



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include

Date: August 2021

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



© Crown copyright 2021

This information is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Consultation Coordinator, Defra

2nd Floor, Foss House, Kings Pool,

1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX

Or email: consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/defra

Contents

Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include	1
Executive summary	4
Introduction	6
Background to consultation.....	7
What are Local Nature Recovery Strategies?	7
How does the Government intend Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be used?	8
Piloting of Local Nature Recovery Strategies	10
Why we are consulting.....	12
Consultation Questions	13
The procedure to be followed in the preparation and publication, and review and republication, of Local Nature Recovery Strategies	13
Information to be included in a Local Nature Recovery Strategy	25
How to respond.....	33

Executive summary

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. The requirement for there to be Local Nature Recovery Strategies, what they are and how they should generally work will be established by the Environment Bill once it completes its current passage through Parliament.

The area covered by each Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be set by the Defra Secretary of State, who will also appoint a "responsible authority" for each to lead its preparation. The Defra Secretary of State will also be able to produce regulations on the process for preparing, publishing, reviewing and republication of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and guidance on what each Strategy should contain. Put simply, the regulations will set the requirements that all "responsible authorities" must follow when preparing and updating their Strategy and the guidance will describe in greater detail what they should be seeking to produce.

The purpose of this consultation is to gather views on key questions that will help Government produce both the regulations and the guidance swiftly after the Environment Bill becomes law.

The consultation includes an overview of what Local Nature Recovery Strategies are and how Government intends for them to be used. The questions themselves focus first on the process (regulations) and then the content (guidance) of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Questions are preceded by an explanation of the issue to which they relate, indicating what aspects of Government's approach to implementing Local Nature Recovery Strategies has already been decided and what remains to be established.

Government's overall ambition is that Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be a powerful new tool that will help the public, private and voluntary sectors work more effectively together for nature's recovery, and enable collective effort to be focussed where it will have most benefit. Key to achieving this will be creating genuine local collaboration with a partnership of organisations and individuals working closely with each "responsible authority". The regulations and guidance, which are the focus of this consultation, have an important role in establishing this, and in making sure that Local Nature Recovery Strategies are shaped to work with the funding mechanisms and decision making processes that will drive their delivery.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are an important part of an ambitious package of measures being introduced by the Environment Bill to reverse nature's decline. Environmental Improvement Plans and legally-binding targets, including the additional target for species abundance for 2030, will establish long-term policy direction and ambition. Biodiversity net gain will drive investment in nature from the development sector whilst the strengthened "biodiversity duty" will make sure the public sector plays a leading role. Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Sites Strategies will drive a more

strategic approach to planning for the needs of our most precious species and places, whilst conservation covenants will strengthen the ability of organisations and individuals to ensure their land will be managed for nature in the longer term. Local Nature Recovery Strategies have been designed to work with all of these measures and to help link them together in a coherent and effective way.

Introduction

This consultation seeks views on the implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, an important new policy contained in the Environment Bill. Seeking views while the Environment Bill is still being considered by Parliament will enable this measure to be implemented swiftly after the Bill receives Royal Assent. References to clause numbers in this consultation are to those listed in the [Environment Bill as amended in Lords Committee](#).

The Environment Bill will enable the Defra Secretary of State to make regulations about the procedures that must be followed and to issue guidance that must be considered by those bodies to whom these new duties apply. This consultation seeks to explain the purpose of the regulations and guidance and to gather views on what approach they should take on key issues. Responses to the consultation will then inform the preparation of these two key documents.

Whilst the regulations and guidance will only apply directly to specific public authorities (in most cases these are likely to be English local authorities) they will affect a broad range of other groups and individuals. The purpose of Local Nature Recovery Strategies is to help reverse an ongoing decline of biodiversity in England, an issue of considerable public interest with important economic and societal implications. Local Nature Recovery Strategies will achieve this by driving greater consideration of and planning for the action needed for nature to recover; providing the foundation of a national Nature Recovery Network. This will encourage direct change in how all public authorities act as decision makers, regulators and landowners. Local Nature Recovery Strategies will also enable better targeting of public and private funds to encourage action for nature and the wider environment. This will ultimately inform what funding to make environmental improvements landowners and managers will be able to access.

Background to consultation

What are Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of spatial strategies for nature, which will cover the whole of England. They are established by clauses 100 to 104 of the Environment Bill and are designed as tools to drive more coordinated, practical and focussed action to help nature.

Each Strategy will, for the area that it covers;

- agree priorities for nature's recovery,
- map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

The production of each Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be evidence-based, locally led and collaborative, to create a network of shared plans that public, private and voluntary sectors can all help to deliver. This will provide a locally owned foundation to developing and underpinning the [Nature Recovery Network](#); identifying the places which, once action has been taken on the ground, will enable the Network to grow over time. This in turn will help achieve wider environmental objectives (like carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change or managing flood risk) and contribute to green economic recovery objectives.

The Government anticipates that there will be roughly 50 Local Nature Recovery Strategies which together will cover the whole of England with no gaps and no overlaps. Precise boundaries will be established by the Defra Secretary of State on a case-by-case basis after Royal Assent of the Bill, so that each and every Local Nature Recovery Strategy covers an area that is both large enough to plan for nature recovery across landscapes and meaningful to local people. It is anticipated that in many cases there will be one Local Nature Recovery Strategy per county (or equivalent) but individual geographies will be set according to an assessment of local circumstances.

The Defra Secretary of State will also appoint a “responsible authority” to lead production of each Strategy from the list of potential public bodies set out in clause 101 of the Bill. By and large they will be public bodies that will have a strong knowledge of the local area and established democratic mandates, ensuring the necessary legitimacy and status to lead a collaborative process with other local partner organisations.

How does the Government intend Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be used?

The creation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies was announced in [government's response to the 2019 public consultation on net gain](#) which revealed strong support for maps to guide the provision of compensatory habitat. The Environment Bill, in addition to establishing Local Nature Recovery Strategies, will make delivering biodiversity net gain a mandatory part of the development process. Off-site habitat enhancement will be required when a development is not able to accommodate the required increase in biodiversity on the development site itself. The [biodiversity metric](#) – which calculates biodiversity value (in units) before and after development – includes a 15% uplift in units generated in locations proposed by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to encourage developers to focus on these places where the benefit will be greatest.

