

MAYOR OF LONDON

London Local Nature Recovery Strategy Method Statement

Public consultation version

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Introduction

This statement explains how the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was developed. The titles reflect the required steps of the LNRS process, as set out in the LNRS Statutory Guidance (2023). It also includes additional information regarding governance and engagement.

This document refers to a number of advice notes. These were issued to all responsible authorities by Natural England and Defra, in order to support preparation of the LNRS.

Overview

The LNRS was produced collaboratively, with input from technical specialists, community groups and Londoners, alongside a review of existing information and strategies. The process was broadly structured around the relevant goals from the Environmental Improvement Plan (EiP)¹, which are:

- Thriving Plants and Wildlife
- Clean and Plentiful Water
- Using Resources from Nature Sustainably
- Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- Enhancing Biosecurity
- Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

The paragraphs below set out how each of these goals has influenced the LNRS process. We used the goals to identify relevant stakeholders, themes for workshops, and datasets to include in the LNRS process. We also used the goals to summarise National Environmental Objectives (NEOs) in our prioritisation process.

Thriving plants and wildlife

This goal sits at the core of the LNRS, encompassing many of the national environmental objectives (NEOs). We consider this goal to cover all terrestrial habitats and species. The habitats workshop sat under this theme, as did the species workstream. More information on these is included later in this document.

Clean and plentiful water

This goal encompasses parts of the LNRS relating to the water environment. The freshwater habitats and species workshop (see below) sat under this theme, as did aquatic species considered.

¹ HM Government (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023: First revision of the 25 year Environment Plan

Using resources from nature sustainably

For the London LNRS, this goal relates to food growing, agriculture and forestry. The Greater London Authority (GLA) commissioned Sustain to support this goal, particularly by engaging community food growers via their Capital Growth programme. Forestry Commission was also a key partner in the LNRS process.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

The focus of this goal for the London LNRS was nature-based solutions. This means using nature-based interventions to help address wider issues, such as flooding or heat risk and thinking about how action for nature can contribute to these. Climate change was a key consideration in shortlisting LNRS priorities and priority species.

Enhancing biosecurity (including invasive species)

For the London LNRS, this goal focuses on invasive species, including engaging London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI) in the LNRS process. Biosecurity is also a factor when considering how priorities and measures are delivered. For example, this could include responsible sourcing of materials.

Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

For the London LNRS, this goal focuses on the engagement of the community in the LNRS process. GLA commissioned London National Park City to support this goal, by growing and engaging their network of community groups and members with an interest in the environment and nature.

Governance

The Mayor of London was appointed as the responsible authority for the London LNRS. Greater London Authority (GLA) officers led the process on behalf of the mayor.

An LNRS Steering Group was established to oversee the LNRS process and provide direction and key decisions. The steering group consisted of:

- GLA – chair and secretariat
- Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GiGL)
- London Councils London Environment Directors' Network (LEDNet) representatives
- London Wildlife Trust (LWT)
- Natural England

The responsibilities of the steering group were set out in a Terms of Reference document, which was agreed by all members. This states “the purpose of the Steering Group [would] be to give strategic oversight to the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Greater London, to give confidence to each of the 33 Supporting Authorities and to keep the LNRS relevant for London” and “to ensure that the LNRS is truly representative of the ambitions for nature recovery in London”. The governance structure centred around the LNRS Steering Group, with senior staff and members of supporting

authorities feeding in via London Councils and technical experts feeding in via the Technical Task and Finish Group. The Steering Group ultimately fed back to the Mayor's Office. This governance structure is shown in **Figure 1**.

