

Place and resource overview committee

24 November 2025

Dorset local nature recovery strategy

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s):

All Councillors

Senior Leadership Team:

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 The Environment Act 2021 introduces Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) as a new system of spatial strategies for nature in England. These strategies, created at a county level by responsible authorities, map out actions needed to restore nature, working with local stakeholders. The LNRS will play a crucial role in delivering Biodiversity Net Gain and meeting national environmental targets. Dorset's LNRS will be part of the network of LNRSs covering the whole of England, with no gaps or overlaps, contributing to national environmental objectives and targets.
- 1.2 Dorset's LNRS is co-produced, led by Dorset Council as Responsible Authority alongside supporting authorities, BCP Council and Natural England, and working with large numbers of stakeholders. It provides a comprehensive framework for restoring nature across the whole of Dorset and has a series of maps that will help target efforts to achieve the greatest gains for nature and the wider environment.
- 1.3 Dorset Council has made climate and nature recovery a key priority, with its Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023–2025 supporting this collective plan for nature recovery across the county. Additionally, Dorset Council's council plan has responding to the climate and nature crisis as one of its 4 key priorities.

- 1.4 The purpose of the report is to update the committee on the public consultation findings and pre-publication feedback from supporting authorities BCP Council and Natural England. Key changes are being made to the strategy based on this feedback, before it goes to cabinet for the final approval to publish the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

2. **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Committee endorses the key changes made to the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy following public consultation and recommends its progression to Cabinet for final approval, recognising the formal support from BCP Council and Natural England.
- 2.2 The Committee notes the consultation outcomes and encourages continued cross-authority collaboration to ensure effective delivery of the strategy.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 The recommendation is made to ensure that the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy reflects the views and feedback gathered during public consultation, incorporates any necessary changes, and acknowledges the formal support of key partners including BCP Council and Natural England. This process strengthens the strategy's legitimacy, promotes transparency, and ensures it is ready for Cabinet consideration and final publication as well as meeting the DEFRA requirements as set out by the Environment Act 2021.

4. The report

- 4.1 Local nature recovery strategies (LNRS) present a system of spatial management for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Environment Act 2021. Each LNRS must:
- Agree priorities for nature's recovery
 - Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
 - Map specific proposals and potential activities for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals
- 4.2 Defra published LNRS [Statutory Guidance](#) and [Regulations](#) on 23/03/23. These documents outline our role as a Responsible Authority (RA) and the rules we must follow, as well as the step-by-step process for LNRS preparation.
- 4.3 Dorset Council is the Responsible Body that is leading in the preparation of Dorset's LNRS, with BCP Council and Natural England as the supporting authorities.
- 4.4 Work started on the Dorset LNRS in July 2023 and has involved working with over 76 organisations and engaging with over 1375 people at workshops, events, county shows etc. across a wide range of sectors and organisations.
- 4.5 Dorset LNRS consultation ran for 12 weeks between 7 May and 30 July with 375 responses, mainly from individuals. The results of these findings and the consultation response can be found in the two reports: Dorset LNRS consultation analysis final report (appendix 1) and Response to the Dorset LNRS Consultation findings report (appendix 2).
- 4.6 Achieving nature recovery requires a shared vision, agreed priorities and collective action. The strategy sets a clear direction and ambition for Dorset (DC and BCP Council areas) with the commitment to reverse the decline in nature.
- 4.7 Key findings from the public consultation show there was overall support, including:
- i. 66% agreement with the Shared Vision
 - ii. 86% agreement with the Joint Mission
 - iii. >90% agreement with Priorities 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 & 12
 - iv. >80% agreement with Priorities 1, 5 & 8
 - v. 59% will use the strategy to find potential activities they can do
 - vi. 50% will use to see how their activities join up with others
 - vii. Suggestions for more potential activities to deliver the priorities and projects and land to be added to the LNRS maps

4.8 Key challenges and concerns were around:

- i. User experience - strategy is long, maps are complex, unclear how to make relevant to me / my organisation
- ii. Concerns about the balance between nature, access, farming, development etc
- iii. Lack of information on nature decline and urgency, geodiversity
- iv. Hedgerows are very important in Dorset
- v. People wanted more opportunities to get involved and guidance on doing the activities
- vi. Needs to be more recognition of existing action
- vii. Targets needed to measure progress
- viii. How it will be delivered and by who and Dorset Council's role in this.