The 2019 net gain consultation response also indicated government's intention that Local Nature Recovery Strategies would have a broader role in the land use **planning system** than supporting net gain; as an important source of evidence for local planning authorities to use in preparation of their Local Plans. Last summer the government published for consultation the Planning for the Future White Paper which proposed substantial reform of the planning system. The White Paper highlighted Local Nature Recovery Strategies as an example of how the reformed planning system could play a proactive role in promoting environmental recovery and long-term sustainability. Defra and MHCLG have been working closely on proposals for planning reform to consider what future role Local Nature Recovery Strategies should play.

The Environment Bill also includes a strengthening of the existing [duty on public authorities to conserve biodiversity](#). Additional requirements include a specific duty on all public authorities to “have regard” to relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and a duty for specified public bodies to report every five years on what action they have taken.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are also intended to support the delivery of wider environmental objectives. “Nature based solutions” refers to the use of nature and natural processes to address wider environmental or societal problems. Examples include restoring peatlands to slow the flow of water into river systems to reduce the risk of flooding, or planting trees near rivers to limit soil erosion that impacts on water quality. The benefits and policies supporting the planting and protection of trees, as well as the restoration of peat, are outlined further in the recently published England Trees Action Plan and England Peat Action Plan respectively. Each Local Nature Recovery Strategy will map specific opportunities for taking priority action for nature recovery and the use of “**nature-based solutions**” to wider environmental problems like flooding, climate change mitigation and adaptation or poor water quality. This will help direct efforts on the ground and enable funding and resources for meeting specific environmental objectives to be used more efficiently and effectively in the support of nature recovery.

Government is developing **future schemes that reward the delivery of environmental benefits** to replace the agri-environment schemes created as part of the Common

Agricultural Policy. The proposed Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery schemes will both involve target financial incentives towards the locations and activities where these will have the most environmental benefit. It is intended that Local Nature Recovery Strategies will play a critical role in identifying the locations and prioritising the activities that will be eligible for funding under both these future schemes.

In preparing their Local Nature Recovery Strategy, it is intended that each “responsible authority” will work closely with relevant public, private and voluntary sector organisations to draw on this collective expertise. Each Strategy should also reflect collective knowledge of relevant planned or ongoing nature recovery activity, enabling Local Nature Recovery Strategies to improve integration between existing efforts to improve the environment, for example, by incorporating land management initiatives being taken to improve water quality that will also benefit nature.

Government’s overall ambition is that Local Nature Recovery Strategies will become the new focal point for a broad range of land use and management activity, and in so doing deliver a step-change in the effectiveness of the action we are taking for nature’s recovery and associated environmental improvement.

The global coronavirus pandemic has also underlined the important benefits to public health and wellbeing from access to nature and green spaces. The government expects that public authorities will wish to use the process of creating their Local Nature Recovery Strategy to also identify opportunities to increase access to nature whilst supporting its recovery. This could help build local support for action for nature recovery and appreciation of its value in the longer-term. The government’s guidance on Local Nature Recovery Strategies may provide guidance on including access considerations and address the relationship between the Strategies and action to improve access to existing greenspace.

Piloting of Local Nature Recovery Strategies

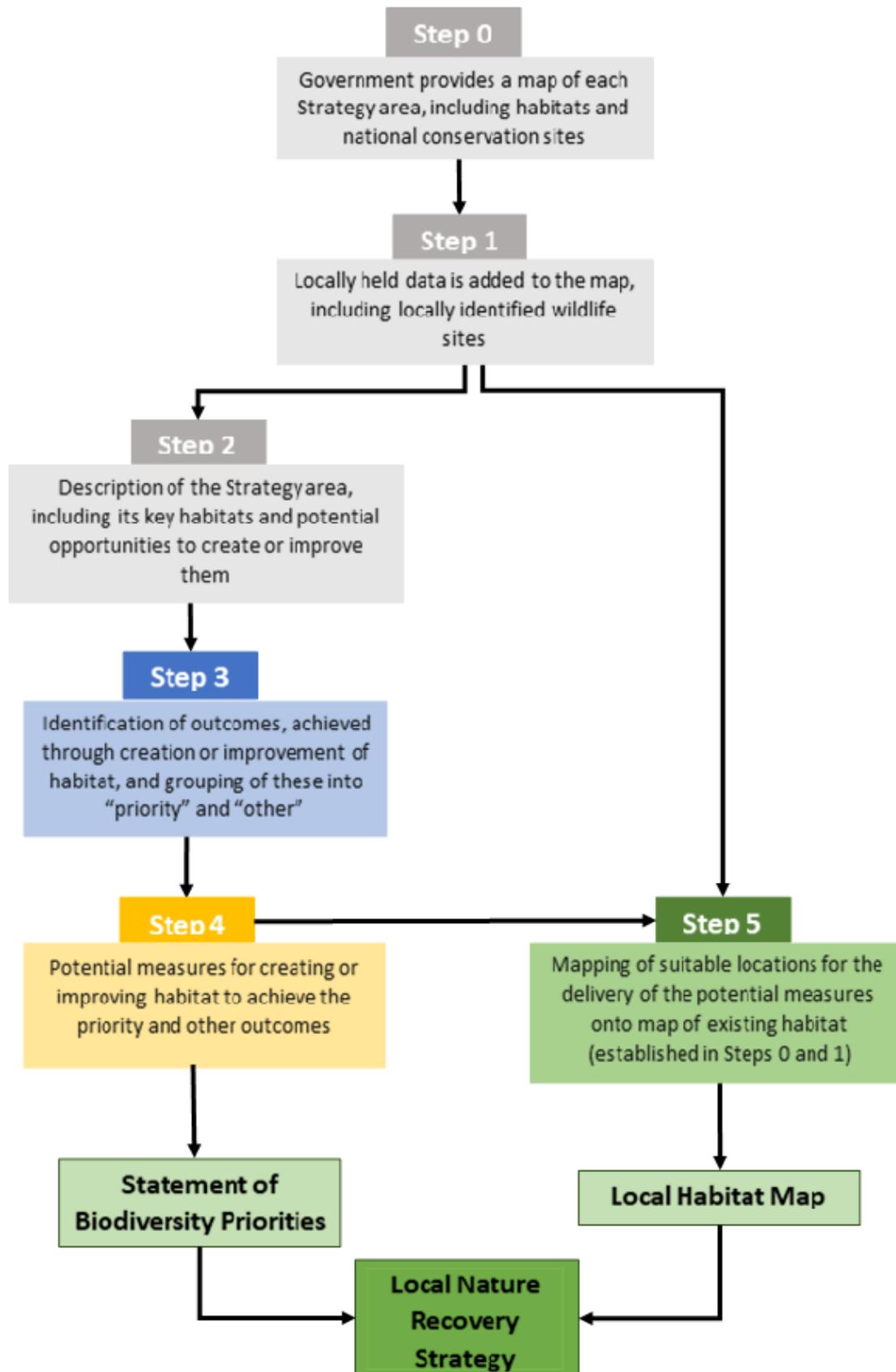
Defra funded five Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots that ran from August 2020 to May 2021. The pilots were set up to help us better understand how to go about preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, what a Local Nature Recovery Strategy might look like and how Local Nature Recovery Strategies interact with other planning processes at a local level. [Lessons learnt from the pilots](#) have been collated and will be considered alongside responses to this public consultation as we prepare to implement Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England.

