

REPORT TITLE: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy

To: Cabinet 16 December 2025

Cabinet Member: Cllr Martin Smart, Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Director Approval: Director James Elms confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to the Cabinet/Cabinet Member for decision.

1.	Recommendations
1.1	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide Cambridge City Council 'supporting authority' approval for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to submit the final Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to the Secretary of State by 31st December 2025. 2. To note the CPCA proposals for supporting implementation and delivery of the LNRS, following submission 2. Authorise officers to continue to represent Cambridge City Council as a

	<p>'Supporting Authority' at future LNRS steering group or alternative forums as we collectively move towards delivery and monitoring phase of the LNRS.</p>
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	<p>Following public consultation on the draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), the revised LNRS, incorporating the changes in response to the consultation as outlined in section 6, was approved by the CPCA Committee on the 5th of November 2025.</p> <p>Following approval, there is a 28-day notification period for 'supporting authorities' and Natural England (NE) to provide support for the LNRS to be submitted to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>This report seeks approval from Cabinet for the CPCA to submit the LNRS to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Approval will ensure the LNRS meets the government's expectation of a strategy submitted by the end of 2025.</p>
3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	<p>To not support approval of the LNRS</p> <p>This option was rejected.</p> <p>A decision to not provide support will require submission of a written 'Publication Advisory Notice' explaining the reason for objection before the end of the 28-day period. LNRS legislation sets out two potential reasons for a SA to register their objection to the LNRS submission, Namely the LNRS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "cannot be justified based on the results of the consultation under Reg 12"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "is materially deficient", <p>Officers have been involved with the LNRS planning, production and consultations, through representation on the LNRS Steering Group, ensuring the document meets the statutory guidance and provides an overarching strategy to coordinate collaborative action for nature recovery at scale and includes existing initiatives such as the Cambridge Nature Network.</p>
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	<p>The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a new statutory plan as required under the Environment Act 2021.</p> <p>A LNRS agrees priorities for nature recovery and proposes actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities.</p> <p>There are 48 strategy areas covering the whole of England and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs appointed 'responsible authorities' to lead the preparation of the strategy for each area. The responsible authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area is the Combined Authority.</p>
4.2	<p>In addition to the responsible authority, the LNRS legislation requires responsible authorities to involve all local authorities and Natural England (collectively termed 'supporting authorities') in the preparation.</p> <p>The Combined Authority commissioned Cambridgeshire County Council to programme manage the production of the LNRS. The Council established a Steering Group co-chaired by Natural Cambridgeshire (the Local Nature Partnership) to guide the development of the draft Strategy, supported by technical groups, contracted specialists and species experts.</p> <p>Officers have attended these steering groups and technical workshops to guide development of the LNRS and ensure it aligns with our existing initiatives and priorities,</p>

	<p>most notably the established vision, sites and partnership working within our adopted Biodiversity Strategy and the Cambridge Nature Network (CNN).</p> <p>The mapping element of the LNRS has been led by Natural Capital Solutions, a consultancy nationally recognised for their work in this field, who brought their experience with other areas LNRS to this process.</p>
4.3	<p>The need for nature recovery is a result of the decline in biodiversity across the UK. The national State of Nature report highlights the lost and endangerment of species and habitats over the past 50+ years, with the country globally being amongst the most nature deprived.</p> <p>Within the country Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has one of the lowest proportions of area designated for nature.</p> <p>The LNRS system aims to encourage nature recovery by prioritising key locations, setting actions and encouraging landowners to make changes.</p> <p>They will influence prioritisation of government expenditure on nature. However, this is a collaborative approach as, whilst LNRS do need to be taken account of in the planning system, the identification of land for a habitat or species priority does not proscribe how landowners use or manage that land.</p>
5.	Corporate plan
5.1	<p>A key priority of the Corporate Plan (2022 to 2027) is</p> <p>:</p> <p>Leading Cambridge's response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies and creating a net zero council by 2030</p> <p>Collaborate development, support and delivery of the statutory LNRS will provide a framework for future regional and local projects to delivery nature recovery at scale and harness the co-benefits of nature-based solutions to address the climate emergency and</p>

