



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain

Communities and Environment Scrutiny
23rd April 2024



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

Appendix 1



What is a LNRS and why do we need it?

- England is widely considered to be one of the most ***nature-depleted*** countries in the world.
- The Environment Act (2021) brings into ***law*** requirements to halt the decline of species and improve our natural environment.
- At COP15 in 2022 the UK Government committed protecting 30% of our land and ocean by 2030 – known as the **30-by-30** commitment – action to achieving this is set out in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.
- England has been divided into **48 strategy areas** that are required to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for their area by March 2025.
- LNRSs will aim to restore our biodiversity by drawing on ***existing data, strategies*** and ***guidance***, alongside ***local knowledge***, to ensure that nature recovery happens in a way that delivers maximum benefit.
- The LNRS will be developed collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders in Cumbria and will identify the key '***priorities***' and '***measures***' for nature recovery and show the areas that are most suitable for these.

What do we need to do? And where?

What will the LNRS do?

- The LNRS is a strategy that **identifies opportunities** for nature recovery. Rather than tell you what *must* be done, it will tell you what *could* be done.
- It will be designed to **align with existing guidance and policies**, and to inform future documentation.
- By establishing **strategic alignment** between the LNRS and BNG we will maximise the potential of this new regime to contribute to nature recovery.
- We will **monitor** progress against LNRS targets, report back to the Council, and leverage this alignment to drive successful **grant writing** and **grant giving** efforts.
- It will also **give consideration to wider environmental, economic, and social benefits**.
- It will be **locally led, evidence based, and collaboratively produced**.



What is the LNRS not?

- **The LNRS is not a Delivery Plan.** It identifies opportunities for nature recovery at a county scale, but it does not replace the need for site specific delivery plans or field surveys.
- **The LNRS is non-binding;** Responsible Authorities must prepare an LNRS, but they are not required to deliver the opportunities identified.
- **The LNRS does not confer any level of protection.** Nor does it prevent land uses such as farming or development.
- **The LNRS does not give permission to create habitat** without consulting specialists in Historic Environment, Landscape, Access etc.



Who will produce the Cumbria LNRS?

The LNRS will be developed collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders in Cumbria.

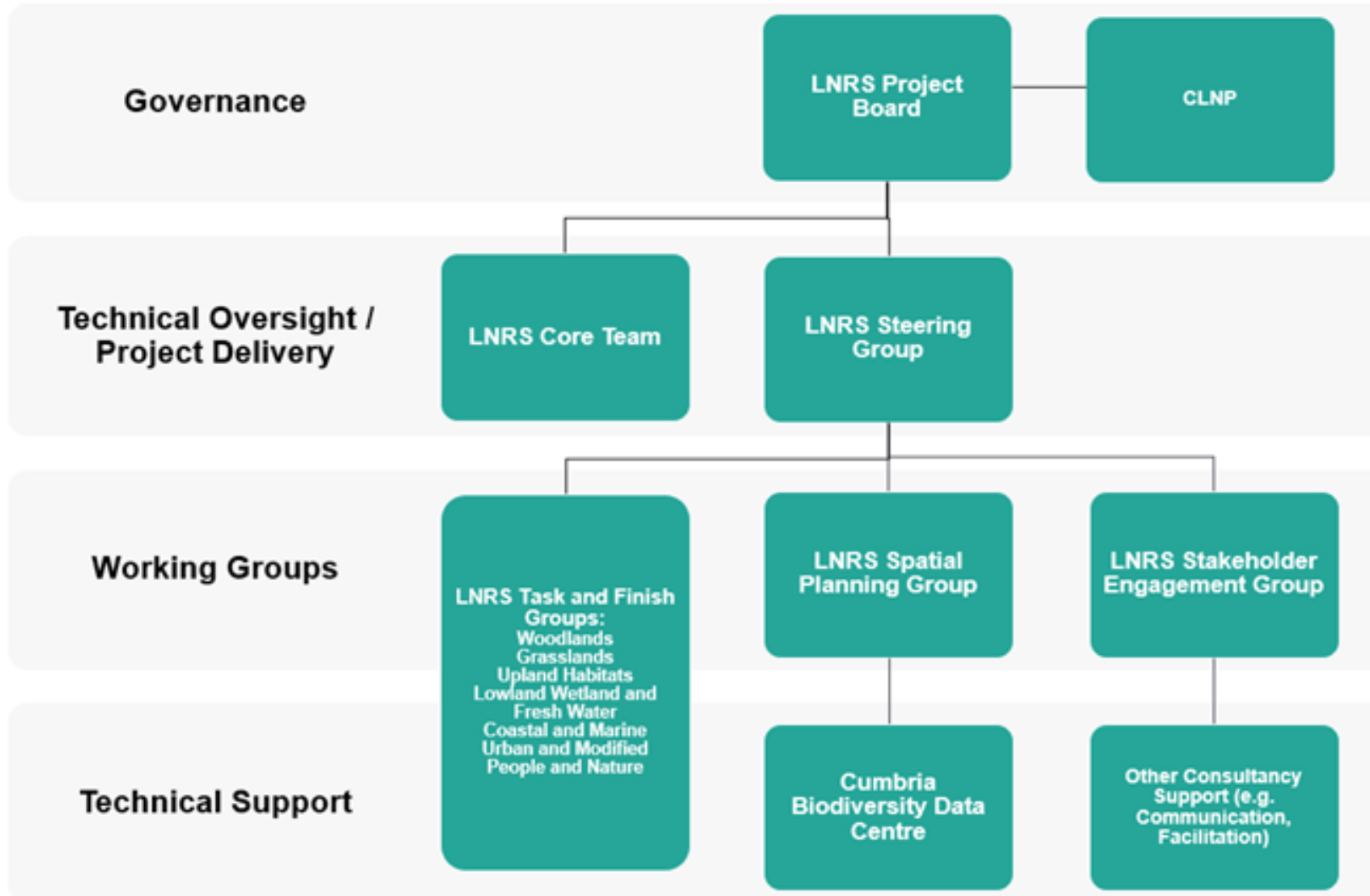
Westmorland and Furness Council will lead on the preparation of the Cumbria LNRS, supported by the following appointed 'Supporting Authorities': The Supporting Authorities will need to 'sign-off' the LNRS before it is submitted to defra by March 2025



