



Funded by
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Sussex Nature Recovery

A collective blueprint for targeted action

Sussex LNRS

Mid Sussex Eco-forum 2026

SussexNatureRecovery.org.uk



Structure of Presentation

- About Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- How they were created
- Key components
- Impact and scope
- LNRS and planning
- Next steps



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What are Local Nature Recovery Strategies? (LNRS)

- New statutory process
- Executed at the county level
- 48 developed across England
- Follow a defined process but vary locally due to data, resources and interpretation
- Collaboratively produced

A new spatial process to agree at the local level, the priorities and actions needed to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits



About Sussex LNRS

- 2 strategies cover Sussex:
 - East Sussex and Brighton & Hove
 - West Sussex
- Processes led by the two county councils (Responsible Authorities)
- Shared stakeholders and history of close collaboration: strategies developed together under the banner of Sussex Nature Recovery.
- 2,000 Sussex residents and organisations involved in their development.
- 6 week Public consultation ended 26th Nov 2025
- Publication May/June 2026.



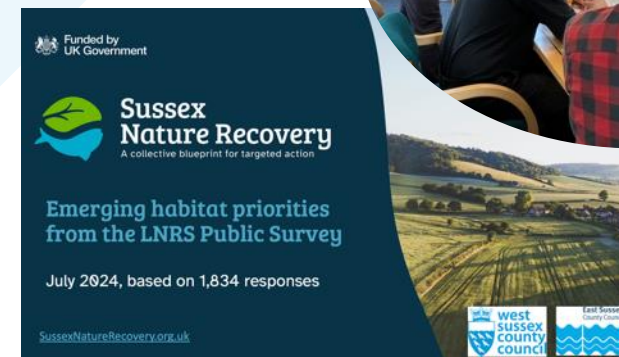
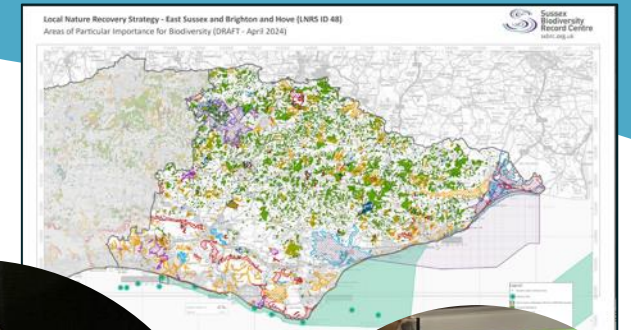
Presenting the LNRS to the Nature Friendly Farming Network in September 2024

Who has been involved



How they've been created

- Mapped existing valuable areas for nature
- Gathered the environmental issues that are most important to local people
- Collaboratively agreed the priorities for nature's recovery
- Mapped proposals for creating or improving habitats and species and for delivering wider environmental benefits (called Measures)
- Final documents include a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and a Local Habitat Map
- Reviewed every 3-10 years.