	mitigate the impacts of our changing climate on nature and our communities.
6.	Consultation, engagement and communication
6.1	<p>The CPCA Consultation on the Strategy included a web-based questionnaire/response form, an interactive version of the draft Strategy Habitats Map, physical material accessible via libraries, and a series of face-to-face events.</p> <p>The level of response was comparable to other LNRS consultations nationally. A summary of the consultation is attached as Appendix A.</p> <p>Overall, the Strategy received a positive response. Similarly, there was a positive response to the priority list of habitats and species from most respondents.</p> <p>There were suggestions for improvement of the Strategy and the mapping. 78 respondents requested changes to the mapping to include or exclude specific parcels of land for nature recovery. Reasons cited included the landowners having other uses in mind for the land (such as housing development), existing nature recovery improvements not captured by the mapping, ground conditions not suitable for the proposed habitat, or planning permission already granted for alternative use. Appendix D notes the location of mapping changes.</p> <p>The responses were assessed by an evaluation panel drawn from the LNRS Steering Group, with additional advice sought from the mapping consultants, and species/subject specialists. The Steering Group provided a steer on the main strategic issues. The issues are summarised in Appendix B. The key areas for change are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority species: adding the Yellow Wagtail bird and the Meadow Saxifrage plant species. Following expert advice, it is proposed that the Forester Moth would be removed from the species list, as it is functionally extinct in the area. • Merging several of the measures (i.e. actions) where they address a similar habitat with

	<p>the same action (these cover woodland, grassland and urban greenspace habitat measures)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding the mapping there are some site-specific alterations reflecting evidence provided • Clarifying the relationship of the LNRS with the planning system • Emphasising the role of landowners in delivery, and that delivery needed to consider the detail of ground conditions
7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	<p>By supporting the submission of the LNRS we will ensure that a legislation compliant regional strategy is in place to provide a framework for prioritising collaborative nature recovery to meet our collective Biodiversity Duty under the Environment Act 2021.</p> <p>As required under the Environment Act 2021, there must be regard to the LNRS in preparing relevant plans including Local Plans. This duty will be strengthened from 'have regard' to 'take account' once the relevant sections of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 are activated.</p> <p>Beyond the enabling role of the Local Plan and planning system, the core delivery of nature recovery lies with the actions of landowners and land managers, the majority of which will take place on privately owned land. This can be assisted with appropriate public sector support schemes. Government is reviewing the national schemes to support environmental outcomes on farms, having closed the Sustainable Farming Incentive in March 2025. No long-term funding has been announced for Combined Authorities nor supporting authorities in relation to LNRS delivery.</p> <p>Initial discussions have been held on how to maximise the delivery on the ground of the Strategy's priorities and actions. This has included discussions facilitated by Natural Cambridgeshire's Policy and Planning Forum, the LNRS Steering Group, the Planning</p>

	<p>Advisory Service and with DEFRA. It is proposed to that CPCA will bring forward a delivery plan within the next six months. This will include a review of actions under the following four topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governance/delivery partnership 2. Embedding LNRS into local decision making 3. How to identify strategic projects (including cross-boundary) and what role does the public sector have in the facilitation of project development 4. Monitoring and reporting on the delivery of LNRS priorities <p>The review will consider these against available resources, noting that future delivery funding from DEFRA has not been confirmed.</p>
8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	<p>Not to support the recommendation would risk delay to the CPCA LNRS timeline and CPCA 25/26 budget allocation to reach LNRS submission by end of December 2025.</p> <p>Submission of a supported LNRS by the end of the year is important in demonstrating to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that our area is ready to take forward nature recovery. The majority of the 48 LNRS nationally are expected to have been submitted by December 2025.</p>
	Financial Implications
8.2	<p>There is no direct financial implication to the City Council from a decision to provide supporting authority approval for CPCA adoption of the LNRS.</p> <p>The CPCA has a budget allocation of £135k for the preparation, consultation and final approval of the LNRS during 25/26. A Grant Funding Agreement is in place with</p>

	<p>Cambridgeshire County Council to programme manage the development of the LNRS up to approval. There is no confirmed allocation from central government for delivery from 26/27.</p> <p>Many of our natural green spaces are identified as strategic sites for nature improvement within the LNRS. Future funding for delivery of the LNRS has yet to be announced by central government however, strategic sites and projects are anticipated to be prioritised for future external funding.</p>
	Legal Implications
8.3	<p>Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new statutory framework for spatial planning aimed at promoting nature recovery, established under the Environment Act 2021. The statutory guidance for LNRS is issued by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under Section 106(5) of the Act. The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 set out the procedures and requirements for preparing these strategies. These regulations are made by the Secretary of State under the powers conferred by Sections 105(4) and (5), and 143(1) of the Environment Act 2021.</p> <p>In discharging its functions under the Local Nature Recovery Strategy framework, the CPCA, as responsible authority must engage with ‘supporting authorities’ to prepare, consult and agree a draft plan for submission. This process has been followed through representation of officers on the LNRS Steering Group and Leader support for the LNRS public consultation.</p>
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
8.4	<p>The CPCA have produced an EqIA covering the writing, consultation and production of the LNRS that is available upon request.</p> <p>Relevant delivery impacts have been covered by the accompanying Biodiversity Duty and Biodiversity Strategy midterm reports and EqIA.</p>

