



**Surrey
Nature
Recovery**

Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Consultation Response

January 2026



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Summary Consultation Response

Below is a short-read version of the full consultation response:

	Comments and questions	Short Response
1.	The documents are too long and complicated for the everyday reader	Improvements made to the structure of the strategy, additional short read chapters will be produced for specific audiences
2.	Not clear who or how the strategy will be delivered	Delivery section added to the strategy document outlining the existing levers and expectations for delivery
3.	Using the LNRS to restrict or prevent development (with particular emphasis on the greenbelt)	The LNRS itself does not restrict development, but it will be a consideration in the creation of Local Plans and Spatial Development Strategies
4.	Can / Will the LNRS Protect or Designate land for nature recovery?	The LNRS does not create a new designation on mapped land. It is a vision for nature recovery action across the county with recommended actions and locations
5.	Can't we just leave nature alone to recover itself? What are we trying to recover to?	Due to the long history of management and the fragmented state of Surrey's nature there are few opportunities where land abandonment would achieve benefits to nature. However, there may be a middle ground or ecological sweet spot where some rewilding principles can be adopted.
6.	Why haven't targets been set for nature recovery?	The LNRS sets an overarching vision for nature recovery rather than a prescriptive implementation plan, combined with uncertainty in future resourcing it would not have been realistic to set specific, achievable targets at this stage. Instead, the LNRS will contribute to target setting within broader, integrated strategies such as the Land Use Framework and Spatial Development Strategies.
7.	Changing behaviour of dog walkers and recreational users of greenspaces to protect wildlife	Noted as a key pressure within the description of the strategy area and added to core principles for nature recovery within the statement of biodiversity priorities, however, considered out of scope for a specific potential measure
8.	Not enough weight given to river pollution and water quality	Pollution and run-off are listed as key threats. Several of the existing river measures are designed to mitigate this threat. Regulatory enforcement of water companies is out of scope of the LNRS

	Comments and questions	Short Response
9.	Remove greenfield agricultural land from consideration for nature recovery opportunities	The inclusion of agricultural land is necessary to meet the scale of delivery set out in the Environment Improvement Plan and will remain. In addition, the farming community are keen to contribute to nature recovery.
10.	Encourage adoption and links to regenerative agriculture and soil health	The principles and potential measures outlined in the farming chapter are designed to align with adoption of regenerative farming practices including those to improve soil health
11.	Reduce the 75m buffer applied to Ancient Woodland to 15m to align with Natural England criteria	75m buffer retained to align with England Woodland Creation Offer and encourage best practice over minimum standards
12.	Ensure community groups, volunteers and residents are engaged and empowered to act	The Responsible Authority and partners will continue to work with community groups, residents and volunteers to maximise engagement and delivery of nature recovery
13.	Remove measures on lethal management or culling of grey squirrel	The current measure on management of grey squirrel populations is aligned with the Forestry Commission Grey Squirrel Control Plan to improve woodland management and as such will be retained. Supporting information for the measure has been updated to include the adoption of fertility control once it is a viable option
14.	Remove measures on lethal management of deer	The current measure on management of deer aligns with national guidance from the Deer Initiative and Forestry Commission to improve the health and management of woodlands and has been retained
15.	Woodland management has been noted as highly important but does not feature in the local habitat map	Mapping has now been produced for potential measure W1.1. Targeting improved woodland management at ancient woodland and a 75m buffer as well as all woodland within Local Wildlife Sites
16.	How do the measures link to Biodiversity Net Gain?	Habitat delivered via biodiversity net gain that is aligned with mapped measures qualify for strategic significance uplift in the metric. Each measure now has a list of BNG habitats to clarify what action qualifies for strategic significance.
17.	It isn't clear what the different layers of the Local Habitat Map represent, and how they should be considered	The methodology statement for mapping has been improved and an additional explanatory section on the Local Habitat Map has been added to the strategy

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Introduction

This report sets out the response to the key questions and comments arising from the consultation on the proposed draft strategy for Surrey's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

The consultation opened on 31st July 2025 and closed on 25th September 2025. Responses were submitted via online survey hosted on Surrey County Council's Commonplace engagement portal and direct responses were received via email directly to the LNRS team. The draft Local Habitat Map was made available via an online interactive map giving respondents the opportunity to place pins at locations they agreed or disagreed with.

In total 233 people completed one or more sections of the online survey, 45 direct responses were received via email and 171 pins were placed on the interactive map. Each of these responses was analysed and categorised into consistent themes. A full analysis of the responses is available.

Headline results from the survey:

75% of respondents found the documents clear and easy to understand

79% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the priorities outlined in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

37% of respondents were confident or very confident that the LNRS will deliver nature recovery in Surrey with **30%** 'fairly unconfident' or 'very unconfident'

Open-text comments from the survey and direct emails were analysed and grouped into recurring themes, which have informed the structure and content of this consultation response.

