

Finance Report 4 July 2024

Item 7

EXPENDITURE

Supplier	Invoice Number	Date	Description	Net	VAT	Total	Paid	Method
ASF Signs	49449	31 May 24	Replacement Post	80.00	16.00	96.00	10 Jun 24	BP
Auditing Solutions Ltd	A8543	28 May 24	Internal Audit	500.00	100.00	600.00	10 Jun 24	BP
Betterclean	3718	31 May 24	May Cleaning	425.10	85.02	510.12	19 Jun 24	BP
BOnline	1563750	11 Jun 24	Broadband	29.44	5.89	35.33	21 Jun 24	DD
British Gas - Electricity	7931100	16 Jun 24	May/June Charges	90.61	4.53	95.14	30 Jun 24	DD
Business Service CAS Ltd	CAS044	23 May 24	Annual Insurance	1,573.17		1,573.17	10 Jun 24	BP
Business Waste	1405074	01 Jun 24	Cemetery and JCH	75.00	15.00	90.00	15 Jun 24	DD
Business Waste	1420418	15 Jun 02	JCH	0.66	0.13	0.79	30 Jun 24	DD
Business Waste	1416537	31 May 24	Cemetery	0.66	0.13	0.79	15 Jun 24	DD
Castle Water	2396536	n.a	Cemetery Water	3.85	0.00	3.85	17 May 24	DD
Corona	18433029	06 Jun 24	May Charges	101.43	5.07	106.50	19 Jun 24	BP
EE	53630	13 Jun 24	May/June Charges	19.42	3.88	23.30	21 Jun 24	DD
HMRC	n.a.	25 Jun 24	Tax and NI - June	895.61		895.61	19 Jul 24	BP
H & W Print	52468	29 May 24	War Book - DDay 80	50.00	0.00	50.00	10 Jun 24	BP
Inception	3038683	17 Jun 24	May/June Charges	42.17	8.43	50.60	19 Jun 24	BP
J Rouse & Son	9652	31 May 24	Handyman Requirments	17.91	3.58	21.49	19 Jun 24	BP
John O'Conner	109250	23 May 24	May Maintenance	884.83	176.96	1,061.79	10 Jun 24	BP
N Armstrong	851	16 Jun 24	JCH Showers	825.00	0.00	825.00	25 Jun 24	BP
N Armstrong	853	17 Jun 24	JCH Refurbishments	1,070.00	0.00	1,070.00	19 Jun 24	BP
Ningbo	31401	11 Jun 24	Chairs	701.60	140.32	841.92	25 Jun 24	BP
Peninsula	4293586	08 Jun 24	HR	106.64	20.14	126.78	08 Jun 24	DD
Peninsula	4320265	25 Jun 24	H&S	138.53	27.71	166.24	25 Jun 24	DD
Smartfuse	541	29 May 24	JCH Electrical Work	1,222.04	0.00	1,222.04	10 Jun 24	BP
Staff	n.a	28 Jun 24	Salaries - June	2,750.45	0.00	2,750.45	28 Jun 24	BP
Three Business Services	44039	16 May 24	May Charges	8.71	1.74	10.45	17 Jun 24	DD
Tradeprint	28194876	27 May 24	DDay80 Banners	149.50	29.90	179.40	10 Jun 24	BP
Wellers Hedleys	49364	30 Apr 24	Legal	875.00	175.00	1,050.00	10 Jun 24	BP
Wiltshire Fire and Rescue	n.a.	04 Apr 24	Grant Award	163.20		163.20	10 Jun 24	BP
Wiltshire Council	n/a	01 Jun 24	Business Rates	99.00	-	99.00	01 Jun 24	DD
Zurich Insurance	533958924	03 Jun 24	Footpath Group Insurance	157.00	-	157.00	10 Jun 24	BP
Expenditure				13,056.53	819.43	13,875.96		

Payments for Approval

John O'Conner	109845	17 Jun 24	June Maintenance	884.83	176.96	1,061.79
K Thompson	2024013	09 Jun 24	Cricknet Square Maintenance	468.00	0.00	468.00
Wellers Hedleys	826547	31 May 24	Legal	700.00	140.00	840.00
				2,052.83	316.96	2,369.79

LMPC Income Summary 2024-2025 Received 25 June 2024

Category	Amount
Exclusive Rights	£224.00
Football	£2,510.00
Total	£2,734.00
Precept	£32,075.50
VAT 2023-2024	£12,696.75
Total	£47,506.25

Recommendation

The Public Sector Deposit Fund

RECOMMENDATION: To transfer £10,000 (if required) from The Public Sector Deposit Fund to the Unity Account to cover JCH works

06 June 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPELLANTS NAME:	Mr & Mrs Neil & Emma Jarmolinski
APPEAL SITE:	Ski's Trees Compound & Yard, Adjacent to Blackfords Industrial Estate, Greenhill, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 8EH
PLANNING APPLICATION REF:	PL/2023/02473
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:	Erection of Security Lodge & associated works
INSPECTORATE REFERENCE:	APP/Y3940/W/24/3337786

I am writing to let you know that an appeal has been made to the Planning Inspectorate in respect of the above site.

The appeal is to be decided on the basis of the **Hearing** procedure.

The Planning Inspectorate have introduced an online appeals service which you can use to comment on this appeal. You can find the service through the Appeals area of the Planning Portal – see <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>. Alternatively, you can send your comments to Planning Inspectorate, Room 3c, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol BS1 6PN, quoting the Inspectorate reference. Comments should be received by **4 July 2024**.

The Inspectorate may publish details of your comments, on the internet (on the appeals area of the planning portal). Your comments may include your name, address, email address or phone number, please ensure that you only provide information, including personal information belonging to you that you are happy will be made available to others in this way. If you supply information belonging to a third party please ensure you have their permission to do so. More detailed information about data protection and privacy matters is available on the Planning Portal.

Any representations received after the deadline will not normally be seen by the Inspector and will be returned.

Any comments you may have already made following the original application will also be forwarded to the Inspectorate (unless they are expressly confidential) but you may withdraw, modify or amplify them now if you wish. All comments received will be copied to the appellant and will be taken into account by the Inspector in deciding the appeal.

If you wish to receive a copy of the appeal Decision Letter, you should write to the Planning Inspectorate specifically requesting one.

The Planning Inspectorate will not acknowledge your letter unless you specifically ask them to do so. They will, however, ensure that your letter is passed on to the Inspector dealing with the appeal.

Finally, you can get a copy of one of the Planning Inspectorate's "Guide to taking part in planning appeals" booklets free of charge from GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/taking-part-in-a-planning-listed-building-or-enforcement-appeal>.

I am also writing to inform you of the Hearing date and venue.

You may attend the Hearing, which will open on **06 August 2024 at 10am at Wiltshire Council, Monkton Park Offices, Chippenham, SN15 1ER. The Hearing is currently scheduled to sit for one day.**

The appeal will be attended by the local planning authority, the appellant and a presiding inspector. The Inspector will be **C Carpenter BA MA MRTPI**.

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State will hold a Hearing opening on the date shown above to decide the appeal.

Members of the public may attend the Hearing and, at the Inspector's discretion, express their views. If you, or anyone you know, has a disability and is concerned about facilities at the Hearing venue, you should contact the council to confirm that suitable provisions are in place.

Attendees should register with Wiltshire Council in advance. Please email your name, email address and details of your status within the context of the appeal i.e., interested party. This information will assist the Inspector and will prove useful should participants need to be contacted ahead of the event e.g., should the event need to move online and be held virtually. Please email your details to planningappeals@wiltshire.gov.uk

Anyone wishing to speak at the Hearing should make themselves known to the Inspector on the day as the Planning Inspectorate will not respond to requests to speak at the event in advance of the Hearing.

Car parking is available outside Monkton Park Council Offices. You will need to go into main reception at Monkton Park and ask for a free parking ticket. If the car park is full, there is nearby parking at Sadlers Mead. Please click on the link below for details of parking at Sadlers Mead:

[Chippenham - Wiltshire Council](#)

Documents relating to the appeal can be viewed on the Council website:
[Planning Application: PL/2023/02473 \(wiltshire.gov.uk\)](#)

The appeal decision will be published in due course on <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Contact point at the Planning Inspectorate:

Tel: 03034445451

Planning Inspectorate case officer: Hamish Walters

Planning Inspectorate Reference: **APP/Y3940/W/24/3337786**

Yours faithfully

Head of Development Management

23.179 Jubilee Club House Trees

Members approved the recommendation to have the trees behind the Jubilee Club House professionally assessed. Quotes Requested.

23.181 Play Area Inspection

Members noted the inspection and the issues raised. Members approved £400 for surface work and time adjustable gate closers. Concerns were raised regarding the Play Tower Decision was deferred until the Handyman could consider the options available. Quotes requested for replacement of two fence posts.

23.184 Holborn Footpath

There are two specific places along the footpath where the holes are very deep and currently filled with water. After discussions, Members AGREED for contractors to be approached for quotes to fill in the holes and to redress the whole length. Quotes Requested.

23.204 Footpath Working Group

The hedging that denotes Lydiard Green and the neighbouring farmland has gaps in places. There is no right of access onto this private land at any of these points. There are three pillboxes on/surrounding the Green, only one of which is on the Village Green itself. Once the information boards have been put in situ, it is possible that members of the public may try and access the private land area. Members RESOLVED to spend up to £1000 to plant new hedging and replacement trees, met from Ear Marked Reserves set aside for Footpaths/Lydiard Green.

24.37 Pedestrians in Road – The Street

Members considered the request for a “pedestrians on the road sign” to warn cars of the risk to life in this area 46a to approx. 58 The Street. Members AGREED more information was required. Clerk to contact resident. Report to come to a future meeting. UPDATE – Agenda item – to CLOSE.

PQT – 2 May – Updates

- A resident raised concerned for the safety of users on footpath LMIL60. For at least the last ten years the metal gate blocking LMIL60 has been locked shut. This means that those wishing to use the footpath have to clamber over the gate or the adjoining metal bars. The Clerk asked the resident to email her the details and she would contact Wiltshire Council. UPDATE: The Clerk is in communication with WC regarding this issue.

PQT – 5 June – Updates

- A resident raised concerns that a resident in Stone Lane who previously had a retrospective planning application and associated appeal refused, has started to develop again, and has also not reinstated the boundary as was instructed to do as a result of the application refusal. The resident was asked to email the Clerk with the detail to follow up with Wiltshire Council Enforcement. UPDATE – Clerk awaiting contact from the resident.
- A resident highlighted that some notices displayed on the Common Platt noticeboard are not visible due to the noticeboard frame. The Clerk will raise this with the Parish Administrator. UPDATE – brought to the attention of the Parish Administrator for future consideration. CLOSED.
- A resident raised concerns around the layby across Common Platt at the bottom of Stone Lane being driven across by vehicles. The road markings are being eroded and are not being maintained and as a result, cars are being driven over utilities and causing damage. The resident was advised to report this to Wiltshire Council using the MyWilts app and the Clerk would do the same. UPDATE – Clerk has reported to Wiltshire Council. CLOSED.
- A resident raised concerns that the T-junction at the bottom of Stone Lane is being used as a bend as the road markings have largely disappeared. Members agreed to discuss adding this issue to the LHFIF list at the next meeting although the priorities for this year have already been agreed. Suggested the resident reports every incident / near miss to Wiltshire Council and keeps a log to accompany the photos they have been taking. UPDATE – Clerk awaiting contact from the resident.

Procedure for Public Participation at Council Meetings

Pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the Parish Council

Meetings of the Parish Council are not public meetings but members of the public have a statutory right to attend meetings of the Council as observers. They have no legal right to speak unless the Parish Council Chairman authorises them to do so.

However, as part of its community engagement, Parish Councils' (no apostrophe) can set out a time for public participation at an agreed time when members of the public are invited to speak.

Members of the public should not be involved in the decision-making of the Council. The Parish Council should not make any instant decisions at the behest of members of the public on items that are not included in the agenda. As a matter of best practice, the public forum will be kept separate from the debate of the Councillors. If matters raised are not on the agenda for the meeting these can be used to form part of the agenda for a future meeting at the discretion of the Parish Council.

Members of the public are welcome to stay for the Parish Council meeting after the public session as observers, but will not be able to join in the discussion unless invited to do so by the Chairman.

Members of the public may be excluded by a resolution of the meeting for specific items which need to be discussed in confidence (e.g. staffing matters, tenders for contracts, some legal issues.)

Any member of the public has the opportunity to raise issues of concern at Council meetings.

Who can you ask a Question?

Provided that the required notice is given (see 'How to Register' below), a member of the public may ask questions of the Chairman of the Council or of a Chairman of a Committee at meetings of the Council.

What Question can you ask?

You can ask any question as long as it relates to local issues and affects Lydiard Millicent.

What you cannot ask?

The Chairman of the Council or of a Committee may reject a question if it:

- Is not about a matter that Lydiard Millicent Parish Council is responsible for, or if it does not affect the district
- Is defamatory, frivolous or offensive
- ~~Refers to applications for, or objections to, planning permission or any licence, notice or order issued, served or made by the Parish Council~~
- ~~Is substantially the same question which has been put at a meeting of the Parish Council in the past six months~~
- Concerns confidential or exempt information

If your question is rejected, you will be told the reason why

Procedure on the day of the meeting - If you wish to ask a question

1. You ~~must~~ **should endeavour to** arrive at the meeting at least 10 minutes before the start, and make yourself known to the Clerk present.

Lydiard Millicent Parish Council
Public Participation at Meetings

2. Public question time at Parish Council meetings should not exceed 10 minutes in duration **unless the Chairman otherwise so agrees.**
3. When it is time to ask your question, the Chairman will invite you to put the question to the Committee. There is a time limit of 2 minutes to ask your question.
4. Questions will be asked in the order that they were received, although the Chairman may group similar questions together.
5. Unless the Chairman decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question.
6. You may also ask one supplementary question without notice to the Member that has answered your original question. The supplementary question also has a time limit of 2 minutes and must arise directly from the original question.
7. Some questions cannot be answered during the meeting, every attempt will be made to give accurate answers to all questions. However, on some subject's further research and consultation with the appropriate bodies may be necessary, following which a response will be offered as soon as is possible.
8. A brief record of topics raised at public participation will be included in the minutes of that meeting. But libellous, offensive and discriminatory comments will not be minuted

Adopted On

To be reviewed every 3 years or when legislation or circumstances change



2024

THE GOOD COUNCILLOR'S GUIDE



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2024 version of the Good Councillors Guide. This revised edition is a welcome and much needed resource.

It is essential guidance primarily for new councillors but also for those thinking about becoming a local councillor. New councillors have a lot of information to take in when they join a council, and the guide can help them understand this.

If you are reading this guide as a new councillor, I congratulate you on joining the council and thank you for taking up a civic office that can make a real difference to the community that your council represents.

Once the excitement of being elected or co-opted has subsided you may begin to feel a little daunted by the responsibilities you have taken on and your part in the democratic framework of local government. I hope this guide will help you understand more about your role, the difference you can make and help ensure you are acting within your council's powers and duties.

Cllr Keith Stevens, Chair of NALC.



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ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

ACV	Assets of Community Value
AGAR	Annual Governance and Accountability Return
ALCC	Association of Local Council Clerks
CALC	County Association of Local Councils
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
DPI	disclosable pecuniary interests
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
GPC	general power of competence
JPAG	Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance
NALC	National Association of Local Councils
RFO	responsible financial officer
SAAA	Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd
SLCC	The Society of Local Council Clerks
SPD	supplementary planning document
VCFS	voluntary, community and faith sector



INTRODUCTION

This guide is an essential tool for all councillors, whether new, aspiring, or existing members of a local council. It will help with understanding how this unique sector of local democracy works and how they can best contribute to it. Training and learning are a crucial element of being a good councillor and this guide is just the start of the process. Where relevant, this guide will show where more resources can be accessed, namely from your local County Association of Local Councils (CALC), which can supply essential training and development opportunities.

Throughout this guide, all community-level civil councils are referred to as local councils because, regardless of their formal title (Town, Parish, Community, City, Neighbourhood or Village), they all have the same tier of authority and duties. In effect, Combe Hay Parish Council (population 147) has the same duties and authority as Northampton Town Council (population 137, 000).

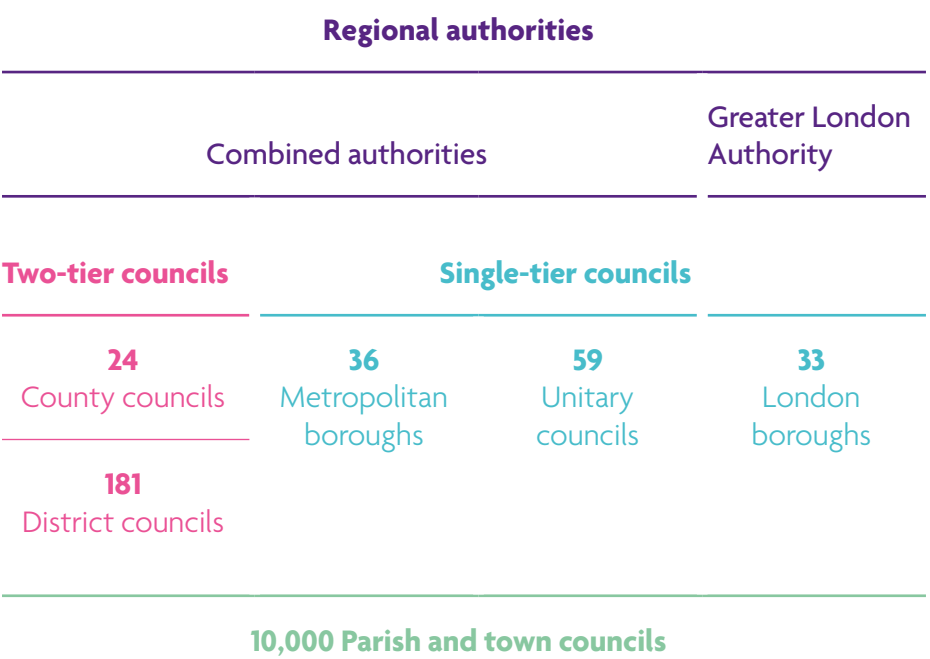
The duties of the local council as a corporate body are not onerous, but respect should be paid to their long history – going back to 1894 – while staying relevant to a fast-paced modern world. Well-informed councillors find the role can be extremely rewarding and that they can make a difference in their communities. Accepting the unique role of a councillor at this tier of local democracy (which is different to those at principal tiers of the democratic system) can be a challenge, but new councillors are not expected to know everything when they start.

This guide aims to outline the basics. It touches on the quite distinct roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers, and the complexity for councillors in having to act collectively as one corporate body (and not as individuals) in their dealings with employees, whilst respecting their highly professional and crucial role. All councillors are recommended to read the Good Councillor's Guide to Employment (2023 edition).

Local councillors are not 'volunteers' in the common use of the word. Firstly, local councils are not part of the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS). Local councils are the first tier of government, closest to the community. Once the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form is signed (and this must take place for someone to become a councillor), that person takes up the position as a holder of public office in a local authority, albeit unpaid, with all the responsibility that comes with it.

The other tiers of local authority are principal councils, including county councils, district, borough or city councils, and metropolitan and unitary councils, which have different statutory functions to local councils.

Figure 1. The different tiers of Local Authority



LOCAL COUNCILS AS LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Most local councils were set up in 1894 by an Act of Parliament. Civil parish councils (local councils) were created by separating them from the Church, which had had a long history of delivering local services such as care for the poor, maintenance of roads and tax collection.

Not all areas of England are covered by local councils, but there are now over 10,000 – and more are regularly being created all the time, especially in urban areas. In 2007, the government brought in new legislation to allow the creation of local councils in London (not allowed since the 1960s) and the first local council in London, Queen's Park, began in 2014.

The number of electors a local council represents varies enormously. St. Devereux in Herefordshire has fewer than 100, whereas some have much larger populations. Northampton Town Council, created in 2020 and fully functioning by 2021, is the largest local council in England. Serving a population of over 130,000, it is larger than some principal authorities. These considerable differences are reflected in annual spending, which might range from under £1,000 to over £4 million.

The essence of a successful local council is one which has members that understand the clearly defined, and hugely different, roles of the councillors and the officers. They all need to work together as one dedicated team, utilising those separate roles and regardless of their personal political stance, to achieve a single purpose – to improve

and enhance the lives and area of the community the local council represents.

A local council is a corporate body: a legal entity separate from its members. It is a collective decision-making body; its decisions are the responsibility of the whole of the council. All the councillors have equal rights and responsibilities, even the chair¹ or councillors who also sit on a principal authority are no more important than any other member. This means that councillors do not have any authority as individuals. In short, no councillor can act alone or speak on behalf of the council without first being formally granted the authority to do so by that council.

It is also important to understand that local councils are autonomous and not answerable to a higher authority. They have been granted their own powers by Parliament, including the important authority to raise money through taxation (the precept) and a range of powers to spend public money (refer to 'What local councils are obliged to do by law' on p.29).

1 "Chairman" is the title given to the person who is elected by the council to preside at its meetings in law. It relates to both males and females, but most councils now refer to the positions as the chair, as a gender-neutral option.



Do you know how much your council spends in a year? If not, find out, as it is important that all councillors know. Ask the clerk/responsible financial officer for a copy of the most recently approved budget for your local council.

THE PURPOSE OF LOCAL COUNCILS

It is clear from [Figure 1 \(p10\)](#) that each tier of local government has a different function. The duties and responsibilities of the members at each tier are also different, as is the legal framework in which they work. Duties are legal obligations – actions that a council must take by law. Powers are contained in legislation and allow actions to be taken at the council's discretion.

Some councillors are members of various tiers of local authority at the same time and this can be useful to local councils, but it is important that those members know their differing responsibilities when acting at the individual tiers of authority and when it is appropriate to declare a conflict of interest due to this dual membership. If a member of another tier of local authority accepts a seat on a local council, they are equal to (not more important than) all the other members when performing as a member of that local council.

The various tiers of local authority can work very well together in partnership, but a local council cannot act on its own in delivering a service that is the statutory responsibility of another tier of local authority. For example, a local council cannot set up its own household waste collection service, as that is the statutory responsibility of a district or unitary authority. They can, however, in certain circumstances be delegated the powers of a higher authority, through a formal agreement to act on their behalf.

Regardless of their size and level of activity, all local councils must perform all their statutory duties set out in law. The legal framework is quite strict, but it is not too onerous. It is important for all councillors to understand that although this legal framework might be frustrating and sometimes slows down a local council's ability to function, especially in this fast-paced modern world, acting in accordance with it is a legal requirement when dealing with public finances on behalf of your local community and being part of the democratic process.

In order to function and, especially, to supply more services to the community, the local council imposes its own tax on its residents. This is called the precept. The precept demand goes to the billing authority (the district, unitary or equivalent council) which collects this tax on behalf of the local council as part of its own council tax and pays it to the local council.

Community safety, housing, street lighting, allotments, cemeteries, playing fields, community centres, litter, war memorials, seats and shelters, rights of way and some aspects of planning and highways – these are some of the things local councils might get involved with at this tier of government. Do you know which projects and initiatives your council is currently involved in running or developing?

All local councils exist to represent the best interests of the residents of that parish, by contributing to the consultations of higher authorities and influencing the decisions they make, such as with planning applications. However, some local councils use the power bestowed upon them by law to act for the whole community's benefit.

Local councils can, for example, supply or give financial support for:

- an evening bus taking people to the nearest town
- affordable housing to rent
- pond clearing
- redecorating the community centre
- a teenagers' drop-in club
- a summer festival
- equipment for a children's activity group
- transport to hospital

Projects like these may be a challenge and need hard work and commitment – but they are achievable for most local councils. Of course, for some very small local councils, with limited funds, it may be that representing their residents' interests to the higher authorities (such as with planning applications and consultations) is the majority of their role, but good councils aspire to use the money they raise as a tax (precept) to provide services to improve the wellbeing of the whole community.

Do you know how much your local council requests annually as its part of the council tax (the precept)? Do you know how much a Band D council tax payer in your council area pays for the precept? How does this compare to the average? Is it low and could it potentially be raised to do more for the good of the community? Do you know when and how your council sets its precept? If not, please find out – it is important that councillors know, to inform their decision making.

As a corporate body, a local council has a legal existence separate from that of its members. It can own land, enter into contracts and be subject to court proceedings. It is the local council that is responsible for its actions as a corporate body. Therefore, decisions can only be made in face-to-face meetings that have been properly summoned.





SERVING THE COMMUNITY

The best local councils want to improve the quality of life for people living in their area and enable them to become vibrant and flourishing communities. Local councils can be dynamic and professional in delivering services which can enhance the life experiences and wellbeing of local people. By devising clear strategic plans, such as action, corporate and business plans, which set out both the vision and the practical steps for delivering local services, the council can engage the community in the development of new services to help them come into effect.

There are powers set out in law that enable all local councils to provide services if they choose to utilise these powers (but they are not obliged to). Councils can undertake an activity only when specific legislation allows it. Acting without legal power is an unnecessary risk which could lead to financial and legal difficulties. The good news is that there are lots of sources of advice. The clerk will advise on whether the Council has the power to take decisions they are about to take. More information can be provided by your local county association.

In more recent years the general power of competence (GPC) was introduced. It is designed to make it easier for eligible councils to act and do anything that an individual might legally do if other legislation does not forbid it. The general power of competence enables local councils to respond more effectively to their communities, encouraging innovation and assisting in

shared service delivery. If the council does something not permitted by legislation – even if it would be popular with the community – then the council could face a legal challenge that it acted beyond its powers (sometimes known as *ultra vires*).

Do you know whether your council is eligible and has resolved to use the GPC? Achieving the eligibility to resolve to use the general power of competence might be possible for your council. GPC would facilitate the council being much more effective and innovative in providing services to the community. Ask your clerk about GPC.

In recent years, the principal authorities have found it increasingly difficult to provide their non-statutory services. This gives the potential for local councils to work imaginatively in partnership with these bodies. Local councils can offer funding, equipment, and premises to help to provide these local services. They can also give small grants to organisations that run services such as childcare, services for the elderly, arts activities, pond clearance or sport which can improve the quality of community life.

To ensure that the local council is providing what is most valued by the community and what it needs in the way of improvements, it consults, engages and listens to as wide a range of all sectors of the community as possible to identify what is required; it then agrees priorities for action at its meetings, and its policies begin to take shape.

The tried-and-tested methods noted below are just some ways in which people can express their hopes and wishes for the community. They provide valuable opportunities for local people to identify features of the area that need

improving or are worth protecting. They stimulate discussion, they inform the decision makers, and they usually lead to action.

- **Surveys and questionnaires** give residents, including children, an opportunity to express their views about where they live. The response rate from households can be impressive.
- **Design statements** involve communities in a review of the built and natural environment of their area. The published results can be used by your principal authority to help make planning decisions (for more, go to '[Local development plans](#)' on p.72).
- **A parish map** can be a creative exercise; for example, it might be a painting, tapestry, or model of the parish. People identify local features that matter.
- **Community conferences or workshops** provide more opportunities for bringing people together to talk about the community's future.
- **Parish or Town (community) Plans** might be led by the local council, drawing in community groups, residents, and others, to produce an action plan for improving the local quality of life and the environment. These plans can be based on the findings of a variety of the consultation methods above and can form the basis of neighbourhood plans (for more, go to '[Local development plans](#)' on p.72).
- Technology provides options for creating **polls and surveys online** which can be highly effective at reaching a wider audience when used alongside traditional methods (for those who do not have online access). For example, SurveyMonkey™, Doodle™, the polling option from a Facebook™ page, etc. Informal meetings of focus groups

on Zoom™ or Teams™ make conversations more accessible for some.

- **Talking to residents** whilst you are out and about in the community is of equal value in terms of keeping up to date with resident views. This approach can easily be formalised by organising councillor surgeries where local residents know they can come and talk face-to-face with a councillor about issues and ideas they have. A parish (or town) plan is a community plan and not a land-use plan. It is a set of policies and an action plan for the next few years covering a much wider range of issues such as housing, the local economy, local health services and transport. It is a good idea to draw up a plan, whatever the size of your community. A local council that listens knows it will have local support for actions it may take.

With all community engagement it is important that the personal information of individuals is protected. The Data Protection Act 2018 came into force to protect such information. It is important that this law is respected when conducting any community consultation or engagement. For more information go to www.gov.uk/data-protection.

There are occasions when the council will be required to meet certain levels of community engagement, such as with a Public Works Loan application, and the guidelines must be followed. However, community engagement generally is good practice. What community engagement has your council done? Was it compulsory or voluntary?

Once the local council knows what local people want, they can decide how they are going to pay for it. Many councils start with the money and then decide how far it will stretch. Some councils claim they have so little money that they can do almost nothing. Evidence clearly suggests that local taxpayers would be willing to pay more if they could see the results in terms of better local services. It is recommended to ask first, and then set the budget accordingly.

Whatever the council's approach to plan-making, if the council is raising a precept it is required (by law) to set a budget each year. The plan creates the budget that determines the precept. Remember, the precept is taken from the council tax. Your council should investigate other sources of funding such as grants and sponsorship to help implement its plans. In some councils, non-precept funding makes up one third of their income.

In addition to helping your council identify real improvements, the process of using tools like those above can strengthen people's sense of purpose and belonging. The process is as important as the product or the result.

Councillors should, of course, use the knowledge they already have as a basis for decisions on behalf of your community, but these tools help you to become even better informed, giving the council a stronger mandate for action. The results of community consultation help you to:

- speak on behalf of the community with greater confidence, especially in discussions with principal authorities;
- provide services and facilities, especially where there is no other provider, or where the local council can secure better value for money;

- support community action and services provided by others. The council can offer buildings, staff expertise and funding to get local projects off the ground;
- work in partnership with community groups, voluntary organisations, and other local authorities, including neighbouring local councils, to benefit the community.

Occasionally there will be a conflict of interest requiring sensitive judgement. For example, dog owners, parents of young children and walkers might disagree about the use of the village green. Making challenging decisions in an open and reasoned way, along with appropriate use of social media (if used), is something that local councils need to do well.

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

A local council can make effective use of modern communications methods to communicate internally.

Has the clerk advised you about what training is available for councillors? If not, please ask the clerk. You will learn a lot about your role reading this guide, but attending training sessions will give you more detailed information, the opportunity to meet other councillors and the opportunity to learn in more detail – particularly about complex areas like social media.

Although decisions and formal discussions can only take place in a reasoned way at a correctly convened council meeting, there is nothing to stop councils having informal conversations and exchanging ideas in Teams™ or on Zoom™. The clerk (or an officer with delegation) should be party to such discussions.

Email discussions should be using a secure council email address, preferably with the .gov.uk domain. The council should take advice from an IT specialist.

Messaging apps are useful for informal communication too. However, it must be remembered that any such written communication between councillors is regarded as council data, which could potentially be requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Data Protection Act 2018, and which must be provided if it exists. Councillors should act politely and respectfully in any communication, internally and externally.

In almost all cases a local council should have a website. Only the very smallest councils might rely on a website hosted by another organisation, and if they do, editorial rights for the clerk are essential. Nowadays, people expect to be able to go online to find out about their local council. If the council makes more information available on its website, it is likely to attract fewer public enquiries.

Councils with an income below £25,000 have a duty to publish certain financial information on their website; larger councils are advised to do so as a matter of course.² Councils with an income above £200,000 have a separate code of transparency with additional responsibilities.

2 Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities 2014

For local councils, acting as a corporate body, the use of social media to communicate with the local community and raise the profile of the local council is to be encouraged. If used properly it is a powerful tool and can successfully reach a more time-poor, younger or housebound audience. However, it is also important for the council not to rely on it completely; it should be used only in addition to more traditional methods of communication so as not to exclude residents without online access.

Communications about council activity should be managed by the officers using the council's social media accounts. This is just the same as sending letters from the council "through the office". The council's formal social media accounts should not be used by councillors individually because they do not have any authority to act alone on behalf of the council. Posts should be controlled and monitored by an officer(s) to ensure they comply with the General Data Protection Act Regulation (GDPR) and the council's own communications policies.

What social media accounts does your council, as a corporate body, use as a method of communication and engagement with the local community?

Do you know how you can offer suggestions and contributions to inform the council's content?

It is advised that an officer (usually the clerk) be responsible for adding content to these corporate accounts. Please talk to the clerk for more information.

If an individual councillor chooses to use a personal social media account to communicate with the community, it is

particularly important that they remember that the code of conduct and standards in public life rules still apply.

- They should not bring the council into disrepute and should act with honesty, integrity, etc.
- Councillors cannot rely on the fact that they are using a personal social media account to divorce themselves from the responsibility that they have under the council's own Code of Conduct and civility and respect pledge.
- Once a decision has been resolved by the council, councillors should stand by that decision, as a member of that council.
- Councillors should not use social media to criticise the council's decision, even if they voted against it. This is because a councillor's own personal opinion is not paramount in the collective decision-making process of a local council.
- They should not give the impression that they represent the views of their council, as only the council officers can do that, on the corporate account and once a resolution has been passed by the council.
- They should not give the impression that they can act as individuals to resolve any issues raised by the public, as only the council can resolve to take any action.

If a councillor is using social media to campaign on an issue where a decision by the local council is yet to be made, it gets even trickier, because councillors must be careful to not give the impression that they will not keep an open mind for the council meeting at which that decision is to be taken. If not, the Council decision could be challenged based on predetermination. A good councillor attends a council

meeting to listen to all arguments put forward before deciding which way to vote.

When communicating on a personal social media account about your council's activity, if you are in any doubt about whether it would breach the Code of Conduct, leave it out. Do not risk a challenge and/or a complaint being made against you.

For further guidance on councillors using social media visit www.local.gov.uk/our-support/communications-and-community-engagement/social-media-guidance-councillors.



COMMUNITY RIGHTS

Do you know about the community rights that came in under The Localism Act 2011?

The Localism Act 2011 introduced new ways in which communities can act, collectively known as community rights. These include:

- The community has the right to bid on nominated buildings and land as an Assets of Community Value (ACV) if they come up for sale.
- The right to reclaim underused or disused publicly owned land to bring it back into beneficial use.
- Community Shares, a social finance model, help local groups (other than local councils) to raise money to do the things they want to do in their community through the issuing of shares which can only be issued by co-operative societies, community benefit societies and charitable community benefit societies. The Community Shares Unit, run by Co-operatives UK, provides support and information. Visit www.uk.coop/support-your-co-op/community-shares.

As local councils are closest to their communities, they can act – or assist other community organisations to act – in using these new initiatives for the benefit of their communities. Local councils up and down the country are already running a wide variety of public services successfully, from car parking to allotments and cemeteries, but in the past, it has been down to the district or county council to decide whether and if to devolve services to local councils. More information can be found at <https://mycommunity.org.uk>.

WHAT LOCAL COUNCILS ARE OBLIGED TO DO BY LAW

THE RULES THAT APPLY TO THE COUNCIL AS A WHOLE

There are surprisingly very few duties, or activities, that a local council must carry out in law to deliver services to local people.

A local council must:

- comply with its obligations under:
 - the Freedom of Information Act 2000
 - the Data Protection Act 1998
 - the Equality Act 2010
- publish certain information such as annual accounts, notice of meetings, agendas, and meeting notes
- comply with the relevant Local Government Transparency Code (further details in ‘[Internal and external audits](#)’ on p.42)
- comply with employment law
- consider the impact of their decisions on reducing crime and disorder in their area
- consider the protection of biodiversity in carrying out their function
- consider the provision of allotments if there is demand from residents and it is reasonable to do so
- decide whether to adopt a churchyard when it is closed, if asked to do so by the Parochial Church Council – though

it would be wise to seek advice from the County Association of Local Councils before doing so.

A local council also has a legal duty to ensure that all the rules for the administration of the council are followed.

The council must:

- appoint a chair of the council to preside at meetings
- appoint officers as appropriate for carrying out its functions i.e. the proper officer (clerk)
- appoint a responsible financial officer (RFO) to manage the council's financial affairs; although this is a separate role, the RFO is often also the clerk, especially in smaller councils
- appoint an independent and competent internal auditor (further details in 'Internal and external audits' on p.42)
- adopt a Code of Conduct – 'The Code of Conduct' on p.54
- hold a minimum of four meetings per year, one of which must be the Annual Meeting of the Council ('The two Annual Meetings' on p.62).

These rules are set out in law to guide the procedures of the council and your council can add its own regulations, formally agreed by your council, to its standing orders.

If the council does not have its own (non-financial) standing orders – although this is unwise – it is still bound by the duties set out for local councils in law, such as appointing a chair and a proper officer. NALC supplies model standing orders (and model financial regulations) which should be adapted, as appropriate, to the local council's size and complexity, except items set out in bold type which are required by law.

All full council, committee and sub-committee meetings must be open to the public except in certain circumstances,³ such as when dealing with:

- commercial tenders
- legal matters, e.g. seeking solicitor advice
- matters relating to individuals, e.g. staff matters.

These are not public meetings as such, but are local council meetings that must allow members of the public to attend, observe, record, and report the proceedings of the meeting. Similarly, the law requires the council to have a publication scheme explaining how certain types of council information are made available.⁴

Equality legislation reminds the council that it must make its meetings accessible to anyone who wishes to attend (at an accessible venue with disabled toilets, hearing loops etc. if possible).

THE LOCAL COUNCIL AS AN EMPLOYER⁵

There are rules to which the council must adhere to protect its employees and the council as an employer. The most crucial points to note as a councillor are:

3 Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

4 Freedom of Information Act 2000

5 For further information on this topic, see the *Good Councillor's Guide to Employment* (2023 edition), published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Available from www.nalc.gov.uk/publications#the-good-councillor-s-guide-to-employment.

