



Oxfordshire County Council

Equalities Impact Assessment

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

05 August 2025

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Environment and Highways, Landscape and Nature Recovery Team
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Oxfordshire County Council has been appointed by Defra as a 'Responsible Authority' with a duty to prepare and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Defra appointed 48 responsible authorities to create LNRSs all across England with no gaps or overlaps. The duty to create and publish LNRSs comes from the Environment Act 2021.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	A new function since 2023
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The project has created a shared, singular vision of nature recovery in Oxfordshire including an agreed set of priorities, actions that need to be achieved, and a map of where these actions could be delivered to create a network of nature in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>The map and documents were developed based on an extensive engagement process that includes workshops, surveys, and a public consultation. In total the strategy engaged with over 3,000 people during the preparation.</p> <p>An engagement plan was written and delivered with a focus on how to reach groups of people who are considered to be 'seldom-heard voices'. The preparation of the strategy was also guided by communications and engagement teams across Oxfordshire who are aware of which groups are typically heard from, or not.</p> <p>After adoption of this strategy, it will be important to carry forward principles and practices from the preparation stage to ensure that the delivery of the strategy supports a wide range of people in Oxfordshire and encourages seldom-engaged groups to take action for nature recovery.</p>
Completed By	Chloe Edwards
Authorised By	Teresa Kirkham
Date of Assessment	05AUG2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>Oxfordshire County Council is Responsible Authority for production of an Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This project has been funded for 2 years (2023 – 2025) by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The preparation of the strategy started in 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The production of the LNRS is a collaborative process with a wide range of stakeholders, and the governance structure sits within the Local Nature Partnership to help facilitate this.</p> <p>Production of the LNRS is governed by the Environment Act 2021 and associated regulations and guidance which sets out steps that all LNRSs need to follow. This LNRS has completed all the steps and has produced both a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities (a written list of agreed priorities for biodiversity in Oxfordshire) and a Local Habitat Map (an interactive online map that shows where certain actions could be delivered to benefit biodiversity in future).</p> <p>14 workshops and events were held in early 2024 to invite local people and organisations to engage with the development of the strategy and shape the priorities, actions, and locations. We worked to reach seldom heard voices during this engagement process. One way was by hosting a range of free workshops (online, in-person, during the week, at the weekend, in the morning, in the evening, in different locations in the county, and offering free food). We also tailored the workshops to be suitable for a range of different people including farmers, landowners, businesses, local nature recovery groups, school children, councillors, nature recovery professionals, local residents, and others. We also held free, online, public webinars which we recorded and shared online for others to view.</p> <p>After the workshops and webinars we prepared a draft version of the strategy and then hosted a public consultation on the strategy. The documents and map were available online for 6-weeks from 18 October 2024 to 01 December 2024 and we invited people to respond through the online survey, by email, by post, and they could get in touch to request accessible versions of different parts of the strategy. The LNRS Project Manager also attended and hosted over 50 different meetings during the 6-week period to help and invite local people and organisations to respond to the consultation. We received 2,143 comments in response to the consultation. The strategy was then adjusted in response to the consultation comments in 2025.</p>
