

**TITLE OF REPORT:** **South of Tyne and Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland City Councils**

**REPORT OF:** **Peter Udall, Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth**

---

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The Secretary of State has specified that the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) will commence from April 2023.
2. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has identified the South of Tyne and Wear (Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland) as one LNRS area. Defra has appointed Gateshead Council as the Responsible Authority for preparing the South of Tyne and Wear LNRS, with South Tyneside and Sunderland City councils and Natural England being Supporting Authorities.
3. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the formation of the South of Tyne and Wear LNRS and its boundary, to comply with the new Environment Act, 2021 duty for Local Authorities to prepare LNRS, and the appointment of Gateshead Council as the Responsible Authority for preparing the South of Tyne LNRS with South Tyneside and Sunderland City councils and Natural England as Supporting Authorities.

### **Background**

4. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new system of spatial strategies introduced by clauses 100 to 104 of the Environment Act, 2021. They are designed to work with and help link other strategies in the Environment Act to reverse nature's decline by driving greater consideration and forward planning of actions to improve the number and quality of species and habitats within the LNRS area.
5. 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".

6. LNRS are also intended to have a broader role in the planning system by being used as evidence and influence in the preparation of Local Plans.

### **Proposal**

7. Defra and Natural England have now formally identified the South of Tyne and Wear (Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland) as one LNRS area, with Gateshead Council being the Responsible Authority.

### **Recommendation**

8. It is recommended that Cabinet notes and endorses the formation of the South of Tyne and Wear LNRS Partnership and its boundary, and the appointment of Gateshead Council as the Responsible Authority for preparing the South of Tyne and Wear LNRS with South Tyneside and Sunderland City Councils and Natural England as Supporting Authorities.

For the following reason:

- To ensure compliance with the Environment Act

### Policy Context

1. The LNRS will cover every part of Gateshead to drive nature's recovery and provide wider benefits. The LNRS will support Gateshead Councils Thrive agenda, also support the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan, Gateshead's Economic Development Strategy, Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy. A significant area the LNRS will support is the Councils Climate Emergency – mitigation and adaptation there are opportunities for the LNRS to play a leading role in shaping and maximising synergies between related policy areas. Nature recovery has an important connection with climate change, and LNRS could achieve multiple benefits include mitigating the effects of climate change (for example through natural flood management) and directly contributing to Net Zero (for example through carbon sequestration).

### Background

2. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new system of spatial strategies set out in clauses 100 to 104 of the Environment Act and is designed to work with and help link other strategies in the Act to reverse nature's decline.
3. 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.
4. 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".
5. LNRS are also intended to have a broader role in the planning system by being used as evidence and influence 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 peatlands to manage flood risk. This could also include climate change adaptation and mitigation or enabling access to nature.
7. 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 LNRS will also need to be in place to coordinate the investment of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain and Government grants such as the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS).
9. The six-step process mandated by the Government to prepare the LNRS is set out in Appendix 2. There are no set timescales associated with LNRS preparation, with much of this work dependant on the date when regulations and

guidance are laid in Parliament. It is estimated that, based on the pilots, it will take 12 to 18 months to prepare, agree, and publish.

## **Proposal**

10. The boundaries of LNRS are set by Defra. 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. Therefore, LNRSs will be prepared by a grouping of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) with one LPA identified as the Responsible Authority.
11. Defra and Natural England have now formally identified the South of Tyne and Wear (Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland) as one LNRS area, with Gateshead Council being the Responsible Authority. This confirms the approach discussed at the North East Combined Authority Leadership Board meeting in July 2022.
12. The process for preparing an LNRS is broadly defined by DEFRA, as set out in Appendix 2.

## **Consultation**

13. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Environment & Transport Portfolio holders have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

## **Alternative options**

14. There are no alternative options, the requirement to prepare a LNRS is a mandatory requirement. The Council could decline Defra's proposal to appoint Gateshead as the Responsible Authority and request that either South Tyneside or City of Sunderland be the Responsible Authority. However, Gateshead is the largest of the three local authorities and supports the largest extent of semi-natural habitat (including over half of all the ancient semi-natural woodland in Tyne and Wear). Of the three South of Tyne LNRS local authorities (Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland City), Gateshead is the only one to share a boundary with both the North of Tyne (Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside) LNRS and Durham County LNRS.

## **Implications of Recommendation**

15. **Resources:**
  - a. **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms Government have committed to funding new burdens in the Environment Act including the preparation of LNRS.

- 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. The Environment Act contains a specific duty on all public authorities to "have regard" to relevant LNRS.
16. **Risk Management Implication** – There are several risks such as reputational legal responsibilities challenge that will need to be addressed in the preparation of the LNRS. Establishing a strong, collaboration, budget and governance structure will ensure these risks are met as the project develops.
17. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – No equality and diversity implications.
18. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – No crime implications.
19. **Health Implications** – No health implications.
20. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – The LNRS will support climate change mitigation and adaptation by increasing and improving habitats and biodiversity within the LNRS area.
21. **Human Rights Implications** - None.
22. **Ward Implications** – The LNRS will cover every ward in Gateshead. The LNRS process will build on existing relationships between Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland City councils. Collaboration with North of Tyne, Durham and Tees Valley LNRS areas will also be required.

## Appendix 2: LNRS Process

