

North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Document 2: Thriving Nature in North Yorkshire
and York – Our Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Consultation Draft | June 2025

LNRS Document Navigation

The North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is split into 5 separate parts to help users of the strategy easily find the information that is most relevant to them. The 5 parts are set out in the table below, with a brief description of each one. Please click on one of the other parts in the table to access it.

This is: **Document 2 Thriving Nature in North Yorkshire and York – Our Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

1	Thriving Nature in North Yorkshire and York – Non-Technical Summary Provides a non-technical summary of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy
2	Thriving Nature in North Yorkshire and York – Our Local Nature Recovery Strategy Provides a detailed overview of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy
3	Statement of Biodiversity Priorities Part I – Description of Our Strategy Area Provides a detailed description of the strategy area of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy
4	Statement of Biodiversity Priorities Part II – Priorities and Measures Sets out the priorities and measures for the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy
5	The Local Habitat Map Online mapping platform providing the Local Habitat Map for the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including existing Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIBs) and Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACBs)
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1. What is the purpose of this document?

The intention of this document is to provide an overview of the scope of the LNRS, whilst also forming a signpost to, and summary of, more detailed information that can be found in the Description of Strategy Area (Document 3), Statement of Biodiversity Priorities (Document 4), the Local Habitat Map and the supporting appendices.

2. What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new system of spatial strategies intended to drive nature recovery, along with associated environmental improvements. Their preparation is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 and their main purpose is to identify appropriate actions and suitable locations to enhance existing habitats, or create new habitats, where this is most likely to provide the greatest benefits for nature and the wider environment.

Each strategy must:

- Agree priorities for nature's recovery
- Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- Map specific proposals for enhancing or creating habitat for nature, along with wider environmental goals

This document is the LNRS for North Yorkshire and York, which has been led by North Yorkshire Council following appointment by Defra as the responsible authority for its preparation, in collaboration with a wide range of regional stakeholders.

In due course, Defra will require the responsible authority to review and republish their strategy as part of an ongoing cycle which considers what has been achieved and proposes what further work is needed for nature to recover. It is expected that the first published LNRS will be reviewed within 5-10 years.

The strategy does not force landowners or land managers to make any changes or undertake any actions on the land that they own or manage. In addition, it does not confer any additional protections or change existing protections and restrictions. Instead, the strategy seeks to drive collaborative, coordinated action for nature by setting out the most beneficial priorities and measures (actions) to enhance and create habitat, and identify where these could be carried out to have the greatest positive impact.

What does the strategy contain?

- Vision and principles – with our stakeholders we have co-created a vision statement with 10 supporting principles
- A description of our natural environment
- The state of nature across North Yorkshire and York – where are we now?
- Links to other plans and strategies
- The priorities and measures (actions) for nature recovery that we have established with our stakeholders
- The nature network and Local Habitat Map – online map (spatial representation of the LNRS)
- How we go about delivery of the LNRS

How has it been prepared?

Preparation of the LNRS has been led by North Yorkshire Council (NYC), as the responsible authority, with work having commenced in September 2023. NYC has been supported by an advisory group (steering group) with representation from the Defra arm's length bodies (Natural England, Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency), the protected landscapes in North Yorkshire (two National Parks and three National Landscapes), City of York Council, Yorkshire

Wildlife Trust, White Rose Forest, Dales to Vales River Network and the National Farmers Union (NFU). During the development of the strategy, NYC has also elicited the views and expertise of many wider stakeholders across our geography. We have facilitated five webinars, nine briefings to Council Members, 33 in-person workshops, 33 stakeholder one-to-one interviews and engaged with 90 organisations and over 1500 individuals.

Key statistics from engagement undertaken up to May 2025.



In-person workshop

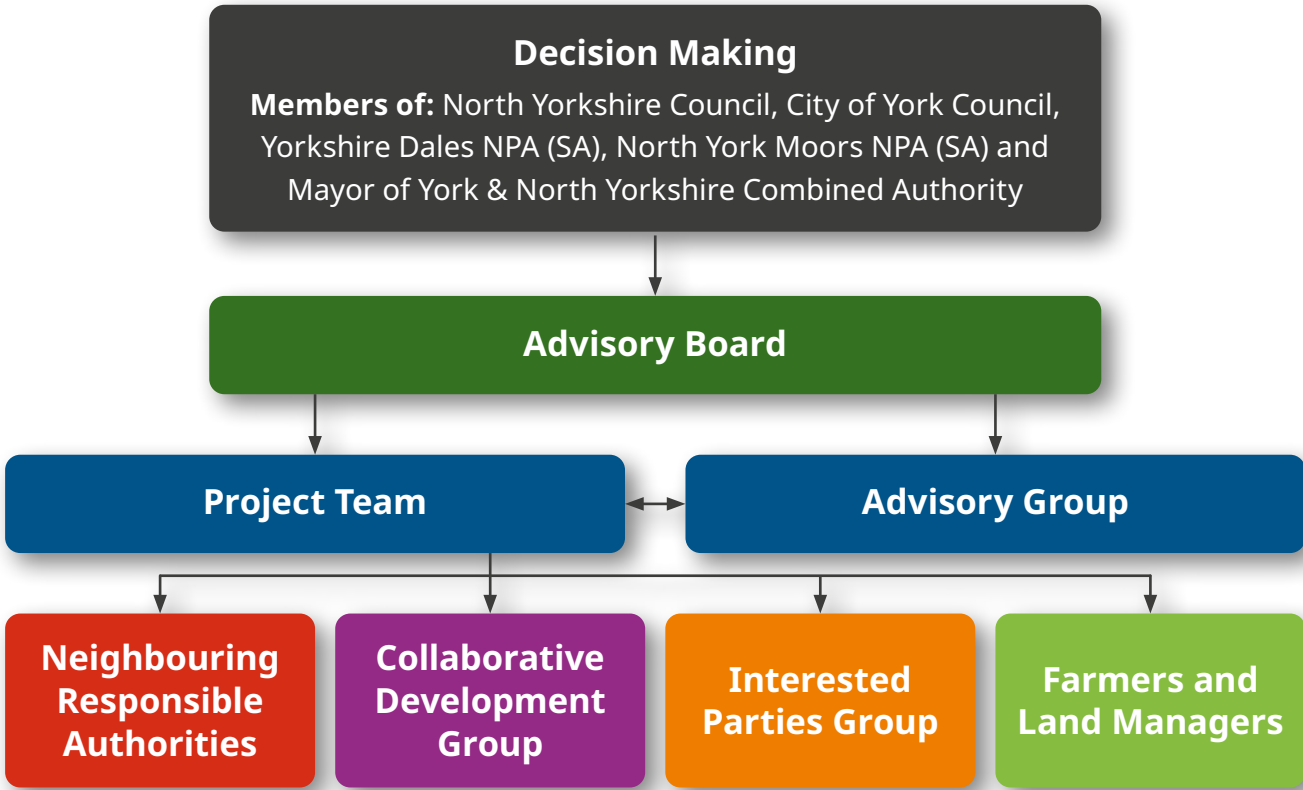
Who has been involved?

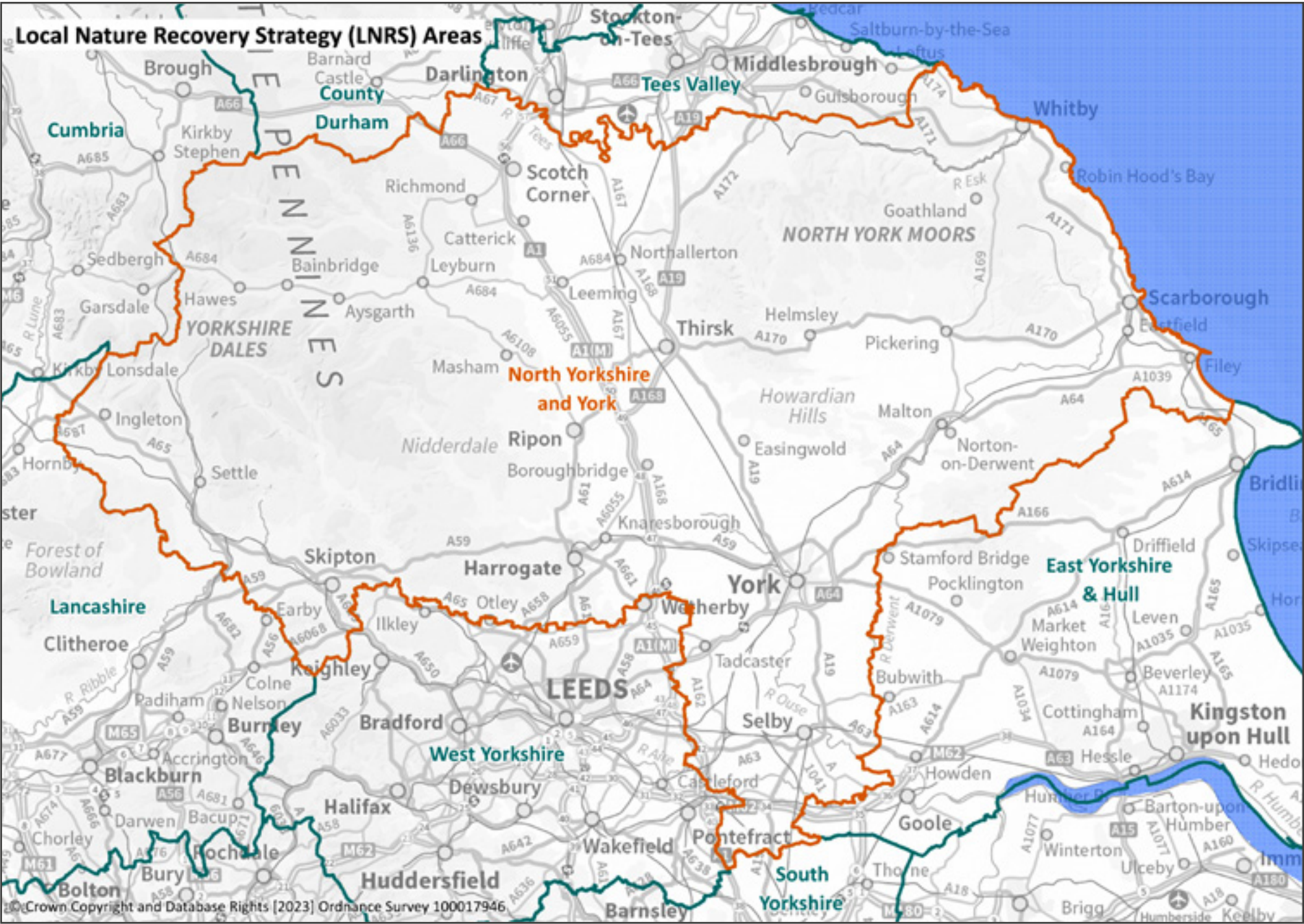
NYC developed a stakeholder engagement plan during summer 2023 to establish governance (working procedures and accountability), to raise awareness about LNRS, and determine which stakeholders to engage with. A working group from North Yorkshire Council and Natural England established a governance model for the LNRS (see diagram below), with the key groupings being:

- Lead Members from the responsible authority and supporting authorities – key decision makers
- Advisory Board – officers at director level, representing the responsible authority and supporting authorities (Natural England, City of York Council, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and North York Moors National Park Authority)

- Project Team – officers from NYC and the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership (LNP)
- Advisory Group – 18 advisory group members representing key stakeholder organisations
- Seven neighbouring LNRS responsible authorities (see plan overleaf)
- Two collaborative development groups – (i) habitat and species specialists (ii) experts from public health, climate change, natural capital, and economy
- Over 200 land managers and farmers
- Interested parties - local politicians, local authority senior officers, town and parish councils, environmental organisations, youth councils, our LNRS mailing list (over 400 contacts) and members of the public

Governance and stakeholder engagement





Who is the strategy for?

Everyone can take action for nature and play a part in local nature recovery. This strategy is for everyone across North Yorkshire and York, whether you are a landowner, farmer or local business owner, an environmental charity, developer or planner, a local resident, parks manager or community group.

How should it be used?

- **To encourage collaboration:** working across communities, businesses, public bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help nature to thrive
- **To inform and evidence:** understand the local state of nature and the best actions we can all take to help nature recover, alongside other land use and development
- **To direct investment:** by setting out the best locations to focus action and resources to enhance habitat, including the delivery of environmental land management schemes (ELMs), biodiversity net gain (BNG) and local investment in natural capital (LINC).
- **To deliver wider benefits from nature:** Natural England's State of Natural Capital (SoNC)¹ report demonstrates how the stock of ecosystem assets underpins the provision of a suite of benefits from nature, which in turn contribute to the economy (see page 22)
- **To raise awareness:** encourage our citizens to appreciate the state of nature and to get involved in action on the ground
- **Monitor progress:** government will require us to review and republish our LNRS periodically, so we will need to monitor progress and map areas where action for nature recovery has been undertaken and those actions are having an impact



¹ State of Natural Capital Report for England – Natural England
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6683489974616064>

3. Vision

3. Vision

Our LNRS identifies locations to improve biodiversity and deliver wider benefits from nature, such as capturing carbon from the atmosphere, flood regulation, and providing greater access to nature-rich spaces where this is most needed for health and wellbeing.

