

TITLE OF REPORT: Response to Consultation - Local Nature Recovery Strategies 2021**REPORT OF: Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive**

Purpose of the Report

1. To brief Cabinet on the background of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and to request retrospective approval for the submission of responses to the Government's recent consultation on the implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies in England (see Appendix 3).

Background

2. The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and biodiversity continues to be in rapid decline. 13% of species in England are threatened with extinction and since 1970 more species have seen their populations decrease than increase.
3. The greatest drivers of biodiversity loss are agriculture, urbanisation, pollution, fisheries, invasive non-native species and climate change. Public sector expenditure on biodiversity in the UK, as a proportion of GDP, has fallen by 42% since a peak in 2008/09.
4. Despite this, public support for UK conservation continues to grow. The amount of time donated by conservation volunteers has increased by 46% since 2000, with their time being estimated to have a financial value of over £20 million per annum.
5. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a system of new measures set out in the Government's Environmental Bill to drive more coordinated and practical action to help nature.

Proposal

6. The Council is being consulted on how the Government should implement LNRS ahead of the national rollout of the Bill. The consultation link is [here](#) and the deadline for responses was the 2nd November 2021.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that Cabinet endorses the responses to the consultation on the implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies in England, as set out in Appendix 3.

For the following reason:

To ensure the implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies takes into account the Council's views and preferences.

Policy Context

1. The Council's strategic approach is to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives, which drives the major policy direction, including the need to reduce inequalities, including those linked to health.
2. The Council's Local Plan sets out a number of strategic objectives including providing a high quality of life for everyone (SO10); ensuring the development and use of land enhances the quality of the natural environment (SO9); and adapting to the issues, mitigating the adverse impacts and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by climate change (SO11). The plan sits under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including protecting and enhancing our local and natural environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy (section 2).
3. The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2021 and an Environmental Policy in 2021. The implementation of the LNRS could deliver some of these priorities.

Background

4. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) as set out in clauses 100 to 104 of the Environment Bill are designed to work with and help link other strategies in the Bill to reverse nature's decline. It strengthens the existing duty on public authorities to conserve biodiversity and sets out that they should "have regard" to relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies and report on the actions taken every five years.
5. Their purpose is to help reverse the decline in biodiversity in England by driving greater consideration and forward planning regarding the action that is needed for nature's recovery. Each strategy will "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". LNRS are also intended to have a broader role in the planning system by being used as evidence in the preparation of Local Plans.
6. They aim to support the delivery of wider objectives such as through "nature-based solutions", which uses nature and natural processes to address both environmental and social challenges, for example by restoring wetlands to manage flood risk. This could also include climate change adaptation and mitigation or enabling access to nature.
7. LNRS were also highlighted in the Planning for the Future White Paper as a way that the reformed planning system could be proactive in promoting environmental recovery and sustainability. The strategies will be evidence-based and locally led to create a network of shared plans that will underpin the Nature Recovery Network.

8. The Government anticipates there will be around 50 LNRS which will cover the whole of England without any gaps or overlaps. The boundaries will be set by the DEFRA Secretary of State. LNRS should cover large enough areas so that nature recovery can be achieved across landscapes but can still be meaningful to local people. They will likely be set out with a LNRS for each county, but individual areas should be set according to local circumstances.
9. Therefore, LNRSs will be prepared by a consortium of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), so that Gateshead LPA will be mandated to prepare a LNRS with one or more adjoining authorities, to be determined by DEFRA. This will help in securing and sharing the resources needed to assist in the production of the LNRS, identifying the locations where financial incentives will have the most environmental benefit and prioritising areas and activities that will be eligible for funding.
10. LNRS will need to be in place to coordinate the investment of biodiversity net gain and Government grants such as the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM). Places that will enable the Network to grow over time will be identified to support the principal aim of restoring biodiversity and helping achieve wider environmental objectives such as managing flood risk and carbon sequestration.
11. Natural England coordinated pilots of Local Nature Recovery Strategies from August 2020 to May 2021 in Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Buckinghamshire Council, Cornwall Council, Northumberland County Council and Cumbria County Council. These were undertaken to test the process of preparing the strategies, see what the strategies might look like and see how they would interact with other local policies. The six-step process of preparing the LNRS is set out in Appendix 2.