Full Consultation Response

1. The documents are too long and complicated for the everyday reader

Response: Improvements made to the structure of the strategy, additional short read versions will be produced for publication

There was a general response that the document was too long for the average reader to engage with.

Every effort was made to keep the document short and concise, however, the quantity of information within the remit of the LNRS means this still results in a substantial strategy. Wherever possible we have avoided acronyms and included uncommon and technical words within the glossary. The document has been reviewed and additional items added to the glossary and acronyms spelled out.

While we are unable to reduce the overall length of the strategy, we will produce a series of shorter summary documents that can be used by specific audiences with language adjusted for each, and we are also increasing the use of visuals and infographics within the main document. These documents will be published alongside the final LNRS.

2. Not clear who or how the strategy will be delivered

Response: Delivery section added to the strategy document outlining the existing levers and expectations for delivery following emerging information from DEFRA and the Environment Improvement Plan

Most responses expressed support for the priorities and potential measures, however, confidence in delivery of the ambition was low with many commenting that there was little information on how the priorities transition into tangible action on the ground.

While the Responsible Authority (currently Surrey County Council) will have a role in coordinating nature recovery and monitoring progress, responsibility for delivery of nature recovery does not sit solely with the County Council. Fully realising the ambition of the LNRS will require action from all stakeholders across the county including business, farmers, environmental charities, developers, local councils, residents and community groups.

Since the release of the consultation draft, discussions with DEFRA on the future delivery role of the LNRS Responsibility Authority have progressed with a clearer mandate set out, this is split into four key areas:-

1. Lead and convene a delivery partnership

2. Embed LNRS into local decision making
3. Identify strategic projects and facilitate project development
4. Monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities

This role was also noted in the England Devolution White Paper and the Environment Improvement Plan 2025. The Responsible Authority will be working with key partners such as the Surrey Nature Partnership to implement these actions as we transition from strategy to delivery.

The LNRS is required to contribute to National Environment Objectives, including national targets set out within the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP). The update to the EIP in December 2025 provides delivery plans for each target which sets out key levers for delivery and funding. The LNRS will be used to target delivery of the EIP at a local level including the allocation of funds such as the Species Recovery Programme.

A new section on delivery of the LNRS has been added to the strategy document outlining all the above.

3. Using the LNRS to restrict / prevent development (with particular emphasis on the greenbelt)

Response: The LNRS itself does not restrict development, but will be a consideration in the creation of Local Plans and Spatial Development Strategies

There was a lot of concern expressed regarding the pressure nature faces from development across Surrey, including a want for the LNRS to prevent development. While this is recognised as a potential threat, it is not the remit or intention of the LNRS to prevent development, it is instead a vision for where we can undertake positive actions for nature recovery.

The LNRS will be used as an evidence base in the future creation of Local and Neighbourhood plans, Spatial Development Strategies and the emerging Land Use Framework. All these plans will need to balance the competing requirements of growth, development, infrastructure, climate adaptation, food production and nature recovery. It is in this context that the LNRS will be used. The Responsible Authority (currently Surrey County Council) will have a role in ensuring these plans fully embed the LNRS in their decision-making process, taking nature into account.

Natural Environment Planning Practice Guidance sets out the legal duty to “have regard” for the LNRS in plan creation. This guidance will be updated following the

publication of the Environment Improvement Plan 2025, to align with the “take account” responsibility set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.

The draft NPPF released in December 2025 provides additional clarity on the consideration of the LNRS and development:

“Areas which could become of particular importance for nature identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be taken into account as opportunities to integrate development with environmental restoration, but should not necessarily preclude the allocation of land for development”

Development will happen in Surrey, the LNRS is an opportunity to encourage integrating nature into this development, through the inclusion of swift boxes, connectivity corridors between key sites and buffers around our most precious woodland. In addition, the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain means development must result in measurably better biodiversity, whether delivered on-site or via contributions to off-site habitat recovery.

There was particular emphasis on protection of the greenbelt within the consultation likely in response to the creation of the grey belt definition. Over 70% of Surrey is designated as greenbelt, and, as such, it covers a vast majority of the rural area of the county, as such it was not practical to use it as a targeting criterion in the LNRS. Each planning authority will need to assess their greenbelt designation in line with government guidelines, and the LNRS can be used as an evidence base in this process.

4. Can / Will the LNRS Protect or Designate land for nature recovery?

Response: The LNRS does not create a new designation on mapped land. It is a vision for nature recovery action across the county with recommended actions and locations.

Several comments called for the LNRS to designate or protect land, conversely there was also a misconception from landowners and developers that land was being designated under this process and thereby losing the prospect of changing to an alternative use in the future. For clarity, the LNRS itself does not create any new designation or protection.

The Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity layer in the Local Habitat Map sets out existing designations at the local and national level. The Areas that Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity is the mapped representation of where action is most likely to have the biggest impact on nature recovery, it does not confer a designation or force any action to be taken on that land, it is an expression of opportunities for biodiversity.

As noted above in section 3., Natural Environment Planning Practice Guidance sets out the legal duty to “have regard” for the LNRS in strategic plan creation. At this point a local authority may choose to safeguard an area for nature recovery that has been highlighted within the ACIB layer of the LNRS. The consideration of LNRS in the planning process will be further defined in the update to the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. What are we trying to recover to? Can’t we just leave nature alone

Response: Due to the long history of management and the fragmented state of Surrey’s nature there are few opportunities where land abandonment would achieve benefits to nature. However, there may be a middle ground or ecological sweet spot where some rewilding principles can be adopted on some sites.

Multiple responses suggested we leave nature alone to recover without interfering. This approach to conservation has risen to prominence under the term rewilding. However, it is rare, especially for somewhere like Surrey, that the circumstances exist where we can fully step away and let nature take its own course. There are natural processes missing, such as the ability for species to freely move across the landscape or apex predators to control herbivore numbers, which means we will always need to take management decisions on how we conserve our natural areas.

However, we can adopt some of the principles of rewilding by reestablishing natural processes where we can, and we have embedded many of these principles within the LNRS. For instance, allowing our woodlands to naturally regenerate from existing seed stock, reintroducing ecosystem engineers like beavers or introducing different grazing regimes.

Each land manager will need to decide what approach is suitable to their situation, both ecologically and financially. Whenever there is a change in conservation management it is also important for local communities to be engaged in decision making, especially on public land, to ensure there is widespread understanding and buy-in.

6. Why haven’t targets been set?

Response: The LNRS sets an overarching vision for nature recovery rather than a prescriptive implementation plan, combined with uncertainty in future resourcing it would not have been realistic to set specific, achievable targets at this stage. Instead, the LNRS will contribute to target setting within broader, integrated strategies such as the Land Use Framework and Spatial Development Strategies.

The LNRS is designed as a strategic, evidence-based framework rather than a prescriptive implementation plan as such the decision was made not to set specific

delivery targets within the strategy. Much of the delivery will depend on the choices of private landowners and land managers, who ultimately determine whether and how proposed actions are taken forward. While the responsible authority and its partners will work to support and enable the uptake of LNRS priorities wherever possible, they do not have direct control over delivery outside land within their own ownership. In addition, the level of resources likely to be available for implementing the LNRS remains uncertain, making it difficult to set meaningful or realistic targets at this stage. This approach helps avoid creating unrealistic expectations, allows for adaptive management, and ensures delivery can respond flexibly to changing circumstances rather than being constrained by fixed numerical goals.

Several broader, integrated strategies such as the emerging Land Use Framework and the Spatial Development Strategy will address the competing demands on land, including infrastructure, development, and food security. These strategies are expected to set targets or expectations for land use. The LNRS will serve as a key evidence base, informing decision-making and ensuring that nature recovery priorities are fully considered within these more holistic, land use focused strategies.

Although the LNRS does not set formal targets, the nature recovery actions delivered through it will be monitored and reported on by the Responsible Authority. This will give us a clear picture of progress and enable us to adapt our approach over time and ensure future iterations of the LNRS are better informed and more impactful.

7. Changing behaviour of dog walkers and recreational users of greenspaces

Response: Noted as a key pressure within the description of the strategy area and added to core principles for nature recovery within the statement of biodiversity priorities, however, considered out of scope for a specific potential measure

Pressure and disturbance from recreation and dogs was noted throughout the engagement process and again during the public consultation. Reference to this pressure already exists within the Description of the Strategy Area but will be expanded on to reflect the scale of the issue. We will also include direct reference to managing human impact on key sites under the core principles for nature recovery within the statement of biodiversity priorities.

Balancing use of green spaces against the need to provide nature with the space to thrive undisturbed is under constant consideration and is often very site dependant, based on the habitat type and species present, the proximity to urban areas and the level of recreational use.

Getting this balance right will be managed via site level management plans – or more strategically at the landscape level via groups such as the Thames Basin Heath Partnership. Joint behaviour campaigns such as the Heathland Hounds project are seeking to embed best practice across our most sensitive sites

8. Not enough weight given to river pollution and water quality

Response: Pollution and run-off are listed as key threats. Several of the existing river measures are designed to mitigate this threat. Regulatory enforcement of water companies is out of scope of the LNRS and as such, not included

There is rightly a large amount of concern regarding the current condition of Surrey's rivers expressed in the consultation response and it was a regular topic within the engagement workshops.

Pollution and run-off are recognised as a key threat to our rivers within the Description of the Strategy Area. In response to this we have incorporate potential measures that use nature to mitigate the impacts of pollution including the use of constructed wetlands (WR2.6) and river buffers (WR1.5) and specific focus on agricultural impact on run-off in priority FWC3.

