

## Annex A

# Cotswold District Council Ecological Emergency Action Plan

## April 2024 Update on actions

On 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 Cotswold District Council declared an ‘Ecological Emergency’ and approved an Ecological Emergency Action Plan.

*(Some wording in the approved actions has been superseded – this is indicated in italics.)*

	Actions in the 2020 Ecological Emergency Action Plan	Recent actions undertaken	Ongoing Actions	Potential Future workstreams
a	Put ecological issues at the heart of the Council’s actions for the climate emergency and ensure that opportunities to gain mutual benefits for both the climate and the ecological emergencies are maximised.	On hold while new Climate Emergency Lead appointed.	Continue to work with the Climate Change team to ensure that both emergencies are considered in tandem, looking for opportunities to deliver on both.	Work more closely on climate emergency projects to ensure that they deliver multiple benefits for biodiversity and ecosystems services as well as climate change e.g. flood mitigation schemes that are designed to deal with the outcomes of climate change and new cycleways could also create more opportunities for wildlife.
b	Ensure that ecological emergency and nature recovery considerations are embedded in all work areas and decision-making processes, including COVID-19 recovery initiatives	Biodiversity has been considered in many planning proposals. 0.4FTE Assistant Biodiversity Officer appointed on 2 year contract to assist with input to planning applications. Post-holder recently resigned and recruitment process in motion to replace. Biodiversity Officer now f/t.	Continued consideration of biodiversity in the planning process.	More comprehensive and proactive input rather than merely highlighting potential issues. e.g. greater input into corporate initiatives such as green tourism, health and well-being etc which are all linked with access to nature. Provision of more pro-active advice on nature and green infrastructure (GI) within the planning process – not simply highlighting constraints

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				but working more closely with developers to provide multi-functional GI.
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	<p>CDC Officers serve on various county-wide fora. Officers played key role in setting up Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund<sup>1</sup> (GNCF) which will ensure that off-site biodiversity net gain<sup>2</sup> is delivered in a way that benefits wildlife and communities in Gloucestershire.</p> <p>CDC played key role in setting up county-wide Local Authority BNG Officer group. This group has produced guidance<sup>3</sup> on delivering BNG for planning applicants and developers. This document is a valuable tool, introducing and explaining key ecological terms, including biodiversity net gain, nature recovery network<sup>4</sup> and local nature recovery strategies<sup>5</sup>. This will allow developers to deliver green infrastructure and BNG that is resilient and forms a part of the wider ecological network.</p>	GNCF working with officers to enable sufficient off-site BNG delivery sites, with a range of biodiversity units and types of habitats available.	<p>A greater emphasis on this county and national landscape level work – at this scale delivery is likely to be more cost effective and comprehensive – nature does not follow boundaries.</p> <p>Delivery of advice on ecological management and possibilities to local community groups and Parish/Town Councils, including for NDPs.</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://glosncf.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/wildlife-and-biodiversity/biodiversity-net-gain-bng/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/rfpn4en4/bng-guidance-for-lpa-february-2024.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/nature-recovery-network>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy>

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d	Review the adopted Local Plan to ensure that the ecological emergency and nature recovery (including green infrastructure, ecosystems services and natural capital) are strategic priorities for planning and new development, through site allocations, policies and an up-dated Cotswold Design Guide	<p>Biodiversity, natural capital and green infrastructure (GI) included in the recent Reg 18 consultation<sup>6</sup>. Policies have been strengthened and extended.</p> <p>Cotswold Beechwoods and North Meadow SAC mitigation strategies<sup>7</sup> have been adopted.</p>	<p>Habitats Regulations Assessment of local plan review and related work on specific internationally designated sites e.g. North Meadow.</p> <p>New Cotswold Design Code, currently being prepared, will place increased emphasis on GI, natural capital and biodiversity.</p> <p>Further work on the SAC Mitigation strategies, including spend of mitigation payments.</p>	Undertake full ecological assessments of all potential SHELAA and allocation sites – and provide detailed advice for mini-masterplans.
e	Continue to support the development and implementation of the Gloucestershire Nature Recovery Network (including Bee lines <sup>8</sup> ) and the Gloucestershire Ecosystem Services and Natural Capital Mapping ( <del>and the Natural Capital Investment Strategy</del> ), including through the Local Plan, biodiversity net gain and developer contributions.	<p>Natural capital and nature recovery network mapping<sup>9</sup> for Glos completed.</p> <p>Mapping will be used to guide Biodiversity Net Gain metric analysis.</p> <p>Biodiversity pre-application advice template has been updated and directs developers to resources including, the Nature Recovery Network map and the guidance on delivering BNG for planning applicants and developers in Gloucestershire. The pre-application template also highlights other potential</p>	Provision of relevant advice during the planning application process.	More use could be made of nature recovery and natural capital mapping to guide DM and planning policy (and other Council priorities and projects) to ensure that the opportunities to increase natural capital and nature within or in connection with new developments and initiatives is fully realised. Promote this approach across all Council functions and to other partners, including NDP groups and landowners.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-update-and-supporting-information/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/wildlife-and-biodiversity/habitats-regulations-assessment/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://naturalcapital.gcerdata.com/>

