

Our Introduction

Our community is forming a new **Community Interest Company** to own and manage Gavray Meadows in Bicester, securing its future as a precious wildlife haven. The founding members of the Community Interest Company are keen to hear your views and hope you will want to join us in our work.

We have prepared this exhibition to tell you more about the Meadows, our plans for the future and how to become a member of our Community Interest Company. Gavray Meadows is the wonderful local wildlife site to the north of Gavray Drive, Bicester (shown on the plan below).

Gavray Meadows is an oasis of traditional wildlife-rich countryside close to the centre of Bicester, connecting the heart of the town with the open countryside to the east, retaining the town's link to its agricultural past.

We are a small (and growing) group of local residents called the '**Friends of Gavray Meadows**'. We have been campaigning for many years to ensure Gavray Meadows is protected as a local wildlife site. You can see our Facebook page here (<https://www.facebook.com/wildlifeneewsgavraymeadows/>).

We want to be custodians of Gavray Meadows and implement a carefully considered management plan to protect and enhance its plants and wildlife. We believe it is a precious place and should be a source of pride for our town and townsfolk.

We know we will have to be really well organised to look after the land and make sure Gavray Meadows thrives as a local wildlife asset. We also know that we will have to be well funded with the expertise to manage the land long into the future. This is why we are setting up **Gavray Meadows Community Interest Company** and you can read more about this in the exhibition.

We look forward to hearing what you think of our plans.

Kind regards

The Friends of Gavray Meadows



Our Meadows

Local resident and Friend of Gavray Meadows, Pat Clissold, is a keen photographer and her images show the rich flora, fauna and wildlife of Gavray Meadows.



Bee Orchid



Grass Snake



General view of meadow



Brown Argus Butterfly



Little Egret



Ragged Robin



Wasp Orchid



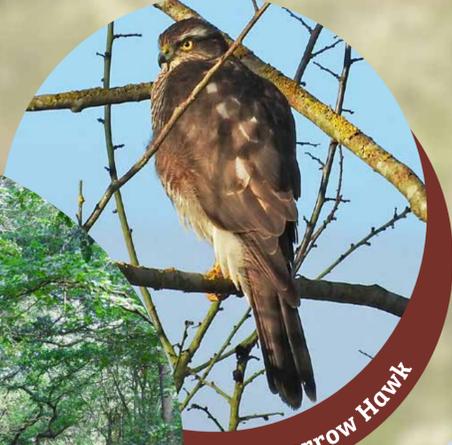
Cinnabar Moth



Male Bullfinch



Four-spotted Chaser Dragonfly



Sparrow Hawk



Woodland



Song Thrush



View of Hay Meadows



Fox



Sedge Warbler



Common Spotted Orchid



Great Spotted Woodpecker

Our Vision

Gavray Meadows Nature Reserve

Welcome to Gavray Meadows, a precious and vital site for wildlife and people within the growing town of Bicester. Here, nestled between housing estates and the Bicester to Marylebone railway line, is a piece of ancient countryside: a landscape of small fields, green lanes and ponds with an

abundance of wildlife that is now rare in the modern countryside. This site is a Local Nature Reserve, managed not only to preserve the wildlife but to enable people like yourself to experience and enjoy it at the same time.

Langford Brook

This stream is a tributary of the River Ray which flows into the Cherwell and meets the Thames in Oxford. Kingfishers and Herons are regularly seen along its banks.



Wet grasslands and sedge beds

These wetter parts of the site support lush vegetation with rushes, sedges and iris, in turn providing havens for wildlife such as harvest mice and the scarce Banded General Soldierfly. This is one of the best parts of the site to see wild orchids.



Drier pastures

The better drained parts of the site support grasslands with a slightly different set of plants to the hay meadows. Particularly characteristic of these areas is Devil's-bit Scabious, the beautiful mauve flowers of which can be seen in late summer. This plant is eaten by the caterpillars of the beautiful Marsh Fritillary and Gavray Meadows was the last site where it was found in the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire region. It is hoped that by restoring ideal conditions for it, it can be returned to grace these meadows again.



Traditional hay meadows

These areas are cut for hay in late summer and then the 'aftermath' grazed by livestock. This type of management, without modern agricultural chemicals, allows a huge number of plant species to co-exist and thrive, creating a colourful spectacle of nodding blooms alive with bees in summer. Please keep to the mown paths in spring and summer to avoid trampling the hay crop.



Ridge and furrow

The lines of parallel bumps forming 'ridge and furrow' in many of the fields are a relic of Medieval agriculture. Although created by ploughing in the Middle Ages, the fact that they have not been smoothed out since shows that the site has remained unploughed for a long time, perhaps centuries. It is this rare combination of factors that allows much of the rare wildlife here to thrive.



