

Foreword



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Suffolk's diverse landscape is home to many different species of plants and animals, enriching the lives of those of us who live here, as well as attracting many thousands of visitors every year, who are drawn to its beauty and the opportunities to enjoy the wildlife it offers. However, despite many of our wildlife sites being legally protected for decades, the diversity and abundance of nature across the county continues to decline, as the habitats that plants, animals and fungi depend on become increasingly fragmented and isolated.

To reverse this decline, and to ensure that future generations of Suffolk residents and visitors can continue to enjoy and benefit from a thriving and healthy natural environment, we need to reconnect and expand our wildlife areas, linking them

through our towns and rural areas to help species to move, to feed and maintain healthy populations. We need to make more space for nature in Suffolk, and to do that in a way that will help nature recover and thrive as quickly and successfully as possible. There is no time to waste.

Focusing our collective actions to have the biggest impact is the purpose of this Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Suffolk. It is one of 48 such strategies covering the whole of England, which for each county identify priority areas for actions to support the recovery of nature. These will help to reverse the decline of many species, both locally and nationally, through extending and linking habitats, improving the condition of locally important habitats and creating new 'stepping stones' of habitat in areas where there is little connectivity at present. The strategy also identifies opportunities to deliver the wider environmental benefits that nature provides, such as flood mitigation, alongside improvements for wildlife.

This Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Suffolk is the result of a huge amount of collaboration between many organisations and individuals, all of whom have an interest in and a role to play in helping Suffolk's nature to recover. This has been coordinated through the Norfolk & Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership, led by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, who are the responsible authorities for producing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their respective counties. This collaboration will continue through the partnership to promote and support the delivery of the priorities and measures set out in the strategy. These focus on actions that can be taken 'on

the ground' in Suffolk to help our nature recover and on areas where these actions could have the most significant benefit for nature. There are also many actions that will support nature recovery widely across the county, which everyone can help play a part in.

Nature is critical to all of our lives, and its health and diversity is vital to not only support our ability to limit and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate in Suffolk, but also underpin our physical and mental wellbeing. This includes improved air quality and the benefits of nature-based interventions. The engagement and contributions made to this strategy are testament to the value of collaboration and partnership, and we need to continue to harness and build on that shared commitment to deliver the ambitions set out within it; working together across our communities and with our farmers and land managers, and with businesses, and health providers, and our schools and local government to achieve the recovery of nature in Suffolk.

Introduction



View of the Levington lagoon on the river Orwell at low tide

What is nature recovery?

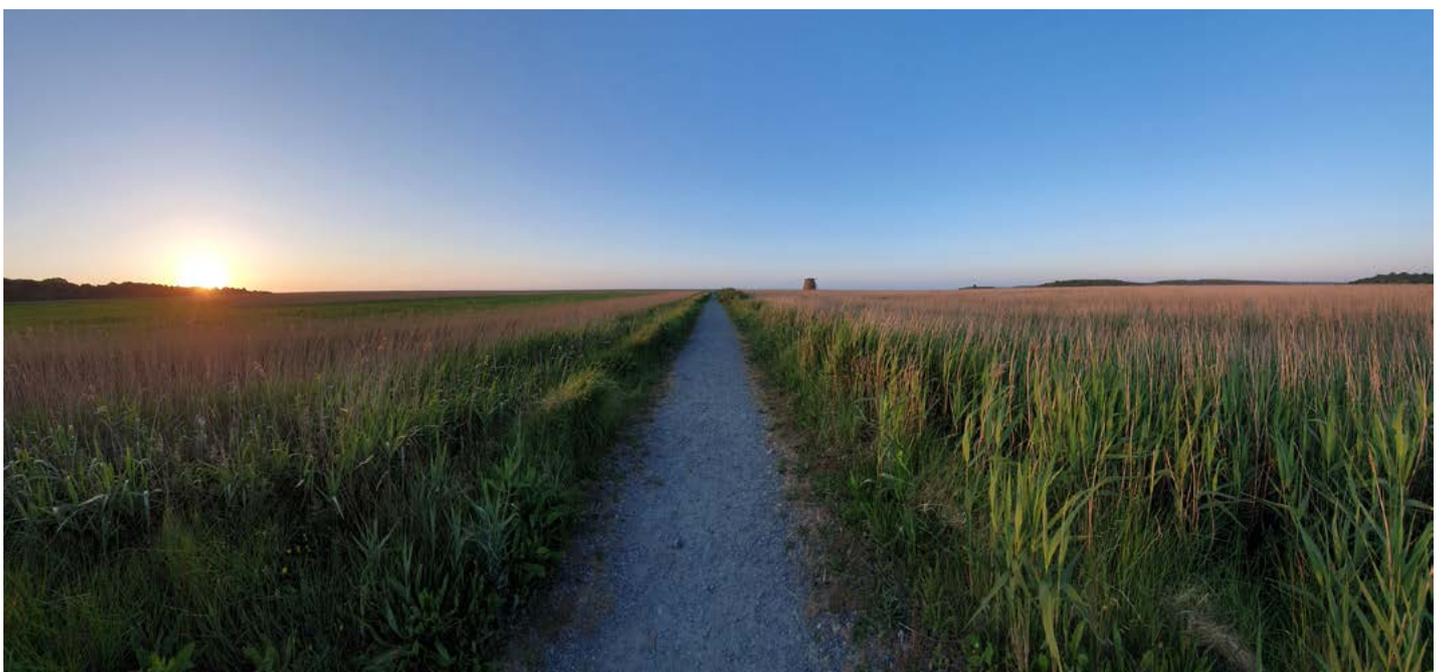
Nature recovery is the creation and restoration of **habitats** and **biodiversity**. This includes wildlife-rich places, **corridors** and **stepping stones** that help populations to recover, grow, move, thrive and adapt to a changing climate.

