

Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Supporting Authority Approval

- To: Environment and Green Investment
- Meeting Date: 12 June 2025
- From: Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Place and Sustainability
- Electoral division(s): All
- Key decision: No
- Forward Plan ref: Not applicable.
- Executive Summary: The report addresses requirements of the Environment Act 2021 relating to the County Council's Supporting Authority role in reviewing the pre-consultation draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy. It is to be noted that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is led by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority as the responsible authority. The Committee is asked to endorse the draft consultation version of the document on behalf of the County Council as a supporting authority.
- Recommendation: The Environment and Green Investment Committee is recommended to:
- a) Note the latest draft of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy that is being finalised for approval by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) set out in Appendix 1
 - b) Note the full list of Supporting Authorities, including wider contributors, in Appendix 2 that have been involved in preparing the draft document; and
 - c) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment and Green Investment Committee to review the Combined Authority's final consultation draft of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and confirm the Council's support for the document for the purposes of consultation.

Officer contact:
Name: Phil Clark
Post: Biodiversity Manager
Email: Philip.Clark@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

Ambition 1 - Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes – The Local Nature Recovery Strategy outlines actions that can be taken to enhance and restore nature. Many of these measures also deliver additional ecosystem services including carbon sequestration, pollination, air quality enhancement and nutrient cycling.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a new statutory plan as required under The Environment Act 2021. A LNRS agrees priorities for nature recovery and proposes actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities. There are 48 strategy areas covering the whole of England and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs appointed 'responsible authorities' to lead the preparation of the strategy for each area. The responsible authority for Cambridgeshire is the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).
- 2.2 In addition to the responsible authority, the LNRS legislation requires responsible authorities to involve all local authorities and Natural England (collectively termed 'supporting authorities') in the preparation process. Cambridgeshire County Council falls under the definition of a supporting authority.
- 2.3 The role of a supporting authority is to work closely with the responsible authority, provide local data and input information from other relevant strategies and to periodically review and agree drafts of the LNRS. As a supporting authority, the County Council has been involved as a member of the steering group throughout the production of the LNRS, providing significant input through its Ecology Officers and the Biodiversity and Greenspaces Manager.
- 2.4 As well as supporting authorities, Defra guidance also states that responsible authorities should involve a wide range of groups to make sure that the LNRS reflects local priorities and benefits from local knowledge. Examples of these groups include the following, with the full list set out in Appendix 2:
 - a. Landowners and managers
 - b. Government organisations such as the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and National Highways
 - c. Environmental charities
 - d. Businesses
 - e. Local groups and communities
- 2.5 The LNRS sets out how everyone across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, from individual residents through to local authorities, landowners and businesses can take action to improve and restore nature.
- 2.6 Every strategy must contain a written statement of biodiversity priorities and a local habitat map. The statement of biodiversity priorities must include:
 - a. A description of the strategy area and its biodiversity
 - b. A description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity in its strategy area

- c. The priorities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity (taking into account the contribution this can also make to other environmental benefits)
- d. Proposals as to potential measures relating to those priorities

2.7 The local habitat map must identify:

- a. National conservation sites in the strategy area
- b. Local nature reserves in the strategy area
- c. Areas that are, or could become, of particular importance for biodiversity
- d. Areas where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits

2.8 The LNRS regulations indicate that once published, a LNRS will be reviewed and republished from time to time by the responsible authority (every 3 to 10 years).

2.9 This report recognises that the CPCA is responsible for the production of the LNRS and this decision therefore only relates to whether the Council confirms acceptance of the CPCA's final consultation draft LNRS document.

3. Main issues

3.1 Under The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023, a responsible authority must provide all supporting authorities with the consultation draft of its local nature recovery strategy and request their comments. Following receipt of the consultation draft, the supporting authority has 28 days (beginning on the day on which the responsible authority provided the supporting authority with the consultation draft) in which to make a formal response. The formal consultation period for supporting authorities runs from 19 June to 17 July 2025.

3.2 The responsible authority has provided the County Council with its consultation draft which has been reviewed by officers. The strategy is formed of two main parts and several supporting documents. Part I of the strategy sets the scene for nature recovery across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, highlighting the decline in nature and the challenges and opportunities for recovery. Part II sets the vision and strategic aims as well as the priorities and potential measures (termed 'actions') for nature recovery across the area.

3.3 Seven broad priority habitats were determined through:

- a. Workshops and drop-in sessions with landowners, local authorities, nature conservation organisations, local communities and interest groups
- b. Public surveys to which over 1,400 responses were received
- c. A review of existing plans and strategies undertaken by environmental organisations

3.4 These broad habitats were then subdivided into local habitat priorities, for example 'woodland' has been subdivided into deciduous woodland, wet woodland, wood pasture/ parkland and traditional orchards. For each of these local habitat priorities, actions to create or enhance the habitat have been assigned (determined through work with Ecologists, ecological experts and the LNRS steering group).