Over 600 additional organisations and interested parties have expressed an interest in engaging with the LNRS process.



Cumbria LNRS Governance Structure



What will the LNRS look like?

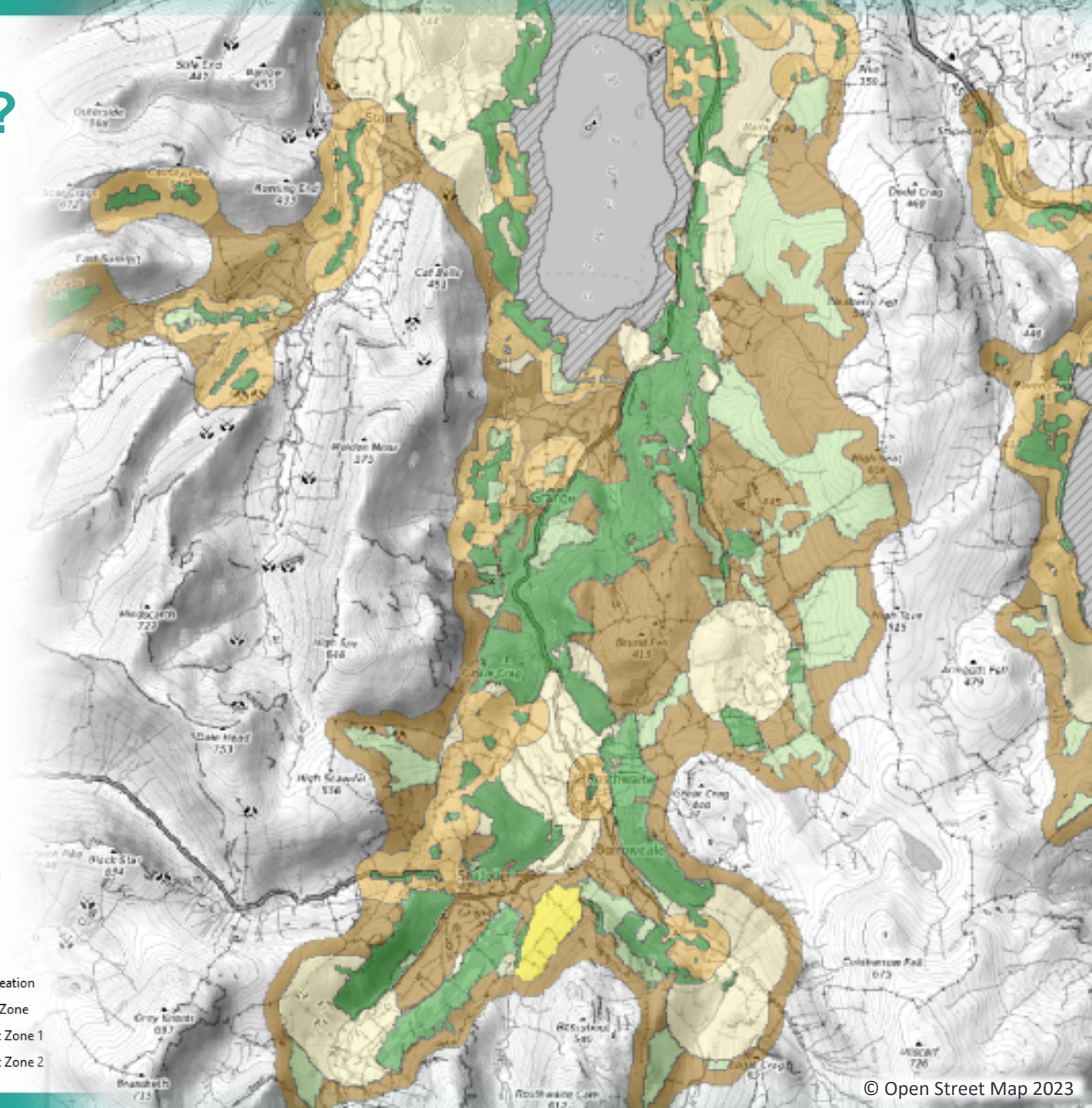
The LNRS will be formed of two parts:

- A written document.
- An interactive map.

The habitats, priorities, and measures identified in the document will be represented spatially on the map showing what could be done and where.

Cumbria LNRS - Woodland

- Primary Habitat
- Associated Habitats
- Restorable Habitat
- Habitat Restoration-Creation
- Fragmentation Action Zone
- Network Enhancement Zone 1
- Network Enhancement Zone 2



What will the LNRS Look like?

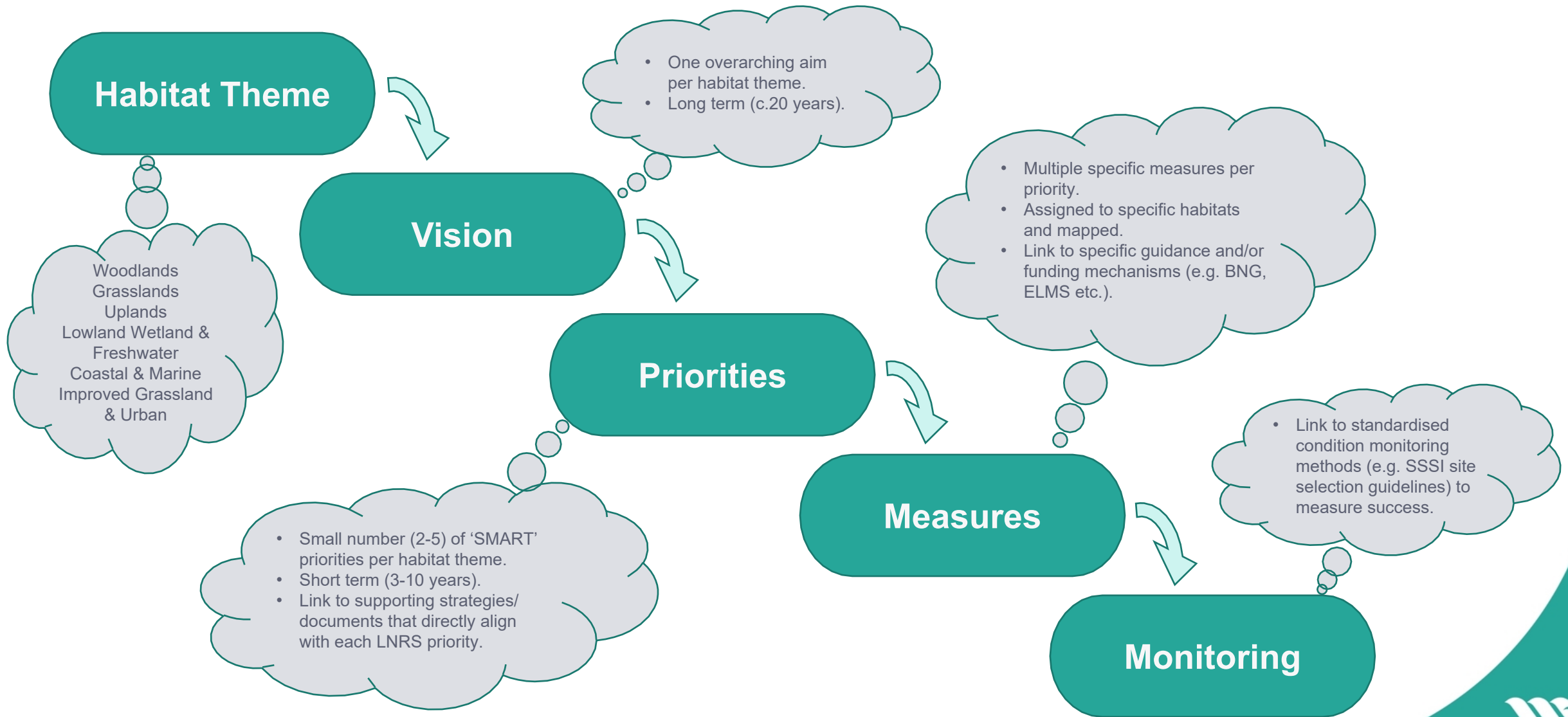


*Key themes will be considered **throughout** such as benefits to **species, people, the farming community, education, tourism and businesses.***

*For each habitat theme, we will identify a **vision**, a small number of **priorities**, and **measures** to achieve these priorities.*



How does it all fit together?



Project Timeline – Summary

Phase 1: Laying the Foundation (Jan - April)

- Evidence Base Review: Comprehensive analysis of existing data and studies to understand the local ecological landscape and inform priority setting.
- Priority and Measure Formation: Utilizing the evidence base, establish key conservation goals and actionable interventions to achieve them.
- Species Shortlist and Assemblage Definition: Identify high-value or threatened species and ecological targeted actions.

Phase 2: Collaborative Development (April - Sept)

- Stakeholder Engagement: Proactive public consultations, community workshops, and discussions with Farmers/Landowners and key stakeholders to incorporate diverse perspectives.
- Strategy Development and Writing: Craft a clear and concise document outlining the vision, objectives, and implementation plan for the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Mapping Finalisation: Integrate spatial data and define habitat restoration and protection areas to guide future actions.

Phase 3: Refinement and Publication (Oct - Jan)

