



**WITNEY
IN BLOOM**



WITNEY IN BLOOM
IS ORGANISED AND FUNDED BY WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

WITNEY LAKE & COUNTRY PARK

IN BLOOM PORTFOLIO 2023

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

Community and Partnership involvement is led by Witney Town Council's Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer, Carl Whitehead who has been in post since July 2022.

Originally recruited as a Park Ranger he has a wealth of experience in managing diverse habitats, conservation work and working with volunteers.

In August he held a **'Meet the Ranger'** event and began recruiting individuals and groups to volunteer in the town's green spaces. Some focus solely on the Lake and Country Park. The work they undertake is always structured and purposeful.

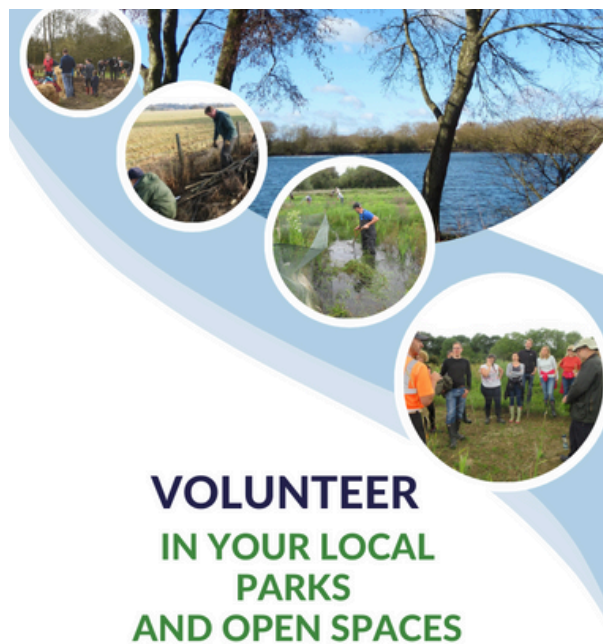


CONSERVATION

- Get Active
- Learn New Skills
- Meet New People
- Support & Inspire
- Help Tackle Biodiversity
- And Have Fun!

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Contact: ranger@witney-tc.gov.uk



COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

Volunteers have been involved in the following projects:

- **October 22 Assisting with installation of gates**
- **General year-round maintenance** including clearance, site management and planting, path clearing etc
- **Daily and weekly litter picking**
- **Regular Care and maintenance of bins and benches**



COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

- **March 23 Hedge Laying**
- **May 2023 the restoration of the WWII pill box** which was uncovered during mowing and meadow reinstatement work.
- **May 23 Eradication of Himalayan Balsam**



COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

- There are two volunteers that pick **Himalayan Balsam** which is an invasive non-native plant.
- The 3m tall plants flower between June & October. The seed pods disperse seed up to 7m away.
- Witney Town Council opts for non-chemical control of this weed and its volunteers pull them before they set seed.
- 2 tons of Balsam has been pulled so far with a further 5 tons to go!



COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

- **HSBC and Audley Travel** employees that are signed up to company volunteering schemes use their volunteer hours to litter pick at the Lake & Country Park and the approach road.
- **There are two individual litter pickers** (a husband and wife team) that pick the site daily – they bring a bag and fill it each day.



COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

- **Bridewell Gardens Mental Health Recovery** offer a safe environment for therapeutic conservation management to support better mental health, creating opportunities for service users to learn new skills, build self esteem and confidence, providing physical exercise while working outdoors in a peaceful setting. The Biodiversity and Green Spaces officer invites members to volunteer once a month.
- bridewellgardens.org



COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

Graffiti Wall

Witney Town Council is working with a group of local graffiti artists to commission an installation on the underpass wall on the main route to the Lake & Country Park entrance.

The Oxfordshire group 'MES Crew' are a collective of artists and designers who work with community groups, councils and businesses to promote the 'Open Walls Network', an initiative to work with local authorities to open up wall space for use by graffiti and street artists.

- openwallsnetwork.org



COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS

Officers at the Town Council work with partners and volunteers to issue press releases and social media posts, often in the form of **Ranger Round-Ups** to publicise and show gratitude and support for the work our volunteer and partners do.

