

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 3 September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Report summary:

That Cabinet receives a summary of the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) including a separate link to the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy website & mapping and consider recommendations for sign off for public consultation.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

1. That Cabinet agrees as the Supporting Authority that the draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy be made available for public consultation;
2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Nature and Climate to make or approve amendments to the consultation materials prior to public consultation.
3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Nature and Climate to approve the final version of the Devon Local Nature Strategy following the public consultation.

Reason for recommendation:

The draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) addresses requirements set out in the Environment Act 2021. The LNRS has been drafted by Devon County Council as Responsible Authority in collaboration with a wide range of partners including East Devon DC. East Devon DC is a Supporting Authority in this process and officers have been involved. The Strategy needs to be finalised by December in order for Devon to get further funding. Devon CC officers who have been leading the development of the LNRS supported by relevant East Devon DC officers now consider that it is ready to go out for public consultation for wider discussion. There are considered to be no risks associated with this consultation.

Officer: Sarah Jennings, DCC Ecologist: Sarah.Jennings@devon.gov.uk; Will Dommett, District Ecologist, Will.Dommett@eastdevon.gov.uk; James Chubb, Countryside Manager, James.Chubb@eastdevon.gov.uk; Charlie Plowden, Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology, Charlie.Plowden@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement

- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☒ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☒ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; The failure to agree as a Supporting Authority to the public consultation will delay the final production of the Strategy for all local authorities in Devon.

Links to background information Environment Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)
The Environment Regulations 2023 (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) (legislation.gov.uk)

[Defra LNRS Supporting Authority Factsheet](#)

Update to the Natural Environment section of [planning practice guidance](#) on 19/02/25

[Devon LNRS additional information](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
- ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

Report in full

1. The Role of the Strategy

- 1.1 England is considered to be one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world following historic losses and ongoing declines. The Government has made legally binding commitments to end these declines and for nature to recover. Part of this commitment includes a statutory requirement through Sections 104 to 106 of the Environment Act 2021 for the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for identified areas across the Country. Devon is one of 48 such areas.
- 1.2 All public authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must have 'regard' to relevant local nature recovery strategies in this process. The LNRSs are new spatial strategies that will inform nature recovery at a strategic local level, by mapping habitats, features and key species to identify opportunities and priorities to boost ecological connectivity, diversity and abundance. They will support the delivery of biodiversity net gain and provide a focus for the strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Online resources aim to help everyone to play a role in nature recovery.
- 1.3 Devon County Council (DCC) was appointed as the Responsible Authority for Devon LNRS under section 105 of the Environment Act 2021. Responsible Authorities are responsible for preparing, publishing, reviewing and republishing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy following the process set out in The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023.

- 1.4 LNRSs must be produced in collaboration with Supporting Authorities and all other relevant stakeholders. A Supporting Authorities Officer Group was set up and has met regularly throughout the preparation of the LNRS. East Devon District Council is a Supporting Authority for the LNRS, along with other local authorities and Natural England.
- 1.5 Co-benefits to nature recovery include:
- Climate Change adaptation and mitigation.
 - Water quality.
 - Natural Capital and ecosystem services.
 - Wellbeing.
- 1.6 The draft LNRS comprises a website and interactive mapping. These formats will enable the material and GIS-linked data to be accessible and useful to a wide range of audiences.