Since embarking on the preparation of the LNRS we have worked collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders including farmers, landowners, habitat experts, local politicians, town planners and residents to ask what nature means to them, how we can reverse its decline and what many wider benefits nature recovery can bring to both people and wildlife. Together we have established a vision 'strap line' and an ambition for the coming decade.

Vision

Our vision for restoring nature is:

To work together to enhance, expand, restore and connect our region's habitats for thriving nature across North Yorkshire and York.

Our ambition is that by 2035 our sub region will be an exemplar for abundant nature, and we will leave our natural environment in a better state for people and wildlife species, while supporting a prospering economy and addressing climate change.



Long Preston Floodplain project, near Settle

Picture credit: Colin Aldred

Principles: What we need to do

We have co-created 10 principles that will underpin our vision, statement of biodiversity priorities, and local habitat map. Principles 1 to 5 focus on what we need to do, with principles 6 to 10 focusing on how we can do it, they are:

1	Restore natural processes – restoring nature’s way of doing things, where people and wildlife are better able to thrive in a prospering economy, while addressing climate change
2	Produce food, fuel and timber in a nature friendly way
3	Connect people to nature – helping people become more aware of nature, our responsibility to it and the health and wellbeing benefits it can provide
4	Manage our water sustainably for both people and wildlife
5	Enhance our sense of place, with a thriving natural environment

Principles 1-5 align closely with the natural benefits referred to in the State of Natural Capital Report for England and this is covered in more detail on page 22.



Sowerby Sport Village, Thirsk



Woodland planting in an upland landscape

Principles: How we can do it

6	Work across communities, businesses, public bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help nature to thrive
7	Put nature at the heart of policy and decision-making
8	Attract funding and green finance into nature
9	Promote jobs, education, apprenticeships, and skills in delivering nature recovery
10	Monitor and evaluating change – recording uplifts to species, tree cover and habitats over time

Principles 6-10 are considered in more detail in Section 9.0 Delivery – who can do what?



Monitoring river fly species to assess water quality



Decision making session in Council Chamber

4. Our Natural Environment

4. Our Natural Environment

Our Description of Strategy Area (Document 3) covers the natural environment in more detail, the text below provides a summary from that document.

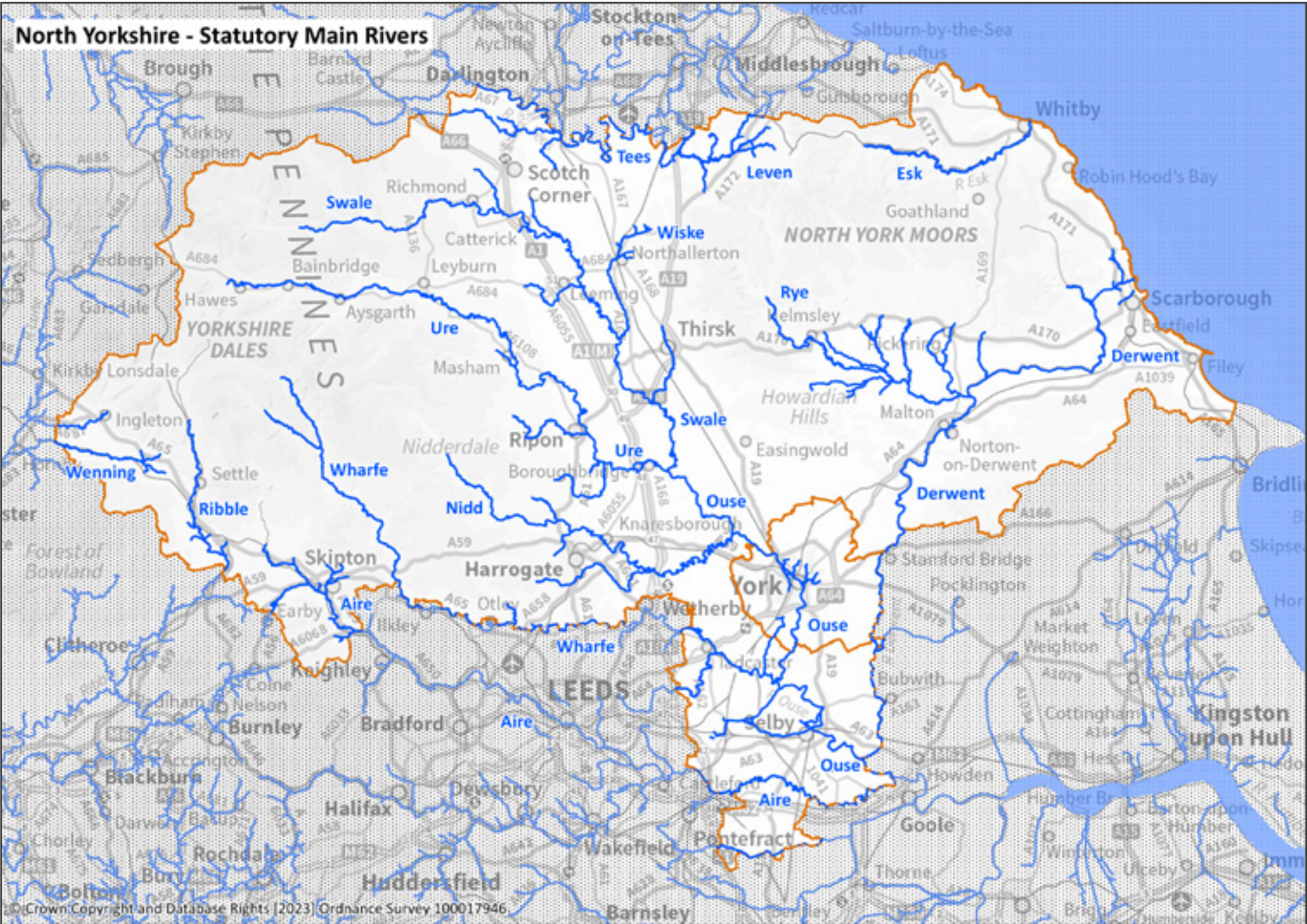
Our land area of over 850,000 hectares (8,500 square kilometres) covers a range of geologies including limestone, sandstone and ironstone. Long term interactions between land, climate, and hydrology have resulted in distinctive topography, with uplands characterised by the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and Yorkshire Wolds, and neighbouring lowlands including the Vale of Mowbray, Vale of York and Vale of Pickering.

North Yorkshire and York has an extensive river network (see plan overleaf), with the rivers Swale, Ure, Nidd and Ouse flowing in a south-easterly direction towards York and then on into the Humber estuary. Other rivers joining the Ouse downstream of York include the Aire, Wharfe and Derwent. In the north, the Tees and Esk form their own, separate river catchments, while in the west the river Ribble finds its source in the Dales before flowing into neighbouring Lancashire.

Our rivers support a diverse range of habitats, including floodplain meadows, with approximately 15% of the national floodplain meadow resource being found within the North Yorkshire and York area. The Lower Derwent Valley, south east of York, supports one of the best examples of traditionally managed species-rich floodplain meadow habitat in the UK and supports internationally important populations of wintering waterfowl.

North Yorkshire is noted for its upland landscapes, dominated by heather moorland and blanket bog that support rare species such as Hen Harrier, Merlin, and Bog Asphodel. The upland areas of the county contains 27% of England's blanket bog resource² and around 25% of the upland heathland resource; the North York Moors has the largest block of continuous heather moorland in England. The Yorkshire Dales National Park contains approximately half of all Britain's limestone pavement and contains a significant proportion of the national upland hay meadow habitat, which the area is also famous for.

² Our peatlands - Yorkshire Peat Partnership www.yppartnership.org.uk/our-peatlands



Lowland heathland is a rare habitat in England, and the York and Selby areas contain 2% of the country's resource, supporting rare species such as Pillwort, Slender Pond Snail, Adder and Nightjar.

Limestone habitats are especially rich in wildlife, and North Yorkshire is unique in having four different limestone types, each supporting unique habitats and species. These include the largest area of Carboniferous limestone in the Yorkshire Dales, the Permian Magnesian limestone running north to south through the centre of North Yorkshire, the Jurassic limestone on the southern edge of the North York Moors, and Britain's most northerly chalk outcrop (Cretaceous) in the Yorkshire Wolds. These support unique flora such as Lady's Slipper Orchid, Purple Milk-vetch and Perennial Flax. Almost half the plants of Conservation Concern in Yorkshire were linked with limestone and chalk³. The Yorkshire Dales contains more than 40% of England's upland calcareous grassland resource⁴.

As a percentage of our total land area, woodland cover across North Yorkshire and York is 11.48% compared with the England average of 14.87%⁵, nevertheless we have important areas of ancient and long-established woodlands across our geography. The North York Moors National Park has the highest density of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) in the North of England. North Yorkshire and York is known for its large number of country estates and associated parkland, including Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal, Duncombe Park, and Castle Howard, which support large numbers of veteran and ancient trees, an irreplaceable habitat.

The LNRS area encompasses the North Yorkshire coastline from Staithes to Filey, a highly distinctive heritage coast, with internationally recognised Jurassic and Cretaceous geology, and cliffs containing an array of fossils. Coastal grasslands support specialist invertebrates and plant species such as Bithynian Vetch and the hard cliffs provide an important nesting habitat for declining sea birds such as Kittiwake, whilst marine mammals such as Minke Whale and Bottlenose Dolphin can be seen out to sea.



Picture credit: Paul Harris

³ State of Yorkshire's Nature - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust www.ywt.org.uk/StateofNature
⁴ Flagship Habitats in North Yorkshire (2019), M Hammond
⁵ National Forest Inventory (NFI) and Outside Woods (TOW) data, Forest Research

North Yorkshire and York hosts a range of rare and iconic species from birds such as the Curlew and Barn Owl, to the Tansy Beetle, also known as ‘the Jewel of York’, as one of only two places it is found in the UK. The North York Moors National Park is now home

to the only significant breeding population of Turtle Dove in the north of the UK and our area is one of few places in the country left for endangered species such as Tassel Stonewort and Freshwater Pearl Mussel.



Picture credit: Will Askew



Picture credit: Gareth Atkinson

5. Our State of Nature



5. Our State of Nature

Our Description of Strategy Area (Document 3) covers the state of nature in North Yorkshire and York in more detail and the text below provides selective information from that document.

Species

In Yorkshire over 25% of species have declined in the last 30 years⁶ and this change can be seen in North Yorkshire and York by the dramatic decline of species such as Turtle Dove, White-Clawed Crayfish, Red Squirrel and Lady's Slipper Orchid. Our area contains over 8600 species considered to be endangered or vulnerable to extinction, including Adder, Curlew, European Eel, Water Vole and Burnt Orchid. Species that may be thought of as common such as the Common Toad, European Hedgehog or Swift are classed as priority species due to their dramatic declines in numbers in recent years.

Designated Sites

23% of the total area of North Yorkshire and York is internationally designated as either Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Areas for Conservation (SAC) or Ramsar. These range from the extensive upland heathland habitat in the North York Moors National Park, blanket bog habitat in the Yorkshire Dales National

Park, and floodplain meadow in the lower River Derwent. 13.8% of our total area is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) including areas of floodplain meadow along the River Ribble near Settle and lowland heath in the York and Selby area. Alongside these are Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) covering 1.2% of our total area, Local Nature Reserves (0.04%) and National Nature Reserves (0.2%). Irreplaceable habitats found within North Yorkshire and York include ancient woodland, blanket bog, limestone pavement and lowland fen.

However, these designations do not ensure that this land is in good quality for nature, due to a wide range of pressures. For example, only 15% our SSSI sites are in 'favourable' condition, with 71% assessed as 'unfavourable – recovering', 8.77% 'unfavourable – no change' and 4.54% 'unfavourable – declining'.



Picture credit: Gareth Atkinson

Pressures

Pressures that have led to the decline in species and the condition of designated sites will continue to impact into the future if not addressed, some of these include:

Land use – urbanisation and agricultural intensification since World War II have historically led to the direct loss in habitat, as well as a reduction in the quality of remaining habitat. This has created a fragmented network of sites for nature that have reduced the ability of species to migrate and made them more at risk of localised extinctions.

In the UK, the many demands on our land is an ongoing issue, including the needs of agricultural production, employment and residential development, strategic infrastructure including renewable energy, nature recovery and leisure and recreation. In January 2025, Government launched the consultation on its Land Use Framework (LUF) applicable to England. North Yorkshire and York faces all of these competing demands across its geography and it will need tools like the LUF and the planning system to help manage competing demands on land effectively.

Water Pollution – less than 20% of North Yorkshire and York's waterbodies are classed as having good ecological status, highlighting the impact issues such as pollution are still having on these ecosystems. More work is required to reduce the input of unwanted chemicals and nutrients from sewage treatment and runoff from roads and agriculture into our watercourses, to support the recovery of our river wildlife.

Air Pollution – In England, the two main sources of atmospheric pollutants are nitrogen oxides and ammonia. Nitrogen oxides result from the burning of fossil fuels, in both power stations and motor vehicles, while ammonia and methane are mainly emitted from agriculture. Overall, 96% of the England's most sensitive wildlife habitats are affected by excessive nitrogen deposition⁷.

