

**Report to the Cabinet**

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 6 April 2023

**Report of the Director of Environment and Planning**

**Part I**

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Protecting our environment;

**Lancashire Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Contact for further information:

Nik Bruce, Tel: (01772) 537695, Principal Nature Recovery Officer,  
nik.bruce@lancashire.gov.uk

**Brief Summary**

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new England-wide system of spatial strategies introduced by the Environment Act 2021. They will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. The Environment Act requires the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to formally appoint a Responsible Authority to lead the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for an area.

Like many county areas in England, Lancashire has been designated as an area for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The county council has therefore been asked to take on the role of the Responsible Authority.

**Recommendation**

Cabinet is asked to approve:

- (i) That the county council acts as the Responsible Authority for the Lancashire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- (ii) The outline process for the development of a collaborative strategy.



## Detail

The 2021 Environment Act requires the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to formally appoint a Responsible Authority to lead the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for an area.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new, England-wide system of collaborative spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has identified the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy area to cover the top-tier authority areas of Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, and Blackpool Council.

Following consultation and agreement with Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen councils, Lancashire County Council has provisionally been appointed as the Responsible Authority for the Lancashire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The provisional arrangements now require formalising, and this will be done through a letter from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asking the county council to confirm its acceptance of Responsible Authority status. Ministers have said they wish to commence Local Nature Recovery Strategy preparations from April 2023.

The proposal for the county council to be the Responsible Authority is in line with the Full Council resolution in December 2022 to prepare a comprehensive strategy for nature recovery for Lancashire.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be key to prioritising and targeting the local delivery of nature recovery through mechanisms such as Biodiversity Net Gain in planning and agri-environment grants. The county council's work to strengthen the Biological Heritage Site system will form a core element of the Strategy. The Local Nature Recovery Strategies regulations and statutory guidance sets out how responsible authorities must prepare, publish, review, and republish their strategy. The strategy development process will require:

- the collation and analysis of existing national and local digital datasets;
- engagement with a wide range of stakeholders to identify priorities and opportunities for the co-delivery of social, economic and climate priorities through nature-based solutions;
- spatially mapping networks and priority delivery areas;
- the preparation, consultation, and approval of the final strategy document and associated spatial mapping.

It is envisaged that the management of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy programme will be overseen by a group comprising top-tier Lancashire authorities and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs agencies, including Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.

The work will be delivered by a core project team informed by a series of task and finish groups with membership drawn from the top-tier authorities supported by wider public, private, and voluntary sector stakeholders, as appropriate.



An allocation of funding has been provided to provisional Responsible Authorities to enable preparatory work to get underway. In Lancashire, this is being used to recruit a project officer to start work on developing the strategy. Any further resources required will be funded from additional burdens grants that have been promised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Responsible Authority status does not convey any additional burdens on the county council to deliver priority actions identified within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and much of the delivery is expected to be via partnership activity.

### **Consultations**

Discussions have been held with relevant stakeholders: the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England, Blackpool Council, and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. Additionally, partner organisations have been involved in discussions through the Local Nature Partnerships that cover Lancashire.

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

The preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is a new statutory duty set out in the Environment Act 2021. Acting as the Responsible Authority will ensure this new duty is met. It will also help to deliver the objectives set out in the county council's Environment and Climate Strategy and deliver against the corporate priority to 'Protect Our Environment'.

### **Financial**

Funding of £48,000 has been received to date via a Section 31 grant to cover initial preparatory work. Responsible Authorities will be allocated further funding by government to resource the new duty of preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Any requirements for county council funding to support delivery of the actions identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be separately brought forward for approval.

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		