The format: 4 written parts and an interactive map



Part 1 – Context & Description of Strategy Area



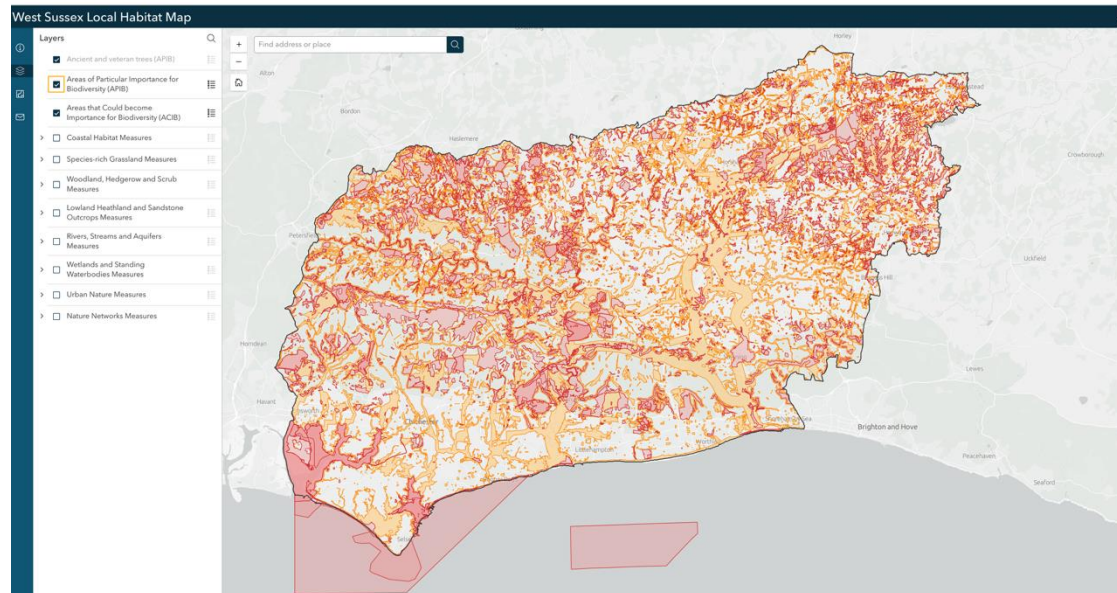
Part 2 – Priorities, Measures and the Local Habitat Map



Part 3 – Priority Species



Statement of Biodiversity Priorities Part 4 – Technical Methods



What they contain....

Supporting information

- Ecological evidence and data
- Existing priorities from 150 published plans & strategies
- Views and concerns from local people
- Existing projects, initiatives and ambitions
- Local/national expertise and rigour

The 'Tool kit'

8 principles

24 habitat priorities

100+ measures
(practical, feasible actions)

Prioritised species list and specific
species measures

Local Habitat Map

Description of Sussex nature

Part 1, Section 4

What is it?

- A summary of our priority habitats: what they are, where they are found, their condition and the pressures they're under.

How does this help us to help nature?

- No single 'State of Nature' report for Sussex. Patchy habitat data locally and nationally.
- Multiple sources reviewed and data drawn together to create this Description.
- Peer reviewed by a panel Sussex's leading nature experts.
- Provides the first ever comprehensive summary of the condition of Sussex nature.
- A benchmark from which to assess progress and future trends.

East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Part 1

Nature in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove - description

4.6 Protected Sites


Designations

The value of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove for wildlife and beauty is recognised by the areas designated for their nature conservation interest. Some are protected under international agreements or national legislation and some under local policies. The following table shows the extent of these **protected sites** in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

SSSIs support habitats and/or species of national importance, and represent our best sites for wildlife and geology. Within these nationally important areas, some are additionally designated as NNRs – these recognise some of our most important habitats, species and geology and are considered to be the 'jewel in the crown' of our SSSIs. SACs are internationally important sites for habitats and species, SPAs are internationally important sites for birds, and Ramsar sites* are internationally important wetlands. All of these sites are protected by law.

Designation	No. of Sites	Extent (ha)	% of LNRS Area
Ramsar wetlands	2	6,442	3.7
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)*	6	7,624	4.2
Special Protection Areas (SPA)*	2	5,546	3.2
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*	65	15,519	8.5
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	4	342	0.2
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	28	2,629	1.1
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)*	368	10,498	5.7
Total extent of national & international designations*		15,547	8.6
Total extent of all designations*		26,994	14.4

*NB designations can overlap so total extents are not a direct sum.



Pevensey Levels © Kai Wilson/Sussex Wildlife Trust
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West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Part 1

Nature in West Sussex - description

Species-rich Grassland


Our species-rich grasslands include **lowland calcareous grassland** (chalk grassland), **species-rich meadows** (including lowland meadows) and pastures, **waxcap grasslands**, and **neutral grasslands**. We also have acid grassland but as that is most commonly found in association with heathland habitats, it is covered in that section of the description. Similarly, wet grassland and grazing marsh are covered in the wetland section. Map 3 (Appendix 1A) shows the distribution of chalk grassland and lowland meadows in West Sussex.

