

An assessment of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and their contribution toward nature recovery commitments

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#### **Glossary of Terms**

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity	APIB	Areas recognised as being of particular importance for biodiversity (nationally designated sites, local nature reserves, local wildlife sites and irreplaceable habitats).
Areas that Could Become of particular importance for Biodiversity	ACIB	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.
Assessment Area Question	Closed (yes/no) o and Delivery Med	questions which align with three Assessment Areas of Ambition, Coherence chanisms. These questions are the focus of this assessment.
Biodiversity Action Plan	BAP	A strategy outlining actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity at local or national levels.
Blue Green Infrastructure	BGI	Network of natural and semi-natural features that manage water, improve biodiversity, and enhance urban spaces.
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology	CEH	UK research centre providing science and data on ecosystems, biodiversity, water, and climate to support environmental management and policy.
Environment Act 2021	EA2021	Primary Legislation providing the basis for EIP and LNRS
Environment Agency	EA	Public body in England responsible for protecting and improving the environment, including regulation of water, waste, and pollution.
Environment Improvement Plan	EIP	Specific measurable plan and targets related to achieving environmental goals for England.
Environmental Impact Assessment	EIA	A process to assess the environmental effects of proposed projects before decisions are made, ensuring potential impacts are considered.
Environmental Land Management Schemes	ELMS	UK government schemes that reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental benefits, such as biodiversity, water quality, and carbon storage.
Geographic Information Systems	GIS	Systems for capturing, storing, analysing, and displaying spatial or geographic data to support mapping and decision-making.
Habitat Regulations Assessment	HRA	A process to assess potential impacts of plans or projects on protected European habitats and species, ensuring legal compliance.
Interest Theme	Shorthand theme relates to an Ass	for coding content during the assessment process - each Interest Theme essment Area Question
Invasive Non Native Species	INNS	Species introduced outside their natural range that spread and cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health.



Local Environmental Records Centre	LERC	Regional centres that collect, manage, and share biodiversity and geodiversity data to support conservation and planning.			
Local Planning Authority	LPA	Local government body responsible for managing land use and development through planning decisions and policies.			
Local Nature Partnership	LNP	Collaborative groups of local organisations working to improve and protect natural environments and support sustainable development.			
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategies were introduced by the UK Government as part of the Environment Act 2021. LNRS are spatial plans designed to identify priorities and actions for nature recovery at a local level while supporting national biodiversity goals.			
Local Wildlife Site	LWS	Areas identified locally for their high wildlife value, protecting important habitats and species outside statutory sites.			
Marine Management Organisation	ММО	UK government body managing marine resources, conservation, and sustainable development in English seas.			
Measures	Taken from the S Priorities	tatutory Guidance on LNRS and defined as actions for achieving the			
National Nature Recovery Commitments	General catch all legally-binding ta	term for the TPW and other EIP goal areas as well as other relevant rgets for nature recovery			
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project	NSIP	Large-scale projects in the UK deemed critical for national infrastructure, requiring streamlined planning and approval processes.			
Nature Recovery Network	NRN	A UK-wide initiative to restore and connect habitats, boosting biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.			
Office for Environmental Protection	OEP	Independent UK body overseeing government environmental laws and holding public authorities accountable.			
Priorities	Taken from the S enhancing biodive environmental be	tatutory Guidance on LNRS and defined as 'the priorities for recovering or ersity (taking into account the contribution that this can also make to other nefits)'			
Protected Site Strategies	PSS	Plans guiding conservation and management of protected areas to maintain or enhance their natural value.			
Responsible Authority	RA	The Local Authority responsible for producing an LNRS			
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI	Legally protected UK sites designated for their important wildlife, geology, or landforms.			
Special Area of Conservation	SAC	Protected European sites designated to conserve habitats and species of international importance.			
Special Protection Area	SPA	Protected European sites designated to safeguard rare or vulnerable bird species and their habitats.			
Supporting Authority	SA	Another Authority responsible for supporting LNRS (may be local authorities, local planning authorities, Natural England)			
Supporting Statement	Definitive stateme questions as a 'ye	ents that need to be true in order to support answering the Assessment Area es'			
Sustainable Drainage System	SuDS	Techniques managing surface water runoff to reduce flooding and improve water quality sustainably.			
Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme	SFI	UK scheme rewarding farmers for environmentally friendly practices that improve soil, water, and biodiversity.			



www.treligan.com.			
Thriving Plants and Wildlife	TPW	'Apex' Goal 1 of the EIP which includes a range of specific commitments to habitat creation, woodland/tree cover expansion, reversing species decline, improving protected site condition, etc	



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### **Executive Summary**

This report assesses Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) with a focus on understanding their contribution to national nature recovery commitments, specifically the Environmental Improvement Plan's (EIP) goal of 'thriving plants and wildlife' (TPW) and legally-binding species abundance targets. Commissioned by the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), it aims to inform their reporting and recommendations to the government in respect of the implementation of environmental law relating to LNRS.

This assessment evaluates LNRS across three key areas: Ambition, Coherence, and Delivery:

- Ambition examines how LNRS collectively contribute to national nature recovery goals, including general alignment with national nature recovery commitments, measurable commitments, broad stakeholder engagement, and long-term resourcing.
- Coherence assesses how well LNRS align with other spatial and non-spatial plans, considering how local nature recovery is integrated into wider policy objectives and regional and national networks.
- Delivery evaluates the clarity of implementation routes, the identification of impactful mechanisms, and readiness for delivery.

The assessment uses a qualitative confidence rating—high, medium, or low—based on the extent to which supporting statements are met for each of several questions within these three themes. It primarily relies on publicly available materials, with some supplementary information provided by Responsible Authorities (RA)'s charged with LNRS preparation. A sample of 12 LNRS areas (25% of the total) was selected to ensure a representative analysis, covering diverse characteristics such as delivery opportunities, geography, size, regional distribution, coastal vs. landlocked status, and designated area coverage. A summary of our key findings is set out below under the headings of the broad assessment areas.

#### Ambition

The assessment found that LNRS collectively represent broad ambition for nature recovery in England and align well with national environmental commitments, including the EIP TPW goal. They reflect local contexts, priorities, and pressures, remaining ambitious yet realistic. However, the lack of quantifiable contributions to national targets and incomplete coverage of all aspects of goal areas, such as marine environments, makes it less clear how they might collectively contribute to achieving national nature recovery commitments. LNRS mapping provides location-based options for action but the lack of a consistent highly-directed approach towards the most impactful areas could make it more difficult to create effective nature recovery networks. Stakeholder engagement has been extensive, fostering broad consensus, though maintaining this momentum into delivery remains uncertain. Concerns over long-term funding and strategy coordination raise risks that LNRS could remain aspirational rather than actionable.

#### Coherence

LNRS demonstrate significant consideration of spatial and non-spatial plans in their development, seeking alignment with local and national strategies. RAs have reviewed a broad range of plans to avoid conflicts, but active integration of those plans remains uncertain - broad synergies between other agenda areas have been made clear, but more specific location-based coherence has not come through strongly, where



on the ground there may be very clear 'win-win' actions at specific known places. Coherence with Local Plans is a clear priority, though potential spatial conflicts are generally avoided by deference to site based assessments and individual decisions rather than LNRS introducing or proposing any clear frameworks for prioritisation other than in a few narrow cases. LNRS does not introduce a clear policy weighting for nature recovery at local level, in comparison to other areas.

Alignment with other policy agendas is conceptually strong but lacks clear mechanisms for embedding LNRS priorities into decision-making. LNRS acknowledge the importance of cross-boundary collaboration, with notable examples of integration where natural landscapes span multiple areas. However, inconsistencies in engagement between neighboring LNRS and challenges in mapping integration suggest that a well-functioning national picture is unlikely to emerge from this process without further work.

#### Delivery

LNRS outline broad delivery mechanisms, including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), agri-environment schemes, and local interventions. While flexible, they do not clearly set out which mechanisms will be most impactful. The sufficiency of existing government delivery mechanisms to meet national nature recovery targets remains uncertain. LNRS highlight the importance of partnerships, with a wide range of potential delivery collaborators identified. However, the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders remain unclear, and structured and specific forms for partnerships and collaborations into delivery are lacking. While LNRS are likely to serve as good coordination tools for those already involved in nature recovery, they offer limited direction for new stakeholders at measures level. Some measures do provide more clarity, suggesting that a more 'delivery-ready' version of LNRS could be quite quickly achieved with further support for RAs.

#### Summary

This assessment highlights that LNRS represent a promising foundation for coordinated nature recovery in England, demonstrating strong local ambition and thoughtful general alignment with existing plans and policies. However, gaps in quantifiable outcomes, delivery clarity, and unknown positioning with national priorities could limit their overall effectiveness. Clearer guidance on delivery mechanisms, and stronger alignment with policy levers will be critical to realising the full potential of LNRS in meeting the UK's legal nature recovery commitments.



### Introduction

The OEP is a public body whose mission is to protect and improve the environment by holding government and other public authorities to account. The body was legally created in November 2021, under the Environment Act 2021 (EA2021). The OEP's work covers England and Northern Ireland, and also reserved matters across the UK (a matter on which only the UK Parliament can make legislation).

This report complements the OEP's work to monitor and report on the implementation of environmental law and will support its work in respect of the EIP TPW goal and its associated legally-binding targets, specifically those relating to species abundance.

Treligan were commissioned to assess LNRS. LNRS were introduced by EA2021 and further developed via 'The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023'. There are 48 LNRS areas, each covered by an RA and a variable number of Supporting Authorities (SA) who cooperate with the RA to contribute towards the strategy. LNRS are spatial strategies for nature - a form of systematic conservation planning - and are intended to work alongside connected instruments pertaining to nature and biodiversity such as BNG in planning and new conservation approaches such as Protected Site Strategies, as well as a range of other plans and strategies such as Agri-Environment incentives and schemes. The OEP, in this commission, are specifically concerned with the role of LNRS in relation to the EIP TPW goal and associated species abundance targets, which were developed in greater detail within 'The Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023'.

The purpose of this report is to present findings from a qualitative assessment of a sample of 12 LNRS carried out between December 2024 and February 2025. The OEP may then use these findings to inform their own reporting and recommendations.



### **Assessment Methodology**

This assessment is based on considering three areas, which are seen as interrelating:

- Ambition for contributing to National Nature Recovery Commitments. This area focuses on understanding the contribution LNRS might make to national nature recovery goals and targets if proposed measures are delivered, whether this is expressed in any measurable commitments, and how nature might be prioritised in a changing landscape. It also considers ambition in the context of stakeholder engagement to lay the groundwork for widespread adoption of priorities, and how creative and ambitious the approach to resourcing strategy coordination in the longer term has been.
- Coherence with other plans and strategies. This area focuses on how well LNRS has incorporated, and will be incorporated into, other spatial and non-spatial plans and strategies. It considers how nature recovery will be prioritised, and whether strategies are likely to be delivered as an integral part of achieving a wide range of other objectives. It also looks at whether LNRS is coherent with wider nature recovery networks to achieve more impact regionally and nationally.
- Well Explained and Realistic Delivery Mechanisms. This area focuses on how clear the routes
  to delivery are and seeks to understand how Ambition will be translated into reality. It seeks to
  understand which delivery mechanisms have been identified and whether strategies provide
  insight into those which will have the most impact for national nature recovery commitments. The
  assessment attempts to gauge how 'delivery ready' the strategies are in terms of bringing clarity
  on the tools and methods, delivery partners (and partnership fitness for broad and inclusive
  collaboration), and clear first steps that will enable measures to be taken forward while
  acknowledging that detailed delivery plans are not expected at this stage.

The assessment is not concerned with assessing the compliance of the LNRS with statutory requirements, and does not seek to duplicate such compliance monitoring or tracking that is being undertaken separately by Defra or Natural England. Nor does it seek to compare or rank strategies, or compare the performance of LNRS RAs in the development of LNRS.

The assessment methodology can be reviewed in the separate document '*OEP* Assessment Framework: *LNRS role in contributing to nature recovery commitments*'. The assessment is qualitative and based on determining a 'high, medium and low' confidence rating for a number of closed questions, the judgements for which are based on how many of the three 'Supporting Statements' for each question have been met.

High	Sufficient evidence 3 out of 3 of the Supporting Statements are true (as well as absence of evidence that any supporting statement is false)
Medium	Little or no evidence 1 or 2 out of 3 of the Supporting Statements are true (or evidence that the statements are false)
Low	Little or no evidence of 3 out of 3 of the supporting statements being true (or evidence that the statements are false)

#### Assessment Area Question Confidence Rating

#### Limitations



There are a number of acknowledged limitations to the assessment approach which should be considered when reviewing the findings in this report.

- The report is based primarily on a review of materials, the majority of which were publicly available or will become publicly available, with some supplementary information provided by RAs.
- The volume of information considered is very large, and the primary focus has been on the main strategy documents and maps. Reasonable attempts have also been made to review supporting method statements and other process documents but these could not be considered in the same level of detail.
- LNRS were at different stages of development, and although some were at consultation stage, none were final published strategies. The assessment approach needed to accommodate situations where evidence relevant to a particular assessment area was reduced or not available.
- Verification of findings with other local stakeholders for each LNRS was not carried out the perspective of the RA expressed through the documents and their clarifications has not been cross checked with other local perspectives.



### Sample of 12 LNRS areas

Sampling of the 12 LNRS areas was determined. The sampling methodology can be reviewed in the separate annex '*Annex 1 - Methodology for Selecting the 12 LNRS*'.



Figure 1 - Geographic distribution of selected LNRS sites.

To ensure a representative analysis, an appropriate sample size of 12 LNRS sites, representing 25% of the total LNRS population and deemed sufficient to cover significant attribute differences. A range of criteria were used to ensure the sample covered as much of the diversity of LNRS characteristics as possible. The selection criteria were:

• Delivery Opportunities through the Planning System - varying levels of opportunity for the LNRS to deliver biodiversity outcomes based on level of engagement with Environmental Impact



Assessment (EIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) activities, which identify areas with development potential and environmental considerations.

- Human Geography predominantly rural versus predominantly urban areas.
- Geographic Size Large geographic areas versus smaller geographic areas.
- Regional Diversity Coverage of different regions such as North vs South, East vs West.
- Coastal vs Landlocked Areas with significant coastland versus those largely landlocked.
- Designated Areas Areas with significant or less significant coverage of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Areas (SPA), and Ramsar sites.

Some high level data on the variation in the sample is provided here as a further illustration of the very different contexts which LNRS as an instrument has been applied within (and the range of variation included in our sample).

	Total area	Rural Land	Urban / Suburban Land	Woodland	Arable and Horticulture	SSSI Proportional	Remai Land Class		Constal	Contains significant flood-prone
	(nectares)	Cover	Cover	Cover	Cover	Coverage	Other Notable Land Classes	Cover	Coastal	areas
Bucks & MK	187465	86%	14%	11%	34%	Lower	Improved Grassland - 40%	1%	No	coverage
Lancashire	326386	88%	12%	7%	14%	Higher	Improved Grassland - 42% Heather / Heather Grassland - 9% Littoral Sediment - 5% Acid Grassland - 4% 7%		Yes	Medium coverage
Kent & Medway	390551	87%	13%	13%	34%	Medium	Improved Grassland - 33% Saltwater - 4%	3%	Yes	Higher coverage
Dorset	269693	91%	9%	11%	27%	Medium	Improved Grassland - 47%	6%	Yes	Medium coverage
Greater Manchester	127692	54%	46%	9%	6%	Lower	Improved Grassland 21% Neutral Grassland 7% Heather, Heather Grassland 4% Bog 4% 3%		No	Medium coverage
Greater Essex	394888	87%	13%	6%	52%	Medium	Improved Grassland - 19% Saltwater - 6% 6% Ye		Yes	Higher coverage
Isle of Wight	39309	87%	13%	12%	20%	Lower	Improved Grassland - 48%	7%	Yes	Medium coverage
Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland	255249	88%	12%	6%	44%	Lower	Improved Grassland - 36% 2		No	Medium coverage
Cornwall	363377	93%	7%	11%	25%	Medium	Improved Grassland - 48% 9%		Yes	Lower coverage
County Durham	223422	93%	7%	9%	18%	Higher	Improved Grassland - 32% Bog - 14% Heather / Heather Grassland - 9% Acid Grassland - 9% 2%		Yes	Lower coverage
Herefordshire	164367	97%	3%	13%	40%	Lower	Improved Grassland - 40% 4% No		No	Medium coverage
York & North Yorkshire	832983	96%	4%	9%	32%	Higher	Improved Grassland - 30% Heather / Heather Grassland - 9% Bog - 7% Acid Grassland - 6%	3%	Yes	Higher coverage

Figure 2 - I	Physical	landscape	variation	in LNRS	assessment	sample
<u> </u>						

	National Parks Coverage	National Landscape Coverage	Number of Local Authorities	Number of Supporting Authorities	Number of neighbouring LNRS areas
Bucks & MK	No	Yes	2	2	7
Lancashire	Yes	Yes	13	16	5
Kent & Medway	No	Yes	13	18	5
Dorset	No	Yes	2	2	4
Greater Manchester	Yes	No	10	12	5
Greater Essex	No	Yes	14	15	5
Isle of Wight	No	Yes	1	1	0
Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland	No	No	10	13	8
Cornwall	No	Yes	1	2	1
County Durham	No	Yes	1	No data	5
Herefordshire	No	Yes	1	1	3
York & North Yorkshire	Yes	Yes	2	4	7

Figure 3 - Administrative and stakeholder variation in LNRS assessment sample

When the LNRS assessment was carried out, there was generally a consistent level of development of the strategies, with most having either reached pre-consultation review (for internal stakeholders and SAs), or public consultation. Three LNRS in the sample were less developed - although these were not deemed 'unassessable', some areas of the assessment for these were based on lower quantity of evidential material (or no material). Therefore, although all 12 have been factored into the qualitative analysis, the more developed strategies were given greater weight in our consideration. A smaller sample size is used for the overall confidence rating against each question depending on whether there is sufficient evidence in all strategies to make an informed judgement on the numbers of LNRS which did or did not meet certain Supporting Statements.



### Structure of the Report

This report presents the results of the assessment in the form of a response to a number of questions which were considered relevant to the likely success of LNRS - things which matter for ensuring the strategy results in tangible improvements to national nature recovery objectives. The questions were developed based on preliminary research into factors in systematic conservation planning that are expected to have an impact on successful outcomes, and were jointly developed with the OEP.

The responses to the questions are based primarily on independent review of the publicly available strategy documentation, concentrating on what were deemed to be the 'main strategy documents' and mapping assets, but also incorporating rapid review of supporting materials such as method statements, engagement plans and public websites. A questionnaire to RAs, and the opportunity for RAs to comment on the evidence we captured and queries we raised, was also considered. In the report we collectively refer to these as 'RA clarifications.'

The questions for each assessment area, with a brief explanation of why this is important, are summarised below with the assessment results sections immediately following. In each question section, we set out in a little more detail the context and why we consider the subject matter of each question important, before summarising the overarching findings and exploring the analysis in relation to the individual Supporting Statements that have been used to arrive at a conclusion.

#### Assessment Area 1 - Ambition for contributing to National Nature Recovery Commitments

- Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with broader environmental objectives that contribute to achieving national nature recovery commitments, such as the EIP TPW goal and species abundance targets? Establishing this fundamental relationship is the foundation stone of the assessment.
- Do the LNRS include maps and spatial priorities which will support ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and help to resolve prioritisation conflicts in a changing landscape? As spatial plans, a primary function must be successful navigation of complex spatial needs to establish enough space for nature recovery to take place.
- Do the LNRS present a clear and convincing picture of impactful engagement and collaborative relationships which will support widespread adoption of nature recovery measures in the strategy? Actually achieving impact will be based on the goodwill and collaborative efforts of a wide range of stakeholders working at different scales.
- Do the LNRS describe a creative and ambitious funding and resourcing approach for ongoing strategy coordination and development? The success of LNRS (which involves multiple actors working together in concert) relies on continued resourcing for strategy coordination, and clarity around funding and resources should enable better planning that is likely to influence successful delivery.

#### Assessment Area 2 - Coherence with other plans and strategies

 Are the LNRS coherent with other spatial plans that influence decision making within or overlapping the same geographic area? A lack of coherence with other spatial plans, or a lack of an understanding of how LNRS needs to be considered in those plans, could hamper adoption of LNRS priorities and measures and result in missed opportunities for those to be applied alongside other planning activity.



- Are the LNRS coherent with other non-spatial plans or strategies that influence decision making within the same geographic area? A lack of coherence or alignment with non-spatial objectives (such as outcomes or goals that relate to other public authority priorities like health, economic growth) could again result in missed opportunities for LNRS priorities and measures to be delivered alongside other priorities, or worse result in nature recovery activity seen as interfering with other priorities.
- Are the LNRS set in the wider context of England's nature recovery landscape, and does it avoid adopting a 'hard border' approach? This is about understanding whether nature recovery spatial planning in local areas will contribute to the creation of an even broader nature recovery network, and also tie-in with efforts over connecting landscapes and with other RAs to make best use of resources for maximum effect.

#### Assessment Area 3 - Well Explained and Realistic Delivery Mechanisms

- Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with well-explained delivery mechanisms, that are referenced in sufficient detail to understand their relative importance and contribution to meaningful nature recovery? It is understood that LNRS itself is not a delivery mechanism in terms of providing funding, requiring or otherwise initiating changes 'on the ground', but instead guides other delivery mechanisms. LNRS will need to anticipate the most impactful delivery mechanisms (which may vary by area), and ensure priorities and measures are designed with these in mind.
- Do the LNRS make it clear how different stakeholders should use it after publication, with measures described in sufficient detail to enable 'first steps' to be taken? Strategies which can successfully bridge the gap between big picture thinking and ambition, and practical first steps, stand a better chance of more rapid and successful translation into outcomes. Strategies which require further work or information to enable delivery to begin may result in delayed outcomes.
- Do the LNRS demonstrate a clear appreciation of the importance of partnerships and collaborative working to delivery? This again emphasises the need for nature recovery to be based on coordinated action at different levels and between different types of organisations with differing influence and focus.



## Assessment Results 1 - Ambition for contributing to National Nature Recovery Commitments

This assessment area is focused on understanding how ambitious the strategy is, principally in regard to the quality and quantity of nature recovery action that it suggests is possible, and in regard to what is said in the strategy about things that support this action - ambition in relation to creating engagement, securing funding, and so on.

This assessment area is not necessarily about identifying evidence that RAs have gone above and beyond the guidance (though this will be captured where it is apparent). The assessment seeks to understand how RAs have applied the guidance to create an ambitious vision of nature recovery. The ambition of an LNRS can be understood through its stated contributions to biodiversity, bioabundance, integration with broader environmental plans, and its ability to meet both short-term and long-term nature recovery goals.

The assessment area looks at the extent to which each LNRS is comprehensive and internally coherent in terms of nature recovery priorities and measures (not to be confused with coherence with other plans and strategies, Assessment Area 2), and ultimately how well it will ensure a meaningful contribution to the nature recovery commitments, species abundance targets and the TPW goal, if the proposed measures are delivered.

#### **Summary Findings**

The findings from individual question areas are covered in more detail below. This section briefly summarises the combined findings for Ambition overall.

LNRS collectively represent broad ambition for nature recovery in England, basing priorities and measures on significant locally-specific ecological understanding and broad stakeholder engagement, and providing strategy users with a comprehensive array of effective place-based actions. Specific local targets and more certainty over future strategy coordination would further strengthen ambition.

The LNRS we reviewed establish a clear link with broader environmental objectives and national nature recovery commitments, including the EIP TPW goal and other related EIP goals. Many strategies explicitly reference these commitments, demonstrating a strong understanding of local habitats, pressures, and priorities in their interpretations of these national commitments. They are generally ambitious yet remain grounded in local realities and the context of local landscapes, reflecting the perspectives of experts and stakeholders and using both local and national data. However, the absence of quantifiable contributions to national targets means it is unclear how much each LNRS will contribute to the nature recovery commitments. Furthermore, not all goal areas are comprehensively covered—marine-related objectives, for example, are only addressed tangentially—highlighting the need for LNRS to work alongside other spatial plans and mechanisms to ensure complete coverage of nature recovery priorities.



The LNRS maps provide users with a range of location options for implementing nature recovery measures, backed by sound evidence and varying visual approaches to support decision-making. However, these tools function more as open-ended decision support systems rather than prescriptive guides, meaning they do not always direct users towards the most impactful areas for actions to take place, and they make no statements about places where nature recovery actions must happen - everything is optional. While this flexibility allows for adaptability to local contexts, it may reduce the effectiveness of creating connected nature recovery networks across wider landscapes and does not identify essential location based actions. While LNRS acknowledge ongoing landscape changes, there is no predictive mapping to inform long-term planning (which was not a requirement but could become increasingly important as climate change and other landscape change impacts accelerate). Here, the availability of a Land Use Framework may have helped.

Stakeholder engagement appears to have been a major strength of the LNRS process. The level of consultation and collaboration during strategy development has been substantial, resulting in strategies that incorporate a wide range of perspectives and priorities. This inclusive approach increases the likelihood of widespread adoption of proposed recovery measures. However, the long-term effectiveness of this engagement remains uncertain, particularly in terms of how well the consensus and goodwill generated during the development phase will translate into effective delivery. Additionally, inconsistencies in alignment across LNRS boundaries—due to variations in working timescales, approaches, and resource availability—could pose challenges in ensuring a cohesive, integrated approach to nature recovery at a regional or national scale.

A significant concern remains around ambition for LNRS implementation and ongoing strategy coordination. RAs have taken a cautious approach, avoiding commitments they may not be able to fulfill, and there is currently no convincing 'plan B' in place should government funding not be forthcoming. Without dedicated resources, there is a high risk that LNRS will become inactive between reviews, reducing their effectiveness in driving nature recovery efforts. Although some RAs have demonstrated creativity in temporarily extending available funding or reallocating internal resources, these measures are unlikely to be sustainable in the long term. There is a risk that LNRS could remain aspirational rather than actionable.

Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with broader environmental objectives that contribute to achieving national nature recovery commitments, such as the EIP TPW goal and species abundance targets?

#### Context

What overarching objectives are referenced in the strategy? The apex goal of the EIP is to achieve *Thriving Plants and Wildlife* by preventing the decline of nature and ensuring the recovery of threatened species. We consider an ambitious LNRS should demonstrate how the RA has considered contributing to relevant national biodiversity and bioabundance goals and targets, both those outlined in the statutory LNRS guidance and those outlined in the EIP, as well as others.

Guidance produced by Defra on national environmental objectives for RAs outlines the targets that should be contributed to, but there is no legal requirement or detailed guidance for how each of these national objectives should be considered in an LNRS, and the guidance does not cover all of the EIP goal and



target areas which LNRS could meaningfully contribute to. An ambitious LNRS would evaluate those objectives and demonstrate how and where they will be contributed to their delivery; the LNRS may also interpret national objectives locally by setting local targets and goals, demonstrating a high level of ambition and enabling a more measurable assessment of the contribution to national goals and targets.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 9 'further developed' strategies, 2 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 7 scored as medium confidence and 0 scored as low confidence. Overall, this indicates that collectively LNRS have a clear relationship with national environmental objectives, and if implemented effectively at scale, LNRS would be expected to contribute meaningfully to achieving national nature recovery commitments. However, the significance of this contribution depends entirely on the level of uptake of measures - for example, some LNRS indicate a percentage of the area which could become part of the nature recovery network, but do not estimate how much will.

## Figure 4 - Confidence Ratings for 'Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with broader environmental objectives that contribute to achieving national nature recovery commitments, such as the EIP TPW goal and species abundance targets?'



The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

## Figure 5 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with broader environmental objectives that contribute to achieving the EIP Thriving Plants and Wildlife goal and species abundance targets?'



#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

All of the LNRS in the sample were assessed as meeting the 'Alignment with National Targets' Supporting Statement which is 'the LNRS incorporates and is well aligned with appropriate national nature recovery goals or targets, or wider national environmental goals or targets. These are expressed



## clearly in the LNRS, the RA's commitment to them is stated, and they either directly or indirectly relate to one or more of the EIP TPW objectives and species abundance targets.'

Here we looked for both broad alignment with national nature recovery goals and wider environmental priorities, but also whether specific goals and targets were mentioned - in particular those from the EIP.

- Most of the strategies either referred directly to the EIP TPW as a key point of alignment and overarching objective in the main body of the document, or clarified the relationship in an appendix. In some cases, strategies showed alignment with EIP goal areas or other national environmental objectives at the priorities level, allowing quite fine-grained traceability between local scale actions and national nature recovery goals (though not in quantifiable form). Similarly, some strategies provided breakdowns of national goal areas and how the strategy was expected to functionally contribute to each area. Some had used potential contributions to national targets as a shortlisting mechanism for measures.
- In all cases, strategies also created linkages with broad environmental objectives across a range
  of environmental state areas throughout the document (covered more under Coherence below),
  though the coverage and focus of these wider national environmental objectives varied. These
  linkages were often made under the banner of 'nature based solutions' or 'co-benefits'. A
  particularly good example of this can be found in Kent & Medway's LNRS which includes an
  entire Priority theme for Nature Based Solutions, and the strategy further maps these to broad
  habitat types in terms of the main opportunity alignment.
- Most strategies did not refer to specific quantifiable targets within the EIP alignment was kept at a broad level and in the main definitions were kept broad also. For example, the term "Wildlife Rich Habitat' (from the EIP target on habitat creation) was not further specified at a local level, which might have helped to understand how local improvements to habitat count towards this target area or not when measures are carried out (and hopefully recorded as being carried out). There were a few exceptions, e.g. in Dorset's LNRS strategy, how land counts towards the 30 x 30 target interpreted in a way that could open the door to local-level measurement against this target. In Greater Essex, national level targets had been quantified locally, in ambition to create 18,000 hectares of new woodland and 22,000 hectares of grassland.
- Strategies did not include detailed species abundance targets, but did position species recovery
  as central to the purpose and mission of the LNRS, and in many cases this consideration was
  evidenced in significant detail in the methodology for species prioritisation, for example through
  selection criteria designed to ensure contribution to the national species extinction risk targets
  'halt decline in species abundance by 2030, increase abundance by 2042, reduce the risk of
  species' extinction by 2042'.
- In terms of how the national nature recovery commitments were considered, incorporated or given weight, strategies met the illustrations given in supplementary guidance<sup>1</sup> on 'How LNRSs can contribute' against each of the national environmental objectives - but these statements are very general and it would have been difficult for LNRS not to meet them. For example 'All LNRSs should seek to identify opportunities for new areas of woodland, expand existing areas of woodland and trees outside of woodland where this will benefit biodiversity and other environmental outcomes'. LNRS demonstrate contribution to the full range of national

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Natural England, 'Relevant National Environmental Objectives for Responsible Authorities to Seek to Contribute to When Developing Their Local Nature Recovery Strategy'

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="https://somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s39275/LNRS%20National%20Environmental%20Objectives.pdf">https://somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s39275/LNRS%20National%20Environmental%20Objectives.pdf</a>> accessed 15 March 2025.



environmental objectives set out in this guidance. Some strategies have more formally stated how the strategy contributes to these than others, and there is little to no quantification of contribution - but ultimately the contributions will be through priorities and measures, and for any given national objective there are abundant examples of these with the exception of marine objectives (not present in the supplementary guidance other than 'Protect 30% of land and of sea in the UK for nature's recovery by 2030)

Some of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the 'Ambitious Local Targets' Supporting Statement, which is 'the LNRS includes locally specific, ambitious targets for nature recovery action, and at least in one instance these exceed a relevant national target (relevant being directly or indirectly related to one or more of the EIP Thriving Plants and Wildlife objectives and species abundance targets).'

