**Sussex LNRS Working Group**

**Meeting Notes**

**Monday 16 June 2025, 11:00 to 13:00**

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| **Present** | **Apologies** |
| ESCC, SxNP, WSCC, BHCC, WDC, HDC, SWT, HWNL, MSDC, CBC, Knepp Wildland Foundation, WayForward, RDC | SDNPA, EA, SE FWAG, NE, NFU, CLA, HDC, CLM |

1. **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

ESCC to Chair. Apologies were noted.

1. **Minutes and matters arising**

All actions from 19/05/25 complete, in progress and/or on agenda.

No issues or matters arising.

1. **General Update**:

Nationally:

Along with other responsible authorities, Sussex RAs have contributed to the design of the delivery phase with Defra. Funding announced a few days ago. £6.5m made available for the current year for the 48RAs (£135.5k/RA). Expectation that LNRS is completed before December 2025 to enable transition to delivery in this financial year. RAs are meeting with Defra on 09/07/25 to discuss time-bound pathway to publication. To provide reassurance for Defra, and hopefully to establish whether it has to be published to get the funding, or whether it can be ready to publish. The funding will cover costs associated with transitioning from LNRS preparation into delivery of the strategies. We have yet to determine what those transition arrangements might be and what our role will be and what the role will be for Supporting Authorities and delivery partners: Defra have however promised further information.  Funding for the subsequent three years will be announced at a later date.

Measures:

A 3rd workshop of delivery partners was held 02/05/2025 - 44% of measures were identified for mapping representing c.50 measures. Final iterations of the habitat and species measures are being polished following that and the Technical Review Panel review as well as integrating feedback from CR and other experts. Species will largely form their own distinct document but some species measures will be woven into the core LNRS, informing priorities, measures and mapping.

Description:

Mapping is now underway led by SxBRC and will discuss later on agenda. Regards to mapping of the measures, this iterative process is expected to take longer than originally estimated with a July completion target. This is due to: utilising existing data not collected for this purpose; iterative nature of the process; high level of manual data handling; large number of datasets and analyses required. Focus is mapping c.50 measures for Mid-June with all other maps (ACIB) completed during July.

Description:

Completing. Will be shared in next week or two.

Engagement:

Public consultation methodology is now being designed. Wayforward have met with our respective communications teams 23 May (monthly) to agree the communication strategy for the public consultation in the autumn. Promotion will likely be similar to previous subject to audience. Some assets to be created to support the consultation. Accessibility issues will be to a LA standard. Campaign page on each of the 3 constituent authorities webpages. Consultation for both LNRSs likely to be managed through the WSCC Engagement Hub. Researching approaches used by other RAs and Local Plan consultations.

Timeline:

Shifting backwards as previously reported. Certainty is hard to pin down. Currently mapping measures. A bigger job than expected - RAs aim to share emerging outputs with WG during July. Expected to take a long time for all the reasons previously outlined but largely due to the iterative nature and size of the job.

August: Following internal RA governance August seems a likely time for the SA consultation. RAs will have to manage the impact of the summer holiday period, e.g. possible early sight or delay to start.

Mid-October: Public consultation, 6 week consultation period applies.

February: Following internal governance, pre-publication consultation with the SA for a Spring publication. Reiterated that because of RA internal governance, will not be possible to deliver an LNRS for the end of the calendar year. Will be during Q4 of this financial year.

Benchmarking national RA progress:

Figures correct as of May 2025. 54% are still at the writing and design stage of which 55% aim to consult the public before the summer and 9% after the summer, with 35% unable to say when they will consult the public. 46% have triggered or completed the first SA consultation, 10% have triggered or completed the second SA consultation 6% have published.

Next steps:

1. A farmer's communications group has been convened and facilitated by WayForward.
2. Completing outstanding preliminary LNRS sections and publishing (species measures and description chapters) on website.
3. Progressing the mapping work.
4. **Mapping Update**

Following May workshop looking at prioritising measures for mapping, have begun mapping in earnest. Still a work-in-progress.

Reminder: rough calculation on coverage of APIB + priority habitats means we have the potential to capture all our priority habitats outside designated sites if we work on 30x30. Fits with the narrative that we already have a lot of important habitats, and that we need to look after and improve what we have.