The five pilots covered Cornwall, Cumbria, Buckinghamshire, Greater Manchester and Northumberland. They were overseen by Natural England with a local authority lead for each, working closely with partner organisations, in particular the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission. Defra officials worked alongside the pilots and early lessons learnt have helped shape this consultation.

The pilots were asked to test a process for preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy based closely on the requirements of the Environment Bill clauses and in line with our commitment that Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be produced collaboratively with input from a broad range of partners. This process is illustrated below.

The process was also supported by Local Conveners in each of the pilot areas, who were appointed by Defra and had responsibility for understanding how the Local Nature Recovery Strategies could be used to support future schemes that reward environmental benefits (primarily Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery schemes). Their role also involved consulting widely with farmers and other land managers who will be the focal point of these future schemes, to consider how their views could best be incorporated in Local Nature Recovery Strategy outputs.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy 6 step process



Local Nature Recovery Strategy 6-step process – detailed step process:

- step 0: Government provides a map of each Strategy area, including habitats and national conservation sites
- step 1: Locally held data is added to the map, including locally identified wildlife sites
- step 2: Description of the Strategy area, including its key habitats and potential opportunities to create or improve them
- step 3: Identification of outcomes, achieved through creation or improvement of habitat, and grouping of these into “priority” and “other”
- step 4: Potential measures for creating or improving habitat to achieve the priority and other outcomes
- step 5: Mapping of suitable locations for the delivery of the potential measures onto map of existing habitat (established in Steps 0 and 1)

Steps 2, 3 & 4 combine to create the “statement of biodiversity priorities”

Steps 0, 1 & 5 combine to create the “local habitat map”

Why we are consulting

This consultation will be open online on Citizen Space for a period of 12 weeks, closing on Tuesday 2nd November. We are seeking views on how Government should implement Local Nature Recovery Strategies in England.

The first group of consultation questions are on how Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be prepared, published, reviewed and republished. This is the subject of regulations that Government will produce under clause 101(4) of the Environment Bill. The second group of consultation questions are on what a Local Nature Recovery Strategy should contain. This is the subject of guidance that Government will produce under clause 102(5) of the Bill. Clause 102(6) requires that responsible bodies must have regard to this guidance. As a result, guidance produced under clause 102(5) is referred to as “statutory guidance” to distinguish it from other types of guidance that is more advisory in nature.

Government has already made some commitments on its overall implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, for example, that preparation of Strategies should be collaborative. The questions in the following section are on those elements that have not yet been established. The questions are linked by an explanation of what the Bill clauses will require and commitments that have already been made to put these questions into context.

Responses to this consultation will inform the preparation of regulations and statutory guidance which will play a key role in the consistent implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England.

Consultation Questions

1. Would you like your response to be confidential? [Yes/No] 1(a) If you answered Yes to this question, please give your reason [Free text box]
2. What is your name? [Free text box]
3. What is your email address? [Free text box]
4. What is your organisation? [Free text box]

The procedure to be followed in the preparation and publication, and review and republication, of Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Clause 101 of the Environment Bill establishes the process by which Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be prepared. Preparation will be led by a “responsible authority” appointed by the Defra Secretary of State. Clause 101 lists the potential bodies that the Secretary of State can choose from to act as “responsible authority”. These are:

- (a) a local authority whose area is, or is within, the strategy area;
- (b) the Mayor of London;
- (c) the mayor for the area of a combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009;
- (d) a National Park authority in England;
- (e) the Broads Authority;
- (f) Natural England.

Clause 101 also allows the Secretary of State to make regulations setting out the procedure to be followed in the preparation and publication, and review and republication, of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Clause 101 goes on to provide examples of issues that these regulations might address, specifically:

- (a) requiring the provision of information by a local authority whose area is, or is within, the strategy area but which is not the responsible authority;
- (b) for a local nature recovery strategy to be agreed by all of the local authorities whose areas are within the strategy area;
- (c) for the procedure for reaching such agreement and for the resolution of disagreements (including resolution by the Secretary of State or by a public inquiry);
- (d) for consultation, including consultation of members of the public;
- (e) for the times at or after which a local nature recovery strategy is to be reviewed and republished.

In response to the 2019 public consultation on biodiversity net gain the Government committed to Local Nature Recovery Strategies being produced collaboratively with input from a broad range of partners. Regulations made under clause 101 will be a key mechanism for ensuring this. During passage of the Environment Bill through the House of

Commons the Government also clarified the important role that the regulations will play in driving consistency between Local Nature Recovery Strategies and establishing the minimum standards that each Strategy must meet.

