



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## Environment Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 29 April 2026

### Update on Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Carolyn Healy - Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability
<b>Lead Director:</b>	James Dunn - Director: Prosperity & Investment
<b>Service Area:</b>	Prosperity & Investment
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Not Key Decision
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Report considered by:</b>	Environment Scrutiny – 29 April 2026

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Environment Scrutiny Committee:

- 1.1 Note the process of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) since last brought before Environmental Scrutiny in July 2025.
- 1.2 Note the work of the LNRS Steering Group and stakeholders in supporting co-ordinated biodiversity action in the borough and wider Shropshire area.
- 1.3 Support the transition of the LNRS from strategic planning into delivery.

#### 2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the LNRS.

2.2 To inform and engage the Committee with next steps.

### **3.0 Background**

3.1 The Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of forty-eight LNRS's being completed across England, as part of a nationwide initiative to fulfil the statutory obligations that are set out in Section 104 of the Environment Act 2021 (EA 2021). These strategies are designed to support nature recovery through locally driven planning and prioritisation of biodiversity and environmental enhancement efforts. The geographical boundaries for each LNRS have been determined by central government, typically aligning with ceremonial county borders to ensure consistency and administrative coherence across regions. 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.

3.2 The specific components of the LNRS have been set out in section 106 of the Environment Act; these include, at a minimum, the preparation of a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, which sets out local objectives for nature recovery, and the development of a Local Habitat Map, which identifies areas of existing and potential ecological value within the strategy area. 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

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

3.3 This mapping, although utilising a number of existing designations, does not constitute a designation in itself with regard to restricting land use or development. Rather it is to identify where specific conservation measures could be most effective should the land manager wish to undertake them.

3.4 The Secretary of State appointed Shropshire Council as the Responsible Authority for the development of the LNRS. In accordance with Regulation 3 of The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023, Natural England and Telford & Wrekin Council (TWC) were designated as Supporting Authorities. Together, this core partnership has established a strategic steering group, along with several thematic sub-groups, to guide the formulation of a robust and actionable strategy. The LNRS steering group comprises of a diverse range of stakeholders, including representatives from Country Land and Business Association (CLA), Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, National Farmers Union, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shropshire Hills National Landscape. In addition

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to these organisations, the species sub group benefits from the expertise of numerous local species experts.

- 3.5 As LNRS' have no power to enforce implementation or the dedicated funding to support the delivery, active engagement with key stakeholders has been essential including landowners such as TWC, this collaborative approach has helped to identify shared priorities and develop realistic, achievable actions that will align with local interest and capacities. It is anticipated that, over time, central government funding streams, such as agricultural incentives, grants and other initiatives will become aligned with LNRS priorities, thereby supporting their implementations.
- 3.6 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 (SALC). 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 Respondents anticipated using the LNRS for:
  - Land management decisions
  - Making homes and gardens more nature-friendly
  - Planning community projects

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- 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.

- 3.12 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
- 3.13 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.
- 3.14 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. 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.
- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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.
- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 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

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Council and TWC. The result of this assessment is the 3-page letter from Natural England on 22nd December presented in Appendix B.

- 3.19 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.”*
- 3.20 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”*.
- 3.21 Subject to these minor amendments, the panel recommended the document is approved for publication.
- 3.22 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.
- 3.23 The final Pre-Publication LNRS was presented to Shropshire Council’s Cabinet where they adopted it on 11<sup>th</sup> March. Similarly, TWC’s Cabinet adopted it on 26<sup>th</sup> March.
- 3.24 Following this, Shropshire Council wrote to TWC and NE on 9<sup>th</sup> April to start the statutory 28-day notice of publication. TWC replied on 14<sup>th</sup> April, confirming support for publication. Natural England also did so on 16<sup>th</sup> April. The Secretary of State was informed on 17<sup>th</sup> April of intent to publish on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026.
- 3.25 The publication version of the LNRS is provided in Appendix C, D and E. This will be published online at the following address:  
<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/shropshire-and-telford-wrekin-local-nature-recovery-strategy/>
- 3.26 While the LNRS was being prepared, the Steering Group have been continuously looking ahead and taking opportunities to ensure its delivery. As part of this brief, sector specific, guidance is being prepared and stakeholders have been regularly engaged to build a network of relationships and understand their opportunities and challenges. An example of this is the continued partnership with Shropshire Association of Local Councils who produced a freely available guidance document (Town & Parish Council Nature Recovery work book Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin) which is available here:  
<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/shropshire-and-telford-wrekin-local-nature-recovery-strategy/community-groups-and-townparish-councils/>
- 3.27 This work is hoped to continue with encouraging the creation of parish scale nature restoration plans. Our “hyper-local” approach has been looked at as an exemplar in a British Academy paper ([Pioneering place-sensitive nature recovery at the hyper-local scale: a multi-tier, multi-directional governance approach | The](#)

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[British Academy](#)) and the current unpublished draft of Defra's LNRS delivery guidance (draft Delivering Local Nature Recovery Strategies; Advice for responsible authorities December 2025 v1).

