



# Witney Lake and Country Park



**WITNEY  
IN BLOOM**

WITNEY IN BLOOM  
IS ORGANISED AND FUNDED BY WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL



2024 BRITAIN IN BLOOM PORTFOLIO

# History



Witney Lake and Meadows is a 37 hectare Country Park that offers a picturesque area for recreation, whether that be taking the dog for a walk around the Lake's footpath, rambling through the tranquil landscape or relaxing whilst enjoying a picnic.

The Lake, bought by Witney Town Council on 12th Sept 1988, is a flooded gravel pit dug initially for gravel used whilst constructing the Witney bypass (A40) in the mid 1980's.

Today it forms a deep lake up to 5.2 metres, whilst a traditional hay meadow and wet grassland, being managed in partnership with Natural England and Freshwater Habitats Trust between streams of the meandering River Windrush. A recent study by the Lower Windrush Valley project and Pond Conservation found 110 bird species and a large variety of invertebrates including 3 Stonewort species.

# Volunteers and Partners

## COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP

The Witney Town Council fund **NatureNOW** an annual grant to provide free activities to local carers, childminders, parents and children, including children from the **Asylum Seekers Hotel**. This has been renewed for 2024/25.

**Abingdon and Witney College** and **Audley Travel** also host their annual litter pick at the Witney Lake in partnership with Witney Town Council. Both involve at least four litter pickers from each organisation to help keep our green spaces litter-free.



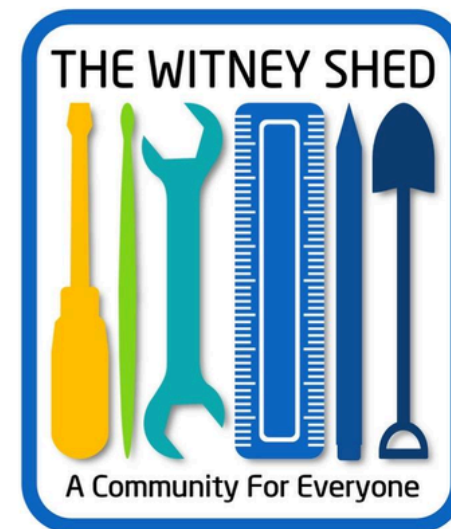
# Volunteers and Partners

## COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP

We have a great working relationship with the **Witney Shed**; we provide cut wood which is used by them to build nest boxes and other habitats and posts and plinths for signage and rubbing posts for the Lake and Country Park.

So far, they have helped us with:

- 10 Bird Boxes
- 3 Owl Boxes
- 11 Information Posts
- 12 Rubbing Posts



# Volunteers and Partners



## COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP

- **Gill Mill Aggregate's Team** offered use of their excavator to create new wetland areas in Snipe Meadow to reinstate and improve the ones that were originally there, as well as add up to 4 extra scrapes.
- We are currently working in partnership with local running club to create a one mile circuit around the lake.
- We have also offered local schools use of the rubbing posts and giving interactive trail books (both PDF and physical) and also to the local **ICE centre** for vulnerable young people with various disabilities, we have facilitated access by minibus to a quarter circuit with paths that make wheelchair access possible. Ice centre have visited and really enjoyed having access to the Lake. Further work is planned to improve access.

# Grants and Funding

## FUNDRAISING

The Lake and Country Park has received:

- **£9,500** from Natural England for use on the meadows
- **£2,000** from Duncan Enright from his councillor's priority fund

FHT grant application agreed £9,405.60 for 10 years of management of Snipe and Mill Meadows  
£2000:00 from Councillor Fund  
2/3 total cost of £1428 for hedgerow products paid for by Woodland Trust



WOODLAND  
TRUST

NATURAL  
ENGLAND



# Events

## ACTIVITIES

Our Bio-diversity Officer Carl hosts walk-arounds the Country Park 2-3 days a week which involve the **ICE Centre** and local schools.

We also opened up the new rubbing posts with a local school's Eco-Champion, six year old **Lois**. She cut the ribbon with the Mayor and was awarded a drive around the lake and a rubbing booklet, of which we have since made accessible to local schools and anyone who walks into our reception.



