



Developing the County's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Shortlisting approach for Kent & Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities

March 2024

Introduction

The [Local Nature Recovery Strategy statutory guidance](#) (2023), requires responsible authorities to gather possible priorities from existing published plans and strategies, and from engaging directly with locally active organisations and individuals. Responsible authorities should first create a longlist of suggestions. They should then exclude any suggestions that are out of scope before narrowing down to select a shortlist of priorities that the responsible authorities consider critical for the strategy to address.

These will be the priorities, in terms of habitats and species, for recovering or enhancing biodiversity, taking into account the contribution that recovering or enhancing biodiversity can also make to other environmental benefits. Other environmental benefits refers to how the strategies can include 'nature-based solutions' to address wider environmental issues as well as priorities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity. Priorities must only be habitat or species focussed.

The Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway project will create a long list of priorities for nature by:

- A series of stakeholder workshops throughout February.
- Supporting tools for groups to host self-led workshops to develop their own priorities for submission.
- An online survey on priorities for nature recovery.
- A review of local plans, neighbourhood plans and strategies.

Once completed (by the end of February), the below approach will be used to assess this long list of suggested priorities in order to develop a focussed list of priorities for nature recovery in Kent and Medway.

The approach has been based on the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy statutory guidance](#) (2023) and aims to enable the achievement of a set of priorities that:

- ✓ Contribute to a balanced range of the National Environmental Objectives?
- ✓ Address the opportunities and pressures identified in the description of the strategy area?
- ✓ Sufficiently cover the variation of landscapes and ecosystems in the strategy area?
- ✓ Balance the contributions from different types of stakeholders? i.e. national experts through to local residents.
- ✓ Is a manageable number.

Please use the following link to provide your feedback on the proposed shortlisting approach

<https://forms.office.com/e/qnH0r2n33N> .

Step one - initial assessment of long list

The first step will be to exclude any out of scope priorities, based on the requirements of the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy statutory guidance](#) (2023) and [LNRS Regulations](#) (2023) and [Environment Act Section 106](#) (2021)

Assessment	If yes
a. Does potential priority contribute to National Environmental Objectives	Include
b. Does the potential priority address a pressure or opportunity identified for the strategy area?	Include
c. Does the potential priority relate to a co-benefit rather than habitats or species	Exclude
d. Does the potential priority relate to a specific site?	Exclude unless it can be amended to a more general priority

Any priorities excluded owing to assessment criteria c.) or d.) will be held for consideration at the mapping of priorities work stage, in case there is opportunity to support these.

The remaining suggested priorities in the long list will then be combined, where possible, to create a shorter, more condensed long-list.

Step two - shortlisting assessment

The priorities long list will then be reviewed against a number of considerations, with their assessment taking account of how much they meet the qualifying criteria. A suggested priority will not need to meet all criteria of the nine assessment categories in order to be selected for the proposed shortlist, but different weighting will applied.

Highest weighting	Medium weighting	Lowest weighting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local and national significance.• Contribution to national targets.• Urgency• Climate change impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximising benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-existing initiatives• Deliverability• Cross-boundary considerations

The categories under lowest weighting will largely be used to distinguish between priorities when all other considerations are equal. A second assessment, increasing the weighting of deliverability, may be used if the first assessment doesn't sufficiently shortlist the priorities.

A suggested priority that does not make the shortlist will still be recorded and made available alongside the LNRS. We will aim to state why it hasn't been shortlisted and the circumstances/conditions that could/would make it an LNRS priority in the future.