We will do this by regenerating **wetlands**, reintroducing native species, conserving coastal habitats, and creating more **green and blue spaces** for nature. Sustainable land and coastal management across our county will help to nurture wildlife, improve soil health and produce cleaner water, providing more and better spaces for us to enjoy and connect with nature where we live, work and play. It also supports improved air quality through increased tree cover and reduction of airborne pollutants, delivering benefits for respiratory health and overall health and wellbeing.

Working with nature helps us to provide the resources required, and **nature based solutions** like planting woodlands, restoring rivers and creating wetlands tackle climate impacts while benefiting outdoor recreation through improved water quality and air quality. Cross-sector collaboration that combines local knowledge and science helps revive Suffolk's nature in harmony with its economies and cultural heritage.

Nature recovery is an essential part of our future, as the United Kingdom has been rated as being within the bottom 10% of nature depleted countries in the world.

For nature to recover across Suffolk, we want to highlight the opportunity, ambition and potential available across all sectors to collaborate and contribute. This document intends to support this action and provide guidance and inspiration.



The sun rises over Westwood Marshes in the Walberswick National Nature Reserve

What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) are a new approach to restoring and protecting nature in England [1].

LNRSs are part of a national push to give nature more room to grow. They are a requirement of the Environment Act of 2021 [2]. They focus on highlighting and revitalising natural habitats across Suffolk, including:

- mapping existing important natural areas
- identifying key locations and opportunities for creating or enhancing habitats for maximum environmental benefit
- planning where and how habitats could be established or connected

Forty-eight LNRSs developed across England (**Figure 1**) will collectively form a national **Nature Recovery Network (NRN)**. The LNRS consists of this document, also referred to as the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and the associated mapping tool, referred to as the Local Habitat Map.

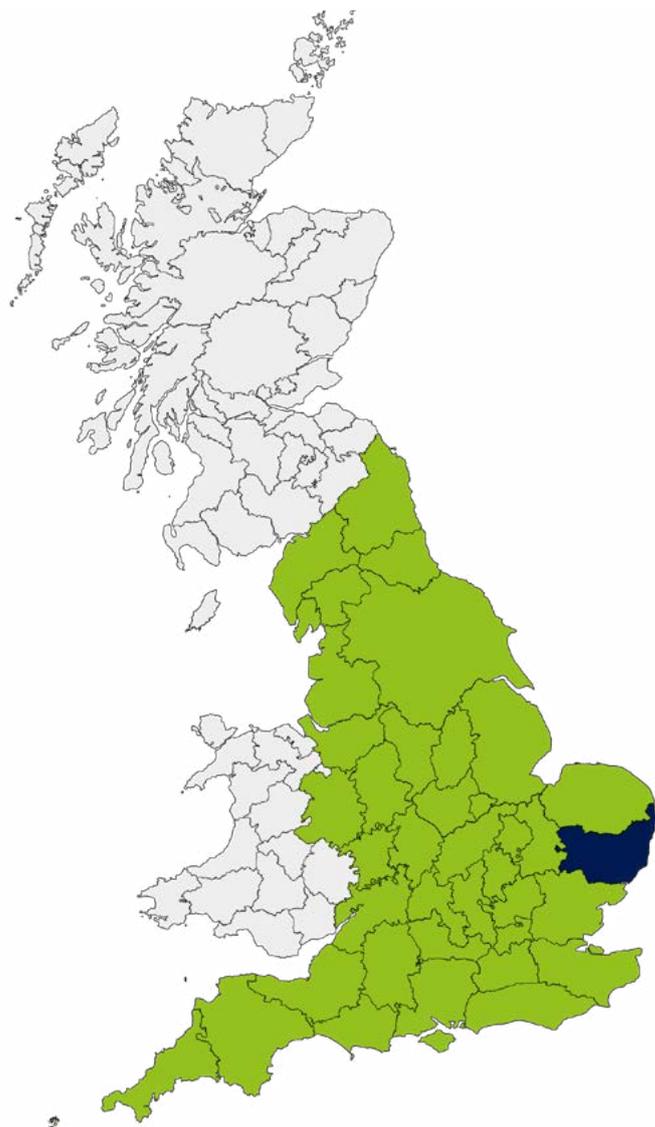
It is considered to be a valuable tool for promoting partnership working across Suffolk to drive nature recovery.