Here we looked for specific and measurable targets or commitments for example to increase habitat areas or woodland cover by a stated amount, any specific commitments to measurable species abundance, etc.

The EIP includes a range of specific targets. The final targets most directly associated with TPW and species abundance are provided in the table below, though there are many more national objectives that are relevant. These were a focus for consideration in the assessment, although any form of target or commitment was captured:

#### **TPW** Target

By the end of 2042, we will increase species abundance so that it is greater than in 2022 and at least 10% greater than in 2030.

Restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042, alongside our international commitment to protect 30% of our land and ocean by 2030

By the end of 2042, we will improve the GB Red List Index for species extinction compared to 2022 levels.

Restore 75% of protected sites to a favourable condition by 2042 (NOTE - this is not listed in the targets and commitments section but is referenced in the body of Goal 1 section)

Increase tree canopy and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area by 2050 (from the current level of approximately 14.5%). (NOTE - based on the way the interim target is expressed, this works out as 261,538 hectares)

For 70% of designated features in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to be in favourable condition by 2042 with the remainder in recovering condition

Note that RAs received guidance on alignment with national environmental objectives<sup>2</sup> which corresponds broadly with these but not completely - the reason for the difference is simply that focus areas were compiled on review of the EIP prior to review of this guidance (and the table is a guide only, not a limit on what was considered in terms of alignment with targets).

The assessment found that...

• Without certainty of future funding for the delivery of priorities and measures, RAs were reluctant to set specific goals or measurable targets in the strategies. There is no requirement to set

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> ibid.



targets in the LNRS in legislation or statutory guidance and RAs have not been otherwise advised to do so by Defra or Natural England in non-statutory guidance.

- The lack of quantifiable targets in LNRS is in contrast to national level strategies and plans, which as well as committing to the top level legally binding EIP goal areas, describe many other contributory goals and targets for example, the EIP states '*Our aim is for 70% of agricultural land, and 70% of farm holdings, to be covered by our new farming schemes by 2028.*'<sup>3</sup>
- Some RAs still did set targets, but not in a consistent way between strategies, and usually this was a single isolated target or small number of targets. None of the strategies systematically set out what the LNRS contribution to the target areas within the EIP TPW would be. Often, any targets set were not time-bound. In some cases where targets were offered in strategies, this is indicative of the RA already being highly confident the target will be met (i.e there is a prior commitment to that target which the LNRS will now help to achieve, rather than the setting of new targets). A good example is LNRS strategy documents endorsing Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets already set, but not formally bringing these targets forward into the LNRS. Some RAs did position pre-existing targets, such as tree coverage targets, from other plans in the LNRS and were clear that these were then part of the LNRS.
- Examples of commitments made in some of the strategies
  - 'Meet "Access to Natural Greenspace" targets'. The LNRS measure 78 calls for Local Plans to meet NE GI Framework standards. (Bucks & Milton Keynes)
  - Adoption of a target of extending tree cover by 1.5 million new trees and increasing the county's average canopy cover to 19% (restatement of an existing plan but given further weight by inclusion in LNRS) (Kent & Medway)
  - 60.6% of LNRS area could become part of the nature recovery network (though not a commitment to or estimate of what will become part of it) (Dorset)
  - Target for tree cover is to expand from 15% to 17% (Greater Manchester)
  - 16.5% tree canopy cover and ambition to reach 30% green and blue habitat coverage by 2030 (Greater Essex)
- Even where no measurable, closely defined targets or goals were set, some form of clear ambition has been stated which can be traced back to the EIP TPW. During our assessment of strategy documents and RA responses to our queries, we formed the impression that there is recognition by RAs in the sample that a strategy with no statements on goals, targets or outcomes is a bit 'empty', and so although they may feel unable to set 'hard' targets, the strategies set out what the RA thinks can be achieved in other ways.
- Examples of broader expressions of ambition from a range of strategies:
  - 'Boost nature's recovery at scale and help achieve the "apex goal" of the EIP'
  - 'Halt local biodiversity loss and support thriving species populations which can move more freely through the landscape'
  - 'By 2035 our sub region will be an exemplar for abundant nature, and we will leave our natural environment in a better state for people and wildlife species.'

All of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Understanding of Local Ecosystems and what national Ambition means in a local context**' Supporting Statement, which is '*beyond simply mapping habitats and current/future areas of importance for nature, the LNRS demonstrates a clear understanding of how local ecosystems function in an interconnected way, and focuses ambition and effort appropriately based on this understanding.*'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Defra, 'Environmental Improvement Plan 2023' (HM Government 2023)

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a6d9c1c531eb000c64fffa/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a6d9c1c531eb000c64fffa/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf</a>>



Here we looked for evidence of a detailed understanding of local ecosystems in terms of their state, connectivity and functionality in regard to supporting species abundance, and with a focus on what is particularly important locally, and what the best local opportunities are for making improvements.

- All the strategies took the essential elements of the Lawton principles and developed and interpreted these in a local context. The presence of these guiding principles is one of the more consistent aspects of LNRS (though detailed application and expression is not necessarily the same between LNRS).
- Strategies were based on very significant evidence of local ecological systems in their broader environmental context. The strategy sections describing the natural environment, and the pressures acting on habitats and species, were well considered. Habitat fragmentation emerged as a key theme in terms of the 'big picture' challenge RAs had a strong focus on this.
- The RAs made use of the expected range of national data sets and supplemented this with a wide range of regional and locally-available data sets. Where data was not available, they took steps to fill gaps where possible.
- The application of models to understand actual networks of species movements and habitat linkages was less observably consistent. There were examples of sophisticated approaches - for example, network mapping based on 'least cost path analysis' (Herefordshire LNRS) which involves scoring habitat based on ease of species movement. There were examples in the LNRS documents where a continuous network of different types of habitats was shown (e.g. woodland network) to connect the existing fragments of that habitat. In some cases, specific infrastructure barriers to species movement were highlighted, such as the HS2 (Bucks & MK, Kent & Medway). It was more common to show all the opportunities for habitat creation in a less directed way. The assessment was based on variable access to detailed methodology for habitat network / connectivity modelling and how this influenced mapping of priorities and measures, but overall the impression is that not all strategies went as far in terms of framing a recognisable, focused 'network' which considered the movement needs of a range of species in specific landscapes.
- Strategies created strong links with co-benefit areas / wider nature based solutions, framing
  nature as a system with benefits for people in lots of areas, and where trying to achieve other
  benefits could deliver for nature too. This was made locally specific in highlighting the particular
  areas of focus for a given LNRS area (e.g flood risk management, improving access to nature for
  largely urban populations).
- Many included reference to, and clearly built on, significant prior work to understand the natural landscape and environmental state but exactly what was used varied a lot, ranging from existing State of Nature Reports, previous BAPs, natural capital assessments, having been included in the LNRS pilot project, and more. This is suggestive of an 'uneven playing field' in the evidence base for different areas, but given the consistency of the scoring in this area, and the relatively consistent approach to describing the 'state of nature' and the natural landscape and pressures, this does not appear to have resulted in strategies being unable to reach a sufficiently detailed understanding. It is reasonable to assume that some RAs had more work to do to reach this point, and a more systematic review of the underlying evidence base supporting LNRS might uncover some examples of greater rigour based on better access to evidence.
- Some strategies adopted approaches to the integration of species measures or outcomes for species into habitat measures, which further supports a view of LNRS considering local ecosystems functioning in an interconnected way.



The consistency of assessment in this area could in part be linked to the guidance and advice provided in terms of what the strategy should include, and which data sources can and should be used. Another contributing factor which is clear in the more detailed methodological appendices are that RAs have successfully engaged with willing experts.

## Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with broader environmental objectives that contribute to achieving the EIP Thriving Plants and Wildlife goal and species abundance targets?

**Yes** - the strategies are set out as a response to national nature recovery commitments generally and in many cases to the EIP TPW goal area specifically, as well as a range of other environmental goals and targets. They are well grounded in an understanding of the habitats, pressures, priorities and constraints that apply to each LNRS area. They are broadly ambitious, but locally relevant and realistic in the sense that they focus on priorities that local experts, combined with a range of local and national data, have agreed can and should be attempted for that area.

**But** - the relationship is not quantifiable, so we are unable to say that there is any clarity of the proportional contribution to the goal by LNRS area, by TPW target, etc. The coverage of goal areas is also not comprehensive - for example goals related to improving the marine environment are covered only tangentially, so LNRS will need to combine with other spatial plans or mechanisms of coordinating effective action to achieve complete coverage of the TPW.

Do the LNRS include maps and spatial priorities which will support ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and help to resolve prioritisation conflicts in a changing landscape?

#### Context

The EA2021 mandates two key elements for the LNRS: A statement of biodiversity priorities, and a local habitat map. While both are essential for the development of an LNRS, ambition in these components is essential for driving impactful nature recovery. For the mapping element, ambition by not only identifying existing ecological networks, but also identifying where those areas can improve the development of connected landscapes that further support biodiversity and mechanisms for on-the-ground delivery.

Essentially, we seek to find ambition within the broadly accepted principles of creating a healthy ecological network, based on these five components <sup>4</sup>:

- 1. Core areas highest wildlife value
- 2. Corridors and stepping stones allowing movement and interaction
- 3. Restoration areas where species and habitats can recover
- Buffer zones protection for core areas, corridors, stepping stones and restoration areas from pressures

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> John Lawton, 'Making Space for Nature: A Review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network' (*UK Government Web Archive*, 2010)

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130402151656/http:/archive.defra.gov.uk/environm">https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130402151656/http:/archive.defra.gov.uk/environm</a> ent/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf> accessed 26 July 2024.



5. Sustainable use areas - areas where human influence is greater, but still sensitive to nature

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 9 'further developed' strategies, 1 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 8 scored as medium confidence and 0 scored as low confidence. Overall, this indicates that collectively LNRS mapping might have variable success in supporting ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and resolving prioritisation conflicts, and that there are opportunities for some improvements.

Figure 6 - Confidence Ratings for 'Do the LNRS include maps and spatial priorities which will support ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and help to resolve prioritisation conflicts in a changing landscape?'



The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

## Figure 7 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement thresholds for 'Do the LNRS include maps and spatial priorities which will support ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and help to resolve prioritisation conflicts in a changing landscape?'



#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Quality and suitability of Maps**' Supporting Statement, which is '*habitat maps are based on sufficient evidence of both current and future importance for biodiversity, and the maps support an understanding of what 'bigger, better and more connected' nature means in the context of that RA area.*'

Here we looked for the breadth of data and evidence considered, and methodology and processes followed, for the development of maps. We looked for how future users and use cases of mapping assets



had been considered. We looked at whether maps supported a very clear picture of what a future more improved nature network would look like, in the context of a specific landscape.

- Where it was available, the information on the evidence the habitat maps were based on supported a view that mapping development was informed by a significant weight of data from national data sources, and regional and local data. Similar to (and connected with) the findings from 'Understanding of Local Ecosystems and what national Ambition means in a local context', the assessment found that strategies were based on understanding of local ecological systems in their broader environmental context, and the expected range of national data sets supplemented with a wide range of regional and locally-available data sets.
- There was some evidence of various modelling approaches used to interpret and map this data. Examples include Lancashire LNRS woodland, wetland and grassland habitat network models (technical information supplement), the use of built in Geographic Information System (GIS) Linkage Mapper tools (e.g Manchester and Lancashire) to assess connectivity between core sites, and use of 'least cost path analysis' (Herefordshire) which involves scoring habitat based on ease of species movement.
- In regard to informing an understanding of what 'bigger, better and more connected' nature means in the context of that RA area, we found it less easy to agree that this has been consistently done.
- The approaches to mapping were variable, in terms of the methods used to understand and model the spatial data, and in terms of the choices made with regard to how to provide and present the information to users. There is more coverage of this general point in sections below related to Ambition in 'Cross-Boundary Collaboration' and the later section on coherence with other nature recovery networks, but it is certainly relevant here in regard to '*support an understanding of what 'bigger, better and more connected' nature means'*. We were able to compare a range of approaches and what these might mean for future users of the maps:
  - Providing the maps as interactive vs. providing them in PDF format (PDF likely to be an interim measure)
  - Showing all layers on one map vs. showing multiple maps
  - Simple options on baselayers vs. a range of baselayer options for users to choose from (esp. whether to enable satellite layers)
  - Certain layers not displaying when zoomed out vs. retaining all layers at all scales
  - LNRS maps only vs. direct integration of other spatial resources showing different things
  - Allowing users to interrogate mapped areas Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) to obtain further information vs. showing areas mapped on the APIB without contextual information.
  - Mapping broad priorities vs. mapping individual measures/activities on the Areas that Could Become of particular importance for Biodiversity (ACIB) map.
  - APIB layers grouped to show different nature networks (e.g a woodland network, a freshwater network) vs. treating all as one
  - Allowing users to directly interrogate mapped opportunities to get information on the priority or measure vs. requiring the user to look at other data to cross reference
- The range of options made determining 'suitability of maps' very difficult, as the choices in different combinations presented a complex matrix of challenges and opportunities.
- Generally, we adopted a favourable view of maps which enabled greater choice for users in what layers and combinations of data could be presented at any one time.
- One of the big points of difference is related to whether the maps show any 'additional focus' or 'strategic opportunity' once opportunities have been mapped - opportunities often cover a very



large extent of maps which makes it difficult to see how they can focus effort on a functional network. Some RAs seemed to embrace a more directive approach and highlight how action could be focused around a more tightly defined nature network (e.g Herefordshire, Lancashire, Greater Essex) - others seem to have tended more towards broader area mapping.

 Even where greater focus has been provided, LNRS are not hugely directive in terms of the creation of a functioning network. I.e, strategies do not make statements about specific sites of importance being connected up with other specific sites of importance, or (with a very few exceptions), specific infrastructure barriers identified as priorities for connectivity enhancement measures. We would hope to see more directed spatial planning come through in implementation or delivery plans.

All of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Identification of future landscape changes**' Supporting Statement, which is 'the LNRS identifies future landscape changes, environmental changes and challenges including from climate change and other land use requirements. The LNRS includes general consideration of the impact of such changes and this is reflected in Priorities and Measures.'

Here we looked for whether LNRS demonstrated appreciation for the broad landscape changes that are expected in their areas in the future, and whether priorities and measures reflected these considerations or concerns.

- A range of landscape changes were considered in strategies, particularly the future effects of climate change. Strategies very clearly identified climate change as a current and future pressure on nature, and in sections describing the natural landscape, aspects that are particularly susceptible to climate change were highlighted. A good example is Isle of Wight LNRS which outlines specifically where and how certain habitats, species and land use will be affected by climate change.
- Other landscape changes were considered, with the focus varying depending on the geographic characteristics of the area - changes in farming practices throughout the last century and into the future, coastal changes, hydrological change, increased urbanisation or significant infrastructure development (including, on occasion, specific infrastructure projects).
- Ensuring climate adaptation / climate resilience is considered was often carried through to the
  detail of priorities and measures for both habitats and species. Sometimes this was on a measure
  by measure basis if adaptation was an important aspect, sometimes landscape pressures were
  considered at the level of habitat priority theme so that all measures considered the main
  changes acting on that habitat type, and sometimes strategies embedded climate adaptation
  principles more widely through universal approach to implementing measures or actions.
- Increased habitat connectivity was often referred to as a key component of ensuring resilience to landscape change, in order to enable species to find and colonise new habitat as change occurs.
- Future landscape changes are not something that was spatially mapped in strategies, which could make it difficult to anticipate specific significant change (e.g changes to coastlines) when planning nature recovery actions. Some strategies may have included anticipated landscape change in the detailed opportunity mapping methodology if this was available in other spatial plans (this was not specifically reviewed).
- It is noted that the extent to which strategies considered specific climate or other future-impact
  modelling or datasets (spatial or otherwise) in the design of measures was not assessed in depth.
  A specific limitation of the assessment is therefore that it is only possible to say LNRS consider
  future impacts on habitat and ecosystems conceptually coastal change, hotter average
  temperatures, extreme weather, wetter winters and dryer summers. If and how future modelling



data was used in measures mapping to take this understanding into the detailed design of a future-proofed nature network is an unanswered question.

One of the LNRS was assessed as meeting the '**Spatial trade-offs and synergies**' Supporting Statement, which is 'the LNRS clearly identifies and justifies trade-offs between different nature recovery measures/actions. It identifies where synergies exist in terms of identifying opportunities where actions could deliver for more than one priority.'

Here we looked for how the LNRS treated nature recovery opportunities in terms of mapping (either being prescriptive or flexible on placement), and if there were specific decision support methods or tools for deciding which actions would have the most impact, or whether certain habitats should be prioritised.

The assessment found that...

- There was a mixture of approaches to enabling multiple opportunities to be mapped to the same locations. Overall, most strategies allow this which introduces the requirement for users to determine the measure or measures to apply at a given site (which habitat to create, which species to cater for, etc).
- Most strategies did not provide guidance or methods for managing the trade-offs involved or supporting decisions on whether particular measures on a given site. RAs preferred to signpost users of the strategy to site based assessments, and established formats such as EIA. RAs pointed out that mapping data used would always need to be ground-truthed. RAs also pointed to prioritisation modelling that had already been done and was reflected in the mapping of priorities and measures.
- Some exceptions and qualifications to this are:
  - Specific known trade-offs or conflict avoidance at measures level e.g. 'Decision Support Framework for Peatland Protection' (Lancashire).
  - A habitat hierarchy reflecting the habitats of particular local importance (concept of primary and secondary priorities) (Dorset).
  - One RA has considered a measure (M33) that allows for other priority habitats and mosaics to be considered, in line with the BNG distinctiveness categories, where higher distinctive habitats in the mapped measures are not ecologically achievable or appropriate, according to soil and ground conditions and neighbouring habitats (Bucks & MK).
  - Key trade-offs or potential conflicts between habitat priorities already understood and considered in the mapping for example Herefordshire where grade 1 and 2 agricultural land given a lower score in opportunity mapping.
  - Some evidence of thinking about actions that benefit some species more than others 'it
    is important to consider if the intended outcome is to increase overall species diversity or
    abundance, or to support a specific species' but little in the way of decision support for
    such trade-offs.
- Strategies did have more focus on ensuring the realisation of co-benefits with other priorities in the siting of opportunities, and this had usually been factored into opportunity mapping already.
   E.g some had mapped priorities to areas where they could deliver multiple benefits (e.g. flood risk reduction, carbon sequestration) which is a form of prioritisation.

Do the LNRS include maps and spatial priorities which will support ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and help to resolve prioritisation conflicts in a changing landscape?



**Yes** - LNRS mapping and strategy documents are very good at providing users with a range of location options for implementing the priorities and measures which are variously set out, and these options are based on sound evidence. The mapping tools present a range of different visual approaches for doing this.

**But** - LNRS mapping and strategy documents are less able to direct users to focus on particular areas or to choose the right form of action to take where there are options. They remain quite 'open' decision support tools, which is good for flexibility but may be less effective than a more directive approach for ensuring successful wide area nature recovery networks are created, or the best opportunities realised. While there is consideration of ongoing landscape changes in setting priorities and designing measures, any predictions of what these changes might be are not provided as part of the mapping resources.

Do the LNRS present a clear and convincing picture of impactful engagement and collaborative relationships which will support widespread adoption of nature recovery measures in the strategy?

#### Context

A key focus of the legal obligations and what is set out in guidance for LNRS is the need for them to be developed collaboratively, with stakeholder engagement and consultation informing their development and guiding much of the LNRS process. That said, there is still much room for local interpretation as to what engagement looks like in practice.

We consider that effective stakeholder engagement will be key to the development of progressive LNRS, which have the buy-in of key delivery partners. Effective engagement will essentially help to ensure the likelihood of successful delivery and implementation. To demonstrate ambition in engagement, an LNRS should show strong commitment to achieving consensus among stakeholders. This means not just undertaking engagement activities, but also working to reconcile differing views and incorporating that feedback into the development of the LNRS.

While it may not be possible for all stakeholders to wholly agree, the closer the LNRS process is to achieving broad consensus, the more likely it will deliver on its ambitions. Here we are looking to test the extent and nature of engagement undertaken to inform LNRS development, and ensure the necessary buy-in from stakeholders across all relevant sectors and stakeholder groups.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 11 'further developed' strategies, 3 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 8 scored as medium confidence and 0 scored as low confidence. Overall, this indicates that stakeholder engagement appears to have generally been good and strategies have been developed collaboratively.

The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows.

Figure 8 - Confidence Ratings for 'Do the LNRS present a clear and convincing picture of impactful engagement and collaborative relationships which will support widespread adoption of nature recovery measures in the strategy?'





The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

## Figure 9 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Do the LNRS present a clear and convincing picture of impactful engagement and collaborative relationships which will support widespread adoption of nature recovery measures in the strategy?'



#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

All of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Stakeholder consensus in LNRS development**' Supporting Statement, which is 'an appropriately diverse and representative group of key stakeholders for the area (e.g., landowners, businesses, local authorities and ecological specialists) have been successfully engaged in the LNRS development process and these views have informed the development of an LNRS that is built on broad consensus.'

Here we looked for evidence of the range of stakeholder groups that had been involved in LNRS development, engagement methods or results that might indicate how their contributions had been used, and engagement techniques which enabled broader stakeholder groups (i.e. non nature-focused) to engage meaningfully.

The assessment found that...

• Stakeholder engagement appears to have been a particular strength of the LNRS development process, and RAs have employed a wide range of approaches and tactics to ensure the representation and consideration of the views of a broad range of stakeholders. Engagement consistently reached hundreds of people, and over 1,000 for some RAs. A number of interesting and innovative tools were used to facilitate insights collection, such as the spatial data capture tool Social PinPoint used by Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland to gather site-specific contributions from over 500 participants.



- The stakeholder engagement process, and the outputs from the engagement including participation, has been well documented (transparent processes).
- Engagement has typically included the same core stakeholder groups national and local public authorities (inc. SAs), eNGOs, the general public / communities, and farmers and landowners. RAs also engaged with a variable mix (still with a lot of overlaps) of youth groups, faith groups, businesses, developers, health, education, partnerships and member organisations, planners, community groups, and others.
- RAs have adopted targeted approaches to different stakeholder groups. Some also focused on ensuring diversity of representation within these groups, for example North Yorkshire and York put effort into ensuring balanced representation of male and female farmers (43% of landowners, land manager and farmer participants were female). However, this analysis was only for the first round of landowner, land manager and farmer engagement events (Feb 2024), and does not necessarily reflect subsequent rounds of engagement.
- Many RAs highlighted the importance of engagement with farmers and landowners, and adopted tailored approaches to engagement with this group to ensure their views were represented. In a few cases, we identified evidence of representation of this group at steering group level, and/or evidence for commitment to continued engagement into delivery.
- Engagement has facilitated a number of the strategy areas creation of the mapping of current areas of importance for nature, longlisting and shortlisting of species, development of priorities and measures, mapping future opportunities (and more)
- In many cases there are signs of continued interest from stakeholders involved

#### Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Ongoing Community Participation**' Supporting Statement, which is 'the LNRS clearly sets out how it has and will continue to encourage and incorporate broad involvement in nature recovery, create a cohesive vision and mission across communities with different perspectives and priorities, and identifies communities of particular impact for their area.'

Here we looked for any reference to general or specific methods or techniques that would be used to continue engagement beyond strategy development, and if or how strategies set out different stakeholder groups and drew links between those groups and achieving important actions. In this area we focused on whether strategies were clear on the difference between stakeholders who were important because they understood local nature and what was needed, and those who were important because they have the authority, resources and land-access to effect change.

- There was broad acceptance and acknowledgement that ongoing engagement across a wide range of stakeholders was important to future delivery. Strategies used terms such as 'improving nature connection', 'local partners working together with landowners and managers and communities', 'working to amplify communities' voices and involvement with nature recovery'. A good example is the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS section on 'Leveraging Partnerships' highlighting the role that different stakeholders have across delivering nature recovery objectives.
- Many strategies had high level statements related to creating broad involvement, but there was
  generally no specific section of the strategy that set out how continued, broad-based engagement
  would be achieved. Strategies referred to specific tactics or components in various places, and/or
  at priorities and measures level there were specific references to continued engagement over
  particular things. In most cases these appear to be based on continued 'pull' engagement from
  those preparing the LNRS, and it is less clear whether this was genuine mutual collaboration
  between interested and invested parties. Examples include



- 'Update webpages with guides and case studies for communities and individuals' linked to the wider nature recovery' (Dorset)
- 'Education to inform the public about the importance of chalk stream habitats, to foster community support and engagement in conservation efforts' (Bucks & MK)
- 'Develop and implement landowner, public, and community engagement strategies for nature recovery'
- Some strategies included some concept of 'supporting action', or other cross-cutting focus areas that applied across many priorities, and ongoing engagement and collaboration, or creating nature connection, was usually a theme if this was done.
- Strategies did not overtly describe the communities of particular impact in their area, perhaps because of an unwillingness to single out certain groups or be seen to exclude others. Some referred to the importance of landowners and farmers, but the critical nature of engagement with and from this group was sometimes diluted. Strategies (understandably) did not highlight perceived conflict or engagement failures. e.g, no strategy talks about key stakeholder groups as currently being unengaged or unwilling to participate.
- Strategies generally set out what were seen as the broad stakeholder groups for the area and described how they could contribute to nature recovery, but did not consistently describe how they would work in a unified way.

Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Cross-boundary Collaboration**' Supporting Statement, which is '*there is evidence of collaboration with neighbouring authorities to ensure an integrated and cohesive plan.*'

Here we looked for reference to any meetings, document, data and resource sharing, review checkpoints and other forms of engagement with neighbouring RAs - as well as any details on how exactly this engagement was used to ensure cohesion.

The results for this area of the assessment were mixed, and to a degree this may be as much a result of a lack of evidence as a genuine lack of collaboration. It should be acknowledged the assessment questionnaire had no specific question related to this, and in retrospect it is possibly one of the things that might be expected not be covered in the strategy documents

- All the strategies included some form of acknowledgment that nature does not observe administrative boundaries and that cooperation with neighbouring areas was important
- The main, public-facing strategy documents did not usually mention neighbouring LNRS areas by name, or collaboration with neighbouring RAs specifically. The usual approach was to describe significant landscapes which extend cross-border, and then there might be reference to neighbouring local authority areas, or organisations (such as National Parks Authorities or National landscapes Teams) which straddle borders.
- In some cases, there was clear and specific evidence of the engagement activities that had been carried out with neighbouring RAs and other cross border organisations. These include:
  - Including neighbouring RAs in stakeholder engagement strategies
  - Setting a defined role for steering groups in terms of coordination with neighbouring RAs
  - Sharing draft strategies or draft components (e.g mapping shape files) with neighbouring RAs for comment, as part of wider stakeholder review processes
  - Obtaining data from neighbouring RAs and LERCs to inform mapping
  - Including a 'buffer zone' around mapping that extended into neighbouring areas



- Monthly meetings between LNRS officers, mapping lead meetings, attending regional nature partnership meetings to give updates on the progress of the LNRS and promote alignment.
- Anticipated further alignment at pre-consultation and pre-publication reviews
- Some (e.g County Durham) had shared mapping resources, platforms and approaches with one or more neighbours (and/or used a single mapping team to deliver for multiple LNRS), as well as sharing some priorities and measures, suggesting a better than average level of alignment in some regional clusters.
- RAs appear to have had only limited success in aligning outputs
  - Mapping approaches are different (in terms of visual presentation but also underlying habitat network modelling approach, choices made in terms of organising information, etc)
  - The structure of, and terminology used to describe, priorities, measures, actions etc is quite varied (this is explained further below in 'LNRS Sample Comparisons' after this results section).
  - The format of measures is quite varied
- Some RAs acknowledged that strategies are being developed at different speeds and in different ways and 'meaningful cross border action and join up' may not be happening.
- Some reference to ongoing coordination in delivery at measures level (this is covered more in the section Coherence below).

Do the LNRS present a clear and convincing picture of impactful engagement and collaborative relationships which will support widespread adoption of nature recovery measures in the strategy?

**Yes** - the stakeholder engagement effort that has gone into LNRS development has been very significant, and the evidence suggests that this has been used to develop a significant amount of strategy content, to the extent we can say that collectively LNRS is reflective of a range of perspectives and priorities. In turn we expect this will support widespread adoption of the measures.

**But** - there is less confidence on exactly how this consensus and goodwill will carry forward into delivery, albeit the importance of maintaining this and building on it for greater impact is acknowledged. Alignment with neighbouring LNRS may have been patchy due to different working timescales, approaches and resources, and as a result strategies may not easily form an integrated and cohesive plan over wider areas.

## Do the LNRS describe a creative and ambitious funding and resourcing approach for ongoing strategy coordination and development?

#### Context

In identifying the 48 RAs leading LNRS development across England, new duties funding was made available from the government. This funding will have been deployed in different ways by each of the RAs to support LNRS delivery. Other funding and resources will potentially be available through other funding streams, or through in-kind commitments from partners and stakeholders. Here we are looking to test the resources that have been available to support LNRS development and how creative and ambitious RAs have been in the use of this funding, as well as plans to access future funding and/or sustain resourcing.



#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 11 'further developed' strategies, 0 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 5 scored as medium confidence and 6 scored as low confidence. Overall, this indicates that the funding and resourcing for ongoing strategy coordination and development is a potential area of concern.

Figure 10 - Confidence Ratings for 'Do the LNRS describe a creative and ambitious funding and resourcing approach for ongoing strategy coordination and development?'

60%	High confidence - 0 out of 11 Medium confidence - 5 out of 11 Low confidence - 6 out of 11						
40%			459/	55%			
40% -			45%				
20% -		0%		-			
0% -			% of LNRS				

The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

## Figure 11 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Do the LNRS describe a creative and ambitious funding and resourcing approach for ongoing strategy coordination and development?'



#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

Some of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the 'Diversity of Funding and Resourcing Sources for LNRS development' Supporting Statement, which is 'the LNRS has made use of additional funding or development resourcing from a variety of sources.'

Here we looked for specific reference to funding or resources beyond the new burdens funding made available to RAs. When considering this area, voluntary resourcing from third parties was excluded from the understanding of 'additional development resourcing' on the basis this was universally incorporated - all LNRS were highly dependent on this voluntary resource and this has been recognised as a critical enabler. Extra staff allocations from RA and SAs were considered as additional development resourcing.



- Most RAs confirmed they made no use of additional funding or resourcing options during development. Some were not aware of any.
- Some RAs confirmed that additional council employed staff (from the RA or from SAs) were allocated to LNRS development, sometimes on a dedicated basis, sometimes based on mixed use of people's time from several departments (e.g. wider ecology team, comms, legal, and planning). For example Kent & Medway clarified that the project manager and project officer were existing Kent County Council members of staff who worked at no cost to the LNRS at nearly 100% allocation to the strategy in 2024. The RA was happy to provide this additional time to the strategy development, however, this should not be seen as something that will be extended beyond the completion of the LNRS as both officers have substantive posts which must be returned to.
- A small number of RAs referred to additional government grants, and some accessed ringfenced climate and nature funding pots internally.
- Additional funding was allocated to areas such as baseline mapping and resurveying of Local Wildlife Sites, and funding for an LNRS coordinator before Defras funding was provided - for example investment by Essex County Council was used to fund the appointment of an LNRS coordinator prior to the allocation of the LNRS central government grant, enabling the authority to make an early start.

One of the LNRS was assessed as meeting the 'Clear and realistic longer term resourcing model for ongoing strategy coordination, monitoring and evaluation / success measurement' Supporting Statement, which is 'the LNRS includes a clear and realistic longer term resourcing model for continued strategy coordination, monitoring and evaluation / success measurement.'