	<p>The assessment found that the report and associated actions will have overall positive equality impacts across Cambridge's communities.</p> <p>The actions promote equitable access to nature, health and wellbeing benefits, and inclusive community engagement. No negative or disproportionate impacts were identified, and equality outcomes will be monitored through annual reporting.</p>
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.5	The overall impact of adopting and delivering the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is assessed as being moderately positive in terms of reducing impacts of climate change and enhancing biodiversity.
	Procurement Implications
8.6	There are no procurement implications for supporting the recommendation.
	Community Safety Implications
8.7	There are no community safety implications for supporting the recommendation.
8.8	<p>Checklist – Impact of the decision</p> <p>Financial: No new funding is required to support submission of the LNRS</p> <p>Legal: No new legal duties are created. The LNRS will support delivery of existing Environment Act 2021 duty and associated planning requirements</p> <p>Climate Change, Biodiversity & Sustainability: Delivery of the LNRS will have a positive impact through increase of canopy cover, carbon capture, boosting biodiversity, reducing storm water flooding.</p> <p>Crime and disorder / Community Safety: No direct impacts from supporting the submission of the LNRS. Specific project will consider and embed mitigation though</p>

	<p>consultation and good design.</p> <p>Discrimination and Equality: The LNR specifically targets action to address inequality in access to natural green space and champion the health and wellbeing benefits of regular access to nature.</p> <p>Human Resources: Support for the LNRS does not require new posts, though it does highlight the need for sufficient resource to be prioritised to collaborate on future delivery and monitoring.</p> <p>ICT: No additional ICT resource implications</p> <p>Property: City owned land is included as priority sites for nature recovery within the LNRS. Many of these have existing designation (City Wildlife Site, County Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserve) for their existing nature value. Officer are reviewing site management plans and exploring opportunities to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain Credit on these and other City owned assets to deliver actions that meet the LNRS ambitions through BNG credit sales.</p> <p>Procurement: No procurement implications are associated with supporting the LNRS</p> <p>Customer Service: The LNRs provide a clear framework for prioritising sites and action for nature recovery that can be communicated to our communities through our web pages, social media and Cambridge Matters.</p> <p>Communications, Consultation & Engagement:</p> <p>No additional consultation is required from the decision to support submission of the LNRS. Going forward the CPCA with support of the Steering Group will seek to engage with delivery partners and communities to establish how best to provide strategic support.</p> <p>Our values and Target Operating Model (TOM): The LNRS is a prime example of an overarching strategy that will help to 'enable partners, communities and the council to achieve outcomes together' in line with the TOM approach to collaborative working.</p>
9.	<p>Background documents</p> <p>Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985</p>
10.	<p>Appendices</p>

10.1	<p>Appendix A - CPCA Summary of public consultation responses</p> <p>Appendix A - Executive Summary of LNRS Consultation.pdf</p> <p>Appendix B - CPCA Summary of key issues from Consultation response:</p> <p>Appendix B - Key issues from LNRS consultation.pdf</p> <p>Appendix C1 - Draft LNRS Part 1, Area Description:</p> <p>Appendix C1 - Draft statement of Biodiversity Principles - Part 1 Area Description.pdf</p> <p>Appendix C2 – Draft LNRS Part 2, Statement of Biodiversity Priorities:</p> <p>Appendix C2 - Draft Statement of Biodiversity principles - Part 2 Priorities and Actions.pdf</p> <p>Appendix D – Location of accepted mapping changes following LNRS consultation:</p> <p>Appendix D - Location of Mapping changes.pdf</p> <p>Appendix E – EQIA</p> <p>Appendix F – Climate Change rating tool</p>
	<p>To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Guy Belcher, Biodiversity Manager, tel: 01223 458532, email: Guy.belcher@cambridge.gov.uk</p>