

Report on Cheshire & Warrington LNRS Public Workshops May 2024

Written By Rhizome Co-operative

Commissioned by Cheshire West and Chester Council on behalf of the Total Environment Team



Contents

1. Background to the report.....	3
2. Cheshire's Programme of Public workshops	5
3. What happened in the topic workshops?.....	8
4. The feel of the day	10
5. Key conclusions	14
6. Next Steps	15

1. Background to the report

The purpose of this report is to:

- Explain what Local Nature Recovery Strategies are
- Why the workshops were held, who came, and what happened
- What the key conclusions were

1.1 Background to Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

Local Nature Recovery Strategies establish local priorities for nature recovery and map actions to achieve those priorities. They target actions in locations where they are most needed and where they provide the best environmental outcomes. The strategies will help to join up national efforts to reverse the decline of biodiversity. Responsible authorities, are required to work with supporting authorities and key stakeholders across the public, private and voluntary sectors to:

- agree priorities for nature's recovery
- map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- establish shared proposals for what action they should take to recover nature and where

The page references below are from Defra's statutory guidance (SG for short) on what an LNRS should contain. See:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6421a4bdfe97a8001379ecf1/Local_nature_recovery_strategy_statutory_guidance.pdf

The main purpose of the strategies is to identify locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment [SG P4]

- The Statement of Biodiversity Principles must set out 'the priorities, in terms of habitats and species, for recovering or enhancing biodiversity (taking into account the contribution that recovering or enhancing biodiversity can also make to other environmental benefits)' This establishes what LNRS is seeking to achieve. [SG P48]
- Responsible authorities should try to clearly distinguish between priorities (the end results that the strategy is seeking to achieve) and the specific practical actions to achieve those priorities (the 'potential measures'). However, there is a close relationship between these 2 required elements and responsible authorities may wish to develop them at the same time. [SG P51]
- Priorities should reflect local circumstances, including the most important issues to local people and organisations. They should reflect local contribution to NEOs and targets included in Env Act – supports cross boundary coherence of Nature Recovery Network [SG P52]

- The strategic guidance contains examples which illustrate the need for wider natural environment objectives [climate change, flood risk and water quality] to be deliverable, at least in part, through the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity [SG P54]
- Strategic Priorities should be the species and habitats that the strategy will focus on supporting, and achievable improvements to the wider natural environment through their conservation and enhancement. But recovering or enhancing biodiversity does not just benefit the natural environment. For example, improving biodiversity can help increase land value or support people's health and wellbeing and access to nature. Whilst these co-benefits are different from the strategy priorities, responsible authorities and local partners can propose action [measures] for biodiversity in ways and in places that will achieve them [priorities] [SG P56].
- Gather draft priorities from other local plans and engage local organisations / individuals; create a long list then exclude out of scope [co-benefits] suggestions [SG P59]
- Proposals as to the potential measures relating to those priorities which are practical actions that make positive contributions to delivering the agreed priorities [SG P50]
- Most potential measures should be ways of enhancing existing habitat and creating new habitats. This is because identifying locations to carry out these sorts of actions is the local nature recovery strategy's main purpose [SG P4]. Responsible authorities may find it helpful to include a smaller number of potential measures which do not involve creating or improving habitat but which are necessary to achieve a strategy priority [SG P66].
- Responsible authorities should take an inclusive approach and include potential measures that can create a positive effect on biodiversity if carried out correctly and in the right place. For example, creation of productive woodland. However, they should make sure the potential measure reflects any uncertainty and consider this in more detail when identifying suitable locations. Responsible authorities may also shape potential measures so that they will deliver non-environmental co-benefits, for example improving public access to green space as well as helping biodiversity [SG P70].

2. Cheshire's Programme of Public workshops

As a result of consultation responses and taking into account other plans and strategies across the county, Cheshire West and Chester Council, as the Responsible Authority (RA) arranged public workshops in Chester, Macclesfield and Warrington throughout May 2024 to develop and confirm a long list of priorities for nature recovery that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy may need to include. The dates and venues were:

- 8 May 2024: St. Mary's Church, Chester
- 15 May: Macclesfield Town Hall, Macclesfield
- 22 May: Walton Hall and Gardens, Warrington

2.1 Structure of the day

Each event began with a short presentation by Roger Goulding, Green Infrastructure lead at Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) council on the context and process.