- Draft Strategy Launch: Public release of the draft strategy for feedback and input from interested parties, including neighboring LNRS areas.
- Supporting Authority Response: Address comments and concerns raised during the consultation period, resulting in a finalised strategy document. Progress through Council democratic processes.

Phase 4: Implementation Initiation (Feb - March)

- Notice to Publish: Initiate formal steps to formally adopt the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a statutory document.



Where are we in the LNRS Process?



Map areas that are of particular importance for biodiversity.

- Confirmed as designated sites and irreplaceable habitats only.



Describe Cumbria's current biodiversity and opportunities for recovery.

- Described within the opening sections of the pilot and requires only minor updates.



Identify the priorities for biodiversity recovery and measures to achieve these.

- Review of evidence base and long-list of priorities drafted.
- Draft priorities to be shortlisted during workshops in March.



Map the areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity.

- Mapping to be developed once priorities for nature recovery and their target habitats are confirmed.

Linking the LNRS with other initiatives

In order to deliver action for nature recovery, the LNRS must be used...

- The LNRS should be used to guide and **inform key planning policy**, such as our Local Plans.
- It should perform that **critical strategic link** to guide nature recovery activity so that it happens strategically.
- It should **connect** conservation efforts, scientific research, management guidance, planning policy, green finance opportunities, ELMS and more!
- It can be directly linked with the emerging **green finance** market (e.g. The Strategic Significance modifier within the Biodiversity Metric).
- It can be used as an **engagement tool** to encourage the general public to deliver action for nature.



