



**Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery
Strategy public consultation –
Kent County Council's (KCC's) initial response**

June 2025

Overview

The draft Strategy set out the county's priorities for nature recovery and identified where in the county action should be targeted to deliver the greatest outcomes for nature.

It was prepared by Kent County Council (KCC), appointed by Defra as Responsible Authority and developed through the Making Space for Nature project, with extensive input from partners and stakeholders across 2024.

Over 1,000 individuals attended events during this period, to enable full participation in the process, which was open to anybody who wished to participate.

On 16th January 2025, an 8-week consultation was launched running until 12th March 2025. The consultation invited residents, stakeholders and other interested parties to provide views on the draft Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The consultation questionnaire provided the opportunity to comment on:

- The process of developing the Strategy and how useful the resulting Strategy will be in informing nature recovery within the county.
- Whether the Strategy sufficiently provides the context for the need for nature recovery and how this will be delivered.
- The principles, vision and priorities for nature recovery in Kent and Medway.
- The potential measures (suggested actions), and areas identified for where these actions would best be delivered, to support the recovery of nature.

There were 264 questionnaire responses to this consultation: 254 online and 10 via paper/email. An additional 66 emails/letters were received providing feedback.

Three reports on the public consultation have been produced:

1. Independent analysis of the consultation results by Lake Market Research, this is the consultation report.
2. The Responsible Authority's (KCC's) initial response to these findings (this report).
3. Consultation outcomes report – a detailed response from the Responsible Authority (KCC) to the findings and conclusions of the Lake Market Research consultation report, including the resulting amendments to be made to the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Decisions regarding key aspects of the Strategy finalisation were made by the Species Recovery Technical Advisory Group; Data, Evidence and Mapping Technical Advisory Group; and the LNRS' Delivery Group and Board who met to discuss and determine matters arising from the consultation on 26th and 27th June 2025.

Notes from these meetings can be found on the [Making Space for Nature website](#), but for the detail on all the amendments, please refer to the full Consultation outcomes report.

The report you are reading is shorter and represents KCC's initial response to the findings of the Lake Market Research consultation report. It focuses on the regularly occurring themes they identified from the consultation, pulling out the main points from the consultation report and showing KCC's response.

Overall, the consultation responses showed strong agreement with the Strategy principles, ambitions and priorities, with particularly high support for the potential measures.

It is intended that the finalised Strategy will be published early autumn 2025.

Our response to what you told us

We asked - Do you believe that the LNRS development process has been sufficiently comprehensive, participatory and based on the best available information?

You said - 165 Yes (65%), 43 Partially, 15 No and 29 Don't know.

"It gave us great hope knowing that such a knowledgeable, talented and committed team has been working on this. They have provided a great starting point for nature recovery."

It was good to see a high degree of satisfaction with the LNRS development process, this was particularly high amongst stakeholders, many of which attend Making Space for Nature events.

Stakeholders will also be essential to delivering the Strategy if it is to be a success. KCC look forward to providing a platform for partnership working and facilitation as we move in to delivery.

We asked - what element of the development process has not been sufficient?

You said -

"Needs more local knowledge, / a more knowledgeable approach, e.g. more science / geology-driven approach, including soil."

"All areas / habitats / species to be assessed / included / believe some important areas have been missed off / a lack of coastal focus."

"There were no specific soil organisations or professionals listed in Appendix 1.3. Soil contains more than half the earth's biodiversity, and it would have been helpful to have more than data sets from Cranfield - the British Society of Soil Science, for example."

Local knowledge was a vital element of Strategy development. Input from workshops, was used to draw up the draft. The additional input received from the consultation is also being used in this way.

Local knowledge also informed the scientific basis of the Strategy. Technical Advisory Groups (TAG) for (i) Species Recovery, (ii) Data, Evidence and Mapping, (iii) Land Advice and (iv) Communication steered the technical elements of the strategy development and comprised a wide range of experts from around the county.

Soil is referenced seven times in the Strategy and when reviewed by Board and Delivery Group's was considered to be sufficiently covered. Data used for soil related measures and all measures, was reviewed and advised on by the Data, evidence and mapping TAG.

We asked – what confidence was there that the LNRS will deliver nature recovery?

You told us that concerns over delivery related to -
“pressure to build houses by central government will override”
“will come down to funding / resources, which won't be sufficient”
“the words ‘encouraging’ / ‘take account’ are not the same as ‘mandated’ / should be made policy”

“I would truly love to believe these measures and suggestions would be taken into account, but with such pressure on housing and infrastructure in the South-East required, I am not confident that the authorities will seriously adhere to them.”

“We are sceptical that with the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Nature Restoration Fund plus the current Government's aims and objectives to 'get Britain building' that the pressures will be too great on our Kent countryside”.

“(Success) depends on government policy and the capacity of the relevant implementation organisations, neither of which are certain at the moment”.

There was lower confidence in the Strategy delivering nature recovery, but this was more about the wider issues listed above, than any failings with the Strategy itself. However, these are valid concerns and background is provided below.

Across England, LNRS is a statutory (legal requirement) under the Environment Act 2021 and had cross party support. The published LNRS will link to the planning system and inform decision making. The Environment Act 2021 also enhances the Biodiversity Duty on local authorities and taking part in the LNRS is one way in which they can fulfil this duty. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act will strengthen the LNRS by instructing local authorities to “take account” of their LNRS. All of this places a focus on the role of local planning in nature recovery.

KCC will receive Defra funding to facilitate delivery the LNRS. Funding for delivery on the ground is linked to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Environmental Land Management payments (ELM).

Natural England and Defra have been informed of the concerns raised by consultees.

We asked "how we could make the Strategy clearer to understand"?

You told us that the Strategy was:
"too long and too difficult to navigate"
"too wordy"
"the language used is too complicated"

"A more concise version should be made available, including a summary for different types of stakeholders which provides the information specifically relevant to them. E.g. Summary for farmers, summary for landowners, summary for planners etc."

We recognise there is work to be done to improve clarity and ease of understanding in respect of the Strategy. We will use the consultation responses to help identify where improvements can be focussed. We will aim to make it shorter, easier to read and to navigate and make the mapping platform more user friendly.

We will develop toolkits for different audiences / purposes – on how to use the LNRS to deliver for nature on the ground.