Invasive species – There are estimated to be around 2,000 Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) in the UK, with many being well established, such as the Grey Squirrel. Collectively, INNS are estimated to cost our national economy £1.84 billion a year and are a major threat to our nature. Some directly target our native wildlife (e.g. American Mink, Signal Crayfish), whilst others cause indirect harm, including undermining our riverbanks (Himalayan Balsam), damaging our property (Japanese Knotweed), or impacting on human health (Giant Hogweed). Control of INNS has been identified as one of our overarching priorities within the strategy (see priority OVR_P03).

Pests and diseases – These are prevalent throughout our natural world, with more entering our country through human activity and climate change. Warmer average temperatures and wetter environments could increase the presence of pests and disease even further. Ash dieback was accidentally introduced to England back in 2012 and is expected to kill up to 80% of ash trees across the UK⁸, which will change the landscape and threaten many species which rely on ash.

⁶ State of Yorkshire's Nature - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust www.ywt.org.uk/StateofNature

⁷ We need to talk about Nitrogen - British Ecological Society www.britishecologicalsociety.org/need-talk-nitrogen

⁸ Ash Dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) - Woodland Trust www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/ash-dieback

Habitats

Farmland

Overview

Farmland makes up over 70% of the land area of North Yorkshire and York and, with over 6,900 farms ⁹ across our LNRS area, farming plays a significant role in community life. Agriculture also has an essential role in managing our region's landscapes, flora and fauna, alongside its significant contribution to the local economy.

In broad terms, our flatter lowland areas and some parts of the coast tend to be occupied by larger arable and mixed farms, with our upland areas and foothills being occupied by smaller hill farms, typically focussed on livestock and mixed farming. Our engagement with farmers during 2024 suggests that across our geography there are pockets of land where landowners and farmers are taking action to help nature by including natural habitat alongside their farm business activity. This applies particularly in the protected landscapes, which have benefitted from the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme, an initiative which provides advice and grants in respect of nature recovery and other objectives.

Elsewhere there is evidence that post-war agricultural intensification has resulted in field amalgamation through the removal of features such as hedgerows, trees, copses and ponds resulting in an environment with smaller and more fragmented areas of natural habitat, which is less able to support nature and wildlife.

⁹ Defra (2021), Farm type and farm size, Structure of the agricultural industry in England and the UK at June

Nature recovery in action – Birkdale Farm

Birkdale Farm in the Howardian Hills National Landscape is a 300-acre farm utilising regenerative agriculture principles to improve soil health and support biodiversity. The farm produces winter wheat with herbal leys as a 'break crop'. 150 breeding New Zealand Romney ewes support the management of various environmental options, improving the diversity of grassland and grazing wheat in February to reduce the risk of virus and therefore use of fungicide spray. No insecticides have been used on the farm for the past eight years. A mid-tier stewardship and Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) agreement supports rare arable plants, wildflowers, birds, invertebrates and newts whilst also protecting soil, water and hedgerows.

The farm has reduced its reliance on inputs (fertilisers and pesticides), extended the hedgerow network and implemented traditional management, incorporated flower-rich field margins and plots to support pollinators and predatory insects. 18 species of dragonfly and 10 species of bat have been recorded on the site, and rare moths, Great Crested Newt and arable plants such as Corn Buttercup and Field Pennycress have also been recorded through regular surveys.



Pollen and nectar mix, Birkdale Farm

Picture credit: Frances Standen



Hay meadow, Ashes Pasture

Picture credit: Becky Dennison, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Upland

Overview

Our upland landscapes are a stronghold for nationally and internationally important habitats, such as limestone pavement, upland heathland, blanket bog, upland hay meadows, calcareous grasslands, mires, flushes and other wetland features. These are home to a vast number of specialist species reliant upon these unique habitats. Our uplands are the source of multiple river systems in our area, and are thereby linked to opportunities to reduce water pollution and the impacts of flood events by storing more water upstream. Many of our upland habitats excel at storing carbon, essential to our ambitions to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change.

However, these areas have also been subject to past policies that encouraged the drainage of upland habitats, resulting in de-wetting and drying out. Historically some of our upland habitats have been converted to grassland and some agricultural practices have resulted in overgrazing.

¹⁰ Resources – Yorkshire Peat Partnership www.yppartnership.org.uk/resources

Nature recovery in action – Yorkshire Peat Partnership

Yorkshire Peat Partnership (YPP) is restoring peatlands at scale in the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks and Nidderdale National Landscape. Their goal is to restore and conserve upland peat resources to ensure the long-term future of these unique and valuable habitats. To date YPP has been particularly active in peatland restoration in areas such as Swaledale, Wensleydale, Nidderdale and lower Wharfedale in the Yorkshire Dales, and Eskdale in the North York Moors. By the end of March 2024 YPP had delivered 46,952 ha of peat restoration work which is 50% of the estimated 94,220 ha peatland in their operational area¹⁰.

YPP is monitoring plots throughout their operational area to better understand how their work is affecting the peatlands they are restoring.



Peatland restoration

Picture credit: Yorkshire Peat Partnership

Grassland

Overview

Grasslands are important habitats for wildlife, both in their own right and through connecting and buffering other habitat types. Some of our grasslands are fantastically rich in wildflowers which make them vital homes and stepping stones for pollinators, whilst others are important feeding and nesting sites for species such as farmland birds and wading birds. Good populations of fungi, such as waxcaps, can highlight unimproved, low-nutrient grasslands, which are a rare and threatened habitat in England. However, these diverse grasslands tend to be found in small, fragmented sites lacking wider connectivity.

Mirroring trends across England over recent decades, our geography has lost a significant proportion of its species-rich grassland. There has been a tendency for diverse grassland to be converted to less diverse 'improved' grassland for grazing and silage and some associated field amalgamation has also occurred, with the loss of networks of hedgerow, hedgerow trees, copses and field margins.



Main Lake, Nosterfield Nature Reserve

Picture credit: Tris Terry

In other areas, species-poor grasslands have often been lost in favour of creating other habitat types, such as woodland, or for other land uses such as housing, renewable energy or more 'productive' farmland. It is important we recognise their inherent value to support and connect nature in decision-making.

Nature recovery in action – Nosterfield Nature Reserve

The main Nosterfield Nature Reserve is 150 acres of wet grassland and open water situated between the Rivers Ure and Swale in North Yorkshire and it is managed by the Lower Ure Conservation Trust (LUCT). The underlying magnesian limestone and its associated aquifer makes the location particularly distinctive. Sand and gravel were produced from a former quarry here until the late 1980s and it was designated a local nature reserve (LNR) in 2001. A dramatic rise and fall in the water levels, associated with the natural water table and rainfall, results in a huge range in water levels, typically 2.5 m per year, creating ideal conditions for many breeding waders, such as Curlew, Redshank and Avocet. LUCT also manages the west end of Nosterfield Quarry (100 acres), including reedbed (breeding Bittern and Marsh Harrier) and magnesian limestone grassland. In a survey carried out in 2018, more than 1,100 species were recorded in 24 hours, evidencing the growth in biodiversity in the nature reserve since its restoration.

Flasks Lake, Nosterfield Nature Reserve



Picture credit: Tris Terry

Woodland

Overview

North Yorkshire and York contains a variety of wooded habitats of different ages and types. Our ancient woodlands have persisted since the 1600s, and long-established woodlands since 1893. These may have had their tree cover and structures changed from the original tree species to conifer plantations (often after the Second World War), but still retain important woodland flora. Woodland cover is more prevalent in our eastern geography, particularly in the North York Moors and Howardian Hills, with two-thirds of woodland in the North York Moors National Park being managed as productive forestry.

Elsewhere woodlands tend to occur in isolated pockets, lacking wider connectivity. Across our total land area woodland cover is 11.5% compared with 8.5% coverage in Nidderdale National Landscape and 5% coverage of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Parkland is an important habitat for our area as it is not only important historically and culturally, but hosts important populations of veteran and ancient trees. Each of these historic trees acts as an ecosystem, with some species such as oak supporting as many as 2,300 species¹¹ including bats, birds, fungi, and invertebrates that can only survive on dead or dying wood. However, our veteran and ancient trees tend to be isolated and vulnerable to felling or toppling caused by high winds.

¹¹ Oak trees and wildlife - Woodland Trust
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/oak-tree-wildlife

Nature recovery in action - Snaizeholme

Snaizeholme is a unique and complex habitat restoration and nature recovery project in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, south of Hawes, and is being led by the Woodland Trust. In the first phase there is a plan to plant almost 291 hectares (719 acres) with native tree saplings, creating one of the largest new native woodlands in England. It will join riverside pasture, wooded valley sides, peat bogs and limestone pavement to form a diverse mix of wildlife-rich habitats. The careful approach to planting will create groves, glades and open woodlands that gently transition into and connect with the other habitats, all delivered without the use of plastic tree guards or herbicides.

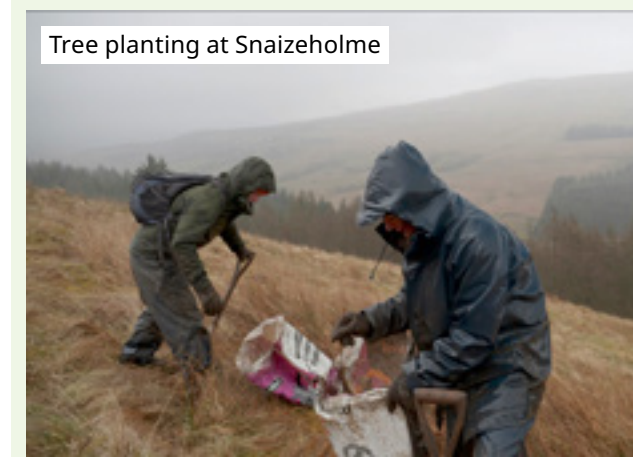
This phase has been funded by the White Rose Forest through its Trees for Climate funding programme. Trees for Climate, part of Defra's Nature for Climate fund, provides grants for woodland creation within all Community Forest areas in England.

Snaizeholme, Yorkshire Dales National Park



Picture credit: Woodland Trust

Tree planting at Snaizeholme



Picture credit: Woodland Trust

Water and wetlands

Overview

A series of major rivers have shaped North Yorkshire and York's landscape, with many having their source in the uplands of the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors and flowing into the Humber Estuary or to the coast. Much of our lowlands were historically covered by fens, marshes, bogs, ponds, and wet grasslands. Millennia of human activity has altered the shape and flow of all our rivers and in many cases disconnected them from their floodplains, created wildlife barriers such as weirs, and drained huge areas of wetland. Drainage of wetlands has occurred particularly in our low-lying areas such as the Vale of Mowbray, Vale of York and Vale of Pickering and this has largely impacted negatively on our wildlife.

Our rivers face many pressures, including impacts from intensive land-use, modifications, invasive non-native species, water pollution, and climate change. Resulting habitat degradation and fragmentation threatens local wildlife both within our rivers and across the wider landscape. These pressures can be addressed at a whole catchment scale by considering not only the river channel itself, but the surrounding landscape with measures such as reducing water run-off from neighbouring fields and 'slow the flow' interventions such as tree and hedgerow planting.



Installed wooden weir allowing fish passage

Picture credit: North York Moors National Park Authority

Nature recovery in action – Ryevitalise

Ryevitalise is a National Lottery Heritage Fund landscape partnership scheme aiming to restore the western River Rye catchment focussing on conserving, enhancing and reconnecting habitats to the river system. Part of the work has involved engaging with landowners and farmers to encourage habitat improvements on the land they manage in the catchment. These stakeholders have received payments for works to habitats and these are underpinned by conservation agreements. Alongside the catchment restoration is a citizen science programme which has been supporting work on species and habitats including bats, ancient and veteran trees, aquatic invertebrates and juvenile fish. The Ryevitalise programme, running from 2019-2025, also aims to revitalise the Rye's natural and cultural heritage, reconnecting people to the river, the history and wildlife of the area, and supporting the restoration of the landscape. From April 2025 the programme will be entering a legacy phase, however payments forming part of conservation agreements will continue until 2031. The partnership has prepared a number of 'shovel ready' projects for legacy delivery when future funding pots become available.



Citizen science - riverfly monitoring to assist with water quality assessment

Picture credit: North York Moors National Park Authority



Picture credit: Tim Johns

St Nicks providing a demonstration of the floating habitat installation in the River Ouse, York

Urban

Overview

The city of York, along with our large towns such as Harrogate and Scarborough, and the smaller market towns spread across the county, have all been shaped by the landscapes they sit within and by many phases of development over time. Infrastructure such as buildings, roads and railways have created barriers for nature and contributed to the decline in many species over the decades.

Wildlife can be found in a variety of places in our settlements, within the remnants of semi-natural habitats such as woodlands, meadows and ponds, as well as human-created spaces such as parks, gardens, schools and business parks. Many of these spaces can be low in biodiversity due to intensive management and a limited number of tree, shrub and flower species, with many of these being non-native and less suitable for pollinators.

12 St Nicks - Green Corridors York
www.stnicks.org.uk/green-corridors-york

Nature recovery in action - Green Corridors York

York has a rich abundance of green spaces, and these green corridors act as vital green 'lungs' breathing life into the city. Connecting these are the city's two main rivers, their surrounding floodplains, disused railway lines, medieval strays and city wall embankments. The biodiversity of these crucial green 'lungs' and connecting corridors are declining due to human pressures, pollution and lack of resources affecting their management.

