

Beds LNRS - FAQ

- *When will the LNRS Project Officer be starting?*

The new LNRS Project Officer, Richard James, will be starting on Monday 11th September. The post is hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council, but working across the whole of Bedfordshire to lead on the creation of the LNRS.

- *Is there any legal/planning status for the LNRS? Is it at all comparable with a Neighbourhood Plan? I.e. can be taken into consideration in the planning process? Is there an expectation it will be delivered through the planning system?*

Local Planning Authorities should have regard to the LNRS to inform the local planning process. We expect further guidance from Defra around this. So at present this will depend on how the outcomes from the LNRS are reflected in Local Plans (and the associated policies) or Supplementary Planning Guidance by individual local authorities.

One mechanism for the delivery of aspirations identified in the LNRS will be 'Biodiversity Net Gain', which will be mandatory for most development from November 2023 and is delivered through the land use planning process. This may be in the form of 'on site' BNG (enhancement delivered within the site that is being developed) or 'offsite BNG'.

In Bedfordshire we often develop a Green Infrastructure Plan as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process, and are currently looking at how we further develop the 'nature recovery' process within these, to inform both NPs and the LNRS.

- *Are local communities stakeholders?*

Yes, they very much are. However, the Bedfordshire LNRS isn't far enough developed to be able to communicate with the general public, community groups etc at this stage. It is something we are considering, and we will be:

- a. Engaging with town and parish councils;
- b. Engaging with community groups;
- c. Developing messaging for wider audiences further along the process, when there are some tangible outputs from the LNRS process.

It will be important for all partners to be promoting the concept of nature recovery through day-to-day activities, and we are working on key messages and resources to help support this.

- *Any thoughts at this stage as to how to balance LNRS priorities and BNG when there is a growing pressure from increased population that brings more people/litter/dogs etc to existing countryside spaces?*

The idea underpinning the LNRS is the creation of a 'Nature Recovery Network', which will be greater in extent and more robust, enabling species to move more freely and easily. By virtue of there being 'more' there will be more 'space' allowing activities to be better balanced with the needs of nature.

New/enhanced habitats created through BNG can allow access – obviously management will need to ensure the legally required biodiversity targets identified through the metric are delivered over time, but for many habitats both should be achievable.

The issue is well-recognised and prominent in a small county like Bedfordshire but we lack a body of good quantitative evidence around site sensitivity and carrying capacity.

And of course, one of the objectives of the LNRS is to deliver against the health and wellbeing objectives, so provision of areas where people can have access to and engage with nature are going to need to be a consideration in any priority setting.

- *How does the Central Bedfordshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan nest into the LNRS planning? And will it be reviewed to take LNRS outcomes into account?*

The Central Bedfordshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan was created to address a specific evidence gap in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan evidence base, due to the age of previous documents. It is acknowledged that it will in large part be superseded by the LNRS, but will be an important part of the LNRS evidence base. It is useful because it covers both 'green' and 'blue' infrastructure.

- *Who is leading the delivery process for the LNRS as much of the work to get a workable delivery plan will take time to set up including planning routes, BNG, carbon trading and the voluntary sector?*

Central Bedfordshire Council, as Responsible Authority, is required to produce the LNRS, but not to deliver its aspirations - it is envisaged that this will involve a variety of mechanisms (including BNG, carbon trading, the Environmental Land Management Scheme, private (green) finance, existing grant schemes) and be delivered through a range of organisations, businesses, landowners and managers.

It will be important to produce an LNRS that includes plenty of 'achievable' aspirations in the short-medium term, as well as in the longer term. Partners and stakeholders will need this to give a clear steer and to support the development of funding proposals. Central Bedfordshire has also taken a proactive step in ensuring that delivery happens – the LNRS Project Officer post is a permanent one, and once the LNRS has been produced their work will include helping develop projects to take it forward within the Central Bedfordshire area.

- *Will everyone be invited to planned workshops?*

The intention is that workshops will be open to as many people as possible – the approach is intended to be inclusive and reach out beyond 'usual suspects'. Some workshops in the future will be targeted at specific sectors. The proposed 'Biodiversity Priority' workshops will be a two-workshop exercise, partly to accommodate those unable to attend a single workshop.

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