



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.



© Crown copyright 2023

This information is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

1st floor (SE corner), Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street, SW1P 4DF

Or email: localnaturerecoverystrategies@defra.gov.uk

PB no14793

www.gov.uk/defra

ISBN 978-1-5286-3996-5

E02884866 03/23

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office

Contents

About local nature recovery strategies.....	4
Working with local partners.....	6
What to include in a local nature recovery strategy	7
Map areas of particular importance for biodiversity	8
Map areas where nature recovery action has been taken	10
Describe the strategy area, its biodiversity and opportunities for recovery	11
Agree priorities and identify potential measures	13
Map areas that could become of particular importance	16
How to present the strategy	19

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

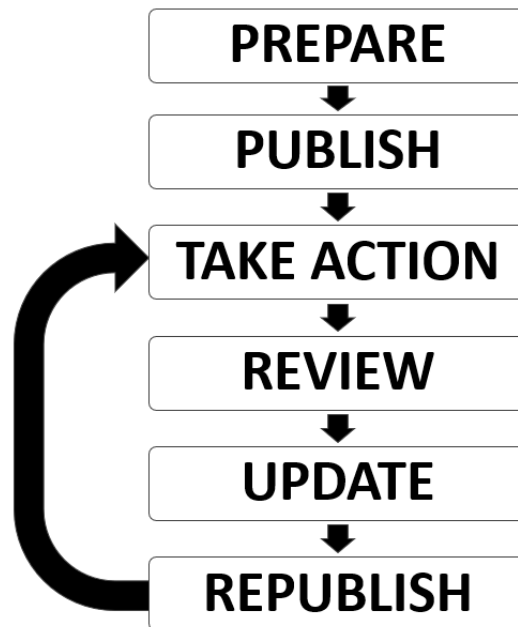
2. Local nature recovery strategies are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Act. Each strategy must:
 - agree priorities for nature’s recovery
 - map the most valuable existing areas for nature
 - map specific proposals for creating or improving 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.

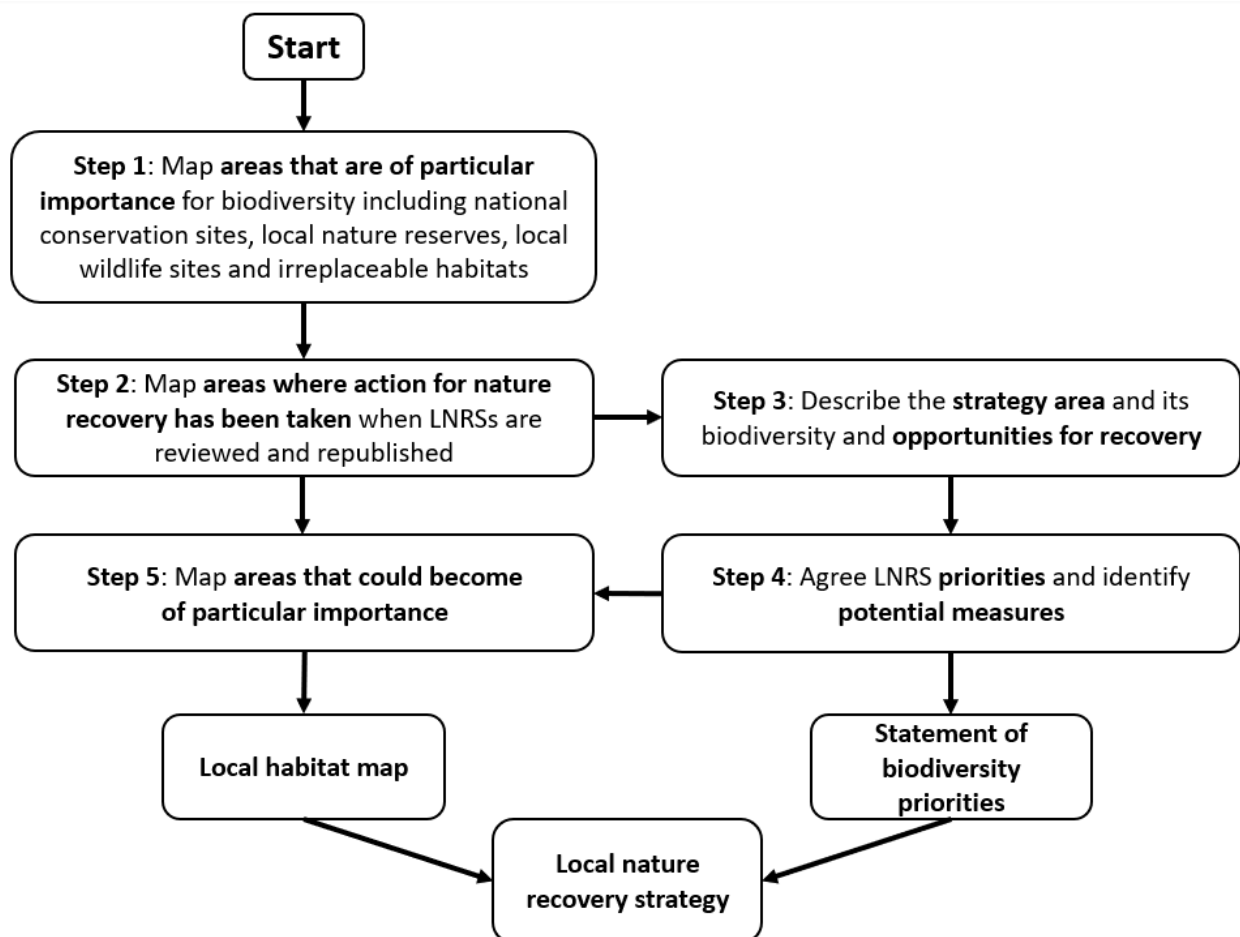
20. Responsible authorities should prepare their strategy so that the statement of biodiversity priorities and local habitat map work closely together. To do this, they should follow this order of steps:

- 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.