



**Cabinet 11th March
2026**

Item

Public



Local Nature Recovery Strategy

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr David Walker		

1. Synopsis

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a statutory requirement for local authorities under the Environment Act 2021. LNRSs were specifically created to turn around the decline of nature and wildlife by establishing a structured, evidence-led approach to identifying where action is most needed. Their purpose is to define local priorities and map the areas where habitat creation or improvement will deliver the greatest benefits. LNRSs are one component of a coherent national network of wildlife-rich places across England.

Shropshire Council has been appointed by Defra as the responsible authority to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the whole of Shropshire. The LNRS comprises a local habitat map showing current and potential areas for nature recovery and a written statement of nature priorities, outlining which actions, taken in which location, can have the most impact. It has been developed with Natural England, Telford & Wrekin Council, landowner groups, species experts and informed by public consultation responses.

This report seeks Cabinet approval of the LNRS. Approval is also being sought in parallel from Telford & Wrekin Council's Cabinet (meeting on 26th March). We are then required to notify the Secretary of State of those approvals and publish the LNRS.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) comprise two core components: a written strategy and a spatial map identifying both the existing nature network and the opportunity network. Both components identify priorities for the restoration of biodiversity across the historic county of Salop.
- 2.2 The LNRS is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021 and Shropshire Council was appointed the Responsible Authority by Defra to produce this. A Steering Group has guided its development and significant stakeholder engagement has shaped its formation and contents.
- 2.3 The Steering Group comprises Shropshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council, Natural England, Country Land and Business Association (CLA), Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, National Farmers Union, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Many local species experts sat on the species sub-group.
- 2.4 The purpose of the LNRS is to help focus funds and resources for nature recovery action. It is not obligating action, and it does not bring additional protections to land. Using ecological evidence, the LNRS identifies 16 local priorities and 51 actions to restore habitats, enhance ecological connectivity, and safeguard species to achieve a “more, bigger, better and better connected” ecological network.
- 2.5 The draft LNRS went to public consultation from the 6th August to 15th October 2025. This Pre-publication document presented at Appendix 3 has been informed by public consultation, which saw and 3,782 comments being received.
- 2.6 Supporting authorities (Telford & Wrekin Council 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 on the 17th December 2025, the panel approved the LNRS for publication subject to minor amendments (which have been made). The LNRS is being taken to Telford & Wrekin Cabinet on 26th March 2026 seeking approval and adoption from its members.
- 2.7 The pre-publication LNRS strategy and map are presented to Shropshire Council Cabinet for adoption. Following parallel adoption by Telford and Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council, as lead body, will inform the Secretary of State of the date for its publication.
- 2.8 Defra provided a grant to fund the development of the strategy. Another tranche of funding has provided to cover officer time to transition to the delivery of the strategy.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.0 It is recommended that Cabinet Members:

- a. Notes the work of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Steering Group and stakeholders in supporting co-ordinated biodiversity action, to enable nature recovery across Shropshire.
- b. Approves the LNRS Strategy (subject to parallel approval by Telford and Wrekin Council) and delegates to the Service Director for Strategy & Change, the authority to make minor amendments to the Strategy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, prior to publication and notification to the Secretary of State as required.

Report

4.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 Shropshire Council is required to produce and publish the LNRS in line with the Environment Act 2021 and Defra's appointment of Shropshire Council as the Responsible Authority.
- 4.2 The LNRS had to be produced in line with Defra guidance. Natural England has worked closely with Shropshire Council (bi-weekly meetings) throughout its development to ensure guidance was followed.
- 4.3 Not publishing 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.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
LNRS not compliant with regulations and guidance	Defra sign off for the LNRS was secured on 22 nd Dec 2025 confirming compliance and quality. Natural England provided ongoing bi-weekly support throughout development to ensure alignment with all requirements.
Cabinet do not give approval for the LNRS to be published	Provide a clear information about how the LNRS has been developed to provide assurance that guidance has been followed and the strategy is as good as it can be. Portfolio holders have been kept up to date with regard progress and stages of consultation during the LNRS creating awareness across political groups.
Failure to publish on time could move Shropshire outside Defra's publication window, reduce access to national support, delay funding alignment opportunities, and	Close coordination with Natural England and Telford & Wrekin Council, completion of all required amendments, and proactive forward planning for Cabinet timelines to ensure timely approval.

postpone nature recovery activity.	
Stakeholder concern or misunderstanding of LNRS implications - Landowners or partners may worry about new obligations, planning impacts or how mapped actions will be used.	Extensive engagement; clear communications emphasising that the LNRS does not impose new obligations or designations, and exists to focus funding and support, not regulate land use. Consultation responses have been incorporated and supported by Natural England.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands, and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September. Defra provided a grant which has covered the entire costs involved in the production of the LNRS. Another tranche of funding has provided to cover officer time to transition to the delivery of the strategy. Funding for delivery post LNRS publication has been announced as part of integrated settlements. Defra have communicated that funding will continue to be provided through Section 31 grants - we are awaiting further information from Defra.
- 5.2 The purpose of the LNRS is to help focus funds and resources for nature action. It is therefore expected that the LNRS helps Shropshire businesses secure additional funds for nature-based activities which benefit nature and wider environmental benefits such as flood management and carbon sequestration. There are obvious links and opportunities with other Council initiatives such as the Marches Environmental Investment Platform and the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme.
- 5.3 Direct funding for landowners to deliver LNRS actions 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 Shropshire Council, to deliver beneficial works to their estates.

