



*Meeting:* **Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

*Date/Time:* **Wednesday, 7 June 2023 at 2.00 pm**

*Location:* **Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield**

*Contact:* **Mr E. Walters (tel: 0116 305 2583)**

*Email:* **[euan.walters@leics.gov.uk](mailto:euan.walters@leics.gov.uk)**

### **Membership**

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC   Mrs. R. Page CC  
Mr. N. Chapman CC   Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC  
Mr. M. Frisby CC   Mrs B. Seaton CC  
Mr. Max Hunt CC

**Please note: this meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWFpwBLs6MnUzG0WjejrQtQ>**

### **AGENDA**

- | <u>Item</u>  | <u>Report by</u> |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Appointment of Chairman.<br><br><i>Mr. M. Frisby CC was nominated Chairman elect at the Annual Meeting of the County Council held on 17 May 2023.</i> |                  |
| 2. Election of Deputy Chairman.  |                  |
| 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2023.  | (Pages 5 - 8)    |
| 4. Question Time.  |                  |
| 5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).  |                  |
| 6. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent   |                  |



elsewhere on the agenda.

7. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.
8. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.
9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.
10. Biodiversity Enhancements in Leicestershire Country Parks                      Director of Corporate Resources                      (Pages 9 - 12)
11. Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Responsible Authority Status.                      Director of Environment and Transport                      (Pages 13 - 42)
12. Dates of future meetings.  
  
Future meetings of the Committee are scheduled to take place on the following dates all at 2.00pm:  
  
Thursday 14 September 2023;  
Thursday 2 November 2023;  
Thursday 25 January 2024;  
Thursday 14 March 2024;  
Thursday 13 June 2024;  
Thursday 12 September 2024;  
Thursday 14 November 2024.
13. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.
14. Exclusion of the Press and Public.  
  
The public are likely to be excluded during the following item of business in accordance with section 100(A) and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:-
  - Scrutiny Review Panel - Recycling and Household Waste Sites.
15. Scrutiny Review Panel - Recycling and Household Waste Sites.                      Chief Executive                      (Pages 43 - 72)

## QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The ability to ask good, pertinent questions lies at the heart of successful and effective scrutiny. To support members with this, a range of resources, including guides to questioning, are available via the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny website [www.cfgs.org.uk](http://www.cfgs.org.uk). The following questions have been agreed by Scrutiny members as a good starting point for developing questions:

- Who was consulted and what were they consulted on? What is the process for and quality of the consultation?
- How have the voices of local people and frontline staff been heard?
- What does success look like?
- What is the history of the service and what will be different this time?
- What happens once the money is spent?
- If the service model is changing, has the previous service model been evaluated?
- What evaluation arrangements are in place – will there be an annual review?

Members are reminded that, to ensure questioning during meetings remains appropriately focused that:

- (a) they can use the officer contact details at the bottom of each report to ask questions of clarification or raise any related patch issues which might not be best addressed through the formal meeting;
- (b) they must speak only as a County Councillor and not on behalf of any other local authority when considering matters which also affect district or parish/town councils (see Articles 2.03(b) of the Council's Constitution).



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Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 2 March 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC  
Mr. N. Chapman CC  
Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC  
Mr. D. Harrison CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC  
Mr. B. Lovegrove CC  
Mrs. A. Wright CC

In attendance

Mr. B. L. Pain CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change.

48. Election of Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. N. Chapman CC be elected Chairman for the meeting.

Mr. N. Chapman CC in the Chair.

49. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

50. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

51. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

52. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

53. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

54. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

55. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

56. Value of Trees on the Highway Toolkit.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport regarding the Value of Trees on the Highway Toolkit and the proposal to integrate the Toolkit into the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) Members particularly welcomed the species selection tool and valuation matrix and the consideration it gave to carbon storage, air pollution and flooding.
- (ii) Members noted that trees being too close to the curb and roads was a historical problem and were pleased that work was being carried out to tackle damage caused by tree roots to highways and nearby buildings. In response to a question about tree roots it was explained the council had guidance on street trees and how they could impact on underground services and adjacent assets. There was the potential for this information to be used as part of the species selection tool and valuation matrix and this would be looked at going forward.
- (iii) A member raised concerns that tree roots were also causing a hazard on bridleways and cycleways. In response some reassurance was given that the Toolkit was also applicable to bridleways and cycleways.
- (iv) The Council was developing its own tree nursery and would be looking at growing specific species that the Toolkit supported for planting on the highways. Traditionally there were 4 main species of trees in Leicestershire and the toolkit would allow scheme designers to select from a wider range of species that would improve resilience of the tree population in relation to issues such as climate change, ash dieback and other diseases.
- (v) A member expressed a belief that there was a lack of partnership working between District councils and the County Council in connection with landscaping and trees on the highways. In response assurance was given that going forward the County Council would work with District councils and particularly Planning Authorities.
- (vi) The toolkit was being promoted more widely in the hope that other authorities and organisations would start using it. In response to a question as to whether Leicestershire County Council would be able to receive an income for developing the Toolkit it was explained that although the County Council had invested in the Toolkit, the main works had been funded by the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund therefore the County Council could not charge for its use.

## RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted and the use of the Value of Trees on the Highway Toolkit be welcomed.

57. Persistent Organic Pollutants in Waste Upholstered Seating.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which informed of the recently emerging issue of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) in Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) The exact nature of the issue was that chemicals used to make seating flame retardant resulted in the furniture exceeding safe limits of POPS. This was a national problem however it was not such a big problem in other countries as UK fire retardant regulations were particularly stringent.
- (ii) In response to concerns that the POPS were dangerous it was explained that it was not advisable for people to dismantle the sofas and remove the chemicals as this could lead to the chemicals escaping. The WUDS needed to be disposed of by incineration. In response to a suggestion from a member that the Council should be developing its own sites for disposing of the WUDS it was explained that this would be very costly and take many years to get planning permission. Furthermore, the Council had already made commitments regarding disposal of its waste. However, consideration did need to be given to how the Council dealt with the WUDS in the long term as they were expected to come forward as waste items for the next 20 or 30 years.
- (iii) In response to concerns raised about a lack of storage space for the WUDS reassurance was given that there was provision at some waste sites and the waste was kept moving through the system so it did not create blockages.
- (iv) A member suggested that Government needed to be lobbied to prevent furniture manufacturers from using the chemicals. It was also suggested that furniture manufacturers should be required to takeback furniture items that contained POPS.

## RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted with concern;
- (b) That officers be requested to provide a further report to a future meeting of the Committee once further data and information was available.

58. Environment and Climate Change Performance Report to December 2022.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the key performance indicators that the Council was solely or partly responsible for delivering against the Council Strategic Plan as well as the Environment and Waste performance framework. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

A member noted that nine of the Key Performance Indicators were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quartile which meant they were below average. In response to a question as to what was being done to improve performance against these indicators it was explained that the action being taken depended on the nature of the indicator. With regards those indicators that related to waste work was taking place with the District Councils under the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy 2022-2050. In relation to emissions, work was taking place under the Local Transport Plan and the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan. With some of the indicators such as air quality and river quality the Council did not have direct control of delivery and tackling the issues required partnership working with other organisations.

It was noted that data was collected as to the amount of particulate matter in the air in Leicestershire and members welcomed the work that was taking place around this given the severity of illness that air pollution could cause. In response to a question as to whether this data collection took place next to the M1 motorway it was agreed that this would be checked and clarified to members after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the performance update be noted.

59. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 7 June 2023 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.20 pm  
02 March 2023

CHAIRMAN





**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7 JUNE 2023**

**BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS IN LEICESTERSHIRE  
COUNTRY PARKS**

**REPORT OF THE  
DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update on the Committee on the ongoing work within our Country Parks service to improve the biodiversity of our country parks and open spaces.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in May 2020 and runs from 2019 to 2029.
3. The Tree Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2020.

