

**NOTES FROM MEETING NEIL CLENNELL OF THE WYCHWOOD PROJECT AND LUCY KENNERY OF  
LWVP**

3 August 2020

**Cllr Ruth Smith**

Neil and Lucy are going to apply for a National Lottery grant to fund a Witney-focussed project consisting of several areas of habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement.

They have offered to include sites on Witney Lake and Country Park in the bid, as outlined in Neil's report to this committee.

Andrew Prosser and I walked around the Lake and Country Park with Neil and discussed suitable areas of focus.

Lucy, by phone, told me that the lake has previously been found to have rare plant species, stoneworts. In 2004, Witney Lake scored the highest for wetland plants of 40 LWVP sites surveyed. A pdf about Stoneworts is attached [https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Stonewort\\_V2-Feb15.pdf](https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Stonewort_V2-Feb15.pdf)

Lucy recommends we do a survey on the freshwater habitat to determine the current species present. If the rare plant is still there, the lake could form part of the grant application. Regardless, the lake has potential to be managed in a way that promotes biodiversity in the water. The rest of the site must be managed primarily for public enjoyment of nature, putting access, safety and maintenance before biodiversity.

Finally – as officers will report – Lucy has some funding from Thames Water's charity grants that will provide new signs (maps, footpaths to local areas, wildlife to spot) at 2 entrances to the Lake and Country Park and will fund a few community nature events next year.

**Recommendations by the Chair**

- commission a survey of wetland species
- adopt this stated vision for the Lake and Country Park: "Witney Lake and Country park is a place where residents can enjoy nature. It is managed with the objectives of being welcoming and accessible for all whilst conserving and enhancing freshwater, wetland and meadow biodiversity where possible."
- Management plan – we will support and promote biodiversity projects falling within the National Lottery project should it be granted; we will support and invite LWVP events; we will instruct our contractor to mow the current paths around the meadow and will manage the meadow in sections.
- Suggested meadow plan: Hay meadow – central triangle managed for wild flowers (mow and remove cuttings; may need to seed), back section to tree line allowed to return to scrub for next 10 years; wet meadow managed for wild flowers and biodiversity (mow and remove cuttings) and audit of condition of the ponds needed.
- Suggested river, ditch and lake plan – local wildlife groups are unable to support us with physical maintenance. We must manage these for safety and appearance via our work team and contractors.

- If the grant application is successful, a project officer will take oversight of the site for the duration. We can revisit the idea of a ranger post if the grant is unsuccessful or at the end of the project.

**Financial Implications – *cost as yet unknown***

- If we state that access is an objective, we will need to consider the remaining parts of the path that have steps and other considerations.