

Cabinet

9 December 2025

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy December 2025

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

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

Local Councillor(s):

All councillors

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Bridget Betts, Environment, Policy & Partnership Manager

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 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, will 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.
- 1.4 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval for the final publication approval of the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), following

completion of public consultation and formal support of BCP Council and Natural England.

2. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the final Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy for publication, recognising its role as a statutory framework for nature recovery across the county.
- 2.2 Commits to integrating the LNRS into relevant council policies and decision-making, including planning, land management, climate adaptation, and public health and supporting the ongoing delivery of the LNRS.
- 2.3 Acknowledges and thanks the contributions from stakeholders, including BCP Council, Natural England, community groups, farmers, landowners and residents, in shaping the strategy through the development and consultation phase.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To ensure Dorset Council formally meets the DEFRA requirements as set out by the Environment Act 2021 that supports and integrates the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a statutory framework for reversing biodiversity decline, enhancing climate resilience, and guiding sustainable land use across the county.

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
 The Dorset LNRS is available in appendix 1 and maps in the link provided in appendix 2.
- 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 The public 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 appendix 3 and 4.
- 4.6 Achieving nature recovery requires a shared vision, agreed priorities and collective action. The strategy set a clear direction and ambition for the Dorset area – (DC and BCP Council area) with the commitment to reverse the decline in nature.
- 4.7 The Dorset LNRS contains 13 nature recovery priorities, supported by detailed management activities. Plus 56 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.
- 4.8 The strategy promotes nature recovery through biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation schemes, environmental land management schemes, community-driven and individual projects.
- 4.9 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.

- 4.10 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 evaluate completed activities and their impacts, 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.
- 4.11 The Dorset LNRS represents the work and refinement across all of the LNRS groups and the engagement. There are several supporting documents detailing some of the methodology and wider pressures and opportunities.
- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 Local nature recovery strategies are intended as a tool to help Local Planning Authorities continue delivering on requirements to protect and enhance biodiversity.
- 4.14 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.
- 4.15 It is important to note, the strategy is not a planning constraint and does not constitute a planning designation. The strategy 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.
- 4.16 The strategy also 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.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 No alternative considerations appropriate.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 Failure to publish the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) within the required timeframe poses a legal risk, as it would breach the statutory duty

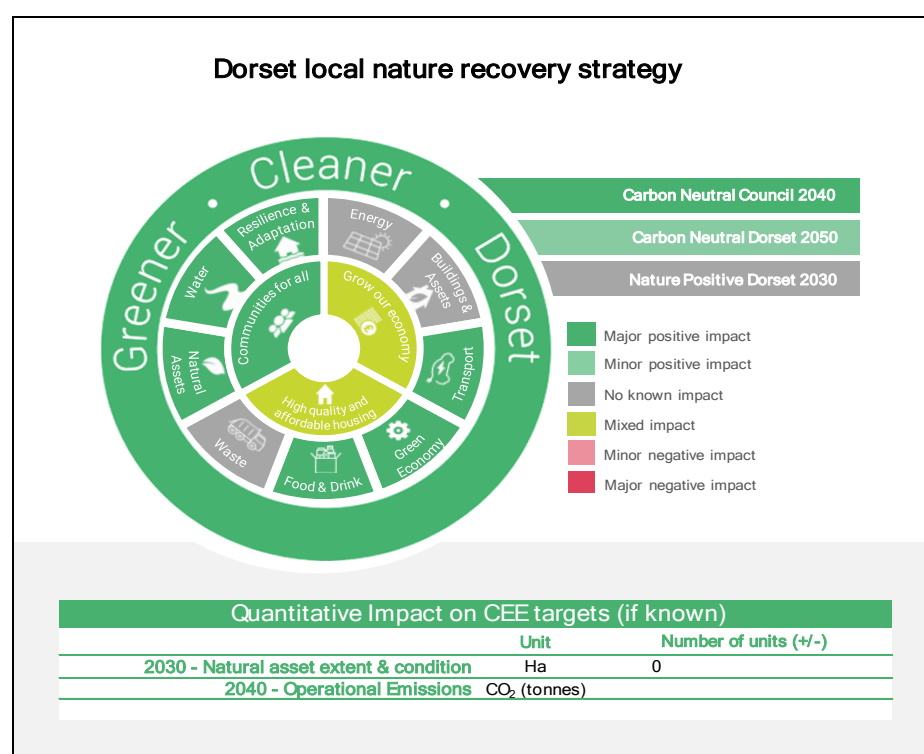
placed on Responsible Authorities under the Environment Act 2021 and associated regulations including the biodiversity duty.

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 a 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. The LNRS presents a collaborative, widely supported plan to deliver significant improvements to Dorset's natural environment over the coming years. Table of assessment and recommendations is in appendix 4.



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 complete the adoption would see Defra pressure to comply with the requirements in a timely manner, potential repayment of grants to facilitate the strategy production and reputational damage to the council.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 There are no significant risks from approving the recommendations to publish the LNRS for publication. This will mitigate the risk of failing to comply with Defra requirements.
- 11.2 Failing to ensure a published local nature recovery strategy for Dorset entails high risks associated with vulnerability to worsening nature decline and climate impacts, risks of missed opportunities (including economic, health and wellbeing opportunities); and reputational risks owing to known high level of public interest in the climate and nature change agenda.
- 11.3 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:
- Current Risk: High
- Residual Risk: Low
- 11.4 Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the current risk of non-compliance is high due to the potential failure to publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) by the statutory deadline. However, if the recommendations are to approve publication the residual risk is considered low, as this will ensure alignment with Defra requirements and demonstrate Dorset Council's commitment to nature recovery and climate resilience.

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 are being improved to ensure they are less technical.

12.3 An EQIA is available in Appendix 4.

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1: The Dorset local nature recovery strategy Dec 2025
- Appendix 2: The local habitat map (made up of)
 - Nature areas-national importance
 - High opportunity nature areas
 - Potential activities

can be viewed at: <https://gi.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorsetexplorer/nature-recovery>:

- Appendix 3: Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations for the Dorset local nature recovery strategy
- Appendix 4: Dorset local nature recovery strategy EQIA

14. Background papers

14.1 Supporting documents to the strategy production are available at [Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy supporting documents - Dorset Council](#):

- i. The Dorset LNRS consultation and engagement report
- ii. Pressures on nature in Dorset and opportunities for recovery
- iii. Policies, strategies and plans relating to the LNRS
- iv. Species recovery methodology and longlist
- v. Guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps

14.2 The consultation analysis and response to that analysis is available at:

- i. The Dorset LNRS consultation and engagement report - [dorsetlnrsconsultationanalysisreportv2.pdf](#)
- ii. Dorset LNRS Consultation response report – [responsetothedorsetlnrsconsultationreportv4.pdf](#)

14.3 i Nature recovery in planning and development [Nature recovery in planning and development: how Dorset's local nature recovery strategy works with planning - Dorset Council](#)

15 Report sign-off

15.1 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).

