Thames Valley
Environmental
Records Centre

Business Plan
2026 - 2029

Enabling data-driven decisions to better enhance and protect our natural environment

TVERC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) provides impartial environmental data services for Berkshire and Oxfordshire, enabling evidence-based decisions that protect and enhance the natural environment. As a partnership of all twelve Local Authorities and the Environment Agency, TVERC's mission is to collect, manage, analyse, and share high-quality data for the benefit of people and nature.

The next few years will see major developments for TVERC and its partners. Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain and the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) have made high-quality environmental data more important than ever. TVERC has a key role for LNRS delivery, providing spatial data, technical support, and ongoing expertise. At the same time, Local Government Reorganisation is reshaping local structures, and TVERC is working to maintain strong relationships and ensure continuity through these changes.

TVERC remains a not-for-profit, reinvesting surplus income into service improvements and the recording community. To ensure financial resilience, we are diversifying income streams and seeking longer-term commitments for data licences, service agreements, and multi-year projects. This will help secure the future of the service and continued support for biodiversity monitoring and decision making.

A thriving and diverse recording community is vital to our success. Over the coming years, TVERC will deepen support for recorders and volunteers, offering training, resources, and opportunities to contribute to shared priorities. By investing in people, innovation, and technology, and strengthening partnerships, TVERC will continue to deliver high-quality, accessible environmental data and insight to support nature recovery and climate resilience.

Steve Wilkes
TVERC Director

👁 OUR VISION

We live in a better environment because decisions are made using our data and insight.

🏔 OUR MISSION

We are impartial environmental data scientists who collect, manage, analyse and share data in Oxfordshire and Berkshire so people can make sound decisions that protect and enhance our environment.

🎯 OUR GOALS

Each of the goals is set out below, with relevant objectives defined. They provide the road map to ensure business management decisions steer a course towards TVERC achieving the long-term goals and vision.

WHO WE ARE

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) is the environmental records centre for Berkshire and Oxfordshire. TVERC is a partnership organisation between all twelve Local Authorities across Berkshire and Oxfordshire and the Environment Agency. TVERC collects, manages, analyses and shares environmental data with a wide range of customers to enable evidence-based decision-making about the natural environment.

What is a LERC?

Local Environmental Record Centres are

"Not-for-profit organisations that collect, collate and manage information on the natural environment for a defined geographic area. LERCs support and collaborate with a network of experts to ensure information is robust, and make information products and services accessible to a range of audiences including decision-makers, the public, and researchers"

Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC)

We live in a better environment because decisions are made using our data and insight

A. We live in a better environment in Berkshire and Oxfordshire because decisions are made using our data, information and services

B. Our region has a diverse, active, and skilled recording community with good geographic and taxon coverage that we encourage and support
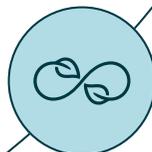
C. We hold an expanding and comprehensive database of high-quality environmental information that is well curated, maintained and accessible for decision-making both now and in the future

D. We employ a well-staffed, effective, and motivated workforce with valued and respected staff and volunteers, who retain and develop their skills, expertise, and knowledge

E. We are creative and innovative, which drive our development, enhance our systems and processes, and offer solutions to interpret natural environment data

F. The future of TVERC is secured

A healthy functioning natural environment is vital for supporting a healthy and functioning society, as well as being of intrinsic importance. TVERC will monitor the state of the natural environment for the benefit of everyone.

A. We live in a better environment in Berkshire and Oxfordshire **because decisions are made using our data, information and services**

OBJECTIVES

● Promote informed decision-making using environmental data and our analysis

● Champion increasing monitoring of environmental measures within the two counties

● Increase profile / outreach so people know we are the "go-to" resource for these services

● TVERC's services are easy to find, access and are used by a broad customer base for a variety of uses:

    o Ensure the data search service meets the needs of the stakeholders in the two counties for biodiversity and geodiversity information.
    o Continue to promote wider use of habitat data
    o Ensure a basic set of products are available at a competitive price
    o Evaluate the demand for additional environmental data
    o Measure and maintain a good level of customer service

● Undertake project work providing an end-to-end environmental data service from data collection and analysis to supporting its interpretation for monitoring, policy and decision-making

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B. Our region has a diverse, active, and skilled recording community wth **good geographic and taxon coverage that we encourage and support**

Biological recorders are essential to the future success of TVERC and to evidence-based decision-making. TVERC plans to continue and increase its support by improving communication about available assistance and strengthen relationships to maintain its role as the central hub for biological recording in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

TVERC will also promote the value of recorders to partners and data users, and actively encourage new participation by offering support and training to develop the next generation of recorders.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate the composition and focus of the recording community. In addition to understand what and where they record, also assess the activity and demographics of recorders
  - o Implement an initiative to promote the increase of breadth, depth and diversity of the recording community
  - o Investigate barriers stopping people from participating
  - o Facilitate training and other initiatives to support this goal
  - o Build relationships with relevant training providers to help address local training needs

- Proactively encourage volunteer recording efforts in priority areas and taxa especially where the information could be of imminent use in decision-making, including Local Wildlife Sites
  - o Species data – geographic and taxon coverage - gap analysis
  - o Habitat data – geographic and habitat coverage – condition assessment – gap analysis

- Recording Co-ordinator – keep primary focus on Recording Community

- Recorder's fund – review relevance, utilisation, opportunity, and amount

- Recording conference – continue to run two per year

- Recording Community is represented at TVERC Steering Group

- Rationalise the data exchange process, perhaps considering a two-tier system

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We have robust processes for dealing with the vast amounts of data we collate. We plan to enhance these procedures further in light of the Environment Act and the new requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies, as well as the climate and ecological emergencies. Our detailed Data Policies and Procedures document was recently reviewed and will be updated at least annually.

