

# Draft Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan: Summary

**It is 2070** in the Cotswold Water Park. The continuous meandering corridors of enriched wetlands, meadows, wet woodlands and scrubland form a resilient mosaic of habitats. The wildlife is flourishing and species can easily move across the landscape. Farmers, land owners and local communities are actively engaged in adopting sustainable ways of living. An array of new footpaths and cycle routes are available for visitors and local residents to explore. Carbon is captured and stored in the wetlands, woodland mosaics and arable soils. The improved water quality and flood management has enhanced the lives of wildlife and people in the CWP and communities downstream. Local communities, visitors and local businesses continue to work together in harmony to maximise the benefits for humans and for wildlife, ensuring fully functioning ecosystems within the CWP.





Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Forum

# The Cotswold Water Park

The Cotswold Water Park (CWP) is unique – a vast patchwork of more than 182 lakes created as a result of gravel extraction and restoration. It is a biodiversity hotspot, a valued visitor destination and a great place to live and work.

The lakes support nationally important wetland birds and plants, but there are other valuable habitats as well including the canal corridor, the Thames, wet woodland and lowland neutral grassland, all interconnected by linear habitats such as hedgerows and ditches. The biodiversity value of the CWP has recently been further recognised through the re-notification of the Cotswold Water Park SSSI to further secure the protection of important ecological features. The wealth of wildlife is central to the CWP's economic and social well-being.



## The need for a Nature Recovery Plan

There have been unprecedented declines in species and habitats in recent decades. The UK Government has set out a 25 Year Environment Plan with goals including protecting threatened species, creating richer wildlife habitats and mitigating and adapting to climate change. Most councils have now declared climate and ecological emergencies committing them to delivering nature recovery.

The CWP Nature Recovery Plan supports the government's goals and sets out actions to reverse the current declines in biodiversity and to enhance our natural capital.

The Nature Recovery Plan has been developed with the input of key partners within the Cotswold Water Park Nature Conservation Forum; a representative body that works across the CWP to protect and conserve biodiversity.