Suffolk's landscape will contribute to this network as it consists of a wide range of habitats, key geographical features and specific areas, shown in **Figure 2**.

As per statutory guidance, the LNRS will not extend into the marine environment beyond the low tide line. However, it is

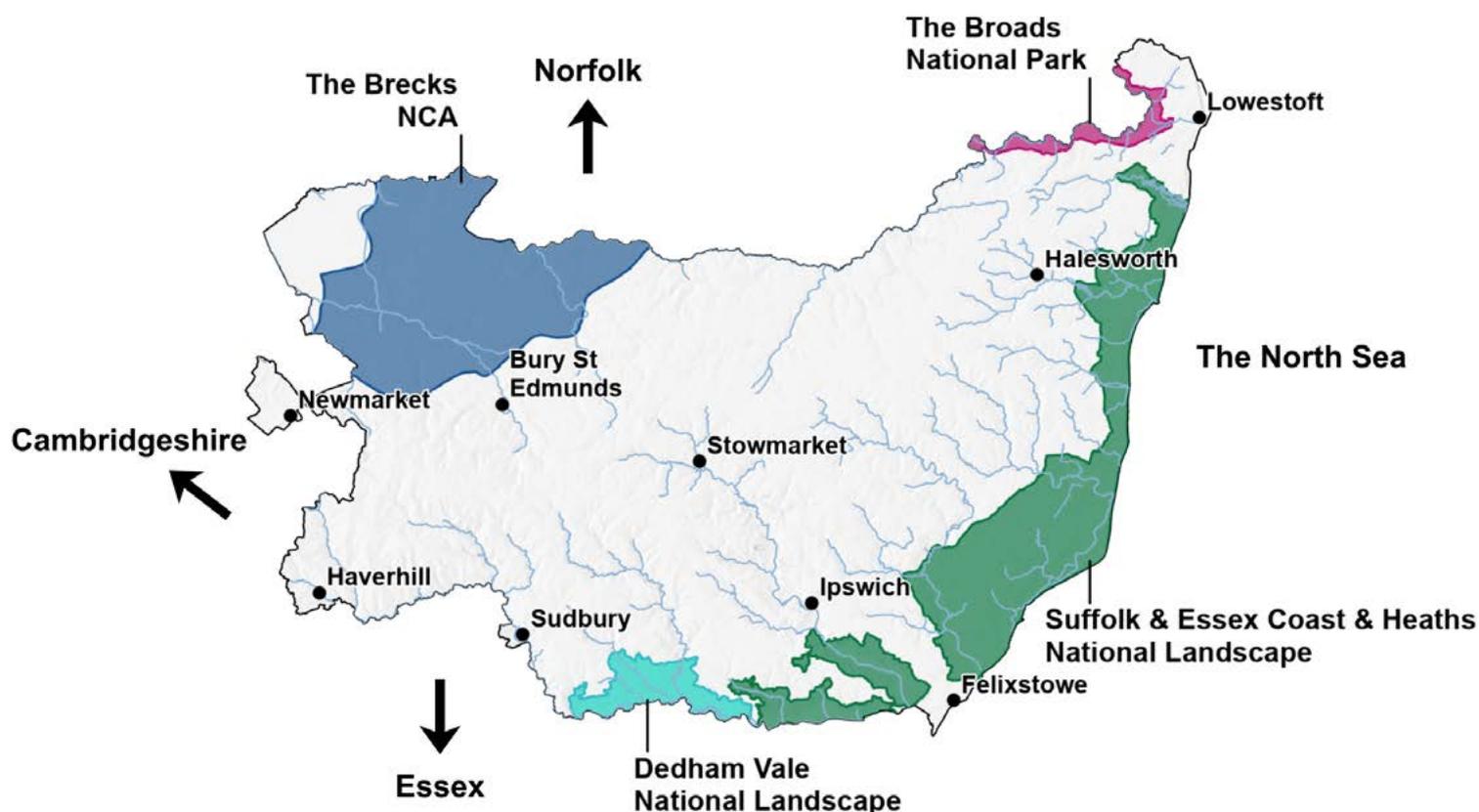
considered that by improving habitat across the landscape, there will be a related benefit to the marine environment. [3].