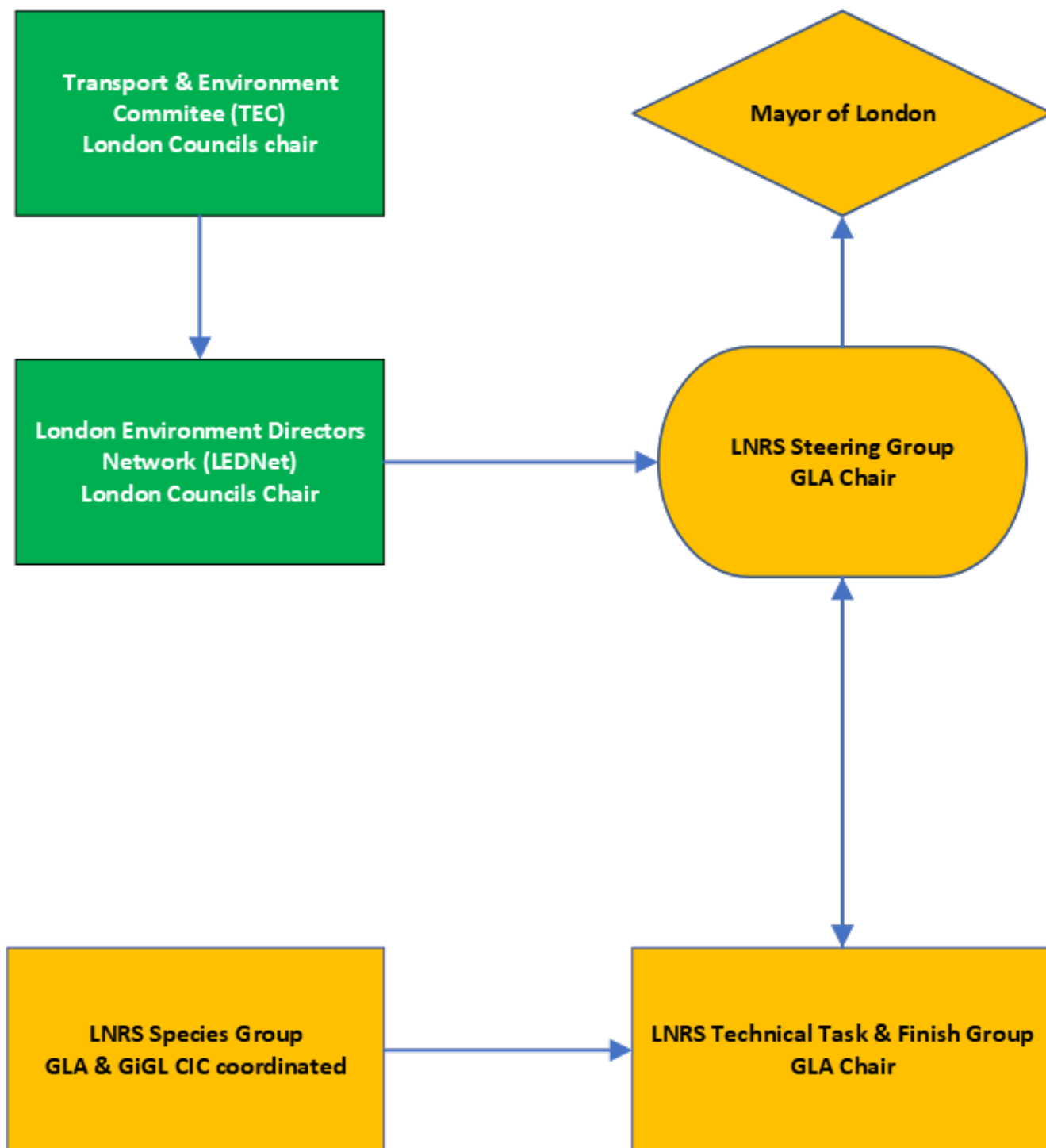


Figure 1: Governance structure of the London LNRS

Step 1: Map areas of particular importance for biodiversity

Overview

GLA commissioned Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GiGL), London's local environmental records centre, to map 'areas of particular importance for biodiversity'. In line with the LNRS Regulations and Guidance, this included collating and mapping the following datasets:

- Nationally designated nature conservation sites:
 - Special Areas of Conservation
 - Special Protection Areas
 - Ramsar sites
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
 - National Nature Reserves
- Local Nature Reserves
- Local wildlife sites (SINCs) and proposed SINCs (pSINCs)
- Irreplaceable habitats (including ancient woodland and veteran trees)

These data are presented on the Local Habitat Map as a single 'Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB)' Layer. Some designations overlap. Data for nationally designated nature conservation sites is available from Defra. The full, detailed, local datasets can be obtained under license from GiGL. The ancient and veteran trees data is from Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory. This can be obtained from the Woodland Trust under license.

The text below explains the approach where some of these datasets needed further consideration than simply adding layers to a map.

Consultation with supporting authorities

To ensure the LNRS is informed by the most up-to-date data, we consulted with all local planning authorities (London boroughs and the City of London Corporation), asking them to review the data.

GiGL created an online mapping portal, which all local planning authorities could log into to view the datasets held by GiGL. This was accompanied by a spreadsheet for officers to check site names, grades (for SINCs), and comment on anything that needed changing.

Local authorities were then asked to complete a form to confirm that they had completed their checks and submit any related files. All 33 London Boroughs engaged with this process - a small number did not submit the formal response form but discussed with GiGL by email.

Local wildlife sites (SINCs)

The relevant local wildlife site designation in London is Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

Following advice from Natural England, the APIB layer includes both SINCs and proposed SINCs (pSINCs). pSINCS are sites that have been assessed and proposed for designation and have reached public consultation stage (Local Plan Regulation 18). Site proposals within the London Borough of Haringey were also included on the map as, although they were pre-public consultation at the time of preparing the Local Habitat Map, they were unlikely to be any changes before Regulation 18 in early 2025.

Some Boroughs noted a discrepancy between locally held boundaries for nationally designated sites and data from Natural England. As per Natural England's advice, we used the latest boundaries from <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/>. Boroughs have been advised to follow up discrepancies with Natural England directly.

The LNRS Steering Group noted that the APIB layer might not reflect a complete and accurate picture of areas that are important for nature in London. For example, not all Boroughs had an up to date or complete SINC review. As part of the consultation with supporting authorities, some Boroughs flagged that some SINCs have been built on. Although the SINC designation remains until formally removed via a new Local Plan, we removed any SINCs where there is confirmation that the feature(s) of interest have been, or are very likely to have been, lost from the site.

Irreplaceable habitats

While there are a number of irreplaceable habitats set out under the BNG Regulations, only ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees were known to exist in London. The consultation with supporting authorities raised that there is also a very small area of lowland fen in London. Ancient and veteran trees are mapped as dots ('point data') because this is how the original Woodland Trust data is recorded. Find out more about ancient and veteran trees in the Woodland Trust's [Ancient Tree Inventory](#).

Step 2: Map areas where nature recovery action has been taken

This step did not need to be completed for the first LNRS. This will be required for future LNRS updates.

Step 3: Describe the strategy area, its biodiversity, and opportunities for recovery

This part of the LNRS drew on existing work to describe the landscapes, habitats, and species present in London. It also considered the challenges and opportunities facing nature in London.

The starting point for describing the strategy area was the detailed descriptions of London prepared for the All London Green Grid Area Frameworks². These split London into 11 areas, aligning with London's River catchments and incorporating Natural England's, natural signatures. This provided a comprehensive baseline for each area.

In addition, a description of the main habitats in London was prepared using the 2002 Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy as a starting point. The Forestry Commission and Environment Agency also provided a review of the area in terms of trees and water respectively.

Species information was drawn from a review of existing Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs) across London, as well as considering the designated features of London's most valuable wildlife sites.

The LNRS guidance requires this step to consider how the distribution and extent of habitats has changed in recent decades. This was challenging in London due to the lack of a regular, comprehensive monitoring framework. Species records are dependent on recording effort, whether sightings are recorded, and which platform or scheme records are sent to. As such, we used the data available, focusing on changes to SINC designations and trends in bird species, drawing on analysis the British Trust for Ornithology undertook for London in 2014.

Wider environmental issues, future pressures, and opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity were identified using a number of sources, including the relevant National Character Area profiles, the London Climate Resilience Review, input from colleagues across GLA, and input from participants at LNRS workshops and events.