What is BNG?



Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

Net gain means that development results an overall positive impact on biodiversity rather having a neutral impact or decreasing it.

The Environment Act 2021 amends Town & Country Planning Act 1990. It sets out the following key components of mandatory biodiversity gain:

- Every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to a general biodiversity gain condition to secure the biodiversity gain objective.
- Calculated using Natural England's Statutory Biodiversity Metric
- The objective is to deliver at least a 10% increase in relation to the pre-development biodiversity value of the development granted permission.
- All off-site habitat and 'significant' on-site habitat secured and managed for at least 30 years via conditions (on-site only), planning obligations or conservation covenants;
- National register for net gain delivery sites.



BNG Development Management Update

- 3 x major applications received since 12th February
- 2 x applications reviewed, both aiming to deliver on-site BNG
- Secured with planning conditions, rather than s106 agreements
- Minor applications within scope from 2nd April.



Biodiversity Net Gain and the LNRS

- Currently BNG is the only 'land management' scheme that is directly linked to the LNRS.
- Agri-environment schemes (e.g. ELMS) will need to link to the LNRS for it to be fully deliverable.
- We should not expect BNG to 'deliver' all the LNRS priorities, but it can help.
- BNG has a strong link with the LNRS as habitats receive a 10%-15% uplift in unit value within the Biodiversity Metric if they are located within areas that are considered to be of 'High' or 'Medium' strategic significance for that habitat.
- BNG's potential to contribute to LNRS delivery could be further enhanced through a requirement over and above the mandatory 10% in the local plan. The current council administration has an ambition for 20%. Robust evidence needed.
- Nutrient Neutrality mitigation can help but NN lacks the direct link with the LNRS that BNG has.



Biodiversity Net Gain and the LNRS

- We have developed interim guidance linking strategic significance with the pilot LNRS, areas identified on the LNRS network maps will:



Receive a 10% or 15% uplift in their baseline unit value for the habitat type in question (making them **less desirable for development** than lower value land outside the LNRS).



Receive a 15% uplift in the unit value of habitat created or enhanced for the purposes of BNG to the specification of the habitat type in question (making them **more desirable for BNG offsetting**). network maps).

Ref	Existing area habitats			Condition		Strategic significance			Ecological baseline
	Broad Habitat	Habitat Type	Area (hectares)	Condition	Score	Strategic significance	Strategic significance	Strategic significance multiplier	Total habitat units
1	Grassland	Lowland meadows	1	Good	3	Formally identified in local strategy	High strategic significance	1.15	27.60
2	Grassland	Lowland meadows	1	Good	3	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	Low Strategic Significance	1	24.00





Biodiversity Net Gain and the LNRS

- Updated guidance will be developed in parallel with the LNRS ‘proper’. This should:
 - Encourage BNG offsetting to occur where it will be most beneficial (as identified by the LNRS).
 - Provide a direct link between the LNRS and the emerging green finance market. Due to the strategic significance multiplier habitats created within LNRS network zones should be ‘worth’ more in financial terms.
- There is further work to do to incorporate less valuable habitats which can help connect ‘priority’ habitats.

Timeline and Next Steps

- The Environment Act 2021 mandates Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to prioritise nature restoration in Cumbria.
- Westmorland and Furness, as the LNRS Responsible Authority and Supporting Authorities will ensure adherence to DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) regulations and guidance and ensures alignment with BNG.

The committee is recommended to:

- Support the LNRS and BNG implementation and its role in achieving nature recovery.
- Provide comments and feedback on the draft LNRS Strategy later in the year.

Benefits

- Aligning BNG with the LNRS maximizes benefits for nature recovery.
- Nature recovery supports Council Plan priorities and will inform and shape the councils Biodiversity Action Plan (Part 2)
- Public consultation ensures the LNRS reflects stakeholder needs.
- Ongoing scrutiny ensures compliance and maximises benefits from LNRS and BNG.
- Continued collaboration with stakeholders will refine the LNRS.

Reporting:

- The Climate and Nature program will implement a quarterly reporting framework enabling members to monitor progress on Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) priorities. These priorities will be fully aligned with Part 2 of the Biodiversity Action Plan which will finalized in early 2025 (post LNRS submission).



Any Questions