6.0 Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The primary benefit of this strategy is nature recovery, however, many of the actions set out will have wider environmental co-benefits. The LNRS creates opportunities to align nature recovery with other Council environmental initiatives, including; Severn Valley Water Management Scheme and the Marches Environmental Investment Platform.
- 6.2 The LNRS will support Shropshire Council's strategies for Climate Change and Carbon Reduction in a number of ways including, capture of carbon, local climate cooling, flood prevention, air pollution reduction, air pollution capture, water pollution reduction, water conservation.

7.0 Background

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Specific contents of the LNRS has been set out in s106 of the Environment Act, including a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and a Local Habitat Map.
1. The Statement must contain:
 - A description of the area and its biodiversity,
 - The opportunities and priorities for recovering or enhancing habitats & species, measures to deliver these.
 2. 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.
- 7.4 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 Telford & Wrekin Council were designated as Supporting Authorities. This core group has assembled a steering group and appropriate sub-groups to aid in the process of creating a robust and deliverable strategy.
- 7.5 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, Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Many local species experts sat on the species sub-group.
- 7.6 It is hoped that central government funds, such as agricultural incentives, grants and other initiatives will become aligned with LNRS priorities over time.
- 7.7 As the LNRS does not have any specific resource allocated for, or power to require delivery of actions, engagement with key stakeholders, including landowners, has been vital to identify key priorities and realistic actions.
- 7.8 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 the map.

- 7.9 To generate this engagement and allow the right priorities and actions to be developed, numerous stakeholder and public consultation events have been held across Shropshire since September 2024. These have included stalls at large events, county shows, online consultations, in person presentations and workshops (including both SC officers and residents), and at the Nature Recovery conference hosted 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 to promote the formal consultation on the draft LNRS which took place from 6th August to 15th October 2025.
- 7.10 The public consultation was exceptionally successful, and it is thought we have had by far the largest response yet for any LNRS in England with 3,782 comments received. This feedback on both the Strategy and Map gives us reassurance that the community and landowners engaged constructively with the LNRS.
- 7.11 An overview of the consultation on the Strategy is presented in Appendix 1. This includes summaries of the activities undertaken, responses provided and actions to address these in the final LNRS. The LNRS identifies 16 local priorities and 51 actions to restore habitats, enhance ecological connectivity, and safeguard species. These actions include both mapped measures—where clear spatial opportunities exist—and non-mapped actions applicable county-wide. Together they aim to achieve a “more, bigger, better and better connected” ecological network, following established national ecological recovery principles.
- 7.12 Following this the updated LNRS was presented to a Defra panel for assessment on 17th December 2025. This included a discussion with the Defra bodies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission) Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. The result of this assessment is the 3 page letter from Natural England on 22nd December presented in Appendix 2.
- 7.13 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.”
- 7.14 They made a number of suggested technical amendments which have, been incorporated and amended into the final LNRS. However, they “*agree that the Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin LNRS is already a sound, comprehensive and well-written document*”. Subject to these minor amendments, the panel recommended the strategy is approved for publication.
- 7.15 The formal adoption process for the LNRS 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 Telford & Wrekin Council.
- 7.16 Reg 15 states that if a supporting authority (such as Telford & Wrekin Council 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 receipt of the LNRS. Any concern raised must be detailed in a written publication advisory notice and sent to Shropshire Council and a copy sent to the Secretary of State. Should these concerns not be resolved, the Secretary of State will adjudicate. Once

adopted, Shropshire Council—as the Responsible Authority—must notify the Secretary of State of the publication date. The pre-publication strategy can be seen in appendix 3 along with the map in appendix 4.

8.0 Additional Information

- 8.1 Natural England, Telford & Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council remain in close coordination as the strategy proceeds towards publication which includes adjustments to the strategy document and mapping have been implemented in line with pre-publication panel feedback, ensuring that the LNRS is technically sound, compliant and reflective of local priorities.
- 8.2 Upon publication, the LNRS enters its delivery phase, underpinned by Defra's emerging national monitoring framework. Responsible Authorities will be required to collect, report and review delivery data through standardised templates and reporting tools, supporting national tracking of environmental outcomes. Successful delivery will depend on continued partnership working. Farmers, landowners, environmental organisations and communities all play a central role. The Steering Group will continue to guide the delivery of the LNRS and ensuring compliance with the Environment Act.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 The Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been developed in line with the statutory requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and shaped through extensive collaboration with Natural England, Telford & Wrekin Council and a wide range of local stakeholders. The strategy has undergone significant public engagement, receiving 3782 consultation responses—the largest response recorded for any LNRS area—demonstrating strong community interest and support for coordinated nature recovery across the county.
- 9.2 Natural England's assessment confirms that the LNRS is a high-quality, compliant and well-formed strategy, approved for publication subject to minor amendments, all of which have been made. Adoption of the LNRS will enable Shropshire Council to fulfil its statutory duties while providing a clear, evidence-based framework for targeting investment, coordinating delivery and supporting wider environmental benefits including climate resilience, carbon capture and community wellbeing.
- 9.4 Approval is therefore sought to publish the final LNRS, subject to parallel approval by Telford & Wrekin Council cabinet (meeting on 26th March), and to notify the Secretary of State.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: [All](#)

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendix 1 - Overview of the consultation on the LNRS

Appendix 2 - Defra panel assessment letter dated 22nd December 2025

Appendix 3 – Pre-publication LNRS  [LNRS_Jan2026_FINAL_v2.pdf](#)

Appendix 4 – Pre-publication Map [here](#)