3.5 Additionally, public surveys and work with experts has identified 144 species of local and national importance. Most of these species are reliant on habitats which are

themselves of special value in the county. Actions have been developed to help these species recover where it cannot be delivered through habitat actions alone.

- 3.6 The method by which the species and habitats have been prioritised is set out in a supporting document titled 'Prioritisation and Mapping Methodology and Habitat Opportunity Modelling Methodology'.
- 3.7 Many of the actions for priority habitats can be mapped as the land they apply to is identifiable (e.g. restore and enhance the biodiversity of traditional orchards) whereas some actions are not location specific and could apply over many areas (e.g. reduce sedimentation of rivers by better land management). Where it is possible to map the actions, these have been added to the local habitat map which is displayed via an online, interactive portal. This map also includes areas that are, or could become of particular importance for biodiversity (including national conservation sites and local nature reserves). Throughout the document, the wider benefits (ecosystem services) that can be achieved through the implementation of the actions is highlighted.
- 3.8 Throughout the preparation of the LNRS, in its role as a supporting authority, the County Council has:
 - a. Attended regular steering group meetings
 - b. Attended workshops (sub-groups, ecology groups etc.)
 - c. Provided input through the mapping sub group and ecology groups
 - d. Attended meetings, workshops and forums of the local nature partnership (Natural Cambridgeshire)
 - e. Reviewing draft documents including governance and terms of reference at the set-up phase
- 3.9 The Council's Principal Ecology Officer has also provided significant input, particularly in relation to, priority habitat mapping and agreeing priority species with measures for management.
- 3.10 The LNRS regulations provide two opportunities for supporting authorities to formally support or raise objections to the responsible authority, of which this is the first opportunity. The second is after the public consultation but prior to publication. This is expected in November 2025 and will be the subject of a future paper to the Environment and Green Investment Committee. A template has been produced for the supporting authorities to use and the draft response from the Council is included in Appendix 3.
- 3.11 The LNRS must be agreed by all supporting authorities within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough before public consultation can take place. Where objections are raised, responsible authorities (in this case the CPCA) should make all efforts to resolve them locally to enable consultation or publication to proceed. In the rare circumstances in which disputes prove insoluble locally and are escalated to the Defra Secretary of State, responsible authorities will need to explain what steps they have taken to resolve the matter locally. Public consultation may not begin until issues have been considered.
- 3.12 Officers are satisfied that the LNRS meets the statutory requirements and that the local interests and opportunities have been included. As such, our draft response set out in Appendix 3 reflects this.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 Officers can advise that the draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy is in a form that can be approved and would highlight that no objections should be made to the public consultation being undertaken in line with Appendix 3.

5. Significant Implications

5.1 Finance Implications

There will be no direct financial implications following publication of the strategy by the CPCA, as the purpose of it is to identify areas of existing biodiversity importance and identify where anyone can create new areas for biodiversity.

5.2 Legal Implications

The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 set out the relationship between the responsible authority and supporting authority for the LNRS and their respective responsibilities.

Under regulation 7, the responsible authority must provide all supporting authorities for the local nature recovery strategy with the consultation draft of its local nature recovery strategy and request their comments.

A supporting authority that has been provided with a consultation draft of a local nature recovery strategy under regulation 7 may raise an objection with the responsible authority about -

- a) the local nature recovery strategy; or
- b) the responsible authority's preparation of the local nature recovery strategy, including the extent to which the responsible authority has involved the supporting authority in that preparation (regulation 9).

An objection must be made in writing, giving reasons for the objection and must be given before the expiry of 28 days with the day on which the responsible authority provided the supporting authority with the consultation draft of its local nature recovery strategy, under regulation 7.

5.3 Risk Implications

Whilst the actions within the strategy are not assigned to individual organisations, nor are they legally binding, a failure to undertake the actions or work towards the objectives set down within the strategy could severely damage the reputation of the county council, particularly following its declaration of a climate and environment emergency.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

As the County Council has been commissioned to develop the LNRS on behalf of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken in conjunction with the County Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Advisor (EQIA-08563).

6. Source Documents

6.1 [Local nature recovery strategies: areas and responsible authorities - GOV.UK](#)

6.2 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Latest draft document that is being finalised for approval by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).

Appendix 2: Full list of Supporting Authorities, including wider contributors, that have been involved in drafting the draft document and through membership of the Steering Group have guided the process.

Appendix 3: Draft response accepting the Combined Authority's final consultation draft of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).