² Mayor of London (2011) All London green grid and area frameworks, <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-and-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/environment-publications/all-london-green-grid-and-area-frameworks>

Step 4: Agree priorities and identify potential measures

Review of existing plans and strategies

This part of the process sought to identify potential LNRS priorities and measures already set out in existing plans and strategies. There was a very large number of potentially relevant plans and strategies in London. This was particularly because most, if not all, of the 33 London Boroughs (including City of London Corporation) have a range of their own plans and strategies. In order to take a proportionate approach, we focused on London-wide strategies, river catchment plans, and regional park plans. The following strategies were included in this review:

- London Environment Strategy (2018)
- London Plan (2021)
- London Rewilding Taskforce Report (2023)
- London Urban Forest Plan (2020)
- Transport for London Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Plan (2024)
- River Crane Smarter Water Catchment Plan (2021-2031)
- Lower Crane Re-Naturalisation and Enhancement Plan
- Colne and Crane Valley Regional Park Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019)
- Lee Valley Regional Park Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2029
- London Biodiversity Action Plan (2000)
- Colne Valley Catchment Action Network Vision and aims (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Crane Valley Partnership Strategy for the Crane Catchment 2018-2028
- Beverly Brook Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Brent Catchment Action Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Darent and Cray Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Hogsmill Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- London Lea Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Maidenhead to Teddington Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Marsh Dykes and Thamesmead Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Ravensbourne Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Tidal Thames Action Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)
- Wandle Catchment Plan (date unavailable, accessed 2024)

With assistance from Natural England and GiGL, we also carried out a review of Borough Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs), Habitat Action Plans (HAPs), and Species Action Plans

(SAPs) to identify which habitats and species were being prioritised for action across London.

There were some relevant emerging plans and strategies still in development at the time we undertook this work. However, we liaised with relevant teams and organisations to discuss these and their potential implications for nature recovery. These included the London Clean and Healthy Rivers Plan, the London Surface Water Strategy (since published in 2025) and the London Deer Strategy (since published in 2025).

Engagement

The key points of engagement for the LNRS are summarised below.

Identifying relevant parties

As set out in the 'Governance' section above, key partners and representatives of statutory agencies and supporting authorities sat on the LNRS steering group. This allowed these organisations to influence the strategic direction of the LNRS, as well as representing and disseminating information to wider groups.

Because of the wide range of existing partnerships and relationships in London, the GLA's approach to engagement was to maximise use of existing stakeholder groups as a basis for engaging interested parties (see **Figure 2**). Existing groups, fora and other key partners played a large part in enabling robust stakeholder engagement by representing their networks and disseminating information to them. Internal colleagues were also included throughout the LNRS engagement stages.

Sustain was commissioned to help engage the food growing community in London, and London National Park City was commissioned to help engage wider with community groups.

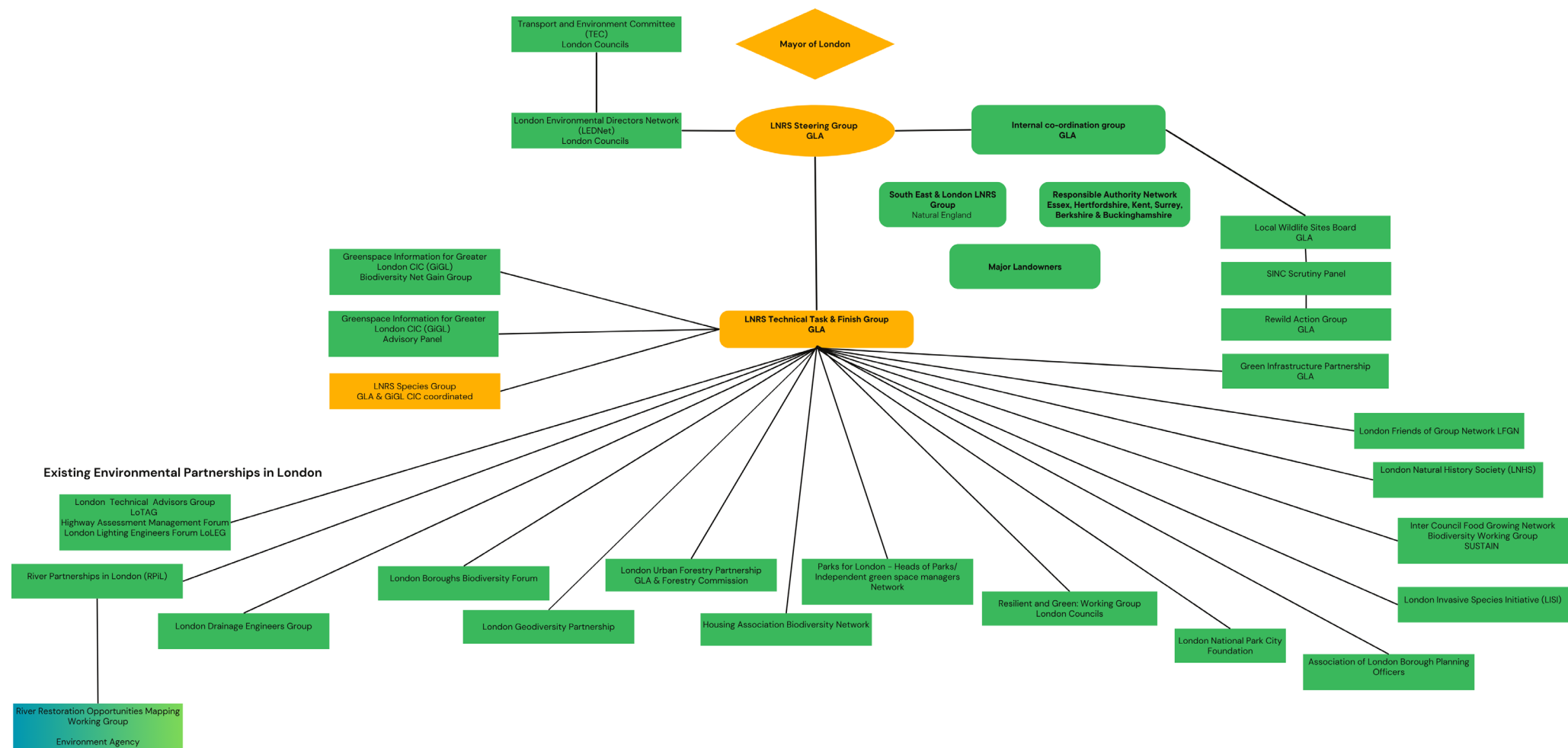


Figure 2: Overview of environmental partnerships in London

Supporting authorities

The LNRS Regulations set out a particular role for ‘supporting authorities’. London has the largest number of supporting authorities of any responsible authority, consisting of:

