

Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include

Briefing and Consultation Questions

Introduction

This short set of introductory comments outlines the Landscape Institute's key thoughts in regards to this consultation. We hope to provide further comments and discussion at a later stage as this consultation was limited in terms of broader discussion questions.

Overall, the LI welcomes the ambitious approach for delivering national environmental objectives on local and regional scales. The LI believes that the primary aim of the Local Nature Recovery Networks (LNRN) should be to recover nature, enabling it to become resilient and thrive, and vitally to reconnect people with it. This should be set out as an overarching principle. Supplementing this consultation's proposed management of LNRNs are some key notions that could strengthen the frameworks and ensure that LNRNs truly deliver for people, place and nature.

- Delivery of LNRS will require a broad range of skills and additional capacity. Landscape practitioners possess many of the key competencies required, including but not limited to:
 - Planning, legal, policy and regulatory compliance
 - Managing habitats and species
 - Landscape Ecology
 - Stakeholder and/or community engagement
 - Digital practice (including GIS)

The landscape sector is however facing a skills shortage, there has been a sharp decline of landscape professionals working in the public sector, local authorities will need the appropriate resources to employ landscape professionals both in-house and brought in privately through consultancies.

- Nature and the environment need a strong voice and protection in planning. Some LNRS pilots have briefly touched on how to better integrate the networks into planning but most have not adequately addressed this question. LNRS need to be able to prevent development in some areas and ensure that any development that does occur is compatible with nature recovery along the NRN. Currently, there is no strong duty for LNRSs to be taken into account in planning decisions in the Environment Bill. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity on whether local nature recovery networks will be statutory bodies.
- At present this document makes little reference to the potentially critical role that the nation's 44 designated areas, which includes National Parks and AONBs. Given that the Glover review recently highlighted their strong potential to deliver nature recovery these areas should have a strong support within strategic areas that mirror those of local authorities or other public bodies.
- There is a need to recognise the importance of Green Infrastructure networks in developing LNRS. These areas can play a key role in connecting nature particularly in urban and peri-urban areas.
- Local plans and LNRS need to work hand in hand- local plans can allocate spaces for nature recovery and LNRS should refer to local plans.
- Finally incorporating broader outcomes into LNRS is vital, we need to ensure that these spaces deliver for recreation, wellbeing and people. LNRS could be a key tool in improving access to greenspace.

Who we are

The Landscape Institute (LI) is the royal chartered body for the landscape profession. As a professional organisation and educational charity, we work to protect, conserve and enhance the built and natural environment for the public benefit. The LI represents around 5500 landscape managers and landscape architects, including related professions including urban designers, parks managers, scientists and planners, working across urban and rural areas.

Habitat creation, conservation and management are a central piece many of the places our members design and create. In urban settings these spaces form a critical component of green infrastructure (GI) and provide a wide range of ecosystem service. In rural settings landscape professionals through management, conservation, restoration and enhancement ensure landscapes thrive, are biodiverse and can be enjoyed by people.

We have consulted closely with our members many of whom are closely involved in the design, development and management of landscapes across the U.K. We would welcome further discussion with DEFRA through which we can create internal working groups to provide expertise and evidence.

Consultation Questions

1. Which of the groups listed below do you consider essential for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

- Local authority(s) other than the “responsible authority”, where the Strategy covers more than one Local Authority area
- Local authorities adjacent to the Strategy areas.
- Local Nature Partnership(s), where active and geographically aligned
- Natural England
- The Environment Agency
- The Forestry Commission
- Other public bodies e.g. Highways England
- Environmental non-governmental organisations active in the Strategy area
- National Park Authority(s), where present in the Strategy area and if not the “responsible authority”
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty organisation(s), where present in the Strategy area
- Local Records Centre(s), where separate from any of the other groups listed
- Local farming, forestry and landowning groups
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Utilities providers, such as water companies
- Other local business representative bodies
- Individual landowners and land managers (including farmers, both landowners and tenants)
- Individual businesses
- Members of the public
- Don't Know

[Tick all that apply]

NRN preparation could be best managed by core working group with broad participation from key actors – including planning and development sectors – followed up by public consultation.

2. Are there any organisations not listed above whose involvement you consider essential? [Yes/No/Don't Know] If yes, which ones and why? [Free text box]

Office for Environmental Protection
National Landscape Body (if it is created in the future)

3. Do you think that additional support should be provided to farmers, landowners and managers the land management sector to facilitate their involvement with the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies? [Yes/No/Don't know]

Guidance and professional support to this sector is essential. ELMS and LNRS teams should collaborate to ensure LNRS is a viable and attractive option for ELM payment.