OBJECTIVES

● Metadata - ensure all our external datasets have metadata including information about quality and reliability

● Species Data
  o Expand geographic and taxon coverage and increase data input speed whilst maintaining quality
  o Have systems and processes that could handle 1 million new records per year
  o Make the best use of online data resources
  o Develop a plan for storing our species data if Recorder 6 can no longer be used

● Sites Data
  o Ensure that all sites have a current written citation
  o Review and update system for managing LWS site data, including a Database of Local Wildlife Sites
  o Support more proactive monitoring and assessment of sites

● Habitat Data
  o Have systems and processes that
  • Improve and maintain the currency of data records
  • Support in collecting, verifying, and integrating habitat data
  • Support BNG, Natural Capital and LNRS
  • Expand the datasets available - cover polygons, lines and points

● Maintain systems and processes that support the cataloguing of other environmental data and provide a comprehensive reference of data sources useful for environmental decision-making in the two counties.

● Review and rationalise our paper records / archive

C. We hold an expanding and comprehensive database of high quality environmental information that is **well curated, maintained and accessible for decision-making both now and, in the future**

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D. We employ a well-staffed, effective, and motivated workforce with valued **and respected staff and volunteers, who retain and develop their skills, expertise, and knowledge**

Highly skilled and experienced staff are key to TVERC's continued success. Volunteers are also vitally important in helping TVERC to maintain high standards. We will continue to make our team feel valued.

OBJECTIVES

● Maintain an organisation with enough people and skills to complete the core record centre tasks and provide project resource to support key initiatives in the two counties

   o TVERC is appropriately staffed, and recruitment is completed in a timely fashion to fill the organisational structure
   o Staff develop the skills and expertise to support the new areas of LNRS, BNG and Natural Capital
   o Staff extend their understanding and expertise with relevant emerging technology and techniques

● Retain existing staff by supporting them through good management and providing in-house training and a budget for external training where appropriate

   o All staff actively participate in Oxfordshire County Council's performance framework
   o All staff attend at least one training course per year to retain or enhance their skills, expertise or knowledge
   o Support staff with membership of Professional Organisations like CIEEM
   o Make use of the extensive training courses available through Oxfordshire County Council

● Retain and expand the use of volunteers

   o Recognise the value of volunteers to TVERC
   o Understand, support and promote the benefits of volunteering with TVERC
   o Extend the number of volunteers regularly working with TVERC
   o Expand their focus to include:
     • Field work
     • Species data
     • Habitat data
     • Research and analysis

We use creative solutions to interpret natural environment data supporting informed decisions on development and land management to enhance biodiversity. The response of organisations to the Environment Act is expected to increase demand for TVERC's data and field services.

TVERC believes that working closely with science and environmental organisations in Berkshire and Oxfordshire is essential to maximise the impact we can make on improving our environment. We hope to maintain, strengthen and develop these collaborations.

OBJECTIVES

● Keep up to date with new legislation, technology, processes and analytic methods

● Encourage innovation:
   o Find ways to assess whether new tools or methods are useful
     • Consider how best to use AI and machine learning to support TVERC's activities
     • Consider the environmental footprint of new technologies
   o Take time to be creative and innovate
   o Test and trial new things, be prepared to fail fast and learn
   o Look into using modern tools like audio recording and DNA sampling for species identification and data collection

● Work with others:
   o Strengthen relationships with museums, universities, colleges, and researchers
   o Investigate innovation hubs that TVERC could join
   o Explore how our current and proposed services align with client needs

● Show and tell:
   o Promote teamwork and let different voices shape innovation
   o Share TVERC's innovation efforts more widely to benefit from others' skills and experience

● Leverage TVERC's Data:
   o Explore how combining species and habitat data can lead to new insights and added value

● Field work – review and enhance the efficiency and quality of field services
   o Consider using UKHab as the main system for classifying habitats in the LWS project

E. We are creative and innovative, which drive our development, enhance our systems **and processes, and offer solutions to interpret natural environment data**

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F. The future of **TVERC is secured**

TVERC, established in 2003 and hosted by Oxfordshire County Council, is dedicated to delivering professional and impartial ecological data services to support decision-making now and in the future. We aim to expand engagement with community groups, conservation NGOs, researchers, land managers, and local councils, while continuing to develop trusted, science-based products and services. Our internal Climate Champion ensures sustainability remains embedded in our work.

OBJECTIVES

● Credibility

  o Continue to be a respected partner in providing an impartial evidence base for policies and decisions
  o Maintain ALERC accreditation and work within ALERC to use TVERC practices to improve other Record Centres
  o Develop a broad customer base

● Sustainability

  o Environmental - Understand Carbon and Water footprints for TVERC and the services we provide
  o Social – Empower communities to collect and use environmental data for better decisions
  o Data - Ensure long-term data sustainability through robust policies, agreements, and interoperability with regional/national datasets

● Relevance

  o Engage county stakeholders to promote the value of high-quality environmental data
  o Understand and assist the two counties with information for decisions and processes for BNG, Natural Capital and LNRS
  o Use Local Government Reorganisation to raise awareness of TVERCs value and services

● Maintain financial stability and resilience

  o Running zero balancing budget – with surplus reinvested in the service and recording community
  o Maintain financial reserves and secure long-term commitments via licences, SLAs, and projects

● Hosting

  o Ensure that TVERC's hosting requirements are understood and considered during the local government reorganisation
  o Identify and take advantage of benefits that come from being part of Oxfordshire County Council or future host
  o Strengthen collaboration with the County Council GIS Team and comply with host policies

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CUSTOMERS AND SERVICE USERS

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES

TVERC data is often used by the ecology / biodiversity officer, but it has many other uses too:

Development Control Planners: Use it to decide on consultations, request ecological surveys, assess development impacts, and ensure compliance with planning policies and legislation.

Policy Planners: Apply it to evaluate strategic site allocations (e.g. housing, roads, minerals), ensuring plans align with policy and legal requirements.

Highways Engineers: Check for protected species (like water voles or bats) before works begin to avoid legal breaches and costly delays.

Tree/Arboricultural Officers: Include checks for bat roosts and nesting birds in risk assessments to prevent delays from unexpected discoveries.