Hedgerows and green lanes

The network of fields, hedges and green lanes visible today is exactly the same as that shown on the oldest maps of the area and studies have shown that some of the hedgerows date back to Saxon times. As well as their historical interest, the hedgerows support many different species, including rare butterflies. Gavray Meadows is one of very few sites in the whole country where all five hairstreak butterflies have been recently recorded.



Ponds and wet furrows

The ancient field ponds on the site and the furrows in the wetter ridge and furrow fields support amphibians, including frogs and all three British species of newt. These in turn attract species that prey on them, such as the impressive grass snake.



Our Opportunity

We have long campaigned to secure the future of the Meadows in light of plans for housing development adjacent to the Meadows. When the developer L&Q Estates recently took over the plans to develop the housing, they adopted a very different (and welcome) approach to the Meadows from the previous developer. They saw real value in helping us to organise ourselves to take ownership of the land, securing it for future generations.

They have funded Alan Caldwell, who helps communities like ours to set up community companies to own land. You can read more about Alan's work at www.alancaldwellassociates.co.uk. We have been working closely with Alan since January to get everything ready. We have met every two weeks to work our way through all the issues we need to cover to own and manage such an important local resource. More people have started to join the group, inspired by what we want to do. By working together in this way our breadth of skills, experience and confidence is growing.



Sneezewort



Redwing



Oak



General view of meadow with Great Burnet



Small Tortoiseshell



Crab Apple Blossom



Brown Hairstreak



Marbled White Butterfly



Whitethroat



Blue Tit

The establishment of our Community Interest Company to own the land will be linked to the planning approval for the planned housing development on adjacent land. Cherwell District Council are very supportive of the formation of our Community Interest Company and see it as critical to the future of the Meadows.

We are really keen that as many people as possible join our Community Interest Company, expanding our skills base and ensuring Gavray Meadows continues to be a wonderful local resource.



Our Company

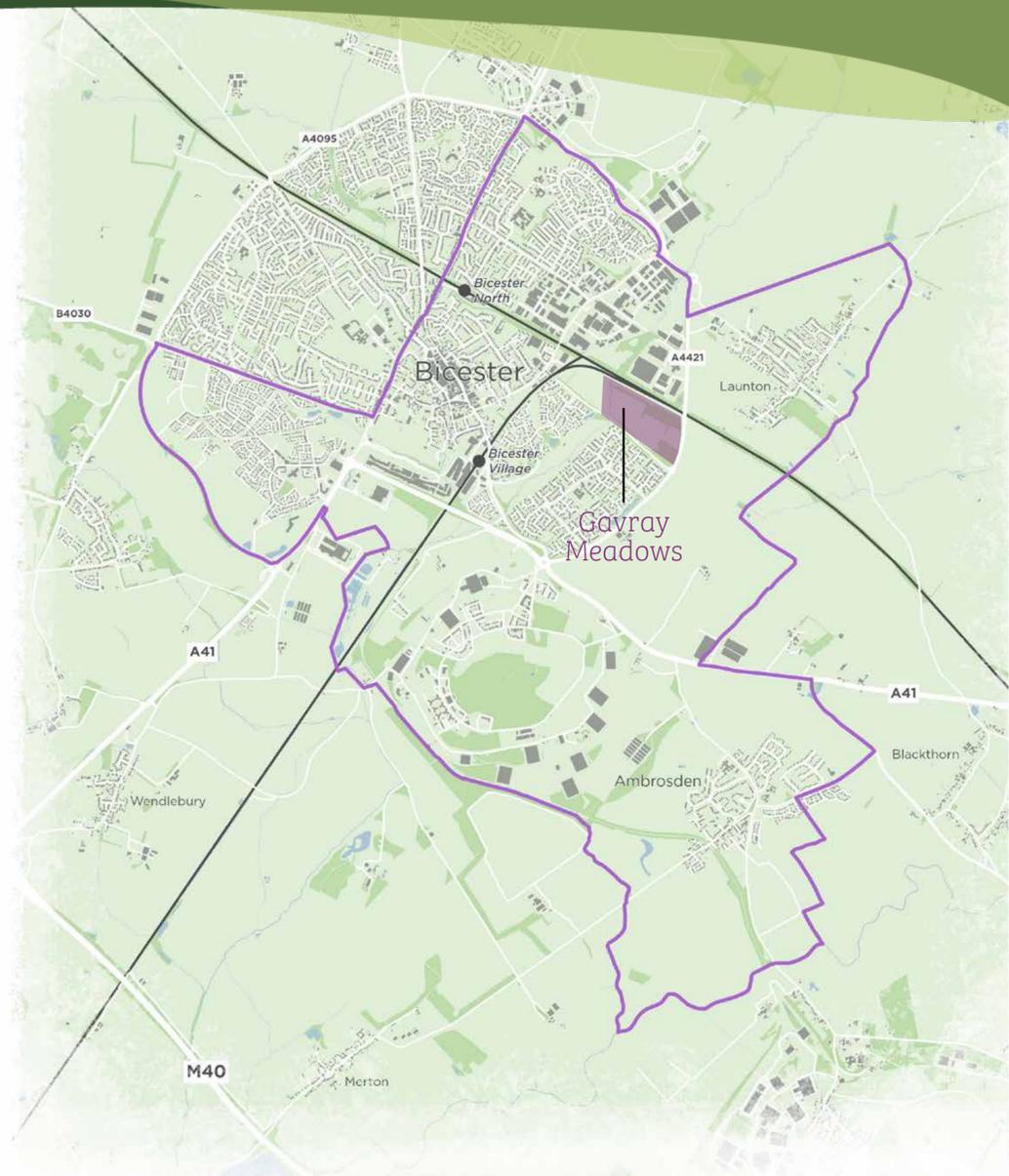
We are setting up a Community Interest Company to own and manage Gavray Meadows because it is the most appropriate vehicle with which to do this effectively. It will be a special type of limited company which exists to benefit the community rather than private shareholders. It has an 'asset lock' which is a legal promise that the Company's assets will only be used for the conservation purpose set out in its community interest statement. In addition, the assets of the company can only ever be disposed of to another body with an asset lock and similar social and environmental purpose.

