

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 16 February 2026

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Purpose: To seek Lead Member approval of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) approve the pre-publication version of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy as set out at Appendices 1 to 4 of this report;
- (2) approve that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is provided to neighbouring and supporting authorities, in accordance with Regulations 13 and 14 of The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 (the Regulations); and
- (3) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to fulfil the requirements of Regulations 15 to 19, of The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023, to ensure that the final version of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is duly published.

1. Background Information

1.1 The Environment Act 2021 introduced a statutory requirement for each upper-tier authority to prepare and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). LNRSs are being introduced in England to encourage more coordinated practical and focused action and investment in nature.

1.2 East Sussex County Council is the 'responsible authority' for preparing the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove LNRS. The LNRS sets out a long-term vision for nature recovery and priority actions for the first 5 years (including opportunities for habitat creation, restoration of degraded sites, and improving ecological connectivity). It also provides a framework for delivering biodiversity net gain, climate resilience, and wider environmental benefits.

1.3 The LNRS has been prepared in partnership with West Sussex County Council (WSCC), Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC), and Natural England. Preparation has also involved extensive engagement with key stakeholders, including the district and borough councils, the South Downs National Park Authority, landowners, farmers, conservation organisations, and community groups.

2. Supporting Information

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy Stages of Preparation

2.1 The main stages of preparing the LNRS were as follows:

- collating and analysing ecological information about habitats and species and the pressures they face;
- reviewing over 150 published plans and strategies for Sussex to identify existing priorities for nature;
- meeting with farmers, landowners, community groups, young people, local councillors, developers, the health and wellbeing sector, and businesses to understand their views;
- online surveys to canvas local concerns to inform priorities;
- longlisting, then shortlisting priorities for nature's recovery;
- running workshops with experts from key local environmental and land management organisations to work through the detail;
- creating a set of measures to deliver the priorities; and
- mapping where any measures (that can be mapped) can be located to deliver the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment.

2.2 Statutory public consultation on the draft LNRS ran for 6 weeks in October and November 2025. Comments were received across public bodies (district/borough councils, National Park), utilities and statutory bodies, Non Government Organisations (e.g. Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Weald to Waves, CPRE, South East Rivers Trust), landowners and estates,, developers/agents, and community groups and residents.

2.3 In general, the response to the consultation supported the content of the Strategy and saw it as providing a practical framework for nature recovery. Responses to the consultation supported the emphasis on habitat connectivity, nature-based solutions and integration with planning policy. In light of the consultation comments, some minor and non material changes will be made to the Strategy, particularly to clarify roles and strengthen delivery mechanisms.

What the LNRS contains

2.4 The key elements of the LNRS are as follows:

- setting out what local people said about the nature they love, what they have noticed, and what they want to see happen;
- a description of the most important habitats and species in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove;
- seven principles for nature's recovery that address the key challenges;
- 24 priorities for nature's recovery, each with a set of statements describing what 'success looks like' in 10 years' time;
- 106 practical measures ('actions') that set out what needs to be done 'on the ground' to deliver the priorities, where, and how; and
- an interactive 'Local Habitat Map' showing current 'Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity' (APIB - which cover 23.5% of the Strategy area) and, if the measures within the LNRS are implemented in a targeted way, 'Areas that Could become of Importance for Biodiversity' (ACIB - which cover 34.9% of the Strategy area).

2.5 Appendices 1 to 4 set out the full LNRS. Appendix 4 is the ‘Local Habitat Map’, but is presented as a snapshot, rather than the interactive map. A link to the interactive version of this map is provided in the background documents.

How the LNRS will be used

2.6 The LNRS will help the County Council and others (including landowners and managers, other local authorities, developers, businesses and investors, local communities, and environmental groups) to help nature by:

- showing where effort should be focussed and why;
- providing a single set of priorities and actions for all to rally behind, seek funding for, and work together to deliver on the ground;
- helping those interested in nature recovery to see how their actions could contribute to the broader county-wide ambition for nature;
- serving as a benchmark of the current ‘state of nature’ to help measure future trends and recovery efforts;
- being a new source of evidence for local planning and local government decision-making processes, including local plan preparation and the planning applications process; and
- acting as a ‘container’ for existing recovery initiatives by providing a wider context and mechanism to coordinate and target action at all scales.

2.7 Following approval, the County Council’s focus (in partnership with WSCC and BHCC) will turn to delivery of the LNRS, including: leading and convening a delivery partnership; embedding the LNRS into local decision-making; identifying strategic projects and facilitating project development; and monitoring and reporting on delivery of priorities.

2.8 In due course, the Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority will become the ‘responsible authority’ for both the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove LNRS and the West Sussex LNRS. This change will require a ministerial decision, for which there is currently no timeframe.

Next steps

2.9 Subject to some minor changes, as referenced in paragraph 2.3, the version of the LNRS that is being presented to this Lead Member meeting (Appendices 1-3) is the version that the County Council intends to publish as the final version of the LNRS. Before this is done, there are certain statutory requirements to be met. Firstly, pre-publication approval of the Strategy needs to be sought from the supporting authorities (District and Borough Councils, Brighton & Hove City Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Natural England) and neighbouring authorities also need to be notified. In addition, there is a requirement to give notice to the Secretary of State of the Council’s intention to publish its final version of the LNRS. Delegated authority is sought for these stages to be undertaken.

2.10 If supporting authorities serve notice on the County Council that they are not content for the final version of the LNRS to be published, the Regulations prescribe a process that the County Council will need to follow in order to resolve such a matter. Although this is considered unlikely, as the County Council has extensively engaged with these authorities throughout the production of the LNRS, delegated authority is also sought for the County Council to undertake the necessary actions to resolve any such dispute.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The production and implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies across the whole of England represents a key element of the Environment Act. The County Council has

a statutory responsibility for producing a LNRS for East Sussex and Brighton and Hove. Following extensive engagement and consultation through a wide range of stakeholders and the public, a pre-publication version of the LNRS has now been prepared.

3.2 It is recommended that the Lead Member for Transport and Environment approves this pre-publication version of the LNRS, as set out at Appendices 1 to 4, and delegates authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to undertake the latter statutory stages of the LNRS production.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS Part 1 – Context and Description

Appendix 2 – East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS Part 2 – Priorities, Measures and Maps

Appendix 3 – East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS Part 3 – Priority Species

Appendix 4 – East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS Local Habitat Map

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The interactive version of the Local Habitat Map can be viewed at - [Local Habitat Map East Sussex and Brighton & Hove](#)