

CABINET

TUESDAY, 11 JULY 2023

NORTHUMBERLAND STEWARDSHIP AND RURAL GROWTH INVESTMENT PROGRAMME – NATURE RECOVERY RESPONSE

Report of: Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader

Lead Officer: Simon Neilson, Executive Director for Place and Regeneration

Purpose of report

To outline the Council's role in leading the region's response to nature recovery as set out in the North East Devolution Deal and, within this context, seek consideration to the declaration of an ecological emergency in Northumberland.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Accept, in principle and subject to the approval of the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Cabinet, the role of leading the development of the statutory North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) on behalf of the Combined Authority
2. Endorse the Council's role as accountable body for the participation of the English part of the Borderlands area in the Government's Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme
3. Accept the anticipated grant awards of £0.285 million and £1.000 million respectively for the development of the North of Tyne LNRS and the delivery of the Borderlands LINC into the Council's revenue budget
4. Agree to declaring an ecological emergency to further strengthen the Council's commitment to rural stewardship and to demonstrate the significant role of nature recovery in mitigating the climate emergency
5. Develop a response, within the context of our Climate Change Action Plan, to the ecological emergency using our new obligations under the Environment Act 2021 as a framework; namely the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy; the strengthened duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity with a requirement to publish action plans and progress reports; and the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain in the planning system.

Link to Corporate Plan

The extent and quality of the county's natural environment has a significant role to play in promoting economic growth, particularly through the visitor economy and in addressing inequality by contributing to physical and mental wellbeing. Protecting and improving

habitats across the country also contribute to a whole range of wider environmental benefits including food production, water quality, flood protection and carbon sequestration. Equally, the recent Future of Farming in Northumberland Inquiry highlighted that farmers and landowners are committed to achieving a sustainable balance between food production and wider environmental benefits, providing there is greater clarity in navigating the complex land management policy landscape.

Key issues

Nature performs a wide range of functions that provide for human needs (often referred to as ecosystem services), with about one third of the food we eat being entirely dependent on pollinating insects, the health of the soil that grows our food being dependent on the invertebrates and fungi within it, agricultural pests and diseases being held in check by natural predators, water quality being improved by and flood peaks reduced by wetlands, and carbon sequestered by peatlands, trees, ponds, saltmarshes and seagrass meadows.

Despite this inherent value, the extent of the decline in the native species and natural habitats across the UK is stark.

Northumberland is enviably rich in wildlife by English standards. For example, the county's uplands hold a significant proportion of England's blanket bog, upland heath and upland hay meadows, and the coast is important for its dune grasslands, the mudflats and seagrass beds around Lindisfarne, as well as breeding seabirds and wintering shorebirds. Given this relative wealth, the county has an opportunity, working with farmers and landowners, to be at the forefront of nature recovery by seeking to further improve and expand important habitats and thereby increase the abundance and distribution of key species.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP), published in 2018, sets out a range of targets for nature recovery. The subsequent Environment Act 2021 obliges the Government to set a series of legally binding environmental targets and places a number of new obligations on local authorities.

Equally, within the Levelling Up white Paper published in February 2022, the Government confirmed its plans to empower local leaders and communities to reimagine their urban green space and improve access for communities who lack it. This includes bringing wildlife back, aimed at increasing public access while simultaneously delivering nature recovery.

As a result, the 'minded to' North East Devolution Deal includes a number of commitments associated with nature recovery with the County Council playing a central role in leading that regional response. The report sets out this leadership role and seeks endorsement to the emerging mechanisms associated with the development of a North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the delivery of a Borderlands Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) pilot. Both these mechanisms will help inform the decision-making processes of farmers and landowners in defining the optimum use of their land in the short, medium, and long term.

Finally, to further underpin our commitment to stewardship and rural growth, the Council is asked to consider declaring an ecological emergency.

