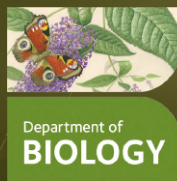# Oxford Nature Conversations Project Citizens' Jury on People & Nature

Final Report, April 2025

Jury Members

With deep appreciation to the 15 jury members who dedicated their time, energy, and insights to this process, shaping a collective vision for Oxford's future where people and nature thrive.

Suzanne, Nicole, Josephine, Vanessa, Nigel, Kate, George, Philippa, Alice, Arwen, Stuart, Lillian, Rose, Patrick, and Sarah.

Lead and Facilitation Team

With gratitude to the project leaders and facilitation team, whose dedication, expertise, and guidance ensured a thoughtful, inclusive, and well-structured deliberative process, empowering participants to shape Oxford's vision for people and nature:

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Advisory Network

Funding

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Summary

In February 2025, Oxford Nature Conversations brought together 15 residents to collaboratively envision a future where both people and nature can thrive in Oxford. Over the course of four deliberative workshop days, participants engaged in structured discussions, expert presentations, and collaborative exercises to explore environmental challenges and opportunities in the city. This inclusive process resulted in a shared vision and a set of actionable recommendations reflecting the community's collective knowledge and priorities.

The jury was guided by a central question:

How can we make Oxford a city where people and nature thrive together?

Beyond generating recommendations, the process highlighted the importance of community participation in shaping urban environmental decisions. Participants expressed a greater awareness of local initiatives and a strong willingness to stay engaged in conservation efforts. The Oxford Nature Conversations Citizens' Jury serves as a model for participatory environmental planning, demonstrating how diverse voices can inform decision-making and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive city.

How can we make Oxford a city where people and nature thrive together?

Recommendations on Priority Actions

Jury members created these 8 recommendations. The full details can be found in the Co-produced recommendations section below.

Establish a forum for accountability and nature advocacy in decision-making

Increase council funding and simplify access for environmental community groups

Retrofit the built environment for nature

Prioritise, create and maintain wildlife corridors

Ensure inclusive access to the health and well-being benefits of green spaces

Improve water quality monitoring & hold agencies accountable

Enhance sustainable urban drainage systems with biodiversity-focused solutions

Convene a Community Lobby Group for Waterway Protection

Local context: Oxford, Nature and Climate Change

Oxford is a city where urban life and nature are closely intertwined. While its historic centre is densely developed, over half of the city's total area (52%) consists of open space, including parks, riverbanks, and nature reserves. [1]. These green spaces provide vital habitats for wildlife and serve as recreational areas for residents, forming an integral part of the city's identity.

Located within the Oxford Green Belt, 27% of the city's land is protected, and much of it is a floodplain. [2, 3]. Oxford's ecological value is reflected in its conservation designations: a European Special Area of Conservation, twelve Sites of Special Scientific Interest, three Local Nature Reserves, and a network of county and local wildlife sites that help safeguard biodiversity. [3, 4]. However, the balance between conservation and urban development is a key challenge, as Oxford faces pressures from economic growth, housing demand, and social inequalities. While the city generates significant economic value, £6.1 billion in 2021, it also experiences disparities, with ten of its neighbourhoods ranking among the 20% most deprived in England [5, 6]

In response to the climate and biodiversity crises, Oxford City Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Later that year, the city hosted the UK's first Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change, where participants emphasised that biodiversity must be central to Oxford's net zero goal [7, 8] Among the different demands, their vision underscored the vital role of a greener Oxford in enhancing public health, fostering stronger communities, and strengthening the city's resilience to climate change. [7]
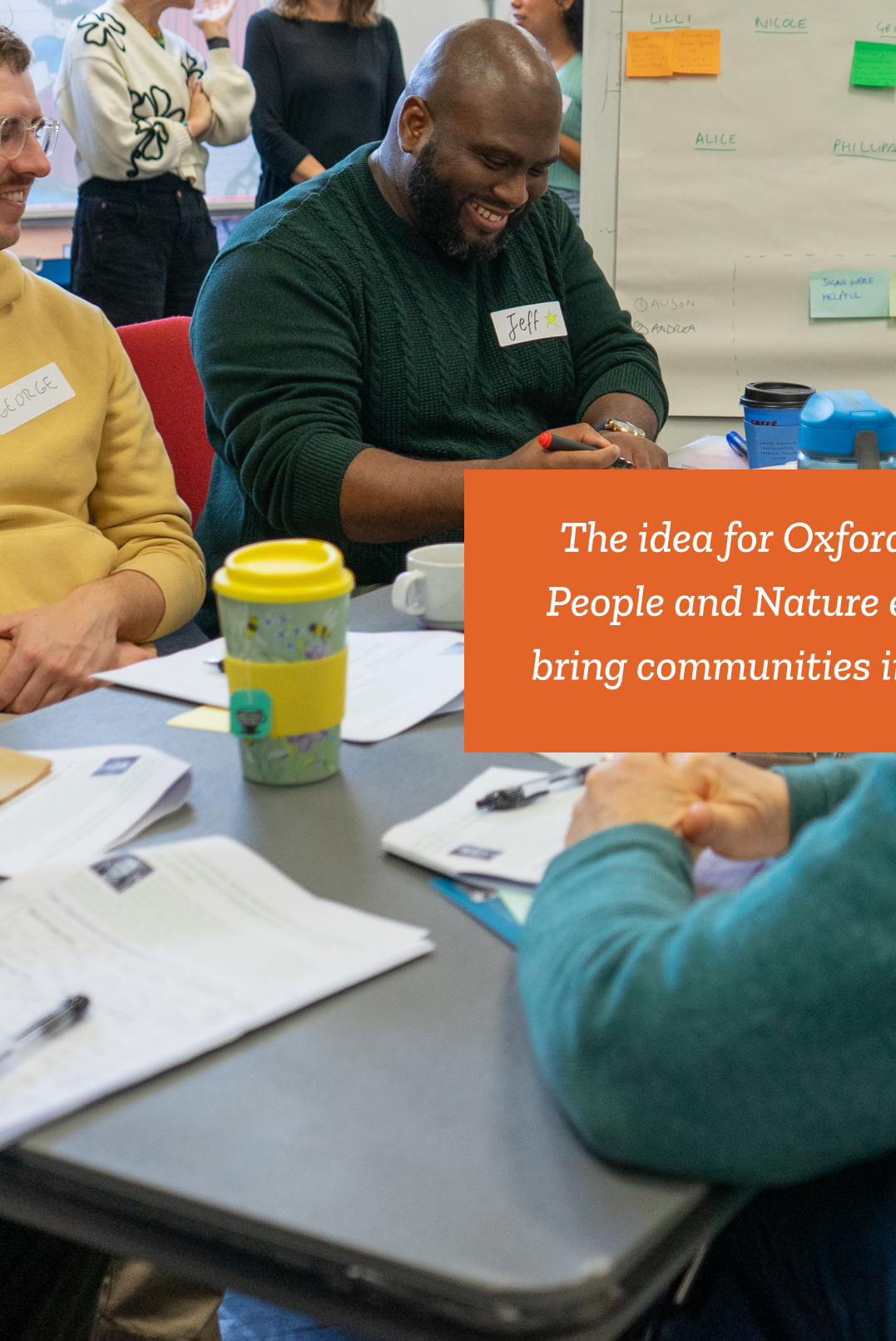
Since then, different strategies and policies have been shaping the city's actions towards improving the natural environment. In September 2021, the Urban Forest Strategy - a Master Plan to 2050 - was adopted to provide a comprehensive framework for managing Oxford's urban forest. New guidelines for managing grass verges, initiatives promoting the use of green spaces, and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy are part of a broader national effort to prioritise biodiversity conservation and habitat restoration. At the city level, the Oxford Local Plan 2042 will guide future development, ensuring economic growth is managed sustainably while preserving the city's natural assets, an especially crucial consideration for biodiversity and green spaces in Oxford.