Figure 1. Forty-eight LNRS Areas in England (green) with Suffolk highlighted (blue).



Overview of Suffolk's LNRS area

Figure 2. Map of Suffolk's LNRS area showing key landscapes: the Brecks National Character Area (NCA), The Broads National Park, Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape, Dedham Vale National Landscape and major waterways.



The strategies aim to expand, improve, and link natural areas, guiding the implementation of environmental priorities and funding like **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) [4]. The LNRS will target where habitat creation will be of 'high

strategic significance', a 15% uplift in the biodiversity metric (using the **strategic significance multiplier**) will be applied if the measures and actions set out in the strategy are followed.

What should the LNRS be used for?

The contents of the LNRS link into legal duties for delivering environmental factors across the county and the country. These include:

- the duty in Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 [5] for **public bodies** to 'seek to further' the purposes of Protected Landscapes (eg conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes and to 'protect and improve the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the area' in National Parks)
- the duty of all **planning authorities** to 'have regard to' Local Nature Recovery Strategies in preparing relevant plans, which will be strengthened to 'take account of' once the relevant sections of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 are activated
- the strengthened duty of all public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity as embedded in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 [44]
- acting as one source of evidence to inform the preparation of plans that will determine where development should occur (these plan preparation processes have their own consultation and engagement requirements so that different needs for land can be balanced by the plan maker). This can allow biodiversity investigations to be part of the earliest stages of planning.

What should the LNRS not be used for?

LNRSs are not designed to be prescriptive but are tools to drive forward action to recover nature. They will not be used to:

- require land managers or owners to make specific proposed land use changes – this will remain their choice
- place new restrictions on developing land or act as a specific barrier or blocker for proposals
- identify areas to be given legal nature protections that create restrictions on how land can be used or managed – LNRSs do not propose new nature reserves or any other kind of legal designation
- prevent nature conservation work in areas not prioritised by the LNRS
- determine regulatory decisions, such as the result of **Environmental Impact Assessments** – they can be a source of evidence to inform decision making but determination must still be made on the basis of relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

Who created Suffolk's LNRS?

Suffolk County Council has been designated as the responsible authority for developing Suffolk's LNRS. Under the shared banner of 'The Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership' (NSNRP) (visit the NSNRP website at www.nsnrp.org and see **Appendix 5**), the Suffolk LNRS has been delivered by working closely with:

- Suffolk district and borough councils
- Broads Authority
- Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape and Dedham National Landscape and Stour Valley Project
- nature conservation organisations
- landowners and land managers
- local people, groups and stakeholders
- private companies and local businesses.

Working with neighbouring Norfolk County Council, the Suffolk and Norfolk LNRSs have been developed in a joined-up way to reflect the shared natural habitats and species that sit across both counties. Close working with Essex and Cambridgeshire County Councils has ensured cohesion across shared boundaries.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) guidance encouraged involving diverse participants in the LNRS process. Steering and expert groups provided advice, while

stakeholders like nature specialists, community groups, landowners and local councils shaped the strategy through targeted engagement.

Six Themed Working Groups (TWG) were established to give as many expert stakeholders and interest groups as possible the opportunity to help influence and shape the content of the LNRS, as well as providing valuable technical input and expertise. These were:



Mapping



Land Management



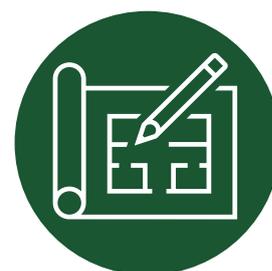
Species and Biodiversity



Water and Coast



Planning Suffolk



Planning Norfolk

Membership of each TWG included existing partners with whom there were already well-established working relationships as well as wider groups and organisations where new collaborative relationships have been formed.

Alongside specialist engagement, input and suggestions were sought from the wider public throughout the process of developing the strategy. Involving the public alongside professional opinions ensured a wide range of perspectives were included.

To reach all the different groups, engagement was conducted through multiple formats. A summary of engagement across the timeframe of the LNRS development is given in **Figure 3**.



