

Planning and the Ecological Network

The National Planning and Policy Framework (NPPF) places requirements on local planning authorities to plan for nature through the NPPF; mandates local planning authorities to plan strategically for nature, identifying and mapping ecological networks to deliver the protection, enhancement, and maintenance of biodiversity.

Ecological networks are the basic, joined up infrastructure of existing and future habitat needed to allow populations of species and habitats to survive in fluctuating conditions.

As a short-term benefit, a landscape that species can move through easily allows re-colonisation of areas after disturbance events, preventing local extinctions.

Ecological networks are fragments of what was once a much larger network, and every effort should be made to maintain what remains in line with national and locally adopted policy.

Planning and the Nature Recovery Network

In 2018 the government published 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' which committed to developing a national and local Nature Recovery Networks, and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

The Environment Act comes into force in November 2023 and will make it a statutory obligation for all Local Planning Authorities to have a Local Nature Recovery Plan based on the mapped Nature Recovery Network.

Well developed, Nature Recovery strategies will be critical in addressing the ecological and climate change emergencies we face.

The Nature Recovery Network will not only build on the ecological network approach to identify and target actions that connect, restore, and create wildlife-rich habitats, but will also provide a mechanism for the targeting of new and emerging funding mechanisms such as ELMS and Biodiversity Net Gain.

Somerset's Nature Recovery Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy is emerging now, led by Somerset Wildlife Trust through the Somerset Local Nature Partnership with all Districts, County and Parish Councils, who have a legal obligation to produce these.