Here we looked for statements or other evidence related to which organisations would lead or be involved in these activities, and if it was known how this would be funded or if there was reference to any follow up activity to further pursue funding.

- There was almost universal reluctance to make any commitments to how the ongoing strategy coordination, monitoring and evaluation would be carried out, across both the public facing strategy documents and through RA clarifications.
- Strategies still included content on the importance of ongoing engagement, coordination, monitoring and engagement sometimes this was even integrated at measures level, relating to gathering further data and evidence for habitats and species where there are gaps, carrying out education and engagement, assessing condition changes of habitats, etc.
- In a scenario where funding for ongoing delivery coordination became available, there were indications of two broad approaches to future resourcing (and there could feasibly be several blended models across these two options):
  - The RA takes on a central role for ongoing coordination, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation.
  - RA commissioning the local nature partnership (LNP) to lead on delivery and monitoring 'picking up where the LNRS board and delivery have left off'.
- Several different approaches were suggested in terms of ensuring some form of ongoing commitment in the absence of clarity on funding:
  - Greater Essex were able to structure their LNRS budget to support delivery in its first year (making the new burdens funding go further to buy time).



- Herefordshire was considering raising money through charging rates for Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring and reporting on Habitat Banks and onsite and offsite contributions.
- RAs referred to embedding LNRS in council plans or other strategies in a general way.
- Greater Manchester indicated that in the absence of dedicated funding, LNRS coordination, monitoring and evaluation would still take place alongside other projects and commitments, in a limited format using existing frameworks of reporting to work around funding and resource constraints. However, the absence of dedicated funding would limit the amount of delivery.

One of the LNRS was assessed as meeting the 'Job Role Permanency' Supporting Statement, which is 'there are permanent positions within the RA (or other org) for LNRS coordination, monitoring, evaluation and review.'

Here we looked for specific statements on the resource allocated to LNRS going forwards.

The assessment found that...

- RAs expressed the desire to retain fixed term LNRS staff in post for continuity into delivery (unless their stated intention was to commission another organisation such as their LNP for ongoing coordination of delivery).
- Generally, strategies themselves said nothing about staffing, and any RA clarifications confirmed a reluctance to make any commitments to staffing without additional clarity on the future funding position for. Some had made fixed extensions staff contracts while this was awaited.

Do the LNRS describe a creative and ambitious funding and resourcing approach for ongoing strategy coordination and development?

**No** - there is not sufficient clarity in the ongoing funding and resourcing provision from Defra for LNRS strategy outputs to cover ongoing strategy coordination and development in a detailed, clear way. RAs opted not to make commitments they might later be unable to meet, and it is quite clear that in the absence of additional funding from government, RAs do not have a convincing 'plan B' for breathing life into strategies between now and the next review in 3 to 10 years. This suggests a very real danger of strategies being 'left on the shelf' - without a funded central coordination point it is difficult to see how the LNRS will have any impact, given our other findings in this assessment on how 'delivery ready' strategies are.

**But** - some RAs have shown creativity in doing what they can to 'fill the gap' on a temporary basis, with evidence of a willingness to use additional internal resources during strategy development, or attempt to make existing funding last longer to cover a period that they hope is a temporary funding gap.

# Assessment Results 2 - Coherence with other plans and strategies

This assessment area is focused on understanding the extent to which the LNRS is consistent with other plans and strategies within or overlapping the same area, and includes both spatial plans and non spatial plans.



In the context of the reviewed LNRS, 'Coherence' represents the variable degree of alignment of intended outcomes with other relevant initiatives on a national, regional or local level. Coherence could range from a negative coherence, i.e. initiatives proceeding without regard to existing plans or strategies, and then through varying degrees of alignment to these, especially their intended outcomes.

Determining coherence is a good measure of whether the LNRS as a whole or in part is likely to be incorporated into the broader system of local authority planning (spatial and non-spatial) and other decision making frameworks, and whether LNRS will benefit from its objectives being reinforced and contributed to by other plans, and vice versa.

Coherence can only be assessed against existing plans and strategies, and there may be other important ones that may emerge during the lifetime of an LNRS - e.g. the anticipated national land use framework<sup>5</sup>, and locally the adoption of new local plans etc.

#### **Summary Findings**

The findings from individual question areas are covered in more detail below. This section briefly summarises the combined findings for Coherence overall.

Strategies show thoughtful engagement with both spatial and non-spatial plans, aligning conceptually with broader strategies and policies; however, active integration is limited, with coherence often achieved through conflict avoidance rather than prioritisation of nature recovery. While some cross-boundary collaboration and alignment efforts are evident, inconsistencies and practical challenges in integration mean that a truly coherent, national-level nature recovery network has yet to materialise.

The strategies reviewed demonstrate significant consideration of, and implied coherence with, other spatial plans that influence decision-making within the same geographic areas. RAs have reviewed and incorporated insights from a broad range of relevant plans in setting their priorities and mapping measures. Many strategies explicitly outline steps taken to achieve coherence, and there is commonality in the range of plans considered across different LNRS areas (though also many variations in what was considered), and consistency in the breadth of review. RAs consistently refer to coherence with Local Plans as a key consideration, and some made statements about what will be done to work towards this. However, overall, spatial coherence (in those LNRS that we have assessed) is primarily achieved by ensuring LNRS opportunities will not / are less likely to conflict with existing spatial plans, by avoiding those conflicts, rather than through active integration and making specific spatial decisions based on priorities. Coherence is relatively easy to achieve in a system where conflicts are simply avoided at the level of the broad spatial plan and left to individual case by case decisions on land use for resolution. So, the extent to which LNRS are truly coherent with other spatial plans and strategies is still somewhat questionable.

In addition to spatial plans, we found that LNRS generally align well with non-spatial strategies and policies influencing decision-making within the same regions. There is strong evidence of systematic

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> 'Government Launches "National Conversation" on Land Use' (GOV.UK) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-national-conversation-on-land-use> accessed 13 March 2025.


policy reviews and a conscious effort to align nature recovery goals with a broad range of other agendas, including economic, social, and health-related priorities. Many LNRS explicitly highlight how nature recovery measures can support multiple policy objectives, reinforcing their wider relevance and value. However, this alignment tends to remain at a broad, conceptual level. There is less clarity on how LNRS priorities and measures will be actively incorporated into other plans and strategies, and how nature recovery can be positioned as a priority. While it is understandable that no single agenda can dominate, the reluctance to prioritise nature in any circumstances may limit the effectiveness of LNRS in driving meaningful change.

In terms of their positioning within the wider nature recovery landscape of England, LNRS do emphasise the importance of ecological connectivity and collaboration beyond administrative boundaries. There are notable examples of effective cross-border engagement, particularly in cases where important natural landscapes extend across multiple LNRS areas. Protected landscapes teams and catchment partnerships are likely to play a key role in facilitating consistency and coordinated efforts across boundaries. However, direct collaboration between neighboring LNRS remains inconsistent, with some strategies showing clear evidence of shared data and alignment, while others provide little indication of meaningful integration. This variability is likely due to differences in development timelines and the challenges of balancing internal stakeholder engagement with external coordination. The practicalities of integrating mapping outputs across LNRS boundaries remain unclear, and a broader, well-functioning national nature recovery network beyond the collective LNRS has not yet emerged.

## Are the LNRS coherent with other spatial plans that influence decision making within or overlapping the same geographic area?

#### Context

The local habitat map will allow review against other **spatial** plans / strategies which are relevant to the area. Per the statutory guidance, "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."<sup>6</sup> The strategy document itself may also contain reference to other spatial plans and insights into how the authority understands or sets out the relationships between spatial plans.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 9 'further developed' strategies, 7 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 2 scored as medium confidence and 0 scored as low confidence. Overall, this indicates that there are no general concerns about the ability for LNRS mapping assets to be considered alongside other spatial plans when relevant decisions are being made (though the review uncovered some questions about the detail of this consideration and what weight LNRS might have, as well as questions over the future use of LNRS across borders and in a wider regional or national context).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Defra, 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy Statutory Guidance'

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6421a4bdfe97a8001379ecf1/Local\_nature\_recovery\_strategy\_statutory\_guidance.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6421a4bdfe97a8001379ecf1/Local\_nature\_recovery\_strategy\_statutory\_guidance.pdf</a>>



### Figure 12 - Confidence Ratings for 'Are the LNRS coherent with other spatial plans that influence decision making within or overlapping the same geographic area?'



The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

## Figure 13 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Are the LNRS coherent with other spatial plans that influence decision making within or overlapping the same geographic area?'



#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Coherence with expected local spatial plans**' Supporting Statement, which is 'spatial plans and strategies from the 'expected' list (Table 4) are clearly referenced within the strategy, and the LNRS shows coherence with these through statements within the strategy document and/or mapping integration (i.e. providing those plans as layers for direct comparison) Any apparent spatial conflicts detected when comparing the LNRS with other spatial plans do not compromise LNRS outcomes (i.e. the level of conflict is not significant enough to prevent measures being implemented)'

Here we looked for expected spatial plans such as Local Plans, Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) plans, Air Quality Plans, etc - those which provided comparable mapping, or other indications of locations or areas where priorities, actions or other elements of those plans would be applied. We looked for any statements on the number and range of plans considered in LNRS development and we looked for how coherence had been approached.

The assessment found that...

• Although the specific spatial context, and spatial data context, of each strategy was different, the approach to considering other spatial resources across most RAs was consistent at a high level.



Strategies considered the following and provided evidence and traceability of the process for doing so:

- Significant lists of other spatial plans and strategies were considered, covering a range of agenda areas which varied between strategies but with a lot of crossover. Examples include River Basin Management Plans, National Landscape and National Park Management Plans (and other specific landscapes were considered where a spatial or management plan with spatial elements existed, e.g New Forest Important Freshwater Landscape, Greater Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area), Catchment Partnership Plans, BGI Plans, Shoreline Management Plans, Integrated Catchment Plans, Spatial Development Strategy, Woodland Management Plans, Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Flood Risk Management Plans, Water Quality Plans, Infrastructure Development Plans, Health and Wellbeing Plans, Tree Strategies, Transport Plans, Species and protected site conservation strategies, Minerals and Waste Plans and many more.
- Some had shown how this had been done systematically at the level of each SA
- Some showed how what they had reviewed had a bearing on different aspects of the LNRS
- Strategies incorporated national spatial data sets as set out in LNRS guidance, supplementing these with local data where needed to address gaps or to create additional richness of information
- Strategies referred most consistently to coherence and integration with Local Plans. Examples include:
  - Strategies which included dedicated 'LNRS links to Planning' or 'How local plans and local nature recovery strategies work together' sections which make it clear that LNRS will inform the preparation of Local Plans enabling them to more effectively identify, map and safeguard areas for nature recovery. In some cases, the RA clarified that this process was already underway.
  - Kent and Medway LNRS included a 'Local strategic context for LNRS local plans' section which describes the review process for specific local plans in full, and a full breakdown of each of the reviews against each Local Plan (15 in total).
  - Cornwall LNRS provided clarity on policy integration in that the LNRS is further reinforced by specific named policies within their Climate Emergency Development Planning Document - 'demonstrate how the proposal will maintain and enhance the integrity and connectivity of the network and LNRS principles'
- Some spatial layers had been used by RAs to refine the opportunity mapping for example, exclusion of high grade farmland.
- Although BNG was not mentioned as a spatial plan, spatial alignment still considered in several cases in relation to definitions and standards, e.g, 'for the purposes of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, we must use the BNG policy definition to determine which of our local habitats are irreplaceable'
- National Character Areas were included in some strategies terms of supporting an understanding of the natural landscape that ignores administrative boundaries, but were not generally seen as a plan that required 'alignment' with in regard to avoiding conflicts / identifying synergies
- It was notable that few strategies mention any integration at neighbourhood spatial plan level. Neighbourhood biodiversity plans should consider LNRS and be consistent with broader area LNRS, and could provide fine-grained coherence with adopted plans through the neighbourhood planning process.
- Mapping outputs were not observed as enabling easy direct spatial comparison with other spatial plans (i.e. through the inclusion of non-LNRS layers, or the addition of LNRS spatial data to



general purpose local authority public mapping services). We noted a significant exception to this in Dorset's intention to include LNRS layers in the DorsetExplorer which includes a wide range of other spatial datasets.

• There is a case to say that LNRS might be a good starting point in knitting together what are clearly a great range of existing spatial plans that exist at local and regional level.

We observed, in many anecdotal cases, theoretical 'conflicts' where another plan designated a parcel of land for one potential use where LNRS presented the same parcel as an opportunity for one of its priorities / measures. In one example, possible extension of a sewerage works. RAs provided very similar clarifications in relation to LNRS being 'non-definitive' and RAs were not concerned about overlaps between different spatial plans.

All of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Coherence with regional and national spatial plans**' Supporting Statement, which is 'spatial plans and spatial resources available at a regional or national level have been considered and integrated into the LNRS. There are no obvious conflicts between national spatial plans and priorities, and key spatial data sets pertinent for nature recovery planning (Table 6) are appropriately factored into the development of the LNRS.'

Here we looked for how strategies had created relationships with national spatial plans, and what form these took. Often this was based on the use of national ecological datasets,

- Strategies referred to a generally consistent range of national spatial data, in terms of the expected range of designated sites, National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves for the development of APIB. There was expected variation in terms of what had been considered in terms of 'Other areas of particular importance' and local wildlife sites to suit the context of the LNRS, with many including sites that are only locally or regionally defined. Many RAs enhanced the definition of 'irreplaceable habitats' to ensure sites that are known to be irreplaceable locally were considered (though acknowledging the 'Areas of Irreplaceable Habitat (The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024)' should be used enhancement provided in separate layers. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) land use coverage data was sometimes supplemented from a range of sources (local and national) as was PHI data.
- With regard to mapping opportunities / ACIB, a broader range of sources was used which perhaps reflects the different data opportunities, and although national data played a role here, there was greater emphasis on local and regional sources.
  - Some national data sets, e.g Marine Management Organisation (MMO) saltmarsh potential data, Environment Agency (EA) seagrass potential data and native oyster bed potential data
  - Information from local and regional projects pilot LNRS, BAP, Natural Capital Reports, State of Nature Reports, Biodiversity Assessments - as well as landscape scale projects
  - The contributions of local stakeholders during the development process including those who owned land parcels and had data about them
- Some RAs provided additional contextual information on working methods, showing how data has been used to inform a particular aspect or aspects of the strategy.



- In terms of conflicts and synergies, we found relatively few 'national' spatial plans which appeared to have a bearing on LNRS. A future land use strategy<sup>7</sup> might provide a basis for aligning many different local spatial plans with national objectives for how land is prioritised for use in certain circumstances, but any implementation of this in LNRS would now most likely wait until the next review in 3 to 10 years.
- Connectivity modelling / nature network modelling appears to have been approached in various ways we have not become aware through this work of clear national standards for public authorities undertaking this.

Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Upward and downward compatibility**' Supporting Statement, which is 'the LNRS spatial plans can be easily integrated into broader regional or national spatial plans to contribute value to the national picture and nature recovery network, and can also be used in conjunction with more detailed 'in-area' maps to plan at a finer scale.'

Here we looked at the behaviour of the mapping assets at different levels of resolution and the choices made in the design of these assets with regard to features and functionality, how data layers were shown, what other contextual data was available, how mapping borders were treated and how features which extended across borders were treated.

- This was a challenging area to assess, particularly in terms of considering how LNRS might be integrated 'upwards' into wider regional or national spatial plans.
- In regard to 'downward' integration, in most cases the LNRS mapping resources for APIB and ACIB included base layers that were detailed and offered visibility of fine scale mapped objects such as individual buildings, footpaths, etc. The base layer could often (but not always) be adjusted to a wide range of different options for further detail (with satellite imagery being particularly useful). ACIB mapped sites could sometimes be interrogated to determine what they are and why they are included. However, not all maps provided features like this which might make planning at a fine scale more difficult for some users without their own mapping capability similarly the lack of non-LNRS map layers that provide additional site context.
- APIB and ACIB opportunities are usually mapped at a granularity that still makes sense at fine scale (lining up with field boundaries, natural features etc).
- At a broader regional and national scale, in the main our findings were constrained to finding no evidence to suggest any broader regional or national spatial planning schemes could not take base mapping data from the LNRS and work to integrate this. The specific use cases for broader scale spatial planning for nature are not well understood which hampered the assessment. We are not aware of any specifications for a national nature recovery network and associated spatial assets or spatial requirements.
- Some of the features that were noted in terms of broader spatial consideration were:
  - Whether mapped layers remain visible as the user zooms out so a visual impression of APIB, opportunities and priorities is possible at broad scale
  - Whether the baselayer extends beyond the LNRS boundary to show continuity of significant features, which helps to understand interactions with cross border areas of importance for nature.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> 'Government Launches "National Conversation" on Land Use' (GOV.UK) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-national-conversation-on-land-use> accessed 13 March 2025.



- Some strategies (e.g Lancashire) included a 'buffer zone' in the data to consider sites which went across boundaries. This is helpful for contextual understanding when planning actions on or near the border.
- Generally, comparing two neighbouring LNRS maps is not a straightforward process and currently for regional spatial planning, there is a risk that LNRS may be able to support this but that the process will be somewhat cumbersome - although it should be noted that the impact of this risk is not really understood, i.e whether this will be an irritation that can be overcome by a team working cross-border with some additional mapping integration work, or a more fundamental problem.
- A key issue, which was not explicitly part of this assessment area as designed but which emerged on reflection, was that new mapping projects may be required to create a national nature network map above the LNRS level. Regional or national joined-up maps of APIB may be achievable as RAs used much of the same data, and although some specific forms of local habitat or site data have been included it likely will not be too challenging to rationalise these as a broader 'local site' data layer. When it comes to the ACIB and the mapping of priorities and measures, RAs have independently created their own underlying data, using different models, weighting and shortlisting criteria for determining where nature opportunity areas should be mapped. It may not be possible to rationalise these to a single data model, but without this, any national map might need to tackle the usability challenge of displaying different priorities and measures from one area to the other (and a very complicated underlying data model). So, while RAs may have met the requirements in the Data Standards Advice<sup>8</sup>, which is that 'RAs must provide the local habitat map in an "editable electronic format" meaning "one of several types of geospatial data file formats used by geographic information systems (GIS)", and despite the provision of attribute schemas for requested data layers, integration problems may remain. It is also noted that the schemas are recommended but not mandatory (uptake was not tested in the assessment).

## Are the LNRS coherent with other spatial plans that influence decision making within or overlapping the same geographic area?

**Yes** - LNRS has considered a very broad range of other plans and strategies (including taking spatial data or insights from these), and has coherence and alignment with the objectives of a number of other areas which have a spatial aspect. RAs made ensuring coherence with Local Plans a key consideration in the strategies, and some had quite well developed statements about what will (or has already) been done to work towards this. Although the range of plans which the different strategies aligned with varied, there was a lot of commonality, and what appears to be consistent is the breadth of review.

**But** - 'coherence' is generally based on an avoidance of conflict with any other spatial plans by positioning LNRS mapped opportunities as always optional. Furthermore, variety in mapping formats may support in-area planning (admittedly, the focus) but easy 'upward' compatibility with regional spatial plans is a risk, and a national nature recovery spatial plan seems a significant challenge of rationalisation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Defra, 'Data Standards for Local Nature Recovery Strategies'

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="https://www.makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Data-Standards-Advice-for-L">https://www.makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Data-Standards-Advice-for-L</a> NRS-Responsible-Authorities.pdf> accessed 7 December 2024.



## Are the LNRS coherent with other non-spatial plans or strategies that influence decision making within the same geographic area?

#### Context

The statement of biodiversity priorities will allow review against national, regional or local **non-spatial** plans / strategies which contain relevant targets. Per the statutory guidance, "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."<sup>9</sup>

Here we looked for alignment with other priorities, and whether that was general or specific, allowing an understanding of how LNRS might 'fit' in an overall balance of objectives that RAs and SAs and other key organisations need to consider.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 9 'further developed' strategies, 0 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 9 scored as medium confidence and 0 scored as low confidence. Mostly, this was based on meeting the threshold for synergies and co-benefits with non-spatial plans and strategies but not the areas related to prioritisation of nature or two-way integration. Overall, this indicates that there is good general synergy with other priority areas but exactly how this will work to maximise positive impact for nature is much less clear.

### Figure 14 - Confidence Ratings for 'Are the LNRS coherent with other non-spatial plans or strategies that influence decision making within the same geographic area?'



The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

Figure 15 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Are the LNRS coherent with other non-spatial plans or strategies that influence decision making within the same geographic area?'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Defra, 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy Statutory Guidance' (n 6).





#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

All of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the 'Clearly outlined synergies and co-benefits with non-spatial plans and strategies' Supporting Statement, which is 'the specific non-spatial plans and strategies which LNRS would be expected to be coherent with (for the type of LNRS area) (Table 4) are clearly laid out and the way in which nature recovery measures and actions will contribute to these, and vice versa, are set out.'

Here we looked for coherence with areas other than the core focus on national nature recovery commitments, which were considered as the main focus in the Ambition section. We looked for 'non-spatial' plans and strategies but also the non-spatial elements of those which did have a spatial focus - the parts which related to goals or activities which were not spatially organised - for example, the population health benefits of an access to nature strategy.

- Strategies positioned LNRS very well in terms of supporting, and being supported by, a broad range of other agenda areas. They present convincing arguments for investment in nature recovery locally and make clear the potential benefits of a wide range of nature recovery measures for other strategic ambitions, covering other environmental state areas as might be expected but also reaching into local economic growth, health and wellbeing, public spending cost reduction, etc.
- There is recognition in the strategies that priorities need to consider wider environmental and other benefits. RAs in many cases demonstrated how consideration of wider benefits had been factored into shortlisting for measures, and in other cases the way priorities and measures are framed in the strategy draws specific links to co-benefits with other areas.
- Strategies were successful in incorporating these benefits throughout the strategies rather than constraining them to brief 'co-benefits sections'. The approach taken to doing this varied but included:
  - Highlighting the value of nature in introductory sections, introducing concepts such as ecosystem services and nature based solutions
  - Highlighting how natural systems benefit people in different ways when describing the landscapes within the LNRS area (and showing how pressures on nature in those landscapes also adversely affect people)
  - Including priority areas / or ambition theme areas that focused on achieving co-benefits or nature based solutions to work alongside habitat or species focused priority areas
  - Integration of additional benefits and synergies with other areas within priorities and measures. There is recognition of the need to design measures with wide environmental benefits in mind.



- Examples of common areas of alignment woven through strategies in various forms are:
  - Climate adaptation
  - Carbon sequestration (or avoided emissions)
  - Reduce flood risk / Surface water management
  - Water resource management / water quality
  - Air quality
  - Soil health
  - River basin management
  - Green Infrastructure / Sustainable infrastructure development
  - Biodiversity
  - Natural Capital / Ecosystem Services (catch all)
  - Landscape management objectives (National Parks, National Landscapes)
  - Public Health & Wellbeing / Access to Nature
  - Energy and Low Emissions
  - Coastal erosion risk management
  - Temperature regulation
  - Food production
  - o Agricultural run off, nitrate and phosphate management
  - Creating economic value
  - Visitor economy
  - Recreational value
- Some took a slightly more technical approach, i.e described how LNRS would need to be implemented in line with relevant legislation, policy, and best practice standards from a range of different areas e.g. Lancashire LNRS frames this as acquisition of all relevant and necessary consents and licences, compliance with Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)(Agriculture) Regulations. The assessment did not find any guidance or advice that provided definitive lists of regulations LNRS should consider and integrate with, but some RAs undertook their own analysis (for example Lancashire provided an Appendix 'Compliance with legislation, policy, and best practice standards' which explains how LNRS should interact with a range of other areas when priorities and measures are being delivered." Some provided statements that related to alignment and coherence with more fundamental natural systems e.g taking account of 'Local climate, Geology, soils, and topography, Hydrology, Existing habitats and land uses' when implementing measures.
- The emphasis on other agenda areas differed by LNRS area, though several themes repeatedly occurred. In the main, the patterns of emphasis were quite predictable, e.g:
  - Coastal areas referred to managing coastal changes such as erosion and coastal flooding
  - LNRS with significant urban populations or close to large urban centres (e.g Greater Manchester, Bucks & MK) highlighted access to nature, and health and wellbeing from nature, as well as 'urban associated' schemes such as Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS), air quality improvements.
  - LNRS areas referred to flood risk reduction benefits regardless of the amount of land coverage in flood risk zones, suggesting that how much of an area is susceptible to flooding does not affect whether this is seen as a focus and a natural point of alignment with LNRS through nature based solutions.

One of the LNRS was assessed as meeting the '**Prioritisation of nature amongst other plans and strategies**' Supporting Statement, which is '*relative prioritisation of nature recovery within the context of* 



## broader priorities is clear, and favourable to nature recovery objectives (i.e nature is given equal or higher priority than other concerns).'

Here we looked for information in the strategies comparing different objectives and how these would be treated in decision processes, and how the existence of the LNRS might affect certain decision making processes (and whether these processes were identified). The main aspect considered was land use prioritisation and any related frameworks and processes (mainly planning).

The assessment found that...

- Strategies did not include information that enabled the relative prioritisation of nature alongside other strategic aims to be understood. There were very few clear references to plan/policy/strategy prioritisation, land use prioritisation or conflict resolution, or a decision making hierarchy when it comes to determining how nature recovery considerations should be considered alongside other objectives.
- The main forms of potential conflicts or prioritisation decisions that were acknowledged within strategies, tacitly or implicitly, were recreational disturbance pressures and access pressures, development pressures (urban growth, infrastructure), water abstraction, agricultural intensification. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) and new housing targets were called out specifically. Some mentioned the awaited Land Use Framework as a possible mechanism to balance priorities.
- In responding to queries, many RAs focused on prioritisation within planning, and the role of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) - highlighting that they must balance many different planning issues against the potential impacts of a given development. RAs stressed that LNRS is not intended as a tool to restrict activity or development and is not a planning constraint. LNRS is positioned as a high level (not site level) instrument and so may not be factored significantly into individual planning decisions.
- In their clarifications, most RAs were clear LNRS is one part of a balance to be struck amongst competing demands and socio-economic objectives. Such statements are loosely suggestive of nature improvement being put on an equal footing with economic development:
  - 'LNRS can positively inform decision making on the emerging local development plan taking account the high level of growth and housing that needs to be accommodated.'
  - 'Activities identified in the LNRS will be balanced alongside other parts of sustainable development'
- One notable exception was Lancashire LNRS which included intent to place nature recovery on a higher footing than other considerations 'where possible' (presumably balancing the merits of the case). There were further policy development recommendations in terms of restricting development (unless for biodiversity reasons) wherever possible on flood plains, coastal habitats, and upland and lowland peat. The basis for this may not reside in LNRS (but rather broader pre-existing planning policy).
- Defra and Natural England had provided advice to RAs on prioritisation which has been interpreted in some cases as meaning that LNRSs should not be a barrier to development (which is suggestive that development may be prioritised over nature recovery where there are direct conflicts), and in softening on measures which implied reducing access to the vulnerable sites (possible prioritisation of access to nature).

Overall, LNRS avoids relative prioritisation of nature. While a blanket prioritisation is likely to be problematic, it is possible that falling back on 'balancing equal priorities' might result in agenda areas with more immediately tangible economic or other social outcomes generally being prioritised. The approach is



also suggestive of prioritisation not being possible in local government or local planning, and that all agendas must be equally weighted, but this could be open to challenge.

There was suggestive evidence of variability in prioritisation between areas. For example, one rural RA had included messaging and measures that alluded to managing access to sensitive sites, whereas another RA with a much more urbanised area was clear in strategy messaging and in their clarifications that increased access was a priority, and not seen as creating a conflict with nature recovery goals.

Some of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Two-way integration**' Supporting Statement, which is 'there is evidence that the LNRS will be integrated into other adopted plans and strategies to the extent that it will be considered by default, and have weight, in those other plans and strategies.'

Here we looked for reference to other plans and strategies and whether clear statements were made on their interactions with LNRS in the future, or any planned updates to them based on the LNRS. We looked particularly for reference to how Local Plans would incorporate LNRS and any mechanisms or timescales for this to happen.

- Strategies and RA clarifications referred to the general duty to have particular regard for LNRS, and more specifically requirements within the EA21 for local planning authorities and decision-makers must take account of the LNRS in their policies, including in their local plans. The main focus on integration of LNRS with other plans and strategies was with the planning system, in particular the local plan. This was frequently stated in strategy documents, and if not was clarified by the RA.
- Integration with the planning system was phrased relatively consistently as a general commitment for LNRS to be incorporated into new and emerging local plans 'so that areas of greatest potential for nature recovery can be better reflected in planning decisions', while stressing that LNRS would be 'one source of evidence used to inform the preparation of plans which will determine where development should occur'. Integration was in one case phrased as LNRS nature recovery opportunities, priorities and measures being incorporated (which implies quite a granular alignment/integration).
- RAs offered varying levels of commitment to the process. Some intended to work with SA districts to embed the LNRS, some had confirmed that LNRS is already mentioned in drafts of local plans, and in a particularly good example from Dorset, set out in some detail the committed integration approach in a dedicated document, including statements on aligning policy wording between LPAs, and stating which wider key policies (eg Council Plan, Biodiversity Policy) the LNRS would be integrated via (presumably to take advantage of established policy linkages and hierarchies).
- Other plans and strategies which were a focus for integration include:
  - Protected Landscape management plans / National landscape plans
  - Many other policies and strategies that affect nature e.g. transport, health, food, growth, housing. Sometimes, these specific points of integration were called out in the detail of priorities and measures. A good example from Isle of Wight LNRS is 'Develop work with IW housing associations and IW utilities as areas of significant opportunity under the Act. Research and refine the power of the Enhanced Duty, as a material change in the law, to revisit and amend existing land management and maintenance contracts in order to ensure compliance and nature recovery.' This fine grained integration detail is rare but helpful where encountered.



There is clear intent to achieve integration, mainly with planning but also with other plans and strategies, but the process, commitment or timescales for this to be done was most often not covered, and it is not clear how it will have significant weight in decisions in those other plans and strategies. At the time of review, RAs were awaiting further clarity on this point. Towards the end of the review process (7th Feb 2025) the government updated its planning practice guidance on protecting and enhancing the natural environment to include a requirement for all LPAs in England to "have regard" to LNRS in both plan-making and decisions.

### Are the LNRS coherent with other non-spatial plans or strategies that influence decision making within the same geographic area?

**Yes** - there is good evidence of systematic and thorough policy reviews, and consideration of and conscious alignment with a broad range of other agendas and benefit areas. LNRS is well positioned as being strongly synergistic with many other priorities, and in many cases this is also evident in the detail of priorities and measures where the benefits to other agenda areas from action for nature is made clear, or opportunities to deliver nature recovery actions through other work.

**But** - the alignment is at a general level, and it is difficult to be completely sure of this translating to the priorities and measures in the LNRS actively and routinely being acted on through other plans and strategies - there is very little clarity on how the incorporation of LNRS in other activity will work. The absence of strong prioritisation or 'equal footing' for nature poses questions about LNRS impact in an environment where competition for land, resources and funding is high. There is a reluctance to set nature recovery as a top priority in any circumstances (accepting that it is not feasible or desirable to create a blanket prioritisation for any single agenda area).

## Are the LNRS set in the wider context of England's nature recovery landscape, and do they avoid adopting a 'hard border' approach?

#### Context

Per the guidance, "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."