Green Corridors York¹², led by the environmental charity St Nicks, strives for "more, bigger, better and more joined up" green spaces by conserving nature whilst supporting neighbouring communities. The initiative, started in 2018, encourages collaboration between land managers, conservation groups and volunteers to improve land management, reduce pollution and challenge harmful developments. It is supporting the expansion of habitats and species such as floodplain meadow, Water Vole and Tansy Beetle.



Picture credit: St Nicks

Team from St Nicks carrying out maintenance in a watercourse



Picture credit: Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership

Coast

Overview

Yorkshire's coastal environment is diverse and unique. It is connected to both inland environments through coastal streams and estuaries, and to offshore environments via important tidal systems and currents. Human influences and associated pressures are felt across the coastline, with multiple industries being reliant on services provided by our marine ecosystems (such as fishing, offshore developments, mineral extraction and shipping), combined with a large coastal tourism sector centred around our seaside towns like Whitby, Scarborough and Filey.

These pressures can result in the displacement of species due to offshore developments and underwater noise, less prey available due to intensive fishing practices, toxins and litter resulting in poor water quality, and changes in tidal currents, temperatures and storm events due to climate change. The impacts of these pressures are most often reflected in the health and populations of charismatic species such as whales and seabirds.

North Yorkshire's coast is a mix of hard cliffs and soft coastal slopes made of calcareous clays. Beyond these slopes, the area is characterised by sheltered sandy bays which

disappear into rocky shore and wave-cut platforms. The River Esk, culminating in the natural harbour formed by its mouth in Whitby, where it flows into the North Sea, provides an important migratory route for salmon and sea trout. Smaller coastal streams, such as Staithes Beck and Scalby Beck in Scarborough also provide key migratory routes for fish and discharge nutrients directly into coastal waters.

The extensive intertidal rocky shore communities are an important source of food for migratory and over-wintering birds, which feed on a variety of molluscs and coastal invertebrates. The rocky outcrops and platforms also provide valuable space for Grey and Common Seals to rest, breed and pup at various locations. In the subtidal area, large swathes of kelp habitat offer food and shelter for a wide variety of wildlife, including commercially important lobsters and edible crabs. This underwater forest also plays a key role in nutrient and carbon cycling.

Further offshore, Bottlenose Dolphins and Minke Whales follow the shoals of North Sea mackerel and herring, joining the resident populations of Harbour Porpoise and seals. Each spring, breeding seabirds return to the sheer cliffs scattered along North Yorkshire's coastline, attracted by the nutrient-rich seas.

Nature recovery in action – Concrete Coast

Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership's Concrete Coast programme¹³ is working to create new opportunities for intertidal species to thrive on our coast. By adapting man-made coastal structures (such as coastal defences and harbour walls) through appropriate habitat creation measures we will encourage coastal wildlife like limpets, mussels and shore crabs to return to the shorelines they once lived on.

Sections of Yorkshire's coastline remain in a natural state, however there are also extents of man-made infrastructure including sea defences to protect towns and businesses, and harbours and slipways to provide safe havens for the fishing fleets. In creating such infrastructure, we change the natural landscape of the coastline and reduce the amount of habitat available to wildlife.

Many intertidal habitats are shrinking in size or being lost altogether due to sea level rise. Natural coastal habitats are unable to retreat further inland because of the walls, barriers and structures we have built. This project explores how we can encourage wildlife to colonise artificial habitats fixed onto man-made infrastructure through simple and cost-effective methods, without changing the function or integrity of coastal structures. In the future, these methods could be used to support intertidal communities where habitat is being lost through the impacts of climate change.



Picture credit: Julian Blumenroeder



¹³ Concrete Coast Project – Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership - YMNP
<https://yorkshiremarinenaturepartnership.org.uk/discover/research-and-active-projects/concrete-coast-project>

6. Links to other plans and strategies

6. Links to other plans and strategies

Many organisations are already engaged in nature recovery activity in the North Yorkshire and York area and we have engaged with them and the associated documentation to ensure that the LNRS aligns with their work.

Nature North

Nature North is a cross sector, pan-regional partnership of businesses and agencies working for nature recovery across the North of England. The collaboration is led by Environment Agency; Natural England; National Landscapes in the North of England; the National Parks in the North of England; The National Trust; The Wildlife Trusts; RSPB England; The Rivers Trust; The Woodland Trust; The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Nature North's 'Investing in Nature for the North, A Strategic Plan for a Nature Positive Regional Economy'¹⁴, launched in February 2025, aims to scale up green investment across the region.

River Basin Management Plans

North Yorkshire and York's river network fall under three river basin districts - the Humber, Northumbria and the North West. The Humber River Basin District is the largest and covers the majority of the LNRS plan area. Within the Humber River Basin there are five management catchments: Derwent, Esk and Coast, Wharfe and Lower Ouse, SUNO (Swale, Ure Nidd and Upper Ouse), Aire and Calder in addition to the Tees (Northumbria), Lune and Ribble (North West). The Humber River Basin is the largest in England and drains approximately 20% of the total land area. The Catchment Based Approach is a policy framework that established catchment partnerships to work collaboratively across each of the River Management Catchment to help deliver water quality and River Basin Management Plan objectives whilst involving local communities in decision making.

Flood Risk Management Plans

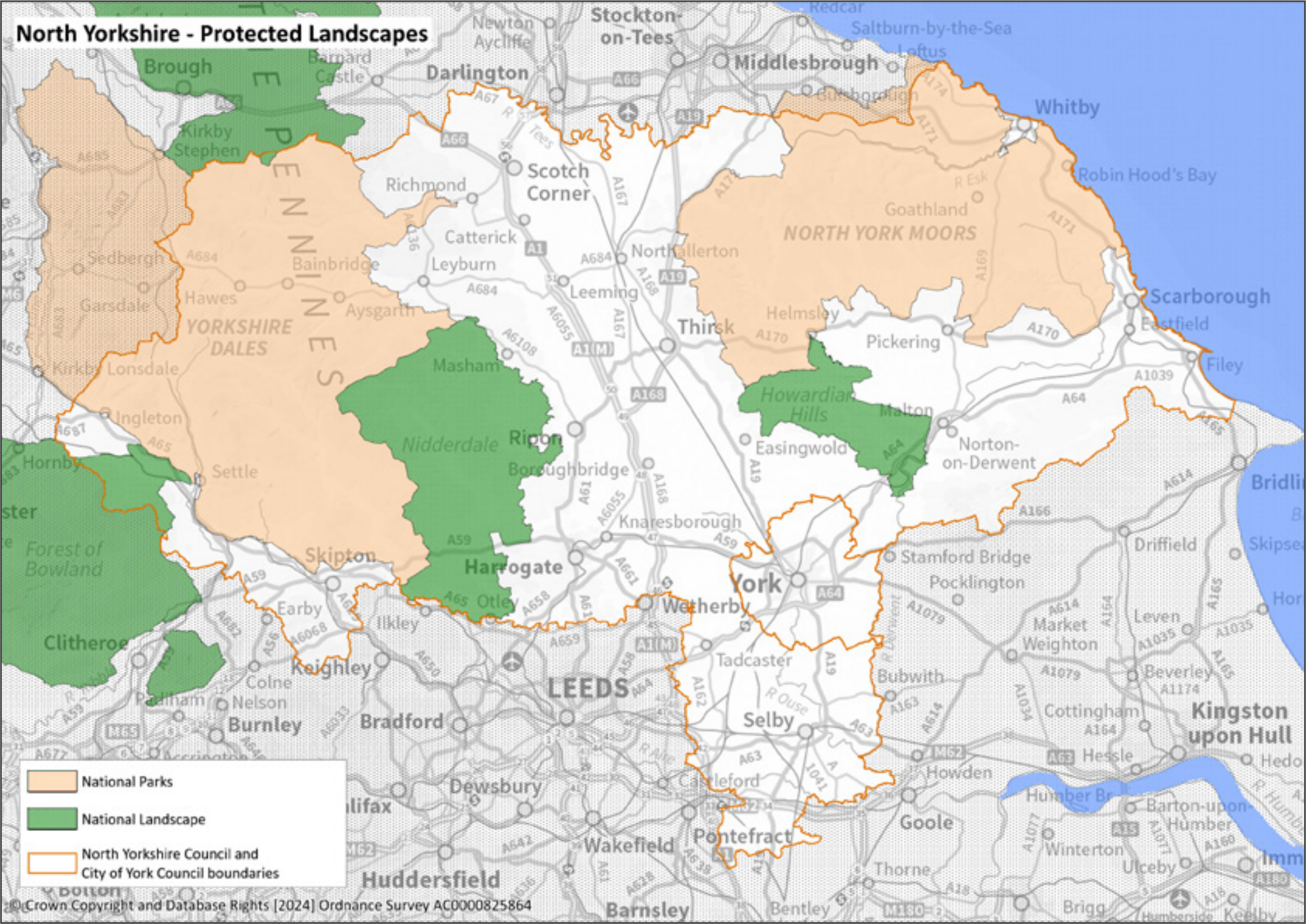
These set out how flood risk management authorities and stakeholders will work together to manage flood risk in England. Land use and management is closely linked to flood risk management. Land drainage can speed up the rate at which water can get into rivers and land management can increase erosion. Natural flood management and working with natural processes play an increasingly important role in managing flood risk at catchment scale and often go hand in hand with benefits for ecology and water quality.

Launch of Nature North's Strategic Plan for a Nature Positive Regional Economy



¹⁴ Strategy - Nature North www.naturenorth.org.uk/strategy

Protected landscapes



Nature Recovery Plans

Each of North Yorkshire's five protected landscapes, which cover approximately 50% of the county's footprint, has its own Nature Recovery Plan. These set out a vision for an enhanced natural environment and describe what action is needed, within a prescribed period. Like the LNRS, the Nature Recovery Plans are underpinned by the principle of *'More, bigger, better and more joined-up wildlife habitats'* and recognise that larger areas of semi-natural habitat are lacking a more natural diversity of structure. Nature Recovery Plans also recognise the importance of connections outside the respective protected landscape boundaries, as habitats and species do not recognise human-made boundaries.

State of Yorkshire's Nature

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's (YWT) State of Yorkshire's Nature Report (2024) is based on new analyses of the distribution and abundance of Yorkshire's biodiversity. It recognises that Yorkshire is important for British biodiversity, but that the region's nature is under threat. YWT's goal is for a nature network extending across the region with a broad range of habitats. YWT considers that all areas of Yorkshire have a role to play in nature's recovery, including farmland, urban, protected landscapes and the coast and sea, but highlight that water and limestone are significant key habitats in the national context.



White Rose Forest led community tree planting at Broughton Hall Sanctuary, near Skipton

Picture credit: White Rose Forest

White Rose Forest

The White Rose Forest is the community forest for North and West Yorkshire, working in partnership with local authorities, landowners, businesses and communities to increase woodland across the region and improve our natural environment. The White Rose Forest Strategic Plan 2025-50 sets out the vision, aspirations and targets for tree and woodland establishment and management in North and West Yorkshire over the next 25 years.

York and North Yorkshire's Routemap to Carbon Negative

York and North Yorkshire's Routemap to Carbon Negative¹⁵ sets out the region's ambitious plans to be net zero carbon by 2034 and carbon negative by 2040. The Routemap provides an ambitious pathway for local authorities, businesses, charities, academia and communities to come together to deliver carbon reduction at the necessary pace and scale to reach net zero by 2034, and net negative by 2040.

Climate Change Strategies

Our constituent local authorities (North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council) have recently adopted Climate Change Strategies arising from their declared climate emergencies. The three pillars of the strategy in North Yorkshire (2023 to 2030) sets out the plan to:

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- prepare for the changing climate; and
- support nature to thrive

Underpinning the strategy is for the Council to work with partners to achieve the ambition to be a carbon negative region by 2040 and encourage residents, businesses and visitors to take climate responsible actions.

City of York Council announced a climate emergency in 2019 and set an ambition for York to be a net-zero carbon city by 2030.

Local Investment in Natural Capital

The Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme is a Defra and Environment Agency initiative designed to mobilise private investment to deliver nature recovery, climate adaptation and climate resilience across the region. North Yorkshire and York LINC was one of four pilots set up in 2023. It aims to unlock institutional investment into nature across our geography and is developing over 50 nature-led infrastructure schemes that will become investible. Initial investments into the pipeline are likely to be on a project-by-project basis matching those projects ready for investment to investors' mandates, returns horizons and risk appetite. Initial investments will aim to dovetail with other strategic programmes such as the LNRS.

Planning Practice Guidance

In February 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the planning practice guidance (PPG) providing guidance on the role of LNRSs in planning¹⁶. The guidance explains how local planning authorities (LPAs) should interpret their legal duty to "have regard" to LNRSs and how LNRSs should be used to help meet existing national planning policy on protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

Local Plan

North Yorkshire Council (NYC) started work on its Local Plan following its investiture in April 2023 and plans for its adoption within five years. We have worked closely with a group of NYC planning policy officers to keep them updated on the strategy. NYC will be preparing a green and blue infrastructure strategy (GBIS) as an evidence base for the Local Plan and we are establishing links with the officer team leading on the GBIS to create alignment with the LNRS.

City of York Council's (CYC) Local Plan was adopted in February 2025 and we have worked closely with the CYC Planning Policy team to ensure they have been engaged with the process of preparing the LNRS.

