



Newsletter - Christmas 2024

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Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Update

It's been a busy year for our LNRS team ahead of us going out to public consultation in early 2025.

This year we have...

- Engaged with young people at the Bucks Youth Summit in March to tell them about the LNRS and gather their views via an online survey (**40** responses).
- Held **10** sector-based stakeholder engagement workshops, with **150** attendees, across March and April, to identify stakeholders' priorities for nature and any corresponding measures.
- Conducted an extensive online survey in July/August, which had **444** respondents, to check the proposed short-listed themes.
- Carried out extensive data analysis of all workshop and survey data.
- Held a stakeholder engagement webinar in October, with **55** attendees, to update on progress.
- Held our final cross-sector stakeholder engagement workshop in November, with around **100** attendees, to discuss the proposed mapped opportunities and priorities for nature.

We are now busy finalising our priorities and measures, mapping, and accompanying documents and pulling everything together to have our draft LNRS ready by Christmas.



In early 2025 we will be consulting with our supporting authorities (Milton Keynes City Council and Natural England) prior to going out to public consultation in February/March. The LNRS will then be published in summer 2025, with a launch event taking place early summer. More details on this early next year!!



For more LNRS info, see our website [here](#).





Chalk, Cherries and Chairs: the end of an era

The Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership, a five-year initiative dedicated to the conservation, restoration, and celebration of the central Chilterns, has officially ended.

Launched in 2019, and led by the Chilterns National Landscape, the project was created to celebrate the central Chilterns, revitalise local heritage, restore vital habitats, and deepen connections to the area to ensure that this unique landscape will be enjoyed by generations to come. The project was made possible by a £1,996,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund as well as a number of other funders.

Highlights of the scheme include;

- Habitat restoration and biodiversity enhancement - including over 3,000 hectares of chalk grassland, woodland and hedgerows and the formation of the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster
- Reviving cultural heritage
- Community engagement and volunteering
- Environmental education and outreach

Nicola Thomas, NEP Partnership Manager, who was on the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs steering group says...

“I have been involved with the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs scheme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, since its inception and original development bid and for the full 5 years of delivery, chairing the Steering group for two of those years, 2020-2022, through the challenge of Covid. The scheme has ended on a huge high, having completed a suite of projects involving more than 80 partners, groups, organisations and landowners, 21 years of volunteering effort - on habitat restoration, species monitoring, research and heritage - with education and outreach to 16,000 people to improve 31km² of landscape across the central Chilterns, and better connect people to it. These will all have lasting impacts. Although the Landscape Partnership has officially come to an end, I look forward to continuing to support the legacy Forward Plan project, working with young people, and working again alongside the fantastic organisations and committed individuals who have helped to steer the work”.

You can see full details of the project, plus read about the project legacy and the future here:

[About Chalk, Cherries and Chairs | Chilterns National Landscape](#)

Emberton Country Park Visit

In September, we travelled with our Nature Recovery Delivery Group after its meeting, to Emberton Country Park, to hear about the conservation work they do and look at the mosaics of habitats in place.





Whilst there we checked in on the 120 Black Poplar trees that the NEP planted there in January in memory of Alan Holmes.

We are planning to put together an information panel in due course to mark the area and enthuse future generations about this historic native tree species.

Farmer Advisor Network Meeting

In November, we held our most recent 6-monthly NEP Farmer Adviser Network meeting, kindly hosted by the Rothschild Foundation at Windmill Hill, Waddesdon Estate. The network brings together advisers based in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes who advise the area's land managers, to update them on national and local policy, good practice and case studies around nature-friendly farming, and to allow space for networking.



Our November network meeting included an update from the consultancy Pilio on the findings of their Defra Test & Trials work in Buckinghamshire, which assessed the readiness of the area's various structures and processes to unlock private and blended financial investment in nature. We heard many recommendations and conclusions, including the need for a local delivery body for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), and how Local Nature Partnerships such as the NEP would be well-placed for the role, subject to more secure and longer-term funding.

We also heard about progress with the LNRS work, from Buckinghamshire Council about its Biodiversity Net Gain habitat bank regulation service, and from BBOWT about its own BNG experience to date. There was lots of room for discussion and we ended with identifying potential actions and possible topics to look forward to at the next network meeting in the Spring.

If you would like to find out more, or join the network, please email nep@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. We are particularly looking for land advisers in the north of our area, north of Milton Keynes – so please do get in touch, you would be very welcome!

Nature South East

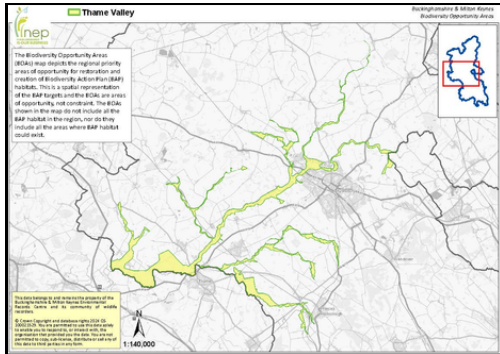
Early in December, our Partnership Manager Nicola attended a highly productive gathering of Local Nature Partnerships and wider partners from across the south east, to collectively identify what we need to do, and the barriers we need to overcome, to super-charge nature recovery at scale. Watch this space as we build on the ideas over the coming months!





Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) identify where the greatest opportunities for habitat creation and restoration lie, enabling the efficient focusing of resources to where they will have the greatest positive conservation impact and represent a more efficient way of delivering action on the ground.



Our BOA Review Panel, made up of members of the NEP, our Nature Recovery Delivery Group, and BMERC, recently reviewed a proposal to extend the Thame Valley BOA. With the key criteria being met, the panel voted in favour of the proposal, and the Thame Valley BOA has now been extended to cover an area of the Thame catchment between Waterperry and Princes Risborough, up to Stewkley and Hulcott.

You can see full details of the newly extended Thame Valley BOA, along with details of all BOAs in our area, on our website. <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/biodiversity-opportunity-areas/>

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The “**Reconnecting Bernwood, Otmoor Ray**” bid to the National Lottery, led by BBOWT and which the NEP supported, has been successful in winning over £half a million to develop projects to restore nature across the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire landscape.

The NEP looks forward to continuing to support the work and will provide regular updates via social media and future newsletters.

Read more here: [Wildlife charity receives half a million pounds for ambitious nature recovery project | Berks Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust](#)”

We would like to say a huge thank you to every person and organisation who has supported the NEP during 2024 and we look forward to further partnership working in 2025!

Wishing you and your families a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year!

If you have any news/events/interesting info you would like us to include in our next newsletter, please email us at nep@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

<https://bucksmknep.co.uk/>

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