



Report to:	Climate, Energy and Environment Committee
Date:	25 March 2025
Subject:	Update on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If the report does contain exempt information, what is the reason for exemption: <i>(indicate in the adjacent box the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1 – see Access to Information Rules)</i>	

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To provide committee members with an update on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and to seek feedback on the proposed approach to the priorities and measures.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee notes updates to the policy context and the work undertaken to continue progressing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).
- 2.2 That the Committee considers the questions outlined in **Appendix 1**, engages in discussion and provides feedback.

3. Information

Background

- 3.1 Members received an update paper on the LNRS on 28 May 2024. The purpose of the most recent update was to note the content of the report and updates and comments were made largely on the engagement with marginalised communities, the principles coming out of the farmer and landowner engagement and the economic benefit of the

LNRS and engaging with it. Committee Members also had sight of an early version of the vision and mission of the LNRS which have now been updated in this latest paper and presentation.

Context

- 3.2 Wildlife in England is under threat, with national surveys continuing to show biodiversity declines. The headline of the most recent national State of Nature Report (2023) was that one in six UK species are threatened with extinction. Moreover, according to the State of Yorkshire Nature Report (2024) nearly 2,000 species may have disappeared over the last 200 years, with nearly one in five declining by 25% in the last 20-30 years. Practices like water drainage have taken away 80% of our wetlands, while half of Yorkshire's rivers have been altered and are in poor condition. Large upland sections are in degraded condition, impacted by multiple pressures such as drainage, burning, overgrazing, grouse-management and reforestation.
- 3.3 It is important that we tackle this, reversing where possible the actions above. Our natural environment provides us with ecosystem services, which are the direct and indirect contributions that ecosystems provide for human wellbeing and life quality. These underpin healthy and resilient populations through provisions like food and water management and regulate the climate and environment (for example through clean air). These remain essential for our economic prosperity and welfare.

National Policy and Legislative Context

Environment Act 2023

- 3.4 The Environment Act 2021 enacted a commitment to a Nature Recovery Network made in the government's 2018 25-year Environment Plan to create a national network of nature-rich places.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

- 3.5 The Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a mandatory system of spatial strategies for nature (including species, habitats, ecosystems, natural processes, and the relationship between them). They will map where local habitat improvement and restoration could improve ecological networks on the ground, establish priorities and map proposals for specific action to drive nature's recovery. They will also identify opportunities for wider environmental benefits (such as health and wellbeing, nature connectedness, air quality, and access to high quality green space).
- 3.6 Government have indicated that post publication of this round of LNRSs they will be periodically updated between every 3 – 10 years as instructed by Government. There is no indication that a decision to review can be undertaken locally.

- 3.7 They are important in the context of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). LNRS will identify areas for priority enhancement of habitats and species. These are likely to be a focus for BNG 'credit' deployment as the credits will have a higher value attributed to them within areas identified by LNRS.

Devolution White Paper

- 3.8 In December 2024, Government published its Devolution White Paper. This Paper sets out Government's approach to devolution for England and provides an overview of the content to be expected to come through the English Devolution Bill.
- 3.9 The paper sets out a new approach to the architecture of devolution, shifting the process which authorities are formed and new powers conferred onto organisation as well as the creation of strategic authorities with certain responsibilities enshrined in law, and tiers of responsibilities depending on maturity. It has been confirmed that West Yorkshire will receive Established Mayoral Strategic Authority status – the deepest level of devolution available.
- 3.10 Strategic authorities will have a defined list of areas of competence. The list is proposed and set for consultation but includes Environment and Climate Change.
- 3.11 West Yorkshire Combined Authority will have the responsibility for coordination, delivery and monitoring of the LNRS. The Authority is awaiting further details from DEFRA on how this will operate in practice and how the resource implications will be taken into consideration.

Nature Restoration Fund

- 3.12 As part of its Plan for Change, Government has announced a Nature Restoration Fund, which they plan to be included in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill this year.
- 3.13 This fund aims to accelerate infrastructure projects and enable developers to meet their environment obligations faster and at greater scale by pooling contributions from developers to fund larger strategic interventions for nature. The hope is that outcomes for nature are significantly improved, planning consents are quicker, and the cost to developer is no greater.
- 3.14 It is expected that a delivery body (i.e. Natural England) will produce a delivery plan. This will be produced at appropriate spatial scales and would not involve unnecessary or duplicative work. For example, where all or some of the evidence base is available, for example through the LNRS, this maybe depended upon.