- 3.28 The national policies and funding opportunities relating to the LNRS are being actively reshaped, including agricultural incentives. Therefore, the Steering Group is keen to move on quick local deliverables that build local confidence, momentum and evidence of capacity so we will be well placed to take advantage of these national level opportunities. The Steering Group is therefore keen to prioritise early, locally deliverable actions that build confidence, maintain momentum, and demonstrate delivery capacity, ensuring we are well placed to take advantage of future national-level opportunities.
- 3.29 Therefore, it is anticipated that this local engagement will increase again sharply over the spring and summer. This will aim to facilitate a variety of initial stakeholder projects, collate and disseminate local good practice and help landowners, groups and funders to connect and design more strategic projects.
- 3.30 TWC are actively contributing to this by both drawing up guidance for developers within the borough and identifying initial habitat improvement projects on our land holding, from existing funds (such as s106) to begin targeted delivery. An example of this is using mapped grassland opportunity areas to help the prioritise the delivery of new meadows on our existing open spaces.
- 3.31 The LNRS will also be incorporated into our Local Nature Reserve and park management plans as they are written/reviewed. This will ensure these significant assets optimise their potential in nature recovery.
- 3.32 Officers, as ever, are looking out for external funding sources to enable improvement to our green spaces. It is anticipated that many of the traditional funders will move to align their priorities with those found in the LNRSs being adopted across England.
- 3.33 To take advantage of this change of funding landscape, TWC have created and adopted a bespoke procurement framework for habitat works at the end of 2025. This was done to ensure cost effective works can be obtained from proven specialist suppliers quickly and efficiently.
- 3.34 Similarly the revised version of the borough's main planning document, the Local Plan, has gone through the major milestone of Examination in Public in February and March 2026, which we hope can be adopted late this year. Officers have ensured the LNRS is firmly included with the policies and supporting text of this document. This should help shape new development and enable them to contribute to strategic biodiversity improvements.
- 3.35 National reports and official responses around the nature crisis are being produced at pace with HM Government's National Security Assessment on Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security (2026) ( [National security assessment - global biodiversity loss ecosystem collapse and national security](#) ) being seen as especially influential with its sobering conclusions on the

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high and increasing threat to the human migration, military, food, economic, water and organised crime challenges facing the UK. Work done on the LNRS helps identify solutions and opportunities to address the biodiversity crisis both locally and nationally.

3.36 Officers from TWC, Shropshire and NE attended a national briefing on moving England's LNRSs from publication into delivery in February. From the high level speakers it is evident that many of the Defra organisations are actively working to incorporate the LNRSs within their ways of working including Natural England, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency.

3.37 As part of this national support, Defra are currently working to create monitoring protocols to enable each LNRS across England to record local delivery. The anticipation is that, when live, the monitoring systems should be able to feed into national priorities and funding over the coming years.

### **4.0 Summary of main proposals**

4.1 The Committee is asked to provide assistance including recommendations and support in moving the adopted strategic nature restoration priorities, opportunity areas and their actions into active and sustained delivery. This could include:

- Aiding engagement with new and existing stakeholders including landowners, communities, decision makers and funders;
- Identifying physical opportunities for delivery within Telford and Wrekin; and
- Identifying additional funding opportunities/resources for use from the hyper-local to landscape scale.

### **5.0 Alternative Options**

5.1 None.

### **6.0 Key Risks**

6.1 The LNRS is at a very precarious moment, as it moves from publication into delivery. A lot of local level support has been garnered to date, however this needs to continue its momentum and increase demonstrable outcomes on the ground. Without this nature recovery within the strategy area will be, at best, inefficient.

6.2 There is a risk that lack of profile and evidenced delivery would prevent the LNRS from becoming influential in decision making at all levels, from corporate boards to farm manager. We aim to maintain frequent engagement and two-way communication with the widening group of stakeholders to keep it on their agendas, offer support and develop case studies of both successes and challenges to encourage and facilitate delivery.

6.3 Its non-obligatory status and no direct funding means the LNRS has to lead with positive engagement, encouragement and good will. There is an expectation that funding streams will align in the future. Therefore, we aim for the LNRS to grow

steadily, signpost stakeholders to emerging funds and creating a culture of delivery rather than try to over-achieve early and collapse.

- 6.4 Leading as well as ensuring positive engagement and cooperation between a broadening church of stakeholders, with different focuses, will bring challenges. We are looking into organisational and governance structures to aid in this, so all can play to their strengths.

### **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 The delivery of the LNRS will form part of the Council's compliance with this strengthened biodiversity duty, evidencing that biodiversity considerations are embedded into decision making, planning, land management and corporate policy frameworks.

### **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).
- 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 Background Papers**

- 1 Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security A national security assessment (2026) HM Government, London.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/696e0eae719d837d69afc7de/National\\_security\\_assessment\\_-\\_global\\_biodiversity\\_loss\\_ecosystem\\_collapse\\_and\\_national\\_security.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/696e0eae719d837d69afc7de/National_security_assessment_-_global_biodiversity_loss_ecosystem_collapse_and_national_security.pdf)
- 2 Town & Parish Council Nature Recovery work book; Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin (2025) <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/media/qnxmpgfd/salc-workbook.pdf>

- 3 Treloar, G, Reed, J, Joanie Willett, J, and Wills, J, (2025) Pioneering place sensitive nature recovery at the hyper-local scale: a multi-tier, multi-directional governance approach. The British Academy, London.  
[https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/5975/00012\\_Nature\\_Recovery\\_Paper\\_11\\_-\\_Group\\_Final.pdf](https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/5975/00012_Nature_Recovery_Paper_11_-_Group_Final.pdf)

## 15.0 Appendices

- A Shropshire Council, 3.26; 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

## 16.0 Report Sign Off

<b>Signed off by</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date signed off</b>	<b>Initials</b>
Finance	20/04/2026	20/04/2026	AEM
Legal	21/04/2026	21/04/2026	EH
Director	01/04/2026	13/04/2026	JD