

Investment Fund - Feasibility and Development Funding Application Form

1. SCHEME:

Local Nature Recovery Strategy Development

2. Lead Organisation

Combined Authority

3. Partner organisations

Bath and North East Somerset Council

4. Scheme contact details

Name:	Roger Hoare
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Telephone:	07385957321

5. Scheme Type – mark with an X

Transport	
Non-Transport Housing Enabling	
Business Support	
Skills	

Other (please specify): Natural Environment / Green Infrastructure

6. Is this investment linked to any others within the early investment or wider investment

Fund programme? If so, please set out the relationship and linkages.

This bid relates to Green Recovery Fund and strategic projects that will deliver nature recovery. The Green Recovery Fund is earmarked for investment designed to help tackle the climate and ecological crises.

Details:

7. Total Funding required for this phase of works

a. Spending Profile (£)

	21/22	22/23	23/24	Total
Investment Fund		£110,000	£220,000	£330,000
Match Funding - please state source(s)		£13,000 (Natural England) + in-kind time from stakeholder s estimated at £17,000	£27,000 (Natural England) + in-kind time from stakeholder s estimated at £34,000	£40,000 + £51,000 = £91,000

b. Cost Breakdown (£)

	Investment Fund (£)	Match Funding (£)
In house staff costs	£230,000	
Third Party Support	£100,000	£91,000
Other (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
Total	£330,000	£91,000

8. Please describe the scheme to be developed (including its objectives and expected impacts) and the proposed activity to be undertaken through this investment.

Context

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are laid out in the Environment Act 2021 as an approach for delivering national environmental objectives on local and regional scales. It is envisaged that the LNRSs will mainly cover the geography of the 50 LNPs, so in the case of the West of England LNP (WENP) the area covered will be Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

The LNRS will be a ‘New, England-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature’s recovery and provide wider environmental benefits’. Each Strategy will:

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

Our current understanding is that the LNRS will be used to direct net gain funding and have a broader role in the planning system, to prioritise activities within parts of the new ELM Scheme, and to support the targeting of nature-based solutions. This would involve directing millions of pounds of funding for the WoE’s natural environment each year, making the LNRS a crucial document in delivering nature’s recovery and maximising the benefits that

the natural environment can provide to society.

It has been indicated that DEFRA will provide burden funding to assist with the development of LNRSs; however, it is unclear how much funding will be provided and what the timescales for providing the funding will be. To proceed at pace to support nature's recovery, this bid requests the funding required for quick progress to be made on the LNRS, underwriting any burden funding from DEFRA.

A. Details of the scheme to be delivered:

[Note: please include details of the intervention expected to ultimately be delivered including the strategic fit, how the scheme is planned to be delivered and the cost.

Programme information should be included in section 10b]

Once completed, the LNRS will help to direct funding and activity for nature recovery in the West of England. Our current understanding is that the LNRS will be used to:

- direct net gain funding and have a broader role in the planning system;
- to prioritise activities within parts of the new ELM Scheme; and
- to support the targeting of nature-based solutions.

However, the way in which the LNRS will be used to direct public funding and its exact role in the planning system has not yet been defined; it is expected that the LNRS guidance produced by DEFRA later this year will provide detail on this.

Additionally, we expect the LNRS to form a framework for prioritising action, project development and funding bids by stakeholders across the region, including WoE CA and UAs.

Delivery is expected to involve millions of pounds per year over many years, through both public and private funding and involving a wide range of stakeholders.

Additionally, regular monitoring will be required to report progress against the outcomes and actions set in the LNRS. This will involve collecting and analysing a greater range of data related to the natural environment much more regularly than we are currently able to do.

B. Details of the activities to be undertaken through this feasibility or development phase:

[Note: If the planned output is other than an Outline or Full Business Case or Second Stage Skills Capital Application please describe the scope and content of the report which will mark the completion of this phase]

The development of the LNRS will be conducted over 18 months through the stages set out in the table below:

Activity	Description
Local data collection and validation	<p>In this stage, locally held data on the natural environment will be identified, validated and mapped. This will require working with stakeholders to identify the best-quality local data that we have on the natural environment, where gaps exist in that data, and if and how those gaps can be filled in the timescale for the development of the LNRS.</p> <p>This will need to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat data – existing assets and key areas for restoration and connectivity – mapping that allows delivery of Lawton Principles, and natural capital accounting; and • Species data – existing assets and key areas for achieving greater resilience through habitat restoration; site buffering and increased connectivity • Land Use data, including mapping of proposed developments, agricultural use, and agricultural land classification. <p>The outcome of this stage will be a map of the Strategy area (i.e. the West of England) showing all relevant data to the production of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>
Data analysis	<p>This stage will comprise the interpretation of the data collected in Phase 1 to identify which habitats and areas are of greatest importance for wildlife in the West of England, and where the best opportunities exist to improve and connect existing habitats or create new habitats.</p> <p>This will involve building on existing work to identify the most</p>