The idea for Oxford's Citizens' Jury on People and Nature emerged as a way to bring communities into the conversation.

Background to the Citizens' Jury

The idea of holding a deliberative process in Oxford took root during the Oxford Nature Recovery Symposium in March 2023.

This gathering brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, from local and national organisations to researchers and community representatives, to discuss the future of nature recovery in the UK. A central theme emerged: addressing environmental challenges requires not only expert knowledge but also the perspectives and lived experiences of those directly affected. Deliberative democracy, with its emphasis on inclusive and reflective discussion, has increasingly been recognised as a vital tool in navigating complex societal issues. Scholars and policymakers advocate for approaches like citizens' assemblies and juries to build trust, foster collaboration, and ensure that decision-making is informed by a broad range of voices.

Oxford City is facing many competing demands, including ongoing construction for housing and student accommodation, economic challenges, social deprivation and lack of inclusion. Oxford is among one of the most socially unequal cities in the country [9] and local residents can feel excluded from green areas owned by the universities and colleges. Oxford is also closely connected with its wider countryside, which means that broader needs for energy, infrastructure, food production and housing are important.

Within this context, this jury sought to explore how communities could play a more active role in shaping the future of Oxford's natural environment.

Recognising the complexity of this evolving landscape of policies and actions, the idea for Oxford's Citizens' Jury on People and Nature emerged as a way to bring communities into the conversation. The jury provides a space for residents to contribute their place-based knowledge, needs, and aspirations, offering valuable insights on the actions needed to shape Oxford's environmental future. The hope is that these insights will inform tangible steps forward, ensuring that decisions about nature in the city not only align with scientific expertise and policy frameworks but also reflect the lived experiences and priorities of those who call Oxford home.

The Citizens' Jury took place over two weekends in February 2025. The initiative was not only an exercise in participatory governance but also an opportunity to reflect on how deliberative processes can influence policy and practice. Aligned with Oxford University's strategic priorities around community engagement, the project aimed to generate insights into how local voices can shape environmental decision-making. It also served as a testing ground for deliberative approaches for strengthening bottom-up governance and fostering new collaborations between researchers, policymakers, and the wider public.

Process Diagram

02

Exploring the Potential
Mid-2024

Shaping what a deliberative process could look like in Oxfordshire.

Gathering insights from stakeholders—local government, NGOs, academics, and communities.

Key questions: *Is this initiative valuable? Is there space for it?*

04

Building the Team & Strategy
Oct. 2024

Involve Foundation joins the project.

Co-designing the process to ensure impact for both people & nature.

06

Final Preparation
Jan. 2025

Selecting & onboarding participants.

Fine-tuning the workshop structure and logistics.

08

Sharing the Impact
Mar. - May 2025

Creating a comprehensive report.

Disseminating results to key stakeholders and the wider community.

01

Igniting the Idea
Early 2024

Agile Nature Recovery Symposium sparks discussions on urban nature and citizens participation.

Research insights from sprints fuel new possibilities.

03

Securing Funding & Defining Scope
Sept. 2024

Funding confirmed for a pilot deliberative process in Oxford.

Refining the scale and scope of the initiative.

05

Recruitment Drive
Dec. 2024

Reaching out to 30+ organisations across Oxford.

Engaging participants through local media & social platforms.

07

Workshops & Deliberation
Feb. 2025

2 weekends, 4 half-day sessions, 15 participants.

Exploring: *How can we make Oxford a city where people & nature thrive together?*

Outcome: 8 key recommendations for action.

What is a Citizens' Jury?

A Citizens' Jury is a deliberative process that brings together a small, diverse group of individuals to learn about a particular issue, engage in structured discussions, and collectively develop recommendations. [10]. Typically consisting of 12 to 24 members, jurors are selected to reflect the wider community's demographics, ensuring that a range of perspectives is included. [11]. Over the course of the process, participants hear from experts, ask questions, and deliberate on the evidence before forming their conclusions.

This approach is particularly valuable for tackling complex or contested issues, as it enables participants to develop informed opinions through discussion and learning. [11, 12]. By allowing citizens to engage directly with expert knowledge and deliberate among themselves, the process ensures that recommendations are grounded in both technical understanding and lived experience. Citizens' juries have been increasingly used to inform policy decisions, offering a way to integrate public perspectives into governance in a structured and meaningful manner. [8].

Oxford Nature Conversation's Jury

The Oxford Nature Conversation Citizens' Jury was convened to explore how the city could better support nature while meeting the needs of its residents. The jury examined the role that local authorities, community organisations, NGOs, universities, individual citizens and other stakeholders could play in creating a greener, more inclusive urban environment.

This theme was carefully chosen to ensure a focused and meaningful deliberation. It was broad enough to encompass key environmental and social concerns, yet specific enough to generate actionable recommendations within the timeframe of the jury's sessions. Importantly, the insights gathered were intended to inform local decision-making, helping shape policies and initiatives that support both people and nature in Oxford.

Rather than developing overarching policies, the jury aimed to produce practical, community-led recommendations, grounded in lived experience, on how to foster a city where urban life and the natural world can thrive together. The central question guiding the deliberations was:

How can we make Oxford a city where people and nature thrive together?

Jury at a Glance

A total of 15 individuals participated in the sessions, representing a cross-section of Oxford's population. The selection process aimed to achieve balanced representation across:

★ All age groups (18+)

★ Gender diversity

★ Various education levels

★ Individuals from neighbourhoods with different levels of deprivation

★ People with and without disabilities

★ Diverse ethnic backgrounds

★ Different levels of engagement with nature

Makeup of the Jury

Age Group
- 65+
- 45-54
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 55-65+

Gender
- Female
- Male

Ethnicity
- White
- Mixed
- Black

Disability
- No
- Yes

Employment
- Self-employed
- Manager
- Housekeeper
- Professional
- Scientist
- Retired