These grasslands are rich in wildlife and provide important ecosystem services but they depend on continuity of appropriate and sympathetic management to maintain their ecological value. Ongoing agricultural "improvement" of semi-natural grassland (through re-seeding, use of fertiliser and herbicides to increase productivity), neglect, land use change and urban development are key threats that continue to reduce and fragment the remaining areas of ecologically important grassland both across the UK and in West Sussex.

Unimproved chalk grassland occurs along the length of the South Downs, and unimproved hay meadows and pastures are concentrated on more traditionally managed farms in the High and Low Weald. Waxcap grasslands can be found in cemeteries and churchyards in towns and villages across the county as well as within unimproved grassland on undisturbed soils with a range of pH values. Diverse, semi-natural grassland is usually associated with the farmed landscapes and nature reserves but also occurs in mosaics with other habitats, such as scrub (in transitional* vegetation), on woodland rides, in wetlands, on road verges and sometimes in urban greenspaces. The extent of the different species-rich grasslands found in our LNRS area is shown below.

Grassland Type	Extent (ha)	% LNRS area
Lowland calcareous grassland	2736	1.4
Lowland meadows	226	0.1
Waxcap grasslands	1451	0.7
Unimproved neutral grassland	369	0.2
TOTAL	4793	2.4

© Grassland meadow © iStock.com/Chris Page



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Opportunities

Part 1, Section 6

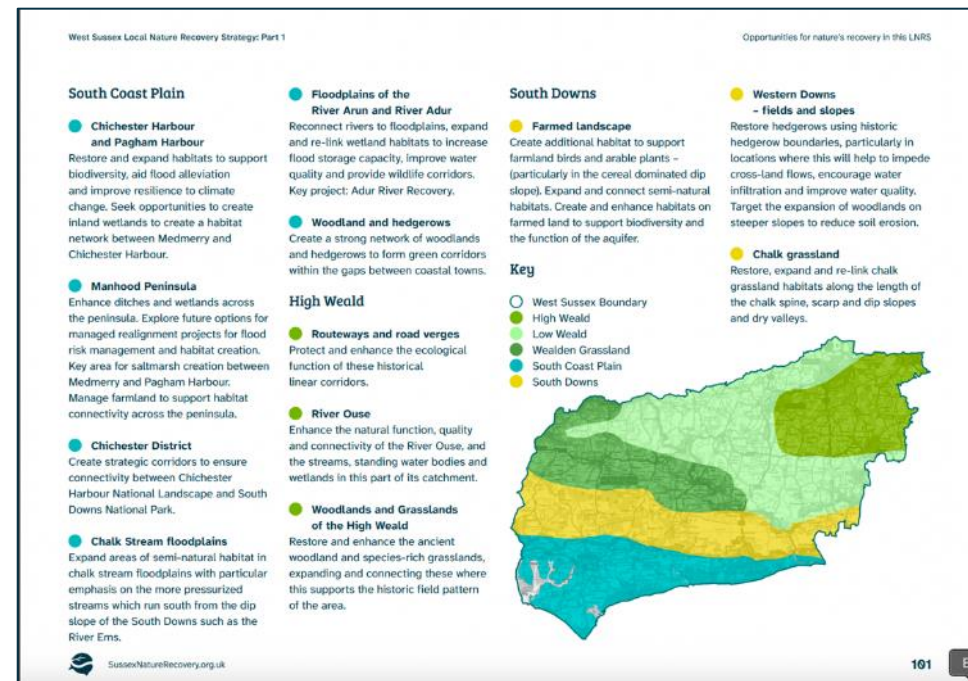
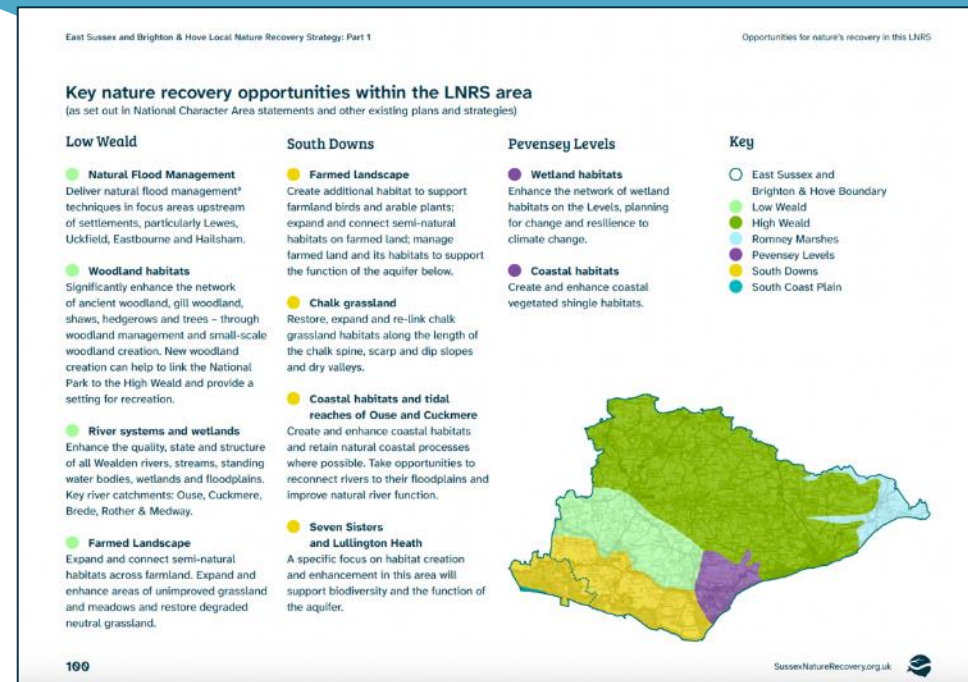
What are they?