The following questions are intended to gather views on key issues to be addressed in establishing a robust process for the creation and updating of Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England, including preparation of regulations under clause 101.

Achieving collaboration

Collaboration is central to government's vision for how Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be prepared and delivered. Whilst the responsible authority (appointed by the Secretary of State) will be accountable for preparation of Strategy, it is intended that they will work closely with and be supported by a partnership of relevant local groups. Government is keen that all groups and individuals with a role or interest in nature recovery and environmental improvement within the Strategy area are able to contribute to its preparation.

5. Which of the groups listed below do you consider essential for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategies?
- Local authority(s) other than the “responsible authority”, where the Strategy covers more than one Local Authority area
 - Local authorities adjacent to the Strategy areas.
 - Local Nature Partnership(s), where active and geographically aligned
 - Natural England
 - The Environment Agency
 - The Forestry Commission
 - Other public bodies e.g. Highways England
 - Environmental non-governmental organisations active in the Strategy area
 - National Park Authority(s), where present in the Strategy area and if not the “responsible authority”
 - Area of Outstanding National Beauty organisation(s), where present in the Strategy area
 - Local Records Centre(s), where separate from any of the other groups listed
 - Local farming, forestry and landowning groups
 - Local Enterprise Partnerships
 - Utilities providers, such as water companies
 - Other local business representative bodies
 - Individual landowners and land managers (including farmers, both landowners and tenants)
 - Individual businesses
 - Members of the public
 - Don't Know
- [Tick all that apply]

6. Are there any organisations not listed above whose involvement you consider essential? [Yes/No/Don't Know] If yes, which ones and why? [Free text box]

Individual landowners and land managers will be critical to delivering nature recovery objectives and wider environmental benefits. The Government is keen for them to contribute fully in helping to determine local nature recovery priorities and identify priority areas to focus recovery efforts. As part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilots, we trialled a "convener" role to bring farmers and land managers into the preparation process. The purpose would be to support the agricultural sector engage with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy process making sure that the outputs work for them. This is important given the intended links between the Local Nature Recovery Strategies and future schemes that reward environmental land management. Feedback from the pilots was that the additional support given by "convener" role through Natural England was helpful in connecting farmers, landowners and managers.

7. Do you think that additional support should be provided to farmers, landowners and managers the land management sector to facilitate their involvement with the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

For Local Nature Recovery Strategies to achieve their purpose it is important that they are based on sound data and information. This should encompass both information on the current state of the Strategy area but also a strong understanding of what nature recovery and wider environmental outcomes are possible given local characteristics and how they might be achieved. The Environment Bill commits Government to providing all information it holds that would assist Local Nature Recovery Strategy preparation, including a map of habitats and national conservation sites. There is, however, a wealth of additional information held at the local level by various organisations. Some of this information has commercial value and can be an important source of revenue to the organisations that control it.

The approach to creating Local Nature Recovery Strategies set out in the Environment Bill is intended to encourage local groups to contribute information that they hold but, in general, does not require them to do so. The exception to this approach is the express requirement that all "local habitat maps" should map Local Nature Reserves, which are areas of existing importance for biodiversity that have been declared by a Local Authority to be protected for this reason. It is expected that in most cases the responsible authority will have direct access to this information, but where this is not the case it is already freely available online

Local Nature Reserves are just one of the several different types of local wildlife sites. Government has stated that it intends that each "local habitat map" should identify all local wildlife sites within their area. As these sites go by different names and there is no standardised legal definition of them, the Environment Bill does not include a specific requirement to identify them. Instead they should be included under the wider requirement for the "local habitat map" to identify other areas of particular importance to biodiversity.

8. If information on other types of local wildlife sites within a Local Nature Recovery Strategy area is not held by the responsible authority, do you think that if another Local Authority owns the information they should be obliged to provide it to them? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

In addition to information that the Bill directly requires to be included in the “local habitat map”, there is a broader range of information that could be helpful for informing the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. For example, by informing the description of the Strategy area or helping identify what environmental outcomes the Strategy should seek to achieve. As explained above, Government will provide centrally-held information it considers might assist in Strategy preparation. It is intended that a strong sense of shared ownership and purpose will encourage local data holders to make other relevant information available to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy preparation process. This information would not be included in the final published Strategy in a way that would allow it to be separately extracted and hence existing commercial value would remain intact. In some cases, the value might even be enhanced as the Strategy serves to advertise the existence of the data to potential customers.

9. Are you aware of specific locally-held information that would make an important contribution to the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies that you do not believe would be made available without a requirement to do so? [Yes/No/Don't Know] If yes, what information should be included?

A key purpose of Local Nature Recovery Strategies is to provide a consistent spatial planning framework for the creation of the Nature Recovery Network. Whilst each Local Nature Recovery Strategy is intended to cover an area large enough to allow landscape-scale spatial planning for nature, the Nature Recovery Network is a national network and this strongly implies the need for cross-boundary collaboration between neighbouring Strategies. Clause 103 of the Environment Bill expressly supports this objective by allowing the Secretary of State to propose to the responsible authority areas that could be of greater importance to biodiversity and which would contribute to the establishment of a network for nature recovery across England. Cross boundary working will also be encouraged by the close involvement of partner organisations whose boundaries of operation do not fully align with the Strategy area. However, the Bill does not contain any direct requirements for neighbouring responsible authorities to work together.

10. How do you think neighbouring Local Nature Recovery Strategy responsible authorities should be required to work together?
- Required to inform neighbouring responsible authorities of their progress in preparing their Strategy
 - Required to give information to neighbouring responsible authorities that would help them prepare their Strategy
 - Required to collaborate when setting objectives for areas close to boundaries
 - Left to local discretion
 - Other [If other, please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

The delivery of the specific proposals for creating or improving habitat identified in the local habitat map will not be a direct legal requirement but will be encouraged through a suite of duties and incentives. This approach is designed to encourage open collaboration in the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with organisations and individuals contributing positively towards a shared goal rather seeking to limit what might be required of them.