BACKGROUND

The State of Nature

1. The state of nature matters for a wide range of reasons.
2. Nature performs a wide range of functions that provide for human needs (often referred to as ecosystem services), with about one third of the food we eat being entirely dependent on pollinating insects, the health of the soil that grows our food being dependent on the invertebrates and fungi within it, agricultural pests and diseases being held in check by natural predators, water quality being improved by and flood peaks reduced by wetlands, and carbon sequestered by peatlands, trees, ponds, saltmarshes and seagrass meadows.
3. Accordingly, at a time when there is growing concern about food supply and food security there are challenging issues concerning the appropriate allocation of land between food production, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration. All of these issues demand an urgent response, and all are interlinked in many ways, emphasising the importance of managing land with all of these objectives in mind. Indeed, climate change and biodiversity loss are among the greatest threats to food supply and food security, and so it is vitally important that these are not seen as competing land uses to food production as has often been the case in the past, but that we rise to the challenge of integrating them.
4. Over large areas food production will remain the primary objective, but with biodiversity and climate becoming increasingly important secondary objectives, supported by the post-Brexit agricultural support framework founded on delivery of public goods. Where land is less productive or where particular circumstances require it, biodiversity or climate will be the primary objective. However, on the majority of land, nature recovery will be nurtured in tandem with food production. For example, land managed for biodiversity often requires extensive grazing to maintain its ecological value, enabling meat to be produced that doesn't require large areas of arable land for the production of animal feeds to support it, and semi-natural habitats such as wetlands and extensively managed grasslands are also important for carbon sequestration.
5. There is also compelling evidence of the importance of contact with nature for people's mental and physical health and so the quality of the natural environment, especially that in and around the places that people live and work, is a significant factor in improving the wellbeing of residents. A high-quality natural environment is also central to the attraction of the county to tourists and so is at the heart of the visitor economy.
6. Despite this inherent value, the extent of the decline in the native species and natural habitats across the UK is stark.

7. The Biodiversity Intactness Index is an international index adopted by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to estimate biodiversity loss across an area as a result of human pressure on the environment. This has been assessed for 240 countries and territories, with England having the seventh lowest biodiversity intactness index of all 240, at 47%. The UK as a whole has an index of 50%, by far the lowest of all the G7 countries. This compares to 63% for the US, 64% for Japan, 65% for Italy and France, 67% for Germany and 89% for Canada.
8. In addition, the 'State of Nature' report published in 2019 by a coalition of conservation organisations, Government agencies and academic institutions in 2019 provides one of the most wide-ranging analyses and found that the abundance indicator for 214 priority species fell by 60% between 1979 and 2016, and 22% between 2011 and 2016.
9. Equally, the 'Plant Atlas 2020' published in March 2023 confirmed that since the 1950s the known range of 53% of native plant species has declined, with the decline being greatest among species associated with lowland farmland, wetlands and waterbodies. Intensification of arable and pastoral agriculture, drainage of wetland habitats, and nutrient enrichment from fertilizers, sewage and vehicle emissions are among the key causes of these declines. In general terms, upland species have suffered less severe changes in distribution than lowland species, but heathland and bog specialists have declined due to burning, drainage, overgrazing and afforestation. Climate change is also playing in its part with the decline of some species with northern and upland distributions; whilst more introduced species are becoming established in the wild, a small proportion of which become invasive and outcompete native species.
10. Northumberland is enviably rich in wildlife by English standards. For example, the county's uplands hold a significant proportion of England's blanket bog, upland heath and upland hay meadows, and the coast is important for its dune grasslands, the mudflats and seagrass beds around Lindisfarne, as well as breeding seabirds and wintering shorebirds. Given this relative wealth, the county has an opportunity, working with farmers and landowners, to be at the forefront of nature recovery by seeking to further improve and expand important habitats and thereby increase the abundance and distribution of key species.

The response of Government to addressing this decline

Environment Action Plan

11. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP), published in 2018, sets out a range of targets for nature recovery. These include:
 - Restoring 75% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to favourable condition.
 - Creating or restoring 500,000ha of priority habitat outside of the SSSI network.
 - Taking action to recover populations of threatened iconic or economically

important species of animals, plants and fungi.

12. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 for England is the first revision of the 25YEP. It builds on the original vision with a new plan setting out how the Government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of the goals for improving the environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress. Taking these actions will help us restore nature, reduce environmental pollution, and increase the prosperity of the country. The Government has also published the Outcome Indicator Framework which describes environmental change that relates to the 10 goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan.
13. The Environment Act 2021 (see below) obliges the Government to set a series of legally binding environmental targets. A consultation has recently closed on the first set of proposed targets, the biodiversity ones of which are:
 - Halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.
 - Increase species abundance by at least 10% by 2042, compared to 2030 levels.
 - Improve the England-level GB Red List Index of species extinction risk by 2042, compared to 2022 levels.
 - Create or restore in excess of 500,000 ha of a range of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042, compared to 2022 levels.
 - Ensure 70% of the designated features in the Marine Protected Areas network are in favourable condition by 2042, with the remainder in recovering condition.

New Legislation

14. Under the Environment Act 2021, the Government is placing a number of new obligations on local authorities.
15. Central to this are the amendment the Act makes to section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This section imposes a general duty on public authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity, but it has now been strengthened considerably, whereby a public authority will have to consider what action it can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity, set out the policies and specific objectives it considers appropriate, and take the action it considers appropriate in light of these policies and objectives, taking account of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for that area.
16. Local authorities (other than parish councils) must also publish biodiversity reports containing a summary of the action the Council has taken over the reporting period to comply with the general biodiversity duty described above, and a summary of the Council's plans for complying with the duty over the next five years. These reports must also contain a summary of the activity the Council's Planning Service has taken in relation to mandatory biodiversity net gain, the biodiversity gains resulting

or expected to result from biodiversity gain plans it has approved over the period of the report and a summary of its plans for fulfilling its biodiversity net gain obligations over the next five years. The first of these must be published within three years of the date that they become subject to this duty. Thereafter there will be a five-year cycle of planning and reporting.

17. This is a significant new obligation because it requires all relevant Services to consider the ecological impact of their work, to identify actions they could take to conserve and enhance wildlife, and for all of this to be put into a published plan which will then be reported on. Accordingly, there will need to be a Council-wide approach to this matter, which will be subject to public scrutiny. This will undoubtedly present challenges to the Council both in terms of resources and potentially the need to challenge established ways of working, but it also creates the opportunity to systematically review the impact of the Council's operations on Northumberland's wildlife and the opportunities to ensure that these impacts are positive ones.

Nature recovery and levelling up

18. Within the Levelling Up white Paper published in February 2022, the Government confirmed its plans to empower local leaders and communities to reimagine their urban green space and improve access for communities who lack it. This includes bringing wildlife back, aimed at increasing public access while simultaneously delivering nature recovery.
19. As part of this the Government wants to ensure that every landscape is oriented towards nature. On this basis, farmers are being supported to protect the environment and enhance access to nature through the Environmental Land Management Schemes and to restore habitats through Local Nature Recovery Strategies. There is also a statutory a commitment to 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in new development and significant investment on tree planting, including through the Great Northumberland Forest, and peatland restoration.
20. In light of this, the "minded to" North East Devolution Deal, published in December 2020, includes the following commitments:
 - the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) will establish a Rural Growth and Stewardship Board chaired by a Northumberland County Council Cabinet member and driven by Northumberland, Gateshead and County Durham Councils, with government committing to senior level engagement and strong collaboration with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and its arms-length agencies
 - building on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots, including in Northumberland, formal appointment of responsible authorities for Local Nature

Recovery Strategies (LNRS) will be made following publication of relevant regulations and guidance and confirmation of funding.