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		constraints and opportunities, including Bee Lines.		
f	Play a pro-active role in developing an <del>ecological recovery strategy</del> <i>the Local Nature Recovery Strategy</i> for the County		CDC is a “supporting body” for preparation of county-wide statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy(LNRS). GCC is the Lead Authority. CDC is represented on the LNRS steering group.	Fully develop and implement the strategy at a District scale to ensure that it delivers on its ambitions.
g	Promote tree/woodland planting and re-wilding in the right places and with the right species to maximise wildlife value, carbon sequestration and other benefits, in line with the Gloucestershire <del>Local Nature Partnership tree and woodland creation strategy</del> <i>Tree Strategy</i> <sup>10</sup> .	CDC contributed to drafts of county Tree Strategy.  BNG tree component training for tree officers and biodiversity officer.  Tree planting carried out as part of delivery of the Tree Strategy.	Ongoing discussions with GCC about further opportunities for tree strategy related tree planting on CDC owned land.	Promote and encourage better tree planting and management more widely. Provision of more pro-active advice on nature and green infrastructure (GI) within the planning process to include better tree management and more tree planting. Use the natural capital mapping to direct tree planting and management to sites where multiple benefits could be delivered.  Review CDC Council owned trees management policy
h	Work with farmers and other rural land managers to support the move towards lower carbon emission farming and other actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change while at the same time increasing natural capital and providing additional ecosystems services benefits.	Only in relation to planning applications and similar.  Member appointed with responsibility for Agriculture and Ecology	The Council has relatively little direct control over farming practices. Most work on the ecological emergency and farming relates to our wider partnership role.  GNCF working with farmers to deliver off-site BNG credits. Creation	Better promotion of natural capital approach via other partnerships, continuing to highlight the importance of agriculture and other rural land management in supporting the ecological and climate emergencies.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/glos-tree-strategy>

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			of the GNCF will help to provide additional funds for farmers and other rural land owners to adopt environmentally sound land management practices.	
i	Ensure that Council-owned land and buildings are managed in a biodiversity-friendly manner and that opportunities are taken to create new wildlife habitat.	Improved biodiversity management of the Council's cemeteries commenced (led by Property Services)  Tree planting being undertaken where possible.		Review all Council owned land and buildings to improve their management in ecological terms.  The installation of bird and bat boxes and other habitat features on Council owned buildings.
j	Progress the Cotswold Water Park <del>Biodiversity Strategy</del> <i>Nature Recovery Plan</i> <sup>11</sup> to maximise biodiversity and other opportunities in this area	Published – available on the Council's website 0.6FTE Assistant Biodiversity Officer (2 year contract) appointed to help coordinate implementation of the NRP with key partners, e.g. Cotswold Lakes Trust. Post-holder recently resigned. NRP forms key part of overall CWP Strategy for CDC. CWP Nature Recovery Forum facilitated by CDC.	Further liaison with other members of the CWP Nature Conservation Forum to drive implementation of the NRP. Work with new nature recovery project hosted by Cotswold Lakes Trust.	Increased delivery of the plan particularly working with local communities and businesses.
k	Support and collaborate with our partnership organisations, including the partner organisations within the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, such as the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the Cotswolds <del>Conservation Board</del> <i>National Landscape</i> , the Woodland Trust, the Cotswold	Continued collaboration with key partners for example; partnership working on strategic projects such as the NRN and more locationally focused ones such as the Wild Towns project.	Ongoing  Delivery of projects in the CWP.  Continue to feed into the LNRS and start to contribute to the species conservation strategies and protected site strategies.	Partner organisations are able to lever in external grants etc and therefore provide excellent value for money in developing projects and initiatives, as well as bringing expertise and experience not present within the Council. Any support that the Council can provide

