

Portfolio holder decision – Portfolio holder for Planning and Economy – 10 October 2025

Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>Hampshire County Council has published its final Local Nature Recovery Strategy and issued it to NFDC for consultation as a supporting authority in accordance with the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 on 1st October 2025 starting a 28-day consultation period.</p> <p>The LNRS has been informed by public and stakeholder engagement at the outset of the project, and the results of the public consultation that was undertaken between 12 May and 23 June 2025</p> <p>This latest consultation gives New Forest District Council the opportunity to review and approve the final LNRS for publication.</p> <p>The council is supportive of the vision for the strategy. It will assist in providing a framework to promote and deliver nature recovery in the district and beyond. It will help target action where tangible benefits can be realised, working towards habitats that are “bigger, better and more joined up” which will in turn be of benefit to a range of species and species assemblages.</p>
Recommendation	That approval be given to the final Local Nature Recovery Strategy (provided as Appendix A) for publication.
Reasons for recommendation	<p>To enable Hampshire County Council to move forward with the publication of the new strategy.</p> <p>Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new statutory duty placed on local government in England, as part of the Environment Act 2021. It requires local authorities to work together to</p>

	<p>develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies across 48 areas in England.</p> <p>Under the Environment Act 2021, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs appointed Hampshire County Council as the 'responsible authority' for the development of a LNRS for Hampshire. The development of the final LNRS fulfils part of the duty.</p>
Wards	District Wide
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Derek Tipp – Planning and Economy
Strategic Director	James Carpenter – Place, Operations and Sustainability
Officer Contact	<p>Chris Hodsman Planning Technical Specialism Manager 023 8028 5747 chris.hodsman@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to agree the council's endorsement and recommendation to approve publication of the final version of the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).
2. Hampshire County Council (HCC) were appointed by Defra as the Responsible Authority for the Hampshire area. NFDC has worked closely with HCC throughout the process as a Supporting Authority.
3. The council is supportive of the final LNRS. It will assist in providing a framework to promote and deliver nature recovery in the district and beyond. It will help target action where tangible benefits can be realised, working towards habitats that are "bigger, better and more joined up" which will in turn be of benefit to a range of species and species assemblages.

Background

What are Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

4. LNRS were introduced by the [Environment Act 2021](#), and are a new system of plans for nature recovery. Their role is to provide a county-wide, practical solution for nature recovery.

- This is important for nature's own sake and for all the things that we rely on nature for, like clean water and food production.
 - For nature to recover, targeted, co-ordinated and collaborative action is required.
5. A total of 48 LNRSs will be developed mostly at the county level, which will join seamlessly to cover the whole of England and create a National Nature Recovery Network. Currently only 8 have been adopted, with this Hampshire LNRS, therefore, being one of the frontrunners.
 6. It is intended that LNRSs be updated between three and 10 years after publication at the request of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

