



## TOE STRATEGY 2020-2023

### RESTORING NATURE, CONNECTING PEOPLE



*TOE is a registered charity (1140563) and a not-for-profit limited company (07492087)*  
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# TOE STRATEGY 2020-2023

TOE is an independent environmental funder based in Oxfordshire

## INTRODUCTION

Our planet faces a crisis. The climate emergency and the actions of humankind are causing irreversible damage to the health and diversity of our natural world. There is growing public awareness and concern about the urgent need to act, both globally and locally. The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) enables people and organisations to support nature's recovery and the local environment in truly practical ways.

Although Oxfordshire retains many places of great natural beauty and value, our natural environment is at risk from the combined pressures of business, agriculture, development and climate change. Poor water quality, polluted air, degraded soils and fragmented wildlife habitats are just some of the challenges we face (<https://environment.data.gov.uk/>). The farming community especially deserve greater levels of support to help them achieve maximum food production whilst moving towards more sustainable and resilient farming systems. We also know that many people feel increasingly disconnected from nature, even though their health, wellbeing and prosperity depend upon it. We must act now to address these problems by helping local businesses, agriculture, development and people become greener. Everyone has a role to play.

TOE will assist nature's recovery; we will focus on increasing biodiversity, on reducing the county's carbon footprint, and we will encourage understanding of and accessibility to green spaces and the wider countryside. To achieve these ambitious goals, we will raise significant funds to support genuine community projects and larger landscape scale schemes. We make supporting such initiatives possible for anyone. We recognise that economic success depends on healthy, well managed natural resources; by working with others we aim to ensure that planned development enhances the natural world.

TOE is well placed to channel investment to the many people and projects capable of making a real difference across Oxfordshire. By working closely with communities, statutory agencies, farmers, local organisations, residents and businesses we will do our best to ensure a diverse and thriving environment for the economy, people and wildlife. It must involve all of us; our future and that of countless other species depends on it.

## TOE'S VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

### TOE's Vision

A county where:

- good quality land, air and water support biodiverse habitats
- nature is at the heart of local life and decision making
- local people feel connected to their environment
- there is a positive response to the climate emergency and ecological crisis
- a high value, invested Local Environment Fund providing long term support for projects

## **TOE's Purpose**

To halt the decline in nature and help restore its richness. To fund immediate and long-term investment in projects which enrich nature, connect people with green spaces and enable more sustainable and healthier ways of living in Oxfordshire and neighbouring counties.

## **TOE's Values**

- *INSPIRE* – Everyone to do whatever they can to secure nature's recovery and improve our countryside and green spaces
- *INNOVATE* – Find new sources of funds to support current and even more ambitious initiatives
- *COLLABORATE* – Work with others to manage and fund projects, share ideas and strategic debate

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

TOE's work has two core strands: to raise funds and to award grants. In so doing we seek to:

- Restore the quality of natural resources - land, hedgerows, trees and woodlands, rivers, ponds and lakes and the very air we breathe
- Improve conditions for wildlife and enable many different species to thrive
- Support natural climate solutions
- Enable people to access and enjoy green spaces and the countryside

***Anyone can make a donation or an investment through TOE for these purposes.***

### **A. GROWING FUNDS**

TOE will make a step-change over the period of this Strategic Plan. We will:

1. Significantly increase the amount of funding available for projects
2. Expand our capacity to work with individuals, businesses and organisations requiring or wishing to invest in environmental outcomes
3. Operate at full cost recovery to ensure TOE remains sustainable
4. Be flexible and explore all possible appropriate sources of funding

TOE will develop three key areas of income to secure a significant and independent fund to meet our vision for Oxfordshire:

### **FUND MANAGEMENT**

- Become the preferred local organisation for managing biodiversity offsetting to secure net environmental gains throughout Oxfordshire
- Explore opportunities for natural capital and ecosystems services payments
- Identify new sources of ring-fenced and statutory funding that TOE could manage on behalf of third parties, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Continue to manage existing grant schemes including Grondon Waste Management, (through the Landfill Communities Fund) and the TVERC Recorders' Fund
- Explore opportunities for managing other small grant schemes
- Identify match-funding opportunities with other organisations and grant schemes