Consultation

12. Cabinet Members for Environment & Transport and The Leader and Deputy Leader have been consulted in preparing this report.

Alternative Options

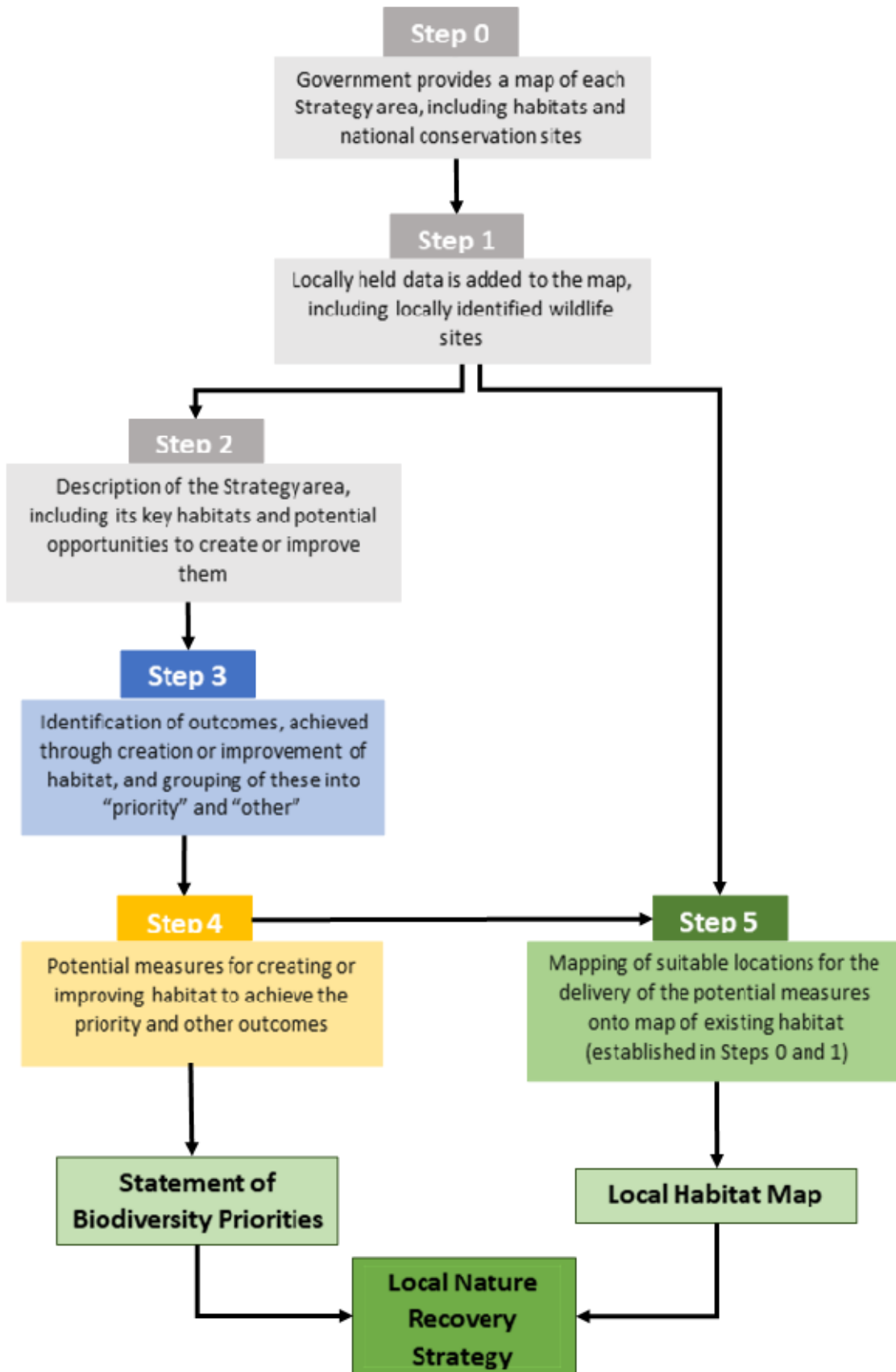
13. Not responding to the consultation, or any alternative views or responses, have been considered in drafting the responses included at Appendix 3.

