

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO CABINET**

16 July 2024

Report Title: Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Submitted by: Service Director Planning & Service Director Sustainable Environment

Portfolios: Sustainable Environment and Strategic Planning

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To provide information regarding the creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Staffordshire and covering the borough of Newcastle-Under-Lyme.	
<u>Recommendation</u>	
That Cabinet:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek member endorsement of the LNRS work, and the forthcoming public engagement consultation. 2. Support as a Council and members commitment to supporting the development of the LNRS by engaging appropriate resources. 	
<u>Reasons</u>	
<p>The Borough Council is a 'supporting authority' under Staffordshire County Council (the 'responsible authority') in developing and delivering the Strategy, and an initial meeting between the LNRS Project Manager and the Borough Council has recently taken place, providing a progress update and initial discussion around mutual support.</p> <p>Representation is required at both Member and Senior Officer level on the LNRS steering group. At delivery group level operational support is required from Officers.</p>	

1. Background

- 1.1 England is widely considered to be one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world following historic and ongoing declines. The Government has made legally-binding commitments to end these declines and for nature to recover. This is important for nature's own sake and for all the things that society relies on nature for, such as fresh air, clean water and food

production. For nature to recover, targeted, co-ordinated and collaborative action will be required.

- 1.2 Under the Environment Act 2021 there is a requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be developed covering England. Each local nature recovery strategy will agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has appointed 48 responsible authorities – mainly county council's and other upper tier local authorities - to lead on preparing local nature recovery strategies for their respective areas. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council as a lower tier authority has been identified as a 'supporting authority' in this context. Together these 48 strategy areas cover the whole of England with no gaps or overlaps.
- 1.3 Responsible authorities are expected to work with other organisations and partners in their area to agree what should be included in their local nature recovery strategy. They will identify practical, achievable proposals developed with the input of people who know and understand the area, especially landowners and managers. This approach is essential if the proposed actions are to be taken.
- 1.4 Responsible authorities will provide local leadership to draw together knowledge, expertise and the best available information and data. Anyone who can play a part in recovering nature and the wider environment in their local area could be involved in preparing a strategy.
- 1.5 The County Council has identified a range of partner types to engage with:
 - Landowners
 - Supporting authorities
 - Regulatory bodies
 - Neighbouring regional authorities
 - Communities
 - Businesses
 - Environmental bodies
 - and utilities

The below list shows the Responsible Authority and Supporting Authorities involved in developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy:

- Staffordshire County Council (Responsible Authority)
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council (Supporting Authority)
- Stafford Borough Council (Supporting Authority)
- East Staffordshire District Council (Supporting Authority)
- South Staffordshire District Council (Supporting Authority)
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (Supporting Authority)
- Newcastle Borough Council (Supporting Authority)
- Lichfield District Council (Supporting Authority)
- Tamworth Borough Council (Supporting Authority)
- Cannock Chase District Council (Supporting Authority)
- Peak District National Park Authority (Supporting Authority)

- Natural England

1.6 To take work forward Staffordshire County Council has recently appointed a Project Officer and additional staff. The County LNRS team is currently engaging with the partners noted above and also commencing with initial public engagement and consultation, to evidence the delivery of achieving a public mandate. This is centred around species recovery, and is being delivered using information from the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, as an ecological records partner.

1.7 Development of the LNRS will also take account of work being carried out by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust in relation to countywide habitat mapping (including identifying conservation sites, local nature reserves, local wildlife sites, irreplaceable habitats). This will be a key source of baseline information.

2. Issues

2.1 It will be important for the Borough Council to engage with the formulation of the LNRS. This will ensure that the LNRS properly reflects the existing nature conservation habitats in the borough but also the opportunities that exist to further enhance biodiversity. The LNRS will need to link to important local strategies for example the Sustainable Environment Strategy, emerging Borough Local Plan, Tree Planting and Management Plans and Grassland Management Plans etc.

3. Recommendation

3.1 To seek member endorsement of the LNRS work including forthcoming public engagement and consultation.

3.2 To agree that the Borough Council fully engages with the exercise of developing a LNRS and contributes to its subsequent implementation.

4. Reasons

4.1 To make Members aware of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which will link to the Borough Local Plan, recent Biodiversity Net Gain obligations, Staffordshire Sustainability Board, and the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy Delivery Plan (SES DP)

4.2 It is envisaged by the County Council that the LNRS will be a high-level document, drawing from policies and strategies already in place at partner level, such as the Council's Grassland Management Strategy, Tree Strategy, emerging Local Plan and BNG delivery. It is being created on the basis of developing existing synergies rather than creating new workloads and obligations.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to contribute to the development of the LNRS.
- 5.2 The Council has a statutory duty to address the safeguarding of biodiversity in the borough and its enhancement. There are no options in this regard. BNG is a requirement of the planning system and as local planning authority the Council has responsibility for assessing the merits of BNG proposals as part of the determination process. The means by which the Council meets its planning obligations including options available to it are still emerging given the start dates of the legislation.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 The Environment Act 2021 imposes specific statutory requirements on the Borough Council as regards nature recovery and biodiversity. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021 and Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) obligates the Council to address BNG as part of the statutory planning process.
- 6.2 The Environment Act 2021 introduced the concept of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG is a statutory requirement imposed on qualifying development schemes to provide for an uplift in Biodiversity over and above existing levels. It derives from an ambition to increase levels nationally of biodiversity.
- 6.3 The development and implementation of the LNRS will also play a part in the work undertaken by the SSB and the BNG.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 There are no equality issues associated with this report.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 It is envisaged that because the LNRS is created using policies and strategies already in place at the Borough Council, the implications will be minimal at this time. However, once the County LNRS is fully adopted, there might be additional finance and resource implications which emerge. Further reports will be provided to Cabinet once the County LNRS is finalised.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

9.1 None.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. Key Decision Information

11.1 Not applicable

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 Not applicable

13. List of Appendices

13.1 None

14. Background Papers

14.1 None