These are always well received by residents who are quick to add appreciative comments and praise for the commitment of these unpaid workers.

There is a great feeling of pride in our hard-working volunteers and community gardeners.

Witney Town Council
15 November 2022 · 🌐

It's time for another Ranger Round-Up.

Some of you may have noticed work taking place along the north-east bank of the lake. Around 30 metres of bank reinstatement work has taken place in the last few weeks. Further work is planned to take place along the north bank in partnership with the angling group in December.

It is all part of an ongoing project of which the key element is the strengthening and prevention of erosion of the lake banks. Along with improving the integ... See more



See Insights and Ads [Boost post](#)

👍❤️ 71 21 comments 17 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

COMMUNITY

GRANTS AND FUNDING

Fundraising

Funding streams are currently being explored. Of particular interest are schemes that can fund projects that have a wider impact and deliver community benefit – as well as improving the Lake & Country Park.

Examples being discussed include:

- **The Youth Council** fundraising for a specific project, that young people can then help to deliver/install.
- **Working with local youth groups** eg. Synolos, whereby service users help with the installation of bird boxes, or other wildlife habitats, building of an otter holt etc.



COMMUNITY

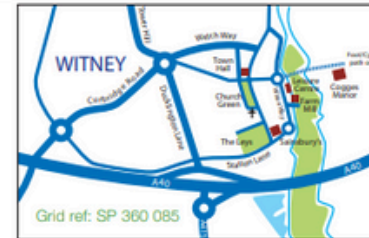
PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING

- **Lower Windrush Valley Project** publish a guide to the Lake & Country Park.
facebook/LowerWindrushValleyProject They have also funded an information board.

- **BBOWT** is working in partnership on a water vole recovery project

Witney Lake and Country Park offer a gateway to the Lower Windrush Valley, an area that has been transformed by mineral extraction over many years. Managed by Witney Town Council for people and for wildlife, there are surfaced paths round the lake and rougher paths through fields providing a rich variety of walking experiences on the doorstep of the historic market town of Witney.

Witney is world famous for the manufacture of woollen blankets and owes its prosperity over the last 400 years to the wool trade. The magnificent spire of St Mary's Church overlooks Church Green and the town and is visible from miles around. The town today is a vibrant shopping centre with a market twice a week, all set amongst attractive historic buildings.



On foot:

- to Witney Lake, from town centre via Avenue Two off Station Lane through the underpass under the A40; from footpaths from Ducklington or from the Country Park
- to Country Park by Farm Mill off Witan Way.

By bus: Call Traveline South East on 0871 200 2233 or visit the website www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk for bus timetables.

By car: Please note there is no parking at Witney Lake or Country Park. Town centre car parks are a 5-10 minute walk.

Access for all: the path around the north side of Witney Lake is wheelchair accessible but the paths on the rest of the site may not be suitable for people with restricted mobility.



Welcome	Contact	Witney Lake & Country Park
<p>The Lower Windrush Valley Project was set up to work in the valley with mineral operators, landowners and local communities as mineral extraction is set to continue for many years into the future. The project aims to deliver a range of environmental initiatives that protect and enhance the landscape and wildlife habitats, and improve public access opportunities in the valley.</p>	<p>Witney Town Council Town Hall, Market Square, Witney, OXON OX28 6AG Tel: 01993 704379 Email: townclerk@witney-tc.gov.uk</p> <p>The Lower Windrush Valley Project Signal Court, Old Station Way, Eynsham, OXON OX29 4TL Tel: 01865 815426 Email: lwvp@oxfordshire.gov.uk</p> <p>This leaflet was funded by:</p>  	

PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING

Witney Angling Club, as long standing and regular users, are familiar with all aspects of the area and are quick to report incidents and anything unusual especially while night fishing.

The Angling Club also raised funds for a new life preserver at the lake



COMMUNITY

GRANTS AND DONATIONS

- **The Rotary Club of Witney** has funded wildflower beds in other spaces in Witney and is keen to fund a project at the lake.
- **Local emergency services worker, Neil Taylor**, raised money, running a marathon for a Defibrillator and its cabinet which was installed at the busy Avenue Two entrance to the lake.



