

Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire

Consultation Report

A summary of the public consultation responses on the
draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire

September 2025



Introduction

This report provides a summary of the feedback received during the public consultation on the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Hampshire, which was held from 12 May to 23 June 2025.

Established under the Environment Act 2021, Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new framework for nature recovery planning across England. They serve as a key mechanism for delivering the National Nature Recovery Network and comprise:

- A map identifying areas of high ecological value
- Opportunities for future nature enhancement
- Locally defined priorities for nature recovery

The consultation draft of the LNRS for Hampshire was developed collaboratively with the unitary authorities of Southampton and Portsmouth, local planning authorities within Hampshire, the New Forest and South Downs National Park Authorities, and Natural England (collectively referred to as the ‘Supporting Authorities’). Through regular Steering Group and Working Group meetings with planning and ecology professionals, we ensured comprehensive representation across all areas of Hampshire. The consultation draft was also informed by public and stakeholder engagement that was undertaken in early 2024.

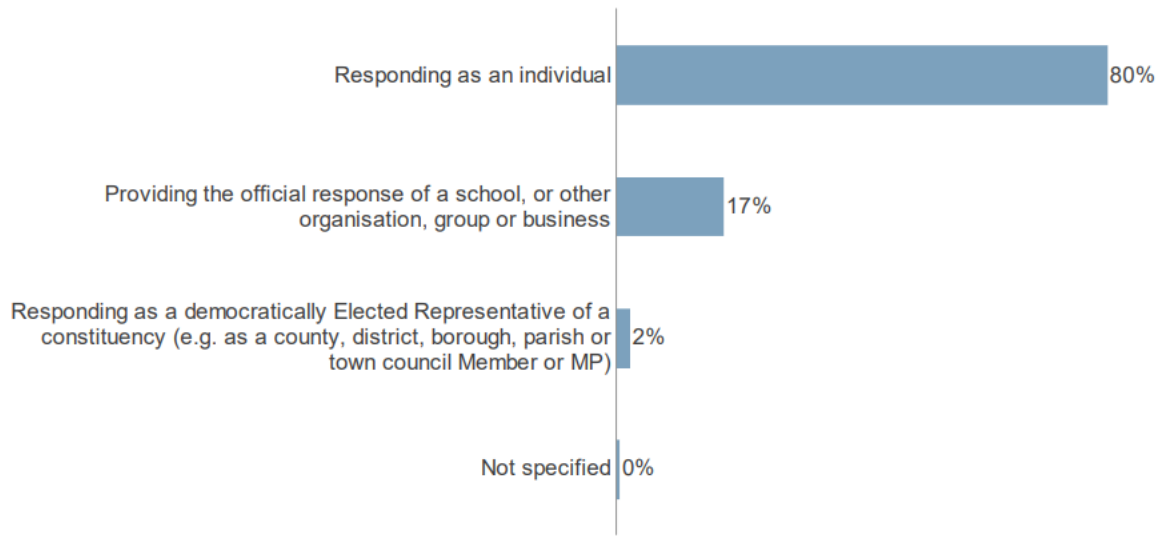
The six-week consultation was promoted via libraries, country parks, and outdoor centres throughout Hampshire. A press release and social media campaign—including a video—were shared through Hampshire County Council and Supporting Authority channels. Individuals who had participated in earlier workshops were directly notified of the consultation’s launch.

The consultation was also featured in several newsletters, including Hampshire County Council’s ‘Your Countryside’ and Portsmouth City Council’s ‘Planet Portsmouth’. Additionally, a webinar was held in partnership with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) to engage farmers and landowners. Supporting Authorities further disseminated the consultation through their networks, targeting local charities and community groups with an interest in nature recovery.