# Events

## ACTIVITIES

We enjoy thanking our volunteers for all their hard work. Here are a few photos from a **recent picnic** at the lake for our volunteers including our community gardeners from **Burwell Community Garden, Edible Gardens** and **Witney Horticultural Society** and volunteers from **Witney Shed**. Cllr Andy Bailey Chair of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee spoke about the importance of the work our volunteers do and our Biodiversity Officer reiterated his thanks and encouraged volunteers to ask questions and informed them of forthcoming nature walks and talks with himself or other local nature experts.





# Further Site Development

- Installation of two tern rafts
- Pollarding of willows along the river corridors to reduce shading and encourage bankside vegetation.
- WTC's aquatic specialist carried out a Stonewort Survey
- Installed an accessible picnic bench with extended table edges for wheelchair users
- Introduction of a new interactive leaflet for walking around the lake
- Hedgerow management has started for butterfly habitats



WWW.WITNEY-TC.GOV.UK

**ABOUT**

The Lake is a flooded gravel pit dug initially for gravel used whilst constructing the Witney bypass (A40) in the mid 1980's.

Today it forms a deep lake, whilst a traditional hay meadow and wet grassland, grazed by the cattle of a local farmer, are found between streams of the meandering River Windrush.

What do you call a bee that is hard to understand?  
A mumble bee!

**WITNEY LAKE MAP**

COME AND EXPLORE THE  
**WITNEY LAKE & COUNTRY PARK**

**MORE QUESTIONS?**

We have a Witney Lake and Country Park Biodiversity page on our website which you can find by scanning the QR code below or typing in your searchbar this link:  
[www.witney-tc.gov.uk/services/lake-country-park](http://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/services/lake-country-park)

What time do ducks get up in the morning?  
The quack of dawn!

What do you call a musical insect?  
A humbug!

**FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS**

V	T	H	O	N	A	L	L	X	M	
B	H	M	B	T	S	Q	E	F	I	
U	Y	M	A	T	R	A	S	T	J	
S	M	C	E	N	I	E	U	E	T	
H	O	G	O	A	N	N	S	T	N	
E	F	R	Z	M	D	A	R	E	I	
X	R	S	X	R	M	O	V	D	D	
M	W	O	A	W	U	O	W	A	P	
T	O	M	H	Q	W	R	N	O	S	
L	O	U	T	B	A	C	K	S	T	L

Word List

BUSH	MEADOW
COMMON	OUTBACK
DESERT	SAVANNA
LLANO	TUNDRA

Draw a line through each word when you find it in the grid - can you cross out them all?

# Further Site Development

- There has been creation of 2 wildflower meadows including 3 hectares of wildflower meadow creation on Mill Meadow
- We are working with Angling Society to provide better platforms to fish from
- There has been a creation of 3-4 new scrapes on Snipe Meadow
- We carried out a botanical survey of the lake allowing us better understanding of future development.
- There has been a soil survey and Spider and invertebrate survey of mill and snipe meadows

There will be thinning over the winter along the A40 strip (up to 200 trees) continuing to improve light and sight lines for lone walkers and others who feel vulnerable.



# Further Site Development



- **Registration of life saving equipment** on the Good Samaritans responder app
- New web page has been created dedicated to Land CP which will have a survey to collect feedback.
- It is also a good source of Witney Lake's history with information on angling, lifesaving equipment locations, and volunteering information.



Dear Sir/Madam,

We have approved your equipment and it should show up on the map now.

Thank you so much for supporting us. If your registration details change at any time, please log into your GoodSAM account, and update your registration.

**Approval message:**

Hi,

On behalf of RLSS UK, thank you for registering a piece of water rescue equipment and helping to create the world's biggest water rescue equipment register.

Your actions have helped the emergency services, first responders and your local community and could save lives.