Parks Officers: Use it to understand and enhance local biodiversity, supporting community wellbeing and cohesion.

Landscape Officers: Recommend planting schemes with local/native or rare species based on TVERC data.

What our customers say

TVERC data is essential to help me and our planning officers in ensuring that we take full account of biodiversity constraints when making planning decisions. The locations of protected species are a particular problem when making planning decisions as they can be found almost anywhere and affect all types of planning application. The records held by TVERC are particularly helpful in guiding us where we should be asking for surveys; With the help of this data we are able to make better decisions, avoid lengthy delays in decisions (particularly where species are picked up at pre-application stage) and most importantly conserve biodiversity"

Dominic Lamb, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT (Environment Agency)

EA 'in house' work (e.g. capital and revenue work – Flood risk, navigation work, physical habitat creation or restoration work e.g. WFD): enables strategic prioritisation for environmental screening to reduce negative impacts and direct limited funding where it can deliver the most benefit.
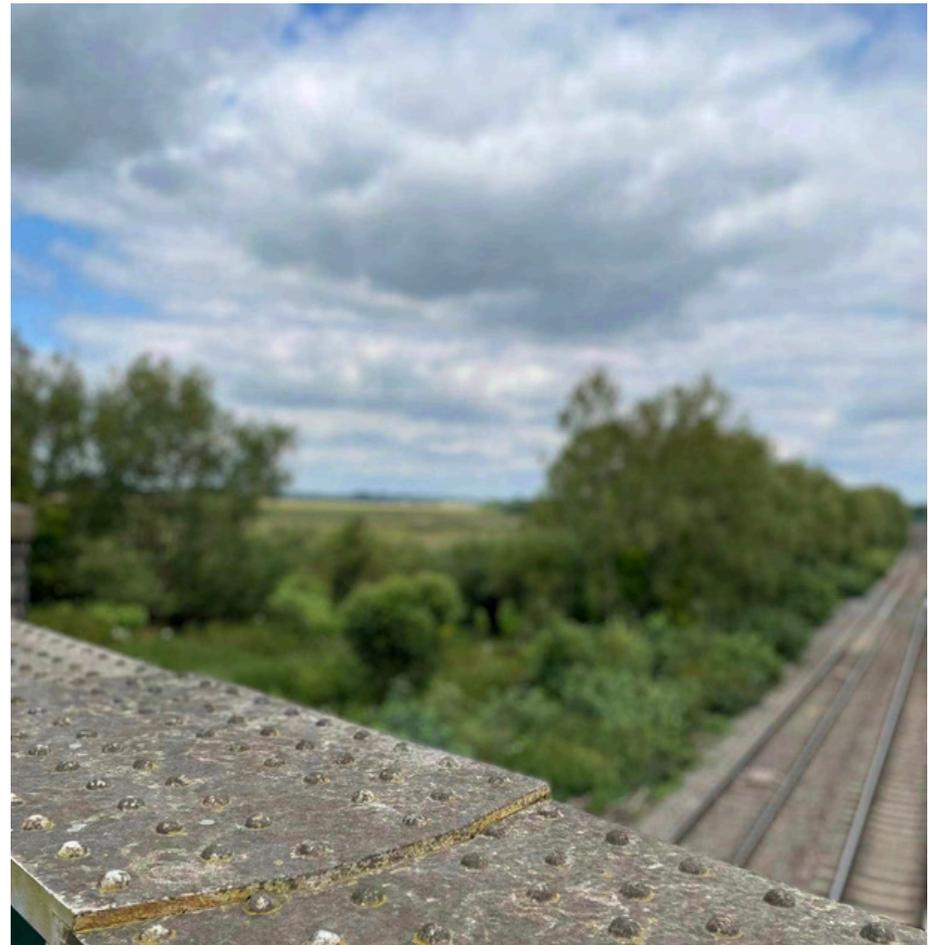
EA Regulatory work (e.g. EA permits for abstraction, discharge, waste, flood risk activity permits, impoundment licences, herbicide approvals, fish movement, etc.): supports screening using habitat and species thresholds.
Helps determine permit type (e.g. exemption vs. standard rules vs. bespoke).
Triggers expert input when needed for complex cases.

Statutory consultee role in development planning: Guides internal planning teams on whether to issue standard responses, bespoke advice, or no comment. Focuses on aquatic and riparian species and habitats under EA's remit.

Advice and guidance: Informs responses to partners and the public. Refers enquirers to TVERC (Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre) when appropriate.

UTILITIES & TRANSPORT

TVERC data is essential for utilities & transport companies such as Thames Water, Affinity Water and Network Rail, when planning maintenance and development work. Making early use of the data to guide their work reduces their risk of delays and unforeseen and costly impacts of protected species, habitats and wildlife sites

What our customers say

"Access to quality TVERC data (and that of other LRCs) is vital for us in order to fulfil statutory requirements of our 'core' legislation (plus the more recent NERC Act requirement applicable to all public bodies). Access to the priority species and habitats data helps us ensure our responses are risk-based and proportionate."

Daryl Buck, Environment Agency

DEVELOPERS

TVERC data is an essential component of environmental impact assessments carried out by consultants on behalf of developers and submitted as part of planning applications. Ecological consultants use our data to help them decide which species to survey for, and to make recommendations for mitigation and compensation for the impacts of development. As Biodiversity Net Gain is becoming mandated, developers want to understand the types of habitats known to be on site and around a site and evaluate its relationship with the surrounding landscape and strategic biodiversity areas and nature recovery networks.

What our customers say

"Being able to call on TVERC as a one-stop-shop repository for reliable species records and designated site information gives a high level of comfort that relevant background data are caught and accounted for early in impact assessment procedures. Without such data, the risk is always there of important information or records jumping out of the woodwork late in the day, which can result in significant and costly delays being caused to development projects "

Dominic Woodfield, Ecological Consultancy

CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS

Large and small conservation organisations use TVERC data and expertise for land management, public education, research and citizen science. TVERC can ensure that data collected via citizen-science projects is supplied to all of the local planning authorities in Oxfordshire and Berkshire in a format they can easily use for decision-making.