### Loss of habitats

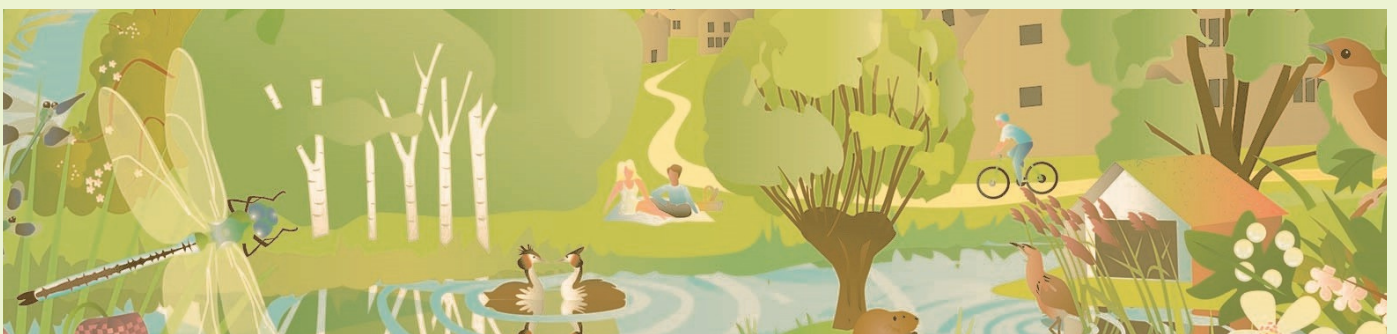
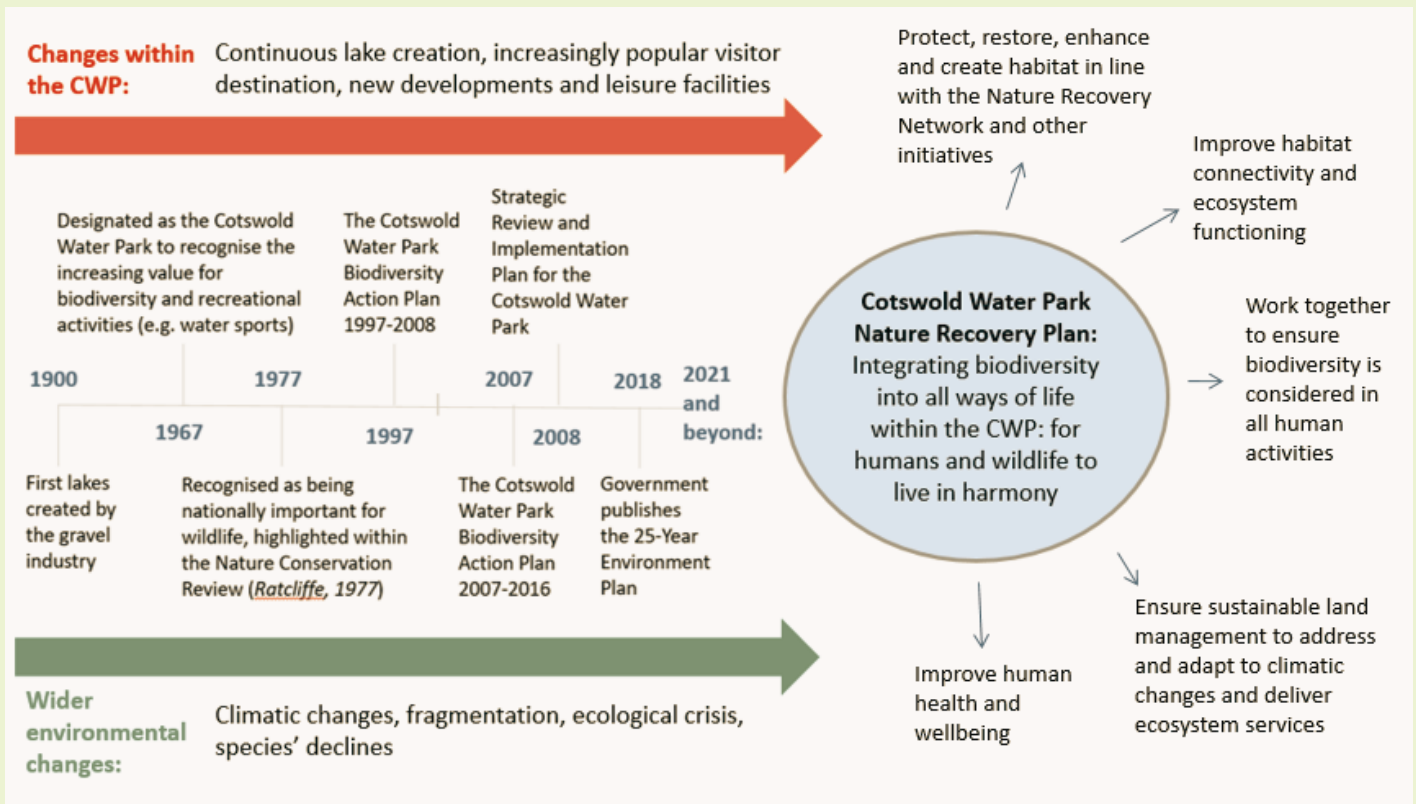
- 97% of wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1930s
- More than 1 million ponds have been lost in Britain over the last 100 years

### Decline in species

- 41% of UK species have declined since 1970
- 15% of UK species are threatened with extinction

# Timeline

The image below shows the timeline of events leading up to the new Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan and a summary of the main objectives.



# Securing a resilient ecological network

The CWP Nature Recovery Plan aims to secure a resilient ecological network 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. It is therefore vital to work together to ensure that the biodiversity of the area is protected, restored and enhanced. This will improve the quality of life for both wildlife and people, helping to meet the challenges of both the ecological and climate emergencies.

The 50-year vision will be achieved by building on and incorporating previous biodiversity action plans and working alongside current strategic initiatives, such as the national and regional Nature Recovery Networks.

The plan provides an overall picture of where key habitats, such as wetlands, woodland and species rich meadows should be created and enhanced - linking up those habitats at a local and regional level, for example the wetland corridor along the Thames or grassland links between the Cotswold AONB and the Wessex Downs AONB, as part of the “Big Chalk” project (refer to Map 1). The plan also sets out actions for a range of important and characteristic species and habitats.