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<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The Environment Act 2021 introduced a requirement to prepare and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). LNRSs are an England-wide system of spatial strategies that establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. They agree priorities for nature's recovery, map the most valuable existing habitat for nature, and map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.</p> <p>In late June 2023 Oxfordshire County Council was appointed Responsible Authority for the Oxfordshire LNRS, and the LNRS Project Manager was appointed on 31st July 2023.</p> <p>A LNRS steering group was formed within Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership, led by Oxfordshire County Council. This governance structure was approved by Cabinet in May 2023, and has helped to ensure the LNRS is produced in a collaborative manner. The steering group is supported by several working groups with each leading on different requirements of the LNRS (see image below in this table). Each and all of the District and City Councils and Natural England were appointed as 'Supporting Authorities' to support the preparation of the strategy and they have all been closely involved in the development work and sit on the steering group and other groups.</p> <p>The process of producing an LNRS is set out in statutory guidance from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).</p>
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	<p>Steering Group (17 people) Monthly. Purpose - Providing expert input and guidance to steer the project and make decisions. Membership: OCC, Supporting Authorities, Oxfordshire farmer, AONB and national landscapes representative, Wild Oxfordshire, OLNP, BBOWT, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Natural England, OxLEP.</p> <p>Engagement and Consultation working group Monthly. (16 people) Purpose – develop and implement an engagement plan for the LNRS Membership: OCC, Wild Oxfordshire, NFU, CLA, Oxford University (Leverhulme), Community Action Groups Oxfordshire, Natural England, BBOWT, OLNP, Supporting Authorities.</p> <p>Supporting Authority working group (5 people) Monthly. Purpose – To develop the LNRS with our District and City Councils. Membership: Cherwell DC, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South and Vale DCs, West Oxfordshire DC.</p> <p>Evidence, Data, and Monitoring working group Monthly. (11 people) Purpose – to advise the LNRS how to collect, use, and publish data. Membership: OCC, Wild Oxfordshire, BBOWT, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, TVERC, Supporting Authorities, Oxford University (Leverhulme).</p> <p>OCC Project Board (9 people) Monthly. Purpose – To ensure the project is meeting quality standards considering cost, time, and delivery. Membership: Oxfordshire County Council Directorate and teams, Supporting Authorities, OLNP.</p> <p>Species Technical Group, TBD. (50 people) Purpose – provide expert input into species presence and distribution across Oxfordshire and how to support species. Membership: 50+ experts across Oxfordshire</p> <p>Prioritisation working group (11 people) Monthly. Purpose – To develop the LNRS with our District and City Councils. Membership: Professor in Conservation Science, Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, Oxford City Council, BBOWT, National Landscapes, LNP Health and Nature, Local Planning Authorities, TVERC, Wild Oxfordshire, Natural England.</p> <p>OCC Internal working group (15 people) Monthly. Purpose – To develop an LNRS in collaboration with strategies across OCC. Membership: OCC teams (biodiversity, flood risk, climate adaptation, strategy planning, environment and heritage, landscape specialist, arboriculture, healthy place shaping, communications, GIS, marketing, minerals and waste, archaeology, engagement)</p> <p>Natural England reporting (2 people) Monthly. Purpose – checking delivery and quality against national and statutory criteria. Membership: OCC, Natural England.</p> <p>Relevant Groups (300 - 400) Key groups to invite to workshops and events including many community groups, local organisations, landowners, and businesses.</p> <p>Oxfordshire Residents (725,300) Inputting priorities to the LNRS via survey with a public consultation in 2024.</p> <p>Other Responsible Authority areas across England (~10 people) Monthly. Purpose – to discuss cross-border practices and promote collaborative working. Occasional regional meets with Defra.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities</p>	<p>During the strategy preparation, the decision making has been informed by input from a great range of people, over 3,000 formal responses to the strategy’s workshops, surveys, and public consultation. Their voices helped to draft the priorities for nature recovery and biodiversity in Oxfordshire, agreeing which are of greatest importance, helped to identify important species locally, and influenced the locations that were mapped as important for nature recovery actions.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council invited a wide range of groups to guide and oversee different decisions that led to the creation of the strategy. The organogram in the previous section of this table shows that about 140 people met with the LNRS regularly throughout the strategy creation to guide decisions. The final decision making was typically completed by the Steering Group.</p>

