

Part 1: What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?



1. Background to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

In 2022, the government published targets to protect our environment, clean up our air and rivers and boost nature. These legally binding commitments pledged to end the decline of nature and for nature to recover. These commitments acknowledged that such action was required not just for nature's sake but also for all the services that we rely on nature for, such as:

- **provisioning** – for example, food and drink, water supply and materials
- **regulating** – for example, clean air, carbon storage and pollination
- **supporting** – for example, healthy soils and nutrient cycling
- **cultural** – for example, physical health and wellbeing, tourism and recreation

Recognising that any recovery of nature would need targeted, co-ordinated and collaborative action, the Environment Act 2021 set in place a requirement for the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

With 48 of these across England with no gaps or overlaps, each Strategy would agree the priorities for nature recovery and propose actions in locations where a particular contribution could be made to achieving those priorities.

Responsible authorities were appointed to lead on the preparation of these strategies. For Kent and Medway, this was Kent County Council. Responsible authorities were provided with a grant for the development of the Strategy and were required to follow the Local Nature Recovery Strategy regulations and statutory guidance when preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Key to the Strategy's preparation was a collaborative approach. Responsible authorities were required to work with a wide range of stakeholders to agree what should be included.

Stakeholders were considered to be anyone who could play a part in recovering nature and the wider environment – consequently a broad and wide-ranging number of people participated.

By working closely with these stakeholders, many of whom would be future delivery partners, the Strategy would benefit from the input of people who know and understand the Strategy area and what is needed to restore nature and help it thrive. Responsible authorities were expected to provide local leadership to draw together knowledge, expertise, and the best available information and data to create an ambitious but achievable Strategy, with practical proposals.





2. Purpose of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy provides:

- a set of agreed, ambitious priorities for nature recovery
- practical and deliverable potential measures that would deliver on these agreed priorities
- a spatially framed strategy that not only identifies potential action but also focuses this action to where it is most needed and deliver the greatest benefits
- a shared vision for nature recovery and the use of nature-based solutions in Kent and Medway
- a framework for joined-up action, developed with those who will be instrumental in its delivery

The intention of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy is to:

1. direct action and investment to areas where it is most needed and where it will derive the greatest benefits
2. steer losses and impacts away from the county's most valuable natural assets
3. maximise the opportunities for development, land use and land management to make a positive contribution to nature recovery

How the Strategy will be used to inform nature recovery is detailed in Chapter 4.

The mechanisms for this are provided by:

- a new duty on all public authorities to have regard to relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- an incentive for how the new requirement for biodiversity net gain is calculated, to recognise the added impact of taking action where the Local Nature Recovery Strategy proposes
- the integration of Local Nature Recovery Strategies into the planning system, so that areas of greatest potential for nature recovery can be better reflected in planning decisions
- funding for specific activities in locations proposed by Local Nature Recovery Strategies



The Strategy will not:

- draw localised, detailed boundaries but **will** identify areas where action is likely to provide the greatest gains
- dictate actions or instruct their implementation but **will** identify potential measures that could be taken to support the recovery of nature
- force landowners and managers to make changes to the way they use and manage the land or their operations but action **will** be incentivised by linking delivery of the Strategy priorities to a wide range of funding
- prevent development from happening but **will** inform future Local Plans, in terms of land-use planning, and inform development management in relation to biodiversity net gain
- end in 2025 – once published, the real work begins as delivery partners take forward the Strategy's actions. The Strategy itself will be reviewed, revised and republished on a regular cycle, which must happen every 3 to 10 years

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy is habitat and species focused and can only include priorities and actions which relate to nature recovery and wider environmental benefits. Consequently, it does not make provision for access or for health and wellbeing. However, it does seek to maximise the benefits of a healthy and thriving natural environment to these societal needs by, where appropriate, directing nature recovery action to where such additional benefits will be most notably felt.



White Cliffs of Dover by Jim Higham

3. Understanding the elements of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** is a set of agreed priorities for Kent and Medway's nature recovery, with spatially framed potential measures to deliver them.

A **priority** is the outcome we want to see for nature.

A **potential measure** is the proposed action to deliver the priority. They must be practical and achievable.

The **local habitat map** is a map of the Strategy area that provides a clear visual way for groups and individuals to understand the areas which are, or could become, of particular importance for biodiversity and the environment to target nature recovery action. The mapped parts include:

- location and extent of areas identified as being of particular importance for biodiversity
- locations for which potential measures have been proposed
- location and extent of identified areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity

Areas of particular importance for biodiversity are the Strategy area's national conservation sites (National Nature Reserve, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Marine Conservation Zones and Ramsar), Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and irreplaceable habitat. The areas eligible for inclusion in this map is tightly defined by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy regulations.

Potential measures mapping identifies where the action determined as necessary for our nature recovery priorities should be strategically targeted to achieve the greatest gains for biodiversity and deliver the widest environmental benefits.

Areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity comprise the extent of the potential measures, with areas of particular importance for biodiversity excluded. These are the areas where the Strategy proposes effort should be concentrated to restore habitat, to achieve the greatest gains for nature and to derive the greatest benefits from a healthy, functioning environment. They are the areas of Kent and Medway where targeted action will enable us to deliver on the priorities laid out by the Strategy.

Wider measures are proposed actions which would be similarly beneficial over wide areas or those where it was not possible to determine specific locations to carry out the proposed action. Collectively, these wider measures identify areas of additional opportunities for nature recovery but do not form a part of the formal Strategy's local habitat map.

Priority species are species the Strategy has determined should be prioritised for recovery action. They were identified from an initial list of threatened and locally significant species.

Within the Strategy document you will also find:

- a description of the Strategy area and its biodiversity. This includes a general overview in the Strategy area description with more detail alongside the relevant habitat and species priorities in the statement of biodiversity priorities
- an overview of how the distribution and extent of habitats has changed
- an account of pressures on nature and challenges to its recovery
- the national and local strategic context for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- the opportunities for recovering and enhancing biodiversity
- wider environmental issues affecting part or all of the Strategy area which changes in land use or management, nature-based solutions could help to address



4. Informing nature recovery in Kent and Medway

4.1 Directing action for nature recovery

The Strategy goes beyond ambition, identifying potential measures (actions) for nature's recovery. The Strategy also identifies the areas of the county where this action is most needed or is likely to provide the greatest benefit.

The Strategy maps these measures, and the target areas, in the 'areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity'. These maps do not dictate actions nor instruct their implementation. Landowners and managers should not read these as enforced changes to the way they use and manage the land or their operations. However, delivery of these potential measures (actions) will be incentivised through a range of government grants and funding and other public and private finance.