Improved regulatory enforcement of sewage treatment works and agricultural run-off is not within scope of the LNRS, however, support for existing and potential local action groups to undertake water quality monitoring that would support the case for enforcement does feature in measure WR1S1.

9. Remove greenfield agricultural land from consideration for nature recovery opportunities

Response: The inclusion of agricultural land is necessary to meet the scale of delivery set out in the Environment Improvement Plan

Several submissions to the consultation requested an initial focus on publicly owned land and for greenfield agricultural land to be omitted from inclusion in the Local Habitat Map so as not to remove its potential for development. This is not a suggestion we are able to take forward as it would heavily limit the land available for nature recovery, and as noted in response 3. above, inclusion of land in the LNRS does not preclude development.

The inclusion of agricultural land for nature recovery potential aligns with the analytical framework for the Land Use Framework and with the target delivery plans outlined within the Environment Improvement Plan 2025.

We do recognise in the strategy that the creation of habitats on farmland needs to be balanced against the need to produce food and broader food security. We accounted for this by removing grade 1 and 2 agricultural land from selection to avoid our most productive areas.

Agricultural land also provides huge opportunities for working with nature without wholesale changes in land use, integrating nature into farming while retaining a productive landscape. There is also potential for providing connecting corridors across the landscape and homes for much loved species such as the Yellowhammer.

Land already allocated for development or where we have been made aware of extant planning permission has been removed as nature recovery is unlikely to happen in these areas.

10. Encourage adoption and links to regenerative agriculture and soil health

Response: The principles and potential measures outlined in the farming chapter are designed to align with adoption of regenerative farming practices including those to improve soil health

Additional explicit mention of regenerative farming has been added to Priority FWC1

11. Reduce the 75m buffer applied to Ancient Woodland to 15m to align with Natural England criteria

Response: 75m buffer retained to align with England Woodland Creation Offer

There were several queries as to why the mapped buffer in measure W2.1 was set at 75m with requests for this to be reduced to align with the 15m Natural England requirement.

The 15m set out by Natural England is the minimum expected buffer to avoid harm to existing Ancient Woodland, the LNRS is seeking to go beyond this by recommending a 75m buffer. The suggested distance aligns with mapping under the England Woodland Creation Offer.

It is also key to remember that landowners are not obliged to undertake actions within the LNRS, and as such there is no obligation to follow the 75m. Should the decision be taken by a landowner to implement a 30-metre buffer, this area would still qualify for a strategic significance uplift within the BNG metric.

12. Ensure community groups, volunteers and residents are empowered to act

Response: The Responsible Authority and partners will continue to work with community groups and volunteers to maximise engagement and delivery of nature recovery

Input from community groups and residents was sought throughout the LNRS process via engagement workshops and this public consultation. The level of interest and passion for nature in Surrey has been vast; it is also evident that there is already a lot happening at a grassroots level.

In November 2025 Surrey County Council ran a pilot grant scheme for community nature recovery delivery that was hugely oversubscribed, clearly showing the want and need for resource in this area.

There is a variety of ways for community groups and residents to engage in nature recovery, through volunteering with established groups such as the Wildlife Trusts or Countryside Partnerships down to local action on their street through adoption and creation of Blue Heart Verges or installation of swift boxes.

As we transition into delivery, community groups and residents will be critical to achieving the vision of Surrey Nature Recovery and we will be working with partners in Surrey Nature Partnership, the Surrey Wildlife Trust Wilder Community team and beyond to provide specific guidance and support to realise the potential of this huge resource.

13. Remove measures on lethal management or culling of grey squirrel

The current measure on management of grey squirrel populations is aligned with the Forestry Commission Grey Squirrel Control Plan to improve woodland management and as such will be retained. Supporting information for the measure has been updated to include the adoption of fertility control once it is a viable option

We understand that there are concerns and objections to grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) control in Surrey. The lethal control of invasive species is a common practice in conservation where there are no natural predators or processes to limit abundance, or where high populations outcompete or cause damage to their local ecosystem. The control and management of grey squirrel is a common practice in woodland management with methods set out by the Forestry Commission. Grey Squirrel is also listed as an invasive non-native species under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The control of invasive species was noted numerous times during engagement workshops by foresters and woodland owners as a key action needed to support healthy and well managed woodlands.

The UK Squirrel Accord are currently researching fertility control in grey squirrels with early positive results. This has the potential to offer a non-lethal alternative to grey squirrel management and recent updates note it should be available for use in the next few years.

As such, the measure on grey squirrel management W3.2 will be retained, but it will be edited to include specific reference to the emergence and future use of fertility control when it is a viable method.

For more information on the impact of grey squirrels and rationale for management see appendix 1.

14. Remove measures on lethal management of deer

Response: The current measure on management of deer aligns with national guidance from the Deer Initiative and Forestry Commission to improve the health and management of woodlands and has been retained

As with grey squirrel there was objection raised to the lethal management of deer within the LNRS.

