

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/Exempt		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES /NO	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES/ NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES /NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Michael De Whalley E-mail: cllr.michael.dewhalley@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Jim Moriarty			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officer: Michael Burton (Principal Planner) E-mail: Michael.burton@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 616573		Other Officers consulted: Stuart Ashworth (Assistant Director), Claire Wiggs (Senior Ecologist), Alex Fradley (Planning Policy Manager).			
Financial Implications YES /NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES /NO	Statutory Implications YES /NO	Equality Impact Assessment YES /NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES /NO	Environmental Considerations YES /NO
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					

Date of meeting: 11th November 2025

ADOPTION OF NORFOLK LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

Summary

The Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is part of a national strategy to restore and protecting nature across England. Preparation of a LNRS is a requirement of the Environment Act of 2021.

Recommendation

Cabinet Resolves:

To recommend adoption of the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) by the Council.

Recommendations to Full Council:

Adoption of the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Reason for Decision

To formally endorse and adopt the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and fulfil the Borough Council's statutory obligations, in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 (Part 6).

1 Background

Preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021. Preparation of the Norfolk LNRS commenced during summer 2024 (preliminary work); led by the Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership (NRP).

The preliminary work (evidence gathering) was followed by three consultation phases, allowing for supporting authorities (SAs), including the Borough Council, to comment on the LNRS document and mapping:

- Phase 1: 28-day pre-public consultation period (closed consultation for SAs only) – 15 January – 11 February 2025;
- Phase 2: Public consultation (open consultation) – 16 April – 11 June 2025; and
- Phase 3: 28 Pre-publication consultation period (closed consultation for SAs only) – 15 September – 13 October 2025.

The final version was published on the 31 October 2025 shortly after the close of the Phase 3 SA consultation.

The LNRS identifies priorities and actions for restoring and enhancing nature across Norfolk. The Norfolk & Suffolk NRP, consisting of representatives from Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils (“The Partnership”). The Partnership has led production of LNRSs for Norfolk and Suffolk, respectively. It has involved collaboration between the two County Councils, Borough and District Councils, who have been directly involved in preparation. It has also involved wider engagement with external partners such as landowners and farmers, conservation experts (e.g. Local Wildlife Trusts) and local communities. Although preparation of the LNRSs for Norfolk and Suffolk has been undertaken jointly through the Partnership, separate strategies have been produced for each County.

It is emphasised that the LNRS is about identifying opportunities for nature enhancement. It is not about prevention or restrictions, such as forcing or compelling landowners to make changes, blocking new developments or creating new nature reserves.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) places a duty on all public authorities who operate in England to consider how they can conserve and enhance biodiversity. In complying with this duty all public authorities must “have regard” to any relevant LNRS. The legislation specifies the form that the LNRS should take; i.e. these must:

- agree priorities for nature’s recovery;
- map the most valuable existing areas for nature; and
- map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

The [August 2025 Public Consultation Report](#) highlights the overarching aims/goals of the Norfolk and Suffolk LNRs. These aim to expand, improve, and link natural areas, guiding the implementation of environmental priorities and funding like Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The final version of the LNR went 'live' on 31 October 2025 alongside the Local Habitat Mapping Tool. Both are available to view here:

- Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Local Habitat Mapping Tool [<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/73317>]

2 Options Considered

No alternative options were considered. Preparation of the LNR is a statutory obligation under the Environment Act 2021.

3 Policy Implications

The Norfolk LNR will function as part of a national suite of 48 separate LNRs, forming part of a national drive to support the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. This focuses on highlighting and revitalising natural habitats across the County, including:

- mapping existing important natural areas;
- identifying key locations and opportunities for creating or enhancing habitats for maximum environmental benefit; and
- planning where and how to establish or connect habitats, benefiting both nature and people.

The LNR is about positive planning; i.e. identifying and supporting enhancement of the natural environment for priority habitats and species. It functions as a toolkit, supporting developers and landowners in identifying potential opportunities to achieve benefits for the natural environment; e.g. the LNR incentivises the delivery of the most significant habitat through a 15% multiplier for BNG through the statutory metric.

When adopted, the LNR will function as a key toolkit for informing both plan-making (e.g. preparation of the Local Plan, neighbourhood plans) and decision making (determining planning applications). It will operate as a live strategy, supporting local planning authorities in making policies and decisions that support conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment, in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy priority to protect our environment and legal duties (Environment Act 2021).

4 Financial Implications

There are no current financial implications. The LNR is already funded through the Council's existing commitments to the Norfolk Coast Partnership and The Wash & North Norfolk Marine Partnership.

The LNRS will operate as a “living strategy”. It will consider future opportunities for nature and landscape recovery, habitat creation and community conservation. The supporting evidence base is extensive; the LNRS having been developed with reference to information gathered through a document review process which analysed approximately 300 published documents and studies. Costs have already been borne for this work.