- in line with commitments made in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the government, which is committed to increasing private investment in nature's recovery across England, will support the North East MCA to capture the economic benefits of its natural capital and attract private investment including to deliver priorities identified in LNRSs through a Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) pilot

Local Nature Recovery Strategy development

21. LNRSs are a new system of spatial strategies for nature that will cover the whole of England, for which Northumberland was one of five local authorities chosen to pilot the process in 2020-21. They are designed as tools to drive more co-ordinated, practical and focused action to help nature, and will identify the priorities for nature recovery, map the most valuable existing habitats and develop and map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat.
22. All public bodies will have a responsibility to have regard to LNRSs when complying with the duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity set out below and they will have a key role in supporting mandatory biodiversity net gain in the planning system. They will also help to guide the development and implementation of the grant schemes for farmers that will replace the existing EU-derived system, thereby playing an important role in integrating land management of food production, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration.
23. The regulations and associated guidance as to what LNRSs should contain was published in March 2023. Further background as to the purpose and development of these strategies is outlined at Appendix 1. The Defra Secretary of State also decides the area that each strategy covers and appoints a 'responsible authority' to lead its preparation, publication, review and republication.
24. Following discussions between the 7 local authorities in the North East of England and DEFRA, the following LNRS geographies have been defined:
 - North of Tyne (to include Newcastle, North Tyneside, and Northumberland)
 - South of Tyne (to include Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland)
 - DurhamWithin this, the North East Devolution Deal confirms that DEFRA will consider the role of the North East MCA in the LNRS including a review of relevant LNRS geographies once the combined authority is in operation.
25. Given these areas, it is anticipated that the Secretary of State will confirm (this announcement is imminent) the NTCA as the Responsible Body for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy covering Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside.

26. However, given the Council's experience as a pilot authority for LNRS and the forthcoming changes to devolution governance, it is also expected that the NTCA will ask the County Council to lead the development of the Strategy on its behalf, working in partnership with Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland National Park Authority, all of whom will be designated as Supporting Authorities. Further details as to the role of the Responsible Authority is set out at Appendix 2.
27. To support this development work for the North of Tyne LNRS, DEFRA is providing a grant of £0.285 million split over two financial years – £0.152 million in 2023-24 and £0.133 million in 2024-25. This is based on a funding formula that takes into account the number of local authorities and the number of farm businesses in the LNRS area. This grant will be paid to the NTCA and subsequently forwarded onto the Council.

Local Investment in Natural Capital

28. In December 2022, consistent with the North East Devolution Deal, DEFRA invited the Council to formally express the region's interest in participating in our new LINC programme, as part of a small cohort of local authority trailblazers. The rationale for the Council's lead on this was on the basis that we are the sole local authority represented in both the North East devolution deal discussions and the Borderlands partnership,
29. The overall purpose and aims of this programme are to:
 - Explore and demonstrate the potential for natural capital investment (based on a sound understanding of assets and opportunities). This will contribute significantly to sustainable growth as part of the Levelling Up agenda, in both urban and rural settings; address the priorities for local natural capital improvement identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategies data and evidence; as well as the increasing role of local authorities as place-makers.
 - Develop local ecosystem markets and investment vehicles that support the green transition, facilitating cooperation and shared learning between organisations and sectors, directing investment to cost-effective solutions, and generating nature-related revenue flows.
 - Build the capacity, effective governance arrangements and capability of local leaders and partner organisations. This will enable sellers of monetisable ecosystem services to develop a pipeline of investable projects; and local areas to aggregate and direct finance flows to deliver environmental goals.
 - Develop and showcase a body of learning and evidence to help other local areas to follow suit.

30. The specific objective of the Programme is for local demonstrator areas to be in a state of readiness to access and bring in local investment for natural capital at a strategic level by 31 January 2025.
31. The Council duly submitted an Expression of Interest to participate in the programme using the footprint of the Borderlands area within England – covering the local authority areas of Cumberland, Northumberland, Westmoreland and Furness.
32. In March, DEFRA invited the Borderlands area to join the LINC programme and in line with the proposals set out in the EOI, a s31 grant of £1.000 million was offered to the Council to act as accountable body for the initiative. Work has now started on mobilising the delivery of this pilot.