Whilst it is intended that preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be open and involve a broad range of partners it would be excessively burdensome for responsible authorities to engage directly with every potential landowner or interested party. To ensure that all individuals are able to contribute to their Local Nature Recovery Strategy Government is considering requiring a public consultation on every draft Strategy before it is finalised.

11. Should draft Local Nature Recovery Strategies be subject to a local public consultation prior to publication? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

For private organisations and individuals, having land they own or manage mapped as areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity is intended to support their case for access to any additional sources of available public or private funding – such as future schemes that reward delivery of environmental benefits, or the provision of biodiversity net gain units to developers. However, if a landowner does not wish to change the way they manage their land to increase its importance for biodiversity then there would seem to be limited benefit to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy mapping it for that purpose

12. Should individual landowners or managers be able to decide that land they own or manage should not be identified by a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as an area that could become of particular importance for biodiversity? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

It is intended that areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity will be based on the suitability of the location for carrying out measures that will contribute to agreed environmental outcomes. This process is intended to enable it to be transparent why each proposal has been included. In consulting on the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy it is likely that respondents may seek to propose additional areas that could become of particular importance.

13. Should anyone interested in the Strategy be able to propose additional areas that could become of particular importance if these can be shown to be making a sufficient contribution to the overall objective of the Strategy? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

Achieving consistency and resolving disagreements

For Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be able to perform the range of roles which Government intends, every Strategy will need to meet a common set of requirements. Clause 102 of the Environment Bill sets out what every Local Nature Recovery Strategy will need to contain and allows the Secretary of State to provide further guidance on this, to which every responsible authority must have regard.

Government has committed to Local Nature Recovery Strategies being collaboratively produced and regulations made under clause 101 of the Environment Bill will provide a key mechanism for setting minimum standards for how the responsible authority must work with local partners. The more detail set out in these regulations the more similar every Local Nature Recovery Strategy is likely to be as a result, which ensures consistent standards and simplifies alignment with other decision-making processes. A more prescriptive approach would however also reduce the flexibility for the responsible authority to reflect local circumstances (for example, to incorporate existing biodiversity plans into their Strategy) and risk making the preparation process longer with potentially more opportunity for disagreement. In preparing the regulations Government will need to decide how to balance these competing factors.

14. How prescriptive do you think regulations made under clause 101 should be in setting out how the responsible authority should work with local partners?

- Setting broad principles only
- Setting broad principles and specific requirements on who to engage or how
- A standardised process of who to engage and how
- Don't know

[Tick one]

If regulations are to set out legal requirements on responsible authorities to ensure that they prepare their Local Nature Recovery Strategy collaboratively with partners then it is important to consider what should happen if these requirements are not clearly met. Break downs in working relationships can happen for many reasons and different parties may have strongly diverging views on what has gone wrong. As with any public decision-making process the responsible authority must comply with the basic principles of administrative law and can be challenged through the Courts if a group or individual considers that they do not.

15. Do you think that regulations made under clause 101 should establish a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

[Yes/No/Don't Know]

If the regulations do include a dispute resolution process then it is important to consider how the approach it takes should balance effectiveness and openness with the resources this would require and the risk of delays that might result. Disputes should therefore be substantive and of sufficient significance that they risk undermining the quality of the final Strategy; they should not be personal differences of opinion, spurious or vexatious.

16. If you believe that regulations made under clause 101 should establish a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which of the following bodies do you think should be able to raise a dispute (including on behalf of others)?

- Local Authorities within the Strategy area who are not the responsible authority
- Natural England
- Responsible Authorities for neighbouring Strategy areas
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

17. Which of the following do you think might be reasonable grounds for raising a dispute about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy preparation process?

- Not adequately involving relevant specific groups
- Slow/no progress
- Lack of transparency
- Legal requirements not being followed
- Other [please specify]
- Don't Know

[Tick all that apply]

In the first instance it would seem reasonable that potential disputes should be raised with the responsible authority themselves so that there is opportunity for them to be resolved with minimum disruption. Where disputes cannot be successfully resolved locally then outside intervention may be needed. Such intervention can be resource-intensive and disruptive and would likely lead to considerable delay to the preparation process. It may therefore be helpful for it to only be possible to escalate disputes at particular stages in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy process.

18. At which points in the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy do you think it should be possible to escalate procedural disputes for external consideration?

- Before finalisation of the Strategy priorities
- Before a potential public consultation on the draft Strategy
- If the responsible authority does not respond within a reasonable timeframe to being informed of concerns
- At any time
- There should not be a process for external consideration
- Other [please specify]
- Don't Know

In addition to, or instead of, creating a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, it is possible that regulations made under clause 101 could create a requirement for formal “sign-off” of individual Strategies by other bodies like other Local Authorities in the Strategy area. Doing so would be very effective in driving consistent standards and ensuring that the bodies with “sign-off” are fully bought in before the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is published. It would, however, create a different dynamic within the group of partners preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy – giving “sign-off bodies” a different role and status and creating the potential for disagreement between different bodies who can withhold their sign-off.

19. Do you think that Local Nature Recovery Strategies should also be “signed off” by a body other than the responsible authority before they can be published?

- No
 - Yes – instead of a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation process
 - Yes – as well as a mechanism for resolving disputes in the preparation process
 - Don’t Know
- [Tick one]

20. If so, which bodies should be given sign-off responsibility?

- Other Local Authorities in the Strategy area
 - Natural England
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don’t Know
- [Tick all that apply]

21. On what grounds could a body refuse to sign-off a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

- Disagreement about overall priorities
 - Disagreement about specific priorities
 - Disagreement about potential measures
 - Disagreement about the inclusion or exclusion of specific “areas of potential importance”
 - On any reasonable grounds
 - Only the “responsible authority” should be required to sign-off the Strategy
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don’t know
- [Tick all that apply]

The Environment Bill makes the Secretary of State responsible for ensuring that there is complete national coverage of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and for appointing responsible authorities to prepare them. It follows that the Secretary of State should be the authority responsible for resolving disputes regarding the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. In other analogous decision-making regimes it is common for Secretaries of State to be able to appoint bodies to consider disputes on their behalf.

