



|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Meeting:</b>      | Combined Executive Member Decision Session                        |
| <b>Meeting date:</b> | 03 March 2026   |
| <b>Report of:</b>    | Garry Taylor, Director of City Development                        |
| <b>Portfolio of:</b> | Cllr Kent, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency |

## **Decision Report: North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) - Adoption**

### **Subject of Report**

1. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a spatial strategy that seeks to map nature recovery actions and deliver the Governments England-wide nature targets. They are a statutory requirement as set out by the Environment Act 2021 as a new system of spatial strategies for nature throughout England.
2. North Yorkshire Council (NYC) was appointed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as the 'Responsible Authority' (RA) for York and North Yorkshire, and City of York Council (CYC) as a 'Supporting Authority'. Consequently NYC Executive approved the publication of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in line with statutory guidance on 20 January 2026
3. This reports seeks to endorse the LNRS as part of City of York Council's evidence base supporting decision-making and future plan-making.

### **Benefits and Challenges**

4. The LNRS is designed as a mechanism to drive more coordinated, practical and focussed action to help restore, join and halt nature decline. The strategy positively:
  - agrees priorities for nature's recovery,

- maps the most valuable existing areas for nature;
  - maps specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals;
  - Provides transparency and accountability in environmental decision-making providing a strategic understanding of our green infrastructure network;
  - Enhances and identify opportunities to support nature recovery and provides a clear set of priorities and spatial data that can be used to monitor progress;
  - Provides a shared spatial framework that enables cross-boundary collaboration between local authorities, statutory bodies, and landowners increasing ecological connectivity and resilience; and
  - supports the delivery of multiple policy objectives, including climate adaptation, flood mitigation, and public health strengthening the case for nature-based solutions in urban and rural settings.
5. Effective implementation of LNRS priorities will require ongoing coordination across internal departments and external partners. Ensuring alignment between planning, conservation, and climate teams may require additional governance structures or working groups. There is a risk that without sufficient resourcing, the strategy may not be fully embedded into decision-making or council-wide actions. While there is some initial funding provided for actioning Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), long-term delivery will depend on sustained capacity within planning and climate teams.
6. The success of the strategy depends on landowner engagement and voluntary uptake of nature recovery actions. Building trust and demonstrating benefits to landowners will be essential, and understanding the mechanisms government intends to use to support nature recovery with help achieve this. There is a real risk that interest may decline during the delivery phase if these mechanisms remain unclear. For example, government could integrate LNRS priorities into the assessment criteria for Environmental Land Management schemes. Demonstrating tangible benefits and securing central government support both financial and policy-based will be key to sustaining long-term engagement, particularly in areas where competing land uses exist.

## Policy Basis for Decision

### National Policy

7. The Environment Act 2021 is the statutory foundation for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Act establishes LNRSs as a key mechanism for reversing biodiversity decline and integrating nature recovery into spatial planning.
8. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to protect and enhance biodiversity, including through the identification of ecological networks. Current Government guidance is clear that LNRSs should be used by Local Authorities preparing Local Plans to inform the way those plans address the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement to protect and enhance biodiversity. Further guidance and updates to the NPPF are expected to set out how Local Planning Authorities comply with their duty to have regard to LNRSs through their planning functions
9. Natural Environment Guidance<sup>1</sup> provides that: *‘Local planning authorities should consider the priorities set out in the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy when determining how their local plan should contribute to and enhance the local and natural environment’*. It goes on to state: *‘Local Nature Recovery Strategy is an evidence base which contains information that may be a ‘material consideration’ in the planning system, especially where development plan documents for an area pre-date Local Nature Recovery Strategy publication. It is for the decision-maker to determine what is a relevant material consideration based on the individual circumstances of the case’*.
10. Defra are currently drafting guidance on the transition to delivery of LNRS (See Background section).

### Local & Regional Strategy

11. The implementation of LNRS and BNG aligns directly with the sustainability priority of the Council’s 10-Year Strategy, which commits York to becoming carbon neutral and contributing to the

---

1. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#local-nature-recovery-strategies>

regional ambition of being carbon negative. The strategy also supports the Council's vision of protecting iconic green spaces and enhancing the natural environment for future generations.