There are six species of deer commonly found in the wild in England some native and some long introduced. With no natural predators and a fall in hunting, population numbers have rapidly increased in the past few decades, above what the landscape can sustainably support. High populations of deer can reduce the natural regeneration of trees and woodland, damage ground flora and reduce overall biodiversity.

The LNRS is aligned with The Deer Initiative, which is committed to ensuring a sustainable and well-managed deer population. The creation and adoption of landscape scale deer management plans (W3S1) will ensure that populations are maintained at sustainable levels, with regular population monitoring. Improving routes to market for venison (W3S2) will make the activity economically viable providing funding for woodland management activity.

The measures on deer management will be retained in alignment with national guidance to ensure the future health and quality of Surrey's woodlands.

For more information on the impact of deer and rationale for management see appendix 1.

15. Woodland management has been noted as highly important but does not feature in the local habitat map

Response: Mapping has now been produced for potential measure W1.1. Targeting improved woodland management at ancient woodland and a 75m buffer as well as all woodland within Local Wildlife Sites.

Due to the high amount of woodland in Surrey, creating objective spatial targeting criteria for improving woodland management proved a difficult proposition as it consistently mapped a high percentage of the county. Although all our woodland is important and much of it needs additional management, we are unable to simply map it all.

On review, we have taken the decision to prioritise all ancient woodland (outside existing statutory designations), woodland within 75m of ancient woodland and woodland within local wildlife sites. This approach provides additional emphasis on important woodlands outside the statutory designations and combined with the measure W2.1 (Establish new woodland or suitable edge habitats to buffer and better connect Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland) creates a more complete buffer around existing ancient woodland.

16. How do the measures link to Biodiversity Net Gain?

Response: Habitat delivered via biodiversity net gain that is aligned with mapped measures qualify for strategic significance uplift in the metric. Each measure now has a list of BNG habitats to clarify what action qualifies for strategic significance

The link between the LNRS and BNG was highlighted within the draft strategy, but several responses requested clarity on how this link would be applied in practice.

Within the BNG metric there is a qualifying feature known as strategic significance. This is applied post development interventions when

- The location of the habitat parcel has been mapped in the Local Habitat Map as an area where a potential measure has been proposed to help deliver the priorities of that LNRS; and
- The proposed intervention is consistent with the mapped potential measure in the LNRS for the habitat parcel

Additional details of how to apply Strategic Significance can be found on page 27 of the [Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide](#).

To aid in the interpretation of this guidance we have added a list of Relevant BNG Habitats to each measure for consideration. We will also produce a specific practice note on the LNRS

17. It isn't clear what the different layers of the Local Habitat Map represent, and how they should be considered

Response: The methodology statement for mapping has been improved and an additional explanatory section on the Local Habitat Map has been added to the strategy

An additional practice note for developers will be produced on publication of the LNRS

Changes to priorities and potential measures

Following analysis of consultation responses several changes were made to the wording of several potential measures. A new column has been added outlining relevant BNG habitats for each measure and the guidance notes previously incorporated into each measure have been moved into a separate column for ease of navigation.

Code	Consultation priority or measure	Edited priority or measure
3.2	<p>Manage populations of invasive non-native animals, including grey squirrel, using culling and reintroduction of native predators.</p> <p>Invasive non-native animal species, particularly grey squirrels (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>), pose a serious threat to native wildlife and woodland ecosystems. Their bark-stripping behaviour damage young trees, undermines woodland regeneration, and has contributed to the local extinction of native red squirrels in Surrey. Population control through targeted culling may be necessary to mitigate these impacts. Complementing this with the reintroduction of native predators offers a more sustainable, ecologically balanced solution. Combined, these approaches can strengthen woodland resilience, protect native species, and help restore natural ecological processes.</p>	<p>Manage populations of invasive non-native animals, including grey squirrel</p> <p>Invasive non-native animal species, particularly grey squirrels (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>), pose a serious threat to native wildlife and woodland ecosystems. Their bark-stripping behaviour damage young trees, undermines woodland regeneration, and has contributed to the local extinction of native red squirrels in Surrey. Population control through targeted lethal management may be necessary to mitigate these impacts. Wherever possible non-lethal methods of management such as the emerging use of contraceptives should be considered. Complementing this with the reintroduction of native predators offers a more sustainable, ecologically balanced solution. Combined, these approaches can strengthen woodland resilience, protect native species, and help restore natural ecological processes.</p>