2.0 Progress with the Strategy and preparation for public consultation

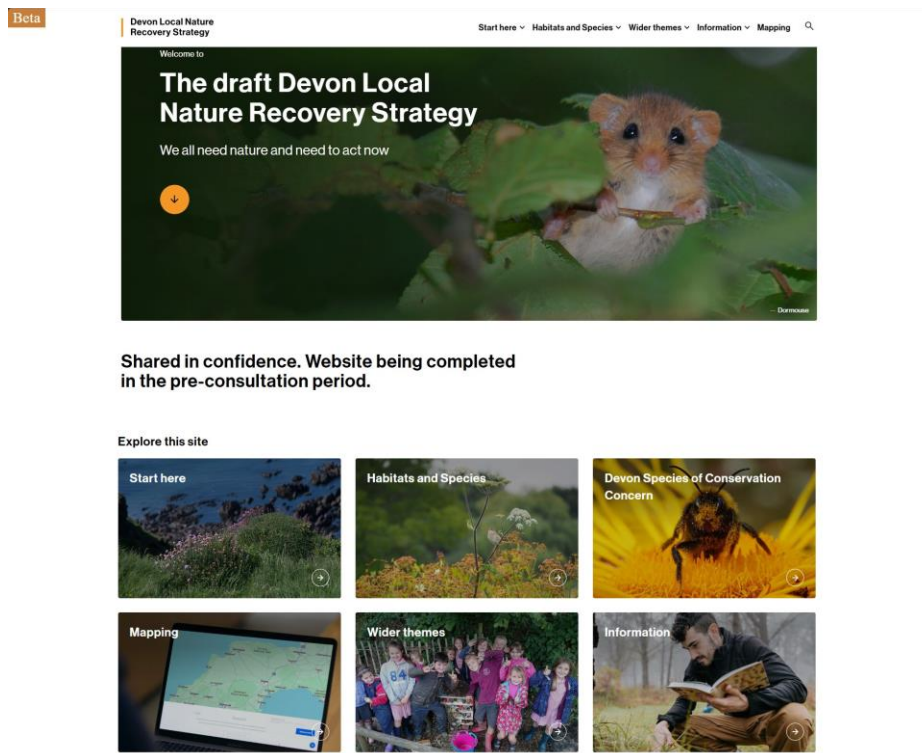
- 2.1 Devon CC's Ecology Team has led the development of the LNRS under the umbrella of the Devon Local Nature Partnership. Funding has been used to engage a team of wildlife experts to pull together the information required for the LNRS and to liaise with relevant partners. Devon CC has also engaged a web designer, copy writer and other consultants to work on mapping, water quality, natural flood management etc.
- 2.2 The Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology, District Ecologist, and the Countryside Manager have worked with the Devon CC LNRS team to develop the draft LNRS. The draft pre-consultation LNRS material is confidential and not for the public realm until signed off by all Supporting Authorities for public consultation. Devon CC have advised that it is confidential because all Supporting Authorities (District Councils) need to sign it off for public consultation and so until all Supporting Authorities have done that it should not go into the public domain. This is because another Supporting Authority may request that something sensitive is changed within the LNRS.

3.0 Background details

- 3.1 LNRSs are statutory strategies and must include:
- A **description** of the county's wildlife, including opportunities and pressures.
 - **Priorities** for habitats and species (to prevent extinctions and increase abundance, following the Lawton principles of Better, Bigger, More, Joined up).
 - **Actions** needed to achieve the priorities.
 - Actions for nature restoration that **will help to meet other priorities** such as carbon sequestration, flood control, better water quality, health and wellbeing.
 - **Maps** showing (a) designated sites and irreplaceable habitats; (b) places where we most need to focus action.
- 3.2 They must be user friendly. They must be produced in collaboration.
- 3.3 They set out **opportunities** and will influence funding (Environmental Land Management schemes, BNG, HLF, etc.). They are not about new designations or restrictions. However, Local Planning Authorities must have regard for them.
- 3.4 They are part of a 'nested suite' of nature strategies at a range of scales. The LNRS sets out priorities at the county level and what we need to do to help meet relevant national

targets. In turn it informs nature strategies at the sub county level which will also have their own local priorities (Protected Landscapes, local authorities, community groups etc.).

- 3.5 Statutory 'Supporting Authorities' must be involved (Local Authorities and Natural England) and be given a 28-day formal consultation period prior to public consultation and post public consultation.
- 3.6 They are funded by DEFRA and each has a Natural England lead officer.
- 3.7 They should be finalised in 2025.
- 3.8 More details can be found in the Environment Act 2021 and Defra LNRS guidance documents, see links above.
- 3.9 For information shown below are screenshots of the draft LNRS which help to show what the format and content will look like and how it can be used.