Thank you for your support,

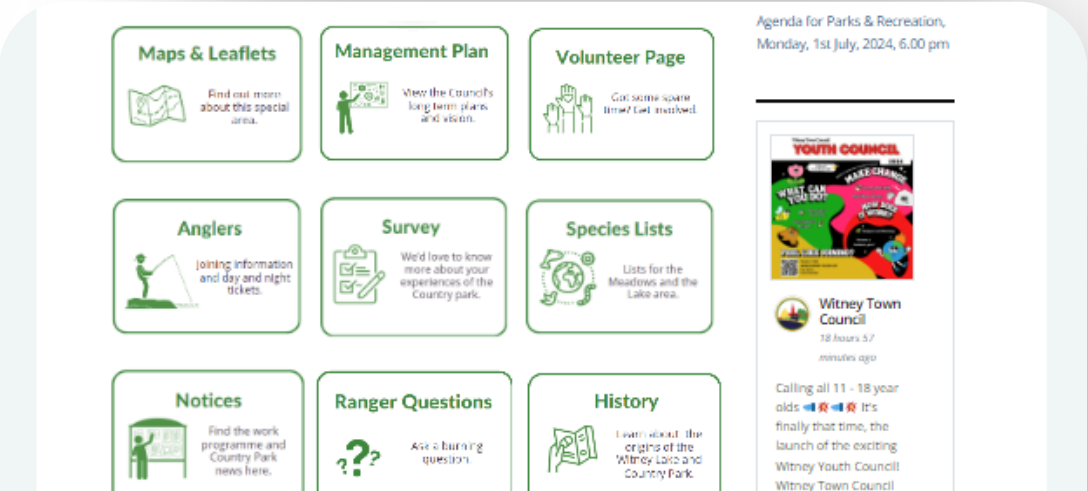
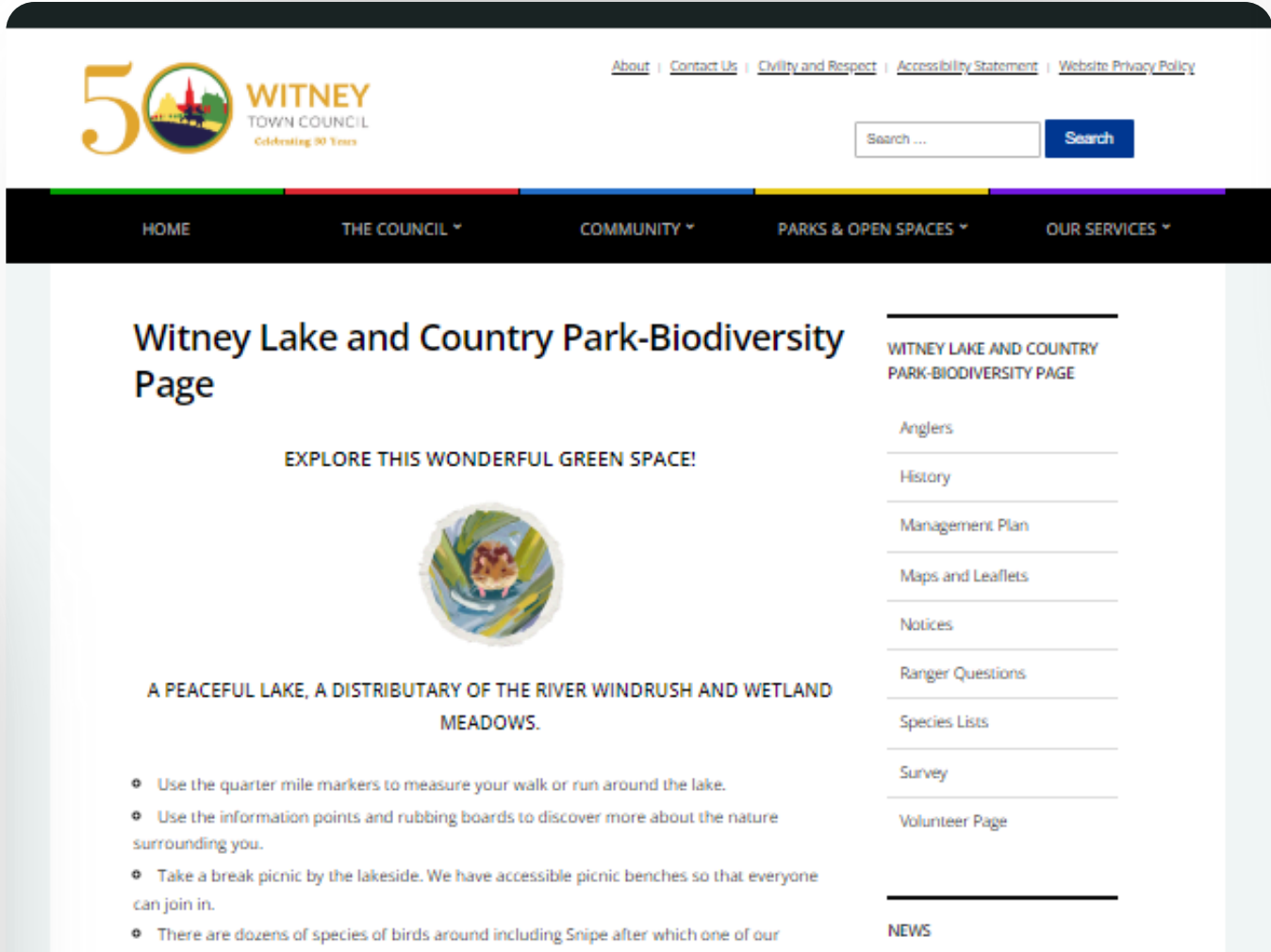
RLSS UK