The legislation (Environment Act 2021, paragraph 105) does not set a specific timeframe for undertaking future LNRS reviews, the current requirement being that these would need “*to be reviewed and republished from time to time by the responsible authority*” (paragraph 105(3)). Notwithstanding, expected changes to climate patterns may be unpredictable and the actions to support species should be adapted to the latest understanding of how species and habitats are also being affected by the changing climate when information and evidence is available. This could trigger a need to review the LNRS, which could have future cost implications.

Any future LNRS review would be likely led by the Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority, with partner supporting authorities (including the Borough Council and/ or future unitary authority for the west of Norfolk) making appropriate financial contributions.

5 Personnel Implications

There are no personnel implications.

6 Environmental Considerations

The LNRS is all about boosting and enhancing the natural environment (biodiversity, habitats and wildlife).

The 2025 consultation draft LNRS (p7) provides a definition for Nature Recovery. It is defined as: “*the creation and restoration of habitats and biodiversity for example wildlife-rich places, corridors and stepping-stones that help populations to recover, grow, move, thrive and adapt to a changing climate*”

The LNRS is fundamental to achieving this, so should deliver positive environmental outcomes.

7 Statutory Considerations

Preparation and adoption of the LNRS is a statutory obligation, under the Environment Act 2021 (Part 6).

The process for preparing the LNRS is directed by the Environment Act 2021. This requires a wide-reaching public consultation, which took place from 16 April – 11 June 2025. 655 responses were received, consisting of predominantly residents (approx. 75%), or landowners/ managers (approx.

20%). Consultation feedback has now been reviewed by the NRP and the summary report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The next stages in the process are as follows:

- 15 September – 13 October 2025 (inclusive): final (statutory) consultation for Supporting Authorities (final checking of LNRS, prior to adoption)
- October/ November 2025: Norfolk County Council to approve and launch the LNRS
- 27 November 2025: proposed adoption of Norfolk LNRS by the full Council.

Consultation was led by Norfolk County Council, on behalf of the Norfolk & Suffolk NRP ([Local Nature Recovery Strategy Public Consultation – Norfolk County Council](#)).

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

The EIA Pre-Screening process has revealed no negative impacts arising from the LNRS. The completed Pre-Screening EIA form is attached.

9 Risk Management Implications

The LNRS is about fulfilling the Borough Council's statutory functions. There could be risks of sanctions upon the Council if we fail to meet our legal obligations.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None.

11 Background Papers

- [Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)
- [Local Habitat Map](#)
- [Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Public consultation report \(August 2025\)](#)

Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? (<i>tick as appropriate</i>)	New	X	Existing		
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	Supporting the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, through highlighting and revitalising natural habitats across the County, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mapping existing important natural areas; identifying key locations and opportunities for creating or enhancing habitats for maximum environmental benefit; and planning where and how to establish or connect habitats, benefiting both nature and people. 				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only (<i>identify stakeholders consulted with</i>)	Consultation led by Norfolk County Council, on behalf of the Norfolk & Suffolk NRP. Stakeholders include supporting authorities (including the Borough Council), biodiversity experts, landowners and residents.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></p> <p><i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit The King's Fund</i></p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			X	
	Disability			X	
	Sex			X	
	Gender Re-assignment			X	
	Marriage/civil partnership			X	
	Pregnancy & maternity			X	
	Race			X	
	Religion or belief			X	
	Sexual orientation			X	
	Armed forces community			X	
	Care leavers			X	
	Health inequalities*			X	
Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			X		
Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:					

The LNRS focuses upon the natural environment. Preparation of a LNRS is required by the Environment Act 2021 and provides a toolkit/ mechanism to identify opportunities to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This may have wider health and wellbeing benefits for all communities and groups.

Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	Yes / No	The LNRS, if effectively used and implemented, should deliver health and wellbeing benefits for all.
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	Yes / No	<p>The LNRS, if effectively used and implemented, should deliver health and wellbeing benefits for all.</p> <p>At a site-specific level, there could be a potential health and wellbeing benefits. However, these would depend on each site and what they could deliver (as some biodiversity sites may not be publicly accessible).</p>
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	Yes / No	Actions: n/a – No negative impacts identified
		Actions agreed by EWG member: N/A
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member: Claire Dorgan</p>		
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes / No	<p>Please provide brief summary:</p> <p>The LNRS is focused upon the natural environment, although it is noted that secondary benefits for people could be achieved, which would benefit all groups and communities.</p>
Assessment completed by: Name	Michael Burton	
Job title	Principal Planner (Planning Policy)	
Date completed	20/08/2025	

Reviewed by EWG member	Claire Dorgan	Date	31/10/2025
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✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy
corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Norfolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Public consultation report (August 2025)

Appendix 2: Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (October 2025)