

## **What are Local Nature Recovery Strategies**

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I recently joined the [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#) as a Policy Officer for Local Nature Recovery Strategies. I believe that they have a lot of potential and thought I would share with you some of my thoughts on what needs to happen to make sure that they become an important tool in our armoury for the recovery of nature throughout England.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) are part of the wide ranging [Environment Bill](#) and will have particular significance to the future of Wild Oxfordshire's nature recovery work. When it becomes law, the act will include a requirement for local authorities, generally county councils, to develop LNRSs. Initially, these will be in the form of a map of opportunities for recovering nature, along with a statement of biodiversity priorities.

To trial the process of developing LNRSs, DEFRA, through Natural England, is currently running five pilots throughout England, one of which is our neighbouring county of Buckinghamshire. The others are Cornwall, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Northumberland, all sharing a pot of £1m. The idea is to test the complete process from initial maps of habitats and national conservation sites, supplied by DEFRA, to production of a local map of opportunities and the statement of priorities. The whole process should also include addition of local data, identification of opportunities and priorities for creating or improving habitats, most likely through engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. This is ambitious - the trials started last autumn and are due to be completed by April this year so that guidelines can be drawn up in the coming autumn.

You may recall the recent [draft Nature Recovery Network \(NRN\) map](#) that TVERC, BBOWT and Wild Oxfordshire developed last year and wonder if that is the same as the opportunity map that the LNRS would require. If it is, then surely we are well ahead of the game. Well the answer is yes but...

It is a start but there are two major differences. Firstly, opportunity maps need to take into account opportunities for nature-based solutions such as tree planting and natural flood management. These were not considered when the NRN map was drawn up. And secondly, the map is only a draft and will need wider consultation of stakeholders to refine it, although this could easily be broadened to include nature-based solution opportunities.

There are also a few details that are uncertain and will determine the effectiveness of LNRSs. The most important is whether or not local authorities will be mandated to take LNRSs into account for planning decisions. Furthermore, LNRSs will need to be acted on at the local level. This means that there should be integration of LNRSs with Nature Recovery Networks, alongside coordination with, for example, AONBs and National Parks, many of which cross authority boundaries. And finally, since NRNs will cover a significant amount of agricultural land, the [Environmental Land Management](#) schemes being phased in are likely to be a very influential source of funding and need to be effectively targeted to deliver a much enhanced Nature Recovery Network across the county.

If these details can be addressed, Local Nature Recovery Strategies that protect nature from adverse planning decisions and are well integrated with other initiatives will form the backbone for making space for nature throughout England. Indeed this is an opportunity to go beyond arresting the current decline of species and habitats in the UK and, instead, reverse the downward trend to encourage a greater abundance of wildlife. And with a growing popular mood towards a green recovery maybe we can succeed this time.