The home page of the Devon LNRS

It has tiles to explore and navigate to the rest of the website.

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍



Start here

This page is being edited and restructured by our copywriter. We will have a menu on the rhs to move between sections.

We need Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

TO DRAFT – We need this new plan because nature is under huge pressure. xxxxx couple of reality check sentences about the state of nature and then be positive – huge ops –

Ref land use framework? Lots of demands on Devon's land – food, energy, timber, housing, shops, business and industrial sites, transport infrastructure, recreation areas, quarries etc – wildlife needs to be integrated within these land uses and in some cases (rare habitats) needs to be prioritised over other needs – give example – restoring wildlife and providing for all our other needs is possible and we need to get better at it....

ref national targets – 30x30 / nature recovery network / climate / connecting people and nature

– as a society we need to be better-organised and more focused if we want to give nature the space it needs and a chance to recover.

They are for everyone to use

Everyone can do something for wildlife, either directly (farmers, gardeners, developers and planners, parks and green space managers/contractors, volunteers) or indirectly (funders, educators, policy makers, voters).

A few examples are listed under 'How to use the Devon LNRS below

The Start here tab provides background of what the LNRS is, who it's for and how to use it, including a few examples of different sectors.





Did you know

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍

IMPORTANT: The LNRS mapping is for guidance only and, given the size of Devon, has not been checked at field level. Land management decisions must be based on knowledge of soils, habitat and species surveys, and knowledge of past management.

A few examples of how some different sectors can use the Devon LNRS are given below:

	Farming	+
	Forestry and arboriculture	+
	Greenspace management (tourism, landscaping, parks, gardening)	+
	Communities	+

Example habitat page, showing habitat snapshot, and lower down the page, the priority and actions for the habitat. Please note the side menu which allows easily navigate the page: 1. About 2. What we need to do and where 3. Inspiration and 4. Find out more.

What we need to do and where includes the priorities and actions and links to the mapping viewer and explanation of relevant mapping layers.

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍


Home ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Habitats ▾ Ancient and veteran trees

Ancient and veteran trees

The dead and decaying wood in and from these trees is one of the most wildlife-rich and important habitats in Devon.

Other important microhabitats include small rot holes, loose bark and sap runs.

What we need to do and where →



Arington Court, Chery/Dartmoor

Snapshot for ancient and veteran trees

What wildlife-rich looks like: Dead branches, decaying wood, holes, cavities, splits, sap runs and loose bark. Ancient trees with wide and hollow trunks. Features support a wealth of wildlife, particularly moths, beetles, flies, fungi, lichens, nesting birds and roosting bats. A range of flowering plants, trees and shrubs are close by and provide nectar and pollen for the moths, beetles and flies.	Focus Species: Birds: Lesser spotted woodpeckers, pied flycatchers, spotted flycatchers. Insects: Dartmoor ancient oak wood moths (especially beautiful bark moth and silver-streaked beauty), blue ground beetle, six-spotted longhorn beetle, apple loabog, veteran tree flies (<i>Mesita britannica</i> and <i>Rhyssalus clonophorus</i>). Lichens and fungi: Veteran tree lichens (<i>fungi</i> to be added).	UK significance: UK priority habitat: Yes Statutory irreplaceable habitats: Ancient and veteran trees
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Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍

🔍 Lush and historic value

2. What we need to do and where

Priority

Better (healthy and wildlife-rich) and more ancient and veteran trees, with existing veteran trees forming the core of a future veteran tree network that's growing across Devon.

See **Find out more** below for detailed guidance and sources of funding and advice.