- **Every individual councillor** on the council is equal in their level of responsibility towards the employees, even if the council has delegated staffing matters to a staffing committee (which is strongly recommended). It is vital that all councillors understand that the proper officer (the clerk) is employed by the council and only answers to the council as a whole, a situation that is unique to the local council sector.
- **All council employees**, full-time or part-time, are protected by employment law in terms of pay, annual leave, sick leave, maternity and parental leave, bullying or harassment, and discrimination.
- **All staff:**
 - » must have a written particular of employment⁶
 - » must be paid (as a minimum) the minimum wage, or the national living wage for workers aged 25 and over
 - » must have clear line-management arrangements, provided by a more senior officer who may report to the staffing committee. The only exception is the management of the clerk, who may be line-managed by the staffing committee (which can appoint one of its members to conduct regular appraisals (in consultation with all councillors)) but not directly line-managed by individual councillors.

6 The Good Councillor's Guide to Employment (see footnote 5) sets out what a council should include in the Written Statement of Employment Particulars (contract). Your CALC can also provide support and information.

EMPLOYMENT OF THE PROPER OFFICER (CLERK)

The proper officer is the official legal title of the clerk to the council. Councillors need to keep in mind that their status as a member of the council is for a maximum of four years, at which point they cease to be members until after the next election, when, of course, they may be re-elected to serve for another term of office. By contrast, the officers, and particularly the clerk, provide a consistent presence even if no councillors stand at the next election (or all the councillors resign or are disqualified mid-term); the clerk remains in post as the officiator, administrator, and practitioner of the business of the council. For this reason, it is particularly important that everyone – councillors and officers – regard themselves as equals but in very different roles. A councillor who claims to have served 40 years on the local council has in fact served ten separate terms of office.

The employment arrangements for the clerk are unique to the local council sector, in that the clerk is employed by the whole council and is only answerable to the whole council, not to individual council members. The clerk is not a secretary and is not at the disposal of the chair or any of the councillors.

The management and administration of the council's business is the responsibility of the clerk and sometimes other employees, too. It is a very responsible role. All employees, including the clerk, are accountable to the council as a whole and therefore it is important that all councillors (though they cannot get practically involved) have a broad understanding of what that management and administration involves.

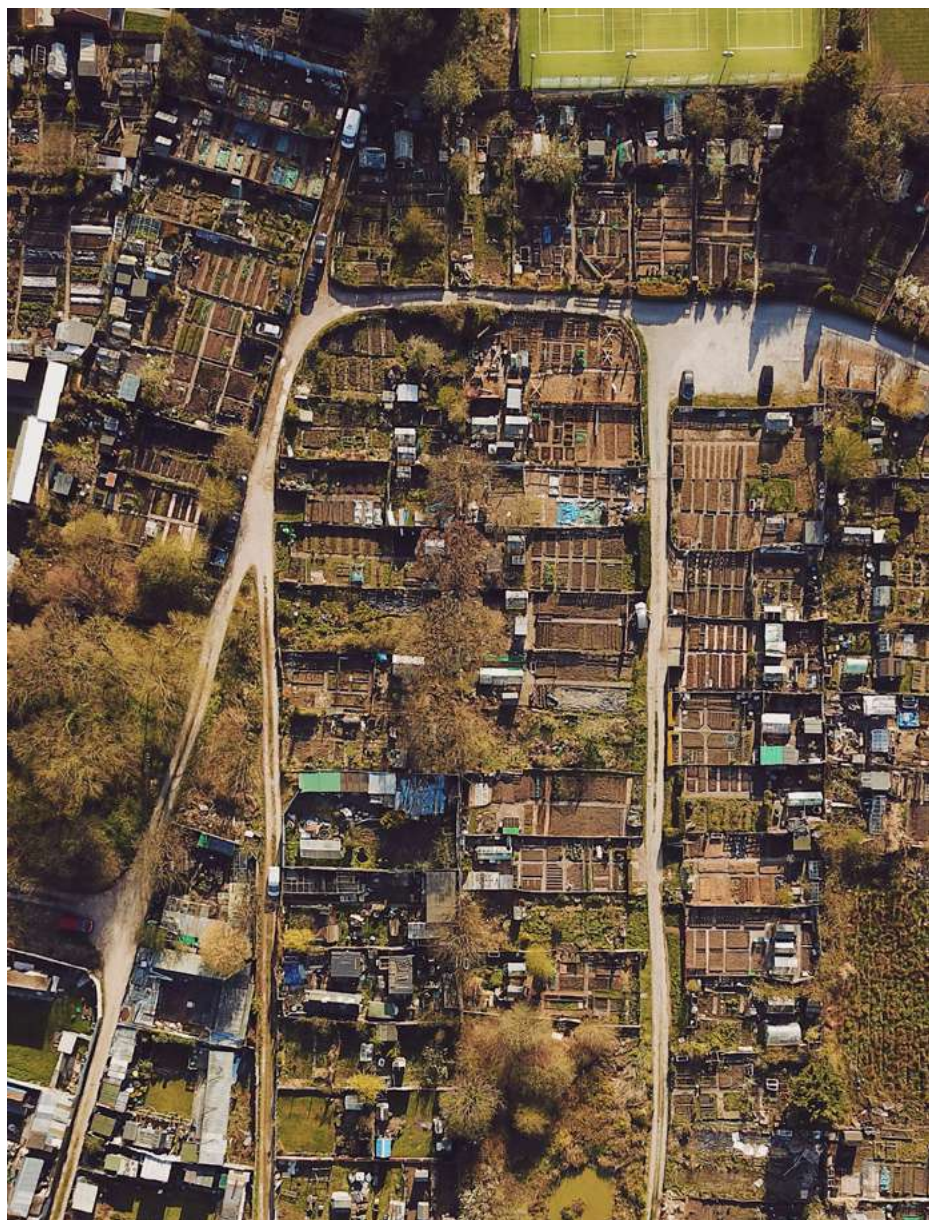
Although all council members, including the clerk, are liable for the welfare of employees (regardless of whether they are on the staffing committee), no individual councillor can issue instructions to, or individually line-manage, the clerk as the clerk can only act on the approved stated policies of the council and on decisions of the whole council that are made at a correctly convened council meeting.

The clerk provides the council with:

- impartial professional advice
- administrative support
- project management skills
- personnel directorship
- public relations support
- information that enables a decision to be taken.

In smaller councils, the clerk might also take on the separate role of responsible financial officer, as this role must be performed by an employee that is accountable to the council (not a councillor).

The council might also employ other officers, with different employment arrangements, but it is the clerk who is the most senior officer. Councillors need to be mindful that all staff are protected by UK employment law and are entitled to be treated with dignity at work. It is the responsibility of all councillors to ensure that their staff are treated with respect – they may need to occasionally remind other councillors of this responsibility, to protect their own personal liability as a responsible employer. For further information it is recommended that you read *The Good Councillor's Guide to Employment* produced by NALC (www.nalc.gov.uk/)



[publications#the-good-councillor-s-guide-to-employment](#)) and the Member Officer Protocol of the council.

It is the clerk's responsibility to ensure that the council acts within the law and it is vital that all councillors take the advice of the clerk in terms of what the council can and cannot do. The main elements of this are set out in the previous chapter ('What local councils are obliged to do by law' on p.29), but the clerk is the first port of call for clarification and the fine details.

Delegation is the act of authorising an officer, a committee, a sub-committee, or another council to make decisions on the council's behalf. The delegations must be formally agreed by the full council at a meeting and set out in its standing orders (more later). Legally, councils can delegate most of their decisions to their clerks because they are trusted professional officers whose objectivity allows them to act for the council.

In the most successful councils, the individual roles of the clerk and councillors are clearly understood; i.e. the councillors stick to their own role and respect the professional role of the clerk. Failure to observe these primary principles can cause the council significant difficulties. The Local Government Act of 1972 does state that councillors can act as the clerk, as long as they are unpaid, but it is advisable that this only ever be a temporary arrangement – simply because it is an important part of a clerk's role to be impartial and to advise and support the whole council, not allowing themselves to be unduly influenced by individual councillors, parties or factions. This crucial element of the clerk's role is compromised where a councillor is also acting as the clerk.

These rules and principles should build on mutual respect and consideration between employee and employer. Misunderstandings can arise between a council and its

employees, and so it is strongly advised that the council have an agreed grievance procedure to ensure that concerns raised by an employee are handled properly if they occur.

The Good Councillor's Guide to Employment gives practical guidance on recruiting and managing employees effectively and in compliance with employment legislation. It is strongly recommended that all councillors (not just those on a staffing/HR committee) have read this guide and understand the implications for their role as a councillor. It is available on the NALC website and in hard copy.

Have you read *The Good Councillor's Guide to Employment*? Do you understand your responsibilities as an employer

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and Safety law also protects employees, councillors, and members of the public when on council premises. Your clerk should be able to advise on such matters.

Have you asked the Clerk about the Council's responsibilities for Health and Safety?

THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

More information about building and maintaining positive relationships between officers and councillors is detailed in the NALC/SLCC (The Society of Local Council Clerks) Civility and Respect project, accessible at www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/civility-and-respect-project.

Has your council signed up to the civility and respect pledge?

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

The officers manage and administer the council's business, with the proper officer (clerk) taking ultimate overall responsibility for ensuring thorough and effective processes and staff management. The councillors are the decision makers and provide the strategic direction of the council's work; they also play a scrutiny role, reading the reports provided by the officers and checking the details are correct. Understanding the internal control procedures necessary to carry out this task is vital.

DEALING WITH PUBLIC MONEY

The rules for dealing with local council finance are set by the Government and are designed to make sure that the council takes no unacceptable risks with public money.

Risk management must be a main priority of a local council (along with being a responsible employer), but the good news is that the financial regulations protect your council from potential disaster and your personal liability as a member of the council.

All money that comes into the council (even from sources other than the precept, such as development bonuses and grants) is considered to be public money, and must be administered within the council's financial regulations and within the powers local councils have been granted by law.

Your council officers will set up a risk management scheme which highlights every known significant risk in terms of

the council's activities and makes clear how such risks will be managed. This must be formalised by the council as a working document. It includes ensuring that the council has proper insurance to protect employees, buildings, cash, and members of the public. For example, playgrounds and sports facilities must be subject to regular checks that are properly recorded. It is not just about protecting assets; it is about taking care of people.

The council shares collective responsibility for the fiscal management of public money; because of this, it must ensure that an officer known, in law, as the RFO reports all financial activity as transparently as possible on a regular basis to the council, to avoid the risk of loss, fraud or bad debt, whether through deliberate or careless actions. Robust financial checks and oversight are of immense importance.

Although it is technically a separate role, in smaller councils it is not unusual for the clerk to also undertake the RFO role.

A council can make electronic payments or choose to pay the bills by cheque; no matter the arrangement, there must be processes in place to reduce the risks of error or fraud. For example, the electronic payment should be set up, or the cheque made out, by an officer and then authorised by at least two councillors.

The broad principles of how a local council deals with public money are set out in its standing orders, but the finer detail, which protects the liability of individual councillors and ensures that the council gets value for money, is set out in the councils' financial regulations. These rules can be frustrating and even counterintuitive for an inexperienced councillor. An example arises when goods needed are available on a website and could be bought by a councillor with a personal credit card, with the cost subsequently

claimed back from the council. This is bad practice, because unless the order for goods is placed by the council (clerk or responsible financial officer), the council cannot claim back the VAT.

The National Association of Local Councils publishes model financial regulations, which are available from your county association. If the council has not adopted financial regulations, it is open to considerable risk and must correct this as a matter of urgency.

An officer, namely the responsible financial officer, ensures that the council adopts effective internal control and financial accounting systems. The RFO must supply regular and easy-to-understand reports to the council, appropriate to your council's expenditure and activity. There is extensive guidance on risk and internal control in *Governance and accountability for smaller authorities in England – a practitioners' guide to proper practices* to be applied in the preparation of statutory annual accounts and governance statements, published by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG).

The term “officer” is used in this guide for anyone employed in any role to do with the management and administration of the council. This includes the proper officer (clerk), but also includes the responsible financial officer, deputy clerk, assistant clerk, project officer, administrator, etc. Where the information relates to a specific role, it is stated; i.e. clerk, RFO etc.

The budget is an essential tool for controlling the council's finances. It proves that your council will have sufficient income to carry out its activities and policies in the coming year and creates the reserves it might need for any future initiatives the council aspires to undertake. By checking spending against budget plans regularly at council meetings, the council controls its finances during the year so that it can confidently progress towards what it wants to achieve. Transparency and openness are fundamental principles underpinning everything your local council does.

For further information see the *Good Councillor's Guide to Finance and Transparency* (www.nalc.gov.uk/publications#the-good-councillor-s-guide-to-finance-and-transparency).

| Is your clerk also the responsible financial officer (RFO)?

These guidelines clearly set out what should be made available to the public in relation to the council including reporting on meetings, public participation, and access to information.

In addition, the *Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities* (2015) applies to local councils and certain other small public bodies with an annual income not exceeding £25,000. It replaces the need for external annual audit in most cases, but these smaller local councils are instead legally obliged, under the Code, to publish the following information:

- all items of expenditure above £100
- end-of-year accounts
- annual governance statement
- internal audit report

- list of councillor or member responsibilities
- details of public land and building assets
- minutes, agendas, and meeting papers of formal meetings.

Although this Code only applies to local councils with an annual income of £25k or less, it is considered best practice for all local councils, whatever their turnover, to be meeting the transparency requirements it sets out. This best practice is reinforced by the NALC Award Scheme.

Local councils with an annual turnover exceeding £200,000 are expected to follow a separate Transparency Code specifically for larger authorities.

All local councils, whatever their size and income, must publish the year-end accounts on a website. Technically this could be a website belonging to another organisation with a local council page, but editing access for the clerk (who has responsibility for making sure the council abides by the law) is essential. NALC recommends that local councils have their own website and preferably a government (.gov.uk) domain name.

AUDITS

The clerk and/or RFO will arrange for the right audits to be carried out and can advise councillors on the correct order in which each stage of the process must be carried out, as this is specified by the external auditor assigned to the council.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDITS

Internal audit is the first stage of the process and must be undertaken within the last fiscal year before the next stage, external audit, can be carried out. Larger councils with

high turnovers or complex services to deliver may choose to have interim internal audits at various points throughout the year, for reassurance that all is well and that the council is functioning as it should.

The internal auditor is a competent person who is completely independent of the council; therefore, they cannot be a serving member of that council. They are someone formally appointed to carry out prescribed checks on the council's entire system of internal control – not just the finances, which means they should not just be an accountant, as they need to have some knowledge of how a local council should lawfully run. A clerk for another council, especially if they are qualified, would be suitable, but it is important to note that a reciprocal arrangement between councils is not allowed.

The internal auditor must carry out tests focusing on all risk areas and report their findings to the council. They must then sign a report on the annual return, which is required by law for all councils (unless they make no financial transactions) to confirm that the council's internal systems of control are in place and working effectively.

It is even more important for small local councils that the internal audit carried out is of a high quality and to a good specification, for public reassurance and to compensate for them being exempt from the external audit process (those with an annual income below £25,000).

The local county association can provide the council with model specifications of what is needed from an internal auditor, and example lists of what checks must be undertaken.

The Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA) handle this stage in the process for local councils and appoint an external auditor every four years.

Councils with an annual turnover of £25,000 or less can send the external auditor a declaration that they are exempt from this part of the process (they cannot just ignore the process altogether). By doing so, that council is then obliged, under the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, to publish a range of financial information on a website (www.gov.uk/government/publications/transparency-code-for-smaller-authorities).

If the council crosses this threshold of £25,000 at any point in the relevant fiscal year, such as by receiving a grant or contribution from a developer, they will be subject to the external audit for that year. Your clerk/RFO can supply more information.

The law requires that all councils with an annual turnover over £25,000 must undergo this second stage of the audit process, called the external audit, so that local taxpayers can be assured that the risks to public money have been professionally managed.

The external auditors review the council's annual return as signed by the internal auditor and the RFO and chair of the council in the prescribed order specified in their guidance (sometimes referred to as the AGAR – Annual Governance and Accountability Return). The annual return is the principal means by which the council is accountable to its electorate. Councils must complete an annual return to confirm that everything is in order. It includes signed statements confirming responsibility for the governance arrangements of the local council during the year. They show that:

- the accounts have been properly prepared and approved, a system of internal control is in place – this includes the appointment of a competent and independent internal auditor – and the effectiveness of both the system and the appointment has been reviewed
- the council has taken reasonable steps to follow the law
- the accounts have been publicised for general inspection so that electors' rights can be exercised (www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2015/03/Council-accounts-a-guide-to-your-rights.pdf)
- the council has assessed all risks to public money
- there are not potentially damaging or hidden issues such as an impending claim against the council
- significant differences in the figures from the previous year have been explained
- the council has responsibly managed any trust funds.

There is also a specific requirement within the audit process which is to allow members of the public to inspect the council's accounts and raise questions with the auditor.

Officers handle all the practical tasks in carrying out the audit process, but it is the councillors' responsibility to collectively, as a corporate body, ensure that the annual return accurately presents the fiscal management by the council.

If councillors have acted properly leading up to the external audit, then the council will receive the external auditor's certificate and an unqualified opinion on the annual return known as limited assurance. This means that nothing has come to the external auditor's attention that gives cause for concern.

VALUE FOR MONEY

It is essential that the council is seen to supply value for money. This means ensuring that public money is spent efficiently to supply an effective service. The overriding aim is to achieve more council provision for the least possible expense, but without compromising quality.

It helps the council to assess 'value for money' if it regularly questions whether it is necessary to spend the full amount or whether another supplier can do the job with greater efficiency and effectiveness. Also, the council should engage with their service users and the wider community to find out what they think. It is sometimes possible to join with other councils to deliver a more economical service to the community.

The financial regulations and various statutes and procedures guide and protect a local council as it makes decisions in the proper manner. They also give the council the tools it needs to achieve its goals, protect community assets, and make best use of public money.

If you have any questions about financial management, ask your clerk and/or RFO. Your local county association will provide training for councillors, which often includes training on financial management/responsibilities.



THE ROLE OF A COUNCILLOR

There are over 70,000 local councillors serving in the 10,000+ local councils in England, all of whom will have met certain criteria to be eligible.

Ideally councillors on a local council will come from diverse backgrounds and have various enthusiasms and interests. Although not within the control of a healthy democracy (because selection is by election), a balance in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, educational attainment etc. is ideal, as a strong local council needs a range of skills and experiences.

When vacancies occur on a local council, usually from resignation, there is a notice period for the electors to decide whether they want a by-election. If ten electors do not come forward to request a by-election the principal authority will inform the local council that it is free to co-opt new councillors onto the council. If this happens, the existing councillors should aim to attract more councillors with contrasting personal attributes, different skills, and attitudes distinct from their own; this will ensure that the local council is a good reflection of the community it stands for and it should be celebrated if it can be achieved.

The role of a councillor is to work with all other members of that council to stand for the interests of the whole community as a balanced local council. Understanding the needs of diverse groups in your community (such as young and elderly people) is an important part of the role of a councillor.

The main task is to bring local issues to the council's attention and help it make decisions for the benefit of the local community.

Councillors have a responsibility to be well informed, especially about diverse local views. You cannot assume that you stand for the interests of all your electors without consulting them.

If you stood for election, even if you were returned unopposed (meaning there were more seats on the council than the number of people wanting to be elected, so you automatically got a seat) you are classed as an elected councillor. If you were selected by the existing councillors mid-term of office (i.e. between elections) you are a co-opted councillor. Once you have formally accepted the office as a councillor it makes no difference – elected and co-opted councillors have the same voting rights and are equal when it comes to being selected for roles on committees, and even as the chair; all are councillors working together in the council to serve the community.

For many people, it is the satisfaction of acting on behalf of their local community that encourages them to become councillors. The next challenge is to make sure that the council acts properly and within the legal framework in achieving what it sets out to do.

‘What local councils are obliged to do by law’ on p.29 introduces the rules that guide your council – not as glamorous as action, but vital to its success.

How does your Council consult with local people?

DUE DILIGENCE

THE RULES THAT APPLY TO INDIVIDUAL COUNCILLORS

As a local councillor you certainly want to do something positive and, like most councillors, you hope to make a difference by influencing decisions that affect your community – but you must remember that you will be held accountable for your actions as a councillor by the local community you serve. The rules are there to protect your personal liability, just as much as they are there to assure the community that the council is working as it should.

The rules may not be exciting, but without understanding them your council could run into challenges and complaints.

- A council must do what the law requires it to do ('What local councils are obliged to do by law' on p.29).
- A council may do only what the law says it may do.
- A council cannot do anything unless it is allowed by legislation.

The crucial question is: does the council have the authority, set out in law, to do what it wants to do? This question is crucial if the council is to make a lawful decision to act, especially if it involves spending money.

Check whether your council has the General Power of Competence (GPC). Beware of copying the activities of other councils without first checking, as they may be doing something under this power that your council is not entitled to do.

The clerk is the first point of contact for trusted advice on the rules. Your clerk will have access to your local county association or association of parish and town (or local) councils, for further advice on legal and financial matters. If your clerk is a member of the Society of Local Council Clerks, they will have access to other guidance.

If this all feels overwhelming, do not worry. Your council should have an adequate training budget for officers and councillors. No one can be expected to perform the role of officer or councillor without adequate training. Your local county association will offer lots of training opportunities to make a success of your role; ask your clerk to show you what is on offer and sign up.

Have you been told about what induction training is available for new councillors?

The rules for an individual councillor are that you cannot act as a member of the council until you have signed a formal declaration of acceptance of your office. This must be signed at or before the first council meeting following your election or co-option, in the presence of another councillor or the clerk. Failure to sign means you cannot act as a councillor, unless you have been given permission by

Councillors should look at 'Make A Change – Become A Councillor' on the NALC website (www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/local-elections) for more information about achieving a balanced council that best represents their community.

a resolution of the council to sign it later, and state when that will happen.

DUTIES

As a councillor you have a duty to:

- attend meetings when summoned to do so; the notice to attend a council meeting is, in law, a summons, because you have a duty to attend and to consider, in advance of the meeting, the agenda and any related documents which were sent to you with the summons
- take part in meetings and consider all the relevant facts and issues on matters which require a decision, including the views of others expressed at the meeting
- take part in voting and respect decisions made by most of those present and voting
- ensure, with other councillors, that the council is responsibly managed
- represent the whole electorate, and not just those who voted for you – or the minority who are shouting the loudest.



As set out in the chapter on Serving the Community, some councils that meet certain eligibility requirements have resolved to use the General Power of Competence, which enables them to act more widely.

RESOURCES

All councillors should have access to:

- a schedule of meetings for the coming year
- the council's standing orders
- the council's financial regulations
- contact details of councillors and the clerk (for use only during working hours, except in an emergency)
- the budget for the current year
- the minutes of meetings that took place during the previous year.

Do you know where all your councils important documents are kept and how to access them?

THE NOLAN PRINCIPLES

All councillors should have a copy of the rules on how you must behave as a councillor. These are particularly important. Every local council must adopt and publicise a Code of Conduct that is in line with the Nolan principles (named after Lord Nolan, who chaired the government committee in 1994, and which apply to the conduct of everyone in public life).

They are:

- **Selflessness:** you should act in the public interest.
- **Integrity:** you should not put yourself under any obligation to others or allow them improperly to influence you, or seek benefit for yourself, family, friends or close associates.
- **Objectivity:** you should act impartially, fairly and on merit.
- **Accountability:** you should be prepared to submit to public scrutiny necessary to ensure accountability.

- **Openness:** you should be open and transparent in your actions and decisions unless there are clear and lawful reasons for non-disclosure.
- **Honesty:** you should be truthful.
- **Leadership:** as a councillor, you should promote, support, and show high standards of conduct and be willing to challenge poor behaviour.

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct relates to all councillors' obligations, including the registration and disclosure of interests (see below). Complaints about councillors' conduct are dealt with by a Monitoring Officer (employed by the principal authority).

**Do you have a copy of your council's Code of Conduct?
Do you understand what you must do?**

DECLARING INTERESTS

As a councillor, you must abide by rules that apply to the disclosure of certain business or financial interests. These are called 'disclosable pecuniary interests' or DPIs. DPIs include your employment, ownership of land, and business interests in your parish. Other interests are usually non-pecuniary or personal interests. Your council's code will show what actions you must take for personal interests.

Councillors must disclose to the principal authority's monitoring officer any DPIs and any other disclosable interests referred to in the local council's Code of Conduct within 28 days (4 weeks) of becoming a member of the council.

The monitoring officer will make a register of your interests available to the public – usually on the principal authority’s website. This rule on disclosure also applies to your spouse, civil partner, or cohabitee, as if their interests were yours. Be aware that the register of interests does not distinguish between a councillor’s interests and those that are held by your partner.

If the monitoring officer decides that, by making a disclosable interest public, you might be subject to a threat of violence or intimidation, the fact that you have the interest can be registered without details of the interest. This is known as a sensitive interest.



Councillors must give a copy of their register of interest to the clerk to be displayed on a website for public scrutiny. It might be the principal authorities' website and/or the local councils' own website, or a community website to which the clerk to the council has editor access – note that this editor access is important, as it is the clerks' responsibility to ensure the council acts within the law.

If, at a meeting, an agenda item relates to one of your DPIs – such as the expansion of a supermarket chain in which you own shares – you must not take part in the discussion or vote. You must withdraw if your council's standing orders say so. Also, if the interest has not been registered with the monitoring officer, you must disclose the interest at the meeting (or, for sensitive interests, disclose the issue but not the detail). You must then notify the monitoring officer within 28 days (4 weeks) of the meeting.

The declaring of any interest in the items on an agenda is intended to give the public confidence that a council's decision-making process is fair and transparent. The clerk should draw up an agenda that gives councillors a reminder and an opportunity to declare any interests at the start of a meeting.

A council can decide that a councillor with a DPI can take part and vote on a council motion. This is called granting a dispensation. If you have a DPI but think you should be able to participate in the discussion and vote on the matter, you must put your request in writing to the council. Your clerk will advise. Interestingly, as a councillor, you can vote on your own request for dispensation.

Note that there are several potential criminal offences associated with:

- the failure to register or disclose a DPI
- getting involved in a discussion and/or voting on a proposal in which you have a DPI.

Successful prosecutions can result in a fine of £5,000 and disqualification for five years from the local council and from other local authorities.

Potentially, councillors can also be subject to complaints about getting involved in council decisions where they may have a natural personal bias, such as issues on an agenda that relate to your friends, neighbours, and family. These are your personal interests and include your membership of a political party, although party politics rarely has any relevance to local council business. Political party group meetings between council meetings (to form a collective view on how they will vote on council agenda items) could be challenged as predetermination, which is specifically banned. Claiming local council successes as being down to a particular political party is also not appropriate, because local councils are a team of elected decision makers working together to reach a collective consensus on how to use the money raised from the community for community benefit. The business of a local council is not about personal or political wins; rather, it is everything to do with listening to the reasoned arguments of those present at the meetings, and making your own decisions after having considered all the views offered.

It is the responsibility of every individual councillor to decide what their personal interests are and when they should be declared. If a complaint is made about a councillor

on a personal interest and the Monitoring Officer decides that these complaints are valid, this is a breach of the Code of Conduct, but not a criminal offence. It is advisable for councillors to declare all personal interests wherever they may be relevant to agenda items, and to follow the council's standing orders, in order to avoid a challenge or complaint about your integrity.

Whilst the clerk is responsible for the management and administration of local council business, it is the chair who has the role of team leader – though only during the council's meetings (see the chapter on 'Meetings' on p.60). It is vital that the clerk and chair work together and understand the difference in their respective roles if the local council is to succeed. The best councils will have councillors (including the chair and a clerk) who are able to work as a team to provide a service for the community.

If you are beginning to think that there are too many rules, remember that they protect people's rights (including yours) and give confidence that the council has good governance systems in place.

Councillors must understand the distinct types of interest they need to declare, and fill in the registration form – have you submitted yours? There are strict rules about keeping this form up to date – when did you last review yours?



MEETINGS

The meeting is the council team in action – the resolutions (decisions) of the council can only be made at a formally called council meeting and by those councillors who attend in person, never by phone, email, or other online communication method. The council should decide on a schedule of meetings for the year at the annual meeting held in May.

The clerk (or someone deputising) supports the council at the meeting as it discusses business, and provides impartial professional advice where required.

Council and committee meetings are formal events, not social occasions. They have a clear purpose, which is to make decisions for the benefit of the community. The minutes note which councillors are present, but not ‘who said what’ at the meeting; that is irrelevant in collective decision making, and only the outcome of the decisions is recorded. Minutes should not be a verbatim record of the meeting.

Council and committee meetings are subject to standing orders; this means they need to be open to the press and the public. Whilst the press and the public also have the right to record council meetings, they have no right to speak during them unless invited to during a public participation session or when the chair allows. (That said, the views of the local community are important information for the council – so they should be given the opportunity to speak at specific intervals and at the chair's discretion.) It is advisable for the council to have a public-speaking protocol.

There are exceptions relating to when a meeting can be closed to the press and the public.

These exceptions are when sensitive issues, such as legal, contractual, or staffing matters are discussed; in these cases, the council can agree to exclude the press and public from that single item of business. As a rule of thumb, the council should conduct as much of its business as possible with the public present, to ensure it is as transparent as possible.

All councillors are expected to attend meetings of the full council. However, the council can form committees, which are meetings that bring together a smaller number of councillors to concentrate on a specific function of the council and share the workload.

Some committees are permanent (standing) committees, or executive committees, which have been given formal decision-making delegation for defined responsibilities by the council, set out in standing orders. Standing and executive committees with delegation then report their decisions to the full council and the council is bound by the decisions these committees make on their behalf.

A sub-committee is appointed by a committee to focus discussion on a specific topic among an even smaller group of councillors. Otherwise, sub-committees operate like committees.

Other working groups might be set up for a short-term project; these are advisory committees, working parties or 'task-and-finish' groups. Although they are not subject to the strict rules that apply to formal council and committee meetings, such as the requirement that they be held in public, etc., they must have terms of reference clearly set out in standing orders. Their less-formal working

arrangements mean these groups cannot be delegated decision-making authority on behalf of the council, but they can explore options and make recommendations to the council for a decision.

Do you know which committees of your council are standing committees with terms of reference and delegation of the council set out in standing orders?

Did you know that if a standing committee goes into confidential session and you are not a member of that committee, even though you are a member of the council you only have the same rights as a member of the public and will be excluded from the meeting? You are also not entitled to the confidential information that was discussed.

There are rules set out in a council's standing orders about who is permitted to join a committee or sub-committee. Sometimes non-councillors can be included (although, with a few exceptions, they cannot vote). This is an excellent means of involving others, particularly young people, in council work.

THE TWO ANNUAL MEETINGS

If elected at the local elections, which are held every four years and in May, the first meeting encountered by a councillor will be the Annual Meeting of the Council. This meeting is held within a short time limit after the election date. The first item on the agenda of this meeting must be for the council to elect a chair and, where it is set out in the council's standing orders, a vice-chair (but this role is not a legal requirement). This meeting is an appropriate time to appoint members of committees and representatives of

other external bodies. This is a formal local council meeting, and the rules for this meeting are in the council's standing orders.

Remember, standing orders include rules of procedure laid down in legislation and additional regulations chosen by your council. Standing orders help the council to operate smoothly. For example, a third of the seats on the council (or three seats, whichever is the greater) must be present for the meeting to go ahead; this is known as the quorum. The council can set a higher quorum for committees through standing orders if it wishes. Other standing orders will determine, for example:

- the order of business
- the length of meetings and the duration of speaking time
- the schedule of meetings for the year
- delegation to committees and officers
- voting requirements
- procedures for public participation.

Every year in which a local election is not held, an Annual Meeting of the Council is also held but can be called on any date in May. Its purpose is to appoint a chair, as the term of office for a chair is one year.

The other annual meeting is of the electors, and is sometimes confusingly called the Annual Parish (or Town) Meeting. It is not a council meeting and councillors are not obliged to attend. It is a meeting of the electors organised by the local council that must take place between 1 March and 1 June. Electors can contribute to the agenda as these meetings are community engagement events and, in practice,

often celebrate local activities and debate current issues in the community.

The chair of the local council, any two councillors, or any six electors can call a Meeting of the Electors at any time during the year, but this annual meeting between 1 March and 1 June is a legal requirement. The local council chair, if present at this meeting of electors, must preside, but they are not obliged to attend. If the chair of the local council is absent, someone is selected from those people present. It is best practice to hold the Annual Meeting of the Council and the Annual Meeting of Electors on separate occasions to avoid confusion.

THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

The formal legal title of the person presiding at local council meetings is 'chairman' which relates to both genders and none, and is nowadays usually referred to as the 'chair' in non-legal settings.

Contrary to widespread belief, the chair is not in charge of the council. This is because, as a councillor, they only have the same level of authority as every other councillor. However, as their responsibility is to preside over the proceedings of the council meetings, they command respect in that specific role.

The chair is in charge of the council's meetings; this is an office created by legislation.⁷ The chair is elected at the Annual Meeting of the Council for one year. The chair has a duty to ensure that council meetings run smoothly, that

⁷ Local Government Act 1972 section 15 (1)

all business is carefully considered and that all councillors who wish to speak can do so. It is good practice for the chair to refer to the clerk for impartial professional advice.

The chair has no extra powers. For instance, it is unlawful for a council to delegate decision making to any individual councillor, and in this the chair is no different. However, the role does carry some additional responsibilities, such as when a vote is tied, the chair may use a second, or casting vote. Incidentally, this additional vote can be used any way the chair sees fit, and they are not obliged to vote the same way as they did for their original vote.

The chair often enjoys a special relationship with the public, especially in a town council where the chair is also the mayor. They are often invited to open the fête, or to welcome official visitors from abroad; for this reason, the chair can receive an allowance to support this important public role.

It is the chair who leads the Annual Meeting of Electors (remember, this is not a council meeting) if they are present.

Successful councils are those where the chair, councillors, and clerk work together as a team to combine their knowledge and skills to deliver real benefits to the community they serve.

Good working relationships, mutual respect and an understanding of their distinct roles are vital. Conflicts between these key players, especially during meetings in front of the press or public, are damaging to the council's credibility.

Does your council have a councillor and officer working protocol? Has your council adopted the NALC/SLCC civility and respect pledge?

You may think these things are not needed as 'everyone gets on jolly well', but it only takes one minor change of officers and/or councillors for the whole dynamics of the council to dramatically change. It is much better to have these provisions in place before anything changes.

BEFORE A MEETING

At, or before, the first local council meeting someone attends they must sign the 'declaration of acceptance of office' form. In law, they are not a councillor until this is signed. This is also an agreement to observe the council's Code of Conduct.

At least three clear days before each council, committee, or sub-committee meeting a summons and agenda will be sent by the clerk. The three clear days are established in law because it is important for councillors to be able to prepare and research the issues to be discussed. This period is also for members of the public to be made aware of what the council will be making decisions on, in case they wish to attend that meeting. Topics requiring a decision cannot be added to the agenda after the three clear days deadline has passed; those issues must wait for another meeting.

The clerk must ensure that each agenda item is clear, in terms of what councillors are expected to do, and must be precise about the subject under discussion. For example, an agenda item saying 'footpaths' gives you no idea what to expect. Councillors need to know what the task at the meeting is: for example, 'To receive a report from Cllr Gorie on the condition of footpaths in the parish and to agree action in response to proposals for repairs (copy of report attached)'.

It is unlawful for a council to decide on an issue, especially a decision to spend money, without sufficient (three clear days') warning. Vague agenda items that do not specify the exact business (such as Matters Arising, and Any Other Business) are dangerous and should be avoided, because the council cannot make unexpected decisions.

Putting the agenda together is the clerk's responsibility. The clerk must sign and date the agenda and decide how it will be set out. This process is often (but not always) undertaken in consultation with the chair. An important part of a councillor's role is to request that items be added to the agenda if they feel a relevant subject should be discussed; however, for business reasons, it is the clerk who has the final say on what is included on an agenda. The clerk will provide a business reason for an agenda suggestion being deferred or not included.

AT A MEETING

Councillors have a duty to attend the meetings they are summoned to, but sometimes things crop up and it is not possible. In this case, councillors should contact the clerk with an apology. These apologies are usually noted in the minutes; if no apology is offered it is recorded in the minutes as an absence. Some clerks post the record of councillor attendance at meetings on the council website, and note whether an apology was offered or it was an absence (which is considered bad form), so that electors are aware.

Councillors need to note that failure to attend any meetings for a six-month period results in an automatic disqualification from being a councillor, unless a request is made for the council to grant an extended absence by

accepting the apologies that were offered before the end of the six-month period. For this reason, when sending apologies for not attending a meeting councillors should give an explanation, so that if a request for an extended absence is eventually required, the council can consider the explanations that were given. It is not unreasonable for a council to consider that a darts or football match is not an adequate reason for not attending and not grant an extended absence, whereas illness or work commitments are acceptable reasons.

Early on each meeting agenda will be a proposal to approve the draft minutes of the last meeting as accurate. Then they are signed by the chair – even if the chair was not present, because it is the council that is doing the approving, not the chair.

It is, of course, the chair's job to manage the meeting by introducing agenda items, inviting members to speak, focusing discussion, and clarifying matters for decision. Councillors, having engaged in discussion, vote for or against the proposal, usually by a show of hands. Matters to be decided are called proposals or motions. Decisions, called resolutions, are recorded in the minutes; for example, 'It was resolved that the council will contribute £2,000 to the community bus scheme'.

If a councillor has no view on a proposal, or cannot decide, they can abstain from the vote – but this should not happen frequently, because an important part of the role of a councillor is to decide what they feel best serves to benefit the community. Abstaining from the vote means that the councillor did not vote. The way each councillor votes is not recorded in the minutes because all decisions are corporate, but a councillor can ask for a named (or recorded) vote.

It is best not to do this often, as it goes against the spirit of collective decision making.