Pilots have highlighted both the need for independent facilitation to handle difficult conversations, and the importance of partnership working, good governance and clear remits.

4. If information on other types of local wildlife sites within a Local Nature Recovery Strategy area is not held by the responsible authority, do you think that if another Local Authority owns the information they should be obliged to provide it to them? [Yes/No/Don't know]
5. Are you aware of specific locally-held information that would make an important contribution to the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies that you do not believe would be made available without a requirement to do so? [Yes/No/Don't Know] If yes, what information should be included? [Free text box]
6. How do you think neighbouring Local Nature Recovery Strategy responsible authorities should be required to work together?

- Required to inform neighbouring responsible authorities of their progress in preparing their Strategy
 - Required to give information to neighbouring responsible authorities that would help them prepare their Strategy
 - Required to collaborate when setting objectives for areas close to boundaries
 - Left to local discretion
 - Other [If other, please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

7. Should draft Local Nature Recovery Strategies be subject to a local public consultation prior to publication? [Yes/No/Don't know]
8. Should individual landowners or managers be able to decide that land they own or manage should not be identified by a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as an area that could become of particular importance for biodiversity? [Yes/No/Don't know]
9. Should anyone interested in the Strategy be able to propose additional areas that could become of particular importance if these can be shown to be making a sufficient contribution to the overall objective of the Strategy? [Yes/No/Don't know]

10. How prescriptive do you think regulations made under clause 101 should be in setting out how the responsible authority should work with local partners?

- Setting broad principles only
- Setting broad principles and specific requirements on who to engage or how
- A standardised process of who to engage and how

• Don't know
[Tick one]

11. Do you think that regulations made under clause 101 should establish a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies?
[Yes/No/Don't know]

12. If you believe that regulations made under clause 101 should establish a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which of the following bodies do you think should be able to raise a dispute (including on behalf of others)?

- Local Authorities within the Strategy area who are not the responsible authority
- Natural England
- Responsible Authorities for neighbouring Strategy areas
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

13. Which of the following do you think might be reasonable grounds for raising a dispute about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy preparation process?

- Not adequately involving relevant specific groups
- Slow/no progress
- Lack of transparency
- Legal requirements not being followed
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

14. At which points in the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy do you think it should be possible to escalate procedural disputes for external consideration?

- Before finalisation of the Strategy priorities
- Before a potential public consultation on the draft Strategy
- If the responsible authority does not respond within a reasonable timeframe to being informed of concerns
- At any time
- There should not be a process for external consideration
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

15. Do you think that Local Nature Recovery Strategies should also be “signed off” by a body other than the responsible authority before they can be published?

- No
 - Yes – instead of a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation process
 - Yes – as well as a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation process
 - Don’t know
- [Tick one]

16. If so, which bodies should be given sign-off responsibility?

- Other Local Authorities in the Strategy area
 - Natural England
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don’t know
- [Tick all that apply]

17. On what grounds could a body refuse to sign-off a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

- Disagreement about overall priorities
 - Disagreement about specific priorities
 - Disagreement about potential measures
 - Disagreement about the inclusion or exclusion of specific “areas of potential importance”
 - On any reasonable grounds
 - Only the “responsible authority” should be required to sign-off the Strategy
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don’t know
- [Tick all that apply]

18. Should the Defra Secretary of State be able to appoint a separate body to consider disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and if so, which body or bodies?

- It should not be possible for a separate body to be appointed
 - Natural England
 - Planning inspectorate
 - Whichever body the Secretary of State considers appropriate
 - The responsible authority for a different Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don’t know
- [Tick all that apply]

19. In resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies should the Secretary of State be able to:
- Require the responsible authority to repeat particular parts of the preparation process
 - Require the responsible authority to make specific changes to their Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - Approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with or without changes.
 - Something else [please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]
20. Do you think that each local habitat map should adopt the same data standards and be published in the same format to facilitate national collation? [Yes/No/Don't Know]
21. If yes, how should this level of consistency be established?
- Advice from Natural England
 - Creation of standard templates
 - Specified in regulations made under clause 101
 - By consensus amongst responsible authorities
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]
22. Do you think that each statement of biodiversity priorities should also be published in a similar format?
- The format should be the same
 - There should be some specific requirements but the responsible authority should keep some discretion over presentation
 - The responsible authority should be able to decide how they present their Strategy so long as it meets legal requirements
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]
23. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be published together on a single national website as well as being published locally by the responsible authority? [Yes/No/Don't know]
24. Do you think that a published Local Nature Recovery Strategy should:
- Only be changed once the Secretary of State has been notified
 - Only be changed with the Secretary of State's permission
 - Not be changed unless it's part of a scheduled review process
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

25. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England should be reviewed and republished at similar times or should there be local discretion to decide when is the best time?