Alignment to other plans and strategies

We are confident that our LNRS aligns with other plans and strategies in our locality following our document and policy review and through ongoing engagement with representatives from the protected landscapes, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, river catchment partnerships and local authorities. These representatives have been involved in key decisions during the development of the strategy, to ensure the outputs of their own plans and strategies inform the LNRS.

¹⁵ Routemap to Carbon Negative > Mayoral Combined Authority
<https://yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk/project/routemap-to-carbon-negative/>

¹⁶ Natural environment - GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#local-nature-recovery-strategies>

7. Priorities and Measures (Actions)

7. Priorities and Measures (Actions)

Priorities and measures are covered extensively in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities (Document 4). This Section provides selective information from that document, with the full list of measures (actions), benefits from nature and focus species set out in Document 4.

Working with a wide range of experts, community groups, farmers, landowners and others we have established a range of priorities to help nature recover, alongside benefits from nature. These priorities are considered the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of nature recovery; what we are seeking to do, and why we are seeking to do it. With our

regional stakeholders, we have co-created five high-level ‘overarching’ priorities which are relevant to all nature recovery activity (see page 24). Each priority delivers wider benefits from nature and we confirm what these are in Chapter 7 (see examples overleaf) These are supplemented by 39 priorities spread across our seven habitat categories:



Farmland



Upland



Grassland



Woodland



Water and wetlands



Urban



Coast

Measures (actions)

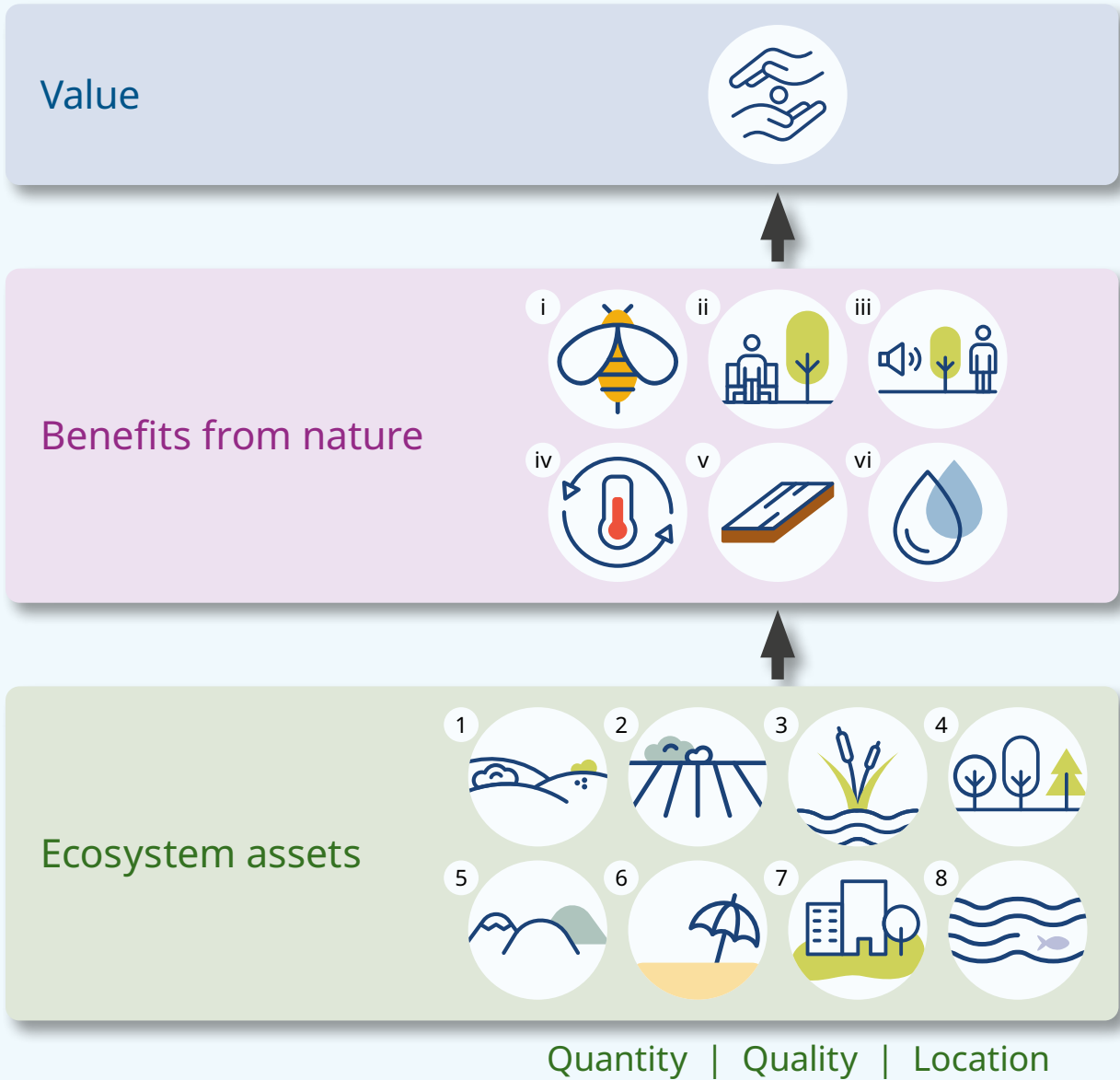
Each priority has a number of associated measures, which are the practical ‘on the ground’ actions that would help to deliver the aims of the priority. They can be considered as the ‘how’ and the ‘where’ of nature recovery; how we could do it, and where we could do it.

Benefits from nature

We have also stated which wider benefits from nature are relevant to each priority, using concepts from Natural England’s State

of Natural Capital (SONC) Report for England 2024. This makes the case that our economy and society depend on complex natural systems for our daily needs and our ability to regulate climate change. It refers to the natural capital logic chain where ecosystems are the natural capital assets that underpin the benefits on which society depends (see reference to natural capital logic chain below). How much we have (quantity), what condition it is in (quality) and where it is (location), determine the benefits the asset provides.

Benefits from nature¹⁷ (examples)



17 State of Natural Capital (2024), Natural England



Overarching priorities

Through discussion with stakeholders, we decided that the strategy needed to include several high-level ‘overarching’ priorities, which are relevant across all habitat types. These priorities followed recurring themes that emerged during stakeholder workshops, such as enhancing habitat connectivity and controlling invasive non-native species (INNS) across our geography.

Key to graphic opposite:

Benefits from nature

(i) pollination (ii) urban cooling (iii) noise regulation (iv) climate regulation (v) timber & other wood products (vi) clean water

Ecosystem assets

(1) semi-natural grasslands (2) enclosed farmland (3) freshwaters & wetlands (4) woodlands (5) mountains, moorlands & heaths (6) coastal margins (7) urban (8) marine

Each overarching priority contains wider objectives that would help to support nature recovery across North Yorkshire and York.

- Enhance the connectivity between areas of good-quality existing habitat through the creation of appropriate new habitat between existing sites, to improve connectivity for key species.
- Undertake actions to benefit key species, particularly those requiring specific interventions.
- Control and seek to eradicate invasive non-native species (INNS).
- Work collaboratively with all sectors to enhance coordinated regional action to benefit nature and seek to increase public knowledge, awareness and understanding of nature and its wider benefits.
- Enhance the ecological data and evidence base and share knowledge between all organisations and individuals undertaking actions to benefit nature.

Habitat priorities



Around 70% of North Yorkshire and York’s land area is farmed. To achieve our ambition to better connect our important habitats and allow species to move freely, we must maximise opportunities to create additional connecting habitat such as hedgerows and trees, flower-rich field margins and ditches within our farmed landscapes. We can make small and big changes to the way our farms are managed which can make farm businesses more resilient to pests, diseases, drought and flood events, whilst also creating more space for nature to thrive in these working landscapes.

Our engagement with landowners and farmers indicated an appetite to work more closely with their neighbours, so that priorities and their associated measures (actions) can extend across land ownership boundaries and our wider geography. There are several farmer clusters in our geography that share ideas, best practice and implement measures on a landscape scale, across land ownership boundaries, with the opportunity to set up more of these in the future.

Priorities & example measures (actions)

Priority (short name)	Example Measure (action)
Enhance and expand arable field margins	Increase the floristic value of field margins under agri-environment schemes
Expand trees outside woodlands	Infield agroforestry on less sensitive pasture to benefit animal welfare, cultivated crops, carbon storage and connectivity for wildlife;
Promote high nature value farming practices	Promote precision farming and use of drones to reduce the use of artificial and chemical application;
Promote changes in grassland management	Encourage uptake of more diverse and sympathetic grazing practices such as rotation of stock and use of different livestock breed;
Expand the hedgerow network	Identify and map fragmented patches of woodland that would benefit from being connected by hedgerows;

Benefits from nature include:

- Carbon storage
- Reduced chemical use
- Soil health
- Water quality
- Flood protection
- Cultivated crops
- Erosion control
- Pest and disease control
- Animal welfare

Focus species include:

- Harvest Mouse
- Turtle Dove
- Tree Sparrow
- Rare arable flowers



Harvest Mouse

Picture credit: Natural England/Julian Dowse



Hedgerow establishing

Picture credit: Leanne Fox

 Upland

The upland areas of the county contain 27% of England’s blanket bog resource, which not only provides valuable wildlife habitat but also wider ecosystem services such as regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk and sequestering carbon. The ongoing enhancement of blanket bog is highlighted as a priority through enhancing the wetness of existing sites, and adjacent land, to prevent drying out. Related habitats include dry and

wet heath which, depending on location, tend to sit at the margins of blanket bog. Priorities for dry and wet heath include restoring and creating new areas of upland dry heathland and enhancing and expanding wet heath adjacent to existing blanket bog. Stakeholders have also highlighted our region’s limestone-related habitats as priorities and the need to expand species-rich connecting habitat between their existing core areas.

Priorities & example measures (actions)

Priority (short name)	Example Measure (action)
Management and connection of Limestone Pavement habitats	Identify and map Limestone Pavement coverage to understand its current state and potential location for calcareous grassland to be restored as a buffer
Enhance and restore upland calcareous grassland	Enhance lowland calcareous grassland through optimal grazing management (reduce stock numbers, alter stock type to include more cattle), and manage scrub to an appropriate percentage
Enhance upland hay meadows	Enhance and maintain existing upland hay meadows through traditional management e.g. cut and collect with aftermath grazing.
Enhance acid grassland	Enhance existing upland acid grassland through appropriate grazing, no mechanical operations in breeding season, and re-wetting or adding scrapes where required.
Enhance upland dry heath	Enhance and restore existing upland dry heathland by amending grassland grazing regimes and grazing species to encourage the development of heath,
Enhance wet heath	Enhance existing wet heath by amending grazing regime and type where required (e.g. reduction in sheep, increase in cattle) and introduce species (e.g. sphagnum and cotton grass) where required.
Enhance blanket bog	Use peat maps to identify former extent of peat resource and understand ability to restore active hydrological processes to identify areas where blanket bog has been lost, and where peat formation could be re-started.
Expand moorland fringe habitats	Create a suitable mix of habitats adjacent to existing sites via different mechanisms, e.g. natural regeneration, deer control, livestock exclusion, vegetation management to mitigate against wildfires.



Benefits from nature include:

- Access to nature
- Sense of place
- Carbon storage
- Climate regulation
- Pollination
- Soil health
- Plentiful water
- Water quality
- Flood protection

Focus species include:

- Adder
- Black Grouse
- Curlew





Picture credit: Caroline Thorogood, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Magnesium limestone grassland, Sherburn Willows



Grassland

Over recent decades we have lost a significant proportion of our species rich grassland and stakeholders have prioritised the enhancement of our distinctive grassland habitats, including species-rich grassland, lowland calcareous grassland, acid grassland, and roadside verges. We are seeking to expand our areas of species-rich grassland through alternative management practices, and to enhance our lowland calcareous grassland with appropriate

grazing and mowing regimes. Expanding acid grassland can be achieved by buffering our lowland heath sites using appropriate grazing and other management measures. Our large geography is served by an extensive road network and so we have also prioritised the enhancement of our roadside verges for improved biodiversity and better connectivity for species across North Yorkshire and York.

Priorities & example measures (actions)

Priority (short name)	Example measures (actions) include:
Enhance species-rich grassland	Implement alternative management practices to maximise biodiversity, including favourable cutting regimes
Enhance and connect strategically important grasslands	Enhance strategically important grassland sites by utilising existing funding schemes, thus increasing the diversity of structure and species.
Enhance lowland calcareous grassland	Enhance existing lowland calcareous grassland sites through appropriate grazing / mowing regimes and scrub management as required
Enhance and expand magnesian limestone grassland	Create species-rich grassland at suitable sites across the Magnesian Limestone. Use arable reversion methods, seeding/ green hay spreading, plug planting of specific key species
Expand acid grassland	Buffer lowland heath by managing adjacent grassland sites, using appropriate grazing and other management measures.
Restore and re-create lowland heath	Undertake creation/restoration of lowland heath utilising seed-rich brash, green hay and other material from appropriate local donor sites, and ongoing sensitive management.
Enhance road verges	Expand the cut and collect of verge arisings, learning from the 2024 North Yorkshire Highways pilot



Lowland Heath, Strensall Common

Picture credit: The Terry

Benefits from nature include:

- Carbon storage
- Soil health
- Pollination
- Flood protection

Focus species include:

- Curlew
- Lapwing
- Short-eared Owl
- Tormetil Mining Bee



Short-eared Owl

Picture credit: Gareth Atkinson

Woodland

In quantitative terms, woodland coverage is 11.5% of the land area of North Yorkshire and York, somewhat lower than the national figure of 14.9%, with the UK legally binding target being to achieve 16.5% coverage across England by 2050. During the delivery phase of the LNRS process, it is envisaged that shorter-term woodland coverage targets for North Yorkshire and York will be considered and our stakeholders have identified a range of priorities for our woodland habitats that are both quantitative and qualitative.