Engagement with Nature
- Often
- Sometimes
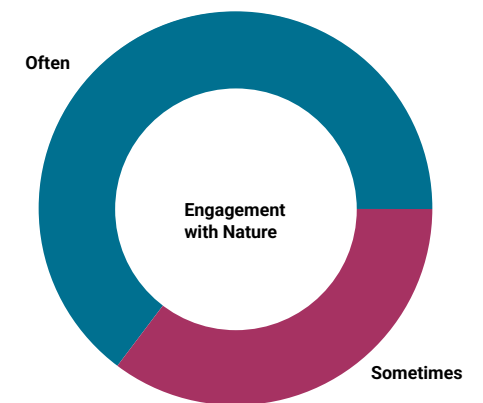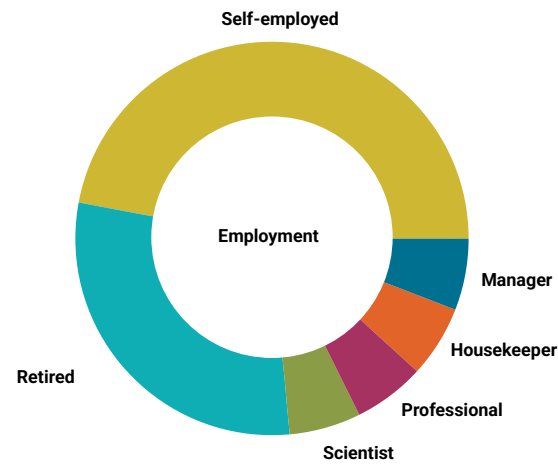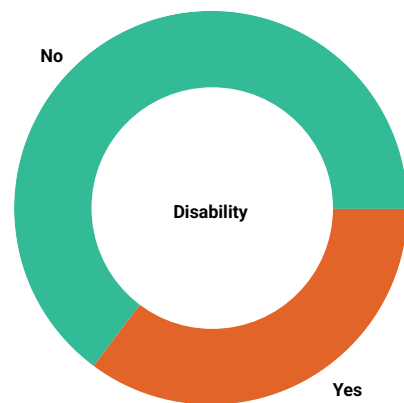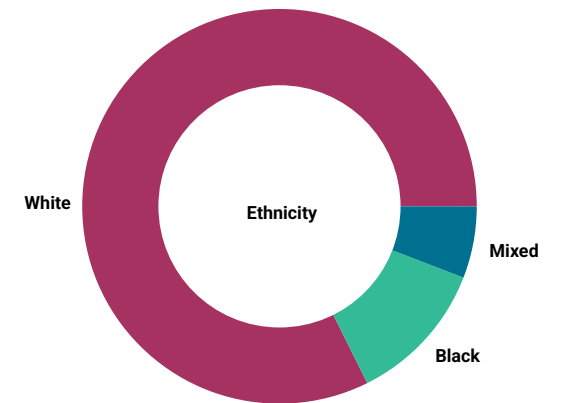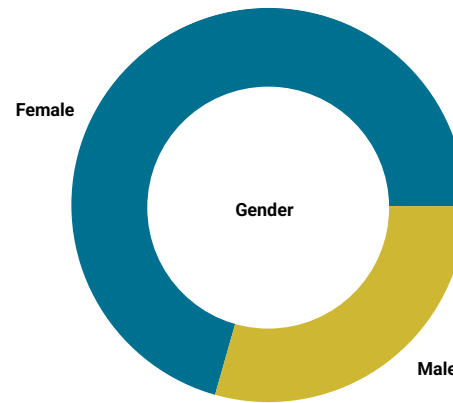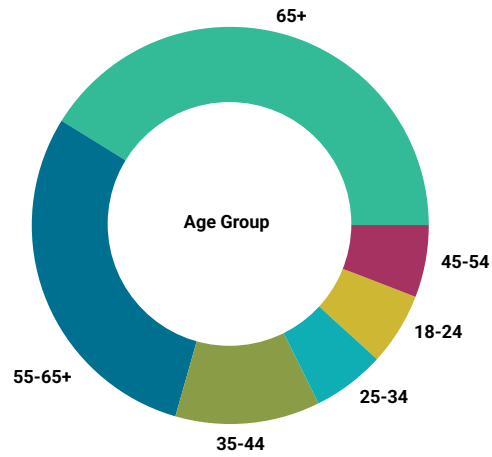
The Process

The Citizens' Jury process took place over four days, combining expert presentations, group discussions, and collaborative development of community-driven recommendations for a nature-positive Oxford. Each day, participants were divided into different groups, so that individuals interacted with different people each time. While the overall atmosphere was constructive, there were occasional interpersonal difficulties during the process. These tensions underscored the inherent challenges of bringing together diverse perspectives and highlight the complexities involved in achieving consensus within a diverse group.

DAY ONE ▸ **DAY TWO** ▸ **DAY THREE** ▸ **DAY FOUR**

DAY ONE

Setting the scene

What does a city where people and nature thrive look like?

DAY TWO

Learning from evidence

Working towards a shared vision

DAY THREE

What does 'good' look like?

Exploring opportunities

Identifying key actors in Oxford

DAY FOUR

Building our recommendations
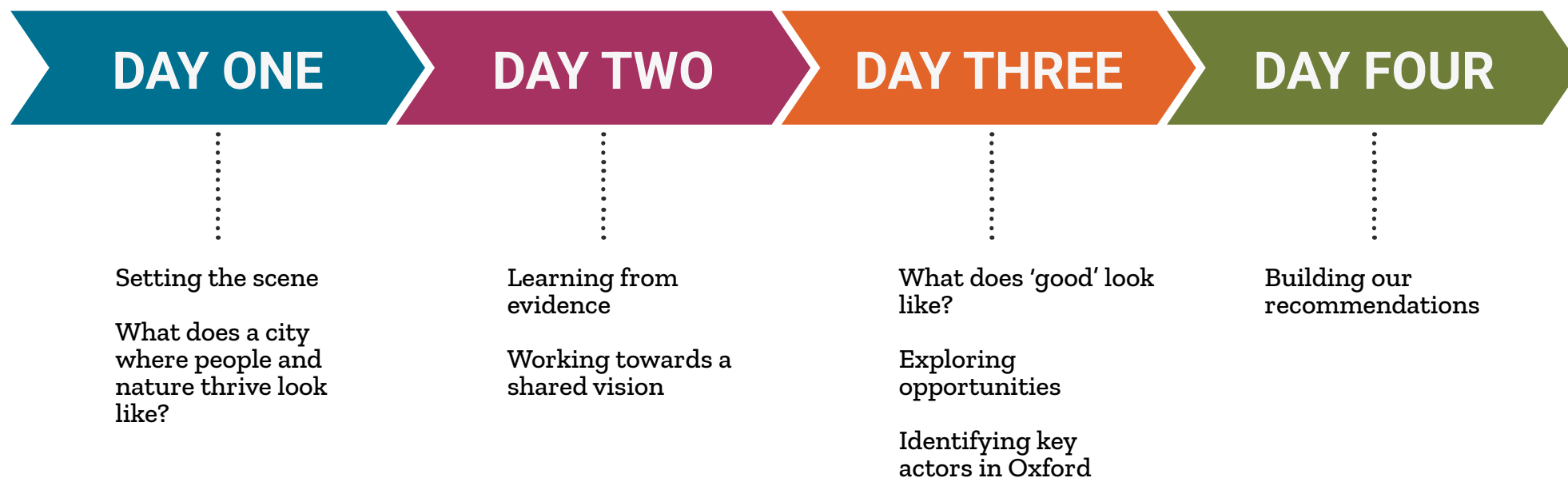
Day 1: Establishing the Foundations

The first session introduced participants to the Citizens' Jury process, clarifying its purpose, structure, and expected outcomes. They began by reflecting on their experiences of Oxford - what they appreciate, what they find challenging, and what a thriving city means to them. This discussion laid the groundwork for developing a shared vision of an Oxford where both people and nature flourish.

To guide this visioning process, participants explored the values that underpin a city where nature - defined broadly as the entire living world - can thrive alongside human communities. A key prompt encouraged them to imagine Oxford 20 years into the future: "What does an Oxford where people and nature thrive feel like? What can you see? What are people, plants, animals, and fungi doing?"

By the end of the session, participants had identified a set of core values to inform their vision statements.

In the afternoon, expert speakers provided insights to deepen discussions:

Cities, People, Climate Change and Nature-Based Solutions

★ **Cameron Blanche**, Associate Professor of Environmental Design at UCL's Bartlett School of Architecture

What is Biodiversity and What is Nature?

★ **Prof. Nathalie Seddon**, Professor of Biodiversity and Founding Director of the Nature-based Solutions Initiative at the University of Oxford.

The People's Plan for Nature

★ **Alex Hunt**, Head of Policy & Advocacy at the National Trust, and Rebeca Lester, an Oxfordshire resident and participant in the People's Assembly for Nature.

