

Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot - May 2021



In August 2020 the government announced that Cumbria would be 1 of 5 Pilot areas trialling the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)¹. Cumbria County Council led the work as the Responsible Authority, working with a wide range of partnerships, organisations and individuals that have an interest in or influence on nature recovery.

The Draft Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was submitted to Defra in May 2021 when the Pilot schemes came to an end. The Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and Local Habitat Map now available to view are the outputs of the Cumbria LNRS Pilot and not formal adopted documents.. The learning from all 5 Pilots will be used to inform the final legislation and guidance that will be issued when the Environment Bill gets Royal Assent (currently anticipated to be Autumn 2021) and the production of a LNRS will then become a statutory requirement for all local authorities in England. The final Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cumbria will therefore not be completed or adopted until after this official roll-out commences, which is anticipated to be from April 2022. There will be further opportunities for consultation and engagement as work on developing the LNRS for Cumbria progresses.

The draft Cumbria LNRS submission, along with other background information on the Pilot scheme, can be found on the county council website here – <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/lnrs/default.asp>

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide to reading the draft Cumbria LNRS, signposting what each section of the LNRS covers, how it was produced and what supporting information can be found in the appendices.

1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides some background to the LNRS Pilots - the legislation and principles behind them, in particular the Environment Bill 2020; the purpose and remit of the LNRS; the 5 steps that were followed to produce the LNRS products, as well as some information on how the Pilot Area Team was set up and how other stakeholders were engaged in the process.

The purpose of the LNRS is to enable nature recovery through the creation and restoration of habitats brought about by changes in land management. It is not a project plan of individual schemes but an agreed set of priorities for habitat management and creation across the county, with details of the actions needed to bring about these changes.

There were clear steps set out for the Pilots to follow in producing the LNRS as outlined in the table below. This will produce the two key elements - a Local Habitat Map and a Written Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.

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| Step 1 – locally held data is added to the map, including locally identified wildlife sites |
| Step 2 – description of LNRS area, including its key habitats; assess sub-areas and potential opportunities to create or improve them. |
| Step 3 – Identification of outcomes and establish priority outcomes |
| Step 4 – potential measures to achieve priority and other outcomes |
| Step 5 – mapping suitable locations for delivery of potential measures |

¹ 5 Pilot schemes were launched in August 2020: Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Northumberland

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE LNRS AREA

The LNRS covers the entire county of Cumbria. This section describes the different habitat types and their locations across the county, based upon the habitat statements prepared as part of the existing Cumbria Biodiversity Evidence Base².

The baseline Local Habitat Map which forms part of the Cumbria LNRS also shows the distribution of these habitats across the county. The Local Habitat Map was produced by the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC). More information on the mapping process can be found in Section 6 of the LNRS, including a link to access the interactive mapping.

3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECOVERING OR ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

This section of the LNRS considers what opportunities there are for further recovery and enhancement of biodiversity across the county.

Appendix 1 includes a number of case studies to illustrate what is already being achieved in the county.

We have presented the information for each sub-area in the form of a template setting out the key characteristics based on the National Character Area (NCA) profiles as defined by Natural England³, then incorporating additional local information for that area, including local development plans and other spatial strategies as well as discussion with partners to identify any known changes to the extent and condition of the habitats.

Finally, for each NCA we have considered what are the 'key drivers for change' - this can include both opportunities for and constraints or pressures on nature recovery within that area; consideration of some of the wider environmental benefits that habitat creation or restoration could achieve; and some broad objectives for nature recovery within that area.

Key themes identified as pressures and drivers for change are set out in this section. The detailed NCA templates are included in **Appendix 2**.

4. PRIORITIES FOR RECOVERING OR ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

In this section we set out our overall vision for nature recovery – what we want the LNRS to achieve for Cumbria.

“Cumbria's wildlife in rural, urban and coastal places will be actively looked after and treasured. Healthy ecosystems on land and sea will support a sustainable local economy valued for its natural assets and contribute to the wellbeing of residents and visitors.”

² <https://www.cbdc.org.uk/data-services/cumbria-biodiversity-evidence-base/habitat-statements/>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

Using the information from the NCA templates and the initial suggestions made by stakeholders attending our first on-line event in November 2020, we developed a list of 76 nature recovery outcomes for Cumbria. This led to drafting a series of tables setting out fairly high-level outcomes, detailed measures for delivery and also consideration of their wider benefits (i.e. what other services they contribute to).

These tables were shared with stakeholders at our second on-line event in February 2021, with an additional feedback period provided for people to make further comment on the type of nature recovery outcomes they wanted to see; suggestions of what measures - or actions on the ground- would help achieve them, and any suggested locations (general or specific) where these measures should be.