**Background**

4. Leicestershire County Council has a wide network of 18 parks and open spaces covering over 530ha. The Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy agreed in 2020, set out six destination parks: Beacon Hill Country Park, Broombriggs Farm, Watermead Country Park, Snibston Colliery Park, Bosworth Battlefield and Market Bosworth Country Park, alongside the Council's secondary parks elsewhere in the county. The main 'destination' parks are those which are generally the reason for people's visit and not only cater for the local community but attract visitors from further afield.
5. Three of the Council's parks form part of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (Beacon Hill Country Park, Sheet Hedges Wood and Jubilee Wood). SSSIs are sites that have been designated due to containing unique species or habitats of high scientific value for conservation. Five parks contain Local Nature Reserves (Reed Bed Nature Reserve at Watermead Country Park, Moira Junction, Grange Nature Reserve at Snibston Colliery Park, New Lount Nature Reserve,

Saltersford Valley. LNRs are sites chosen by the local authority as particularly significant for their wildlife, geology, education, or enjoyment (without disturbing wildlife).

### **Priority habitats and some highlights**

6. Woodland Habitats – a Countryside Stewardship Woodland Improvement agreement is in place with Defra from 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2026 for woodlands within most of the Council's parks. This builds upon the principles set out within the Council's Tree Strategy and promotes excellence in silviculture (the care and cultivation of woodlands), whilst increasing biodiversity and making woodlands more resilient to pests and diseases.
7. Since the commencement of the funding we have undertaken:
  - 5800m<sup>2</sup> of coppicing, 35,350m<sup>2</sup> of thinning to max 40% thin;
  - The installation of 52 small bird boxes, 4 large raptor boxes and 8 bee boxes;
  - Pest control across sites to protect young trees.
8. Grassland Habitats – we continue to manage a number of successful wildflower meadows at Beacon Hill, Oakthorpe Colliery, Market Bosworth Country Park and Watermead Country Park. Thanks to funding from the Trent Rivers Trust Botanica WWFUK Pollinators Project Grant we have been able to restore a number of grassland areas at Watermead, as well as create some new areas of grassland. The rangers and volunteer groups have scarified the ground of existing meadows, before rolling and sowing new seed. In the late summer they cut and rake the arisings from the meadows.
9. Heathland Habitats - the heathland restoration work at Beacon Hill continues with a pilot closure of a small area of the park at Jewels to encourage ground nesting birds and other wildlife associated with a heathland habitat undertaken in 2021. It was decided that the timings for the closure should be in line with the nesting bird season, April until end of August, as nesting birds would be one of our indicator species. Grazing would also be restricted and reduced in the area over this period, to reduce disturbance and over grazing. However, conservation grazing would be required in order to maintain and enhance the sward. Ecologists have been assessing the impact of this pilot and have identified several examples of birds using the area that would have been unlikely to have nested were there access by humans and dogs during the breeding season. The positive results of this trial have meant that we have continued with the temporary closure of this area in each year since.

10. At Bagworth Heath Country Park we have undertaken heathland improvement works to remove scrub and small trees and open up the heathland.
11. Wetland Habitat - Watermead has extensive areas of Norfolk Reed, mainly situated within the boundaries of the Reedbed Nature Reserve, though with expanding patches forming around the park. The Reedbed Nature Reserve is now nearly 9 acres in size and is managed on a 3-year rotation system. Aquaclear, a reed cutting company manages the beds over a week period during February under the supervision of the Senior Ranger.
12. Since 2019 we have been creating a new reedbed to the west of the Ken Goodrich Sand Martin hide in the Reedbed nature reserve. The area of reedbed is now the largest in Leicestershire. This supports several rare or threatened bird species which occur within this part of the Soar Valley and helps with the sustainable water environment contained within the Soar Catchment Management Plan with water quality, flood capacity, provision of a fish refuge and the removal of silt from the floodplain.
13. Freshwater habitat - at Snibston Colliery Park and Donington le Heath Country Park we have undertaken pond restoration works, as part of a Council biodiversity net gain scheme. At Watermead Country Park, we have added a number of scrapes around the site to provide habitat for wading birds.
14. All of this work is only possible because of the dedication of our small team of Country Parks rangers, supported by over 100 volunteers. These volunteers support us with a variety of tasks from acting as wardens on our sites, to litter picking, to carrying out significant pieces of environmental conservation activities as part of larger teams. A number of the activities listed above would not be possible without the volunteers.

### **Recommendation**

15. Members are asked to note the report and for any comments on the report or the Country Parks Service.

### **Background papers**

Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy:

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s152649/APPENDIX%20Country%20Parks%20and%20Open%20Spaces%20Strategy%202019-2029.pdf>

Tree Management Strategy:

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s152064/Tree%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None

**Equality and Human Rights Implications**

There are no equality or human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**Officer to Contact**

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**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 7 JUNE 2023**

**LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY AND RESPONSIBLE  
AUTHORITY STATUS**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of the report is to advise the Committee of the new statutory duty that has been placed on local government in relation to Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and of the appointment of Leicestershire County Council as the 'responsible authority' for the LNRS that will cover Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. LNRS's are a new statutory duty being placed on local government as a result of the Environment Act 2021. Under the Environment Act 2021 'responsible authorities' are appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
3. The new statutory duty fits with the aims and objectives of the Environment Strategy 2018-2030, in particular those in relation to Biodiversity, Habitats and the Local Environment. It also fits with the Strategic Plan 2022-2026 priorities, in particular those under the Clean Green Outcome. Furthermore, it supports the Council's Net Zero 2045 Strategy and Action Plan and the Action for Nature Delivery Plan. The latter mainly focuses on protecting, conserving and improving nature on the Council's estate and supporting service delivery. The new duty is also complimentary to the delivery of the Council's Climate and Nature Pact.
4. Development of the LNRS's will identify the nature priorities for the area, while implementation of the proposed measures will support the protection and recovery of nature and contribute to the Government's national '30 by 30' target, which is to protect 30% of the UK's land for nature by 2030.

**Background**

5. As part of the Environment Act 2021, the Government introduced the requirement to develop LNRS across England. There are 48 LNRS areas across England.
6. This new mandatory system of spatial strategies will map the most valuable existing areas for nature, establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions at a landscape scale to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits. The draft strategy must go out to public consultation and the strategy must be agreed by the Secretary of State.
7. In March 2022, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) approached higher tier councils to take on the 'responsible authority' role as part of the new LNRS duty. Leicestershire County Council agreed at that time, and on a provisional basis, to be the 'responsible authority' for the LNRS area which covers Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.
8. Since then, the Government has been putting in place a national framework to enable the preparation of LNRSs to commence across the country. This includes confirming strategy boundaries and formally agreeing the roles of the 'responsible authority' to lead in each area. The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 and statutory guidance on LNRS were released on 23 March 2023. The regulations and guidance provide details on the appointment of responsible authorities, the creation of the role of supporting authorities and what is required in developing and publishing LNRSs.
9. Locally an interim LNRS Steering Group was established, initially with officer representation from Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland Council. More recently the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, National Forest Company and district representatives have joined the Steering Group.
10. The LNRS Steering Group has focused over the last year on gathering, analysing and mapping local available data to start identifying possible nature opportunities and priorities. In addition, some work has been carried out to map and analyse possible LNRS partners and stakeholders. This work has been funded from the initial Defra Section 31 grant and Natural England grant funding.

### **Partnership Working and Associated Issues**

11. The development of the LNRS will require Leicestershire County Council to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities including Leicester City Council, Rutland Council and the districts as well as other public bodies such as the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the National Forest Company.
12. Under the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 the role of 'supporting authority' is created and it requires 'responsible authorities' to "take reasonable steps to involve" supporting

authorities, “have regard” to their opinions, share information with them and seek their agreement before consultation and publication. Locally the supporting authorities are Leicester City Council, Rutland Council, the seven district councils and Natural England.

