

Local Nature Recovery Strategy Steering Group

Minutes of Steering Group Meeting on 16th December 2024

Present:

Elizabeth Duberley	ED	Chair of meeting, Nutrient Mitigation Lead (HC)
Emma Gardner	EG	Principal Ecologist (HBRC)
Charlie Alfandary	CA	Local Nature Recovery Officer (HC)
Rhiannon Pierce	RP	Senior Officer (NE)
Alan Reid	AR	Nature Recovery Advisor (FC)
Helen Dale	HD	Regional Advisor Countryside Management (CLA)
Tim Pickering	TP	Environment Planning Specialist (EA)
Charlotte Bell	CB	Severn Treescapes Woodland Advisor (HWT)

Apologies:

Andrew Blake	AB	Wye Valley AONB and representing Malvern Hills AONB
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1. Update on publishing mapping online – CA:

CA happy to report that the opportunity mapping is now live: [Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) – Herefordshire Council](#)

Charlie displayed the mapping which includes a link to the survey where people can comment on areas for which they have knowledge. A copy of the map is within survey so users can click on a specific point that they want to comment on and it will be linked. The survey also allows users to provide anonymous comments and upload files/images which may be helpful sources of evidence re. errors etc.

Following closure of the survey CA will work through comments and apply to the map as appropriate. It was agreed that we may need a flowchart to keep a record of decisions so that all comments are treated the same e.g. treat same type of evidence provided in the same way.

2. Update on Rural hub workshop- CA & RP:

About 10-15 landowners attended. Relatively positive atmosphere and it was felt that feedback received was constructive if negative:

- concern from those present that some areas of land may have been identified as low opportunity through the mapping process but it may actually be where landowners were motivated carry out work and so they may not be covered for grants, projects etc.
- thoughts that the LNRS wouldn't be able to do enough.
- the workshop was quite well received although issues around mapping were highlighted – e.g. field parcels cut in half so only part of it in the opportunity area.
- currently mapping is low, medium, high with some areas being blank, concern that these areas are not considered important at all. Potentially the wording could be changed?
- some concerned about being in the white space and some concerned about not being included. Will either affect them negatively? Will they be prevented from doing some activities as a result of the strategy? General apprehension over the potential long term implications.

Need to ensure that the message is clear that the aim is to enable landowners to improve things for themselves and the environment rather than compel them to do things.

CA will collate feedback which he will look at with RP. Landowners have concerns about the long term implications of the LNRS will mean

All acknowledged landowner fatigue with multiple national issues at present and HD noted that DEFRA should be clearer with messages.

RP reminded the group that land can be removed from the mapping should a landowner wish. Unsure as to how this area would be treated in the mapping process.

How do we engage with landowners going forward?

HD suggests that market town events led by consultants is likely to result in a low level of engagement. More general promotion might be useful as a lot of people aren't aware of it. Kate Speke-Adams unable to be involved with events until April. Suggested that Reverberate carry out some general promotion until then.

HD reports that newsletters aren't getting great engagement, few people are actually opening them. General agreement based on experience from other counties that events that might do well would be short in duration and include a short presentation and opportunity to chat, potentially over food and drink. Also potential to link in with other non-LNRS events. The aim is to get to the detail rather than just negative feedback.

Events could be focussed by area, potentially targeting landowners by postcode.

Another possible angle would be to promote the LNRS through Young Farmer channel.

RP acknowledged that there is scope for the deadline to be extended, DEFRA are expecting a fair number to come in later than originally planned for.

3. Wider Mapping engagement opportunities discussion – CA:

Trying to reach out to other areas rather than rural. Potential suggestions include healthcare, Nuffield, other industry and businesses, MOD. Can internally work with the economy and public health teams, online events would work well for these. The NHS have an estates team, NHS forests, though not sure how much land would be covered by this. Forestry England would be a good contact.

Helen noted that she would be happy to post physical things out if stamps provided but cannot send mass emails.

All agreed that we will look at gantt chart and extend deadlines as appropriate and then revisit stakeholder engagement plans.

Action: CB to send MOD contact if possible.

4. Priorities and measures working group - CA

A working group including representatives for woodlands, wetlands and open habitats is set to meet on the 18th December to discuss priorities and measures. The group will look at feedback to date and work through the matrix. Priorities and measures will be scored and then a shortlist created, this will then be sent through to for SLR to include in the written strategy.

Mapping of the priorities and measures will potentially be done in house. **Action: ED, CA and EG to meet to look at this aspect further.**

5. Description of strategy area layout discussion- CA:

The content has largely been created but CA posed the question of how do we want it to look?

CA showed examples from other RAs and the group discussed.

Agreed that we should have the option of a simple document capturing the basic messages of the strategy with an alternative full document with appendices etc. Detail should be there for those that want it but not cloud the main messages for those that don't. It was noted that throughout the production of the written documents we need to keep coming back to who is going to read it and what do they want/need to know.

The group looked at whether this section of the document should be framed by habitats or Landscape Character Areas (LCA). After lengthy discussion it was agreed that habitats would be the focus but LCA would be included. It will be broken down by the main opportunity areas: Woodland, Wetland and Open habitats but also include ice age ponds and orchards.

Agreed that it would be useful to include sections on successes and partnership projects.

6. AOB

EG reported that NE are supportive of applying a 30 year cut off to the species work i.e. if a species was last recorded more than 30 years ago it can be removed from the shortlist. If there is a case for something to remain that is older then it can be looked at but will require evidence as to why it should stay. All agreed with this way forward.

Dates of next meetings:

20th January, 2pm-4pm - in person at the Shell Store (location TBC)

17th February, 10am-12pm – location TBC