We assessed the coherence of each LNRS in the sample with neighbouring LNRS areas to review the consideration given by the RA to the broader picture and how this meets the guidance to consider impact across boundaries. To do this we reviewed the LNRS for explicit mention and further description of plans relevant to neighbouring areas, overlapping landscapes of importance, and considered the extent of that coherence. We were also specifically seeking reference to the concept of a national nature recovery network, how this was developed beyond the conceptual through LNRS, and whether other specific elements of that network were identified and functional connections established with them.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 10 'further developed' strategies, 1 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 6 scored as medium confidence and 3 scored as low confidence. Overall, this indicates uncertainty over



whether LNRS has been developed in a way that will easily facilitate cross border collaboration or a high functioning national nature recovery network.

## Figure 16 - Confidence Ratings for 'Are the LNRS set in the wider context of England's nature recovery landscape, and do they avoid adopting a 'hard border' approach?'



The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

## Figure 17 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Are the LNRS set in the wider context of England's nature recovery landscape, and do they avoid adopting a 'hard border' approach?'



#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

Some of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Neighbouring LNRS**' Supporting Statement, which is 'due consideration is given to alignment with neighbouring Responsible Authority LNRS, with evidence of consideration of the high level nature recovery context of the wider region and clear expression of common purpose.'

Here we looked for references to neighbouring LNRS areas in general and in the detail of priorities and measures where relevant, as well as considered how mapping assets handled natural features or landscapes across RA borders, and how species priorities related to coordinating action with neighbours.

The assessment found that...

 Strategies generally provided a good sense of the wider landscape extending beyond the boundaries of the LNRS area, and that action needed to be coordinated through the LNRS process that extended across these boundaries. There was an awareness of pressures originating out of the area (though less consideration of pressures within the LNRS area acting on



neighbours). Some referred to guidance issued on 'cross-boundary considerations to be able to plan coherent ecological networks with neighbouring responsible authorities'

- Often, RAs referred to neighbours inconsistently (i.e referred to one/some adjacent LNRS area but not all) and the strategies did not go on to incorporate significant detail in cross boundary collaboration in the detail of priorities and measures. Exceptions include:
  - Kent & Medway LNRS includes a specific priority areas, for 'landscape scale management, with partners beyond the county, to address habitat change and species migration as a result of climate change'
  - North Yorkshire & York's landscape presents opportunities for potential future coordination and shared delivery between neighbouring LNRS areas (E.g. INNS management along riverine systems and the White Rose Forest).
  - Collaboration with neighbours in relation to isolated pockets of specific threatened species (e.g red squirrels example in Lancashire LNRS)
  - Collaboration with neighbours in relation to detecting species migration as climate change impacts manifest (Kent & Medway)
- Even where priorities and measures included little content that alluded to collaboration, there was often still evidence of alignment with neighbours in methodology statements and clarification comments, which variously described:
  - Regular touchpoints with neighbouring LNRS teams in various regional forums or through direct engagement
  - How RAs integrated data from neighbouring RAs through stakeholder engagement, to shortlist the priorities and potential measures
  - Identification of key ecological networks that extend beyond the LNRS administrative boundaries
  - Use of a buffer zone in some LNRS mapping to ensure sites of importance were captured overlapping or sometimes entirely beyond the immediate boundaries
  - Notably the LNRS in the sample with a national boundary (Herefordshire) did refer to cooperation with nature recovery efforts in Wales
- Overall, although neighbours had been considered, there was inconsistent evidence of meaningful integration with neighbouring LNRS, perhaps made challenging by different development timescales, and difficulties in prioritising this alongside managing alignment with multiple internal stakeholders.

Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Overlapping landscapes of importance**' Supporting Statement, which is '*due consideration is given to any cross-border areas such as National Parks or National Landscapes where combined activities are more likely to have impact and where key decision makers will need to work with multiple RAs, as well as notably 'large' designated sites which extend across boundaries and also require cross-boundary cooperation.'* 

Here we looked for references to known cross-border Protected Landscapes and also for other landscapes of importance (not all of which are designated), and whether there were clear references to coordinating action with bodies such as National Parks and National Landscapes teams and how those and similar organisations had contributed to the development of strategies.

The assessment found that...

• Strategies were consistent in identifying a range of significant cross-border landscapes and being clear in the general messaging about the potential for joined up action to achieve more in these areas. The type of landscapes included the 'obvious' protected landscapes (National Parks and



National Landscapes) but also catchment systems and contiguous areas of important habitat that fell outside designated areas.

- The universal inclusion of National Parks, National Landscapes teams and other stakeholders
  responsible for large scale landscapes (e.g. Forestry Commission, catchment partnerships,
  Utilities Companies, eNGOs with large reserves, cross-border strategic mitigation associated with
  NSIPs such as HS2) in strategy steering groups and working groups provides confidence
  landscapes overlapping different LNRS areas have been consistently considered.
- In their reviews of other plans and policies, landscape management plans and nature recovery plans have featured prominently in terms of the evidence base. Some strategies have shown further alignment with targets and objectives e.g. through the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework
- Strategies set out the intent to work collaboratively with neighbours and cross border landscape teams
- In priorities and measures, specific landscapes were sometimes mentioned if these corresponded strongly with a particular habitat of focus.
- Cross border landscapes of importance were not mapped extending beyond the boundaries of the LNRS, where perhaps doing this could enhance an understanding interconnectedness. Base map layers did enable this to an extent.

Some of the LNRS was assessed as meeting the '**Clear relationship with a broader Nature Recovery Network**' Supporting Statement, which is 'the concept of a national nature recovery network is embedded in the LNRS and in particular, the way in which key sites for wildlife within the RA boundary will be connected with other key sites for wildlife in other areas.'

Here we looked for references to or descriptions of the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) and statements on how LNRS formed part of the network, but also what the other elements of the network were considered to be. We referred to Table 7 for a summary list of potential wider area recovery network projects that could bridge LNRS areas.

- Strategies referred to the NRN in general terms, explained in terms of introduction in EA21 and being underpinned by the 48 LNRS areas. The concept of the network beyond an aggregation of the 48 LNRS areas is not further explained
- Wide area projects described by Natural England<sup>10</sup> (Table 7) are not mentioned or covered only briefly (note there is not much overlap with the LNRS areas in the sample and these projects)
- Other wide area nature recovery schemes and partnerships that were researched and captured in advance of the assessments are generally referred to briefly or not at all. Examples which might have been expected to feature (or feature more strongly) based on the LNRS sample include:
  - River Nene Regional Park, Oxford to Cambridge Arc, South East Nature Partnership / Nature South East, Nature North, The Big Moss Map, The Northern Forest, Moors for the Future Partnership, Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership, Thames Estuary Partnership, The Wilder Blean (Kent Downs Partnership)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> 'Nature Recovery Projects (England)'

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::nature-recovery-projects-england/expl">https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::nature-recovery-projects-england/expl</a> ore?location=52.515904,-2.098392,7.23> accessed 13 March 2025.



### Are the LNRS set in the wider context of England's nature recovery landscape, and do they avoid adopting a 'hard border' approach?

**Yes** - strategies clearly emphasise the importance of an understanding of nature that is. Direct engagement with neighbouring LNRS (or our visibility of this through the review) is patchy, with some very clear examples of how neighbours have collaborated and shared data and aligned outputs, but with some cases where this is much less clear. There are more consistent indications in terms of collaboration over important natural landscapes that straddle multiple boundaries. Protected landscapes teams and catchment partnerships could be important 'brokers' for consistency and combined efforts across borders.

**But** - overall, although neighbouring RAs have communicated, there was inconsistent evidence of meaningful integration with neighbouring LNRS to achieve coherence, perhaps made challenging by different development timescales, and difficulties in prioritising this alongside managing alignment with multiple internal stakeholders. Furthermore, as previously identified there are concerns around the practicalities of integrating and using mapping outputs for priorities and measures across different LNRS areas. Without the presence of cross border landscapes with their own teams to coordinate, direct LNRS to LNRS collaboration is less sure. A wider, functioning nature recovery network that exists beyond the collective LNRS has not come through clearly in this review.

### Assessment Results 3 - Well Explained and Realistic Delivery Mechanisms

This assessment area is focused on understanding the likelihood of LNRS strategy measures being implemented at a level that will contribute positively and meaningfully to the EIP 'thriving plants and wildlife' goal and species abundance targets. Essentially, it seeks to test whether the strategy is set out in a way which gives the best chance of the 'ambition' being converted into reality, within a meaningful timeframe. We will consider whether delivery mechanisms feel clear and specific enough for stakeholders to 'take the first step', while also allowing sufficient flexibility for new delivery mechanisms that might come into being during the strategy's implementation, and avoiding 'locking in' delivery mechanisms that might not exist between LNRS adoption and review (3 to 10 year timeframe).

Our review of this area was based on a clear understanding that LNRS are intended as an enabling mechanism, not a delivery mechanism or plan - the assessment did not seek to find high detail in terms of delivery routes, but did seek to get a sense of how LNRS are considering delivery from the outset and whether the strategy outputs can effectively support some delivery to happen from the outset (and if so to gauge to what degree), or whether further delivery planning is needed before anything significant can happen on the ground under the strategy (over and above the current rate of nature recovery action).

LNRS is a spatial strategy which supports a range of other nature-recovery delivery mechanisms, by prioritising and directing where action should happen. Examples include agri-environment schemes, Biodiversity Net Gain, green infrastructure development, carbon credits (associated with creating new woodlands, restoring peatland and rolling out regenerative agriculture) and / or other local initiatives and associated funding mechanisms. Of these, only those related to planning such as BNG have a legal driver for being carried out.



### **Summary Findings**

The findings from individual question areas are covered in more detail below. This section briefly summarises the combined findings for Coherence overall.

LNRS set out a wide range of potential delivery mechanisms, and show awareness of the importance of collaboration, but generally lack clarity on which mechanisms will be most impactful and where responsibility for implementation lies. Their open-ended nature may limit effective delivery unless further support and structure is provided.

LNRS outline a broad range of delivery mechanisms that could support meaningful nature recovery, with a strong emphasis on BNG, agri-environment schemes, and integration with planning. They also reference various grant schemes, local policy interventions, and landscape recovery initiatives, demonstrating flexibility in potential funding and implementation pathways. However, while the broad mechanisms are well understood, the strategies do not clearly prioritise which ones will be most impactful for the LNRS area in question specifically, or as a collective, generally. This lack of clarity may lead to a diluted focus on the mechanisms that could drive the most significant improvements. Additionally, LNRS has not provided more certainty over whether the government's existing delivery mechanisms are sufficient to meet national nature recovery commitments, particularly in relation to quantified targets.

Collaborative working and partnerships are well-recognised as crucial to delivery, with LNRS reflecting a good awareness of the diverse range of potential delivery partners across multiple sectors and organisational scales. Many RAs and their partners (notably SAs and LNPs) have broad plans for coordinating efforts, and in several cases, strategies integrate collaboration at a landscape scale by defining whole priority areas for joint action or ensuring continued focus on creating consensus on the action needed. However, despite this general appreciation for partnerships, there is less certainty about the specific roles and responsibilities of different organisations and a lack of clearly defined structures for navigating land-use competition, resolving conflicts over approaches, or mitigating risks for those hesitant about nature recovery initiatives. While the foundations for collaboration exist, overcoming these barriers will depend on further development of structured partnership models and governance arrangements.

One of the most significant limitations of LNRS is their lack of clear guidance on how different stakeholders should engage with them post-publication. The strategies tend to be open to interpretation, providing broad direction but few specific calls to action that would directly initiate delivery. They do not clearly assign responsibility for implementing nature recovery actions in different contexts, nor do they clarify how RAs will have an ongoing leadership role in coordinating efforts. This ambiguity makes it difficult for new or less experienced stakeholders to engage with LNRS, potentially limiting the number of actors actively driving nature recovery. While organisations already involved in strategy development may find LNRS useful as coordination tools, those without prior engagement may struggle to determine their role. That said, some priority areas and measures do provide greater clarity on stakeholder involvement and available tools, suggesting that a more 'delivery-ready' version of LNRS could be achieved quickly if RAs receive the necessary support.



Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with well-explained delivery mechanisms, that are referenced in sufficient detail to understand their relative importance and contribution to meaningful nature recovery?

#### Context

This area focused on identifying the delivery mechanisms that are referenced in the strategies. During review of the strategy, assessors considered both explicitly named, and implied, delivery mechanisms, and captured reference to these in the various places they were referred to in strategies so that a picture of the range of delivery mechanisms emerged. The assessment considered whether any were more prominent than others, and whether any notable delivery mechanisms are absent which might have been expected to be referenced.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 9 'further developed' strategies, 0 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 9 scored as medium confidence and 0 scored as low confidence. It is also worth noting that the strategies all scored in the same way, in that they all met the threshold for 'Delivery Mechanisms identified' but not others. Overall, this indicates that that there is a good general understanding of the range of Delivery Mechanisms available for LNRS, but this is not in any quantifiable form or with any strong focus or direction, and the LNRS process has not made it clearer which delivery mechanisms will really deliver for which aspects of national nature recovery commitments.

# Figure 18 - Confidence Ratings for 'Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with well-explained delivery mechanisms, that are referenced in sufficient detail to understand their relative importance and contribution to meaningful nature recovery?'



Figure 19 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with well-explained delivery mechanisms, that are referenced in sufficient detail to understand their relative importance and contribution to meaningful nature recovery?'





#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

All of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Delivery Mechanisms identified**' Supporting Statement, which is 'the key delivery mechanisms for the LNRS are clearly laid out and these are consistent with the expected delivery mechanisms (Table 8) based on the 'cause and effect' model created for this project, as well as the area characteristics (captured in Box B - Characteristic / data area for RA of the Evidence Capture Template)'

Here we looked for references to expected broad delivery mechanisms from Table 8, discussion of how these delivery mechanisms related to the context of the LNRS, and any other general discussions on delivery which provided information on forms of delivery we might not have anticipated.

- Strategies presented clear statements on the expected delivery mechanisms for LNRS, and these
  were consistent with expectations for delivery mechanisms based on our earlier research
  (provided at Table 8), though many of these were not mentioned, and LNRS in the sample also
  suggested other delivery mechanisms which suited their circumstances that had not been
  anticipated.
- Most strategies placed emphasis on BNG and agri-environment schemes as expected (attention is drawn to these in the EIP) but this was not universal a very few strategies did not focus as much on these, but presented alternative mechanisms.
- Most LNRS which highlighted BNG as a delivery mechanism did not acknowledge that this largely covers a loss of biodiversity in development and so logically, contributes to nature recovery in some areas of priority but only when there has been a reduction elsewhere, for a minimal net uplift.
- The main delivery mechanisms consistently referenced were:
  - All referred to integration of LNRS with planning to ensure nature recovery is reflected in planning decisions
  - BNG calculation incentive where applied in LNRS identified priority areas,
  - Finance for nature recovery, covering a range of approaches from specific funding schemes (Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), woodland creation fund, protected species funding, natural flood management funding) to more general references to public funding, business funding, new green finance, etc. There was reference to establishing a local financing strategy for Landscape scale nature recovery projects, and promotion of private and public investment in these.
  - Sustainable farming and forestry schemes (various) increased uptake of agri-environment schemes, grants and nature friendly farming incentives
  - Community and individual projects / citizen science and other forms of direct action



- Large scale Landscape Recovery projects
- Public BGI projects (tree planting schemes, public work on parks and public green and blue spaces)
- Other less commonly referenced mechanisms were:
  - Development of policies that support nature recovery in other areas / general integration of LNRS in local policies (across the various SAs). A good example is Durham LNRS which refers to 'production and delivery of a Strategic Open Space Strategy for local authority owned urban green spaces'.
  - Environment mitigation delivery and development again, like BNG this offsets an impact of development, so can contribute to nature recovery in some priority areas but the overall 'nature recovery' impact may be neutral.
  - Use of various forms of permissions, consultation and licences, the role of planning system for creating change, and the general integration of LNRS in local policies (across the various authorities).
  - Informing other management and delivery plans (e.g Protected Landscape management plans)
- Delivery mechanisms were sometimes referenced at priorities and measures level, for example linking management changes on agricultural land to agri-environment or BNG agreements, and rarely in more specific formats such as reference to a particular grant.
- Resourcing for delivery is described in broad terms refers to volunteering, and working through Environmental NGOs and partnerships, capacity building and skills development - but otherwise resourcing is treated lightly.
- Forms of delivery mechanisms which were rarely mentioned or avoided / clarified as not a focus were (each with very few exceptions):
  - Forms of environmental enforcement
  - Restrictions on development
  - Creating new site designations for example in Durham LNRS which refers to 'new LWS [Local Wildlife Site] sites brought forward for designation by the Local Wildlife Sites Partnership where criteria are met' being identified as a delivery mechanism
- Coverage of emerging nature markets and green finance options in relation to delivery was nascent, with strategies positioned as being a tool for directing any funding from such schemes but stopping short of identifying specific markets or schemes, and in some cases referring to this as a matter for 'those that deliver the strategy'. There were some indications of further thinking being done on this, for example reference to 'a local financing strategy for Landscape scale nature recovery projects' in Lancashire. Detail on the role nature markets are expected to play is not a feature of the strategies.

None of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Contribution of different Delivery Mechanisms**' Supporting Statement, which is '*the expected contribution of the broad forms of different Delivery Mechanisms is clear*'

Here we looked for statements within the strategies that rank or prioritise delivery mechanisms, or other indicators on which mechanisms are expected to be a focus for achieving the aims of the LNRS, based on the characteristics of the LNRS area or experience or insight gained during development.

The assessment found that...

• We could not say in aggregate whether certain forms of delivery mechanism were expected to be more important than others for contributing to priorities.



- Although the EIP itself sets out the main expected delivery mechanisms and their relative contributions at a national scale, at LNRS level this does not seem to have been possible. In the EIP, for instance, there are clear statements about the proportion of contribution nature friendly farming will make to EIP goals 'at least 80% of the target to restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected areas by 2042'.
- In strategies reviewed with the sample, proportional links between either specific delivery mechanisms, or broad forms of delivery mechanism, are generally not made.
- Although the relationships between delivery mechanisms and action on the ground for nature recovery are admittedly complex, it might be expected that the focus on delivery mechanisms would loosely reflect the broad characteristics of LNRS areas based on aspects such as land cover, population density, key pressures etc.
- A primary example would be that almost all LNRS areas might be expected to position ELMS as the priority delivery mechanism based on land coverage this is the case even for highly urban LNRS areas such as Greater Manchester, where urban and suburban overage is still less than half of the total hectarage, and farmland coverage is still very significant. In rural LNRS areas in England, farmland dominates (primarily cultivated land and improved grassland).
- Strategies and RA clarifications do, in a broad sense, acknowledge the importance of ELMS and schemes such as SFI in relation to rural land, but also highlight BNG in areas with high levels of growth and housing, and Landscape Recovery where there are a high number of current and emerging projects. Strategies do not champion delivery mechanisms.

None of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the 'Delivery mechanism links to national nature recovery commitments' Supporting Statement, which is 'the links between Delivery Mechanisms and the national nature recovery commitments are explained and credible, in that they relate to ensuring new habitat creation, restoration and improvement, removal or reduction of pressures, adoption of more sustainable practices, etc'

This requires some reiteration in terms of the meaning of 'delivery mechanisms' in this context. The Priorities and Measures in strategies are of course delivery focused, in that they describe the practical actions that can be taken in delivery of improvements for nature, but we are not referring to these. In terms of the delivery mechanisms supporting the implementation of the strategies, we refer to the funding, resourcing, policy and regulatory mechanisms for ensuring Priorities and Measures get done - covered in 'Delivery Mechanisms identified' above.

To answer this question we are seeking to trace a causal relationship between these delivery mechanisms and EIP targets - *through* the Priorities and Measures which have already been established are well aligned with the EIP targets (see 'Alignment with National Targets').

- Overall we did not find that the strategies helped to understand whether particular delivery
  mechanisms correspond strongly to one or more of the EIP TPW goal areas or species
  abundance targets (for example, which delivery mechanisms will contribute what proportion of
  new wildlife rich habitat creation in the LNRS area, or which delivery mechanisms would be most
  impactful for a given TPW goal area in a given LNRS area)
- Links to EIP goals and targets for habitat creation might be made, for instance, via clearly referenced ELMS, and particular priorities and measures that delivered habitat creation on agricultural land. We did not find that this was the case on the whole.



- Strategies and RA clarifications framed the connections between specific delivery mechanisms and priorities and measures in terms of 'presenting opportunities for which a number of funding sources may be relevant'. Government funding streams were seen as a diverse pot that could contribute to various LNRS objectives i.e. woodland creation funding, protected species, natural flood management, protected landscape etc should have criteria that projects must comply and be in accordance with local LNRS priorities and measures.
- It was acknowledged by one RA in clarifications that on farming focused schemes such as SFI 'it
  would be great to make direct linkages as clear and as easy as possible so land managers can
  see direct connection.'
- What RAs expectations are for delivery mechanism relationships with forms of action (priorities and measures/actions) are difficult to determine when reading the strategies

On reflection, this question sets a particularly high bar for the clarity the LNRS process can bring to delivery mechanism contributions towards the different national nature recovery commitments. Where statements have been made at the broad national level about how delivery mechanisms will contribute to these commitments, LNRS development has not made the understanding of this contribution more specific. We cannot say for example whether the 'increase tree canopy and woodland cover' target will be supported firstly through woodland grant schemes, secondly through a number of specific ELMS schemes, and with a small remainder expected to be delivered through BNG.

None of this means that LNRS does not create links between delivery mechanisms and national nature recovery commitments. In priorities and measures we see a very clear focus on ensuring new habitat creation, restoration and improvement, removal or reduction of pressures, adoption of more sustainable practices - and at a broad level the delivery mechanisms that will ensure measures are implemented are known. However, these complex links are not traceable through the LNRS process (which is the primary coordination mechanism for all the different delivery mechanisms), which makes it difficult to establish whether delivery mechanisms set out by the government are sufficient for the task of meeting the quantified national nature recovery commitments.

Do the LNRS describe a clear relationship with well-explained delivery mechanisms, that are referenced in sufficient detail to understand their relative importance and contribution to meaningful nature recovery?

**Yes** - the broad delivery mechanisms that strategies will require in order to be successful in delivery are well understood, and strategies consistently emphasise BNG, agri-environment schemes and integration with planning - though as noted, too much emphasis on BNG may prove problematic if there is a reliance on this for large scale nature recovery. Strategies each refer to a different range of other delivery mechanisms across various grant schemes, local policy interventions, landscape recovery schemes etc. The range of mechanisms indicates flexibility.

**But** - it remains to be seen which mechanisms will come to be most strongly associated with LNRS, and whether those are the most impactful for large scale nature recovery (expected at a national level to be agri-environment schemes, though this may vary by LNRS area). The broad delivery mechanisms expected to contribute the most are not clearly set out which could reduce the focus on pursuing those that will really make the biggest impact in a given area. It is also difficult to determine whether certain delivery mechanisms, directed through the lens of LNRS (i.e funding or otherwise ensuring the application of priorities and measures) have more of a role to play than others in delivering for national



nature recovery commitments, and overall whether delivery mechanisms set out by the government are sufficient for the task of meeting the quantified targets in those commitments.

## Do the LNRS demonstrate a clear appreciation of the importance of partnerships and collaborative working to delivery?

#### Context

To be effective, many aspects of LNRS will need to be delivered by organisations other than RAs and SAs, and many of the more impactful (but difficult) measures may require cross-organisation, cross-sector collaboration.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 9 'further developed' strategies, 3 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 6 scored as medium confidence and 0 scored as low confidence. Overall, and considering the balance of scoring against the Support Statements below, this indicates that there is a solid understanding of the importance of collaboration with a range of stakeholders for effective delivery at scale, and that strategies appropriately position for this. There is perhaps slightly less confidence or visibility of how these partnerships are structured to balance different priorities e.g. achieve economic goals and nature recovery goals at the same time.

### Figure 20 - Confidence Ratings for 'Do the LNRS demonstrate a clear appreciation of the importance of partnerships and collaborative working to delivery?'



The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

Figure 21 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for 'Do the LNRS demonstrate a clear appreciation of the importance of partnerships and collaborative working to delivery?'



<ul> <li>Delivery partners understood -</li> <li>Partnership fitness for balancin</li> <li>100%</li> </ul>	10 out of 10 g different objecti	Strong, multi-statives and land use	akeholder deliver s, while still achie	y partnerships - 6 out of 11 eving nature recovery prog
75%	100%			
50%		55%	60%	
25%				
0%				
% of LNRS (against variable totals)				

#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

All of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Delivery partners understood**' Supporting Statement, which is '*key partners for delivering measures and achieving outcomes are described*'

Here we looked for lists and descriptions of organisations, partnerships or other structures in the context of future delivery, and in examples of recent successful delivery.

- Strategies consistently demonstrated good general awareness of the local stakeholder landscape relevant to future delivery, with key partners often being referenced explicitly throughout the main strategy documents in the context of their past work (through case studies) and contributions and commitment to LNRS development. Some strategies had dedicated sections referring in broad terms to stakeholder groups expected in delivery. Sometimes ongoing delivery commitment was implied, sometimes it was stated.
- Strategies were universally broad and inclusive in their approach to delivery stakeholders, and clear that anyone can get involved in LNRS delivery.
- Appendices dealing with LNRS development methodology, particularly stakeholder engagement, provided additional detailed evidence of the likely future delivery organisations (essentially useful lists of already engaged organisations).
- LNPs were positioned in several strategies as a lynchpin organisation for delivery coordination
- Other forms of delivery partners referred to included
  - Farm clusters.
  - Landowners.
  - Partnerships and connectors 3rd sector and public authority partnerships, business and 3rd sector partnerships, etc.
  - Local public bodies local authorities, parish councils, NHS trusts, etc.
  - National public bodies Natural England, Forestry Commission, EA, MMO, etc.
  - eNGOs e.g the Wildlife Trusts, Rivers Trusts, National Trust, RSPB etc and a great many local eNGOs.
  - Catchment partnerships / landscape projects / landscape partnerships (e.g peat partnerships).
  - National Parks and National Landscapes teams.
  - Community groups, Friends groups.
  - Membership organisations Country Land and Business Association (CLA), National Farmer's Union (NFU).
- The RAs positioned themselves for various ongoing delivery roles, quite often in respect of monitoring though with the caveat this is dependent on future funding.



- Case studies throughout the strategy provide further examples of recognised delivery partnerships that can serve as a model.
- At measures level, the delivery partners / responsible bodies are not frequently specified even where the measure might be focused on a particular stakeholder, or where a given measure would almost certainly require a multi-agency / multi-stakeholder collaboration.
- RAs highlighted 'there is no requirement to identify delivery responsibility' but overall provided a good sense that strategy development has provided them with good knowledge of who will be important to delivery of LNRS.

Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Strong, multi-stakeholder delivery partnerships**' Supporting Statement, which is 'relevant partnerships have been formed (or planned to form) with appropriate structures for collaborative decision making and continued engagement'

Here we looked for references to specific organisation of future delivery structures, such as who might lead, who might support, what form of organisation was seen as appropriate, etc.

The assessment found that...

- Several referred to LNPs (subject to funding) as lynchpin co-ordinators to bring together a pipeline of projects, convene further more specific partnerships for delivery in key areas, provide advice to the delivery network, and other. In other cases, the RA positioned themselves in that role, at least initially.
- The partnership focus was clearly dependent on variety in the stakeholder landscape for each area, for example not all LNRS have a nature partnership, and some areas have notably more SAs than others which naturally implies a different focus on ongoing collaboration and engagement around and through the SAs.
- There was variation in how specific the commitments to forming partnerships for ongoing collaboration round the strategy were. Some presented broad vision statements such as 'reinvigorate existing partnerships and establish new ones to deliver nature recovery in the places and spaces that need it most on a landscape-scale.' Some went further and dedicated whole priority areas to continued engagement and collaboration. Some good examples of this were:
  - Lancashire which has a priority area for 'Engagement and collaboration to promote nature recovery' which includes measures for ongoing engagement and consultation with key expected groups.
  - Dorset which has a priority area for 'Nature Connection' which positions a coordinating body role focused on building consensus based action, and broad based collective effort.
- In most cases where LNRS did not meet the threshold for this supporting statement this was mainly due to a lack of detail on what the partnership or governance / decision making structure would be, rather than a lack of evidence of intent to form ongoing partnerships and retain momentum (which was more universal).

Most of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the 'Partnership fitness for balancing different objectives and land uses, while still achieving nature recovery progress' Supporting Statement, which is 'there is evidence that such partnerships can improve collaboration over land use decisions, or enable 'multifunctional land use' - i.e. enable and encourage land to be used for nature recovery measures while continuing to support economic and social uses'

Here we looked for reference to ensuring inclusion of key land owning or land managing stakeholders in future delivery structures, or any reference to ongoing focus in supporting uptake of nature-friendly



farming schemes, or mechanisms to overcome barriers to uptake of such schemes, in the ways of working of future partnerships.

This was a challenging area to assess mainly because this is difficult to evidence for partnerships that have only been proposed, and before they have established a track record. Our assessment therefore included consideration of case studies and partnerships from the area that were mentioned in the strategy and whose experience and connections could reasonably be assumed to be available to any partnerships delivering for LNRS (and indeed it is expected that these would be the same in many cases)

The assessment found that...

- Strategies which included clear case studies in connection with particular priority areas provided more confidence of the essential capability to secure win-win outcomes for nature and other land use priorities (most typically economically viable farming, but also development, recreation etc)
- Sometimes this was further supported by the inclusion of specific priorities for enabling multifunctional land use, though a lot of strategies did not use this term.
- Across most strategies there is a good range of future engagement activity described for landowners and farmers (as well as other stakeholders with a role in land use decisions)
- Detail on how collaborative approaches and partnership structures could overcome barriers to adoption of land management changes was not as strong. Similarly, where it might be needed to 'de-risk' approaches for land managers how collaboration could function to overcome the perceived or real barriers to innovating for nature.

### Do the LNRS demonstrate a clear appreciation of the importance of partnerships and collaborative working to delivery?

**Yes** - there is a clear sense of a rich community of potential delivery partners from multiple sectors and different organisational scales, and no evidence of a lack of general capacity for delivery (we did not assess delivery capacity or skills availability for any specific areas of delivery). There is evidence that many RAs and their close partners have a broad plan for coordinating this effort, and in many cases, creating effective collaboration at landscape scale is embedded in strategies in the form of whole priority areas.

**But** - there is less surety that the form and function of specific, multi-sector delivery partnerships is known, what the roles of different organisations will be (including the RA in some cases), and how these partnerships will be able to navigate competing needs for land, conflicts over approach, or provide assurance and de-risk the change process for those who might be sceptical about various nature recovery schemes and incentives.

Do the LNRS make it clear how different stakeholders should use them after publication, with measures described in sufficient detail to enable 'first steps' to be taken?

#### Context

The LNRS will need to support a range of stakeholders to be effective in many different action areas. Can a wide range of stakeholders easily use LNRS outputs to work towards measures and outcomes? This area is about looking beyond whether the broad delivery partners and other important stakeholders have



been identified in the strategy, and considers whether there is clarity at priorities and measures level how first steps can be taken, who needs to be involved in what activity, and what specific tools and methods (if any) are the best to use to achieve a particular measure or carry out an activity.

#### **Overall Results**

Of the sample of 10 'further developed' strategies, 1 scored as high confidence in relation to this question, 2 scored as medium confidence and 7 scored as low confidence. Overall, this indicates that there remain a number of uncertainties in relation to how 'delivery ready' the strategies are. While accepting that strategies are not intended to be delivery plans, there is also no certainty from the LNRS materials reviewed that delivery plans will definitely be produced, or what they should look like to consistently bridge the gap between the ambition in the strategy and meaningful action being taken at scale.

The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows

# Figure 22 - Confidence Ratings for 'Do the LNRS make it clear how different stakeholders should use them after publication, with measures described in sufficient detail to enable 'first steps' to be taken?'