- A summary of the key nature recovery opportunities from various sources:
 - National Character Areas
 - Protected Landscape Management Plans
 - BOAs (Biodiversity Opportunity Areas)
 - Local Plans

- 22 identified for West Sussex, 23 for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

How does this help us to help nature?

- Reflects a consensus on the high-level spatial priorities for nature's recovery for our LNRS areas.
- Important foundation for mapping measures.



Principles

Part 2, Section 3

What are they?

- Eight strategic principles to guide the application of our priorities and measures.
- Describes the key issues related to nature in Sussex and how the strategy helps to address these.

How does this help us to help nature?

- Sets the scene to describe why we need to act and what we need to do. (e.g. coastal habitats at *extreme* risk of climate change).
- Highlights changes needed to current approaches (e.g. designations are *not enough* to keep core areas in good condition).
- Underscores the breadth of action needed – not just habitat creation and enhancement but improving access to nature in urban areas and supporting and championing farmers/regenerative farming practices.

1. In our core areas for nature, hold on to what we have and make it better.
2. Create a network of ‘bigger, better, more and joined-up’ wildlife-rich spaces across our rural and urban landscapes.
3. Think big: work at scale to support ecosystems and natural processes.
4. Work together through a source-to-sea approach to support our terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine environments.
5. Showcase and support action for nature across our farmed landscapes.
6. Support species special to the LNRS area.
7. Invest in and use nature to deliver wider benefits where we need them.
8. Bring nature into everyday life, providing places for people to benefit from and engage with nature.



Priorities

Part 2, Section 4

What are they?

- 24 priorities related to habitats (woodland, coastal, river systems, grassland etc).
- Each comes with a set of outcome statements that describes what 'success' in 10 years looks like to guide our understanding of their potential short-mid term impact.

How does this help us to help nature?

- Sets out what we need to do.
- Includes priorities for 'nature networks' (to cover habitat mosaics and nature corridors), and 'Nature, health & wellbeing' (to acknowledge the important link between access to nature and health).

RIVERS, STREAMS & AQUIFERS

Priority: R1 (Rivers and river systems)

Support the recovery of our rivers and river systems*, their health, biodiversity and natural functions

- The natural functions of our rivers and streams are being enhanced and restored. The connection between our rivers and their floodplains has been increased where this is suitable. Mosaics of dynamic floodplain habitats are delivering benefits for nature and are supporting the natural function of river systems in times of flood and drought. In some places, watercourses are also being 're-naturalised' to improve their habitat and flow paths, undoing 'straightening' and removing/adapting man-made barriers to flow and species movement. This is giving rivers and streams room to flow more naturally over a greater length.