Councillors should keep their contributions to the meeting short and to the point – no one enjoys listening to others who speak for too long. One role of the chair is to ensure that a meeting is kept to time; therefore, if a councillor is asked to curtail the length of their contribution, this must be respected. Council meetings are about teamwork, collective decision making and reaching consensus, not winning or scoring points off each other. Even if councillors disagree strongly with the way a discussion is working out, they should never engage in personal attacks on others, as this is against the Code of Conduct and not in the spirit of the civility and respect pledge.

Councillors should strive to keep proceedings good-humoured and remember that everyone – members and officers – is working to the same aim: to make constructive decisions collectively that benefit the community.

Council meetings should have a ‘public participation’ part of the agenda: a short, defined period, early in the meeting, in which members of the public are encouraged to speak and ask questions about the issues included on the agenda. Minutes of the public participation session should be very succinct (with just the issue raised noted) and the GDPR observed (for more information see www.gov.uk/data-protection).

All meetings, full and committee with delegation, must have one third of its members, including the vacant seats, present. This is known as the quorum. The meeting must remain quorate throughout for it to be legally valid, so, if a councillor needs to leave before the end, they must

inform the clerk and chair before the meeting starts. This is recorded in the minutes for clarity.

The standing orders of the council will set out how long a meeting should take in order to enable councillors to plan their diaries. It is usually no longer than two hours, because people's concentration begins to lapse if the meeting goes on longer. A well-crafted agenda with precise discussion topics and an effective chair who ensures everything stays on track are valuable tools for ending the meeting on time. The council's standing orders also set out clear rules of debate, which are useful for the chair in keeping the meeting to time and the discussion focused.



AFTER A MEETING

All the resolutions passed (decisions made) at the meeting need to be implemented. The clerk or the minute secretary writes the draft minutes as a legal record of what was decided, and this acts as the instructions to the officers of the council to act. It is important that these minutes are accurate.

Decisions cannot be made between meetings; so, where matters need full discussion, the chair can call an extraordinary meeting, with all the normal processes of an ordinary meeting (such as the three clear days' notice etc.). Delegation is a useful tool in this situation. Delegation allows a council to give the power to make decisions to an officer, a committee, a sub-committee, or another council. It is good practice to specify in standing orders or financial regulations the kind of decisions that the clerk can make, such as routine decisions, dealing with emergencies or spending small sums of money.

Standing orders may state that a decision can be taken after the clerk consults with two councillors (including the chair), but the final decision remains with the clerk, as it is the clerk who has the formal delegation from the council to act. Most importantly, the council must not allow delegation to a single councillor – not even to the chair, as local councils exist to make and implement decisions made collectively as a corporate body, not by individual councillors.



INFLUENCING THE PLANNING SYSTEM

Although local councils are not the decision makers on planning decisions in their area, people can get very agitated when the local council is formulating a response to the planning authority. The local council has a responsibility to represent the whole community – not just the people with the loudest voices. The council must ensure that proper procedures are in place. Local councils must have lawful, well-managed meetings and councillors must make sure that in planning matters they act in accordance with their council's Code of Conduct.

Local councils are statutory consultees, which means that the planning authority has a duty to consult with them about planning applications affecting their area, and they can express their collective view to the planning authority. In addition, under the Localism Act's neighbourhood planning provisions, there are several 'community rights' that local councils can take up in the planning system.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The local development plan covers the entire range of a higher planning authority's district. It includes policies for housing, retail, industry, heritage and landscape protection and infrastructure.

The (local) planning authority is normally the district council (or equivalent). The county council has the planning authority for some issues such as mineral extraction and

waste disposal. If you work with a single (unitary) authority, it is much simpler. Planning in a National Park is the responsibility of the National Park Authority.

Many local councils spend time and energy at full council or planning committee meetings deciding what recommendations to make to the planning authority. While the planning authority does not have to agree, it must consider the local council's collective view before it decides to grant or refuse permission for a development. The ultimate decision is with the planning authority. The recommendations a local council submits on a planning application must fit with statutory local development plans, otherwise they may be ignored. These include the local plan and, if available, the neighbourhood plan.



The local council needs to understand the procedures by which the planning authority makes decisions. Some decisions are made by the authority's planning committee, while many are delegated to officers. Central to the decision-making process are material considerations – issues that are, in law, material or relevant to a planning application. Such matters must be considered when making a recommendation on a planning application.

Material considerations include:

- a development plan (including the local plan or neighbourhood plan)
- a site's planning history (including earlier applications)
- accessibility
- traffic
- roads and parking
- archaeology
- a neighbourhood or community plan or design statement.

Councillors must understand that their personal feelings about the application, or the applicant, are not relevant. It is the wider public interest in respect of the planning application that is important.

The planning authority (not the local council) is responsible for development control, where development is managed through planning applications. The local council's local knowledge, combined with a sound understanding of the planning process, means that its views are more likely to be heard by the planning authority. As one planning officer observed, *"There are those local councils who understand the system and have influence... and there are those (the majority) that don't."*

Local councils can spend hours on development control and forget that it is equally important to influence the policies of the planning authority. The most important policies are contained in the planning authority's development plan. If your council did not participate when the development plan was discussed, then they may be unpleasantly surprised when those proposals become planning applications, by which time it is too late to make valid objections.

A design statement can be a supplement to the planning authority's policies and can influence development control. Once accepted by the planning authority it becomes a supplementary planning document (SPD). The benefit of having a design statement adopted as an SPD is that the planning authority must consider it as a material consideration when making decisions. This gives the council and its community considerable power.

Through the Localism Act 2011, the Government introduced two new ways in which local councils can influence planning in their area:

- neighbourhood plan
- community (neighbourhood) development orders.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

A neighbourhood plan is a local development plan for a specific place. It is drawn up by the local community (which includes a local council where one exists) working with the planning authority, and is approved by an independent inspector before going to a community referendum.

Once a neighbourhood plan has demonstrated that it conforms with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and

is brought into force by the planning authority, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict. Councillors need to be aware that a neighbourhood plan cannot seek to prevent the development of an area, only what type of development it is and where, otherwise it will not be formalised by the planning authority.

Neighbourhood plans help to shape and direct sustainable development in local areas and can give local communities more say about where new homes are built and what they should look like; e.g. to allocate land for industry and leisure, or set retail and infrastructure policies. Once in place, a neighbourhood plan gives your community more control over the way in which your area develops; a neighbourhood plan becomes part of the development plan which will be used by the local planning authority when determining planning applications.

In addition, with the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) system, local councils who have approved neighbourhood plans are entitled to 25% of CIL receipts and can decide for themselves how to spend the money on local infrastructure. Importantly, though, this only applies where the higher authority has adopted the CIL, and not all have.

For more information on neighbourhood planning, go to www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2.

Has your council been involved in the development of a neighbourhood plan? If not, is it considering doing so?

Has the local planning authority adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy system?

THE COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUILD

Community Development Orders, also known as the ‘right to build’, give local councils and community groups the right to propose small-scale, site-specific, community-led developments. This right allows communities to build new homes, shops, businesses, or facilities where they want them, without going through the normal planning application route. Any project built under the community right to build is managed by the local council or community group. The community right to build enables the community to design its own development. The process (including a referendum) gives the local community control over the decision to grant planning permission.

To get approval for a neighbourhood plan or a community development order, the local council must:

- work with the local planning authority
- take expert advice to ensure that the plan or order complies with national planning policies and strategic elements of the local plan
- engage fully with all parts of the local community
- seek approval from an independent inspector
- gain support from at least 50% of local people voting in a referendum.



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LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME

The Local Council Award Scheme is an accreditation scheme that helps councils confirm they have sound processes in place for good governance, for community engagement and for developing their council. The Local Council Award Scheme has been designed to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils, and to provide a framework to support all local councils to meet their full potential.

It is only through the sector working together to share best practice, drive up standards and support those who are committed to improving their offer to their communities that individual councils and the sector will reach their full potential. There are three award levels.

FOUNDATION AWARD

Even the smallest local council can achieve the Foundation Award, if they are doing everything correctly and within the legal framework. Having the Foundation Award is a useful tool in assuring any doubters that the council is doing everything correctly.

Councils achieving the Foundation Award demonstrate that they have all the documentation and information in place for operating lawfully and according to standard practice, building a foundation for improvement and development (including adherence to the appropriate transparency code, where applicable).

QUALITY AWARD

To achieve the Quality Award, a council demonstrates that it meets all requirements for the foundation award and has additional documentation and information in place for good governance, effective community engagement and council improvement. The Quality Award also testifies that a council is eligible to use the General Power of Competence.

QUALITY GOLD AWARD

Councils achieving the Quality Gold Award demonstrate that they meet all requirements of the foundation and quality awards and are at the forefront of best practice by achieving an excellent standard in community governance, community leadership and performance management.

You can find out more about the Local Council Award Scheme by contacting your county association or visiting NALC's website.

HINTS AND TIPS ON AVOIDING THE POTENTIAL PITFALLS OF BEING A COUNCILLOR

Even in the best councils, things go wrong – so one of the most useful resources is the council's clerk. Trained clerks can recognise when something needs attention, and if they cannot fix the problem, they will know someone who can.

Ask the clerk to the council if they keep a record of continuous professional development to ensure they are up to date with the local council legal framework. Of course, the council should have a Development Policy for both staff and councillors and have an adequate training budget, as a well-trained team prevents many of the problems that can arise.

Risk management allows your council to anticipate where breakdowns and accidents might occur. For example, it is unhelpful if the clerk and councillors, including the chair:

- are unsure of their respective roles, duties, and responsibilities
- do not work as a team or respect each other's roles
- do not communicate with each other
- concentrate on scoring points or playing party politics (which is not relevant at this level of local government).

Furthermore, the council will have difficulty if it:

- allows one person or a small group of councillors to dominate its work
- allows a councillor, including the chair, to make decisions on its behalf

- does not listen to and communicate with its community, other local councils, principal authorities, and outside bodies
- does not have written contracts of employment
- does not keep its records in order
- lacks a robust system of financial control
- does not manage meetings effectively
- is not well-informed on topics to be discussed
- ignores or antagonises the press.

Everyone in the team is responsible for checking that the council avoids these dangers; ultimately the council is liable. By contrast, well-prepared and well-informed councillors avoid difficulties and spend their energies on serving their communities.

BE PREPARED

LIST OF LEGAL POWERS AND DUTIES

For councils without the GPC, here is a list of powers and functions to help you appreciate the wide range of activities covered by Acts of Parliament. It is a useful reference when you need to know if the local council has permission to act but note, no list can be totally comprehensive.

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Allotments	Powers to provide allotments. Duty to provide allotment gardens if demand unsatisfied and if reasonable to do so	Small Holding & Allotments Act 1908, s.23
Borrowing money	Power for councils to borrow money for their statutory functions or for the prudent management of their financial affairs	Local Government Act 2003, Schedule 1, para. 2
Baths (public)	Power to provide public swimming baths	Public Health Act 1936, s.221
Burial grounds, cemeteries and crematoria	Power to acquire and maintain	Open Spaces Act 1906, Sections 9 and 10
	Power to provide	Local Government Act 1972, s.214
	Power to contribute towards expenses of cemeteries	Local Government Act 1972, s.214 (6)
Bus Shelters	Power to provide and maintain shelters	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1953, s.4

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Byelaws	Power to make byelaws for: Places of public recreation	Public Health Act 1875, s.164
	Cycle parks	Road Traffic Regulation Act
	Public swimming baths	Public Health Act 1936, s.223
	Open spaces and burial grounds	Open Spaces Act 1906, s.15
	Mortuaries and post-mortem rooms	Public Health Act 1936, s.198
Charities	Duties in respect of parochial charities	Charities Act 2011, ss.298–303
	Power to act as charity trustees	Local Government Act 1972,bs.139 (1)
Clocks	Power to provide public clocks	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.2
Closed Churchyards	Powers to maintain	Local Government Act 1972, s.215
Commons and common pastures	Powers in relation to inclosure, regulation, management and provision of common pasture	Inclosure Act 1845; Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, s.34
Conference facilities	Power to provide and encourage use of facilities	Local Government Act 1972, s.144

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Community Centres	Power to provide and equip buildings for use of clubs having athletic, social or educational objectives	Local Government Act 1972 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19
	Power to acquire, provide and furnish community buildings for public meetings and assemblies	Local Government Act 1972, s.133
Crime Prevention	Power to spend money on crime detection and prevention measures	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.31
Ditches and ponds	Power to drain and maintain ponds and ditches to prevent harm to public health	Public Health Act 1936, s.260
Duties		
Entertainment and the arts	Provision of entertainment and support of the arts	Local Government Act 1972. s.145
Environment	Power to issue fixed penalty notices for litter, graffiti and offences under dog control orders	Clean neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, s.19, s.30, Part 6

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
General Power of Competence	Power for an eligible council to do anything subject to statutory prohibitions, restrictions and limitations which include those in place before or after the introduction of the general power of competence	Localism Act 2011, ss.1–8
Gifts	Power to accept	Local Government Act 1972, s.139



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Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Highways	Power to repair and maintain public footpaths and bridle-ways.	Highways Act 1980, ss.43, 50
	Power to light roads and public places	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.3; Highways Act 1980, s.301
	Power to provide parking places for vehicles, bicycles and motor cycles.	Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, ss.57, 63
	Power to enter into agreement as to dedication and widening	Highways Act 1980, ss.30, 72
	Power to provide roadside seats and shelters	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.1
	Power to consent to a local highway authority stopping maintenance of a highway or stopping up/ diverting a highway	Highways Acts 1980, ss.47, 116
	Power to complain to district council about the protection of rights of way and roadside waste	Highways Act 1980, s.130
	Power to provide certain traffic signs and other notices	Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s.72
	Power to plant trees and shrubs and to maintain roadside verges	Highways Act 1980, s.96

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Honorary Titles	Power to admit to be honorary freemen/ freewomen of the council's area persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area.	Local Government Act 1972, s.249
Investments	Power to participate in schemes of collective investment	Trustee Investments Act 1961, s.11
Land	Power to acquire by agreement, to appropriate, to dispose of Power to accept gifts of land	Local Government Act 1972, ss.124, 126, 127
Litter	Provision of bins	Litter Act, 1983, ss.5, 6
Lotteries	Powers to promote	Gambling Act 2005, s.252, 258
Markets	Power to establish or acquire by agreement markets within the council's area and provide a market place and market building	Food Act 1984, s.50
Mortuaries and post-mortem rooms	Power to provide mortuaries and post-mortem rooms	Public Health Act 1936, s.198

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Neighbourhood Planning	Powers to act as lead body for a neighbourhood development plan or a neighbourhood development order	Localism Act 2011, Schedule 9; Town and County Planning Act 1990, ss. 61E-61Q, Schedule 4B; Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, s.38A
Newsletter	Power to provide information relation to matters affecting local government	Local Government Act 1972, s.142
Nuisances	Power to deal with offensive ditches	Public Health Act 1936, s. 260
Open spaces	Power to acquire and maintain land for public recreation	Public health Act 1875, s.164
	Power to acquire and maintain land for open spaces	Open spaces act 1906, ss.9 and 10
Parish Property and documents	Power to receive and retain	Local Government Act 1972, s.226
	Duty to deposit certain published works in specific deposit libraries	Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003, s.1
Public buildings and village hall	Power to acquire and provide buildings for public meetings and assemblies	Local Government Act 1972, s.133
Public Conveniences	Power to provide	Public Health Act 1936, s.87

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Recreation	Power to provide a wide range or recreational facilities	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19
	Provision of boating pools	Public Health Act 1961, s.54
Right to challenge services that are provided by a principal authority	The right to submit an interest in running a service provided by a district, county or unitary authority	Localism Act 2011, ss.81–86
Right to nominate and bid for assets of community value	The right to nominate assets to be added to a list of assets of community value and the right to bid to buy a listed asset when it comes up for sale	Localism Act 2011, ss.87–108
Town and Country Planning	Right to be notified of planning applications if right has been requested	Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Sched. 1, para.8
Tourism	Power to encourage tourism to the council's area	Local Government Act 1972, s.144
Traffic Calming	Power to contribute financially to traffic calming schemes	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.30
Transport	Powers to spend money on community transport schemes	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.26–29

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
War memorials	Power to maintain, repairs, protect and adapt war memorials	War Memorials (Local Authorities' Power) Act 1923, s.1
Water	Power to utilise wells, springs or streams for obtaining water	Public Health Act 1936, s.125
Websites	Power for councils to have their own websites	Local Government Act 1972, s.142

DOCUMENTS KEPT BY COUNCILLORS

All councillors are advised to keep all these important documents (if they exist) to hand. Are the versions you have been supplied with up to date? Do not worry if your council does not have all this information; it can be assembled over time, and you can play a role in offering to assist in the process. You might also need to know:

- the size of the population of the parish and how the population is made up
- the size of the electorate (different from the population)
- how much an average household pays in council tax to the local council
- contact details of principal authority councillors
- contact details of local organisations.

Document kept... (on website / in personal file)	to be updated/ developed?
The Code of Conduct	
The financial regulations (reviewed anually)	
The standing orders (reviewed anually)	
A map of the parish	
Statement of community engagement	
Communication strategy	
Social media policy	
Equal opportunities policy	
Health and safety	

Document kept... (on website / in personal file)	to be updated/ developed?
Publication scheme for the Freedom of Information Act	
Procedures for emergencies	
Grievance and disciplinary procedures	
Bullying and harassment (dignity at work) policy	
The planning authority's development control and planning policies	

DOCUMENTS KEPT BY CLERKS

The clerk will keep the following documents; we suggest you ask to read them:

- risk assessment policy
- assets register (list of property)
- leases
- insurance policies
- the cash book for recording receipts and payments
- schedule of council charges and fees for services and facilities
- partnership agreements
- planning documents (including the parish plan and/or neighbourhood plan) for the locality



HOW TO AVOID COMMUNICATIONS PITFALLS

Remember that if a resident demands a subject access report through the Freedom of Information Act, technically everything a councillor has said about them on social media, in emails, on WhatsApp etc. will need to be provided to that individual by law. Councillors are putting themselves at risk if any communications they have sent have not been civil and polite.

EMAILS

Check that any emails on council business are sent and received through an email account specifically and only used for council business (not a personal email account, and never through a shared email address).

SOCIAL MEDIA

If councillors want to use social media as an individual (separate from the council's own account) they must use extreme caution, as the Code of Conduct, standards in public life and data protection rules still apply.

For more guidance go to local.gov.uk/our-support/communications-and-community-engagement/social-media-guidance-councillors.

We hope you find this guide useful and, most importantly, that you enjoy your work as a councillor making a difference in the community that you serve.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

SECTOR-SPECIFIC ADVICE

For further information and the other Good Councillor Guides go to www.nalc.gov.uk/publications, there you will find guidance on being an employer, finance and transparency, transport planning, community business, and cyber security.

Under no circumstances should you use search engines for information, or just copy the practices of another council, as there are no guarantees that these sources are correct or suitable for the local council of which you are a member.

Whereas the principal tier authorities can provide general advice on areas of expertise that a local council might also be involved with, they are not responsible for local council activity. Moreover, they operate under their own legal framework, some of which is not appropriate for the local council sector.

If an officer chooses to join the Association of Local Council Clerks (ALCC), which is a Trade Union, this has to be a personal expense and cannot be paid for by the council that employs them.

Local councils in their County Association and NALC have access to a wide range of expert, sector-specific support and advice, and strengthen the national voice and impact of the sector. County Associations should be the council's first port of call for queries and advice.

Clerks can become members of the SLCC, who provide training, advice, and support to clerks. NALC and SLCC have a joint protocol to work together to promote the best interests of the local council sector and its employees and their contribution to the wellbeing of communities. We believe councils are best supported where the council is in membership of their local county association and NALC, and the clerk is in membership of the SLCC.



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Other guides in this series include:

The Good Councillor's guide

The Good Councillor's guide to community business

The Good Councillor's guide to cyber security

The Good Councillor's guide to finance and transparency

The Good Councillor's guide to neighbourhood planning

The Good Councillor's guide to transport planning

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Briefing Note No. 24 - 12

Service : Natural and Historic Environment

Further Enquiries to: Alison Levy

Email: Alison.levy@wiltshire.gov.uk

Date Prepared: 30/05/24

What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a mechanism to deliver nature recovery at a local and regional scale as introduced in the [legislation.gov.uk: Environment Act 2021 - Local nature recovery strategies Section 106](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/24/section-106). Wiltshire Council has been appointed by DEFRA as responsible for preparing the LNRS for Wiltshire and Swindon.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy will consist of a document containing biodiversity priorities and a habitat map which will inform and guide nature recovery across Wiltshire and Swindon.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy will:

- agree priorities for nature's recovery
- map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals

In February 2024, we held six usability testing workshops with different stakeholder groups. This has given us practical feedback and guidance on how to produce the mapping element of the LNRS from end users. We have attached a copy of our report detailing the methodology and outcomes from these usability testing workshops.

In March 2024, we ran three interactive, in-person events in Swindon, Salisbury and Trowbridge to hear from stakeholders across the public, private and voluntary sectors, encouraging their support for delivering the strategy and to gather their views and expertise on what should be included in the LNRS. We have attached a copy of our report detailing the methodology and outcomes from these longlist workshops.

Having gathered a long list of suggested nature recovery priorities through direct engagement with locally active organisations and individuals, we are currently in the

shortlisting stage. This is being led by a small group of experts who are refining the list of nature recovery priorities for Wiltshire and Swindon which will feed into the production of the LNRS first draft documents.

The reason for this project

The Wiltshire Council Business Plan states that our mission is to ensure:

- The people of Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives.
- Our communities continue to be beautiful and exciting places to live.
- Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce.
- We lead the way in how council and counties mitigate the climate challenges ahead.

To support this, Wiltshire Council has produced a Climate Strategy and a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy to help meet these aspirations. A central part of these strategies is to support nature recovery across Wiltshire for the benefit of people, nature and to help mitigate climate change.

Next steps

The shortlisting process has been taking place throughout May 2024. Once completed, the chosen priorities will be mapped in draft form.

County wide engagement and opportunities for feedback on these mapping drafts will take place in July 2024 through an online interactive survey, supported by a video and a public webinar. Several engagement opportunities are also being planned across July exclusively for farmers, who are key stakeholders in the LNRS. Details will be confirmed in a briefing note in due course.

We will also be hosting a members only first look event at the end of September. Details to be confirmed in due course.

The project programme aims to seek sign off by the supporting authorities; Swindon Borough Council, New Forest NPA and DEFRA at the end of October 2024 ahead of formal public consultation in November and December 2024, with final council approval and adoption in February 2025.

Suggested actions for councillors

We would welcome your support. Please read the attached reports and share the opportunities for feedback on the initial LNRS mapping once invitations are shared in the next briefing note.

If you have any questions please get in touch
localnaturerecoverystrategy@wiltshire.gov.uk

End

Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Longlisting methodology
May 2024

Introduction

1. The Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy steering group (LNRS steering group) is following guidance for responsible authorities ([Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) which states that:

*Responsible authorities should seek support for their priorities from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to encourage their support for delivering the strategy. To achieve this, the responsible authority should gather possible priorities from existing published plans and strategies, and **from engaging directly with locally active organisations and individuals. Responsible authorities should first create a longlist of suggestions.** They should then exclude any suggestions that are out of scope before narrowing down to select a shortlist of priorities that the responsible authorities consider critical for the strategy to address. Priorities can include where action within the strategy area could positively affect neighbouring areas. (para. 59, emphasis added).*

2. The overall LRNS consultation programme consisted of a number of activities each designed to identify and refine measures and priorities for the LNRS. These steps are set out below.
 - **Usability testing events:** Two in-person events aimed at different user groups to determine how to design the website and mapping outputs (February 2024)
 - **Longlisting events:** three in-person consultation events to identify all potential priorities and measures across Wiltshire and Swindon (March 2024)
 - **Longlisting survey:** an online survey to allow all stakeholders to make a contribution to identify all potential priorities and measures (March, April 2024)
 - **Shortlisting workshops:** a series of intensive workshops attended mainly by ecological professionals and professionals from related disciplines to refine and develop the priorities and measures. (April, May 2024)
 - **Ground truthing events and public consultation:** online events and an online survey to allow all stakeholders to verify the identified and mapped priorities and measures (July 2024). Full public consultation of the draft LNRS will take place in the Autumn-Winter 2024.

This report explains the process and methodology used to create the LNRS longlist for Wiltshire and Swindon using consultation techniques to reach a wide range of stakeholders. Published data was considered as part of the longlisting process.

Pre-event consultation

The steering group advertised widely the three longlisting consultation events through a range of media and techniques:

- Events advertised through normal Wiltshire Council communications channels (emails, website, social media).
- A briefing note to local councillors asking them to attend and participate.

- Individual invitations were sent to known organisations and individuals. The letter is shown in **Appendix 1**.

In-person consultation events

Three in-person Local Nature Recovery Strategy longlist events were held on Tuesday 5 March, Tuesday 12 March and Tuesday 19 March 2024 in Pattern Church, Swindon, The Guildhall, Salisbury and County Hall, Trowbridge respectively. The sessions ran between 2.30pm - 5pm with guests arriving from 2pm onwards.

Sessions included a presentation about the background of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Wiltshire's approach to the LNRS as well as the task for the workshop. Tasks included: mapping priorities for species, habitats and environmental benefits, noting measures to show what can be done to improve each priority, and marking if there were any specific geographical relevance and cross over to other areas in Wiltshire or if this was applicable to the whole County. Each table looked at either North, South or West Wiltshire and were then invited to repeat the exercise across each location. Participants were also invited to vote on priorities that had already been listed to signify they also agreed with the importance of these priorities.

There were 159 different attendees across three events (excluding facilitators and duplicates) representing around 100 different businesses, councils, groups and organisations.

The methodology used for each event is set out in **Appendix 2**. **Appendix 3** shows anonymised participants for each session.

Online survey

An online survey complemented the in-person events which allowed attendees to refine their responses and encouraged further responses from people who could not attend the events.

The survey was open between 7th March and 31st March 2024 on the Wiltshire Council website. Email reminders were sent to all known stakeholders to remind them to participate.

The full content of the online survey is shown in **Appendix 4**.

Longlisting methodology

All existing data was kept and unchanged from both the survey and the longlisting events.

All raw data was placed in this tab of the 'Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet' excel spreadsheet and left unedited (an example is shown in Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Excerpt from Longlist Data Spreadsheet

The screenshot shows a detailed Excel spreadsheet with multiple columns. The first column lists priority numbers (1-276). Subsequent columns include location names (e.g., Swindon, Wilton, Great Ouse), dates, map references, specific area names, priority descriptions, agreement status, measure details, agreement status, and geographical coverage. The data is organized into several sections, with some rows highlighted in yellow and others in light blue.

There were 276 responders from the survey. From these responses, 1727 priorities were identified and categorised.

All the data was typed up and saved into these tabs of the 'Wiltshire and Swindon LNRs Longlist Data Spreadsheet'. This data was typed up exactly as written on the post it notes within the three longlisting events.

This screenshot shows a different section of the same Excel spreadsheet. It continues the list of priorities, with columns for location, date, map, area, specific area, priority, agreement status, measure, agreement status, and geographical coverage. The priorities are numbered 1 through 276. The data is organized into several sections, with some rows highlighted in yellow and others in light blue.

There were 3 events where data was collected: Tuesday 5th March in Swindon, Tuesday 12th March in Salisbury, Tuesday 19th March in Trowbridge. 159 people attended in total excluding facilitators.

Within each event, people were asked to write their priorities and measures for nature recovery on post it notes and add them to a Wiltshire map. From these 3 sessions, 929 priorities were identified and categorised.

All the raw data from the longlist events and the survey was then edited by adding in information, including:

- **Survey or Event:** This column was added to differentiate between the data from the survey and the longlisting events.
- **Habitat, Species, Environmental Benefits or Other:** This column was added to help breakdown the data into different categories to help collate

similar priorities and common themes within the data ie. Habitat, Species, Environmental Benefits or Other.

- **Habitat Type:** This column was added to categorise the habitat priorities into different habitat types.
- **Subcategories:** This column was added to specify the type of species, environmental benefit or habitat category to help direct priorities into similar groups to ease decision-making.

This typology is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Raw data edited and grouped

Habitat, Species, Environmental Benefits or Other	Habitat Type	Subcategories	Notes
Habitat	Woodland	Ancient Woodland	
		Wet Woodland	
		Woodland	Non-specified woodland species/types
		Wood Pasture and Parkland	
	Grassland	Calcareous Grassland	Includes limestone and chalk grassland
		Meadow	
		Neutral Grassland	
		Scrub	
		Wildflower	
	Freshwater	Chalk Rivers and Streams	
		Floodplain Marsh	
		Open Standing Water	Includes lakes, ponds, reservoirs, canals, ditches
		Rivers and Streams	
		Wetland	
	Urban	Green Space	
		Trees	
		Urban	
		Wildflower	
	Heathland	Heathland	
	Trees	Orchard	
		Trees	Includes field trees, ancient trees, agro-forestry
	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Includes hedgerow trees
	Arable	Arable	
		Arable Margins	
Species	N/A	Amphibians	
		Aquatic Mammals	
		Aquatic Species	Excludes mammals
		Bats	
		Birds	
		Invertebrates	
		Non-Native Species	
		Plants, Lichens and Fungi	
		Reptiles	
		Terrestrial Mammals	
Environmental Benefits	N/A	Carbon Sequestration	
		Clean Air	
		Climate Change Adaptations	
		Flood Mitigation	
		Soil Quality	

		Water Quality	
Other	N/A	Out of Scope	Not relevant to nature recovery
		Suggestion	Recommendations of who/what should be involved within the LNRS process
		Vague	Unclear of what the outcome/priority is highlighting or suggesting

Column AB, Inferred Priorities: A column for inferred priorities was created to merge the results/outputs from the online survey of priorities and outcomes, to produce an overall priority to ease interpretation for longlisting. Due to the responses and the way the questions were phrased, inferred priorities were deduced by merging data.

Area Duplication: Where priorities were highlighted for multiple areas, these priorities were duplicated, so that this priority could be examined under each area.

Subcategory Duplication: Where priorities were highlighted for different subcategories, these priorities were duplicated, so that this priority could be examined under each subcategory.

Separate Priorities but the Same Output: Priorities were duplicated where the priority and outcome provided in the survey output addressed different issues.

Inferred Priorities from Q14, Q16, Q51 and Q52: Comments within Column AF (Q14), AI (Q16), BA (Q51) and BB (Q52) and the measures were analysed to suggest if priorities had been stated.

A longlist spreadsheet was produced for each area, including Wiltshire wide. Each spreadsheet had a habitat tab, species tab and environmental benefits tab. All priorities were filtered and divided by area, and colour coded by subcategory. An example is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Example longlist spreadsheet

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Habitat	Habitat Type	Subcategories	Secondary Category	Area	No. of Habitats	Priority	Collated Priority	Shortlist Priorities	Specific Area	Specific Species
Habitat	Arable	Arable		1	1	Encourage more sustainable land management	Encourage more sustainable land management of pasture and management of grazing intensity	Increase the use of regenerative and sustainable farming methods, pasture land management, livestock rotation and grazing intensity		
Habitat	Arable	Arable	Invertebrates	1	1	Managing grazing intensity encourages more diverse habitats	Protect and buffer wild flower meadows			
Habitat	Grassland	Meadows		1	1	Enhance, restore and create flower rich meadows	Enhance, restore, buffer and create flower rich meadow habitats and wildlife conditions	Enhance, protect, restore, buffer and create flower rich meadow habitats, grassland cover and associated grassland, hedgerow, scrub and woodland habitat mosaic to provide connective habitat	Cricklade	
Habitat	Grassland	Meadows	Invertebrates	1	14	Enhance, restore and create flower rich meadows	Enhance and protect chalk grassland		North Meadow NNE, Cricklade, Thames Clay Vale	
Habitat	Grassland	Calcareous grassland		1	1	Enhance and protect chalk grassland	Enhance and protect chalk grassland			
Habitat	Grassland	Neutral grassland	Invertebrates	1	1	Joining North Meadow to Clattinger Farm	Create or establish grassland, hedgerow, scrub and woodland mosaic around calcareous grassland to provide connective habitat, through		Braydon Forest and Minsterley	Lepidoptera
Habitat	Grassland	Scrub	Birds	1	2	Increased scrub habitat for nightingales	Increased scrub habitat for nightingales		Grasslands	Nightingale
Habitat	Hedgerows	Hedgerows		1	1	Increase length and width of existing hedgerows	Increased planting, connectivity, natural regeneration and enhancement of hedgerows	Increased protection, restoration, natural regeneration, enhancement and improved management of hedgerow diversity, species variety, hedgerow trees and connectivity with associated habitats		
Habitat	Hedgerows	Hedgerows		1	11	Increase length and width of existing hedgerows	Increased planting, connectivity and enhancement of hedgerows		network, Savernake Forest and Braydon Woods	
Habitat	Woodland	Ancient Woodland	Woodland	1	1	Connect and buffer areas of ancient woodland	Connect and buffer areas of ancient woodland		NF's ancient woodland habitat	
Habitat	Woodland	Woodland	Invertebrates, Amph	1	0	Increased creation of native woodland	Maintain, create, improve, restore buffer and connect ancient semi-natural woodland, plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) and long-established woodland	Maintain, create, improve, restore, buffer and connect ancient woodland, long-established woodland, native woodland and associated hedgerow, scrub and grassland habitat mosaic to provide connective habitat	Corstorphine, River Avon SAC, Sal	Lepidoptera
Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Maintain and improve ecological condition of woodland	Enhance woodland core areas			
Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Bring back with new woodlands	Bring back with new woodlands			
Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Restoration of ancient woodlands	Restoration of ancient woodlands			
Habitat	Woodland	Trees		1	1	Widescale adoption of agroforestry techniques	Widescale adoption of agroforestry techniques			
Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Widescale adoption of agroforestry techniques	Widescale adoption of agroforestry techniques			
Habitat	Woodland	Woodland	Hedgerow, Scrub, etc	1	1	Create or establish native woodland, hedgerow, scrub and grassland mosaic around ancient woodland	Create or establish native woodland, hedgerow, scrub and grassland mosaic around ancient woodland		NF's ancient woodland habitat	
Habitat	Freshwater	Rivers and Streams		1	1	Protect river from pollution in Maydon Wood	Protect river from pollution in Maydon Wood		Savernake Forest, Maydon Wood	
Habitat	Freshwater	Rivers and Streams		1	1	Remove physical barriers in river in Cricklade	Remove physical barriers in river in Cricklade		Cricklade	
Habitat	Freshwater	Rivers and Streams		1	1	Remove physical barriers in river in Cricklade	Remove physical barriers in river in Cricklade		Cricklade	
Habitat	Freshwater	Open Standing Water		1	4	Protect and enhance Cotswold Water Park	Protect and enhance Cotswold Water Park		Cotswold Water Park	
Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh	Calcareous Grassland	1	2	Create additional water based habitat via	Create additional water based habitat via			
Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh		1	11	Create, maintain, enhance, improve species rich wet grassland and wildflower meadow	Create, maintain, enhance, improve species rich wet grassland and wildflower meadow			
Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh		1	1	Create, maintain, enhance, improve species rich wet grassland and wildflower meadow	Create, maintain, enhance, improve species rich wet grassland and wildflower meadow			
Habitat	Freshwater	Wet Woodland, Wet		1	1	Expansion of the key habitats in the area	Expansion of the key habitats in the area			
Habitat	Freshwater	Wet Woodland, Wet		1	1	Expansion of the key habitats in the area	Expansion of the key habitats in the area			
Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh	Scrub, Meadows	1	4	Increased protection and enhancement of	Increased protection and enhancement of			
Habitat	Freshwater	Wetland		1	1	Restoration, restoration and connection of	Restoration, restoration and connection of			

Merge Inferred Priorities: Priorities of similar wording or of similar outcome were merged to produce a single priority. The number of priorities were then recorded as votes accumulated with any votes made at the longlisting events.

Collated Priorities: Following the merging of priorities, there was a second grouping and collating of priorities to enable shortlisting.

Shortlist Priorities: Following the collating of priorities, a trial run of shortlist scoring was undertaken and priorities of a similar wording within the same category were found to have resulted in the same scores, therefore a further grouping, and collating of priorities into a single priority for each habitat type was produced. From this, wording and decision making could be made within the shortlisting group regarding these groupings, decisions and phrasing.

Collated Priorities and Measures from Strategies

Priorities and measures from other strategies, plans and documents within Wiltshire were collated within the 'Collated Priorities and Measures from Strategies' Spreadsheet. The strategies referred to are those which have been agreed by collaborative groups or official sources.

These strategies include:

- Neighbourhood Plans
- Biodiversity Action Plans
- Catchment Plans
- Woodland Strategies
- Farmer Group Clusters
- Nature Recovery Plans
- Protected Sites Strategies

These strategies were then categorised in the same way as the event and survey data, by habitat, species or environmental benefit, and added to the spreadsheets.

Measure Spreadsheet

Measures for each priority were assessed in a different spreadsheet. Categories and areas were kept the same as their inferred priorities, and measures were considered separately. These measures themselves were then categorised into: General, Take Note and Map.

A more detailed account of the longlisting methodology can be found in **Appendix 5**.

Longlist outcomes

The final outputs from the longlisting process can be viewed in **Appendix 6**. These outputs will be taken forward to the next stage of the preparation of the LNRS (shortlisting) where local experts and professionals will further refine the priorities and measures to be put onto the LNRS map.

Appendix 1: Invitation to attend longlisting events

Dear [insert name]

I am writing to you about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Wiltshire and Swindon. I have written to you previously asking whether you would be willing to contribute to our user testing sessions in February 2024. I am now writing to you to ask for your further assistance with our longlisting exercise to identify priorities and measures for nature recovery. To remind you, the LNRS is a requirement for Wiltshire and Swindon councils to prepare in 2024. This link will take you to the Government's website should you wish to remind yourself why this is necessary and important. [Local nature recovery strategies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-nature-recovery-strategies) We are undertaking a challenging process to identify all priorities and measures for our area.