Actions for ancient and veteran trees

Follow best practice guidance to maximise the wildlife value of ancient and veteran trees in woodlands and open habitats, including their microhabitats

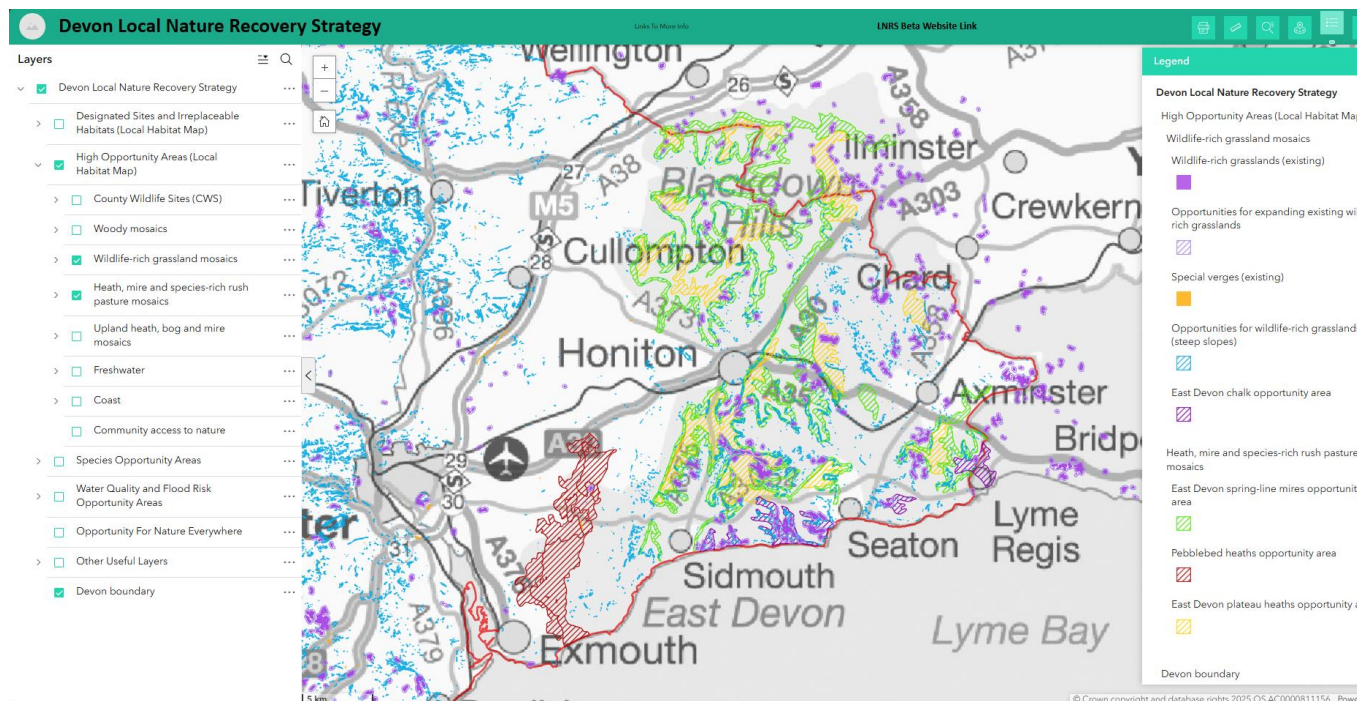
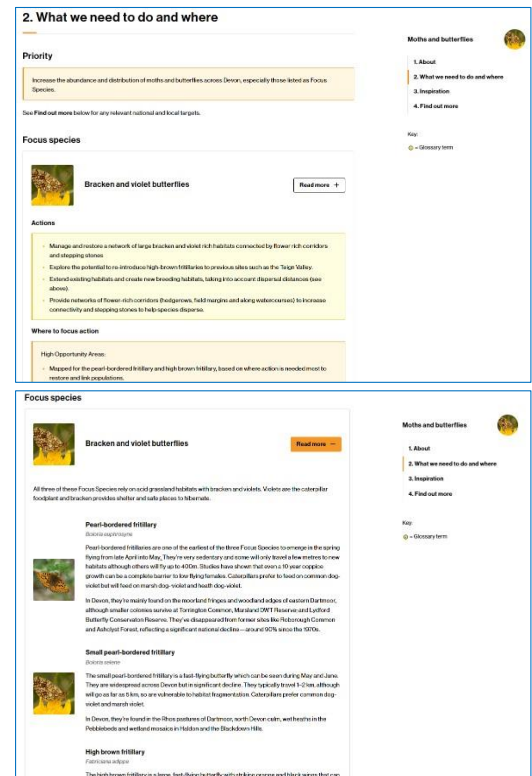
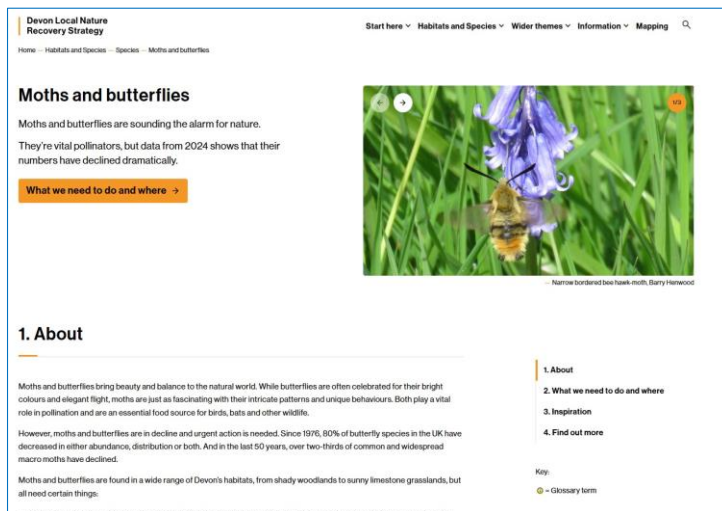
- Leave standing and fallen deadwood, collapsed trees and branches (even small ones), other than where there's a clear safety issue and no alternatives. Pile up deadwood and fallen branches rather than chipping or burning them.
- Protect the root zone through sensitive management (consider impacts from vehicles, ploughing and stocking rates) and during infrastructure projects. Consider brush piling (especially fallen deadwood) and bramble zones to prevent compaction and increase habitat.
- Carry out works at times that are least likely to affect wildlife. For example, take care during breeding and hibernation seasons.
- Avoid carrying out works in woodlands that will cause sudden changes in light levels or humidity as these can reduce the wildlife value of veteran trees, including by affecting bat roosts.
- Carry out sensitive thinning of woodlands around existing veteran trees to give them more space and exposure to light.

