

Nature Recovery Network: glossary of terms

Nature Recovery Network (NRN) – a single, national network which will benefit people and wildlife by increasing, improving and joining-up wildlife-rich places across England, stretching from our cities to countryside, mountains to coast. At its core will be enhanced sites designated for nature conservation and other existing wildlife-rich places. Additional, newly created or restored nature-rich habitat, corridors and stepping stones will help wildlife populations grow and move. It will improve landscape resilience to climate change, provide natural solutions that reduce carbon and manage flood risk, and sustain vital ecosystems such as improved soil, clean water and clean air. It will reinforce the natural and cultural diversity of our landscapes, help to protect their historic environments, and enable us to enjoy and connect with nature where we live, work and play - benefiting our health and wellbeing.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) – Introduced by the Environment Bill, LNRSs are a new mandatory system of spatial strategies for nature, led by local Responsible Authorities, which will aggregate to cover the whole of England. For the area it covers, each strategy will map the most valuable existing habitat for nature; map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environment goals; and agree priorities for nature's recovery, targeting action and investment to areas delivering the greatest benefits for nature and the wider environment. Local Nature Recovery Areas provide the spatial planning tool for the NRN

Core network areas – a generic term to refer to existing wildlife-rich places which will be at the heart of the Nature Recovery Network, including a variety of protected sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Specially Protected Areas (SPAs), Ramsar wetland sites of international importance, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and other local wildlife sites. The aim is for wildlife to 'brim over' from these sites into new or restored habitat.

New areas – additional new or improved wildlife-rich places, corridors and 'stepping stones' which will enhance and connect core network areas to form part of the Nature Recovery Network

Sustainably managed land – a generic term used to describe zones that protect core network areas. These are used currently in biosphere reserves but could be adopted more widely to create areas that are more wildlife-friendly, manage land sustainably and ease the pressure on important sites, protecting them from environmental impacts and restoring ecosystem function.

Wildlife-rich habitat - Natural or semi-natural habitats or other habitats listed as habitats of principal importance under the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. It may also include habitats outside of this definition where they are essential to the recovery of threatened species. (Defra and Natural England are carrying out further work on this definition).

Nature Recovery Areas (NRA) - An integral part of the Nature Recovery Network, these large landscape-scale or catchment-scale areas aim to make a significant contribution to nature restoration targets and species recovery, alongside net zero, economic, health and wellbeing benefits.

Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership (NDP) – A national partnership of diverse organisations and cross sectoral groups, led by Natural England. The NDP will pool knowledge and resource to take action for the NRN and support local delivery of the Nature Recovery Network

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through the principle of 'shared endeavour.' It will also galvanise support for the Network, seeking cross organisational/sectoral pledges of support which will drive its delivery.

National framework – the Environment Bill sets out a requirement for the Secretary of State to provide:

1. A national habitat map of existing national conservation sites and other areas of importance for biodiversity; and
2. Areas that could contribute to a network for the recovery and enhancement of biodiversity across England.

Together, these measures will provide a national framework underpinning the Network, to complement and support delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

NRN Toolkit - a package of evidence, mapping and advice to support local delivery of the Nature Recovery Network within the parameters of the National framework.

NRN Delivery/Implementation Plan –The collaboratively-agreed set of actions that the National Delivery Partnership will take to support delivery of the Network.

Nature-based solutions - Nature-based Solutions (NBS) are defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as 'actions to protect, sustainably manage, improve and restore natural or modified ecosystems¹, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits'

Wildlife corridors - a link between wildlife habitats, generally native vegetation, which joins two or more larger areas of similar wildlife habitat. Corridors are critical for the maintenance of ecological processes including allowing for the movement of animals and the continuation of viable populations.

Biodiversity net gain - biodiversity net gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected in such a way it is hoped that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.

Green infrastructure - Green infrastructure (GI) or green-blue infrastructure is a general term to describe the network of natural and semi-natural features within and between our villages, towns and cities. These features range in scale, from street trees, green roofs and private gardens through to parks, rivers and woodlands.

Other Terminology:

Funding

Nature Recovery Fund (NRF) - £25m fund. £10m is supporting the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF). £15m is expected to be focused on projects which support delivery of the Nature Recovery Network, including Nature Recovery Areas (tbc)

Nature for Climate Fund (NFCF) - £640m fund£610m will be focused on tree planting and peatland restoration. £30m is supporting the GRCF.

¹ Note that UKFS compliant forests and woodlands are a modified ecosystem

Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) –The £40m fund will kickstart a programme of nature-based projects. It is designed to address the twin challenges of halting biodiversity loss and tackling climate change, while creating and retaining jobs in the conservation sector. The GRCF consists of £30m that is being brought forward from the Nature for Climate Fund, and £10m from the Nature Recovery Fund. Green recovery funding is being managed by Defra’s Green Finance team

Evidence

Nature Networks Evidence Handbook – by Humphrey Crick. Designed to help those contributing to the Nature Recovery Network by identifying the principles of network design and describing the evidence that underpins the desirable features of local nature networks. It builds on the Making Space for Nature² report of Lawton et al. 2010, outlining some of the practical aspects of implementing a nature network plan, as well as describing the tools that are available to help in decision making.

The People and Nature Survey -The People and Nature Survey for England (previously known as MENE – Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment) gathers evidence and trend data through an online survey relating to people’s enjoyment, access, understanding of and attitudes to the natural environment, and its contributions to wellbeing.

National Natural Capital Atlas - The atlas maps Natural England’s Natural Capital Indicators to show the state of natural capital across England. These indicators of change are based on environmental properties underpinning the provision of ecosystem services. The atlas covers the extent of our natural capital assets, where they are, what condition they are in and which benefits they provide to people.