### **LNRS Regulations and Guidance**

13. Defra released the LNRS Regulations, Statutory Guidance and the Government’s response to the LNRS consultation on 23 March 2023. The key features of the LNRS regulations and guidance are as follows:
- a) The **creation of the ‘supporting authority’** and how they should work with responsible authorities. Responsible authorities must “take reasonable steps to involve” supporting authorities, “have regard” to their opinions, share information with them and seek their agreement before consultation and publication. Supporting authorities will play a key role in making sure all LNRSs are genuinely collaborative, and include other local authorities within the LNRS area and Natural England
  - b) **Requirements for wider engagement**, including how to bring a wide range of organisations and viewpoints into LNRS preparation and the need for public consultation.
  - c) The **new power for responsible authorities to request information** on Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites from other planning authorities so that the LNRS can fulfil its requirement to map all local wildlife areas.
  - d) A **process for dispute resolution** should responsible authorities and supporting authorities develop different opinions on what should be included in the LNRS.
  - e) **Requirements for publishing the LNRS** by the responsible authority and to provide the LNRS to Defra in a format that allows them to be compiled nationally.
  - f) **Rules for review and publication**, all LNRSs will be received at the same time and renewed by the Secretary of State and expected every 3-10 years.
  - g) A **step-by-step process** for responsible authorities to take when preparing the LNRS. This will link all the required elements of the LNRS together into a logical series of steps that stakeholders can engage with which leads to the identification of areas where nature recovery effort should be focussed.
  - h) A **definition of “areas of particular importance for biodiversity”** that the LNRS must include, designed to promote alignment between LNRSs and the planning system.
  - i) The **need to consider other plans and strategies** in the area so that the LNRS does not “reinvent the wheel.” Responsible authorities should consider other plans while preparing their LNRS to help set their local

priorities and identify potential measures by which they can be achieved, as well as mapping areas that could become of particular importance in the future.

- j) How LNRSs should identify local opportunities to **contribute to national environmental objectives**, drawing out individual actions and how they will contribute.
- k) The steer that above all else, **LNRSs should be deliverable on the ground** and not a “wish list” of things we’d like to see happen. Stakeholder engagement, particularly with landowners, will be important to develop realistic proposals.
- l) There is **no fixed deadline** for when LNRS need to be produced by, though it is expected that it will take **up to 18 months**.
- m) The Government intends for LNRSs to **inform the local planning process. Local planning authorities must have regard to them** in complying with the strengthened biodiversity duty. The Government will provide separate guidance to explain what this means in practice.
- n) The Act establishes two mechanisms to support the delivery of LNRS namely, mandatory **biodiversity net gain** and a **strengthened biodiversity duty** on public authorities.
- o) The strategies will **identify where action to achieve net gain will have the most impact** and encourage action in these locations through the way net gain is calculated.
- p) All public authorities will also have to **have regard to relevant LNRSs** under the strengthened biodiversity duty.
- q) The main purpose of the strategies is to **identify locations to create or improve habitat** most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The strategies **do not force the owners and managers of the land identified to make any changes**. Instead, the Government is encouraging action through, for example, opportunities for funding and investment.

### **Responsible Authority**

- 14. Defra sent a formal letter to all provisional responsible authorities in mid-May 2023 to notify them that they have been appointed as the responsible authority for their respective LNRS area.
- 15. In addition to the features identified above, such as the creation of the ‘supporting authority’ and the new power for responsible authorities to request information and the requirement to publish, the regulations and guidance also identify several other aspects which are relevant to responsible authorities, namely:



- a) The Secretary of State decides the area that each strategy covers and appoints a 'responsible authority' to lead its preparation, publication, review and republication.
- b) Responsible authorities must work together with partners when preparing their strategy and later when reviewing and preparing it for republication.
- c) Responsible authorities should involve people and groups from across the public, private and voluntary sectors and help them to work together.
- d) Responsible authorities should contribute to the delivery of their strategy as well as leading its preparation. However, they are not solely responsible for delivering the strategy. This should be a shared effort with public, private and voluntary sector partners all playing a role.
- e) Responsible authorities must review and republish their strategies as part of an ongoing cycle which considers what has been achieved and proposes what further work is needed for nature to recover.
- f) Responsible authorities should consider and set out how they intend to engage and actively involve local partner organisations and communities early in the process of preparing or reviewing their strategy. This should include engaging with supporting authorities and neighbouring responsible authorities.

### **Risk Assessment**

16. A project risk assessment has been carried out and this has identified several risks. The key risks remaining after existing control measures have been taken include:
  - a) Insufficient co-operation from partners;
  - b) Delays in recruiting suitable staff;
  - c) Insufficient funding to support development and management of a delivery plan;
  - d) Insufficient funding to implement LNRS delivery plan;
  - e) Reputational damage to the Council as 'responsible authority'.
17. The risk in relation to co-operation from partners will be mitigated by the creation of the interim Steering Group mentioned earlier. As the provisional responsible authority, the Council has sought to adopt a collaborative approach. The new 'supporting authority' role for key partners will require them to co-operate and Defra will be establishing a mediation service to address any disputes that arise.
18. It is intended to proceed with the recruitment of staff at the earliest opportunity, noting other authorities will be in the same position. However, there is a general shortage of staff in the environmental sector so early recruitment is not necessarily a guarantee of success. This will be further compounded by recruitment of similar staff by neighbouring LNRS areas.

19. Currently, funding has only been provided for the development of the LNRS and it is expected that implementation will in part be funded through mechanisms such as Biodiversity Net Gain, the Environmental Land Management Scheme, Natural Flood Management projects and other investment such as philanthropic donations, future Government or other grants. However, there is no funding for developing a delivery plan or for covering the costs of managing the implementation of a delivery plan. This issue has been raised with Defra. This matter will also be discussed with partners to identify a local solution in the absence of national support.
20. All these risks contribute to the risk of reputational damage for Leicestershire County Council as the responsible authority. This will in part be mitigated by raising the above concerns with Defra, lobbying through the national Responsible Authorities Network, and adopting a collaborative and collective approach to the development of the LNRS.

### **Consultation**

21. While there is no need to consult on the County Council's appointment as LNRS responsible authority, it will be necessary to hold a public consultation exercise on the draft LNRS. This is expected to be within the next 18 months, subject to being able to recruit suitable staff and consultancy resources to carry out the work required and achieving cross partner agreement of Steering Group members on a draft strategy. Guidance will be issued by Defra on how to consult and engage stakeholders when developing the Strategy.
22. Reports will be presented to the Committee in advance of the consultation and again afterwards, to present the results of the consultation exercise.

### **Resource Implications**

23. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.
24. The County Council will receive 'new burdens' funding for taking on the role as 'responsible authority' in the form of a Section 31 grant. The amount of funding provided was calculated using a national formula with the County Council receiving £328,000 over two years (2023/24 – 2024/25). This is in addition to the almost £49,000 received in 2021/22 and 2022/23.
25. The funding provided is to be used for developing the LNRS and will be used to recruit staff, employ specialist support, cover the Council's management costs and to ensure that full and proper engagement takes place with stakeholders and partners.
26. It is considered that the new burdens funding will be sufficient to undertake the preparation of the LNRS. Further funding is expected to be provided by the Government to undertake future reviews of the LNRS (timescales to be determined by the Government). However, at this point, no details have been provided on funding for the implementation of the LNRS, as the Government

expects projects to be delivered through mechanisms such as the Environmental Land Management Scheme and Biodiversity Net Gain.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

27. A report went to the Cabinet on 26 May 2023 with an update on the new statutory duty that has been placed on local government in relation to LNRS and to ask the Cabinet to note that the County Council has been appointed as the 'responsible authority' for the LNRS that will cover Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.
28. As stated in paragraphs 21-22, further reports will be presented to the Committee within the next 18 months, subject to being able to recruit suitable staff and specialist resources to carry out the work required and achieving supporting authority agreement on a draft strategy, before and after the statutory public consultation exercise. This will be in advance of the report going to the Cabinet for approval and before it is sent to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to be agreed.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

29. This report has implications for all electoral divisions and will be circulated to all members.

### **Equality Implications**

30. There are no equality implications arising from this report.
31. There will be equality implications arising from the development of the LNRS and an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the process.

