

Title of Report	DRAFT LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY	
Presented by	Councillor Tony Saffell Planning Portfolio Holder PH Briefed: yes	
Background Papers	Local Habitat Map webpages which support/accompany the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy https://haveyoursay.leicestershire.gov.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy-local-habitat-map Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies is a new statutory duty placed on Local Government. There are also statutory requirements to be followed in the process for preparing/publishing the strategy, as well as complying with the Councils Constitutional requirements.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Potential resource implications for the Planning Policy Team who will need to take the LNRS into account in the preparation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	The purpose of the report is to present to the Cabinet the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland to seek approval for it to go out to public consultation. Although the LNRS would not be adopted at this stage and would only be a draft going to consultation, the Council’s Legal Service has previously advised that Cabinet approval would still be required, due to the requirement for the draft having to be in an approved form.	
Reason for Decision	Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new statutory duty placed	

	<p>on local government in England, as part of the Environment Act 2021. It requires local authorities to work together to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies across 48 areas in England.</p> <p>Under the Environment Act 2021, Leicestershire County Council was appointed the 'responsible authority' for the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.</p> <p>Leicestershire County Council requires each of the seven local authorities in Leicestershire to seek authority to go out to public consultation.</p>
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <p>APPROVES THE DRAFT LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY, REFERRED TO IN PARAGRAPH 3.7 BELOW, TO GO OUT TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION</p>

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of the Environment Act 2021 the Government introduced the requirement to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) across England. There are 48 LNRS areas across England.
- 1.2 This new mandatory system of spatial strategies will map the most valuable existing areas for nature, establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits. The draft strategy must go out to public consultation and the strategy must be agreed by the Secretary of State.
- 1.3 In March 2022, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) approached higher tier councils to take on the 'responsible authority' role as part of the new LNRS duty. Leicestershire County Council agreed on a provisional, non-binding basis to be the 'responsible authority' for the LNRS area which covers Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland.
- 1.4 Between March 2022 and March 2023, the Government put in place a national framework to enable the preparation of LNRSs to commence. This included confirming strategy boundaries and formally agreeing the roles of the 'responsible authority' to lead in each area.
- 1.5 The official regulations and guidance on LNRS were released on 23 March 2023. The regulations and guidance provided details on the appointment of responsible authorities, the creation of the role of supporting authorities, and what was required in developing and publishing LNRSs.
- 1.6 Defra sent a formal letter to all provisional responsible authorities, including Leicestershire County Council, in mid-May 2023 to notify them that they had been appointed as the responsible authority for their respective LNRS area.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT LNRS

- 2.1 The development of the draft LNRS required Leicestershire County Council to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities including Leicester City Council, Rutland Council and the districts as well as other public bodies such as the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the National Forest Company.
- 2.2 Engagement has also involved key partners and stakeholders including, amongst others, representatives from the supporting authorities and Defra bodies, the National Farmers Union (NFU), Countryside Land Managers Association (CLA), Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) and Trent Rivers Trust.
- 2.3 A programme of communication and engagement was undertaken to promote the work to develop the LNRS, to encourage stakeholders and residents to get involved. The engagement programme also included a series of farmer/landowner and resident workshops across the LNRS area.
- 2.4 Leicestershire County Council officers presented the LNRS to the Members Advisory Group on 14 September 2023.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF THE LNRS CONTENTS

- 3.1 The contents of the LNRS are largely set out in the official LNRS guidance, with strategies required to meet certain criteria in order to be approved to go out to public consultation by Natural England. The LNRS consists of two key components; the LNRS strategy document and auxiliary webpages that include an interactive copy of the Local Habitat Map and supporting information.
- 3.2 The draft LNRS for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland was presented to a Natural England panel on 8 October 2024. The panel found the LNRS had met all the criteria, however, they suggested some minor amendments to be made to the document and the webpages to improve their readability and functionality.
- 3.3 The amendments were made to the designed-up version of the LNRS and the webpages, and they were presented to a Natural England sub-panel on 5 November 2024 for approval. The County Council has now received approval from Natural England for the draft LNRS.
- 3.4 The key components of the LNRS are:
 - the setting out of the overall strategic aims of the strategy,
 - the area description, which describes the natural landscape and how people have shaped the landscape,
 - an assessment of the current state of nature across the area, including a presentation in map form of the existing areas of particular importance for biodiversity (located on supporting LNRS webpages),
 - a presentation of the key environmental considerations, such as future pressures and wider environmental issues,
 - a presentation in map form of the areas that could become of importance for biodiversity and the wider environment (located on supporting LNRS webpages),

- the setting out of the main biodiversity priorities and measures, that will take place within the priority areas as well as the landscape scale (area wide) priorities and measures,
- the setting out of the key factors needed to support delivery of the LNRS,
- a suite of appendices providing supporting information and technical detail.

3.5 The [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) includes a requirement that Local Authorities must take account of any LNRS when preparing Local and Neighbourhood Plans. Once approved, it is anticipated that the LNRS would help support the implementation of BNG schemes secured through the granting of planning permissions for new development to identified priority areas for nature recovery and biodiversity.

3.6 A copy of the draft LNRS can be found on the following link:

[Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

4.0 DRAFT LNRS APPROVAL PROCESS

4.1 The draft LNRS was issued to the supporting authorities on 4 October under Regulation 7 of the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023.

4.2 Under Regulation 9, the supporting authorities have 28 days to raise an objection with the responsible authority regarding the draft LNRS. Leicestershire County Council has received no objections to-date.

4.3 The draft LNRS is also going through the individual approval processes of the supporting authorities and Defra bodies to approve the draft LNRS to go out to public consultation. Although the LNRS would not be adopted at this stage and would only be a draft going to consultation, the Council's Legal Service has previously advised that Cabinet approval would still be required, due to the requirement for the draft having to be in an approved form.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications that arise from this report.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and regeneration - Communities and housing - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	LNRSs are a new statutory duty being placed on local government as a result of the Environment Act 2021. All local authorities have a role to play in preparing and delivering them. The LNRS must be

	taken into account in the plan-making process, including Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.
Safeguarding:	None identified.
Equalities/Diversity:	None identified.
Customer Impact:	The decision will allow for public consultation on the strategy.
Economic and Social Impact:	None identified
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	The LNRS will map the most valuable existing areas for nature, establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	This report seeks Cabinet approval for Leicestershire County Council to go out to public consultation on the draft LNRS.
Risks:	Impact on the resources of the Planning Policy team in terms having to take account of the LNRS in Local and Neighbourhood Plan making.
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