

Terms of Reference for the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Steering Group

Purpose and aims

Purpose of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The core purpose of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), as defined by DEFRA, is to help reverse the ongoing decline of nature and biodiversity in England. They are designed as tools to drive more coordinated, practical and focused action to help nature. They will be evidence based, locally led and collaborative, to help create shared proposals that public, private and voluntary sectors can all help to deliver. Each strategy will, for the area it covers:

- Map the most valuable areas of existing habitat for nature;
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals; and
- Agree and publish priorities for nature's recovery.

In Herefordshire, it is understood that Herefordshire Council will be the 'Responsible Authority' for the production of an LNRS covering the geographic county of Herefordshire and the process for formalising that appointment is underway with Defra. It is recognised that 'nature' does not stop at administrative boundaries and a duty to co-operate with neighbouring 'responsible authorities' is recognised.

Purpose of the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The wider Local Nature Recovery Strategy Partnership will be the collaborative group providing the local information, support, subject-species specific guidance and best practice and supporting practical actions in support of developing and implementing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Herefordshire.

Purpose of the Steering Group

The purpose of this Steering Group is to support the **preparatory** work required to develop the future LNRS in Herefordshire, through the provision of oversight and the provision and practical support to deliver required preparatory work. This preparatory work, set out at Annex 1, will be delivered by the Steering Group by autumn 2024 using local resources which may include elements of funding provided by Defra to Herefordshire Council as the Responsible Authority.

It is envisaged that this Steering Group will continue to operate beyond the preparatory phase acting as the lead body and providing secretariat, support and facilitation to the wider LNRS Partnership in its delivery of practical outcomes for the benefit of 'nature' in Herefordshire

Supporting Authorities

Supporting Authorities are specifically defined in the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023. In Herefordshire Natural England is the only Supporting Authority and has a specific role above its role as a Statutory Agency sitting on the Steering Group.

These are:

Under Regulation 4 the Responsible Authority must communicate with and involve Supporting Authorities in the preparation of the LNRS.

Under Regulation 7 the Responsible Authority must provide a Consultation Draft of the LNRS to all Supporting Authorities.

Regulations 9 onwards set out a Supporting Authority's role in consultation and publication including their right to object.

Operational tasks of the Steering Group

- To agree a shared understanding of the purpose of the LNRS in a local context
- To help identify and allocate capacity, skills and data within their organisation to facilitate and support work on the LNRS
- To help scope the process/stages required for LNRS production
- To ratify a draft framework for future work on the LNRS
- To facilitate task and finish or technical working groups as needed
- To develop a draft engagement plan
- Develop a communications strategy
- To engage with early-stage consultation on a draft list of priorities for nature's recovery
- To agree specific targets and outcomes and develop a meaningful methodology for measuring these targets and outcomes resulting from the LNRS
- Explore potential web-based mapping systems and detail findings/make recommendations, including hosting, set-up and maintenance costs
- Develop a detailed Strategy and Action Plan to support nature recovery in Herefordshire
- Others to be agreed

Membership of the Steering Group

In addition to Herefordshire Council as the 'Responsible Authority', the membership of the Steering Group is taken from a range of conservation organisations and local partnership groups that have the capacity to provide practical and strategic support to the LNRS process.

Consideration should be given to both the role that a person or organisation plays within Herefordshire, and the leadership and individual skills and experience that they can contribute.

Currently these include:

- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
- Forestry Commission
- Representatives from the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

At its discretion, and where expedient to do so, the Steering Group can invite any other appropriate representatives should they be agreed as beneficial to the LNRS.

The Steering Group will have strong links with the wider Herefordshire Nature Recovery Strategy Partnership which will be formed of a wide group of stakeholders and a number of technical sub-groups as required.

Constitution and Legal Framework

The Steering Group and Partnership for Local Nature Recovery are not legal entities. They do not directly control resources, employ staff, nor are they able to enter into contractual arrangements. They also shall not be regarded as statutory bodies.

The Steering Group and Partnership does not have a dedicated budget as it is not a legal entity. Herefordshire Council as the Responsible Authority may have dedicated/allocated funding that it can deploy through normal council financial management processes. Other individual members of the Steering Group or Partnership may allocate their own budget as necessary to fulfil the purposes of these Terms of Reference. Any funding applications that are made on behalf of the LNRS will require approval from the Steering Group and also a relevant partner to act as project sponsor and accountable body.

Steering Group Meeting procedures

- Meeting notes, decisions and action points will be recorded by Herefordshire Council in their secretariat role and will be circulated to each steering group member

- The notes from the previous meeting will be discussed at the start of the next meeting and any outstanding actions highlighted
- The Steering Group will be chaired by a representative from one member organisation, to be agreed at the first meeting and subsequently reviewed every 12 months
- Individual task & finish or working groups may be set up by the Steering Group to assist in carrying out tasks afforded to it by the Terms of Reference for a defined purpose and for a fixed period of time

Data Protection and GDPR

As the responsible body the council's data protection policies will be adopted by the LNRS Steering Group: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/5493/data-protection-policy#:~:text=Herefordshire%20Council%20has%20a%20responsibility,its%20compliance%20with%20the%20Act.>

Annex 1

Preparatory Work to be Undertaken by Steering Group up to July 2024

Early Public Engagement

Drafting of Engagement Plan

Ongoing Engagement

Visioning Work

Mapping work – Baseline and Opportunity Areas

Description of Local Area, Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and Vision

Formal Public Consultation