

Report title: Amendment to boundary of Ocombe Farm and Scadson Woods Local Nature Reserve

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	20 October 2026
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr Chris Lewis, Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth
Email:	chris.lewis@torbay.gov.uk
Lead Director:	Malcolm Coe, Director of Finance David Carter, Director of Regeneration
Email:	malcolm.coe@torbay.gov.uk
Wards affected:	Preston and Cockington with Chelston

1. Summary of Report:

- 1.1 Torbay Council sold Ocombe Farm and associated land in July 2026 – this land forms part of the Ocombe Farm and Scadson Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR). It is understood that the designation as a Local Nature Reserve was originally sought in order for the previous Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust to more easily access grant funding.
- 1.2 There is an expectation that the land forming Local Nature Reserves needs to be under control of the party who designated it as such. Therefore, it is proposed to amend the boundary of the LNR to be as shown in Appendix 2.
- 1.3 The amendment reflects the change in land ownership for which the new owner intends to invest in the farm site, supporting regeneration, tourism and economic activity. The proposal has been informed by independent ecological advice and consultation with Natural England.
- 1.4 Any proposals brought forward by the new owner would still need to go through the normal planning process and be assessed against national planning policy, the Local Plan,

environmental requirements and other relevant planning considerations, including the Site of Special Scientific Interest designation on part of the land.

- 1.4 The Local Nature Reserve will continue to exist, with the vast majority of the reserve remaining protected. An updated management plan will help ensure that the retained reserve continues to be managed, enhanced and accessible for wildlife, education and recreation.

2. Recommendations and Proposed Decision:

- 2.1 That the amendment to the Occombe Farm and Scadson Woods Local Nature Reserve boundary, as set out in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, be approved with any necessary declaration and associated requirements being made.

3. Reasons for Recommendations/Proposed Decision:

- 3.1 The Council sold the land at Occombe Farm in July 2026 and committed to use reasonable efforts to secure re-designation of the Local Nature Reserve regarding the land sold, in order to meet the expectation that the land forming LNRs should be under the control of the party who designated it.
- 3.2 The proposed amendment to the boundary reflects the change in ownership and has been informed by an independent ecological assessment and consultation with Natural England. The majority of the Local Nature Reserve will remain in place and will continue to be managed for wildlife, education and recreation. Any future development proposals for the site would remain subject to the statutory planning process and assessment against relevant planning and environmental policies.

4. Background and Context:

- 4.1 The boundary of the Occombe Farm and Scadson Woods Local Nature Reserve is shown in Appendix 1 – this includes the land at Occombe Farm which the Council has sold.
- 4.2 There is an expectation that the land forming Local Nature Reserves is under the control of the local authority who designated it as such. Therefore, the Council agreed to make reasonable efforts to re-designate the LNR regarding the land recently sold. To this end it is proposed to amend the boundary of the LNR as shown in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 An ecology report has been commissioned, and Natural England has been consulted. The Ecological Assessment Report can be found at Appendix 3. The report suggests that mitigation measures set out at Section 4 *Mitigation strategy/ opportunities for enhancement*

measures could be implemented in the remaining LNR to mitigate the removal of the LNR designation on the land sold at Occombe Farm. Appendix 4 contains Natural England's response. Natural England has requested Torbay to "update the existing management plan for the new LNR boundary and provide Natural England with a copy of this document. As the local authority you should then prepare a formal (legal) declaration to revoke the declaration document (this need only be one side of A4 paper) accompanied by a local nature reserve map"

- 4.4 Following consideration of the feedback from Natural England and the independent ecological assessment, approval is sought to amend the Local Nature Reserve boundary to remove the land sold at Occombe Farm whilst retaining the remainder of the LNR. It should be noted that the proposal has no impact on the Site of Special Scientific Interest which continues to cover part of the land sold.
- 4.4 Pending a decision, Torbay Council has provided an updated management plan to Natural England and should the recommendations be approved will prepare a declaration document accompanied by a local nature reserve map.

