

**Briefing Note Planning Reform Working Paper
Development and Nature Recovery**

The working paper sets out a new approach with the dual purpose of delivering the 1.5 million houses and accompanying infrastructure development it has committed to building, with the proposal of delivering environmental benefits to air and water quality, nature recovery, climate resilience at a strategic level.

- The proposal is to shift multiple environmental assessments at project level to a broader, strategic approach, where environmental issues will be addressed holistically where achievable through joint actions at an appropriate scale. Restorative actions for water quality within a river for example could be put in place where evidence identifies they would be to be employed to best effect; at pollution source or upstream.
- A strategic approach to mitigation is already employed in the UK, initiatives include the District Level Licensing for Great Crested Newts and the Marine Recovery Fund for offshore wind development, the government is consulting on a similar approach for Nature Recovery more broadly.
- Responsibility/Decision making to address the environmental impacts will shift from individual developers to public Delivery Bodies; potentially Natural England, who will plan and implement actions as a regional scale. The Delivery Body will have the flexibility to take appropriate action including land management and land acquisition if required.
- Delivery Plans will be developed by the relevant Delivery Body which will identify appropriate actions, their costs and timeframes for implementation.
- The funding mechanism for implementing the mitigation measures will be secured via a levy imposed by Planning with a public schedule determining the contribution from developers matching the housing requirement with an appropriate uplift.
- The Nature Restoration Fund will have the ability to address all impacts on Nature, considering the multiple impacts of different development types and seeking to address these in a holistic way to deliver layered benefits.
- Biodiversity Net Gain contributions and the minimum 10% enhancement onsite, adhering to the mitigation hierarchy, will continue to be implemented as is.
- The scheme will require legislative change to the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Habitats Regulations which will be incorporated within the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. It is anticipated a number of pilot schemes will be progressed at the same time in order that the schemes can be commenced when the Bill receives royal assent planned for early 2026.
- A reporting mechanism will be in place via the Environmental Outcomes report and if mitigation is under performing ancillary measures will be introduced, if there is a continued failure to demonstrate improvements the plan will no longer be relied upon and a reversion to project level assessment may be reintroduced.
- Cross border – How this works in practice with devolved powers across the border for the Wye catchment and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in England is yet to be established.