The breakdown of scoring against the Supporting Statements is as follows, followed by further analysis regarding the three Supporting Statements and what is meant by them.

# Figure 23 - Total count of LNRS meeting the Supporting Statement threshold for Do the LNRS make it clear how different stakeholders should use them after publication, with measures described in sufficient detail to enable 'first steps' to be taken?'





#### **Results by Supporting Statement**

One of the LNRS was assessed as meeting the '**Identified tools and methods**' Supporting Statement, which is '*specific tools and methods, sources of information, and practitioner communities are identified for measures in the strategy.*'

Here we looked primarily within the Priorities and Measures for references to specific local projects or relevant organisations, published guidance, named methodologies, further information resources, and other things which readers could follow up on to investigate adopting a given measure or action.

- Priorities and measures in strategy documents have been introduced and described in a range of formats overall, the way these are expressed results in clear, 'on-the-ground' practical actions and users of the strategies with an interest in nature recovery would be able to understand what is meant by a given measure, and how it relates to making a positive difference for nature recovery.
- Overall, a majority of measures do not provide additional information in relation to specific tools and methods and sources of information that facilitate delivery of the measure.
- Specific practitioner communities (i.e. those already carrying out such work) are not usually linked to measures, and this was the case even where there are strong associations in a local area with a particular form of action and a particular project, group or other community who could support those attempting the measure. Strategies do provide evidence that such communities have been considered, distributed throughout various sections often related to case study examples, and in methodological appendices where such communities have clearly been engaged and often contributed significantly to strategy priorities and measures.
- In their clarifications, RAs referenced a number of good reasons why provision of this information was not feasible
  - Making measures more specific in terms of tools, methods, practitioner communities and specific funding pots that suit each measure presents the challenge of these resources going out of date (and the strategy documents may not be updated for 10 years). This point was reinforced during report drafting by the closure for 2025 of applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme which is mentioned specifically in several strategies as a delivery mechanism.
  - Narrowing the focus of measures may result in less inclusive strategies
  - RAs have generally advocated for site based assessment Systematic Conservation Planning approaches
- In the majority of strategies there were enough examples which contradicted the general trend that there might be grounds to challenge some aspects of this. For example:
  - Measure related to river restoration techniques which then reference specific active project for more information (Bucks & MK)
  - Measure related to 'financially sound models for long-term site management of green and blue spaces' which reference a specific model in a specific town as something to build on
  - Measure which relates to low impact woodland management which references
     'Continuous Cover Forestry' this is a specific standard and there are a number of good available resources which could then be researched (or better, linked from the strategy) (Lancashire)
- Some RAs clarified that it might be possible to add some more of this rich detail in the final versions of strategies. Others proposed links to existing websites for hosting this more specific but changeable information.



• The strategies themselves (as tools) do provide some clarity on how they should be used by different stakeholders. Some are associated with specific features for ongoing engagement - ongoing registrations of interest, call to action to join nature recovery network, etc.

### Some of the LNRS were assessed as meeting the '**Targeted measures**' Supporting Statement, which is '*Measures are appropriately and clearly targeted at the 'right' stakeholders.*'

Here we looked primarily in the Priorities and Measures sections (but also at any sections that describe key stakeholders or LNRS audiences) for links or relationships made in the strategy between stakeholders and measures in any form.

Given the variation in LNRS stakeholder environments, it is hard to know who these 'right' stakeholders might be and we would certainly not expect to be able to predict this for such a broad and diverse range of LNRS areas - it should also be acknowledged that there may be no such thing as the 'right' stakeholder for a number of the measures, or that there are might always be exceptions to a general rule. What the assessment focuses on is whether the LNRS have tried to bring some stakeholder focus to measures where this is possible and appropriate (i.e. if a measure clearly would require, or benefit from, certain stakeholder groups to be involved).

- Strategies provided helpful broad statements in relation to the different stakeholder groups and example organisations who would be able to use it in different ways, ranging from local authorities and public bodies, land managers, farmers and landowners, forestry organisations, developers, environmental organisations, businesses, industry and economic groups, community groups, residents, partnerships and connectors, citizen science groups.
- Some strategies further defined some of the differences in how these groups might use the strategy or which areas they might be most interested in or find most useful. Generally the audience coverage was well considered.
- In most cases, priority areas and individual measures do not refer to specific stakeholder groups, and there are no specific links or calls for particular stakeholder groups to be involved in specific parts of actions, even where certain measures would seem closely aligned with specific stakeholder groups.
- Similarly, within species measures, there were no references to special interest groups, charities etc that work with particular species or taxa, who might be expected to lead on some of this work, or any specific projects or delivery schemes for action (with a few isolated exceptions).
- RAs clarified that stakeholder targeting or allocation of delivery responsibility was not a
  requirement of the LNRS and some stressed that measures should be for anyone to deliver.
  While this may be generally true, there is some manifest contradiction of this in that all LNRS
  include at least some measures which clearly cannot be delivered by a wide range of
  stakeholders due to requirements for technical knowledge, equipment, access, permissions or
  significant influence.
- In one strategy exception (Greater Essex), the formal list of measures does not assign actions to specific stakeholder groups, but it does identify the scale of the action (regional/ district / borough / city, or local). Additionally, a separate section of the strategy provides guidance on key stakeholder groups, outlining the types of action they might consider to help deliver the outcomes of the strategy.



One of the LNRS was assessed as meeting the '**Clear first steps**' Supporting Statement, which is '*it is* clear how stakeholders can take the first step towards delivery, while retaining flexibility over exactly how measures are delivered in most cases'

Here we looked within the detail of Measures, at the structure of the Measures and the level of detail and specificity, and whether specific 'calls to action' were present.

The assessment found that...

- While the steps to carry out measures physically (i.e. 'on the ground actions') were usually described very clearly, for stakeholders without prior knowledge of how to carry out a given measure, we did not find that strategies consistently provided clear first steps or a call to action, or signposting to resources for necessary steps such as identifying and securing funding, setting up or joining a delivery partnership, navigating various permissions or permits, etc.
- There were some elements which improved the chances of understanding clear first steps
  - 'Example Opportunities Identified' section which explains in more 'real' terms how some of the measures might be approached .
  - Case studies provided within the successes section or sections describing the main landscapes or key habitats provided examples and inspiration of action having been taken by local stakeholders.
  - Case studies linked directly from measures (even if only referred to briefly) generally these added to an understanding of what was meant about a given intervention, which lent an additional focus and applicability.
  - 'To level' first steps such as registering interest, joining a partnership, etc while this might not enable understanding of individual measures, there is at least a route to capture passing interest.

### Do the LNRS make it clear how different stakeholders should use them after publication, with measures described in sufficient detail to enable 'first steps' to be taken?

**No** - LNRS are quite 'open to interpretation' documents and generally have few specific calls to action that lead directly into making delivery happen. LNRS do not address the issue of who is responsible for taking action locally for restoring nature in different contexts, and often do not clarify whether RAs have the ongoing responsibility for driving nature recovery in their area (though many infer a significant role ongoing). Without delivery plans being produced the strategies may still be useful coordinating documents for organisations already involved in their creation or others who are active and established in delivering nature recovery, but it is more difficult to see how they can be picked up and used by less experienced stakeholders. This may keep the pool of those committed to and involved in nature recovery too small to have the desired impact.

**But** - the main forms of delivery mechanism are clear, and for some priorities and measures there is greater clarity on who should be involved and which tools they can use to get started with confidence. This indicates a level of clarity is possible to achieve to make strategies more delivery ready and sets expectations for further information that could be provided by RAs if they are appropriately supported to do so.



### Conclusions

LNRS collectively demonstrate a strong and locally grounded ambition for nature recovery in England, drawing on robust ecological insight and wide-ranging stakeholder engagement to propose a rich suite of place-based actions. This ambition would be further reinforced by the inclusion of specific local targets and greater clarity around long-term strategy coordination.

The strategies reflect meaningful engagement with both spatial and non-spatial plans, aligning well in principle with wider policy agendas; however, coherence is often achieved through the avoidance of conflict rather than through proactive integration or prioritisation of nature recovery. While there are promising examples of cross-boundary collaboration, uneven engagement and practical limitations in data and mapping integration mean that a joined-up national nature recovery network may not result from the LNRS process without further work.

LNRS identify a broad spectrum of potential delivery mechanisms and recognise the value of collaborative working, yet they rarely define which approaches will be most effective or clearly assign responsibility for implementation. Without additional clarity around delivery plans and resources, their open-ended design may limit their impact.

## LNRS Sample Comparisons

During the LNRS assessment process, a range of differences in the structure and focus of different LNRS emerged which were noted. These have been presented below for comparative purposes, but with no commentary on whether certain approaches are better or worse than others. The intention is to highlight the range of forms in a number of different strategy components.

### **Priorities comparisons**

RA	Top level priorities / priority section headers / themes		
	Grassland & Heathland		
	Woodland, hedgerows and Veteran Trees		
	Running waters and wetlands		
	Urban		
	Coastal		
	Butterflies and Moths		
	Bumblebees		
	Birds		
	Reptiles		
	Fish		
	Plants		
	Mammals		
	Improve Connectivity		
	Improve Recording		
	Improve Condition of Habitats		
County Durham	Support Farming and nature recovery		
	Aquatic & wetlands		
Lancashire	Coastal & estuarine		



RA	Top level priorities / priority section headers / themes		
	<ul> <li>Grasslands (including agricultural land)</li> <li>Lowland &amp; upland peatland</li> </ul>		
	Rocky habitats		
	Urban & infrastructure networks		
	Wooded habitats & treesUniversal Priorities		
	• Three 'universal' priorities that relate to recurring pressures across all habitats have		
	Deen Identified as:		
	biosecurity (measures aimed at preventing the introduction or spread of harmful		
	organisms) and the control of invasive species, and		
	minimising recreational impacts.		
	Supporting actions that are not specifically linked to delivering actions 'on the ground'		
	but are equally important in achieving the wider goals of nature recovery have been		
	identified as:		
	Data and evidence to inform nature recovery actions.     Engagement & collaboration		
	Policies that support nature recovery.		
	Finance for nature recovery.		
	Overarching Priorities		
	PriorityOVR_P01.Ennance nabilal connectivity		
	PriorityOVR_P03 <sup>·</sup> Control invasive non-native species		
	PriorityOVR P04:Enhance nature-related engagement, outreach and collaboration		
	PriorityOVR_P05:Enhance the data and evidence base and share knowledge		
	Habitat Priorities		
	Farmland(FRM)		
	Upland(UPL)		
	Grassland(GRA)		
	Woodland(WLD)		
	Water and Wetlands(WET)		
	Coast(CST)		
	Within each habitat theme group there are several Priorities listed, e.g under Farmland:		
	PriorityERM_P01 Enhance and expand arable field margins		
	PriorityFRM_P02:Expand trees outside woodlands		
	PriorityFRM_P03:Promote high nature value farming practices		
	PriorityFRM_P04:Promote changes in grassland management		
North Yorkshire and York	PriorityFRM_P05:Expand the hedgerow network		
	Urban green spaces and buildings		
	Woodlands, trees, scrub and hedgerows		
	Rivers, canals and waterbodies		
	Lowiano mossianos and wellands Grassland farmland and lowland beath		
Greater Manchester	Upland moorlands		



RA	Top level priorities / priority section headers / themes
	Species priorities and actions Reintroductions
	Main priorities: Woodland Freshwater Grasslands Urban Agricultural Open Mosaic habitats Green and blue corridors Geodiversity
Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland	Landscape scale priorities: - Landscape hedgerow optimisation - Landscape roadside grass verges - Landscape INNS pest management - Landscape nature friendly farming - Landscape grassland management - Landscape freshwater and wetland management - Landscape flood management and natural solutions
	Wetland Opportunities Woodland High Priority Open Habitats Open or Woodland Herefordshire Combined traditional orchards
Herefordshire	(These are based on the mapping layers only and have not been definitively stated anywhere - very possible this will change in the final strategy)
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes	Conserve, create, enhance and restore land based habitats Improve rivers, their floodplains and the quality of their waters Conserve, create, enhance and maintain wetland habitats More farmers and rural land manager to adopt wildlife friendly land management practices and take action to improve soil health Improve biodiversity in built-up areas Create connections between high quality areas for wildlife and habitats to flourish Manage the effects of a changing climate and improve air quality Tackle non-native invasive species, pests and diseases Improve the environment for important species
Greater Essex	Trees and woodlands Grasslands and meadows Scrub and Mosaic Hedgerows Farmland Urban Freshwater and Wetlands Coastal and Marine Geology and soils Species priorities
Kent and Medway	Connectivity Nature-based solutions



RA	Top level priorities / priority section headers / themes
	Land management and land use Species Grasslands Successional habitats Woodland, trees and hedgerow Freshwater Urban Coast
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	Trees and woodland Farmland, hedges and edges Rivers and wetlands Heathland, moors and mires Nature-rich grasslands Coastal wildbelt Intertidal Town and village green and blue space Historic mines and quarries
Dorset	Grasslands Woodlands Heathlands Rivers, lakes and wetlands Coastal Urban Farming Natural processes Nature-based solutions Nature connection Species abundance and diversity Priority species
Isle of Wight	Trees and Woodland Lowland, Grassland and Heath Catchment and Rivers Estuaries, Harbours and Transitional Waters Maritime Soft Cliffs and Chines Lagoons, Dunes and Shingle Banks Beaches, Seafronts and Seashores Urban, Green and Grey

### Usage of Priorities, Measures & Linked Terms

RA	Usage of Priorities, Measures & Linked Terms	What is actually mapped?
	<b>Overarching Priorities:</b> Overall principles of nature recovery action to be adopted wherever possible	
	Priority Areas: Broad habitat type or species group	
County Durham	<b>Priorities:</b> Tab sections, habitat-focused Priorities and Species Priorities (by broad species group)	Could not assess



RA	Usage of Priorities, Measures & Linked Terms	What is actually mapped?
	There are also	
	Measures: More specific, outcome-focused areas of action	
	<b>Priority Areas:</b> Section headers, mostly habitat based with separate species one (note Priority Area is not a defined term in the strategy, just an observed one)	
	<b>Priorities:</b> These are the long-term end results that the strategy is seeking to achieve in terms of habitats and species. The priorities for Lancashire reflect local circumstances, including the most important issues to local people and organisations.	
Lancashire	<b>Potential Measures:</b> These are the practical actions that could contribute to achieving each agreed priority and can deliver wider gains for the environment and people of Lancashire.	Priority Areas
	<b>Overarching Priorities:</b> Overall principles of nature recovery action to be adopted wherever possible	
	Habitat Priority Groupings: Thematic habitats e.g Coastal	
	Habitat Priorities: More specific types of actions that apply within a given habitat theme	
North Yorkshire and York	<b>Measures:</b> More specific actions and activities beneath the habitat priorities	Could not assess
	<b>Priority Areas:</b> Section headers, mostly habitat based with separate species one (note Priority Area is not a defined term in the strategy, just an observed one)	
	<b>Priorities</b> : These are the long-term end results that the strategy is seeking to achieve in terms of habitats and species. Our habitat priorities are divided into different broad habitat types. Our species priorities cover some of the most vulnerable species across Greater Manchester.	
	<b>Practical actions:</b> The practical actions that would make a positive contribution towards delivering our priorities (the term actions is used throughout this document in place of the statutory measures.)	
Greater Manchester	'Each priority is an outcome (i.e. what is to be achieved). Each priority is accompanied by several practical actions – these are the activities that if taken would make a positive contribution towards delivering on this priority. Each priority may have several practical actions linked to it – working towards one or a number of these actions can help achieve a priority. The word actions is used throughout the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy to refer to the statutory measures set out in the Environment Act.'	It is the Priorities which are mapped, that then are taken to include all the potential Practical Actions

I



RA	Usage of Priorities, Measures & Linked Terms	What is actually mapped?
	There is a further distinction between mapped and unmapped practical actions	
	<b>Priorities:</b> These are broad areas that have been replicated across different habitat types. They relate to the end results that the strategy is hoping to achieve through it's measures.	
	<b>Measures:</b> The specific practical actions that will help to achieve the overarching priorities. These are specific to the habitat type it is referring to.	
	Landscape-scale Priorities: These priorities address issues that affect large areas of the landscape and cannot be confined to specific mapped locations. Instead, they require widespread implementation across different land types and habitats.	There are multiple maps available on their website which map different things but the one of interest is the APIB map which includes the following:
Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland	<b>Priority and species measures:</b> These species are typically selected based on their conservation status, ecological importance, and vulnerability to habitat loss, climate change, and other environmental pressures. The designation of priority species helps focus conservation efforts and resources on those species most in need of protection and recovery.	<ul> <li>Ecological connections</li> <li>Opportunities to create New</li> <li>Bigger Areas</li> <li>Buffer zones</li> <li>Opportunities to create better</li> <li>quality habitat</li> </ul>
Herefordshire	Could not assess	Various broad 'Opportunities' are mapped (Open Habitat, Wetland) but at present specific Measures are not mapped
	<b>Themes:</b> a way to organise our priorities and measures and communicate the overall purpose of our LNRS. Help to summarise the main common purpose of several priorities taken together	
	<b>Priorities</b> the end results that the strategy is seeking to achieve. Priorities linked to wider environmental benefits and NEOs	
Buckinghamshire and Milton	<b>Measures</b> the specific practical actions that, if taken, would make positive contributions to achieving the priorities	
Keynes	There are mapped and unmapped measures	
	<b>Priority Areas:</b> Section headers, habitat based and a separate section for species-focused actions.	The strategic opportunity map is divided against habitat types, for example 'areas that could
Greater Essex	<b>Priorities:</b> This section of the LNRS sets out, for each habitat type, what are considered to be the priorities to help make our landscape bigger, better and more connected. Actions, or potential measures, related to these priorities are then presented, with a description of the nature recovery and wider environmental benefits that are expected to result from those actions.	become of particular importance – 'all' woodland creation opportunities'. There are also some maps for what appear to be more specific measures, e.g 'Priority ghost pond restoration/recreation


RA	Usage of Priorities, Measures & Linked Terms	What is actually mapped?		
	<b>Measures:</b> Potential measures have been separated into "actions" and "supporting actions". An action sets out the primary activity to achieve the goal of habitat creation. These actions have been mapped in the combined strategic opportunity interactive map. A supporting action is a secondary task which aids the completion of the primary activity and wider goal of habitat creation and nature recovery.	opportunities', and 'River obstruction clearance opportunities'. They also have priority species maps - Presence based on species recordings made since 1990		
	<b>Ambitions</b> - The Kent and Medway Nature Recovery Strategy has ten ambitions for nature recovery, that our more detailed priorities and potential measures are structured around. The first three of these expand further on the overarching principles, expressing the outcomes for connectivity, nature-based solutions and land management and land use. The fourth relates to the Strategy area's priority species and the remainder focus on broad habitat groupings and the aspirations we have for our grassland, successional, wooded, freshwater, urban and coastal ecosystems.			
	A <b>priority</b> is the outcome we want to see for nature			
	A <b>potential measure</b> is the proposed action to deliver the priority – these must be practical and achievable. There is a further distinction between mapped and unmapped measures The measures are further coded in terms of ode of action as follows:			
	Measures which improve the quality of our existing habitats, through improved management and safeguarding – delivering better. Measures which extend or buffer existing habitats – delivering			
	Measures which restore or create new habitat – delivering more. Measures which focus on connectivity – delivering joined up. Measures which deliver nature-based solutions. Measures which focus on improving land management and land uses. Data, evidence and/or mapping needed to better inform the priority's delivery. This is included for information and cannot be			
Kent and	addressed by the LNRS. Measures which will support the success of the priority. This is included for information and cannot be addressed by the LNRS. Priority species supported by the priorities and potential	It is the Potential Measures		
Medway	measures.	which are mapped		
	Priorities: Broad themes (mainly babitat focused)	Preferred habitat (e.g Heath and moor mosaics)		
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	Actions: specific on-the gorund activities that 'can be delivered in any suitable location.'	Priority (e.g P12: Create and enhance heath and moor mosaics )		



RA	Usage of Priorities, Measures & Linked Terms	What is actually mapped?
		Preferred action group (e.g A37: Create new heath and moor mosaics )
		groups)
	Nature recovery priorities are the high-level outcomes (end results) the strategy is seeking to achieve. Together these priorities focus on achieving a network of lots of different nature- rich habitats across Dorset that help increase biodiversity and mean the whole ecosystem is functioning, resilient and able to deliver wider environmental benefits. Potential activities (referred to as potential measures by Defra) are the practical actions that will help achieve the different priorities over	The local habitat mp shows the potential activities in the locations where they can have most benefit for nature recovery and/or provide wider environmental benefits. The potential activities listed under each priority provide more
	the next 10 years. Most of the activities relate to habitats, species or sustainable land management, and are practical on the ground actions that will help improve and expand existing habitats, and create new habitat including stepping-stones or corridors to improve connectivity and support species dispersal. Other activities relate to the wider enabling actions needed to support the practical activities on the ground.	detail than shown on the Local Habitat Map. For example, where the map shows 'create or enhance grassland' as the potential activity, this may involve several of the activities listed under the
Dorset	Activities can be listed under more than one priority	grassiand priority.
	habitat to enable nature recovery is achievable by the corresponding potential measures.	that has been mapped in a located area.
	<b>Measure Code:</b> Text and Numeric code to identify measures within the table and mapped layers.	<b>Non-Mapped Measure:</b> A measure that has not been mapped either due to the type
	<b>Measure:</b> The action(s) required to deliver the overarching habitat priority.	of measure being applicable across the Island, not a direct action for habitat
	<b>Details:</b> Additional supporting information that explains the measure in more detail.	creation/enhancement activity (e.g., supporting farm clusters), or has insufficient data to
	<b>Species/Species Assemblages that are Beneficiaries:</b> Relevant species and species assemblages that directly benefit from this measure.	constrain to a location and extent.
	<b>National Environmental Objects:</b> The National Environmental Objectives (NEO) that are achieved by the measure. The NEO is referenced by the corresponding number in the NEO table in Table 1.	<b>APIB</b> (Areas that are Particularly Important for Biodiversity): This covers all local, national and international designated sites for nature and all irreplaceable habitats.
Isle of Wight	Other Environmental Benefits: The Other Environmental Benefits that are achieved by the measure. The Other Environmental Benefits is referenced by the corresponding	ACB (Areas that Could become important for Biodiversity): These are sites



RA	Usage of Priorities, Measures & Linked Terms	What is actually mapped?	
	number in the Other Environmental Benefits table in Figure 2 and Table 2.	that could achieve significant benefits for biodiversity that have in locations that can have the most impact. They are defined by measures for specific habitats. <b>Measures:</b> Under each habitat type heading in the legend is a list of coded measures. These are areas where defined actions for nature should take place to achieve priorities for biodiversity.	



# **Appendix A - Reference Tables**

During the assessment process, reference tables were used to support an understanding of the strategies and as a point of comparison.

# Table 1: Areas of action paraphrased from EIP23

Items taken from EIP (summarised by OEP team, based on Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report by ICF<sup>11</sup>)

Item
Creating more joined up space for nature on land
Restoring our protected sites on land
Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry
Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments
Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species
Mobilising green finance and the private sector
Taking action to restore our global environment
Unlocking private and public finance financial flows
Reducing key drivers and pressures of habitat and species decline

# Table 2: Environment State Areas

Provided by the OEP

Item
Air quality (national, regional, local, urban, etc.)
Water quality (rivers, lakes, seas, coastal zones, groundwater)
Water Resources
Soil quality (national, local, natural areas, agricultural areas)
Ecosystems (biodiversity, vegetation, soil organisms, water organisms)
Humans (health)
Protected Sites condition

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> ICF, 'Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report' (2023).



# Table 3: Environmental Pressures and Drivers

Item	Source
Use of resources	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Pollution (direct pollution to air, water and soil and indirect emissions to air, water and soil)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team). 2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Production of waste (inert and hazardous)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Production of noise	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Natural hazards (e.g. flooding)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Water abstraction	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Habitat damage / destruction (e.g. hedgerows and woodlands, land drainage)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Invasive non-native species	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team). 2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Climate change	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Land use change / Land Management / loss of functionally linked land	OEP report on the drivers and pressures affecting nature in Northern Ireland. 2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP). Treligan (pre-assessment research).
Urbanisation	2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Hydrological change	2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Woodland management	2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Fisheries	Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Other marine extraction / development	Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Recreational Disturbance	Treligan (pre-assessment research)



# Table 4: LNRS coherence – relevant spatial and non-spatial plan & strategies for consideration, mapped to RA characteristics

RA Sampling Characteristic	Key plan or strategy	Link		
All	The Air Quality Strategy for England ('framework for local authority delivery')	The air quality strategy for England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)		
All	Clean Air Strategy 2019 (updated by EIP23) and NAPCP	Clean Air Strategy 2019 (publishing.service.gov.uk)		
All	Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/the-air-quality-strategy-for-engl and/air-quality-strategy-framework-for -local-authority-delivery		
Urban	Local Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)	https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/		
All	30 x 30	https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/202 3/12/11/30-by-30-a-boost-for-nature-r ecovery/		
All	Species Survival Fund	https://defraenvironment.blog.gov.uk/ 2024/03/15/over-25-million-to-preserv e-wildlife-rich-habitats-in-england/		
All	England Trees Action Plan	England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)		
Only 5 pilots nationally	Protected Site Strategies	https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/202 2/06/16/springing-into-action-with-prot ected-site-strategies-for-natures-reco very/		
Only pilots at present	Species Conservation Strategies	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complyin g-with-the-biodiversity-duty#species-c onservation-strategies		
All	Green Infrastructure Framework	https://designatedsites.naturalengland .org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.asp X		
All	National Planning Policy Framework	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.u k/media/669a25e9a3c2a28abb50d2b 4/NPPF_December_2023.pdf		
All	Local Plan	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-pla ns		
All	Significant supplementary planning guidance documents that contain spatial plans	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/20 12/767/part/5/made		
Coastal	Shoreline Management Plans	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/shorelin e-management-plans		
Coastal	National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/national-flood-and-coastal-eros		



RA Sampling Characteristic	Key plan or strategy	Link	
		ion-risk-management-strategy-for-eng land2	
Contains significant Urban areas	Blue Green Infrastructure plans	https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/202 4/10/31/mapping-our-green-and-blue- spaces-the-green-infrastructure-mapp ing-project/	
Contains significant Urban areas	Sustainable Urban Design plans	https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/11- sustainable-cities-and-communities/	
Contains significant Urban areas	Sustainable Drainage Systems	https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-su ds/using-suds/background/sustainabl e-drainage.html	
All	Resources & Waste Strategy	Resources and waste strategy for England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	
All	Minerals and Waste Plan	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/minerals	
All	Access for All programme	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ government-pledges-to-boost-britains -access-to-nature-ahead-of-cop28	
Contains significant Urban areas	Urban Green Space spatial schemes	https://urbandesignlab.in/spatial-orga nization-of-green-urban-spaces/?srslti d=AfmBOooU_kSBWLIJ8SeZyQMZ4I owHraNUDKMXQz4Ih2NICPkQuKEjr Tf	
National Parks and National Landscape Coverage	National Park or National Landscape Management Plans	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/the-protected-landscapes-duty/ guidance-for-relevant-authorities-on-s eeking-to-further-the-purposes-of-prot ected-landscapes	
National Parks and National Landscape Coverage	Relevant Character Maps	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national- character-area-profiles-information-for -local-decision-making	
Contains significant Rural areas	Agricultural Transition Plan (and ammonia strategy for NI)	The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk)	
Contains significant Rural areas	Catchment Sensitive Farming area maps	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/catchment-sensitive-farming-pri ority-catchment-areas	
Contains significant Rural areas	Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) Designations	https://www.gov.uk/government/collec tions/nitrate-vulnerable-zones#:~:text =Nitrate%20Vulnerable%20Zones%2 0(NVZs)%20are.for%20changes%20i n%20nitrate%20concentrations.	
All	Catchment Based Approach CaBA plans	Catchment Management Plans - CaBA (catchmentbasedapproach.org)	
All	River Basin Management Plans	England   Catchment Data Explorer	



RA Sampling Characteristic	Key plan or strategy	Link
Contains significant flood-prone areas	Local flood risk management strategies (LFRMS)	https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/severe -weather/flooding/local-flood-risk-man agement-strategies-lfrms-guidance
Contains significant flood-prone areas, Coastal	Local Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs)	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-ris k-management-plans-frmps-responsib ilities#:~:text=FRMPs%20must%20co ver%20areas%20of,through%20preli minary%20flood%20risk%20assessm ents.
All	Natural capital maps - recreational value	https://ecosystemsknowledge.net/res ources/tool-assessor/orval-outdoor-re creation-valuation-tool/
All	Natural capital maps - soil carbon	https://hub.arcgis.com/maps/theriverst rust::natural-capital-soil-carbon-engla nd/about
All	Natural capital maps - habitat connectivity	https://magic.defra.gov.uk/Metadata_f or_magic/Habitat%20Network%20Ma pping%20Guidance.pdf
Contains significant flood-prone areas, Coastal	Environment Agency Working With Natural Processes flood mitigation maps	https://www.gov.uk/flood-and-coastal- erosion-risk-management-research-re ports/working-with-natural-processes- to-reduce-flood-risk
National Parks and National Landscape Coverage	National Park Partnership Plans	

# Table 5: Expected Stakeholder Groups by LNRS Area Type

National Level Stakeholder / Group or Broad Category	Local Level Stakeholder or Specific Examples	ICF alignment with TPW areas of action (applies to broad item)	RA Sampling Type	Source
Local Planning Authorities	All Local Authorities and National Parks Authorities		All	
Devolved Administrations	Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	Where present	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)



