

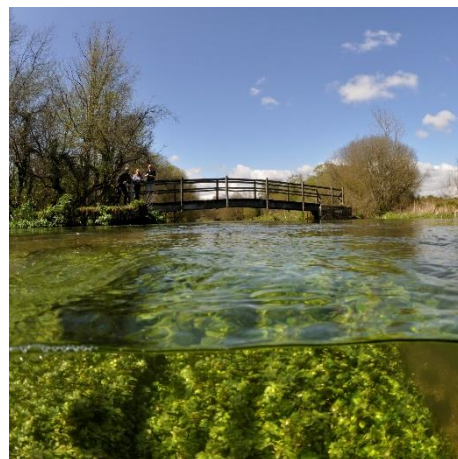
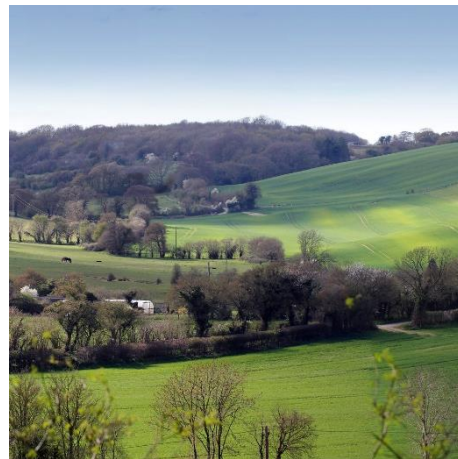


Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway

Developing the County's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Kent & Medway Local Nature Recovery – Redrafted LNRS Priorities report

July 2024



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Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway

Making Space for Nature (MS4N) is working with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent & Medway (LNRS). These strategies result from the 2021 Environment Act, with 48 to be created across England with no gaps or overlaps. Developed at a landscape scale by the Responsible Authority (with Kent County Council taking on this role for Kent and Medway), the LNRS will agree and map the local priorities and associated actions for nature recovery and wider environmental benefits, that collectively will deliver a nature recovery network for England, ending the decline of nature and supporting its recovery.

Making Space for Nature will develop:

- Spatially framed strategy for nature – focussing action to where its most needed and/or where it will deliver the greatest benefits.
- Framework for joined-up action, developed with those that will be instrumental in its delivery.
- Set of agreed priorities for nature recovery, with measures to deliver.
- Shared vision for nature recovery and the use of nature-based solutions in Kent and Medway.
- Ambitious but realistic and deliverable plan, linked to supporting mechanisms and finance.

More detail on the project can be found on the [Making Space for Nature website](#).

Redrafting of priorities

Redrafting of priorities followed input from stakeholders at three priorities shortlist workshops in May, online survey and other comments/input received from stakeholders and partners. Two reports summarising the outcomes of this stakeholder engagement are available from the project website.

The input from stakeholders suggested that the priorities were largely right in respect of what were considered the main areas of concern and importance for the county's nature. No priority was identified as inappropriate (although there was some questions on achievability; discussed later) and only a few new ones were added following consensus of comments. There are also some further habitats nominated as requiring attention – these are also discussed later in this paper.

General changes made to the draft LNRS priorities

- Have created top level priorities and then sub-priorities, which are more detailed outcomes and, in the case of the habitat based priorities, relate to a specific habitat.
- All but marine, and access & connection, remain as a priority groupings:
 - The marine grouping has been removed on advice of NE LNRS senior advisor (instruction from Defra). Some of the marine priorities have been moved to coastal where they fall into the intertidal area. Other marine priorities will be picked up after the LNRS is completed by KCC's "Plan Sea" work. Defra have agreed that this can become an annexe to the LNRS, so that the links are there (but statutory requirements of LNRS will not extend to marine).
 - On advice of NE LNRS senior advisor. Workshop on 10th July to look at what access and health outcomes could be supported by the LNRS and how – these will then be referenced under wider benefits, with supporting potential measures as appropriate.
- Reference numbers changed to make it more simple and in reflection of the changed structure.
- Majority of priorities have remained in one guise or another – some have been combined and some have been changed to potential measures.
- Some amendments to priority wording but no significant changes. For instance, there was a consistent comment that priorities for habitats should start from the basis of first protecting what we already have (but that has made the priorities a little wordy!).
- Some priorities have moved from one grouping to another.