Informed by the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) and Lawton Principles, a coherent and resilient ecological network will be established and maintained within the CWP.

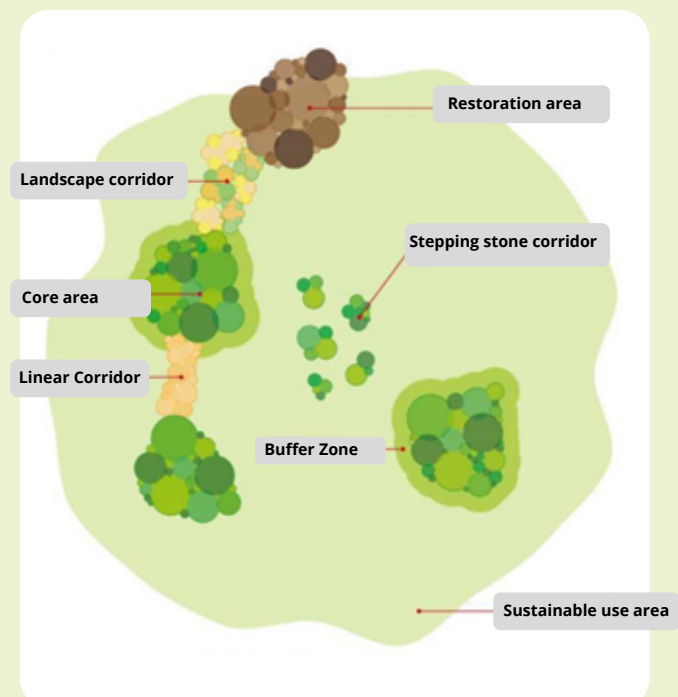
## Definition of the Nature Recovery Network (NRN)

The creation of a national network with an aim to expand, improve and connect the wildlife rich places across the countryside as well as towns and cities.