- Usability testing
- Longlist of priorities and measures – all data
- Online survey to identify further priorities and measures
- Shortlisting of priorities and measures – refined and focused data
- County-wide roadshows to identify how priorities and measures should be located on the ground
- Preparation of LNRS mapping package, report and interactive website.

So far, we have met with potential users to understand how to design our system so that it meets the needs of all relevant user groups.

This next stage is to develop a long list of all possible priorities and measures and this is where we are asking for your further assistance. **Our task at this stage is to put together a long list of all options for priorities (the outcomes we wish to achieve for nature) and measures (the actions we need to take to reach those outcomes).**

We will be holding three sessions for you to choose from where we are inviting you, anybody from your organisation who may be interested, and any contacts that you may wish to pass this invitation to. The sessions will be around three hours in locations across the County. We aim to have as many people as possible attend so that we can hear a wide range of views.

The venues and times are as follows:

Swindon	Pattern Church,	Penzance Drive, Swindon, SN5 7JL	5 March 2024
Trowbridge	County Hall	Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire. BA14 8JN	19 March 2024
Salisbury	Guildhall	The Market Place, Salisbury, SP1 1JH	12 March 2024

For each session, check-in will start at 13.30 with a prompt 14.00 start. The session will conclude at or before 17.00. Light refreshments will be served.

The session will be interactive and we will be asking all participants to help us create a rich and robust longlist. The longlist will be added to by an online survey so that nothing is missed. When this part of the process is concluded, the long list will be vetted by ecological professionals and a concise shortlist of priorities and measures will be prepared. This will then be tested at a series of roadshow events that will take place across the entire area in late Spring.

Please help us with this important project and:

- **Click this link to register which session you wish to attend. Once you have done this, we will send you joining instructions.**
- **Send this invitation to any colleagues you feel should attend to share their knowledge.**

Thank you and I look forward to meeting you in person at one of our sessions.

Appendix 2: Activities at in-person events

ON EACH TABLE

- **A0 Map of the Relevant Map** ie. North, Central or South Sections (labelled with relevant numbered areas ie. 1 to 11)
- **Post It Notes:** Yellow (Priorities), Blue (Measures), Pink (Geographical Overlap)
- **Voting Dots** (more use in second and third session)
- **Pens** (writing pens and whiteboard pens for drawing)
- **Documentation:** Small map of whole Wiltshire area and 11 areas, Description of appropriate areas with their small associated map (ie. North = Areas 1 to 3, Central = Areas 4 to 7, South = Areas 8 to 11), Maps of priority habitats, watercourses or any relevant information

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS: SESSION 1

- 5 mins Introduction
 - Introduce yourself/ meet people on your table
 - Facilitator to explain/recap task
 - Introduce documents (which were not yet on the table)
 - Explain the post its (Yellow = Priorities, Blue = Measures, Pink = Geographical overlap – make it clear that pink is geographical overlap, if want to specify another area, must be rewritten on that map)
 - Ask people to write clearly!! (We need to read it or it will be thrown out!)
 - Ask people if drawing on the map to link it to the appropriate post it
 - Can discuss across boundaries and outside – it's encouraged
- 5 mins Couple examples: run through a few examples of how post its should work and what should be written on them ie. Colour system
- 30 mins Everyone to write down ideas on post its: facilitators to encourage communication, link post its and get the information flowing
- 10 mins Discuss ideas: Talk about what you have written down if you want to follow up on ideas and add to others
- Summarise session of what they think has been agreed.
- Ensure all post its clear to read, taped down and read over before Session 2

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS: SESSION 2

- 5 mins Introduction
 - Introduce yourself to the table and highlight the area you are looking at
 - Introduce documents (which were not yet on the table)
 - Facilitator to discuss main points, priorities and measures that were discussed in Session 1
- 10 mins Everyone to write down ideas on post its
 - Add post its to existing ideas
 - Write new ideas
 - Use pink post its to link to previous point on another area/previous map
 - Use voting dots if agree with priorities and measures
- Summarise session of what they think has been agreed.
- Ensure all post its clear to read, taped down and move to the next table for Session 3

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS: SESSION 3 AS ABOVE

Appendix 3: Participation at March 2024 longlisting events.

There were 159 different attendees across three events (including facilitators, duplicate attendances not counted) representing 100 different businesses, councils, groups and organisations. The following were represented across the three in-person events:

Swindon – Tuesday 5th March 2024
35 attendees (including 7 facilitators)
Action for the River Kennet
Charlton Parish Council
Cotswold Lakes Trust
County Recorders – Invertebrates
County Recorders - Moths
Environment Agency
Environmental Farmers Group
Floodplain Meadows Partnership
Great Bedwyn Parish Council
Haydon Wick Parish Council
JM Stratton & Co
National Trust
Natural England
Perdix Partnership
Pryor and Rickett Silviculture
River Restoration Centre
St Andrews Parish Council
WBRC
WiltsARG
Wiltshire Council
Wiltshire Fishery Association
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust – Butterfly Conservation
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Wroughton Parish Council
Zulu Ecosystems

Salisbury – Tuesday 12th March 2024
59 attendees (including 9 facilitators)
Alderbury Parish Council
Brinkworth Parish Council
Broken Bridges Nature Reserve Trust
Butterfly Conservation – Wiltshire Branch
Chalke Valley Farmer Cluster
CLA
Cranborne Chase National Landscape
Cycling Opportunities Group Salisbury
East Knowle Parish Council
Easterton Parish Council
Environment Agency
Forest of Selwood
Forestry Commission
Fountains Forestry UK Ltd.
Fowler Fortescue
FWAG South East
GBG
GWCT
J Hitchings Partners
Landmarc Support Services
Laverstock and Ford Parish Council
Longford Estates
Mj. SA. NJ Coombes
Nadder Valley Cluster Group
Natural England
Pitton and Farley Parish Council
Pitton Nature Trust
Pryor and Rickett Silviculture
Salisbury and District Angling Club
Salisbury and District Natural History Society
Salisbury and Wilton Swifts
Salisbury Area Greenspace Partnership
Salisbury Wildlife Group
Tisbury Natural History Society
Tisbury Parish Council
WBRC
Wessex Rivers Trust
Wessex Woodland Management Ltd.
Wiltshire Council
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Trowbridge – Tuesday 19th March 2024
65 attendees (including 9 facilitators)
Andrea Pellegram Ltd.
Ayers Forestry Limited
Box Parish Council
Bradford on Avon Town Council
Bremhill Vales Farmers Group
Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
Broad Hinton and Winterbourne Bassett Parish Council
Butterfly Conservation – Wiltshire Branch
Center Parcs, Longleat Forest
Chapmanslade Parish Council
Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon
Cotswolds Landscape Partnership
County Recorders – Vascular Plants
Devizes Town Council
Duchy of Cornwall
Fittleton cum Haxton Parish Council
Forestry England
Found Outdoors
Friends of Warminster's Rivers
Glebe Farm
Greener Health Project
Keevil Parish Council
Langly Burrell Parish Council
Limply Stoke Parish Council
Market Lavington PC Community Group
Melksham Without Parish Council
Nadder Valley Farm Group
National Trust
Natural England
NFU
North Swindon Council
RSPB
Stourhead National Trust
Stourton Parish Council
Sustainable Calne
Sustainable Warminster
Tree Parts
Trowbridge Town Council
Upper Deverills Wildlife and Conservation Group
Warminster Toad Patrol
WBRC

Wessex Water
Westbury Town Council
Wiltshire Beekeepers Association
Wiltshire Council – Woodland Team
Wiltshire Council - Highways and Transport
Wiltshire Ornithological Society
Winsley Parish Council
Woodland and Countryside Management Ltd.

Appendix 4: Content of online survey

Wiltshire Council

Survey of nature recovery priorities for Wiltshire and Swindon Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a new, England-wide system of map-based strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits.

Wiltshire and Swindon's strategy will, for the first time, provide an agreed, coherent, and compelling approach to nature recovery, directing financial resources and organisational effort to where it is most needed.

This survey will help us understand your priorities for nature recovery in the county, and the measures needed to deliver them. This survey is designed to complement the three in person events we are holding on the 5th, 12th and 19th of March. We would encourage you to both attend one of these meetings and complete this survey. You can book a place at one of these events via the LNRS Wiltshire Council webpage.

When completing this survey, you might like to refer to our area descriptions. We have split the county into 11 "biodiversity areas", each with their own distinct landscape and wildlife. Our area descriptions show a detailed map of each of the 11 areas, as well as more information about that area and key opportunities for nature recovery. to view the area descriptions.

How will my data be used?

This survey will capture your name, organisation as well as some demographic information, alongside your values relating to nature, and your ideas of priorities and outcomes for nature recovery. None of the questions are mandatory, and the processing of your data is based on your consent. The information collected in this survey will support us to compile a longlist of priorities for the LNRS in Wiltshire and Swindon and

from this, a shortlist of priorities will be created which will form the basis of our LNRS mapping. We may use anonymised quotes and aggregated data from answers collected in this survey in our reporting and documentation.

For more information about how your personal data is processed, please see Wiltshire Council's Privacy Notice. For any questions, or to withdraw your consent for your personal data to be processed, please contact localnaturerecoverystrategy@wiltshire.gov.uk.

1. I have completed this survey before.
☐ Yes
☐ No
2. (If yes to Q1) So we can match your answers with your existing response(s) please add your name and organisation.
 Name:
3. Organisation:

Section 1: Personal Details

4. (If no to Q1) Name:
5. Organisation:

6. Stakeholder Group:

- ☐ Forester, Farmer or Landowner
- ☐ Public Bodies
- ☐ Parish or Town Council or Community Group
- ☐ Nature Group or NGO
- ☐ Local Authority - Wiltshire or Swindon Councils
- ☐ Developer, Planning Applicant or Consultant
- ☐ Member of the public
- ☐ Other

If other, please give more details:

[IMAGE OF BIODIVERSITY AREAS MAP]

[Click here to view the area descriptions to see a more detailed map and information for each of the 11 areas.](#)

7. Which area of Wiltshire do you live or work in or most strongly associate with out of the 11 biodiversity areas shown on the map above?

- ☐ Wiltshire wide
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11

For us to understand who our respondents are and how representative the LNRS will be, we would appreciate if you could tell us the following:

8. How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24 years old
- ☐ 25-34 years old
- ☐ 35-44 years old
- ☐ 45-54 years old
- ☐ 55-64 years old
- ☐ 65+ years old
- ☐ Prefer not to say

9. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Transgender
☐ Non-binary
☐ Other (please specify)
☐ Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

10. What is your ethnic background?

- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian
☐ Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - African, Caribbean or Other Black
☐ Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian, White and Black African, White and Black Caribbean, Other Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups
☐ White - White British, White Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma, Other White
☐ Other ethnic group
☐ Prefer not to say

Section 2: Your values

11. In your opinion, what are the top three most important benefits nature provides?

- ☐ Tackle climate change by storing more carbon
☐ Increase the water available during droughts by storing more water
☐ Reduce the impacts of flooding e.g. by storing more water and improving river condition
☐ Improve water quality in rivers, ponds, ditches, and lakes (reduced pollution)
☐ Improve the quality of our air (reduced pollution)
☐ Benefit people's wellbeing (mental and physical) by having more/better quality places for all people to access and enjoy nature
☐ Benefit health by reducing the impact of heat in towns and cities using nature (e.g. increasing shade)
☐ Boost the economy by supporting businesses to work with nature and increase opportunities for outdoor recreation and natural products
☐ Continue to produce food on farmland into the future (food security from healthy soils)

Section 3: Detailed Priorities for Nature Recovery

In this section we are asking you to provide us with some detail about what your priorities and measures for nature recovery are. Please only

input one priority at a time. If you are not sure what to write in the boxes please put "N/A".

At the bottom of the page, you will find an option to 'add another priority' - please select 'yes' if that is the case, and you will be able to add more. You can add up to 5 priorities per form. To add more than 5, click on the survey link again and select 'yes' to the first question, which will take you straight through to the priorities section

When completing this part of the survey, you might like to refer to our area descriptions. We have split the county into 11 "biodiversity areas", each with their own distinct landscape and wildlife. Our area descriptions show a detailed map of each of the 11 areas, as well as more information about that area and key opportunities for nature recovery. to view the area descriptions.

12. Your priority for nature recovery

A priority is the end results the strategy is seeking to achieve. For example, "better connected ancient woodland blocks", "larger populations of butterflies" OR "improved water quality in the river Kennet".

What is the priority? Name the thing that is a priority for you. For example "water quality", "flooding", "hedgerow species composition" OR "climate change adaptations".

13. What is the outcome you want? For example "improved water quality", "reconnected floodplains to reduce urban flooding", "more fruit bearing species in hedgerow mixes" OR "plant climate robust tree species"

14. Anything more to say? You can include links to resources or documents that give more information and research here. We are also interested to hear about any cross boundary issues or opportunities. (maximum 500 characters)

[IMAGE OF BIODIVERSITY AREAS MAP]

Click here to view the area descriptions to see a more detailed map and information for each of the 11 areas.

15. **Please refer to the map of biodiversity areas above and select all the areas you think this priority applies.**

- ☐ Wiltshire wide
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5
☐ 6
☐ 7
☐ 8
☐ 9
☐ 10
☐ 11

16. **Tell us why you feel this is a priority in this area.** The LNRS will not be able to prioritise everything so providing strong justification will help us with this decision. (maximum 2,500 characters)

17. **Do you know if this priority appears in any local strategy?** If so, please name it and where possible include a link to the document and a page number. Examples of local strategies or plans include: a formally agreed farmer group strategy, an AONB management plan, neighbourhood plan etc.

18. **What are the key measures you think would help achieve this priority?** A measure is a specific practical action to achieve the priority. Please list as many measures as you want. (maximum 2,500 characters)

19. Would you like to add another Priority?

- ☐ Yes (if Yes, you can add up to 5 priorities, repeats from Question 12 onwards each time)
☐ No (if No, go to Question 51)

51. **If you are a landowner, or directly manage any land, please tell us any additional information you would like us to be aware of.** You can leave this blank if this doesn't apply. Consider including information like: what the most important habitats on the land are, the actions you are already taking for wildlife, what resources (help, materials, funding, systematic changes) would you want or need to do more and what else might you want to do. (maximum 3,000 characters)

52. **Help us think outside the box!** We must collect priorities and measures, but this can be restrictive. If you have any other thoughts or genius ideas you would like to share please do so here. (maximum 2,500 characters)

53. **Please leave your email address here if you would like to sign up to the LNRS mailing list and haven't already done so.**

By sharing your name, organisation, stakeholder group and email address with the Wiltshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), you are agreeing that we can store this information securely on our contact list and are happy to receive regular email updates about Wiltshire LNRS process via our e-newsletter, invitations to relevant stakeholder events and surveys to participate in the LNRS process in Wiltshire. You can opt out at any time by following the link on the email updates.

Please press the submit button below to send your completed survey to us.

Thank you for completing the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist survey. We really appreciate your time.

After you have submitted your form, you can still share more priorities with us until the closing date of the survey (Sunday 31st March 2024). Just follow the survey link again and select 'yes' to the first question, which will take you directly to the Priorities section where you can add up to 5 priorities at one time.

For any questions about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in Wiltshire and Swindon, please contact us via localnaturerecoverystrategy@wiltshire.gov.uk

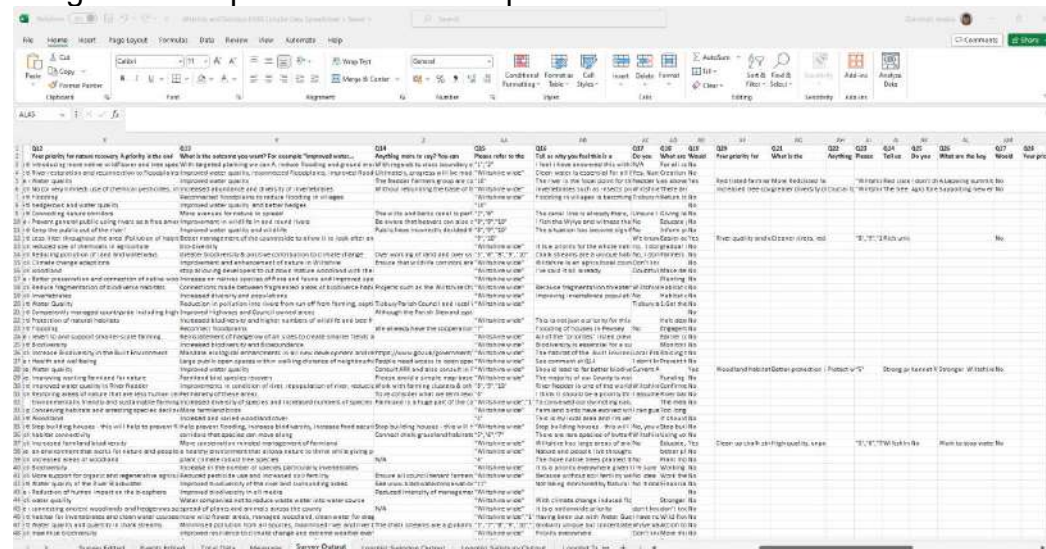
Appendix 5: Full Longlisting Methodology

Longlisting Data Collection

All existing data was kept and unchanged from both the survey and the longlisting events.

‘Survey Output’

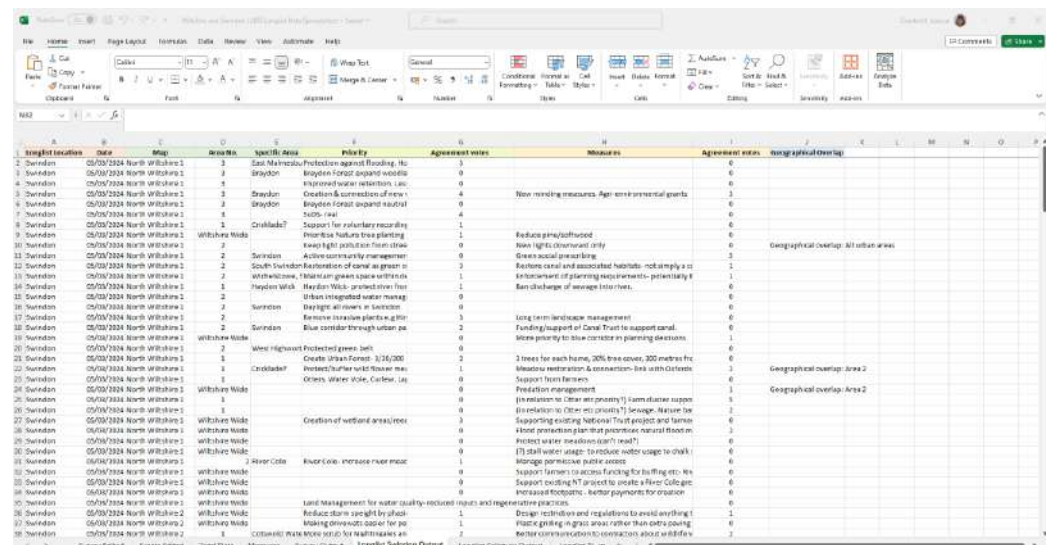
All raw data was placed in this tab of the ‘Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet’ excel spreadsheet and left unedited.



There were 276 responders from the survey. From these responses 1727 priorities were identified and categorised.

‘Longlist Swindon Output’, ‘Longlist Salisbury Output’, and ‘Longlist Trowbridge Output’

All the data was typed up by Rebecca Saldanha, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and saved into these tabs of the ‘Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet’. This data was typed up exactly as written on the post it notes within the three longlisting events.



There were 3 events where data was collected;

Tuesday 5th March in Swindon

Tuesday 12th March in Salisbury

Tuesday 19th March in Trowbridge

From these events, 168 people attended. Within each event, people were asked to write their priorities and measures for nature recovery on post it

Any data that was not required for the next stage of the process was transferred into this tab but hidden from view, including name and organisation etc.

Additional Data Added

Within the survey outputs, additional information was added to the spreadsheet:

Column X: Survey or Event

This column was added to differentiate between the data from the survey and the longlisting events, when all data was collated into one spreadsheet.

Column Y: Habitat, Species, Environmental Benefits or Other

This column was added to help breakdown the data into different categories to help collate similar priorities and common themes within the data to pass on to shortlisting ie. Habitat, Species, Environmental Benefits or Other.

Column Z: Habitat Type

This column was added to categorise the habitat priorities into different Habitat Types, for example: Arable, Freshwater, Grassland, Heathland, Hedgerows, Trees, Urban or Woodland. 'N/A' was used for species, environmental benefits and other categories as information was relevant in this column.

This column was added to group Habitat types in categories.

Column AA: Subcategories

This column was added to specify the type of species, environmental benefit or habitat category to help direct priorities into similar groups to ease decision-making within the shortlisting process

Habitat, Species, Environmental Benefits or Other	Habitat Type	Subcategories	Notes
Habitat	Woodland	Ancient Woodland	
		Wet Woodland	
		Woodland	Non-specified woodland species/types
		Wood Pasture and Parkland	
	Grassland	Calcareous Grassland	Includes limestone and chalk grassland
		Meadow	
		Neutral Grassland	
		Scrub	
		Wildflower	
	Freshwater	Chalk Rivers and Streams	
		Floodplain Marsh	
		Open Standing Water	Includes lakes, ponds, reservoirs, canals, ditches
		Rivers and Streams	
		Wetland	
	Urban	Green Space	
		Trees	
		Urban	
		Wildflower	
	Heathland	Heathland	
	Trees	Orchard	
		Trees	Includes field trees, ancient trees, agro-forestry
	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Includes hedgerow trees
	Arable	Arable	
		Arable Margins	
Species	N/A	Amphibians	
		Aquatic Mammals	
		Aquatic Species	Excludes mammals

		Bats	
		Birds	
		Invertebrates	
		Non-Native Species	
		Plants, Lichens and Fungi	
		Reptiles	
		Terrestrial Mammals	
Environmental Benefits	N/A	Carbon Sequestration	
		Clean Air	
		Climate Change Adaptations	
		Flood Mitigation	
		Soil Quality	
		Water Quality	
Other	N/A	Out of Scope	Not relevant to nature recovery
		Suggestion	Recommendations of who/what should be involved within the LNRS process
		Vague	Unclear of what the outcome/priority is highlighting or suggesting

Column AB: Inferred Priorities

A column for Inferred Priorities was created to merge the results/outputs from the online survey of priorities and outcomes, to produce an overall priority to ease interpretation for longlisting. Due to the responses and the way the questions were phrased, inferred priorities were produced by merging columns AC and AD.

Column AB: Inferred Priorities

Column AC: Your priority for nature recovery

Column AD: What is the outcome you want?

Example 1: Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet

AC137: Clean up chalk stream water quality and prevent over-abstraction

AD137: High quality, unpolluted chalk streams and rivers that have healthy flows year-round

AC137 and AD137 Merged to produce inferred priority...

AB137: Clean up chalk stream water quality and prevent over-abstraction to encourage high quality, unpolluted chalk streams and rivers that have healthy flows year-round

AB	AC	AD
1 Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome
137 Clean up chalk stream water quality and prevent over-abstraction to encourage high quality, unpolluted chalk streams and rivers that have healthy flows year-round	Clean up chalk stream water quality and prevent over-abstraction	High quality, unpolluted chalk streams and rivers that have healthy flows year-round

Example 2: Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet

AC305: native woodland

AD305: preservation of native species of flora and fauna

AC305 and AD305 Merged to produce inferred priority...

AB305: Increased native woodland to preserve native species of flora and fauna

AB	AC	AD
1 Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome
305 Increased native woodland to preserve native species of flora and fauna	native woodland	preservation of native species of flora and fauna

Column AE: No. of Votes

This column was added so when people supported a priority within the events they allocated a voting dot to show popularity of a priority.

Column AH: Specific Area/Species Highlighted

This column was added to help highlight any specific species or area within Wiltshire that had been mentioned either within the priority or further comments in the survey to highlight a possible importance or spatial area this priority may have.

Columns AJ-AZ: Measures 1 to 16

These columns were adapted from the original spreadsheet to ease interpretation. The original outputs listed all the measures in one cell of the table, these were then separate out into one row.

Priorities were given their own row each within the 'Survey Edited' tab, whereas in the raw data, priorities given by the same person were all on the same row.

By moving priorities to have a row each, all other information in relation to the priority was duplicated eg. Name and organisation of the person was duplicated for each priority that was given.

Measures were then divided into separate columns, depending on the number of measures provided.

AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	QI
3	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35	Q36	QI
I like to add other priority?	Your priority for nature recovery A is the and	What is the outcome you want? For example "Improved water..."	more to say? You can include	refer to the map of	why you feel this is a priority	know if this measures you think would help achieve th...	What are the key measures you think would help achieve th...	you like to add another Priority?	Your priority for nature recovery A is the and	What is the outcome you want? For example "Improved water..."	more to say? You can include	refer to the map of	why you feel this is a priority	know if this measures you think would help achieve th...	What are the key measures you think would help achieve th...	you like to add for another nature ye	priority th	ci

Original Layout

AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA
Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome	No.	Add	Area	Spec	Why	App	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea

New Layout

Example 1: Survey Output, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRs Longlist Data Spreadsheet

Row 36

Raw Data Measures Survey Output: Using volunteers to help plant plug plants and tree saplings. Ensuring farmers actively manage appropriate grazing in the area. Monitoring the results over several years to check that habitats are developing and species are spreading.

3 measures were provided for this priority, which was generated in the same cell.

W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA
36	In year	Your priority for nature recovery A is the and	What is the outcome you want? For example "Improved water..."	Anything extra to say? You can	Please refer to the	Tell us why you feel this is a	Do you	What are the key measures you think would help achieve th...	Using volunteers to help plant plug plants and tree saplings. Ensuring farmers actively manage appropriate grazing in the area. Monitoring the results over several years to check that habitats are developing and species are spreading.	What	Your priority for	What is the																		

Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRs Longlist Data Spreadsheet

Row 117

These same measures were divided into 3 separate measures and split into 3 different cells:

Column AJ: Measure 1: Using volunteers to help plant plug plants and tree saplings.

Column AK: Measure 2: Ensuring farmers actively manage appropriate grazing in the area.

Column AL: Measure 3: Monitoring the results over several years to check that habitats are developing and species are spreading.

AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA			
1	Subcategories	Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome	No.	Add	Area	Spec	Why	App	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea	Mea

117	Diversity	Increase habitat connect	habitat connectivity	corridors that species can move along	Connect	5	There is	with	plug plants and tree saplings.	Ensuring farmers actively manage appropriate grazing in the area.	Monitoring the results over several years to check that habitats are developing and species are spreading.																		
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Area Duplication

Where priorities were highlighted for multiple areas, these priorities were duplicated, so that this priority could be examined under each area. This was done within both the survey data: 'Survey Edited' tab and the events data: 'Events Edited'.

Example 1:

Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRs Longlist Data Spreadsheet

Rows 526 and 527

AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG
1	Habitat Ty	Subcategories	Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome	No.
526	Woodland	Ancient Woodland	Better connected ancient woodlands to expand existing woods and connectivity between them	better connected ancient woodlands	existing woods and connectivity	https://
527	Woodland	Ancient Woodland	Better connected ancient woodlands to expand existing woods and connectivity between them	better connected ancient woodlands	existing woods and connectivity	https://

The priority was duplicated and split into separate areas as it had been highlighted for areas 9 and 10. All data relevant to these priorities was also duplicated.

Subcategory Duplication

Where priorities were highlighted for different subcategories, these priorities were duplicated, so that this priority could be examined under each subcategory. These were highlighted in yellow and a comment was added 'Multiple priorities highlighted = duplication'. This were done within both the survey data: 'Survey Edited' tab and the events data: 'Events Edited'.

Example 1:

Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet
Rows 754 and 755

The priority: Increased species diversity and connectivity in woodland and meadows, was duplicated to categorise into habitat meadow subcategory and woodland subcategory.

1	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH
	Surv	Habitat	Habitat Ty	Subcategories	Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome	No.	Add	Are	Spe
754	Survey	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland	Increased species diversity and connectivity in woodland and meadows	species diversity in both meadows and woodla	increased connectivity for			e	Wide
755	Survey	Habitat	Grassland	Meadows	Increased species diversity and connectivity in woodland and meadows	species diversity in both meadows and woodla	increased connectivity for			e	Wide
756	Survey	Environment	N/A	Water Quality	Improved water quality	species diversity in both meadows and woodla	increased connectivity for			e	Wide
757	Survey	Habitat	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Increased hedgerows to improve connectivity for wildlife, provide more hedgerows	species diversity in both meadows and woodla	increased connectivity for			e	Wide
758	Survey	Habitat	Arable	Arable Margins	Increased wildflower strips alongside hedgerows will increase the number of hedgerows	species diversity in both meadows and woodla	increased connectivity for			e	Wide
759	Survey	Habitat	Urban	Wildflower	Management of roadside verges to increase insect life which will increase the number of hedgerows	species diversity in both meadows and woodla	increased connectivity for			e	Wide

Separate Priorities but the Same Output

Priorities were duplicated where the priority and outcome provided in the survey output addressed different issues. This were done within both the survey data: 'Survey Edited' tab and the events data: 'Events Edited'.

Example 1: *Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet*

Rows 577, 578, 579, 580, 581 and 582

The Priority: protect ancient chalk grasslands, woodlands and water courses, improve hedgerow species, plant shrubs etc to protect water runoff down slopes, was divided into different inferred priorities:

The Outcome: improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.

Priority 1: Protect ancient chalk grasslands

Priority 2: Protect Woodlands

Priority 3: Protect water courses

Priority 4: Improve hedgerow Species

Priority 5: Improve floodplains for water storage

Priority 6: Plant native trees sympathetic to the area

1	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD
	Surv	Habitat	Habitat Ty	Subcategories	Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome
577	Survey	Habitat	Grassland	Calcareous Grassland	Protect ancient chalk grasslands	protect ancient chalk grasslands, woodlands and water courses, improve hedgerow species, plant shrubs etc to protect water runoff down slopes	improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.
578	Survey	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland	Protect woodlands	protect ancient chalk grasslands, woodlands and water courses, improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.	improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.
579	Survey	Habitat	Freshwater	Rivers and Streams	Protect water courses	protect ancient chalk grasslands, woodlands and water courses, improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.	improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.
580	Survey	Habitat	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Improve hedgerow species	protect ancient chalk grasslands, woodlands and water courses, improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.	improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.
581	Survey	Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh	Improve floodplains for water storage	protect ancient chalk grasslands, woodlands and water courses, improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.	improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.
582	Survey	Habitat	Trees	Trees	Plant native trees sympathetic to the area	protect ancient chalk grasslands, woodlands and water courses, improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.	improve floodplains for water storage, remove straightend river sections to slow water down, plant native trees sympathetic to the area.

Example 2: *Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet*

Row 284 and 285

Priority: water quality

Outcome: better connected ancient woodland blocks

Row 284 Inferred Priority: Better connected ancient woodland blocks

Row 285 Inferred Priority: Improve water quality

1	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD
	Surv	Habitat	Habitat Ty	Subcategories	Inferred Priority	Priority	Outcome
284	Survey	Habitat	Woodland	Ancient Woodland	Better connected ancient woodland blocks	water quality	better connected ancient woodland blocks
285	Survey	Habitat	Freshwater	Water Quality	Improve water quality	water quality	better connected ancient woodland blocks

Inferred Priorities from Q14, Q16, Q51 and Q52

Comments within Column AF: Additional Information (Q14) Anything more to say? You can include links to resources; Column AI: Why is it a Priority (Q16) Tell us why you feel this is a priority in this area; Column BA: If you are a landowner, or directly manage any land (Q51) If you are a landowner, or directly manage any land; Column BB: Help us think outside the box! (Q52); were analysed to suggest if priorities had been stated. These priorities were then added to column AB with any other information from this survey entry provided duplicated in the spreadsheet.

Every measure provided within the survey output was then assessed. If a measure provided was written as a priority this was then added to column AB with any other information from this survey entry provided duplicated in the spreadsheet. This were done within both the survey data: 'Survey Edited' tab and the events data: 'Events Edited'.

'Total Data'

Longlist Data for Shortlisting

‘Longlist Area 1’

[illegible]

Merge Inferred Priorities

Priorities of similar wording or of similar outcome were merged to produced a single priority. The number of priorities were then recorded as votes accumulated with any votes made at the longlisting events.

Example 1: Survey Edited, Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS Longlist Data Spreadsheet

Original Hedgerow Habitat Category Inferred Priorities:

1. Enhance, protect and create hedgerow habitats to protect and increase populations of butterflies and moths
2. Plant and connect more hedgerows
3. Hedgerow Planting
4. Increase length and width of existing hedgerows
5. Create or establish hedgerows to provide connective habitat, via planting and natural regeneration
6. Increase planting and enhancement of hedgerows

Area 1 Shortlist, Habitat Longlist for Shortlist Spreadsheet

Professional judgement was used to merge these 6 priorities together to produce 2 Hedgerow priorities:

1. Increase length and width of existing hedgerows
2. Increased planting, connectivity and enhancement of more hedgerows to provide connective habitat, via planting and natural regeneration

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Habitat	Habitat Type	Subcategories	Secondary Categories	Area	No. of 1	Inferred Priority
9	Habitat	Hedgerows	Hedgerows		1	1	Increase length and width of existing hedgerows
10	Habitat	Hedgerows	Hedgerows		1	11	Increased planting, connectivity and enhancement of more hedgerows to provide connective habitat, via planting and natural regeneration

Collated Priorities

Following the merging of priorities, there was a second grouping and collating of priorities to enable shortlisting. Again priorities of similar wording or of similar outcome were further grouped into one.

Example 1: Area 1 Shortlist, Habitat Longlist for Shortlist Spreadsheet

Woodland Habitat Inferred Priorities:

1. Connected and buffered areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) and long-established woodland
2. Increased creation of native woodland to introduce more biodiversity by allowing safe passage for insects, butterflies and moths, amphibians, birds and other wildlife.
3. Maintained and improved ecological condition of existing woodland habitats and trees including Braydon Forest, including improved structural diversity and availability of dead wood habitat, to contribute towards the government's Net Zero targets and enhance resilience to threats such as climate change, pests and diseases
4. Increase woodland copse areas
5. Bring back elm tree woodlands
6. Restoration of willow pollards
7. Widescale adoption of agroforestry techniques to ensure food security whilst mitigating environmental impacts of farming on wildlife and ecosystems
8. Create or establish native woodland, hedgerows, scrub and rough grassland mosaic around ancient woodland to provide connective habitat, via planting and natural regeneration

Woodland Collated Priorities:

Merged priorities 1 to 6: Maintain, create, improve, restore buffer and connect ancient semi-natural woodland, plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) and long-established woodland

Priority 7: Widescale adoption of agroforestry techniques

Priority 8: Create or establish native woodland, hedgerows, scrub and rough grassland mosaics around ancient woodland to provide connective habitat, through planting and natural regeneration

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Habitat	Habitat Type	Subcategories	Secondary Categories	Area	No. of	Inferred Priority	Collated Priority
11	Habitat	Woodland	Ancient Woodland	Woodland	1	1	Connected and buffered areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, increased creation of native woodland to introduce more biodiversity by allowing safe passage for insects, butterflies and moths, amphibians, birds and other wildlife.
12	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland	Invertebrates, Amphibians	1	3	Maintained and improved ecological condition of existing woodland habitats and trees including Brendon Forest, including improved structural diversity and availability of dead wood habitat, to contribute towards the government's Net Zero targets and enhance resilience to threats such as climate change, pests and diseases
13	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Increased woodland coppice areas
14	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Bring back elm tree woodlands
15	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Restoration of willow pollards
16	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Widescale adoption of agroforestry techniques to ensure food security whilst mitigating environmental impacts of farming on wildlife and ecosystems
17	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland		1	1	Create or establish native woodland, hedgerows, scrub and rough grassland mosaic around ancient woodland to provide connective habitat, through planting and natural regeneration
18	Habitat	Woodland	Woodland	Hedgerows, Scrub, Grassland	1	3	

Shortlist Priorities

Following the collating of priorities, a trial run of shortlist scoring was undertaken and priorities of a similar wording within the same category were found to have resulted in the same scores, therefore a further grouping, and collating of priorities into a single priority for each habitat type was produced. From this, wording and decision making could be made within the shortlisting group regarding these groupings, decisions and phrasing.

Example 1: Area 1 Shortlist, Habitat Longlist for Shortlist Spreadsheet Floodplain Marsh Habitat Collated Priorities:

1. Create, maintain, enhance, improve and establish species rich wet grassland wildflower meadow floodplains, biodiversity-rich wet woodland, wetlands, reedbeds, shallow lakes, marsh and other wetland habitat mosaics to provide connective habitat
2. Recreation, restoration and connection of increased diverse wetland habitat
3. Increased riparian buffers

Shortlist Priority for Floodplain Marsh: Create, restore, maintain, enhance, improve and establish species rich floodplains, wet woodland, wetland, reedbeds, marsh, grassland, meadow and other wetland habitat mosaics to provide connective habitat

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Habitat	Habitat Type	Subcategories	Secondary Categories	Area	No. of	Inferred Priority	Collated Priority	Shortlist Priorities
23	Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh	Calcareous Grassland	1	2	marsh and ponds to increase wetland habitat on chalk	Create, maintain, enhance, improve and establish species rich wet grassland wildflower meadow floodplains, biodiversity-rich wet woodland, wetlands, reedbeds, shallow lakes, marsh and other wetland habitat mosaics to provide connective habitat
24	Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh		1	11	Create, maintain, enhance, improve species rich wet grassland wildflower meadow floodplains and other wet grassland habitats, wetland, reedbeds, shallow lakes, marsh, wet woodlands and innovative freshwater river options to deliver multiple benefits in terms of water and flood management, water quality improvements, human health and wellbeing benefits and other ecological services	
25	Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh	Wet Woodland, Water O	1	3	Expansion of the key habitats in the area around Cotswold lakes including open grassland and scrub, with the only wooded parts being properly functioning wet woodland	
26	Habitat	Freshwater	Wet Woodland	Grassland, Scrub	1	1	Develop a rich complex of open water, watercourses, scrub and willow carr, lowland meadows and floodplain grazing marsh that allows for the perpetuation of the habitat features that are important for niche species, and robust refuge for those species more susceptible to disturbance from human activity	
27	Habitat	Freshwater	Floodplain Marsh	Scrub, Meadows	1	4	Wetland habitat especially between WJ and E of CWP	Recreation, restoration and connection of increased diverse wetland habitat
28	Habitat	Freshwater	Wetland		1	6	Increased creation of wetlands to introduce more biodiversity by allowing safe passage for insects, amphibians, birds and other wildlife	
29	Habitat	Freshwater	Wetland	Invertebrates, Amphibians	1	4	Increased riparian planting to introduce more biodiversity by allowing safe passage for insects, amphibians, birds and other wildlife	
30	Habitat	Grassland	Wildflower	Invertebrates, Amphibians	1	1		Increased riparian buffers

Collated Priorities and Measures from Strategies

Priorities and measures from other strategies, plans and documents within Wiltshire were collated within the 'Collated Priorities and Measures from Strategies' Spreadsheet. The strategies referred to are those which have been agreed by collaborative groups or official sources.

