

Local Nature Recovery Strategy Steering Group

Minutes of Steering Group Meeting on 12th June 2023

Present:

Liz Duberley	LD	Service Manager Built and Natural Environment HC
Fran Lancaster	FM	Principal Natural Environment Officer HC
Sam Banks	SB	Strategic and Neighbourhood Planning Manager HC
Andrew Blake	AB	Wye Valley AONB and representing Malvern Hills AONB
Rhiannon Pierce	RP	Senior Advisor Natural England
Rachel Sparks	RS	Forestry Commission
Sarah King	SK	Nature Recovery Manager Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (HWT)
Martin Quine	MQ	Environment Agency Place Manager Herefordshire/Gloucestershire
Emma Gardner	EG	Herefordshire Biological Record Centre (HBRC) HC
Josh Gibbs	JG	Apprentice Ecologist HC

Apologies:

Jamie Audsley – HWT

1. Welcome

LD welcomed members to the first steering group for the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Introductions made.

2. Consideration of membership of the Steering Group

The steering group was asked to consider size, membership and any missing representation from within the steering group.

Key issues raised:

How to clarify relationships between other existing partnerships and projects including the Nutrient Management Board (NMB), the Landscape Recovery Bid, the Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

How to ensure good dove tailing of groups and good communication with other partnerships.

Whether the LNRS could be a standing agenda item for some other partnerships.

The group seemed agreed that a small focussed steering group would work best. Then discussed the grouping of tasks to allow working groups to address the work effectively.

A further discussion of landowner representation followed – the consensus was that landowner representative on the steering group was necessary and should be strategic and should represent landowners beyond the farming community. It was determined that a first approach should be made to CLA who appear well placed to provide a strategic link between the LNRS and the landowner community.

ACTIONS:

LD to approach CLA with an invitation to be a landowner representative on the LNRS Steering Group.

LD to brief Farm Herefordshire on the decision.

FL to share the wire diagram being developed within HC showing the various existing partnerships and how they relate to one another.

3.Consideration of draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group

The steering group were invited to comment on the draft Terms of Reference. It is anticipated that this draft will continue to evolve as the work gets underway.

A concern was raised around the work 'network' in the terms of reference. In nature recovery the word 'network' has a clear meaning relating to national work and ideally should not be used locally.

It was suggested that some text around 'supporting authorities' was required in order to establish NE's specific role within the LNRS process. There are no other 'supporting authorities' in Herefordshire.

ACTIONS:

FL to amend the draft Terms of Reference and recirculate prior to the next meeting.

4.Consideration of formation of technical sub groups making up the wider network

The group discussed the need for technical groups which would sit underneath the steering group and would be formed to progress specific elements of the LNRS work.

It was suggested that some stakeholders do not have capacity to support additional sub-groups and that care should be taken to avoid duplicating work or taking on work which might be already being done/might be better done by an already formed group for example within the NMB structure.

There was a discussion of the mapping work which had been carried out by HWT via Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and whether this might be appropriate to use for some or all of the mapping element.

Herefordshire Council reported that they are meeting with HWT on Monday 19th June to discuss the HWT/GWT mapping work, to understand where it might fit into this process and will report back at the next steering group.

The need to create a wide stakeholder list, being mindful of GDPR issues, was raised. Along with the need to prioritise for levels of engagement – broad, detail, stakeholder, steering group.

It was suggested that we may potentially be able to use elements of HC held stakeholder lists as a starting point where DGPR allows.

There followed a wider discussion of how the LNRS work should be achieved:

- Is there potential to effectively commission other partnerships to do elements of the work where they are correctly placed?
- It would be positive to work from a 'task and finish' approach and to resource each task
- There is a need to keep the brief very clear
- Data is a priority initially
- Understanding existing partnerships is key so we can understand where we might need to create a technical group to fill a gap
- If we were to take a commissioning approach then we need to be clear what we want out of each group, and either meet that need through forming our own group or by approaching an existing partnership or group
- The need for early engagement and stakeholder progress was raised
- We need to pick up the cross border work

- It would be positive to do a wide early engagement questionnaire – to raise profile of LNRS, understand levels of knowledge and gather some basic information to support the formation of strategy work

It was suggested that the data element needs a gap analysis so we can understand what we hold, what is missing and we can look to fill those gaps. HBRC might be well placed to lead?

It was agreed that HBRC would lead on investigating data initially and will report back.

Specific needs were identified:

- A data group – lead by HC/HBRC
- A landowner group for formation later in the process to focus around delivery
- A water quality group – or better to use NMB TAG or Wye Catchment Partnership in due course
- A Strategy Writing Group? Or to be done in house or via a consultant with facilitated workshops
- Stakeholder engagement group – to focus on engagement plan

ACTIONS:

Herefordshire Council to meet with HWT to view HWT/GWT mapping work and understand whether it meets the requirements of the Regulations/Guidance or whether we could work with it going forward and to report back.

EG to do an evidence gap analysis around data and report back.

LD to contact Nicola Hillary at Gloucestershire LNRS with the hope of learning from their advanced position.

**FL to draft an early engagement questionnaire to bring to the next meeting.
HC to create a basic landing page on the HC website.**

FL/LD/SB to consider whether parts of the existing HC stakeholder list might be helpful in forming a wide stakeholder list for this work and report back.

5. Discussion of Election of Chair

The group discussed the need for a chair, potential skills required and how extensive a role the group consider the chair to have.

Key issues raised were the need for the chair to have a defined role – is it just chairing the steering group meetings, is it wider representation of the group at other fora, are they the 'face' of the LNRS etc.

The group discussed the various options and determined not to make a definitive decision at this point. FL/LD will continue to manage the steering group meetings and the group will continue to discuss the need and role of a chair as the process gets underway.

ACTION:

HC to draft role/responsibilities of the chair for further discussion at next meeting.

6. Discussion of the Draft Timetable

HC have produced a draft LNRS timetable in very broad strokes at this point and it was discussed by the group.

Main points raised were:

- Need to amend the early stages
- That it should be broken down into stages – establishment, gap analysis, production of the mapping, production of the strategy, consultation, adoption, delivery etc.
- That it ought to include any Council decision making milestones so that these can be planned well in advance

A brief discussion of the group's identity, relationship to the Council, branding and PR followed. A longer discussion on these elements will be required at a future meeting.

ACTIONS:

FL to continue to work on the timetable to reflect the revised timetable, to break it down into stages and task so that we can start being specific. To bring back to the next meeting.

7.Date of the Next Meeting

The group discussed the proposed regularity of LNRS Steering Group Meetings.

FL – Proposed that meetings should be frequent initially – potentially every month or so – while the work got going and then might space out once technical work is underway with smaller groups or technical groups meeting to do elements of the work.

The group discussed whether meetings should be in person or virtually. It was agreed that in person was preferable initially but that would be kept under review in order to allow organisations to be represented while minimising the time requirement. Group agreed that the Cider Museum is a good in person location.

ACTIONS:

FL to circulate a doodlepoll for a further meeting in July, and around monthly going forward.