The Future of Farming in Northumberland Inquiry

33. In March 2022, the Council commissioned Professor Sally Shortall (Duke of Northumberland Chair of Rural Economy at Newcastle University) to conduct an Inquiry into the future of Farming in Northumberland. Its purpose was to better understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the range of farmers and landowners in Northumberland in moving from the current regime of subsidy funding to the new benefits system for environmental land management, which represents an unprecedented change for agriculture in England following the UK's exit from the European Union.
34. The Inquiry reported in November 2022 and confirmed that farmers and landowners are committed to achieving a sustainable balance between food production and wider environmental benefits, and there are already numerous good practice examples of this. Equally, however, farmers and landowners are having to navigate a complex policy landscape to make challenging short-term decisions to maintain their survival until such time as the fuller implications of the transition to the new system become clearer and they are better placed to plan for their long-term future.
35. Given this, the Inquiry report recommended a number of recommendations to provide better access to information and improve the sharing of good practice. Many of the Council's subsequent responses were built into the Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Plan.

Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Plan

36. In February 2023, Cabinet gave, consistent with all of the above, its full support and endorsement to the Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Plan, the preparation of which had been facilitated and approved by the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

37. The central aim of Investment Plan is to set out a fresh approach for investing in our unique natural, economic and cultural assets in a way that will simultaneously enhance our environment, grow our rural economy, and improve opportunity and prosperity in our communities. As such, the approach aligns and balances investment in:
- *Stewardship*: looking after and enhancing our precious natural assets in a way that provides environmental, social, and economic benefits.
 - *Rural growth*: developing the rural economy, and growing businesses, jobs and wealth in a way that simultaneously delivers environmental and social benefits.
38. The Plan unlocked an initial tranche of up to £9.000 million funding from NTCA to facilitate the delivery of the first wave of deliverable projects (subject to the approval of business cases as required). These are as follows:
- *Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS)* – creation of a new service, that builds upon our recent experience of similar initiatives to deliver business diagnostic and brokerage services to all small and micro businesses across the county. The Service will also deliver an enhanced rural growth and resilience support service and a rural capital Grant Investment Fund, as well as providing a bespoke, countywide farming business advisory service via the National Park Authority.
 - *Rural Asset Multiplier Pilots (RAMPs)* – development of innovative place-based pilots that will seek to improve the balance between stewardship and rural growth within their areas in a way that multiplies the environmental, social and economic benefits.
 - *Northumberland Food Strategy and Action Plan* - the development of a strategy that will, like its national counterpart and building on the existing Made in Northumberland initiative, look at the entire food chain, from field to fork; to include production, marketing, processing, food security, sale and purchase of food (for consumption in the home and out of it), consumer practices, resources and institutions involved in these processes.

Declaration of an ecological emergency

39. To further underpin our commitment to this Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Plan, the Council is asked to consider declaring an ecological emergency.
40. An increasing number of local authorities are taking this step to site alongside the equivalent climate emergency declaration. These include Devon, Cornwall, Dorset, Cambridgeshire, Herefordshire and South Gloucestershire. In the north east, Durham County Council is the first Council to declare an ecological emergency, with the declaration being made in March 2022.