National Level		ICF alignment with	24	
Stakeholder /		IPW areas of action	RA	
Group or Broad	Local Level Stakeholder	(applies to broad	Sampling	Course
Category	or Specific Examples	item)	туре	Source
	Country Land and Business			Fig 3.3 'The Delivery
	National Farmers Union Regional	Restoring our protected		TPW' Policy Mapping
	Team	sites on land		Thriving Plants & Wildlife
Major Landowners	Individual members of The Major	Creating more joined up	A 11	Final Report (by ICF, for
Groups	Landowners Group	space for nature on land	Ali	
	Crown Estate			
	Network Rail			
	NHS			
Large Landowners	Local Authorities		A 11	Treligan (pre-assessment
Public Sector	Forestry Commission		Ali	
		Creating more joined up		Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for
		space for nature on land		TPW' Policy Mapping
		Enhancing nature in our		Thriving Plants & Wildlife
Environment Agency	Environment Agency Area team	marine and coastal	ΔII	Final Report (by ICF, for the OFP)
English Heritage	English Heritage regional team			
			Contains	
			significant	Treligan (pre-assessment
n/a	Farmer Clusters		Rural areas	research)
		Managing our woodlands		
		for biodiversity, climate and		Fig. 2.2 IThe Delivery
		Creating more joined up		Partner Landscape for
		space for nature on land		TPW' Policy Mapping
		Taking targeted actions to		Thriving Plants & Wildlife
Forestry Commission	Forestry England local team	species	All	the OEP)
Local Economic				,
Partnerships	Local Economic Partnerships		All	
Association of Local	Local Environmental Records			
Environmental Records	Centre / Biological Records		All	Treligan (pre-assessment
	Centre			
				Partner Landscape for
				TPW' Policy Mapping
Inshore Fisheries		Enhancing nature in our		Thriving Plants & Wildlife
Authorities	Local INFCA	environments	Coastal	the OEP)
	Local Nature Partnerships			,
Environmental	Coastal Partnerships			Treligan (pre-assessment
Partnerships	Catchment Partnerships		All	research)
	Local residents associations			
Communities and	Commons associations		All	
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Nation LevelDescriptionRA SamplingGroup or Broad CategoryLocal Level Stakeholder or Specific ExamplesTPW areas of action (applies to broad item)RA SamplingLocal Wildlife Trust Local RSPB team Freshvater Habitats Trust Rivers Trust EtcRestrong our protected speciesFig 3.3 The Delivery Pather Landscape for TPW Polcy Mapping Thrwing Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)Department for Levall committiesNature Conservation restrong our point of up space for nature on land for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environmentsFig 3.3 The Delivery Pather Landscape for TPW Polcy Mapping Thrwing Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)Department for Business and Traden/aManaging our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environmentsFig 3.3 The Delivery Pather Landscape for TPW Polcy Mapping Thrwing Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)Department for Business and Traden/aCreating more joined up space for nature on land significant significant significant significant Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)Fig 3.3 The Delivery Pather Landscape for TPW Polcy Mapping Thrwing Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)Department for Business and Traden/aCreating more	National Level		ICE alignment with		
Group or Broad Category         Local Level Stakeholder or Specific Examples         (applies to broad item)         Sampling Type         Source           Restoring our protected sites on land Frestwater Habitats Trust Coganisations         Restoring our protected sites on land Taking targeted actions to restore and manage peckets         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TWV Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Trust actions on restore and manage peckets           Department for Leveling Up, Housing and Commuties         Nature Conservation (restore and manage peckets         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TBW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for TBW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for Hencing more joined up space for nature on land sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TBW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for Hencing nature in our marine and coastal for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TBW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for Hencing 1, and the CEP)           Department for Business and Trade         n/a         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TBW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for Hencing nature in our marine and coastal environments         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TBW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for Hencing TBW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for Hencig paping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF,	Stakeholder /		TPW areas of action	RA	
Category         or Specific Examples         Item)         Type         Source           Category         or Specific Examples         Item)         Type         Source           Local Wildlife Trust Local RSPB team Freeshwater Habitats Trust Rivers Trust         Restoring our protected sites on land Freeshwater Habitats Trust Rivers Trust         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)           Department for Leveling Up, Housing and Commities         Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Creating more joined up space for nature on land sustainable forestry Creating more joined up space for nature on land sustainable forestry Creating more joined up space for nature on land sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for All           Department for Exercise and Trade         Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for He OEP)           Department for Business and Trade         Na aging our woodlands for biodiversity, Climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments         Fig 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)           Rural Payments Agenory r/a         r/a         Fig 3.3 T	Group or Broad	Local Level Stakeholder	(applies to broad	Sampling	
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Nature Conservation OrganisationsRivers Trust Etcrestore and manage speciesFinal Report (by ICF, for 		Freshwater Habitats Trust	Taking targeted actions to		Thriving Plants & Wildlife
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	Organisation	n/a	environments	Coastai	
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Join Nature Enhancing nature in our Thriving Plants & Wildlife	Join Nature		Enhancing nature in our		Thriving Plants & Wildlife
Conservation marine and coastal Final Report (by ICF, for Committee n/a environments Coastal the OEP)	Conservation	n/a	environments	Coastal	the OEP)



National Level Stakeholder / Group or Broad Category	Local Level Stakeholder or Specific Examples	ICF alignment with TPW areas of action (applies to broad item)	RA Sampling Type	Source
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture	n/a	Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	Coastal	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
National Highways	National Highways Regional Team	Creating more joined up space for nature on land	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Protected Landscape Organisations	National Park Authority National Landscape Team	Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land	Where present	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Natural England	Natural England Area Team	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Large Landowner Non Public Sector	Ports Airports Private landowners National Trust English Heritage Utilities (water esp.) National Grid		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Community Science Schemes	Recording schemes Environmental assessment schemes Rewilding schemes		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Fisheries	Regional Fisheries Groups		Coastal	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Individual Experts	Species Recorders and local Ecologists (ideally for all taxa groups) Bat groups Bird groups Pollinator groups etc		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)



National Level Stakeholder / Group or Broad Category	Local Level Stakeholder or Specific Examples	ICF alignment with TPW areas of action (applies to broad item)	RA Sampling Type	Source
Local Authorities	The RA and all the SAs, as well as any other local authorities not listed as specific SAs	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)

# Table 6: Key spatial data sets pertinent for conservation planning

ltem	Data source / link	Entry Source
Priority Habitats Data	https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.c om/datasets/Defra::priority-habitats-inventory- england/about	
Habitat Networks by Natural England	https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/5e614 b67-ccd0-4673-8ad8-adddf538125e	SWC
Woodland opportunity maps (various)	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/ pii/S1462901121001830?casa_token=n5G_F 3Sf_uoAAAAA:crRyJJBMrW9Uc7MWpEWOz c3mBiNN2Fhz347wJgQ9NRaWQGN5jDcHA mQ1C6T1o7vcWazsRKfKqlW9	SWC
Peatland opportunity maps (various)		SWC
The biodiversity gain site register	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-the-biodi versity-gain-sites-register	Stat Guidance (main LNRS guidance)
LNRS Data Viewer	https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/7c5 242fdec7f433aa4ee4510383e3909/page/Hom e/	
Local Authorities own sources of data		
Local Wildlife Site data	LERC, usually	
National Conservation Sites	LNRS data viewer	Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)



ltem	Data source / link	Entry Source
Local Nature Reserves	LNRS data viewer	Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
Irreplaceable Habitats	Only habitats in The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024.	Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
Tree Maps (various, inc. LA own data)		
UK Species Inventory (naming conventions)		Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad habitats (naming conventions)		Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
Habitats of principal importance in England priority habitats (naming conventions)		Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)

# Table 7: National and Regional Nature Recovery Networks and Projects

Item	
Nature North	
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)	
National Highways and Wildlife Trusts Network for Nature	
Natural England's Resilient Landscapes and Seas work	



Item
South East Nature Partnership / Nature South East
South West Local Nature Partnerships
The Fens for the Future Partnership / East Anglian Fens NRN
East of Eden
Purple Horizons
Somerset Coast Levels and Moors
G7 Legacy
Wye Valley
Wendling Beck
Lost Wetlands
Heathland Connections
Bradford & South Pennines
Seaford to Eastbourne
Drink-in the Downs
Cambridge Nature Network
Tees Estuary Recovering Nature (TERN)
The Big Moss Map
Linking Landscapes by the RSPB
Wild East
Back from the Brink
The Northern Forest
Nature's Recovery in the South Downs National Park
The Great Fen
Wildbelt Initiative
Moors for the Future Partnership
Severn Trent Great Big Nature Boost
Wilder Blean Project
North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve
Somerset Levels and Moors Partnership
Wye Valley AONB Partnership
Humberhead Levels Partnership
Thames Estuary Partnership
Cornwall Nature Recovery Network
Cumbria Connect
East Anglian Chalk Rivers Partnership
Lincolnshire Coastal Grazing Marshes



Item	
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	
Wild Cotswolds	
Sussex Kelp Recovery Project	
River Nene Regional Park	
Humber Nature Partnership	
Wild Dartmoor	
Severn Estuary Partnership	
North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership	
Oxford to Cambridge Arc	
Meres and Mosses Nature Improvement Area	
Tyne to Tees, Shores, and Seas	
Wilder Blean (Kent Downs Partnership)	
RSPB Wallasea Island Project	
Plymouth Sound National Marine Park	
Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership	
Fenland Restoration Partnership	

# Table 8: Anticipated Delivery Mechanisms

Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates
Sustainable Farming Incentive	SFI	Pays
Woodland Creation Grants		Pays
Blue Green Infrastructure	BGI, Green Infrastructure, Urban Green Infrastructure, Urban Green Space	Stimulates
Environmental Land Management Schemes (general)	ELMS	Pays
Biodiversity Net Gain	BNG, Net Gain	Pays
Countryside Stewardship agreement	CS	Pays
Higher Level Stewardship agreement	HLS	Pays
Landscape Recovery Scheme	LRS	Pays
Woodland Carbon Code		Stimulates
Woodland Creation Planning Grant	WCPG	Pays
England Woodland Creation Offer	EWCO	Pays
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	UTCF	Pays
No Mow May		Stimulates



Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates
Changes to the planning system / planning strategies		Requires
Local Plan integration		Requires
	SPD, Supplementary Planning Guidance, SPG, Supplementary Plans (these are all actually slightly	Desuise
Supplementary Planning Documents	amerent)	Requires
Farming in Protected Landscapes		Pays
Nature Recovery Networks	NRN	Stimulates
National Nature Reserves	INNR	Requires
Biodiversity Duty and Guidance		Requires
Implementing Landscape Review Proposals		Stimulates
Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (in particular Embedding targets into statutory management plans)		Requires
Protected Sites Strategies	PSS	Requires
Updating evidence on protected site condition		Stimulates
Feature assessment approach		Stimulates
Conservation and Enhancement Scheme		Pays
Woodlands for Water project		Pays
Statutory Management Notices		Requires
Guidance for public authorities		Stimulates
Nature Markets development		Pays
Nature for Climate Fund		Pays
Trees and Peat Action Plan		Stimulates
England Trees Action Plan		Stimulates
England Peat Action Plan		Stimulates
Tree Health Resilience Strategy		Stimulates
Keepers of Time Policy		Stimulates
Planted Ancient Woodland	PAWS restoration	Pays
Long Established Woodland consultation		Stimulates
National Planning Policy		Requires
Agroforestry Pilots		Stimulates



Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates
Forestry training, proposals and working with the sector		Stimulates
Local planning authority duty (connected to woodland creation?)		Requires
Woodland creation regulation		Stimulates
Greenhouse Gas removals in Emissions Trading Scheme		Pays
Carbon Markets		Pays
Woodlands tax guidance		Stimulates
Highly Protected Marine Areas & Marine Protected Area measures		Requires
Fisheries Management Plans		Requires
Sustainable Ocean Plan		Stimulates
Marine Spatial Prioritisation		Stimulates
Restoring Meadow, Marsh & Reef		Stimulates
Marine Natural Capital & Ecosystem Assessment		Stimulates
Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement package & associated measures		Stimulates
UK Marine Strategy		Stimulates
UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership		Stimulates
Species Recovery Programme		Stimulates
Species Survival Fund		Pays
Species Conservation Strategies		Stimulates
National deer management		Stimulates
National Pollinator Strategy		Stimulates
UK Bycatch Mitigation Initiative		Stimulates
English Seabird Conservation & Recovery Pathway		Stimulates
Species Reintroduction Taskforce		Stimulates
Translocations & Reintroductions		Stimulates
Green Finance Strategy		Pays
Big Nature Impact Fund		Pays
Local Investment in Natural Capital programme		Pays



Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates
Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund		Pays
Conservation covenants		Pays
Marine Net Gain policy		Pays
Cost recovery options		Pays
Investment standards & pathways		Pays
Nature Related Financial Disclosures		Stimulates
Directly acquiring land for nature recovery (voluntary sale)		Pays
Directly acquiring land for nature recovery (Compulsory Purchase Orders)		Pays
Section 106 agreement		Pays
Green Recovery Challenge Fund		Pays
Revere partnership with National Parks to derive large-scale woodland and peatland projects		Stimulates
Peatland Carbon Code		Stimulates

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# Annex 1 - OEP Assessment Framework: LNRS role in contributing to nature recovery commitments

OEP Assessment Framework: LNRS role in contributing to nature recovery commitments

## **Glossary of Terms**

Term	Acronym Meaning		
Environment Improvement Plan	EIP	Specific measurable plan and targets related to achieving environmental goals for England	
Environment Act 2021	EA21	Primary Legislation providing the basis for EIP and LNRS	
Responsible Authority	RA	The Local Authority responsible for producing an LNRS	
Supporting Authority	SA	Another Authority responsible for supporting LNRS (may be local authorities, local planning authorities, Natural England)	
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	LNRS	Spatial plans for nature required by the EA21	
Thriving Plants and Wildlife	TPW	'Apex' Goal 1 of the EIP which includes a range of specific commitments to habitat creation, woodland/tree cover expansion, reversing species decline, improving protected site condition, etc	
Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity	APIB	Areas recognised as being of particular importance for biodiversity (nationally designated sites, local nature reserves, local wildlife sites and irreplaceable habitats).	
Areas that Could Become of particular importance for Biodiversity	ACIB	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.	
National Nature Recovery Commitments	General catch all legally-binding ta	term for the TPW and other EIP goal areas as well as other relevant rgets for nature recovery	
Assessment Area Question	Closed (yes/no) questions which align with three Assessment Areas of Ambition, Coherence and Delivery Mechanisms. These questions are the focus of this assessment.		
Supporting Statement	Definitive statements that need to be true in order to support answering the Assessment Area questions as a 'yes'		
Interest Theme	Shorthand theme for coding content during the assessment process - each Interest Theme relates to an Assessment Area Question		
Priorities	Taken from the Statutory Guidance on LNRS and defined as 'the priorities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity (taking into account the contribution that this can also make to other environmental benefits)'		
Measures	Taken from the Statutory Guidance on LNRS and defined as actions for achieving the Priorities		



# Introduction

The Office for Environmental Protection (the OEP) is a public body that protects and improves the environment by holding government and other public authorities to account. The body was legally created in November 2021, under the Environment Act 2021. The OEP's work covers England and Northern Ireland, and also reserved matters across the UK (a matter on which only the UK Parliament in Westminster can make legislation).

This assessment framework was developed to complement the OEPs work to monitor and report on the implementation of environmental law and will support their work in respect of the EIP goal of 'thriving plants and wildlife' and its associated legally-binding targets, specifically those relating to species abundance.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new system of spatial strategies for nature, introduced by the Environment Act 2021 (s104-108). The OEPs '*Progress in improving the natural environment in England 2022/2023*' report highlighted spatial prioritisation as a major gap in the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). LNRS, the land-use framework and marine spatial prioritisation are all expected to play important roles in implementing key actions on land, freshwater and at sea.

This assessment framework has been commissioned to support an analysis of how LNRS might contribute to the aims of the EIP. The OEP wishes to understand the merits of any variation in emphasis that LNRS place on approaches based on prioritising habitats, species or wider environmental benefits. Success of LNRS is likely to be achieved through high levels of ambition, coherence with other relevant strategies (both local and national, where there is the potential for impactful synergies and trade-offs) and a strong focus on delivery mechanisms. These three areas form the basis of this assessment framework.

Treligan Limited has produced this assessment framework on behalf of and in collaboration with the OEP through a process of evidence review, engagement with LNRS Responsible Authorities, and engagement with strategic national stakeholders with an interest in LNRS. A statement of the framework development process has been provided separately to the OEP, and OEP representatives were closely involved in this development work supported in an advisory capacity by the OEP's College of Experts.

## What this assessment framework is for

This assessment framework has been developed for the OEP to assess individual area LNRS as part of a collective analysis, with a focus on understanding if and how LNRS overall will contribute to the EIP goal of 'thriving plants and wildlife' and EA21 species abundance targets. The assessment objectives are:

- Qualitative assessment of the collective impact that can be realistically expected from the LNRS process and outcomes, based on analysing and understanding a range of relevant factors (level of ambition, coherence with other plans, and clear links to delivery mechanisms).
- Attempting to understand the 'cause and effect' link between LNRS and the EIP goal of 'thriving plants and wildlife', in order to make any necessary recommendations about strengthening that causal relationship.
- Compare and contrast varied LNRS to understand whether different approaches may be expected to result in better outcomes with regard to the EIP goal of 'thriving plants and wildlife'.



## What this assessment framework is not for

The following are not designed for, and are explicitly scoped-out of the assessment framework's functionality:

- Comparing the performance of LNRS Responsible Authorities in the development of LNRS, to achieve any form of ranking or league table, or to hold individual Responsible Authorities to account for performance. The assessment framework does not take into account in sufficient detail the resources available to Responsible Authorities during LNRS development, or specific challenges faced. There is no mechanism to account for area differences in funding, resourcing or other relevant factors, and the framework does not provide a metric scoring that could be fairly used for ranking purposes. Nor is ranking something that the OEP are seeking to achieve from this assessment.
- Appraisal, assessment or evaluation of LNRS for purposes other than their role in delivering for the EIP goal 'Thriving Plants and Wildlife', and species abundance targets. This includes any form of economic / value for money appraisal, process evaluation, or any form of impact evaluation beyond understanding LNRS contribution to the EIP goal and EA21 targets.
- Collaboration with or incorporation of any evaluation or appraisal of LNRS carried out by any body other than the OEP. The OEP is an independent body with specific remit and responsibilities. For example, whilst the OEP has maintained regular, constructive dialogue with Defra and Natural England, this work is entirely separate and distinct from any evaluation that Defra or Natural England may undertake in respect of LNRS.

## How to use this assessment framework

## Sampling

The assessment framework is intended to be used at the individual LNRS level within England selected from the list of <u>48 Responsible Authority areas</u>. However, since the assessment objectives are related to understanding the impact of LNRS in aggregate (whole of England), it is not recommended that the framework is applied to just one LNRS area in any given assessment 'event'. Although this is technically possible, the assessment framework should normally be applied against an appropriately sized and designed sample of LNRS areas. There are guidance stages at the end of this assessment framework which relate to combining the insights derived from the individual LNRS assessments in a summative report that relates to the sample (and by inference, LNRS at national scale). This approach is more consistent with the assessment objectives.

During the assessment framework's development and initial application during 2024 and 2025, a representative sample of 12 LNRS areas (25% of the population) was agreed with the OEP. If the assessment is repeated in the future, the same sample may be used, or an alternative sampling approach may be used, for example:

- Larger or smaller sample using the same criteria
- Representative sample based on a different range of criteria (to achieve a different purpose)
- Non-representative sample of LNRS which share a particular characteristic, e.g all coastal.

Given the potentially long period of time between LNRS reviews (up to 10 years), some aspects of LNRS areas may change between assessments (e.g, local authority borders) and this should be considered when sampling (particularly if relying on the original sample, where some sampling characteristics should be checked to confirm these have not altered).



## Undertaking an individual assessment

Assessment is intended to be a repeatable, consistent process that seeks to minimise room for subjective interpretation. However, because LNRS strategies are varied, it is designed as a 'narrative' assessment with judgement based scoring, rather than numeric scoring which might create a misleading impression of 'absolute objectivity'.

A narrative assessment approach presents a challenge for consistency. There are some constraints set on the application of the assessment which help to mitigate against the potential risk of variation between assessors, between assessment 'events', and between LNRS themselves:

- The assessment has been designed to take 4 days of effort on the part of the assessor to complete, spaced over a period of around four to five weeks to allow for information gathering, engagement and right of reply processes. Keeping as close to this timeframe as possible helps to keep assessment size, effort and level of detail consistent.
- The assessment should use the provided Evidence Capture Template, which break down the process into manageable, repeatable activities, which each have time limit guides again to encourage consistency over effort allocation.
- The evidence capture templates come with their own 'pocket guides' which exist to steer consistency through simple 'do' and 'don't' rules.
- The 'reply window' process has been designed to be able to be completed by a responsible authority within 2 days of effort (spaced out over approximately three to four weeks).

Based on these constraints and the average length of the strategy documents (100 pages+), the assessment of Ambition, Coherence and Delivery Mechanisms needs to be completed during a single read-through of the document, by one assessor, capturing evidence against all three areas in a structured format as the read-through progresses.

## Assessment 'confidence rating'

This section describes how the assessment arrives at a judgement, and uses some new terminology:

Term	Description	Example
Assessment Area Question	A relevant aspect of the Assessment Area in terms of the OEP's overall objectives in determining LNRS contribution to EIP Goal 'Thriving Plants and Wildlife' and species abundance targets. Always phrased as a closed (yes/no) question.	Does the LNRS include maps and spatial priorities which will support ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and help to resolve prioritisation conflicts in a changing landscape?
Supporting Statements	Statements that we would expect to be true if the answer to the Assessment Area Question is yes (elements that are relevant to the question topic). Always phased as a definitive statement.	Habitat maps are based on sufficient evidence of both current and future importance for biodiversity, and the maps support an understanding of what 'bigger, better and more connected' nature means in the context of that RA area.
Interest Themes	Shorthand topic titles that relate to the Assessment Area Questions. These are for 'coding' content from each	Quality and suitability of Maps



LNRS strategy against during the Step 6 - 'First Pass Strategy Walkthrough'. They help the assessor organise all the relevant evidence for consideration	
against the Supporting Statements.	

The assessment works as follows:

- The assessment areas (ambition, coherence, delivery mechanisms) are subdivided into different questions which relate to the theme, which are phrased as 'yes / no' Assessment Area Questions the assessor is trying to answer. The assessment will determine whether we have high, medium or low confidence that we can answer these questions positively (with a 'yes').
- Assessors should apply the assessment at the Assessment Area Question level. It is not necessary to attempt to 'roll this up' to an overall judgement of the assessment area at individual LNRS level.
- Each question is underpinned by three 'Supporting Statements', which are relevant to that confidence rating.
- In the summative assessment stage (Step 12), assessors judge if they agree with the statement based on the evidence. Assessors will not try to grade these as high, medium or low confidence in the same way. This makes the judgement to agree (or not) much simpler, which is important because assessors will potentially be considering a lot of information for each Supporting Statement. This judgement should be justified and explained by directly linking to evidence gathered from the previous stages that was coded against the interest theme.
- If the assessor can agree with confidence with all three of the Supporting Statements based on the evidence, the 'Assessment Area Question' is marked as high confidence (a confident yes). Medium confidence means the assessor agreed with some but not all, and low confidence means they are not confident they can agree with any.

High	Sufficient evidence 3 out of 3 of the Supporting Statements are true (as well as absence of evidence that any supporting statement is false)
Medium	Little or no evidence 1 or 2 out of 3 of the Supporting Statements are true (or evidence that the statements are false)
Low	Little or no evidence of 3 out of 3 of the supporting statements being true (or evidence that the statements are false)

#### Assessment Area Question Confidence Rating





Diagram showing flow of evidence, Supporting Statements and Assessment Areas Questions

#### Assessment process

The assessment process includes more than the application of the framework itself. There are also important steps related to engaging with Responsible Authorities before, during and after the assessment, and identifying and engaging with other organisations (usually with a geographic presence in the LNRS area in question), who may have relevant insights for consideration in the assessment.

#### Step 1 - Preparatory Stage

In this stage, the assessor captures baseline information about the RA that affects some of the areas of focus of the assessment, or how certain information is understood. The required information, and the sources used to obtain it, is outlined in the 'LNRS RA Characterisation Sheet'

The other key part of the preparatory stage is to conduct a rapid review of the relevant spatial and non-spatial plans and strategies which exist within the LNRS area, in order to act as an independent point of comparison for Coherence (as opposed to relying only on the strategy document itself to understand what plans and strategies exist). Reference table 4 'LNRS coherence – relevant spatial and non-spatial plan plans & strategies for consideration, mapped to RA characteristics' should be used for search prompts, combined with the relevant geographic, broadly as follows:



- Plan or strategy name + LNRS Area name
- Plan or strategy name + RA name
- Plan or strategy name + SA names / other local authority names / other relevant organisation names



There are likely to be several spatial plans which could be relevant to a given area, and priority will be given to those spatial plans which have been already ratified or adopted by the stakeholders on a formal basis.



#### Step 2 - Stakeholder Mapping

This step supports identification of specific examples of 'expected stakeholders' which supports part of the assessment in relation to Delivery Mechanisms.

Assessors should use 'Table 5: Expected Stakeholder Groups by RA Area Type' as a prompt to identify some of the key stakeholders and partnerships, and populate this information in Box D of the Evidence Capture Template.

#### Step 3 - Notification to the Responsible Authority

This step is performed by the OEP. This step involves letting the Responsible Authority know they have been selected for assessment in the sample. It should explain more about what the assessment process involves, and provide the context for the assessment.

- Introduce the OEP and explain their role and remit
- Explain the LNRS assessment project and the nature of the OEPs interest in LNRS
- Explain why we are assessing the RAs LNRS how we will use the information

Notifications should be sent to the relevant RA LNRS mailbox or contact, any known contacts working on the development of LNRS, and an appropriately senior member of the RA with directorate responsibility for LNRS (usually a Director of Environment or Head of Environment role).

Use the 'RA Notification' template for this step. The assessor should offer a short call (optional) for RAs who seek to understand more about the assessment process and how to cooperate with it.

#### Step 4 - Information Request

Many of the substeps of this step are relevant for the first assessment event, December 2024, which is being carried out at a time when not all authorities had completed their first LNRS, and in many cases do not have a complete draft ready for consultation.

If the authority has a full draft of the strategy, and a completed map, ready for consultation, then no other documents should be required for the assessment.

Note that these outputs may come in a number of different formats, for example:

- Some authorities have embedded the priorities and measures in an interactive map, which
  makes engaging with specific content user friendly, but may not suit a review process of all
  content. Assessors may request 'source files' of this content so that it can be reviewed in a
  more systematic way.
- Some authorities may have divided the components of their strategy into separate documents, in which case the assessor needs to compare these outputs to what is required i the guidance in terms of strategy elements, to ensure they have a complete 'pack'.

#### Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance, Page 7

By law, each local nature recovery strategy must include:

- a statement of biodiversity priorities
- a local habitat map

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 or 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

If RAs provide additional documentation voluntarily, assessors should not necessarily include all of this in their assessment in order to maintain consistency, and should not review these additional documents in depth. Assessors should use their own judgement to determine the extent to which they should 'skim read' or check specific referenced parts of these documents when completing their review of the primary strategy materials.

A good example of an additional document might be materials relating to delivery planning, which are certainly of interest to this assessment but are not required in the strategy. A reasonable approach here would be to skim this output and use a general understanding of the output to inform the 'delivery mechanisms' assessment area.

If the authority does not have a full draft of the strategy and/or does not have a map in any form, the assessor should determine whether there is enough information to complete all the elements of the review.







#### Step 5 - First Pass Strategy Walkthrough - Coding Excerpts

Steps 5 onward are completed in batches of 3, to ensure that any improvements to process and consistency identified during QA can be applied to later batches. Use the Evidence Capture Template.

Assessors should read through the LNRS strategy in its entirety, as well as relevant supplementary documents that have been accepted into the assessment process in the previous step. As this read through is carried out, assessors should keep to hand a summary of the 'Interest Themes' for coding content against, and paste relevant excerpts into box 'E - Qualitative Evidence Capture' of the Evidence Capture Template.

- If a short excerpt, directly paste into the sheet and reference page number and what section it falls within
- If a longer section, reference the section title, start and end page, and describe what aspect of the whole section relates to the interest theme
- Capture any questions or comments that relate to the interest theme (being careful to ensure these are clear and answerable, as the RA may respond to these).
- If the excerpt seems to belong to more than one interest theme, capture it twice (though where possible without losing the meaning of phrases, break down excerpts into small portions to allow greater focus).

At the same time, the assessor should capture anything which relates to specific quantifiable or non-quantifiable targets, objectives or intended outcomes, and attempt to align these against TWP goals, in 'Box F - Specific Objective, Goal, Target' of the Evidence Capture Template.

The assessor should consider the map, and spend enough time interacting with it to determine its features and functions, and engage with the information presented. This time may vary depending on the complexity of the mapping solution provided with each LNRS. Capture this information in 'E - Qualitative Evidence Capture' and use naming conventions 'Map-General, Map Layer [name], Map Function [name]' to ensure it is clear what element of the map is being referenced.

#### Step 6 - Filter by assessment area and simplify

The assessor should filter the captured qualitative evidence by Interest Theme, and determine whether any points raised have been addressed by evidence captured from other parts of the strategy materials. These items should be left in the evidence capture template but only those with outstanding comments or queries should be marked as 'for review' (which is how they should be highlighted for the particular attention of the RA).

The assessor should now have a collection of relevant points and material from the LNRS material which are focused on the Assessment Questions.

#### Step 7 - QA process - 1 in 3 repeated by peers

In order to sense check the process up to this point (i.e. to determine whether later judgements against evidence are based on a consistent collection of that evidence, and consistent understanding of the focus of each Interest Theme), in the first two batches of 3, different assessors should repeat the coding and querying process for one of the LNRS and then discuss their findings.

The outcome of this QA check should be reviewed by the OEP to ensure they are satisfied with consistency.

Where there have been differences of perspective on whether items belong to certain interest themes or not, specific points of clarification should be created that assessors should then use for future



assessments. These may also require some re-work of previous assessments, which should be done before the outputs are sent to the RA in Step 8.

#### Step 8 - Submit first pass review to RA - 'reply window' process

The completed assessment sheet E Qualitative and F are provided to the RA, who is asked in particular to consider the 'for review' points. These should be provided in a form which minimises the available details, the RA does not need to see how the excerpts have been coded in terms of assessment area etc

The objective of this is:

- Obtain clarifications where the meanings of things are not clear
- Positively confirm (or not) any inferences made by the assessor from the information
- Invite the RA to *reference and explain* further evidence which supports a different interpretation on any given point but the RA should not be invited to submit this evidence as it cannot be considered in the review if it was not submitted and accepted in step 5.
- Obtain answers to the Further Questions (see bottom section of this assessment framework document) to support the final summative assessment.

#### Step 9 - RA responds at query level and to the Further Questions

The RA now has the opportunity to respond to any items and should be allowed a minimum of three weeks to do so (four is preferable). The RA should not need to provide in-depth justification or contextual explanation, but should need to respond to clear, limited queries.

- The RA should respond to the 'for review' points as a minimum, but may offer further details on other areas as they see fit
- The RA should not submit a significant amount of new information as this cannot then be assessed
- The RA responds briefly to the Further Questions (given a guide of 100 words for each).

#### Step 10 - Consider RA response

All of the information from all strands of the enquiry should now be considered by the assessor.

#### Step 11 - Complete the summative assessment against the three assessment areas

Using the assessment confidence rating process described above, and considering the evidence which has been coded against each interest theme (including clarifications provided by the RA), the assessor resolves each Support Statement in turn, and uses these results to determine a high, medium or low confidence score for each Assessment Area Question.

These judgements at each Supporting Statement should be justified and explained by directly linking to evidence gathered from the review and reply window stages that was coded against the interest theme (provide a brief synthesis of the evidence, 1 to 2 paragraphs, per Supporting Statement. The OEPQA this output by reviewing a random sample of the resolved Supporting Statements.

#### Step 12 - Submit completed review to RA & Step 14 - RA fact checks

The completed review is submitted to the RA with a final opportunity to fact check any statements made (but only fact check, no opinion or commentary on findings is invited).



# **Assessment Area 1: Ambition**

This assessment area is focused on understanding how ambitious the strategy is, principally in regard to the quality and quantity of nature recovery action that it suggests is possible, and in regard to what is said in the strategy about things that support this action - ambition in relation to creating engagement, securing funding, and so on.

This assessment area is not necessarily about identifying evidence that RAs have gone above and beyond the guidance (though this will be captured where it is apparent). The assessment seeks to understand how RAs have applied the guidance to create an ambitious vision of nature recovery. The ambition of an LNRS can be understood through its stated contributions to biodiversity, bioabundance, integration with broader environmental plans, and its ability to meet both short-term and long-term nature recovery goals.

The assessment area looks at the extent to which each LNRS is comprehensive and internally coherent in terms of nature recovery priorities and measures (not to be confused with coherence with other plan and strategies, Assessment Area 2), and ultimately how well it will ensure a meaningful contribution to the species abundance targets and the thriving plants and wildlife goal, if the proposed measures are delivered.

