



Report to:	Council	5 October 2023
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bridget Smith	
Lead Officer:	Liz Watts, Chief Executive	

Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership

Executive Summary

1. This report provides an update on the work of the Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Council notes the report.

Details

3. Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership Board meeting

4. On 14 September 2023 the PRP Board met for the first time, with representatives from local government, universities, and non-executive directors. The board discussed a wide range of issues. All of the board papers (including a recording of the meeting) can be found here: [Oxford to Cambridge Partnership Board 14 September 2023: agenda and papers combined](#)
5. The Board approved the business case for a Data Observatory which will create and maintain a data portal providing stakeholders with easy access to raw data resources and analyst support and set out the regional opportunities and challenges to inform the partnership. The Oxford to Cambridge Data Observatory (ODO) aims to be a service providing transparent, unbiased, high quality, and frequently updated economic and environmental evidence, equipped with robust research and analytical capability to support our partners in policy, business case development and project monitoring, all managed through a central team.
6. The Board approved the following projects and programmes to be taken forward by the Environment Sub-Group:
 - a. Refreshing the agreed Environmental Principles to reflect changes in the policy landscape and articulate regional aspirations for environmentally progressive sustainable growth.
 - b. Acting as a facilitator and convenor in supporting the delivery of the Environment Agency's Integrated Water Management Framework programme and its delivery.

- c. Establishing a green finance mechanism to explore the opportunity for large landscape and catchment-scale investment opportunities, which delivers the Government's (DEFRA's) Finance in Nature paper published in March 2023. There is potential to develop experimental "Environmental Net Gain" methodologies and "credit" mechanisms appropriate to large landscape-scale catchment-based opportunities.
 - d. Cross-boundary Local Nature Recovery Strategy Compliance Support, facilitating and engaging the region's Nature Partnerships with Natural England and other stakeholders to support compliance with legal requirements, share knowledge and expertise, and develop good practice. There are strong linkages with Biodiversity Net Gain through this topic area.
 - e. Developing and articulating a vision for a South Midlands Community Forest. Previously identified by the region's Local Nature Partnership and achieving the ambitions of the Environment Principles, this project will seek to increase tree canopy coverage and develop green infrastructure through a regional community forest based on the achievements of the Community Forest of Marston Vale and which builds on initiatives taking place across the area.
 - f. Using the region's satellite and drone expertise, to explore opportunities to develop innovative tools and techniques that quantify and monitor habitat condition and quality.
 - g. Identifying best practices and exemplars about incorporating people, nature and biodiversity in the built environment for partners to access at their discretion.
 - h. Integrating the Local Natural Capital Plan Website into the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership website and data observatory work programme to offer enhanced regional mapping capabilities and data collection opportunities.
 - i. Engaging with organisations across the electricity distribution network to unlock opportunities to create a flexible distribution system. This partner-led project will examine known electricity supply constraints and seek to establish a roadmap that provides certainty to investors and stakeholders.
 - j. Investment in regionally significant environmental infrastructure while developing farming clusters and sustainable land management practices. The direct intervention and investment in the region's environmental infrastructure has strong linkages with Nature Finance and remote habitat monitoring, with the additional opportunity of establishing best practise in sustainable farmland management.
7. The Board approved plans for an All-Partner Conference to be held on Friday 24th November at The Ridgeway Centre, Wolverton, Milton Keynes.

Implications

8. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Financial

9. The Oxford to Cambridge Partnership has funding from government of £2,500,000 over the next two financial years, subject to business cases being agreed. As part of accessing this funding local contributions are required, both in officer time and in cash contributions. Last financial year's contribution was £4,000. This contribution has been provided for within the Council's 2023/24 proposed budget.

Legal

10. Cabinet formally confirmed its membership of the partnership at its May 2023 meeting.

Risks/Opportunities

11. The partnership offers the Council the opportunity to work at a regional level to shape and influence strategy and ensure that the voice of residents is kept at the forefront of policy and projects as they emerge. The cost to the Council of being in the partnership is relatively small (when considering both financial cost and officer time) and the risk of being part of the Partnership is therefore low.

Climate Change

12. The priorities of the Partnership are focussed on supporting delivery of clean, green and inclusive economic growth as well as delivering increased environmental gain and benefits from this growth for our communities now and in the future. The implications of supporting the Partnership would be to benefit from a wider, strategic approach to delivery of its sustainable, climate impact reducing priorities.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Growing local businesses and economies

13. This is a key workstream of the PRP.

Being green to our core

14. This is a key workstream of the PRP.

Background Papers

The partnership's website can be found here: [OxCamPartnership \(oxford-cambridge-partnership.info\)](https://oxcampartnership.info)

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