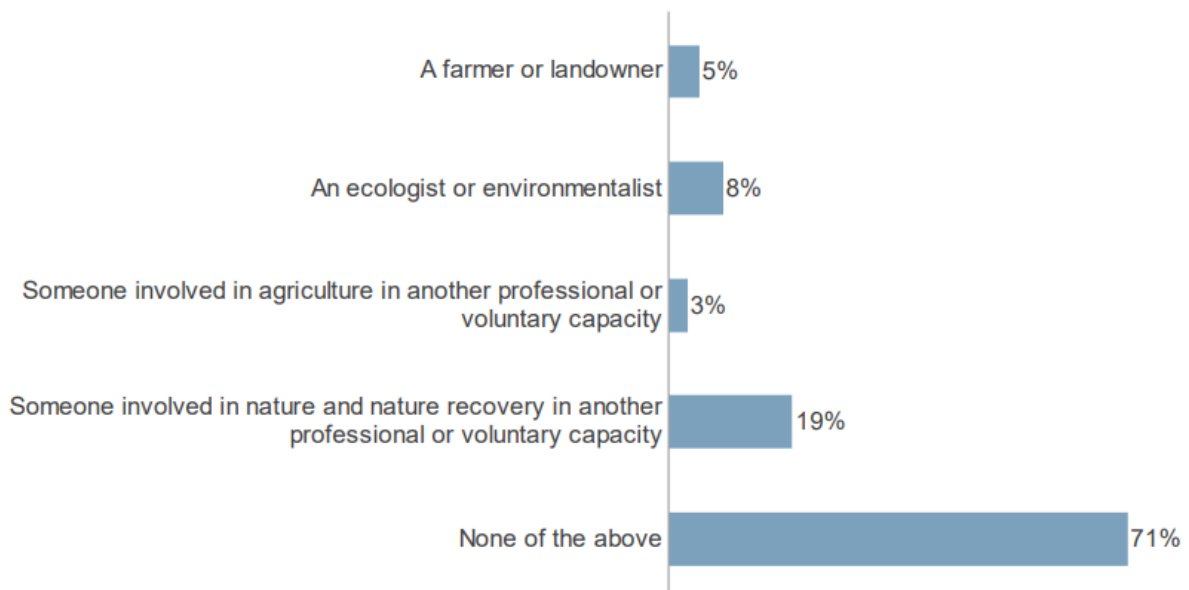
The consultation invited feedback on both the written content of the draft Strategy and the accompanying Local Habitat Map. Responses were collected via an online form with 93 questions in total, which included links to relevant sections of the Strategy to facilitate cross-referencing. Participants could choose which topics to comment on based on their areas of interest, with questions not shown for areas not selected. The survey included a mix of closed and open-ended questions. All responses have been analysed, and where appropriate, revisions have been made to the Strategy and/or the Local Habitat Map.

A total of 276 responses were received through the online survey for the consultation, and 101 responses via email. Of the 101 responses received via email, 58 were from individuals with the remaining 43 from organisations. Some organisations completed the online survey and emailed directly to elaborate on their comments.

Details of respondents to the survey can be found in the following charts.

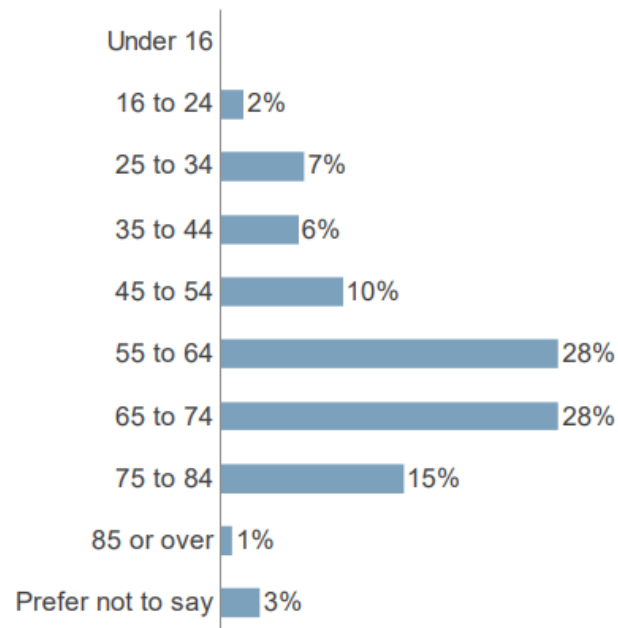


For individuals responding, would you consider yourself (multiple responses permitted) –