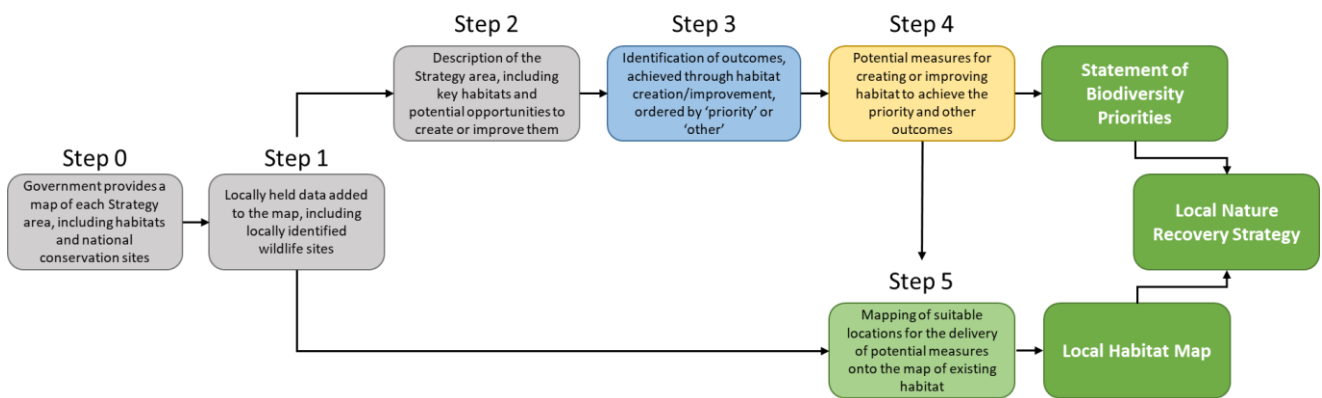
Activity	Description
	<p>important sites for nature and key opportunities for nature recovery, including through the mapping of a West of England Nature Recovery Network, the Nature Recovery Network Prospectus, and Local Authorities' Green Infrastructure Strategies. It will also require stakeholder collaboration to ensure we are best utilising knowledge from across the region on the most important sites for nature and opportunities for habitat creation.</p> <p>Community engagement will also be an important feature of this stage, including direct engagement with key community groups (such as community wildlife groups and town/parish councils), and workshops/webinars where the wider community is able to contribute towards identifying opportunities for nature recovery.</p> <p>Additionally, collaboration will take place with neighbouring LNRS areas to ensure we are taking account of landscape-scale and cross-border opportunities for nature recovery.</p> <p>The Outcome of this stage will be a description of the Strategy area, including key habitats and potential opportunities to create or improve them.</p>
Identification of outcomes	<p>In this stage, the opportunities identified in the Data Analysis stage will be refined to a set of outcomes to be achieved through habitat creation/improvement, which are categorised by 'priority' or 'other'.</p> <p>This will require extensive stakeholder work, including stakeholder workshops, to agree which of the opportunities identified in the previous Phase are feasible and which are the greatest priorities for nature's recovery.</p> <p>Also important will be engaging with landholders and farmers to ascertain where there is interest in nature restoration from those who make decision on land use. Landowner engagement through the West of England Agriculture Group will, therefore, be a feature of this stage.</p> <p>Again, collaboration will take place with neighbouring LNRS areas where outcomes will be cross-boundary in nature, to ensure that neighbouring LNRSs are consistent in their</p>

Activity	Description
	<p>identification of outcomes for nature recovery.</p> <p>The outcome of this stage will be a set of outcomes to be achieved through habitat creation/improvement, ordered by 'priority' or 'other'.</p>
<p>Identification of actions</p>	<p>Having identified the desired outcomes for nature recovery in the previous stage, the next step will be to identify potential measures for achieving those outcomes.</p> <p>This will require a more in-depth analysis of the land and the funding that will be needed to achieve the identified outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant collaboration with stakeholders, including WENP Working Groups, will be needed to identify how the agreed measures will be funded, including the identification of opportunities for nature-based solutions, the role of public funding including ELMs, and the role of private funding (through schemes such as the Bristol Avon Catchment Market). • Further engagement with landholders and farmers will be needed to identify which land in the outcome areas will be most suitable for nature recovery, and which measures are appropriate for this land. <p>A number of stakeholder workshops will be held to assist in this stage of the development of the LNRS, including community engagement where appropriate.</p> <p>These measures will need to be considered as a whole to identify the package of measures that would be required to deliver the outcomes identified in the previous stage, helping us to focus our efforts on the measures that are likely to make the biggest difference in the future.</p> <p>The outcome of this stage will be an agreed set of potential measures for creating or improving habitat to achieve the priority and other outcomes.</p>
<p>Mapping of actions</p>	<p>This stage will involve mapping the measures identified in the previous stage onto the map of existing habitat produced in the</p>

