



North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Appendix 1: Methodology for the identification and
prioritisation of nature recovery opportunities

February 2026

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1. Overview

This document sets out the methodology used to prioritise opportunities for nature recovery (hereafter referred to as opportunities) for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for North Yorkshire and York. A longlist of opportunities was compiled following a series of six habitat-themed stakeholder workshops during early summer 2024. Suggested opportunities were also requested via email from wider stakeholders, community groups and other interested parties (including those who had signed up to the LNRS mailing list).

Opportunities were then scored by a panel of stakeholder representatives at a prioritisation workshop in late May 2024, and were then ranked according to the aggregated scores from the panel. A shortlist of nature recovery priorities (hereafter referred to as priorities) was compiled by the LNRS project team based on the ranking, with the highest-scoring opportunities being taken forward onto the priority shortlist. A number of additional opportunities were selected by the project team alongside the highest-scoring opportunities (see Section 6.0), and together these formed the shortlist of priorities.

The initial shortlist of LNRS priorities (and associated measures) was presented to stakeholder representatives at a ‘validation’ workshop in early June 2024. Feedback from the workshop resulted in a number of changes to the shortlist, which then went through several rounds of refinement by the LNRS project team in consultation with the LNRS Advisory Group (Supporting Authority and key stakeholder representatives). A final shortlist of priorities and associated measures was agreed with the Advisory Group in November 2024. The priorities and measures presented in the LNRS Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and on the Local Habitat Map are the end product of this process.

2. Gathering of opportunities and associated measures

The majority of the opportunities and measures that have been considered in the development of the LNRS were collected through a series of six habitat-themed stakeholder workshops during April and May 2024. The habitat themes for the workshops were:

- Water and wetlands
- Upland
- Woodland
- Grassland, lowland heath and farmland
- Urban
- In-river habitats

An overview of the workshops and attendees is provided in Table 1 below. Workshop attendees represented a wide range of national and regional stakeholder organisations, with attendance at each workshop reflecting particular stakeholder expertise in the relevant habitat theme. A number of organisations were represented at more than one workshop, but often by different representatives with differing subject area knowledge.

Workshop attendees were asked to suggest opportunities for nature recovery across North Yorkshire and York, along with the measures (actions) that would help to deliver those opportunities. Workshop facilitators recorded attendee suggestions directly into digital spreadsheets to aid subsequent collation and data processing. Attendees were also asked to suggest potential locations where measures might be delivered, along with organisations who could potentially lead or support in their delivery.

Suggested opportunities and associated measures were also requested via email from wider stakeholders, community groups and other interested parties (including those who had signed up to the LNRS mailing list). Email respondents were asked to provide the information set out below:

- The proposed opportunity for nature recovery
- The habitat, species, or group of species the opportunity will support
- At least one measure (practical action) that shows how the opportunity could be achieved
- A location (if known) and which LNRS sub-area the opportunity is relevant to
- The name of the organisation or group that would support or lead on the delivery of the opportunity

The project team received 22 submissions of suggested opportunities and associated measures via email (some of the submissions contained multiple suggested opportunities).

3. Longlist of opportunities and measures

Suggested opportunities and associated measures received from the six habitat-themed stakeholder workshops, along with those received via email submission, were collated into a single spreadsheet. The spreadsheet also contained additional information captured from the suggestions such as locations where measures might be carried out, and organisations that might lead or support in the delivery of measures. Where possible, the proposer of each measure was also captured, so that further detail or clarification could be requested if needed.

The spreadsheet data was reviewed by the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC) through a data-cleansing process, which focused on correcting any data input errors, correctly categorising each opportunity and associated measures into a habitat classification category and removing duplicates. Due to the way that opportunities and measures were collected, there were a reasonably large number of duplications of very similar opportunities and very similar measures. As part of this process, duplicates were removed by combining very similar suggested opportunities and measures together into a single opportunity.

The data cleansing process resulted in a final opportunity longlist of 107 opportunities, with 440 associated measures.