Events (13)

- Public event stands
- Talks and panel sessions
- Site visits and networking meetings



Presentations (34)

- Presentations to organisations and businesses
- Invitations to speak at partnerships
- Presentations to stakeholders



Digital engagement

- Social media posts
- News updates on websites
- Email information distribution



Surveys (2)

- Public opinion surveys
- Surveys for target groups
- Public consultation



Webinars (12)

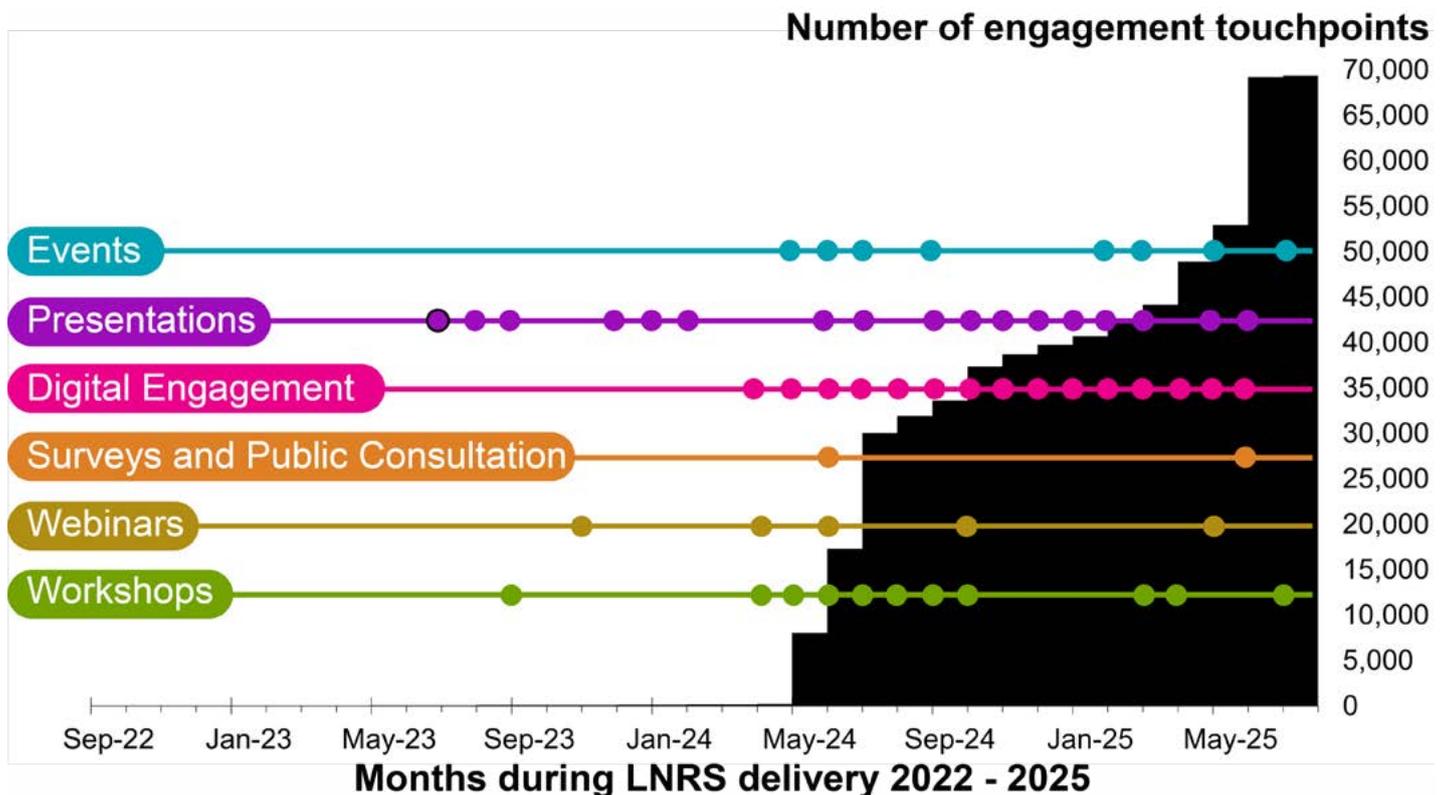
- Webinars with guest speakers for public and professionals
- Online roundtables



Workshops (16)

- Themed Working Groups
- Focus groups
- Collaboration discussions and data sharing

Figure 3. Numbers of people engaged through Suffolk-led and NSNRP efforts during LNRS delivery.