Activity	Description
	<p>first stage. This will primarily require time from technical support and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, with some stakeholder engagement to ensure the mapped measures are consistent with those identified during previous work.</p> <p>The outcome of this stage will be a Local Habitat Map identifying suitable location for the delivery of potential measures for nature recovery.</p>
<p>Consultation and publication</p>	<p>The Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and the Local Habitat Map will be brought together to form a draft of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the West of England.</p> <p>This draft will then be made available for stakeholder comment through a consultation period of a number of weeks and be updated to account for any comments made during this period. Sign-off will also be required from all participating Unitary Authorities and from Combined Authority as the Responsible Authority for producing the LNRS.</p> <p>The Outcome of this stage will be an agreed version of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the West of England.</p>
<p>LNRS monitoring set-up</p>	<p>As explained in Section 8A, regular monitoring will be required to report progress against the outcomes and actions set in the LNRS. This will involve collecting and analysing a greater range of data related to the natural environment much more regularly than we are currently able to do.</p> <p>We are, therefore, proposing to recruit an environmental data manager alongside the production of the LNRS, who will be responsible for putting in place an environmental data framework that will enable us to monitor progress against the LNRS, and other environmental objectives for the region, as well as provide greater transparency to stakeholders and the public regarding the state of the West of England's natural environment.</p> <p>A data commission will be required to fill the gaps in existing data related to the natural environment in the most efficient way possible.</p>

Activity	Description
	<p>Outcome: An environmental monitoring framework for the West of England and an interactive environmental data portal.</p>

This process for developing the LNRS is summarised in the following diagram:



- Please set out how the activities to be undertaken through this Feasibility and Development Funding Application will be managed and resourced. If use of consultants or other third parties is proposed please describe how these have been, or will be, procured.

The CA, as the designated Responsible Authority for the production of the LNRS, will act as commissioner/client for the project, with a nominated SRO (Head of Environment).

B&NES will act as the delivery partner, with a nominated Programme lead for delivery (Head of Green Transformation).

Work will be delivered under an SLA (or MoU) between WoE CA and B&NES. The SLA will set out the agreed scope of work, budget and delivery timetable, along with a change control process, and indicate any specific issues where formal approvals required (eg external data commissioning specs, where detail not available prior to signing SLA).

An LNRS Executive Group will be set up to oversee progress and agree any significant

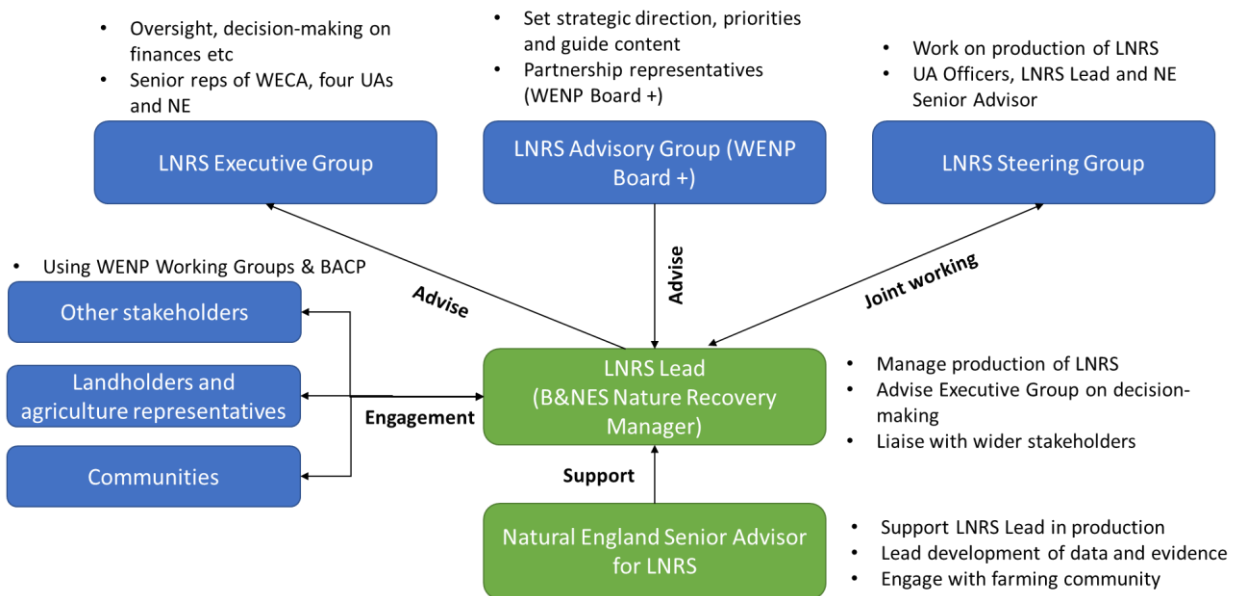
changes to delivery, meeting quarterly. It will comprise the CA (HoE), B&NES (HoGT), senior UA representation and senior Natural England representation (Co-chair: WoE CA/B&NES).

