

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

20 January 2026

North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) - Publication

Report of the Corporate Director – Environment

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Executive approval to publish the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in line with statutory guidance.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The LNRS is a spatial strategy that seeks to map nature recovery actions and deliver the Government's England-wide nature targets. They are a statutory requirement as set out by the Environment Act 2021.

2.2 The LNRS is designed as a mechanism to drive more coordinated, practical and focussed action to help restore and connect nature and halt its decline. Each Strategy will, for the area that it covers:

- agree priorities for nature's recovery,
- map the most valuable existing areas for nature,
- map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

2.3 Work commenced on the LNRS in September 2023 and the process of deriving the LNRS has followed statutory guidance and advice set out by Defra and Natural England.

2.4 Through the LNRS development extensive technical studies have been undertaken alongside stakeholder, farmer and landowner engagement. Political engagement has also been undertaken for North Yorkshire Council and the five supporting authorities: York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, City of York Council, Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Park Authorities and Natural England.

2.5 Statutory public consultation for the LNRS was undertaken from 30 June until 12 August. 91 online survey responses were received, along 850 comments related to the detailed feedback form and 200 comments pinned to the online Local Habitat Map. All comments have been reviewed and the Report on Public Consultation is referred to under 3.1.

3.0 NORTH YORKSHIRE & YORK LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

3.1 The LNRS for North Yorkshire and York has mapped areas of particular importance for biodiversity (APIBs) across the region. It has then, for the purpose of encouraging nature recovery, identified strategic creation opportunity areas where new habitats could be created to enhance and connect the network of habitats across the County.

- 3.2 In respect to North Yorkshire and York, a map showing the Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIBs) and Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACBs) is set out below in figure 1.

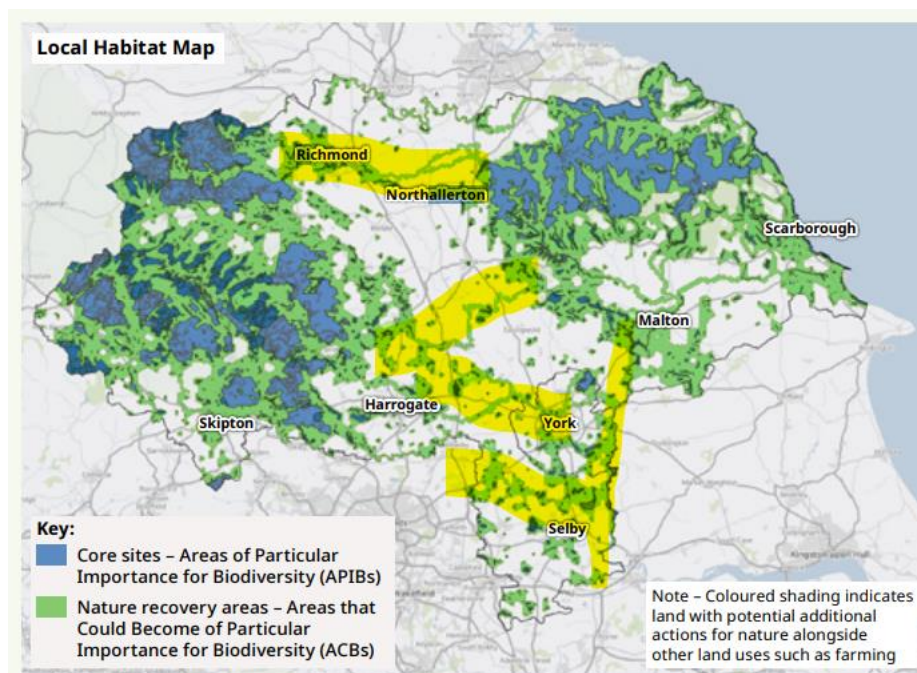


Figure 1

- 3.3 Through the mapping of APIBs, the LNRS identifies important existing sites to protect biodiversity. The identification of a strategic network (shaded areas on the plan) with associated priorities and measures (actions) on the ground helps to direct investment in habitat creation to those areas which would have the best outcomes in terms of overall nature recovery.
- 3.4 Preparation of the LNRS has been led by North Yorkshire Council (NYC), as the responsible authority, with work having commenced in September 2023. NYC has been supported by an advisory group (steering group) with representation from the Defra arm's length bodies (Natural England, Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency), the protected landscapes in North Yorkshire (two National Parks and three National Landscapes), City of York Council, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, White Rose Forest, Dales to Vales River Network and the National Farmers Union (NFU).
- 3.5 Working with the wide range of stakeholders a range of priorities to help nature recover, alongside benefits from nature have been established. The LNRS priorities are considered the 'what' and the 'why' of nature recovery; what we are seeking to do, and why we are seeking to do it. These 39 priorities spread across our seven 'habitat' categories:
- Farmland
 - Upland
 - Grassland
 - Woodland
 - Water and wetlands
 - Urban
 - Coast
- 3.6 Each priority has a number of associated measures, which are the practical 'on the ground' actions that would help to deliver the aims of the priority. They can be considered as the 'how' and the 'where' of nature recovery; how we could do it, and where we could do it.