Notable changes and additions made to the original draft priorities shortlist as a result of stakeholder input

Grassland priorities

- Species rich grassland priority used as basis for overarching top-level grassland priority.
- Acid grassland and heathland priority combined into one.
- Arable weeds priority amended to refer also to wildflowers and moved into grassland (from farm habitats).

Successional habitats

- New top-level priority created to cover open mosaic habitats and scrub and move these from the connectivity grouping, in order to give them stronger recognition as an important habitat in Kent.

Woodland

- Specific reference to trees outside woodland.

- Management and extension now two separate sub-priorities. By separating these, it allows us to emphasise the need that this priority must start with getting in place active management. This is important to the High Weald where they have high tree coverage (and more trees is not a priority) and lack of management is the main issue. Having two discrete sub-priorities also helps with the mapping, so we are able to distinguish between woodland management and woodland establishment, and ensure that the latter is in the right place.
- New sub priority on resilience of woodlands.
- New sub priority for ghyll woodland.
- Hedgerow priorities combined into one and moved to WTH grouping (from farm habitats).

Coastal

- Sub priorities for seagrass, chalk reefs, native oyster beds and marine life disturbance moved to coastal (from deleted marine).
- Freshwater
- NBS related sub-priority for freshwater wetlands moved to freshwater group (from nature based solutions).

Urban

- Other than move of OHM to new successional habitats priority, no major changes.

Connectivity

- Connectivity and fragmentation priorities combined.
- Sub-priority "The county's highway, cycleway, pathway and PROW networks acting as functional networks for wildlife" now a potential measure.

Climate change resilience

- New sub priority of: species assemblages formed across priority habitats incl. reintroductions where needed, to form functioning ecosystems resilient to extreme weather and invasive species.
- Question over whether sub priorities are needed – see below.

Nature based solutions

- NBS sub priorities that relate to specific habitat moved to the relevant habitat groupings.
- Soil health and structure sub-priority moved to NBS grouping (from farm habitats – recognising that soil health isn't just important for farmers, that pressures are multi-sourced and responsibility for this goes a lot wider).

Land management and land use

- Two new sub-priorities:

- Farmland responding to climate change induced pressures with the help of nature.
- Publicly accessible open spaces managed for both wildlife and people. (Created to address open space that sits outside urban areas – stately homes, parks and gardens, golf courses, cricket fields etc).
- All “farm habitats” now moved to relevant habitat grouping.

The draft document also outlines the overarching principles delivered by the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy. These are:



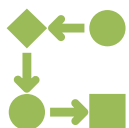
Better – improve the quality of our existing habitats and ensure they are in a healthy and functioning state, by applying and resourcing better and appropriate management. We also need to better conserve and protect what we already have.



Bigger – increase the size of our most valuable and important habitat sites, not only extending but buffering, to protect them from the pressures of human influences.



More – through habitat restoration and creation, establish new, nature-rich sites that not only provide more space for nature but also provide connectivity between existing core sites.



Joined up – enhance connections between, and join up, sites, through improving the quality of the land that exists between, creating new, physical corridors and establishing ‘stepping stones’.



Nature based solutions – the strategy also considers how we can work with nature and use natural processes to tackle some of the socio-economic challenges our county faces, maximising the benefits of nature recovery.



Land management and land use – critical to this landscape scale approach to nature recovery are private landowners, land managers and farmers, who all have a crucial role to play in delivering a better, and more coherent and resilient wildlife network.