



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 9th May 2022
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 5
Subject	Endorsement of the Nature Recovery Plans for the Cotswold Water Park and the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB)
Wards affected	All wards in the Cotswold Water Park and Cotswolds National Landscape.
Accountable member	Councillor Juliet Layton - Cabinet Member for Development Management and Licensing Email: juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Sophia Price Heritage and Design Manager Email: sophia.price@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To obtain Council endorsement of the two Nature Recovery Plans.
Annexes	N/A
Recommendation(s)	<p><i>To endorse the Nature Recovery Plans for the Cotswold Water Park and the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) for use as –</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• part of the evidence base for the review of the Cotswold District Local Plan;</i> <i>• part of the evidence base for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans;</i> <i>• part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects;</i> <i>• as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and</i> <i>• to inform the development and implementation of the Council's emerging Cotswold Water Park Project.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the challenges presented by the climate crisis • Presenting a local plan that's green to the core • Helping residents and communities access the support they need for good health and wellbeing • Supporting businesses to grow in a green, sustainable manner, and to provide high value jobs



Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Both documents have been subject to key stakeholder consultation and were developed by partnerships which included local government, national governmental organisations, local voluntary (including environmental) organisations etc.



I. BACKGROUND

I.1 Nature Recovery Plans (NRPs) aim to secure resilient ecological networks to benefit wildlife and to also provide a range of “ecosystem services”, such as clean air and water, food provision, water management and improvements to wellbeing and the economy. They guide activities within a given area, such as planning decisions and policy, funding applications, land management etc to ensure that alongside other benefits, biodiversity is protected, enhanced and created in a way that drives nature recovery –“ the right habitats in the right places.”

I.2 Nature Recovery Plans:-

- enable a strategic approach to biodiversity and nature recovery in an area, linked to nature recovery work at larger scales (such as the England National Nature Recovery Network¹ and the emerging Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy)
- give an opportunity, during their preparation and implementation, to bring organisations, individuals and communities together to work in partnership for nature recovery
- provide mapping to show the area’s nature recovery network. The nature recovery network mapping illustrates –
 - Core areas of existing wildlife rich habitat (including nationally and locally designated sites).
 - Potential areas where new habitat could be created that would either buffer the core areas or better connect them through corridors and stepping stones
 - Other existing habitat areas
 - Areas where new habitats could most effectively be created on a landscape scale

The remaining landscape is also highlighted as being important as there are always measures that can increase biodiversity value.

- provide information on which species and habitats are the most important in that area and the types of actions that should be taken to protect and enhance them
- help to improve the landscape’s resilience to climate change, by promoting natural solutions to reduce carbon and manage flood risk, and sustaining vital ecosystems such as improved soil, clean water and clean air
- reinforce the natural and cultural diversity of the local landscape,
- help to enable local communities and visitors to enjoy and connect with nature, benefiting health and wellbeing

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network>



1.3 The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and the Cotswold Water Park (CWP) NRPs will form key components of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which is required under the Environment Act 2021². LNRSs are a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. Developed through a collaborative approach, the LNRSs will support the delivery of local, County-level and national Nature Recovery Networks by acting as a key tool to help local partners better direct investment and action that improves, creates and conserves wildlife-rich habitat, for example in targeting delivery of off-site biodiversity net gain.

1.4 The County Council will be the lead Local Authority for the preparation of the Gloucestershire LNRS, working closely with the District Councils and other partners, particularly the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership³. These two NRPs cover areas that stretch beyond the county boundary so will be key in not only providing a greater level of detail for their areas, but also ensuring that cross-boundary issues are taken on board fully.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 Two NRPs have recently been prepared that cover parts of Cotswold District, and across boundaries to adjacent Local Authority areas.

2.2 The Cotswolds National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan

The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Nature Recovery Plan (CotsNRP)⁴ was prepared and adopted by the CNL⁵ (formally known as the Cotswolds Conservation Board – CCB), working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including Cotswold District Council and the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership. The NRP can be found on the CNL's web-site at <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/looking-after/cotswolds-nature-recovery-plan/>. The NRP has not been included as an annex to this Report due to the length of the NRP and the GIS mapping which is integral to the NRP.