An LNRS Steering Group will provide day-to-day support on the development of the LNRS. It will be set up with officer representation from the CA, UAs, and the designated Natural England Senior Advisor (Chair: Mark Minkley (MM); meeting frequency tba).

The Environment Officer Steering Group will act as the LNRS Advisory Group and will help set the strategic direction, priorities and content of the LNRS, consisting of key stakeholders across the region (UAs, the CA, Environmental NGOs, arms-length government bodies, agricultural representatives, utility companies etc.). This will build upon direction and advice from the WENP Board (Chair: Roger Hoare; meeting frequency quarterly and ad-hoc as required).

A Nature Manager has been recruited by B&NES to manage the production of the LNRS, guided by the steering group and managed by the Strategic Manager - Green Infrastructure & Nature Recovery within B&NES, and accountable to the Board. Additionally, Natural England have designated a 0.5 FTE role for a Senior Advisor to support production of the West of England LNRS.

The management and governance of the project is summarised in the diagram below:



The Environmental Data Manager will be managed by the WoE CA Head of Environment,

and they will report to the same structures as set out for the LNRS.

10. What output will be produced using the funds awarded as part of this Feasibility and Development Fund Application, and when will this be completed?

The following outputs will be produced using the awarded funds:

- Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the West of England, as required by the Environment Act
- Environmental monitoring framework for the West of England
- Environmental data portal for the West of England

	Mark with an X	Date (mmm/yy)
Feasibility Study Report		
Option Development Report		
Option Assessment Report		
Outline Business Case		
Full Business Case		
Second Stage SkillsCapital Application		
Other (please state)	West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy	May 2024 (indicative, exact timing will depend on the timescale set by DEFRA)
Other (please state)	Environmental monitoring framework for the West of England	February 2024
Other (please state)	Environmental data portal for the West of England	May 2024

11. When do you plan to start and complete your project and what are the main project milestones? Please include the milestones related to the feasibility or development work to be undertaken through this application and the milestones for the subsequent implementation phase through to completion.

A. Milestones for the activities through this Feasibility and Development Funding

The following dates are indicative and will depend on when we receive guidance for

producing LNRSs from DEFRA and the timescale set for their production. An 18 month timescale for producing the LNRS has been assumed.

Milestone	Date (mmm/yy)
Guidance and a map of the Strategy area is sent by DEFRA	15/11/2022
West of England Environmental Data Manager recruited	13/01/2023
Locally held data added to the map, including locally identified wildlife sites	03/02/2023
Description of the Strategy area, including key habitats and potential opportunities to create or improve them	17/03/2023
Identification of outcomes, achieved through habitat creation/improvement, ordered by 'priority' or 'other'	07/07/2023
Potential measures for creating or improving habitat to achieve the priority and other outcomes	24/11/2023
Mapping of suitable locations for the delivery of potential measures onto the map of existing habitat	22/12/2023
Environmental monitoring framework for the West of England agreed	02/02/2024
Draft version of the LNRS produced and consultation period opens	08/03/2024
LNRS Consultation period ends	19/04/2024
Final version of the LNRS produced for sign-off	17/05/2024
West of England Environmental Data portal goes live	17/05/2024
Sign-off from WoE CA and UAs	31/05/2024


B. Planned milestones for scheme development or delivery beyond this initial phase.

The milestones beyond the date of this project will depend on the guidance set out by DEFRA regarding the use of the LNRS, and on the outcomes and measures identified within the LNRS itself. We expect there to be a regular review of progress towards the LNRS and regular updates of the document as required; however, it is not possible to attach milestones to this yet.

Milestone	Date (mmm/yy)

12. Application sign off by the promoting organisation:

Senior Responsible Owner

Name:	Roger Hoare
Signature:	
Date:	14/09/22

Section 151/Chief Finance Officer *

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

* Where Combined Authority are the applicant this should be signed by the appropriate Director/Head of Service