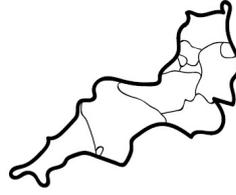


Principles of Nature Recovery Networks across the South West



South West Local Nature Partnerships

We are the South West Local Nature Partnerships: a contiguous link of Local Nature Partnerships working across the South West to secure a healthy natural environment that in turn supports a healthy society and prosperous economy.

This sets out the key principles that we will work to as we develop and evolve Nature Recovery Networks across the South West.

Government's 25 Year Environment Plan¹ published in January 2018 includes a commitment to “develop a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife, and provide opportunities to re-introduce species that we have lost from our countryside”. We strongly welcome this vision, and will work positively with our local, regional and national partners to integrate and locally deliver this vision, for the long term.

Why do we need a Nature Recovery Network?

A healthy natural environment is at the heart of a healthy society and economy. It is our very life support system – providing us with clean water and air, a regulated climate, fuel and food. It also provides us with beautiful places for respite and recreation, and enables all kinds of enterprise to thrive – both those directly connected to the land, including tourism, agriculture and forestry, but also high-tech and service industries which rely on our natural assets through their global supply chains and for the wellbeing of their employees.

Decades of development pressure, extraction, intensive agriculture and industrial production have contributed to a serious global decline in the healthy functioning of our natural environment, exacerbated by a changing climate.

Between 1970 and 2013, 56% of species declined in the UK, according to the most recent State of Nature report².

Safeguarding pockets of our remaining natural habitat is not enough. To reverse the declines in biodiversity and realise nature's recovery at scale, we need to work together and on the landscape-scale to embed the Lawton principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined Up³ in our local, regional and national policies and strategies. This means protecting and enhancing our existing natural habitats, but also making them bigger, restoring and creating new areas of species-rich habitat, and, critically, ensuring they join up to create functional and resilient ecological networks that enable nature and people to thrive.

Why now?

With the UK set to imminently exit the EU, now is a critical moment to ensure legislation to protect and enhance the natural environment is sufficiently strong and ambitious to enable us to deliver the step-change we need for the natural environment.

We see the Nature Recovery Network as a critical spatial plan that should have legal underpinning and be a key component of both the Agriculture Bill 2017-19 currently going through Parliament, and the Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill 2018.

We see the Nature Recovery Network as a joined-up network of marine and terrestrial habitats where nature and people can thrive. More than a map, it is an active, adaptive spatial plan that identifies the best opportunities to deliver nature's recovery.

As we develop Nature Recovery Networks across the South West, we will work to the following principles. **Our local Nature Recovery Networks will:**

1 Be mapped locally and in partnership — but respond to emerging national frameworks

We agree with the Greener UK⁴ coalition and The Landscape Partnership⁵ that there is a need for a national framework for mapping nature's recovery to ensure some consistency across the country and allow benchmarking and monitoring to take place. We also agree that Nature Recovery Networks should be developed by local partnerships using local data and expertise. While acknowledging this national discussion, **we will not wait for a national framework but rather develop local Nature Recovery Networks now and evolve these as a national framework becomes clearer. We will share learnings from the South West with those developing a national framework.**

2 Be based on the best available evidence

In 2004, the South West Nature Map⁶ was launched. This identified our Strategic Nature Areas – priority areas for maintaining and expanding habitats across the South West. This map has been of vital importance in influencing strategic planning and catalysing landscape-scale partnerships. Since 2004, more detailed mapping has taken place across the South West at various scales, including ecological network and ecosystem services mapping by Local Nature Partnerships and Catchment Partnerships, which has influenced Green Infrastructure strategies. Nature Recovery Networks should build on this existing mapping.

We will use the best available evidence (from surveys, remote sensing, modelling and local knowledge) to evolve our Nature Recovery Networks. Evidence should include natural capital assets (including habitats, species, soils, geology and water) as well as information on the ecosystem services which these assets provide. Opportunity areas will be identified from such evidence. **We will acknowledge any evidence gaps, work to address these and update our Network maps as better evidence emerges.**

3 Reflect that nature does not recognise boundaries

We may use slightly different methodologies to map Nature Recovery Networks across the South West. This reflects the nuances of locally available data, local priorities and resources. However, we recognise that nature does not recognise boundaries, and as such **we will collaborate to ensure our Nature Recovery Networks are coherent across political borders.** This will mean sharing our maps, approach and learnings with our neighbours.