Policy Context

West Yorkshire

- 3.15 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority has declared a climate emergency and committed the region to be net zero carbon by 2038. In 2023 the West Yorkshire Combined Authority published the West Yorkshire plan. Mission four of the West Yorkshire Plan is 'A sustainable West Yorkshire making lives greener' highlighting our commitment to create a sustainable, nature-rich and climate ready region.
- 3.16 To support delivery of the West Yorkshire Plan, the Climate and Environment Plan (CEP) will set out a range of objectives for climate resilience and nature recovery which will support delivery of the LNRS.

West Yorkshire LNRS Update

- 3.17 This item includes an update on progress for the West Yorkshire LNRS. This is provided as presentation which will be outlined as part of this item. The presentation includes the following content:

- LNRS process and methodology
- An update on stakeholder engagement
- An update on the emerging strategy
- Next steps and key milestones

4. Risks and Mitigations

- 4.1 There are several key risks stemming from this work programme of which we review via existing governance structures. Key risks include finances, partnership working, technical work and the political climate.
- 4.2 To manage the programme's budget the project team monitor finances and explore avenues for additional funding. Any procured services are commissioned whilst ensuring value for money, using competitive tenders where appropriate.
- 4.3 LNRSs are a new process with its associated legislation only recently being published. The Government are still in the process of producing technical guidance for the development of LNRS. This poses a risk as any new guidance could impact work that was already been developed. It is important that we constantly monitor political development and legislative changes. The LNRS work programme allows for ongoing engagement with government departments and Agencies (i.e. DEFRA and Natural England).

5. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 5.1 The LNRSs will identify and prioritise opportunities to restore habitats, connect ecological networks and deliver wider environmental benefits. If acted on, these will increase biodiversity, which in turn helps the natural processes that underpin all life. They also have the potential to support wider measures to help tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. Examples include grasslands or woodlands to engineer and control water storage and flow; plants to support improvements in air quality; restored peatland to sequester (capture) carbon; tree canopy cover to cool urban spaces; accessible and biodiverse rich spaces to reconnect people with the rest of nature and boost pro-environmental behaviour.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 6.1 Increased action to recover nature is likely to increase opportunities for more people, including training, skills and employment in existing and future 'green jobs' directly or indirectly.

7. Equity and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 Depleted natural environments have disproportionate impacts on people. The lack of natural environmental can amplifying existing inequalities such as, exposure to toxic air or the impact of heatwaves / floods.
- 7.2 The LNRS will support delivery of wider environmental benefits for more people. These benefits may include enhanced access to green space, high-quality natural environments, and the wellbeing and restorative benefits of the 'natural health service'.
- 7.3 As part of the development of the LNRS, an Equality Impact Assessment (EqiA) was completed as part of the programme's business case.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The proposals in this report have been funded through a mix of government funding and Combined Authority resources. Combined Authority colleagues are continuing to make the case for a longer-term funding from Government to account for the delivery of the LNRS once it has been published.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Combined Authority is a signatory the White Rose Forest Partnership Agreement. This ensures the Authority is a has a role in ensuring alignment between WRF and our priorities, including the LNRS.

10. External Consultees

- 10.1 We have consulted with a wide range of external stakeholders in the development of the LNRS. To date, we have consulted farmers and landowners, the business and commercial sector, large Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOS) and community organisations, young people, and the public, through our online survey. We had a total of 1,156 responses, 1,134 by individuals and 22 on behalf of a charity, organisation or business.
- 10.2 We continue to have deep and ongoing engagement with key partners such as the White Rose Forest, Yorkshire Peat Partnership, Yorkshire Water, National Trust and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust where there is appropriate collaboration and alignment of objectives where appropriate.
- 10.3 We are currently continuing our engagement with external specialists to ensure voices are heard and reflected in the overall development of the LNRS.
- 10.4 There will be a public consultation on the LNRS in Autumn 2025.

11. Background Documents

- 11.1 There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

[Appendix 1 – Update: West Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) Presentation](#)