- 32 London Boroughs
- City of London Corporation
- Natural England

Supporting authorities were recognised as the stakeholders requiring the highest level of engagement in the LNRS process. This was managed through:

- Inclusion of LEDNet members on the Steering Group to represent environmental directors from all local authorities
- Additional consultation stages with Boroughs and the City of London beyond statutory requirements, consisting of:
 - Consultation on governance structure and principles of engagement
 - Consultation on Step 1 baseline mapping
- Formal letters to environmental directors and relevant members at each local authority in February / March 2024 to introduce the LNRS process and the GLA’s role
- Identifying a first point of contact for LNRS at each local authority
- Liaison with London-wide borough officer groups, including London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum (LBBF), Association of London Borough Planning Officers (ALBPO), London Technical Advisory Group (LoTAG), London Lighting Engineer Group (LoLEG), and London Drainage Engineers Group (LoDEG)
- Invitation to local authority officers and representatives of London-wide borough officer groups to attend engagement workshops

Stages of engagement

The stages of engagement and the organisations engaged at each stage are set out below and summarized in **Table 1**.

Raising awareness

From 2023 onwards GLA worked to raise awareness of the London LNRS with a range of parties, including supporting authorities and environmental organisations. This included sharing information about the emerging LNRS at meetings with partners and relevant fora, speaking about LNRS at external events and launching an LNRS webpage on the London.gov website.

In July 2024, GLA held an introductory webinar to explain the LNRS as well as the emerging London Green Infrastructure Framework (LGIF), the upcoming process and how the two fit together. Some 279 individuals attended this live, with additional people watching the recording.

Key questions raised in the raising awareness stage were compiled into a [frequently asked questions document](#), which was made available to the public.

Bespoke engagement with boroughs

As set out above, we carried out bespoke engagement with local authorities (Boroughs and the City of London Corporation). This included issuing formal letters to environmental directors and relevant members at each local authority in February / March 2024 to introduce the LNRS process and the GLA's role. GLA held a non-statutory consultation on the process as outlined in these letters, asking each local authority to feedback on the proposed process, to nominate a first point of contact for LNRS, and offering an opportunity for a one-to-one conversation to discuss the LNRS. Responses were positive, with no suggested changes to the process and a named contact identified in all Boroughs. Of 33 local authorities, 17 requested a one-to-one call with GLA officers to ask questions and help them better understand the process.

GLA held a second, non-statutory consultation with local authorities from mid-June to mid-July 2024. This focused on ensuring the APIB layer of the Local Habitat Map was as accurate and as up to date as possible by asking authorities to review the information held by GiGL. Some 19 local authorities responded with updates, varying from changes in site names, to informing us of sites that had been destroyed.

In addition, the GLA invited local authorities to partake in all other stages of engagement as well.

Technical workshops

In November 2023 the GLA held a climate change workshop as part of the Planning for London programme of consultative workshops, in the build-up to the London Plan review. The LNRS was a key topic in the workshop, with two facilitated tables covering a range of structured questions on the LNRS, leading to several suggestions and observations on the role nature has in making London more climate resilient. There was a total of 70 attendees, mainly from the planning, nature, architecture and design communities, with representatives from community organisations as well.

In July 2024 the GLA held three technical workshops to gather input into the LNRS. These focused on water-based habitats, the urban forest, and other land-based habitats. Each workshop had between 35 and 61 attendees, with representation from local authorities, NGOs / charities, landowners / managers, government / public bodies, academics, businesses and community groups.

At each of these workshops, attendees discussed the key challenges and pressures facing nature in London. The key issues and pressures identified at workshops informed the wider environmental issues and future pressures discussed in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. These were also considered when developing biodiversity priorities for the LNRS.

Workshop attendees were also asked to identify priorities and measures for nature in London, which formed an initial longlist of LNRS priorities. Following the workshops, GLA officers grouped priorities by the habitat or species they related to, merged similar priorities and measures and removed those that clearly fell outside the scope of LNRS (for example, because they related to governance structures). Scoped out priorities and measures informed the 'enabling actions' set out in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.

As part of the workshop, attendees were asked to identify where the priorities and measures should be focused, geographically. GiGL translated the locations mapped during the workshops onto a digital map, where possible (for some there was not sufficient or clear enough information to enable this). These inputs were then processed along with inputs gathered through the interactive map (see below), informing the mapping of measures.

Species workstream

GiGL engaged local species specialists to help create a species shortlist for the London LNRS. This included two workshops in September 2024: an online workshop, to which species NGOs were also invited; and a smaller, in-person workshop with just the species experts. There were 25 attendees at the online workshop and 19 attendees at the in-person workshop. The inputs gathered through the species workstream resulted in the species shortlist and assemblages set out in Annex 1 of the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. This shortlist was integrated into the LNRS priorities by ensuring measures meet the needs of relevant species for each priority. Further information on the species workstream is set out later in this document.

Interactive map

GiGL launched an online, interactive map on behalf of GLA. This was publicly available for input from late August until early October 2024. The map allowed organisations and Londoners to suggest locations for nature recovery, and which habitat or species should be the focus for action at that location. During this time, GLA held two community webinars to help promote the interactive map and to demonstrate how to submit proposals using the map. Some 65 people attended the live webinars, and recordings of the webinars were posted on the LNRS webpage for others to view.

The map received over 1,500 submissions, plus additional suggestions submitted via email. Nearly 1,000 of these submissions came from Londoners and community groups or charities. Over 400 submissions came from local authorities and landowners / managers and just over 70 came from NGOs. Interactive map submissions formed the starting point for mapping measures.

Additional community engagement

GLA commissioned Sustain to help engage the food growing community in London. This included initial surveys of community food growers to understand what they are currently doing for nature on their sites and what they would like to do more of. This included

community gardens, allotment associations, and peri-urban farmers. The results of these surveys informed the descriptions of farmland and the urban environment in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. They also informed priorities relating to farmland (arable and horticultural) and 'urban mosaic'. The GLA team have supported and been involved with Sustain's Capital Growth Growing for Nature programme, presenting both at the Inter Council Network meetings and the Nature Working Group. This culminated in the 'SEWN North' event to demonstrate the interactive map and help attendees input into the map if required.