COMMUNITY

GRANTS AND DONATIONS

- **Work is ongoing to achieve a 'Status' for the meadows and the lake.** Applications for status and many applications for funding can't be achieved without certain surveys being carried out. Two surveys have been commissioned;
- **Lawrence Bee**, local wildlife expert, surveying Snipe Meadow & Mill Meadow.
- An **aquatic survey** of the lake, for flora & fauna, by professional aquatic ecologist.



COMMUNITY

EVENTS

We have held a number of events that have a focus on the Lake and Country Park and offer opportunities to meet and talk with our Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer or to take an active part in getting involved in nature. There is something for all ages and an ongoing programme with plans for new activities in the pipeline.

- **August 22 Meet & Greet** - a first encounter with our then Ranger-Visitors could discuss volunteering and discover more about plans for the development of the Lake & Country Park.



COMMUNITY

EVENTS

- **Jan and Feb 23 Jo Cox Winter Warmer Days** - designed to combat isolation over the winter and bring people in from the cold for soup, and games and activities. There was also the chance to go for a walk with Carl (weather dependent) or to chat with him and find out more about his role, his experience and plans for our green spaces.
- **Annual Town Meeting** An opportunity for residents to ask questions of Carl and see a slideshow of his work so far.
- **In Bloom** Carl engaged with our community gardeners and heard about what they do and fielded questions from them



WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

Witney Town Council's Jo Cox Winter Warmer

Tuesday 17th January 2023 from 11am - 3pm

Beat the Winter Blues and the cold and join us in
the Corn Exchange, Market Square, Witney

Drop in between 11am and 3pm

- Vegetable Soup and a Roll
- The Cycling without Age Bike will be here
- 11.15 am Join Carl, our Parks Ranger for a short Ranger Ramble to Mill Meadow
- Entertainment, Games & Activities dominoes, cards, simple jigsaw puzzles, table top curling
- Witney then and now slideshow
- Plant and take home a bulb in a pot
- Good company and a friendly chat

It's all FREE and all ages are welcome

THE GREAT GET
TOGETHER
INSPIRED BY JO COX

COMMUNITY

EVENTS

- **Bug Talks** - plans for a series of free talks from our local invertebrate expert "The Spiderman Talks". The first of these was scheduled for Big Green Week these will link to our children's drawing competition as these will be displayed in the Hall during future talks.



WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

**An Introduction to Britain's Spiders
an Oxfordshire Perspective**

**By Local Ecological & Environmental Education
Consultant, Lawrence Bee**

**from 7:30-8:30pm
Saturday 17th June 2023**

The Big Screen, Corn Exchange, Witney

Free Event

Please book a seat on Eventbrite



**THE GREAT
BIG GREEN
WEEK** 

COMMUNITY

EVENTS

- **Insect Safari Competition** - a drawing competition for children to hunt for insects and then draw their favourite. This was issued as a social media and web post as well as static posters along with some Woodland Trust resources to help identify common insects.
- **A planned programme** for the rest of the year and into next will include season appropriate content from the following.
- **Micro habitats** in your own garden, 'How to create a Wildlife Pond' workshop.
- **How to Survey Your Pond**
- **Urban data gathering**
- **Pond-dipping** (Big Green Week June 2024)

INSECT SAFARI



Explore the mini beasts in your own garden, a park or other green space in Witney and send us an A4 painting or drawing of one of the insects you find.

The competition runs for around four weeks, **closing on 15th July**, so that we can prepare them for display.

Your pictures will be displayed in the Gallery Room at the Corn Exchange through the summer holidays, between **24th July and 4th September**.
Remember to come and see yours!

We will select **three winners** who will each receive a Corn Exchange cinema pass to admit four people to one screening.