4.2 Influencing local planning

4.2.1 National planning practice guidance on Local Nature Recovery Strategies

In February 2025, the government published updated planning guidance to outline the requirements in respect of the regard Local Plans should pay to Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are intended to support local planning authorities in preparing Local Plans that conserve and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment, and local planning authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the relevant strategy for their area. Local planning authorities should consider the priorities set out in the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy when determining how their Local Plan should contribute to and enhance the local and natural environment.

Paragraph 192(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework states that Local Plans should identify, map and safeguard areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation. Local Nature Recovery Strategies, prepared by local partnerships, identify these areas and therefore provide an important and ready-made evidence base for the Local Plan requirements.

Local planning authorities should consider how the areas mapped and identified in the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and the measures proposed in them, should be reflected in their Local Plan. In doing so, they should consider what safeguarding would be appropriate to enable the proposed actions to be delivered, noting the potential to focus stronger safeguarding in areas the local planning authority considers to be of greater importance. This will enable local planning authorities to support the best opportunities to create or improve habitat to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including where this may enable development in other locations.

Relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies can also inform the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and Spatial Development Strategies.

4.2.2 Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Kent's Local Plans

Many of the county's planning authorities already have in place revised Local Plans and policies or are well advanced in their plan revision process. In the absence of any statements to the contrary in the February 2025 guidance, it is not expected that the Strategy will be applied retrospectively or supersede any land-use decisions already taken, including allocated sites.

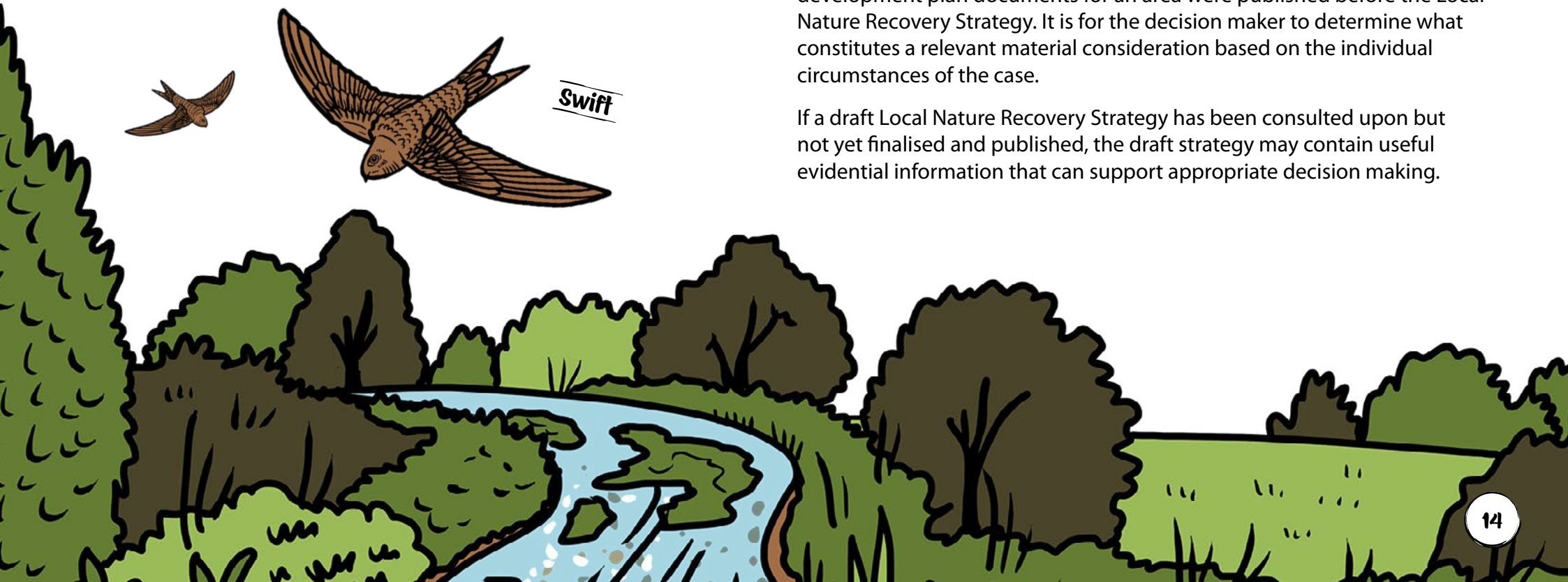
It is also important to note that, while the Strategy has an important role in informing Local Plans and may be used by local planning authorities to identify areas they wish to safeguard, it is not designed as a tool to prevent development, and nor do the identified areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity preclude development. Instead, it will guide development in maximising positive outcomes for nature.

The term 'safeguard', used throughout the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy, does not imply a formal protection or prevention of potentially impactful activities, unless these have already been identified within an existing and adopted Local Plan or in an already-established legal protection. Safeguarding may be delivered by setting aside the land, but it also refers to active management that prevents loss and damage, using buffers to minimise human impacts, and connecting habitats to increase resilience. Where measures refer to safeguarding areas, this does not mean that nothing can happen in these areas, but that appropriate action should be taken to support the habitats and species they are notable for.

4.3 Influencing planning decision making

The 2025 updated planning guidance states that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is an evidence base which contains information that may be a material consideration in the planning system, especially where development plan documents for an area were published before the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. It is for the decision maker to determine what constitutes a relevant material consideration based on the individual circumstances of the case.

If a draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been consulted upon but not yet finalised and published, the draft strategy may contain useful evidential information that can support appropriate decision making.





Barn Owl by Jim Higham

4.4 Influencing biodiversity net gain

The Strategy will also help the delivery of meaningful biodiversity net gain. Biodiversity net gain is a mandatory requirement that aims to make sure that development has a measurably positive impact on biodiversity. This gain is calculated using a standardised metric that identifies the biodiversity value of the land lost and the biodiversity gained.

The 2025 updated planning guidance notes that Local Nature Recovery Strategies will identify areas where habitat creation, restoration or enhancement would be most beneficial for nature recovery and wider environmental outcomes, and that the strategies can play a critical role in supporting offsite gains to be delivered in a way that maximises biodiversity benefits, when these are required to achieve a development's biodiversity gain objective. This can help to support bigger and more joined-up areas in which our wildlife can thrive.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are designed to promote the delivery of offsite biodiversity gain in the right places, where offsite provision is needed to meet the biodiversity gain condition for a development and it cannot be met in full through onsite habitat enhancements.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy can be used as a key source of information for strategic approaches to offsite biodiversity net gain delivery and connections to existing habitat, when local planning authorities are carrying out their functions in respect of biodiversity net gain.

