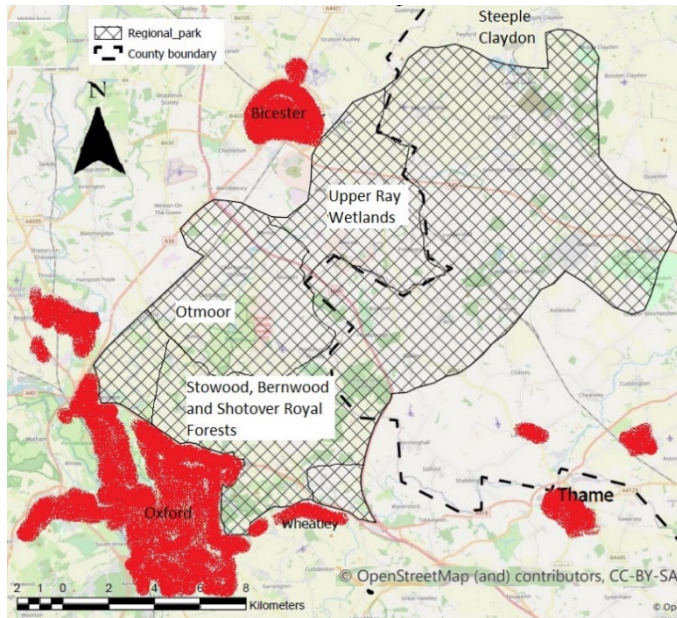


Creating a Regional Nature Park for Oxfordshire

We propose a 100 sq mile Regional Nature Park (RNP) for inclusion in Oxfordshire Plan 2050. It is 14 by 7 miles, half in Oxfordshire, the rest in Buckinghamshire. It includes Otmoor, the Upper Ray wetlands and the Bernwood-Stowood-Shotover ancient forests, meadows and heaths. The Oxfordshire section holds a quarter of our county's nationally important restorable habitat (outside the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).



The RNP will consolidate nature, providing a rich reservoir to help us re-seed our depleted county. But it will do much more: providing landscape-scale action on nature and restoration of historic landscapes. It will provide green infrastructure services for leisure, exercise and contact with nature for mental well-being.

The Park would provide a superb opportunity for residents, and protect an area which is particularly vulnerable to urban development.

The opportunity is for high-quality, landscape-scale 'green infrastructure' for current and future urban residents.

Uniquely, for land next to Oxford, the RNP has a very low population and a low density of roads, whilst also boasting historic landscapes rich in hedges and woods. It is blessed with far-reaching views from hills and gives visitors an experience of deep countryside in a 'wilderness' of natural area. There is also scope for new visitor-focussed large-scale, natural areas near towns.

Vulnerability comes from the anticipated large population growth at Oxford, Kidlington, Bicester and Steeple Claydon. It will bring new road infrastructure, and increase visitor numbers to existing sensitive nature reserves.

The RNP could be protected for residents through inclusion in Oxfordshire Plan 2050. This would provide a framework for nature and landscape enhancement, access to funding, and visitor services, with public access to large natural areas.

Crucially RNP will require a Sustainable Transport Plan to keep car use low, deflect visitors from ecologically sensitive areas, and improve access from urban areas. Cycle and foot access would be needed including new routes, bridges and 'quiet lanes'.

The proposal is for the RNP to be implemented by a partnership of councils, government agencies, voluntary bodies, landowners and farmers. Funding will come from government schemes for landscape-scale nature restoration, from nearby developments, and from transport budgets. Planning control would stay with Oxfordshire local authorities.

We see the RNP as an addition to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 proposals for protecting nature. It should sit alongside other landscape-scale nature and recreation initiatives. It would not displace any major new development initiatives, as 97% of the area is either of high environmental value, or is grade 2 farmland.

Let us deliver a world class innovative project for our world class county!