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/landscape/cotswold-water-park/>

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	<del>Water Park Trust</del> <i>Lakes Trust</i> ), the National Trust, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records.	Heritage and Design Manager sits on the LNP Board to represent Green Infrastructure.  Payment to GCER <sup>12</sup> for ecological data.  Ongoing collaboration with LNP and neighbouring authorities to deliver the BNG guidance and work towards delivering the LNRS.		to these partners will aid in that work.
l	Provide advice for local communities on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital (ecosystems services) into their neighbourhood plans and other initiatives	Advice provided to a number of NDP groups on natural environment issues.	Continued limited reactive support for NDP groups.  Advice for NDP groups on how to implement the CWP NRP in preparation.	Production of a comprehensive guide on how to approach the ecological emergency in NDPs, including GI, natural capital etc.  Proactive encouragement and advice for NDP and other community groups to develop relevant policies, to manage their own land holdings appropriately.
m	Progress the ongoing green infrastructure (GI) agenda including through completing the draft District GI strategy; ensuring the inclusion of high quality well-managed GI in new developments, the review of the Local Plan, advice on neighbourhood plans; input into the county GI strategy; continuing support for and collaboration with the national GI benchmark, Building	GI Strategy <sup>13</sup> published and available on the Council's website.  Continuing advice to developers on the inclusion of high quality GI, using advice note prepared in 2020 as part of MHCLG funded GI project.	Ongoing discussions around better public open space management, including draft policy in Local Plan Reg 18 consultation.  Work on new Cotswold Design Code to better reflect GI standards	Review the LNP-led GI pledge.  Implementation of the actions in the GI Strategy . Develop and obtain funding for a range of highlighted projects.  Further work required to address management of public open spaces within residential developments

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gcer.co.uk/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://cotswold.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=dac1a6973d4e4e2caa6cb1f47b013171>

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	with Nature (BwN) (which was created in Gloucestershire with support from the Council).	Project on the fairer management of open spaces in residential developments  Prepared new GI framework for Gloucestershire <sup>14</sup> on behalf of the LNP.	within Building with Nature <sup>15</sup> and the national GI framework <sup>16</sup> .	
n	Promote the creation of new natural green spaces and green links across the District.	Continued promotion of this within existing partnerships. (see above)	Inclusion of new draft policy on Sherborne Park <sup>17</sup> – to provide more access to nature - in Local Plan Reg 18 consultation.	Progress the project on open spaces (see m above)  Provide support for developers, land-owners and local communities to create new green spaces and links.
o	Liase with other partners to establish an ambitious biodiversity net gain system for Gloucestershire.	Publica BNG implementation project group established.  Joint working among LPAs across Gloucestershire on BNG, e.g. jointly commissioned training. GNCF  Officer and Member training undertaken at CDC.	Close involvement in work of GNCF.  Extensive array of other preparatory work for BNG, working with partners where this increases effectiveness	Once BNG has bedded in it will be easier to understand what further work is required to drive this through.
p	Review how our natural environment can increasingly become a key part of the tourism offer of the Cotswolds.	No action		More emphasis on tourism projects where biodiversity and nature

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/files/ugd/5c4a64\\_2ab97555c371434fb65acf724228dc44.pdf](https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/files/ugd/5c4a64_2ab97555c371434fb65acf724228dc44.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/gloucestershire-cotswolds/lodge-park-and-sherborne-park-estate>

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				recovery can be delivered and promoted through other initiatives.
q	Consider the implications for the Council of the forthcoming Environment Act Bill-2021 <sup>18</sup>	BNG is now mandatory on most planning applications. To deliver this, new systems have been put in place e.g. pre-application advice; validation requirements; training; new IT system etc. However much remains to be done, for example drafting relevant legal agreements.	Consideration of BNG in planning applications. Work on details of delivery of BNG being considered.  LNRS preparation and delivery (see above)	Mandatory requirement to fully consider the enhanced biodiversity duty and reporting requirements – see section 4 of the main O&S report. Full benefits of the Environment Act exploited to deliver on the EE and nature recovery in the District.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>