Day 2: Developing a Vision

The second session focused on deepening participants' understanding of biodiversity and nature in Oxford by presenting key evidence on the topic. Expert speakers provided insights into various aspects of urban nature, including biodiversity challenges, equity in access to green spaces, and the links between green infrastructure and well-being.

The experts' contributions were:

Biodiversity in Oxford: Highlights and Challenges

★ **Catriona Bass**, Co-founder of the Long Mead Foundation's Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project

Equity, Inclusivity, and Nature

★ **Katherine Chesson,** Director of Community Action Groups

Urban Green Spaces in Oxford

★ **Martha Crockatt**, Researcher at the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, University of Oxford

★ **Mattia Troiano**, Researcher at the Environmental Change Institute, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford.

Green Infrastructure and Well-being

★ **Wendee Zhang**, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery and the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre, University of Oxford

In the afternoon, participants built on their discussions from the previous day, refining their core values and using them to shape a shared vision for Oxford's future. They explored what a city that truly supports both people and nature might look like, feel like, and function like in 20 years. By the end of the session, participants had drafted an initial vision statement—an aspirational framework that would guide their recommendations in the sessions to come.

Day 3: Identifying Opportunities and Drafting Recommendations

The session focused on showcasing successful nature initiatives in Oxford and similar cities across the UK, providing inspiration on how urban biodiversity and community needs can be addressed. A diverse panel of experts from academia, non-profits, and local-government shared insights to spark discussions on potential opportunities for Oxford.

The experts' contributions were:

Opportunities for Urban Biodiversity in Oxford

★ **Alison Smith**, Senior Research Associate, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford

Experience from Naturvation in Newcastle & Clearing House in Europe and China

★ **Dr Andrea Armstrong-Pulinx**, Co-founder and Research Director of Silent Spring Consultants, Senior Researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and Maastricht Sustainability Institute

### Urban Greening and Citizen Science in Oxford

★ **Claire Narraway**, Research Lead - Nature in Cities, Earthwatch Europe

Planning and Greening Policies

★ **Cllr Louise Upton**, Cabinet Member for Planning, Oxford City Council

Following the expert presentations, participants began developing their recommendations by reflecting on the key question: Who has the power to create change? They reviewed a broad list of stakeholders and discussed which actors—whether policymakers, businesses, community groups, or individuals—hold power and influence in shaping a city where both people and nature can thrive.

Building on this discussion, they worked collaboratively to identify proposed actions, considering their potential impact on both people and nature, their alignment with the vision they had developed, and their relevance to Oxford's specific context. They also assessed which actions were the most realistic and achievable, particularly if prioritisation was necessary. By the end of the session, participants had produced a first draft of recommendations, outlining key actions for different stakeholders.
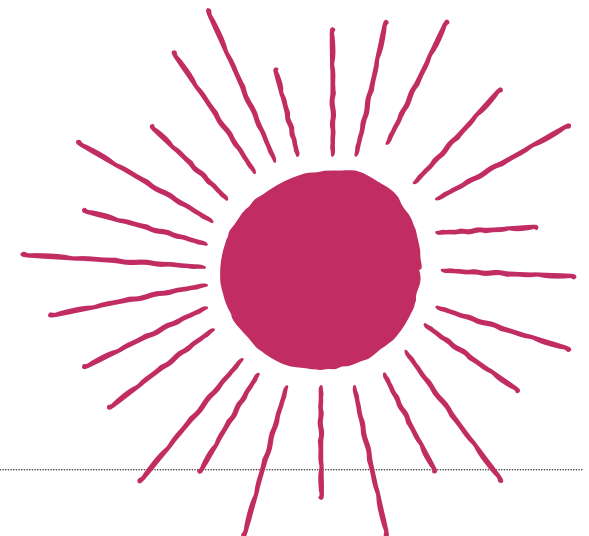
Day 4: Refining and Finalising Recommendations

On the final day of the process, participants refined and prioritised their recommendations, working in depth with expert guidance from David Knight (Wild Oxfordshire), Prof. Nathalie Seddon (University of Oxford) and Melissa Felipe (University of Oxford). To ensure a shared sense of ownership and prevent any single idea from being represented by just one person, each recommendation was rotated across each of the three tables. This allowed all participants to contribute to and shape each recommendation, fostering a more collaborative and inclusive process. By the end of the session, they had collectively agreed on seven key recommendations, each structured to include a proposed action, a description, the stakeholders responsible, and an initial step to move forward.

The Co-created Vision Statement

The jury's vision statement for Oxford's environmental future was crafted on Day 2 of the workshops, in a structured process. This approach ensured that diverse perspectives were integrated, leading to a shared and actionable vision.

Process

1. **Introduction to Visioning**
   We began by discussing the importance of a vision statement, emphasizing its role in uniting efforts and guiding decision-making.

2. **Exploring Key Themes**
   Participants reflected on current environmental challenges and aspirations for Oxford, focusing on themes such as biodiversity, accessibility, community health, and stakeholder inclusion.

3. **Group Discussions**
   Divided into three tables, participants delved deeper into these themes, sharing insights and personal experiences to inform their vision drafts.

4. **Drafting Vision Statements**
   Each table synthesized their discussions into a draft vision statement, capturing their collective aspirations.

5. **Consolidation**
   The group reconvened to share and discuss the drafts, identifying commonalities and unique ideas, leading to the formulation of a unified vision statement. is approach ensured that diverse perspectives were integrated, leading to a shared and actionable vision.

Key Themes Identified

★ **Environmental Quality**

(air, light and sound pollution, clean rivers)

★ **Accessibility**

(mobility, transport, built environment and architecture)

★ **Community**

(culture, connection, integration, diversity, safety, openness of university green spaces)

★ **Biodiversity**

(green spaces, green corridors, rural/urban connectedness)

★ **Creativity & Inclusion**

★ **Health & Wellbeing**

Draft Vision Statements from Each Table

" Oxford and its surroundings will be a city accessible to all, with protected green spaces, rich in biodiversity, and clean rivers. We will protect and enhance our sustainable built and natural environment."

" Oxford is a city where people and nature are interconnected, using green corridors that nurture the health of both. We aim to preserve and protect our green and blue spaces, making them healthy and accessible, supported by policies."