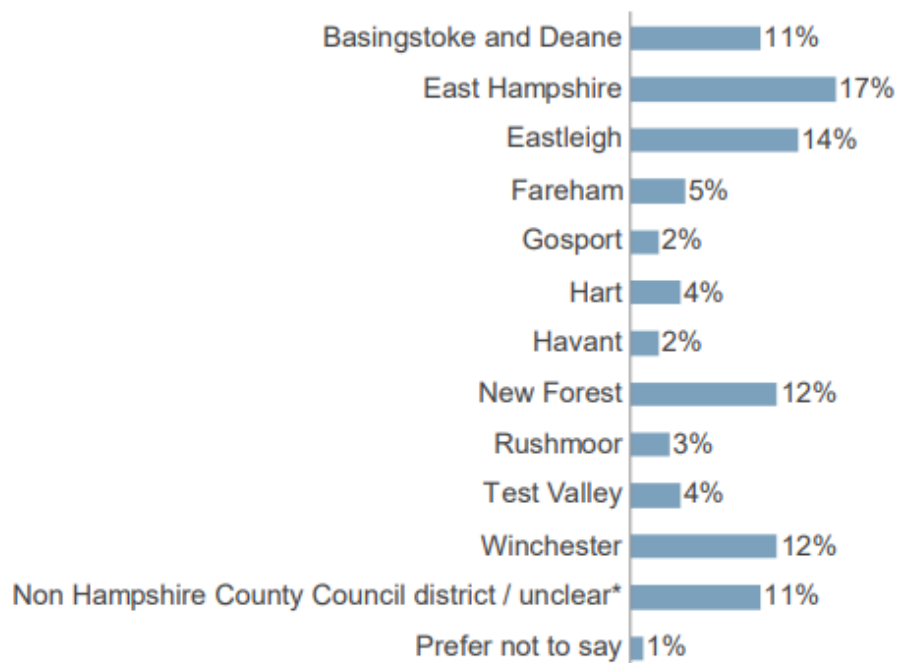




Age of respondents –

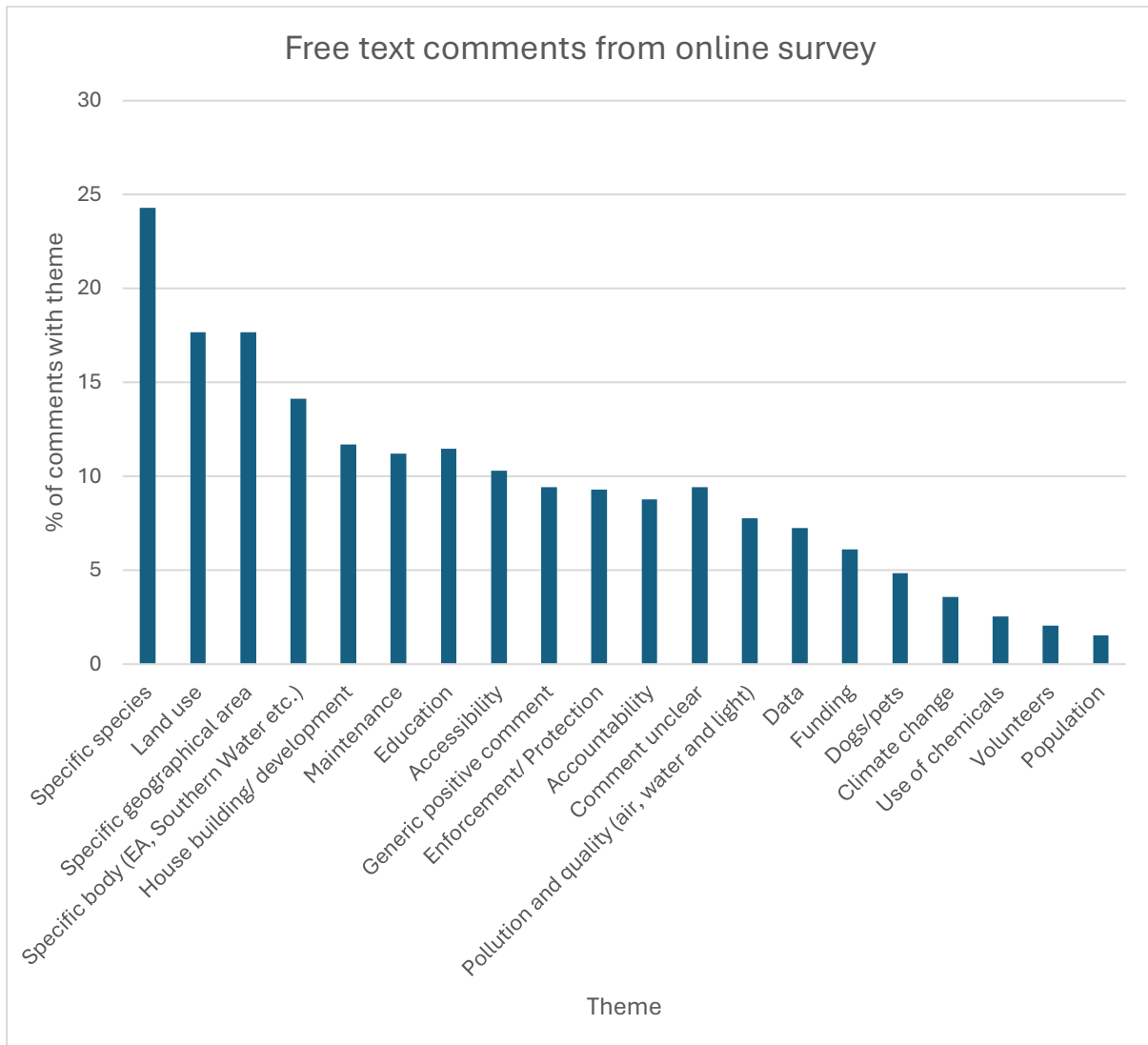


Location of individuals responding –



Full analysis of the online survey responses is [published on our website](#).

Within the 276 responses to the online survey, 786 free text comments were provided covering multiple themes, which are summarised in the below graph.



Key themes raised in consultation responses

The following themes emerged from the comments received during the consultation period. These are set out in the following section along with our response to the issues raised.

More needs to be done to tackle sewage pollution

Rivers and watercourses are covered in detail in the LNRS for Hampshire in 'Description of the strategy area and its biodiversity' in 'Part 1: Introduction and Description of Strategy Area', and 'Part 2: Priorities and Measures'. Within these sections, concerns around water quality and links to wastewater pollution are highlighted. The remit of the LNRS with regards to wastewater pollution is limited. While the LNRS promotes nature-based solutions at wastewater treatment works (e.g. settlement lagoons and reedbeds), it does not have regulatory authority over water companies or infrastructure. Implementation depends on collaboration with external bodies like water companies and the Environment Agency. Targets for reducing phosphorus from treated wastewater (e.g. 80% reduction by 2038) are national commitments, not directly enforceable by the LNRS. Delivery depends on national funding mechanisms and regulatory frameworks, such as the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). The LNRS identifies sewage discharges as a threat to freshwater habitats and species, but it cannot mandate pollution controls. It relies on influencing policy and encouraging voluntary action through incentives and partnerships. Improvements to water quality require catchment-wide coordination, including with neighbouring LNRSs, water companies, farmers, and regulators. The LNRS alone cannot deliver these outcomes without broader cooperation.