The statutory biodiversity metric formula takes different factors into account, including the habitat's size, condition, type and strategic significance. Strategic significance is the local significance of the habitat based on its location and habitat type. Where a Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been published, high strategic significance (and the associated score) is applied to a location when:

- the location of the habitat parcel has been mapped in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as an area where a potential measure has been proposed to help deliver the priorities of the Strategy; and
- the proposed intervention is consistent with the mapped potential measure in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the habitat parcel.

For the latest government guidance on how the LNRS informs strategic significance, in particular in relation to land within areas of particular importance for biodiversity, see [Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain)

5. Development of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy



5.1 A collaborative framework for development

The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy's preparation was evidence led and collaborative, with wide involvement from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The work was undertaken in a transparent and inclusive manner, with clear communications at every step.

To support this, a governance and delivery structure was created to ensure that the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy:

- met the requirements of the regulations and statutory guidance
- benefited from the knowledge and expertise within the county, to ensure it is technically sound
- engaged all stakeholders throughout the process, to secure the support and buy-in that is critical to the successful delivery of the Strategy's priorities

This structure included the following groups.

Project Board – providing political and strategic oversight and governance for the development of the Strategy.

Delivery Group – providing the technical and sectoral advice required to steer the preparation of the Strategy.

Supporting Authorities Group – Supporting Authorities for the Kent & Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy are defined under the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Regulations (2023) as all of the Strategy area's local planning authorities and Natural England. The regulations require

the Responsible Authority (Kent County Council) to take reasonable steps to involve, share information with and have regard to the opinions of supporting authorities. Consequently, this group was formed to provide a forum where Supporting Authorities' input to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy can be effectively and efficiently facilitated, in a collaborative manner.

Technical Advisory Groups – groups of the county's experts that focus on specific elements of the Strategy development. Members were selected on the basis of their technical competency and/or experience, to ensure the soundness of the resulting Strategy. The advisory groups were appointed to advise on and support data, evidence and mapping, species recovery, landowner engagement, and broader stakeholder engagement and communications.

Neighbouring Responsible Authority Group – regularly linking with the Local Nature Recovery Strategies being developed in adjacent counties to join up shared priorities where the strategy areas meet and to develop compatible approaches for the Strategy's development.

Participation in forums and workshops for the wider stakeholder base – across the Strategy's development, 20 open-to-all workshops were held, with over 1,000 people contributing to the resulting Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Further detail on how the collaborating framework inputted to the development of each stage is provided in Local Nature Recovery Strategy development supporting information, available from naturerecoverykent.org.uk

The Strategy is indebted to the extensive contributions of all partners and stakeholders who gave so much time, expertise and support throughout the process. Appendix 1.1 acknowledges organisations and individuals who contributed.

Development of the Strategy has followed Defra and Natural England guidance and advice – details of these documents can be found in the Reference section.



DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LNRS WAS A *Collaborative* APPROACH, WITH STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING: FARMERS + LANDOWNERS, ENVIRONMENTAL / WILDLIFE NGOS, COMMUNITY GROUPS, RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, DEVELOPERS, BIODIVERSITY RECORDING GROUPS, TOWN + PARISH COUNCIL, LOCAL GOV., ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, RECREATIONAL / ACCESS, UTILITIES, TRANSPORT, EDUCATION, MARINE, HEALTH

OVER 12 MONTHS, WE HELD WORKSHOPS, ONLINE BRIEFINGS + QUESTIONNAIRES THAT ALLOWED THE PARTICIPATION OF OVER 1000 PEOPLE IN TOTAL

THERE WAS A GOVERNANCE + DELIVERY STRUCTURE THAT OVERSAW THE PROCESS:

SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

THE COUNTY'S PLANNING AUTHORITIES + NATURAL ENGLAND

PROJECT BOARD

STRATEGIC + POLITICAL OVERSIGHT

DELIVERY GROUP

TECHNICAL + SECTORAL ADVICE, STEERING A DELIVERABLE STRATEGY

WIDER STAKEHOLDER GROUP

INPUTTING VIA WORKSHOPS + DEDICATED MEETINGS TO SHARE INFORMATION + OPINIONS + PARTICIPATE IN DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUPS

- DATA, EVIDENCE + MAPPING
- SPECIES RECOVERY
- LANDOWNER + FARMER
- ENGAGEMENT + COMMUNICATION
- COUNTRY'S EXPERTS - PROVIDING SPECIFIC TECHNICAL GUIDANCE TO ENSURE SOUNDNESS OF THE STRATEGY

8 LNRS PRESENTS A STATEMENT OF BIODIVERSITY PRIORITIES, WITH DELIVERY DIRECTED BY THE LOCAL HABITAT MAP...

7

COLLECTIVELY THE MAPPED POTENTIAL MEASURES CREATE THE AREAS THAT COULD BECOME PART OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY...

1

MAP OF AREAS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY (APIB) WAS ESTABLISHED...

2

IDENTIFIED THE PRESSURES + CHALLENGES FOR BIODIVERSITY...

3

CREATED A LONGLIST OF OUR PRIORITIES FOR NATURE...

4

REFINED LONGLIST USING SELECTION CRITERIA TO AGREE ON THE LNRS PRIORITIES...

5

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL MEASURES (ACTIONS) THAT WOULD DELIVER THE LNRS...

6

WE MAPPED THE POTENTIAL MEASURES TO WHERE THEY WOULD DELIVER THE GREATEST BENEFITS...

5.2 Identification of pressures on and challenges for nature

The starting point for the development of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy was to determine the key issues it needed to consider when setting priorities for nature recovery – what the Strategy should be responding to and the actions needed to address them.

At a series of workshops, stakeholders identified pressures, threats and challenges facing the county's biodiversity both now and anticipated in the future.

These pressures and challenges are discussed further in Part 2, Chapter 5.

5.3 Agreeing the priorities for nature recovery in Kent and Medway

At the same time as determining the pressures and challenges for the county, stakeholders also outlined the outcomes they would like to see for nature – what a county with recovered habitats and restored species populations would look like. This created the initial longlist of potential priorities.

Criteria to aid the prioritisation of this longlist was developed, with input from stakeholders to ensure it was a fair and equitable selection process. Refinement against the criteria selected priorities that:

- were within the scope of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy remit and ability to affect
- addressed key pressures and challenges
- related to habitats and/or species of national or local significance
- contributed to national targets and/or supported local targets (as identified by the review of national and local strategies and plans – see Part 2, Chapter 6 for further details)
- were urgent, related to climate change vulnerability and/or presented opportunity for nature-based solutions

Further workshops were held to review the draft priorities. Although this did not lead to any further refinement, it did confirm that the priorities provided the right focus for nature recovery in the county.