Measures Part 2, Section 4

What are they?

- 100+ practical and achievable actions that can be implemented to deliver the priorities.
- Each has additional information about how and where they can be carried out, their wider environmental benefits, links to best practice and case studies, and some examples of alignment with agri-environment schemes.
- ‘Core’ measures supported by ‘Enabling’ measures – a set of additional actions needed that are *beyond the scope* of the LNRS e.g. ‘Work collaboratively to design a data and monitoring system... on the health of rivers and streams in Sussex’.

How does this help us to help nature?

- Takes the strategy from high level steps to on-the-ground actions, ranging from those related to specific sites and expertise to everyday measures we can all take forward.

Code	Measures	How	Where	Further info/guidance
R1.6	<p>Create and manage permanent vegetation buffer strips alongside rivers and streams to support biodiversity and intercept and reduce levels of pollutants (such as nutrients, chemical pollutants, veterinary chemicals, excessive sediment) reaching watercourses.</p> <p>Mapped</p> 	<p>Creation of permanent vegetation buffers (grassland, wetland, hedgerows, trees, others).</p> <p>For farmland, buffer size to be suitable for site, field size and landscape scale.</p> <p>For grassland buffers, there is a recommended width under ELMS schemes >6m (SFI) and 12-24m (arable land at high risk of erosion).</p>	<p>This is good practice along all watercourses but is particularly important in the following cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watercourses in an agricultural setting (arable and pasture); • priority watercourses e.g. chalk streams, wood gills; • those located in source protection zones and nitrate vulnerable zones; • those in upper catchments. 	<p>Defra Blog: Water body buffering standard of the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot</p> <p>Gov.uk guidance for relevant ELMS options: BFS1 12m to 24m watercourse buffer strip on cultivated land</p>



Priority species and measures

Part 3

What is it?

- A shortlist of our most at risk/iconic Sussex species and the specific interventions needed to recover them (over and above those that will improve habitats).
 - East: 160 priority species (additional 326 species supported by habitat measures).
 - West: 163 priority species (additional 338 species supported by habitat measures).

How does this help us to help nature?

- The most up-to-date and comprehensive analysis of priority species compiled for Sussex.
- Rigorously reviewed by panel of leading species experts.
- Highlights which species need additional actions.
- A benchmark from which to assess progress and future trends.

West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Part 3 Priority Species Measures

Species	Information	Measures
Mouse-eared Bat <i>Myotis myotis</i>	Legal protection, CR. Rarest bat in Britain, but not resident with no maternity sites found for many years. Only two individuals of this species in the UK, both in West Sussex. Thought to be crossing the Channel to hibernate. Possible that there are undiscovered summer roosts in southern England. Key species: Hibernation roost protection key. Habitats: tunnels (hibernation roost); woodland edge, pasture/grassland, agricultural land (foraging).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect hibernation roost e.g. through raising awareness with landowners. 2. Create, enhance and manage supporting foraging habitat for the species including woodland edges, pasture/grassland and agricultural land, especially in proximity to known hibernation roost and historic maternity roost site.
Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>Brenta bernicla bernicla</i>	S41, BoCC Red. Very common winter visitor and passage migrant. Chichester Harbour holds about 80% of birds wintering in Sussex. Stronghold for the species and considered iconic.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with farmers to provide suitable crop or set aside pasture in winter months for geese to feed on. 2. Create and manage diverse coastal grasslands and marshes with ditches and scrapes of lagoons. 3. Ideally leave grasslands ungrazed over winter. 4. Reduce recreational disturbance through education.
Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Legal protection, BoCC Amber. Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; very scarce breeder since 2004. Marshes and reedbeds.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain/enhance water quality in wetland and rivers around known sites e.g. by providing appropriate buffers, reducing the use of chemicals etc. 2. Manage reedbeds by e.g. grazing, cutting, scrub control etc.
White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Legal protection, BoCC Amber. Rare vagrant. Reintroduction project on the Isle of Wight. Considered iconic. Coastal & wetland.	Survey/monitoring to assess success of reintroduction programme and to inform future management.

