

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	05 August 2025
Subject:	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Steve Keable - Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist. Richard Marsh - Director of Place and Economy.
Exempt:	The draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (website and mapping). which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	(none)

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To receive an update on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and consider recommendations to Cabinet.

Recommendation(s):

The Planning, Environment and Sustainability PDG recommends to Cabinet:

- 1. That approval is given to Devon County Council (DCC) that the draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is published and to go out for public consultation.**
- 2. That delegated authority is given to the Director of Place and Economy, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, to make or approve any minor amendments to the consultation materials.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 The Role of the Strategy

- 1.1 Devon's [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) (LNRS) will inform nature recovery at a local level, by mapping habitats, features and key species to identify opportunities and priorities to boost ecological connectivity, diversity and abundance. Online resources aim to help everyone to play a role.
- 1.2 England is considered to be one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world following historic losses and ongoing declines. The Government has made legally binding commitments to end these declines and for nature to recover. Part of this is a statutory requirement via [Sections 104 to 106](#) of the Environment Act 2021 to prepare LNRSs.
- 1.3 All public authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must have 'regard' to the relevant LNRS in this process.
- 1.4 DCC is the appointed Responsible Authority for Devon's LNRS. Mid Devon District Council is a Supporting Authority for the LNRS, along with other local authorities and Natural England.
- 1.5 Co-benefits to nature recovery include:
 - Climate Change adaptation and mitigation.
 - Water quality.
 - Natural Capital and ecosystem services.
 - Wellbeing.
- 1.6 The LNRS will comprise a website and interactive mapping. These formats will enable the material and data to be accessible and useful to a wide range of audiences.

2.0 Progress with the Strategy and preparation for public consultation

- 2.1 DCC's Ecology Team has led the development of the LNRS under the umbrella of the Devon Local Nature Partnership. Funding has been used to engage a team of wildlife experts to pull together the information required for the LNRS and to liaise with relevant partners. DCC has also engaged a web designer, copy writer and other consultants to work on mapping, water quality, natural flood management etc.
- 2.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, the Forward Planning Team Leader and the Climate and Sustainability Specialist have worked with the LNRS team to consider the LNRS resources and the consultation paper.
- 2.3 The Planning Policy and Advisory Group (PPAG) 08 July 2025 received an in-depth presentation about the LNRS map viewer and website from Sarah

Jennings, County Ecologist at DCC, who leads the LNRS project team. PPAG, which was attended by some members of the Planning, Environment and Sustainability PDG, discussed the Strategy in depth and its significance to the Council.

2.4 The draft versions of the LNRS website and interactive mapping will be presented to the PDG and to Cabinet.

2.5 **The draft pre-consultation LNRS material is confidential and not for the public realm.** Development is ongoing e.g. data permissions are being negotiated and are subject to contractual agreements with data owners.

3.0 Background details

3.1 LNRSs are statutory and must include:

- A **description** of the county's wildlife, including opportunities and pressures.
- **Priorities** for habitats and species (to prevent extinctions and increase abundance, following the Lawton principles of Better, Bigger, More, Joined-up).
- **Actions** needed to achieve the priorities.
- Actions for nature restoration that **will help to meet other priorities** such as carbon sequestration, flood control, better water quality, health and wellbeing.
- **Maps** showing (a) designated sites and irreplaceable habitats; (b) places where we want to focus action.

3.2 They must be user friendly. They must be produced in collaboration.

3.3 They set out **opportunities** and will influence funding (Environment Land Management, Biodiversity Net Gain, Heritage Lottery Fund, etc.) They are not about new designations or restrictions. However, Local Planning Authorities must have regard for them.

3.4 They are part of a 'nested suite' of nature strategies at a range of scales. The Devon LNRS sets out priorities at the county level and what we need to do to help meet relevant national targets. In turn it informs nature strategies at the sub county level which will also have their own local priorities (Protected Landscapes, local authorities, community groups etc.).

3.5 Statutory 'Supporting Authorities' must be involved (local authorities and Natural England) and be given a 28-day formal consultation period prior to public consultation and post public consultation.

3.6 They are funded by DEFRA and each has a Natural England lead officer.

3.7 They should be finalised in 2025.

3.8 More details can be found at [Defra regulations and guidance summary](#).

4.0 Local nature recovery strategies and the planning system

4.1 Government guidance is clear that LNRs should be used by Local Authorities preparing local plans to inform the way those plans address the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement to protect and enhance biodiversity. It is expected that a future update to the NPPF will include how LNRs should be given weight in the plan making process. The Government will also provide separate guidance on how local authorities will be expected to comply with their duty to have regard to LNRs through their planning functions.

5.0 Next steps

5.1 It is expected that, subject to approval by the supporting authorities, DCC will publish the consultation draft Devon LNRs for public consultation in mid-September 2025.

5.2 Following the public consultation and any amendments being made to the draft Devon LNRs there will be a further formal 28 day period in which the Supporting Authorities will be consulted, before the strategy is finalised. The post-consultation final Devon LNRs will be reported to the Planning, Environment and Sustainability PDG in the autumn including a recommendation to a subsequent Cabinet meeting.

5.3 Once the final Devon LNRs has been approved by the supporting authorities, DCC must then notify the Secretary of State of its intention to publish the strategy; and can proceed to publish once the Secretary of State has given approval. Thereafter there will be duty for the responsible authority to undertake a review of the final Devon LNRs following notification from the Secretary of State there is a need to do so.

Financial Implications. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications. The Council's environmental sustainability duties are underpinned by legislation e.g. [Environment Act 2021](#).

Risk Assessment. There are two main risks to the Council: 1) that the Council does not enable the LNRs as a supporting authority; and 2) that the Local Planning Authority does not 'have regard' for the LNRs as reflected in plan making and decision making.

Impact on Climate Change. There is no impact associated with this decision / recommendation. The purpose of the LNRS is to inform and support nature recovery, and relevant co-benefits include: actions for Climate Change adaptation (e.g. natural flood management) and mitigation (e.g. restoration of habitats that are important for carbon storage and sequestration). These, in turn, can benefit interrelated aspects of environmental conservation and enhancement, such as water quality, Natural Capital and ecosystem services (e.g. soil conservation and restoration).

Equalities Impact Assessment. There are no equality impacts associated with this report. Specific projects and policies are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. (Assessing the equality impacts of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not only a legal requirement, but also a positive opportunity for authorities to make better decisions based on robust evidence.)

Relationship to Corporate Plan. Please refer to priorities 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off / mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151.
Date: 21.07.2025

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer.
Date: 21.07.2025

Performance and risk: Steve Carr
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager.
Date: 17 July 2025

Cabinet member notified: Yes.

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No.

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Jason Ball, Climate and Sustainability Specialist: Email: JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk Tel: 01884 255255.

Background papers: Previous reports provided to [PDG](#) on 10 June 2025. For background details, please refer to previous reports, all [available online](#).

Links:

Government Policy Paper: [Local nature recovery strategies](#) (30 June 2023).