22. Should the Defra Secretary of State be able to appoint a separate body to consider disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and if so, which body or bodies?

- It should not be possible for a separate body to be appointed
- Natural England
- Planning inspectorate
- Whichever body the Secretary of State considers appropriate
- The responsible authority for a different Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

It is implicit that the power granted by the Environment Bill to appoint Local Nature Recovery Strategy responsible authorities allows the Secretary of State to unappoint a responsible authority if need be. This provides the Secretary of State with a final sanction if the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy in any given area irretrievably breaks down. However, doing this unilaterally could cause significant damage to the prospects of future collaborative working in that area so this would seem to be very much an intervention of last resort. To avoid getting to this point it might be helpful for the Secretary of State to have more specific corrective powers in resolving disputes.

23. In resolving disputes in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies should the Secretary of State be able to:

- Require the responsible authority to repeat particular parts of the preparation process
- Require the responsible authority to make specific changes to their Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with or without changes.
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

Publication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Government is keen for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be in place across England as soon as possible after the Environment Bill becomes law. How long it takes each responsible authority – once they have been appointed and the necessary resources, regulations and guidance are in place – to prepare and publish their first Local Nature Recovery Strategy is likely to vary. How well different partners are already working together on nature recovery in that area and the avoidance of disagreements are both potentially important factors.

For Local Nature Recovery Strategies to perform their key role in underpinning the Nature Recovery Network the intention is for each local habitat map to be viewed alongside neighbouring areas so that in aggregate they form a national map of “opportunities” for nature recovery as a basis for adding to the Network. Common data standards and a consistent format could help achieve this.

24. Do you think that each local habitat map should adopt the same data standards and be published in the same format to facilitate national collation? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

25. If yes, how should this level of consistency be established?

- Advice from Natural England
- Creation of standard templates
- Specified in regulations made under clause 101
- By consensus amongst responsible authorities
- Other [please specify]
- Don't Know

[Tick all that apply]

Clause 102 of the Environment Bill in combination with statutory guidance will set out clear expectations for what each statement of biodiversity priorities must contain. As for the local habitat map, the Government expects there could be benefits in taking a consistent approach in formatting and data standards. For example, to enable organisations that work across Strategy areas to clearly understand how priorities vary, to facilitate direct comparison between, and analysis of, different Strategies and to ensure that public and private sector users of these Strategies nationally can make best use of the data. This might, however, reduce the flexibility for each responsible authority to decide how best to communicate with local partners.

26. Do you think that each statement of biodiversity priorities should also be published in a similar format?

- The format should be the same
 - There should be some specific requirements but the responsible authority should keep some discretion over presentation
 - The responsible authority should be able to decide how they present their Strategy so long as it meets legal requirements
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

The Environment Bill makes it clear that it is for each responsible authority to publish their Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Publishing it locally will help ensure that it is clearly linked to other important plans and strategies in the area, for example the Local Plan. It might, however, be complicated to look across neighbouring Strategies if they are published entirely separately.

27. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be published together on a single national website as well as being published locally by the responsible authority? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

To maintain a coherent national picture it will be important that any changes to published Local Nature Recovery Strategies are kept to a minimum in between review cycles.

28. Do you think that a published Local Nature Recovery Strategy should:

- Only be changed once the Secretary of State has been notified
 - Only be changed with the Secretary of State's permission
 - Not be changed unless it's part of a scheduled review process (see below)
 - Don't Know
- [Tick one]

Review and republication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Clause 101(3) of the Environment Bill states that a Local Nature Recovery Strategy is to be reviewed and republished from time to time by the responsible authority. This process of reviewing and republishing Local Nature Recovery Strategies will enable them to reflect changing circumstances, including where action has been taken on the ground for nature's recovery, and to maintain ambition. Whilst the Environment Bill does not directly require this, Government anticipates that there is the opportunity to create a virtuous circle by aligning the review and republication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies with the biodiversity reports published every five years by designated public authorities - also required by the Environment Bill.

The preparation of the original Local Nature Recovery Strategies should help to establish a consistent network of local supporting partnerships across the country. Where partnerships do not already exist, new ones will take time to set-up and mature. Having partnerships already in place should reduce the time needed to review and republish each Strategy when compared to preparing the first version. This could make it easier to sequence the review and republication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England so that they are all updated at a similar time. Whilst this would likely be helpful for ensuring coherence between Strategies and enabling them to support the delivery of national policies, it is likely to be less helpful in aligning them with locally-led decision-making processes.

29. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England should be reviewed and republished at similar times or should there be local discretion to decide when is the best time?

- Set nationally
 - Decided locally
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

30. If you do think all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be reviewed and republished at the same time, do you think that this should happen to a fixed cycle?

- There should be a regular fixed period between reviews
 - A maximum period of time between reviews should be set
 - A minimum period of time between reviews should be set
 - A maximum and a minimum period of time between reviews should be set
 - The Defra Secretary of State should be able to decide
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

Information to be included in a Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Clause 102 of the Environment Bill sets out what a Local Nature Recovery Strategy must contain. It specifies two components: a statement of biodiversity priorities and a local habitat map.

The **statement of biodiversity priorities** should include:

- (a) a description of the strategy area and its biodiversity,
- (b) a description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species, in the strategy area,
- (c) the priorities, in terms of habitats and species, for recovering or enhancing biodiversity (taking into account the contribution that recovering or enhancing biodiversity can also make to other environmental benefits), and
- (d) proposals as to potential measures relating to those priorities.

A **local habitat map** is a map identifying:

- (a) national conservation sites (i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites etc) in the strategy area,
- (b) local nature reserves in the strategy area, and
- (c) other areas in the strategy area which in the opinion of the responsible authority
 - i) are, or could become, of particular importance for biodiversity, or
 - ii) are areas where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits.

Clause 102 enables the Secretary of State to issue guidance as to information to be included in a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to which responsible authorities must have regard. Clause 103 also requires the Secretary of State to provide information that would assist a responsible authority in preparing their Strategy. This includes information on areas that the Secretary of State considers are of particular importance for biodiversity or could be of greater importance.