- Set nationally
- Decided locally
- Don't know

[Tick one]

26. If you do think all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be reviewed and republished at the same time, do you think that this should happen to a fixed cycle?

- There should be a regular fixed period between reviews
- A maximum period of time between reviews should be set
- A minimum period of time between reviews should be set
- A maximum and a minimum period of time between reviews should be set
- The Defra Secretary of State should be able to decide
- Don't know

[Tick one]

27. Do you think that all responsible authorities should take a consistent approach to describing the biodiversity in their Strategy area? [Yes/No/Don't know]

28. If yes, do you have a preference as to how sub-areas based on similarities in biodiversity should be identified?

- No preference
- Responsible authorities should be able to decide
- National Character Areas
- River catchments
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

29. To ensure that the statement of biodiversity priorities provides an accurate and useful description of the Strategy area that can inform the setting of realistic and appropriate priorities, what else should the description consider in addition to describing existing biodiversity?

- Climate change scenarios
 - How land use/ habitat distribution has changed over time
 - Anticipated future pressures on land use (e.g. broad indications of housing and infrastructure need)
 - Environmental issues in the Strategy area that might be addressed through nature-based solutions
 - Existing significant nature or environment projects (e.g. landscape scale work)
 - Other [Existing land management regimes agricultural especially relevant.
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

30. How should the statement of biodiversity priorities describe opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity without mapping them?

- Identify particular rarer habitats/species that the strategy area is suitable for supporting
 - Assess the potential to contribute to national priorities for nature recovery
 - Describe the relative opportunity for creating more areas of key habitats as well as making them bigger, better and joined up
 - Indicate broad areas where creating improving habitat may be more achievable
 - Assess the potential for use of nature-based solutions
 - However the responsible authority finds most useful
 - Other [Include areas for creating improved habitats and potential for nature based solutions.
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

31. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should follow the same priority setting process or that each responsible authority should decide for themselves how priorities should be set?

- All Strategies should follow the same priority setting process
- Strategies should follow the same high-level principles but with local discretion
- Strategies should decide for themselves how to prioritise
- Don't know

[Tick one]

32. How should national environmental priorities be reflected when setting Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities?

- National priorities should be advisory
- Responsible authorities should show how they have considered national priorities
- Local priorities should follow a consistent nationally-set structure
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick one]

33. Should Local Nature Recovery Strategies identify only those outcomes for nature recovery and environmental improvement that are of priority or also include those that are positive but of lower priority?

- List only priorities
- List priorities and other relevant lower priority outcomes
- Don't know

[Tick one]

34. How should priorities identified in other environmental spatial plans in the Strategy area be incorporated into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

- Considered and prioritised alongside other outcomes
- Incorporated directly
- Don't know

[Tick one]

35. Do you think that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should include potential measures for conserving and enhancing biodiversity and making wider environmental improvements that cannot be mapped as well as those that can?

- Yes both
- No, only those that can be mapped
- Don't know

[Tick one]

36. Should there be a standard list of potential measures for responsible authorities to choose from?

- No – responsible authorities should have free choice
 - There should be a list of suggestions
 - There should be a core list which the responsible authority can add to
 - Responsible authorities should only be able to choose measures included on a national list
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

37. What sort of areas, outside of national conservation and local wildlife sites, might a responsible authority reasonably consider to be of particular importance for biodiversity?

- Ancient woodlands
 - Flower rich meadows
 - Priority habitats in good condition
 - Areas used for feeding or resting by animals or birds from a nearby national conservation site
 - Any areas the responsible authority chooses
 - None
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

38. Should all responsible authorities follow a standardised process for mapping potential measures to identify areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity or other environmental benefits? [Yes/No/Don't know]

39. Do you think that all responsible authorities should seek to identify a similar proportion of their Strategy area as areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity or wider environmental outcomes?

- Yes, there should be a set percentage each responsible authority should identify
 - No, this should not be set and decided locally
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

40. Do you think that when Strategies are reviewed and republished, they should map where appropriate action has been taken to make areas of increasing importance for biodiversity? [Yes/No/Don't know]

41. Overall, how satisfied are you with our online consultation tool?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dis-satisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know