National habitat map – the Environment Bill sets out a requirement for the Secretary of State to provide a national habitat map as part of the national framework which will support local delivery of the NRN. Defra led, the map will map existing national conservation sites and other areas of importance for biodiversity. Natural England are supporting this through a toolkit of evidence that will inform spatial planning at a local level.

National opportunities - the Environment Bill sets out a requirement for the Secretary of State to indicate any areas outside of existing protected sites that are potentially important for biodiversity.

Sites for Nature Conservation

Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory areas designated by local authorities for their significant nature conservation value, working with Local Sites Partnerships made up of key stakeholders. They include both local wildlife sites (biodiversity value) and local geological sites (geological value).

There are more than 40,000 Local Sites in England, covering contrasting landscapes in coastal, rural and urban situations (around 694,000 ha)

Protected sites for nature conservation

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the land notified as an SSSI by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). SSSIs are the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in England, supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. There are 4,127 SSSI sites, covering 1,093,881 ha (over 8% of England).

SSSI condition and assessment

Natural England categorises the condition of SSSIs as one of the following:

- favourable - habitats and features are in a healthy state and are being conserved by appropriate management
- unfavourable (recovering condition) - if current management measures are sustained the site will recover over time
- unfavourable (no change) or unfavourable (declining condition) - special features are not being conserved or are being lost, so without appropriate management the site will never reach a favourable or recovering condition
- part destroyed or destroyed - there has been fundamental damage, where special features have been permanently lost and favourable condition cannot be achieved

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) – declared by Natural England under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, to protect some of our most important habitats, species and geology, and to provide ‘outdoor laboratories’ for research. There are currently 224 NNRs in England with a total area of over 94,400 hectares - approximately 0.7% of the country’s land surface.

Special Protection Areas (SPA) are classified by Government for rare and threatened and regularly occurring migratory bird species set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). There are 87 SPAs covering 1,926,816 ha.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) - are designated by Government to protect the habitat of important species and habitats considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). There are 256 SACs covering 2, 115, 880 ha

Ramsar sites: are designated by Government for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands of international importance as set out in the Ramsar Convention There are currently [73 Ramsar sites in England covering 400,000 ha](#).

Local Wildlife Sites - also occasionally referred to as Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)/ Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)/ regionally important geological site (RIGS) - are designations used by local authorities in the United Kingdom for sites of substantive local nature conservation and geological value. Their designation is a non-statutory one, but they are vital for enabling the planning system to recognise, protect and enhance special sites.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) - designated by local authorities for nature and geology of specific local interest under the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. LNRs are for people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. They are usually areas of natural green space, but they can include brownfield and artificial sites, such as historic cemeteries, agricultural land and orchards, commons and other accessible green spaces. There are 1,645 LNRs covering an area of 41,817 ha

Protected landscapes:

National Parks (NPs) – are areas designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Each National Park is administered by its own National Park Authority, which are public bodies funded by central government with a dual purpose to ‘conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage’ and to ‘promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public’, although they do not own most of the land within the Park. National Park Authorities are also required to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park. There are 10 National Parks in England.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – these are areas designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) to conserve and enhance their ‘natural beauty’, which includes their flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features. AONBs have the same level of protections as National Parks, however, the set-up of organisations that have responsibility for the landscape differ. The CROW Act sets out the roles of public organisations with responsibilities for managing AONBs, including Natural England and AONB partnerships, which are hosted by a local authority. There are 34 AONBs in England.

Glover Review – Independent landscapes review (May 2018) to consider the next steps for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England.

Legislation

NERC Act – the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act makes provision about bodies concerned with the natural environment and rural communities. The Act is primarily intended to implement key aspects of the Government’s Rural Strategy published in July 2004; it also addresses a wider range of issues relating broadly to the natural environment. The Act establishes an independent body – Natural England – responsible for conserving, enhancing and managing England’s natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations. The Act also establishes the Commission for Rural Communities.

The Act makes provision in respect of biodiversity, pesticides harmful to wildlife and the protection of birds, and in respect of invasive non-native species. It alters enforcement powers in connection with wildlife protection and extends time limits for prosecuting certain wildlife offences. It addresses a small number of gaps and uncertainties which have been identified in relation to the law on sites of special scientific interest. It also places a duty on public authorities to conserve biodiversity.

Section 41 species - In England many of our rarest and most threatened species are listed under Section 41 (S41) of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act. Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to publish and maintain lists of species and types of habitats which are regarded by Natural England to be of "principal importance" for the purposes of conserving biodiversity in England. These 56 priority habitats and 943 species are drawn from earlier lists of United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species and Habitats³. The Section 41 lists are needed by decision-makers in local and regional authorities when carrying out their duties under Section 40 of the Act.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) - The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) normally gives a public right of access to land mapped as ‘open country’ (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. These areas are known as ‘open access land’.

³ <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-species/>

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[25 Year Environment Plan \(25 YEP\)](#) – The environment plan sets out the Government’s goals for improving the environment, within a generation. It details how they will work with communities and businesses to do this, providing an action plan for the next 25 years.

[Environment Bill](#) - sets out how we plan to protect and improve the natural environment in the UK. The Environment Bill was introduced into parliament on 15 October 2019. It was re-introduced to parliament following a general election on 30 January 2020. One of the key vehicles for delivering the 25 Year Environment Plan, the Environment Bill brings about action to combat the environmental and climate crisis we are facing. It sets a new domestic framework for environmental governance as we maximise the opportunities created by leaving the European Union and helps to deliver on the government’s commitment to be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state.

Nature Strategy –The Nature Strategy will implement our commitments under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), in England alongside action towards our goals for nature set out under the 25YEP. It follows on from [Biodiversity 2020](#). With other key strategies such as peat, tree, water and the pollinator strategy, it will provide a joined-up approach to tackling both climate change and biodiversity loss.