London National Park City (LNPC) was commissioned to map and understand the role that communities play in local nature recovery processes. This focused on existing biodiversity policy, in particular the SINC designation process. LNPC produced a list of Local groups, forums and partnerships operating locally in each Borough, with either an interest, general appreciation of or specific focus on biodiversity. During the interactive map phase and instructional webinars, we contacted these groups and provided explanatory slides / text to describe the differences between the SINC system (site designation), what the LNRS is not, and what we needed from Londoners to prepare the LNRS. This was of critical importance to manage expectations from the public and stakeholders.

Supporting authority extended feedback period and pre-consultation

An initial draft LNRS was circulated to supporting authorities in January 2025 for review and comment. Relevant parts of the draft LNRS were also shared with other parties, including the steering group, the technical task and finish group, species experts and major landowners. This was to give these parties sight of emerging documents in advance of the statutory pre-consultation with supporting authorities and prior to public consultation.

The statutory pre-consultation period began in February 2025. The proposed Consultation Draft LNRS was circulated to supporting authorities under Regulation 7 of the LNRS Regulations. This started the 28-day period for any objections to be raised under Regulation 9 of the LNRS Regulations.

Twenty six of the 34 supporting authorities responded, either through submitting additional opportunity sites, suggesting amendments to the Local Habitat Map, giving feedback on the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, or a combination of these. None of the supporting authorities submitted a formal objection. Over half of the comments received related to the Local Habitat Map, most of these relating to additional opportunities. Around a quarter of the comments suggested changes to the LNRS priorities and many also related to the species shortlist.

Public consultation

Public consultation on the draft LNRS runs for a period of 28 days. The consultation focuses on asking organisations and Londoners:

- If they think the right priorities have been identified for nature in London

- Whether amendments are needed to any potential measure locations on the Local Habitat Map.

The LNRS will be updated to account for feedback from the public consultation, where relevant. GLA will collate, summarise, and present public consultation responses along with how they have been addressed, in a 'you said, we did' style document. This will be published on the London.gov website.

The draft LNRS is published online at <https://londonlnrs.commonplace.is/> for review and comment by any organisation or Londoner who wants to respond. The consultation portal includes the following:

- Statement of Biodiversity Priorities (including two annexes)
- Local Habitat Map
- Method Statement (this document)
- Surveys to respond to the consultation
- Frequently Asked Questions
- A map of where hard copies can be accessed
- A list of consultation events

Hard copies of the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities are hosted at locations across London. While the Local Habitat Map needs to be viewed online to see the full information provided, an overview map of APIBs and 'areas that could become of particular importance' (ACBs) is included in the hard copies. Paper survey forms are provided alongside hard copies.

The public consultation is also supported by the following events:

- Public webinar to give an overview of the LNRS and how to respond
- Online question and answer session
- Public drop-in sessions to ask questions about the LNRS and get help navigating the consultation materials.

Pre-publication

The statutory pre-publication period is expected to commence in early 2026. At this time, the final LNRS will be shared with supporting authorities under Regulation 13 of the LNRS

Regulation. This will start the 28-day period within which supporting authorities may raise a 'publication advisory notice' (formal objection).

Publication

Following the pre-publication stage, the final LNRS will be published on the London.gov website and a public-facing web map.

Table 1: Summary of engagement stages for the London LNRS

Stage	Parties engaged	Format of engagement	Timing
Raising awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting authorities - Environmental organisations in London - Interested public - GLA teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising LNRS as agenda item at regular meetings - Attending external events to discuss LNRS - LNRS web page launch - London Plan workshop on climate change – covering LNRS 	January 2023 – March 2025
First stage consultation with local authorities	Supporting authorities (excluding Natural England)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Letters to local authority environment directors and members - Local authority consultation on governance structure and principles of engagement 	February – March 2024
Second stage consultation with local authorities	Supporting authorities (excluding Natural England)	Local authority review of draft APIB mapping	June – July 2024
Opening Webinar	All	Webinar introducing LNRS (and London Green Infrastructure Framework, LGIF) and outlining upcoming engagement	July 2024
Engagement Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting authorities - Statutory agencies - Environmental organisations - Landowners / managers - Species experts 	Thematic workshops to identify potential priorities, measures, and locations for nature recovery	July – September 2024
Interactive map	All	Publicly accessible mapping tool to facilitate input into the LNRS from any interested parties	August – October 2024
Community webinars	All	Two webinars held to support community input into the interactive map	October 2024
(Extended) pre-consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting authorities - GLA teams - Major landowners - LNRS steering group 	- Draft LNRS sent for review with associated forms for feedback. Note that only the supporting authorities, GLA teams and steering group were sent the full LNRS.	January – March 2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical task and finish group - Species experts 	<p>Others were sent information appropriate to their area of interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online question and answer sessions held for each group 	
Public consultation	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft LNRS published with associated materials and feedback survey - Public webinar - Online question and answer session - Drop-in sessions for anyone to ask questions or get help in navigating the LNRS. - Attend and promote the LNRS at relevant events across London - Providing promotional roadshow pack to stakeholders - Hard copies of the LNRS provided at locations across London 	September / October 2025
Pre-publication	Supporting authorities	Final LNRS sent to supporting authorities for final review	Expected early 2026

Species workstream

GiGL led a species-focused LNRS workstream on behalf of GLA.

Stage one: create an LNRS species longlist

The starting point for identifying a species shortlist was the existing species longlist for London. The existing longlist was compiled on similar principles to those recommended in the 'Species Recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies' advice note. While a shortlist for London existed, there is no record of the methodology used to compile this. The longlist was considered to be a more robust starting point.

The longlist was sent to a group of species experts, representing as many taxa as possible. This included London Natural History Society (LNHS) and environmental NGOs. Each expert was asked to review their taxon group speciality on the longlist, adding or removing any species they felt necessary.

We were unable to obtain specialist input on the following taxa: centipedes, liverworts, mosses, Diptera, and lichens. As such, all relevant species stayed on the longlist.

Stage two: create an LNRS species priorities list

Experts were asked to categorise species on the longlist in accordance with the categories set out in the 'Species Recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies' advice note. Any species falling within categories E, F or G (lacking evidence, needs action outside England, and vagrants / occasional visitors) were excluded from the long list. This resulted in a 'medium list'.