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West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Part 3 Priority Species Measures


Wetlands (Rivers, Streams & Aquifers + Wetlands & Standing Water Bodies)

Amphibian Ponds Assemblage

Measures:

- Restore ponds: de-silt, deepen, maintain water levels and improve water quality.
- Establish network of new ponds, with range of sizes and depths.
- Maintain/extend undisturbed semi-natural habitat surrounding pond.
- Avoid stocking with fish.
- Establish toad crossing signage/patrols where roads cross migration routes.
- Note: great crested newt conservation strategy in place through District Licensing.

Species	Additional Information & Resources
Common toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>	Legal protection, S41. Widespread in the UK but have declined by over 68% in last 30 years. Requires targeted habitat management.
Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Legal protection, S41. Widespread but patchy distribution in the UK. Sussex is a stronghold for the species. Newt Conservation Partnership



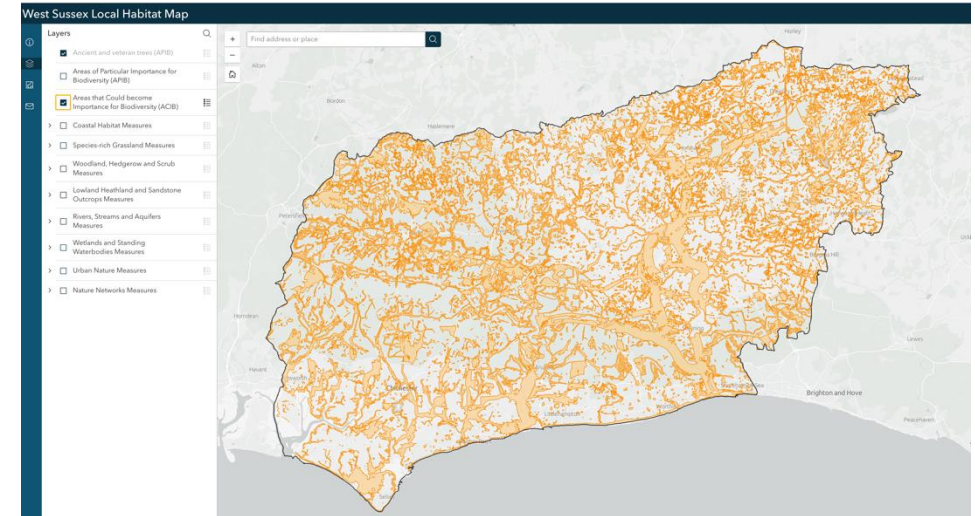
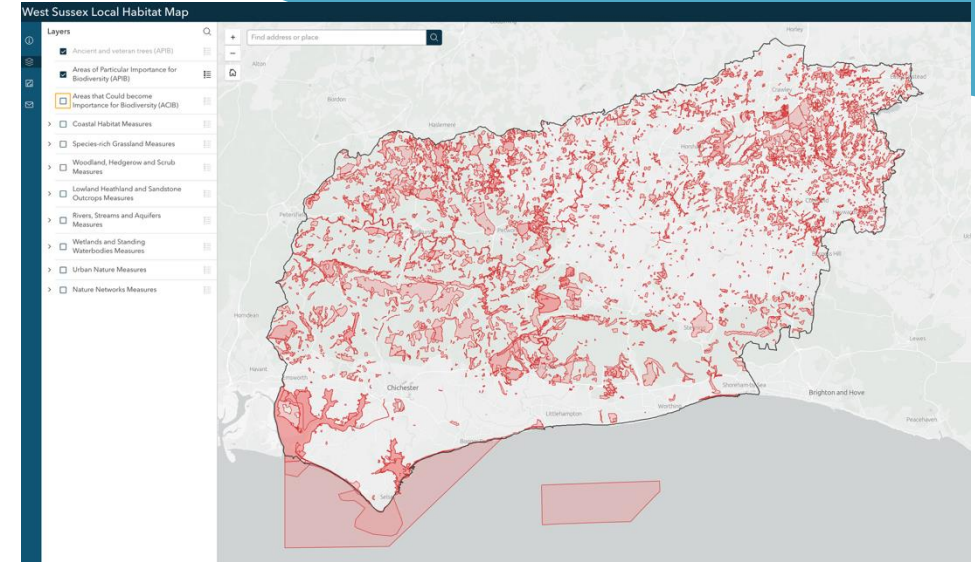
Great crested newt © iStock.com/MikLew45