5. Alternative Options Considered:

- 5.1 The alternative option would be for Occombe Farm to remain designated as an LNR. If the LNR designation were to remain, agreement would need to be reached with the landowner and the land would need to be managed as a Local Nature Reserve alongside the new landowners' aspirations for the site.

6. Contribution to Council Priorities:

- 6.1 The proposal aligns with the previous decision of the Council to dispose of Occombe Farm and associated land whilst retaining the majority of the Local Nature Reserve and supporting continued environmental stewardship through an updated management plan.

7. Consultation and Engagement:

- 7.1 Torbay Council having declared the local nature reserve is responsible for making decisions about changes to the boundary of the local nature reserve. Torbay Council must consult Natural England on the amendment of the boundaries with the initial consultation having been carried out through the provision of the Ecological Assessment Report (appendix 3) and Natural England's response (appendix 4).

- 7.2 In terms of the procedure that the Council must follow for formal de-registration, legal advice has been obtained which confirms that the next steps are:
- a) The Council is to draw up a formal declaration and de-declaration document accompanied by the LNR map at a scale which accurately shows the LNR boundary.
 - b) The formal document is signed according to the Council's scheme of delegation. The LNR map will show the current LNR boundary and it will show the amended LNR boundary.
 - c) The local authority shall formally notify Natural England of the LNR amendment of boundaries in writing and send them a copy of the signed legal document, together with a map.
 - d) Natural England will then update the LNR Records.

8. Implications:

Financial Implications:

- 8.1 The Council has agreed to sell the land and agreed to make reasonable efforts to remove the LNR designation from the sold land. The Council's Asset Management Strategy states that the Council will 'always seek to maximise the full market receipt for their assets whether by way of freehold disposal or leasehold interest'. The independently appointed valuation established that the interested party's offer is above market value.

Legal Implications:

- 8.2 The amendment of the Local Nature Reserve boundary requires the Council to follow the statutory process for revocation of part of the declaration, including consultation with Natural England and the preparation of a formal declaration document and revised boundary map. Legal advice has been obtained on the required process.

Corporate Parenting/Children and Young People:

- 8.3 No impacts are anticipated with the removal of the LNR designation to Occombe Farm resulting in an amended boundary to the remaining LNR. The Occombe Farm land is currently unused and does not provide any service to children or young people. The new landowner's proposal includes leisure facilities that improve health and wellbeing to the community and has been recently re-opened. The existing LNR will continue to operate as a nature reserve.

Associated Risks, Risk Tolerance Level and Mitigations:

A summary of key risks associated with the recommendations in this report are:

1. Financial Risk – mitigated through the de-registration of the LNR relating to the land sold.
2. Ecology Risk – monitored through the range of possible mitigation measures.

The risks of not approving the recommendations include failure to obtain a capital receipt preventing regeneration strategies across Torbay. Overall risk exposure is assessed as acceptable within the Council's risk tolerance appetite.

Full risks are set out below:

Risk	Risk score before mitigations (likelihood x impact)	Mitigations	Risk Score after mitigations (likelihood x impact)	Risk tolerance
Loss of ecology	9	Monitored through the range of possible mitigation set out in section 4 of the Ecological Assessment Report contained in appendix 3.	2	The suggested mitigation measures will enhance the ecological value of the remaining LNR.
Social Value	9	Careful consideration of the mitigation set out in section 4 of the Ecological Assessment Report contained in appendix 3.	2	The suggested mitigation measures will enhance the user experience (social and educational) of the remaining LNR.

Contributions to tackling climate change or achieving carbon neutrality:

- 8.4 Ecological measures set out in section 4 of the Ecological Assessment Report to improve the remaining LNR will in turn will play its part in tackling climate change. For example, conservation days involving habitat management, tree planting and invasive species control will help protect and enhance the local environment having a positive impact on tackling climate change.