GLA officers grouped species in the medium list into initial habitat groups, based on information provided by species experts. Species for which habitat information was not provided, or for which only one or two fell into that habitat group, were labelled as 'lonely species'.

Species workshop 1 (online)

An initial workshop was held online. This workshop was open to species NGOs and other local species experts, as well as the taxonomic experts inputting directly to the species shortlisting.

The outputs of this workshop were:

- Refined habitat-based species assemblages
- Identification of key measures required to support each species / assemblage

Species workshop 2 (in person)

This workshop involved the taxonomic experts and further refined the species list. The workshop looked at the factors recommended in the 'Species Recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies' advice note, such as urgency, maximising benefits, climate impacts and pre-existing initiatives relevant to the recovery of each species. These were used to develop an overall 'species risk score'. In this workshop we also undertook an exercise to estimate how feasible / deliverable the suggested measures are expected to be.

The outputs of this workshop were:

- Refined species assemblages
- Assessment of species against factors from advice note
- Overall species risk score
- Overall measure deliverability score

Final species shortlisting

The overall species risk scores and deliverability scores were plotted on a matrix to identify which species have the highest risk scores and highest deliverability scores. This methodology was based on that set out in Booy et al (2017)³ - while this method was developed for targeting management of invasive species, we have amended it to prioritise species through consideration of risk and deliverability.

Species with highest levels of risk and deliverability were selected for the LNRS species shortlist and grouped into refined assemblages, taking into account the primary habitat(s) used by species and the measures required to aid their recovery. These assemblages

³ Booy et al (2017) Risk management to prioritise the eradication of new and emerging invasive non-native species, Biological Invasions, Available at: <https://nora.nerc.ac.uk/id/eprint/517713/1/N517713JA.pdf>

were then matched to LNRS priorities, and any species-specific measures added to the list of potential measures for the relevant LNRS priority.

The key measures associated with some of the species in the 'buildings' assemblage are different when compared to the measures associated with these species in other assemblages. This is to ensure the measures listed are appropriate for the context of the 'buildings' priority.

The small number of taxa / species we were unable to get input on were not included in the LNRS species priority list. This is because we did not have sufficient expertise to understand the issues they face, and their habitat needs.

Identifying LNRS priorities

Initial review by GLA

The longlist of potential priorities included those gathered through engagement workshops, the interactive map, and a review of existing plans and strategies. Additional inputs were gathered at partner events, using online polling.

Each potential priority was 'tagged' with the habitat or species it primarily related to. In general, suggestions relating to the same habitat / species were grouped under one potential priority.

Most suggested priorities were not submitted in an 'LNRS-ready' format. These required a level of interpretation to frame them in a way suitable for inclusion in LNRS. This was initially carried out by GLA officers and then reviewed by partners as part of the process outlined below. There were also a small number of potential priorities scoped out at this stage because:

- they were raising a general point / comment, rather than a suggested priority / measure
- there was not sufficient detail to understand what was being suggested
- the suggestion was clearly out of scope

Technical task and finish group

A technical task and finish group was established to assist in refining and shortlisting priorities and measures for inclusion in the final LNRS. This group consisted of representatives from the following organisations:

- Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE)
- Buglife
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Butterfly Conservation
- City of London Corporation Open Spaces / Epping Forest
- Countryside Management Association (CMA)
- Environment Agency

- Forestry Commission
- Froglife
- Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC
- Housing Association Biodiversity Group
- Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
- London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum
- London Invasive Species Initiative
- London Rewilding Action Group
- London Wildlife Trust
- Natural England
- Parks for London
- Port of London Authority
- Royal Parks
- Thames21 / River Partnerships in London (RiPL)
- Transport for London
- Wimbledon and Putney Commons
- Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

A spreadsheet template was prepared to assist in shortlisting, using the 'Identifying and agreeing priorities and potential measures within LNRS' advice, accompanied by a detailed instruction document. The process set out in the instruction document is summarised below.

Prioritisation consisted of three stages:

- Scoping
- Analysis
- Shortlisting

Scoping

The longlist of potential priorities was shared with Natural England, Environment Agency, and Forestry Commission to:

- Sense-check / refine the wording of the priorities
- Identify and remove any out-of-scope suggestions.

Potential priorities were considered to be out of scope if the answer to any of the following questions was 'yes':

- Does the priority relate only to co-benefits?
- Does the priority relate to a site-level location and cannot reasonably be generalised to cover a wider area?
- Are required measures within the scope of the LNRS (could the priority be delivered by habitat enhancement or creation, or removal of invasive species)?

None of the potential priorities related only to co-benefits or specific sites. The only priorities scoped out at this stage were those that were considered not to relate to a particular habitat or species. The task and finish group also suggested re-wording of priorities, so that 'protection' was removed, as this is outside the scope of the LNRS, and the emphasis was shifted to habitat restoration and creation.

At the scoping stage it was also noted how many times a similar suggestion was raised and whether a similar priority is included in an existing plan or strategy.

We also compared the potential priorities and measures raised through the engagement work with those identified from existing plans and strategies (see above). We noted where priorities / measures suggested through engagement aligned with those set out in existing plans and strategies and added any additional priorities / measures that were not already captured to the spreadsheet.

Analysis

Each member of the task and finish group was assigned some priorities to analyse. Analysis was input directly into the spreadsheet and consisted of assigning a value of 2, 1, or 0 to each of the following:

- Contribution of the priority to National Environmental Objectives (NEOs) - NEOs were grouped according to the Environmental Improvement Plan (EiP) goals listed above with a value of 1 available for each group
- Does the priority address identified pressures? - The pressures were taken from those raised in the July LNRS workshops (refined to remove out of scope pressures)
- Local / national significance - national significance was defined as section 41 habitats and species. Local significance was defined as London priority habitats as set out in the London Environment Strategy
- Cross-border benefits
- Popularity – number of times raised
- Popularity – workshop ranking - those habitats and species ranked in the top 3 in July workshops, or those submitted through live polls in the workshops
- Deliverability

It is acknowledged that there is a degree of subjectivity to some of these areas. This was minimised, where possible, by providing strong guidance and examples, but cannot be removed entirely (particularly, for example, with regards to deliverability). The spreadsheet included a 'Notes / justification' column to capture any justification and uncertainties in assigning values to these areas.