### **Human Rights Implications**

32. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

### **Environmental Implications**

33. While becoming the LNRS responsible authority will not have any environmental implications, the development and implementation of the LNRS should have a significant positive impact on the local environment.

### **Background Papers**

Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023:  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/341/made>

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: LNRS Summary Factsheet

## Appendix B: LNRS Statutory Guidance March 23

**Officer(s) to Contact**

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Director, Environment and Transport Department  
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# Local Nature Recovery Strategies

*A summary note on the newly published regulations and statutory guidance*



Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) were introduced in the Environment Act 2021. This new system of spatial strategies will: support efforts to recover nature across England; help planning authorities incorporate nature recovery objectives; support the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain; and help deliver our national environment targets.

The Government has now published LNRS regulations and statutory guidance which work together to establish the 'rules' to enable high quality and consistent LNRSs to be prepared across England. Government's response to the public consultation that informed the development of the regulations and statutory guidance has also been published.

## Consultation Response (linked [here](#))

Summarises the responses to the 40 questions the Government posed to inform how LNRSs should be prepared and what they should include. Responses to the consultation highlighted the need for LNRS preparation to be as open and collaborative as possible, how stakeholders are key to developing consistent strategies and how end products must be accessible through publication. The response sets out how these views are reflected in the regulations and guidance and provides an overview of Government's approach.

## Regulations (linked [here](#))

Explains the role of the 'responsible authority' (RA) and the rules they should follow when preparing their LNRS. Key features include:

- **The creation of the 'supporting authority'** and how they should work with RAs. RAs must "take reasonable steps to involve" supporting authorities, "have regard" to their opinions, share information with them and seek their agreement before consultation and publication. Supporting authorities will play a key role in making sure all LNRSs are genuinely collaborative.
- **Requirements for wider engagement**, including how to bring a wide range of organisations and viewpoints into LNRS preparation and the need for public consultation.
- **The new power for RAs to request information** on Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites from other planning authorities so that the LNRS can fulfil its requirement to map all local wildlife areas.
- **A process for dispute resolution** should RAs and supporting authorities develop different opinions on what should be included in the LNRS.
- **Requirements for publishing** the LNRS: the RA must publish the LNRS and provide to Defra in a format that allows them to be compiled nationally.
- **Rules for review and publication**, for all LNRSs will be received at the same time and renewed by the Secretary of State and expected every 3-10 years.

## Statutory Guidance (linked [here](#))

Expands on what the Environment Act says LNRSs must contain. RAs must "have regard" to this guidance. Key features include:

- A **step-by-step** process for RAs to take when preparing the LNRS. This will link all the requirement elements of the LNRS together into a logical series of steps that stakeholders can engage with which leads to the identification of areas where nature recovery effort should be focussed.
- A **definition of "areas of particular importance for biodiversity"** that the LNRS must include, designed to promote alignment between LNRSs and the planning system.
- The need to **consider other plans and strategies** in the area so that the LNRS does not "reinvent the wheel." RAs should consider other plans while preparing their LNRS to help set their local priorities and identify potential measures by which they can be achieved, as well as mapping areas that could become of particular importance in the future.
- How LNRSs should identify local opportunities to **contribute to national environmental objectives**, drawing out individual actions and how they will contribute.
- The steer that above all else, **LNRSs should be deliverable on the ground** and not a "wish list" of things we'd like to see happen. Stakeholder engagement, particularly with landowners, will be important to develop realistic proposals.

Training and further information will be provided to all responsible authorities about how to use the regulations and guidance. LNRS preparation will be fully funded and further information on distribution of funds and formal appointments of responsible authorities will follow shortly.

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Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance

## What a local nature recovery strategy should contain

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 106(5) of the Environment Act  
2021

March 2023

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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1. This guidance is provided by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under [section 106\(5\) of the Environment Act 2021](#) (hereafter, ‘the Act’) It explains what a responsible authority should include in their local nature recovery strategy. Responsible authorities are required by law to have regard to this guidance when preparing their strategy. Responsible authorities should read this guidance alongside the [local nature recovery strategy regulations](#) which set out the procedure to be followed in the preparation and publication, and review and republication of local nature recovery strategies.

## About local nature recovery strategies

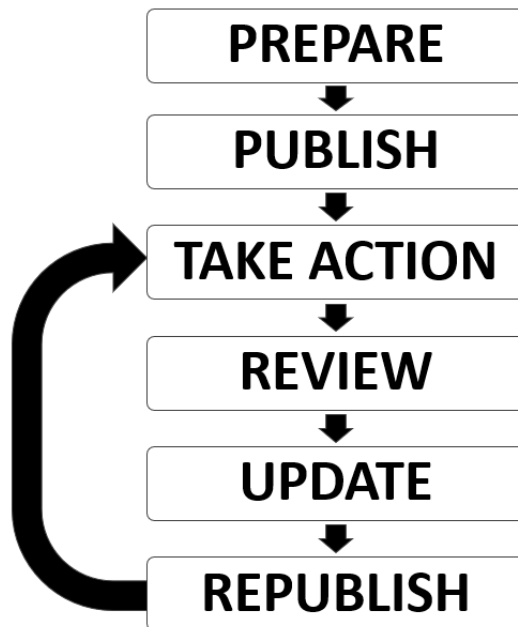
2. Local nature recovery strategies are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Act. Each strategy must:
  - agree priorities for nature’s recovery
  - map the most valuable existing areas for nature
  - map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals
3. The Defra Secretary of State decides the area that each strategy covers, and appoints a ‘responsible authority’ to lead its preparation, publication, review and republication. Defra will publish information on the area covered by each strategy and who the responsible authorities are. Together, the strategies will cover the whole of England with no gaps and no overlaps.
4. The main purpose of the strategies is to identify locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The strategies do not force the owners and managers of the land identified to make any changes. Instead, the government is encouraging action through, for example, opportunities for funding and investment.
5. Actions which support and draw on nature to provide wider environmental or societal benefits are called ‘nature-based solutions’. Having both actions for nature recovery and nature-based solutions will help join up work to improve how land is managed for different environmental reasons and find activities that have multiple benefits.
6. Responsible authorities should involve people and groups from across the public, private and voluntary sectors and help them to work together. The strategy will benefit from their understanding of what environmental issues are most important locally. This will also encourage them to carry out the proposals in the strategy.
7. The Act establishes 2 mechanisms to support the delivery of local nature recovery strategies:
  - [mandatory biodiversity net gain](#)
  - [a strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities](#)

The strategies will identify where action to achieve net gain will have the most impact and encourage action in these locations through the way net gain is calculated. All public

authorities will also have to have regard to relevant local nature recovery strategies under the strengthened biodiversity duty.