The heart of the day consisted of four sessions, lasting an hour or a little less, each comprising five topic workshops:

- Woodland, hedgerows and trees
- Grassland and heathland
- Rivers and canals
- Peat and water bodies (e.g. wetland, ponds, lakes, meres, mosses)
- Nature-based solutions (economic, social and environmental)

This structure meant that over the course of the day each participant could engage with four out of the five topics.

Towards the end of the day, there was a plenary in which participants could view, and comment on, the output from all 20 sessions.

Finally, Roger Goulding or Elis Smits, the LNRS programme officer at CWaC, explained what would happen next, especially the expert engagement via Technical Working Groups to review the Priorities and Measures drawn from the workshops, other plans and the public survey.



2.2 Who came?

Each event was attended by 40 – 50 people. The engagement we received from both citizens and professionals was tremendous, considering that the workshop was a full day on a Wednesday. The citizen turnout ranged from students to retired environmental professionals, volunteers from community groups and passionate residents from across Cheshire, who have been involved in the process since the first public consultation. As for the professionals, we had representatives from Natural England, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Mersey Forest, Mersey Rivers Trust, Local authority Ecologists, Peak District national park, farmers and representatives from the landowning community.

The citizens were recruited in three ways: via email addresses that some people provided with their consultation response; through Eventbrite; and through CW&C, CE and Warrington, plus the LPN, sharing it on social media.

Rhizome Coop (see the two pictures below) were the consultants for the workshops, providing the overall design and facilitation. Each topic workshop was facilitated by someone from one of the three councils or from government agencies such as Natural England, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency. They were trained by the consultants in an online session lasting a couple of hours. The facilitators also met twice during each day, before the start and at lunchtime.

So that the facilitators could concentrate on running the sessions smoothly, they were assisted by one or more experts in each topic. They were recruited from the Local Nature Partnership.



3. What happened in the topic workshops?

The focus was provided by two A0 sheets (about three feet by four feet). Each was divided into six columns:

1. *Current state*
2. *Threats*
3. *Opportunities*
4. *Priorities (the desired end result in terms of habitats and species)*
5. *Measures: suggestions for actions and initiatives that meet the priorities*
6. *Links to other themes or sub-themes*

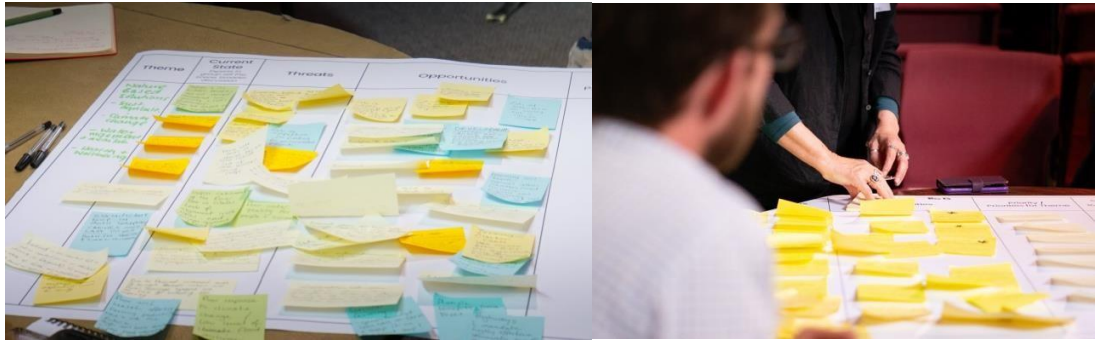
One of the two sheets provided examples in each column, written by Roger Goulding. The other was blank.

Each main contribution was captured on a sticky note, written either by the facilitator or by the participant themselves, which was then placed on the blank sheet. Each workshop attracted around 200 sticky notes, making 4,000 per day, or 12,000 pieces of information in all!