These strategies include:

- Neighbourhood Plans
- Biodiversity Action Plans
- Catchment Plans
- Woodland Strategies
- Farmer Group Clusters
- Nature Recovery Plans
- Protected Sites Strategies

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
G36											
41	Habitat	Upland	Fraser fir, Spruce	Shrub, heather	1	4	Increased plant diversity and some species				
42	Habitat	Freshwater	Wetland		1	6	Recreation, restoration and connection of	Recreation, restoration and connection of	Other wetland habitats needed to provide		
43	Habitat	Freshwater	Wetland	Emergent, Ampt			Increased creation of wetlands to introduce	Increased diverse wetland habitat	collective habitat		
44	Habitat	Grassland	Wetland	Emergent, Ampt	1	1	Increased riparian planting to introduce	Increased riparian			
45	Habitat	Upland	Wetland	Wetland	1	4	Introducing more native tree species and	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
46	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland	Introduce, enhance and support increased native		
47	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland	tree species, hedgerow, green verges		
48	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
49	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
50	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
51	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
52	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
53	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
54	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
55	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
56	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
57	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
58	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
59	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
60	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
61	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
62	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
63	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
64	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
65	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
66	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
67	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
68	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
69	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
70	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
71	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
72	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
73	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
74	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
75	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
76	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
77	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
78	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
79	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
80	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
81	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
82	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
83	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
84	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
85	Habitat	Urban	Woodland		1	2	Increased forest planting to introduce	Introducing native tree species and wetland			
86	Habitat										

Measures for each priority were assessed in a different tab within the spreadsheet. Categories and areas were kept the same as their inferred priorities, and measures were given a row each. These measures themselves were then categorised into: General, Take Note and Map. General was used to identify measures that would likely be covered within priorities or measures already provided. Take note was used to identify measures that were of specific interest and worth discussion within the shortlisting process. Map was used to identify measures that were of particular interest for mapping purposes.

—11— 91— 100— 100—

Appendix 6: Longlist outcomes

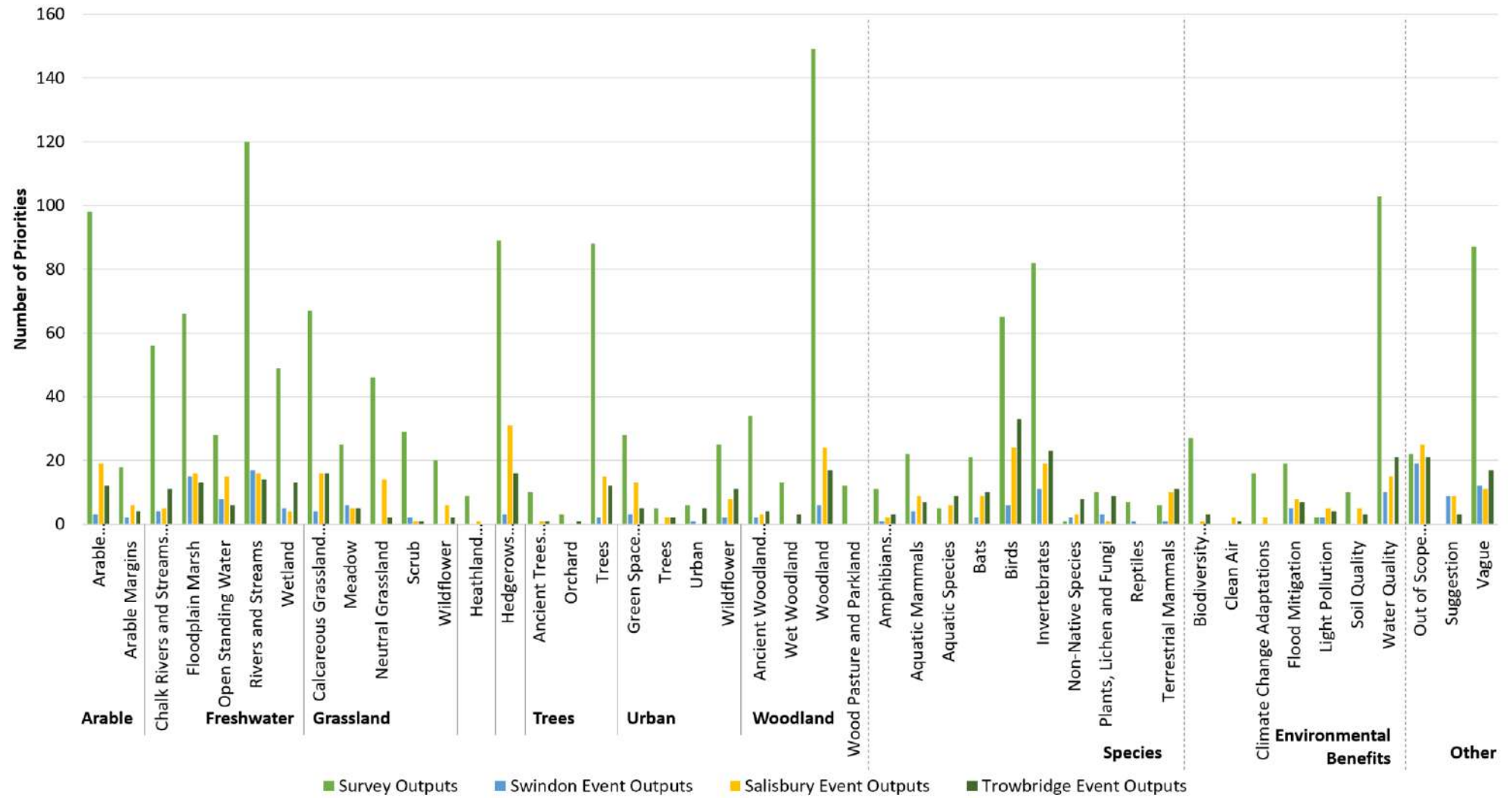
Longlisting Data Categories

	Survey Outputs	Swindon Event Outputs	Salisbury Event Outputs	Trowbridge Event Outputs	Total Outputs
Habitats	1093	85	221	176	1575
Species	230	31	83	113	457
Environmental Benefits	177	17	38	39	271
Other	109	40	45	41	235
Total	1609	173	387	369	2538

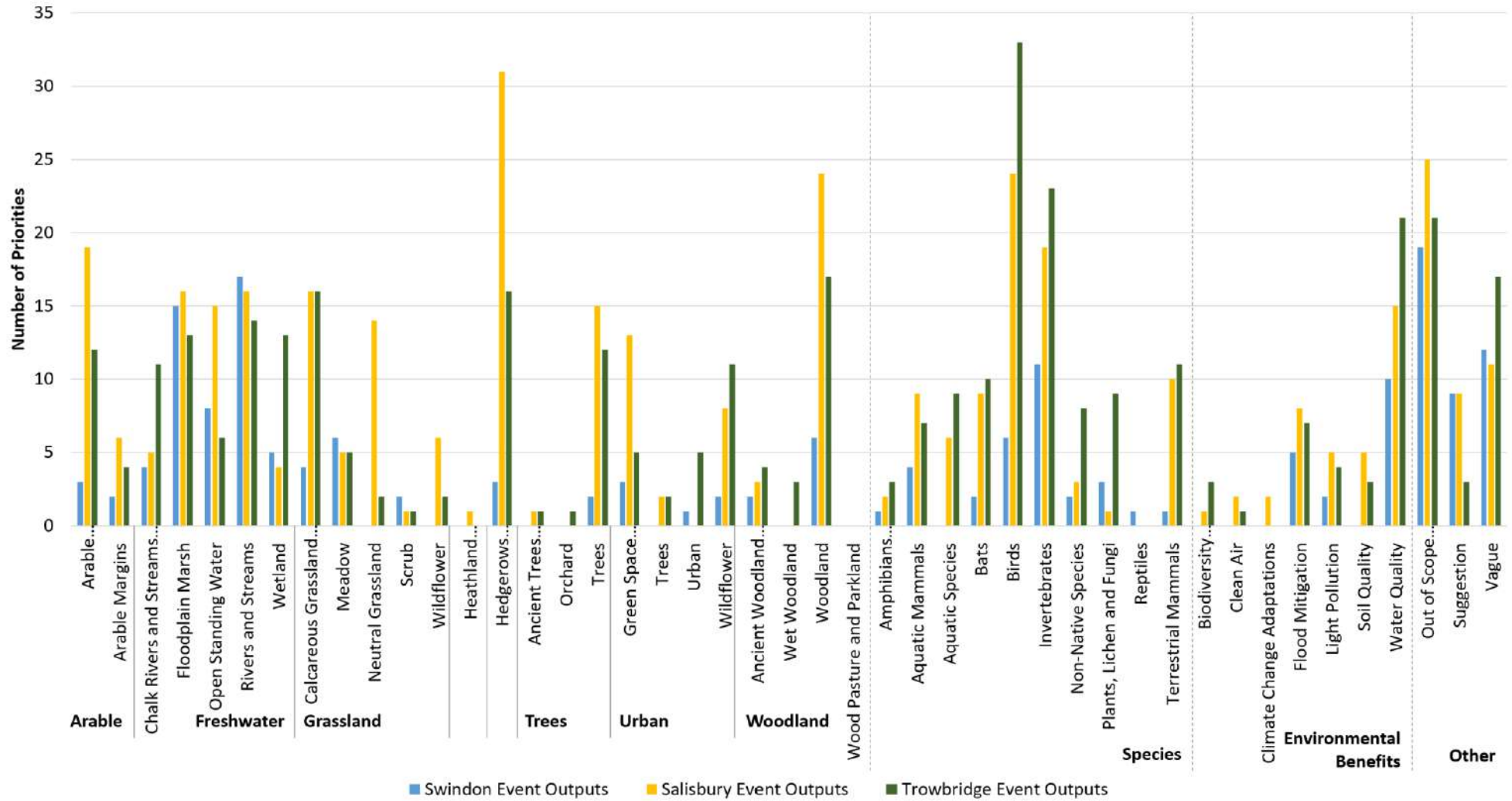
Species	Survey Outputs	Swindon Event Outputs	Salisbury Event Outputs	Trowbridge Event Outputs	Total Outputs
Amphibians	11	1	2	3	17
Aquatic Mammals	22	4	9	7	42
Aquatic Species	5	0	6	9	20
Bats	21	2	9	10	42
Birds	65	6	24	33	128
Invertebrates	82	11	19	23	135
Non-Native Species	1	2	3	8	14
Plants, Lichen and Fungi	10	3	1	9	23
Reptiles	7	1	0	0	8
Terrestrial Mammals	6	1	10	11	28
Total	230	31	83	113	457

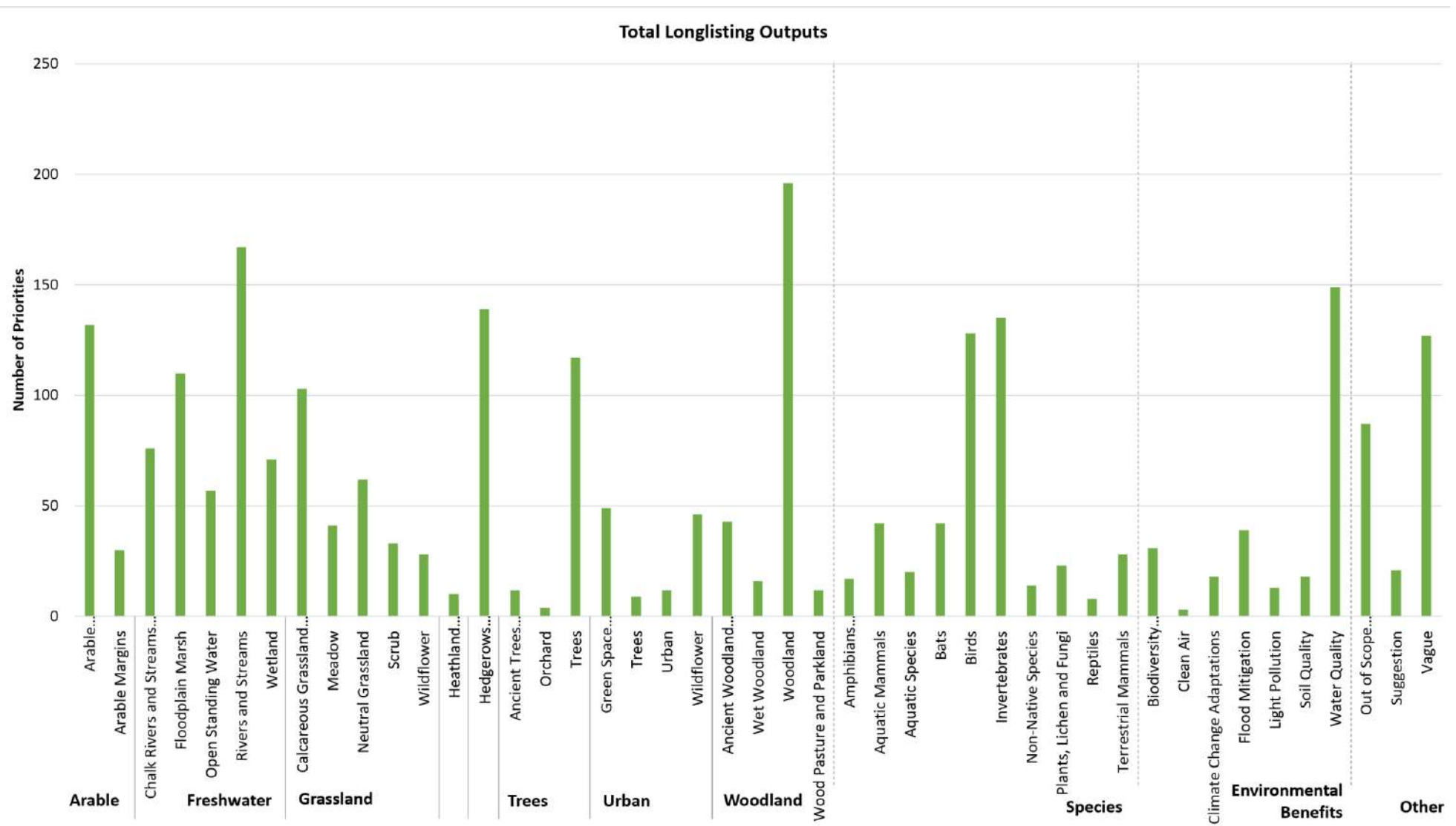
Habitat Type	Subcategories	Survey Outputs	Swindon Event Outputs	Salisbury Event Outputs	Trowbridge Event Outputs	Total Outputs
Arable	Arable	98	3	19	12	132
	Arable Margins	18	2	6	4	30
Freshwater	Chalk Rivers and Streams	56	4	5	11	76
	Floodplain Marsh	66	15	16	13	110
	Open Standing Water	28	8	15	6	57
	Rivers and Streams	120	17	16	14	167
	Wetland	49	5	4	13	71
Grassland	Calcareous Grassland	67	4	16	16	103
	Meadows	25	6	5	5	41
	Neutral Grassland	46	0	14	2	62
	Scrub	29	2	1	1	33
	Wildflower	20	0	6	2	28
Heathland	Heathland	9	0	1	0	10
Hedgerows	Hedgerows	89	3	31	16	139
	Ancient Trees	10	0	1	1	12
Trees	Orchard	3	0	0	1	4
	Trees	88	2	15	12	117
Urban	Green Space	28	3	13	5	49
	Trees	5	0	2	2	9
	Urban	6	1	0	5	12
Woodland	Wildflower	25	2	8	11	46
	Ancient Woodland	34	2	3	4	43
	Wet Woodland	13	0	0	3	16
	Woodland	149	6	24	17	196
Wood Pasture and Parkland	Wood Pasture and Parkland	12	0	0	0	12
Total		1093	85	221	176	1575

Longlisting Category Outputs



Longlisting Events Outputs



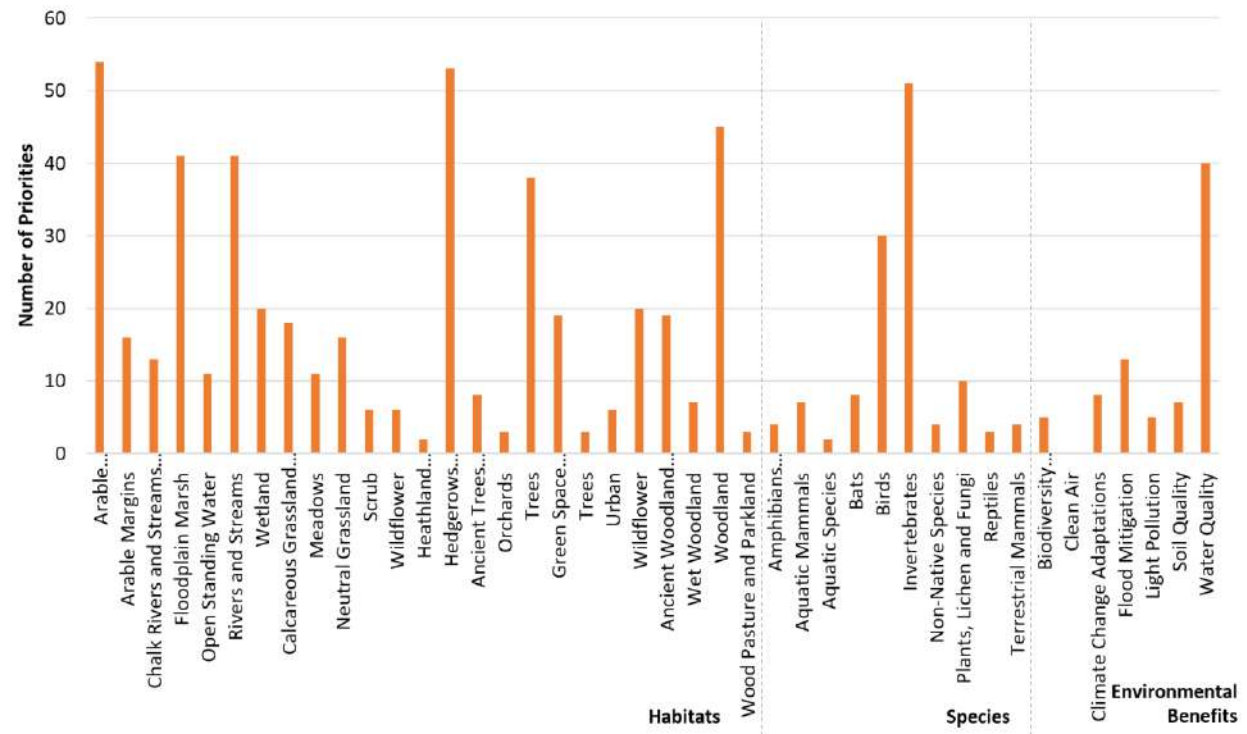


Wiltshire Wide

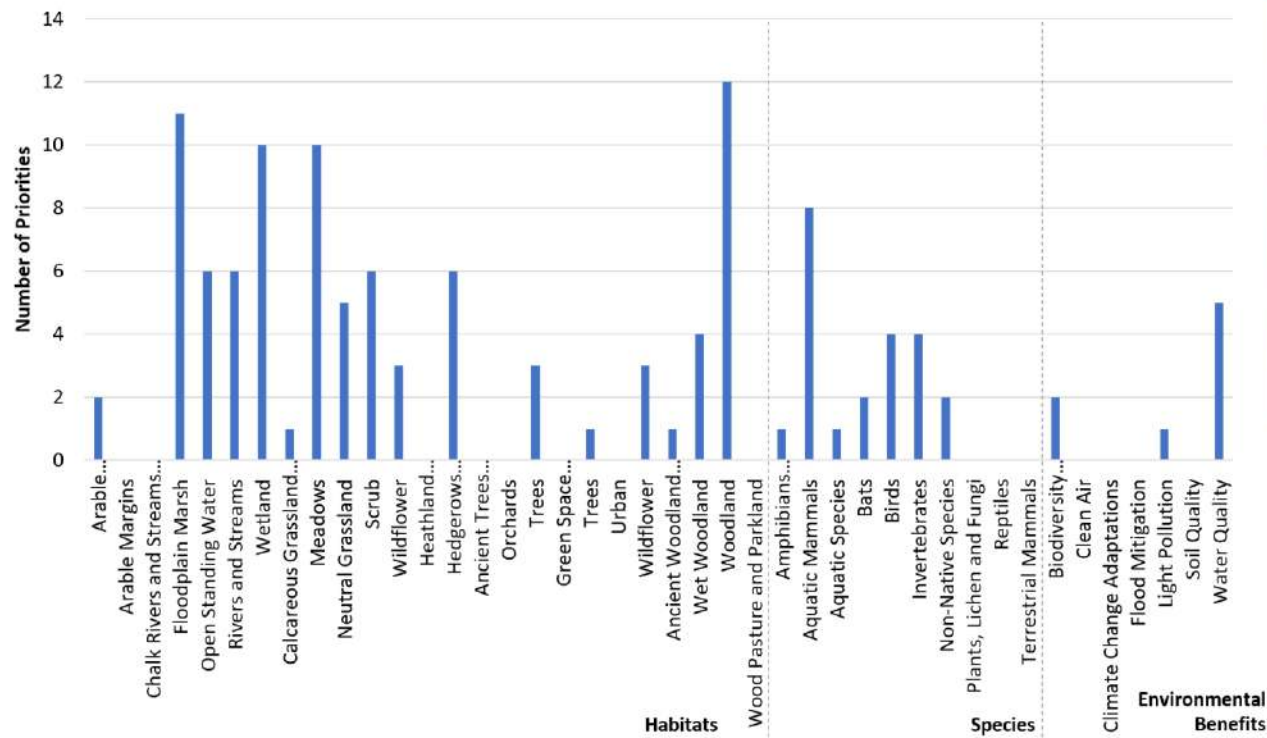


Popular Wiltshire Wide Priorities

1. Increase in environmentally friendly and sustainable farming practices to increase diversity of species and increased numbers of species present
2. Increase hedgerow species composition
3. Creating/improving habitats for White Letter Hairstreak, Duke of Burgundy, Adonis Blue, Pearl Bordered Fritillary



Area 1: Wiltshire Upper Thames Clay Vale



Popular Area 1 Priorities

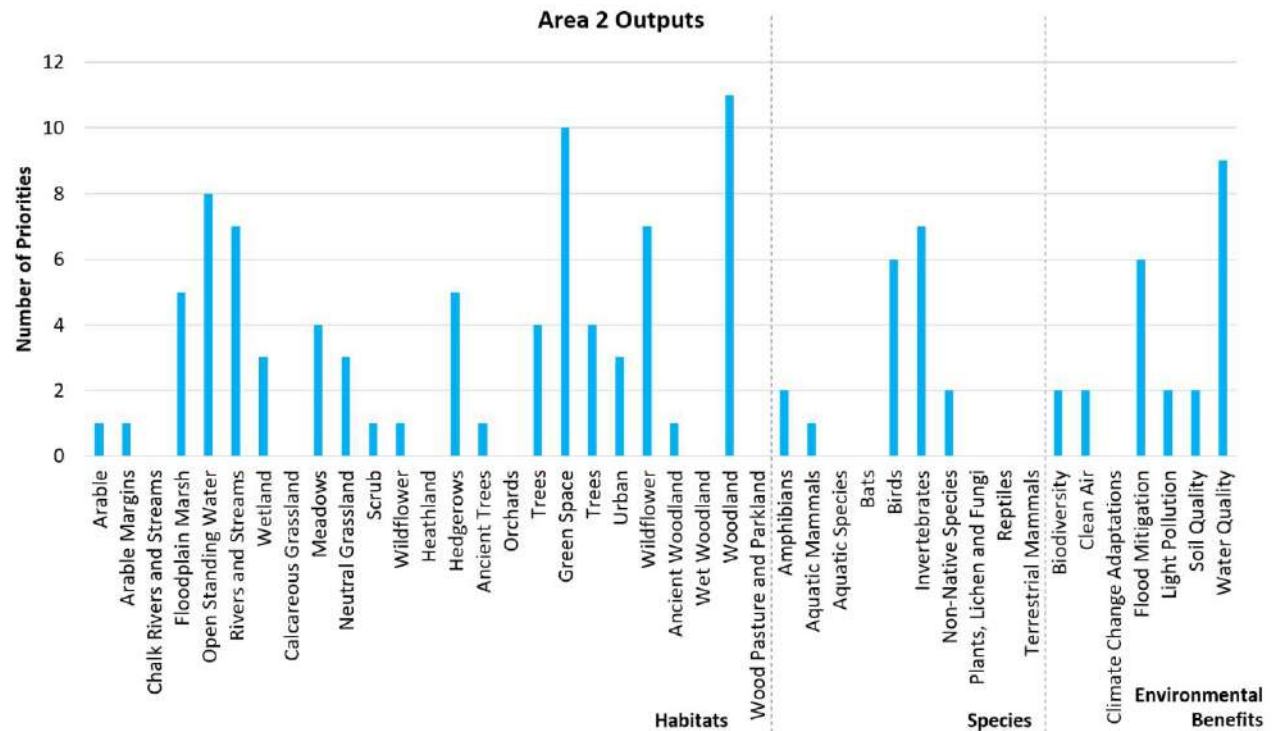
1. Protect, restore, enhance and reconnect floodplains
2. Increased creation and establishment of native woodlands
3. Increase population of beavers

Area 2: Swindon Ridge and Clay Lowlands

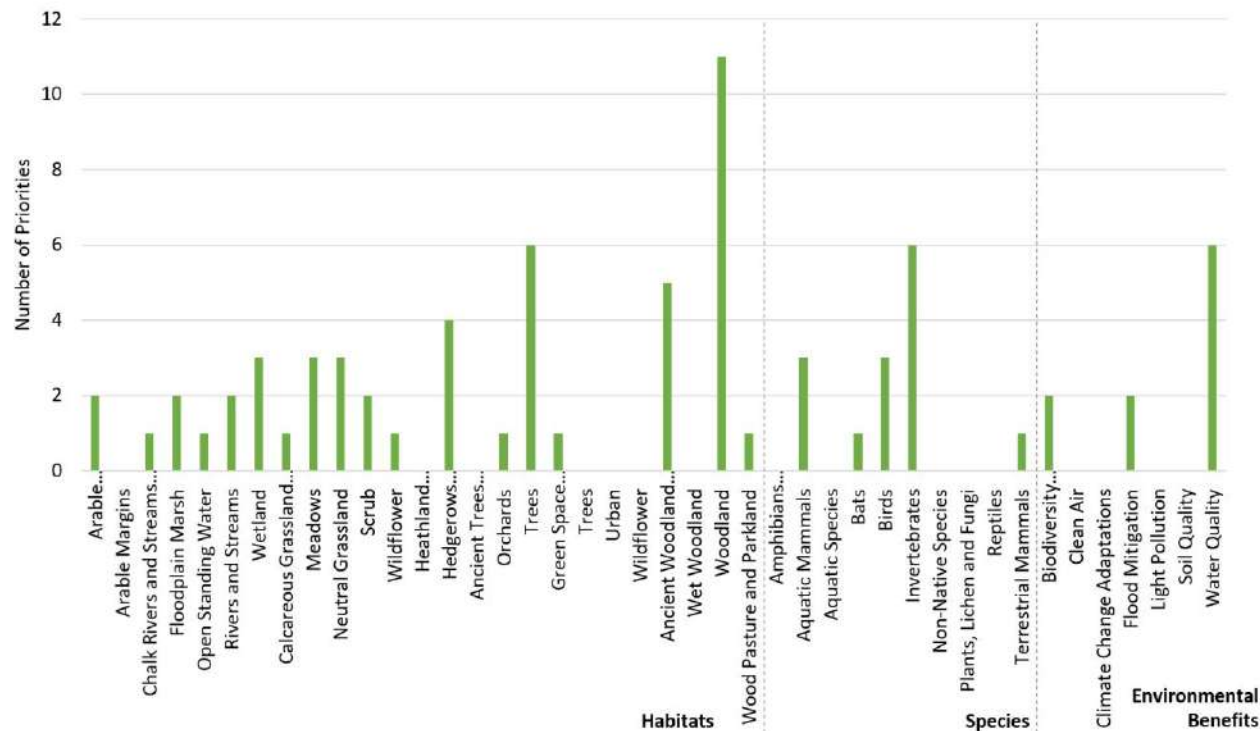


Popular Area 2 Priorities

1. Create wildlife friendly verges, green corridors and increased access to green spaces
2. Increased woodland cover and improved ecological condition of existing woodland habitats
3. Improved water quality



Area 3: Braydon Forest



Popular Area 3 Priorities

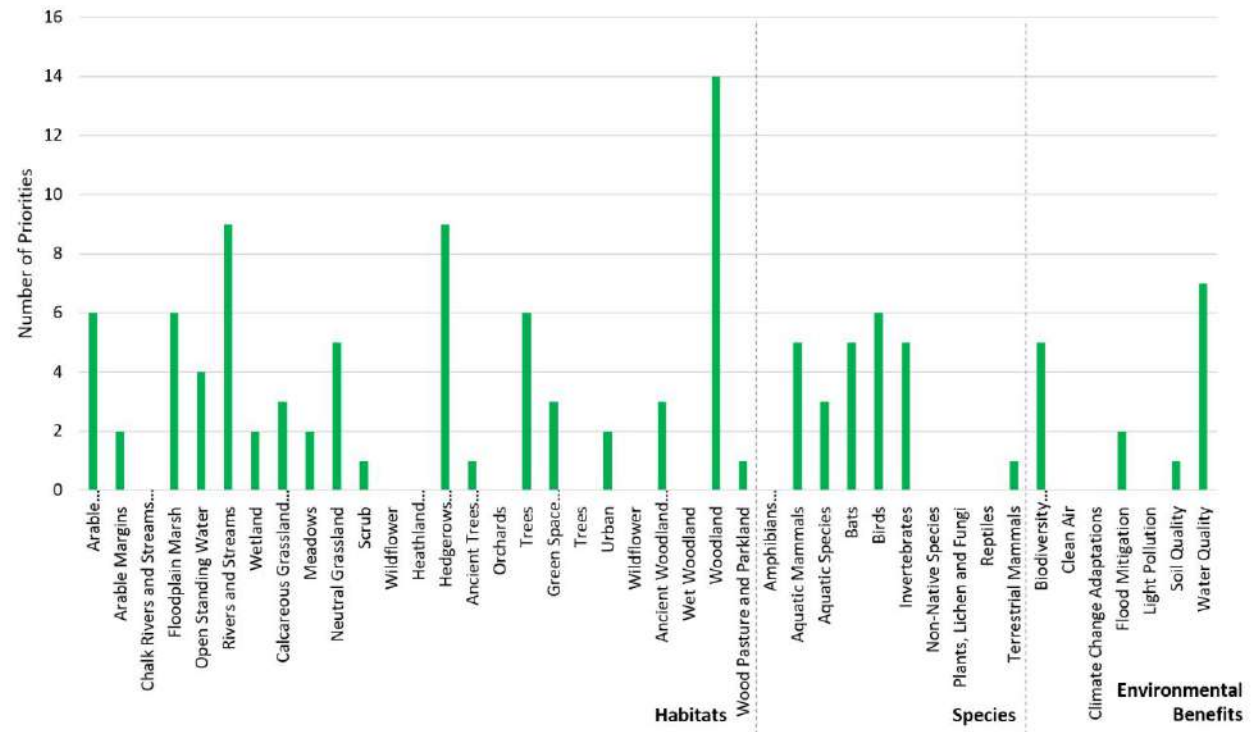
1. Sustainable management of woodland habitats
2. Increase connectivity and create mosaic habitats for marsh fritillaries, cinnibar moth, brown hairstreaks, marbled whites and skippers
3. Improved water quality

Area 4: Cotswolds Limestone Lowlands

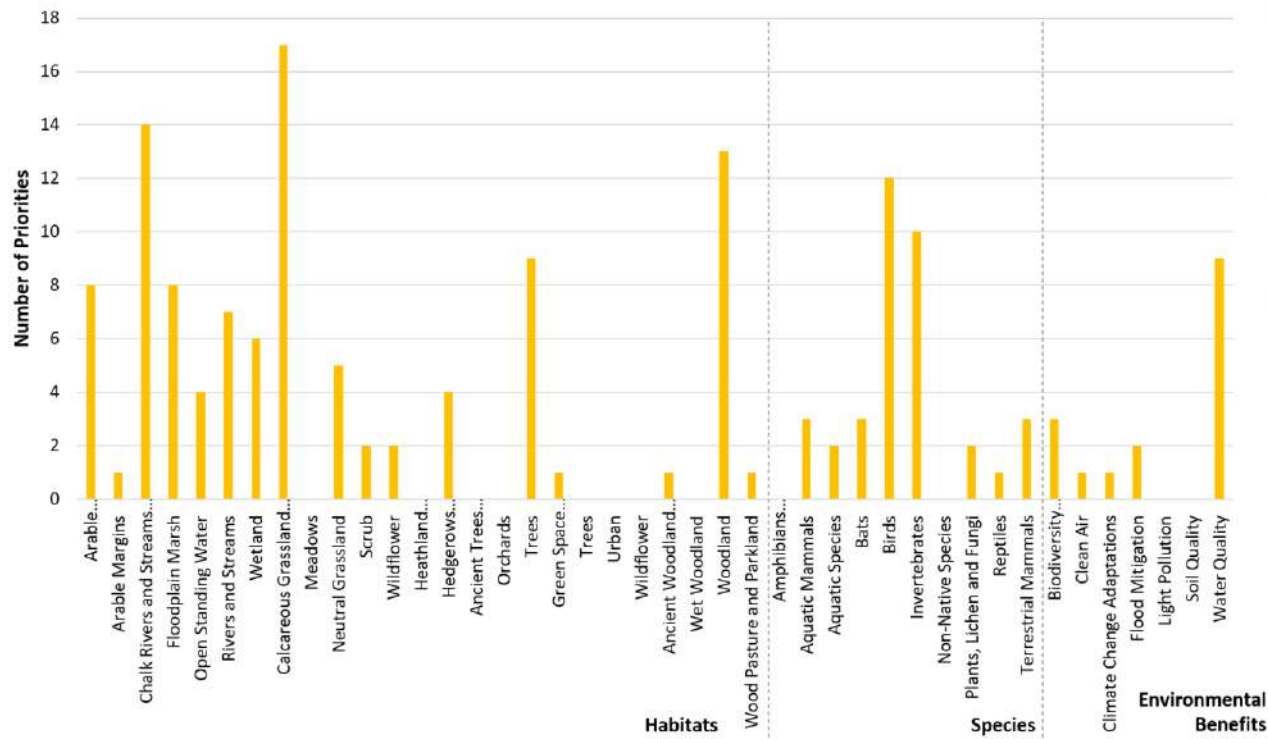


Popular Area 4 Priorities

1. Healthy thriving river ecology to increase abundance of fish, invertebrates, mammals and birds
2. Increased protected and connected hedgerows to support large numbers of plants, insects and other animals
3. Protect and enhance habitat for rare Annex II bats