8. The government intends for local nature recovery strategies to inform the local planning process. Local planning authorities must have regard to them in complying with the strengthened biodiversity duty. The government will provide separate guidance to explain what this means in practice.
9. Further support for strategy delivery may come from funding for specific activities mapped by the strategy.
10. Responsible authorities should contribute to the delivery of their strategy as well as leading its preparation. However, they are not solely responsible for delivering the strategy. This should be a shared effort with public, private and voluntary sector partners all playing a role.
11. Responsible authorities must review and republish their strategies as part of an ongoing cycle which considers what has been achieved and proposes what further work is needed for nature to recover. The local nature recovery strategy regulations set out when and how often reviews will take place. The stages in this cycle are:
  - 1. Prepare - agree priorities, identify 'potential measures' (actions for achieving them) and map suitable locations for carrying them out.
  - 2. Publish - finalise the strategy and make it available.
  - 3. Take action - local partners work together with landowners and managers to create and enhance habitat for nature and environment, and take other biodiversity-positive actions.
  - 4. Review - recognise what actions have been delivered, including those not identified in the current strategy.
  - 5. Update - revisit priorities, potential measures and suitable locations, to reflect progress and changing circumstances to ensure the strategy remains relevant and ambitious.
  - 6. Republish - finalise the updated strategy and make it available.

**Figure 1: Local nature recovery strategy review and republication cycle**



## Working with local partners

12. Under the regulations, responsible authorities must work together with partners when preparing their strategy and later when reviewing and preparing it for republication. This aims to:

- provide a single vision for nature recovery and the use of nature-based solutions that all interested parties have been able to contribute to and work towards
- build and strengthen local partnerships that will be important for carrying out the strategies as well as preparing them
- involve the people who own and manage the land, and the people who take regulatory decisions, so they can contribute to what action is being proposed, where and why

13. In working with partners, responsible authorities should apply these principles:

- transparency – be able to show how partner contributions have been considered, how decisions have been made, and what the basis for them is
- inclusivity – enable everyone with an interest to be involved where possible
- clear communication – avoid using technical terms that may not be understood by partners and end users

14. By working with local partners in this way, responsible authorities will be able to produce strategies that are technically sound and evidence based. They will also benefit from local knowledge and have the support from partners to help achieve successful delivery.

15. Responsible authorities should consider and set out how they intend to engage and actively involve local partner organisations and communities early in the process of

preparing or reviewing their strategy. This should include engaging with supporting authorities and neighbouring responsible authorities.

## What to include in a local nature recovery strategy

16. This section explains what to include in a local nature recovery strategy. It follows the same order as the steps responsible authorities should take to prepare or review their strategy.

17. By law, each local nature recovery strategy must include:

- a statement of biodiversity priorities
- a local habitat map

18. Under the Act, the written statement of biodiversity priorities must include:

- a description of the strategy area and its biodiversity
- a description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity in the strategy area
- the priorities for recovering enhancing biodiversity (taking into account the contribution that this can also make to other environmental benefits)
- proposals as to potential measures relating to those priorities

Its purpose is to draw together existing information on the state of nature and the environment in the strategy area, to agree what the strategy is trying to achieve and to identify practical actions that could achieve them.

19. The local habitat map must identify:

- national conservation sites in the strategy area
- local nature reserves in the strategy area

The habitat map must also identify other areas in the strategy area which in the opinion of the responsible authority:

- are, or could become, of particular importance for biodiversity, or
- are areas where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits

Its purpose is to provide a clear visual way for groups and individuals to understand the areas which are or could become of particular importance for biodiversity and the environment to target nature recovery action.

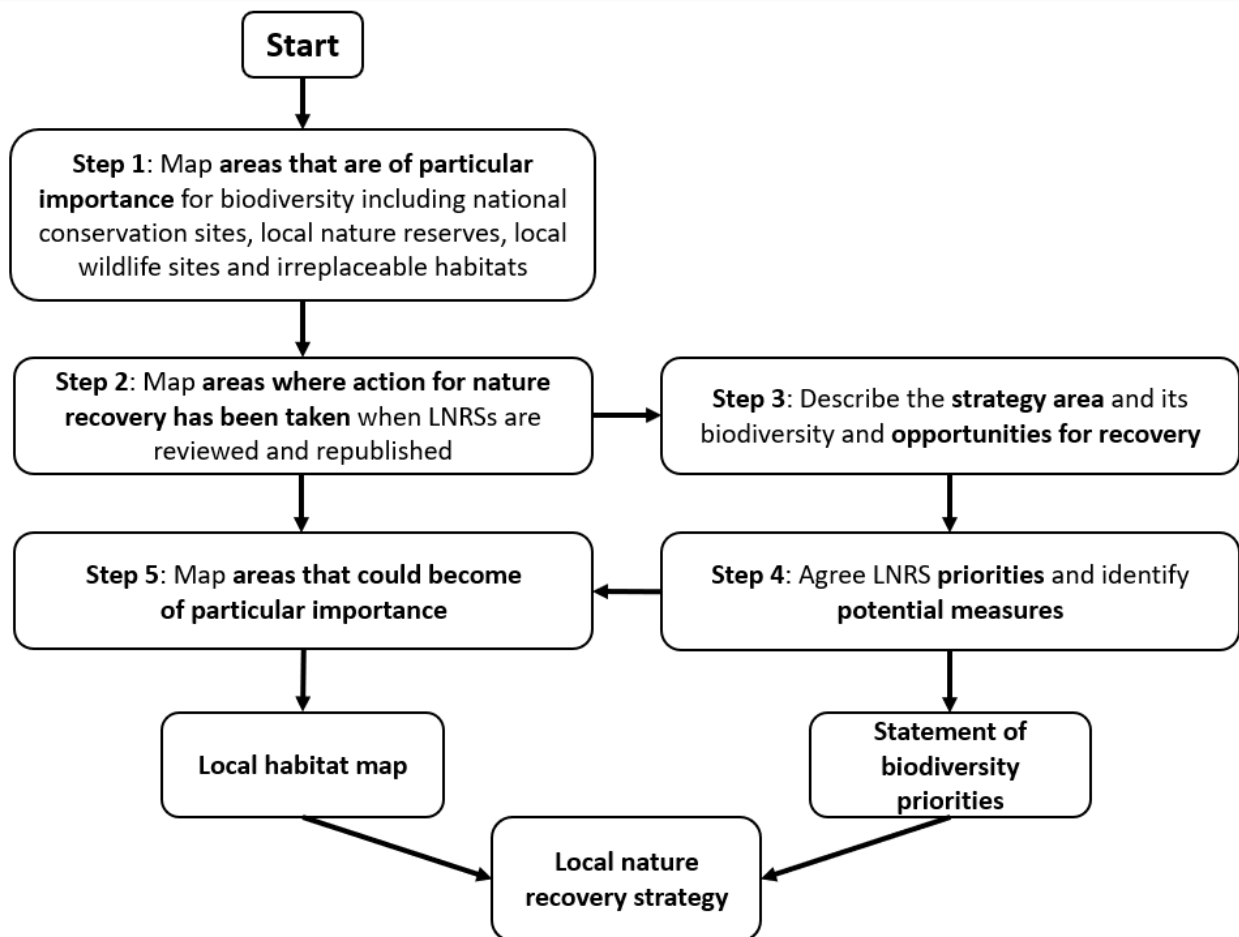
20. Responsible authorities should prepare their strategy so that the statement of biodiversity priorities and local habitat map work closely together. To do this, they should follow this order of steps:

- 1. Map areas of particular importance for biodiversity.
- 2. Map areas where nature recovery action has taken (when the strategy is reviewed)

- 3. Describe the strategy area, its biodiversity and opportunities for recovery in the written statement.
- 4. Agree priorities and identify potential measures for achieving them in the written statement.
- 5. Map areas that could become of particular importance using the information in step 4.

Steps 1 and 2 will form part of the local habitat map. They will also provide important information for steps 3 and 4 which together form the statement of biodiversity priorities. The information written in step 4 is needed for step 5 which completes the local habitat map.