Numbers of engagement for Suffolk-led and NSNRP activities during the LNRS delivery. Engagement activities – events (teal), presentations (purple), digital engagement (pink), surveys and public consultations (orange), webinars (gold), and workshops (green) – are displayed below with timelines indicating their occurrence from September 2022 to July 2025. The black area represents cumulative engagement, showing the growing reach to over 69,000 engagement touchpoints – that is, the individual moments where people connected with the project (such as attending an event, completing a survey, or interacting online) – through these activities and stakeholder interactions over the delivery timeline.

In Spring 2024 land managers and the public were asked which species and habitats they thought were the most important to prioritise in the LNRS; 1647 people responded to the surveys.

To ensure the LNRS represents the full county, all the survey suggestions were included on the longlist for biodiversity **priorities** and were given the same consideration as those included using a data-based approach or presented by conservation experts (see further information in **Part C**).

The full longlist can be found on the [NSNRP website](#).

Public survey responses flagged pollinators and hedgehogs as key species for residents in Suffolk – you can find them both in our lists of priorities (**Part C**).

Suffolk County Council greatly appreciates the valuable contributions and perspectives provided by all those involved in developing this plan, including:

individuals who participated in public surveys, events and workshops
landowners who responded to surveys and joined workshops
local subject matter experts from the NSNRP and its steering committee
Natural England, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.

Community experts and organisations have contributed case studies that demonstrate successful nature recovery in practice. These case studies have been included to highlight existing efforts and best practices, and to support the potential implementation of future projects.

Funding to support the creation of Suffolk's LNRS has been provided by [The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(Defra\)](#).



Suffolk Wildlife Trust Wild Tots group enjoy bug hunting

How can the LNRS support the people of Suffolk?

The strategy outlines a plan for how everyone in Suffolk – from individuals and local communities to landowners, local governments, businesses, and national agencies – can come together to better restore nature through planning and on-the-ground action.

For everyone in Suffolk the LNRS will:

- inform how all public authorities in England meet their legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity, through **land management** and regulatory decisions
- seek to enhance the positive effects of nature on community wellbeing that contribute to improved physical and mental health and wellbeing, including direct and indirect benefits like clean air, water and food
- help identify key areas within the local community to prioritise nature recovery efforts while fostering community ownership at various levels, from nest boxes to nature reserves, so everyone can get involved
- promote active travel by supporting access improvements and integrating green corridors and trails that connect green spaces, encouraging walking and cycling and supporting healthier and more sustainable lifestyles. This can include use of Public Rights of Way, National Trails and the King Charles III England Coast Path
- provide potential locations for initiatives aimed at creating and enhancing habitats
- aid in aligning **local and neighbourhood plans** and other spatial strategies with countywide objectives, and informing priority actions in future plans
- support funding applications for nature recovery projects
- encourage local community groups, schools and homeowners focused on nature recovery.



For land managers the LNRS can:

- signpost ways to help enhance and restore nature, providing a strategic spatial guide for habitats and species recovery and supporting environmental funding schemes under **Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)** such as **Countryside Stewardship**, Sustainable Farming Incentive, Farming in Protected Landscapes and landscape recovery schemes, enabling large-scale positive changes for nature
- support **sustainable agriculture**, **flood risk management**, water management (both availability and quality) and **carbon capture** using measures such as planting trees and improving soil health
- identify the highest priority opportunity areas for **habitat creation** and **connectivity**, helping to channel BNG investment
- provide guidance on actions to achieve nature recovery – linking efforts across the county for expanding and connecting habitats, including development and implementation of Protected Landscape Management Plans.

For environmental Non-Governmental Organisations the LNRS aims to:

- facilitate the connection of long-term goals and generate greater ambition for nature recovery across partnership organisations
- further promote nature and wildlife recovery projects and strategic objectives including development and implementation of Protected Landscape Management Plans.
- help prioritise areas, **potential measures** and collaborative efforts for nature recovery, including species monitoring and evidence gathering as appropriate.



Heather in full bloom on Suffolk heathland at the end of summer

For planners and developers the LNRS can:

- help to ensure planning decisions are informed by nature recovery priorities and follow best practices for enhancing biodiversity
- assist in aligning and developing local and neighbourhood plans, green infrastructure delivery (including links to the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework [45], contributing to Suffolk-wide collaborative action between local authorities and ensuring development uplifts and safeguards the county's natural assets
- support decision making for off-site potential for BNG
- provide a series of potential measures for embedding nature into urban and new infrastructure such as stormwater management, contributing to climate resilience and delivering the most suitable nature-based solutions for Suffolk in the right places.

Planners have a legal requirement to 'have regard to' or 'take account' of the content of the LNRS (determined by the activation of the LURA, 2023), alongside other relevant objectives, to ensure nature recovery is properly reflected in the planning system [6].