#### Things to consider when assessing this area

- In the Ambition area, we are not seeking evidence that what a strategy sets out will be delivered, as this is considered separately in the assessment (Delivery Mechanisms). We are interested in seeing a bold and compelling vision for nature recovery, and understanding whether this is a realistic vision at the 'technical' level (i.e whether the vision is based in solid understanding of nature recovery principles, and using appropriate data and evidence).
- LNRS areas do not have the same opportunity to contribute to national targets e.g, different areas have varying opportunities to contribute to national tree cover targets - so we are not seeking to make definitive statements of whether LNRS are meeting 'targets' or not (there are no targets at individual area level).
- There is a very broad range of nature recovery goals, objectives, targets and other potential evidence of Ambition, both locally and nationally, which LNRS may align with. It is not the objective of this assessment to judge which of these is more important. However, it is the role of the assessment to understand the link between LNRS and the EIP goal of Thriving Plants and Wildlife, and evidence of reference to the specific objectives set out in that goal area is a primary focus.

## Assessment method

When reviewing the LNRS materials for evidence of Ambition, both the LNRS strategy document itself and the mapping assets are expected to be equally important, as the distribution, connectivity and overall coverage of opportunities for nature recovery are material to an understanding of Ambition.

The following areas are Ambition interest themes against which strategy excerpts or section references should be coded in the initial run through of the strategy, and against which summative analysis should be produced afterwards.

- A1 Relationship with TPW and Species Abundance Objectives
- A2 Mapping and Spatial Priorities



- A3 Engagement and Collaboration
- A4 Funding and Resources

Does the LNRS describe a clear relationship with broader environmental objectives that contribute to achieving national nature recovery commitments, such as the EIP Thriving Plants and Wildlife goal and species abundance targets?

#### Interest theme for coding: A1 Relationship with TPW and Species Abundance Objectives

What overarching objectives are referenced in the strategy? The apex goal of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) is to achieve *Thriving Plants and Wildlife* by preventing the decline of nature and ensuring the recovery of threatened species. An ambitious LNRS should demonstrate how the responsible authority has considered contributing to relevant national biodiversity and bioabundance goals and targets, both those outlined in the statutory LNRS guidance and those outlined in the EIP, as well as others. Guidance produced by Defra on national environmental objectives for responsible authorities outlines the targets that should be referenced, but there is no legal requirement for how each of these national objectives should be considered in an LNRS. An ambitious LNRS would evaluate those objectives and demonstrate how and where they will be contributed to their delivery; the LNRS may also interpret national objectives locally by setting local targets and goals, demonstrating a high level of ambition and enabling a more measurable assessment of the contribution to national goals and targets.

For example, setting a goal to increase woodland cover within an LNRS region by 10% over the next 10 years is a measurable and actionable target. This would involve planting native trees, working with local landowners and communities, and identifying suitable sites for afforestation. By selecting ambitious, yet realistic and deliverable targets, the LNRS can demonstrate how local strategies can contribute to the overall goal of nature recovery, providing parallels with the Lawton principles of 'bigger, better and more connected' <sup>1</sup>.

# Capture the following specific measurable elements in Box A of the Assessment Template, which align with the TPW objectives, wherever they are encountered. Capture any target dates.

- Any Species Abundance targets (current and future goals or targets)
- Hectarage creation for 'wildlife-rich habitat' (various definitions expected) absolute target hectares, and % land coverage (links to 30 by 30)
- Anything which might be a specific ambition related to Red List Index for species extinction
- Anything which references targets to improving the condition of protected sites to Favourable condition (in particular, % of sites). Note that reference to protected site condition is not expected as a focus in LNRS but should still be captured where referenced.
- Anything which references Increase to tree canopy and woodland cover. Absolute target hectares, and % land coverage (links to 30 by 30)
- Anything which references targets to improving the condition of designated features in MPAs to Favourable condition (in particular, % of sites). Official guidance in relation to excluding coastal / marine environments makes it unlikely these references will be present in most LNRSs but any references still need to be captured.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Lawton, 'Making Space for Nature: A Review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network'.



# Determine whether there is clear evidence the following supporting statements are True when completing the thematic analysis of coded excerpts:

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Alignment with National Targets	The LNRS incorporates and is well aligned with appropriate national nature recovery goals or targets, or wider national environmental goals or targets. These are expressed clearly in the LNRS, the RA's commitment to them is stated, and they either directly or indirectly relate to one or more of the EIP TPW objectives and species abundance targets.	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS indicates an ambition to increase tree canopy cover to 18% of total land area by 2040. Current canopy cover is 10%, so although this does not align with national targets it is still ambitious for this RA area. However, the timescales seem very short and may not be realistic. The LNRS sets out an ambition to improve the condition of all freshwater bodies to 'good' by 2050. The LNRS sets a target to increase species diversity by 20%, in line with national biodiversity objectives.
Ambitious Local Targets	The LNRS includes locally specific, ambitious targets for nature recovery action, and at least in one instance these exceed a relevant national target (relevant being directly or indirectly related to one or more of the EIP Thriving Plants and Wildlife objectives and species abundance targets).	<i>Example:</i> Setting a target to increase woodland cover by 10% (to 18% total) within the next 10 years, using native species for afforestation, to bring total woodland cover above EIP TPW target of 16.5%
Understanding of Local Ecosystems and what national Ambition means in a local context	Beyond simply mapping habitats and current/future areas of importance for nature, the LNRS demonstrates a clear understanding of how local ecosystems function in an interconnected way, and focuses ambition and effort appropriately based on this understanding. Use Table 1 'Areas of action paraphrased from EIP23' as a guide	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS recognises that local wetlands play an internationally important role in supporting migratory bird populations such as Reed Warblers, and it correctly identifies wetlands as key habitats in species actions plans for a number of rare species. Wetland restoration is a strong focus and because of the historic extent of wetland habitat loss in the area (90%), an area where ambition is especially important.



## Does the LNRS include maps and spatial priorities which will support ambitious nature recovery spatial planning, and help to resolve prioritisation conflicts in a changing landscape?

#### Interest theme for coding: A2 Mapping and Spatial Priorities

The Environment Act 2021 mandates two key elements for the LNRS: A statement of biodiversity priorities, and a local habitat map. While both are essential for the development of an LNRS, ambition in these components is essential for driving impactful nature recovery. For the mapping element, ambition by not only identifying existing ecological networks, but also identifying where those areas can improve the development of connected landscapes that further support biodiversity and mechanisms for on-the-ground delivery.

Essentially, we seek to find ambition within the broadly accepted principles of creating a healthy ecological network, based on these five components <sup>2</sup>:

- 1. Core areas highest wildlife value
- 2. Corridors and stepping stones allowing movement and interaction
- 3. Restoration areas where species and habitats can recover
- 4. Buffer zones protection for core areas, corridors, stepping stones and restoration areas from pressures
- 5. Sustainable use areas areas where human influence is greater, but still sensitive to nature

RAs will approach this ambition challenge in a number of ways. This could involve mapping areas suitable for habitat restoration, rewilding, or increased canopy cover, with specific and measurable targets. It is also important that these maps incorporate climate resilience to ensure long-term sustainability and adaptability. Similarly, the statement of biodiversity priorities could go beyond national objectives, outlining clear and measurable local targets that reflect on the ecological context of the area.

For example, urban areas are more likely to focus on green infrastructure, while rural or coastal regions may prioritise habitat connectivity or flood resilient landscapes. The criteria for assessing ambition must be carefully applied to ensure that they are sensitive to the context of a given LNRS. It is important that the assessment focuses on the specific, actionable elements that demonstrate a high level of ambition while remaining realistic and achievable.

Determine whether there is clear evidence the following supporting statements are True when completing the thematic analysis of coded excerpts:

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Quality and suitability of Maps	Babitat maps are based on sufficient evidence of both current and future importance for biodiversity, and the maps support an understanding of what 'bigger, better and more connected' nature means in the context of that RA area.	<i>Example:</i> The maps are based on key expected datasets for existing nature areas of importance. Future areas of importance for nature are based on the physical characteristics of sites and areas such as soil type and underlying geology, distances from existing habitats and natural features,



		Maps highlight key ecological corridors for effective species movement The maps emphasise expansion or addition of buffer habitat to existing areas of importance, rather than treating all opportunities as equal
Identification of future landscape changes	The LNRS identifies future landscape changes, environmental changes and challenges including from climate change and other land use requirements. The LNRS includes general consideration of the impact of such changes and this is reflected in Priorities and Measures.	<i>Example:</i> Map identifies where habitat restoration may build resilience against increased incidents of flooding or drought. The strategy also describes supporting work on species migration predictions or future impacts of urban development on spatial prioritisation methods.
Spatial trade-offs and synergies	The LNRS clearly identifies and justifies trade-offs between different nature recovery measures/actions. It identifies where synergies exist in terms of identifying opportunities where actions could deliver for more than one priority.	<ul> <li><i>Example:</i> Actively managing a predatory bird species in the interests of safeguarding a protected ground nesting bird.</li> <li>Maintaining habitat which is important to one endangered species but which is associated with generally lower species diversity and abundance than habitat which could be established instead.</li> </ul>

Does the LNRS present a clear and convincing picture of impactful engagement and collaborative relationships which will support widespread adoption of nature recovery measures in the strategy?

#### Interest theme for coding: A3 Engagement and Collaboration

A key focus of the legal obligations and what is set out in guidance for LNRS is the need for them to be developed collaboratively, with stakeholder engagement and consultation informing their development and guiding much of the LNRS process. That said, there is still much room for local interpretation as to what engagement looks like in practice. We consider that effective stakeholder engagement will be key to the development of progressive LNRS, which have the buy-in of key delivery partners. Effective engagement will essentially help to ensure the likelihood of successful delivery and implementation. To demonstrate ambition in engagement, an LNRS should show strong commitment to achieving consensus among stakeholders. This means not just undertaking engagement activities, but also working to reconcile differing views and incorporating that feedback into the development of the LNRS. While it may not be possible for all stakeholders to wholly agree, the closer the LNRS process is to achieving broad consensus, the more likely it will deliver on its ambitions. Here we are looking to test the extent and nature of engagement undertaken to inform LNRS development, and ensure the necessary buy-in from stakeholders across all relevant sectors and stakeholder groups.


Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Catchment Partnerships are examples of partnerships that might play a vital role in driving collaborative efforts at a landscape and cross-boundary scale. Ambitious LNRS should actively involve a range of partnerships and stakeholders; from landowners / occupiers and local businesses to local authorities involved in the planning and delivery process and neighbouring authorities involved in cross-boundary delivery. The relationship between responsible and supporting authorities is important in ensuring a well-integrated and effectively implemented LNRS that works across different jurisdictions. Nature friendly farming guided by agroecological (regenerative) principles will likely be a significant delivery mechanism for nature recovery in England. Where legal hooks are less well developed, the extent to which these links can be realised will be heavily dependent on engagement with farmers and landowners and effective join up with other delivery partners such as Natural England.

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Stakeholder consensus in LNRS development	An appropriately diverse and representative group of key stakeholders for the area (e.g., landowners, businesses, local authorities and ecological specialists) have been successfully engaged in the LNRS development process and these views have informed the development of an LNRS that is built on broad consensus.' Use reference Table 5 as a guide to expected stakeholder groups by area.	<i>Example:</i> A diverse group of stakeholders, including local farmers, businesses and eNGOs have been consulted and actively involved in the LNRS process. The LNRS has had contributions from a good range of species and habitat specialists
Ongoing Community Participation	The LNRS clearly sets out how it has and will continue to encourage and incorporate broad involvement in nature recovery, create a cohesive vision and mission across communities with different perspectives and priorities, and identifies communities of particular impact for their area.	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS states that there is an ongoing commitment to maintain the cross-sectoral working group which supported the initial engagement, as well as further aims to create special interest outreach groups (notably for landowners).
Cross-boundary Collaboration	There is evidence of collaboration with neighbouring authorities to ensure an integrated and cohesive plan. Note: to avoid conflict with the 'Neighbouring LNRS' theme in	<i>Example:</i> The Supporting Authorities have contributed significantly to the development of the LNRS Example: All Local Planning Authorities in the coverage



Coherence below, the focus of this is on the collaboration, not the 'technical' cross boundary spatial plan coherence.	area of the LNRS have made a joint commitment to adopting the strategy by a given date.
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# Does the LNRS describe a creative and ambitious funding and resourcing approach for ongoing strategy coordination and development?

#### Interest theme for coding: A4 Funding and Resources

In identifying the 48 Responsible Authorities leading LNRS development across England, new duties funding was made available from the government. This funding will have been deployed in different ways by each of the RAs to support LNRS delivery. Other funding and resources will potentially be available through other funding streams, or through in-kind commitments from partners and stakeholders. Here we are looking to test the resources that have been available to support LNRS development and how creative and ambitious RAs have been in the use of this funding, as well as plans to access future funding and/or sustain resourcing.

This includes considering whether RAs are adequately supported from a funding perspective or if they need further support to keep the strategy viable in the long-term. Further to this, we will look at any evidence (or lack of) for the funding and resourcing picture beyond the point at which LNRS are published, and the RAs understanding of their resource needs to maximise potential for delivery coordination and effective monitoring and evaluation.

Here we are not looking at the funding and resources available for the actual nature recovery projects (i.e. through BNG or nature friendly farming to deliver biodiversity improvements on the ground – this will be covered in more detail under the assessment framework associated with LRNS delivery). Instead, we are concerned with the funding and resources in place to provide strategic oversight, coordination, evaluation and review of the LNRS itself – both now, and for the future.

In terms of ambition, we will be looking to test the extent to which investment from RAs and other stakeholders is indicative of the priority and commitment afforded to the LNRS and its long term implementation and delivery.

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Diversity of Funding and Resourcing Sources for LNRS development	The LNRS has made use of additional funding or development resourcing from a variety of sources.	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS has secured funding from government grants, research grants and third sector grants or funding.



		<i>Example</i> - the LNRS has worked in partnership with eNGOs and therefore 'shared the burden' of developing an impactful and ambitious LNRS.
Clear and realistic longer term resourcing model for ongoing	The LNRS includes a clear and realistic longer term resourcing model for continued strategy coordination, monitoring and evaluation / success measurement.	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS has developed a green finance model framework to secure long-term funding for restorative efforts, and some of this funding would be allocated to monitoring and success measurement.
Job Role Permanency	There are permanent positions within the RA (or other org) for LNRS coordination, monitoring, evaluation and review.	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS has created a permanent role for ongoing oversight of delivery of the strategy, monitoring & evaluation to feed into future review, and undertake the review.

### Assessment Area 2: Coherence

This assessment area is focused on understanding the extent to which the LNRS is consistent with other plans and strategies within or overlapping the same area, and includes both spatial plans and non spatial plans.

In the context of the reviewed LNRS, 'Coherence' represents the variable degree of alignment of intended outcomes with other relevant initiatives on a national, regional or local level. Coherence could range from a negative coherence, i.e. initiatives proceeding without regard to existing plans or strategies, and then through varying degrees of alignment to these, especially their intended outcomes.

Determining coherence is a good measure of whether the LNRS as a whole or in part is likely to be incorporated into the broader system of local authority planning (spatial and non-spatial), and whether LNRS will benefit from its objectives being reinforced and contributed to by other plans, and vice versa.

Coherence can only be assessed against existing plans and strategies, and there may be other important ones that may emerge during the lifetime of an LNRS - e.g. the anticipated national land use framework<sup>3</sup>, and locally the adoption of new local plans etc.

#### Things to consider when assessing this area

<sup>3</sup> 'Where next for the Land Use Framework?'



- In the preparatory stage, a rapid review of existing spatial and non-spatial plans and strategies should have been undertaken to provide a basis for determining coherence without relying only on what is referenced in the strategy documents. If the strategy documents reference plans and strategies not uncovered in this rapid review, these are still pertinent to the assessment.
- In the Coherence area, when considering coherence with national plans and policies, we specifically are not comparing coherence with the EIP Thriving Plants and Wildlife Goal or other environmental objectives or targets which support EIP TPW, since this is covered under Ambition above. However, we are still interested in coherence with broader environmental objectives where this implies greater justification and impetus for making progress with LNRS delivery. Essentially, we are seeking to understand known synergies with non 'nature-recovery' agendas as well as nature related strategies in other jurisdictions.
- Principally we are interested in coherence with those plans and strategies which have been 'adopted' in any formal way, are legally binding, or otherwise have weight in the LNRS area.

### Assessment method

The LNRS guidance requires each responsible authority to produce their LNRS in a consistent, standardised format, and each local nature recovery strategy must include a statement of biodiversity priorities and a local habitat map.

The following areas are Coherence interest themes against which strategy excerpts or section references should be coded in the initial run through of the strategy, and against which summative analysis should be produced afterwards:

- C1 Coherence with other spatial plans (at different scales)
- C2 Coherence with other non-spatial plans
- C3 Coherence with other nature recovery networks

# Is the LNRS coherent with other spatial plans that influence decision making within or overlapping the same geographic area?

#### Interest theme for coding: C1 Coherence with other spatial plans (at different scales)

The local habitat map will allow review against other **spatial** plans / strategies which are relevant to the area. Per the guidance, "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." The strategy document itself may also contain reference to other spatial plans and insights into how the authority understands or sets out the relationships between spatial plans.

The assessor should review the LNRS local habitat map and compare those areas where the RA identifies nature recovery opportunities for improvement to other spatial plans / strategies that are relevant to that area.

As well as reviewing those spatial plans explicitly listed in the LNRS, the assessor will research other spatial plans that we would expect to be relevant to the region, using the rapid review search criteria



and process defined in the Preparatory Stage of the Assessment Process section above. Many spatial plans are likely to be individual to the region, and are unlikely to be consistent between LNRS regions. For example, we would expect coastal LNRS areas to have considered the local Shoreline Management Plan and Coastal Strategy.

Assessors should particularly look for and consider the varying types of plans which are expected depending on the characteristics of each LNRS, which are summarised in 'Table 4 - LNRS coherence – relevant spatial and non-spatial plan plans & strategies for consideration, mapped to RA characteristics'.

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Coherence with expected local spatial plans	spatial plans and strategies from the 'expected' list (Table 4) are clearly referenced within the strategy, and the LNRS shows coherence with these through statements within the strategy document and/or mapping integration (i.e. providing those plans as layers for direct comparison)	<i>Example</i> - LNRS is a largely urban area (major city) and adopted green infrastructure plans, and local flood plans, are shown as layers on the map which can be directly compared to mapped LNRS opportunities.
	Any apparent spatial conflicts detected when comparing the LNRS with other spatial plans do not compromise LNRS outcomes (i.e. the level of conflict is not significant enough to prevent measures being implemented) (Note - the <b>number</b> of plans referenced is not a factor).	<i>Example</i> - when comparing the local plan with the LNRS, some land earmarked for development overlaps with opportunity mapping for an LNRS measure, but this is on only a tiny portion of the mapped opportunity area for the measure.
Coherence with regional and national spatial plans	spatial plans and spatial resources available at a regional or national level have been considered and integrated into the LNRS. There are no obvious conflicts between national spatial plans and priorities, and key spatial data sets pertinent for nature recovery planning (Table 6) are appropriately factored into the development of the LNRS.'	E.g Priority Habitats data is available for the authority area within the LNRS data viewer and has been used by the RA in setting areas current and future importance for biodiversity.
Upward and downward compatibility	the LNRS spatial plans can be easily integrated into broader regional or national spatial plans to contribute value to the national picture and nature recovery network, and can also be used in conjunction with more detailed 'in-area' maps to plan at a finer scale.'	There are no practical limits on the scale of resolution, I can zoom in to examine individual land parcels and the map detail and quality is sufficient to support comparison with other mapping assets. The LNRS mapping has been completed in a recognised GIS format.



# Is the LNRS coherent with other non-spatial plans or strategies that influence decision making within the same geographic area?

Interest theme for coding: C2 Coherence with other non-spatial plans

The <u>statement of biodiversity priorities</u> will allow review against national, regional or local **non-spatial** plans / strategies which contain relevant targets. Per the guidance, "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."

We will review the LNRS to assess how much coherence to non-spatial plans is demonstrated, including national and regional commitments.

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Clearly outlined synergies and co-benefits with non-spatial plans and strategies	the specific non-spatial plans and strategies which LNRS would be expected to be coherent with (for the type of LNRS area) (Table 4) are clearly laid out and the way in which nature recovery measures and actions will contribute to these, and vice versa, are set out.'	<i>Example</i> - access to Nature strategy, which may describe the amount of 'green space' individuals should be able to reach within 15 minutes walk. <i>Example</i> - LNRS references nature based solutions strategies for flood management in the areas, and ties these to LNRS measures.
Prioritisation of nature amongst other plans and strategies	relative prioritisation of nature recovery within the context of broader priorities is clear, and favourable to nature recovery objectives (i.e nature is given equal or higher priority than other concerns).'	<i>Example</i> - the LNRS is clear on the other priorities for the area which nature recovery must sit alongside. A local land use framework is described for the management of priorities. <i>Example</i> - the LNRS acknowledges particular development pressure in key areas for the strategy and gives a sense of how this will be managed to still achieve LNRS outcomes for that area.
Two-way integration	'there is evidence that the LNRS will be integrated into other adopted plans and strategies to the extent that it will be considered by default, and have weight, in those other plans and strategies.'	<i>Example</i> - the LNRS states that the next iteration of flood risk management strategy will incorporate consideration of LNRS opportunity mapping for the placement and design of nature based solutions



# Is the LNRS set in the wider context of England's nature recovery landscape, and does it avoid adopting a 'hard border' approach?

#### Interest theme for coding: C3 Coherence with other nature recovery networks

It is also useful to assess coherence between **neighbouring** RA regions. Per the guidance, "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."

We will assess the coherence of the LNRS to neighbouring areas to review the consideration given by the RA to the broader picture and how this meets the guidance to consider impact across boundaries. To do this we will review the LNRS for explicit mention and further description of plans relevant to neighbouring areas and consider the extent of that coherence.

We will identify the neighbouring areas and note any particular features explicitly shared over borders, such as National Parks or National Landscapes. We will also research any regional initiatives which may be relevant. We would then prioritise these based on the extent to which they are adopted / ratified on a formal basis and consider if there were any we would expect to see in the LNRS which are not present. We will also briefly review the LNRS of the neighbouring regions to better understand the relationship.

We will consider how closely aligned to these plans and how much detail is presented in the LNRS to form a view of their coherence.

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Neighbouring LNRS	due consideration is given to alignment with neighbouring Responsible Authority LNRS, with evidence of consideration of the high level nature recovery context of the wider region and clear expression of common purpose.' For certain RAs this should consider borders with Wales and Scotland and their respective nature recovery networks.	<i>Example</i> - the LNRS acknowledges all the neighbouring LNRS and identifies some specific opportunities to create bigger nature recovery areas by lining up similar opportunity areas <i>Example</i> - the LNRS explicitly acknowledges that a key river system extends beyond their borders, and efforts to improve species abundance in the river relies on measures being implemented by another RA. The LNRS explains how it will work with that RA.
Overlapping landscapes of importance	due consideration is given to any cross-border areas such as National Parks or National Landscapes where combined activities are more likely to have impact and where key decision makers will need to work	<i>Example</i> - Part of the Humber Estuary SPA falls into the LNRS area and the strategy describes cooperation with neighbouring authorities to address key pressures through



	with multiple RAs, as well as notably 'large' designated sites which extend across boundaries and also require cross-boundary cooperation.'	LNRS measure alignment. <i>Example</i> - The LNRS acknowledges the overlap with the Peak District national park and describes a partnership approach with other LNRS areas and the Park Authority to design measures for that area.
Clear relationship with a broader Nature Recovery Network	the concept of a national nature recovery network is embedded in the LNRS and in particular, the way in which key sites for wildlife within the RA boundary will be connected with other key sites for wildlife in other areas. See Table 7 for national and regional nature recovery networks.	<i>Example</i> - The LNRS explains how the RA will coordinate with the national Nature Recovery Network partnership in terms of <i>Example</i> - The LNRS describes ongoing interaction with the broader Nature North recovery network to ensure measures delivery and ongoing progress are feeding into a cohesive regional picture.

## Assessment Area 3: Delivery Mechanisms

This assessment area is focused on understanding the likelihood of LNRS strategy measures being implemented at a level that will contribute positively and meaningfully to the EIP 'thriving plants and wildlife' goal and species abundance targets. Essentially, it seeks to test whether the strategy is set out in a way which gives the best chance of the 'ambition' being converted into reality, within a meaningful timeframe. We will consider whether delivery mechanisms feel clear and specific enough for stakeholders to 'take the first step', while also allowing sufficient flexibility for new delivery mechanisms that might come into being during the strategy's implementation, and avoiding 'locking in' delivery mechanisms that might not exist between LNRS adoption and review (3 to 10 year timeframe).

LNRS is a spatial strategy which supports a range of other nature-recovery delivery mechanisms, by prioritising and directing where action should happen. Examples include agri-environment schemes, Biodiversity Net Gain, green infrastructure development, carbon credits (associated with creating new woodlands, restoring peatland and rolling out regenerative agriculture) and / or other local initiatives and associated funding mechanisms.

The assessment area looks at whether appropriate and effective delivery mechanisms are referenced in the strategy, and if the expected contributions of delivery mechanisms (to species abundance targets and to the goal of thriving plants and wildlife) are explained and credible.

#### Things to consider when assessing this area

- LNRS are spatial strategies, not delivery plans. The absence of detailed and funded delivery plans is not grounds for concern. It is not expected that published LNRS will identify specific delivery projects for all measures.
- Assessors should 'fill in the gaps' where appropriate. For example, reference to 'green roofs and walls, street trees and community gardens' can be taken as 'Blue Green



Infrastructure planning' without this needing to be named as a delivery mechanism in the LNRS materials.

- Consider whether delivery mechanisms are generic or specific. 'Blue Green Infrastructure' is generic, 'Essex Green Infrastructure Standards Technical (and Non-technical) Guidance', 'Natural England Urban Greening Factor (UGF)' are specific - depending on their usage within the strategy. Specific detail in relation to mechanisms may be an indicator of better understanding of how delivery will work.
- Assessors should not grade 'up' or 'down' based on the presence or absence of any specific mechanism. What matters is the general presence and prevalence of well-defined delivery mechanisms throughout the strategy overall and importantly, credible connections to species abundance and thriving plants and wildlife.

### Defining delivery mechanisms

Defining 'Delivery Mechanisms' properly is an important part of assessing this area correctly.

The measures in LNRS strategies themselves might be considered delivery mechanisms, since these are actionable steps that can be taken to achieve positive nature recovery effects. However, for the purposes of this assessment, the delivery mechanisms being referred-to sit above or beyond these measures. They are the specific schemes or instruments for **requiring**, **funding**, or **stimulating** the measure to be delivered:

- Requires something to be done because of a law, regulation, or adopted policy or principle
- Pays for something to be done
- **Stimulates** something to be done through communication and engagement (i.e helps generate additional voluntary effort, or voluntary change of practice), or through organising existing resources differently, or by informing stakeholders of better practise.

Table 8 provides a non-exhaustive guide to Delivery Mechanisms expected to be referenced in a variety of LNRS.

### Assessment method

When reviewing the LNRS materials, the main focus for Delivery Mechanisms is likely to be the LNRS strategy document itself as opposed to the mapping assets or other documentation. However, at various points it may be necessary to cross-reference specific delivery schemes or mechanisms that are unfamiliar, particularly locally-specific delivery schemes or frameworks.

Mapping should be reviewed to determine if there is any spatial element to delivery mechanisms.

The following areas are Delivery Mechanism interest themes against which strategy excerpts or section references should be coded in the initial run through of the strategy, and against which summative analysis should be produced afterwards:

- DM1 Clear delivery mechanisms
- DM2 Clarity on using the LNRS after publication
- DM3 Clear appreciation of collaborative working for achieving delivery



Does the LNRS describe a clear relationship with well-explained delivery mechanisms, that are referenced in sufficient detail to understand their relative importance and contribution to meaningful nature recovery?

#### Interest theme for coding: DM1 Clear delivery mechanisms

What delivery mechanisms are referenced in the document? During review of the strategy, assessors should be aware of both explicitly named, and implied, delivery mechanisms. Whenever delivery mechanisms are mentioned this should be captured, so that a picture of the range of delivery mechanisms emerges, whether any are more prominent than others, and whether any notable mechanisms are absent which might have been expected to be referenced.

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Delivery Mechanisms identified	'the key delivery mechanisms for the LNRS are clearly laid out and these are consistent with the expected delivery mechanisms (Table 8) based on the 'cause and effect' model created for this project, as well as the area characteristics (captured in Box B - Characteristic / data area for RA of the Evidence Capture Template)'	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS is set in a largely rural area and outlines that the most important delivery mechanism will be uptake of nature friendly farming practices and schemes, and several of these are listed and explained. <i>Example:</i> The LNRS references work that has been done to estimate available BNG funding for on and offsite mitigation, and identifies that this is key for urban nature recovery delivery.
Contribution of different Delivery Mechanisms	The expected contribution of the broad forms of different Delivery Mechanisms is clear'	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS is set in a largely rural area and outlines that 75% of the mapped opportunities need to take place on farmland, and references the specific delivery mechanisms that are critical for this to happen.
Delivery mechanism links national nature recovery commitments	the links between Delivery Mechanisms and the national nature recovery commitments are explained and credible, in that they relate to ensuring new habitat creation, restoration and improvement, removal or	<i>Example:</i> The LNRS references specific EIP targets for delivery by farmers and land managers and mirrors the ambition to support 80% of farmers to adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10-15% of their land.



	reduction of pressures, adoption of more sustainable practices, etc'	<i>Example</i> : BNG is explained in the context of a conscious policy of focusing offsite mitigation funded in this way in connection with existing areas of importance (targeting use of BNG funds for expansion of existing APIBs, rather than letting the market decide).
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# Does the LNRS make it clear how different stakeholders should use it after publication, with measures described in sufficient detail to enable 'first steps' to be taken?

Interest theme for coding: DM2 - Clarity on using the LNRS after publication

The LNRS will need to support a range of stakeholders to be effective in many different action areas. Can a wide range of stakeholders easily use LNRS outputs to work towards measures and outcomes?

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Identified tools and methods	Specific tools and methods, sources of information, and practitioner communities are identified for measures in the strategy.	<i>Example:</i> Measures are frequently associated with specific toolkits or resources which facilitate their implementation, for example a published guide on nature friendly verge management, as well as reference to a map of highways and which are managed by which agency / organisation.
Targeted measures	Measures are appropriately and clearly targeted at the 'right' stakeholders.	<i>Example:</i> Each measure in the strategy clearly outlines which general stakeholder group it is targeted at and these are appropriate. <i>Example:</i> The LNRS measures highlight where multiple stakeholders may need to cooperate to achieve the outcomes



Clear first steps	It is clear how stakeholders can take the first step towards delivery, while retaining flexibility over exactly how measures are delivered in most cases	<i>Example:</i> Measures signpost funding, planning and delivery toolkits, existing networks and partnerships
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# Does the LNRS demonstrate a clear appreciation of the importance of partnerships and collaborative working to delivery?

Interest theme for coding: DM3 - Clear appreciation of collaborative working for achieving delivery

To be effective, many aspects of LNRS will need to be delivered by organisations other than Responsible Authorities and Supporting Authorities, and many of the more impactful (but difficult) measures may require cross-organisation, cross-sector collaboration.

Title	Supporting Statement	Example
Delivery partners understood	Key partners for delivering measures and achieving outcomes are described	<i>Example</i> - The LNRS describes farmers and landowners as key to delivery, and references farmer cluster organisations in the context of relevant measures. Partner organisations including eNGOs which have been involved in creating the strategy are described
Strong, multi-stakeholder delivery partnerships	Relevant partnerships have been formed (or planned to form) with appropriate structures for collaborative decision making and continued engagement	<i>Example</i> - The strategy states that the cross-sector steering group formed for the development of the LNRS will persist into a delivery phase and the same members have committed to ongoing coordination work.
Partnership fitness for balancing different objectives and land uses, while still achieving nature recovery progress	There is evidence that such partnerships can improve collaboration over land use decisions, or enable 'multifunctional land use' - i.e. enable and encourage land to	<i>Example</i> - The strategy provides a number of strong case study examples of existing partnerships having achieved landscape changes which balanced these needs, and the links between these



be used for nature recovery
measures while continuing to
support economic and social
uses

examples and the measures in the strategy are clear

## LNRS Responsible Authority Perspectives

During 'Step 8 - Submit first pass review to RA - 'reply window' process' of the assessment, the RA is invited to respond to some additional questions which are valuable in understanding the broader picture of their LNRS.