**Figure 2: Order of steps to be followed in preparing contents of a local nature recovery strategy**



## Map areas of particular importance for biodiversity

21. Every local habitat map must identify all national conservation sites and local nature reserves. They must also identify “other areas in the strategy area which in the opinion of the responsible authority are of particular importance for biodiversity”. The government will provide responsible authorities with a national habitat map. This map

will include information on national conservation sites and local nature reserves for this purpose. As local nature reserves are identified locally, local partners may have more up-to-date information than the government can provide. The local nature recovery strategy regulations give responsible authorities powers to request information on local nature reserves from other local planning authorities in the strategy area if necessary.

22. Responsible authorities should take a consistent approach to identifying the other areas of particular importance for biodiversity in their local habitat map, they should include:
- all existing local wildlife sites
  - areas of irreplaceable habitat
  - other areas identified by the Secretary of State as being of particular importance

This will help local nature recovery strategies integrate well with other environmental and land use policies.

23. 'Local wildlife site' is a term used to describe various areas identified at a local level for their biodiversity value, which are granted protection from inappropriate development or change of use. Including them in the local habitat map as areas of particular importance will help align local nature recovery strategies with the planning system. If responsible authorities do not have information on all the local wildlife sites in their area, the local nature recovery strategy regulations provide powers to request this information from the relevant local planning authority.
24. Responsible authorities should map known areas of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland, as areas of particular importance for biodiversity. Protecting irreplaceable habitat is established government policy. The government is preparing regulations to establish a clear legal definition of 'irreplaceable habitat'. Until this is available, responsible authorities should use the definition of irreplaceable habitat in the National Planning Policy Framework.
25. The Secretary of State may identify areas that, in their opinion, are of particular importance for biodiversity. If the Secretary of State does this, they will inform the relevant responsible authority who should map these areas as being of particular importance - unless there are strong reasons not to.
26. Responsible authorities should not map any other areas that are not mentioned in paragraph 22 as being of particular importance for biodiversity. This is not to suggest that other areas are not of importance for biodiversity. This is to help establish a nationally consistent baseline of areas whose particular importance has already been recognised and are protected. This will help local nature recovery strategies align well with local planning policy and avoid duplicating with the identification of local wildlife sites.
27. If the responsible authority believes that additional areas require protection due to their particular importance, they should discuss making those areas local wildlife sites with the relevant local planning authority (if this is not the responsible authority).

28. When reviewing their local nature recovery strategy ahead of republication, responsible authorities should identify any changes to the areas of particular importance for biodiversity and update their local habitat map.
29. Responsible authorities may need to consult with other parties to identify areas of particular importance, including Natural England, other local authorities and national park authorities (where relevant). They may also need to request data from other organisations, for example on the distribution of irreplaceable habitats. However, this step is not expected to require wide engagement with local partner organisations and so should be comparatively quick to complete.

## Map areas where nature recovery action has been taken

30. The Defra Secretary of State will tell responsible authorities when they must review and republish their local nature recovery strategies. This will be every 3 to 10 years. These reviews should show what actions for nature have been done since the strategy was last published. Responsible authorities are strongly encouraged to record the specific locations in their republished strategy's local habitat map where this action has been taken.
31. Mapped areas should show the previous strategy's proposed actions ('potential measures') that have been taken forward. They should also include other actions that were not included in the strategy but were done since the strategy was last published and support delivery of its priorities. Responsible authorities should consider whether the action taken is significant enough to include in the local habitat map and should get advice from Natural England if necessary. Actions should only be mapped if they have or are expected to bring about significant or lasting positive change rather than minor, short-term or uncertain benefits.
32. Responsible authorities should use both published information and information provided by local partners to undertake this mapping. Useful sources of published information include:
- reports published by public authorities as part of their duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity
  - the biodiversity gain site register
  - other government data
33. When responsible authorities review and republish their strategies, they should decide whether the locations of previous activity can be kept on the local habitat map. Further positive action does not need to have been taken since the last republication for a location to remain mapped. However, if the responsible authority recognises that previous activity is no longer providing benefits, they should not continue to map that location. It might be better to propose more beneficial action in these areas instead.
34. Responsible authorities may need to engage with a broad range of local partners to identify areas where action has been taken to increase their importance for biodiversity. This is likely to include individuals and organisations who hold information on how areas of land are managed.



## Describe the strategy area, its biodiversity and opportunities for recovery

35. Each statement of biodiversity priorities must include:

- a description of the strategy area and its biodiversity
- a description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species, in the strategy area

36. The purpose of the strategy area description is to inform setting priorities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity and environmental improvement within the strategy area. To do this, responsible authorities should consider:

- the range of habitats in the strategy area and their general distribution – especially priority habitats. They should also include habitats of local importance, including ones that support scarce or declining species
- how this distribution and extent of habitats has changed in recent decades, including habitats that may have been lost entirely from the strategy area
- the species or groups of species for which the strategy area is, or could feasibly be, of national importance
- anticipated future pressures likely to influence species or the extent, distribution or quality of different habitat types – including recognising the impact of climate change scenarios and anticipated new developments, including house building and infrastructure
- wider environmental issues affecting part or all of the strategy area which changes in land use or management could help to address – for example improvements to the water environment, flood risk management, or climate mitigation and adaptation

37. Whilst local nature recovery strategies should consider both habitats and species this guidance refers more often to habitats. This is because habitat types give a helpful indication of an area's general environmental characteristics including which species it is likely to support and what environmental benefits it may provide. Responsible authorities should refer to habitat types throughout their statement of biodiversity priorities to help link them together and connect the statement to the local habitat map.

38. When writing a statement of biodiversity priorities, responsible authorities should refer to:

- the areas of particular importance for biodiversity
- the areas where action has been taken (for strategy reviews)
- relevant nationally held data provided by government

39. Responsible authorities should also refer to a wide range of other available data and expertise from local partner organisations. This information might be sensitive or have commercial value. In this case, the responsible authority should work with the information owner on how it could be shared and used for the strategy's preparation or review without the information itself being made more widely available.

40. When describing the strategy area, responsible authorities may find it helpful to recognise sub-areas that have similar topography, geology and soil type. These characteristics will heavily influence where different habitats and land management can be supported. Neighbouring responsible authorities are encouraged to take a common approach to areas near strategy boundaries, to support good joint working across landscapes that span different strategies.
41. When describing the strategy area, responsible authorities should draw on other relevant spatial plans. This should include local plans, or environmental plans such as river basin management plans and related plans for water management. This will avoid duplicating effort and help integrate the activities that each plan is promoting into the strategy.
42. Coastal local nature recovery strategies are required to follow the relevant local authorities' boundaries. This usually means extending into the inter tidal zone as far as low water, but can be further around river estuaries. Coastal responsible authorities should consider how to factor in neighbouring marine areas and plans in their strategies. Linking local nature recovery strategies and marine spatial planning would help to identify land management changes that could benefit the estuarine or marine zone. For example, by improving the quality of water leaving river systems or managing coastal erosion risks.
43. Responsible authorities should use the 'description of the strategy area and its biodiversity' as a basis for writing 'a description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species, in the strategy area'. They could choose to combine the description of the strategy area and the description of opportunities together. For example, when describing why a habitat in the strategy is important, they could also include opportunities to recover or enhance it as part of the description.
44. Responsible authorities, with Natural England's support, should seek to:
- identify the existing or potential habitats considered to be either locally or nationally important and the practicality of improving existing areas' condition, or creating new areas of these habitats
  - identify the existing or potential species (or groups of species) in the area that the strategy could make a particular contribution to enhancing or recovering, and assess the practicality of creating or enhancing habitats to support this.
45. Responsible authorities should avoid suggesting specific locations where they could recover or enhance biodiversity in their statement of biodiversity priorities. They should only identify locations in the local habitat map. If assessing potential opportunities leads to proposals for specific locations, they should note and use these to inform the later stages of preparing the strategy.
46. When reviewing their strategy, responsible authorities should update the description and opportunities to show what has changed since the strategy was last published. Responsible authorities should also include a summary of progress in this period, or since the publication of the first strategy, or both.