Assessment category	Qualifying criteria
<p>Local and national significance - does the priority relate to a habitat or species that the strategy area is particularly important for?</p> <p>(Note – the LNRS is undertaking a dedicated assessment of which specific species the strategy should be targeting – this will establish detailed priorities for species recovery and associated measures. The list of species included here is not an indication of the LNRS priority species for recovery but is to be used as a tool to support the assessment).</p> <p>(Based on Kent Biodiversity Strategy (2020) priority habitats and priority species and irreplaceable habitats as defined by The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland - Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland - Chalk grassland - Lowland meadow - Lowland dry acid grassland / Lowland heathland - Hedgerows - Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land - Traditional orchard - Rivers - Chalk streams - Ponds - Wet woodland - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh - Intertidal mudflats and coastal saltmarsh - Vegetated shingle - Intertidal chalk and subtidal chalk - Subtidal mud - Lowland fens - Coastal sand dunes - Ancient woodland - Ancient trees and veteran trees - Spartina saltmarsh swards - Shrill Carder Bee - Turtle Dove - Nightingale - Swift - Adder - Adonis Blue - Heath Fritillary - Dwarf or Kentish Milkwort - European eel - Lapwing - Sandwich tern

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water vole - True Fox-sedge. <p>Where a proposed priority relates to a specific species not included in the list above, this will be referred to the MS4N Species Recovery Technical Advisory Group for consideration.</p>
<p>Contribution to national targets - does priority help to deliver one or more of the National Environmental Objectives?</p> <p>(Based on National Environmental Objectives that relate to biodiversity and The Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023. Where local targets are more ambitious than those held nationally (e.g. Kent Plan Tree target for canopy cover), will defer to those more ambitious targets).</p>	<p>Thriving plants and wildlife (land and freshwaters):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - restoring 75% of protected sites to favourable condition. - creating or restoring 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network, focusing on priority habitats (as above this will relate to the Kent Biodiversity Strategy's selected priority habitats). - taking action to recover threatened or economically important species (to be advised by MS4N Species Recovery Technical Advisory Group). - increasing woodland in England in line with 12% cover by 2060. <p>Thriving plants and wildlife (marine):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reversing the loss of marine biodiversity and restoring it - increasing the proportion of protected and well-managed seas, and better managing existing protected sites - making sure populations of key species are sustainable - ensuring seafloor habitats are productive and sufficiently extensive to support healthy, sustainable ecosystems <p>Clean and plentiful water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reaching or exceeding objectives for rivers, lakes, coastal and ground waters that are specially protected for biodiversity as per our River Basin Management Plans. - Improve the cleanliness of our waters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042, when compared to the risk of species' extinction in 2022. - By 2030, overall relative species abundance index on the specified date indicates that the decline in the abundance of species has been halted. - Reverse the decline of species abundance, so that by the end of 2042, the overall relative species abundance index is (a) higher than the overall relative species abundance index for 31st December 2022; and (b) at least 10% higher than the overall relative species abundance index for 31st December 2030.

<p>Contribution to the purposes of Kent's protected landscapes - does priority help to deliver one or more of the Kent Downs or High Weald Protected Landscape (formerly AONB) principles?</p> <p>(Note – this assessment category and qualifying criteria is currently under review by the county's two Protected Landscape units)</p> <p>(Based on the Kent Downs and High Weald Protected Landscape Management Plan's principles that relate to biodiversity and nature recovery and Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of new habitats, wilding, buffering and connecting habitat corridors informed by the needs for resilience and the threats to existing habitats and species. - The protection, conservation, enhancement and extension of Kent Downs and High Weald AONB priority and distinctive habitats and species (not already covered by KBS priority habitats and species): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Habitats tbc) • Duke of burgundy fritillary • Late spider orchid • Lady orchid • Monkey orchid • Man orchid • Hedgehogs • Glowworms • Marsh tits • Small red damselflies • Serotine bats - Generating a greater connection between people and nature will be pursued at the same time as dispersal of visitor pressure from sensitive wildlife sites where the biodiversity interest is at threat. - Management of the impact of deer on the flora of High Weald woodlands and other habitats. - Creation and management of scrub and wilder boundaries. - Restoration of a pesticide and pollution free environment.
<p>Urgency – does priority need immediate action?</p> <p>(Species risk classification based on IUCN Red List)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Habitat - Species is identified as critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable, - Habitat or species is identified in Habitats and species of principal importance in England. - Habitat is known to be limited in Kent. - Habitat or species is one Kent is known to be a stronghold for. - Species is known to be in decline in Kent.
<p>Climate change impacts – does this priority relate to a habitat or species particularly vulnerable to climate change? Or relate to an invasive non-native species.</p>	<p>Vulnerable habitats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - River habitats and standing water bodies - Lowland beech and yew woodlands, wet woodlands and native pine woodlands - Wet lowland meadows - Coastal grazing marsh - Wet and dry lowland heath - Fen, marsh and swamp