Workshop in Birchington featuring stakeholders



5.4 Developing the potential measures that would deliver the nature recovery priorities

Potential measures were also developed with stakeholders. This ensured that future action for the county's nature was based on expert and experienced input, meaning that the measure would be both appropriate and deliverable. To support this work, the strategy and plans review highlighted where existing ambitions and targets for the county could be aligned with, and supported by, the future measures of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (see Part 2, Chapter 6).

Potential measures were also taken from Local Nature Recovery Strategy guidance documents produced by nature conservation and species charities and groups (Part 2, Chapter 6), and reference was made to eligible actions under the various Environmental Land Management funding streams.

5.5 Mapping the potential measures

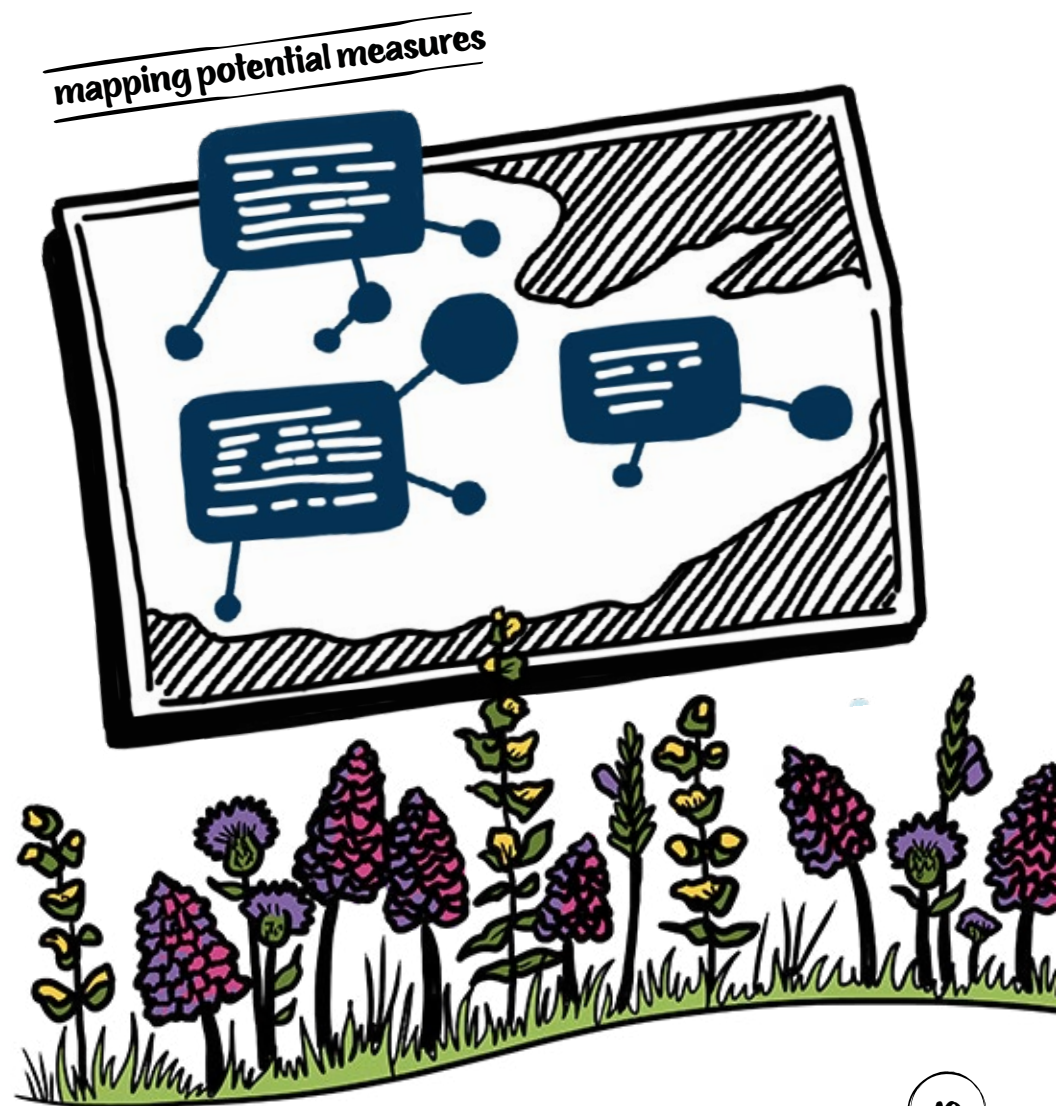
The purpose of mapping the potential measures is to determine where in the county effort should be concentrated to restore habitat, to achieve the most for biodiversity and the wider environment.

The potential measures mapping was created by an iterative process which is outlined below:

5.5.1 Initial approach to mapping of potential measures

Available data and evidence to inform and define the mapping of each potential measure was reviewed, to determine whether the measure could be mapped as per the statutory prerequisites of a Local Nature Recovery

Strategy. These require the Strategy to be ambitious in proposing change but also realistic in the need to concentrate effort where it will have most benefit. The guidance notes that indiscriminate or widespread mapping of areas will not aid the targeting of available resources and therefore, feasible locations should be considered according to which would have the greatest impact on achieving the priorities and which would achieve greater connectivity.



5.5.2 Ensuring the value of the whole county for nature recovery was represented by the maps

The initial approach of only mapping measures that could be sufficiently refined in order to meet the Local Nature Recovery Strategy mapping requirements, meant that some areas of the county appeared to have no potential or importance for nature recovery. This was not the case.

Instead, many of these areas had a number of potential measures mapped to them but these were management actions that could be applied anywhere, with no advantages gained from delivery in one area over another. In some cases the available data simply was not sufficient to enable the required refinement. Whilst the resulting maps did not meet the mapping requirements of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy guidance, stakeholders viewed the exclusion of these maps from the Strategy as problematic and unrepresentative of the actual value of these areas to nature recovery.

Consequently, measures were categorised based on whether they led to targeted and defined action or whether they applied more widely across the county, with some mapping possible, based on the extent existing habitat or potential for that habitat. Measures are therefore presented as either a potential measure or a wider measure:

- **Potential measure** – the proposed action has been identified for an area or areas that will have the greatest impact on achieving the priorities and which would achieve greater connectivity. Collectively, potential measures identify areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity and are a constituent part of the formal Local Nature Recovery Strategy's local habitat map.
- **Wider measure** – a proposed action which would either be similarly beneficial over wide areas or it was not possible to determine specific locations to carry out the proposed action. Collectively, wider measures identify areas of additional opportunities for nature recovery but do not form a part of the formal Local Nature Recovery Strategy's local habitat map.

