

Planning for Nature



Natural England's perspective

- Embedding nature recovery into special planning and decision making
- Drive landscape scale nature recovery whilst supporting growth, development and infrastructure
- Healthy nature is foundation of strong, productive economy
- Two mechanisms
 - Environmental Act 2021
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)



Natural England's perspective

- Provide statutory advice on:
 - Development proposals
 - Changes to protected sites
 - Nutrient neutrality
 - Habitat management
- Guide planning authorities on biodiversity impacts, timing and mitigation actions
- Our advice must be considered in decisions with potential effects on habitats and species
- We are consulted on applications that we have statutory responsibilities for
 - Designated sites
 - High value agricultural land
 - EIAs
 - NSIPs
 - Regularly involved in Green Infrastructure matters



Natural England's perspective

- Sustainable Development team focuses on high risk/high opportunity caseworks
- Provide pre-application advice to developers through DAS
- Integrate biodiversity targets into development plans
- Collaborate with many stakeholders
- Support the creation and delivery of multiple nature recovery mechanisms



LNRS

- Statutory, spatial strategies that map opportunities for nature recovery
- They include:
 - A habitat map (APIB)
 - A statement of biodiversity priorities
 - A map of proposed actions (ACB)
- LNRS can support planners in multiple ways:
 - Provide a strategic evidence base
 - Inform where off-site BNG delivery is most beneficial ecologically
 - Aspects of the LNRS may be treated as material considerations in planning applications
 - Fosters effective cross-sector cooperation
- Designed to build nature networks that are bigger, better and more connected
- Complement and guide other mechanisms, BNG, Agri-environment schemes, green infrastructure
- Enables planners to ensure developments avoid significant contribute to ecosystem degradation
- Applying LNRS at an early stage helps improve overall quality and reduces conflict during the application process.



BNG – A Strategic Planning Tool

- It requires developers to leave biodiversity in a 'measurably better state' than before
- A minimum of 10% biodiversity increase following completion
- Not just a validation requirement
- When used effectively BNG can:
 - Secure better on-site design
 - Target off-site delivery strategically
 - Strengthen ecological connectivity
 - Leverage private finance
 - Reinforce Local Plan policies



BNG – And LNRS

- Obtain uplift by delivering nature recovery in areas that aligns with LNRS mapped measures
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric includes a 'strategic significance' multiplier of 1.15
 - =15% uplift to Biodiversity units generated
- To qualify:
 - Must match the LNRS measure
 - Be within the mapped measure boundary
 - Be a newly created or enhanced habitat
 - Can apply to on-site or off-site
- LNRS alignment increases the units generated, not the legal target



Green Infrastructure

- Natural England developed the Green Infrastructure Framework to support planners and developers to:
 - Increase green cover in urban environments
 - Embed nature-rich features at all scales of development
 - Plan GI strategically alongside LNRS and local plans
- Includes tools and standards that provide benchmarks for GI provision in residential and commercial developments
- These GI planning tools help to identify gaps in provision and embed connectivity between habitats and communities
- Well-planned GI delivers benefits for both people and nature



Practical Delivery

- Effective planning for nature must be underpinned by strong ecological evidence
- Long-term stewardship is critical
- Strengthen delivery by working with land trusts, management companies and community organisations
- Funding and incentives are imperative in delivery
- Collaboration underpins all success



Conclusion

- When all elements are combined effectively, planning becomes a powerful mechanism for growth **AND** long-lasting nature recovery
- Planning for nature is **NOT** about restricting growth
- It **IS** about fostering vibrant, connected landscapes that:
 - Supports biodiversity
 - Improve people's lives
 - Strengthen local economies

Thank you!





Stewardship of On-Site Wildlife Habitat



Open Space Specialists



On-site Habitat History

- Most historic residential sites had fragments of existing habitat
- Management Plans were light touch on ecological requirements
- By early 2010s we began to see more detailed Ecological Surveys
- LEMPs became more prevalent
- Introduction of more wildlife habitat and wildlife refuge
- Environment Act 2021
- LNRS influence grows
- Mandatory BNG



Desford – Case Study

- Typical SuDS design from early 2010s
- Contract to adopt signed in 2015
- By 2018 Developer neglected SuDS
- Hinckley & Bosworth BC enforce 2020
- GGL carry out remediation in 2022
- Adopted since 2022
- Colonised quickly by wetland species incl. 4 species of dragonfly, amphibians (GCN)



Dawlish – case study

- 100 unit site contracted in 2016
- Red line included Cirl Bunting habitat
- Assist with planting habitat in 2017/19
- Regular liaison with RSPB
- Ongoing customer liaison
- BALI Award winner 2024



Barton Seagrave

- 400 houses
- 7 Ha of open space
- SSSI with restricted access
- Grazing cycle



Ownership

Understand the Beast

- Green Infrastructure Complexity
- Multi functional Open Space
- Risks / Liabilities

Adoption Option Suitability

- Scale and Complexity
- Financial Sustainability

Stewardship Crossroads

- Garden Community Concept
- Government Consultations
- Blended Solutions
- Regulation and Statutory Monitoring



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