Implications of Recommended Option

14. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resource implications arising from this report.
- c) **Property Implications** - There are no direct property implications arising from this report.

15. **Risk Management Implication** - Responding to the consultation will ensure that the Council's views and preferences on the approach to implementing LNRSs are taken into account.
16. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no equality and diversity implications.
17. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
18. **Health Implications** – Access to nature and green spaces provides important benefits to public health and wellbeing, and the government expects that public authorities will wish to use the process of creating their LNRSs to also identify opportunities to increase access to nature whilst supporting its recovery.
19. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - The implementation of LNRSs will enable the nature recovery network to grow over time helping to achieve wider environmental objectives (like carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change or managing flood risk), and contribute to green economic recovery objectives and long-term sustainability. The LNRS could also provide a mechanism for climate adaptation.
20. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no human rights implications arising from this report.
21. **Ward Implications** - The LNRS will have implications for all wards once prepared and published.



Local Nature Recovery Strategies – Consultation Questions and Responses

4. What is your organisation? [**Gateshead Council**]

5. Which of the groups listed below do you consider essential for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

- Local authority(s) other than the “responsible authority”, where the Strategy covers more than one Local Authority area
 - Local authorities adjacent to the Strategy areas
 - Local Nature Partnership(s), where active and geographically aligned
 - Natural England
 - The Environment Agency
 - The Forestry Commission
 - Other public bodies e.g., Highways England
 - Environmental non-governmental organisations active in the Strategy area
 - National Park Authority(s), where present in the Strategy area and if not the “responsible authority”
 - Area of Outstanding National Beauty organisation(s), where present in the Strategy area
 - Local Records Centre(s), where separate from any of the other groups listed
 - Local farming, forestry, and landowning groups
 - Local Enterprise Partnerships
 - Utilities providers, such as water companies
 - Other local business representative bodies
 - Individual landowners and land managers (including farmers, both landowners and tenants)
 - Individual businesses
 - Members of the public
 - Don't Know
- [Tick all that apply]

6. Are there any organisations not listed above whose involvement you consider essential? [**Yes**] If yes, which ones and why? [**local bat, badger, bird, and amphibian & reptile groups; owing to their specialist/local knowledge**]

7. Do you think that additional support should be provided to farmers, landowners and managers the land management sector to facilitate their involvement with the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies? [**Yes**]

8. If information on other types of local wildlife sites within a Local Nature Recovery Strategy area is not held by the responsible authority, do you think that if another Local Authority owns the information they should be obliged to provide it to them? [**Yes**]

9. Are you aware of specific locally held information that would make an important contribution to the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies that you do not believe would be made available without a requirement to do so? [**Yes**]
If yes, what information should be included? [**landowner information; local specialist interest group data**]

10. How do you think neighbouring Local Nature Recovery Strategy responsible

authorities should be required to work together?

- Required to inform neighbouring responsible authorities of their progress in preparing their Strategy
- Required to give information to neighbouring responsible authorities that would help them prepare their Strategy
- **Required to collaborate when setting objectives for areas close to boundaries**
- Left to local discretion
- Other [If other, please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick one]

11. Should draft Local Nature Recovery Strategies be subject to a local public consultation prior to publication? [Yes]

12. Should individual landowners or managers be able to decide that land they own or manage should not be identified by a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as an area that could become of particular importance for biodiversity? [No]

13. Should anyone interested in the Strategy be able to propose additional areas that could become of particular importance if these can be shown to be making a sufficient contribution to the overall objective of the Strategy? [Yes]

14. How prescriptive do you think regulations made under clause 101 should be in setting out how the responsible authority should work with local partners?