The relationship between the LNRS and Planning is unclear

Following this feedback, we have added information on how the LNRS links to Planning in the introduction section of the LNRS. Please see text below –

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

Overdevelopment is exacerbating existing problems and could be creating new ones

The LNRS acknowledges that urban and suburban development has caused cumulative habitat and species losses. However, it does not have statutory powers to prevent or restrict development. Planning decisions remain the responsibility of local planning authorities, who have been closely involved in the creation of the LNRS as Supporting Authorities. While it promotes sustainable urban planning, the LNRS cannot dictate land use changes or prevent further development on natural spaces. Where development does occur, the LNRS encourages biodiversity net gain (BNG) and recreational access mitigation.

The LNRS is lacking information on how it will be monitored and enforced

This is the first iteration of the LNRS, with planned reviews every three to 10 years as per Defra guidance. The baseline provided by this version will provide a blueprint for these future reviews. While the LNRS sets out species recovery priorities and recommends monitoring, at this stage it does not have statutory powers to enforce monitoring or require data sharing from landowners, developers, or other stakeholders. The LNRS relies heavily on voluntary data contributions, and organisations such as the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre. There is no dedicated monitoring framework or funding stream within legislation to ensure consistent, long-term tracking of progress. Success depends on partnerships, incentives, and voluntary reporting, rather than enforceable standards. Whilst the LNRS is a material consideration in planning decisions, it is the responsibility of the local planning authority to take these decisions in the planning balance.