The recent Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots produced draft Local Nature Recovery Strategies focusing on the requirements set out in clause 102. Lessons learnt from the pilots will be considered alongside responses to the following questions to inform our approach to developing statutory guidance.

Statement of biodiversity priorities

The purpose of the statement of biodiversity priorities is to clearly set out the shared objectives that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is seeking to achieve and to identify suitable potential measures for achieving them. In establishing objectives it is necessary to first assess the current situation. Government has stated that Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be practical and deliverable so this assessment should consider not just the biodiversity of the area but also other land use needs which might shape or constrain what action may realistically be taken for nature recovery.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots used the current distribution of different habitats (which will also form part of the local habitat map) to help describe their Local Nature Recovery Strategy area and its biodiversity. They also explored ways in which the wider Strategy area could be sub-divided into smaller areas that could be distinguished by the habitats that they support. The existing system of [National Character Areas](#) is one such framework for identifying sub-areas that the pilots used. The use of such sub-areas was intended to ensure that the Strategies were built on an understanding of what habitats could reasonably exist where in the landscape and to provide a way of linking between adjacent Strategy areas.

31. Do you think that all responsible authorities should take a consistent approach to describing the biodiversity in their Strategy area? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

32. If yes, do you have a preference as to how sub-areas based on similarities in biodiversity should be identified?

- No preference
- Responsible authorities should be able to decide
- National Character Areas
- River catchments
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick all that apply]

33. To ensure that the statement of biodiversity priorities provides an accurate and useful description of the Strategy area that can inform the setting of realistic and appropriate priorities, what else should the description consider in addition to describing existing biodiversity?

- Climate change scenarios
 - How land use/ habitat distribution has changed over time
 - Anticipated future pressures on land use (e.g. broad indications of housing and infrastructure need)
 - Environmental issues in the Strategy area that might be addressed through nature-based solutions
 - Existing significant nature or environment projects (e.g. landscape scale work)
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

The statement of biodiversity priorities should include a description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity to inform the setting of priorities. There is the potential for these opportunities to be confused with the “areas that could become of particular importance” that are a key part the local habitat map. This is in part due to the use of the term “opportunity mapping” to describe existing voluntary initiatives similar to Local Nature Recovery Strategy local habitat maps.

34. How should the statement of biodiversity priorities describe opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity without mapping them?

- Identify particular rarer habitats/species that the strategy area is suitable for supporting
 - Assess the potential to contribute to national priorities for nature recovery
 - Describe the relative opportunity for creating more areas of key habitats as well as making them bigger, better and joined up
 - Indicate broad areas where creating improving habitat may be more achievable
 - Assess the potential for use of nature-based solutions
 - However the responsible authority finds most useful
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don't know
- [Tick all that apply]

Setting priorities is a key step in the preparation of each Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The priorities should be ambitious but realistic and collectively reflect what the Strategy is seeking to achieve. Importantly, if the Strategy is to succeed in gaining broad local support then the priorities should reflect the views of key local partner organisations and the wider community within the Strategy area.

Clause 102 makes clear that the priorities are in relation to habitats and species and should take account of the contribution this can make to other environmental benefits. This means that priorities should include local partners' wider ambitions for environmental improvement as well as the actions that they think are key for nature's recovery. These priorities should relate to what the Strategy is trying to achieve rather than the actions needed to achieve it.

There is extensive academic literature on how to work with varied groups of partner organisations to agree priorities for nature conservation, including Systematic Conservation Planning. The priority setting process tested by the five Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots reflected some key principles, including openness, transparency and consistent use of accessible language.

As well as being widely supported locally it is important that each Local Nature Recovery Strategy reflects national priorities for nature recovery and environmental improvement. This will enable them collectively to play an important role in meeting national goals for nature recovery, including a new target for species abundance for 2030, aiming to halt the decline in nature. It will also help them to align to current and future funding schemes to drive their delivery such as future schemes that reward environmental land management. For the pilots Defra provided a list of the environmental objectives that would contribute to national priorities to inform the setting of local priorities.

35. Do you think that all Local Nature Recovery Strategies should follow the same priority setting process or that each responsible authority should decide for themselves how priorities should be set?

- All Strategies should follow the same priority setting process
- Strategies should follow the same high-level principles but with local discretion
- Strategies should decide for themselves how to prioritise
- Don't know

[Tick one]

36. How should national environmental priorities be reflected when setting Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities?

- National priorities should be advisory
- Responsible authorities should show how they have considered national priorities
- Local priorities should follow a consistent nationally-set structure
- Other [please specify]
- Don't know

[Tick one]

37. Should Local Nature Recovery Strategies identify only those outcomes for nature recovery and environmental improvement that are of priority or also include those that are positive but of lower priority?

- List only priorities
 - List priorities and other relevant lower priority outcomes
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

The broad scope of Local Nature Recovery Strategies means that they will be able to set priorities that are also reflected in other spatial plans for more specific environmental improvements, such as River Basin Management Plans or Protected Sites Strategies. This is intended to help improve integration between these plans to reduce the potential for conflicting objectives or actions.

38. How should priorities identified in other environmental spatial plans in the Strategy area be incorporated into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

- Considered and prioritised alongside other outcomes
 - Incorporated directly
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

The final element that the statement of biodiversity priorities must include is proposals as to potential measures relating to the priorities identified. These are the practical actions that, if taken, would help deliver the priorities for conserving or enhancing biodiversity. Locations suitable for carrying out these actions will then be identified to create a key component of the local habitat map – areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity, or where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits.

Linking potential measures to the creation or improvement of a specific habitat type will make it easier for locations suitable for carrying them out to be identified in the local habitat map. However, early evidence from the Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots suggests that not all potential measures can be readily mapped to specific locations that would then become “of particular importance” as a result. For example, management of deer populations across a landscape to enable new areas of woodland to become established, or reduced mowing of all roadside verges in the Strategy area.

39. Do you think that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should include potential measures for conserving and enhancing biodiversity and making wider environmental improvements that cannot be mapped as well as those that can?