Area 5: Marlborough Downs and Savernake Forest



Popular Area 5 Priorities

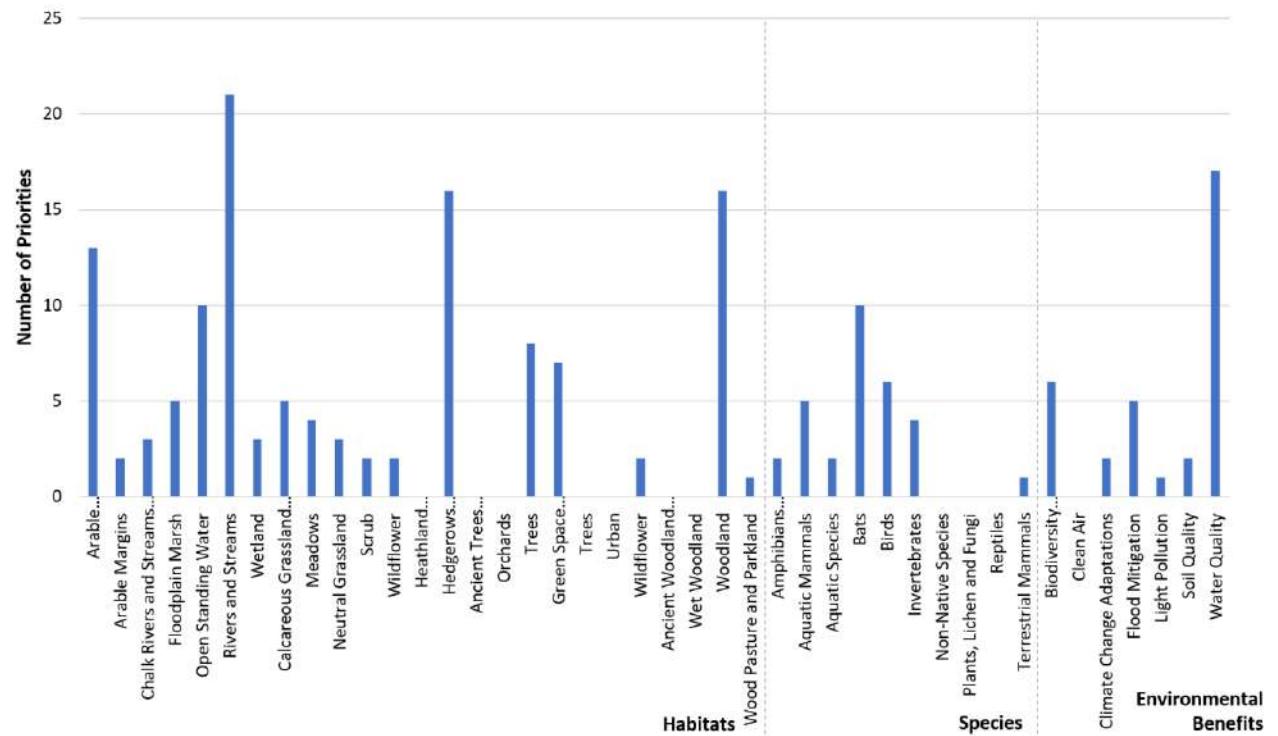
1. Chalk grassland protection, restoration and connectivity
2. Protection and restoration of chalk stream habitats
3. Increase population of farmland birds

Area 6: Bristol Avon Vale

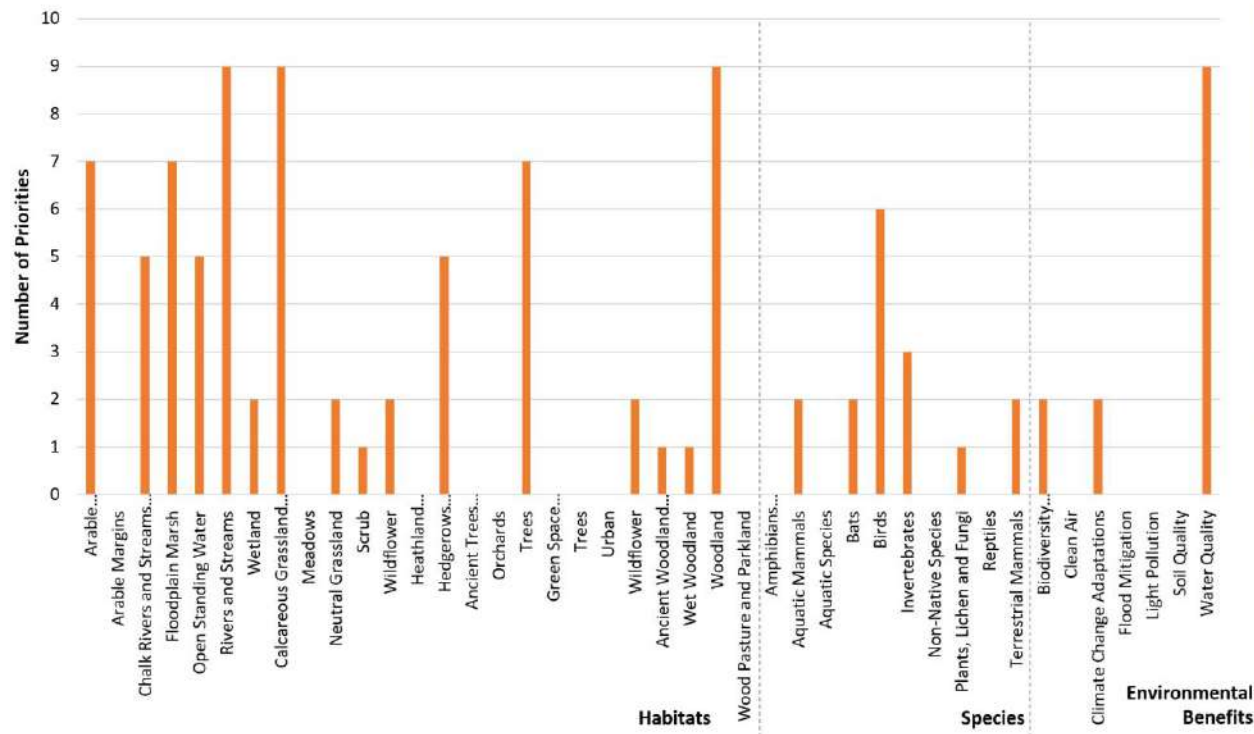


Popular Area 6 Priorities

1. Protect, restore and enhance the River Avon as a wildlife corridor
2. Increase hedgerow diversity and species variety
3. Replace arable crops on thin, less productive calcareous soils with native grasses



Area 7: Vale of Pewsey



Popular Area 7 Priorities

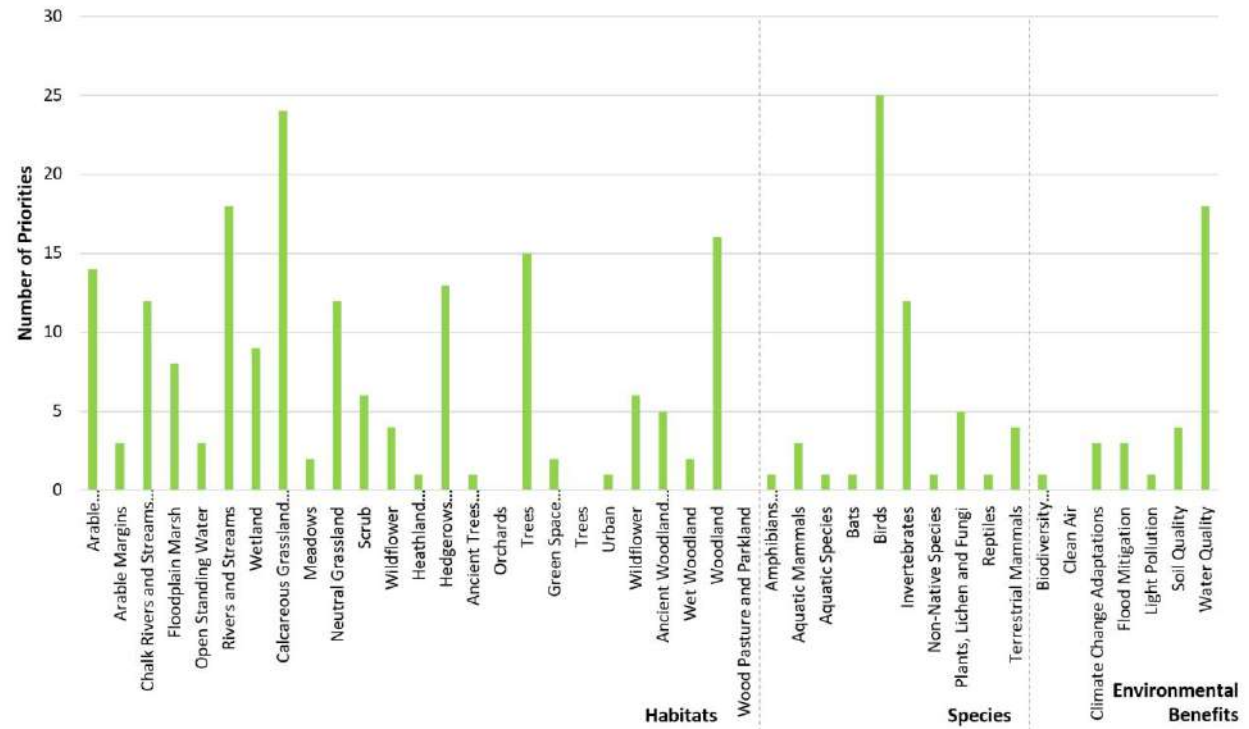
1. Larger, more connected areas of well-managed, species rich, chalk grassland
2. Increase woodland cover
3. Improved water quality and reconnected floodplains

Area 8: Salisbury Plain

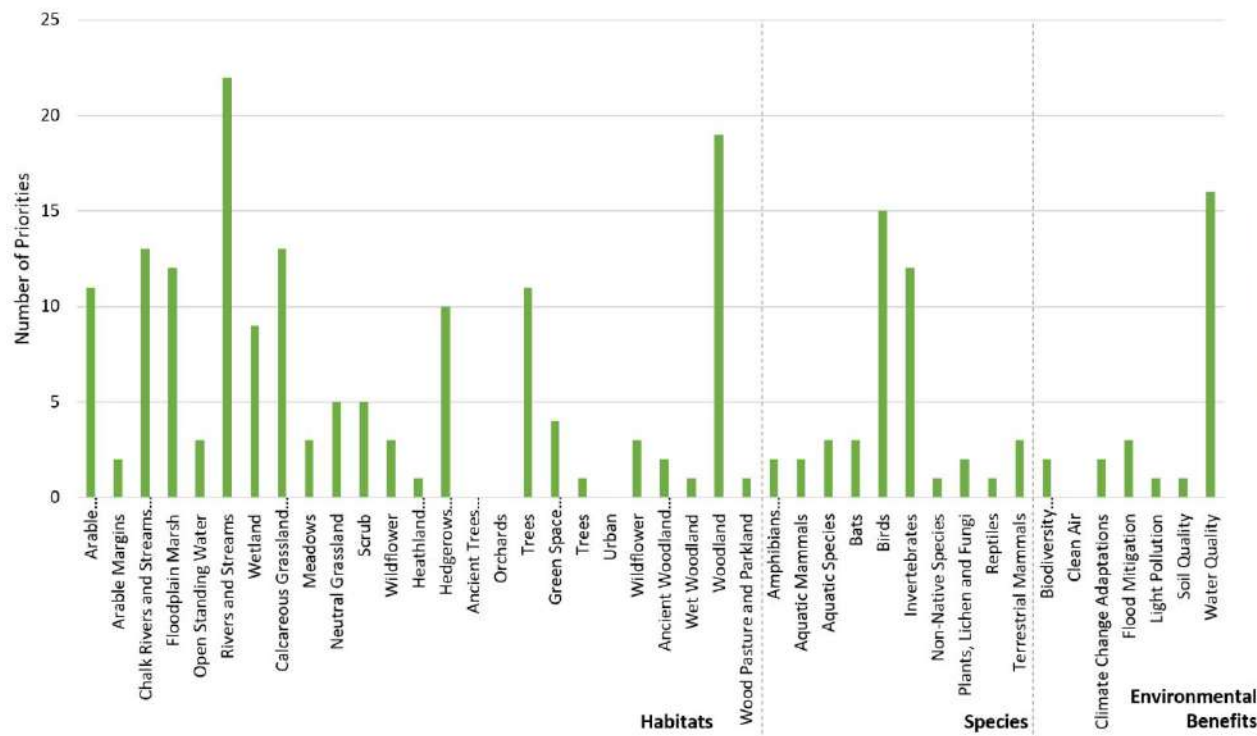


Popular Area 8 Priorities

1. Protect, enhance, create and reconnect Salisbury Plain chalk grassland
2. Protect and improve habitats and populations of farmland birds including Stone Curlew, Corn bunting, Skylark, Grey partridge and Yellowhammer
3. Improve water quality



Area 9: West Wiltshire and Cranbourne Chase Downs



Popular Area 9 Priorities

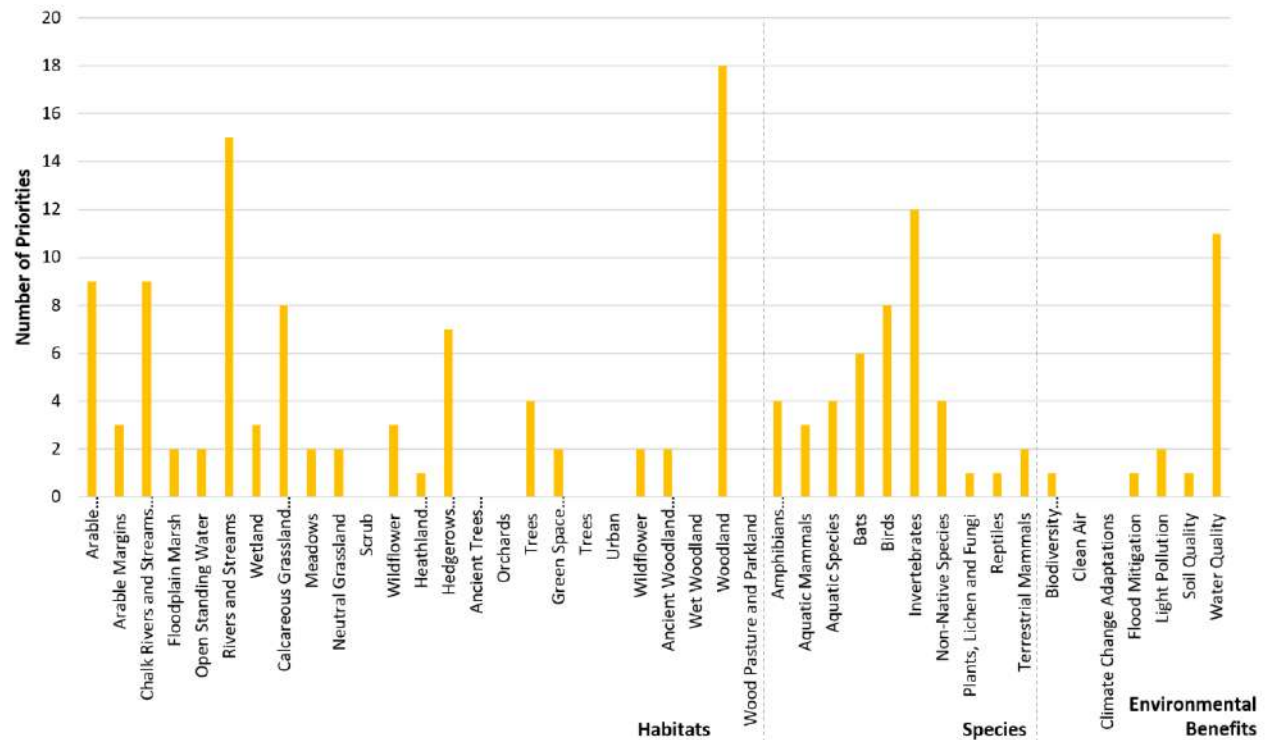
1. Restoration of natural processes and dynamism within rivers and floodplains
2. Better connected woodland and associated habitats managed appropriately for resilience and adaptation
3. Improve water quality

Area 10: Warminster and the Vale of Wardour

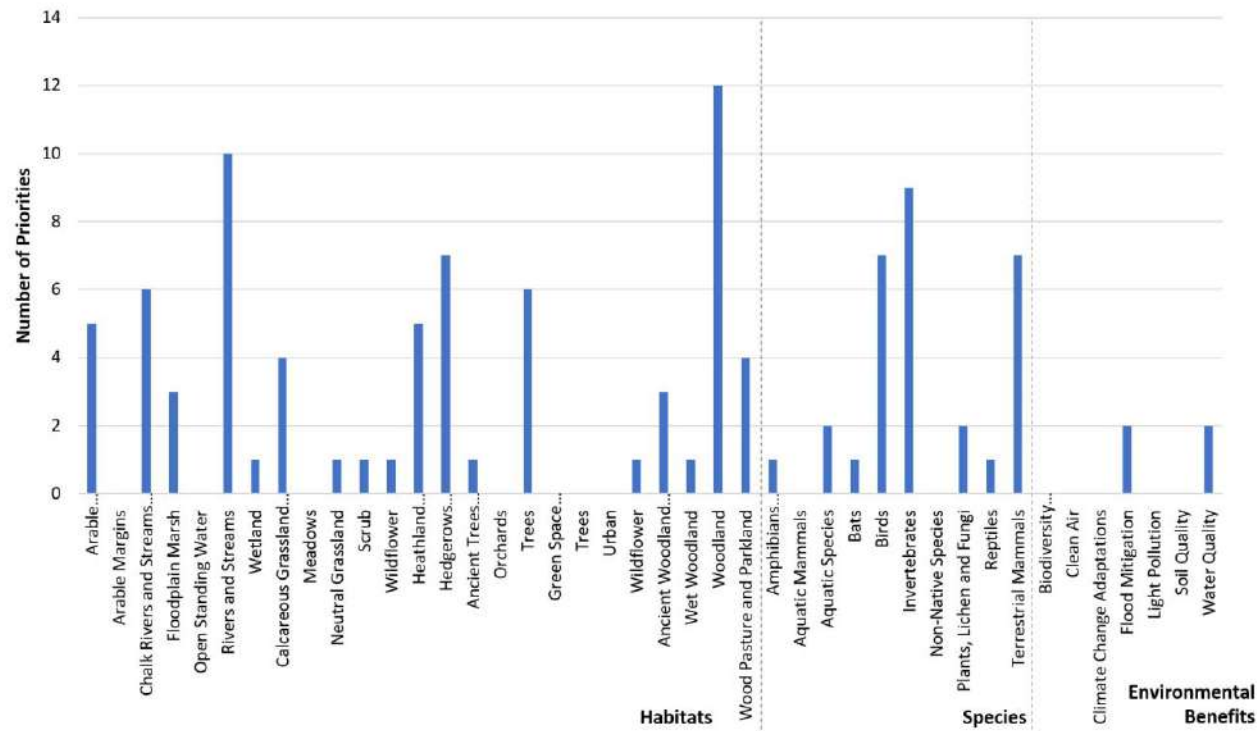


Popular Area 10 Priorities

1. Increased woodland management
2. Better quality of water in all rivers and lakes
3. Improve habitat for Lepidoptera



Area 11: Tytherley and Langley Woods



Popular Area 11 Priorities

1. Enhance broad-leaved woodland within the New Forest and Southern Wiltshire habitats
2. Improving connectivity between core sites for Woodland butterflies and high-quality habitat patches
3. Coordinated and collaborative deer and squirrel management



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Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Report of Usability Testing
March 2024

Summary of recommendations

1. It is recommended that:

1. the following Story Maps be prepared:
 - Farmers and foresters
 - The development sector
 - Parish and Town Councils and community groups
 - Environmental bodies
 - All layers
2. It is not known at this which of the layers requested by the user groups are available for display on the LNRS website/pages and it will be necessary for the GIS team to identify those that can be provided through the LNRS. This should be done before decisions are made on which layers will be provided on which story map.
2. the GIS team confirms which suggested data layers are publicly available and can be included on the LNRS
3. the GIS team consider which of the suggested layers will be made available to the LNRS and
4. the steering group consider which GIS layers would be appropriate for each user group story map. This can be done in a group discussion at a steering group where each layer is assessed for inclusion within the relevant Story Map.
5. the LNRS layer be put onto the interactive policies maps for both local planning authorities. This is not a requirement but would significantly improve uptake of the tool.
6. a detailed methodological report be prepared alongside the preparation of the LNRS for publication on the website/pages as justification for the use of LNRS in project design. There should be a feedback feature to allow users to flag suspect data.
7. two interactive layers be prepared if resources allow. These layers are not a requirement of the LNRS but would significantly increase stakeholder uptake and joint working. This work could be done after the LNRS content had been finalised.
 - a) A BNG opportunities layer;
 - b) A LNRS projects layer.
8. shortlisting addresses what to do in cases where there is an overlap in data layers with clear priorities expressed wherever possible.
9. the GIS team consider how the allow export of polygons and associated metadata as a matter of priority.
10. the shortlisting exercises also ask participants to provide links to other websites and funders relevant to the priorities and measures they are proposing.
11. The measures attributes should include the links where appropriate.
12. A “library” of links could usefully be created on the LNRS website/pages that is searchable for users to find other relevant organisations and resources.
 -

13. the GIS team adds the features listed where possible. Some attributes will require additional data gathering, for instance where a dataset is uncertain, and this should be addressed during the shortlisting process.
14. It is recommended that a user manual and/or video be prepared and posted prominently on the LNRS website/pages.

Project plan

3. Month	4. GIS activity	5. LNRS activity
6. March 24	• Create full set of story map tiles to be populated • GIS team to review all available Type B public layers to determine which can be imported • Find a mechanism for exporting polygons onto users' systems. Should also include associated metadata • Agree how <u>shortlisting</u> will address the following GIS actions: ○ Description of data collection methodology ○ How to capture data for interactive layers (this might be postponed till summer) ○ How to address layer overlaps and how to capture priority measures in overlap areas ○ How to capture links to other websites to link to measures and library ○ How to flag data reliability issues and signpost to new available data	7. Longlisting events
8. April 24	• Deliver GIS shortlisting actions that were agreed in March during shortlisting sessions. • Agree which layers can be included in LNRS as Type B • Work with steering group to determine which layers go onto which Story Map • Load layers onto Story Maps • Obtain agreement that LNRS will go onto both LPA planning policy maps • Design a feedback form/page to collect info on where data should be improved (this could be postponed until Summer) • Load <u>mock-up</u> interactive pages for usability testing • Go live on export function	9. Shortlisting
10. May 24	• Reconvene usability testing in a session to check with users whether LNRS meets their expectations	11. Shortlisting

	• Adjust system after usability testing second event • Work on adding other user defined features and functionality	
12. June 24	• Prepare a user manual and video to include in invites to roadshow events.	13. Shortlisting 14. Roadshow
15. July 24	• Prepare report on data collection methodology and load • Design interactive layers (BNG projects and LNRS projects) and test. • Identify where data is not reliable and add “warnings” to relevant attributes	16. Roadshow
17. August 24	• Finalise all outstanding actions	18. Report/finalisation
19. September 24	• Load LNRS onto panning policy interactive maps • Load interactive layers	20. First draft

Introduction

15. The Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy steering group (LNRS steering group) spent December 2023 and January 2024 refining its approach to consultation for the preparation of the LNRS. Andrea Pellegram Ltd. is leading on the engagement activities on behalf of the steering group.
16. The overall consultation programme consisted of a number of activities each designed to identify and refine measures and priorities for the LNRS. These steps are set out below.
 - **Longlisting events:** three in-person consultation events to identify all potential priorities and measures across Wiltshire and Swindon (March 2024)
 - **Longlisting survey:** an online survey to allow all stakeholders to make a contribution to identify all potential priorities and measures (March, April 2024)
 - **Shortlisting workshops:** a series of intensive workshops attended mainly by ecological professionals and professionals from related disciplines to refine and develop the priorities and measures. (April, May 2024)
 - **Ground truthing events and public consultation:** a roadshow of weekly events held in all parts of Wiltshire and Swindon to allow all stakeholders to verify the identified priorities and measures. (May, June, July 2024)
17. The LNRS will be delivered via an online portal based on Story Maps¹ which is a web-based geographical information system (GIS) on the ArcGIS platform. This GIS would of necessity fit alongside other GIS systems held by other government departments and bodies, other stakeholders and many users. Most users utilise their own mapping system inhouse. These other GIS products are not necessarily fully compatible with the usability requirements and outputs of Story Maps.
18. The steering group started the LNRS preparation with no GIS in place and it would be the overall LNRS project task to populate a new GIS with the LNRS in 2025. The preparation of the LNRS would require a significant investment of time and resources, including volunteer time from many stakeholders over 2024. Since the GIS would need to be built over that time, and would not be reviewed again for 5-10 years, the steering group were determined that the GIS should be built in such a manner that it would remain relevant for all potential user groups.
19. The steering group identified the following potential LNRS user groups, each with their own requirements and motivations for referring to the LNRS:
 - Farmers, foresters and other landowners;
 - Town planning professionals, developers, consultant ecologists, BNG² providers and scheme developers;
 - Local Planning Authorities (Forward Planning and Development Management);
 - Parish and Town Councils and community groups;
 - Government organisations and public bodies;
 - Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with an interest in environmental matters.

¹ [ArcGIS StoryMaps](#)

² Biodiversity Net Gain

20. The steering group decided that the LNRS would use the Story Map software to present the LNRS differently to these different user groups to provide them with a bespoke experience for their sector. This is so that each group only needs to view GIS layers of interest to them and thus to provide a faster experience for each user group since each additional layer will slow the system. By presenting only maps of interest to each user group, the LNRS would run more quickly and would be more targeted to their requirements. Should anyone wish to view all layers, or look at different layers, this would still be possible (but slower).
21. The steering group considered that given the disparities between these main user groups, it would be prudent to understand their different requirements so that the GIS could be built to meet as many needs as possible in order to create a final LNRS product that would have maximum effectiveness across all groups.
22. The steering group decided that before the formal LNRS engagement programme would commence, and while the steering group was working with the GIS builders, it would undertake a programme of **Usability Testing**, where all identified user groups could express their requirement and preferences to make the most of the LNRS as a tool for their sector.
23. In February 2024, the steering group held two events in Trowbridge where representatives of each user group were invited to attend a two hour session looking at a mock-up LNRS to discuss what they wanted the LNRS to provide for them.

Summary of the Usability Testing sessions

24. Two sessions were held for the user groups as follows:
 - a) February 13 2024:
 - i. Farmers, foresters and other landowners
 - ii. Planning consultants, developers, environmental consultants, BNG providers;
 - iii. Local Planning Authority officers (Forward Planning and Development Management).
 - b) February 20 2024:
 - i. Public bodies
 - ii. Nature groups and NGOs
 - iii. Parish and Town Councils and Community greening groups
25. **Appendix 1** shows who attended each session.
26. Each session was based on a presentation of a mock-up of the LNRS and a demonstration of anticipated usability features, map detail and potential map layers. A discussion then ensued where participants were invited to share their views on the mock up and make suggested changes.
27. The results of each session is presented in unrefined form in **Appendix 2**.
28. Email comments were submitted after the events and these are included in unabridged form in **Appendix 4**. These comments are taken into account in this report.

GIS layers

29. Three **types** of layers may become part of the LNRS website tool.
- A. LNRS priorities and measures** (A static layer that will be updated every 3-5 years once the LNRS is adopted). This is the statutory requirement on Wiltshire Council as the Responsible Authority. The data for this layer will be generated through longlisting, shortlisting and ground truthing.
 - B. GIS layers of other data sets** that will enable users to develop projects based on priorities and measures in the LNRS (These are fairly static layers but new data sets and layers will be made available from time to time). These are publicly available GIS layers that could be loaded onto the LNRS web pages.
 - C. Interactive user generated layers** that are dynamic and allow users to create relationships with other users (These are “living” and always changing). These GIS layers do not exist but users in the sessions suggested that they would be very helpful.
30. The full list of GIS layers (Types B and C) is provided in **Appendix 3**. This table shows all GIS layers that participants considered would help them to delivery LNRS to be used in addition to the actual LNRS map (Type A).
31. The final column shows GIS layers that area already publicly available on the Wiltshire Council website that could be migrated to the LNRS pages. The GIS layers for Swindon Borough have not yet been checked in this regard.

Story maps

32. The layers proposed in the usability testing exercise can be broken down into the following main categories:
- c) Borders and boundaries;
 - d) Publicly available data;
 - e) Constraints;
 - f) Local Authority data including planning data;
 - g) Farming, forestry;
 - h) Environmental layers;
 - i) Dynamic layers and local projects;
 - j) Other layers.
33. The original working assumption going into the sessions was that Story Maps would be used to create bespoke maps for each user group. The usability testing sought to identify which layers would be useful to which user group.
34. The data in Appendix 3 shows and “x” where each GIS layer was suggested by a user group. This shows that some layers were deemed useful by various groups. However, it cannot be inferred that because a group did not mention a layer that was suggested by another group, that this means that another layer would not be of interest to them as well. Therefore, the number of “x”s against a layer is not reason to conclude that other groups would not be interested in that layer as well.
35. In the usability testing sessions, it became apparent that most user groups wanted access to a very wide range of data, and sometimes to all the data layers.

36. Most groups also agreed that it would be useful for the usability testing to be reconvened in a few months to check on the build of the LNRS website before the ground truthing stage.

37. It is recommended that the following “story maps” be prepared:

- k) Farmers and foresters**
- l) The development sector**
- m) Parish and Town Councils and community groups**
- n) Environmental bodies**
- o) All layers**

38. It is not known which of the layers requested by the user groups are available for display on the LNRS website/pages and it will be necessary for the GIS team to identify those that can be provided through the LNRS. This is a matter of copyright and data ownership. Data availability and copyright should be checked and confirmed before decisions are made on which layers will be provided on which story map.

39. It is recommended that

- p) The GIS team confirms which suggested data layers are publicly available and can be included on the LNRS**
- q) The GIS team consider which of the suggested layers will be made available to the LNRS and**
- r) the steering group consider which GIS layers would be appropriate for each user group story map. This can be done in a group discussion at a steering group where each layer is assessed for inclusion within the relevant Story Map.**

40. For the development sector group, there was a strongly expressed view that the planning pages of the local authority websites were critical for them because they needed to incorporate the LNRS in the design of their schemes particularly with regard to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. It is proposed above that a separate Story Map be prepared for this user group. However, for those developers who are not aware of the LNRS, it would be useful to add the LNRS as another layer on the Wiltshire interactive policy map ([Wiltshire Core Strategy \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-core-strategy)) or the Swindon interactive policies map ([Swindon Local Plan 2026 | Swindon Local Plan 2026 and New Local Plan | Swindon Borough Council](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/swindon-local-plan-2026)).

41. It is recommended that the LNRS layer be put onto the interactive policies maps for both local planning authorities. This is not a requirement but would significantly improve uptake of the tool.

Data accuracy and methodological transparency

42. All groups stressed the importance of data reliability. The LNRS would be used in projects and to calculate funding streams and BNG. It would need to be reliable if it were to avoid challenge. Clear statements of methodology would therefore be welcome alongside rigorous and tested data capture. Boundaries of priority areas should be as precise as possible for most stakeholders.

43. Where date is unreliable or imprecise, this should be noted in the attributes. Potential data accuracy issues should be able to be flagged by users.

44. It is recommended that a detailed methodological report be prepared alongside the preparation of the LNRS for publication on the website/pages as justification for the use of LNRS in project design. There should be a feedback feature to allow users to flag suspect data.

Interactive layers and BNG opportunities

45. A few of the user groups, mainly those who have an involvement in land use planning as applicants, regulators or as landowners, were interested in a function that would allow BNG opportunities to be created and developed.
46. Though discussions, it was felt that one way of doing this would be to mimic the planning system and do a “call for sites” where landowners and BNG project promoters could submit their sites for inclusion on a layer of the LNRS. This would be a “red line” around a site with contact details of the land owner or promoter. This would require ongoing maintenance and specific defined criteria what is eligible for posting.
47. Another interactive layer that all groups supported was one that would track ongoing and completed LNRS projects, with links through to those projects. In order to populate this layer, users would need to send in maps of their proposals with their links, and this could go onto the LNRS projects layer. This would require ongoing maintenance. This layer would be helpful in later stages of the LNRS when Wiltshire Council will be required to report back on progress. This aspect of the website is not a LNRS requirement but would assist stakeholders in joining up projects and to make them aware of what other stakeholders are doing.
- 48. It is recommended that two interactive layers be prepared if resources allow. These layers are not a requirement of the LNRS but would significantly increase stakeholder uptake and joint working. This work could be done after the LNRS content had been finalised.:**
- a) A BNG opportunities layer;**
 - b) A LNRS projects layer.**

Overlapping layers

49. A few users asked questions about priorities where layers overlapped. The system must provide guidance on which measures take precedence over others where this is the case to avoid ambiguity and to focus resources where greatest impacts can be achieved.
50. As an example, if a user were to draw out his/her entire landowning with a polygon in a area of overlap, would they then be able to see which measures are applicable in the area for each field (e.g. It might be that woodland creation is a priority in one field but not another)?
- 51. It is recommended that shortlisting addresses what to do in cases where there is an overlap in data layers with clear priorities expressed wherever possible.**

Mapping tools

52. There was overlap between the various user groups about that they wanted the system to look and feel like.
53. The most important usability issue was interaction with users' own maps. Most users also used maps and/or GIS. There was a very strong desire for the export of polygons from the LNRS for all types of layer (A-C). This should be in the form of a polygon (and perhaps also to include a buffer) with all associated metadata. This single feature would allow users to import the LNRS (and associated Types B and C layers) to develop their own projects in house without needing to re-draw all polygons and re-type metadata. Parish councils use Parish Online which is not ArcGIS and they would also like to be able to export data to import into that system.
54. It is likely that DEFRA will require export of layers and it is therefore necessary that the GIS design of the layers has no data ownership issues or constraints.
- 55. It is recommended that the GIS team consider how to allow export of polygons and associated metadata as a matter of priority.**

Search function

56. A second priority was for a search function. There would be many layers and users would like to be able to search to find them.
- 57. It is recommended that a search function be included across all aspects of the LNRS website/pages.**

Links

58. Most users expressed a wish to be able to link information in the LNRS to other websites. The attribute tables will only be able to show small amounts of text, but the information necessary to carry out measures will be complex. Users wanted to be able to follow links (that opened on new web pages and did not close the LNRS) to other websites, reports and contacts so that they could develop their ideas how to make the most of the LNRS and create good projects.
59. It would also be helpful to users if there was a separate page (perhaps organised by headings) in the LNRS that listed all links. This should be searchable.
60. The shortlisting will be an opportunity for collecting information on other organisations, their projects and their data.
- 61. It is recommended that:**
- **the shortlisting exercises also ask participants to provide links to other websites and funders relevant to the priorities and measures they are proposing.**
 - **The measures attributes should include the links where appropriate.**
 - **A "library" of links could usefully be created on the LNRS website/pages that is searchable for users to find other relevant organisations and resources.**

System features

62. Suggestions were made for various features that would make the system easier to use:

- c) show a spinner when data is loading
- d) the many boxes on the screen are confusing. Can they all be put together on the left side of the screen?
- e) can there be a “hover menu” to show what each box is for?
- f) the landing page needs to give an indication of which story map is best for each potential user (which story to open?)
- g) there should be a snap function for polygons
- h) reminders on screen to users how to save/store data and doodles
- i) info on how to save, export and import shape files.
- j) measure in hectares (not sq. m.)
- k) attributes which indicate delivery against higher level priorities such as water quality/nn/BNG, etc.
- l) allow users to change colour scheme in case they were colour blind.
- m) radius around site is useful to assess a site in context.
- n) attribute on the quality of habitat (on a scale to identify which is better/worse)
- o) ability to make a polygon more transparent when using so that user can see other layers simultaneously
- p) search function to find a layer
- q) where there is uncertainty about a dataset, put in a “be aware” message with links to a contact/webpage where more up to date data might be available
- r) if links provided they should open a new page rather than close the current page
- s) be able to select multiple layers for export as a bundle
- t) be able to be viewed on a phone or tablet with a zoom in function
- u) search to find locations (postcode, grid reference)
- v) outputs should be able to be printed
- w) should be able to save a polygon
- x) Link in with Caba datasets <https://data.catchmentbasedapproach.org/>

63. It is recommended that the GIS team adds the features listed above where possible. Some attributes will require additional data gathering, for instance where a dataset is uncertain, and this should be addressed during the shortlisting process.

Supporting text

64. Most of the users were familiar with GIS and would be able to use the LNRS tool from the outset. However, other groups (particularly parish councils and community groups) might not be familiar with GIS. A user manual should be prepared to help new users and this should be displayed prominently on the LNRS pages. This should also explain key concepts such as the “duty” on local councils and BNG.

65. It should be possible to create a layperson’s user manual, possibly complemented by an online training video.

66. It is recommended that a user manual be prepared and posted prominently on the LNRS website/pages.

Other suggestions

67. A number of other suggestions were made that might make the LNRS more user friendly. However, these are “nice to have” and not critical for usability. If there is time and resource, these features would be welcome to users:

- a) A glossary of terms and acronyms
- b) User training events on how to use the LNRS
- c) Advice on what to do if land is outside the priorities
- d) “use cases” to show examples of how the LNRS was utilised in a project
- e) LNRS targets (particularly for neighbourhood planners)
- f) Ability to import shape files into the LNRS as a new layer
- g) Climate vulnerability including advice on species would be a welcome feature to be included in measures and attributes.
- h) Showing the LNRS outside the county boundary (perhaps 2 Km).

68. *It is recommended that the steering group and GIS team consider how to add the other suggestions listed above.*

Appendix 1: Attendance at Usability Testing exercise

23.

13 February 2024, County Hall, Trowbridge

24. Session 1 – Farmers etc. (11 people)

- 25. National Farmers Union
- 26. Tilhill Forestry
- 27. Bremhill Vale Farmers Group
- 28. Nadder Valley Farmer Group
- 29. Pryor & Rickett Silviculture
- 30. 4 Barrows Cluster
- 31. 4 Barrows Cluster
- 32. Fountains Forestry
- 33. Wilton Farmer Cluster
- 34. Cotswolds National Landscape
- 35. Black Sheep Countryside Management
- 36. Pewsey Downs Farmers Group

37. Session 2 – Developers, Agents, Ecology Consultants (11 people)

- 38. Bluestone Planning
- 39. Ther Rural Planning Practice
- 40. Master Land and Planning
- 41. The Landmark Practice
- 42. The Landmark Practice
- 43. Ecosulis
- 44. Ecosulis
- 45. Willis & Co. Town Planning
- 46. Environment Bank
- 47. Environment Bank
- 48. LUC

49. Session 3 – Local Planning Authorities

- 50. Swindon Borough Council
- 51. Wiltshire Council

20 February 2024, County Hall, Trowbridge

52. Session 1 – Public Bodies

- 53. Forestry Commission
- 54. Forestry Commission
- 55. Landmarc Support Services
- 56. National Highways
- 57. Forestry Commission
- 58. Environment Agency

59. Session 2 – Nature Groups and NGOs

- 60. FLOW CIC
- 61. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- 62. WHS Coordination Unit, Wiltshire Council
- 63. Great Bustard Group
- 64. Great Bustard Group
- 65. Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
- 66. The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)
- 67. RSPB
- 68. RSPB
- 69. County Recorded – Wiltshire Mammal Group and Wiltshire Bat Group

70. Session 3 – Parish Councils and Community Groups

- 71. Trowbridge Town Council
- 72. Great Green Bedwyn
- 73. North Newton Parish
- 74. Salisbury Area Greenspace Partnership
- 75. Salisbury City Council
- 76. Corsham Town Council
- 77. Highworth Town Council
- 78. Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade/ Broad Hinton
- 79. Calne Town Council
- 80. Chilmark Parish Council
- 81. Limpley Stoke Parish Council
- 82.