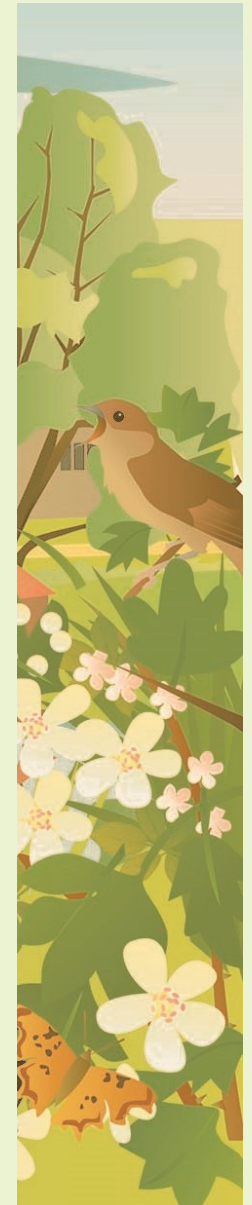
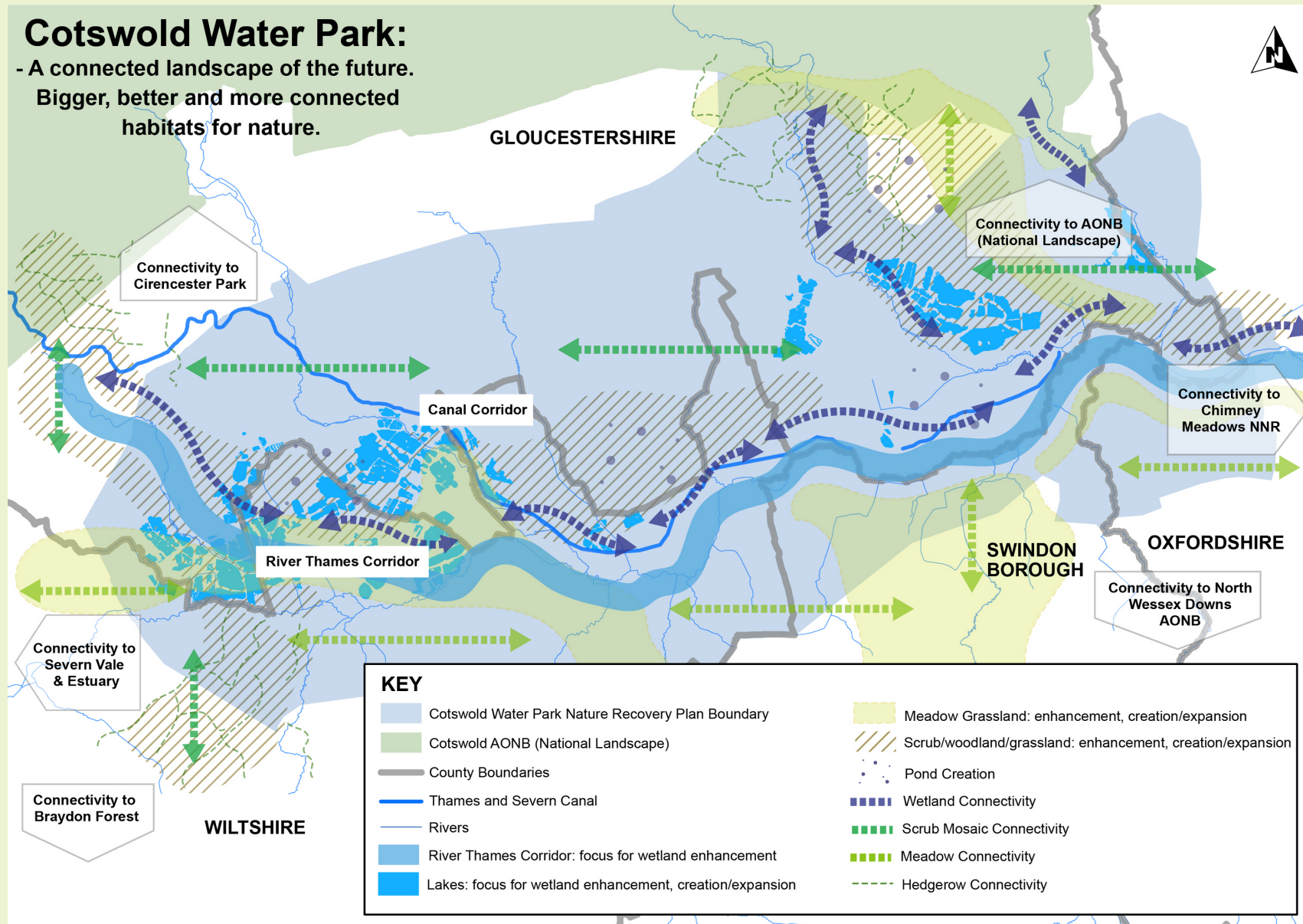
## Lawton Principles (based on Lawton et al. 2010):

A network of wildlife sites in line with 4 key principles:

- Create new sites
- Bigger sites
- Better site quality
- Enhanced connectivity



A strategic map to demonstrate the 50-year vision -aspiring for habitats to be bigger, better and more join-up to ensure a resilient landscape and fully functioning ecosystems.



# Actions for key habitats and species

- Habitats will be protected, restored, enhanced and created in strategic locations in line with the Nature Recovery Network and to ensure that they provide the most ecosystems service benefits.
- More detailed information can be found in the full Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan – <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/iwyfev22/draft-cotswold-water-park-nature-recovery-plan-july-2021.pdf>

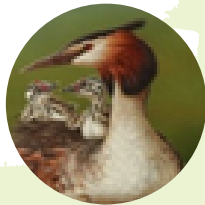
## Standing Open Water (lakes, ponds and canals)

### Actions

- Create wildlife ponds and wetland habitat in strategic locations
- Further explore local level project mapping to identify opportunity areas for standing open water
- Monitor and manage the water quality in standing open waters

### Example Species

- Breeding and wintering water birds
- Stoneworts



## Rivers, Streams and ditches

### Actions

- Ensure appropriate land management alongside river corridors to control for water quality
- Support continuation of restoration and enhancement work along corridors, including ditches

### Example Species

- Water Vole
- Otter



## Fen, marsh and reed swamp (and ditches)

### Actions

- Enhance structural diversity through creating habitat mosaics
- Create reed bed along river corridors (e.g. River Thames corridor) and within new ditches created through mineral restoration schemes