4.9 Key changes from the draft LNRS to the final Dorset LNRS include:

- i. A section on geodiversity has been added as it underpins diverse habitats and ecosystems, supporting nature recovery.
- ii. The draft vision has changed from 'Nature in Dorset is thriving, resilient, and connected across our landscapes. It is accessible to and celebrated by all' to 'Nature in Dorset is recovering, thriving, resilient and connected across our landscapes. Everyone in Dorset is able to access nature and be involved in nature recovery'
- iii. The draft mission has changed from 'Collectively work together to meet the urgent need to address the climate and nature emergencies through nature recovery' to 'Work together to meet the urgent need to address the climate and nature emergencies through nature recovery, bringing benefits for our wellbeing and communities'
- iv. Water vole has been added to the species priority list with specific actions that enable its recovery.
- v. There are now 13 priorities (previously 12) with the new priority being hedgerows – 'Hedgerows are maintained, enhanced and expanded to support wildlife and provide corridors that connect habitats across the county'
- vi. Changes to the local habitat map include:
 - adding more projects and land manager proposals to the high opportunity nature areas layer
 - adding Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) to the nature areas of national importance layer
 - reducing some areas of the large landscape scale projects that are yet to have funding or land manager support
 - changing the habitat suggested as primary activity in the potential activities layer in some specific locations
 - some improvements to the guide to the maps and layer descriptions. During the delivery phase we will make further

improvements and share tailored videos to help people access the maps

- 4.10 The Dorset LNRS contains 13 nature recovery priorities, supported by detailed management activities. Plus 55 priority species identified as needing bespoke activities to ensure they remain or return to Dorset. Together, these tools ensure a strategic, collective and effective approach to nature recovery across the county.
- 4.11 The strategy promotes nature recovery through biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation schemes, environmental land management schemes, community-driven and individual projects.
- 4.12 From the work, the initiative [Nature Recovery Dorset](#) has been created which is a celebration of collaboration, uniting individuals, communities, and organisations in a shared mission to restore and protect the county's landscapes. Currently there are 288 members.
- 4.13 The Defra guidance states that progress will be monitored through a review process led by Dorset Council, which will assess achievements every three to ten years. This process will review the priorities and record where nature recovery action has taken place, supported by existing monitoring initiatives that track habitats, species, and enabling measures. These insights will help refine and strengthen ongoing efforts, ensuring the strategy remains adaptive and effective.
- 4.14 The Dorset LNRS represents the work of the LNRS groups and ongoing refinement in response to the engagement activities. There are several supporting documents detailing some of the methodology and wider pressures and opportunities.
- 4.15 Local nature recovery strategies are intended as a tool to help Local Planning Authorities continue delivering on requirements to protect and enhance biodiversity.
- 4.16 Local planning authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the local nature recovery strategy. The strategy will therefore be used alongside other evidence and planning requirements to inform plan making and in the determination of planning applications. There is proposed updated wording on nature in planning and development for the website, reflecting Natural England recent feedback on BNG implementation. This draft wording is available in appendix 3.
- 4.17 It is important to note, the strategy is not a planning constraint and does not constitute a planning designation. It does not prevent development, including that of new homes, employment uses or other infrastructure. Instead, the

strategy helps guide nature recovery and environmental activities that can be delivered as part of sustainable development

- 4.18 The strategy does not force the owners and managers of the land identified as high opportunity nature areas to make any changes, they have flexibility to identify what, if any, activities and funding options will work best for them.
- 4.19 The next phase, as set out by government is the delivery of the Dorset LNRS where we have been asked to:
 - i. Lead and convene a delivery partnership
 - ii. Embed LNRS into local decision making
 - iii. Identify strategic projects and facilitate project development
 - iv. Monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities
- 4.20 We will be setting up a cross-sector delivery partnership with democratic representation.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1.1 No other alternatives as we have a statutory duty to comply to deliver and a published LNRS for Dorset.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 Failure to publish the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) within the required timeframe (December 2025) poses a legal risk, as it would breach the statutory duty placed on Responsible Authorities under the Environment Act 2021 and associated regulations including the biodiversity duty

