# WORKING DOCUMENT

# Clifton Hampden Wharf Management Plan – 2026/2027

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Approved by:

- Burcot & Clifton Hampden Parish Council
- Christopher Purvis on behalf of the Clifton Hampden Village Charity

## 1. History

The Wharf is called the Wharf for good reason: boats were moored here; until the bridge was built in 1864 the ferry crossed the river from the Wharf. Until the 1960s there was a boathouse tucked under the hill rising to the churchyard.

In more recent times it has been an area used as a place for village residents to enjoy: to swim; to launch boats; or simply to sit and enjoy the river. This was particularly important during Covid. The Sea Scouts launch their boats from the Wharf. Boat mooring is still permitted, with the charge (currently TBD) payable at the village shop. Proceeds from mooring are donated to Clifton Hampden Primary School. Fishing permits can also be obtained from the shop for the cost of £5 with the proceeds donated to the village's church of St Michael and All Angel. Fishing is permitted from 16 June to 14 March only. Night fishing is not permitted.

In 1726 Robert Hucks, an ancestor of the Gibbs family, acquired the Wharf as part of the acquisition of the Clifton estate, and it remained in the family's possession until 2009 when Christopher Gibbs, keen to retain certain village assets for the benefit of Clifton inhabitants, put the Wharf and the recreation ground into a newly created charitable trust, the Clifton Hampden Village Charity (the "Charity"). This was done with the blessing and partnership of the Parish Council, which agreed to take on the lease and upkeep of both Wharf and recreation ground. The chairman of the Parish Council is an ex officio trustee of the Charity.

## 2. Objectives

The Charity has the following charitable objectives:

"to provide facilities for the benefit of the inhabitants of Clifton Hampden Oxfordshire and the surrounding area for the promotion of recreation or other use of leisure time, occupation of individuals who have need for such facilities by reason of their youth age infirmity or disablement financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large and the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of the said inhabitants."

These are the objectives as laid down by law, which have to be followed by the Parish Council as leaseholder. They do not preclude other objectives being taken on by the leaseholder as long as they are compatible with these primary objectives. The objectives are about improving the condition of the lives of people.

Christopher Gibbs's instructions to the Trustees of the Charity were stated in the following email:

**The Wharf**

Always remember that the wharf is a wild riverside place, not a park, not a garden, so native species only. Paths need to be kept open and an access to the river. Therefore perhaps the ground between the big seat and the ditch should be cut twice a year, so that there's a smoother area round the place for launching boats which should be kept reed free. It would be nice if one day the boat house could be resurrected, which was a simple weather boarded affair with a tiled roof. The steep bank between church wall and wharf seems to have been left out. It should be regarded as trust property. There are lots of hellebores tumbling down the bank. There are also sometimes big groups of the huge silver thistle near the seat (onopordum giganticum). It's worth making an effort to mask the concrete wall behind the seat. This happened on the watch of a nervous vicar who imagined that the church was sliding into the river! Perhaps the best cover for it would be ivy. But the bank above it needs to be kept low and densely planted to halt erosion and keep open the view from the church (hypericum?, vinca major or minor).

Resist the temptation to plant bulbs with the possible exception of the native English daffodils narcissus pseudo narcissus or of leucojum (snowflake) which can be found in wet places on either side of the bridge. Non native bulbs that have been thrown out of gardens should be removed, it's a wild place. As to trees the poplars (fastigiate) are almost gone and we planted oaks and alders and I think a plane (? Platanus orientalis). The tree guards are part of a long series made in the smithy a hundred years ago or more. They were around orchard trees at the manor and all along the road to the station.

Thus the primary objectives in the management of the Wharf are:

1) Provision of amenity areas for villagers and visitors to view and enjoy the riverside
2) Protection and maintenance of wharf amenities for small boat launches (specifically rowing boats, canoes, kayaks and paddleboards)

As part of these objectives the natural scenery and native habitat of the Wharf must also be retained.

## 3. Habitat & The Natural Environment

The Wharf consists of a mosaic of floodplain neutral grassland/meadowland, riparian woodland and marginal swamp/reedbed associated with the River Thames floodplain.

Under the Environment Act 2021 it is the duty of Parish Councils to conserve and enhance biodiversity, however note that this duty does not override the primary objectives and responsibilities as outlined above

**Species noted (list not exhaustive):**

**Current species noted:**

- Trees & shrubs: black poplar, white poplar, oak, willow, hazel, sycamore, spindle, maple
- Grasses: rye, timothy, cocksfoot
- Herbacious perennials: comfrey, meadowsweet, nettle, dock, creeping buttercup, marsh woundwort (marsh hedge nettle), yellow loosestrife, yellow flag iris

Note: the black poplar trees are one of Britain's rarest trees, typically found on damp lowland floodplains. Only an estimated 7000 mature specimens survive in the wild across the UK

Note: the large spindle by the river's edge is notable as an ancient woodland indicator and should be protected.

**Previous species noted:**

- Herbacious perennials: lodden lilies, snakes head fritillaries

Note: snakes head fritillaries are classed as vulnerable on the Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain

**Bats**

The Burcot and Clifton Hampden Wildlife Club conducted a bat survey on the Wharf in May 2026 and were able to verify the following species:

Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Nathusius' Pipistrelle, Brown Long Eared, Serotine, Noctule, Daubenton's, Natterer's, and Leisler's pending BTO verification

The Wildlife Club put bat boxes up on the Wharf in the summer of 2026 in order to support the bat population.