41. There are a number of reasons why it would be appropriate for the Council to declare an ecological emergency. These are as follows:
- It would be timely given our leadership role in relation to the North East Rural Growth and Stewardship Board, the North of Tyne LNRS development, and the Borderlands LINC pilot, as set out in the North East Devolution Deal
 - These regional mechanisms together with the initiatives outlined at paragraph 38 will both further strengthen the engagement channels between the relevant local authorities and the farming/landowning community and help inform the decision-making process of farmers and landowners in defining the optimum use of their land in the short, medium, and long term.
 - Acknowledging the nature and extent of a problem is a necessary precursor to taking effective action.
 - Acknowledging the gravity of the issue and its relevance to Council objectives would help to ensure that it is afforded an appropriate priority.
 - It would provide public acknowledgement that the Council recognises the importance of the ecological element in the multiple challenges of climate, biodiversity and food security, and the need to address these and other competing land uses all in a co-ordinated way.
 - It would strengthen and deepen the approach initiated by the declaration of a climate emergency. The links between nature and climate are strong; restoration of peat bogs and expansion of woodland cover in appropriate locations are obvious examples of this synergy and are being pursued through initiatives such as the Great Northumberland Forest and the Northumberland Peatland Partnership, while the huge potential for restoration of marine and coastal habitats to benefit both nature and carbon sequestration is at a much earlier stage of recognition and action.

IMPLICATIONS

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| Policy | Many aspects of Council policy have implications for the natural environment, but especially planning, regeneration and the management of the Council's own estate. The declaration of an ecological emergency and the use of the Council's new biodiversity planning and reporting obligations to frame a response to this creates the opportunity to systematically review the Council's impact on the natural environment, as it is currently doing for climate. |
| Finance and value for money | Declaration of an ecological emergency in itself does not involve expenditure. However, new statutory obligations under the Environment Act, 2021 which this paper proposes to be used to frame a response to the ecological emergency, will place additional capacity demands on the Council. The implications of this will be monitored within the context of the establishment of the new North East Mayoral |

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| | Combined Authority and further reports brought to Cabinet as required. |
| Legal | <p>This report proposes using the Council's legal obligations under paragraphs 98-101 (biodiversity net gain), 102-103 (biodiversity planning and reporting) and paragraphs 104-108 (local nature recovery strategies) of the Environment Act 2021 to help frame a response to any declaration of an ecological emergency.</p> <p>Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended) S.40 (Duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity).</p> <p>The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council</p> |
| Procurement | None |
| Human Resources | The need for two new Ecologist posts to increase capacity to support work on biodiversity net gain and biodiversity planning and reporting has been identified and recruitment to one of these has been undertaken. However, funding has yet to be identified for the second of these. If developing a response to an ecological emergency involves a need for further posts this will be subject to normal budgetary processes. |
| Property | Council landholdings such as country parks and local nature reserves already make a significant contribution to nature conservation, but it may be possible to identify further ways in which the Council's land can make a greater contribution, subject to wider policy objectives. |
| Equalities | <p>(Impact Assessment attached)</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> |
| Risk Assessment | Declaration of an ecological emergency does not require a risk assessment; proposed actions arising from it can be assessed as required should they meet relevant thresholds |
| Crime & Disorder | None |
| Customer Consideration | The value that the residents of Northumberland place on the natural environment is shown in many ways such as visitor levels to NCC country parks and nature reserves; membership of organisations such as Northumberland Wildlife Trust; volunteering activities such as with Coast Care and through the many positive comments received about Council ecological initiatives such as Space for Shorebirds. |
| Carbon reduction | The restoration and creation of many habitats also brings significant benefits in terms of carbon sequestration and so will also support the Council's progress towards net zero. |

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| Health and Wellbeing | There is strong and growing evidence of the benefits of everyday contact with nature for people's mental and physical health |
| Wards | All |

Appendices

Appendix 1: About local nature recovery strategies

Appendix 2: The role of the responsible authority for a LNRS

Background papers:

None

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

| | Full Name of Officer |
|---|----------------------|
| Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer | Stephen Gerrard |
| Executive Director of Resources and Transformation (S151 Officer) | Jan Willis |
| Executive Director of Place and Regeneration | Simon Neilson |
| Chief Executive | Helen Paterson |
| Council Leader | Glen Sanderson |

Author and Contact Details

David Feige
 Environment and Design Team Manager & County Ecologist
 0777 4295253
David.feige@northumberland.gov.uk

Janice Rose
 Director of Economic Development and Growth
 07500 097568
Janice.rose@northumberland.gov.uk