Code	Consultation priority or measure	Edited priority or measure
W3.3	<p>Undertake landscape scale deer management</p> <p>The UK's deer population is believed to be at its highest level for 1,000 years, with Surrey seeing a rise in fallow, roe and muntjac. Excessive browsing by deer prevents the regeneration of trees and ground flora, undermining woodland restoration and reducing biodiversity. Overpopulation also affects the agricultural sector and leads to road traffic collisions.</p> <p>Sustainable deer management is essential to restore balance and support healthy woodland ecosystems. This should involve coordinated culling at a landscape scale, undertaken by trained and licensed professionals with landowner consent. Effective population control enables woodland creation and nature recovery to succeed, while protecting agricultural interests and broader environmental objectives.</p>	<p>Undertake landscape scale deer management</p> <p>The UK's deer population is believed to be at its highest level for 1,000 years, with Surrey seeing a rise in fallow, roe and muntjac. Excessive browsing by deer prevents the regeneration of trees and ground flora, undermining woodland restoration and reducing biodiversity. Overpopulation also affects the agricultural sector and leads to road traffic collisions.</p> <p>Sustainable deer management is essential to restore balance and support healthy woodland ecosystems. This should involve coordinated culling at a landscape scale, undertaken by competent voluntary and professional stalkers with landowner consent. Effective population control enables woodland creation and nature recovery to succeed, while protecting agricultural interests and broader environmental objectives.</p>
GSH1.1	<p>Create and restore areas of heathland and acid grassland prioritising the expansion and connectivity of existing sites</p> <p>Restoration efforts will focus on expanding existing heathland and connecting fragmented patches to create larger, more resilient ecosystems that support rare heathland species in Surrey. Habitat creation techniques may include soil preparation, seeding or planting native heath species, and establishing new bare-ground areas to support wildlife. Management such as conservation grazing and rotational cutting should be applied to maintain open heath conditions and support ecosystem development.</p>	<p>Create and restore areas of heathland and acid grassland prioritising the expansion and connectivity of existing sites</p> <p>Restoration efforts will focus on expanding existing heathland and connecting fragmented patches to create larger, more resilient ecosystems that support rare heathland species in Surrey. Habitat creation techniques may include soil preparation, seeding or planting native heath species, and establishing new bare-ground areas to support wildlife. Management such as conservation grazing, rotational cutting and in certain situations managed burning should be applied to maintain open heath conditions and support ecosystem development.</p>

Code	Consultation priority or measure	Edited priority or measure
UR1S1	<p>Encourage the adoption of wildlife friendly gardening.</p> <p>Encouraging wildlife-friendly gardening helps transform urban and suburban spaces into valuable habitats that support a wide range of species. Planting native plants with year-round nectar sources provides essential food for pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Creating hedgehog holes in fences improves connectivity, allowing these mammals to move safely between gardens. Leaving sections of grass and scrub to grow naturally offers shelter and nesting sites. Small ponds and water features supply vital drinking and breeding resources for amphibians and insects. Together, these simple steps contribute to healthier, more resilient urban ecosystems and foster stronger connections between people and nature.</p>	<p>Encourage the adoption of wildlife friendly gardening.</p> <p>Encouraging wildlife-friendly gardening helps transform urban and suburban spaces into valuable habitats that support a wide range of species. Planting native and non-invasive ornamental plants with year-round nectar sources provides essential food for pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Creating hedgehog holes in fences improves connectivity, allowing these mammals to move safely between gardens. Leaving sections of grass and scrub to grow naturally offers shelter and nesting sites. Small ponds and water features supply vital drinking and breeding resources for amphibians and insects. Together, these simple steps contribute to healthier, more resilient urban ecosystems and foster stronger connections between people and nature.</p>
UR2.2	<p>Create and enhance species-rich grasslands on suitable road verges by reducing the frequency of grass cuts, collecting arisings and sewing additional seeds if required</p> <p>Enhancing road verges as species-rich grasslands supports pollinators, birds and other wildlife while improving ecological connectivity across urban and rural areas. Reducing mowing frequency allows native wildflowers to complete their life cycles, and collecting grass cuttings helps lower soil fertility to encourage a greater diversity of plant species. Where existing diversity is limited, locally appropriate seed mixes can be sown to enrich the sward. These nature-friendly verges increase biodiversity, contribute to climate resilience and provide attractive, low-maintenance green space for the benefit of both people and wildlife.</p>	<p>Create and enhance species-rich grasslands on suitable road verges, Public Rights of Way and National Trails by reducing the frequency of grass cuts, collecting arisings and sewing additional seeds if required</p> <p>Enhancing road, Public Rights of Way and National Trail verges as species-rich grasslands supports pollinators, birds and other wildlife while improving ecological connectivity across urban and rural areas. Reducing mowing frequency allows native wildflowers to complete their life cycles, and collecting grass cuttings helps lower soil fertility to encourage a greater diversity of plant species. Where existing diversity is limited, locally appropriate seed mixes can be sown to enrich the sward. These nature-friendly verges increase biodiversity, contribute to climate resilience and provide attractive, low-maintenance green space for the benefit of both people and wildlife.</p>

