



Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot - Overview

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Help set the ambition for nature's recovery in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire's natural environment is the foundation of our health, prosperity, identity and heritage. It boasts varied landscapes – from the low-lying farmland of Aylesbury Vale, the floodplain grasslands of the Upper Ray Valley, the ancient woodland, chalk grasslands and internationally important chalk streams of the Chiltern Hills, and the streams and rivers that feed the River Thames.

But nature is highly fragile, and while Buckinghamshire's countryside may look green and pleasant, it disguises dramatic declines in species diversity and abundance. Nature is declining at an unprecedented rate, with 41% of species having declined in the UK since 1970. These include some of our best-known wildlife such as skylarks, yellowhammers, water voles, hares, hedgehogs, frogs, and toads.

To address the alarming declines of nature, we need a bold new strategy that paves the way for nature's recovery, which draws on work already done locally, such as through the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership, and gives a voice to the people who live and work in Buckinghamshire and to those who farm and manage the land.

Buckinghamshire has been chosen as one of five areas in the country to trial the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which are a new way of helping nature, identifying which characteristics are most important at a local level to focus action and investment. The aim is to help nature and people flourish together. Ultimately, these local strategies will form part of a national Nature Recovery Network – creating improved, joined-up, wildlife-rich places which will benefit people and wildlife.

Between now and the end of March 2021, we will engage with stakeholders to help shape our Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot. Whether it's wildflowers for pollinators, more trees to fight climate change, more green spaces in our towns, or a habitat or species you're passionate about – we want your input to create a shared vision for nature's recovery over the next 25 years.

This will not be the end of our engagement with you – in fact it will be just the beginning. Beyond April 2021 we will share the outputs of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot, and work more with stakeholders to finalise the Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.



What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a flagship measure in the Environment Bill. These are plans that will help drive more coordinated, practical, focussed action and investment to help nature and people flourish together, whilst delivering wider nature-based environmental benefits. They will consist of:

- A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, which reflect stakeholder priorities for environmental outcomes, and the actions that need to be undertaken to achieve these outcomes.
- A Local Habitat Map which will identify the existing distribution habitats and the location of areas already important for biodiversity, overlaid by locations considered suitable for delivering the outcomes and actions identified by stakeholders.

The strategies will be a statutory requirement of the upcoming Environment Bill. This means that local councils will be required to develop one when the Bill becomes law. Councils will then have to report on progress on the LNRS every five years.

For more details on the specific steps of the pilot, please see the section 'Details of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot'.



What does the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot involve?

Buckinghamshire Council is leading the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot, with the support of a Pilot Area Team, comprised of representatives from the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Chilterns Conservation Board, and the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust.

The pilot is running from September 2020 – March 2021.

The pilot involves the creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which will be evidence-based, locally-led and collaboratively produced. The LNRS will be co-owned and

co-created by stakeholders in Buckinghamshire, therefore stakeholder engagement is a fundamental component of the LNRS.

In addition to this the pilot will also test how the LNRS sits within the local context and other local environmental spatial frameworks. For Buckinghamshire this includes (but is not limited to) the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan, the Chilterns AONB Management Plan, the emerging Biodiversity Action Plan 'Forward to 2030', the emerging Biodiversity Net Gain policies, Environmental Land Management, and the natural capital mapping that has been undertaken locally.

The pilot itself does not itself involve funding to deliver specific projects on the ground and in the community. The purpose of the pilot is to help test the process for production of a LNRS, whilst at the same time helping us shape a plan and gather evidence for where projects and funding would be best placed.



What will the Local Nature Recovery Strategy be useful for?

The Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be one of the crucial local delivery plans for the UK's Environment Bill and national Nature Recovery Network. It will specify our vision for nature's recovery in Buckinghamshire, our stakeholders' key environmental priorities, and importantly actions that need to be undertaken to reach our goals.

The Environmental Land Management offer is the new way for government to pay farmers and land managers to deliver public goods such as clean air and water, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and thriving plants and wildlife. The Local Nature Recovery component of Environmental Land Management seeks to support the delivery of locally targeted environmental goals. The LNRS provides the process and output for building these local priorities. An E.L.M Local Convener is working alongside the Buckinghamshire Pilot team supporting the alignment between the two policy areas and how these function on the ground with stakeholders. The LNRS will need to support farmers, land managers and advisers in the development of agreements and through effective stakeholder engagement and spatial prioritisation, and the Pilot team aim to deliver this.

By helping us to understand where the most effective places in Buckinghamshire are, it will support the recovery of nature. It will also help guide a future investment plan.

It will guide other important local and national policy initiatives, such as

- the [Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Accounting](#) system to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain in planning
- the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery component of Environmental Land Management

It will help us to influence and work closely with Government, before LNRS's are rolled out to the rest of the country.

It will also help us to attract future funding for environmental growth.