<p>(Based on most sensitive habitats identified by Re-evaluating the sensitivity of habitats to climate change, Natural England June 2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mountain heath and willow scrub - Coastal (machair, saltmarshes, mudflats, saline lagoons) <p>Vulnerable species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Species identified by the Natural England research on risks & opportunities for species in England as a result of climate change (NECR175) (2015) <p>Invasive non-native species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Species identified as non-native by the GB Non-native Species Secretariat. <p>To consider suitability of priority, in light of anticipated climate change impacts, by applying the Resist-Accept-Direct framework.</p>
<p>Maximising benefits – would the recovery be likely to bring about other biodiversity and environmental benefit?</p> <p>(Based on the non-biodiversity targets of National Environmental Objectives)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clean air - Clean and plentiful water - Reducing the risks of harm from environmental hazards - Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently - Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment - Mitigating and adapting to climate change - Minimising waste - Managing exposure to chemicals - Enhancing biosecurity
<p>Pre-existing initiatives – any opportunities to enhance gains recently made?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapped nature recovery action delivering same or similar outcomes.
<p>Deliverability – how feasible are the measures required to deliver this priority?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Likely delivery partners in support of the priority. - Potential funding or investment (or other resourcing) opportunities can be identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It relates to a national target. • It relates to the creation restoration or management of woodland. • It relates to species survival or recovery. • It delivers a nature-based solution. • It relates to environmental goods and services that identified under the three ELMS schemes of Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), Countryside Stewardship (CS) or Landscape Recovery. • It relates to a habitat gain that could be funded through biodiversity net gain. • It provides a green investment opportunity, such as carbon offsetting. - Strong support for priority.

<p>Cross-boundary considerations – are there opportunities to join up and work at larger, cross boundary scale?</p>	<p>- Neighbouring responsible authority has the same or similar priority.</p>
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Step 3 - further refinement

If, after the first two rounds of shortlisting, the priorities list is still considered to be too long/not manageable, the following may be used to further refine the priorities.

- Relevance of priority/outcome – is this a priority/outcome that applies broadly across the county?
- Relevance of priority/outcome – is this a priority/outcome that whilst affecting only small areas of the county, is addressing a significant need?
- Evidenced need - is there evidence of need (rather than it being a preference-based priority)?

Step 4 – final review against priority shortlist checklist

The final priority shortlist should meet the following requirements as detailed by the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy statutory guidance](#) (2023):

- ✓ Do the agreed priorities and potential measures contribute to a balanced range of the National Environmental Objectives?
- ✓ Do the agreed priorities address the opportunities and pressures identified in the description of the strategy area?
- ✓ Do the agreed priorities sufficiently cover the variation of landscapes and ecosystems in the strategy area?
- ✓ Do the agreed priorities balance the contributions from different types of stakeholders? i.e. national experts through to local residents.
- ✓ Are there a manageable number of agreed priorities? The number of agreed priorities will depend on the factors listed above but should be manageable enough for end-users to understand and to focus delivery planning.

What next?

The draft LNRS priorities list will be published online in April and discussed with stakeholders at a number of workshops. The list will be accompanied by a shortlisting report, so that the process of selection is clear and transparent.

Stakeholders will then be invited to help identify the potential measures that will support delivery of these priorities.

Indicative timeline

Creation of LNRS priorities long-list	30 th January – 23 rd February
Consultation on priorities shortlisting approach	7 th February – 23 rd February
Shortlisting of priorities	26 th February – 5 th April
Publication of draft priorities shortlist	8 th April
Priorities shortlist workshops	2 nd , 7 th and 9 th May
Potential measures workshops	14 th , 16 th , 21 st and 23 rd May