The data and mapping approach for each potential measure can be found in Appendices 1.2 and 1.3.

In some cases, potential measures were not mapped at all, as they could be applied widely across the Strategy area, with few spatial limitations. These measures have been included under the land management principles for each priority.




Banded Demoiselle by Jim Higham

5.5.4 Refining and reviewing the maps

The potential measures mapping was reviewed and refined with stakeholders and partners at a series of workshops and meetings, including direct discussions with landowners, local planning authorities and other delivery partners and decision-making bodies. This provided extensive local knowledge and expertise, which allowed some verification of the desk-based mapping work, further targeting to more defined areas, and the consideration of deliverability in the areas proposed.

Additional refinement of the potential measures mapping focused on:

- opportunities to address wider environmental challenges using nature-based solutions
- other wider benefits such as health and access
- opportunities to build on existing action or delivery



The final data and mapping approach for each potential measure can be found in Appendices 1.2 and 1.3.



5.5.5 Mapping potential measures to nationally designated sites

Potential measures have been mapped to areas of particular importance for biodiversity. It is recognised that the majority of designated sites in the county (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites and National Nature Reserves) will already have in place management plans and approaches, with some of these designed to maintain and/or protect the feature(s) the site is designated for. It would therefore not be appropriate for the mapped potential measure to override something already in place. This is particularly the case where the potential measure relates to the creation of habitat. However, as the potential measures mapping has been designed to deliver a coherent network for nature recovery across the Strategy area, measures mapped to designated areas have been retained, so their appropriateness can be considered at the point of planning for delivery or when and if the management plan is reviewed. How potential measures may be applied to nationally designated sites in the future will be an ongoing discussion during the Strategy's delivery, monitoring and review phases.

5.5.6 Inclusion of areas identified for development

During the development of the mapping, the work questioned whether Local Plan site allocations, which identify specific locations for future development, should be excluded from the potential measures mapping and, consequently, the areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity. In agreement with the county's local planning authorities, it was agreed that such sites would not be excluded, for the following reasons:

- The Local Nature Recovery Strategy does not instruct what should happen on land; rather, it informs. Therefore, overlap with a potential measure does not prevent development on that land. It does, however, offer direction on what measures could be integrated within the development site to aid nature recovery.
- If allocated sites were removed, it would undermine the integrity of the Strategy and its role in biodiversity net gain – that is, identifying strategically significant areas for nature and informing strategic significance within the metric. The potential measures will also indicate what actions (gains) would be most beneficial. Their removal would result in missed opportunities to steer onsite biodiversity net gain.
- Removal of allocated sites would give the message that nature has no place within development or growth, suggesting that they are incompatible. If planned and designed correctly, necessary development has the potential to contribute to nature recovery efforts and the removal of future sites would undermine this.
- The potential measures mapping identifies opportunities for nature-based solutions, which can assist developers in finding solutions to challenges on site.

For the same reason, sites where development is coming forward were also included.

It was determined that sites where development has already been through the planning process or where construction is underway would be excluded except for measures which fell under urban, successional, connectivity, freshwater and coastal priorities. It was considered that measures under these priorities would still be applicable for newly developed land in the future.

5.5.7 Online tools to spatially capture existing and future nature recovery action

Using online mapping tools, stakeholders were asked to let the project know where in the county nature recovery action was already taking place and where in the county they wished to see action, and what. The intention was to use this information to refine the potential measures mapping, using it as an indication of where gains could be built on and where delivery may be more achievable, based on an expressed interest.

However, although there was a good response and useful information was captured, it was considered too sporadic and incomplete a picture on which to confidently base the mapping of potential measures.

While it was not considered appropriate to use the data to refine the location of potential measures in a strategic context, the data is expected to be useful in the delivery of the Strategy. For instance, the data can be used to indicate where there may already be completed, ongoing or planned work on sites within or neighbouring an area mapped to a potential measure, presenting the opportunity to build on or link up with existing nature recovery efforts. The data also indicates where there are potentially interested landowners and delivery partners that can be linked up to potential measures mapped in the same area.

Hedgehog





Bearded Tit by Jim Higham

5.5.8 Mapping more than one potential measure to the same location

In some instances, more than one measure has been mapped to the same location. There are a number of reasons:

- One measure does not necessarily preclude the delivery of another. The Strategy is aiming to maximise benefits for both biodiversity and wider environmental gains. It is also looking to create a mosaic of different habitats and stages of habitats, as necessary for the recovery of nature and supporting the life stages of many of the county's threatened and vulnerable species.
- The mapping of potential measures has been desk-based and theoretical, albeit with the input of partners and experts who have an in depth understanding of the county's ecology. However, the appropriateness of a measure for a location can only really be guaranteed with up-to-date knowledge and/or assessment of the land itself. Hence, the Strategy sets out the best option or options for nature recovery but does not make assumptions about what measure should be prioritised over another. There should be full consideration before taking action, and ideally with the guidance of a suitable expert/professional.
- Mapping more than one potential measure to a location will support the development of both small-scale (one action, one habitat, one species) project but also those that are larger, long term and more ambitious in scale.
- Preference over measures does not just come from an ecological perspective. There may be some actions that are more palatable to a landowner than others, because of impacts on current and future uses of the land and also the financial benefits of one action over another. Having more than one potential measure mapped to a location, all of which will deliver benefits for nature recovery, maximises the opportunity for an action to be picked up.

5.6 Creating the local habitat map

The local habitat map illustrates the county's areas of particular importance for biodiversity and areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity.

5.6.1 Areas of particular importance for biodiversity

Areas of particular importance for biodiversity are defined by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy statutory guidance as:

- national conservation sites:
 - National Nature Reserve (NNR)
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - Special Protection Areas (SPA)
 - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
 - Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ)
 - Ramsar
- Local Nature Reserves
- Local Wildlife Sites
- areas of irreplaceable habitat – for the purposes of the Strategy mapping, areas of irreplaceable habitat were defined as those included in the biodiversity net gain irreplaceable habitats list:
 - ancient woodland
 - coastal sand dunes
 - ancient and veteran trees
 - spartina saltmarsh swards
 - blanket bog
 - Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub
 - limestone pavements
 - lowland fens



Collectively, the nationally and locally significant sites create the 'areas of particular importance for biodiversity'



Illustration of how the 'areas of particular importance for biodiversity' were created

5.6.2 Areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity

Areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity are where the Strategy proposes effort should be concentrated to restore habitat, to achieve the greatest gains for nature and derive the greatest benefits from a healthy, functioning environment. They are the areas of Kent and Medway where targeted action will enable us to deliver on the priorities laid out by the Strategy.

The first stage in mapping the areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity was the mapping of the potential measures.