Shortlisting

The analysis of priorities was compiled by GLA and ordered from the highest scoring to the lowest scoring. GLA convened a workshop of the technical task and finish group in October 2024. At this workshop the group reviewed the scoped-in priorities and:

- Agreed to merge similar priorities
- Agreed to nest species priorities and measures within habitat priorities
- Discussed lowest scoring priorities and whether to remove or merge with other priorities
- Considered whether any priorities were particularly urgent, susceptible to climate change, and whether there was a good mix of priorities
- Reviewed the list of standard measures

Following the workshop, the priorities and measures were reviewed. As a result of the workshop a number of overarching priorities were identified, as well as more focused priorities. The measures list was revised to group measures into broader categories (while retaining more detailed measures associated with priority species). The updated priorities and measures were circulated to the task and finish group for further review.

The wider benefits the priorities could bring were categorised according to Natural England's 'why' principles for Green Infrastructure. These are as follows:

- Resilient and climate positive places - for example, managing heat / fire / drought risk
- Improved water management - for example, managing flood risk, improving water quality
- Active and healthy places - for example, improving air quality, improving physical and mental health, access to green space
- Thriving and prosperous communities - for example, increasing green jobs, improving social equity, attracting inward investment, and supporting the visitor economy

The task and finish group was asked to rank each of these wider benefits in terms of how well each priority would contribute to them. They had the option of selecting 'N/A' if they felt wider benefits were not applicable to a particular priority. This was used to identify the wider benefits each priority would contribute to most strongly.

Step 5: Map areas that could become of particular importance

Data gathering

The initial longlist of potential locations for LNRS measures ('potential measure locations') consisted of suggestions gathered from landowners and other interested parties through:

- LNRS workshops – workshop participants had an opportunity to identify where their proposed priorities should be focused. GiGL translated these suggestions from paper maps and notes into GIS files.
- LNRS interactive map – interested parties could draw areas on the map and select which habitat and / or species the area is suitable for.
- Additional inputs sent directly to GiGL / GLA – some interested parties sent GIS files directly to GiGL and GLA with their suggestions.
- River Restoration Opportunity Mapping (a separate project led by Environment Agency with GiGL, ZSL, Thames21 and River Partnerships in London (RiPL)) - this included GIS files with information submitted by catchment partnerships to the project.
- London's Rewilding Opportunity Zones (note that these were all added to the Local Habitat Map, without going through the stages below).

For a small number of LNRS priorities, additional areas were included by GLA. This related primarily to priorities that are very geographically specific in terms of where they could be achieved, such as those relating to chalk streams.

Initial screening

Suggestions that met any of the following criteria were removed:

- Not enough detail was provided to determine what opportunity for nature recovery was suggested
- Suggestions wholly outside the London LNRS boundaries (these were shared with the relevant responsible authority)
- Suggestions wholly within a relevant constraint, as identified by the landowner / manager (note that some identified constraints do not preclude habitat creation and enhancement)

In addition, some site names were updated to ensure they gave an appropriate description of the location.

Linking to priorities

Where a submission listed multiple habitats, these were separated for the purposes of mapping. Note that this does not mean that one identified site cannot provide a range of habitats.

Each submission was either screened out or tagged to a particular LNRS priority. Every effort was made to tag each suggestion to a priority and keep screening out to a minimum. As such, where proposed habitats or species were not stated, information such as site names and other notes were used to link suggestions to a priority. For example, some priorities did not specify which habitat should be created or improved, but the site selected was a public park and was therefore tagged to the 'parks and open spaces' priority. Other suggestions that did not specify a particular habitat or species but specified that they were for 'joined up' habitats, were tagged to the 'green corridors' priority. Submissions relating to residential gardens were excluded – while these form an important part of the ecological network in London, it was not felt appropriate to map particular gardens. 'Private green space', including gardens, was included as an un-mapped LNRS priority.

It was clear that many entries submitted as proposals for 'open mosaic habitat' were actually for a mix of habitat types, rather than open mosaic habitat. As such, everything submitted as a suggestion for open mosaic habitat was reviewed and some suggestions were moved to more relevant LNRS priorities, following similar principles to those listed above.

Similarly, 'urban mosaic' was often used as a catch-all, rather than specifically for areas like churchyards and allotments. Where parks, for example, were suggested as 'urban mosaic' opportunities, these were re-assigned to 'parks and open spaces'. Green corridors were sometimes suggested at a sub-site level. This was not considered to be a 'corridor', so these were assigned to more appropriate objectives.

Spatial scoping

Submissions were next screened spatially against available evidence layers, specific for each priority. This process screened out any suggestions that were not appropriate in terms of the existing ecology, geology, hydrology or land use, leaving only submissions that could best contribute to nature recovery in London. Evidence layers considered included (the data source is stated in brackets):

- Agricultural Land Classification (Natural England)
- Ancient Tree Inventory (Woodland Trust)
- Ancient Woodland and Wood Pasture and Parkland Inventory (Natural England)
- Brownfield Register and draft Open Mosaic Habitat layer (Natural England)
- Chalk Streams (Natural England)
- Flood map zone 2 (Environment Agency)
- Habitat Suitability Modelling (GiGL) for eight priority habitats which considers the various factors influencing the distribution of each priority habitat

- National Soil Map
- Open Spaces and SINC's (GiGL)
- Habitat and Land Use dataset (GiGL)
- Ordnance Survey Master Map (for example inland water polygons, Open watercourse Link lines, etc.)
- Statutory Main River lines (Environment Agency)

Where appropriate, submissions made by local authority staff or site managers were included despite a lack of supporting evidence. This is because it was assumed they have the best ecological knowledge of a particular site.

For some priorities it was appropriate to prioritise the inclusion of some submissions over others due to existing strategic data layers for the Greater London area. For example, for the 'ponds and lakes' priority the following strategic layers were used for prioritisation: Provisional Priority Ponds (ZSL's Great London Pond Project Survey with GiGL and Freshwater Habitats Trust), Priority Ponds (Freshwater Habitat Trust) and Frog Life's Blue Chain.