12. The LNRS complements the York Climate Change Strategy (2022–2032), particularly its focus on nature-based solutions, climate resilience, and ecosystem services. It provides a spatial framework for delivering these outcomes in partnership with landowners, developers, and community groups.
13. The LNRS also supports the delivery of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority ambitions to support opportunities for the green economy across the region and vibrant and sustainable places, including increasing woodland coverage, the number of hedgerows and peatland restoration.
14. The strategy underpins Policy GI1 'Green Infrastructure' of the adopted Local Plan (2025) and will also inform future reviews wherein nature recovery priorities will be embedded in land use planning and development management policies.

## **Financial Strategy Implications**

15. North Yorkshire Council was provided a grant of £380k to lead the preparation of the LNRS.
16. A further allocation of £135k for years 2025-26 has been issued to North Yorkshire Council (NYC) as the Responsible Authority (RA) for the transition into delivery of the LNRS, once the strategy has been published.
17. It is not currently known whether further funding will be provided in future years or what costs will be ultimately incurred. These will be considered when further details are known.

## **Recommendation and Reasons**

18. The Executive Member is asked to:
  - i. Note the decision by North Yorkshire Council to publish the LNRS;
  - ii. To accept the LNRS, as approved, as a statutory evidence base to inform planning decisions and plan-making.

Reason: To ensure compliance with the Environment Act 2021.

## Background

19. Relevant decisions made during the preparation of the LNRS are set out in the background documents section at the end of report.
20. Now that NYC have published the strategy, we are entering a delivery phase to implement the strategy. CYC are aware that Defra hosted a national workshop for all LNRS RAs on 10 February 2026, to help shape future delivery, and Defra have circulated draft future guidance with RAs. Updates will be shared with LNRS advisory Group & LNRS Board in March 2026. All are waiting for Defra announcements on transition to delivery funding.
21. In draft guidance Defra envisages that the delivery role of the RAs 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
22. What we know about these currently is:
23. Lead and convene a delivery partnership
  - Possibly the RA role will move from NYC to York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, as part of devolution developments.
  - The existing organisation and memberships of North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership might be utilised as part of a delivery governance role.
  - Set up a (or build on an existing) suitable delivery partnership; Provide direction to the partnership; Coordinate delivery among the partnership
24. Embed LNRS into local decision making
  - Use LNRS in plan making (Spatial Development Strategy, Local Plan, Minerals and Waste Plan or Neighbourhood Plan etc...)
  - Having regard for LNRS in your own organisation (biodiversity duty under Environment Act 2021)
  - Support other public bodies to have regard for LNRS
  - Support other external partners to use LNRS

25. Identify strategic projects and facilitate project development
  - Identify new potential projects using the LNRS
  - engage with potential project partners
  - Develop these new potential projects, along with relevant existing projects, to become ready to be delivered
  - Work with partners to ensure their project designs are shaped by the LNRS
  - Keep a record of planned projects
26. Monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities
  - Uncertain but it looks like RAs should collate nature recovery data that is not already monitored by Government schemes (eg not BNG).

## **Consultation Analysis**

27. CYC endorsed the Publication Draft of the LNRS, in line with Regulation 15 of the Environment (LNRS) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 in December 2025<sup>2</sup>. This stage included public consultation.
28. This stage is transitioning into delivery. Governance is yet to be agreed, but CYC will be a part of this, which can be reported in due course.

## **Options Analysis and Evidential Basis**

29. The following options have been considered:
  - Option (i) (recommended) - Agree to accept the LNRS as statutory evidence base supporting planning functions.
  - Option (ii) - Do nothing to formally agree the LNRS.
30. The requirement for the production and publication of an LNRS is a statutory duty aligned to the Regulations (set out above). Taking a decision to accept the LNRS following publication by NYC actively endorses the strategy and it's use to inform planning functions and environmental priorities for the council; Option (i) is therefore recommended.

---

<sup>2</sup>To support the publication of the final LNRS;  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7587>

31. Should CYC take no decision, the outcomes of the LNRS will still need to be used to inform planning decisions and plan-making aligned to the legislative requirements.