Table 1: Habitat-themed stakeholder opportunity workshops

	Date	Habitat Theme	Venue	No. of Attendees	Organisations Involved
1	23/04/24	Water and Wetlands	County Hall, Northallerton	15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. North Yorkshire Council (RA) 2. Natural England (SA) 3. North York Moors National Park Authority (SA) 4. Nidderdale National Landscape 5. Howardian Hills National Landscape 6. Environment Agency 7. Yorkshire Water 8. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust 9. Forestry Commission 10. Lower Ure Conservation Trust (LUCT)
2	24/04/24	Upland	County Hall, Northallerton	17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. North Yorkshire Council (RA) 2. Natural England (SA) 3. North York Moors National Park Authority (SA) 4. Environment Agency 5. Nidderdale National Landscape 6. Yorkshire Peat Partnership 7. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust 8. White Rose Forest 9. National Trust 10. RSPB 11. Swinton Estate 12. National Farmers Union (NFU) 13. Country Land and Business Association (CLA) 14. Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)
3	30/04/24	Woodland	County Hall, Northallerton	26	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. North Yorkshire Council (RA) 2. Natural England (SA) 3. North York Moors National Park Authority (SA) 4. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (SA) 5. Environment Agency 6. Nidderdale National Landscape 7. Howardian Hills National Landscape 8. Forestry England 9. Forestry Commission 10. White Rose Forest 11. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust 12. Woodmeadow Trust

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					13. Woodland Trust 14. Raincliffe Woods CIC
4	02/05/24	Grassland, lowland heath and farmland	County Hall, Northallerton	23	1. North Yorkshire Council (RA) 2. Natural England (SA) 3. North York Moors National Park Authority (SA) 4. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (SA) 5. Environment Agency 6. Nidderdale National Landscape 7. Howardian Hills National Landscape 8. Forest of Bowland National Landscape 9. National Farmers Union (NFU) 10. Country Land and Business Association (CLA) 11. Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) 12. Floodplain Meadow Partnership 13. Woodmeadow Trust 14. Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) 15. Swinton Estate 16. Escrick Park Estate
5	08/05/24	Urban	Friargate Quaker Meeting House, York	25	1. North Yorkshire Council (RA) 2. Natural England (SA) 3. City of York Council (SA) 4. Environment Agency 5. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust 6. Forestry Commission 7. White Rose Forest 8. St Nicks, York 9. University of York 10. Groundwork 11. York Civic Trust
6	09/05/24	In-river habitats	County Hall, Northallerton	14	1. North Yorkshire Council (RA) 2. North York Moors National Park Authority (SA) 3. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (SA) 4. Environment Agency 5. Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust 6. Tees Rivers Trust 7. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (Derwent Catchment Host) 8. Wild Trout Trust 9. Foss Society

4. Opportunity scoring criteria

To select a shortlist of priorities from the longlist of opportunities, it was necessary to score each of the longlisted opportunities against a set of scoring criteria. The scoring criteria were developed with a working group at two online workshops in January and February 2024, facilitated by the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Datacentre (NEYEDC). The working group comprised representatives from the following organisations:

(RA = Responsible Authority, SA = Supporting Authority)

- North Yorkshire Council (RA)
- Natural England (SA)
- City of York Council (SA)
- North York Moors National Park Authority (SA)
- Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (SA)
- North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

The workshops identified 52 individual detailed criteria against which opportunities could be assessed. These were consolidated into 12 over-arching criteria, covering the themes set out below:

- Habitats
- Species
- Local distinctiveness
- Timeliness
- Risk
- Facility
- External linkages
- Co-benefits
- Ecosystem services

The 12 scoring criteria were divided into two groups; 7 criteria which related to nature recovery (ecological scoring criteria), and 5 criteria which related to wider co-benefits (co-benefit scoring criteria). The 12 scoring criteria are provided in Table 2 below. The full scoring criteria matrix is provided at Appendix 1.

Table 2: Opportunity scoring criteria

Ecological Scoring Criteria	
1	Does the opportunity offer a significant contribution to the recovery of NY&Y LNRS Priority Habitats?
2	Does the opportunity offer a significant contribution to the recovery of one or more threatened species, species for which North Yorkshire is a particular stronghold or iconic / keystone species?
3	Does the opportunity support positive outcomes for species in categories A - E of the species prioritisation process?
4	Does the opportunity promote aspects of local distinctiveness as outlined in the LNRS Strategy Area Description?
5	Are their reasons why the opportunity should be progressed within the current iteration of the LNRS?
6	Is this opportunity based on well-established evidence and is it likely to have a sustainable legacy after the intervention period?
7	Is this opportunity within the experience and resources of existing LNRS partners if suitable funding can be accessed?
Co-benefit Scoring Criteria	
8	Does the opportunity support other plans, policies and targets?
9	Does the opportunity provide a co-benefit in respect to flooding?
10	Does the opportunity have potential to positively impact on carbon sequestration?
11	Does the opportunity have the potential to support climate change adaptation?
12	Does the opportunity have the potential to deliver broader ecosystem service benefits?