### Example Species

- Bittern
- Invertebrates



## Scrub Woodland

### Actions

- Allow scrub growth within existing woodland patches and create corridors or 'stepping stones' across the CWP
- Promote the importance of scrub for biodiversity

### Example Species

- Nightingale
- Terrestrial mammals



## Active Sand and Gravel Quarries & Bare Ground and Early Successional Habitat

### Actions

- Ensure specific habitat enhancement, creation and restoration when quarries are active and after use
- Encourage natural succession and structural diversity in restoration schemes

### Example Species

- Sand Martin
- Dragonflies



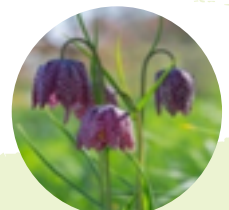
## Lowland neutral grassland

### Actions

- Protect and restore from pro-longed water logging
- Expand, extend and connect existing sites
- Reduce recreational pressure

### Example Species

- Snakes Head Fritillary
- Bats



# Thematic Action Plans

## Invasive Non-native species (INNS)

### Actions

- Raise awareness of the 'check, clean and dry' protocol – please follow this link: <https://marinescience.blog.gov.uk/2019/05/13/how-check-clean-dry-can-help-protect-our-freshwater-environments-and-animals/>
- Monitor, map and manage INNS species where required



## Built Structures

### Actions

- For all developments to achieve significant biodiversity net gain (BNG) on site. If BNG is required off-site, it should be delivered in the CWP
- Ensure all compensation/enhancement measures are designed to benefit locally characteristic species



## Green Infrastructure (GI)

### Actions

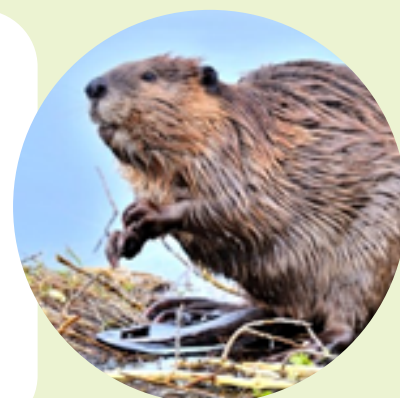
- Promote high quality GI in all new developments
- Deliver the objectives of local green infrastructure strategies



## Re-introductions

### Actions

- Consult landowners and communities to understand local opinions on re-introductions
- Review the results of the 2005 beaver trial in Lower Mill Estate as well as others in the UK to gather evidence for future re-introductions





# Funding the actions

It will cost money to deliver the outcomes of the nature recovery plan and an imaginative approach will be required – encouraging nature-based solutions to a range of issues; using external funding such as off-site biodiversity net gain payments, grants and crowdfunding, as well as agri-environment schemes. There are opportunities to work in new and innovative ways to enable nature's recovery.

The 1 million people visiting the CWP each year offers an opportunity for biodiversity to also benefit through eco-tourism, generating income to create, enhance and manage habitats within the CWP whilst improving the environment for visitors and residents at the same time.



Photograph: Habitat First Group

# Implementing the actions

For the CWP Nature Recovery Plan to be successful and to deliver on its ambitions, everyone will have to work together and to take a proactive approach to biodiversity. This includes land managers, local communities, local businesses, universities etc. Through joint working, the Cotswold Water Park will become a much better place for both people and wildlife



This photo is of Ashton Keynes Primary School celebrating receiving a successful grant from the Lower Mill Estate S106 Nature Conservation Fund (administered by CDC) which allowed them to enhance their wildlife garden and outdoor learning facilities

Photograph link: <https://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/news/17280392.ashton-keynes-schools-nature-garden-given-wild-makeover/>

# Further Information

For more information or to become involved and help deliver the actions, please visit:

- [Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan](#)
- [Crowdfund Cotswold:](#)  
<https://www.spacehive.com/movement/cc>



You may wish to seek advice from relevant partners within the Cotswold Water Park Nature Conservation Forum before undertaking your own actions. Examples include the Wildlife Trust, Cotswold Lakes Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). The full list of the Cotswold Water Park Nature Conservation Forum can be found within the Appendix of the Technical Document



Photograph: Habitat First Group



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