## **Organisational Impact and Implications**

32. **Financial** - An allocation of £135k for years 2025-26 has been issued to North Yorkshire Council (NYC) as the Responsible Authority (RA) for the transition into delivery of the LNRS, once the strategy has been published. There are no immediate financial considerations as result of endorsing the LNRS.
33. **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no HR implications.
34. **Legal** - The Environment Act 2021 is the statutory foundation for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Procedures for the consultation and publication of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is set out in the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 (the Regulations).
35. **Procurement** - Whilst there are no direct procurement implications relating to report itself, should any priorities require procurement, all works and/or services must be procured via a compliant, open, transparent, and fair process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Procurement Act 2023. Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.
36. **Health and Wellbeing** – No implications.
37. **Environment and Climate action** - The LNRS demonstrates alignment with objectives of the York Climate Change Strategy, particular the focus on nature-based solutions, climate resilience, and ecosystem services. It provides a spatial framework for delivering these outcomes in partnership with landowners, developers, and community groups.
38. **Affordability** – No implications.
39. **Equalities and Human Rights** – The implementation of specific projects, developments and interventions will need to consider

Equalities and Human Rights on a site-specific basis the noting of proposed statutory regime in this report has no impacts. North Yorkshire Council will have considered Equalities and Human Rights in the development of LNRS strategy.

40. **Data Protection and Privacy** - The completion of data protection impact assessment (DPIA) screening questions evidenced there would be no processing of personal data, special categories of personal data or criminal offence data processed, so there is no requirement to complete a DPIA.
41. **Communications** - Communications support will be required during LNRS publication.
42. **Economy** - LNRS will impact the economy at a high level by its association with land use and practices. The economic affects are unquantifiable for the purposes of this report, but are intended to be beneficial in the long term, as part of an overall sustainable economy.

## Risks and Mitigations

43. Risk: Insufficient Resources for Implementation - Delivery of LNRS priorities may be constrained by limited staff capacity, particularly in ecology, design, and conservation teams.

Mitigation:

- Utilise existing grant funding to support additional capacity, particularly for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) implementation.
- Explore further funding opportunities through Defra, LEP, and private sector partnerships.
- Prioritise actions based on available resources and strategic impact.

## Wards Impacted

44. All wards will be impacts as the LNRS covers the entire local authority.

## Contact details

45. For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

## Author

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Name:</b>            | Guy Hanson                                    |
| <b>Job Title:</b>       | Design and Conservation Manager               |
| <b>Service Area:</b>    | Design and Conservation, Development Services |
| <b>Telephone:</b>       |   |
| <b>Report approved:</b> | Yes   |
| <b>Date:</b>            | 19.02.2026                                    |

## Co-Author

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Name:</b>            | Alison Cooke                                |
| <b>Job Title:</b>       | Head of Strategic Policy Planning           |
| <b>Service Area:</b>    | Strategic Planning Policy, City Development |
| <b>Telephone:</b>       | 01904 551467                                |
| <b>Report approved:</b> | Yes   |
| <b>Date:</b>            | 19.02.2026                                  |

## Specialist officers:

- Andrew Mcilwraith, Ecology and Countryside Officer

## Background papers:

- 12/10/2023 Executive [Biodiversity Net Gain \(including information on Local Nature Recovery Strategy\)ref: 6954](#)
- 20/05/2025 EMDS: [North Yorkshire & York, Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) consultation draftref: 7425](#)
- 12/06/2025 [To provide written consent to public consultation on the draft North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\)](#)
- 04/11/2025 Executive: [North Yorkshire an York Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) – Publication Draft](#) (item 168)
- 0512/2025 Officer Decision: [To support the publication of the final LNRS](#)
- North Yorkshire Council Decision to Publish the LNRS (Item 834): [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday, 20 January 2026, 11.00 am | North Yorkshire Council](#)

***LNRS core documents published on NYC webpage<sup>3</sup>:***

- [Document 1: a non-technical summary of the strategy for residents and those from a non-technical background \(pdf / 3 MB\)](#)
- [Document 2: a detailed overview of the strategy, for politicians, land managers, town planners and wider stakeholders \(pdf / 9 MB\)](#)
- [Document 3: Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, Part 1 – Description of our Strategy Area, for technical stakeholders and those involved in project delivery \(pdf / 2 MB\)](#)
- [Document 4: Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, Part 2 – Priorities and Measures, for technical stakeholders and those involved in project delivery \(pdf / 1003 KB\)](#)

See also NYC webpage for LNRS Local Habitat Map, LNRS Appendices and Guidance Notes.

**Annexes:**

- Annex A - LNRS Document 2 (February 2026): a detailed overview of the strategy, for politicians, land managers, town planners and wider stakeholders

**Abbreviations:**

BNG – Biodiversity Net Gain

CYC – City of York Council

Defra – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

LNRS – Local Nature Recover Strategy

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

NYC – North Yorkshire Council

RA – Responsible Authority

SA – Supporting Authority

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy-documents>