5. Prioritisation Panel

The longlist of opportunities was scored by a prioritisation panel at a workshop in May 2024. Scoring was undertaken by 13 key stakeholder organisation representatives with appropriate subject-matter expertise, as set out below:

(RA = *Responsible Authority*, SA = *Supporting Authority*)

1. North Yorkshire Council (RA)
2. Natural England (SA)
3. City of York Council (SA)
4. North York Moors National Park Authority (SA)
5. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (SA)
6. North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership
7. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
8. Environment Agency
9. Forestry Commission
10. White Rose Forest
11. Nidderdale National Landscape
12. St Nicks, York
13. National Farmers Union (NFU)

Scoring of opportunities:

Panel members were asked to independently score each of the longlisted opportunities against each of the 12 scoring criteria using a scoring scale from 0 to 4, where 0 indicates that the opportunity does not meet the criteria, and 4 indicates that the opportunity meets all aspects of the criteria. Panel members were encouraged to score all of the shortlisted opportunities, but were advised that if they felt that assigning a score was outside their area of expertise, it was acceptable to not assign scores to that opportunity. Panel members were asked to consider the question: “in my opinion, how well does the opportunity under consideration satisfy each of the criteria?”.

Scoring was undertaken using a series of Microsoft Forms questionnaires which grouped opportunities into habitat types. The questionnaires provided each opportunity with the scoring options against each of the 12 criteria listed below (see Fig.1). Panel members scored the longlisted opportunities independently using their own device, but were able to ask questions of the project team.

Following scoring by the panel, each opportunity was assigned an overall score from 0 to 4, which was the mean score assigned by panel members, across the 12 scoring criteria. The maximum theoretical score for any opportunity was therefore 4. The highest-scoring opportunity received an overall mean score of 3.55 (88.67% of the maximum). The lowest-scoring opportunity received a score of 1.8 (44.96% of the maximum). The opportunities were then ranked from 1 to 107 based on their overall mean scores.

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3. OPP087 Mitigate the ecological impact of ash dieback to benefit associated species

	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
Does the opportunity offer a significant contribution to the recovery of ERY LNRS Priority Habitats?	<input type="radio"/>				
Does the opportunity offer a significant contribution to the recovery of one or more LNRS species or suites of species?	<input type="radio"/>				
Does the opportunity support positive outcomes for species in categories A - E of the species prioritisation process?	<input type="radio"/>				
Does the opportunity promote aspects of local distinctiveness as outlined in the LNRS Area Description?	<input type="radio"/>				
Are there reasons why the opportunity should be progressed within the current iteration of the LNRS?	<input type="radio"/>				

6. Initial selection of shortlisted priorities from longlist of opportunities

The shortlist of priorities and associated measures that has been included in the first iteration of the LNRS for North Yorkshire and York were selected from the scored and ranked longlist of opportunities. The project team agreed that a shortlist of around 40 priorities would be appropriate for inclusion in the final strategy to achieve a suitable balance between maintaining the LNRS's strategic focus, whilst covering a suitable breadth of the different habitat types found across North Yorkshire and York.

The 25 top-ranked (highest-scoring) opportunities from the scoring process, along with their associated measures, were selected as the starting point for the shortlist of priorities. The project team then selected an additional 15 opportunities from the ranked longlist. Selection of these additional opportunities was based on increasing the breadth and scope of the LNRS in respect of different habitat types (beyond those habitat types already covered by the 25 top-ranked opportunities). Whilst ranking was taken into consideration, selection of the additional 15 opportunities was not based on their ranking, but rather the habitat type that each opportunity was seeking to benefit.

This resulted in a shortlist of 40 LNRS priorities (the 25 top-ranked, plus 15 additional) covering a good range of different habitat types, as indicated by the summary table (Table 3) below.