## PHILANTHROPY

- Better explain funding needs to a wide audience of potential donors
- Explore new ways of securing donations, such as financial products e.g. impact investments
- Develop our relationship with philanthropists with Oxfordshire connections and an interest in TOE's work
- Secure more funding from Trusts and Foundations for the delivery of specific projects and programmes

## BUSINESS SECTOR INVESTMENT

- Create opportunities for Oxfordshire's business community to support and invest in Oxfordshire's environment through TOE
- Establish a working group and/or network presence with local business leaders to inform and develop our approach
- Trial new models of giving that appeal to strategic investors, such as scheme accreditation (e.g. *One% for Oxfordshire*), habitat banking and customised impact reporting
- Explore potential sponsorship opportunities, such as a local environmental awards scheme

## B. WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS WILL TOE SUPPORT?

### TOE supports the environment of Oxfordshire and the surrounding area

Britain's biodiversity is in alarming decline. As outlined in the *UK State of Nature* reports of 2010 and 2016, and by the *State of Nature in Oxfordshire 2017* report, our wildlife needs more, better, bigger and connected habitats in which to recover. TOE plans to continue to support a range of projects but the focus for this Strategy is to **support the landscape scale approach to nature's recovery**. TOE's goals are to:

- **Continue to develop a comprehensive project portfolio**, at landscape and community level
- **Increase biodiversity** through ensuring viable and diverse wildlife habitats and well managed land
- **Ensure people are better connected** to nature and their local green spaces for health and wellbeing, learning, volunteering and enjoyment
- **Reduce carbon emissions** and encourage ways of living that minimise our impact on natural resources to help tackle climate change

TOE proposes to make **nature's recovery** a top priority. We are working with partner organisations and contributing to policy development to identify ambitious long-term projects, strengthening the good work already being delivered. We will invite organisations to seek funding from TOE to:

- Deliver landscape scale projects and a net gain for biodiversity
- Enable and support farmers and landowners to create new areas to increase biodiversity and improve the way land is managed
- Optimise opportunities for urban green spaces
- Support people to connect with their local environment.

TOE's role is to encourage local organisations and landowners to bring forward ideas to deliver against identified needs. We will fund a wide range of projects from smaller community-based projects to multi-agency landscape scale schemes ([www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/how-to-apply](http://www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/how-to-apply)).

### **C. INTERNAL TOE - Tasks and Objectives**

TOE has an excellent track record for identifying, appraising and funding local projects. As more diverse funding streams become available and environmental threats continue to increase, TOE must become a more ambitious and strategic funder with the resources and capacity to ensure resilience for the future. Over the next three years TOE will:

- Value and support the people within the organisation
- Develop existing and new partnerships to ensure effective and strategic working
- Work to a Business and Communications Plan

#### **PEOPLE**

- Continue to value the staff and review the staffing structure to meet the changing needs of the organisation and ensure funding streams are managed appropriately
- Recruit a new chairman before 2022 as part of a managed process of reviewing the board of directors/trustees
- Continue to encourage and support volunteer assessors and Grant Panel members
- Review the role and structure of the Grant Panel to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Work with TOE's Fundraising Advisory Group to develop environmental philanthropy

#### **PARTNERS**

- Ensure that projects are meeting the objectives of TOE and our funders
- Work effectively with partners at the local, regional and national level
- Continue to input into discussions at a strategic level within Oxfordshire to develop the funding mechanisms to deliver our priorities
- Develop a network/advisory group of local businesses who wish to invest in a better and more sustainable future for Oxfordshire

#### **COMMUNICATION**

- Develop a comprehensive Business and Communications Plan
- Encourage donors to support TOE through more effective use of the website and PR
- Develop reporting to better reflect the impact of TOE's work and supported projects
- Share experience and good practice in order to inform policy and maximise the impact of funded projects both locally and nationally, as part of a charged for service.

***Through all these approaches TOE will intensify its efforts to safeguard and restore biodiversity and habitats in the county, and to bring people and nature closer together.***