Appendix 1: About local nature recovery strategies

1. Local nature recovery strategies are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Act. Each strategy must:
 - agree priorities for nature's recovery
 - map the most valuable existing areas for nature
 - map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals
2. The Defra Secretary of State decides the area that each strategy covers and appoints a 'responsible authority' to lead its preparation, publication, review and republication. Defra will publish information on the area covered by each strategy and who the responsible authorities are. Together, the strategies will cover the whole of England with no gaps and no overlaps.
3. The main purpose of the strategies is to identify locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The strategies do not force the owners and managers of the land identified to make any changes. Instead, the government is encouraging action through, for example, opportunities for funding and investment.
4. Actions which support and draw on nature to provide wider environmental or societal benefits are called 'nature-based solutions'. Having both actions for nature recovery and nature-based solutions will help join up work to improve how land is managed for different environmental reasons and find activities that have multiple benefits.
2. Responsible authorities should involve people and groups from across the public, private and voluntary sectors and help them to work together. The strategy will benefit from their understanding of what environmental issues are most important locally. This will also encourage them to carry out the proposals in the strategy.
3. The Act establishes 2 mechanisms to support the delivery of local nature recovery strategies: mandatory biodiversity net gain and a strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities
4. The strategies will identify where action to achieve net gain will have the most impact and encourage action in these locations through the way net gain is calculated. All public 5 of 20 authorities will also have to have regard to relevant local nature recovery strategies under the strengthened biodiversity duty.
5. The government intends for local nature recovery strategies to inform the local planning process. Local planning authorities must have regard to them in complying with the strengthened biodiversity duty. The government will provide separate guidance to explain what this means in practice.
6. Further support for strategy delivery may come from funding for specific activities mapped by the strategy.
7. Responsible authorities should contribute to the delivery of their strategy as well as leading its preparation. However, they are not solely responsible for delivering the

strategy. This should be a shared effort with public, private and voluntary sector partners all playing a role.

8. Responsible authorities must review and republish their strategies as part of an ongoing cycle which considers what has been achieved and proposes what further work is needed for nature to recover. The local nature recovery strategy regulations set out when and how often reviews will take place.
9. The stages in this cycle are:
 1. Prepare - agree priorities, identify 'potential measures' (actions for achieving them) and map suitable locations for carrying them out.
 2. Publish - finalise the strategy and make it available.
 3. Take action - local partners work together with landowners and managers to create and enhance habitat for nature and environment, and take other biodiversity-positive actions.
 4. Review - recognise what actions have been delivered, including those not identified in the current strategy.
 5. Update - revisit priorities, potential measures and suitable locations, to reflect progress and changing circumstances to ensure the strategy remains relevant and ambitious.
 6. Republish - finalise the updated strategy and make it available

Appendix 2: The role of the responsible authority for a LNRS

1. Under the regulations, responsible authorities must work together with partners when preparing their strategy and later when reviewing and preparing it for republication. This aims to:
 - provide a single vision for nature recovery and the use of nature-based solutions that all interested parties have been able to contribute to and work towards
 - build and strengthen local partnerships that will be important for carrying out the strategies as well as preparing them
 - involve the people who own and manage the land, and the people who take regulatory decisions, so they can contribute to what action is being proposed, where and why
2. In working with partners, responsible authorities should apply these principles:
 - transparency – be able to show how partner contributions have been considered, how decisions have been made, and what the basis for them is
 - inclusivity – enable everyone with an interest to be involved where possible
 - clear communication – avoid using technical terms that may not be understood by partners and end users
3. By working with local partners in this way, responsible authorities will be able to produce strategies that are technically sound and evidence based. They will also benefit from local knowledge and have the support from partners to help achieve successful delivery.
4. Responsible authorities should consider and set out how they intend to engage and actively involve local partner organisations and communities early in the process of preparing or reviewing their strategy. This should include engaging with supporting authorities and neighbouring responsible authorities.