Table 3: Initial selection of shortlisted priorities by habitat theme

Habitat Theme	Number of shortlisted priorities
Upland	10
Water and Wetlands	7
Woodland	4
Farmland and grassland	13
Coast	2
Urban	4
Total	40

7. Validation Workshop (11th June 2024)

A validation workshop was held in York in early June 2024 with representatives from key stakeholder organisations in attendance, the majority of whom had previously attended one or more of the thematic habitat workshops held during April and May 2024. Stakeholder organisations with representatives in attendance at the workshop are listed below:

(RA = Responsible Authority, SA = Supporting Authority)

1. North Yorkshire Council (RA)
2. Natural England (SA)
3. City of York Council (SA)
4. North York Moors National Park Authority (SA)
5. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (SA)
6. Howardian Hills National Landscape
7. Nidderdale National Landscape
8. Environment Agency
9. Forestry Commission
10. Forestry England
11. White Rose Forest
12. Woodland Trust
13. Escrick Park Estate
14. Floodplain Meadow Partnership
15. Lower Ure Conservation Trust
16. RSPB
17. Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust
18. Yorkshire Water
19. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
20. York Civic Trust

The initial shortlist of LNRS priorities was presented to attendees, before breaking into discussion groups to allow attendees to reflect on the shortlist and make any comments or suggested changes. Discussion groups were facilitated by a member of the project team, who also took notes of the discussions. The discussion groups were focused around the three questions below:

1. Does the range of priorities seem right?
2. Does the number of priorities seem right?
3. Is anything obviously missing, and why?

Following the workshop, the discussion notes were collated and individual comments from all attendees were transferred into an Excel spreadsheet to form an action log for the project team. A total of 95 individual comments were received.

Examples of comments from the workshop included:

- Fen and mire missing, seems an important habitat for carbon as well as biodiversity.
- The shortlisted limestone opportunity needs to mention 'upland' in relation to calcareous grassland (it mentions lowland, but not upland).
- Suggest reference to the opportunities provided by improved management of road verges should be included in the shortlist of about 40 opportunities (longlist OPP032).
- SUDs not obvious in the urban priorities.
- Feel invasive non-native species (INNS) needs to be included somewhere. Possibly needs to be an overarching opportunity across habitat types?

Attendee comments generally fell into one of the below four categories:

1. Requests to include something not currently covered by the shortlisted priorities (e.g. a particular habitat type or species group)
2. Requests to change the wording of a given shortlisted priority to make it clearer, or more (or less) specific
3. Requests to combine two very similar shortlisted priorities into a single priority
4. Requests to include an additional opportunity from the longlist as a shortlisted priority

Attendees generally felt that the range and number of shortlisted priorities was about right. There were no requests to remove any shortlisted priorities from the initial shortlist.

The initial shortlist of priorities was also circulated by email to all stakeholder representatives, including those who had attended the validation workshop, along with those who had been invited to the validation workshop, but were unable to attend. Comments were invited through completion and return of a pro-forma template. 12 responses were received by email, each with a number of additional comments. Combining these with the comments received at the validation workshop resulted in a total of 122 individual comments on the shortlist, which were recorded in the action log.

The project team then worked through the action log, reviewing each individual comment in turn and implementing the requested amendments to the shortlist, where it was considered appropriate to do so. When an individual comment had been considered and actioned, this was recorded in the log.

8. Refinement of the shortlist of priorities and associated measures

Following the amendments made to the shortlist as a result of comments received at the validation workshop, the project team continued to further refine the shortlisted priorities and associated measures, in consultation with the LNRS Advisory Group (Supporting Authorities and key stakeholder representatives).

Refinement of the shortlist focused on the aspects listed below:

- Development of 5 overarching priorities and associated objectives (based on key themes identified at the validation workshop)
- Review and refinement of the wording of individual priorities (to give consistency)
- Review and refinement of the wording of individual measures (to give consistency)
- Combination of two or more very similar priorities into a single priority
- Combination of two or more very similar measures into a single measure
- A small number of priorities changed to be a measure for a different priority
- Shortlist habitat categories revised (e.g. Farmland and Grassland separated)
- Unique coding of individual priorities and measures revised, to align with habitat categories
- A short name given to all priorities, to assist with identification / reference
- Ordering of priorities and associated measures revised to be more logical

The shortlist went through several iterations alongside consultation with the LNRS Advisory Group from July to October 2024. A final shortlist of 39 priorities and 187 associated measures for the LNRS Consultation Draft was agreed with the LNRS Advisory Group in November 2024, following final comments in October, as indicated by the summary table (Table 4) below.

Table 4: Final selection of shortlisted priorities by habitat theme

Habitat Theme	Habitat Code	Number of shortlisted priorities
Overarching Priorities	OVR	5
Farmland	FRM	5
Upland	UPL	8
Grassland	GRA	7
Woodland	WLD	4
Water and Wetland	WET	8
Urban	URB	4
Coast	CST	3
	Total	39