The key documentation is available on the Natural environment guidance page of the GOV.UK website but is summarised below:

- local planning authorities should be aware of mapped areas and proposed measures in the relevant LNRS and consider how these are reflected in their local plan

- the LNRS is an evidence base that may be a 'material consideration' in planning; the decision-maker determines its relevance based on circumstances.

For local businesses the LNRS:

- signals Suffolk is open for **green investment**, showing that nature is at the heart of a successful local economy
- unlocks opportunities and provides supporting evidence for businesses and tourism to meet environmental and social goals while driving economic growth
- has the potential to promote and encourage a balanced approach to private and public investment into ecosystem creation and restoration, guiding investment and donation to specific projects.

Why does nature in Suffolk need recovering?

Suffolk's habitats have been shaped by centuries of human interaction with the land and sea. They have been continually managed in ways to provide us with shelter, food, water, fuel, natural materials and recreation. Over time the majority of our habitats and species have undergone significant dynamic changes shaped by a range of environmental and social factors. Evidence from the last 50 years indicates that nature is in decline and we have experienced a significant loss of biodiversity [7]. The loss and degradation of nature has contributed to climate breakdown, as carbon dioxide is released through the loss and degradation of all habitat types, or is not absorbed effectively due to changes in the landscape. Contributing factors include:

- intensive agricultural practices
- increased demand on water and other natural resources
- air and water pollution
- **invasive non-native species**
- animal and plant diseases
- degradation of peat
- development and new infrastructure,

- including large scale energy projects
- **fragmentation** of habitats
- loss of coastal habitats
- climate change
- loss of traditional land management techniques
- reliance on artificial pesticides and herbicides
- changes in the use of natural resources
- increased recreational pressures.

On average, species abundance in England has fallen by about one-third (32%) since 1970 [7]. Among UK species in Suffolk that are classified as critically endangered or **endangered** are:

- European eel
- Starry Breck-lichen
- Turtle dove
- Barberry carpet moth
- Suffolk lungwort
- Natterjack toad

Lots more are '**vulnerable**' (threatened with extinction) or '**near threatened**' (close to being endangered in the near future) – see **Appendix 2** for further details. As indicated in the State of Nature report from 2023 [7], the UK overall has seen significant habitat impacts, with only one in seven habitats assessed as being important for wildlife reported to be in a good condition.



European eel
Anguilla anguilla



Barberry carpet moth
Buella asterella



Suffolk lungwort
Pulmonaria obscura



Starry Breck-lichen
Pelophylax lessonae



Turtle dove
Streptopelia turtur



Natterjack toad
Epidalea calamita

What can nature recovery achieve: Maple Farm

Maple Farm is a 400-acre, family-run farm in Kelsale, Suffolk. Organic for over 20 years, hens roam freely, meadows are grazed by visiting herds of sheep and cattle, and the market garden produces year-round fruit and vegetables in soils enriched by green manures, composts and compost teas.

Research suggests that organic farming, ie without pesticides or herbicides, helps the most threatened wildlife species to survive and recover. Organic farming using regenerative farming methods enables Maple Farm to produce food, capture carbon and build biodiversity all at the same time.

How did they do it?

Regenerative organic methods are used to improve soil health, boost water retention, and support natural insect predators.

The purchase of a stone flour mill has allowed the farm to sell their own grain as flour, increasing their margins. This also results in lots of byproducts to feed the free-range hens enabling soya-free egg production. This, in a small way, addresses the global issue of widespread and destructive soya production for livestock feed.

Creating healthy, fertile soil

Soil health has been prioritised - planting fields with deep-rooting, fertility building crops like clover and grazing these with hens or other livestock to improve soil structure and drainage. The fields are

rarely ploughed and shallow ploughing is practiced to maintain soil structure. Small machinery is also used to avoid compacting the land.

Intercropping

A wide range of different crops are grown, often side by side to compliment and protect each other e.g. tomatoes and basil. This helps to keep plants disease and pest free without having to use pesticides.

Agroforestry

Thousands of trees have been planted in rows within the fields. These trees help to maintain optimum soil temperatures, moisture and fertility. They store carbon, provide diverse habitats for beneficial insects to support nearby crops, and they give shade and shelter to the hens. In time, they'll provide valuable timber and nuts and apples.

Conservation and restoration

Many miles of hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been replanted, vital habitat for nightingales. Over ten miles of wildflower and grass field margins have been created, many ponds have been restored (there are 32 natural dew ponds in total). Stubble is retained over the winter months for wild bird habitats and areas are planted specifically for winter bird feed. Permanent pastures have been restored and many spaces left wild where life can thrive undisturbed.