Appendix 2: Unrefined results of usability testing sessions

83.

Farmers, foresters and other landowners

- Farmers already hold a lot of geographic data and would prefer to import aspects of LNRS onto their systems in support of grant applications and other business processes.
- Concern that the LNRS would be repeating “what is already out there”.
- There was concern that some agricultural stakeholders (mainly public bodies) would not share data. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) was mentioned in this regard.
- This group would prefer that the LNRS provided options but was not prescriptive.
- Farmers have their own data that they would wish to use alongside LNRS (preferably in their individual GIS systems).
- The RPA would require very precise boundaries for applications to be successful. Blurry edges on the LNRS would not be helpful therefore. Farmers would require very precise measurements down to the centimetre for RPA applications.
- The group discussed that the LNRS would be different from MAGIC maps (a synthesis of local knowledge and data).
- The group discussed that the LNRS would be useful in future funding applications. Natural England has promised to link their programmes to the LNRS. Funding streams will be aligned to the priorities and locations in the LNRS.
- The LNRS will be binary – yes/no on whether land is a priority.
- Funding will be greater for priority areas.
- Cross-county boundary issues might be problematic because farmers might need to check two different LNRS maps/approaches. The national database of LNRS maps should help with this.
- The LNRS will have statutory weight. It is the first ever national and legal nature recovery strategy.
- The LNRS will not be varied until it is reviewed (probably in 5 years).
- There was a discussion of features that should be funded. The shortlisting process should address funding.
- The accuracy of the baseline data was critical.
- Farmers want land to be “at its best” all the time.
- The LNRS was vulnerable to becoming outdated since it would not be changed and updated for 5 years. The example of ash die-back was used: today there may be a wood but in 4 years it might be full of dead trees.
- There are already many maps that farmers and foresters use and this adds to that number. However, this augments national data with local knowledge.

- The Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (whose data will be integral to the LNRS) is already regularly updated with local knowledge.
- Some areas are already good and should be maintained.
- The LNRS should be open to feed back so it can be updated.
- LAYER: Single Business Identifier -click on every parcel. Either import all SPI data as an overlay or allow for input of SPI onto the LNRS (would imply a working space), or export LNRS onto the farmer's system.
- LAYER: Sustainable Farming Incentive (SPI)
- LAYER: Wildlife corridors with buffers
- MAPPING TOOLS: link LNRS to grant providers and funding (but how would this be updated?)
- LAYER: satellite data
- WOULD LIKE to be able to download LNRS onto their systems so that they could develop their proposals in a confidential manner and work on a proposal over time. Do not like that the current system does not allow them to save their work or export it. Would like to be able to draw and export shape files onto their systems with associated metadata.
- They don't want duplication of maps or of data input. They want one system /unified platform where they can develop their ideas/strategies. Does this happen on the LNRS platform or on their own system?
- WOULD LIKE to be able to import shape files as view only data on the LNRS (not to be saved).
- WOULD LIKE to "tick" layers on LNRS to export to their own database.
- The LNRS cannot allow external change of attributes
- Small farmers don't do much mapping. How will they use the LNRS? Can farmer groups create "discussion maps" as an export?
- Can the LNRS provide email updates on changes to legislation and guidance?
- The text on the website must be up to date.
- The fact that the LNRS cannot be updated (except in a formal review) needs to be made clear on the website – it is not a "living" document.
- LAYER – BNG opportunities
- MAPPING TOOLS – where land is already serving an agricultural function, the LNRS does not need to provide a lot of data or explanation. Leave that to the farmers.
- Cotswold AONB included arable land for habitat improvement – management of boundaries, hedges, mixed farming.
- Arable land can also provide habitat.
- LAYER definitive locations for tree planting (to help avoid objections to tree planting). This could perhaps be Forestry Commission Low Risk Zones
- LAYER – areas that are already serving a positive function.
- How do we manage layer overlap?
- LAYER – the "big picture" for an area (landscape scale) to provide context for
- LAYER – where "do not" is expressed
- MAPPING TOOLS – snap polygons, snap to SFI/SPA boundaries, draw polygons with a buffer, PRINTABLE, save polygons, view aerial photography, export polygons and metadata.
- How does this interact with/intersect the Defra maps?
- LAYER – commercial/conifer woodland

- MAPPING TOOLS – reminders on screen to users how to save/store data and doodles. How to save, export and import shape files.
- Needs to be up to date.
- LAYER – archaeology
- LAYER – constraints layer from MAGIC
- MAPPING TOOLS – constraints attribute table
- What do you do about conflicting priorities???
- How does the LNRS match field level interventions against landscape scale change?
- The system needs to be fast to load and use. Keep layers to a minimum.
- RECALL THE USABILITY GROUP AFTER SHORTLISTING TO CHECK AGAIN.

84.

Town planning professionals, developers, consultant ecologists, BNG providers and scheme developers

- MAPPING TOOLS measure in hectares (not sq m)
- Would like this to integrate seamlessly with WC and SBC planning maps at all layers
- LAYER land ownership boundaries
- LAYER – priority habitats
- LAYER – forestry, ancient woodland, WWT reserves, corridors, MAGIC map layers, bat strategies
- LAYER – neighbourhood plan environment policies (include local green spaces)
- LAYER – WC GBI strategy and similar for SBC if this exists
- LAYER – SHEELA sites
- MAPPING TOOLS – export to their own systems or reports
- LAYER – Landowners who wish to be involved in offsite BNG schemes. Would require a call for sites where landowners would agree to have their sites and contact details available for public view. It would be up to users to make contact for individual sites.
- WOULD LIKE if the contribution of one site/scheme could show its contribution into the wider LNRS.
- LAYER for delivered LNRS projects?
- LAYER on urban greening to inform landscape architects in the early stages of design to provide a more integrated approach to urban areas.
- WOULD LIKE advice on species though this may be difficult over time due to climate change.
- WOULD LIKE shortlisting to consider climate vulnerability
- MAPPING TOOLS – would like links to specific reports in the attributes where relevant. But this needs to be kept up to date.
- WOULD LIKE to be able to export a shape file to import into MAGIC
- The LNRS will help the end client tell a “good story” as a contribution to the LNRS to help demonstrate their environmental credentials
- MAPPING TOOLS – attributes which indicate delivery against higher level priorities such as water quality/nn/BNG etc. Can this be done at shortlisting?
- LAYER showing nutrient neutrality including projects that have already been delivered and also (perhaps a different layer) what the water companies are doing and the location of their outfalls.

- Look at Future Homes website. Landowners put their sites with contact details for follow on inquiries.
- Great crested newts – call for new ponds/credit system.
- LAYER on public access including public access land (definitive map, Forestry Commission, park and open space, etc. this is so that designers can put in buffers where it is necessary to keep people (and their pets) away from habitats and species.
- DATA Inaccurate data is not helpful. Data must be trustworthy. Better to be low-res and reliable than high-res and inaccurate.
- Forestry Commission and Natural England have open access databases. How will the LNRS integrate with these?
- The LNRS will assist in screening sites, pointing development in the right direction, identifying projects with strategic benefits.
- LAYER landscape character areas
- LOOK AT BUILDING WITH NATURE STANDARDS – can these be integrated in the LNRS?

Local Planning Authorities (Forward Planning and Development Management)

- The group discussed the proposal put by the developers (previous session) where the LNRS was integrated into the LPA GIS layers. The question was “who owns” the data if the two GIS products were combined? The general consensus was that the LNRS could be a layer on the LPA GIS whilst having its own existence on the Story Map LNRS portal.
- MAPPING TOOLS – allow users to change colour scheme in case they were colour blind.
- Don’t overload the maps – keep them simple and clear.
- DATA explain how the buffers were created using “least cost modelling” in case the data is queried at a an inspection/planning inquiry
- DATA boundaries of LNRS must be accurate so that development management can safely refuse or require conditions. Must be clear and defensible. Must seek to avoid challenge in objections or at appeal.
- DATA must be accurate, defensible, transparent, defined. Where this is not possible, must have a “health warning” to indicate that the data cannot be relied on but must be offset with other data.
- MAPPING TOOLS must link layers to other strategies and policies
- MAPPING TOOLS – radius around site is useful to assess a site in context
- Will people interpret that everything not coloured is “fair game”?
- LAYER urban greening factor
- LNRS can feed into site assessments for local plan allocations
- LAYER final SHELAA sites
- DATA check licencing about what can be exported
- LAYER planning history
- LAYER allocated sites
- MAPPING TOOLS be able to export buffer outcomes as a table
- DATA need to make clear what is base data (what is currently on the ground) and what is strategy (priorities and measures). Base data will quickly become out of date.

- LNRS will start to knit together existing WC and SBC policies – needs to be a working partnership to delivery BNG on a strategic scale.
- DATA - LNRS will be useful to development management but the NPPF is prescriptive on corridors and stepping stones. It would therefore be useful to use terminology from NPPF.
- RECALL THE USABILITY GROUP AFTER SHORTLISTING TO CHECK AGAIN.

Government organisations and public bodies

- They would probably use the Developer story map
- The system needs to be easy to use at the county boundary. The buffer into other counties from Wilts should be wide enough to allow government bodies to plan across borders with confidence. This to be in addition to links to neighbouring LNRS maps.
- National Highways have a requirement for BNG and would like a search function in the LNRS for habitat types. Schemes like grassland that offer multi-functional benefits (e.g. flower margins plus agri-environment) are more cost effective and preferred than other schemes. National Highways very much looking for LNR improvements that deliver best financials.
- LAYER Local Authority Boundaries (i.e. Wilts and Swindon)
- National Highways is a statutory consultee on highways proposals, local plans and large housing/commercial schemes. They need high level info for assessing proposals, such as motorway junctions.
- DATA Evidential basis for maps will be really important and must be fact driven and verifiable. The LNRS needs a very clear methodology statement to be part of all consultations so that assumptions can be tested thoroughly before adoption.
- Species records must be accurate and appropriate.
- WOULD LIKE a feedback system to record errors in the data and suggested changes for next round
- LAYER commercial forestry
- LAYER soil maps
- MAP TOOL export not as critical for this user group who have their own maps.
- LAYER sensitivity maps (? Is this not just a constraints layer?)
- LAYER archaeology. Can Historic Environment Record be mapped
- Forestry Commission wants to use LNRS to prioritise and incentive schemes. They are working with the LANDAP which is similar to LNRS. (Can LNRS obtain data from Landap?)
- LAYER public sector land ownership
- MAPPING TOOL attribute on the quality of habitat (on a scale to identify which is better/worse)
- Environment Agency representative not sure how they would use LNRS.
- National Highways is always looking for LNRS schemes as BNG offset and also for their landholdings.
- How does LNRS sit alongside food production and account for stepping stones along margins?
- LNRS could inform better applications for Forestry Commission
- MAPPING TOOL embed links to other websites/research papers/advice into the attribute tables to allow users to get further information. Should open in a new window. Would also be useful to have a list of links on the story maps webpages

- LAYER Defence Estate (but need MOD approval)
- LAYER ancient woodland and veteran trees

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with an interest in environmental matters

- WOULD LIKE a list of local projects with links so that groups can learn about each other and joint up. However, this would need to be “live” because it will go out of date.
- LNRS needs to resolve conflicts between different habitat types and indicate what should happen when two layers overlap. Which measures take priority?
- WOULD LIKE a list of local organisations that work on specific types of projects (e.g. water quality/bats/birds)
- Link to MAGIC showing sites that area already good for nature NOW and be able to overlay over sites in LNRS that may be good for nature in the FUTURE
- WOULD LIKE attributes to signpost to other websites (that might be difficult to find)
- SURVEY – add new question about other websites and links.
- MAGIC has glitches and is not always up to date.
- WOULD LIKE the LNRS to be “phone friendly” so it can be used in the field.
- WOULD LIKE an interactive layer where groups can drop a pin with explanation of what they are doing.
- WOULD LIKE to have a live system where data can be updated.
- WOULD LIKE to be able to export. Request data from within a polygon.
- LAYER heritage sites, scheduled monuments
- LAYER farm cluster groups
- LAYER agricultural land use type
- Overlapping areas – need to really understand each area and how priorities and measures should be developed
- LAYER critical species
- LNRS should use data from “working with natural processes” mapping in shortlisting
- LAYER bird strike and aerodromes
- WWT projects are short term (up to 6 months) and would become out of date quickly.
- LAYER interactive layer showing current projects so that others can become partners
- LAYER of completed projects (also interactive, so not part of LNRS)
- MAPPING TOOL ability to make a polygon more transparent when using so that user can see other layers simultaneously
- LAYER lighting (lux, location of poles, dark skies, light pollution)
- LAYERS of key species (group of layers for bats?)
- MAPPING TOOLS search function to find a layer
- WOULD LIKE links to other organisations/webpages
- LAYER full river floodplain reconnection
- WOULD LIKE a list of all organisations with links to their websites

- WOULD LIKE mention/links or layer of rewilding projects such as Wiltshire Small Rewilders Network who are not necessarily part of LNRS community
- LAYER rewilding projects
- WOULD LIKE information on who to contact in other organisations
- Is rewilding a priority or a catchphrase that will draw laypeople into the process?
- What do you do to help landowners outside the priority areas?
- MAPPING TOOLS explain how to use the polygons
- LAYER district level licencing (newts)
- WOULD LIKE text on what to do if your land is outside a priority area Who to contact.
- Need to set up two systems – LNRS (static) and other layers (living)
- MAPPING TOOLS if links provided they should open a new page rather than close the current page)
- MAPPING TOOLS where there is uncertainty about a dataset, put in a “be aware” message with links to a contact/webpage where more up to date data might be available
- Maps for “Joe Public” should be simple and easy to use
- Attribute tables should be simple and uncluttered
- Attributes for measures should link to more detail
- Explain how LNRS links to neighbouring LNRSs in other counties
- LAYER of weirs and river obstacles
- RECONVENE THE USER TESTING IN A FEW MONTHS

85.

Parish and Town Councils and community groups

- Would like it to feed through to MAGIC
- Want to be able to find out what is there NOW (not the future LNRS)
- LAYER agricultural land classifications
- MAPPING TOOLS show a spinner when data is loading
- LAYER soil types
- LAYER topography/ridgelines
- LAYER landscape character areas
- RECONVENE THE USER TESTING IN A FEW MONTHS
- WOULD LIKE user workshops/training events in how to use the LNRS. They are not experts so they need a lot of guidance how to use this.
- LAYER on best places to build and best places NOT to build
- LAYER parish boundaries
- DATAAbility to export to Parish Online
- Co-benefits
- MAPPING TOOLS attributes to show partnerships and major orgs (such as AONB)
- LAYER flood risk
- LAYER orchards
- LAYER meadowland
- LAYER water quality
- LAYER nutrient neutrality projects
- LAYER nitrate vulnerability
- LAYER farmer biodiversity zone

- WOULD LIKE website to show “use cases”
- LAYER bombs/ordnance
- MAPPING TOOLS they need to have an explanation how to use the layers and how to move from high level to site specific
- MAPPING TOOLS the many boxes on the screen are confusing. Can they all be put together on the left side of the screen?
- MAPPING TOOLS can there be a “hover menu” to show what each box is for?
- MAPPING TOOLS the landing page needs to give an indication of which story map is best for each potential user (which maps to parishes use?)
- MAPPING TOOL want a search function to find the right layers
- MAPPING TOOLS how to link to other groups
- MAPPING TOOLS glossary
- MAPPING TOOLS measure to also provide guidance on maintenance/management
- WOULD LIKE TO HAVE targets for LNRS coverage for individual parishes so that this can be part of their neighbourhood plans
- WOULD LIKE a parish council user guide for non-experts

Appendix 3: Layers suggested by participants in the usability testing sessions (Feb. 2024)

LAYER NAME	FARMER FORESTER	DEVELOPER	PLANNING AUTHORITY	PUBLIC BODY	NGO	PARISH AND COMMUNIT Y	ALREADY A WC ARC GIS
Borders and boundaries							
Local Authority Boundary				x			
Parish boundaries						x	Parish
Publicly available data							
Satellite data	x						
Land ownership		x					Property points
Public access land		x					
Public Sector land ownership				x			
Constraints							
Archaeology, scheduled monuments	x			x	x		Scheduled Monuments World Heritage Sites
Priority habitats		x					
Flood risk						x	
Constraints and opportunities	x			x			

layers from MAGIC (SSSI, SAC, SPA, RAMSAR, Local Nature Reserves, AONBs)							
English Heritage – World Heritage Site' layer				x			
Other WC layers							Conservation areas Listed buildings SSSI AONB
Local Authority layers including planning data							
Ancient woodland and veteran trees		x		x			Tree Preservation Orders
Green and Blue Infrastructure		x					
Definitive footpath map		x					Rights of way Protected routes of the Thames and Severn Protected route of the Wiltshire and Berks
Landscape Character Areas		x				x	Special landscape areas
SHEELA sites		x	x				SHEELA
Allocated sites		x	x				Core Strategy Chippenham Site Allocations Plan WHSAP
Planning history		x	x				Planning applications

Neighbourhood Plan designations		x	x				Neighbourhood plan policies
Nitrate vulnerability						x	
Nutrient Neutrality projects		x				x	
River catchments							River Test Catchment Lambourne Somerset Levels River Catchment
Farming, forestry							
Single Business Identifier	x						
Sustainable Farming Incentive	x						
Forestry Commission Low Risk Zones (where trees can be planted)	x						
Commercial and conifer woodland	x			x			
Soil maps				x		x	
Agricultural land classifications					x	x	

Farm Cluster Groups					x		
Farmer biodiversity zone						x	
Environmental layers							
Existing wildlife corridors with buffers	x						
Land that is already serving a positive function	x						
Areas where LNRS is not supported	x					x	
Critical species					x		
River floodplain reconnection					x		
Traditional orchards						x	
Meadowland						x	
District level licencing					x		
Priority river layer					x		priority river layer https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/7e5d
Dynamic layers and local projects							
BNG and LNR opportunities and projects	x	x			x	x	
Local strategies		x			x		

Delivered LNRS projects		x					
Rewilding projects					x		
Other layers							
Urban greening factor		x	x				
Bird strike and aerodromes					x		
Wiers and river obstacles					x		
Typography and ridgelines						x	
Water quality							
Ordnance and unexploded bombs						x	
Solar farms							Full Solar PV farms

Appendix 4: notes and comments received after the events

Forestry Commission

Notes:

- Mapping will run over county boundaries, by 2km maybe.
- If areas are marked as strategically significant, would those biodiversity units become more expensive?
- Destructing/modifying habitats in 'strategically significant' areas would cost the developer more money. For this reason, people/landowners might not want their land to be marked out.
- What additional layers would users like to see in the map? I think it depends on what datasets have been used to inform the 'measures' map, or 'ACPIB' map.
- Need to incorporate land restrictions, eg archaeology, into mapping?
- There needs to be clear methodology of how the mapping was produced.
- We want to be wary to not end up duplicating MagicMaps. Is it also going to be duplicating LandApp?
- Can we link FC schemes/grants, other than EWCO (which will be incorporated in CS), with the LNRS?

Technical questions on the interactive map:

If something is overlapping (i.e. a priority for woodland but also grassland), is it equally beneficial to create each of those habitat types?

What is the meaning of the priority species section? How does this link to on-the-ground action

Is looking at the 'overlapping habitats' layer the same as looking at each of the individual layers?

If you draw out your entire landowning with a polygon, can you then see which measures are applicable in your area? Is it easy to see where each of the opportunities/measures are? (eg. It might be that woodland creation is a priority in one field but not another)

Are the layers (base, measures) same for each user group? Or could there be a scenario where you would only see woodland opportunities, and not grassland (for example)?

Do we really need additional layers, other than the APIBs layer (SSSIs, irreplaceable habitats) and the ACPIBs layer (i.e. the measures and opportunities map)? Surely the purpose of the LNRS map is to show strategic opportunity areas. If you add detail, where do you end?

Parish Council

A few comments:

What is the "duty" on a parish council, and what exactly are Biodiversity Credits and how are they traded? Please define these two terms somewhere for the layperson.

As we are near the Avon I would like surface water drainage and other sewerage , including ditches, shown on the map.

How accurate is the bio data given on the map? Is a bio “survey” carried out in our Parish. What skilled support is available to capture this information? Or can training be made available for willing volunteers to assess and upload information for maps.

Is there a (mandatory?) forum or process where Parishes can engage landowners and developers on this specific topic?

Eg I am aware of an amazingly luminescent area of woodland (looks like a temperate rain forest to me!) just off a footpath in our area. Who would identify this and its potential significance?

Biological Records Centre

Foresters, Landowners

- Can landowners upload their own data (via SBi) onto LNRS ?
- Request from landowners themselves
- Import and Export as shapefiles for use in landowners own software - cut too or selection
- Snap to boundary / polygon
- Buffer tool
- Printable
- Save polygon
- Export and talk to DEFRA / RPA as part of your application
- Perhaps after LNRS
- Interactive feedback from landowners via the accounts
- Keep it simple
- Hate duplication
- Map opportunities
- Map updates
- Look at opportunities for the FARM CLUSTER
- Users made aware of new info / changes
- Visual queues and pop ups to remind to save/export...
- Be up to date - in its priorities
- Synthesise ecology / archaeological
- What other data layers would you like to see ?
- include arable ?
- Aerial
- Layer for possible tree planting - FC Low risk zone data ?
- Attribute table contents ?
- ID areas that are GOOD and important
- More or less info ?
- Opportunities to Conifer / commercial forestry ?
- Constraints
- different constraints for different things
- Speed of system
- Wiltshire and Swindon Planners

- Colour Blind Friendly colourschemes
- Changable symbology, use of hatchings in fills
- Defendable, transparent justification for buffer zones
- definitions of what the buffer / zone is and what its for
- Swindon
- Shela sites? Being able to upload
- Downloadable data pack
- WMS
- Roadshow / training NPs for Parish Councils
- MET Office Climate Change Data Pack for LA's ?

FLOW (local group)

1. I like the idea of making it work on a tablet, if so then a button to zoom into your current location would be helpful
2. Would be good to be able to search for postcode or NGR
3. As discussed, link in with Catchment Partnership pages
4. Link in with Caba datasets <https://data.catchmentbasedapproach.org/>, loads of useful layers here via ArcGIS online. River obstacles was one that was mentioned. Also things like WFD boundaries might be handy. All the datasets available are listed [here](#) if you are not familiar with it.
5. It would be useful to have a detailed watercourse layer as well as the main river later. There was talk of an EA version being made available which was digitised from OS Mastermap. If not, would there be budget to digitise a layer for Wiltshire? It might be useful for highlighting little headwater streams which presumably will want to be highlighted as strategically important areas for restoration. From a BNG perspective I think we really need to highlight these areas, as they can often get dismissed as 'ditches' with low strategic significance.
6. Presumably you already have the priority river layer <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/7e5dd3c72f424fd5bc6f013d18dd770c/explore>, any work to update this for Wiltshire and ensure the most natural watercourses are highlighted?
7. In terms of existing modelling for priority river interventions there are a few layers in the CABA package. But the guys at the Rivers Trust and Wilts Wildlife will be best placed to guide on that.
8. Having projects on there is good, even if they are historic. Saves talking to a landowner and finding out consultants did a big project on the same site 10 years ago.
9. Have an opportunity on the portal for community groups and organisations to add their own projects – they might be small, tree planting, meadow restoration or bat boxes but it would be good to see a map of this across the county.
10. Not sure how to do this but signpost people to existing citizen science platforms i.e. River Obstacles, INNS mapper

Defence Infrastructure Organisation

What DIO needs from the LNRS

- Ensuring that the LNRS is realistic in terms of what can be delivered on the training estate without compromising military requirements (e.g. the scope for hedgerow planting is likely to be limited within dry training areas)
- Detailed spatial mapping to guide us to the locations where nature recovery is delivered with maximum benefit (what habitat and where).
- Mapping and statement of priorities to include opportunities across Salisbury Plain Training Area, particularly focussed on areas outside the SSSI (non-statutorily designated land comprises approximately 50% of the Salisbury Plain Training Area)
- Presented in an interactive mapping format that we can manipulate and can also be used by our tenant farmers plus consultant ecologists working on defence development projects.
- We would intend to use the LNRS to drive our BNG requirements, particularly establishment of habitat banks
- In terms of the mapping, we would want to make sure that:
 - we understand the data lying behind the mapping and LNRS e.g. habitat, species records?;
 - we have opportunity to input our expert knowledge of the plain (we would want to review the mapping on our land prior to publication);
 - there is an ongoing mechanism to keep the maps updated.

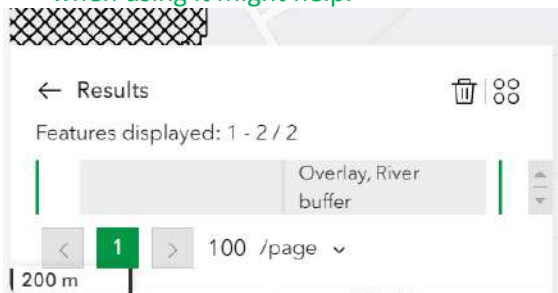
Data presentation

It's difficult to comment on the mapping presentation without having attended the workshop, however, what has been included on the slides looks great. We would prefer slightly blurry boundaries if possible as this gives us more flexibility in determining habitat restoration/ creation proposals. Boundary-wise, that's a tricky question for SPTA, but suspect boundaries based on soil data will be most useful. Exportable LNRS layers would be extremely useful for us to layer on our existing GIS.

Environment Agency (Fisheries, Biodiversity & Geomorphology)

- Do you like the overall presentation?
Overall, I really like the initial layout. Each icon is laid out clearly and I like the straightforwardness of the map. It's quite intuitive.
- Have the audience segments been written well for you?
- How do you feel about the information we have included and is the tone right?
Yes, I do feel the tone is right – highlighting the importance of agriculture in the area but also the extent of our Chalk streams. Shows we need to strike the right balance.
- Is anything missing?
 - Is there a way of showing BNG within the mapping? For example – potential areas where BNG could be used for offsetting? (This may be too big of an ask for this tool).
 - Under LNRS Data layers – is there any way of distinguishing the overlapping priority habitats and what they are? Could they be listed under the Data Layers?
- What uses would you require a streamlined map for?

- To show a particular issue or potential project opportunity clearly. E.g.- Being able to show an area of land that isn't being fully utilised, 2 areas of habitat that would only need a small corridor to connect them etc.
- To show the funding streams in an area – such a useful tool as it can be quite confusing as to what funding is out there.
- What other layers would you like included for each map?
SSSI, SAC, SPA, RAMSAR, Local Nature Reserves, AONBs. Could be a layer mapping all of these.
- Would you prefer the LNRS layer to be cut to boundaries (field boundaries, soil boundaries, parish council areas)
There can be some use in having parish council area and field boundaries – this would help when reaching out to communities or landowners.
- Does the attribute table (it appears when you click on the LNRS layer) helpful, contain good information, well laid out, missing any information.
Initially I find the attributes table too small and hard to look at. Could this be made to expand when looking at it? I realise you click on “view” and it opens on a new page but it feels very confined to start with. Perhaps being able to expand this box when using it might help.



- Would an exportable (but likely without attribute table present) data set of the LNRS layer be helpful to you?
Yes.
- When you think about how the LNRS relates to your sector, what do you think it should do for you?
Being able to identify areas where a project could help with connectivity, to show those with influence where small changes could make a massive difference.
With other sectors also having this data available to them and in a way that they understand could create huge benefits.
The LNRS could be so useful to so many.
- Is our overall direction fit for purpose?
Yes – I think the work you're doing is invaluable.

World Heritage Site Unesco

- It would be good to use WHS boundary ('English Heritage – World Heritage Site' layer on planning explorer) to indicate constraint with links to [WHS Management Plan](#) and WHS Woodland Strategy (needs updating) – or simply some blurb from me eg WHS is a sensitive area please consult with stonehengeandaveburywhs@wiltshire.gov.uk about your proposal.
- Good to use 'Historic England – Scheduled Monument' layer from planning explorer to indicate constraint that permission must be sought from Historic England on these areas (I will discuss with Historic England)



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Housing Land Supply and Housing Delivery Test Briefing Note No. 24-13

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Date Prepared: 12 June 2024

BRIEFING NOTE ON HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AND HOUSING DELIVERY TEST

Summary

We have now completed the update to Wiltshire's housing land supply position. The current position is a **4.2 years** supply using a base date of 1 April 2023. This will be used to inform decision-making of planning applications and appeals.

This is the first Housing Land Supply Statement to be published since the update to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued on 19 December 2023. This made changes to how housing land supply should be assessed for councils that have made sufficient progress in developing their Local Plan. An update on how the revised NPPF impacts on the council's planning function is provided in [Briefing Note 24-01](#).

These changes mean that for a period of two years from the date that the NPPF was updated, local planning authorities such as Wiltshire that have an emerging local plan that has reached Regulation 19 stage, will only be required to demonstrate a four-year requirement, rather than a five-year requirement.

In addition, recent housing delivery in Wiltshire remains strong, with the latest Housing Delivery Test results (from 2022) indicating the council has met **106%** of its housing targets over the past three years.

This briefing note provides information on both these Government measures and what the implications are for decision making.

1. Introduction

1.1 Government policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes two measures that are designed to drive the delivery of housing:

- (i) Five-year / four-year housing land supply (see below)

(ii) Housing Delivery Test

1.2 The main difference between the two is that:

- the five-year / four-year housing land supply measures the level of 'supply' that can be expected to come forward over a five-year period of time i.e. the number of homes that it is anticipated **will be** built; whereas
- the Housing Delivery Test measures the number of homes that **have been** built over a set period.

1.3 Both measures have established methodologies and assess the expected delivery of homes, and homes that have been delivered respectively, against the housing requirement for a local authority area. There is no latitude as to how the methods are applied.

2. What is the housing land supply requirement ?

2.1 The latest NPPF (December 2023) states that:

Paragraph 76

"Local planning authorities are not required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing for decision making purposes if the following criteria are met:

- a) their adopted plan is less than five years old; and*
- b) that adopted plan identified at least a five-year supply of specific, deliverable sites at the time that its examination concluded."*

Paragraph 77

*"In all other circumstances, local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide either a minimum of five years' worth of housing, **or a minimum of four years' worth of housing if the provisions in paragraph 226 apply**¹ the supply should be demonstrated against either the housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against the local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old (unless they have been reviewed and do not require updating).*

Where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years², the supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer of 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period)."

2.2 As the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015) is more than five years old, the provisions in 'Paragraph 76' do not apply in Wiltshire, the council is a 'Paragraph 77'

¹ Where the council has an emerging local plan that has either been submitted for examination or has reached Regulation 18 or Regulation 19 (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) stage, including both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need. This concession applies until December 2025.

² Where the Housing Delivery Test results indicate delivery below 85%.

authority. The council carried out a Regulation 19 consultation on its Local Plan during autumn 2023. This included a policies map and proposed allocations to meet the housing need identified in the Local Plan. As such, the council is only required to meet a four-year housing land supply against the five-year requirement. The requirement to meet a four-year housing land supply only runs for two years until 18 December 2025, at which time the requirement will revert back to the council needing to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

- 2.3 As the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015) is more than five years old, the housing requirement to be used in the five-year housing land supply calculation is Wiltshire's local housing need based on the Government's standard method³. The local housing need is based on future household growth and an adjustment to take account of housing affordability in the local authority. It is recalculated every year based on the latest data, which is applicable at the base date. The standard methodology operates on a local authority basis and does not disperse the local housing need figure to a smaller geographic level.
- 2.4 The annual update for Wiltshire has now been completed and the results of the assessment, using a base date of 1 April 2023, are set out in the 2023 Housing Land Supply Statement (HLSS). This is available on our website via this [link](#). Key points:
- The council can demonstrate a four-year housing land supply. The current position indicates there is a **4.2 years** supply.
 - The deliverable supply has decreased since the previous version due to a number of factors, including a significantly higher number of completions than in previous years, and the effect of the changes to nutrient neutrality by statutory bodies and approach adopted in response by the council.

3. How is the housing land supply calculated?

- 3.1 Housing land supply is calculated using a base date from which calculations are made to avoid double counting.
- 3.2 We have now updated the housing land supply calculation using a base date of 1 April 2023. Using this base date, an explanation is provided below:

Starting point for calculation at base date of 1 April 2023:

Local housing need (1 April 2023) = **1,952** homes per annum

No buffer needs to be applied to the housing requirement as the council has passed the latest Housing Delivery Test (see section 5 below)

4-year requirement = **7,808 homes**

5-year requirement = **9,760 homes**

³ Planning Practice Guidance (DLUHC, July 2019) - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

What can be included in supply?

- (i) Number of homes on small sites (less than 10 homes) with planning permission or resolution to grant at 1 April 2023 = **1,371 homes** outstanding of which **1,160 homes** were considered to be deliverable within five years (the reduced number takes into account a delivery rate that is based on historic data on non-implementation and delivery timescales).
- (ii) Number of homes on large sites (10 or more homes) with full planning permission at 1 April 2023 = **4,444 homes** outstanding of which **3,741 homes** were considered deliverable within five years (the reduced number reflects delivery timescales).
- (iii) For other large sites with either outline planning permission; resolution to grant planning permission; or allocated⁴ at 1 April 2023: the number of homes where there is clear evidence of delivery over a five year period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2028 = **10,399** homes outstanding, of which **1,920 homes** were considered deliverable within five years.
- (iv) Windfall allowance: number of homes expected to be completed on new 'windfall' sites (which do not have planning permission as at 1 April 2023) over a five-year period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2028 = **1,372 homes**

Therefore, in total **8,193 homes** can be included in the deliverable supply.

- 3.3 (i) and (ii) are relatively straightforward statistical exercises, which involve an understanding of delivery timescales for individual sites.
- 3.4 (iv) is also a statistical exercise that requires understanding of past delivery trends and the potential for development opportunities to come forward in the future. As these are matters which vary year-on-year, the allowance is reviewed and refreshed as part of each annual update. The position includes an allowance for delivery on brownfield sites and small greenfield sites.
- 3.5 (iii) is more complex, and clear evidence must be provided for each site to meet the requirements of paragraph 77 of the NPPF, which requires that sites are deliverable over the five-year period being assessed. This means that for large sites, which take time to deliver, we may only be able to include the first few phases of development in the five-year land supply.
- 3.5 So, while on the face of it there is a substantial pool of large sites, for **17,586 homes** in total, and a higher level of supply could be expected, the timescales within which these can be delivered is key. An assessment of the deliverability of these sites has indicated that only **47 %** of these are capable of delivery during the five-year period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2028. Factors determining housing delivery are often outside our control, as the

⁴ Wiltshire Core Strategy, Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan, and allocations in Neighbourhood Plans which do not yet have planning permission.

development industry ultimately determines how and when sites come forward, despite planning permissions being granted and sites allocated within the development plan.

- 3.6 It is important for credible judgements to be made in undertaking these assessments because they are subject to scrutiny at appeal by appellants, third parties and the appointed Planning Inspector.

4. What are the implications of having a four-year housing land supply?

- 4.1 The implications for not having a five-year housing land supply and decision making were set out in previous briefing notes, specifically Briefing Notes No. 20-20 (June 2020), No. 20-37 (December 2020), No. 22-09 (April 2022), and No. 23-15 (May 2023). These indicated that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applied when determining planning applications.
- 4.2 Following the December 2023 changes to the NPPF, the council is now only required to provide a four-year housing land supply to prevent the presumption in favour of sustainable development applying when determining planning applications. This was set out in Briefing Note 24-01 (January 2024) which superseded the council's approach set out in the earlier Briefing Notes specified in paragraph 4.1.
- 4.3 As these figures exceed the four-year requirement, the planning balance is now 'level'. This indicates that there is now a lower threshold in place for being able to justify the refusal of planning applications. Pragmatically, this means that fewer 'speculative' residential planning applications are likely to be granted.

5. What is the Housing Delivery Test and consequences?

- 5.1 It measures net homes delivery (i.e. net homes built) in a local authority area, such as Wiltshire, against the homes required using local authority completions statistics and planning data.
- 5.2 The results are published for each local authority area by the Secretary of State annually, see [Housing Delivery Test \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/housing-delivery-test)
- 5.3 As set out in the NPPF the Housing Delivery Test will apply the day following publication of the results, at which point they supersede previously published results. The most up to date result, at the time of writing, is for 2022.
- 5.4 Since the inception of the Housing Delivery Test the published results for Wiltshire are:
- | | |
|------|---|
| 2018 | 139% (years measured 2015/16 - 2017/18) |
| 2019 | 149% (years measured 2016/17 - 2018/19) |
| 2020 | 140% (years measured 2017/18 - 2019/20) |
| 2021 | 141% (years measured 2018/19 - 2020/21) |
| 2022 | 106% (years measured 2019/20 - 2021/22) |
- 5.5 The three consequences of failing the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) are set out in paragraph 79 of the NPPF, as follows:

1. Triggering the presumption in favour of sustainable development (HDT below 75%)

The presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11d, NPPF), as explained above, should be applied to decisions where the HDT indicates delivery has fallen below 75% of the housing requirement.

2. 20% buffer (HDT below 85%)

The five-year land supply must include an additional buffer of 20% where the HDT indicates that delivery was below 85% of the housing requirement.

3. Requirement to prepare an action plan (HDT below 95%):

The authority should prepare an action plan in line with national planning guidance, to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.