- 3.7 North Yorkshire and York also contains a significant number of rare and threatened species that will, to some degree, benefit from habitat improvement measures, however they may also need very specific actions. For example, research and survey work that will help to better understand their distribution, abundance and ecology, as well as more specific measures to provide their unique habitat requirements. This section refers to ‘focus species’, which is a shortlist of species to be prioritised in this first iteration of the LNRS
- 3.8 For North Yorkshire Council specifically, we recognise that the central belt of our geography has had the least nature recovery activity in the county. Therefore, a strategic opportunity would be to prioritise nature recovery in this area (see yellow highlighted area on figure above), alongside other place-based opportunities for nature recovery, in support of our council and regional partner objectives.
- 3.9 It is also important to acknowledge the recently published Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP), in the context of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and wider environmental/sustainability priorities. As the EIP provides the governments updated/revised plan to restore nature, improve environmental quality and security, build a circular economy, and make nature easier for everyone to access. It aligns statutory targets under the Environment Act 2021 and integrates environmental action with economic growth, health, and climate resilience.

4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The LNRS will contribute to the vision of the Council Plan (2024-2028) particularly in respect of building on our natural capital and supporting a good quality of life for all. The vision is underpinned by five ambitions and the LNRS will support place and environment by contributing to a clean, environmentally sustainable and attractive place to live, work and visit and by encouraging communities to work together to improve their local area. It will support economy by helping to reverse the decline in nature and in doing so, contribute to sustainable tourism. It will contribute to health and wellbeing by supporting people to have a good quality of life and enjoy active and healthy lifestyles.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 We have been required to follow the LNRS regulations and statutory guidance set out by Defra and so no alternative options have been considered.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An allocation of £388,000 was issued to North Yorkshire Council as the Responsible Authority, by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra); to lead the preparation of the LNRS for York and North Yorkshire in line with statutory guidance.
- 6.2 Costs incurred for the preparation of the LNRS are fully covered by the allocated S31 grant from Defra, accepted by NYC on 28 July 2023.
- 6.3 An allocation of £135,000 for FY'25-'26 has been issued to NYC as the Responsible Authority for the transition into delivery of the LNRS, once the strategy has been published. Defra envisages that the delivery role of the Responsible Authority will be made up of four key functions:
- Lead and convene a delivery partnership
 - Embed LNRS into local decision making
 - Identify strategic project and facilitate project development
 - Monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities

6.4 Along with other responsible authorities, North Yorkshire Council has contributed to the design of the transition to delivery phase for LNRS with Defra and awaits any potential forthcoming announcement on funding for coordination of LNRS delivery. As the funding for FY26/27 has yet to be announced, there is a risk that it is insufficient for the delivery role of the LNRS and in that case there is a risk that additional costs could fall to North Yorkshire Council.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Environment Act 2021 requires responsible authorities in England to prepare and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). North Yorkshire Council (NYC) was appointed by Defra in August 2023 as the Responsible Authority for the York and North Yorkshire LNRS

7.2 The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023, govern the preparation of LNRS and set out the procedure to be followed in the preparation and publication, and review and republication of the LNRS.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening was completed and no equalities issues were raised, see Appendix B.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Supporting nature is one of the three pillars of the NYC Climate Change Strategy 2023-2030 and within that theme there are seven priorities. The development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) seeks to support those priorities and is therefore expected to have a positive outcome for Climate Change and Nature. Assessment available at Appendix C.

10.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 North Yorkshire Council, as responsible authority, has followed all stages of the statutory requirements in the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and therefore authority to publish the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is recommended. This is subject to the consent to proceed to publication by the supporting authorities.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION

11.1 Executive approval to publish the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in line with statutory guidance.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Document 2 - Thriving Nature in North Yorkshire and York – Overview of the LNRS

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Climate Change Impact Assessment

Karl Battersby
Corporate Director – Environment
County Hall, Northallerton

Report Author – Tim Johns, Senior Policy Officer
Presenter of Report – Shaun Berry, Head of Environment & Sustainability