

Amenities and Leisure Committee – 25th October 2023

Agenda Item 9 – Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) webinar 20.9.23

Report by Cllr Sheena Matthews

The Town Clerk and I attended the LNRS webinar for parish and town councils on 20 September 2023. As one of a series of introductory webinars it included a good presentation, a short video on beautiful Berks and decent time for Q&A. The webinar slides are available on their website along with a transcript [Introduction to the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com).

The initiative comes from the Lawton Report (2019), mandated in the 2021 Environment Act <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/section/106/enacted>, the 2023 Environment Improvement Plan and its 10 goals for ‘more, better and joined up’ to tackle declining biodiversity. Responsible authorities are required by law to have regard to this guidance when preparing their strategy.

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are leading on the Berkshire strategy, assisted by representatives from the other principal authorities within Berkshire. For more information, including membership of the steering group for Berkshire see [Berkshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy | RBWM Together](#). Target date for publishing the Berkshire strategy is autumn 2024.

Local nature recovery strategies are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Act. Each strategy must:

- 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

Under the regulations, responsible authorities must work together with partners when preparing their strategy and later when reviewing and preparing it for republication. This aims to:

- provide a single vision for nature recovery and the use of nature-based solutions that all interested parties have been able to contribute to and work towards
- build and strengthen local partnerships that will be important for carrying out the strategies as well as preparing them
- involve the people who own and manage the land, and the people who take regulatory decisions, so they can contribute to what action is being proposed, where and why

By law, each LNRS must include: a statement of biodiversity priorities and a local habitat map. The government intends for local nature recovery strategies to inform the local planning process. Local planning authorities must have regard to them in complying with the strengthened biodiversity duty. The government will provide separate guidance to explain what this means in practice.

DEFRA is funding the creation of LNRS projects following successful pilots in Cornwall. LNRS is not intended to produce an action plan and funding is expected to come from existing sources topped up by landowners and developers. LNRS and local plans are intended to be ‘of equal weight’; DEFRA will issue further guidance later this year. Landowners will be under no obligation to act on any recommendations or opportunities that LNRS identifies.

If formally identified as an Opportunity Area, Earley TC could be in the forefront of the LNRS work, aligning some of our current environmental activities and responsibilities with the LNRS goals.

Earley Green Corridor Proposal

Two members of the Earley Environmental Group are developing a proposal which will hopefully encourage the creation of green corridors across Earley. The Town Council has already expressed initial support for the plans and we are awaiting further details of how ETC can support the development of an Earley Green Corridor document.

In the meantime, the two members of EEG have met with the lead officer of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to discuss how their corridor proposal would fit into the wider strategy. Initial discussions have been very positive, it may be the case that the corridor proposal could form a significant part of the Berkshire LNRS.