

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY
POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 29 July 2025 at 5.30 pm**

Present

Councillors

B Fish (Chair)
G Cochran (Vice-Chair), C Adcock,
A Glover, A Stirling and G Westcott

Apologies

Councillors

G Czapiewski and C Harrower

Also Present

Officers

Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Jason Ball
(Climate and Sustainability Specialist) and Angie Howell
(Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski, G Duchesne, S Keable,
L G J Kennedy and L Taylor

Officers Online

Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader) and Laura
Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr G Czapiewski.

16 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests where appropriate.

No interests were declared under this item.

19 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reminded the Group that the draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) had not been published and asked Members to ensure that discussions previously made at the Planning Policy Development Group were not disclosed as the Strategy was not yet in the public domain.

20 DRAFT DEVON LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Group had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy considering the draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy which was presented by the Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy was a work in progress and was not the final version.
- The role of the Strategy was to inform nature recovery at a local level. It mapped out habitats, featured key species and enabled opportunities and priorities in nature recovery to be identified.
- The resources would help people such as farmers, landowners, planning officers and members of the public to understand how to boost nature and ecological connectivity.
- All Local Authorities had a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must have a regard to their Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- The Strategy had been produced by Devon County Council (DCC) with Mid Devon District Council being a supporting Authority. DCC were aiming for a public consultation in September 2025.
- Additional benefits included wider topics such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, water quality, natural capital ecosystem services and wellbeing.
- The Strategy would comprise a website with interactive mapping to enable access to local data and give information relevant to individuals and provided an overview of the importance of Devon's wildlife. It provided explanations of priorities and actions required to conserve and enhance wildlife.
- The website was interactive, exciting, interesting and offered inspiration – it provided information such as:-
 - Important species and approximate areas where you could locate them such as dragonflies etc.
 - The location of schools and community centres showing 500-metre zones, to help illustrate where the nearest area of nature or green space would be accessible to communities.
 - Different layers of information that could be used depending on need and perspective.
 - Powerful tools and resources for the viewer to use.
 - Funding decisions and the direction and prioritization of funding would be influenced by the LNRS.
- Copywriting specialists had been employed to ensure the website was written in such a way that would be easily understood.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether the website would accommodate the reporting of beavers or other species moving about in the District? It was explained that it would not be a data gathering website as once it was published it would remain static until a new version would be approved as part of a Statutory Review.
- Wildlife corridors, the relationship between producing food and biodiversity and protecting nature.
- Water quality in rivers and seas.
- Whether the website afforded additional protection to certain sites recorded on the database – it was explained that this would not be the case as the Strategy was not legislation.
- Whether the website could be utilized for Planning – it was explained that every Planning Authority would need to have a regard for the Strategy when making planning decisions and in development of their Local Plan. Developers would also be required to undertake their own specific surveys although the Strategy would be useful for highlighting potential issues and opportunities.

The Chair advised the Group that the wording to the first recommendation would slightly differ to that in the report. It would read as follows:-

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:-

1. Approval is given to Devon County Council that the draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy is published and that it should go out for public consultation.
2. 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.

(Proposed by Cllr A Glover and seconded by Cllr G Cochran)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note *Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 6.11 pm)

CHAIR