Social Value Considerations:

- 8.5 Measures to improve public access, ensure public safety and to promote educational value (but avoid significant impacts to habitats and species) as suggested in section 4 of the ecological assessment report in appendix 3 will enhance users experience of the remaining LNR.

Procurement Implications:

- 8.6 There are no significant procurement implications.

Other Implications:

- 8.7 There are no significant additional implications.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	18% of Torbay residents are aged under 18 years old. 55% of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. 27% of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.	The proposal may affect people of all ages who use the site for recreation, informal exercise, education and enjoyment of nature. No significant adverse impacts have been identified as the proposal does not remove the wider Local Nature Reserve and ecological enhancement measures are proposed for the remaining reserve. The future reopening of Occombe Farm may also increase opportunities for intergenerational participation, education and leisure activities.	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.
Carers	- At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these carers provided 50 hours or more of care.	Whilst no significant adverse impacts are anticipated, the Council recognises that people with disabilities and their carers may derive particular benefit from access to green spaces for recreation, wellbeing and connection to nature. Consideration has therefore	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
		been given to whether the land being removed from the Local Nature Reserve designation provides specific accessibility benefits which are not replicated elsewhere within the remaining reserve. The proposal relates to the removal of a statutory designation rather than the closure of the site to public access. The remaining Local Nature Reserve will continue to be available and opportunities to improve accessibility will be considered through the updated management plan.		
Care experienced	As of January 2026, there were 277 former care experienced young people aged 18-24 in Torbay.	The Council has considered the proposal in its role as a Corporate Parent. Access to green spaces can support the health, wellbeing, social development and resilience of care experienced young people, who may experience poorer outcomes than their peers across a range of measures. The proposal relates to the removal of the Local Nature Reserve designation from part of the site rather than the	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
		removal of access to the wider reserve. No evidence has been identified to suggest that care experienced young people make disproportionate use of the land affected by the proposed boundary amendment. The wider Local Nature Reserve will remain accessible and ecological enhancement measures are proposed to improve its environmental, educational and recreational value. As such, no significant adverse impacts on care experienced young people are anticipated.		
Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.9% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	Whilst no significant adverse impacts are anticipated, the Council recognises that people with disabilities may derive particular benefit from access to green spaces for recreation, wellbeing and connection to nature. Consideration has therefore been given to whether the land being removed from the Local	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
		Nature Reserve designation provides specific accessibility benefits which are not replicated elsewhere within the remaining reserve. The proposal relates to the removal of a statutory designation rather than the closure of the site to public access. The remaining Local Nature Reserve will continue to be available and opportunities to improve accessibility will be considered through the updated management plan.		
Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth.	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
		differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining reserve will continue to promote inclusive access for all sections of the community.		
Marriage and civil partnership	Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining reserve will continue to promote inclusive access for all sections of the community.	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.
Pregnancy and maternity	Between 2013 and 2024, the rate of live births (as a	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment	Swisco or another.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
	proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 56.0 per 1,000) than the Southwest (53.4) and broadly in line with England (56.3). For the period 2022 to 2024, rates in Torbay (44.6) have been significantly below England (50.0).	protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining reserve will continue to promote inclusive access for all sections of the community.	Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Timescales to be confirmed.
Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as the following: 1.6% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh 0.3% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African 1.5% as being of Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
	96.1% as White 0.4% described their ethnicity another way. - Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.	reserve will continue to promote inclusive access for all sections of the community.		
Religion and belief	The 2021 Census showed that the residents in Torbay identify their religion and/or belief as the following; 48.5% are Christian 0.4% are Buddhist 0.2% are Hindu 0.6% are Muslim - Less than 0.1% are Sikh 0.1% are Jewish 0.7% have another religion	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining reserve will continue to promote	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
	43.2% have no religion 6.3% did not answer	inclusive access for all sections of the community.		