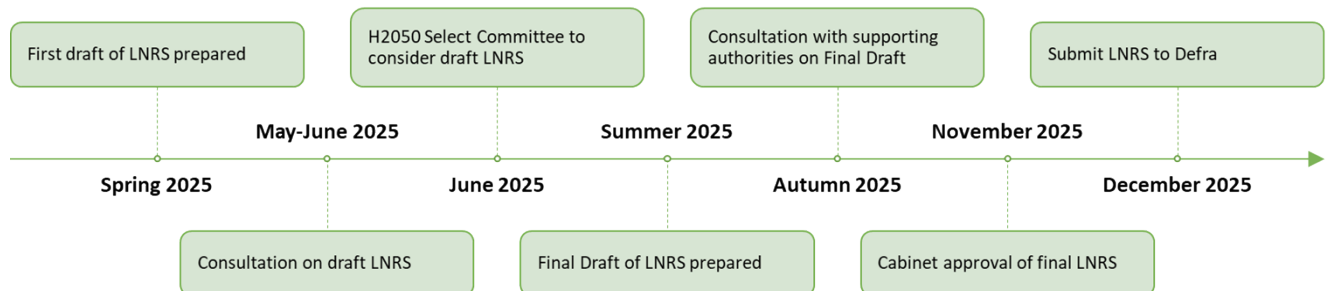
What the strategy sets out to do

7. The aim of the LNRS is to identify locations to create, restore and enhance habitats, providing the best opportunities to deliver nature recovery.
8. This LNRS for Hampshire presents a key opportunity to reverse the decline in the county's habitats and species. By providing the direction needed to create a biodiversity-rich environment, wildlife and people will mutually benefit from nature recovery.
 - The strategy will help to target future effort and funding.
 - It also provides a range of options and recommendations on delivery, with supporting evidence.
 - The LNRS does not dictate how land is used or limit the choices land managers have on their land. The maps will provide a range of options to help people and organisations make evidence-based decisions.

Why the strategy is needed

9. Like the rest of the UK, the natural environment and biodiversity across Hampshire has declined significantly over the last 50 years and is under continued threat.
10. Hampshire has a beautiful and varied landscape with an impressive diversity of unique and important habitats. These include ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows, iconic chalk streams, species-rich downland, important heathland mosaics including the New Forest, and coastal and marine habitats. The variety of habitat types within Hampshire is reflected in a rich flora and fauna.

11. However, there has been a decline in the quality, variety and quantity of natural areas in Hampshire due to multiple pressures from a growing human population. These threats include increased development, agricultural and land use changes, invasive species, pollution, recreational pressure and climate change.
12. With Hampshire, including the New Forest, facing complex pressures from housing growth, infrastructure delivery, agricultural intensification, and recreational demand, the LNRS will provide a shared spatial framework to guide nature recovery efforts across these diverse landscapes, helping to target investment, inform Local Plans and land management, and support delivery of wider priorities such as climate resilience, water quality, and health and wellbeing.
LNRS Timeline
13. The LNRS for Hampshire is being developed through a structured process from Spring to Winter 2025. Key milestones included the preparation of a first draft in Spring, with public consultation having taken place in May–June, followed by a review by the H2050 Select Committee in June. Further refinement with supporting authorities took place over Summer and Autumn 2025.
14. This report represents the final step of approval by supporting authorities before the final strategy is scheduled for HCC Cabinet approval in Autumn 2025, with submission to Defra by December 2025.



The Hampshire Local Nature Recovery (LNRS) Documents - What the strategy document contains

15. The LNRS for Hampshire is now split into five parts as follows:
 - Part 1: Introduction and description of the strategy area.
 - Part 2: Priorities and measures.
 - Part 3: Species recovery.
 - Part 4: Technical Appendices.
 - Part 5: Glossary

16. The document has been split to respond to previous consultation comments and try and help make the document more user friendly, easier to navigate and cross reference between the different parts of the Strategy.
17. The updated versions of the Strategy and Local Habitat Map will not replace the drafts on the HCC website until the strategy publication has been approved.
18. The Statement of Biodiversity Priorities is contained in Parts 1 to 3, and the Local Habitat Map (consisting of a number of maps in static document form), is embedded within Part 2. The Local Habitat Map can also be viewed in an interactive online format on the LNRS webpages available here. The map includes all geographically located measures.
19. The LNRS for Hampshire relates to the whole county of Hampshire, including the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth, and the parts of the New Forest National Park and South Downs National Park that fall within Hampshire.

Commentary and Key Matters

20. Whilst the final LNRS is not yet published, work is underway to ensure LNRS objectives are given due regard and are embedded into the emerging Local Plan and reflected in guidance especially relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
21. Following analysis of the public consultation feedback, the final version of the LNRS for Hampshire has been produced. This has been updated considerably to take into account the comments received. It is noted that comments made by NFDC have in many cases been incorporated into the final version including:
 - Updating baseline information for greater horseshoe bats within the district following recent radio-tracking work commissioned by NFDC to inform the Local Plan evidence base.
 - Providing commentary on potential measures which could be taken for greater horseshoe bats e.g. survey, sensitive lighting, proactive roost provision.
 - Reference to New Forest SAC Management Plan to update to Version II (2025)
 - Use of local provenance seed sources or green haylage from local donor meadows
22. Details about the interaction of the LNRS with planning have been added to the Strategy. The Strategy notes that this is based on information that has been provided by Defra to Hampshire County Council directly, as there has been no updated guidance or legislation

with respect to the responsible authority's role in monitoring or delivering the Strategy. The strategy states:

"LNRSs will have an important role in planning, with local planning authorities having a legal duty to have regard to the Strategy. This means that the information within the LNRS may be a material consideration when developing plan documents and making planning decisions. Planning practice guidance advises that local planning authorities should be aware of those areas mapped and identified in the LNRS, and the measures proposed in them, and consider how these should be reflected in their local plan. In doing so, they should consider what safeguarding would be appropriate to enable the proposed actions to be delivered. This will enable local planning authorities to support the best opportunities to create or improve habitat to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including where this may enable development in other locations. The LNRS can also inform the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and Spatial Development Strategies.

LNRSs do not designate land for specific uses. Instead, they highlight areas that may hold potential for enhancing biodiversity. This process does not restrict development, or prevent land from being used - it aims to support informed decision-making that balances environmental and development needs".

Corporate plan priorities

23. The LNRS strategy will deliver across several key elements of the three key priorities of the Corporate Plan, in particular that of 'Place' in protecting the climate, coast and natural environment. The council has a duty to 'have regard' to the LNRS in the preparation of the Local Plan review. The strategy will help the council to ensure that development considers the key environmental factors to safeguard sustainable outcomes. The district council is supportive of the vision for the strategy.

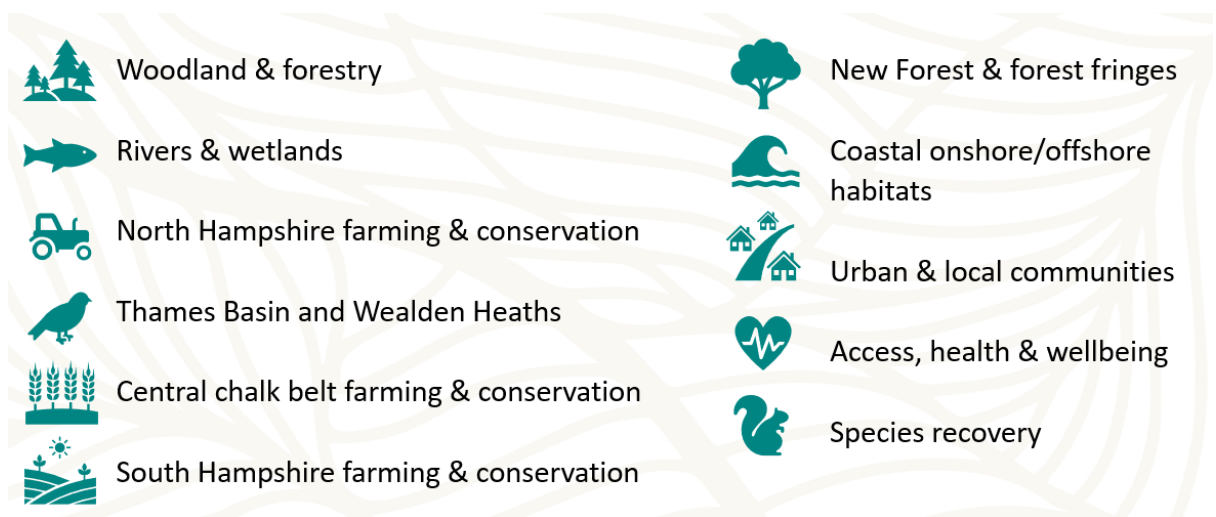
Options appraisal

24. Hampshire County Council are the responsible body for the production of the LNRS (introduced by the Environment Act 2021) which mandates responsible authorities to prepare and publish these strategies. Consequently, there were no alternative options to consider.

Consultation undertaken

25. The LNRS for Hampshire has been developed in partnership with key local partners and a wide range of experts, stakeholders, agencies, organisations and communities across Hampshire and adjacent areas who were interested in helping to deliver nature recovery.