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Local Habitat Map

- Identifies locations where measures can feasibly be implemented that will have the greatest impact for nature/wider environmental benefits.
- Layers include:
 - Our existing designated sites for nature (*called Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity – APIB*).
 - Where a combined view of measures can be applied outside of the APIB (*called Areas that Could become of Importance to Biodiversity – ACIB*).
- NB - 60% of measures are not mappable
 - This is due to a lack of data to target effectively, a stipulation in the regulations, or there are no ‘best’ locations as they could be implemented in too many places (e.g. nesting and roosting boxes, buffer strips etc).



What are they for?

- **Unlock funding:** direct Biodiversity Net Gain funding into areas that will deliver the greatest benefits to nature. Role in guiding agri-schemes to be defined.
- **Inform local planning:** influence the planning approval process and are another piece of information for the planning officer. They inform public authorities' strengthened biodiversity duty.
- **Support decision-making:** provide an evidence-base to give confidence to landowners, funders, investors.
- **Nature-based solutions:** support their delivery which will help direct funding from private sector.
- **Targeting:** ensure the right things are done in the most effective areas.

What they can't do

- *Can't dictate* how land will be used.
- Place *no obligations* on landowners or any other organisation to carry actions out.
- *Can't protect more spaces* for nature - Areas mapped for habitat creation/improvement do not place new restrictions on developing land, and do not identify areas to be given legal protection.
- While they highlight pressures such as pollution and housing development, they *can't tackle the sources* of these pressures if they are covered by other frameworks.
- They also *don't cover the marine area*. Their statutory scope stops at the **mean low water** mark.