As well as sending the review and invitation to respond at line by line level, RAs will be asked to respond to the following questions, and given a word limit guide of 300 words per response.

- We recognise that producing an LNRS in line with what is required by law and what is set out in the guidance is already an ambitious endeavour. What do you consider to be the most ambitious and impactful elements of your LNRS for contributing to thriving plants and wildlife and species abundance targets?
- Did you access or make use of any additional funding or development resourcing for the development of the LNRS, over and above the new burdens funding from government?
- We recognise that LNRS development has been resourced through new burdens funding but that this is finite. In terms of future commitments to overseeing implementation, monitoring, evaluation and ultimately review, what is your model for funding and resourcing so that the LNRS is maintained as an active strategy, and when you come to review your LNRS you are able to do that with sound evidence?
- Are there firm plans for any permanent positions within your organisation (or supporting organisations) for ongoing LNRS coordination, monitoring, evaluation and review?
- What do you see as the most critical points of coherence with other plans and strategies that will ensure LNRS is embedded within and has weight in wider strategies and plans, and remains relevant?
- Are there any risks of conflict with other strategies and plans that influence spatial planning decisions in your area, and how will priorities between other agenda areas be managed?
- What do you believe will be the most important and impactful delivery mechanisms for achieving nature recovery measures in your area?



## Appendix A - Reference Tables

During the assessment process, reference tables were used to support an understanding of the strategies and as a point of comparison.

### Table 1: Areas of action paraphrased from EIP23

Items taken from EIP (summarised by OEP team, based on Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report by ICF<sup>4</sup>)

Item
Creating more joined up space for nature on land
Restoring our protected sites on land
Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry
Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments
Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species
Mobilising green finance and the private sector
Taking action to restore our global environment
Unlocking private and public finance financial flows
Reducing key drivers and pressures of habitat and species decline

### Table 2: Environment State Areas

Provided by the OEP

Item
Air quality (national, regional, local, urban, etc.)
Water quality (rivers, lakes, seas, coastal zones, groundwater)
Water Resources
Soil quality (national, local, natural areas, agricultural areas)
Ecosystems (biodiversity, vegetation, soil organisms, water organisms)
Humans (health)
Protected Sites condition

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> ICF, 'Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report' (2023).



### Table 3: Environmental Pressures and Drivers

Item	Source
Use of resources	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Pollution (direct pollution to air, water and soil and indirect emissions to air, water and soil)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team). 2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Production of waste (inert and hazardous)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Production of noise	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Natural hazards (e.g. flooding)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Water abstraction	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Habitat damage / destruction (e.g. hedgerows and woodlands, land drainage)	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Invasive non-native species	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team). 2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Climate change	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (summarised by OEP team)
Land use change / Land Management / loss of functionally linked land	OEP report on the drivers and pressures affecting nature in Northern Ireland. 2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP). Treligan (pre-assessment research).
Urbanisation	2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Hydrological change	2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Woodland management	2019 State of Nature Report, via Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Fisheries	Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Other marine extraction / development	Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Recreational Disturbance	Treligan (pre-assessment research)

# Table 4: LNRS coherence – relevant spatial and non-spatial plan & strategies for consideration, mapped to RA characteristics

RA Sampling Characteristic	Key plan or strategy	Link
All	The Air Quality Strategy for England ('framework for local authority delivery')	<u>The air quality strategy for England -</u> <u>GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u>



RA Sampling Characteristic	Key plan or strategy	Link		
All	Clean Air Strategy 2019 (updated by EIP23) and NAPCP	<u>Clean Air Strategy 2019</u> (publishing.service.gov.uk)		
All	Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/the-air-quality-strategy-for-engl and/air-quality-strategy-framework-for -local-authority-delivery		
Urban	Local Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)	https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/		
All	30 x 30	https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/202 3/12/11/30-by-30-a-boost-for-nature-r ecovery/		
All	Species Survival Fund	https://defraenvironment.blog.gov.uk/ 2024/03/15/over-25-million-to-preserv e-wildlife-rich-habitats-in-england/		
All	England Trees Action Plan	England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)		
Only 5 pilots nationally	Protected Site Strategies	https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/202 2/06/16/springing-into-action-with-prot ected-site-strategies-for-natures-reco very/		
Only pilots at present	Species Conservation Strategies	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complyin g-with-the-biodiversity-duty#species-c onservation-strategies		
All	Green Infrastructure Framework	https://designatedsites.naturalengland .org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.asp X		
All	National Planning Policy Framework	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.u k/media/669a25e9a3c2a28abb50d2b 4/NPPF_December_2023.pdf		
All	Local Plan	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-pla ns		
All	Significant supplementary planning guidance documents that contain spatial plans	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/20 12/767/part/5/made		
Coastal	Shoreline Management Plans	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/shorelin e-management-plans		
Coastal	National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/national-flood-and-coastal-eros ion-risk-management-strategy-for-eng land2		
Contains significant Urban areas	Blue Green Infrastructure plans	https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/202 4/10/31/mapping-our-green-and-blue- spaces-the-green-infrastructure-mapp ing-project/		
Contains significant Urban areas	Sustainable Urban Design plans	https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/11- sustainable-cities-and-communities/		
Contains significant Urban areas	Sustainable Drainage Systems	https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/background/sustainabl		



RA Sampling Characteristic Key plan or strategy		Link		
		<u>e-drainage.html</u>		
All	Resources & Waste Strategy	Resources and waste strategy for England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)		
All	Minerals and Waste Plan	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/minerals		
All	Access for All programme	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ government-pledges-to-boost-britains -access-to-nature-ahead-of-cop28		
Contains significant Urban areas	Urban Green Space spatial schemes	https://urbandesignlab.in/spatial-orga nization-of-green-urban-spaces/?srslti d=AfmBOooU_kSBWLIJ8SeZyQMZ4I owHraNUDKMXQz4Ih2NICPkQuKEjr Tf		
National Parks and National Landscape Coverage	National Park or National Landscape Management Plans	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/the-protected-landscapes-duty/ guidance-for-relevant-authorities-on-s eeking-to-further-the-purposes-of-prot ected-landscapes		
National Parks and National Landscape Coverage	Relevant Character Maps	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national- character-area-profiles-information-for -local-decision-making		
Contains significant Rural areas	Agricultural Transition Plan (and ammonia strategy for NI)	The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk)		
Contains significant Rural areas	Catchment Sensitive Farming area maps	https://www.gov.uk/government/public ations/catchment-sensitive-farming-pri ority-catchment-areas		
Contains significant Rural areas	Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) Designations	https://www.gov.uk/government/collec tions/nitrate-vulnerable-zones#:~:text =Nitrate%20Vulnerable%20Zones%2 0(NVZs)%20are.for%20changes%20i n%20nitrate%20concentrations.		
All	Catchment Based Approach CaBA plans	<u>Catchment Management Plans -</u> CaBA (catchmentbasedapproach.org)		
All	River Basin Management Plans	England   Catchment Data Explorer		
Contains significant flood-prone areas	Local flood risk management strategies (LFRMS)	https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/severe -weather/flooding/local-flood-risk-man agement-strategies-lfrms-guidance		
Contains significant flood-prone areas, Coastal	Local Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs)	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-ris k-management-plans-frmps-responsib ilities#:~:text=FRMPs%20must%20co ver%20areas%20of.through%20preli minary%20flood%20risk%20assessm ents_		
All	Natural capital maps - recreational value	https://ecosystemsknowledge.net/res ources/tool-assessor/orval-outdoor-re creation-valuation-tool/		
All	Natural capital maps - soil carbon	https://hub.arcgis.com/maps/theriverst rust::natural-capital-soil-carbon-engla		



RA Sampling Characteristic	Key plan or strategy	Link
		nd/about
All	Natural capital maps - habitat connectivity	https://magic.defra.gov.uk/Metadata_f or_magic/Habitat%20Network%20Ma pping%20Guidance.pdf
Contains significant flood-prone areas, Coastal	Environment Agency Working With Natural Processes flood mitigation maps	https://www.gov.uk/flood-and-coastal- erosion-risk-management-research-re ports/working-with-natural-processes- to-reduce-flood-risk
National Parks and National Landscape Coverage	National Park Partnership Plans	

### Table 5: Expected Stakeholder Groups by LNRS Area Type

National Level Stakeholder / Group or Broad Category	Local Level Stakeholder or Specific Examples	ICF alignment with TPW areas of action (applies to broad item)	RA Sampling Type	Source
Local Planning Authorities	All Local Authorities and National Parks Authorities		All	
Devolved Administrations	Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	Where present	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Major Landowners Groups	Country Land and Business Assocation Regional Team National Farmers Union Regional Team Individual members of The Major Landowners Group	Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Large Landowners Public Sector	Crown Estate MOD Network Rail NHS Local Authorities Forestry Commission		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Environment Agency	Environment Agency Area team	Creating more joined up space for nature on land Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
English Heritage	English Heritage regional team		All	
n/a	Farmer Clusters		Contains significant Rural areas	Treligan (pre-assessment research)



National Level		ICF alignment with		
Stakeholder /		TPW areas of action	RA	
Group or Broad Category	or Specific Examples	(applies to broad litem)	Sampling Type	Source
		Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Creating more joined up space for nature on land Taking targeted actions to restore and manage		Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for
Local Economic		species		
Partnerships	Local Economic Partnerships		All	
Association of Local Environmental Records Centres	Local Environmental Records Centre / Biological Records Centre		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities	Local INFCA	Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	Coastal	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Environmental Partnerships	Local Nature Partnerships Coastal Partnerships Catchment Partnerships		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Communities and societies	Local residents associations Commons associations Countryside groups		All	
Nature Conservation Organisations	Local Wildlife Trust Local RSPB team Freshwater Habitats Trust Rivers Trust Etc	Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Commnities	n/a	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Creating more joined up space for nature on land	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero	n/a	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Department for Business and Trade	n/a	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)



National Level Stakeholder / Group or Broad	Local Level Stakeholder	ICF alignment with TPW areas of action (applies to broad	RA Sampling	
Category	or Specific Examples	item)	Туре	Source
Rural Payments Agency	n/a	Creating more joined up space for nature on land	Contains significant Rural areas	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Heritage Fund	n/a	Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Marine Management Organisation	n/a	Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	Coastal	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Join Nature Conservation Committee	n/a	Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	Coastal	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture	n/a	Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	Coastal	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
National Highways	National Highways Regional Team	Creating more joined up space for nature on land	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Protected Landscape Organisations	National Park Authority National Landscape Team	Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land	Where present	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)
Natural England	Natural England Area Team	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)



National Level Stakeholder / Group or Broad Category	Local Level Stakeholder or Specific Examples	ICF alignment with TPW areas of action (applies to broad item)	RA Sampling Type	Source
Large Landowner Non Public Sector	Ports Airports Private landowners National Trust English Heritage Utilities (water esp.) National Grid		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Community Science Schemes	Recording schemes Environmental assessment schemes Rewilding schemes		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Fisheries	Regional Fisheries Groups		Coastal	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Individual Experts	Species Recorders and local Ecologists (ideally for all taxa groups) Bat groups Bird groups Pollinator groups etc		All	Treligan (pre-assessment research)
Local Authorities	The RA and all the SAs, as well as any other local authorities not listed as specific SAs	Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry Restoring our protected sites on land Creating more joined up space for nature on land Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species	All	Fig 3.3 'The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW' Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report (by ICF, for the OEP)

# Table 6: Key spatial data sets pertinent for conservation planning

ltem	Data source / link	Entry Source
Priority Habitats Data	https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.c om/datasets/Defra::priority-habitats-inventory- england/about	
Habitat Networks by Natural England	https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/5e614 b67-ccd0-4673-8ad8-adddf538125e	SWC
Woodland opportunity maps (various)	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/ pii/S1462901121001830?casa_token=n5G_F 3Sf_uoAAAAA:crRyJJBMrW9Uc7MWpEWOz c3mBiNN2Fhz347wJgQ9NRaWQGN5jDcHA mQ1C6T1o7vcWazsRKfKqIW9	SWC
Peatland opportunity maps (various)		SWC



ltem	Data source / link	Entry Source
The biodiversity gain site register	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-the-biodi versity-gain-sites-register	Stat Guidance (main LNRS guidance)
LNRS Data Viewer	https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/7c5 242fdec7f433aa4ee4510383e3909/page/Hom e/	
Local Authorities own sources of data		
Local Wildlife Site data	LERC, usually	
National Conservation Sites	LNRS data viewer	Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
Local Nature Reserves	LNRS data viewer	Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
Irreplaceable Habitats	Only habitats in The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024.	Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
Tree Maps (various, inc. LA own data)		
UK Species Inventory (naming conventions)		Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad habitats (naming conventions)		Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)
Habitats of principal importance in England priority habitats (naming conventions)		Data standards for LNRS – Advice for Responsible Authorities (https://www.makingspacefornatureken t.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/D ata-Standards-Advice-for-LNRS-Respo nsible-Authorities.pdf)



# Table 7: National and Regional Nature Recovery Networks and Projects

Item
Nature North
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)
National Highways and Wildlife Trusts Network for Nature
Natural England's Resilient Landscapes and Seas work
South East Nature Partnership / Nature South East
South West Local Nature Partnerships
The Fens for the Future Partnership / East Anglian Fens NRN
East of Eden
Purple Horizons
Somerset Coast Levels and Moors
G7 Legacy
Wye Valley
Wendling Beck
Lost Wetlands
Heathland Connections
Bradford & South Pennines
Seaford to Eastbourne
Drink-in the Downs
Cambridge Nature Network
Tees Estuary Recovering Nature (TERN)
The Big Moss Map
Linking Landscapes by the RSPB
Wild East
Back from the Brink
The Northern Forest
Nature's Recovery in the South Downs National Park
The Great Fen
Wildbelt Initiative
Moors for the Future Partnership
Severn Trent Great Big Nature Boost
Wilder Blean Project
North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve
Somerset Levels and Moors Partnership
Wye Valley AONB Partnership
Humberhead Levels Partnership
Thames Estuary Partnership



Item			
Cornwall Nature Recovery Network			
Cumbria Connect			
East Anglian Chalk Rivers Partnership			
Lincolnshire Coastal Grazing Marshes			
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership			
Wild Cotswolds			
Sussex Kelp Recovery Project			
River Nene Regional Park			
Humber Nature Partnership			
Wild Dartmoor			
Severn Estuary Partnership			
North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership			
Oxford to Cambridge Arc			
Meres and Mosses Nature Improvement Area			
Tyne to Tees, Shores, and Seas			
Wilder Blean (Kent Downs Partnership)			
RSPB Wallasea Island Project			
Plymouth Sound National Marine Park			
Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership			
Fenland Restoration Partnership			

## Table 8: Anticipated Delivery Mechanisms

Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates		
Sustainable Farming Incentive	SFI	Pays		
Woodland Creation Grants		Pays		
Blue Green Infrastructure	BGI, Green Infrastructure, Urban Green Infrastructure, Urban Green Space	Stimulates		
Environmental Land Management Schemes (general)	ELMS	Pays		
Biodiversity Net Gain	BNG, Net Gain	Pays		
Countryside Stewardship agreement	CS	Pays		
Higher Level Stewardship agreement	HLS	Pays		
Landscape Recovery Scheme	LRS	Pays		
Woodland Carbon Code		Stimulates		
Woodland Creation Planning Grant	WCPG	Pays		
England Woodland Creation Offer	EWCO	Pays		
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	UTCF	Pays		



Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates
No Mow May		Stimulates
Changes to the planning system / planning strategies		Requires
Local Plan integration		Requires
Supplementary Planning Documents	SPD, Supplementary Planning Guidance, SPG, Supplementary Plans (these are all actually slightly	Poquiros
Supplementally Flamming Documents		
Harming in Protected Lanuscapes		Pays
Nature Recovery Networks		
Inditudi Inditic Reserves		
		Requires
Proposals		Stimulates
Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (in particular Embedding targets into statutory management plans)		Requires
Protected Sites Strategies	PSS	Requires
Updating evidence on protected site condition		Stimulates
Feature assessment approach		Stimulates
Conservation and Enhancement Scheme		Pays
Woodlands for Water project		Pays
Statutory Management Notices		Requires
Guidance for public authorities		Stimulates
Nature Markets development		Pays
Nature for Climate Fund		Pays
Trees and Peat Action Plan		Stimulates
England Trees Action Plan		Stimulates
England Peat Action Plan		Stimulates
Tree Health Resilience Strategy		Stimulates
Keepers of Time Policy		Stimulates
Planted Ancient Woodland	PAWS restoration	Pays
Long Established Woodland consultation		Stimulates
National Planning Policy		Requires
Agroforestry Pilots		Stimulates
Forestry training, proposals and working with the sector		Stimulates



Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates
Local planning authority duty (connected to woodland creation?)		Requires
Woodland creation regulation		Stimulates
Greenhouse Gas removals in Emissions Trading Scheme		Pays
Carbon Markets		Pays
Woodlands tax guidance		Stimulates
Highly Protected Marine Areas & Marine Protected Area measures		Requires
Fisheries Management Plans		Requires
Sustainable Ocean Plan		Stimulates
Marine Spatial Prioritisation		Stimulates
Restoring Meadow, Marsh & Reef		Stimulates
Marine Natural Capital & Ecosystem Assessment		Stimulates
Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement package & associated measures		Stimulates
UK Marine Strategy		Stimulates
UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership		Stimulates
Species Recovery Programme		Stimulates
Species Survival Fund		Pays
Species Conservation Strategies		Stimulates
National deer management		Stimulates
National Pollinator Strategy		Stimulates
UK Bycatch Mitigation Initiative		Stimulates
English Seabird Conservation & Recovery Pathway		Stimulates
Species Reintroduction Taskforce		Stimulates
Translocations & Reintroductions		Stimulates
Green Finance Strategy		Pays
Big Nature Impact Fund		Pays
Local Investment in Natural Capital programme		Pays
Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund		Pays
Conservation covenants		Pays
Marine Net Gain policy		Pays
Cost recovery options		Pays



Example Delivery Mechanism	Alternative Phrases	Requires, Pays, Stimulates
Investment standards & pathways		Pays
Nature Related Financial Disclosures		Stimulates
Directly acquiring land for nature recovery (voluntary sale)		Pays
Directly acquiring land for nature recovery (Compulsory Purchase Orders)		Pays
Section 106 agreement		Pays
Green Recovery Challenge Fund		Pays
Revere partnership with National Parks to derive large-scale woodland and peatland projects		Stimulates
Peatland Carbon Code		Stimulates



# Annex 2 - Methodology for Selecting the 12 LNRS

The methodology for selecting the 12 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) involved a systematic approach to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample for analysis. The approach ensures the sample pool is as diverse as possible with varying attributes across the sites.

### Inclusion of Pilot LNRS:

The analysis will include the pilot LNRS locations, conducted from August 2020 to May 2021, as they were designed to inform policy development. However, it is important to note that the pilot sites predate the publication of strategy guidance and may also be of higher quality compared with other regions due to additional time and resources.

### Sample Size and Criteria:

To ensure a representative analysis, an appropriate sample size of 12 LNRS sites, representing 25% of the total LNRS population and deemed sufficient to cover significant attribute differences will be chosen. The selection criteria is systematic and includes:

- Delivery Opportunities Selection is based on varying levels of opportunity for the LNRS to deliver higher, or fewer biodiversity outcomes as identified through our initial review. The methodology considers areas with different levels of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) activities, which identify areas with development potential and environmental considerations. In areas with higher EIA and HRA activity, the LNRS can provide guidance on mitigating environmental impacts, such as suggesting locations for habitat creation to offset impacts, and providing further opportunities for developers to contribute to biodiversity priorities.
- **Geography** predominantly rural versus predominantly urban areas.
- Geographic size Large geographic areas versus smaller geographic areas
- Regional diversity Coverage of different regions such as North vs South, East vs West.
- Coastal vs landlocked Areas with significant coastland versus those largely landlocked.
- **Designated areas** Areas with significant or less significant coverage of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Areas (SPA), and Ramsar sites.

### **Chosen Assessment Sites**

The following section outlines the methodology and rationale behind the selection of each LNRS site in our sample. Figure 1 visually presents the geographical locations of the chosen LNRS sites, with each selected on the predefined criteria. They each offer unique insights into the essential criteria while ensuring both objectivity and representation across England.



#### Figure 1 - Geographic distribution of selected LNRS sites.



### **Geographic Size**

Geographic size was assessed through a visual examination, using the map of LNRS areas and responsible authorities.<sup>1</sup> Sites were categorised as large or small based on their spatial extent, with those marked as intermediate not chosen. To maintain focus, only sites clearly distinguishable as large or small on the LNRS map have been included for geographic size selection.

### Large Geographic Area - North Yorkshire and York

North Yorkshire and York presents one of the largest LNRS sites within England and encompasses a variety of geography within its boundaries. It is predominantly rural however it also contains a number of more urban areas.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Defra, 'Map of Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Areas and Responsible Authorities' (Gov.uk, n.d.),

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/649db1de45b6a2000c3d45bf/Map\_of\_local\_nature\_rec overy\_strategy\_areas\_and\_responsible\_authorities.pdf.



### Small Geographic Area - Isle of Wight

The Isle of Wight was selected based on its small size. In addition, it is its own island, and therefore may not have as many democratic hurdles as other areas with neighbours.

### Coastal vs Landlocked

Selecting coastal and landlocked sites ensures a comprehensive approach to LNRS inclusion. Landlocked sites refer to any area that is entirely surrounded by land, whereas coastal regions will border areas of coastline. While landlocked regions focus solely on terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, coastal sites offer unique marine habitats that need to be considered in addition to their terrestrial habitats, such as coastal management plans.

Additionally, the inclusion of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs), and coastal strategies such as the National Coastal Erosion Risk Management is an important consideration to ensure coastal LNRS sites are in alignment with broader coastal management objectives.

Our landlocked site selection was quantified by distance from coastline exceeding 75 miles, whereas our coastal site selection focused around the area having over 50% of its border being coastline.

### Coastal - Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were selected due to their extensive coastline and beaches, which span over 400 miles, making it the LNRS site with the longest coastline. The region is known for its rich marine biodiversity and diverse coastal habitats. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were also selected as a pilot region, and within their draft strategy, they included references to integrating marine opportunities into their LNRS strategy.

### Landlocked - Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes was selected as the landlocked site due to its neighbouring many other LNRS sites, and its significant distance from any coastline. It was also selected as a pilot site, however their draft strategy places more emphasis on innovative approaches to green infrastructure and habitat connectivity.

### **Designated Conservation Areas**

For selecting LNRS sites based on designated areas, we utilised the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) Local Nature Recovery Strategy data viewer.<sup>2</sup> This tool displays the 48 LNRS spatial areas overlaid with various national conservation sites including the following:

- Local Nature Reserves
- National Nature Reserves
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protected Areas (SPA), both potential and existing
- Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ)
- Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA)
- Ramsar (Proposed and Existing)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Defra, 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy Data Viewer', June 2024,

https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/7c5242fdec7f433aa4ee4510383e3909/page/Data-Map/#dat a\_s=id%3AdataSource\_16-17f6510d4a6-layer-14%3A12%2Cid%3AdataSource\_19-18a2d1a13ec-lay er-143%3A22.



As the data viewer doesn't incorporate National Parks (NP) or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), we overlaid the map of 'Designated landscapes in England'<sup>3</sup> to consider conservation spaces on a more comprehensive scale. National Parks and AONB were not weighted as heavily as other protected site designations, but were considered in a spatial planning context due to the stakeholder environment presenting different opportunities. For example, a large area of land within a National Park will have active preservation engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and the National Park Authority will be a significant influence on planning.

The site selection process involved a visual assessment of the map with the overlaid national conservation sites to identify LNRS sites with significant coverage of designated areas. Sites were then categorised into two groups: those with high designation coverage, and those with low coverage. Selection limitations were also considered. For example, larger LNRS sites may naturally have more designated area coverage, while smaller areas may have a higher total coverage. Therefore, we considered coverage as relative to the size of each LNRS site. In addition, even though marine conservation areas go beyond the statutory requirements for LNRS, we are considering them within our selection criteria. This is specifically targeted towards the 'added value' on LNRS with some sites incorporating marine recovery into their LNRS's.

### High Designation Cover - Dorset

Dorset was chosen for its extensive coverage of designated conservation areas, with a significant proportion of Dorset highlighted on the map. Dorset was an appropriate choice when focusing just on protected site designations, but also when the map was overlaid with NP and AONB due to its particularly high coverage of AONB. In addition to terrestrial designations, Dorset also has Marine Conservation Zones, Special Protected Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and internationally recognised sites such as the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to LNRS that encompasses both terrestrial and marine environments.

### Less Designation Cover - Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

Leicester, Leicester and Rutland were selected for their lower coverage of designation conservation areas. Despite the region having several habitat types such as agricultural land, woodlands and built-up urban areas, it has fewer designated conservation sites. This selection provides an opportunity to explore potential biodiversity improvement without the constraints or opportunities associated with formal designations.

### Delivery Opportunities in the Planning System

We performed a literature review of all 48 LNRS sites, providing an overview of their current status, future plans, stakeholders and collaborators, and any other information of interest. Sites were categorised based on their opportunity to deliver significant biodiversity outcomes. Selection criteria for higher opportunity sites included having comprehensive plans, with significant progress and integration with the planning system whereas lower opportunity sites may include preliminary plans, fewer completed actions, slower progress and little to no incorporation with the planning system. It's important to note that sources may become outdated, however, to reduce selection bias we also used Defras project tracker data for cross-verification to ensure the selection is as representative as possible.

Considering the importance of environmental assessments in the delivery of LNRS, we integrated data on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA). The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Defra, 'Designated Landscapes in England' (Gov.uk, April 2016),

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-parks-8-point-plan-for-england-2016-to-2020/title



OEP's report highlighted the Local Planning Authorities with the most EIAs and HRAs conducted in the previous year and we included LNRS sites with both high and low levels of EIA and HRA activity to examine their influence on the effective delivery of LNRS. The incorporation of environmental impact assessments were split into two categories for selection:

- 1. High levels of EIA applications with a well-developed strategy indicates robust environmental oversight and potential for effective LNRS delivery.
- 2. Absent or minimal presence of EIA/HRA activity present opportunities to explore LNRS implementation in less regulated environments.

The data from the Government's live tables on planning statistics did not directly highlight low levels of EIA and HRS activity. Instead, we identified LPAs with little to no applications, then reviewed their environmental strategies outlined on their LNRS council website to determine the level of delivery opportunity.

### Delivery Opportunities in the Planning System: High - County Durham

County Durham was chosen for its extensive coverage of designated conservation areas and high levels of EIA and HRA activity. Durham County Council was one of the areas that received a relatively high number of EIA applications (19). Additionally, their strategy addresses coherence with other strategies such as Biodiversity Net Gain, Environmental Land Management Schemes and demonstrates how they will link their LNRS with planning and development.

### Delivery Opportunities in the Planning System: Low - Greater Essex

Greater Essex had limited information on their LNRS strategy and no data on EIA and HRA integration within the planning system compared to other LNRS sites. While there was no direct reference to 'low / no levels' of EIA and HRA development, the absence of this information, coupled with a review of Essex County Council's strategy suggests that their LNRA may be less developed compared to other sites and offers a contrasting example. The relative lack of integration means that they are likely to have fewer structured opportunities for developers to contribute to the delivery of biodiversity priorities. The inclusion of Essex in this analysis will illustrate the challenges and needs faced by an LNRS area that is in an earlier stage of development.

### **Regional Diversity**

To ensure regional diversity in the selection of LNRS sites, the methodology involved choosing two sites from distinct areas of England. This criterion is essential to capturing the varying ecological, geographical and socio-economic difference across the country. Regional diversity can demonstrate the difference in environmental conditions and conservation needs present in different parts of England. Furthermore, this diversity aids understanding of how local strategies are tailored to address specific regional challenges, providing a more representative evaluation of LNRS implementation.

### North-West - Lancashire

Lancashire was selected to represent the North West of England and its site offers terrestrial and coastal landscapes as well as offering both rural and build up regions.

### South-East - Kent and Medway

Kent and Medway was selected as a similar alternative to Lancashire, however located within the South-East of England. Its inclusion represents a variety of landscapes such as coastlines, agricultural land and built-up areas.



The inclusion of both these sites help balance the regional representation and provide broader understanding of how LNRS can be tailored to specific regional issues.

### Geography: Rural vs Urban

To determine whether an LNRS site is rural or urban, we overlaid the map from Planning Data showing built-up areas.<sup>4</sup> The colour map uses up-to-date data sourced from the Office of National Statistics. Selection was determined by visually assessing these overlays to categorise sites as predominantly rural, urban or neither (contained a mixture of rural and urban areas).

For selection measurables, sites with particularly built up areas and containing a high colour density were categorised as urban, whereas sites lacking a distinct amount of colour were categorised as rural. Only those representing the extreme spectrum of urban and rural were selected.

### Urban - Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester has a population density of 2,247 people per km<sup>2</sup>, ranking third in the UK according to the 2021 census data.<sup>5</sup> It was also selected as a pilot region and provides important data on urban nature recovery efforts.

### **Rural - Herefordshire**

With up to 95% of the county classified as rural<sup>6</sup>, and having one of the lowest population densities (87 people per km<sup>2</sup>)<sup>7</sup>, Herefordshire was the most appropriate rural site selection. Its inclusion helps address challenges that are unique to rural areas, such as agricultural land management and habitat connectivity.

# Table 1 - an overview of the selected LNRS site across England, categorised by the predetermined selection criteria.

ID	Region	Delivery Opportunities	Rural or Urban	Geographic size	Coastal or landlocked	Designation size	Regional diversity
02	Durham	High	Rural	Large	Coastal	High Coverage	North West
34	Greater Essex	Low	Neither	Large	Coastal	High Coverage	South East
11	Greater Manchester (Pilot)	High	Urban	Small	Landlocked	Less Coverage	North West
20	Herefordshire	Low	Rural	Mid	Landlocked	Less Coverage	North West

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Natural England, 'Map of Planning Data for England' (Gov.uk, June 2024),

https://www.planning.data.gov.uk/map/?dataset=built-up-area#52.46302382447686,-0.392853822233 9739,5.521586324774721z.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> UK National Statistics, 'Greater Manchester', City Population, August 2022,

https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/admin/E11000001\_\_greater\_manchester/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Understanding Herefordshire, 'Economy and Place', n.d.,

https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/economy-place/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Understanding Herefordshire, 'Population', n.d.,

https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/population/#:~:text=Herefordshire%20is%20a%20predomi nantly%20rural,87%20people%20per%20square%20kilometre).



7	North Yorkshire and York	High	Rural	Large	Coastal	High Coverage	North East
46	Isle of Wight	Low	Neither	Small	Coastal	High Coverage	South
31	Buckinghams hire and Milton Keynes (Pilot)	High	Urban	Mid	Landlocked	Less Coverage	South
41	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Pilot)	High	Rural	Large	Coastal	High Coverage	South West
19	Leicestershire , Leicester and Rutland	Low	Neither	Large	Landlocked	Less Coverage	North
44	Dorset	High	Rural	Mid	Coastal	High Coverage	South
06	Lancashire	High	Neither	Mid	Coastal	Less Coverage	North West
40	Kent and Medway	High	Neither	Large	Coastal	Large	South East