" We propose reducing division and increasing inclusion between stakeholders and habitats with a range of diverse stewards that are inclusive. We propose Increasing biodiversity, which is fundamental to community health & wellbeing in Oxford."
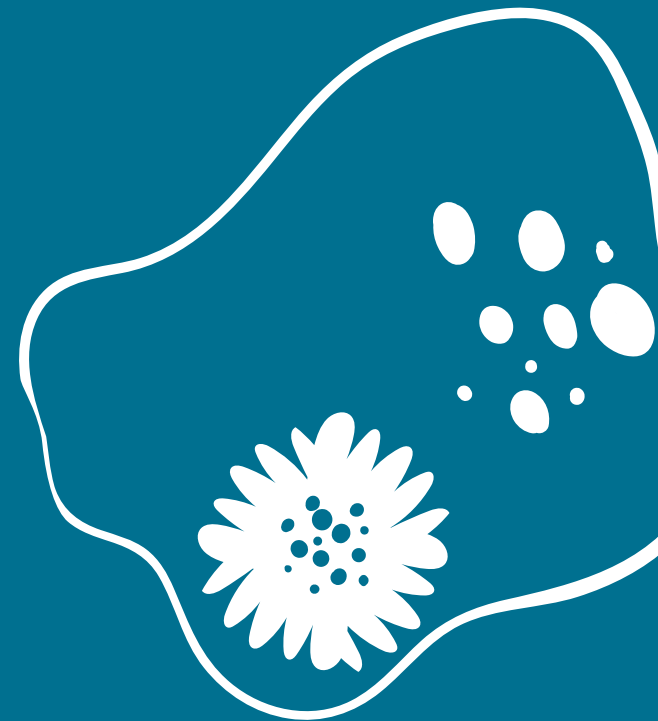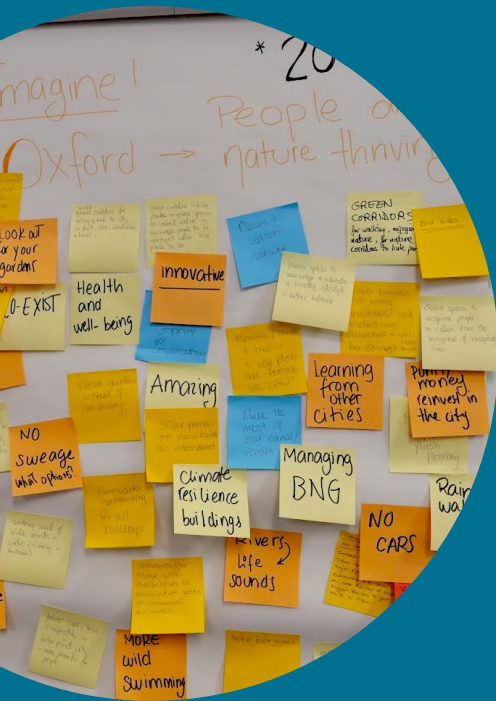
Final Group Vision Statement

"Oxford and its surroundings will be an accessible city for all, with protected green spaces, clean rivers, and rich biodiversity. These will be interconnected through green corridors that nurture the health of both people and nature. To achieve this, we propose enhancing biodiversity and protecting and improving our sustainable built and natural environment, while also reducing division and increasing inclusion among stakeholders. These efforts will be led by diverse and inclusive custodians and supported by strong policies."

Vision Responses

The final vision statement was synthesized by facilitators who integrated key elements from the three initial visions, aiming to encapsulate the collective aspirations of all participants. Participants were then invited to express their level of agreement with the final vision statement.

The responses were as follows:

"Love it": 4 participants

"Can live with it": 9 participants

"Can't live with it": 2 participants

This feedback indicates that a majority of participants (13 out of 15) found the final vision statement acceptable, reflecting broad support for the co-created vision. The vision statement served as a foundational guide for developing the recommendations in the second weekend. This alignment ensured that the recommendations were directly connected to the collective aspirations and values expressed in the vision statement, providing clear direction and fostering a cohesive approach throughout the process.

Co-created Recommendations

On the final two days of the jury, participants worked collaboratively to develop a set of recommendations grounded in the vision they had co-created and the insights gained from expert speakers. The process began with an open brainstorming session, where participants identified a broad range of potential actions to enhance nature across Oxford. Working in small groups, they refined these ideas before collectively voting to prioritise the most impactful and achievable ones. Through this process, they arrived at eight key recommendations to take forward.

The final day was dedicated to strengthening these recommendations, ensuring they were clearly articulated and directed towards relevant stakeholders. The participants considered the feasibility of their proposals, suggested initial steps for implementation, and rotated their work among different groups to incorporate diverse perspectives. This collaborative feedback ensured that each recommendation reflected the collective expertise and lived experiences of the jury, with the aim of guiding tangible.

Systemic Changes

I. Establish a forum for accountability and nature advocacy in decision-making.

To ensure nature is prioritised in decision-making, a community-led forum should be established, bringing together residents, conservation groups, environmental organisations, and representatives from each Oxford district. This forum will evaluate the success and shortcomings of nature-related initiatives and provide a platform for accountability. Additionally, a neutral nature advocate should be appointed at the pre-planning and decision-making stages of the Oxford Local Plan. Their role will be to represent the interests of nature and wildlife objectively, ensuring ecological considerations are embedded in urban planning and development.

Stakeholders

Forum: City and county councils, community groups, conservation/environmental organisations, residents, business owners, and educational institutions.

Nature Advocate: City council, landowners, universities, and developers.

First Steps

★ Formalise the creation of the community-led forum and identify key participants from across Oxford.

★ Secure funding and governance for the nature advocate role.

★ Ensure both the forum and advocate are integrated into the Oxford Local Plan

II. Increase council funding and simplify access for environmental community groups.

Increase financial support for community-led environmental initiatives and streamline the application process to improve accessibility.

Stakeholders

City and county councils, private donors, and community groups (e.g. Earthwatch, local allotment associations, Wild Oxfordshire).

First Steps

★ Conduct a budget review to allocate a dedicated environmental fund.

★ Improve the council's funding portal for accessibility.

★ Ensure transparency in environmental spending.

Built Environment

III. Retrofit the Built Environment for Nature.

Enhancing climate resilience by integrating nature-based solutions into existing urban infrastructure. This includes cooling measures, water retention systems, and ensuring equal access to green spaces.

Stakeholders

Neighbourhood associations, private landowners, local businesses, city council, media, universities, schools, planners, and architects.

First Steps

★ Introduce rain gardens, vertical planting, and green roofs.

★ Break up concrete spaces to create microhabitats.

★ Provide training on implementing nature-based retrofits.

★ Link retrofitted spaces to existing green corridors.

IV. Prioritise, create and maintain wildlife corridors.

Connecting green spaces and the wider countryside to enhance biodiversity, including birds, insects, and plant life. Improving transport links while incorporating nature-friendly infrastructure.

Stakeholders

Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, National Highways, homeowners, landowners, and resident associations.

First Steps

★ Map priority corridors.

★ Plant pollinator-friendly vegetation on verges and roundabouts.

★ Implement hedgehog highways and nesting sites.

★ Adjust mowing strategies to benefit wildlife.

★ Develop a universally recognised symbol for wildlife-friendly areas.

Inclusivity & Access

V. Ensure Inclusive Access to the Health and Well-being Benefits of Green Spaces.

Expanding access to nature for all communities, promoting social diversity, and integrating health benefits into urban planning.

Stakeholders

City Council, university colleges, community groups, schools.

First Steps

★ Redirect city council funding towards green space accessibility.

★ Conduct school visits to raise awareness

★ Encourage partnerships between colleges and community groups to open up private green spaces.

★ Launch a "Wellbeing on Wheels" bus to help residents access rural green spaces.

Water Quality

VI. Improve Water Quality Monitoring & Hold Agencies Accountable

Ensuring stricter oversight of water quality through data-driven action and stronger regulatory enforcement.

Stakeholders

Central government, environmental agencies, and the Environment Minister.

First Steps

★ Collect and independently assess water quality data.

★ Escalate findings to the relevant government department.

VII. Enhance sustainable urban drainage systems with biodiversity-focused solutions.

Improving water management by increasing permeability, reducing waste, and integrating biodiversity-friendly drainage solutions.

Stakeholders

Oxford City Council, housing associations, developers, and urban planners.

First Steps

★ Fix water leaks and reduce water wastage.

★ Implement rain gardens and floodplain attenuation ponds.

★ Promote greywater reuse for non-drinking purposes.

★ Explore the use of sewage as fertiliser or fuel.

VIII. Convene a Community Lobby Group for Waterway Protection

Bringing together stakeholders to advocate for improved waterway management, pollution reduction, and sustainable river use.