Each workshop was divided into three parts:

1. 15 – 20 minutes was spent mapping out the first three columns (*current state, threats and opportunities*). The experts made their main contributions here, particularly on the current state.
2. The bulk of the time, 30+ minutes, was given to columns 4. and 5., the *priorities and measures*.
 - One challenge for the facilitators was that, asked for a priority, participants often came up with a measure. The facilitator had a crucial role at this point. As well as using their judgement to put the sticky note in the right column, they also encouraged participants to identify the priority that underlay the measure.
 - A second challenge was to ensure that each sticky note would make sense when read afterwards for the preparation of this report. Some facilitators did this by writing the notes themselves, others by checking what others had written. Given the torrent of sticky notes, it was perhaps inevitable that success here was mixed.
 - It was noticeable that different facilitators developed their own ways of making sense of the enormous numbers of sticky notes. Some did so by grouping notes into clusters, which were then named. Others used arrows to show the links between priorities and measures.
3. The final few minutes were spent on column 6. *Links to other themes or subthemes*, as well as a review of the whole sheet.



4. The feel of the day

All the participants seemed to do what the word implies – they participated, vigorously. None of the workshops felt like a seminar. There was an air of positivity in the room, with many ideas, outcomes and measures being discussed.

The facilitators from the local authorities, other organisations and Natural England seemed to have enjoyed their role throughout the day. While they took seriously their role to shorten the speaking time of those who like to hold the floor and to encourage the quiet, they were able to spend most of their time drawing out the important points, rather than having to keep people on track.

Each of three days finished at 4pm, instead of the originally planned 4.30. This showed that the days were well organised and the discussions well facilitated.

Some of the LinkedIn Posts from those who attended, perfectly reflected the days atmosphere and general consensus on how the workshops were ran.



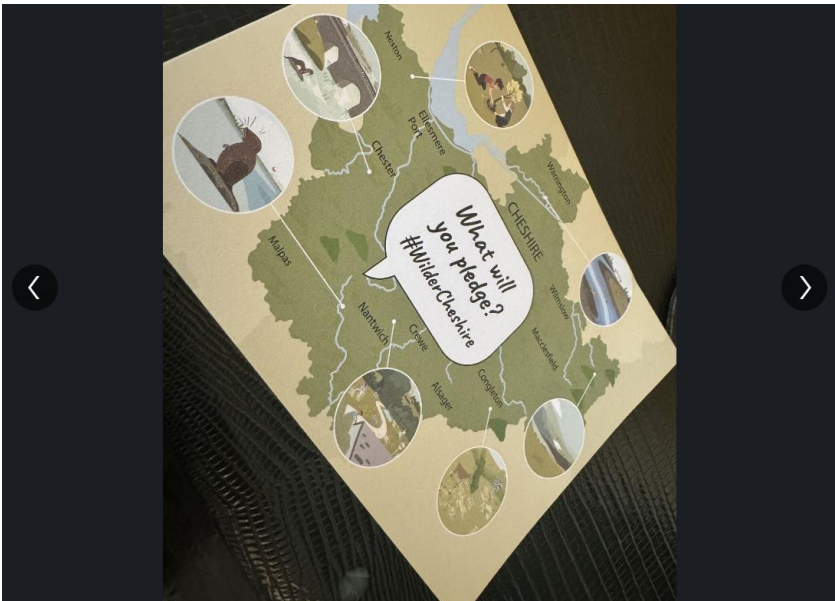


Packed third workshop in Warrington for the Cheshire & Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy today. What are the priorities for [#naturerecovery](#) ?

27

Like Comment Repost Send

Add a comment...



3mo •

Today was international day for biological diversity & to spend it contributing to the final Local Nature Recovery Strategy workshop for the Cheshire & Warrington region felt quite poignant. Having key local authority officers from across the region collaborating along with residents, charity representatives as well as those who work in nature based roles made the room buzz. Nature recovery can only be delivered at a landscape scale through a huge team effort. Thanks to [Cheshire West and Chester Council Roger Goulding Angie Jukes](#) for leading this process and moving the LNRS journey in the region along. It's exciting times to be working to reverse the decline of biodiversity in the UK, get involved where you can.

[#biodiversity](#) [#LNRS](#) [#Cheshire](#) [#naturerecovery](#) ...more

50

1 repost

Like Comment Repost Send

Add a comment...