Within this section is a summary table which sets out all of the outcomes and indicates the range of wider environmental and other benefits they can also deliver. The detailed measures associated with the outcomes for each habitat type can be found in **Appendix 3**.

Appendix 4 sets out the Cumbria LNRS approach to developing nature recovery outcomes for species. The output of this work will be an agreed list of Priority Cumbria Species, a list of species linked to LNRS Measures (both in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and the associated Local Habitat Map) and a list of species requiring more proactive or bespoke management.

We also attempted to prioritise the nature recovery outcomes. Section 4 explains the different mechanisms used to help us prioritise (including stakeholder engagement, on-line surveys and discussion with farmer and land manager groups, as well as considering some of Defra's national policy objectives and whether outcomes also contribute to ecosystem services). **Appendix 5** contains a summary of the on-line survey responses. **Appendix 6** shows the simple matrix developed to help identify which of the outcomes could be considered strategically important for Cumbria.

5. PROPOSALS FOR POTENTIAL MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THESE PRIORITIES

This section expands more on the potential measures – or actions on the ground – that will deliver the nature recovery

outcomes developed in the LNRS. Many reflect the work already being done across the county by a range of individual land managers, partnerships and organisations. Others will require a change to current practices and may be dependent on funding streams such as future farming schemes or biodiversity offsetting to achieve them.

The detailed measures were shared with stakeholders at a 3rd on-line engagement event in April 2021. This was the first opportunity for stakeholders to see the full first draft LNRS products. The key question asked of stakeholders at the event was “**Are there any measures to add, take away or change?**” An additional feedback period was provided for people to comment on the draft Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.

This section explains how stakeholder feedback on the draft LNRS documents has been taken into account. A report of the April engagement event can be found in **Appendix 7**. A summary of the changes and additions suggested is provided in **Appendix 8**.

The majority of measures can be mapped directly on the Local Habitat Map accompanying the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. Some measures cannot be mapped, either because they are very broad brush and apply to the whole county, or because they are not directly related to land management but are nevertheless important ways to help nature recovery within Cumbria. This section includes some text boxes with examples of the kind of actions or measures that are considered important but are not identified on the LNRS Local Habitat Map.

6. THE LOCAL HABITAT MAP

The Local Habitat Map for the Cumbria LNRS comprises a baseline habitat map and a series of habitat network maps for each habitat type to show suitable locations for the various measures included in the strategy.

This section explains the process that was followed for producing the mapping, work that was carried out by Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) also incorporating on-going habitat data audit work that was being undertaken as part of the Cumbria nature recovery network process. **Appendix 9** contains a number of maps for illustrative purposes including: the Local Habitat Baseline Map; additional habitat baseline maps showing water-based habitats; habitat network maps for Hay Meadows and Reedbeds (showing where habitat restoration and creation measures associated with these habitat types could ideally be focussed); habitat network map showing interrelationship of Green Infrastructure mapped in Copeland district with the local woodland habitat for Cumbria; habitat measure mapping for fish barriers (as an example of how to map measures by location point).

For the purposes of this Pilot the full range of habitat baseline layers and network maps can be viewed on-line as an interactive map using the following link - https://www.cbdc.org.uk/about-us/projects/clnrrn_story_map/

The interactive mapping has been demonstrated through six workshop sessions with different user groups – farm advisors, farmer facilitation groups, conservation organisations, local authorities, Natural England and parish council representatives. Feedback from these sessions will be used to make improvements to the mapping product so that it can be a useful tool for a variety of users according to their specific needs.

7. TAKING THE STRATEGY FORWARD

This final section explains that the LNRS submitted to Defra for the Pilot should still be considered as a Draft product. It identifies further work that could be done to improve it, in particular refining the detail of the proposed measures by speaking with relevant stakeholders to

understand how they can realistically be achieved and to find consensus on the correct approach.

There is a real commitment and enthusiasm amongst the partners and stakeholders involved in this Pilot process so far to keep working together on a nature recovery strategy for Cumbria. It is envisaged that work will continue over the next 12 months on developing the Local Habitat Map and speaking with a wider group of stakeholders so that we can include everyone interested in contributing to the LNRS. We should then be in a good place to produce a final LNRS for Cumbria when it becomes a statutory requirement under the Environment Act in April 2022.

This section also considers how the outcomes in the LNRS can be delivered and notes some of the current funding streams and work programmes that could help to achieve this. Having a Delivery Plan to sit alongside the LNRS will be an important part of the work required to implement, monitor and review the final strategy once adopted.