Ancient and veteran trees

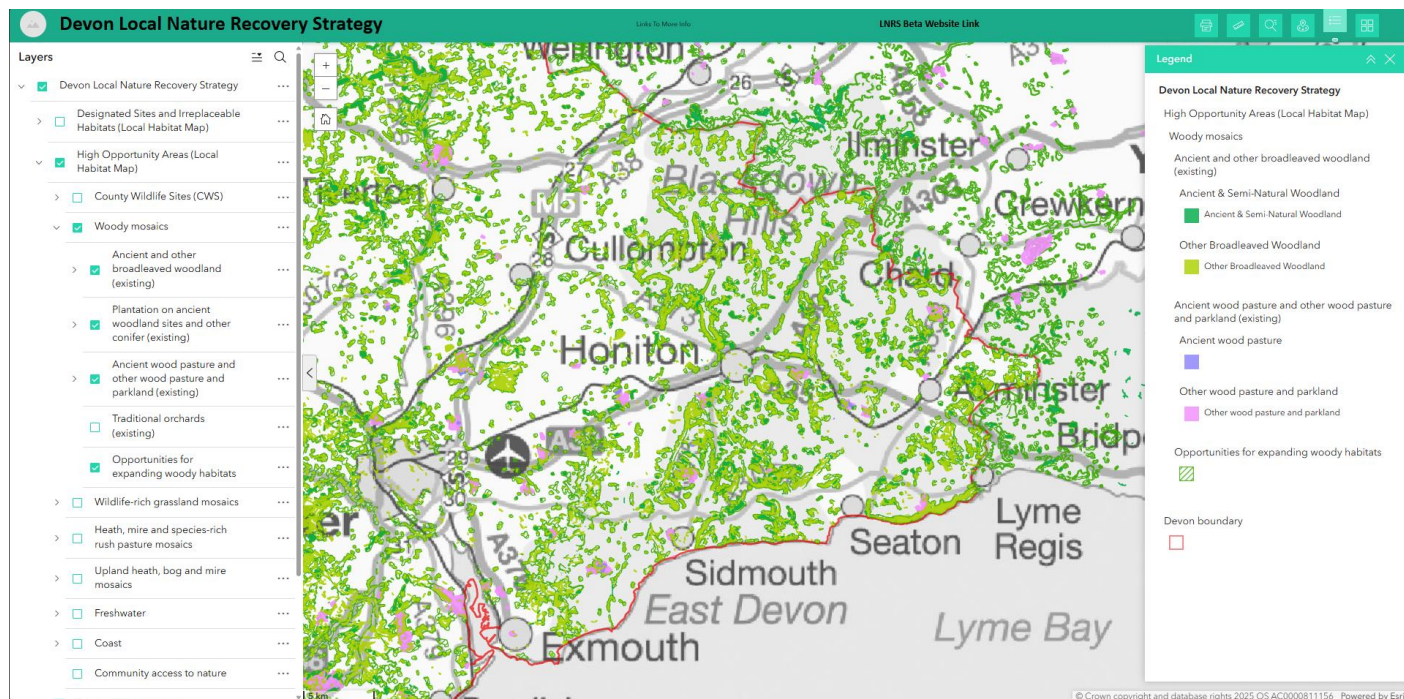
- About
- What we need to do and where**
- Inspiration
- Find out more

Key:
 📖 – Glossary term

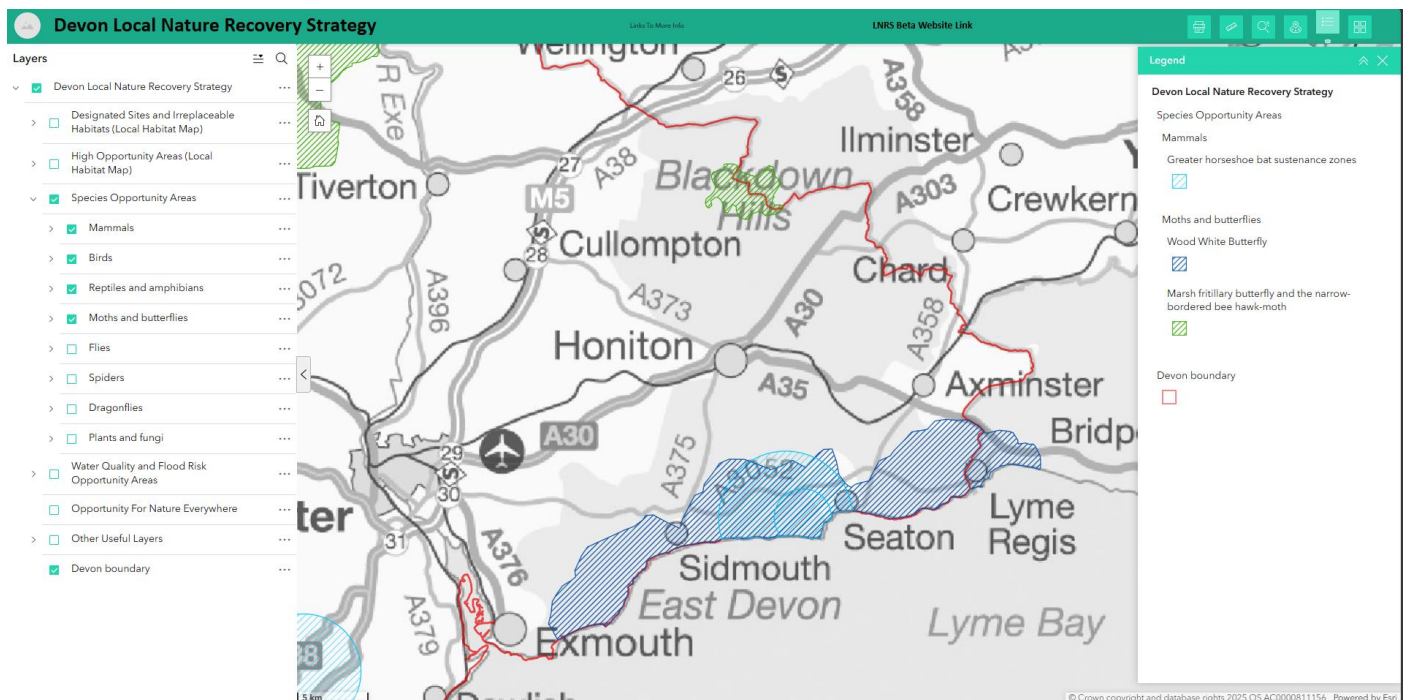
Example species page, has a call-to-action box to take you directly to what you need to do so and where, lower down the page, the priority and actions including focus species groups and individual focus species. If you wish to read more about the species, you can click on the read more box.