Code	Consultation priority or measure	Edited priority or measure
UR2.3	<p>Plant individual trees and shrubs on road verges where suitable</p> <p>Targeted restoration of species-rich grassland on road verges is vital for enhancing habitat connectivity across urban and rural landscapes. Establishing diverse wildflower and grass species helps these verges function as important wildlife corridors. Effective management includes timing cuts to avoid peak flowering / seeding and breeding seasons, controlling invasive scrub, and supplementing seed banks with locally sourced native species.</p>	<p>Plant individual trees and shrubs on road verges, Public Rights of Way and National Trails where suitable</p> <p>Planting trees and hedgerows on road, Public Rights of Way and National Trail verges can provide a wide range of environmental and community benefits by creating habitats for birds, insects, and other wildlife, especially when planted alongside wildflower-rich vegetation. They also contribute to reducing noise and heat and improve air quality. Any planting should ensuring the verge is wide and safe enough for a tree without obstructing visibility or damaging underground services, planting in a way that protects existing verge biodiversity while avoiding impacts on drivers, infrastructure, and flower-rich grassland.</p>
UR3.1	<p>Safeguard existing swift nests and nest access holes and re-establish following construction / maintenance works where possible</p> <p>Swifts rely on long-standing nesting sites in buildings, often returning to the same location year after year. These nests are increasingly threatened by building renovations and repairs that inadvertently block access or destroy cavities. Protecting existing nest sites during development or maintenance works, and reinstating access points where feasible, is essential for supporting local swift populations. Early planning, use of swift-friendly materials and consultation with ecologists will help preserve this iconic migratory bird in urban environments.</p>	<p>Safeguard existing swift nests and nest access holes and re-establish following construction / maintenance works where possible</p> <p>Swifts rely on long-standing nesting sites in buildings, often returning to the same location year after year. These nests are increasingly threatened by building renovations and repairs that inadvertently block access or destroy cavities. Protecting existing nest sites during development or maintenance works, and reinstating access points where feasible, is essential for supporting local swift populations. Early planning and consultation with ecologists or local swift groups will help preserve this iconic migratory bird in urban environments.</p>

Code	Consultation priority or measure	Edited priority or measure
UR3.2	<p>Create new nesting sites for swifts, bats and owls by including relevant infrastructure, such as swift bricks, in new builds and/or retrofitting external nest boxes on established housing</p> <p>Providing artificial nesting and roosting sites for swifts, bats and owls helps to reverse population declines caused by the loss of natural habitat in the built environment. Installing swift bricks, bat boxes, and owl boxes in new developments, or retrofitting appropriate features on existing buildings offers low-cost, high-impact opportunities to support urban biodiversity. Correct placement, species-appropriate design, and long-term maintenance are essential to ensure these features are well used and contribute to biodiversity.</p>	<p>Create new nesting sites for swifts, bats and owls by including relevant infrastructure, such as swift bricks, in new builds and/or retrofitting external nest boxes on established housing</p> <p>Providing artificial nesting and roosting sites for swifts, bats and owls helps to reverse population declines caused by the loss of natural habitat in the built environment. Installing swift bricks, nest cups, bat boxes, and owl boxes in new developments, or retrofitting appropriate features on existing buildings offers low-cost, high-impact opportunities to support urban biodiversity. Correct placement, species-appropriate design, and long-term maintenance are essential to ensure these features are well used and contribute to biodiversity.</p>
FWC1	<p>Nature friendly farming practices are widely adopted reducing the impact of food production on nature and building healthy and resilient soils that will remain productive for future generations</p>	<p>Nature friendly and regenerative farming practices are widely adopted producing nutritious food and supporting resilient ecosystems, whilst building healthy soils that will remain productive for future generations</p>

Changes to mapped measures

Measure code	Change
W1.1	New mapped measure – all woodland designated as ancient woodland or SNCI has been included, with any areas within SSSIs omitted. In addition, existing woodland within the 75m buffer of ancient woodland has also been included to align with mapped measure W2.1
W2.1	Areas of existing neutral grassland have been added to the mapping for this measure. Previously any existing semi-natural habitat was omitted however on review this wasn't deemed appropriate for neutral grassland and was causing areas suitable for this measure to be missed. Gaps that still persist in the buffer are likely due to the existence of other prioritised mapped measures such as the creation of calcareous grassland, ensure all mapped measures are switched on when reviewing buffers.

UR2.1	<p>This mapped measure has been removed from the statutory LNRS. This measure caused the most confusion and concern from respondents to the consultation.</p> <p>There was significant overlap between this measure and allocations for development. When combined with the wide range of habitats eligible for creation under this measure, it resulted in many development sites receiving a 15% strategic significance uplift for onsite delivery. If left unchanged, this approach would substantially reduce the overall biodiversity gains delivered through BNG.</p> <p>The Urban Biodiversity Opportunity Areas that underpinned this mapping will be made available on publication of the LNRS as a supplementary mechanism for guiding delivery but will not form part of the Local Habitat Map.</p>
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Appendix

Appendix 1. Rationale for the management of grey squirrel

As an invasive non-native species introduced to the UK in the 19th century, grey squirrels have significantly affected native wildlife and habitats, particularly the red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*). This is largely attributed to two factors: competitive displacement in terms of habitat and food resources, and the introduction of the squirrelpox virus (SQPV), which poses a considerable health threat to red squirrels.