Stakeholders

Farmers, angling associations, recreational users (rowers, swimmers), Earthwatch, Thames River representatives, Canal River Trust, and local councils.

First Step

★ Identify key stakeholders and develop an action plan.

★ Establish a working committee and formalise a constitution.

★ Initiate discussions with Thames Water to explore improvements.

Next Steps

The Citizens' Jury marks an important starting point. Over two weekends, residents came together to share knowledge, deliberate, and shape a vision for people and nature in Oxford. Their recommendations reflect a strong sense of care, urgency, and commitment to action.

To carry this momentum forward and begin turning ideas into impact, we are planning three key next steps:

1. Launch the report at a public event, bringing together all jury applicants, city and county council colleagues, speakers, and others involved in the process. This will be an opportunity to share the report, celebrate the Jury's work, and discuss what comes next.

2. Connect the Jury's recommendations with those who can act on them, by continuing conversations with local organisations, academics, and policy teams already working on related issues in Oxford and Oxfordshire. We will support this through a series of short one-pagers summarising each recommendation.

3. Share key reflections from the process, both publicly in partnership with Involve Foundation and within relevant networks, to support wider learning about community-led, locally grounded deliberation.
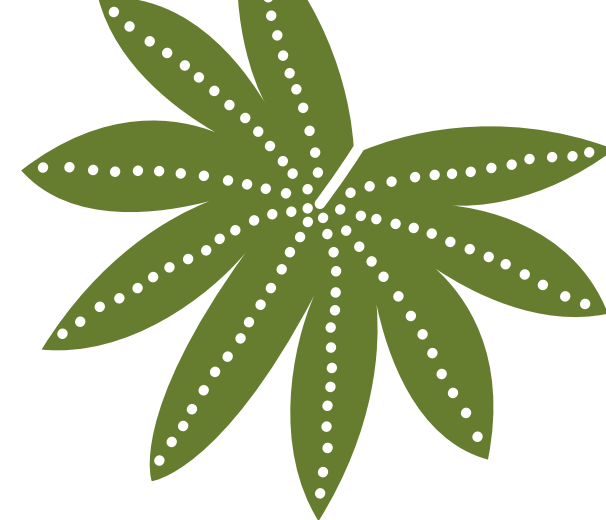
Further Details

In this section, we give more detailed information on the process and outcomes of the Citizens' Jury.

Recruitment Detail

The recruitment process for the Oxford Nature Conversations project commenced in late November 2024. To maximise outreach, we engaged with approximately 30 local organisations, including community groups, community centres, parishes, schools, and the city council. Information about the project was disseminated through newsletters, mailing lists, social media, and word of mouth. Additionally, posters promoting the initiative and inviting participants were displayed in public spaces across Oxford, such as community cafés, libraries, schools, local shops, and community centres. A city-wide press release was also issued to attract participants through local media channels.

To ensure a diverse participant pool, we specifically targeted postcode areas with higher levels of deprivation, reaching out to community groups and centres in these locations. A deliberate effort was made to slightly over-recruit individuals from traditionally underrepresented ethnic backgrounds, as well as those residing in areas with greater socioeconomic challenges. To remove potential barriers to participation, an incentive of £260 was offered as a gift compensation for attendees. We also offered the option to cover additional expenses such as travel costs or childcare, ensuring that everyone had the necessary resources to take part comfortably.

A total of 37 individuals applied to take part in the conversations, for the 20 places which we had available. In order to choose the final group, we carried out a second, stratified random selection from this applicant pool based on six key demographic dimensions: age, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, employment type, and frequency of engagement in nature-related activities.The Citizens' Jury retention rates:

The Citizen Jury retention rates:

37 people applied to be part of the Citizen Jury

22 people were selected as Citizen Jury

17 participants started the Citizen Jury sessions

15 participants completed the Citizen Jury Sessions

Composition of the Jury

To evaluate the representativeness of our citizens' jury, we compared its demographics with Oxford's 2021 Census data [13]. Oxford's population is composed of 54% identifying as White British, 17% as White non-British, and 29% belonging to Black and minority ethnic groups. The city also has a youthful age profile, with 30% aged 18-29 years, largely due to the city's substantial student population, which is not represented within our jury demographic. Additionally, 16.4% of residents reported living with a disability. Comparing these figures, our jury's composition revealed underrepresentation in certain ethnic groups. Additionally, the composition of the jury was lacking younger people. However, it is important to note that we intentionally excluded university students from the final selection. This decision was made because students tend to represent a transient population and may not fully reflect the perspectives of long-term residents of Oxford.

The final composition of the Citizens' Jury was designed to broadly reflect the demographic targets established at the outset of recruitment. However, the jury was not as diverse as initially hoped. This may be attributed to the volunteer-based nature of participant recruitment, which relied on individuals actively signing up for the project, as well as other potential factors. Despite efforts to ensure representation, some demographic groups remained underrepresented. Collaborating with marketing or engagement agencies experienced in targeted recruitment strategies, such as randomised postcode invitations, could help ensure broader participation.

A key priority for us was to amplify voices typically underrepresented in public discourse. Despite our efforts, some participants from diverse demographics withdrew during the process. To enhance inclusivity in future initiatives, a more personalised approach to understanding and fulfilling the needs of particular groups may be beneficial. Overall, the underrepresentation of some groups will have limited the generalisability of our findings across all segments of Oxford's community. This is partly because of the small number of people in the jury, due to funding and capacity limitations. Recognising this limitation is essential, but nonetheless our jury did comprise a range of perspectives and experiences.

A key priority for us was to amplify voices typically underrepresented in public discourse.

Other Recommendations for Actions

Throughout the workshops, participants proposed a wide range of ideas to enhance Oxford's green spaces and biodiversity. While these were not selected as the final recommendations, they reflect the community's broader aspirations for a more sustainable and inclusive city. These suggestions highlight key themes that emerged during discussions, offering valuable insights into the diverse ways residents envision a greener Oxford.

Enhancing Community Access and Engagement

Facilitate public access to private university green spaces through community group invitations, improved signage, and awareness campaigns.

Encourage collaboration among major landowners to involve local communities in green space management, notably to increase biodiversity.

Strengthening Policies and Leadership

Advocate for stronger policies and increased funding from local councils for the maintenance of biodiverse green spaces and tree-planting initiatives.

 Implement fines for local corporations and developments that cause ecological degradation, including water pollution and failure to meet stringent biodiversity standards.

Integrating Nature into Urban Planning

Implement green infrastructure projects such as rain gardens, green roofs, and the transformation of concrete areas into green spaces to enhance climate resilience.

Simplify funding processes to facilitate the renovation and enhancement of urban natural areas.

Promoting Sustainable Practices

Introduce incentives, including tax breaks, for green retrofitting and the rewilding of private properties.

Encourage the development of 'green champions' within neighbourhoods to spearhead community involvement in environmental initiatives.

Improving Transportation and Accessibility

Reduce transportation costs: Lower bus fares and invest in cycling infrastructure to support equitable, carbon-neutral transportation goals.

Enhance countryside access: Modify the ring road to improve permeability, facilitating easier access to rural areas.