RECORDERS AND RECORDING GROUPS

Recorders and Recording Groups use TVERC data for research, planning survey locations and publishing atlases of species distributions. TVERC also host two Recorders conferences per year to encourage knowledge-sharing and networking between the groups.

RESEARCHERS/ UNIVERSITIES

TVERC data and datasets are used for education and research by students, teachers and scientists. We have links with Imperial College London (Silwood Park), Oxford University, Oxford Brookes University and Reading University. These links work well for attracting student volunteers to carry out data management and project work. We would like to strengthen further our links with researchers.

COMMUNITY & PARISH GROUPS

Community and Parish Groups have been encouraged by central government to produce Neighbourhood Development or Community-Led Plans. TVERC can assist communities by carrying out surveys, identifying wildlife corridors, managing wildlife data, giving advice on sources of funding for community projects, and providing data and maps to support plans and Local Green Spaces.

LANDOWNERS AND LAND MANAGERS

We deliver an increasing number of data search reports each year to landowners and conduct ecological surveys that inform land management decisions. Our work also involves supporting landowners in understanding the biodiversity value of their land. This includes conducting Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Habitat and Condition Monitoring surveys to aid the development and implementation of off-site receptor sites and Habitat Banks.

Additionally, we offer independent monitoring and reporting services for on-site Biodiversity Net Gains achieved through completed developments. We also provide tailored data reports—based on both database searches and field surveys—to assist those offering land management advice and to support agri-environment scheme applications.

What our customers say

" With the BNG market in its infancy, it was important to us that our baseline surveys be carried out by someone known and respected locally, so as to reassure stakeholders of the integrity of the project. TVERC have been great to work with throughout the development of this large and complex project, and I have no doubt that having their name on our baseline report has helped to get people onside with what we are doing. "

Henry Scutt, Sulham Estate

MARKET

TVERC operates in a rapidly evolving political and environmental landscape. The unitarisation of Oxfordshire and the potential formation of a strategic authority including Berkshire and Oxfordshire will reshape local governance, with implications for how environmental services are commissioned and delivered. In response, TVERC will continue to diversify its income streams, strengthen partnerships, and remain agile in adapting to new structures and funding models.

The implementation of the Environment Act has embedded Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) into planning and placed Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) at the heart of local environmental policy. These changes, alongside the climate and ecological emergencies, are driving demand for robust, accessible environmental data. TVERC is well-positioned to meet this demand through its data services, ecological analysis, and survey expertise, and will continue to evolve its offer to support evidence-based decision-making.

Digital innovation is transforming biodiversity monitoring and data management. The rise of citizen science, wildlife recording apps, and AI-powered tools offers new opportunities to enhance data collection, analysis, and accessibility. TVERC will explore how to use AI effectively —whether to automate data processing, improve habitat mapping, or support predictive modelling—while continuing to work with stakeholders and the recording community to ensure data quality, integration, and sustainability. We will also advocate for recognition of the resources required to maintain high-quality datasets in an increasingly open data environment.

COMPETITORS

No other organisation has a database for the region that matches ours in terms of quality or quantity of data. We hold a database of more than 5 million validated species records, over 300,000 hectares of habitats classified and mapped to field level, and more than 2,000 sites including boundaries and current citation information comprising of the important details of their designation.

However, some customers perceive national platforms such as the NBN Atlas or datasets from DEFRA and even iRecord as viable alternatives. These sources often lack the local detail, validation, and contextual understanding that TVERC provides. We will continue to highlight the superior quality and relevance of our data to ensure informed decision-making.

We are also seeing increased competition from commercial consultancies offering data analysis and modelling services. These organisations do not have access to our datasets without a licence and they may attempt to undercut our pricing or downplay the value of our data. TVERC will emphasise the unique value of our datasets and our collaborative approach, which ensures that clients receive tailored, high-quality outcomes.

Other Local Environmental Records Centres are not considered competitors, as we operate under mutual agreements through ALERC to avoid geographic overlap and support one another's work.

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

OUR DATA

TVERC aims to hold all available information about the species, wildlife habitats and important wildlife and geological sites in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. This information is not available elsewhere.

All species records received by TVERC are validated and verified before entering them into our database. Full details of our validation and verification processes are contained within our 'Data Policies and Procedures' document which is updated regularly.
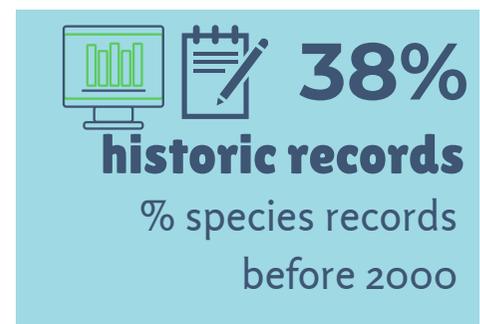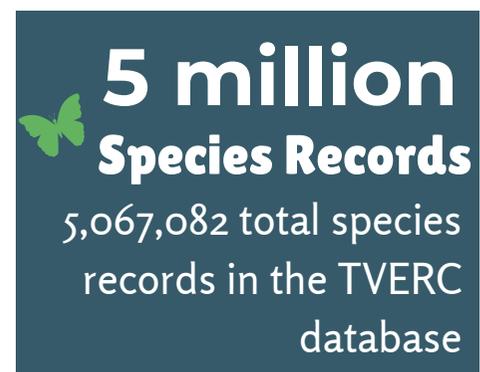
Much of the data in the TVERC database originates as raw data from volunteer recorders and so supporting them is an essential part of the work TVERC carries out. We provide technical support for recording groups who are collecting and analysing data across Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Working with other wildlife organisations, TVERC organise a local Recorders Conference to share information amongst volunteer recorders and increase their knowledge so they can provide us with even better data.

