

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I123631
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1. **TITLE:** Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Public Consultation

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Place

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To seek agreement to the content and public consultation on the Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This is a Berkshire wide document being produced by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead as the Responsible Authority, supported by Bracknell Forest, Reading Borough, Slough Borough, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham District with Natural England. It seeks to achieve a more coordinated, practical, and focussed approach, to help drive nature recovery.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Cabinet

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the draft Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is approved to proceed to a 6-week public consultation as set out in para 6.11 of this report, provided the concerns raised by officers are adequately addressed before 23 November 2024.
- ii. final authority to approve or object to the draft for public consultation is delegated to the Executive Director Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- iii. following public consultation the amended document will be brought to Cabinet for final approval.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. Local nature recovery strategies are spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Environment Act 2021. Each local nature recovery strategy will agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions in locations where they would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities.
2. Bracknell Forest falls within the Berkshire strategy area. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has appointed the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) as the 'responsible authority' to lead the preparation of the Berkshire LNRS. The other Berkshire unitary authorities (including Bracknell Forest Council) and Natural England are 'supporting authorities'.
3. This is the first time an LNRS has been produced in Berkshire and for all other LNRS areas in England.

4. RBWM has undertaken wide-ranging stakeholder engagement and worked collaboratively with partners over recent months to produce a draft Berkshire LNRS.
5. Under Regulation 7 of [Statutory Instruments 2023 No. 341: The Environment \(Local Nature Recovery Strategies\) \(Procedure\) Regulations 2023](#), RBWM as the responsible authority must provide all supporting authorities with a draft LNRS which it considers ready for consultation (the 'consultation draft') and request their comments.
6. Under Regulation 9, a supporting authority may raise a 'pre-consultation objection' within 28 days of receiving the consultation draft about the content of the LNRS or the way the responsible authority has prepared the draft.
7. On 14 October 2024, Bracknell Forest Council received the consultation draft. The formal 28-day pre-consultation period is 28 October to 23 November 2024. Links to the draft documents are included in Appendix 2. The draft is under review by Officers in discussion with the responsible authority and the other supporting authorities. The responsible authority has given assurances that the presentation of the written content will be improved ahead of the public consultation, including being made suitably accessible. Bracknell Forest Council officers consider that some improvements to the content is required ahead of public consultation. These are summarised in Appendix 3. The issues appear to have ready resolutions, given sufficient time to incorporate the changes. Bracknell Forest Council will continue to work with the Responsible Authority during the pre-consultation period to make essential amendments. Following these amendments, the recommendation will be that Bracknell Forest Council does not raise a pre-consultation objection and instead confirms in writing that Bracknell Forest Council is content for the public consultation to proceed. Due to the tight time constraints, it is recommended that final authority to approve the draft for public consultation is delegated to the Executive Director Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside. This will enable all the available time up to the deadline, and in the weeks following if required, to be used to work with the responsible authority to make the required changes.
8. Bracknell Forest Council and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide further detailed feedback during the public consultation which is due to take place from 2 January – 15 February 2025.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- i. The alternative options are:
 - 1) To raise an objection with the responsible authority about
 - a) the local nature recovery strategy; or
 - b) the responsible authority's preparation of the local nature recovery strategy, including the extent to which the responsible authority has involved the supporting authority in that preparation.These are the options for objection laid out in Regulation 9.
- ii. To provide no response and allow the 28 days to expire. After this point, the responsible authority will be allowed to proceed to consultation, so this has the same effect as confirming we are content for the consultation to proceed.
- iii. The draft is under review and, as discussed above, some amendments must be

agreed during the pre-consultation period before the public consultation can be recommended by officers. Overall, it is anticipated that Bracknell Forest Council will not wish to object to the draft Berkshire LNRS proceeding to public consultation, provided the current concerns have been addressed, because:

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- The draft LNRS includes drafts of all the elements required under Section 106 of the Environment Act, which are:
 - a) a statement of biodiversity priorities for the strategy area, and
 - b) a local habitat map
- The development of the draft LNRS has been undertaken collaboratively, with the involvement of Bracknell Forest Council and other stakeholders. Therefore, it is anticipated that there will not be a reason to object to the broad content or preparation of the draft LNRS.
- iv. As noted above, Bracknell Forest Council and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide further detailed feedback during the public consultation.
- v. It is not an option to have no LNRS for Berkshire or for Bracknell Forest not to be covered by an LNRS. LNRS are required by law under the Environment Act 2021. There are 48 LNRS strategy areas which cover the whole of England with no gaps or overlaps.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Executive Director: Place

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 November 2024	19 November 2024