Our clearly stated aim is

'The protection, conservation and enhancement of the environment and biodiversity of Gavray Meadows'

Gavray Meadows Community Interest Company will be established as a Company Limited by Guarantee and will be owned by the members of the Community Interest Company. Members will be drawn from a defined geographic area of benefit where anyone on the electoral register can become a member. See the map on this page. We will also have associate members who support our work but live outside the area and junior membership (both non-voting).

The members elect a board of directors (with a process at each AGM) to manage the land and the Company can raise funds, appoint staff and enter into contracts as any company would do to deliver their plans.



In this instance, the long term management of Gavray Meadows will likely be funded from a lump sum contribution from L&Q Estates, annual service charge on the new houses in the Gavray Drive development and agreed Section 106 contributions through the planning process. The company also has the ability to raise funds from grants, loans, investments and crowd funding campaigns.

How can I get involved?

Anyone within the area of benefit can apply to become a full member. Application forms and contact details are available from our website gavraymeadows.org. Bicester people, with skills in management and running such a Company, will be welcomed to be part of the team so that the Company has a solid base. At the moment it is in the embryo stage with more work to do.

Our Update

The establishment of our Community Interest Company to own Gavray Meadows will be linked to the planning approval for the planned housing development at Gavray Drive. L&Q Estates submitted their planning application in October 2021 and we anticipate the application will be determined by Cherwell District Council in the Autumn. The planning application is for:

“Residential development for up to 250 dwellings including affordable housing and ancillary uses including retained Local Wildlife Site, public open space, play areas, localised land remodelling, compensatory flood storage, structural planting and access.”

Gavray Drive is a long-standing development allocation. The land is allocated for development under Policy Bicester 13 (re-adopted) of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1, adopted in 2015. It remains a key site required to meet the Council’s housing delivery objectives.

Development has been delayed for a complex series of reasons. Planning permission for the entire site was previously granted in 2006 but lapsed. Most recently an appeal for development of part of the allocation on Gavray Drive West was dismissed at appeal in 2018. The Inspector’s comments pointed towards a need to consider development for the whole allocation. In response, L&Q Estates submitted the current application for the full extent of the allocation.

The majority of the built development is proposed to the west of Langford Brook, close to the town centre. A smaller area for housing is proposed to front Gavray Drive to the east of the brook. No built development is proposed within the Local Wildlife Site or Conservation Target Area and the application is submitted with long term management proposals for the land.

The application is the culmination of over a year of constructive work with Cherwell District Council (CDC) and Oxfordshire County Council through a formal pre-application process and regular meetings with a dedicated ecology stakeholder group made up of interested parties from the local community. From that stakeholder group has emerged the Community Interest Company.

Since submission of the application, statutory consultees have commented on the technical aspects and L&Q are in the process of providing further information and clarifications where requested. A formal submission of this information is anticipated to be submitted to Cherwell District Council this summer and the public will be able to comment on the proposals again at that stage. The submission will contain further details on the Community Interest Company and invite CDC to agree to its stewardship of Gavray Meadows.