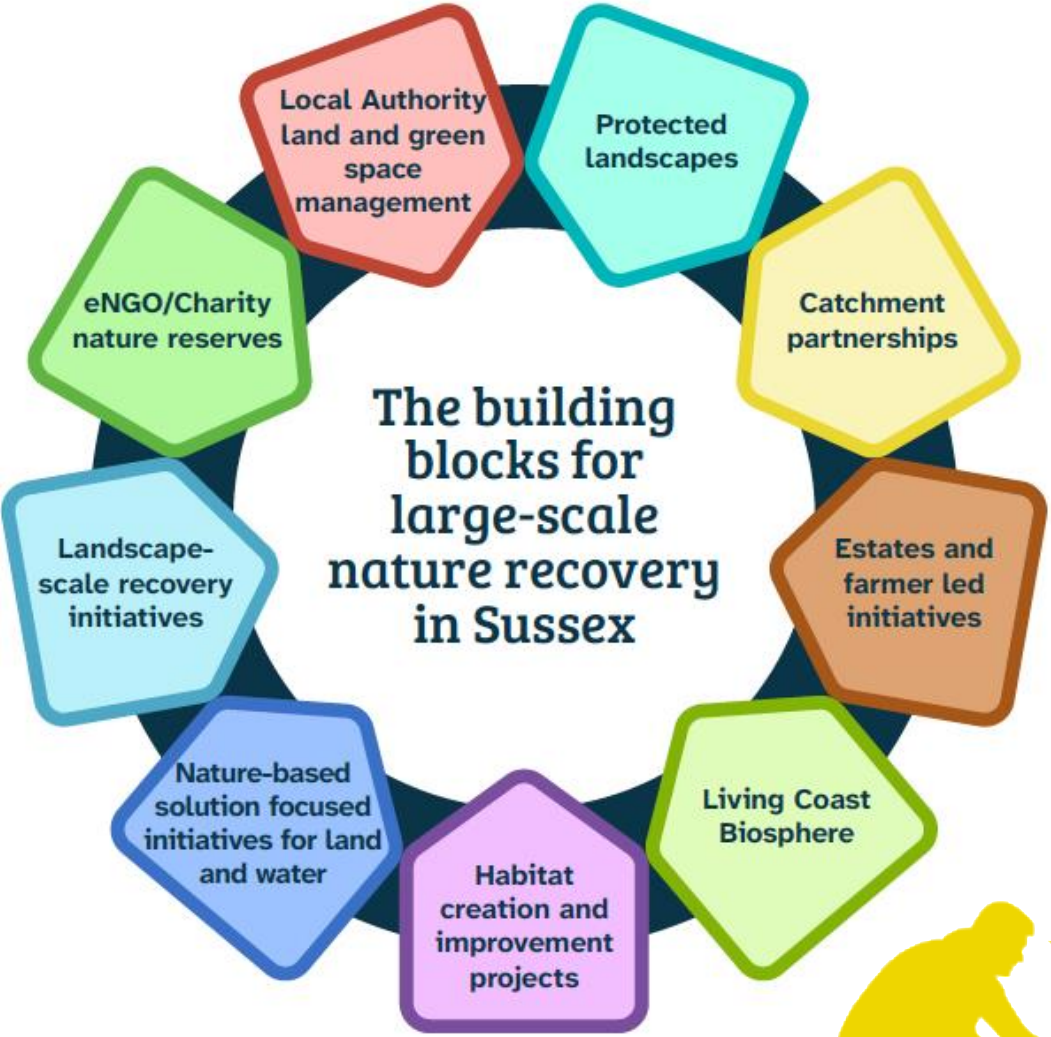


How the LNRS can help us help nature

- It shows **where we should be strategic** in focusing our effort and why.
- **Gives confidence** to funders, investors, landowners about actions and locations due to being statutory and its collaborative, participative approach
- Serves as a **benchmark ‘state of nature’** for future trends and recovery efforts.
- **Is a new source of evidence for local planning** and local government decision-making processes.
- Provides **a single set of priorities and actions** for all interested parties to rally behind, seek funding for and work together to deliver on the ground.
- Helps all those interested to see **how their actions could make a contribution to the broader county-wide ambition** for nature.



Our foundation - big initiatives & local action



Conducting Riverfly Surveys on the Western Rother, using river invertebrates to understand water quality and river health. © Sam Moore, Western Sussex Rivers Trust



The Woodland Flora and Fauna Group undertake breeding surveys and identify a young barn owl. © Michael Setford



Planting new hedgerows © CPRE Sussex

Next steps

To publication

- Finalise review of consultation comments.
- Launch publication of amended LNRS documents and map in **May/June**.
- Interactive version of the LNRS to improve utility and user experience to follow in the summer, along with launch events and supporting materials e.g. guides and tool kits.

Transition to delivery

- Working to embed the LNRS in decision making. Supporting Sussex public bodies to use and have “have regard” to the LNRS.
- Leading a partnership to support delivery – likely to be an evolution of the existing Sussex Nature Partnership.
- Evolving the County Council’s role to support identification and development of nature recovery projects – will first involve listening to our delivery organisations about how/where RAs can add value in the busy Sussex space.
- Understanding monitoring and reporting requirements and developing a long-term solution for Sussex that is beneficial to the sector.



For local groups....

- We will be in touch – to find out what you need!
- We will work with other organisations on the ground – to help link you to support and guidance
- Provision of more advice/guidance and knowledge sharing
- Collecting information on what groups and projects are doing – and putting on our delivery ‘map’
- Help everyone to understand how they can play a role – and are part of a bigger picture



Find out more:

SussexNatureRecovery.org.uk

Email:

EastSussexLNRS@eastsussex.gov.uk

WestSussexLNRS@westsussex.gov.uk



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