We hold Local Wildlife Site and Local Geological Site boundaries and site descriptions for every site. We also hold data for BBOWT and RSPB nature reserves, Woodland Trust Sites, Ancient Woodland, Local Nature Reserves and national sites.

We hold habitat data on NERC Act S41 Habitats of Principal Importance (previously called UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats) and other habitat data. Sources including aerial photographs and field surveys are used to identify and map habitats to field level. The dataset includes a measure of habitat certainty - how certain we are that the habitat has been correctly identified. We provide data-users with metadata and user-guides to help ensure they fully understand the data provided.

We also hold the boundary data for Conservation Target Areas in Oxfordshire and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Berkshire. These landscape-scale conservation areas are used by the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership and Wild Oxfordshire to coordinate biodiversity work in Berkshire & Oxfordshire.

In the future, we will have systems and processes in place that support the cataloguing of other Environmental Data that is useful for environmental decision-making in the two counties.

5 million
Species Records
5,067,082 total species records in the TVERC database

1 million
Protected & Notable Species
1,217,282 total protected & notable species

38%
historic records
% species records before 2000

42%
of the records from last 5 years

WHAT TVERC OFFERS

The extensive environmental information that TVERC holds and the expertise of TVERC staff in analysis, ecology, planning and surveying qualifies us to carry out diverse projects for a variety of organisations. TVERC also works with other Local Records Centres to undertake regional projects in the South East.

DATA SEARCHES

TVERC provides access to extensive environmental data to support informed decision-making through Data Licenses and a Data Search service. Both are accessible via the TVERC website.

Available data includes:

🐦 Species   🗺️ Sites   🌿 Habitats

Our standard format for providing biodiversity data is a desktop biodiversity report, supplied as a pdf document, along with an Excel spreadsheet for species data and an interactive web map for species, habitat and site data. We can provide GIS datasets for habitats and sites.

For data covering more than a 10km square or a 5km buffer, data is provided in GIS layers. The supply of data in this form is subject to a digital licensing agreement which is usually valid for 1 year.

Some groups and organisations like to have regular access to the latest data for their areas of interest. For these groups there is an option to enter into an annual or multi-year licence agreement for the relevant data sets. The data is presented as GIS layers, and they are provided with periodic updates.

DATA VALIDATION, ANALYSIS & MODELLING

TVERC can carry out data analysis and interpretation projects using existing TVERC data, or data collected specifically for the project. A few examples include:

•Analysing and synthesising ecological data sets to monitor, target, and report the state of biodiversity to inform local plans and nature recovery strategies

•Quantifying the current and potential biodiversity, carbon and other natural capital value of land holdings for spatial planning and decision-making

•Assessing habitat connectivity for protected species to identify core areas, important corridors, barriers to dispersal, and opportunities for improving connectivity

•Identifying important ecological areas, networks, and opportunity mapping to focus landscape scale conservation efforts

•Carrying out green infrastructure audits and identifying green infrastructure opportunities

•Supporting Local Planning Authorities with Biodiversity Net Gain, including calculator validation, monitoring and reporting, and providing training

•Assessing the value of the natural environment and identifying opportunities for improvement such as assessing the value of trees to urban populations and securing investment in their protection and enhancement

ECOLOGICAL SURVEYS & LAND MANAGEMENT ADVICE

TVERC's highly qualified and experienced ecologists carry out ecological surveys to inform land management or nature conservation purposes. We can provide the following:

- Surveys, condition assessments and data to support Biodiversity Net Gain. This includes long-term monitoring of on and offsite developments and habitat banks as well as baseline assessments for offsite gains and habitat banks. Our survey team covers all three aspects of BNG including assessing habitats, hedges, and conducting rivers condition assessments

- Surveys, assessments, and data to support Countryside Stewardship applications, such as Farm Environment records maps, building wildlife assessments, grassland assessments and pond assessments

- Hedgerow surveys to assess against Hedgerow Regulations criteria for Important Hedgerows

- Woodland surveys to support English Woodland Grant Scheme applications

- Species surveys to inform conservation strategies and action

- Monitoring of habitats or species against agreed or proposed conservation action

- Advice to landowners on how to manage their land to protect and enhance the natural environment

TRAINING & EDUCATION

TVERC offers a range of training and engagement opportunities to help people connect with nature and build confidence in biological recording. Through its Noticing Nature programme, TVERC runs relaxed, beginner-friendly events that encourage participants to slow down, observe wildlife, and explore local habitats.

Since 2023, TVERC had lead the City Nature Challenge for Oxfordshire and Berkshire—an annual international citizen science event where communities document as many wildlife observations as possible over four days through iNaturalist.

In addition, TVERC continues to offer bespoke training for organisations and projects, covering habitat and species surveys, biological recording, and GIS use.

CHARGING POLICY

WHAT SERVICES DO TVERC CHARGE FOR?

🔍 Data searches 🌿 Surveys 🗺 Digital mapping of sites and habitats 📗 Data analysis projects 👥 Training

Where TVERC charges for data services this is not a charge for the data itself but relates to the time and costs involved in acquiring, managing, processing, storing and extracting the data along with producing presentable results. TVERC can charge for time taken to provide information and advice, though this can be waived in some cases, for instance for local groups or students. In these cases, we invite a non-compulsory donation which helps TVERC to provide our services.

WHY DOES TVERC CHARGE?

The data TVERC holds takes time and is costly to collect and manage. This work is carried out by both volunteers and paid staff who ensure the data we hold and provide is of a high quality whilst keeping our charges as low as possible. We are grateful that our Service Level Agreement partners (Local Authorities and the Environment Agency) commit to use our data widely within their organisations and in return provide us with the reliability of an annual income that contributes to part of the costs of this work. Of the majority of the core service, more than 70% is funded by Data Searches and Licenses. Private sector organisations, individuals or community groups contribute to TVERC by paying for data services at the point of use, when they request a data search or agree a data licence.