Illustration of the initial mapping of potential measures

However, despite best efforts to focus the mapping of potential measures, the resulting draft areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity were considered to have too broad a coverage to satisfy the purpose of the Strategy's spatial element – that being to effectively and efficiently target available resources.

To address this, connectivity modelling was used to refine and target action further, with priority given to potential measures located in areas of low species flow and connectivity bottlenecks and where action would provide buffering/linking of existing areas of particular importance for biodiversity. The rationale for this approach was that a more joined up, connected landscape was the ultimate ambition of the Strategy, if the applied Lawton principles are considered a hierarchy of going from better to joined up.



Only potential measures located in connectivity modelled target areas are retained.

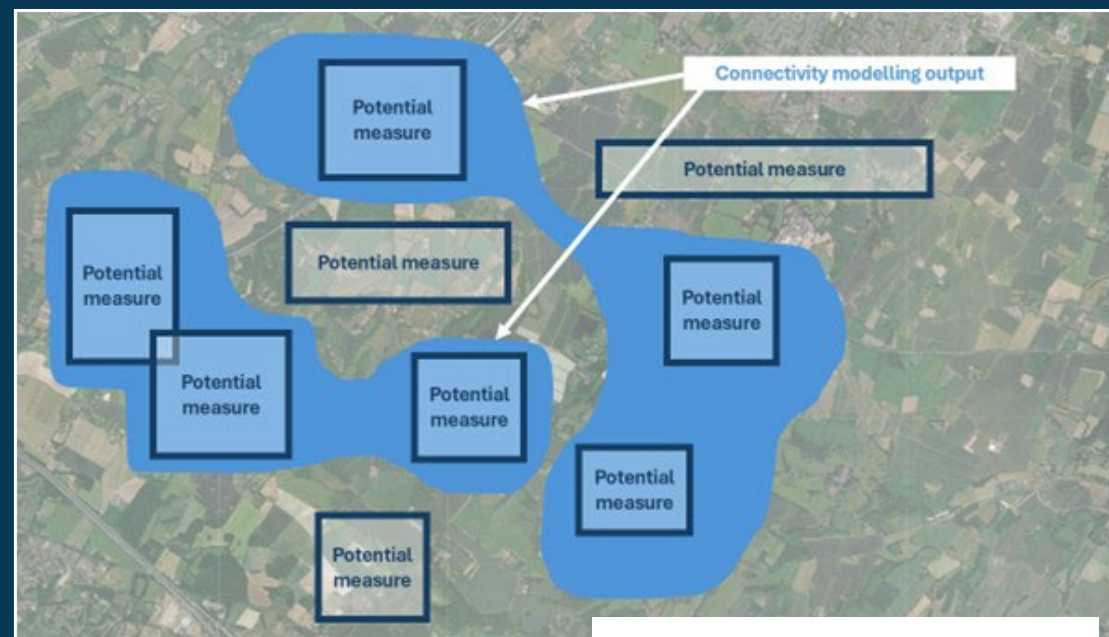
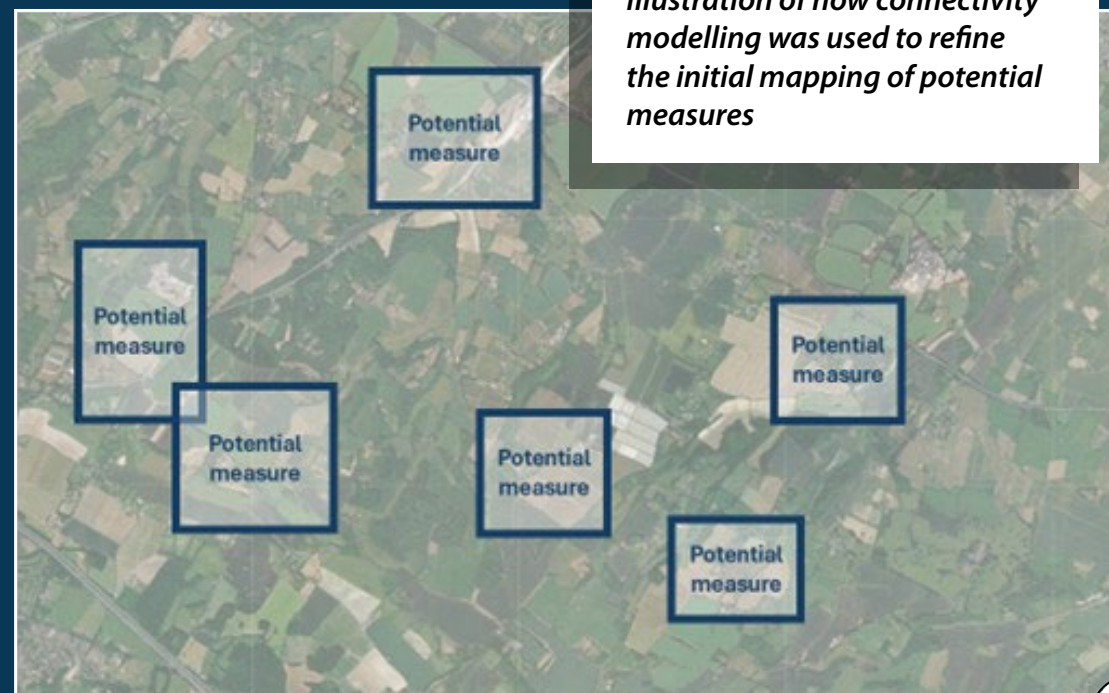
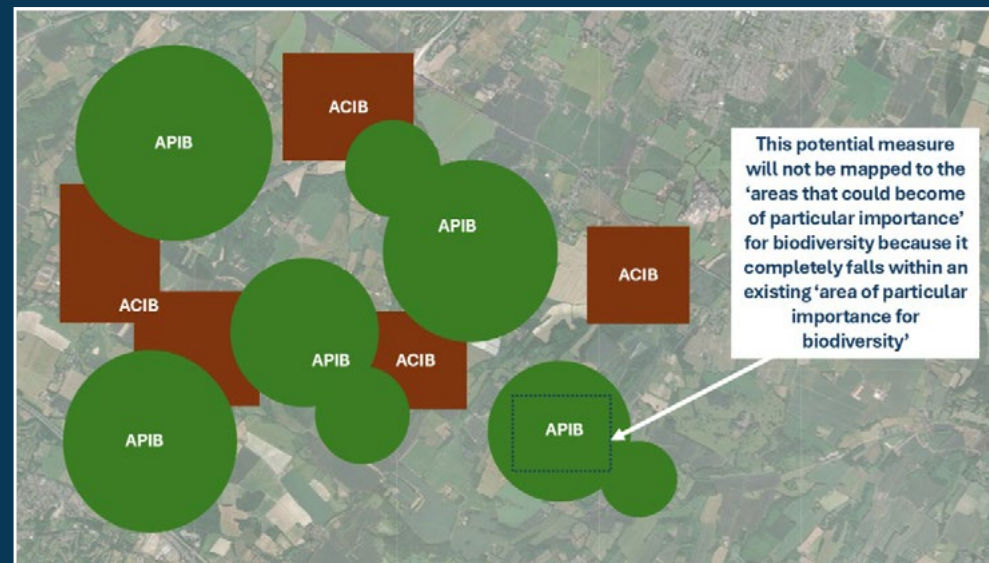
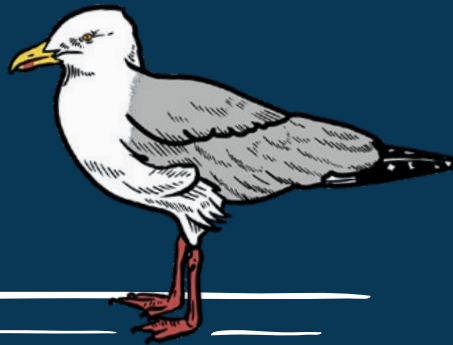