or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.	
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>The LNRS process is a statutory five-step process clearly outlined with both statutory and non-statutory guidance which we followed. To achieve everything, this LNRS completed a two-step engagement process. In the first step we held a round of initial workshops with a range of people to hear about initial priorities that local people and organisations held for nature recovery in the county. We then assimilated this with pre-existing information and data about biodiversity and nature recovery in Oxfordshire. Then, we prepared a draft version of the strategy to present back to people in the second step of engagement where we hosted meetings and an online public consultation to show local people and organisations what we had created with their guidance and asked them whether we had got things right, wrong, and we asked what should be changed before we finalised the strategy. We received strong, positive participation with over 2,100 responses to this and we have since adjusted the strategy based on these responses.</p> <p>The consultation and engagement team described that this was a new and different approach for Oxfordshire and can see that it offers people further opportunity to develop the decision-making process together with the Council.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is understood that younger voices are often more seldom-heard in decision-making processes. There could therefore be a negative impact on them if we are unable to accurately capture their priorities for nature recovery. However, the strategy's vision is to recover nature for the benefit of future generations which is also expected to be a positive impact on people of all ages.	Promoting our resident surveys through channels that reach young people will be a key method of reaching 29% of the Oxfordshire population aged 0 – 24 allowing them to input priorities for nature that help shape the future direction of nature recovery actions, and hosting a workshop with a local sustainability network of schools with young people.	LNRS Project Manager	This was completed in 2024.

Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>During strategy preparation, the LNRS offered dates, times, and in-person venues that could support a range of accessibility needs. For all engagement opportunities there was also at least one online opportunity to engage. Online questionnaires could always be downloaded as a document that had been checked against accessibility requirements. Additionally, consultees could always request other versions from the consultation team. The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective instead of focus on access (which is more the remit of green infrastructure strategies) but the strategy still prioritizes the creation and enhancement of habitat near to people in Oxfordshire which is expected to bring health and wellbeing benefits for all people including those who have disabilities.</p>			
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Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective and does not discuss or relate to gender reassignment.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week, before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers.</p>			
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Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective and does not discuss or relate to marriage and civil partnerships. Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week, before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers.</p>			
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Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective and does not discuss or relate to pregnancy or maternity. Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week, before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers.</p>			
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Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>It is understood that the environment sector is one of the least ethnically diverse sectors in the UK, being made up by predominantly by people who identified on the 2021 Census as 'white'. Since the LNRS will collect priorities from workshops and engagement activities with people who are heavily involved in nature conservation, it is likely that our list of LNRS priorities could miss voices from people from non 'white-British' backgrounds. In Oxfordshire, the latest Census figures show us that 23.2% of Oxfordshire identified as ethnic groups other than 'White British'. If our engagement figures show that we are not representative of the population of Oxfordshire then we may be negatively impacting on the characteristic of Race by not building representative</p>	<p>Within our Communications and Engagement working group for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, we are in conversation about groups who may be 'seldom-heard voices' and strategies for reaching these groups to enable them to shape the priorities which will influence decision-making during the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>	LNRS Project Manager	<p>Completed in 2024 and reporting is available for each and all the workshops and the surveys and can be provided for the public consultation for people to understand the demographics of the LNRS audiences.</p>
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				<p>voices and priorities into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p> <p>After a survey we hosted in 2024 we were able to see underrepresentation from a range of non-white respondents. Whilst this is representative of the issue within the nature conservation sector, it offers us an opportunity in future workshops and surveys to reach a wider and more representative group of people in Oxfordshire. Please see the attached demographic report for details.</p>			
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Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective and does not discuss or relate to the protected characteristic - sex. Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week, before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers.</p>			
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Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective and does not discuss or relate to the protected characteristic – sexual orientation.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week, before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers.</p>			
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Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective and does not discuss or relate to the protected characteristic – religion or belief.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week, before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers.</p>			
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The objectives of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy focus on improving the biodiversity across Oxfordshire. Rural communities are typically placed closest to our existing areas of high-quality natural environment and includes farmers who use 72% of Oxfordshire's land for agriculture. This is a significant group who we intend to reach to understand their priorities for nature recovery and how they see this being actioned so that we can represent their priorities through the LNRS.	n/a	LNRS Project Manager	Farmers, businesses, landowners, local residents, and local nature recovery groups formed a key part of the engagement process for the LNRS and were a large part of our workshops and surveys. Completed in 2024 and 2025
Armed Forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The strategy is tasked to focus on the best locations to enhance nature from an ecological perspective and does not discuss or relate to	Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week,		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				the armed forces. However, the MoD was invited to engagement events and opportunities to influence the strategy and their responses were incorporated in the strategy. This allowed us to map appropriate nature recovery actions to suitable land where armed forces operate. This offers a chance for those communities to get involved with the delivery of nature recovery actions and receive benefits from such actions.	before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers.		
Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Opportunities to engage in the strategy preparation were spread across the county, held at different times, on different days of the week, before, during, and after work, and online offering opportunities for people to engage whilst reducing barriers. This was designed to support more			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				people to engage with the preparation of the strategy including those with care responsibilities. The strategy encourages the enhancement and creation of habitats and greenspaces near to people across Oxfordshire which is expected to bring a range of health and wellbeing benefits to a range of people including carers but it's not possible to specify exactly who would receive which benefits.			
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The intention of the project is to set nature recovery priorities and to do this in a way that creates a more resilient Oxfordshire. The state of nature is known to influence people's health, wellbeing, job opportunities, cost of living, and more. It is understood that there is an unequal access to nature across Oxfordshire and our project will build people,	OCC is working closely with representatives from the Local Nature Partnership Health and Nature group who have access to the Community Research Network and have a well-developed understanding on the inequity of nature, and access to nature, across Oxfordshire as well as the direct impacts this has on	Chloe Edwards	The LNRS engaged with a range of people and used the latest 2024 research by the Environmental Change Institute. Their researchers found 16 priority neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				health and nature into the decisions we make. Since this project is the development of a strategy, the decisions on how we do this are to be made.	people in Oxfordshire. A contact here is helping to shape our engagement strategy with seldom-heard voices to help build their priorities into our decision-making process.		experiencing both socio-economic deprivation and poor provision of accessible green spaces. The LNRS therefore added these 16 neighbourhoods as an additional priority focus for nature recovery efforts in Oxfordshire to improve access to greenspaces and to bring the wider benefits for health, wellbeing, and economies that a healthy natural environment contributes significantly towards.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The LNRS features priorities from across people who live and work in Oxfordshire and should offer staff a chance to shape the strategy as well as bring together departments to oversee the strategy development and link our processes with their own.			
Other Council Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The LNRS features priorities from other services and teams within this Council and other District and City Councils. This creates opportunity to achieve multiple benefits such as flood risk mitigation, air quality improvements, improved wellbeing, healthy place shaping, and carbon sequestration within one project. The strategy therefore links to a range of other			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				team's ambitions and can be incorporated into their work.			
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The LNRS can feature priorities from across people who live and work in Oxfordshire and should offer staff a chance to shape the strategy as well as bring together departments to oversee the strategy development and link our processes with their own.			
Social Value ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The LNRS offers significant social value to people across this county offering a range of benefits such as urban cooling, building a sense of place, recreation and leisure, food production, flood risk mitigation, and water quality improvements to name a few. Adopting and delivering the			

¹ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				LNRS offers a way to significantly boost the environmental wellbeing of Oxfordshire as well as having knock on positive impacts for the local economy and social wellbeing.			

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	Review in July 2026 with an interim review in November 2025 when the strategy is expected to launch and plan for the next steps in our process of engagement. During future engagement sessions we will record and track demographic engagement. Please note that we have a prior report after our range of workshops in February – April 2024. This identifies areas where we have opportunity to reach a more representative sample of people in Oxfordshire.
Person Responsible for Review	LNRS Project Manager
Authorised By	Teresa Kirkham 05AUG2025

Before authorization was sought, this EIA was read and checked by:

Jamie Kavanagh *BA (Hons), MBCS, RITTech*

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead

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August 2025