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female. 48.7% of Torbay's population are male.	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining reserve will continue to promote inclusive access for all sections of the community.	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, residents described their sexuality as follows;	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within	Swisco or another.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
	• 89% as Straight or Heterosexual • 1.7% as Gay or Lesbian • 1.1% as Bisexual • 0.1% as Pansexual • 0.1% described their sexuality another way • 7.4% of people didn't answer the question	proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining reserve will continue to promote inclusive access for all sections of the community.	appendix 3 from this report.	Timescales to be confirmed.
Armed Forces Community	• In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. • In Torbay, 5.9% of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.	No evidence has been identified to suggest that people sharing this protected characteristic are currently more likely to be affected by the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary. The proposal relates to a geographical change in designation and does not alter eligibility for services or result in differential treatment of any protected group. Any future management arrangements for the remaining reserve will continue to promote	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
		inclusive access for all sections of the community.		
<i>Additional considerations:</i>				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)	Torbay is ranked as the 39th most deprived upper tier local authority in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025.	Access to green space can be particularly important for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, as it provides free opportunities for recreation, exercise and wellbeing. Consideration has therefore been given to whether the proposal could disproportionately affect residents living in more deprived communities. Whilst the removal of the designation represents a reduction in the overall extent of protected land, the wider Local Nature Reserve will remain available and mitigation measures are proposed to enhance its ecological, educational and social value. No disproportionate adverse impacts on residents experiencing deprivation have been identified at this stage.	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)	For the five-year period 2020 to 2024, data shows there is a 6-year life expectancy gap between males who live in Torbay's least and most deprived areas and, a 3-year gap for females.	Access to natural environments contributes positively to physical activity, mental wellbeing and social connection. The Council has considered whether the proposed amendment to the Local Nature Reserve boundary could adversely affect these benefits. As public access to the wider reserve will remain and the ecological assessment identifies opportunities for enhancement of the retained reserve, significant adverse public health impacts are not anticipated. The reopening of Occombe Farm may also create additional opportunities for recreation and community participation.	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.
Human Rights impacts		Consideration has been given to the Human Rights Act 1998. The proposal is not considered to interfere disproportionately with any Convention rights. The proposal concerns a change to the boundary of a Local Nature Reserve designation following the sale of land and does not remove	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
		public access to the remaining reserve. The proposal has been informed by an ecological assessment and consultation with Natural England and is considered proportionate and justified in the circumstances.		
Child Friendly (Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) considerations): <i>Summarise the CRIA considerations for this proposal, including which groups of children and young people may be affected (e.g., care experienced children/young people, care leavers, children with SEND), how their rights and best interests have been considered, and any engagement undertaken with children/young people and/or their representatives. Set out any mitigations to address identified adverse impacts</i>		The proposal has been considered from the perspective of children's rights and wellbeing. Children and young people may use the site for informal recreation, educational visits, nature-based learning and family activities. The proposal relates to the removal of the Local Nature Reserve designation from part of the site rather than the removal of public access to the wider reserve. No significant adverse impacts on children's rights are anticipated. The ecological enhancements proposed for the retained reserve have the potential to strengthen educational and environmental learning opportunities in the future. Care experienced children, children with SEND and other	See section 4 from the Ecological Assessment Report contained within appendix 3 from this report.	Swisco or another. Timescales to be confirmed.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
<i>and how these will be monitored.</i>		vulnerable groups are not expected to experience disproportionate impacts from this proposal.		

10. Cumulative Council Impact:

10.1 None

11. Cumulative Community Impact:

11.1 The majority of the Local Nature Reserve will remain in place and continue to provide ecological, educational and recreational benefits to the community. Enhancement measures identified within the ecological assessment and the updated management plan will support the ongoing value of the reserve.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation:

12.1 Monitoring and evaluation will be required once a timescale and confirmation of the mitigation measures are taken through the updated management plan.

Appendices:

1. Existing LNR
2. Proposed amended LNR boundary
3. Ecological Assessment Report
4. Natural England consultation response

Background Documents:

None

Officer Contact Details:

Name: [Ed Brown](#)

Title: [Development Manager](#)

Email address: edward.brown@torbay.gov.uk