



Title of report: Adoption of Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Decision maker: Cabinet Member Environment

Decision date: 14th August 2026

Report by: Acting Head of Environment, Principal Natural Environment Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To adopt the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet member:

- a) **Authorises the submission of the LNRS to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;**
- b) **Delegates authority to the Head of Environment to approve any modifications as may be required by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;**
- c) **Approves the LNRS adoption and publication; and**
- d) **Delegate all operational authority to the Head of Environment to defray the ‘delivery body transition grant’ of £135,500, and future grant funding, in line with the grant conditions, to deliver outcomes of the LNRS.**

Alternative options

- 1. Not to approve this strategy. This is not recommended as the LNRS is a statutory requirement for Herefordshire Council as a designated responsible authority.

Key considerations

- 2. The production of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) is a statutory duty of the Environment Act (2021). Herefordshire Council was appointed as the Responsible Authority to prepare and publish a LNRS in June 2023 by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 (subsequently referred to as ‘The LNRS Regulations’) sets out the requirement for Responsible Authorities to prepare and maintain a LNRS.
- 3. The main statutory requirements of an LNRS are that it must:
 - a. Agree priorities for nature’s recovery;
 - b. Prepare a ‘Local Habitat Map’ to identify the most valuable existing areas for nature; and
 - c. Provide a Local Habitat Map which identifies specific measures for creating or improving habitat for nature and which also contribute wider environmental benefits.
- 4. The Herefordshire LNRS Steering Group was established in June 2023 and held monthly meetings. Membership includes:
 - a) Natural England;
 - b) The Forestry Commission;
 - c) The Wye Valley National Landscape;
 - d) Herefordshire Wildlife Trust;
 - e) The Environment Agency;
 - f) Herefordshire Biological Records Centre;
 - g) The Countryside Land and Business Association;
 - h) The National Farmers Union;
 - i) The Wye and Usk Foundation.
- 5. The Herefordshire LNRS has been developed since then through an engagement phase to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders and consultees have had input to a transparent process, with well informed, high quality, evidence-based decisions. Working groups were set up with additional expertise to cover mapping requirements and local species knowledge. The engagement phase also included on-line public surveys, attendance at events and pop-up stalls, targeted workshops, newsletters, social media and webinars. Engagement with local

farmers and landowners was supported by Farm Herefordshire, the Rural Hub, County Land Agency and the National Farmers Union, to achieve a meaningful dialogue and promote awareness and understanding of the type of nature restoration that the LNRS is promoting.

6. The analysis of existing nature set out in the Strategy Area Description (see Appendix 1), together with the stakeholder and public engagement, has led to the selection of priorities and measures that have been created specifically for Herefordshire. These are set out in the Priorities and Measures document (see Appendix 2) and are spatially located on the Local Habitat Map, targeting practical actions that can be taken, primarily concentrating on creation and restoration to improve habitat connectivity (see website [Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Local habitat map - Herefordshire Council](#)).
7. The draft LNRS was presented at a Cabinet Briefing on 11 December 2025. It was also presented at a Political Groups Committee on 26 January 2026. A Pre-Consultation Draft LNRS was reviewed in November 2025 and January 2026 by a panel of Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) organisations, comprising: Natural England, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission. The DEFRA Panel approved the LNRS to progress to a public consultation.. This commenced on 8 February, for seven weeks, through to 29 March 2026.
8. The outcomes of the public consultation have been reviewed, published in a summary report and actioned where necessary to improve the quality of the documents and map (see Appendix 3). Through this collaborative development the Final LNRS establishes Herefordshire's priorities for nature recovery and identifies the actions to take which can best deliver these priorities. The LNRS identifies the most suitable locations where actions could be delivered, and will guide the targeting of financial mechanisms, such as agri-environment schemes and Biodiversity Net Gain offsets, to incentivise the delivery of actions for nature's recovery. The Final LNRS also includes a description of the landscapes, habitats and species of particular importance in Herefordshire, and provides a map of the network of statutory and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity (defined by DEFRA as 'Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity in Herefordshire' or 'APIBs').
9. The Final LNRS sets out how nature conservation can be achieved both on the Areas that Could become of Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB) sites, as well as in homes and gardens; both in communities and schools, farmed estates, council owned land and also across non-farmed land such as industrial and retail parks. The LNRS proposes specific actions or 'Measures' which can be taken to aid nature's recovery. All suggested Measures are entirely voluntary; they don't impose any additional restrictions on how land can or cannot be managed. Where targeting to a particular location maximises their impact, some Measures are displayed on the Local Habitat Map. Measures can also be non-mapped and delivered anywhere in the county. Mapped and non-mapped Measures have equal importance. Supporting measures are non-direct work, but are important for nature recovery, such as improving communication, public awareness and baseline evidence gathering. It should be viewed as a framework for integrating nature recovery into future growth and infrastructure planning.
10. Once the Final LNRS is adopted, notification will be made to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the intended date and website on which the Final LNRS will be published, in accordance with Regulation 16(2) of the LNRS Regulations. The 'Pre-Publication Final Local Nature Recovery Strategy' has also been shared with the 'LNRS Neighbouring Authorities'. Once published on Herefordshire Councils website, as the Responsible Authority Herefordshire must provide the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with all relevant parts of the Final LNRS.
11. The Responsible Authority must not then change a published LNRS other than in accordance with Regulation 20 of the LNRS Regulations, following the written instructions of the Secretary