Veteran trees are identified as important habitats, both in their own right and to facilitate the movement of species, and we propose to both protect our existing resource and plant trees that will become the veterans

of the future. We propose the enhancement and expansion of wood pasture, wood meadows and open mosaic habitats, as they provide good connecting habitats between existing woodland and grassland sites. Our ancient woodlands are rich in biodiversity, however they are geographically fragmented and negatively impacted by conifer plantations. We plan to enhance and better connect these isolated woodlands and to restructure existing conifer plantations, providing greater habitat diversity and improved species movement. We have set out to increase tree and woodland cover across North Yorkshire and York by enhancing all types of existing woodland and creating new species-diverse woodland, where appropriate, across the region.

Priorities & example measures (actions)

Priority (short name)	Example measure (action)
Protect and expand veteran tree resource	Protect existing veteran trees and newly-planted future veterans with suitable fenced enclosures to protect from livestock and other herbivores.
Enhance and expand wood pasture, wood meadows and open mosaic habitats	Create and expand wood pasture habitat as an appropriate buffer and connecting habitat between woodland and grassland sites.
Enhance and connect ancient woodland	Restructure existing conifer plantations to buffer and connect patches of ancient woodland to maximise biodiversity
Enhance, expand and connect new and existing woodland	Buffer, improve and protect existing woodland and create new woodland with resilient tree species

Benefits from nature include:

- Access to nature
- Health and wellbeing
- Educational resource
- Sense of place
- Carbon storage
- Climate regulation

Focus species include:

- Red Squirrel
- Hawfinch
- Juniper

Expanding existing woodland



Picture credit: White Rose Forest

Wood pasture



Picture credit: Robyn Guppy

 Water and wetlands

Reinstating natural processes in our river catchments, by making more space for water, will not only increase the diversity of species and the size of their populations, but will also reduce the impacts of flood events in our settlements. Many wetland habitats are also excellent carbon sinks, helping to reduce our carbon emissions. Implementing nature-based solutions in our rivers and adjacent landscapes can also help to reduce water pollution, creating healthier rivers for both humans and wildlife.

Working with stakeholders, our priorities for water and wetland habitats include enhancing and expanding river habitats, by extending waterside vegetation beyond the riverbank. We are also seeking to restore natural river processes , which includes the reconnection of rivers to their floodplains by amending existing engineered barriers. Our region’s ponds tend to be isolated, with limited marginal habitat, and so we plan to enhance and expand the



Picture credit: Adam Harland

pond network to support the resilience of our wetland species. Our geography hosts a significant proportion of the national resource of floodplain meadow habitat (15%) and we intend to restore our existing poor quality sites and expand meadow habitat onto neighbouring land, whilst accommodating the needs of agriculture. A further priority is to expand the amount of riparian woodland along our watercourses, at all elevations, providing better habitat connectivity across our region.

Priorities & example measures (actions)

Priority (short name)	Example Measure (action)
Enhance and expand river habitats	Implement in-channel mitigation measures for heavily-modified water bodies and improve in-channel habitat diversity
Restore natural river processes	Remove or realign artificial and engineered barriers and modifications where feasible to allow re-establishment of natural river processes
Expand and restore pond networks	Buffer existing ponds by increasing and improving the quality of marginal habitat and encourage creation/restoration of surrounding terrestrial habitat
Enhance, expand and connect fen habitats	Create fen habitat where feasible, e.g. by expanding fen species into neighbouring ditches,
Restore, enhance and expand existing flushes	Enlarge wetlands at known key areas for breeding and wintering bird populations
Restore floodplain meadows	Increase floodplain meadow habitat, where appropriate, by allowing flooding to take place on appropriate grassland sites
Expand riparian woodland	Create new riparian woodland (within a minimum of 15-20m of planting both sides of watercourse
Restore, enhance and expand wet woodland	Identify wet areas of land around existing wet woodland that has scope to become new habitat

Benefits from nature include:

- Access to nature
- Health and wellbeing
- Educational resource
- Plentiful water
- Water quality
- Flood protection

Focus species include:

- Tansy Beetle
- Curlew
- Lapwing
- Water Vole
- Common Frog

Water Vole



Picture credit: Natural England - Paul Lacey



Picture credit: Martin Hammond



Picture credit: Lower Ure Conservation Trust



Urban

Across the built environment of North Yorkshire and York, there is scope to introduce more habitat for species to make homes alongside people. Implementing these kinds of changes, alongside enhancing and creating more green spaces in urban areas, will support human health and wellbeing, through improvements to air and water quality, cooling down our urban environments and helping to store water, to reduce the impacts of flood events.

We intend to incorporate more green infrastructure into our built environment by providing more habitat for nature, and plan to do this at a strategic level by working with our local authorities in their preparation of green and blue infrastructure strategies that will inform their Local Plans. On a more practical level, we will recommend that features for birds and bats are incorporated into both our new and existing buildings, and we intend to enhance and expand our existing nature-rich urban spaces, such as churchyards. Our areas of urban grassland tend to be intensively managed and we propose that maintenance



Derwenthorpe, York

Picture credit: Tris Terry

and mowing regimes are modified to improve the diversity of these habitats. In terms of our human resource, there is great potential for our citizens to engage in nature-friendly practices within private gardens, schools and other publicly accessible spaces. We intend to promote public action in this regard to achieve better connectivity for nature.

Priorities & example measures (actions)

Priority (short name)	Example Measure (action)
Incorporate nature into the built environment	Work with local planning authorities in the development of their Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategies
Enhance urban nature-rich spaces	Buffer and connect urban nature-rich spaces by identifying neighbouring land with partners to restore or create suitable habitat
Modify the management of urban grassland	Reduce the size of amenity grassland through changes to mowing regimes
Promote public action for better nature connectivity	Promote nature and climate change adaptive options for residential properties

Benefits from nature include:

- Access to nature
- Health and wellbeing
- Educational resource
- Sense of place
- Carbon storage
- Climate regulation
- Pollination
- Plentiful water
- Water quality
- Flood protection
- Clean air
- Noise regulation
- Urban cooling Species

supported include:

- Common Toad
- Garden Tiger
- Hedgehog
- Swift
- Emerald Damselfly
- Bats



Emerald Damselfly

Picture credit: Natural England, Allan Drowitt



Picture credit: Natural England, Allan Drowitt



Coast

Our rocky shores are home to a huge variety of wildlife and are an important way for people to learn about marine life. Many residents and visitors enjoy the diversity of our coastal habitats, but associated disturbance can put pressure on the wildlife that lives within these places. Sea birds, whose populations are rapidly declining, nest on the region’s cliffs and within our coastal towns, where their presence can lead to conflict between humans and the bird life of the coast.

The coastal priorities devised with our stakeholders cover rocky shores, habitats for seabirds, and a unique area of saltmarsh along the North Yorkshire coast. In the earlier ‘Our State of Nature’ section, we highlighted

the work of the Concrete Coast programme and we plan to continue to prioritise this work of adapting man-made coastal structures, with the necessary consents, to encourage coastal wildlife like limpets, mussels and shore crabs to return to the shorelines they once lived on. We propose the enhancement of habitats for our seabirds, both on our cliffs and in our urban areas, to help resolve pressures from human activity and the impacts of climate change. North Yorkshire has a very small area of existing saltmarsh near Whitby, which is unique to the coast between Middlesbrough and Spurn Point. We plan to enhance this existing habitat with appropriate management and establish the feasibility of further expanding the resource in the locality.

Priorities & example measures (actions)

Priority (short name)	Example Measure (action)
Enhance rocky shore habitat	Work with the Concrete Coast programme to install ecological enhancements on ‘hard’ infrastructure, where ecologically and structurally appropriate, to create new habitat.
Enhance habitats for seabirds	Create and enhance suitable habitat for seabirds on the North Yorkshire coast, both on our cliffs and in our urban settlements
Enhance and expand existing saltmarsh	Enhance existing saltmarsh through sympathetic management and identify opportunities to expand this resource.

Benefits from nature include:

- Access to nature
- Health and wellbeing
- Educational resource
- Sense of place
- Carbon storage
- Climate regulation

Species supported include:

- Kittiwake
- Fulmar
- Adder
- Blue Mussel



Picture credit: Gareth Atkinson

8. Our Nature Network – the Local Habitat Map

8. Our Nature Network – the Local Habitat Map

Spatial vision

Our nature network (Local Habitat Map) provides a spatial vision for this first iteration of the LNRS with the ambition to create a comprehensive and connected network across North Yorkshire and York. It will form a component of the national nature recovery network¹⁸ across England.

The nature network is made up of existing core sites, priority habitat within our National Parks and potential nature recovery areas. We define each of these elements below and set out the principle of ‘bigger, better, more, and more joined’ up from Making Space for Nature¹⁹ that underpins the nature network. This guiding principle is also reflected in our vision: *‘To work together to enhance, expand, restore and connect our region’s habitats for thriving nature across North Yorkshire and York’*.

We also explain the use of hexagonal ‘planning units’ in the Local Habitat Map, and how our priorities and measures (actions), introduced in Section 7.0, relate to the nature network.

Core sites – Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIBs)

In preparing the LNRS, we are required to identify and map all nationally-designated conservation sites (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), local nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and areas of irreplaceable habitat, which form the core of our nature network.

Priority habitat within our National Parks

In developing our approach to mapping for the LNRS, stakeholders highlighted the importance of mapping areas of existing priority habitat within our National Parks to become part of the nature network, as there are no locally designated sites (e.g. Local Wildlife Sites) within their geography.

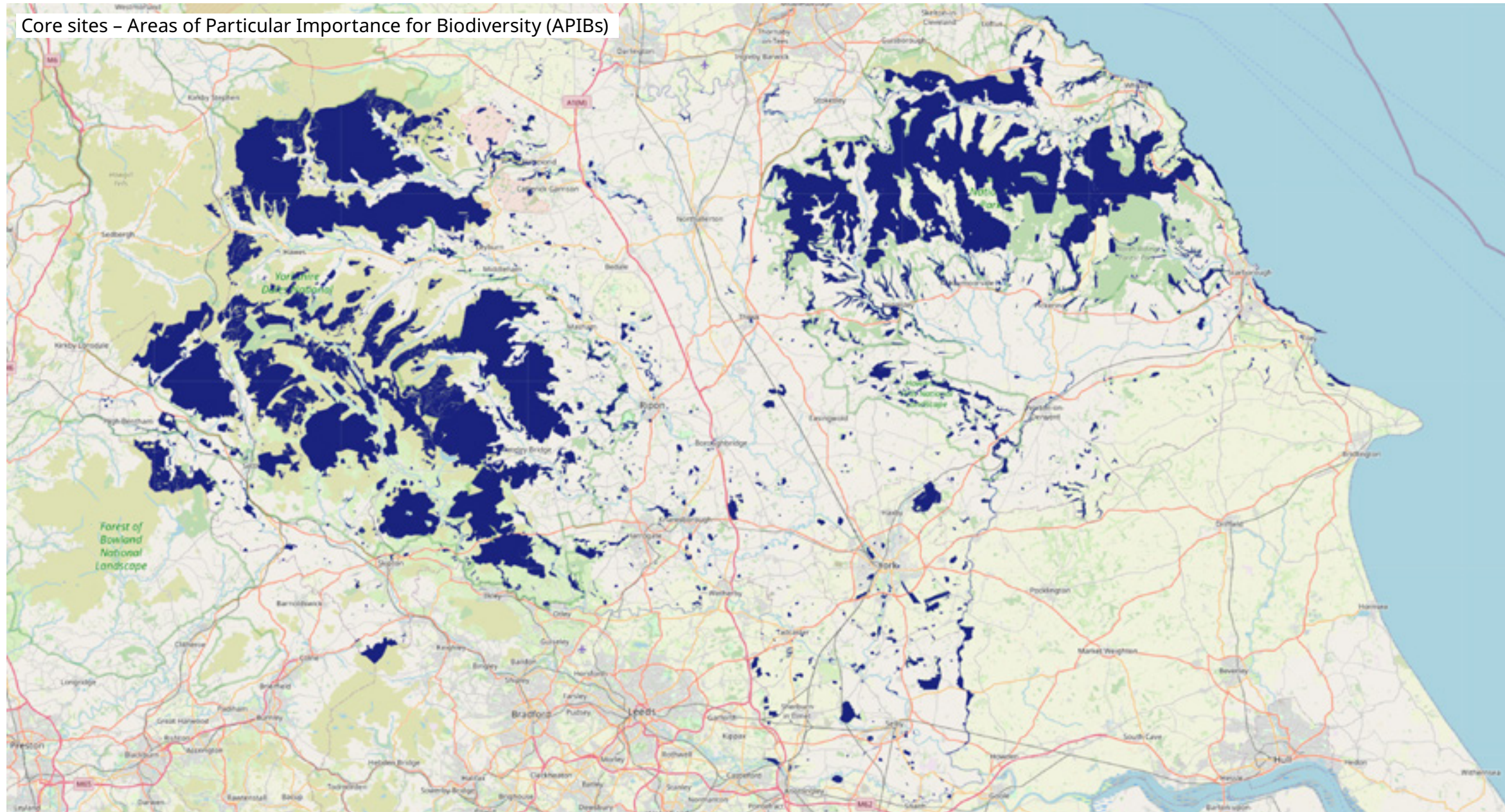
Nature recovery areas – Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACBs)

Additionally, we are required to map areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity (ACBs). These are areas where the responsible authority and our local partners propose that nature recovery effort should be focused to achieve the greatest benefit for biodiversity and the wider environment.