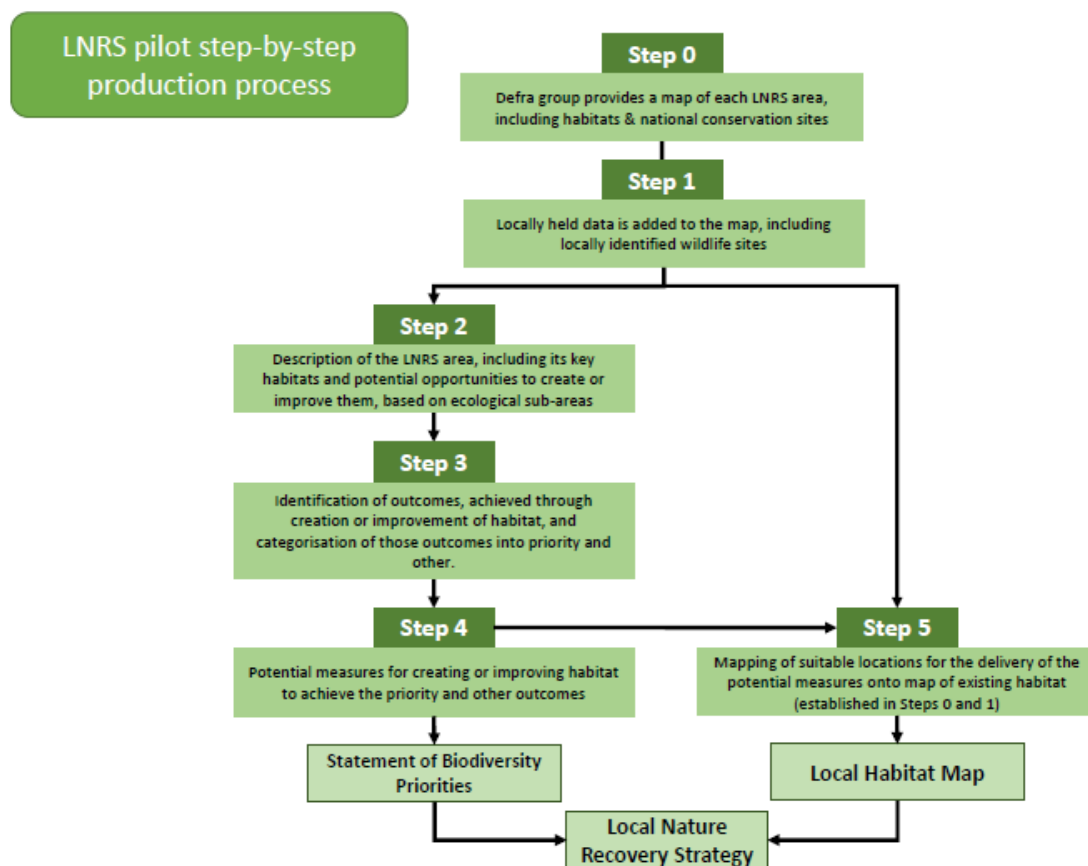


Further details of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot

Buckinghamshire Council has been selected by Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Natural England to be one of five local authorities across England to pilot the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).

The Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot will be evidence-based, locally-led and collaboratively produced. Collectively LNRSs across the country will help to build the foundations of planning and local engagement on which the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is built. The NRN is a single, growing national network of improved, joined-up, wildlife-rich places which will benefit people and wildlife.

The pilots will test the policy and inform future national implementation once the Environment Bill receives royal assent which is likely in spring 2021. The pilot will test several steps to generate an evidence base and a standardised process for the creation of the Local Habitat Map and Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, which together make up the strategy:



A key feature of the LNRSs is that they will identify both areas that could become of importance for biodiversity and areas where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could contribute to other environmental benefits, such as tree planting, natural flood management and access to greenspace. This allows the LNRS to target the use of nature-based solutions to where they will have the most benefit, and potentially drawing funding from a wide range of sources designed to address these wider environmental issues.

Working through the process of the LNRS pilot, we have compiled a set of baseline maps that draw on national and local datasets (step 1), and we have developed a written description of the LNRS area including its' key habitats and assess the potential opportunities to create or improve them (step 2). Much of this work has drawn on a wealth of knowledge and work undertaken recently for the next Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan. The culmination of steps 1 & 2 is a Buckinghamshire Background Document, which will be shared with stakeholders at our information webinar on Friday 5th of February.

Between now and the end of March 2021, we will engage stakeholders to identify environmental outcomes and potential measures, or activities, to create or improve habitats to achieve outcomes.

The final stage of the LNRS pilot will involve the production of a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, which reflect stakeholder priorities, and a Local Habitat Map which will identify the existing distribution of different habitat types and the location of areas already important for biodiversity, overlaid by locations considered suitable for delivering the outcomes and measures identified by stakeholders.

As this is a pilot, the pilot outputs (Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and Local Habitat Map) will be shared with stakeholders for further consultation and iteration before being formalised into the Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.