of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs who may give notice of the need to review its LNRS. This can be no sooner than 3 years and no later than 10 years following its publication.

12. In January 2026 the Secretary of State instructed Herefordshire Council to make preparations to transition from its role as LNRS Responsible Authority (responsible for preparing the Final LNRS) to a LNRS 'delivery body'. The LNRS delivery body will provide a role coordinating and assisting in the development of projects capable of delivering against the biodiversity priorities agreed in the Final LNRS. In Herefordshire, this work will be implemented through the collaboration with partners and stakeholders and will report regularly to the Environment Board. A 'delivery body transition grant' has been provided by DEFRA to contribute towards the resource implication of LNRS partnership working during 2025-2026.
13. The statutory Biodiversity Duty (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 40) was further strengthened by the Environment Act and requires Planning Authorities to 'agree and deliver policies and specific objectives to conserve and enhance biodiversity', and to periodically report to Government on the discharge of this statutory biodiversity duty. This includes providing Government with a quantitative summary of BNG secured through its planning functions. Additionally, The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) requires Planning Authorities to 'take account' of LNRS in their relevant functions.
14. The DEFRA advice for responsible authorities on delivering LNRS (May 2026) includes that it will be embedded into local decision-making, unlock funding and co-ordinate partnerships that turn strategy into action at the centre of place-making. The delivery partnerships should foster collaboration, leverage diverse cross-sector expertise and ensure broad support for nature recovery initiatives. This will reach a wide range of organisations, at strategic and local levels, including those that may not have been involved before - health, education, businesses and young people (in line with the Child Friendly Herefordshire partnership). The Nature Recovery officers will work on identifying new potential projects and develop them, along with relevant existing projects, to become ready to be delivered, for example through feasibility, project development support and signposting to potential funding sources. There may be an extra role of going further to engage with private investors, support funding bids and reaching out to contributors.

Community impact

15. The strategy includes an objective to establish strong working partnerships and support community involvement. This includes continuing to work closely with partners, landowners, volunteer groups and the general public in dealing with nature recovery opportunities. This should include encouraging, providing and recording opportunities for community engagement and activity. The results of the public consultation demonstrate a variety of existing volunteer nature groups are already available to Herefordshire's residents. One of the aims is to further encourage the involvement of individuals and communities in the delivery of the strategy. It supports the Council Plan 2024-28, which includes a commitment to 'protect and enhance the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards'.