¹⁸ The Nature Recovery Network - GOV.UK www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network

¹⁹ Making space for nature: a review of England’s wildlife sites published today - GOV.UK www.gov.uk/government/news/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-published-today

Core sites – Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIBs)



Bigger, better, more, and more joined up

This is the guiding principle of our nature recovery network, to identify areas where it may be possible to increase the size of existing areas of core habitat (including core sites), improve their condition, and provide additional protection through buffering (offsetting by a certain distance from the perimeter of the existing habitat), create areas of new habitat, and create new linkages across our landscape. Each of these principles has been incorporated into our mapping process and the development of our nature network, as set out below.

Bigger

Working out from our existing core sites in nested concentric rings to identify opportunities to expand or buffer areas of existing habitats and create sympathetic habitats in close proximity to existing ones.

Better

The mapping process involved first identifying all core areas of existing habitat, where condition can potentially be improved through enhanced habitat management.

More

Alongside the existing core areas, the process then identified opportunity areas where additional areas of key habitat could be created.

More joined up

The process then looked for opportunities to link these clusters of existing and new habitat across the landscape with stepping-stones and corridors to increase their ecological functionality and allow for enhanced movement of species throughout our region.

For each of these elements, we have followed an evidence-based modelling process to create a bigger, better and more joined-up strategic nature network.

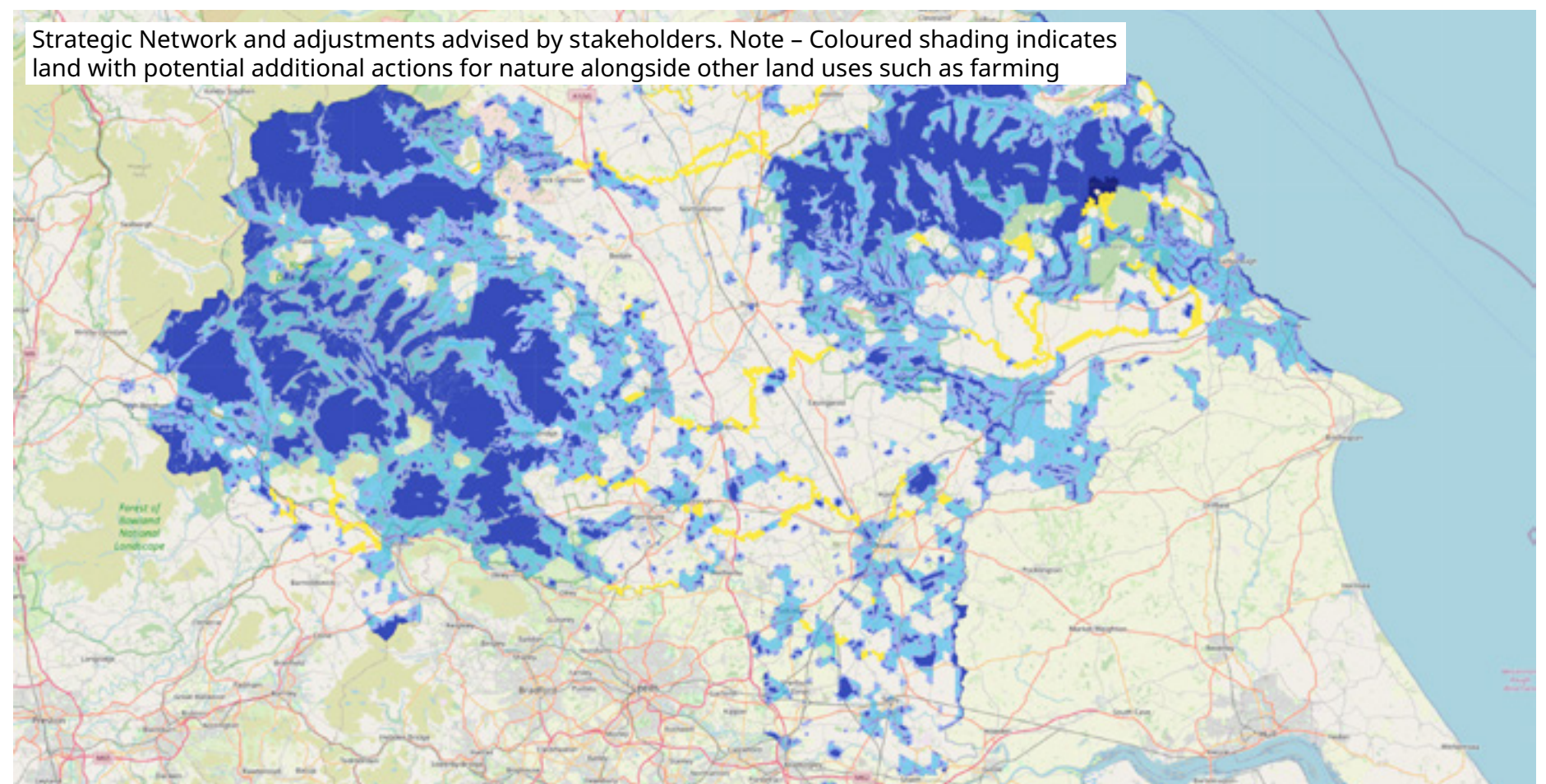
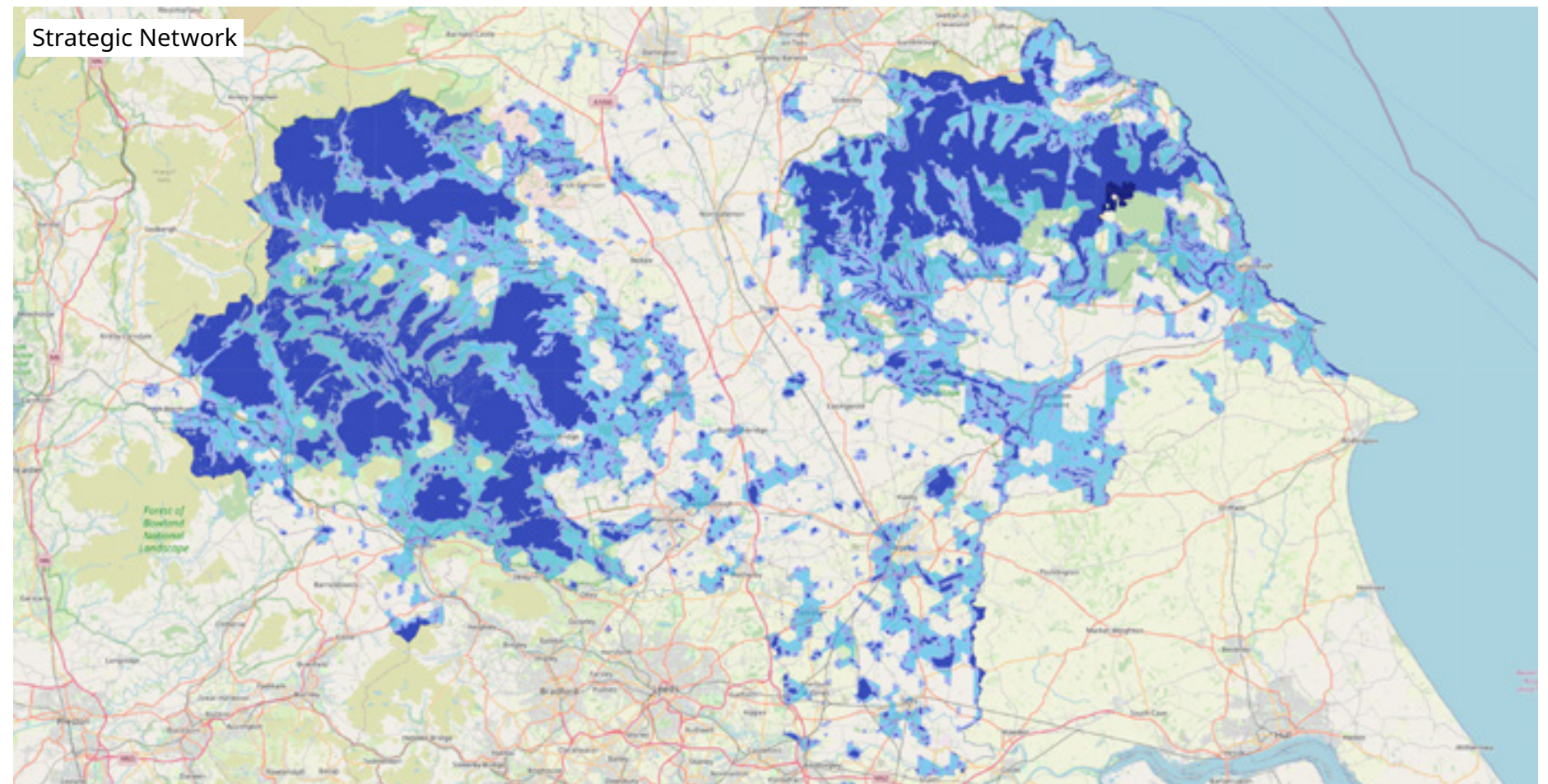
Creating a strategic network

Underpinning this first iteration of the LNRS, is the need to identify an optimum nature network that can contribute to an overarching target across our geography. To identify an optimum network we employed the modelling software tool Marxan, which is based on the well-established methodology of Systematic Conservation Planning²⁰. In summary, the procedural steps of the methodology were:

- Establish a regular grid of hexagonal ‘planning units’ across our geography, each with an area of 20 hectares (ha)²¹
- Programme the software to include all existing core sites as part of the network solution
- Set targets for each habitat and opportunity type such that the total area of the optimised network would cover approximately 55% of the total area of North Yorkshire and York
- Inform the software’s selection of an optimised network with additional data relating to wider benefits from nature (the software is more likely to select planning units that align with wider benefits from nature)
- The software generates many network solutions by selecting individual planning units, and the optimum solution is chosen that best meets the target criteria with the most efficient network footprint
- The optimum network solution generated by the software is scrutinised by expert stakeholders and any necessary adjustments to the network are made

²⁰ Systematic Conservation Planning - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics
www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/systematic-conservation-planning

²¹ 20ha equates to the approximate footprint of 28 football pitches



How do priorities and measures relate to the nature network (Local Habitat Map)?

Our priorities and measures are directly linked to the Local Habitat Map. The map layer titled 'Areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity (ACB)' shows the strategic network that has been identified as the most beneficial places for habitat enhancements to be undertaken across North Yorkshire and York. Each hexagonal 'planning unit' has several measures associated with it, which are considered to be the most appropriate and beneficial measures that could be implemented in that location.

Clicking into a hexagonal 'planning unit' within the ACB layer will show the relevant measures that could be implemented along with the priorities that those measures are associated with.

Non-mapped measures

Measures can be undertaken anywhere in North Yorkshire and York (not just within the strategic nature network) and there are a large number of more generic, unmapped measures that are not location-specific (e.g. many of the farmland measures) which could be undertaken more widely across our geography.

9. Delivery – who can do what?

9. Delivery – who can do what?

Everyone in North Yorkshire and York can contribute to our vision ‘to work together to enhance, expand, restore and connect our region’s habitats for thriving nature across North Yorkshire and York’. In Section 3.0, we established five ‘How we can do it’ principles for the delivery of nature recovery:

1. Working across communities, businesses, public bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help nature to thrive
2. Putting nature at the heart of policy and decision-making
3. Attracting funding and green finance into nature
4. Promoting jobs, education, apprenticeships, and skills in delivering nature recovery
5. Monitoring and evaluating change – recording uplifts to species, tree cover and habitats over time

Working across communities, businesses, public bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help nature to thrive

Residents and community groups can help nature to thrive in their local area, while landowners, land managers, farmers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can work at a more strategic scale to aid nature recovery, particularly by working in partnership.

Subject to funding from Defra, the expectation is that an LNRS delivery team will be set up by the responsible authority to support communities, businesses and organisations and help support their plans for nature.



Volunteers working at Nosterfield Nature Reserve with the Lower Ure Conservation Trust

Landowners, land managers and farmers

Why?

Over 70% of our land area is farmed and we also have a number of large estates across our geography. Much of this land is managed for food, fuel or timber, but there is great potential to better integrate natural habitats alongside these productive uses, bringing down costs for farmers through reduced input costs, supporting nature and making our land more resilient to climate change.

How?

Landowners, land managers and farmers can use the LNRS to:

- understand how their land fits within the Local Habitat Map and the strategic nature recovery network
- inform the measures (actions) they could carry out on their land
- inform and support applications for funding and delivery of projects

NGOs and partnerships

Why?

