



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 26 March 2026

Adoption of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Carolyn Healy - Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability
Lead Director:	James Dunn - Director: Prosperity & Investment
Service Area:	Prosperity & Investment
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	SMT - 17 February 2026 Business Briefing - 5 March 2026 Cabinet - 26 March 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note the work of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Steering Group and stakeholders in supporting co-ordinated biodiversity action in the borough and wider Shropshire area.
- 1.2 Approve adoption of the LNRS as set out in Appendix C & D of the report and grant the Director of Prosperity & Investment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability the authority to agree to appropriate amendments as required to meet parallel approvals from other stakeholders.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To seek approval from Cabinet to adopt the LNRS and grant delegated powers of amendment to the Director of Prosperity and Investment in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member.
- 2.2 The LNRS strategy and map will have many practical uses, however its main function is to identify the most effective action in the most useful place. The phrase “if you had one pound to spend on nature restoration what would you do with it?” has been used throughout most discussions during its formation, to ensure focus on efficient and effective delivery.
- 2.3 It is therefore expected to influence the writing of Local Nature Reserve management plans to help account for wider ecological connectivity. It should also help TWC, and community group identify new environmental projects and steer our funding bids.
- 2.4 The LNRS is not introducing a planning designation, however a development within an opportunity area, which carries out the accompanying recommended action does get an increase in their biodiversity unit value. Therefore, it should act as an incentive to carry out improvements that compliment and benefit the wider ecological network.
- 2.5 Many of the recommended actions will directly benefit societal climate adaptation. Restoring the natural functioning of floodplains has a direct ability to reduce flooding and also store water for use by landowners in summer dry spells. Similarly, the planting of hedgerows and trees will increasingly benefit livestock welfare via shade and prevent soil erosion. The creation of flower-rich meadows will aid support the pollinators of crops.
- 2.6 The approach of the LNRS is complimentary to the original vision of Telford New Town's; of joined green spaces which protect key wildlife sites and link them with wildlife corridors through the urban fabric. This is exemplified in the Green Network and Forest Community ethos still being promoted by existing and future development planning policies to benefit wellbeing and investment.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The LNRS is one of 48 being completed across England to deliver the requirements of s104 of the Environment Act 2021. The boundaries of these often relate to ceremonial counties and were set by Government.
- 3.2 The LNRS process is required to deliver a step-change in the conservation and recovery of biodiversity across England to meet our international and national obligations.
- 3.3 Specific contents of the LNRS has been set out in s106 of the Act, including a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and a Local Habitat Map.

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- 3.4 The statement document must contain:
- A description of the area and its biodiversity
 - The opportunities and priorities for recovering or enhancing habitats & species, measures to deliver these
- 3.5 The map must identify:
- National Conservation sites
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - Areas which are, or could become, of particular importance for biodiversity
 - Areas where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits
- 3.6 The Responsible Authority appointed by the Secretary of State was Shropshire Council. Under The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 Reg 3 Natural England and TWC were designated as Supporting Authorities. This core group has assembled a steering group and various sub-groups to aid in the process of creating a robust and deliverable strategy.
- 3.7 Along with those mentioned above, other active members of the steering group represent Country Land and Business Association (CLA), Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, National Farmers Union, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, and Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Many local wildlife experts sat on the species sub-group, whose work fed into the Steering Group.
- 3.8 The mapping work has been carried out in partnership with Oxford University as part of a research initiative, called Agile. Their best practice setting methodology has been tested and improved through this work and the best available datasets have been acquired to feed into it.
- 3.9 It is hoped that central government funds, such as agricultural incentives, grants and other initiatives will become aligned with LNRS priorities over time.
- 3.10 The LNRS does not have any specific resource allocated for, or power to require, delivery of actions. Therefore, engagement with key stakeholders, including landowners, such as TWC, has been vital to identify key priorities and realistic actions.
- 3.11 To generate this engagement and allow the right priorities and actions to be developed, numerous stakeholder and public consultation events have been held across the borough and wider Shropshire since September 2024. These have included stalls at large events, online consultations, in person presentations (including for Telford Green Spaces Partnership) and workshops (including both TWC officers and residents), and at the Nature Recovery conference by Shropshire Association of Local Councils. The purpose of these have been to raise awareness, gather priorities and measures for nature recovery in the area and promote the formal consultation on the draft LNRS which took place from 6th August to 15th October 2025.