TVERC also charges on a time and materials basis for survey and data analysis projects. This covers the costs of maintaining the resources to undertake relevant projects, and should also contribute - either with data, skills or income - to running the core service. The Local Wildlife Projects in the two counties account for about one third of project income. This is mainly funded by the Local Authorities with a 20% contribution from the Data License and Search income.
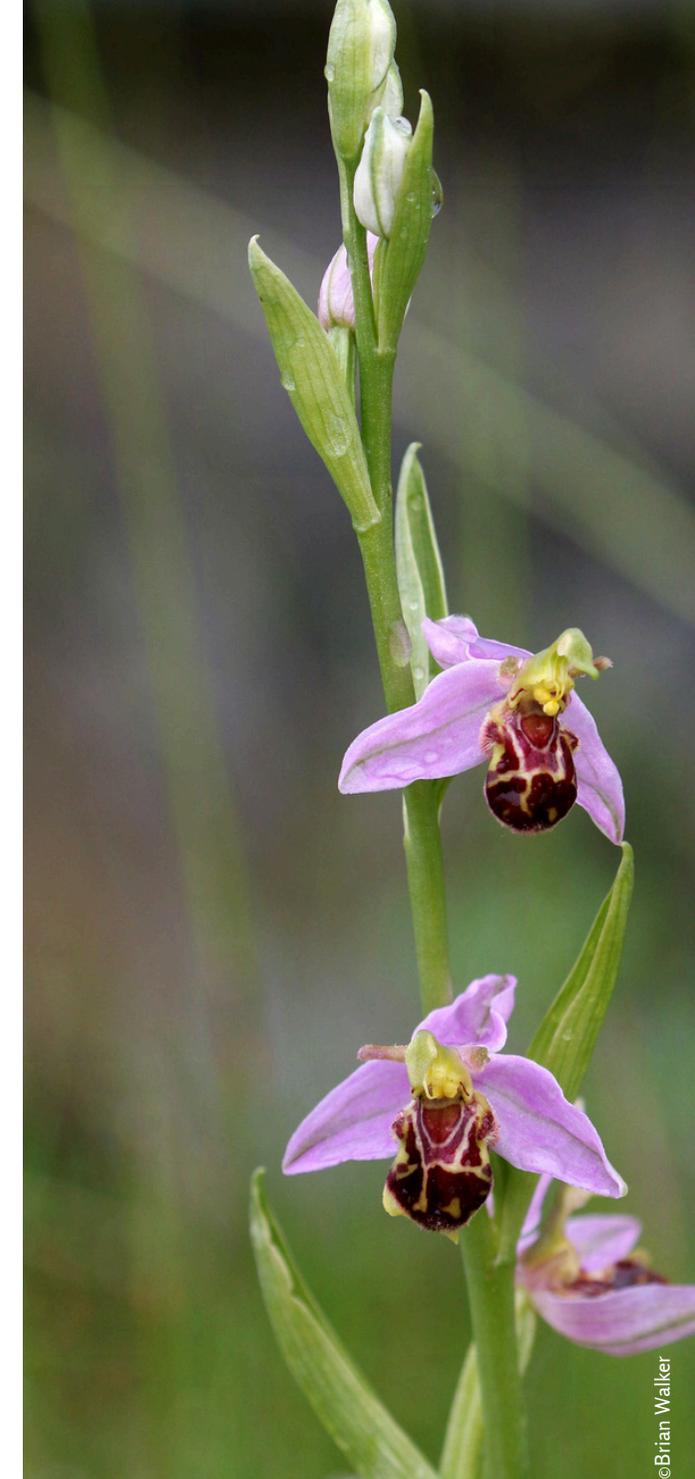
As a non-profit organisation, TVERC's income sustains the services we provide to the local recording community, who in turn share their data with us, so we can share it with everyone. By using TVERC as a central resource, the costs of collating and managing the databases are spread across all our funding sources, which results in economies of scale for everyone.

GOVERNANCE, TEAM & PARTNERSHIP

STAFF

The TVERC team comprises 14 people, but as some work part-time, this is equivalent to 12.8 full-time staff. Together, the TVERC staff encompass a range of skills including ecological knowledge, data management and data modelling expertise.

Steve Wilkes
DIRECTOR

Laura Doughty
ECOLOGY MANAGER

Ellen Lee
BIODIVERSITY DATA MANAGER

Miguel Batista
BIODIVERSITY DATA MANAGER

Julie Kerans
BIODIVERSITY OFFICER

Gordon Barker
BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS OFFICER

Joanna Higson
BIOLOGICAL RECORDING CO-ORDINATOR

Daniela Muñoz
BIODIVERSITY DATA OFFICER

Rob Curtis
BIODIVERSITY OFFICER

Nicolette Bell
BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS OFFICER

Filipa McGuinness
ADMIN OFFICER

Katharine Flach
BIODIVERSITY DATA OFFICER

Katherine Howell
BIODIVERSITY OFFICER

Siobhan Edney
BIODIVERSITY DATA ASSISTANT

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VOLUNTEERS

We are fortunate to have the help of both office and field volunteers, who support TVERC's work in a variety of way.

Since the pandemic, our office volunteers have been supporting us remotely. We usually work with around five office volunteers at any one time, and their combined efforts often equate to around 100 days per year. The tasks they carry out include:

- Validating data to ensure accuracy
- Creating digital maps using GIS tools
- Preparing datasets for import into our Recorder 6 database
- Sourcing ecological reports from local authority planning portals

We are expanding these roles to include support with enhancing our habitat data and conducting research and analysis.