The vision of the NRP can best be summarised through its headline image –

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

³ <https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/looking-after/cotswolds-nature-recovery-plan/>

⁵ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/>



The CotsNRP describes the current nature conservation situation, what is changing and the potential for nature recovery - the priorities and required outcomes. It then goes on to outline how nature recovery can be delivered across the Cotswolds:

- It sets targets for habitat restoration
- It links to maps to show where this habitat restoration and creation can best be located, based on the Gloucestershire Nature Recovery Network⁷ and other mapping work.
- It provides a list of priority habitats and species for the Cotswolds, e.g. ancient unimproved limestone grassland and ancient woodland
- It describes what stakeholders and the wider community can do to contribute
- Four broad habitats are then considered individually and practical measures recommended:
 - woodland and trees,
 - grassland and scrub,
 - rivers and wetlands
 - cropland.

The CNL will lead on co-ordinating the implementation of the CotsNRP. An advice note on how the NRP can be used in Development Management decision making has already been prepared.

2.3 The Cotswold Water Park (CWP) Nature Recovery Plan

The Cotswold Water Park (CWP) Nature Recovery Plan (CWPNRP) was prepared by Cotswold District Council on behalf of a partnership, the CWP Nature Conservation Forum, funded by s.106 contributions. The membership of the Forum includes a wide range of partners including local government, national government organisations, local voluntary and environmental organisations (e.g. Cotswold Lakes Trust⁸, Gloucestershire Local Nature

⁶ Illustration by Rachel Hudson with thanks to Back from the Brink/Butterfly Conservation

⁷ <https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/nature-recovery-network>

⁸ <https://cotswoldlakestrust.org/>

Partnership) etc. The NRP can be found on the Council's web-site - <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/landscape/cotswold-water-park/>. The CWP NRP has not been included as an annex to this Report due to the length of the NRP and the links to the GIS mapping which is integral to the NRP.

The vision of the CWP NRP can best be summarised through its headline image –



The CWP NRP is made up of two documents: a summary⁹ and a Technical Details¹⁰ document. It supersedes the previous very successful Biodiversity Action Plans¹¹ for the CWP, which are now out of date.

The CWP NRP describes the current nature conservation situation, what is changing and the potential for nature recovery - the priorities and required outcomes. It then goes on to outline how nature recovery can be delivered across the CWP:

- It includes a set of strategic actions, for example ensuring that nationally important biodiversity sites (e.g. Clattinger Farm and North Meadow Special Area of Conservation) are appropriately protected
- It links to maps to show where habitat restoration and creation can best be located based on the Gloucestershire Nature Recovery Network.
- It provides a list of key habitats and species for the CWP, e.g. standing open water and native black poplar. Action plans are included for these key habitats and species.
- It describes what stakeholders and the wider community can do to contribute.

Implementation of the CWP NRP will progress in earnest when a new part-time Assistant Biodiversity Officer is appointed with the NRP as their main task. An advice note on how

⁹ <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/w00b0wel/cotswold-water-park-nature-recovery-plan-summary-document.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/wwferfcb/cotswold-water-park-nature-recovery-plan.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.waterpark.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/FINALCWP-BAP-2007-16-v8print.pdf>



the NRP can be used in Development Management decision making has already been prepared.

2.4 Both NRPs were subject to consultation with key stakeholders including Parish and Town Councils, Local Authorities, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Local Nature Partnership and others.

2.5 The implementation of the NRPs forms an important part of Cotswold District Council's approach to addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergencies¹². The Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan includes an action related to the CWP (it should be noted that, at the time the Ecological Emergency Action Plan was approved, the CWP NRP was called a biodiversity strategy)

- j) Progress the Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Strategy to maximise biodiversity and other opportunities in this area.

The Ecological Emergency Action Plan also includes an action, which emphasises the need for the Council to endorse and lead on the implementation of these NRPs –

- c) Take a leadership role on the ecological emergency and nature recovery in the Cotswolds, working with, influencing and inspiring partners across the District, County and region to help deliver nature recovery.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1** The NRPs will be used to inform many areas of the Council's work from the determination of planning applications and the review of the Local Plan to the development of the emerging CWP project and other relevant projects. Formal endorsement of the NRPs by the Council will give them more weight in decision-making and clearly illustrate the Council's commitment to and leadership role on nature recovery and tackling the Ecological Emergency.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** There are no financial implications at this stage.

¹² <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/au2c5l4i/ecological-emergency-action-plan.pdf>



5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications at this stage.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The endorsement and implementation of these NRPs will contribute to the Council's aspirations with respect to the ecological and climate emergencies (more detail is provided within the main report.)

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1 The only alternative is not to endorse these plans.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 N/A

(END)