The LNRS is lacking information on delivery and funding for landowners

We continue to await guidance from Defra with regards to delivery and funding. The LNRS is not intended to dictate how land is used or limit the choices landowners and land managers have in the way they manage their land. The LNRS does not provide new protections for habitats, species, or places. Landowners are not legally bound by LNRS priorities unless these are adopted into planning policy or funding schemes. For landowners and farmers, the LNRS identifies habitat opportunities and offers guidance, but participation is voluntary. It can support access to schemes like Environmental Land Management (ELM) but cannot compel involvement. The LNRS cannot enforce compliance with its recommendations. It relies on collaboration, incentives, and voluntary action from landowners to achieve nature recovery goals.

The Draft Strategy is not user friendly

Ensuring the Strategy accurately reflects the variety of biodiversity across Hampshire, and meets the statutory regulations and guidance, has resulted in the document being long and complex. We have used every endeavour to make the document accessible, however we recognise that a lot of the content is technical in nature. To try and help make the document more user friendly, we have split the document into parts to make it easier to navigate and to help those who may want to cross reference between the different parts of the Strategy.

The LNRS is lacking information on how it can be supported by parish councils

The network of parish councils across Hampshire provides a significant resource of local knowledge with regards to nature recovery. We recognise that they will have an important role to play in the delivery of the LNRS. However, there is currently little information from Defra on how LNRSs are to be delivered, the role of the responsible authority and other public bodies and therefore it is not possible to provide any further information within the Strategy. It is expected that further guidance and legislation will be published in due course which will provide the information and future iterations of the LNRS will be able to include this.

There was not sufficient engagement with landowners

At the outset of the project, we undertook a stakeholder mapping exercise that identified a significant number of landowners to engage with. This included cluster farms, large estates, operational land holdings (such as the ports and airports), and public sector landowners (such as the MoD). We reached out to all of these stakeholders when we undertook our initial engagement to invite them to attend in person or online workshops. Given the size of the Strategy area and the number of landowners we were unable to contact each landowner individually. To try and address this, we partnered with the NFU (National Farmers' Union) and CLA (Country Land and Business Association) as well as the local planning authorities to ensure that could use their networks to reach as many landowners as we could. We also attended some of the country shows, promoted the public consultation in libraries, country parks and on social media. Newsletters were also used to spread the word – both by ourselves and our partners, along with webinars hosted by the NFU and CLA.

Species

We received several comments regarding the priority species. There are no additional species recommendations from the consultation responses that will be incorporated into the prioritised list. At the request of the Hampshire Bat Group, we have removed the Leisler's bat from the priority list.

Mapping

The Local Habitat Map, made up of a number of layers, provides a snapshot of data. We understand that this data can in some instances change over time, in particular with regards to land use and species information. Once published, the Local Habitat Map will not be updated – Defra has mandated that the data remain as at the time of approval and publication of the LNRS and therefore will not be ‘live’. It will next be updated alongside the Strategy upon instruction from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Following feedback through the consultation, the following changes have been made to the Local Habitat Map:

Areas of Particular Importance to Biodiversity (APIB)

- Amendments to Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC) – boundaries or measures changed on 37, 13 have been deleted, and 25 new SINC added
- Five new Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) added
- Sand dune data removed in areas with inaccurate national data
- Ancient woodland data amended

Potential Measures

- All SINC with measures now shown on this map
- Opportunity Focus Areas and Additional Sites layers have been combined to form Habitat Opportunity Areas, with duplicates and overlaps removed
- 17 small Habitat Opportunity Areas added as a result of aligning with the five neighbouring LNRs
- Additional Habitat Opportunity Areas added and a small number removed as a result of landowner and local authority suggestions
- Riparian buffers now mapped at 10m for all rivers and streams (previously 10m for rivers and 5m for streams)
- ‘In-channel’ measures added to all river SINC
- Additional measures have been added to many SINC and Habitat Opportunity Areas, with appropriate or duplicate measures removed
- ‘Holes’ have been removed from the Groundwater Special Protection Zones except where they cover large areas of built land
- Boundaries of wood pasture/parkland areas re-digitised for greater accuracy

Areas that Could Become of Importance to Biodiversity (ACB)

- All APIBs have been removed (and thus the changes that have been made to SINC and LNRs)
- Slithers/fragments have been removed as much as possible