47. Responsible authorities should involve partner organisations when preparing the description as this is likely to offer good engagement opportunities before critical decision-making steps later in the preparation of the strategy.

## Agree priorities and identify potential measures

48. Each statement of biodiversity priorities must set out ‘the priorities, in terms of habitats and species, for recovering or enhancing biodiversity (taking into account the contribution that recovering or enhancing biodiversity can also make to other environmental benefits)’. This is an important step in the process of preparing a local nature recovery strategy as it establishes what the strategy is seeking to achieve. It is, therefore, a stage in strategy preparation where engagement with local partners will be particularly needed.

49. The reference to ‘other environmental benefits’ is an important feature of local nature recovery strategies. This is how the strategies can include ‘nature-based solutions’ to address wider environmental issues as well as priorities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity.

50. Each statement of biodiversity priorities must also include ‘proposals as to the potential measures relating to those priorities’. These are the practical actions that, if taken, would make positive contributions to delivering the priorities agreed with local partners. For example, rotational coppicing of native woodland to provide dormouse habitat or ditch-blocking to re-wet degraded peat to mitigate climate change.

51. Responsible authorities should try to clearly distinguish between priorities (the end results that the strategy is seeking to achieve) and the specific practical actions to achieve those priorities (the ‘potential measures’). However, there is a close relationship between these 2 required elements and responsible authorities may wish to develop them at the same time.

52. The priorities identified by every local nature recovery strategy should reflect local circumstances, including the most important issues to local people and organisations. They should also reflect what contribution the strategy area can make to national environmental objectives, commitments and targets, including those legally binding targets established by the Act. This is so that local nature recovery strategies can work together coherently to recover and enhance biodiversity and improve the natural environment across England.

53. Priorities for recovering or enhancing particular species or habitats to improve biodiversity should be based on the assessment of ‘opportunities’ described at paragraph 44. However, local partners should still be able to suggest additional habitats and species that they consider important at this stage.

54. Examples of wider national environmental objectives that all local nature recovery strategies should seek to contribute to are:

- mitigating climate change (for example, through the potential measure of planting trees)

- improving the water environment (for example, through the potential measure of creating wetlands)
- mitigating flood risk (for example, through the potential measure of restoring degraded upland peat)

55. These examples illustrate the need for wider natural environment objectives to be deliverable, at least in part, through the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity. For many wider priorities this will be straightforward because the use of 'nature-based solutions' to address these issues is increasingly established. When setting priorities, it may be helpful to consider potential measures to avoid priorities that the strategy can do little to address. For example, reducing historic land contamination.
56. Strategy priorities should be the species and habitats that the strategy will focus on supporting, and achievable improvements to the wider natural environment through their conservation and enhancement. But recovering or enhancing biodiversity does not just benefit the natural environment. For example, improving biodiversity can help increase land value or support people's health and wellbeing and access to nature. Whilst these co-benefits are different from the strategy priorities, responsible authorities and local partners can propose action for biodiversity in ways and in places that will achieve them.
57. The government will provide more detailed, up-to-date advice on the specific national environmental objectives which each local nature recovery strategy should contribute to. This will enable the strategies to adapt to evolving national priorities when they are reviewed and republished.
58. Responsible authorities should use the national environmental objectives to guide their strategy's scope and identify locally relevant priorities which align with them where possible. This does not mean that every strategy must contribute to every national environmental objective but responsible authorities may be challenged by local partners to show how national objectives have been considered.
59. Responsible authorities should seek support for their priorities from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to encourage their support for delivering the strategy. To achieve this, the responsible authority should gather possible priorities from existing published plans and strategies, and from engaging directly with locally active organisations and individuals. Responsible authorities should first create a longlist of suggestions. They should then exclude any suggestions that are out of scope before narrowing down to select a shortlist of priorities that the responsible authorities consider critical for the strategy to address. Priorities can include where action within the strategy area could positively affect neighbouring areas. For example, coastal strategy areas could consider how they can benefit neighbouring marine areas.
60. Responsible authorities may find a mix of what could be priorities or potential measures by sifting published documents and contributions from local partners. They may choose to gather both as part of a single exercise, before separating them and matching potential measures with each priority.
61. Responsible authorities should be transparent when deciding which possible priorities to select from the longlist. This involves showing local partners and helping them to understand how they considered their contributions. Decisions should be evidence-

based and lead to a manageable number of agreed priorities for the strategy. These priorities should reflect a balance of suggestions from local partners and support national environmental objectives.

62. When reviewing the strategy, responsible authorities should let partners assess and challenge the published strategy's current priorities. This should include proposing new priorities and potentially removing existing ones. Progress made in delivering the previous priorities will be an important factor in this process.
63. Local partners will have an important role to play in identifying a comprehensive set of potential measures for delivery of the agreed priorities. Responsible authorities should seek contributions from partners with ecological and environmental expertise and practical land management experience. There may be many potential measures to support each priority. For example, actions to restore peat or plant trees will both help mitigate climate change. Or a single potential measure could help achieve more than one priority. For example, creating wetlands can mitigate flood risk and improve water quality.
64. Responsible authorities should set out the potentially complex relationships between priorities and potential measures as clearly as possible. This will enable local partners, including landowners and other decision makers, to understand:
- why particular potential measures are being proposed
  - how different potential measures can contribute to the same priority
  - how a potential measure can achieve multiple priorities

Doing this transparently increases the chances of the strategy leading to positive practical action. To be persuasive, both priorities and potential measures must be expressed clearly, simply and in an accessible way for the range of people who will use them. Natural England will provide support and advice on how to do this.

65. Responsible authorities should include enough detail in their potential measures so that non-experts can understand their purpose and be able to seek further guidance or instructions (if necessary) to confidently carry them out successfully. However, potential measures should not be detailed instructions on how to implement them.
66. Most potential measures should be ways of enhancing existing habitat and creating new habitats. This is because identifying locations to carry out these sorts of actions is the local nature recovery strategy's main purpose (paragraph 4). To help map out suitable locations, these potential measures should clearly state the habitat type which they relate to, using the same classification system as the local habitat map. Responsible authorities may find it helpful to include a smaller number of potential measures which do not involve creating or improving habitat but which are necessary to achieve a strategy priority.
67. Local nature recovery strategies should be practical, realistic and deliverable documents. So, responsible authorities should avoid including any potential measures that are not likely to be implemented in the foreseeable future.
68. Responsible authorities should engage with local partner organisations to find out what environmental projects are already planned or underway to see if the projects could be

included as potential measures. This allows the local nature recovery strategies to incorporate existing relevant work and to align with other environmental spatial strategies. This will help improve efficiency and achieve better environmental outcomes. Examples of relevant strategies include river basin management plans, local tree and woodland strategies and National Park Management Plans.

69. Responsible authorities should recognise that the benefits provided by some potential measures will depend on precisely how, when and where they are carried out. This will be particularly relevant when creating new habitats, rather than improving existing ones, as whether the potential measure is “biodiversity positive” will depend on what habitat is being replaced. For example, planting trees can make an important contribution to climate change mitigation, but whether it is positive for biodiversity will depend on putting the right tree in the right place.
70. Responsible authorities should take an inclusive approach and include potential measures that can create a positive effect on biodiversity if carried out correctly and in the right place. For example, creation of productive woodland. However, they should make sure the potential measure reflects any uncertainty and consider this in more detail when identifying suitable locations. Responsible authorities may also shape potential measures so that they will deliver non-environmental co-benefits, for example improving public access to green space as well as helping biodiversity.
71. Defra may provide a suggested list of potential measures with standard wording for responsible authorities to use, adapt or create different potential measures. Using consistent wording can help to align local nature recovery strategies with potential funding sources for the delivery of potential measures. This funding is likely to interest landowners and managers and increase the chance of action taking place.
72. When reviewing their strategy, responsible authorities should consider which potential measures have and have not been carried out since the previous published strategy. This should inform an open process of adding, removing or amending potential measures before republishing.