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- 3.12 The formal process of LNRS consultation and approval is set out in the 2023 Regs. Reg 7 required Shropshire Council as the statutory authority to give TWC and Natural England, as statutory supporting authorities an opportunity to comment on the consultation draft LNRS for comment. As part of this process, it was considered by the Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability on 24th July 2025 and agreed an appropriate draft to be consulted upon.
- 3.13 The public consultation was exceptionally successful, and it is thought we have had by far the largest response yet for any LNRS with 3,782 comments received. Anecdotally, we understand the next highest received c2.1k and most typically have c200. This feedback on both the Strategy and Map gives us reassurance that the community is engaging constructively with the LNRS.
- 3.14 An overview of the consultation on the Strategy is presented in Appendix A. This includes summaries of the activities undertaken, responses provided and actions to address these in the final LNRS. A summary of key themes is presented below.
- 3.15 The 3,782 comments were made by 843 different respondents. Just over half (55%) of these were from landowners, or their representatives. This gives us confidence that when combined they reflect the views of interested parties as well as those with the physical ability to deliver restorative actions at scale.
- 3.16 Respondents anticipated using the LNRS for:
- Land management decisions
 - Making homes and gardens more nature-friendly
 - Planning community projects
 - An evidence base for grants and research
- These again cover a range of utilisations from domestic to estate scale as well as immediate action to targeting additional resource or narrowing information gaps.
- 3.17 Much of the positive feedback received included recognition of the LNRS':
- Comprehensive approach
 - Clear presentation
 - Ambition
 - Value in guiding future work.
 - Acknowledgement of the need for action across all landscapes
 - Collaborative development process
- 3.18 Common concerns related to the accuracy of the opportunity mapping. The majority of which stemmed from a confusion that the map reflected current state and not that it was setting out recommended changes to land cover. Fortunately, this trend was picked up early, allowing this distinction to be stressed more strongly during the main consultation period.
- 3.19 Similarly, there were concerns that all landowners were not directly consulted individually. This was something the Steering Group had tried repeatedly to resolve throughout the LNRS process, via legally obtaining contact details.

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However, despite numerous requests to national agencies, this was not possible. Therefore, we made every effort at targeted and effective outreach via numerous methods from stalls at major agricultural shows over two years, talks to farmer groups throughout the plan area, articles in NFU and LCA newsletters, information packs sent to land agents/consultants and employing an agricultural PR company.

- 3.20 Some landowners were concerned that the LNRS would be used as a protective designation on their land and reduce the flexibility of their business. The optional and discretionary basis of the mapping has been stressed throughout the document and during the engagement. Additional sector-based guidance notes will again set out intentional use of the mapping to inform rather than dictate change as the LNRS moves into delivery phase.
- 3.21 As set out in the legislation, it was made clear that if a landowner wished, their land could be removed from the mapping. These changes are reflected in the final map. This approach has the dual benefit of ensuring landowner goodwill and focusing strategic actions towards locations where there is a higher potential of them being delivered.
- 3.22 Comments on specific actions, within individual land parcels, were also made. This very much helped “ground truth” the proposals to make them more fit for delivery, whilst retaining the overarching focus on strategic nature recovery (right action in the right place). The resulting amendments were carried out within parameters set by the Steering Group, to ensure sound methodology was still applied fairly and consistently across the plan area.
- 3.23 Following this the updated LNRS was presented to a Defra panel for assessment on 17th December. This included a discussion with the Defra bodies, Shropshire Council and TWC. The result of this assessment is the 3-page letter from Natural England on 22nd December presented in Appendix B.
- 3.24 The panel stated that they;
“would like to congratulate you and your team on preparing such a high-quality strategy. Panel members also remain impressed by the collaborative approach taken towards developing this strategy, and especially your drive to engage as widely as possible resulting in such a large response during public consultation.”
- 3.25 They made a number of suggested technical amendments which have been made to the final LNRS. However, they *“agree that the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin LNRS is already a sound, comprehensive and well-written document”*.
- 3.26 Subject to these minor amendments, the panel recommended the document is approved for publication.
- 3.27 The formal adoption process is outlined in Regs 13 to 19. This includes the requirement in Reg 13 for Shropshire Council to provide a final version of the LNRS to Natural England and TWC.

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3.28 Reg 15 states that if a supporting authority (such as TWC or Natural England) believe the LNRS is not justified based on the consultation or it is materially deficient it can raise these concerns within 28 days of its receipt. These must be detailed in a written publication advisory notice and sent to Shropshire Council and a copy to the Secretary of State. Should these concerns not be resolved, the Secretary of State will adjudicate.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 The LNRS comprises of a strategy document and a map. These identify priorities for the restoration of biodiversity across the borough and wider strategy area.