- 5.6 Wiltshire has consistently performed well against the HDT and has passed the test in the latest results. As a result, none of the consequences set out above apply in Wiltshire.

6. What can we do to maintain housing land supply?

- 6.1 The changes to the NPPF relating to the four-year housing land supply are time-limited - the concession under paragraph 226 only lasts until December 2025. It is therefore very important that the council gains the support of local communities to secure the adoption of its emerging Local Plan as soon as possible as this will provide a much longer period of 'protection'.
- 6.2 The council will look to restore a five-year housing land supply through the Local Plan, which should be in place prior to December 2025, and permitting appropriate housing developments in the meantime. The Plan looks to allocate additional housing land, some of which can be delivered within five years, and therefore contribute towards meeting a five-year housing land supply.
- 6.3 The council's housing land supply figure can only be retained during the concessionary period if suitable planning applications for housing development continue to be granted. If the council refuses too many planning applications, housing supply will fall below four years and the 'tilted' balance in favour of approval will once again apply.
- 6.4 Since the base date of 1 April 2023, consents have continued to be granted permission on suitable sites. While these do not currently contribute to the housing land supply because they were permitted after the base date of 1 April 2023, they will help to increase the housing land supply in the future. New permissions help replenish the housing land supply as it is reduced due to housing completions, planning permissions lapsing, and delays in delivery on key sites. Table 4 of the HLSS contains a list of large new sites (10 or more dwellings) that have been permitted since the base date up to the date of publication.

- 6.5 Work can now commence on the preparation of the next HLSS using a base date of 1 April 2024. These statements take time to prepare, particularly for authorities the size of Wiltshire, and typically take around 9-12 months from the base date to publication.

Launch of the third Solar Together scheme in Wiltshire and Swindon

Briefing Note No. 24-14

Service: Climate Team

Further Enquiries to: Lynn.Trigwell@wiltshire.gov.uk

Date Prepared: 14 June 2024

Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council are working with iChoosr, independent experts in group-buying, to launch a third Solar Together scheme, following the success of previous two schemes in 2022 and 2023. The Solar Together scheme offers a cost-effective way for residents and businesses to purchase solar panel and battery storage installation.

What is the Solar Together scheme?

Solar Together operates on a group-buying approach, with the core principle that coming together as a group provides enhanced buying power and allows the approved providers to offer a better price than individual homeowners might get from entering the market alone.

The scheme gives households and businesses the opportunity to save on energy bills and generate their own electricity by purchasing high-quality solar panels and battery storage at a competitive price.

The prospect of choosing an installer and making the change to renewable energy can be daunting, but Solar Together makes the switch to clean energy as hassle-free as possible. The scheme supports people every step of the way, providing clear and objective information that people can trust, so that they can make a well-informed decision and receive expert guidance throughout the process.

The initiative offers solar panels (also known as solar PV) with optional battery storage and electric vehicle (EV) charge points. It also offers battery storage installation for residents who have already invested in solar panels and are looking to maximise how much of their self-generated energy they can use at home and become less dependent on electricity suppliers.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to be particularly challenging, and this scheme is one of the ways in which households can make long-term savings by generating their own renewable energy, whilst also helping our ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions across the county.

Relevance to the council's business plan

By reducing carbon emissions and stimulating the green economy, this scheme will support the following business plan missions and guiding themes:

- **Sustainable environment:** We are on the path to carbon neutral (net zero). We lead the way in how councils and counties mitigate the climate challenges ahead and assist the county to have a smaller carbon footprint.
- **Thriving economy:** Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce.

Who is eligible and when can they register?

To register for the scheme, residents must either own their own house or have permission from the landlord to install solar panels. Small and medium-sized enterprises (non-domestic) and Commonhold Associations meeting this requirement can also participate.

The scheme is now open for registrations in Wiltshire and Swindon, people have until 9 August 2024 to register. People who are interested can register for free, and, following a competitive bidding process managed by Solar Together, will then be sent their recommended provider and costs, with no obligation to proceed with the installation.

iChoosr will send out a direct mail letter from the week of 17 June to a selection of properties in Wiltshire that are likely to be eligible for the scheme, to give them all the information they need to consider participating should they wish to. The scheme will be promoted using all the available council communication channels, including social media, press releases, newsletter articles and posters at public facing council buildings. There will be no selling by phone or doorstepping of residents.

How does the scheme work?

1. **Register without obligation from 17 June:** in Wiltshire via [Solar Together Wiltshire](#) or in Swindon via [Solar Together Swindon](#)
2. **Auction:** Solar Together's approved solar installers will bid for the work in a reverse 'auction'. The most competitive offer, from these pre-vetted installers, wins the auction.
3. **Personal recommendation:** Individuals will be emailed a personal recommendation for their home based on the details they provided during registration. This will include the costs and specifications for a complete solar panel installation.
4. **The decision:** the decision is then up to individuals as to whether they want to accept or decline their personal recommendation. There is no obligation to continue and they will have four weeks to decide. If they choose to go ahead and accept with Solar Together, a £150 deposit is required, which is conditionally refundable.
5. **Installation:** if they accept, the winning installer will contact them to survey their roof and set an installation date. All installations are planned to be completed six months after accepting.

How successful was the first Solar Together scheme in Wiltshire?

The previous schemes in 2022 and 2023 have delivered 1,110 installations, totalling more than 10,660 solar panels and resulting in over £11 million invested by residents into the green economy. All of the schemes combined are also estimated to lead to a reduction of 22,000 tonnes of CO2 over the 25-year guaranteed lifetime of the solar panels installed.

What can you do to help?

Our Wiltshire Climate Strategy is very clear that as a county we need to reduce the energy we use as well as using low carbon forms of energy. Within the strategy we aimed to encourage installation of renewables through group buy schemes and we're pleased to offer this opportunity to residents to consider.

If you are contacted by residents who want more information about this, people can visit www.solartogether.co.uk/wiltshire, email wiltshire@solartogether.co.uk or call 0800 0488113. iChoosr are responsible for managing and rolling out the scheme and all enquiries about it will be going via them.

We would welcome and encourage you to share any council communications, such as social media posts and press releases, with your contacts and the local community to help spread the word about the scheme.

For those residents not eligible for this particular scheme, but who still want ideas on lowering their carbon footprint or information on how to access support or grants for energy efficiency in their homes, then there's more information available at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/climate-change-individual.

If you have any questions or queries, please contact climate@wiltshire.gov.uk.

More about Solar Together and iChoosr

The Solar Together scheme has been running successfully across the UK for six years and, to date, has completed over 33,000 installations with 10-25% savings for individuals against the market average. More information can be found at: <https://solartogether.co.uk/>.

iChoosr are the independent experts in group-buying who facilitate the scheme locally. iChoosr was founded in 2008 and is privately owned by two co-founders. Before it entered the UK energy market in 2012 it had focused on collective schemes in the Netherlands and Belgium where it works with community leaders helping households to select energy and solar power suppliers. As in the UK, its operations continue to grow across Europe, North America and Japan.

iChoosr has a strong track record of delivering group purchase schemes for local authorities. It has worked with 160 UK local authorities on its collective energy switching schemes. More information can be found at www.ichoosr.co.uk.

Members are requested to:

- NOTE this report and CONSIDER the quotes received.
- NOTE and CONSIDER the Clerk's recommendations.

Background

A hearing loop is an assistive listening system that helps make public premises welcoming to people with hearing loss. They transmit audio directly to users' hearing aids or cochlear implants, cutting out background noise and making speech clear.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people who are deaf or have hearing loss from discrimination. It states that service providers cannot discriminate against people by refusing to provide a service or offering a service of a lower standard.

Investigations

Through obtaining quotes, it is apparent there are many options available dependent on the size, set up and primary function of the room. An infrared loop has been discounted as this would require those who are hard of hearing to wear a lanyard and therefore highlighting they are hard of hearing which may not be palatable to the individual. Ceiling microphones were recommended as opposed to handheld microphones or lapel microphones given the nature of business conducted in the room. All quotes are based on a wire loop to be installed in the loft space above the Main Hall, four ceiling microphones and an amplifier (which can be wall mounted in the Main Hall or in the Store Room) that will accommodate additional sound inputs, such as a handheld microphone or a desk microphone should the need arise in the future.

After installation, the Council may wish to consider annual maintenance checks of the equipment although this is not mandatory. Quote D includes a loop tester, which allows any person who does not use a hearing aid to check that the loop is working.

Quotes

Company A - £3,308.95 ex. VAT

Company B - £1,987.00 ex. VAT. £250 ex. VAT for annual maintenance check

Company C - £1,218.90 ex. VAT. £200 ex. VAT for annual maintenance check

All quotes above require an electrician to install a switched spur. The Council's approved electrician has quoted for this at a cost of £210 (no VAT payable).

Recommendation

Members are asked to CONSIDER the Clerk's recommendation to accept Company C's quote of £1,218.90, with the addition of the required electrical works of £210 (no VAT payable) at a total cost of £1,428.90 ex. VAT.

Quotes for the hearing induction loop to be funded by Ear Marked Reserves CIL, of which funds of £9,740.97 are available.

Hayley Graham
June 2024

Members are requested to:

- NOTE the report
- CONSIDER the grant application for £500 towards the All Saints Church Nave appeal.

Background

Historically, Parish Councils have legally been unable to make a direct contribution to the running of or appeals made for Parish Churches. In 2023, as part of the Levelling up and Regeneration Act, amendments were made to the bill that changes this and as a Parish Council, it is now allowed to contribute directly to church appeals.

All Saints Church need a total of £266,741 for their appeal. They have already raised all but £20,000 through grants, a legacy, various events and donations to date. The need to re-roof is as a result of the architects 5 yearly check (Quinquennial) which in 2020 said the Nave roof will only last another 5-10 years. Once completed the roof should last 100 years and as the S. Aisle roof was repaired about 35 years ago, the chancel in 2019 then All Saints should be dry inside for a good 50-60 years or more.

At the meeting held on 9th November 2023, minute reference 23.108:

Members AGREED to support a local resident to organise a 2024 Open Gardens event. The Parish Council will promote the event, print posters and programmes. Members RESOLVED to set a maximum budget of £500 (five hundred pounds). All proceeds from the event will be donated to the Church Roof Appeal.

As the resident is now unable to run this event, the request is that the £500 originally earmarked for the event now be provided to the appeal in the form of a grant.

Clerks Comments:

The £500 agreed at the November meeting was not a donation or a cash payment of £500, it was a gift in-kind for Council services.

In reference to LO2-23 (attached) –

- The Council has now received a written request from the Parochial Church Council
- The Parish Council has the power to approve this grant under s137 of the Local Government Act.

In reference to Legal Topic Note 31E (attached) –

- The Council must first be satisfied that there is a direct benefit to the area or part of the area, or to some or all of the inhabitants.
- The Council must secondly ensure that the direct benefit accruing to its area or residents is commensurate with the expenditure incurred.

A budget line of £500.00 was included in the 24/25 precept for grant applications, and a grant request of £163.20 for Wiltshire Search and Rescue has already been approved in this financial year, leaving a balance available of £336.20.

20 DECEMBER 2023

L02-23 | POWER TO FUND WORKS TO PROPERTY RELATING TO AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH OR HELD FOR AN ECCLESIASTICAL CHARITY (ENGLAND ONLY)

Introduction

On 26 October 2023, the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (the 2023 Act) received Royal Assent. Section 82 of the 2023 Act amends the Local Government Act 1894 (the 1894 Act) by inserting a new section 19A into the 1894 Act. Section 19A comes into force on 26 December 2023. The Appendix at the end of this briefing contains the wording of section 19A.

The government's view is that its amendment in the form of section 19A clarifies that the 1894 Act does not affect the discretionary powers of parish councils in England to fund church repairs or improvements or property held for an ecclesiastical charity. NALC recommends that its members adopt the government's view when they receive requests for funding. This means that councils can use their discretionary powers to fund such property, including that of other Christian denominations and non-Christian faiths. It applies in the case of:

- Specific powers to fund works - for example, repairs to clocks fixed to church property (section 2 of the Parish Councils Act 1957) and the maintenance of open churchyards (section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act)).
- General powers to fund works where works are not covered by a specific power - section 137 of the 1972 Act and the general power of competence can also be used by councils to fund requests for works not covered by specific powers.

What will parish councils need to consider when receiving funding requests?

Councils need to consider requests in respect of church property or property held for an ecclesiastical charity as they would any other funding request. Funding powers further to section 19A of the 1894 Act coming into force are discretionary. Parish councils are not under any additional duties as a result of the 2023 Act and the insertion of section 19A to the 1894 Act.

The issues that councils would need to consider when seeking to rely on a general power are set out within our Legal Topic Note 31E. This includes the direct benefit

of expenditure accruing to a council's area or residents being commensurate with the expenditure incurred in respect of section 137.

NALC publications

NALC's view (as set out in Legal Briefing L01-18 – financial assistance to the church) was that only explicit local council powers could override the prohibition in the 1894 Act to fund churches. We will be withdrawing Legal Briefing L01-18 further to the Government's amendment as per section 19A coming into force on 26 December 2023. We will also update and reissue Legal Topic Note 31E to remove references to the prohibition, which will no longer apply when section 19A comes into force.

Appendix

19A Powers under other enactments

- (1) Nothing in this Part affects any powers, duties or liabilities conferred on a parish council by or under any other enactment (whenever passed or made).
- (2) This section does not apply in relation to community councils (see section 179
- (4) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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19 DECEMBER 2023

LTN 31E | LOCAL COUNCIL GENERAL POWERS (ENGLAND)

THIS VERSION EFFECTIVE FROM 26 DECEMBER 2023

Introduction

1. Local councils in England can rely on general powers to act and spend money unless they are restricted from doing so. This Note will look at the scope of the general powers and what councils can and cannot do. The powers are as follows:
 - a. Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972
 - b. The general power of competence (if eligible)

Overview of the powers

2. Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. It is however, limited in a number of ways. Section 137 cannot be used by a local council that is eligible to exercise the General Power of Competence (GPC) except to donate money to certain charities and appeals (section 137(3)). The relationship between section 137 and the GPC is an important one and is explained further below.

Section 137 — scope and nature of the section

3. The basic power is for a local council to spend money subject to the statutory limit on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.
4. Where the council has an unrestricted specific statutory power to spend money, section 137 cannot be used. An example of such a power is section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Act, which empowers a local council to contribute by way of grant or loan towards the expenses incurred or to be incurred by any voluntary organisation in providing recreational facilities. Another example is section 145(1)(b) of the 1972 Act, which enables a local council to contribute towards the expenses of providing a theatre.
5. Where a council has a statutory power restricted by a limitation or condition, section 137 cannot be used to get around the limitation or condition. An example of a limitation is contained in section 127(2) of the

1972 Act in respect of a disposal of an interest in land for less than best consideration.

6. Where there is a statutory prohibition on a council carrying out a particular function, section 137 cannot be used to avoid the prohibition. An example is section 2(1) of the Local Government Act 1986, which prohibits a local authority from publishing or arranging for the publication of material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to effect support for a political party. Section 137(1A) also reinforces the prohibition on using section 137 to avoid a limitation or condition on some other power or for a function that they are prohibited from exercising.
7. Provided that there is no alternative power whether limited or conditional or not, and no statutory prohibition, a council may incur expenditure under section 137. The council must first be satisfied that there is a direct benefit to the area or part of the area, or to some or all of the inhabitants. The council is the body to determine whether or not such benefit will accrue, and a decision by the council could only be challenged on the ground that it was wholly unreasonable. The use of “some” in relation to the inhabitants means that the council cannot use the power to benefit a single individual. It may be possible for the council to help an organisation to which the individual belongs, thus releasing funds for the organisation to help individuals. For example, a council could make a donation to a local organisation which provides grants to needy persons or to pay for individual’s first aid courses where a council believes there would be demonstrable benefit to the area or its inhabitants.
8. The council must secondly ensure that the direct benefit accruing to its area or residents is commensurate with the expenditure incurred. This means that a council should not spend a disproportionately large amount on something which has no or very little direct benefit. For example, spending the whole of the council’s allowance under section 137 for the benefit of two people is unlikely to confer benefits commensurate to the expenditure incurred, or to donate a council’s entire annual section 137 allowance to a local campaign group where there is a contentious issue that divides local opinion.
9. Expenditure incurred by a council under section 137 is open to challenge by the auditor, or by a local government elector objector at audit (section 27 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014), on the basis that the expenditure is larger than the direct benefit to the area or to residents would justify. Councils must therefore exercise care when considering the amounts of proposed expenditure under section 137 and, if in doubt, should seek advice before going ahead.

10. Section 137 expenditure can only be incurred on publicity by way of assistance to a public body or voluntary body when it is incidental to the main purpose for which the council is giving financial assistance (section 137(2C)). Expenditure by a council on publishing information regarding the services it provides is also subject to the statutory limit (section 142 of the 1972 Act).
11. Under section 137(3) contributions may be made to charities and bodies providing a public service on a non-profit making basis, but only in furtherance of their work in the United Kingdom. It is unlawful for a council to contribute to a charity or a public service body operating overseas, or to a fund established to help persons outside the UK. Contributions to UK charities and bodies providing a public service do not have to bring any direct benefit to the council's area or to its inhabitants.
12. Section 137(3) may also be used to contribute to public appeals for funds in connection with particular events affecting UK residents only where the appeal is made by the Lord Mayor of London or the Chair of a principal council or by a similar person in Scotland or by a committee of which such a person is a member.

Limit of expenditure

13. The maximum amount which a council may spend under section 137 in any one fiscal year (i.e. 1 April to the following 31 March) is an index-linked amount per head of the relevant population, calculated as set out below.
14. The relevant Government department (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) usually notifies NALC of the agreed value for local councils according to the indexation formula a short time before the relevant financial year.
15. The relevant population is the number of persons on the electoral roll for the town, or parish as at 1 April. The electoral register is published and updated regularly. The electoral registration officer will be able to give details of numbers.
16. In calculating the expenditure incurred under this section, a council is entitled to deduct from its gross expenditure any grant payable by a Minister of the Crown (defined as "the holder of an office in Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and includes the Treasury, the Board of Trade and the Defence Council"), or out of the European Regional Development Fund or the European Social Fund. In addition, any amount that has been funded by public subscription and any loan repayments can also be ignored.

Authorisation of expenditure and accounts

17. As councillors are collectively expressing an opinion as to the commensurate local benefit, the expenditure under section 137 must be properly authorised by resolution.
18. Section 137(7) requires a separate account to be kept of expenditure under the section. For many councils all that is necessary is to have a separate column in the cash book. Steps need to be taken with computerised book-keeping to see that a total of the money spent to date under this section is available on request. Rights of inspection under section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 apply to the separate account.

Contributions to voluntary bodies, charities etc.

19. Where a council provides financial assistance equal to or exceeding the relevant minimum to a body providing a public service, a charity or funds where the appeal is made by the Lord Mayor of London or the chair of a principal council within section 137(3), must require the body or charity recipient to furnish a written statement of how the money has been spent, within 12 months after the assistance has been given (section 137A). The “relevant minimum” is £2,000 but a council should normally require some account from the recipient body of how the contribution is to be (and in the case of successive contributions has been) spent, whatever the amount. It is usually prudent to require sight of a financial statement or account before a grant is given. In many cases, the grant is given in a form that will have to be treated as restricted funds by the receiving charity.

Other relevant legislation

20. Expenditure incurred under section 20 of the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 is also subject to the statutory limit permitted by section 137. Section 20 concerns powers in relation to local energy-saving measures and allows local councils to encourage or promote the likes of microgeneration within their area.

The General Power of Competence

21. Section 1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) provides that a local authority has the power to do anything that individuals generally may do. “Local authority” is defined in section 8 of the 2011 Act and includes an eligible parish council (see paragraph 22 below). Section 2 sets out the boundaries of the general power. Subsection (2) provides that the general

power does not enable an eligible local council to do (a) anything which the authority is unable to do by virtue of a pre-commencement limitation, or (b) anything which the authority is unable to do by virtue of a post-commencement limitation which is expressed to apply (i) to the general power, (ii) to all of the authority's powers, or (iii) to all of the authority's powers but with exceptions that do not include the general power.

22. The prescribed criteria that a local council is required to fulfil in order to become an eligible parish council are set out in the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012. It confirms that a local council is eligible to use the general power of competence if:
- a. it has a qualified clerk;
 - b. a minimum of two-thirds of the total number of councillors have been elected; and
 - c. it has resolved at a meeting of the council and each subsequent relevant annual meeting (that is, an annual meeting that takes place in a year of ordinary elections of parish councillors) that it meets these conditions.

The relevant date for eligibility purposes is the annual meeting in a year of ordinary elections. As such, if a council loses a qualified clerk or does not have two-thirds of elected councillors in the intervening period between relevant annual meetings, the council will remain eligible until the next annual meeting in a year of ordinary elections. Having a qualified deputy clerk or RFO is not sufficient if the clerk is not qualified.

23. Qualified clerk means one who has attained one of:
- a. the Certificate in Local Council Administration;
 - b. the Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy;
 - c. the Certificate of Higher Education in Local Council Administration;
 - d. or the first level of the foundation degree in Community Engagement and Governance awarded by the University of Gloucestershire or its successor qualifications;

and the clerk completed training on the General Power of Competence unless such training was part of obtaining a qualification mentioned above.

24. Unlike expenditure incurred by a council under section 137 of the 1972 Act, the GPC imposes no statutory maximum limit to the level of expenditure that may be incurred by an eligible parish council. Paragraph 7 of Schedule 5 to Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 means that an eligible parish council cannot incur expenditure under section 137

except under section 137(3) to contribute to the funds of charities in furtherance of their work in the United Kingdom, not for profit bodies operating in the UK and mayoral appeals as detailed in paragraphs 11 and 12.

25. Local councils which are not eligible councils for the purposes of the GPC retain the power to incur expenditure under section 137.

Exercise of the GPC - trading

26. NALC's view is that the absence of a power enabling local councils to trade prior to the GPC coming into force does not constitute a pre-commencement limitation. In short, eligible councils can exercise the GPC for trading purposes. However, section 4 of the 2011 Act requires that anything done under GPC for a commercial purpose must be done through a separate company.

Members are requested to NOTE this report and CONSIDER the recommendation

Background

A resident has highlighted there is a section of The Street (c. 50 metres) where pedestrians are forced to walk on the road, and has requested that signage is put in place to warn drivers of the hazard. (Min ref. 24.37).

A new sign on the network would be considered as a new highway request and as such, go through the LHFIFG process. The Council can bypass the LHFIFG and pay the full cost.

Recommendation

Members to AGREE for Wiltshire Council to be approached for a quote for two “Pedestrians in Road” signs.

Members are requested to NOTE this report and CONSIDER the recommendation

Background

The Parish Handyman has identified that two fence posts need replacing. Members AGREED for contractors to be approached to carry out this work (Min ref. 23.181), but the Parish Handyman has now established he can do this work in house.

Recommendation

Members to APPROVE expenditure of a maximum of £60.00 to replace two fence posts. Cost to be met from 2024-2025 Play Area Maintenance Budget (£500), code 4131.

Members are requested to:

- NOTE this report and CONSIDER the quote received
- NOTE and CONSIDER the Clerk's recommendation.

Background

In the Parish meeting held on 5 June 2024, members APPROVED the purchase of two SIDs and six additional mounting bars at a total cost of £4,149 (four thousand, one hundred and forty nine pounds) ex VAT. £3,000 (three thousand pounds) ex VAT to be met from code 4140 (included in 2024-2025 precept), and the balance of £1,149 (one thousand one hundred and forty nine pounds) ex VAT to be met from Community Infrastructure Funding. (Minute ref 24.32)

Update

It has since been established that all 6 SID locations require mounting bars to face both directions of travel and as such, twelve mounting bars. Each unit comes with one mounting bar, therefore an 10 additional mounting bars are required, 4 more than the previously approved expenditure covered.

Quote

To purchase 4no. mounting bars at a cost of £190 ex. VAT.

Clerk's Recommendation

Members are asked to CONSIDER the Clerk's recommendation to purchase 4.no mounting bars at a cost of £190 ex. VAT to enable the Parish Council maximise the number of locations from which data can be captured.

Funds required for this recommendation to be met from CIL Funds. The current EMR CIL balance is £9,740.97.

Hayley Graham
June 2024

LYDIARD MILLICENT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
5 June 2024
held at the Jubilee Club House, Lydiard Millicent
at 19:02 hrs

Councillors Present:

S Westwood, Chairman S Chalker C Hacker S Hill-Wheeler R Selwood
M Allsop, Vice Chairman M Suleman

Others in Attendance: 5 members of the public, Parish Handyman C Tydeman and Tina Jones

Meeting Clerk: Hayley Graham

Public Question Time:

- A resident raised concerns that a resident in Stone Lane who previously had a retrospective planning application and associated appeal refused, has started to develop again, and has also not reinstated the boundary as was instructed to do as a result of the application refusal. The resident was asked to email the Clerk with the detail to follow up with Wiltshire Council Enforcement.
- A resident highlighted that some notices displayed on the Common Platt noticeboard are not visible due to the noticeboard frame. The Clerk will raise this with the Parish Administrator.
- A resident raised concerns around the layby across Common Platt at the bottom of Stone Lane being driven across by vehicles. The road markings are being eroded and are not being maintained and as a result, cars are being driven over utilities and causing damage. The resident was advised to report this to Wiltshire Council using the MyWilts app and the Clerk would do the same.
- A resident raised concerns that the T-junction at the bottom of Stone Lane is being used as a bend as the road markings have largely disappeared. Members agreed to discuss adding this issue to the LHFIF list at the next meeting although the priorities for this year have already been agreed. Suggested the resident reports every incident / near miss to Wiltshire Council and keeps a log to accompany the photos they have been taking.
- A resident highlighted that new pedestrian markings along the Greatfield footpath were discussed several months ago but no progress has been made. Greatfield is on the LHFIF list of priorities for this new financial year.
- A resident advised a utility company had left blue markings on a road which have remained for some time. The resident was advised that the Council has no control or authority over utility markings.
- A resident wanted to ask Councillor Steve Bucknell for a definition of "imminent" in relation to the Restrop Road application. This application is on the agenda, see Minute Reference 24.29. There are new documents but it is the existing application so there is no need to resubmit comments.

MINUTES

24.22 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received from Councillor Coffey or Wiltshire Councillor Steve Bucknell.

24.23 Appointment of Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer

Members RATIFIED the appointments of Hayley Graham as Parish Clerk and Tina Jones as the interim Responsible Finance Officer.

24.24 Declarations of Interest and Dispensation Requests

No declarations of interest were made.

Councillor Hill-Wheeler had written to the Clerk requesting a dispensation. In accordance with Standing Order 13, the Clerk granted Councillor Hill-Wheeler a dispensation in the interests of persons living in the Parish Area, it was granted for a period of two years.

24.25 Chairman's Announcements:

- There are three Councillor vacancies, come and join us.
- D-Day pop up museum is taking place at the Jubilee Club House tomorrow from 7.30pm with the beacon being lit at 9.15pm, all welcome.

- Pleased to announce the refurbishment of the main hall in the Jubilee Club House is complete. Plans are being progressed to work on the acoustics of the room.
- Wiltshire Council will be visiting the Parish with their Discretionary Gully Clearing service this month. They are only able to work on areas that do not require traffic management.

24.26 Minutes

Members considered the minutes of the Parish meeting held on 2 May 2024. The minutes of the meeting were ADOPTED as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 2 May 2024. The minutes of the meeting were ADOPTED as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

24.27 Wiltshire Councillor Report

No report received from Councillor Steve Bucknell. Clerk to request an update by email.

24.28 Financial Accounts

Members NOTED and APPROVED the Income & Expenditure Reports and Payments List.

24.29 Planning Applications

Members NOTED and CONSIDERED the Notification of Planning Appeal – PL/2023/00424 – Land at Washpool, SN5 3PN. Members RESOLVED to add the Road Safety Report to original OBJECTION.

Members NOTED the following Wiltshire Council decisions:

Application: PL/2024/02035 – Full Planning Application	Applicant: Rawlings & Davis Ltd
Address: Plain Farm, Lydiard Plain, SN5 0AL	Proposal: Renew/Extend area of concreting in farmyard under Catchment Sensitive Farm Support Scheme
	WC Approved with Conditions
Application: PL/2024/01632 – Lawful Development Certificate for a Proposed Use	
Applicant Name: Mr M Sharp	Address: Lydiard Millicent Parish Hall, Church Place, SN5 3LS
Proposal: Proposed solar panel installations to roof.	WC Approved with Conditions
Application: PL/2024/03222 – Householder Application	Applicant: Mr Piedade & Ms Chalker
Address: Maycroft, Common Platt, SN5 5JZ	Proposal: First floor extension over existing ground floor and ground floor rear extension.
	WC Approved with Conditions
Application: PL/2024/00649 – Householder Application	Applicant: Mr & Mrs Sturman
Address: 19 The Beeches, Lydiard Millicent, SN5 3LT	Proposal: Proposed Side and Rear extension and new roof over accommodate rooms in the roof.
	WC Approved with Conditions

Members CONSIDERED the following applications:

Application: PL/2022/00239 – Full Planning Application	Applicant: Mr Varey
Address: Land East of Restrop Road, Lydiard Green, SN5 3LP	
Proposal: Change of use of land to use as a residential caravan site for 12 gypsy families, each with two caravans including no more than one static caravan, together with laying of hardstanding, construction of driveway and installation of package sewage treatment plant.	
Members RESOLVED to uphold the original OBJECTION with additional comments.	
Application: PL/2024/04067 - Householder Planning permission	Applicant: Mr Sheppard
Address: Bridge House, Lydiard Plain, SN5 0AL	
Proposal: Two storey side and rear extensions.	
Members RESOLVED to make NO COMMENT on this application.	
Application: PL/2024/04408 - Full Planning permission	Applicant: Messers Marty & Smith
Address: Lydiard House Farm, Lydiard Green, SN5 3LW.	
Proposal: Proposed alterations to the external appearance.	
Members RESOLVED to make NO OBJECTION to this application.	

An additional application for the last address was identified:

Application: PL/2024/04409 – Agricultural buildings to a flexible commercial use.
Applicant: Messers Marty & Smith
Address: Lydiard House Farm, Lydiard Green, SN5 3LW.
Proposal: Proposed alterations to the external appearance.
Members RESOLVED to make NO OBJECTION to this application.

Clerks Report

Members NOTED the report.

23.179 Jubilee Club House Trees

Members approved the recommendation to have the trees behind the Jubilee Club House professionally assessed. Quotes Requested

23.181 Play Area Inspection

Members noted the inspection and the issues raised. Members approved £400 for surface work and time adjustable gate closers. Concerns were raised regarding the Play Tower Decision was deferred until the Handyman could consider the options available. Quotes requested for replacement of two fence posts.

23.184 Holborn Footpath

There are two specific places along the footpath where the holes are very deep and currently filled with water. After discussions, Members agreed for contractors to be approached for quotes to fill in the holes and to redress the whole length. Quotes Requested.

23.204 Footpath Working Group

The hedging that denotes Lydiard Green and the neighbouring farmland has gaps in places. There is no right of access onto this private land at any of these points. There are three pillboxes on/surrounding the Green, only one of which is on the Village Green itself. Once the information boards have been put in situ, it is possible that members of the public may try and access the private land area. Members resolved to spend up to £1000 to plant new hedging and replacement trees, met from Ear Marked Reserves set aside for Footpaths/Lydiard Green

PQT – 2 May – Updates

- A resident raised concerned for the safety of users on footpath LMIL60. For at least the last ten years the metal gate blocking LMIL60 has been locked shut. This means that those wishing to use the footpath have to clamber over the gate or the adjoining metal bars. The Clerk asked the resident to email her the details and she would contact Wiltshire Council. UPDATE: The Clerk is in communication with WC regarding this issue.
- A resident asked if better/additional signage could be placed at the chicane by the car garage as drivers seem to ignore the priority signs, and there have been some near misses. The Chairman said this request would be on to the next agenda. Resident contacted with no response.
- A resident (ex Councillor) advised that a village entry sign had been knocked down and the pole bent, he had reported to the Clerk and told her where she should get it repaired or replaced, he wanted to know why it had not been done. The Clerk advised him that she does have delegated authority and had requested that the Parish Handyman looked at the damage, to see if he could repair it, in the first instance. The function of the Clerk is to find best value, and even with delegated authority there must be a budget to spend against. UPDATE: Following discussions with the Parish Handyman a new pole has been purchased under the Clerks delegated powers and has now been put in place. Members AGREED to close.
- A resident asked what to do when a Speed Indicator Device was not working, who should they report it to. The Chairman said they could email the Parish Clerk; the Council will also add information to the website. Information has been added to website. Members AGREED to CLOSE.

Policies

Members AGREED to further review and amend the following policy to be considered for adoption at the next Parish meeting:

b. Procedure for Public Participation at Council Meetings Policy

Members CONSIDERED and ADOPTED the following policies:

- a. Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings Policy
- c. Petitions Policy (with a modification to the number of signatures required reduced to 20)
- d. Co-option Policy
- e. Lone Working Policy

- f. Tree Management Policy
- g. Investment Policy

24.32 **Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs)**

Members NOTED the report and APPROVED the purchase of two SIDs and six additional mounting bars at a total cost of £4,149 (four thousand, one hundred and forty nine pounds) ex VAT. £3,000 (three thousand pounds) ex VAT to be met from code 4140 (included in 2024-2025 precept), and the balance of £1,149 (one thousand one hundred and forty nine pounds) ex VAT to be met from Community Infrastructure Funding.

24.33 **Correspondence**

Members NOTED the following correspondence:

- Age UK Wiltshire Letter
- WC Briefing Note Defra Simpler Recycling Updates
- WC Management of Council Business and Publicity During the Pre-election Period
- Invitation to the First Planning Service Stakeholder Meeting

24.34 **Annual Internal Audit Report**

Commendations were given to the Clerk for her continued efforts to bring the Council's governance, finance and administration functions back into good order, as a result, no recommendations for improvement were made by the internal auditors.

Members NOTED the Internal Audit Report.

Members NOTED and APPROVED the Annual Governance Internal Auditors Report.

24.35 **Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022-2023**

Members NOTED and APPROVED the Annual Governance Statement – Section 1

Members NOTED and APPROVED the Accounting Statement – Section 2.

Members were advised that the increase in total fixed assets from 2023 to 2024 was as a result of an updated valuation for the Jubilee Club House.

24.36 **Asset Register**

Members NOTED and APPROVED the Asset Register.

24.37 **Local Highway & Footway Improvement Group (LHFIG)**

Members NOTED the 22 May LHFIG meeting notes and prioritisation list.

Members RECEIVED a verbal report from Councillor Chalker further to the LHFIG meeting notes.

Members NOTED the 22 May meeting notes and prioritisation list.

Members considered the prioritisation list of commitment recommendations however were not in agreement that there should be no further action on Greatfield. Clerk to query with LHFIG Engineer.

Members considered the request for a "pedestrians on the road sign" to warn cars of the risk to life in this area 46a to approx. 58 The Street, Members AGREED more information was required. Clerk to contact resident. Report to come to a future meeting.

24.38 **Bus Stops**

Members NOTED the report and APPROVED the cleaning of five bus stops twice a year at a total cost of £250 (two hundred and fifty pounds) per year. Cost for 2024-2025 to be met from General Reserves, and included as a budget line in the 2025-2026 precept to cover future costs.

24.39 **North Operational Flooding Working Group Meeting**

Members RECEIVED a verbal report from Councillor Westwood following a recent meeting of the group. Wiltshire Council has been in disaster mode since October 2023 and have only just moved into recovery mode. The Council has been assured of a visit from the Drainage Team to address local issues. An update was received from the Police as to what a Council can and cannot do in the event of flooding.

2 members of the public left the meeting.

24.40 **Parish Newsletter**
Members RECEIVED a verbal report from Councillor Westwood. At the May meeting (Minute Reference 24.16), the Council agreed to fund the production and delivery of the community magazine to every household in the Parish along with the Council's newsletter. Production scheduled for distribution in August. Councillor Chalker volunteered to support with proof reading, Councillor Suleman volunteered to organise the distribution.

24.41 **Jubilee Club House Improvements**
Members NOTED the report and considered the quotes received.
Members APPROVED the purchase of two vertical window blinds and two vertical door blinds at a cost of £397 (three hundred and ninety seven pounds) ex VAT.
Members APPROVED the purchase of eight folding tables and trolley and two additional smaller folding tables at a total cost of £905 (nine hundred and five pounds) ex VAT.
Members APPROVED the purchase of twenty-eight steel framed padded seat / back stackable chairs at a cost of £656.60 (six hundred and fifty six pounds, 60p) ex VAT.
Members APPROVED the purchase of acoustic boards to a maximum cost of £150 (one hundred and fifty pounds) ex VAT.
All costs to be met from Ear Marked Reserves JCH Refurbishment (minute ref. 24.19)

24.42 **Council and Community Representatives**
Members RECEIVED the following update:

Parish Hall: Councillor Hacker reported that the next meeting is taking place on 10 June
Safety Forum: Members NOTED the report from Councillor Hill-Wheeler relating to the meeting held on 10 May

24.43 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**
Members RESOLVED – That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items in Part 2 of the Agenda, this is due to the confidential nature of the items being considered, under the Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960.
3 members of the public, Parish Handyman C Tydeman and Tina Jones left the meeting.

24.44 **Land Issues**
Members NOTED and considered the report on land issues. After discussions, Members APPROVED the expenditure to proceed with Stage 1 and Stage 2 of procedures outlined in the report. Costs to be met from General Reserves.
Members AGREED to explore additional legal support as recommended by the solicitors.

24.45 **Staff Issues**
Members discussed the recommendation from the Personnel Committee. Members APPROVED the recommendation for the Tina Jones to continue work on the burial records for an initial 3 month period from 5 July, to be reviewed monthly thereafter.

Meeting Closed at 20.51 hrs