Agroforestry in action at Maple Farm, demonstrating the varied planting regimes

What has been achieved?

The fields of flowering vetches and clovers are a haven for different species of threatened bees and other pollinating insects. The farm is host to many bird species, including yellowhammers, nightingales and skylarks, which have been victims of modern agricultural methods.

Ponds welcome wildfowl, while on and beneath the water great crested newts, grass snakes, dragon and damsel flies are found.

This work creates good jobs in the countryside and the farm supplies healthy food for the community. Most of what is grown is sold through the Maple Farm store. The rest goes to local restaurants and a few shops who support local production.

What's next?

Maple Farm will continue to develop and share experiences with a growing number of farmers that are interested in these techniques. They are keen to support the development of farm clusters that will be vitally important to promote farming methods that encourage the recovery of nature and that maintain and support rural jobs and communities.

The farm will seek further innovations to find new profitable niches such as growing wildflower seed and other high value crops. The team at Maple Farm are keen to prove that small family farms can be very profitable if they behave differently.

Find out more by visiting
www.maplefarmkelsale.co.uk

Community conservation: Little Ouse Headwaters Project

Founded in 2002, the Little Ouse Headwaters Project (LOHP) is an award-winning initiative that brings local people together to protect, manage and celebrate a special landscape of biological, cultural and historic value.

The project focuses on a complex of fens, wet woodland and grassland along 5 km of river valley on the Norfolk-Suffolk border close to the villages of Thelnetham and Garboldisham. Alongside conservation activities they run social events, guided walks, talks and an annual art exhibition.

The project's core aim is the creation and restoration of wetlands, including rare calcareous fen habitat which is of national significance for its plants. All of the work is based on the principle of 'people working with and enjoying nature', both to restore and offer access to tranquil countryside.

Who's involved?

LOHP has a membership of approximately 200 local residents, ably coordinated by the Conservation Manager. Volunteers are fundamental to the ethos of LOHP and help manage the land and with weekly work parties as well as organising events.

LOHP works in collaboration with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and is a partner in the Waveney and Little Ouse pilot Landscape

Recovery Project (WaLOR). Several areas of fen are leased from the local villages 'poor's trust'. Parts of the land are SSSI or or Special Area of Conservation (SAC) so the project also works closely with Natural England.

LOHP has received long-term support from both the National Heritage Lottery (NHL) and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation along with various local charities and trusts and their own members. The project works with graziers and, where possible, local contractors to deliver management aims.

How do they do it?

The development phase of the project involved extensive consultation and engagement with landowners (farmers) to secure buy-in for an ambitious vision for landscape scale habitat and ecosystem restoration. The innovative approaches being taken by the project include:

- use of natural capital and ecosystem services metrics to quantify the public benefits delivered by proposed habitat and ecosystem restoration and land use change,
- developing a bespoke approach to valuing these to make their delivery attractive to landowners and competitive with other land management options without undermining food production,
- developing the legal and business structures to enable multiple landowners to pool the ecosystem services (or credits) they can offer and sell them through a single legal entity.

Planned habitat and ecosystem restoration includes 'Stage Zero' river restoration on a section of the River Waveney just upstream of Roydon Fen nature reserve.



Volunteers clearing fen vegetation

This would see the river restored to its natural, meandering course from its current canalised channel alongside the restoration of a functional floodplain and wetland habitats.

What have they achieved?

LOHP have purchased 31 hectares of land and currently lease an additional 46ha. Habitat management is fine-tuned to the requirements of individual areas, wherever possible restoring rich communities of fenland plants. Ongoing monitoring shows that the diversity of wetland vegetation is now far higher as a result of this management.

Amongst the most spectacular successes has been the restoration of an area now known as 'New Fen', purchased with a NLHF grant in 2014. Originally, this was a tree nursery and a degraded fen that had become closed-canopy willow scrub. Clearance of the planted trees has created open woodland and scrub, and removal of the willows has led to the emergence of a remarkably rich fen flora containing southern marsh orchid, marsh lousewort, yellow rattle and meadow rue.

All of this has been achieved in less than 10 years thanks to a massive volunteer effort.

What's next?

As well as the ongoing maintenance of restored areas, the next major project is the creation of a network of diverse ponds across the sites. This will involve the creation of many new ponds and the restoration of existing ponds over a 5-year period. To address wider landscape pressures the project is contributing to the development of WaLOR to ensure their stewardship is successful in the decades to come.

A longer-term aim is to work with others to establish a more natural continuous river corridor providing extensive wildlife habitat, carbon storage and a range of other benefits.

Find out more by visiting www.lohp.org.uk