4.2 The LNRS is a requirement of the Environment Act and TWC have been active partners throughout its formation. Many of our corporate stakeholders, including businesses and residents have been actively involved in shaping it.

4.3 TWC approved the Consultation Draft LNRS in July 2025. This final document is the result of that very successful formal public consultation.

4.4 Supporting authorities (TWC and Natural England) have the option to object to its publication on grounds of either not being justified by the consultation or being materially deficient. Natural England, wholeheartedly supports the LNRS and following examination by the Defra panel in December 2025, has approved the LNRS for publication subject to minor amendments (which have been made).

4.5 The final LNRS strategy and map are presented to Cabinet for adoption. Following this Shropshire Council, as lead body, will inform the Secretary of State of the date for its publication.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 TWC can write a publication advisory notice to Shropshire Council and the Secretary of State if we do not agree with Natural England that the final LNRS is sound by reason of:

- not being justified by the consultation, or
- being materially deficient

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 Not adopting the LNRS in a timely fashion will delay publication and:

- Move it out of Defra's publication window
- Absorb officer time
- Postpone delivery of nature recovery potentially including successful resource acquisition by ourselves and partners

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 A key outcome of the Council Plan is to work towards the protection and enhancement of habitats and wildlife. However, the founding forest city ethos of the town of Telford has demonstrated that the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity contribute fundamentally to the Council's vision of protect, care, and invest to create a better borough and assists in the delivery of all five of the Council Plans' priorities.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Telford & Wrekin council does not receive direct funding for delivery from the LNRS. However, it is predicted relevant external funders will align their initiatives to its delivery.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021 (EA 2021) places a duty on public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Government guidance states that public authorities must consider strategies when meeting the biodiversity duty to include the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which is intended to support national biodiversity.
- 9.2 Adoption of the LNRS will form part of the Council's compliance with the strengthened biodiversity duty ensuring that biodiversity considerations are embedded into decision making, planning, land management and corporate policy frameworks.
- 9.3 Adopting the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin LNRS will place the Council in a strong position for fulfilling its strengthened biodiversity duty under s102 of the EA 2021.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The mapped actions are present across much of the borough. In addition to these, unmapped measures are present across all wards. Therefore, although it may be strategically clustered in certain priority areas, it promotes borough wide action and benefits.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Direct funding for delivery of the LNRS is not available at the moment, however it is expected that it will be used by funders to align their future provision. This would enable landowners, including TWC, to deliver beneficial works to their estates.
- 11.2 Many studies have shown the significant benefit of biodiversity to human health, social wellbeing and economic growth, not least the HM Treasury's internationally respected "[The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review \(2021\)](#)".

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- 11.3 Additional research since this review by [Oxford University concluded](#) that damage to the natural environment is slowing the UK economy and could lead to a 12% drop in GDP, which would be bigger than the global financial crisis or Covid-19.
- 11.4 TWC's Health and Wellbeing Board' strategy for 2023-2027 has identified a "Green and Sustainable Borough" as one of its eight priorities. It also quotes the 2022 residents' survey that found that for *improved open green spaces is the most important priority to them for improving cultural, leisure and sports facilities and service.*"
- 11.5 Therefore, actions proposed should benefit the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and continue to promote inward investment to the borough.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 Environmental degradation, including biodiversity loss, has greater impact on those in society who are more vulnerable. This has a number of drivers often connected to economic status, health, and age. Therefore, preventing and reversing this degradation is likely to have a greater proportional benefit on those groups.
- 12.2 Actions proposed have tangible local benefits that are accessible to all.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 The primary benefit of this strategy is nature recovery, however, many of the actions set out will have wider environmental co-benefits including:
- Reduction in carbon emissions
 - Capture of carbon
 - Local climate cooling
 - Flood prevention
 - Air pollution reduction
 - Air pollution capture
 - Water pollution reduction
 - Water conservation

14.0 Appendices

- A Shropshire Council, 1.26; Local Nature Recovery Strategy Report - Consultation feedback and changes to strategy
- B Natural England, 22.12.26; Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Pre-publication Panel Response.
- C Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin LNRS Strategy inc. Appx (Compressed)
- D Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin LNRS Map
- E Summary of the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy

15.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	26/01/2026	02/02/2026	JD
SDM	20/01/2026	26/01/2026	VH
Finance	03/02/2026	05/02/2026	AEM
Legal	03/02/2026	05/02/2026	RP