

Report subject	Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Meeting date	1 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>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</p> <p>Dorset's LNRS is co-produced, led by Dorset Council on our joint behalf, through 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.</p> <p>The purpose of the report is to seek pre-publication approval of the Dorset LNRS by Cabinet, following completion of public consultation and formal engagement with Natural England. As per Defra guidance, this will allow for the lead authority Dorset Council to adopt and publish the final strategy in December 2025.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet gives pre-publication approval of the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy for publication in December 2025 by Dorset Council, recognising its role as LNRS lead authority 2. Commits to integrating the LNRS into relevant BCP council policies and decision-making, including planning, land management, climate adaptation, and public health. 3. Supports ongoing monitoring and review of the strategy every 3 to 10 years, ensuring it remains evidence-based, inclusive, and responsive to environmental change.

	4. Acknowledges the contributions of stakeholders , led by Dorset Council and including Natural England, community groups, and residents, in shaping the strategy through consultation and co-production.
Reason for recommendations	The reason for these recommendations is to ensure BCP Council formally 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. It also meets the DEFRA requirements as set out by the Environment Act 2021.
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Corporate Director	Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer.
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Recommendation

Background

- 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:
 - Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
 - Agree priorities for nature's recovery
 - Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals
- 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.
- 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.
- Work started on the Dorset LNRS in July 2023 and has involved working with over 76 organisations and engaging with over 1,375 people at workshops, events, county shows etc. across a wide range of sectors and organisations.

5. LNRS consultation ran for 12 weeks between May and July 2025 and the results – See further detail in appendices X and Y for the consultation analysis and summary report, and a report on the changes to the strategy that will be made following the consultation.
6. Following consultation and with relevant changes made to the strategy documents, the process for adoption to meet Defra guidance is:
 - a. Natural England approve the changes and final documents
 - b. BCP Council as supporting authority provide pre-publication approval
 - c. Dorset Council as lead authority approve the final strategy and both councils can then publish the final suite of strategy documents.

Achieving nature recovery

7. Achieving nature recovery requires a shared vision, agreed priorities and collective action. The strategy sets a clear direction and ambition for the Dorset area, that is the Dorset Council and BCP Council areas, with the commitment to reverse the decline in nature.
8. The Dorset LNRS contains 13 nature recovery priorities, supported by detailed management activities. 55 priority species have been 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.
9. The strategy promotes nature recovery through biodiversity net gain, nutrient mitigation schemes, environmental land management schemes, community-driven and individual projects.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. In BCP the LNRS adds to a suite of strategies and work that seeks to achieve nature recovery, some of these are:
 - a. [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) provides principles and a framework to make BCP greener, more nature rich and more resilient to climate change.
 - b. Biodiversity net gain is mandatory planning policy [here](#)
 - c. The [Urban Forest Strategy](#) sets out levels of future tree canopy cover, the benefits that trees, especially in the urban environment, bring and an action plan for future work.
 - d. BCP is the first 'Nature Towns' in the UK, accreditation shows BCP is committed to working with communities and other partners to create greener, healthier, resilient and thriving places, read more [here](#).

Local Planning Authority context

13. Local nature recovery strategies are intended as a tool to help Local Planning Authorities continue delivering on requirements to protect and enhance biodiversity.
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.
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.
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.

Options Appraisal

17. Cabinet approval of the recommendations enables Dorset and BCP Councils to meet the requirements of the 2021 Environment Act and have a published LNRS.
18. 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.

Summary of financial implications

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

Summary of legal implications

21. There is a requirement on every local Authority in England to publish a LNRS, as defined by the Environment Act 2021. By approving the recommendations in this report and with Dorset Council's subsequent adoption, this requirement will be met.

Summary of human resources implications

22. The Dorset Council Natural Environment Team and BCP's Strategic green spaces teams work closely on a range of partnerships and shared work and the LNRS has formed part of this positive working relationship that will continue as the strategy moves to delivery alongside other pieces of work.

Summary of sustainability impact

23. Ensuring that the Dorset LNRS is implemented is critical to accomplishing the strategic Green Infrastructure ambitions of BCP Council. The LNRS presents a

collaborative, widely supported plan to deliver significant improvements to Dorset's natural environment over the coming years.

Summary of public health implications

24. 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.

Summary of equality implications

25. Dorset Council produced an EQIA (Appendix XX) and this has been supplemented with a BCP EQIA (Appendix XX).
26. 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, specific projects or delivery.
27. 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.

Summary of risk assessment

28. There are no significant risks from approving the recommendations and adopting the LNRS. This will mitigate the risk of failing to comply with Defra requirements.
29. Public consultation was positive with feedback on specific proposals, opportunities to do more for nature, comments on the process of writing the strategy and means of improving it. These do not present any form of risk to the process and have been acknowledged and incorporated as appropriate.

Background papers

Supporting documents to the strategy production are available on the Dorset Council Nature recovery web pages and include a wide range of guidance and supporting material, including:

- Pressures on nature in Dorset and opportunities for recovery
- How the local plan and LNRS work together
- Guide for developers, planners and ecologists
- Policies, strategies and plans relating to the LNRS
- Species recovery methodology and longlist
- A guide to Dorset's nature recovery maps

These are available at: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/nature-recovery

Appendices

1. Local Nature Recovery Strategy, pre-publication draft pending final changes and adoption by Dorset Council in December. Final strategy once approved by Dorset Council to be published on both council's websites.
2. The Dorset LNRS consultation and engagement report
3. Consultation response report
4. BCP Council EQIA
5. Dorset Council EQIA