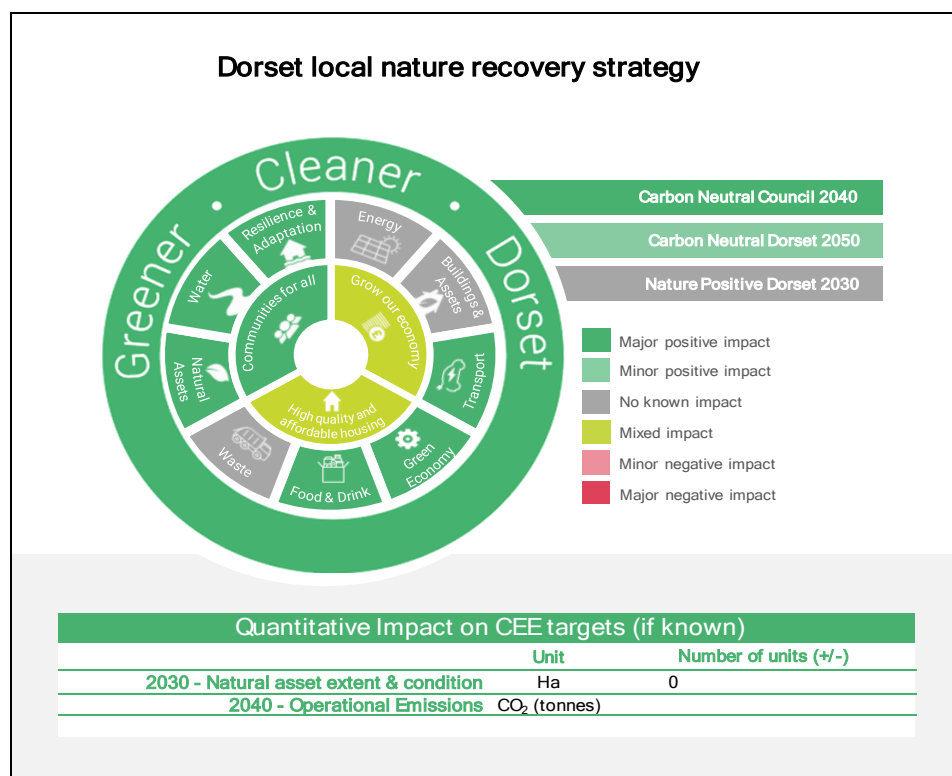
7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Dorset Council has received a budget from Defra to deliver the Dorset LNRS of £409,174 over three years. The LNRS Steering Group has overseen the expenditure.
- 7.2 Funding for the future delivery of the LNRS will happen through a variety of mechanisms including central government grant, developer contributions, landowner initiatives, grants and project funding

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 One of the key actions in Dorset Council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023–2025 is to create a local nature recovery strategy, a commitment reinforced by the Council's declaration of a nature emergency in July 2024, placing nature's recovery at the heart of its plans.

- 8.2 Ensuring that the Dorset LNRS is implemented is critical to accomplishing the strategic natural environment ambitions of Dorset Council. Dorset Council's council plan has responding to the climate and nature crisis as one of its 4 key priorities. The LNRS presents a collaborative, widely supported plan to deliver significant improvements to Dorset's natural environment over the coming years.



9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications of this report. However, the impact of nature decline poses numerous health and wellbeing risks to the residents of Dorset. The strategy and its maps hope to ensure collective effort can achieve nature recovery and more people will have access to nature. Time spent in nature is known to improve mental and physical well-being and implementation of this strategy can therefore have benefits beyond the immediate remit of nature recovery.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 Failure to progress to cabinet would risk the delay to the timeframe for the LNRS to be published and therefore be a pressure to comply with the Defra mandate and cause reputational damage to the council.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

- 11.2 There are no significant risks from approving the recommendations and the progression to cabinet. This will ensure that Dorset Council meets its timeframe to publish the Dorset LNRS and complies with Defra requirements

12. Equalities

- 12.1 The Dorset LNRS is a strategic, high-level strategy that will not positively or negatively impact on anyone's equality. EQIAs will be undertaken for specific work relating to the implementation of the strategy and for the public consultation exercise of the draft strategy.
- 12.2 Final documents and related materials shall meet accessibility requirements including plain text options. Through the public consultation the public have fed back the difficulty of understanding the mapping that accompanies the strategy. Maps will be available on a publicly accessible version of Dorset Explorer to view online and work will be done to support different users to become familiar with how they can use the maps and remove any unnecessary technical information.
- 12.3 The EqlA is available in appendix 4.

13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Dorset LNRS consultation analysis final report

Appendix 2: Response to the Dorset LNRS Consultation findings report

Appendix 3: Draft new wording for website on Nature recovery in planning and development v2 Nove 25

Appendix 4: Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations for climate & nature

Appendix 5: Dorset Council Dorset LNRS EQIA

13. Background papers

- 13.1 The draft Dorset local nature strategy and supporting papers can be found at [Dorset's local nature recovery strategy - Dorset Council](#)

14. Report sign-off

- 14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)