

The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) and Biodiversity Gain

- TOE is a registered charity (1140563) and a not-for-profit limited company registered in the name of the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) Ltd, company number 07492087.
- Having implemented pilot BNG projects in 2018/19, TOE now has memoranda of understanding in place with South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of the White Horse and West Oxfordshire District Council and a working terms of reference with Oxford City Council.
- An annual report is provided to each district authority providing details of funds taken relating to planning decisions and how the funds have been spent. Monitoring reports for sites are provided along with an updated biodiversity metric calculation so progress is monitored. Cherwell District Council will be provided an annual report relating the project at Fritwell.
- TOE has a separate bank account where funds are secured for the long term management payments to the landowner and has a policy in place to hold sufficient reserves to enable its ongoing ability to deliver on its responsibilities in terms of the 30 year monitoring role and relationship with the landowner to ensure the management plan continues to be delivered as agreed.

Less relevant for this specific arrangement at Fritwell, but information provided as it demonstrates TOE's overall approach to maximising biodiversity benefits within the county.

- TOE set up and provides the secretariat role for the BNG Task and Finish Group (Chaired by Beccy Micklem, Principal Ecologist, Oxfordshire County Council). The purpose of this group is to advise the Local Nature Partnership on how to effectively deliver Biodiversity Gain in the county.

Track record:

- TOE was contracted to deliver 'no-net-loss' of biodiversity with Network Rail to offset the losses from the Great Western electrification programme (£750K contract). Resulted in a 17% biodiversity gain.

Process:

- Normally funds are taken from different developments so that small biodiversity gains can be accumulated and used strategically to provide more significant gains for biodiversity. The funds allocation process is collaborative, robust and transparent.
- Proactive biodiversity project development in priority areas in the county, led by the Conservation Target Areas and draft Nature Recovery Network Map.
- Grant Panel (including members of the Councils in which funds are collected) makes funding recommendations on the biodiversity projects that come forward.

Project pipeline:

- Biodiversity projects being worked up to the value of approximately £4m.

National policy:

- TOE is on the national Natural England Market Advisory Group which advises the government on how to effectively role of biodiversity gain across the country.
- TOE has a Defra Tests & Trials project looking at how the TOE model can be replicated around the country.
- TOE provides advice on an ad hoc basis to other counties on the delivery of biodiversity gain.