Grey squirrels often outcompete red squirrels for resources and habitats, primarily by exploiting broader food sources in deciduous woodlands (Rushton et al., 2005; Bertolino & Lurz, 2011). Studies indicate that grey squirrels typically occupy greater densities compared to red squirrels (2-16 vs. 0.3-1.5 per hectare, respectively) (Twining et al., 2020). This higher population density increases competitive pressure on red squirrels.

The introduction of SQPV by grey squirrels has exacerbated the decline of red squirrel populations. While grey squirrels are largely unaffected by this virus, it is often lethal to red squirrels, leading to substantial population declines when both species coexist (Rushton et al., 2005; Sainsbury et al., 2008; Everest et al., 2023). Research has shown that in areas where grey squirrels carry the virus, declines in red squirrel populations can be up to twenty-five times faster than in areas devoid of the virus (Ballingall et al., 2016). These findings suggest that the presence of grey squirrels can precipitate severe declines in red squirrel numbers, demonstrating the impact of inter-species competition exacerbated by disease (Romeo et al., 2018; Sainsbury et al., 2008).

While some suggest that grey squirrels may incidentally assist woodland regeneration by forgetting cached seeds, this potential benefit does not outweigh their negative impact on tree health. Grey squirrels cause substantial damage through bark stripping, which can kill young trees, thereby hindering woodland regeneration and nature recovery (Diagne et al., 2023; Nichols et al., 2017). This assessment aligns with the UK Forestry Standard and Forest Research, which classify grey squirrels as a pest species requiring active management to protect woodland environments (Rushton et al., 2005; Mill et al., 2020). The Forestry Commission has published guidance which promotes ethical grey squirrel culling to assist with woodland regeneration (Gill et al., 2019).

Our approach to grey squirrel control is humane, targeted, and based on scientific evidence, in line with the core principle of the LNRS - Nature Recovery. By managing the grey squirrel population, we aim to restore ecological balance, which is essential for the survival and recovery of red squirrels and other native species that depend on healthy woodland ecosystems (Sheehy et al., 2018; Wauters et al., 2000). Without intervention, red squirrels' risk local extinction throughout much of their former range in the UK (Barratt et al., 1999). With intervention we create the opportunity to return red squirrels to areas within which they have become locally extinct.

In summary, controlling the grey squirrel population is not aimed at their eradication; rather, it focuses on restoring suitable habitats for our native wildlife and economy. Through these efforts, we can enhance biodiversity and support the regeneration of woodlands (Broughton, 2019) which are vital for helping achieve nature recovery within Surrey.

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Appendix 2. Rationale for the management of deer

The management of deer populations in the UK, particularly within Surrey, is essential for sustaining ecological balance and promoting nature recovery. Currently, deer populations in the UK are significantly high, contributing to ecological challenges such as overgrazing, which hinders woodland regeneration and diminishes plant diversity.

High deer densities have been linked to reduced growth of young trees and degradation of understory flora, creating less biodiverse environments that negatively impact various native species (Gullett et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, deer management is guided by established legislation, such as the Deer Act of 1991, which outlines humane culling practices, including closed seasons to safeguard deer breeding populations. This ensures that culling efforts are not merely reactive but are subject to rigorous standards that promote welfare and sustainability in practice (Reynolds & Tapper, 1996). Professional culling operates under best-practice guidelines to balance wildlife management needs with nature recovery goals. The aim of deer management is not eradication; instead, it seeks to maintain deer populations at ecologically viable levels, allowing ecosystems to flourish without compromising the health of the natural environment within Surrey (Gullett et al., 2023).

Research indicates that while deer can positively contribute to ecosystems by maintaining certain processes through their foraging habits, high populations can lead to negative outcomes such as soil nutrient loss and inhibited tree diversity and growth (Gass & Binkley, 2011). Managed culling serves as a crucial strategy by controlling deer numbers to levels that allow for effective woodland and other habitat regeneration and species recovery (Gullett et al., 2023). The need for targeted culling has been supported by various research findings, which highlight ecosystem fluctuations in response to wildlife management interventions (Gullett et al., 2023).

In conclusion, while the cultural significance of deer within the UK and the Surrey countryside is recognised, managing their populations through targeted management is vital for nature recovery to be successful. Continued research and adherence to ethical management practices will ensure that both deer and the habitats they occupy can thrive together, supporting a diverse and resilient natural environment within our county.

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