**Equipment description:**

On the northern shore of the lake, parallel with the A40 (Available All Day)

This is an automated email, please do not reply directly.

Best wishes,  
The GoodSAM Team



# Further Site Development

- **Signage review, replacement, and refurbishment.** Some signs have been reused in other areas of the L and CP. There are new Signage and Noticeboards installed
- **Furniture refurbishment** for creating an identifiable brand across the Country Park.
- **WWII Pill Box** on Mill Meadow has been cleared up and introduced with an informational sign post.



# Environment



- Litter picking by the public and **bins** (including dog bins) are cleared two times a week. Proactive work is scheduled in and there is an agile response clearance if situation merits such as broken glass or barbeques. The bins are **Dual Bins** (litter & recycling) and what is collected gets **recycled**.

- **Wood from signs and gates get reused** into nest boxes, new signs, and other purposes. Plastic found disposed by nearby businesses are also used within signage and bird boxes. An example of this is the information sign built by the Witney Shed (right).

- **Graffiti is actioned on the day it is discovered**. Staff carry graffiti removal equipment. A graphic artist frequently refreshes the underpass that leads to the entrance to the site.

- We are registered with Thames Valley Records Office and BBOWT as a **Local Native Reserve (LNR)** and also as a Local Wildlife site (LWS). It is currently in the process of being assessed which will be followed up in July.

- There are regular **flora and fauna surveys** by professional external bodies as well as internally.




# Maintenance Program 2024-25

## PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The meadows are the largest single components of the site. The previous condition suggests that they have had no recent management prior to the recent improvements. Dominated by dense tussocks and mats of coarse grasses and rushes, together with scattered invasive tall ruderal species including common nettle and creeping thistle, a habitat of this type controlled by once traditional management such as mowing and/or grazing has ceased. It generally leads to a loss of biodiversity.

This is being offset by an active work program and an annual review and, if needed a re-survey of the habitat. We will also use the biodiversity metric to calculate the Biodiversity Net Gain for our holdings to both know the “value” both financially and biologically

<p>WITNEY LAKE AND COUNTRY PARK</p> <p>MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY 2024-2034</p>  <p>Written by Carl Whitehead, Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer April 2024</p>	<p><b>Contents</b></p> <p><b>Where are we now?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction</li><li>• Management Reports and Surveys</li><li>• The Country Park Today</li><li>• Legal Compliances and Policy Context Frameworks</li><li>• Site Description</li></ul> <p><b>Where do we want to get to?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vision</li><li>• Assessment and analysis<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Ecology</li><li>◦ Landscape</li><li>◦ Management</li></ul></li><li>• Visitor and Community Needs</li><li>• Management Objectives</li></ul> <p><b>How will we get there?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removal and Control of Invasive Species</li><li>• Surveys</li></ul> <p><b>Finance and resources.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Budget</li></ul> <p><b>How will we know when we have arrived?</b></p> <p><b>Monitoring and review</b></p> <p><b>Appendices</b></p>
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# Maintenance Program 2024-25

## PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT

We continue the removal and control of Invasive Species:

Himalayan Balsam

Nuttall's Pond Weed

Terrapins that have been released into the lake by members of the public

Hemlock

Giant Hogweed

whilst also protecting the endangered species in our meadows, such as the Great Burnet found in Mill Meadow (pictured right).

We also have a 3-year work program for SSE to manage all the trees under power lines that cross the Country Park. It has been agreed with SSE's contractors that use will be made of the cleared wood in other habitat creation projects