NGOs and partnerships such as Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Lower Ure Conservation Trust (LUCT) and the Dales to Vales River Network have established management plans and are already leading on nature recovery projects and are working with volunteers, landowners and farmers to take action and demonstrate the importance of partnership working for nature recovery. These organisations have been closely involved in the preparation of the LNRS.

How?

NGOs and partnerships can use the LNRS to:

- galvanise collaborative working with their partners
- inform the measures (actions) they can carry out on their land
- inform and support applications for funding and delivery of projects



Workshop with land managers & farmers, Selby Auction Mart

Developers and planners

Why?

There are targets to build approximately 20,500 homes across North Yorkshire, and 4,100 homes in the City of York, over the next five years. Future growth and development in our area will depend upon, and benefit from, a healthy natural environment and there is great opportunity to fully embed nature into our plans for growth.

How?

Developers and planners can use the LNRS to:

- support the integration of nature into the planning and development process
- understand how development sites fit with the Local Habitat Map and the strategic nature recovery network
- inform the selection of on-site and off-site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) sites

Under the Environment Act 2021, local planning authorities and decision-makers must have regard to the LNRS in their policies, including those within their local plans. Taking account of the LNRS when considering proposed developments can help developers move more smoothly through the planning process.

Investors

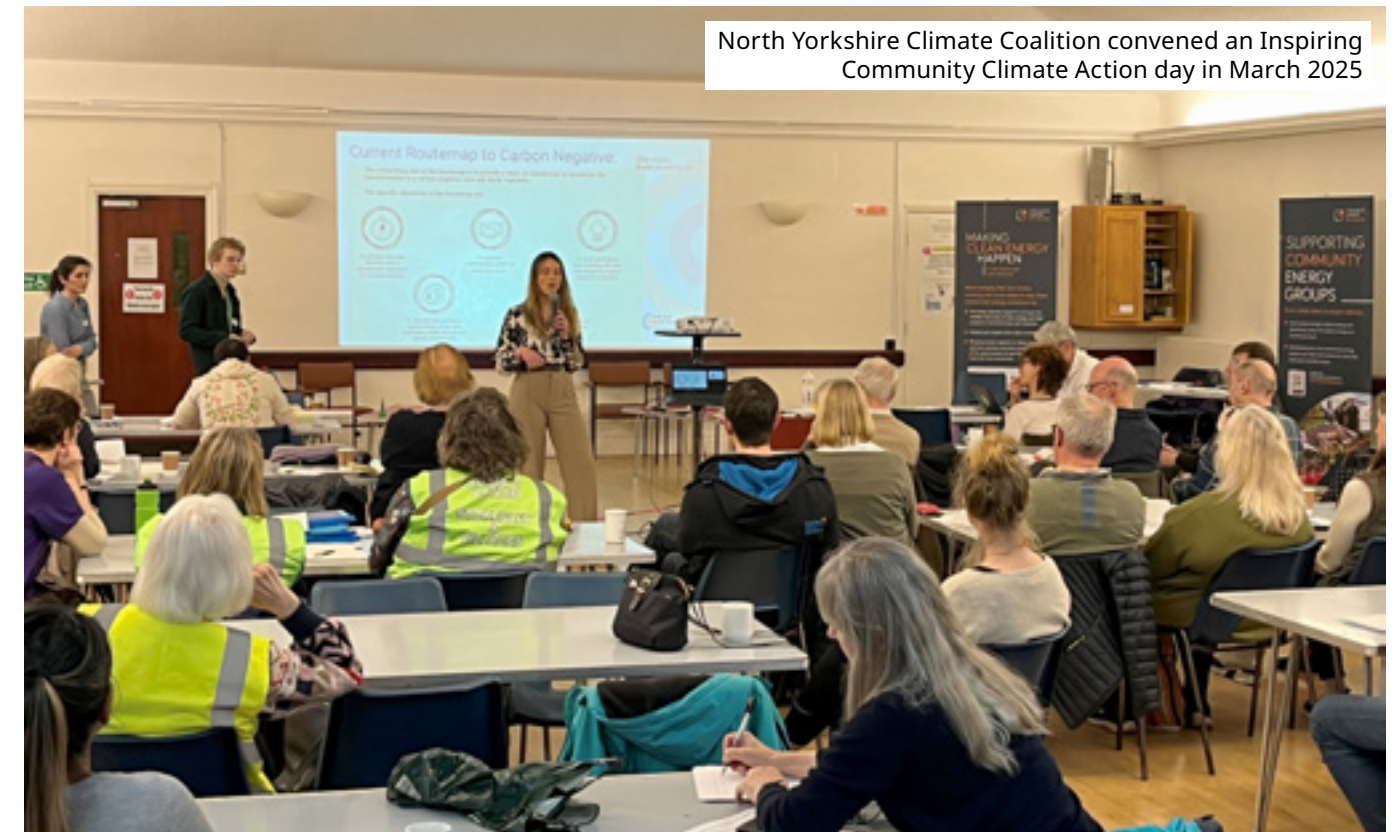
Why?

Private sector investors are increasingly factoring environmental concerns into their investment decisions, including their dependency on natural capital or need to mitigate offsets for water or greenhouse gas emissions. The Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme is designed to mobilise private investment and to support landowners and farmers in the delivery of nature recovery, climate adaptation and climate resilience actions across our geography.

How?

Investors can use the LINC programme and the LNRS to:

- connect with landowners and farmer clusters who are seeking the finance for nature-based solutions and nature-led infrastructure projects on the land they manage
- understand how these potential projects fit with the LNRS priorities, Local Habitat Map and the strategic nature recovery network



Town and Parish Councils and Community groups

Why?

Local organisations and coalitions, such as Holmedale Nature Network in Richmondshire, Kirkbymoorside Town Council and North Yorkshire Climate Coalition, are at the forefront of nature recovery and other causes such as action for climate change. They work to bring together groups of volunteers to survey their local area and draft management plans and schedule tasks and operations to benefit wildlife species and habitats. Those involved in these activities also benefit from their involvement through learning new skills and enhancing their health and wellbeing.

How?

Town and Parish Councils and Community groups can use the LNRS to:

- understand their local natural environment in the context of the Local Habitat Map and the strategic nature recovery network
- inform the measures (actions) they can carry out in their local community
- inform and support applications for funding and delivery of projects



Picture credit: Tris Terry

Schools, nurseries and colleges

Why?

This is a significant opportunity to transform the way climate and natural environment education is taught in schools, nurseries, colleges and youth councils and to support young people to act and increase biodiversity across England. The National Education Nature Park programme²² has been developed for this purpose and led by the Natural History Museum with the Royal Horticultural Society and partner organisations. The programme aims to embed nature-based learning in the curriculum, and encourage children and young people all over the country to take action to improve their site for people and wildlife. The programme involves a five-step process:

- 1. Getting to know your space
- 2. Identifying opportunities
- 3. Making decisions
- 4. Making change happen
- 5. Recording change

Barrowcliff School in Scarborough has a volunteer-led garden club which is incorporating nature into the site including corners of the playing field with an orchard, an area for compost and hedgerow planting along the site boundary.

During 2024 the school and garden club was in receipt of a National Education Nature Park grant which has funded some large timber planters sited in the playground with space for planting and seating and plans for a small pond. The monies have also covered the cost for wildflower planting along the margins of the playing field.

How?

Schools, nurseries and colleges can use the LNRS to:

- understand their local natural environment in the context of the Local Habitat Map, the strategic nature recovery network and biodiversity priorities
- inform the measures (actions) they can carry out on their school site
- inform and support applications for funding and delivery of projects



LNRS workshop with Skipton Youth Council

22 Education Nature Park www.educationnaturepark.org.uk



Picture credit: Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Andy Steele

TadCrafters meadow creation project, Tadcaster

Residents

Why?

North Yorkshire and York has a population of over 800,000 and there is significant scope to harness volunteer activity for our gardens, parks and open public spaces. Private gardens can make up a significant proportion of our total land area²³ and there are measures (actions) within the strategy that can be undertaken in gardens to benefit nature, such as planting native trees, shrubs and wildflowers, reducing the frequency of lawn mowing, and creating small areas of water such as ponds and rainwater gardens. Collective action across a neighbourhood can expand and connect natural habitats, supporting a wide variety of species.

How?

Residents can use the strategy to:

- inform the measures (actions) they can carry out in parks and gardens
- understand how private gardens, parks and open spaces fit with the Local Habitat Map and the strategic nature recovery network
- join volunteer programmes run by organisations such as Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (Team Wilder), St Nicks (Green Corridors), and the Lower Ure Conservation Trust (LUCT)



Picture credit: NEVEDC

Group of residents surveying plant and animal species

23 Oldham Council; private gardens comprise 11.62% of total land area, Oldham's Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022)

Putting nature at the heart of policy and decision-making

Local politicians

Why?

Politicians have a great opportunity to offer leadership and they can do this by championing nature recovery with members of parliament (MPs), cabinet members, portfolio holders and fellow decision makers. They can also champion nature recovery in the wider policy context of climate change, planning and public health.

How?

Politicians can use the LNRS to:

- understand their local natural environment in the context of the LNRS priorities, Local Habitat Map and the strategic nature recovery network
- support Council funding of nature recovery projects (capital and revenue)
- Champion nature recovery within their local communities

Attracting funding and green finance into nature

Recently published natural capital investment plans²⁴ identify the relatively limited suite of financing strategies for nature recovery including: public sector grants, public sector service provision, private developer investment and community-level action. These are both narrow in scope and vulnerable to future changes to the financial and economic landscape. To address the shortcomings, natural capital investment plans consider a broader range of investment sources into nature and natural capital, including philanthropy, corporate and institutional investors.

Government has committed £5 billion to farming in the next two years (FY '25-'26 and '26-'27)²⁵ and there is opportunity to lever private sector funding alongside this. Locally, it is anticipated that the North Yorkshire and York Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme will help to mobilise private investment to deliver nature recovery, climate adaptation and climate resilience across the region. It will become one of the key delivery mechanisms of the LNRS.

Promoting jobs, education, apprenticeships, and skills in delivering nature recovery

Nature North has highlighted how investment in nature recovery can play a key role in the generation of green jobs. Targeting disadvantaged urban communities and rural and coastal regions can result in job and skills generation in economically vulnerable areas. The expectation is that jobs can be created at both entry and graduate level. Skilled staff are required in the restoration and creation of habitats as well as in their maintenance, monitoring and management. Nature North references a study by RSPB and Cambridge Econometrics²⁶ that estimates that a significant number of temporary and long-term jobs would be established through initiatives such as woodland creation and peatland restoration.

More locally, the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority is funding a series of initiatives to support our working population with specific pathways into green jobs. These include the York & North Yorkshire Careers Hub for young people, Skills Bootcamps, Adult Skills Fund and the Skills Innovation Fund²⁷. Askham Bryan College is a land-based college with a campus on the western fringes of York. A significant proportion of the 1,500 students on the site are engaged in agriculture, horticulture, arboriculture, nature or conservation studies, meaning there is a pool of talent to take up green jobs in the region.

We have already highlighted the work of NGO's such as Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, St Nicks and the Lower Ure Conservation Trust, who facilitate apprenticeships and volunteering.

Through these initiatives, individuals enter into the nature recovery sector gaining knowledge, expertise and experience with the anticipation that they choose to stay in the nature sector for the duration of their career or remain supportive throughout it.



Young people at Nature North event



Askham Bryan College, York



Yorkshire Wildlife Trust apprenticeships

²⁴ Greater-Manchester-Natural-Capital-Investment-Plan-January-2019.pdf

²⁵ Land Use Consultation - Defra - Citizen Space <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use-framework/land-use-consultation/>

²⁶ The economic costs & benefits of nature-based solutions_final report_FINAL_V3.docx www.camecon.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-economic-costs-benefits-of-nature-based-solutions_final-report_FINAL_V3.pdf

²⁷ Skills in York and North Yorkshire <https://yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/skills>

Monitoring and evaluating change – recording uplifts to species, tree cover and habitats over time

Government has mandated that LNRS responsible authorities monitor changes in nature recovery that occur as a result of the published strategies. At the outset of the preparation of the LNRS for North Yorkshire and York the Advisory Group (steering group) highlighted the importance of making use of monitoring and reporting tools to verify the impact of changes taking place over time.

During December 2024 over 30 locally-based stakeholders contributed to a workshop considering ‘What does LNRS delivery look like?’ for our region. This included a section on monitoring and reporting requirements, with some of the key findings including:

- Attendees would value dedicated LNRS resource to help facilitate a central reporting system for all stakeholders involving both numerical and spatial (GIS) records
- The importance of setting up baseline monitoring to determine any changes as a result of nature recovery activity
- To devise a GIS reporting system for ‘activity’ with a traffic light reporting system (with coloured polygons related to a step-by-step process, moving sequentially through (i)-(iv): (i) idea (ii) started (iii) finished (iv) achieved intended goal
- The value of measuring outcomes as opposed to outputs (e.g. assessing key indicator species may be a better way forward rather than detailed monitoring)



Contact us

Online: **northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us**

By telephone: For further information call **0300 131 2131** and say '**nature recovery**' when prompted

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You can request this information in another language or format at
northyorks.gov.uk/accessibility