Our field volunteers play a vital role in collecting biodiversity and geodiversity data across Oxfordshire and Berkshire. They contribute by:

- Conducting standard habitat and botanical surveys
- Participating in surveys focused on specific species or taxonomic groups

Volunteering with TVERC provides opportunities to:

- Learn about the collection, management and utilisation of biodiversity and geodiversity data
- Develop skills in using software such as Excel and GIS
- Expand knowledge of local flora and fauna
- Explore sites that may not be accessible to the public
- Gain hands-on experience in recording and fieldwork
- Work alongside enthusiastic and professional ecologists
- Contribute to a valuable conservation resource

What our volunteers say

"It was fantastic to be able to make a real contribution to the work of TVERC, and to be able to do so independently. At the same time, the level of support given was fantastic and all staff members/other volunteers have always been happy to help. Another brilliant aspect has been the opportunity to learn so much about biodiversity, the roles within record centres and their external partnerships"

PREMISES AND HOSTING

We are currently hosted by Oxfordshire County Council. Our primary office is County Hall, but most staff work from home for much of the time. The costs of hosting TVERC are deducted from the Oxfordshire County Council's SLA payment. The hosting arrangements cover the necessary services of Facilities, HR, IT and Finance needed to support TVERC's staff and activities. This is valuable to TVERC and Oxfordshire County Council and also is reassuring to our other partners as TVERC gains cost-effective access to Local Authority grade services.

GOVERNANCE, PARTNERSHIP AND STEERING GROUP

Our funding partners include each of the Local Authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire along with the Environment Agency. These partners contribute to the overall collection, processing and distribution of environmental information so there are efficiencies of scale which provide excellent value for money. We also work closely with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

The Steering Group consists of representatives from the partners, data users and data providers.

The group operates on a consensus basis under agreed-upon terms of reference. Each partner has representation in the group, either directly or via consultation and feedback. All partners agree to:

- Support the group
- Use all reasonable endeavours to ensure it functions effectively and decisions are made expediently

The director is responsible for:

- Reporting on progress at each group meeting
- Ensuring all products and services are delivered on time and within budget
- Ensuring outputs are achieved

The steering group monitors progress by meeting at least three times a year (usually May, September and January). The group records all decisions in meeting minutes.

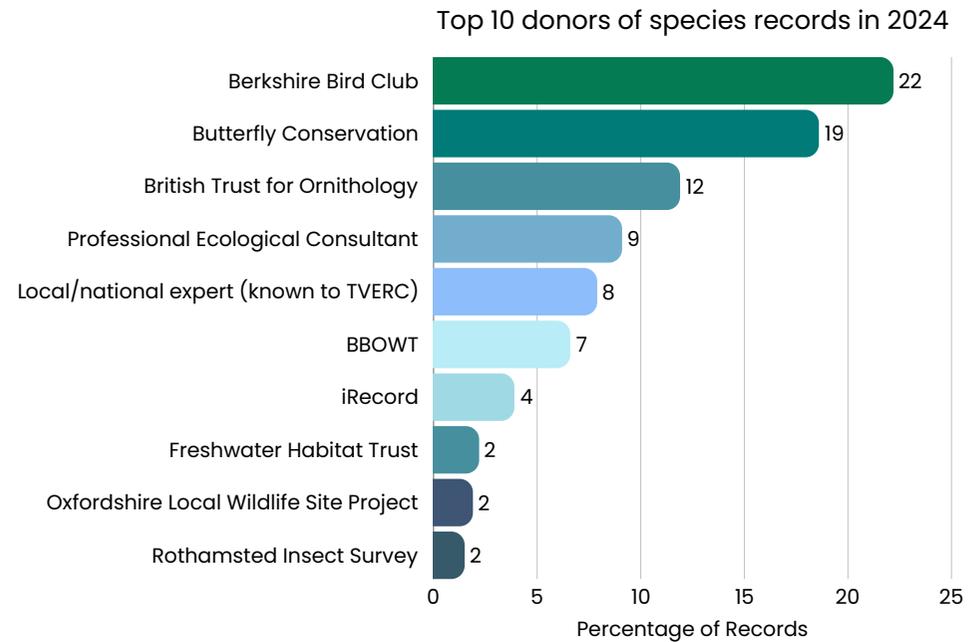Steering Group → **guides** → TVERC Director → **leads** → TVERC Team

DATA SUPPLIERS

Biological species are recorded for many reasons and by many groups and individuals and so TVERC obtains data from a wide variety of sources (see box opposite). TVERC also downloads online species records including iRecord, NBN Atlas, Record Pool, CEH and Government data portals.

Data is collated into datasets, which range in size from one individual sighting to several thousand records within one set. In 2024, 74% of the data sets we received (548 out of 738) were created by ecological consultancies. These data sets were mainly downloaded from planning portals by TVERC volunteers, sent to us by Local Authorities as part of their Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with us or by the consultancies themselves. The numbers of data sets sent to us by members of the public has remained steady and we receive several hundred records annually from members of the public via the online Cognito form that was made available on the TVERC website in 2024.

Looking at individual records entered into the TVERC database during 2024, around 70% were from NGOs and local groups; many from BBOWT, with whom we work closely.

Our Biological Recording Co-Ordinator supports local recorders and conservation organisations to help them to continue to share data with TVERC, preferably in a format we can easily add into our database.

Top 10 donors of species records in 2024

Donor	Percentage of Records
Berkshire Bird Club	22
Butterfly Conservation	19
British Trust for Ornithology	12
Professional Ecological Consultant	9
Local/national expert (known to TVERC)	8
BBOWT	7
iRecord	4
Freshwater Habitat Trust	2
Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site Project	2
Rothamsted Insect Survey	2

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MANAGING OPERATIONAL RISKS

TVERC has an annually updated Business Continuity Plan. This outlines mitigation strategies and recovery procedures to ensure continuity of services in both expected and unforeseen circumstances.

COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION

TVERC has a Communication Strategy that supports our business plan by:

- Retaining existing customers

- Attracting new customers

- Supporting our network of recorders

TVERC tailors its communications to a wide range of audiences including local authority planners and Councillors, environmental consultants working on behalf of developers, local recorders and conservation groups to nature conservation professionals. Our key messages include:

- Who are TVERC and what do we do

- Why is TVERC important to customers, partners, recorders, etc

- The value of recording

- How we support recorders, how their data is used

- Principles of data ownership, management and sharing

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FINANCE

TVERC operates as a not-for-profit internal trading unit within Oxfordshire County Council, meaning its budget must balance to zero each financial year. Any surplus income is reinvested into the service, except for funds held in a Reserve account. The Director is responsible for ensuring there is sufficient income to cover operational costs. Financial forecasts are reviewed monthly, with reports to the Steering Group three times per year. While charges may vary from forecasts depending on future circumstances, TVERC will work to ensure that any fee increases are kept to a minimum for all our customers by ensuring our processes are as efficient as possible.

INCOME

TVERC is funded in several ways, as shown in the table below, resulting in an annual income of around £800k. All these funding streams contribute to the annual cost of collating and managing the TVERC database, resulting in economies of scale for our customers.

The forecasts in Table 1 are based on the following assumptions:

CORE INCOME

• Data search numbers are expected to continue to increase each year. Charges will increase each year

• Data licences revenue has been reduced, as Thames Water is unlikely to renew its data licence. Charges will increase each year

• Core Local Authority Service Level Agreements (SLA income remains stable and increases each year with the increase in TVERC's staff costs

• Environment Agency SLA income remains stable and increases with TVERC's staff costs

PROJECT INCOME

• Projects, Local Authority SLA: Income increases in 26/27 to reflect increases in project work, principally Local Wildlife Sites projects. It increases each year with the increase in TVERC's staff costs

• Other Projects funded by Local Authorities: Number of project days reduces but charges increase with TVERC staff costs

• Projects funded by Government Agencies: It is expected that this can grow to regularly 2 or 3 projects a year, and increased with TVERC staff costs

• Projects funded by Other organisations: These are planned to increase each year from 26/27 and charges will increase with TVERC staff costs

RESERVE PROJECT FUNDING

• TVERC reserves will not be used over the 3 years of the plan

TABLE 1: Forecast income 2025 - 2029

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Commercial Data Licences	£15,000	£18,000	£19,170	£20,032
Commercial Data Searches	£260,000	£321,558	£356,157	£372,184
Local Authorities Core SLA	£66,999	£70,015	£73,166	£76,458
EA SLA	£17,152	£17,924	£18,730	£19,573
Donations	£1,250	£1,306	£1,365	£1,426
Projects - LA SLA Funded	£99,247	£131,223	£137,128	£143,299
Projects - LA funded	£112,903	£130,510	£134,700	£131,320
Projects - EA / NE / DEFRA funded	£9,500	£25,260	£29,185	£30,485
Project - other funded	£40,000	`£78,300	£100,080	£113,295
Reserve Project Funding	£122,505	£0	£0	£0
TOTAL	**£744,556**	**£794,096**	**£869,681**	**£908,073**

CHARGING STRUCTURE

Data Licences are priced based on location and area size, with options for multi-year access and regular updates. Discounts are available for charities and social enterprises using data for conservation.

Data Searches are one-off charges based on requested datasets and search area size. Updates require a new search. Common requests include Species, Sites and Habitat data within 1 or 2km areas.   Charges may be reduced by up to 50% or waived in specific cases.

Data Analysis & Ecological Surveys are charged at a daily rate, which includes a contribution to TVERC's database management. Commercial organisations pay a standard rate, with discounts available for partners and non-profits.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are priced according to deliverables, geographic coverage, and—for Local Authorities—population size.

All charges across Data Licences, Searches, Day Rates, and SLAs are scheduled to increase over the next three years (see Table 2 below).

TABLE 2: Increase in charges 2025 - 2029

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Data Licences & Searches	-	15%	6.5%	4.5%
Day Rates	-	6.5%	6.5%	4.5%
Service Level Agreements	-	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%

EXPENDITURE

The majority of TVERC's income is spent on staff (including volunteer expenses). Our staff and volunteers are the biggest assets TVERC has, as it's the staff time spent on supporting the Recording community, acquiring and managing data, providing data searches and data licences, and a variety of projects which bring in the income. Our staff and volunteers also work continuously to improve the TVERC service and data products we can offer. The forecast (Table 3) shows staff costs increasing from the start of 2025/26 when all vacancies in the team were filled and then increasing each year with inflation and progression through grades.

It is likely that other costs will rise with inflation over the period of this plan, modelled at 3% for each year.

TABLE 3: Forecast expenditure 2025 - 2029

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Staff (salaries, expenses, training)	£706,668	£736,800	£775,798	£805,054
Project expenses	£603	£1,137	£1,172	£1,208
Overheads (equipment, printing, postage, subscriptions)	£5,525	£9,000	£9,271	£9,550
Premises (paid 'in kind' by OCC)	£18,822	£19,669	£20,554	£21,479
Recorders Conferences & Recording Fund	£6,300	£15,731	£16,413	£17,177
Investment in service (data tools, website etc)	£6,638	£11,330	£11,670	£12,021
Add to Reserve	£0	£0	£33,588	£40,830
Total	**£744,556**	**£793,667**	**£868,466**	**£907,319**

MANAGING FINANCIAL RISK AND CASH FLOW

Cash-flow is not currently an issue whilst TVERC remains hosted by Oxfordshire County Council, however, it is good practice to manage income and expenditure so the Business account remains balanced throughout the year.

Due to Oxfordshire County Council accounting rules, the Business account must balance to £0 at the end of each financial year, but 'surplus' monies or deficits can be moved into or out of a Balancing account.

The TVERC Reserve is also kept in the Balancing account. The TVERC Reserve mitigates TVERC from financial risk. The policy that the Reserve covers the costs of staff redundancies plus two months running costs was agreed by the Steering Group in the September 2012 meeting. As TVERC has had several new starters in the last few years, the potential redundancy costs increases significantly over the next business plan period (Table 4).

TABLE 4: Reserve forecast 2025 – 2029

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Redundancy costs	£80,000	£146,879	£184,442	£220,004
2 months running costs	£210,000	£132,278	£139,146	£144,415
Total	£290,000	£290,000	£323,588	£364,419

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