- Setting broad principles only
- **Setting broad principles and specific requirements on who to engage or how**
- A standardised process of who to engage and how
- Don't know

[Tick one]

15. Do you think that regulations made under clause 101 should establish a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies? [Yes]

16. If you believe that regulations made under clause 101 should establish a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which of the following bodies do you think should be able to raise a dispute (including on behalf of others)?

- **Local Authorities within the Strategy area who are not the responsible authority**
- **Natural England**
- **Responsible Authorities for neighbouring Strategy areas**
- Other []
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

17. Which of the following do you think might be reasonable grounds for raising a dispute about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy preparation process?

- **Not adequately involving relevant specific groups**
- **Slow/no progress**
- **Lack of transparency**
- **Legal requirements not being followed**
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

18. At which points in the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy do you think it should be possible to escalate procedural disputes for external consideration?

- Before finalisation of the Strategy priorities
- Before a potential public consultation on the draft Strategy
- If the responsible authority does not respond within a reasonable timeframe to being informed of concerns
- At any time
- There should not be a process for external consideration
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

19. Do you think that Local Nature Recovery Strategies should also be "signed off" by a body other than the responsible authority before they can be published?

- No
- Yes – instead of a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation process
- Yes – as well as a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation process
- Don't know

[Tick one]

20. If so, which bodies should be given sign-off responsibility?

- Other Local Authorities in the Strategy area
- Natural England
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

21. On what grounds could a body refuse to sign-off a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

- Disagreement about overall priorities
- Disagreement about specific priorities
- Disagreement about potential measures
- Disagreement about the inclusion or exclusion of specific "areas of potential importance"
- On any reasonable grounds
- Only the "responsible authority" should be required to sign-off the Strategy
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

22. Should the Defra Secretary of State be able to appoint a separate body to consider disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and if so, which body or bodies? **Yes**

- It should not be possible for a separate body to be appointed
- Natural England
- Planning inspectorate
- Whichever body the Secretary of State considers appropriate
- The responsible authority for a different Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

23. In resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies should the Secretary of State be able to:

- Require the responsible authority to repeat particular parts of the preparation process
 - Require the responsible authority to make specific changes to their Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - Approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with or without changes.
 - Something else [please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

24. Do you think that each local habitat map should adopt the same data standards and be published in the same format to facilitate national collation? [Yes]

25. If yes, how should this level of consistency be established?

- Advice from Natural England
 - Creation of standard templates
 - Specified in regulations made under clause 101
 - By consensus amongst responsible authorities
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

26. Do you think that each statement of biodiversity priorities should also be published in a similar format?

- The format should be the same
 - There should be some specific requirements but the responsible authority should keep some discretion over presentation
 - The responsible authority should be able to decide how they present their Strategy so long as it meets legal requirements
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

27. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be published together on a single national website as well as being published locally by the responsible authority? [Yes]

28. Do you think that a published Local Nature Recovery Strategy should:

- Only be changed once the Secretary of State has been notified
 - Only be changed with the Secretary of State's permission
 - Not be changed unless it's part of a scheduled review process
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

29. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England should be reviewed and republished at similar times or should there be local discretion to decide when is the best time?

- Set nationally
 - Decided locally
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

30. If you do think all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be reviewed and republished at the same time, do you think that this should happen to a fixed cycle?