Don't forget to put your name, age and contact details on the back of your picture and send it in by post to:
Insect Safari, Witney Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square, Witney OX28 6AG
or by email to info@witney-tc.gov.uk



COMMUNITY

FURTHER SITE DEVELOPMENT

- All bins to become recycling bins
- Install distance marker posts around the 1 mile perimeter of the lake
- **Design** and produce a self-guided walk leaflet
- **Consolidate** the volunteering process
- **Rubbing posts trail**
- **Improve the path** around Witney Lake to make it accessible all year, drainage channels for lake overflow



COMMUNITY

FURTHER SITE DEVELOPMENT

- **Replacement of furniture** with accessible recycled plastic (enviropol) items
- **Interpretation boards** and history and physical attributes of the lake
- **New signage** at entrances sensitive to the surroundings
- **Promote** the health and well-being benefits
- **Conduct surveys** with users to ascertain additional needs



COMMUNITY

MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2022-23

- **Historically** the Lake and Country Park had been left fairly wild with only essential work carried out to maintain access and safety. Having having been identified as a valuable resource to residents and visitors plans are now in place to develop the site.
- **Proposals for development** and maintenance of the site are taken to council to approve the work and budget required. An example of such a report is included as an appendix. Items labelled LP relate specifically to the Lake & Country Park.

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 28 March 2023
Title: Open Spaces Strategy
Contact Officer: Park Ranger - Carl Whitehead

Background

PO3: We have 9 thousand trees on Witney Town Council land and there needs to be a planned and systematic approach to when and to what level they are checked.

PO4: We have had in the past the "Wild Witney" team looking at taking over a piece of land we provided.

PO6/LP4: We are in the process of collecting the base line data to better allow the ability to write a robust management plan.

LP2: We are installing marker posts around the lake at ¼ ½ ¾ and a start finish post as the lake perimeter is 1 mile all the way round.

LP5: The angling club have around 12-15 swims (areas of usage)

EE7: There is a need to increase community engagement.

Current Situation

PO3: We as a council at present have a number of strategies to fulfil our responsibility to the public.

- The works team carry out on-site visual checks whenever we are working in a specific area.
- We react to public request to inspect trees using our level 1 tree inspection trained Ranger.
- We receive reports from our approved Tree Surgeon with regard to problems he has observed while carrying out other work for WTC.
- We employ Treework Environmental Practice to carry out surveys of all our trees on a 2 to 5 year rotation dependent on area and condition of the trees
- We use Treework Environmental Practice to carry out Static load tests on mature trees to provide evidence that they have a low risk level to the public

PO4: The Wild Witney group folded at the end of 2022.

MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT

MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2022-23

- **Plans** include a programme of maintenance and improvements designed to increase biodiversity, protect and conserve natural features and add value for residents, based on what is contained in the Town Council's recent **Open Spaces Strategy**.
- Much of the work is already underway, or already completed.



MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT

HEDGEROWS

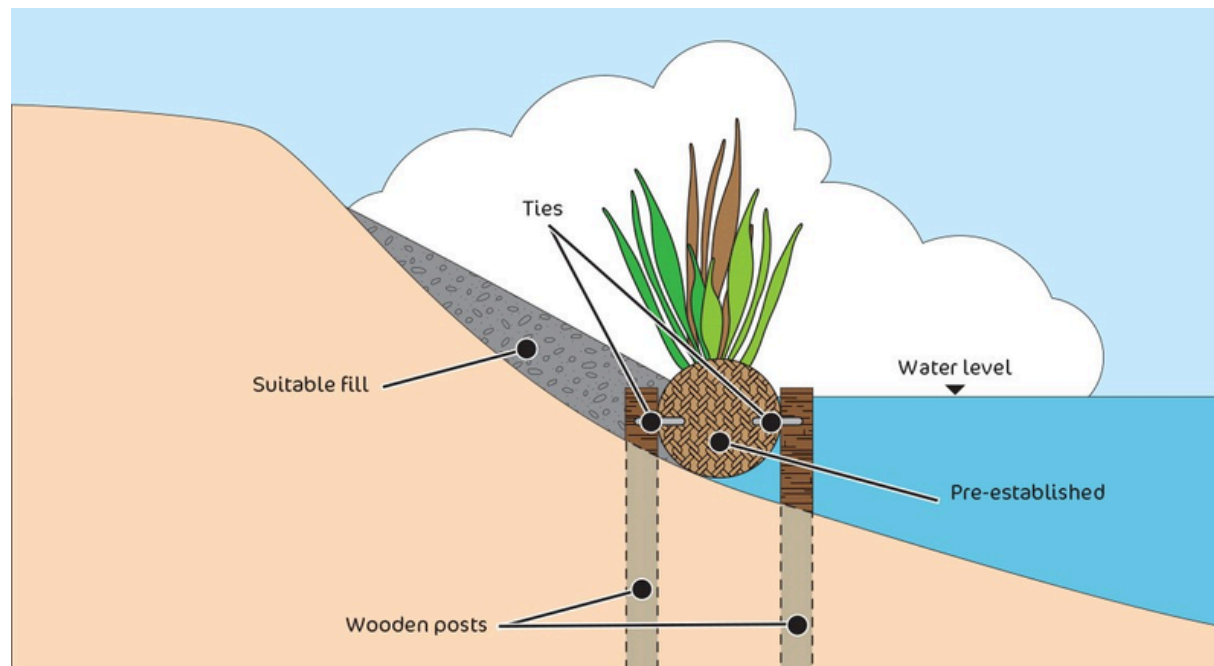
- **Hedge Laying** – 200m of native hedge. This was completed over five sessions in the late winter and spring months.
- Installation of gates



MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT

LAKE WORK

- **Bank Stabilisation** using coir and wooden posts and- working with the Angling Club to provide better swim creation around the lake



MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT

LAKE WORK

- **Control of Invasive Species - Signal Crayfish - Himalayan Balsam**
- **Replacement of fences** damaged by people trampling them down when straying from the footpath to avoid floods
- **Installation and care of furniture**, including benches, signage and litter bins.



MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT

MEADOW REINSTATEMENT

Cutting and renaming of Snipe Meadow

- The previously grazed Hay Meadow and the Wet Meadow had not been grazed, and was left uncut for almost a decade. Now mown, (with a natural high cut) both have shown an improvement and Snipe were discovered in the Wet Meadow, which was renamed accordingly!
- **Management of sensitive areas during breeding seasons** includes notices about the rough locations of nesting or pairing birds that need no disturbance

TO ALL USERS OF THIS MEADOW AND DOG WALKERS



This bird, the Snipe is using this meadow for feeding and if undisturbed, nesting here. Can I please ask if you are walking on the meadow to keep to the outside paths and have all dogs on a lead if they are not FULLY under your control.

We would love for this beautiful wetland bird, along with the woodcock that has also been seen here to feed and breed in this area and thereby provide a wonderful sight when walking in this area.

Thank you for your understanding and for looking after this wonderful bird.

Carl Whitehead

Country Park Ranger

Tel: 07774665340

ACCESS AND SAFETY

- Winter maintenance, this year that included clearance of some trees to open up the public walking space as a response to a national survey where women stated that they often felt unsafe in parks, along with comments by some local walkers that they felt a little unsafe walking around the lake in some areas where the path was more concealed and overgrown.
- This was achieved by **removal of some of the overhead canopy** around the lake, opening sight lines and improving confidence of safety.
- The additional light also dries the path more quickly and benefits edge vegetation.



MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT

REGULAR CHECKS

- **Graffiti artists** will be using the underpass to create a street art installation. Other Graffiti is removed as soon as spotted such as that on signage and defibrillator housing
- **Bins, benches and signs** are regularly cleaned and the bases trimmed.
- **Litter is collected** three times a week with active collection should an unauthorised event occur.
- **New entrance sign and noticeboard with map**
- **Transition into appropriate and consistent country park furniture.** 18 month replacement programme planned.



ENVIRONMENT

The Lake has always been extremely popular with a variety of visitors. It is extremely busy with dog walkers including professional dog walkers, joggers and walkers, families, anglers, photographers and nature lovers.

It became apparent during **lockdown** how well used it was and responses to a residents' annual satisfaction survey in 2021 referenced it as; "a lifesaver", "grounding", "finding peace and hope that nature will triumph", a vital and inspiring place that they hope will always be here" and "a saviour of sanity during unbelievable times".



ENVIRONMENT

**THANK YOU FOR
VISITING
WITNEY LAKE AND
COUNTRY PARK**

**WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED
YOUR WALK AROUND**