Note: Bats are protected from being intentionally disturbed by UK law.

## 4. Grassland Maintenance Strategy

**Late spring/early summer:**

The whole of the Wharf to be topped to 10cm. Ideally all cuttings should be removed, however if this proves to be impractical or too costly then mulched cuttings can be left on the ground

Note: leaving cuttings, even if they are in small pieces in not recommended as it adds richness and nutrients to the soil when it decomposes, favouring vigorous grasses and plants like nettles and docks which can outcompete wildflowers. Left cuttings can also form a mulch layer that makes it harder for small wildflower seedlings to germinate.

If possible and practical, a check should be made for hedgehogs, reptiles, amphibians, and ground nests before cutting.

**Autumn:**

A further cut should be taken.

**Throughout the summer:**

If necessary, the paths, sitting areas and areas by the river where boats are moored or launched should be cut with a strimmer more frequently.

Note that nettles and other vigorous weeds currently thrive in the area of the grassland next to the main sitting and boat launch area (see photo below). In general, areas where there are high number of nettles would benefit from frequent strimming between spring and autumn in order to weaken them and encourage other species to flourish.

## 5. Tree Management:

A tree survey was carried out by Christopher Purvis, Martin Drew and Jo McManus 13 July 2026.

**Wharf East:**

- Black poplars to be monitored, may require future management to keep in check.
- Removal of saplings from the right side of the carved wooden seat
- Willow on rivers edge to be monitored for fallen branches

- The Norway Maple tree (see photo below) is a non-native species and was originally intended to provide ornamental interest. This tree should be significantly reduced in size in order to enhance the amenity area.

**Wharf South:**

The tall white poplar tree by bridge (see photo below) should be managed in order to prevent it falling.

**Wharf West:**

There is a patch of scrub/self-set saplings at the edge of the western edge that should be removed.

The oak tree in the central area (see photo below) is showing signs of environmental stress and should be assessed and managed in order to maintain its health and avoid falling branches.

**In General**

All trees should be inspected at least twice yearly. Every other year an inspection should take place by a professional arborist.

Dead or dying trees and should be removed to avoid falling hazard both to people and to the river.

A yearly pruning schedule should be established to ensure tree health and safety.

All self-setters and saplings should be removed. (Note: sycamore – non-native and can become dominant in floodplain habitats).

## 6. Future Amenity Enhancement in Harmony with Nature

<u>Suggestions made by the community:</u>

- Accessible access
- Another log to sit on
- Another picnic table
- Native wildflower protection, enhancement, introduction
- A planked jetty to the river in order to provide a stable surface for launching boats and to protect the river bank.
- Local wildlife support organisations e.g. BBOWT, Wild Oxfordshire, the Earth Trust could be consulted for advice.
- A TVERC species search could be carried out.

<u>Ideas for Community involvement and education:</u>

- New paths to be cut through wildflower areas during flowering season

- School-produced information signs

## 7. Sign Renewal

The following signs need to be reviewed and replaced:

Dog fouling notice needing replacement.

## 8. Initial Actions

| **Action** | **Target Start Dates** |
|---|---|
| Establish mowing schedule as per the plan | Autumn 2026 |
| Manage boardwalk repair work | ASAP |
| Renew existing signs | ASAP |
| Conduct tree survey | Summer 2026 **DONE** |
| Cost tree management work | Autumn 2026 |
| Establish Wharf working team (as necessary) | From Autumn 2026 |
| Apply for grants for e.g. signs, seating, planting | Autumn 2026 – Spring 2027 |

## 9. Conclusion

The charitable purpose of the Wharf is to provide facilities for people to enjoy and thereby to improve the life of the inhabitants of Clifton Hampden. This paper will be reviewed in **September 2027** to ensure that that purpose is being fulfilled while also enhancing the natural environment.

## APPENDIX

For information: OCC published the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in November 2025. The strategy describes and maps important nature recovery actions developed through local engagement. The Potential Measures described are advisory only. Any future measures carried out for habitat enhancement should not restrict the use of the Wharf for public amenity.

Potential Measures identified in the strategy for the Wharf:

- PM ID 40: Create wet woodland
- PM ID: 54 : Create wetland habitats that contain a matrix of various habitat types suitable for the site (e.g. wet grassland, ponds, ditches, hedgerows, trees, or wet woodland)
- PM ID: 55 : Create new, varied ponds in suitable locations across all habitat types to increase biodiversity and create more clean water habitats
- PM ID: 42 : Restore river diversity and manage rivers and their riparian (riverside) habitats to achieve good ecological condition that supports species

Erosion Regulation Opportunities:

- Nature recovery actions in this area are expected to be particularly beneficial at achieving wider benefits if they focused on preventing soil erosion.

Wild Oxfordshire visited the Wharf in November 2024 and suggested the following specific wildflower species for protection (if already present) or introduction:

Wharf West (includes a pond-like depression which contains standing water after floods):

- Protect snakes head fritillaries
- Plant ground cover marsh marigold to the edges of the natural pond area

Wharf South (river's edge):

- Plant Marsh woundwort (aka marsh hedge nettle), yellow loosestrife to prevent soil erosion

Wharf East:

- Protect lodden lillies
- Plant yellow iris and yellow loosestrife at river's edge to prevent soil erosion

Clifton Ditch:

- Clear ditch banks and plant tall Uk natives e.g. purple loosestrife, water figwort, wild angelica
- Plant alder at water's edge to aid water filtration, stabilise soil and avoid erosion