Submissions that passed the initial screening stages were reviewed on an individual basis to validate their location and boundaries. GiGL checked that the submitted geographic location matched the written description and that submitted boundaries were sensible. For example, where an indicative polygon was drawn loosely around an existing open space it was re-digitised more accurately to match to GiGL's parks and open spaces data. This also allowed a sense-check of each polygon and the suggested priority in that area. For example, some 'rivers and streams' submissions did not coincide with a mapped watercourse. However, some of these related to de-culverting a watercourse and such submissions were generally included where they were in an area that could reasonably have an underground watercourse. Duplicate submissions referring to the same site and priority were merged. The site name given to each polygon were also assessed and updated where they were incorrect, included descriptive information, or were very long. Overlapping submissions were investigated and, in some cases, merged or removed according to the evidence layers.

Further refining

GiGL and GLA further reviewed the remaining potential measures layer to remove overlaps of LNRS priorities that were similar or would not make sense on the same site. For example:

- Overlapping polygons assigned to the same priority were merged into one polygon. The exception to this was where there were two overlapping 'green corridor' priorities that clearly followed different corridors. For example, if there was one green corridor that followed a railway line that overlapped with a different green corridor connecting up two parks, they were kept separate.

- Where chalk rivers and streams (whole waterbody) were assigned to both 'chalk streams' and 'rivers and streams' priorities, they were amended to only to the 'chalk streams' priority.
- Proposals for woodland or wood pasture and parkland that overlapped with GiGL's recently updated ancient woodland inventory were assigned to the 'ancient trees and woodland' priority. The boundaries of these were also updated to match the ancient woodland inventory.
- Areas could only be assigned to one of acid grassland, chalk grassland, or lowland meadow, depending on which was the closest match with GiGL's habitat suitability mapping. This is because the habitat will depend on whether the soil is mostly acidic, calciferous, or neutral. Where a location was assigned to a relatively general priority, such as 'parks and open spaces' but was also covered by a number of more specific priorities, such as 'scrub' or 'acid grassland', the more general priority was removed.

Sorting by scale

Potential measure locations vary from specific areas within a site to large areas covering multiple sites and spaces in-between. To recognise the varying scale of potential measure locations and make it clear how the varying scales should be interpreted when planning action on the ground, each was assigned a scale. There are three scales potential measure locations could be assigned to:

- Strategic – these potential measure locations cover a wide area, bigger than an individual site, or follow a linear feature. These often 'wash over' a large area, including both green and grey space. Generally, strategic measure locations are expected to come forward as a series of smaller projects, which each contribute to the relevant priority in an area.
- Site - these potential measure locations relate to the whole area of a particular site or land parcel. Generally, these measures are expected to come forward on only part of the site, as part of a site-level plan. However, measures associated with one priority may be appropriate across the site, for example, if the whole site is woodland.
- Sub-site - these potential measure locations relate to a smaller area within a site. This indicates specific action that is only relevant to that particular part of the site.

It is important to note that not all potential measure locations were easy to categorise. As such, these scale categories are indicative and subjective. In order to maintain as much consistency as possible, assessors cross-checked each other's categorisations and developed some general rules, including:

- Overlaps between sub-site potential measure locations and site scale potential measure locations were removed (sub-site potential measure locations were 'cut out' of site-scale locations).
- All rewilding opportunity areas were categorised as strategic.
- Potential measure locations that 'wash over' built up areas were generally strategic, unless they clearly related to a particular estate.
- Rivers and streams were site scale if the potential measure location seems to cover the whole waterbody. Most locations taken from the River Restoration Opportunity Mapping project were deemed to be sub-site, as they relate to specific projects.
- Chalk streams were considered to be site-level. These were added directly from Natural England's dataset or submitted directly from a London Borough.
- The 'parks and open spaces' priority could only be site-scale. Where suggestions for this priority were submitted at a sub-site scale, the potential measure location was expanded to the whole site.
- The only sub-site potential measure locations that could overlap with the ancient woodland inventory are those assigned to the 'ancient trees and woodland' priority.

Consideration of wider environmental benefits

Wider environmental benefits have informed the mapping of potential measure locations, where relevant. The LNRS priorities and measures identified for London take into account the wider environmental benefits that habitat creation and improvement can bring. Particularly in urban environments, the creation of green corridors and urban mosaic habitat has a positive impact on reducing the urban heat island effect and surface water flooding events. The application of these priorities within inner London, which has a combined sewer system vulnerable to storm overflow, will be a specifically important wider environmental benefit.

The river restoration opportunity mapping, which has been imported into the Local Habitat Map, had input through London's 11 river catchment partnerships and the Environment Agency. These opportunities include constructed wetlands and features to build capacity in the river corridor to cope better with flood and storm events. Spatial prioritisation of measure locations for wetland and floodplain habitats focused on areas at higher risk of flooding, as creation of these habitats will help reduce flood risk downstream.

Mapped opportunities submitted by Borough officers, who work across multiple disciplines, including adaptation and resilience, were driven by wider environmental benefits and nature, which is specific to their local area.

Our engagement process via the London LNRS interactive map encouraged creativity and freedom from Londoners to input their suggestions for Nature Recovery on the map. Anecdotal interaction with participants using the interactive map, especially within urban areas, showed that they were particularly keen on addressing the climate emergency with action to address the ecological emergency.

Note that the emerging London Green Infrastructure Framework (LGIF) will carry out more detailed work to identify where green and blue infrastructure is best located to provide wider environmental benefits and co-benefits. As the LGIF will consider nature recovery as one of a series of benefits GI can bring, alongside wider benefits and co-benefits, it will further highlight opportunities for these to be delivered together.

Mapping areas that could become of particular importance (ACB)

In line with the 'Data Standards for Local Nature Recovery Strategies' advice note, the ACB layer was derived from the measures layer, by excluding any areas that overlapped with the APIB layer and merging the remaining, overlapping polygons. In some cases, an APIB polygon did not completely overlap a measures polygon, and small slivers of polygon were left behind. GiGL buffered the APIB layer by 10m to remove many of these slivers during the exclusion process, then any remaining slivers were removed by size (any that were smaller than the smallest measure (0.0003ha) or by manually selecting and deleting them.

Until the final LNRS is published, Local Habitat Map layers cannot be copied or re-used for any purpose. For further information on access to the data, please contact GiGL.

Other formats and languages

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