

Press release

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For immediate use

State of the Environment in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes: first report

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) has published its first ever State of the Environment report.

The [State of the Environment Report](#) assesses the status of the Buckinghamshire environment, using indicators and information to take stock of the extent and quality of Buckinghamshire's natural assets. These include habitats and the quality of our air and water; our energy and resource use; how much green space we have access to; and the relationship between the environment and economic prosperity.

The report assesses the status of the Buckinghamshire environment: how we make use of it and the many benefits it provides, so the Natural Environment Partnership can track changes and focus efforts to improve it into the future.

Adam Wallace, Natural England, and Board Member of the NEP, praises the production of the report: *"Natural England fully supports the need and importance of placing the natural environment and all it offers to society at the centre of decision-making. In order to do that we need a clear view on our natural environment and this report gives an important update on the current state of play."*

The Chair of the NEP, Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, notes the importance of the report to focus attention where it is needed: *"Our report for the first time brings together information about the Buckinghamshire environment and the benefits it provides that we all rely on."*

"It will help focus attention and effort where it's needed. For example, on improving the quality of our natural environment, including priority habitats; and on the quality of water in our rivers where we found that only 8% are meeting the required "good" status."

"The report also shows the importance of access to green space for the mental and physical health and wellbeing of our communities and how we must protect, improve and provide connected green space for wildlife and people as we face unprecedented growth in Buckinghamshire in the near future."

The NEP's report follows the *State of Nature 2016* report developed by 53 conservation organisations, which highlights the status of the environment at a national level. The NEP's report for Buckinghamshire, in line with the national report, recognises the need to

better connect people with the environment to protect and improve it for future generations.

Adam Wallace, Natural England says: “*The natural environment is fundamental to securing long term economic and social gains this report is an important part of understanding those inter-relationships.*”

Wallace is also calling for a step-change in our collective action and thinking – “*...to avoid simply slowing the decline of the natural environment in Buckinghamshire and moving to actively improving it.*”

In response, the NEP will be working with its Partners, including local authorities, Natural England, The Chilterns Conservation Board, the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, Local Enterprise Partnerships, the Open University and the Chiltern NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, to drive and support improvements to the Buckinghamshire environment using the report’s findings to help prioritise what is done and where.

This will include working with local authorities as they plan new growth areas, with landowners in managing their own land, and with businesses and organisations in all sectors to raise awareness of the difference they can make for the environment. The report will also be updated regularly by the NEP to highlight issues and to monitor and influence change.

Individuals have an equally-important role to play, and there are several ways to help:

- *Save water:* using water meters and being careful with water reduces overall consumption – and will help the flow and quality of our rivers and our precious chalk streams;
- *Reduce pollution:* for example, by minimising the number of journeys by vehicle; or minimising the use of pesticides and insecticides on crops and plants;
- *Enjoy and care for local green spaces:* the NEP encourages people to visit, enjoy and take care of their local green spaces to improve their own health and wellbeing.

The NEP is calling for everyone to “**think green**” to help conserve and improve the Buckinghamshire environment. Doing so is more important now, during Buckinghamshire’s period of growth, than ever before.

ENDS

Contact for interview requests, more information about the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership and images

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This press release issued by the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership

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Notes for editors:

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) is the area's Local Nature Partnership and was formally recognised by Defra in 2012. www.bucksmknep.co.uk
The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes NEP brings together different sectors, from health to business, education to conservation, to provide a voice for the environment in local decision-making and to coordinate work across the county to improve the Buckinghamshire environment at a landscape-scale.

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes NEP covers all the Districts of Buckinghamshire as well as Milton Keynes Local Authority. It is chaired by Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher and operates through a Board, Delivery Group and Task Groups focused on Biodiversity; Energy and resource use; and Green Infrastructure and Health. <http://www.bucksmknep.co.uk/about-us/nep-board-structure/>

The work of the NEP and its Partners in response to the State of the Environment Report will support its current work – in particular:

- The NEP's [Biodiversity Action Plan](#) Forward to 2020 aims to increase the area of priority habitat in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes by 20% by the end of 2020 – the “20% by 2020” initiative.
- Calls for all the Buckinghamshire Local Authorities to retain, improve, connect and provide well-designed and multi-functional green spaces for wildlife and for all our communities throughout Buckinghamshire's period of growth.

Publications

The [State of Nature 2016 report](#)

The NEP's Vision for Green Infrastructure across the county during the period of growth, and Principles that should be followed to achieve it, were launched in September 2016 and are available here: [Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes](#). The NEP is working to encourage all Local Authority Local Plans to explicitly support this initiative.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is one of 47 Wildlife Trusts across the UK working to achieve the shared aim of securing a better future for wildlife. BBOWT's vision is to create a region rich in wildlife and appreciated by all. BBOWT has over 52,000 members. BBOWT brings people and nature together to protect our environment. Our experts work with more than 1,400 volunteers to look after over 80 nature reserves, four education centres and run hundreds of amazing events. We rely on the generosity of individuals, charitable trusts and businesses. Find out more at www.bbowt.org.uk