Environmental impact

16. Adopting the LNRS supports the delivery of the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028, specifically the 'Place' priority "We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire remains a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers." The specific priorities are:
 - a. Develop Herefordshire as a place for growth, prosperity and communities to thrive.

- b. Value nature and uphold environmental standards to minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.
 - c. Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero by 2030/31 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change.
 - d. Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit.
- 17. The strategy links to countywide strategies such as the Herefordshire Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy, the Local Plan Core Strategy and supporting evidence bases that include the Green Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- 18. Tree planting and habitat creation will see increased canopy cover, improved habitat connectivity, and reversal of biodiversity decline as well as increasing the counties capacity to sequester carbon.

Equality duty

- 19. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
- 20. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision and it has been found to have low impact for equality.
- 21. Due to the potential impact of this activity being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However, the following equality considerations should be taken into account when making a decision about this strategy:
 - a. Implementing the strategy will indirectly affect the public, through improvements to habitats which have a wide range of benefits and through partnership working which will offer chances for community and public engagement and participation.
 - b. Implementing the strategy has the potential to promote good relation between different groups who can come together in working on neutral nature projects.

Resource implications

- 22. Approval of the LNRS does not create any requirement for additional council funded resources.
- 23. The production and initial delivery phases are supported through DEFRA grant funding, including two officer posts funded for 12 and 18 months respectively. This funding has enabled the establishment of delivery, monitoring and reporting arrangements and the development of an implementation framework.
- 24. A 'delivery body transition grant' of £135,500 has been provided by DEFRA to cover the resource implication of LNRS development and partnership working during 2025-2026.
- 25. Future resource requirements will be reviewed alongside ongoing DEFRA funding arrangements and delivery priorities.

Legal implications

26. The statutory Biodiversity Duty (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 40) was further strengthened by the Environment Act and requires Planning Authorities to 'agree and deliver policies and specific objectives to conserve and enhance biodiversity', and to periodically report to Government on the discharge of this statutory biodiversity duty. This includes providing Government with a quantitative summary of BNG secured through its planning functions. Additionally, The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) requires Planning Authorities to 'take account' of LNRS in their relevant functions.
27. This report is requesting authority under Regulation 17 of the Regulations to notify the Secretary of State of intention to public a final strategy.

Risk management

28. Delays in implementation could exacerbate biodiversity loss whilst jeopardising the council's progress against its public commitments. Delivery risk is mitigated through partnership working and alignment with existing council strategies.
29. Financial risk will be offset by leveraging external funding where possible to implement nature recovery projects.
30. Failure to act could undermine public trust and Herefordshire's leadership on biodiversity issues. Through adoption of the LNRS, Herefordshire Council will maintain momentum delivering environmental projects.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Reputation (both risk and opportunity) – There is a reputational risk of not delivering priorities within the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028.	This proposal seeks to support priorities within the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028.
Project delivery capacity and capability – the wider Environment Team will assist partners with projects and secretariat duties where capacity and capability allows.	Where there is not capacity, or capability then partners will be encouraged to continue the work of the strategy.
Project delivery – timescales – the action plan will be worked up with relevant timescale allocated as ongoing, short, medium and long term (over 5 years) suggestions.	There are no statutory deadlines, however there is a requirement for annual reporting to maintain progress.

31. The relevant risks will be managed at a service level, escalated to Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) as required. The risks associated within this report have been reviewed and managed in accordance with HC's risk management strategy. Ongoing oversight through established structure will ensure that risks are monitored, escalated and addressed as necessary to support.

Consultees

32. The development of our Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been a collaborative process, with support from a wide range of individuals and organisations, as well as feedback from the general public. The Engagement Report provides details of the preparation stages of the LNRS, available here [Herefordshire LNRS Engagement Report](#), and the Public Consultation Summary is provided at Appendix 3. These documents summarise our approach to ensure meaningful engagement across a broad audience.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Strategy Area Description

Appendix 2: Statement of Priorities and Measures

Appendix 3: Public Consultation Summary

Background papers

None

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report

Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)

Directorate Leadership Team (DLT)

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)