Illustration of how connectivity modelling was used to refine the initial mapping of potential measures

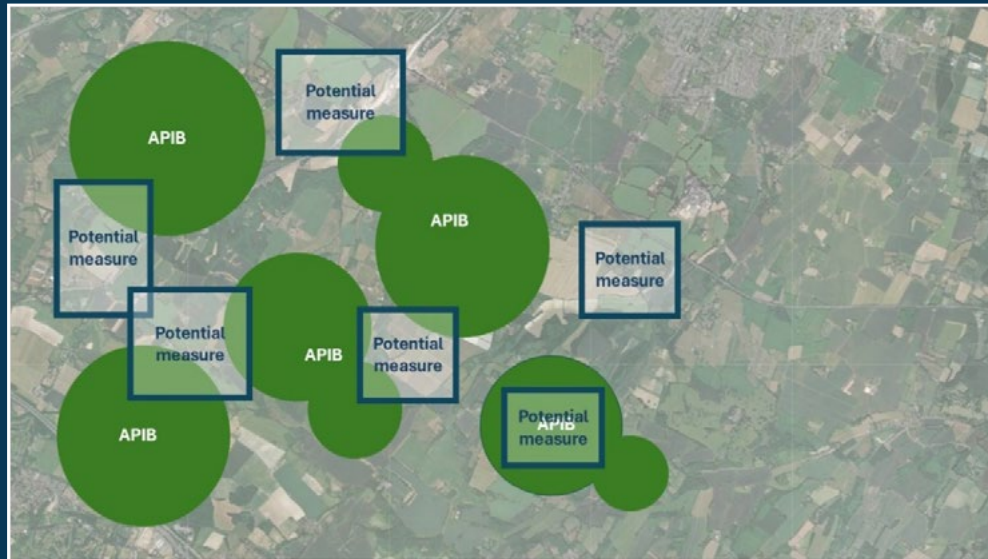




To create the areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity, the refined potential measures mapping was laid over the areas of particular importance for biodiversity to identify where the areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity could not be situated, given that the areas of existing importance cannot overlap with the areas of opportunity.



The resulting mapping layer denotes 'areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity'



Mapped potential measures are clipped so that they don't overlap with the 'areas of particular importance for biodiversity'



Illustration of how the 'areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity' were created

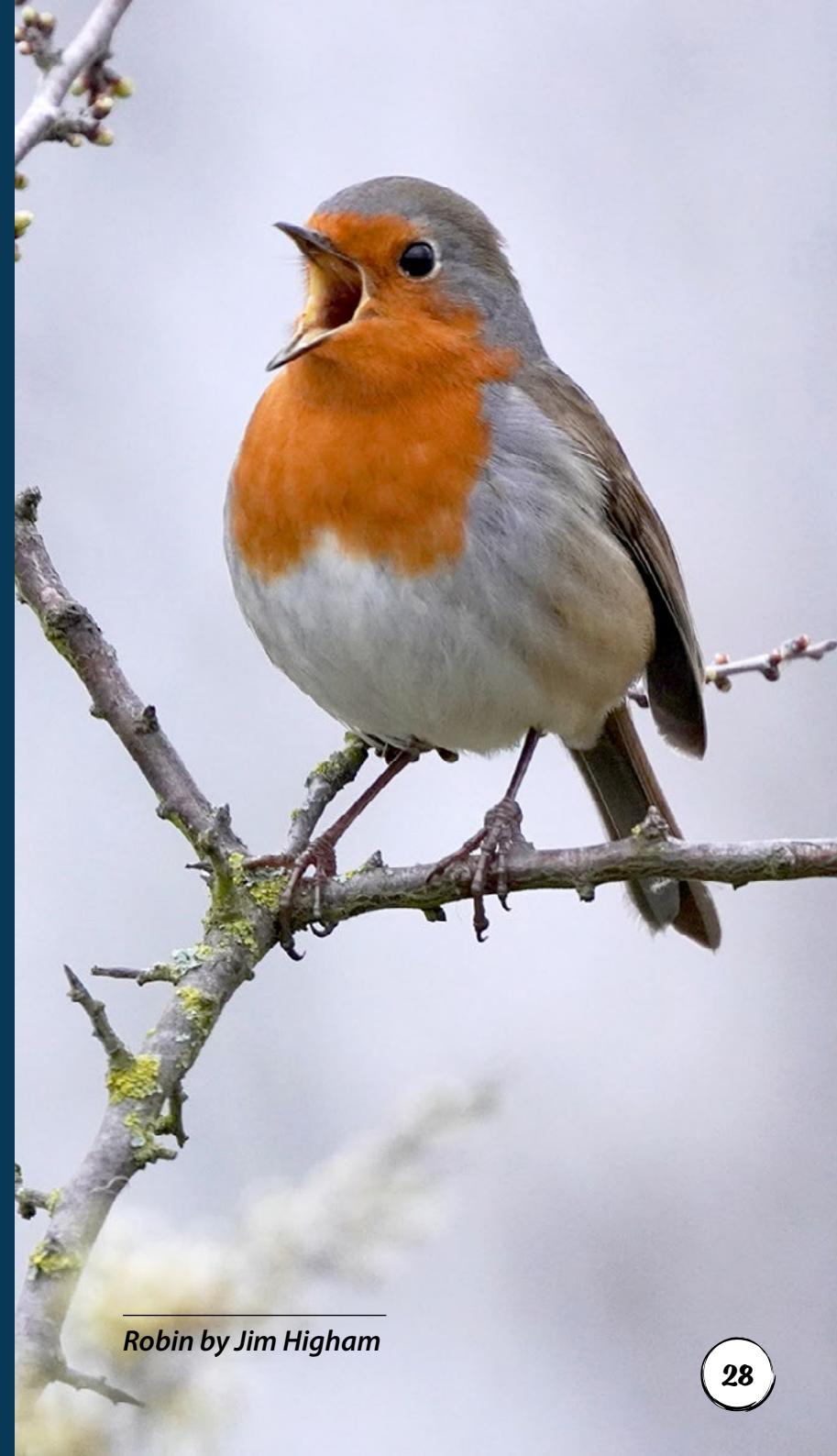
5.6.3 The local habitat map

The local habitat map brings all these mapping components together and presents the:

- location and extent of areas identified as of particular importance for biodiversity (in the illustration below, in green)
- locations where potential measures have been proposed (in the illustration below, in blue outline)
- location and extent of areas identified that could become of particular importance for biodiversity (in the illustration below, in brown).



Illustration of the resulting local habitat map, with all featured components



Robin by Jim Higham

5.7 Identifying the Strategy's priority species

5.7.1 Creating the Local Nature Recovery Strategy species longlist

To identify the county's priority species, first, a longlist of species was compiled. Species on the longlist were selected against Natural England criteria, which were designed to enable Local Nature Recovery Strategies to contribute to the following national species extinction risk targets:

- Halt the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030.
- Increase species abundance by the end of 2042 so that is greater than in 2022 and at least 10% greater than in 2030.
- Reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042, when compared to the risk of species' extinction in 2022.

Species which met the following criteria were to be included on the species longlist:

- Any native species which have been assessed as Red List Threatened or Near Threatened against International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria, at a Great Britain scale.
- Any native species which have not been formally assessed against IUCN Red List criteria but where strong evidence is provided showing that they would meet the criteria for Threatened status in Great Britain.
- Any native species considered to be nationally extinct that has re-established themselves or been rediscovered.
- Any native species which Natural England suggests as suitable candidates for conservation translocation, or any native species already subject to translocation efforts that, on Natural England's advice, need to be scaled up to maximise success.
- Other species of local significance which have not yet been Red List assessed or lack approved Red Lists but for which there is strong evidence – or in the absence of this, authoritative expert opinion – to show that they would meet criteria for Threatened status.

The Natural England guidance notes that there are roughly 2,000 species in England which meet these criteria. When species in Kent were assessed and other species of local significance added, there were 1,503 species in the longlist, demonstrating the value of Kent and Medway for supporting rare, threatened and significant species. This longlist of species for the Strategy area can be found in Appendix 3.2a

5.7.2 Identifying the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priority species

The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy priority species were identified by a technical advisory group comprising 37 of the county's species specialists, including county recorders. The work was led by the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre.

In the first instance, the longlist was assessed to determine which of the species the Local Nature Recovery Strategy could best support. Species fell into three categories:

- 1 Requires better, bigger, more or connected habitat but did not require specific or targeted recovery measures.
- 2 Requires specific and targeted habitat management, improvements in environmental quality and/or bespoke conservation actions.
- 3 Requires better evidence and/or understanding before necessary action can be determined, requires action outside England and/or is a vagrant or occasional visitor.



Those in category 1 were considered to be species that would benefit from the overall delivery of the Strategy's principles and did not require specific habitat measures – 466 species from the longlist were assessed to fall into this category. Those in category 3 were considered to fall outside the scope of the Strategy's influence at this time – 161 species from the longlist were assessed to fall into this category (the Strategy area's species requiring further evidence are listed in Appendix 3.3). Therefore, only species which fell into category 2 (444 species from the longlist) were assessed by the final selection criteria, to create a short list of potential priority species. The selection criteria were:

- urgency of recovery requirements
- significance of Strategy area nationally and internationally to the conservation of the species
- scale of effort required
- associated benefits to other wildlife and the wider environment
- vulnerability to climate change
- species needs support with tracking when they adapt their geographical range or biological cycles to the changing climate
- ability to build on existing local, regional and/or national initiatives
- local expertise and knowledge of other reasons outside these criteria that qualifies the species for shortlisting as a potential priority species

The species shortlist was then considered in depth by the Species Technical Advisory Group to create a 'nominated priority species' list. This list of nominations was the focus of a dedicated workshop, which was attended by additional species experts and delivery partners, and allowed further scrutiny and wider input to what would eventually become the Strategy's priority species. Priority species were selected from the shortlist in consideration of the habitats they were associated with, and the wider benefits action for that species would result in.



Green veined white butterfly by Jim Higham



5.7.3 Presentation of the Kent and Medway priority species

The non-statutory guidance on priority species for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy recommends that only species that require bespoke measures are identified and that these bespoke measures are presented alongside the relevant species. However, acknowledging that many of the habitat measures designed for the benefit of a priority species offer wider benefits to other species of that habitat assemblage, it was determined that these should be embedded in the habitat potential measures.

Consequently, a number of the Kent and Medway priority species, while meeting the criteria as a priority, seemingly do not have dedicated potential measures. These are noted in this chapter as priority species requiring broad habitat measures, and the relevant habitat priority is identified alongside them.

Where a species requires a bespoke measure that will only benefit that particular species, this is noted in this chapter as priority species requiring bespoke measures – the bespoke measures for the priority species are provided in Appendix 3.1.

5.7.4 Mapping potential measures for the Kent and Medway priority species

Mapping of potential measures for the Strategy's priority species has not been developed, due to the complex nature of the bespoke action required.

To aid locating where action could be taken, priority species heat maps were developed for the following habitat assemblages:

Strategy habitat group	Priority species habitat assemblage maps
Grassland habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arable • Chalk grassland • Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh • Heathland • Lowland meadows
Successional habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrub and open mosaic habitat on previously developed land (brownfield)
Woodland, trees and hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodlands • Ancient woodland, wood pasture and parkland and traditional orchard
Freshwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers and streams • Standing open water • Swamp, reedbed and wet woodland
Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban
Coastal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Littoral sediment • Maritime cliff and slope • Sand dunes and vegetated shingle

The maps are based on the density of priority species for the habitat assemblage, enhanced with modelling to predict species density in areas that are unrecorded. The initial maps were reviewed and refined with the county's species experts.

The maps identify the areas considered to offer the most benefits for priority species, using the density of priority species for that habitat assemblage as a proxy.

The maps are indicative and are intended to provide additional and supporting information for delivery. Consequently, they should be used in consultation with species experts.