Open university green spaces to the public: Increase public access to university-owned green areas.
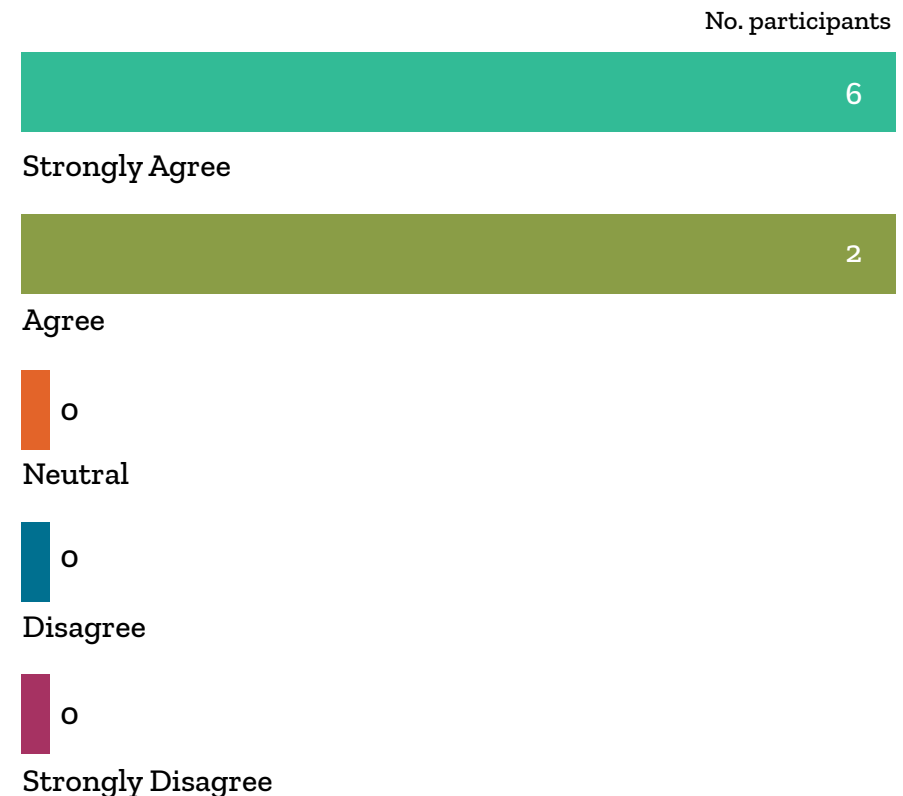
The Participants' Experience

The success of Oxford Nature Conversations was not only measured by the recommendations produced but also by the experiences of the citizens who participated. To assess this, participants provided feedback on various aspects of the process, including whether they felt heard, whether their views evolved through discussion and whether they gained new insights.

Eight participants provided feedback on their experience with the Citizens' Jury on Nature. The responses indicate a generally positive experience, with most participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements provided.

Learning Outcomes

All participants who shared feedback reported having learned something through the workshops, reinforcing the educational value of the jury process.

"I learned something new through these workshops."

No. participants

Strongly Agree	6
Agree	2
Neutral	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0

Topics Participants Learned About

No. Participants

Topic	
Governance Levels & Stakeholders	5
Organisations working in Oxford	5
Nature-based Solutions for Cities	4
Biodiversity	3
Green Spaces	2
Access & Equity	2
The Role of the University in Oxford's Landholdings	1
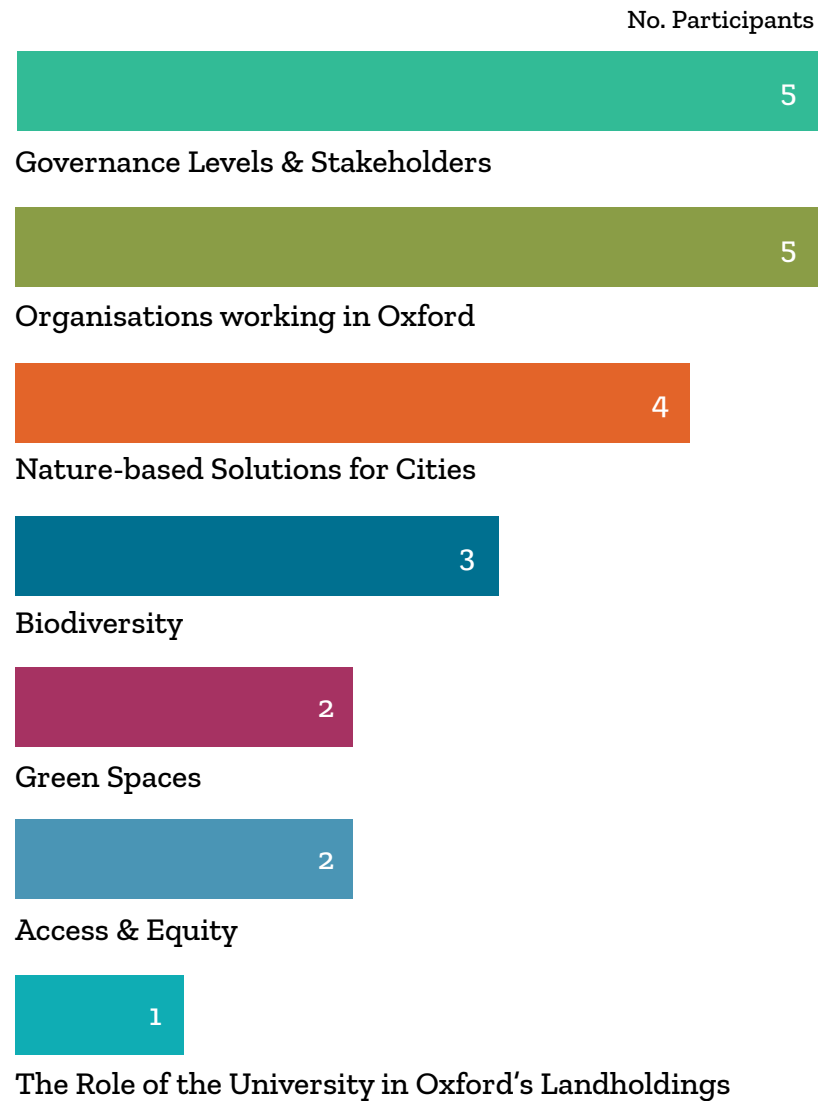
Future Engagement with Nature and Advocacy

 All participants who answered the feedback agreed that they were more likely in future to engage with local nature or environmental groups in Oxford or their neighbourhood.

"As a result of this experience, I am more likely to engage with local nature or environmental groups in Oxford or in my neighbourhood"

No. participants

Strongly Agree	3
Agree	3
Neutral	1
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0

Sharing the Experience with Others

Most of the participants who gave feedback said that they had shared their experiences with friends, family, and others, demonstrating the wider impact of the deliberative process.

"I have shared my experience with friends/family/ other people."

No. participants

Strongly Agree	3
Agree	4
Neutral	1
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0

Key Takeaways and Valuable Aspects

Participants highlighted several aspects of the Oxford Nature Conversations that they found particularly valuable. A strong emphasis was placed on learning about the processes behind conservation efforts, including how communiqués and proposals are structured. The facilitators played a crucial role in guiding discussions, and many attendees appreciated their contributions.

Another significant takeaway was the discovery of the vast number of existing environmental groups and initiatives in Oxford and Oxfordshire. Attendees found value in hearing from excellent speakers who challenged them to think more deeply about conservation issues. This led to a greater appreciation of the complexity of obtaining funding for projects and the diversity of organisations involved in advocacy and practical conservation work.

Furthermore, many participants valued the opportunity to engage with different perspectives - whether from fellow attendees, experts, or communities they might not typically interact with. Issues such as clean rivers, protecting green spaces, and the broader impact of conservation efforts were discussed, making the conversations thought-provoking and enriching.

Areas for Improvement

While participants were largely positive about the workshops, they also identified areas for improvement. A key concern was insufficient representation from minority groups, indicating the need for more inclusive outreach in future events.