26. The council has had officer representatives on the LNRS Working Group and LNRS Steering Group established in July 2023 which have met regularly through this period.
27. The consultation process has included a series of 20 workshops - both for interested individuals and organisations, and for landowners and specialist groups. These workshops had over 450 attendees. A public survey was also run in Spring 2024 with over 1,500 responses, alongside other means of engagement such as working groups and presence at agricultural and county events. The workshops comprised those around the following themes:



28. The New Forest and Forest Fringes workshop was held in Lyndhurst Community Centre on 01/02/2024. NFDC were represented and assisted in facilitating the event. HCC also attended the New Forest and Hampshire show in 2024 to engage on LNRS.
29. Officers gave a [presentation](#) to members at the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 13th March 2025. The presentation covered the LNRS process, partners and key stakeholders, engagement, details of the public survey and its results, issues for the New Forest and Hampshire, potential measures, priority species and the timeline for 2025.
30. The feedback from these engagement activities helped to create the shortlists of priorities, issues and opportunities for nature that were included in the draft LNRS for Hampshire which was subject to public consultation between 12/05/2025 and 23/06/2025.
31. The public consultation included an online survey which enabled people to provide their views on the draft strategy, and comments were also received via email. NFDC submitted a response to this consultation (Agreed by Portfolio Holder Decision). The online survey yielded 276 responses, and an additional 100 emails were received

with detailed comments on the draft Strategy. A [consultation report](#) has been prepared which provides more detail about the consultation, the key themes raised in the responses received and how the Strategy has been updated in response. This is provided as Appendix B. In accordance with the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023, all responses to the consultation have been published online.

Financial and resource implications

32. None arising directly from this decision.

Legal implications

33. The LNRS has been prepared in accordance with the:

- Environment Act 2021
- The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023

34. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation. While there are no direct legal implications, the council will have to have regard to the LNRS in complying with the strengthened biodiversity duty and in its preparation of the Local Plan review.

Risk assessment

35. There are no requirements for a formal risk assessment arising from this report, however, there is a risk that the LNRS may not be signed off by all the relevant Supporting Authorities (local authorities) in Hampshire, but it is not anticipated to be a high risk given the high and sustained levels of stakeholder involvement.

Environmental / Climate and Nature implications

36. The consideration of environmental and ecological impacts and opportunities is an integral part of the LNRS preparation process.

37. The LNRS will help to identify nature-based solutions to help counter the impacts of climate change and therefore will be a key tool in helping to ensure Hampshire's natural environment can adapt to the changing climate.

Equalities implications

38. None arising directly from this decision.

Crime and disorder implications

39. None arising directly from this decision.

Data protection/ Information governance/ ICT implications

40. None arising directly from this decision.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

41. The statutory purposes of National Parks are:

- conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas designated; and
- promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.

42. The LNRS will help to further these purposes by helping the Council to target action on the elements and geographic areas that will facilitate nature recovery to the benefit of wildlife, and related public enjoyment of the New Forest. The strategy provides clear mapping and commentary on the opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and sets out potential measures. These elements will help NFDC in the production of its new Local Plan, the determination of planning applications, and the delivery of Council strategies relating to the coast and other interests.

Portfolio holder endorsement

43. I have agreed to the recommendation of this report.

Signed: Cllr Derek Tipp

Dated: 10 October 2025

Appendices:

Appendix A – Final Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Appendix B – LNRS Consultation Report (September 2025)

Background Papers:

The following documents set out the process each Responsible Authority must follow and what each strategy should include:

- Data Standards Advice for LNRS Responsible Authorities

- Defra guidance on Identifying and agreeing priorities and potential measures within LNRS
- Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance
- Mapping potential measures in Local Nature Recovery Strategies advice
- Species Recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023

Date on which notice given of this decision – 10 October 2025

Last date for call in – 17 October 2025

APPENDIX A – Final Local Nature Recovery Strategy

APPENDIX B – LNRS Consultation Response (September 2025)