4 Reflect that nature's life support systems are foundational

Nature Recovery Networks should principally plan for the restoration of healthy ecosystems as foundational life support systems. These include biodiversity, climate regulation, water and soil health upon which we all depend. As such their design should be driven by ecological need rather than economic opportunity, although **we will acknowledge the services nature provides to ensure the value of nature is appreciated and unlocks opportunities for positive ecological interventions.**

5

Start from all our existing terrestrial and marine habitats

Nature Recovery Networks should not only link protected sites (including locally designated sites), but must include all our remaining natural habitats. They should also include both terrestrial and marine habitat data.

6

Be designed to thrive and not just survive

Nature Recovery Networks should be planned to be extensive enough to support thriving and resilient populations of all our native wildlife. More than simply linking core habitats, they should aspire to support viable populations.

7

Promote resilience and adaptability to a changing climate

We will develop Nature Recovery Networks that enable nature and people to thrive in a changing climate. This means creating the right space for native species to adapt, while acknowledging that climate change will bring new species. In planning our Nature Recovery Networks, **we will consider how the natural environment contributes to climate change resilience and adaptation.** The Networks will drive a more connected, landscape-scale approach to identifying and implementing natural climate solutions.

8

Acknowledge that nature works at all scales and everywhere

Nature operates at different scales: from bluebells that creep over the centuries, to bees that forage within a couple of miles and birds that cross continents. To help make best sense as to how to support nature's recovery at the scales different people can influence, it is appropriate that maps might be developed for different scales. **We will work positively with broader stakeholders to share our maps and approach, to best ensure mapping at different scales are complementary.**

Equally, nature works everywhere. For the sake of prioritisation and to help us understand our key ecological networks, maps might highlight corridors, stepping stones, core areas and restoration areas. However, **all spaces can contribute positively to nature's recovery, an important message that we will communicate.**

9

Reflect that nature's recovery is relevant to everyone

We need everyone to play their part in nature's recovery. To support this, Nature Recovery Networks should be accessible and relevant to a wide range of stakeholder groups including farmers, local planning authorities, government agencies, businesses, NGOs, community interest groups and the general public. **We will make local Nature Recovery Network maps and plans accessible and relevant to these different stakeholder groups, to encourage broad contribution to nature's recovery.**

10

Influence decision making and ensure long term investment for nature's recovery

Delivery of Nature Recovery Networks will require strong, long term support and investment from a wide range of stakeholders, including political leaders.

To secure this support, **we will involve key partners (including strategic partners such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and Health & Wellbeing Boards) in the development and delivery of Nature Recovery Networks. We will work positively with stakeholders to integrate principles and spatial priorities identified from our Nature Recovery Network into plans and policies that secure nature's recovery for the long term.** For example, through planning policy and net gain, agri-environment schemes, natural flood management schemes, community projects and natural capital investment plans.

Our role

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) originated in a vision set out in Government's 2011 Natural Environment White Paper, which identified the need to take greater account of the value of the natural environment when strategic decisions are made that affect people and the local economy. LNPs are well placed to strategically map and drive forward the integration and delivery of Nature Recovery Networks due to their cross-sector representation of influential local organisations. LNPs are identified in Government's 25 Year Environment Plan as key to its local delivery. We will work positively with partners towards delivering the 25 Year Environment Plan's aspirations locally, including the Nature Recovery Network.

But, to deliver the step change we need for nature's recovery and for the long term, dedicated governance and funding streams are needed nationally, regionally and locally to develop and maintain green infrastructure and habitat restoration towards nature's recovery.

Why we must act now

- **To target the new Environment Land Management schemes** spatially for the best return on investment (for wildlife, water quality and flood risk management)
- **To provide certainty to commercial investors** who need a long term statutory map to be confident that their investment (including in biodiversity net gain) will aid nature's recovery
- **To ensure a statutory duty** to produce maps that will be relevant across the whole of Government — cross cutting Environment Bills are rare and one is imminent

Nature Recovery Network mapping must be a statutory requirement

- **To be credible, stable and consistent** to guide long term private sector investment and maximise value for money from state investment
- **To ensure high quality** and consistent standards across the country
- **To ensure all parts of Government** and related public bodies contribute positively to the development and maintenance of local Nature Recovery Networks

¹ [gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan)

² [rspb.org.uk/our-work/stateofnature2016](https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/stateofnature2016)

³ A Government-commissioned report in 2010 on the state of the nation's natural environment by Professor Lawton made the case for the principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined Up

⁴ Greener UK is a coalition of environmental NGOs calling for improved environmental protections post EU-exit. See [greeneruk.org](https://www.greeneruk.org)

⁵ The Landscape Partnership brings together the four largest landowning environmental charities in the UK (RSPB, the National Trust, Woodland Trust and The Wildlife Trusts).

⁶ [biodiversitysouthwest.org.uk/nmap.html](https://www.biodiversitysouthwest.org.uk/nmap.html)

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