



Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee

Agenda Item

7

13 November 2023

Title:	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Report of:	Steve Cox, Interim Director Place and Connectivity
Lead Member:	Cllr. Bridget Smith
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	No vote required

Recommendations:

A	To note progress with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
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Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
✓	Achieving good growth
	Increased connectivity
✓	Enabling resilient communities
	Achieving best value and high performance

1. Purpose

1.1	To receive a progress report on the development of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).
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2. Proposal

2.1	Acting on behalf of the Combined Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council has been approved to provide the operational lead on the LNRS. This report provides an update to Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee on progress.
2.2	Successful development of the LNRS is an objective under the Resilient Communities Strategic Objective. The LNRS has specific outputs (a Local Habitat Map and a statement of Biodiversity Priorities). The expected long-term impact of the LNRS is to enhance biodiversity by helping landowners to incorporate species and habitats into their management of land, support the planning system implementing the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, and overall to increase the amount of rich wildlife habitats.

3. Background

3.1	<p>The LNRS is a key component of the Environment Act 2021. It will set priorities for nature recovery. The LNRS needs to include the following:</p> <p>A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A description of current biodiversity for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area• Opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity• Identification of priorities <p>A Local Habitat Map</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National conservation sites• Nature reserves• Other areas that are important for biodiversity and nature recovery• Areas where biodiversity could make a contribution to other environmental benefits.
3.2	<p>The government appointed the Combined Authority as the Responsible Authority for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LNRS area. All constituent Councils are formally each a Supporting Authority. The Combined Authority engaged Cambridgeshire County Council to lead the operational management of the LNRS preparation, in collaboration with Natural Cambridgeshire (Local Nature Partnership) as a key partner.</p>
3.3	<p>Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee agreed the governance structure at its meeting in June 2023. An officer Steering Group has been established. All Councils were contacted in October to nominate officers to attend this Steering Group to enable full engagement as Supporting Authorities (latest meeting was held 31st October).</p>
3.4	<p>Under the LNRS Regulations and Guidance, the Responsible Authority must consult and obtain approval from Supporting Authorities at specific stages (pre-consultation and pre-publication). Over the summer advice was sought from Defra on the nature of this sign-off. Defra have advised that the sign-off process can be decided upon by each Supporting Authority. Each authority has therefore been contacted to seek their views on a preferred approach.</p>
3.5	<p>To provide the necessary technical support for the development of the LNRS a tender exercise was started in August to procure an author/editor, and to undertake habitat mapping and data analysis. Following evaluation the following contracts have been awarded to commence in November 2023 (as contracts are being finalised at the time of report writing the names of the consultant will be verbally reported).</p>
3.6	<p>Natural Cambridgeshire have been formally contracted to support the stakeholder engagement aspects of the LNRS development.</p>
3.7	<p>The government has delayed the national implementation of the mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain from November 2023 to January 2024. The LNRS, when approved, will have a key role in this system (by encouraging any necessary off-site provision towards priority habitats). An amendment proposed by government to the Levelling Up Bill will also require local plans produced by local authorities to “take account” of the LNRS (as opposed to “have regard”). Preparatory work on the LNRS will gain weight in decision-making as it progresses through the relevant stages – involvement of the councils means that early data information can be utilised as part of their evidence bases.</p>
3.8	<p>The development of the LNRS is expected by Defra to take 18-24 months. The current timeline and milestones are attached as Appendix A.</p>

4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix A: Timeline
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5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1 The LNRS has a budget of 309k (split 165k/144k over the 2 year period).

Legal Implications

6.1 The LNRS is required to be in place under the Environment Act 2021.

Public Health Implications

7.1 None.

Environmental & Climate Change Implications

8.1 Development of the LNRS supports the achievement of the Doubling Nature target.

Other Significant Implications

9.1 None.

Background Papers

10.1 [Report to Environment Sustainable Communities Committee, June 2023 \(Item 9\)](#)