Several attendees noted that clearer communication at the outset regarding the purpose, funding, and intended outcomes of the workshops would have been beneficial. Some found that they had to seek this information themselves, whereas it should have been made explicit in the opening session.

The length of the workshops was another commonly mentioned point. While some found the process suitable given the time constraints, others felt that more than two weekends were needed to explore issues in depth. Some also suggested that the lectures could have been more engaging, with less reliance on PowerPoint presentations and more visual content that highlights the challenges facing nature in Oxford.

Additionally, a few attendees suggested greater involvement of younger participants, given that discussions revolved around the future of nature conservation.

Additional Thoughts and Reflections

A key frustration voiced by some was the challenge of condensing the many valuable ideas generated into a limited number of sentences. They felt that all contributions should have been documented fully, leaving it to decision-makers to determine what is practically achievable.

Overall, while time constraints were noted, participants commended the organisers for successfully facilitating discussions among such a large and diverse group. Some even suggested a longer workshop format with extended lecture sessions in a more traditional setting.

Speakers details

Blanche Cameron

Associate Professor of Environmental Design, Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL). Blanche is an ecological designer, builder and teacher, working at UCL and with community groups, local authorities, businesses and others on practical solutions to global health, biodiversity and climate challenges and associated social, environmental and economic injustices.

Nathalie Seddon

Professor of Biodiversity and Founding Director of the Nature-based Solutions Initiative, University of Oxford. Nathalie is also Director of the Agile Initiative, a member of the leadership team of the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, and is a Senior Research Fellow at Wadham College.

Alex Hunt

Head of Policy & Advocacy, National Trust (online). Alex is leading engagement with politicians and policymakers and the charity's input to public policy making. Alex has worked on nature and heritage conservation policy, strategy and audience research for more than 20 years, including collaborative research with academic researchers on issues such as human nature connectedness. Alex was a co-lead with colleagues at RSPB and WWF in supporting the creation of the People's Assembly for Nature. Outside of work, Alex is also a Trustee of the charity Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

Rebecca Lester

Oxfordshire resident and participant in the People's Assembly for Nature. Rebecca Lester was a member of the citizens' assembly for the People's Plan for Nature. It was an initiative from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the National Trust, and the WWF. The citizens' assembly informed this comprehensive plan which sets out actions that are needed to secure the future of nature in the UK.

Catriona Bass

Long Mead Foundation's Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration. Catriona is co-founder, with Professor Kevan Martin, of Long Mead Foundation's Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project which is working towards creating a connected floodplain meadow network along the Rivers Thames and Cherwell in and upstream of Oxford. She is also co-initiator of the Nature Recovery Network a bottom-up network of people for nature recovery in West Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse that aims at connecting enthusiasts with experts in the place where they all live. Catriona advises local government, communities, landowners and NGOs on floodplain meadow restoration.

Katherine Chesson

Director of Community Action Groups. Katherine leads the CAG Oxfordshire staff team, overseeing strategy, network facilitation, funding and offering development support to groups in the network. Most recently, she supported a multi-disciplinary net-zero research initiative at the University of Oxford as programme manager. Prior to that, she spent ten years at the US-based

National Park Foundation supporting programs and partnerships that engaged people with their national parks.

Martha Crockatt
Researcher at Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, University of Oxford. Martha has a background in ecology and has now shifted her focus towards people and nature. She worked for ten years with the environmental NGO Earthwatch Europe, a citizen science-focused organisation, where, among other projects, she co-managed a long-term forest carbon cycling project, working extensively with citizen scientists from a range of backgrounds. Martha built on this experience while working with the Oxfordshire Treescape Project, an initiative to support community groups and land managers in nature recovery planning through opportunity mapping, and in her current role with the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery in which she is exploring equity of access to green space.

Mattia Troiano
Researcher at Environmental Change Institute, School of Geography and the Environment. Mattia has recently completed his MPhil studies in Environmental Change & Management at the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. During his MPhil project, Mattia worked across participatory social science and art-based methods in Oxford. Through the lens of recognitional equity, Mattia explored how community values and relations with institutions across different social-economic groups in Oxford affect their access to green spaces (distributional equity) and participation in local governance

(procedural equity). In his current role at the ECI, Mattia is exploring the social dimension of nature markets in Oxfordshire being established under the new mandatory policy provision of Biodiversity Net Gain as part of the Agile Initiative sprint 'How can the UK implement the finance-related goals of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework?'.

Weende Zhang
Postdoctoral Researcher at Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery and the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre, University of Oxford. Weende is a postdoctoral researcher on nature, health and wellbeing at the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery and Flourishing and Wellbeing Theme of the Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre. Her research focuses on how environmental policies and urban planning practices impact subjective and objective mental health and well-being. Wendee is passionate about improving urban sustainability and believes that equitable access to high-quality green infrastructure is crucial for addressing health inequalities in both the UK and the Global South.

Alison Smith
Senior Research Associate, Environmental Change Institute, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford. Alison Smith is a natural scientist with 20 years of experience as an environmental consultant, specialising in climate policy. For the last five years, she has been a researcher at the Environmental Change Institute in the School of Geography and the Environment, where she is developing and testing practical methods of mapping and measuring natural capital and the ecosystem services it

provides. Her main interest is in the synergies and trade-offs between different approaches to tackling societal challenges, and she sees nature-based solutions and green infrastructure as having a strong role to play in providing multiple benefits for climate adaptation, mitigation, biodiversity and human well-being.

Dr Andrea Amstrong-Pulinx

Co-founder and Research Director of Silent Spring Consultants, Senior Researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and Maastricht Sustainability Institute. Andrea has 20 years of academic research and teaching experience, specialising in the governance and politics of climate change, nature-based solutions, climate risks, urban transitions, and circular and sharing economies.

Claire Narraway

Research Lead - Nature in Cities, Earthwatch Europe. Claire Narraway is the Research Lead for the Nature in Cities programme, a programme aiming to create greener, healthier cities and improve access to nature-rich spaces. Claire obtained a PhD in Biology from the University of California, Los Angeles and a Postdoc at University College London. She has worked in a variety of organisations, from start-ups to housing associations, led groups of young people on expeditions, and volunteered with wildlife organisations, including the British Trust for Ornithology. She is passionate about fostering diversity in science and is a member of two COST actions on citizen science.

Cllr Louise Upton

Cabinet Member for Planning, Oxford City Council. Louise Upton has lived in Oxford for 26 years and is a neuroscientist at the University of Oxford, teaching medical students. Louise was first elected to the City Council in 2013 and is the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Champion of Cycling. She is particularly interested in making sure our planning policies bring forward as much social housing as possible, with zero carbon energy needs, and contribute to making Oxford a healthier and more active place.

David Knight

Chair of Trustees, Wild Oxfordshire. David moved to Oxfordshire in 2011 with his post at the Open University. He has since left the Open University and is pursuing a different career as a self-employed craftsperson, especially interested in woodland crafts. He is the local organiser for the Association of Pole Lathe Turners and Green Woodworkers. Before joining the Open University David was Chief Executive of Northumberland Wildlife Trust and before that worked in University adult continuing education in Newcastle and Southampton, running programmes in science, environment and natural history. David has been a trustee and Chair of several educational and environmental charities. He is a Parish Councillor for Eynsham and a volunteer for the Wychwood Forest Trust and Hill End Outdoor Education Centre.
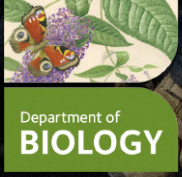
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