- Yes both
 - No, only those that can be mapped
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

It is likely that some “potential measures” will feature widely in Local Nature Recovery Strategies across the country. For example, potential measures relating to tree planting. Rather than require every responsible authority to agree similar wording it might be helpful to create some standardised “potential measures” that responsible authorities could choose from. This might also be helpful should funding be made available for particular activities.

40. Should there be a standard list of potential measures for responsible authorities to choose from?

- No – responsible authorities should have free choice
 - There should be a list of suggestions
 - There should be a core list which the responsible authority can add to
 - Responsible authorities should only be able to choose measures included on a national list
 - Don't know
- [Tick one]

Local habitat map

The role of the local habitat map is to map those areas that are already of particular importance for biodiversity and those areas that have the potential to become of particular importance. This mapping of “opportunities” is the central purpose for which Local Nature Recovery Strategies have been created. Being mapped as an “opportunity” does not incur any new specific requirement or protection in and of itself (beyond that which might already apply) but is recognition that it is a location where action will generate greater benefit for nature or the wider environment.

The local habitat map must map all national conservation sites within the Strategy area. This information will be provided to each responsible authority by the Secretary of State as part of the national habitat map required by clause 103 of the Bill. The local habitat map must also map all local nature reserves within the Strategy area. Information on the locations of local nature reserves will either be held by the responsible authority or by partner organisations such as other local authorities.

The responsible authority must then identify other areas within the Strategy area which, in their opinion, are of particular importance for biodiversity. In creating this requirement it was Government's intention that this would include all local wildlife sites. Local wildlife sites are areas identified by a local planning authority for their nature value. This term includes local nature reserves which are the only type of local wildlife site to be defined in law. This meant that the inclusion of local nature reserves in the local habitat map could be expressly required in the Bill.

Government's intention is that areas which "are of particular importance for biodiversity" should also include areas that are in the process of being designated as a type of national conservation site. Some such sites are legally protected from the point of notification whilst others are afforded the same protection as if designated as a matter of Government policy once proposals have been issued for public consultation. As these areas that are protected as a matter of policy are not defined in law, their inclusion in the local habitat map could not be expressly required. Information on the location of such "candidate sites" would be provided to the responsible authority by the Secretary of State.

Areas that "are of particular importance for biodiversity" should be, by definition, areas that do not need significant changes to the way in which they are managed so that they might become of particular importance. As such it is intended that their importance for biodiversity should be comparable to national conservation sites or local wildlife sites.

41. What sort of areas, outside of national conservation and local wildlife sites, might a responsible authority reasonably consider to be of particular importance for biodiversity?

- Ancient woodlands
 - Flower rich meadows
 - [Priority habitats](#) in good condition
 - Areas used for feeding or resting by animals or birds from a nearby national conservation site
 - Any areas the responsible authority chooses
 - None
 - Other [please specify]
 - Don't Know
- [Tick all that apply]

Government is keen that the mapping of areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity or wider environmental outcomes is a transparent process based on strong participation of local partners. Whilst this means that the mapping should not be entirely generated by computer-based models, it might be that these tools could be helpful for generating initial proposals on which discussion could be based. Such tools might lend themselves to taking a consistent approach between Strategies to the mapping of potential measures. Alternatively, a standardised method for mapping potential measures could be described.

42. Should all responsible authorities follow a standardised process for mapping potential measures to identify areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity or other environmental benefits? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

In creating their draft Local Nature Recovery Strategies, a question that the five pilots found challenging was deciding what proportion of their total Strategy area they might map as areas that could become of particular importance and how this might relate to the delivery of national priorities. To some degree this will depend on local circumstances. For example, what proportion of the Strategy area is already made up of national conservation or local wildlife sites, or whether the Strategy contains extensive urban areas with high density development. However, within the land that could realistically be managed differently for better environmental outcomes, the proportion mapped as areas that could become of particular importance could be a crude indicator of ambition and approach. For example, a low percentage mapped might suggest a focus on those changes with greatest impact whereas a high percentage mapped might suggest a more inclusive but less targeted approach.

43. Do you think that all responsible authorities should seek to identify a similar proportion of their Strategy area as areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity or wider environmental outcomes?

- Yes, there should be a set percentage each responsible authority should identify
- No, this should not be set and decided locally
- Don't know

[Tick one]

Reviewing and republishing Local Nature Recovery Strategies from time to time is an important part of the process for ensuring that they stay up to date, including reflecting what action is taken to deliver them. Areas that could become of particular importance will not generally become so immediately after action is taken. Some habitats will take many years, decades or even longer to establish, with their importance to biodiversity and the wider environment increasing over time. During this period of establishment there is the potential that habitat deteriorates as well as improves and it is likely to be very challenging to say definitively when it has become of "particular importance".

For this reason, Government is considering whether when Local Nature Recovery Strategies are reviewed and republished the local habitat map should identify a third category of area alongside areas that are already or could become of particular importance for biodiversity; areas where appropriate measures have been taken so that they are in the process of becoming of particular importance. This could draw upon information provided by public authorities under their 5-yearly reporting duty to avoid duplication and drive a virtuous relation between the Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the strengthened biodiversity duty.

44. Do you think that when Strategies are reviewed and republished, they should map where appropriate action has been taken to make areas of increasing importance for biodiversity? [Yes/No/Don't Know]

How to respond

Responses can be provided on Citizen Space, by email or by post.

The consultation email address is: localnaturerecoverystrategies@defra.gov.uk

The postal address for responses is:

Consultation Coordinator, Defra

2nd Floor, Foss House, Kings Pool,

1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX

This public consultation will conclude on Tuesday 2nd November. Following the end of the consultation Government will compile and consider responses, using this information to develop regulations and statutory guidance to shape how Local Nature Recovery Strategies are implemented across England.

Dear Consultee

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this online survey. It would be appreciated, if you can provide us with an insight into how you view the tool and the area(s) you feel is in need of improvement, by completing our feedback questionnaire.

45. Overall, how satisfied are you with our online consultation tool?

Please give us any comments you have on the tool, including suggestions on how we could improve it.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dis-satisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know
- [Free Text Box]
[Tick one]