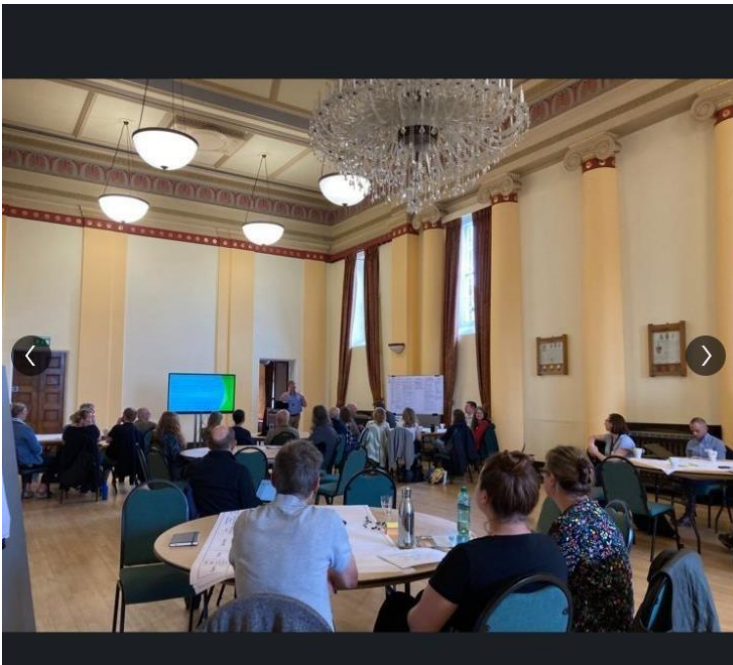
3mo • Edited • 🔒

Great to have so many passionate individuals, groups and organisations join us for our last 'Priorities' workshop for the Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Many thanks to our great supporting authorities, partners and the special individuals who helped to facilitate 60 group sessions with over 150 participants. Some fantastic insights and ideas to adopt and act upon as we work together for a 'Wilder Cheshire' over the next 10 years.

There's still a chance to tell us how you, your community, business or organisation intend to take action to help nature by making your pledge at - <https://lnkd.in/e-Shrz-a>

[#LNRS](#) [#WilderCheshire](#) [#Cheshire](#) [#Warrington](#)
[#Nature](#) [#naturebasedsolutions](#) [#biodiversity](#)



3mo • Edited • 🔒

Cheshire & Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy second session underway in Macclesfield today. What are the priorities for [#naturerecovery](#)?

14

Like Comment Repost Send

Add a comment...



Exciting day ahead at Cheshire LNRS event for priorities for nature recovery in Chester!



26

2 comments

Love

Comment

Repost

Send

5. Key conclusions

- Many of the themes that emerged were common to all habitats, such as:
 - the need for better education from early years to adulthood
 - the need for more community cooperation with the local authorities to create and maintain habitats in their local communities
 - the desire for cooperation by the organisations to spread the resources wider to enable habitat creation and maintenance

These helped inform the LNPs discussions in the shortlisting workshops.

- Other outputs from the workshops include the need for action (more measures were created than priorities). However, there were priorities across all themes that helped the LNPs discussions. These included “Right tree in right place”, all protected habitats to be in good ecological condition, and nature friendly farming to be incorporated whilst protecting food security.
- The public workshops displayed the variety of opportunities and measures that can help in achieving the priorities.
- Results from each workshop were collated and reported in order to inform the Technical Working Groups

6. Next Steps

- Following the 3 successful workshops, the Local Nature Partnership met in June and July to shortlist the priorities, which came out of the workshops and from the plans and strategies across the county.
- During the summer, the LNP alongside our supporting authorities, have been working hard to re-word priorities and give comments and feedback, where needed. Furthermore, they have been adding further actions or initiatives that they are currently working on or plan on doing, in their individual organisations, to enable wider collaboration from the LNP and local authorities, to ensure that we achieve the priorities set.
- We will be finalising the Priorities and measures and the opportunity map during the Autumn and we will have a draft strategy created in November, upon which everyone will have the chance to comment on in the New Year.