## Map areas that could become of particular importance

73. In the final, most important stage of the strategy, responsible authorities need to map areas which they believe ‘could become of particular importance for biodiversity’ or ‘where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits’. These areas are collectively referred to as ‘areas that could become of particular importance’. They are where the responsible authority and local partners propose that effort should be concentrated to restore habitat, to achieve the most for biodiversity and the wider environment.
74. Responsible authorities should decide how to map ‘areas that could become of particular importance’ by looking for locations where potential measures from the statement of biodiversity priorities could be carried out in a way that contributes to the strategy’s priorities. This enables responsible authorities to consider areas of potential importance for biodiversity and nature-based solutions in an integrated way.

75. This mapping should also build on the distribution of existing habitats and the areas of particular importance for biodiversity, which were identified at the first stage of preparing the local habitat map (paragraph 21). This is so that areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity can be targeted to join up or expand existing areas of particular importance for biodiversity. This can help to establish larger, more resilient networks of high-quality habitat across the landscape. Areas mapped could range in size, from narrow linear features like proposed hedgerow locations, to much larger landscape-scale changes.

76. When considering alternative feasible locations for a potential measure or different feasible potential measures in the same location, responsible authorities should consider:

- which would have the greatest impact on achieving the priorities
- which would achieve greater connectivity of similar biodiverse habitats across the landscape

Where a potential measure could feasibly be done in many locations, responsible authorities should pick ones that would benefit biodiversity or the environment the most.

77. Responsible authorities should be ambitious in proposing change but also realistic in the need to concentrate effort where it will have most benefit. Indiscriminate or widespread mapping of areas that could become of particular importance would not aid targeting of available resources. The proportion of each strategy area mapped for its potential importance will likely vary considerably depending on factors like the extent of existing designations and other constraints on land use.

78. Some responsible authorities may be concerned about leaving 'white space' which is not mapped as being - or could become - of particular importance. To address this, they should include potential measures in their statement of biodiversity priorities that could be used widely across the strategy area. For example, sowing native nectar-rich wildflowers or planting native hedgerows. This enables the strategy to be inclusive and support anyone who wants to help nature recover whilst still being clear about where nature recovery resources should be targeted to achieve the most benefit.

79. Responsible authorities should draw upon other relevant environmental plans, strategies and knowledge held by local partners about where nature conservation activity is already proposed, and where additional action would have most impact. They should identify areas that could become of particular importance for specific potential measures and make it clear which potential measure has been proposed in those areas.

80. Responsible authorities may propose more than one potential measure in the same area. For example, where 2 or more potential measures could be carried out together, or where different potential measures would generate similar levels of benefit. However, if there is a potential measure for which a location is particularly suitable for then this preference should be clearly shown.

81. Responsible authorities may wish to propose potential measures in areas mapped as already being of particular importance for biodiversity (rather than areas that could become of particular importance) to maintain or increase their importance. This may be

helpful for areas such as local wildlife sites which do not have to have management plans.

82. If a responsible authority has Green Belt in their area, they should actively seek to target areas that could become of particular importance inside the Green Belt. This supports the government's intention for Green Belts to provide multiple benefits, including nature recovery and increased public access to nature. Similarly, responsible authorities should also look for areas that could become of particular importance near to people's homes to improve public access to nature, biodiversity, and environmental benefits.
83. Not all actions for nature are compatible with increased public access, as some species are very sensitive to disturbance and some habitats are susceptible to degradation (for example, due to litter or erosion). So not every area that could become of particular importance will necessarily need to consider increasing public access. Defra and Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework may help identify where there is the least amount of accessible green space.
84. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are expected to be particularly suitable places for areas that could become of particular importance to be proposed. This reflects the increasing contribution protected landscapes are making to nature recovery and the opportunity to align with the existing protections these designations offer.
85. Some potential measures would result in replacing one habitat type with another. Responsible authorities should look across the strategy area to consider how different habitat types' coverage might change, to understand the potential effect on its biodiversity and the strategy's priorities.
86. For some potential measures, where and how they are carried out will affect whether they will be 'biodiversity-positive'. Responsible authorities should take an inclusive approach, particularly for potential measures that could create substantial environmental benefits. They should carefully consider potential locations and include further information on how to carry them out to achieve biodiversity recovery or enhancement if necessary.
87. Some changes in land use or management may require a separate consent before they can be undertaken, such as planning permission. Responsible authorities do not need the relevant consents to be in place before including areas that could become of particular importance in their local habitat map. However, they should seek to involve the relevant consenting bodies (for example, local planning authority, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission or Natural England) so they do not propose potential measures in locations that are unlikely to be granted consent.
88. Responsible authorities should listen to landowners and managers' views for land they are considering mapping as areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity. All draft strategies must go through public consultation. Responsible authorities do not need to engage with all relevant landowners and managers before public consultation but they should invite them to participate.
89. If the responsible authority knows that a landowner opposes a potential measure on their land and is very unlikely to choose to carry it out, it would be better to explore



alternatives or include other more suitable measures before public consultation. This is particularly important if they propose a location due to its potential to join up areas of habitat to create a wider network. If objections from landowners only become clear at public consultation, the responsible authority should try to accommodate their views where this does not undermine the coherence and ambition of the strategy as a whole.

90. Responsible authorities should give specific consideration to defence interests. They should consult with the relevant Head of Establishment before proposing potential measures on or near land managed by the Ministry of Defence to confirm that the potential measures would be consistent with operational needs.
91. Responsible authorities may find certain models and computer software useful to assess how suitable it is to carry out potential measures in different locations. They can also use help to understand how enhancing and creating habitat in different locations can connect to existing areas of habitat across the landscape. Defra may provide software or data analyses to help responsible authorities identify suitable locations. However, it is the responsible authority, working with partners, who should ultimately decide what potential measure to propose in what location. They should use software and models as a guide or a tool, but not rely on them without further consideration.
92. The Secretary of State may identify areas that, in their opinion, could become of particular importance and could also contribute to a national network for nature recovery. If a responsible authority is informed that the Secretary of State has identified such an area within their strategy area, then they should include it in their local habitat map as being somewhere that could become of particular importance.
93. Areas that could become of particular importance are likely to change significantly when responsible authorities are reviewing and republishing their strategies. This is to reflect where action has been taken as well as changing priorities and circumstances. In the republished strategies, responsible authorities can suggest the need for action in the same locations as before, but they should build on what action has been taken, especially in creating greater connectivity between areas.

## How to present the strategy

94. Local nature recovery strategies should be practical documents that can be understood by a range of landowners, managers, decision makers and other interested parties. Responsible authorities should make the statement of biodiversity priorities concise and clearly structured, emphasising the priorities and the potential measures to carry these out. They should write and present the statement in plain English. They can provide supporting information with the statement if more detailed is required.
95. The local habitat map should be simple and uncluttered. It should be easy to see those areas that are already of particular importance for biodiversity and those areas that could become of particular importance. It should be straightforward to access basic information about these mapped locations. For example, the name of the national conservation site or the potential measure proposed at an area that could become of particular importance.

96. Responsible authorities should only include other mapped information if it is necessary. They should keep the local habitat map separate and distinct from other maps created for other purposes. This is essential so that bodies required to use the local nature recovery strategy in different ways can clearly understand what they must do. For example, public authorities who are legally required to have regard to relevant strategies.
97. Responsible authorities could use interactive software to enable users to easily find the most interesting or relevant information to them.
98. Each responsible authority must provide their strategy to the government in a format that enables the most important information to be extracted and edited. For example the location and extent of areas of particular importance for biodiversity. This will help the government to compare or pull together information from different strategies.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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