- There should be a regular fixed period between reviews
- A maximum period of time between reviews should be set

- A minimum period of time between reviews should be set
- A maximum and a minimum period of time between reviews should be set
- The Defra Secretary of State should be able to decide
- Don't know

[Tick one]

31. Do you think that all responsible authorities should take a consistent approach to describing the biodiversity in their Strategy area? [Yes]

32. If yes, do you have a preference as to how sub-areas based on similarities in biodiversity should be identified?

- No preference
- Responsible authorities should be able to decide
- National Character Areas
- River catchments
- Other [Responsible authority AND other local authorities in the strategy area]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

33. To ensure that the statement of biodiversity priorities provides an accurate and useful description of the Strategy area that can inform the setting of realistic and appropriate priorities, what else should the description consider in addition to describing existing biodiversity?

- Climate change scenarios
- How land use/ habitat distribution has changed over time
- Anticipated future pressures on land use (e.g., broad indications of housing and infrastructure need)
- Environmental issues in the Strategy area that might be addressed through nature-based solutions
- Existing significant nature or environment projects (e.g., landscape scale work)
- Other [Climate change adaptation/mitigation]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

34. How should the statement of biodiversity priorities describe opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity without mapping them?

- Identify particular rarer habitats/species that the strategy area is suitable for supporting
- Assess the potential to contribute to national priorities for nature recovery
- Describe the relative opportunity for creating more areas of key habitats as well as making them bigger, better and joined up
- Indicate broad areas where creating improving habitat may be more achievable
- Assess the potential for use of nature-based solutions
- However the responsible authority finds most useful
- Other [However the responsible authority AND other local authorities in the strategy area find most useful, in consensus]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

[Tick all that apply]

35. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should follow the same priority setting process or that each responsible authority should decide for themselves how priorities should be set?

- All Strategies should follow the same priority setting process

• Strategies should follow the same high-level principles but with local discretion

• Strategies should decide for themselves how to prioritise

• Don't know

[Tick one]

36. How should national environmental priorities be reflected when setting Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities?

• National priorities should be advisory

• Responsible authorities should show how they have considered national priorities

• Local priorities should follow a consistent nationally-set structure

• Other [Responsible authorities along with the other local authorities within the strategy area should show how they have considered national priorities]

• Don't know

[Tick one]

37. Should Local Nature Recovery Strategies identify only those outcomes for nature recovery and environmental improvement that are of priority or also include those that are positive but of lower priority?

• List only priorities

• List priorities and other relevant lower priority outcomes

• Don't know

[Tick one]

38. How should priorities identified in other environmental spatial plans in the Strategy area be incorporated into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

• Considered and prioritised alongside other outcomes

• Incorporated directly

• Don't know

[Tick one]

39. Do you think that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should include potential measures for conserving and enhancing biodiversity and making wider environmental improvements that cannot be mapped as well as those that can?

• Yes both

• No, only those that can be mapped

• Don't know

[Tick one]

40. Should there be a standard list of potential measures for responsible authorities to choose from?

• No – responsible authorities should have free choice

• There should be a list of suggestions

• There should be a core list which the responsible authority can add to

• Responsible authorities should only be able to choose measures included on a national list

• Don't know

[Tick one]

41. What sort of areas, outside of national conservation and local wildlife sites, might a responsible authority reasonably consider to be of particular importance for biodiversity?

• Ancient woodlands

• Flower rich meadows

- Priority habitats in good condition
 - Areas used for feeding or resting by animals or birds from a nearby national conservation site
 - Any areas the responsible authority chooses
 - None
 - Other [All priority habitats, accessible natural greenspace, wildlife corridors]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

42. Should all responsible authorities follow a standardised process for mapping potential measures to identify areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity or other environmental benefits? [Yes]

43. Do you think that all responsible authorities should seek to identify a similar proportion of their Strategy area as areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity or wider environmental outcomes?

- Yes, there should be a set percentage each responsible authority should identify
 - No, this should not be set and decided locally
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

44. Do you think that when Strategies are reviewed and republished, they should map where appropriate action has been taken to make areas of increasing importance for biodiversity? [Yes]

45. Overall, how satisfied are you with our online consultation tool?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dis-satisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know