Devon LNRS mapping showing the High Opportunity Areas (HOA) for Wildlife –rich grassland mosaics: Wildlife-rich grasslands (existing) Opportunities for expanding existing wildlife-rich grasslands, Special verges (existing), Opportunities for wildlife-rich grasslands (steep slopes), East Devon chalk opportunity area Heath, mire and species-rich rush pasture mosaics: East Devon spring-line mires opportunity area, Pebblebed heaths opportunity area, East Devon plateau heaths opportunity area.



Devon LNRS mapping showing the High Opportunity Areas (HOA) for Woody mosaics: Ancient and other broadleaved woodland (existing), Ancient wood pasture and other wood pasture and parkland (existing) and Opportunities for expanding woody habitats



Example mapping of Species Opportunity Areas – these are not mapped within the LNRS Local Habitat Map but do feature actions within the LNR

4.0 Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the planning system

- 4.1 All public authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must 'have regard' to relevant local nature recovery strategies in this process. Local Planning Authorities should consider how LNRS priorities, actions and mapping are reflected in Local Plans and development management decisions. LNRSs have been given a statutory link to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Simplistically, BNG proposals will be assessed as having a 'high strategic significance' score in the statutory metric if they are located in an area mapped for action in the LNRS Local Habitat Map, and the proposal is consistent with said actions.
- 4.2 The government has made it clear that LNRSs are not intended to act as a barrier to development or place new restrictions on developing land or making land use changes. LNRSs provide guidance and an evidence base to inform Local Plans and decision making. Planning decisions at both the plan making and planning application stage need to consider all material considerations and the LNRS will be one consideration amongst many.

5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 It is expected that, subject to approval being given by all the Supporting Authorities, Devon CC (as Responsible Authority) will publish the consultation draft Devon LNRS for a public consultation in late September / October 2025. Following the public consultation and any amendments being made to the draft LNRS, there will be a further formal 28-day period when the Supporting Authorities will be consulted before the strategy is finalised.
- 5.2 The post consultation, final LNRS, is to be approved as set out in Recommendation 3 within the report as a final sign off by East Devon DC as one of the Supporting Authorities. Defra has provided guidance that all LNRS must be finalised by December 2025. Once adopted it will enable East Devon DC Officers to produce its own Local Nature Recovery Plan that aligns with the Devon LNRS but at a more granular level. Once the final LNRS has been approved by the Supporting Authorities, Devon CC must then notify the Secretary of State of its intention to publish the strategy. When the Secretary of State has given approval Devon CC can then publish the strategy and make hard copies available. Thereafter there will be a duty for the Responsible Authority to undertake a review of the final LNRS following notification from the Secretary of State if there is a need to do so.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implication resulting from the report

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report.