Mapping is being sense-checked by the respective groups from the workshop, and where possible, ideal coverage and acceptable fall-back positions for targeting are being agreed to allow flexibility once all the measures are mapped and the extent of APIB coverage is better understood.

Protected sites: first iteration complete and reviewed by workshop group 10/06/25. One measure mapped (PS1.2 Create new areas of habitat on land adjacent to protected sites, expanding total area). Targeted SSSIs and LWS that intersect with BOAs, and applied 250m buffer with urban/built-up areas clipped out. 250m buffer based on professional judgement. Agreed that it further targeting required, buffer could potentially be reduced.

Noted that smaller buffers could be easier to defend through planning.

Coastal: first iteration complete and reviewed by workshop group 10/06/25. SMP policy areas with No Active Intervention or Managed Realignment in short term (effectively second epoch) used for targeting. Measures to enhance existing habitats mapped to existing priority habitats. Creation of new mapped using SE Regional Monitoring Programme maps.

Grassland, heathland, sandstone outcrops and farmed landscape: first iteration complete and reviewed by workshop group 12/06/25.

Grassland: existing grassland mapped includes LCG and waxcap grasslands + HW wildflower meadows. Neutral grassland and lowland meadows will be unmapped due to incomplete database with low confidence levels. Within HW, creation of new wildflower grassland targeted where ≥50% either unimproved of good quality semi-improved grassland targeted. Could potentially be clipped to NE habitat networks. Waxcaps could potentially be more targeted based on assessment of whether locally, regionally or nationally important. LCG creation targeted to highest potential for creation from Sussex-wide modelling.

Heathland: existing mapped. Potential for creation targeted to high and very high potential using modelling for West Sussex, and to three highest potential bands within NE habitat network mapping in East.

Sandstone outcrops: existing mapped.

Farmed landscape: no specific measures mapped. However, wetland measure for buffers to watercourses primarily on agricultural land. Consideration being given to mapping farmland bird assemblage – heat maps produced to date.

Woodland: first iteration complete, date for workshop review TBC. Existing woodlands (all priority types) mapped. Creation of new woodland targeted using lowest sensitivity category of woodland opportunity maps clipped to Low Weald NCA.

Freshwater/Wetland: most complex suite of measures to map. Mapping in progress with workshop group review scheduled for 19/06/25.

Urban measures and Corridors: datasets still being compiled.

Discussion:

Reminder that coverage of the ACIB (Areas that Could become of Importance for Biodiversity) will be known once all measures mapped and APIB removed. Still not clear guidance on what coverage should be aimed for. However, anecdotally, Somerset coverage (APIB + ACIB) is 50% and Cumbria c. 60%. Sussex RAs are currently working towards c. 45% given high level of coverage by APIB (Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity = designated sites and irreplaceable habitats).

Mapping measures for corridors. Trying to piece together corridors from LPAs etc, but do not fall neatly into habitat types, and as such, NE may push back. Also trying to reflect W2W etc. Agreed the value in referencing existing initiatives. Important that there is consistent messaging. Noted that mapping W2W etc would help tee-up the LNRS for the delivery stage.

1. **Finalised Measures**

Summarised final changes to the document following feedback from the Technical Review Panel which has resulted in some minor tweaks to wording.

Farmland: taken decision to reinstate measure for temporary rotational habitats given how important it is for farmers.

“Nature Networks” section added, which includes protected sites, wildlife corridors + new priority and measures for projects and initiatives that deliver multiple habitats, e.g. mineral restoration sites, habitat banks etc. Other RAs have done similar e.g. by having “Lawton” measures.

Each measure will be labelled as to whether mapped or unmapped, and document will be split into the two LNRS areas.

Discussion:

Agree that habitat banks should be included if possible, but question as to how new ones would be captured. Noted that these could not be mapped in this iteration of the LNRS if brought forward post publication, but would be covered by priority. However, those not mapped would not benefit from strategic uplift unless delivering mapped measures for specific habitats.

Offered to ask W2W members whether they have any habitat banks coming forward, although would need to caveat that not all would necessarily be mapped.

1. **Feedback from Farmers’ Group**

WayForward provided feedback on a recent meeting with landowner advisors etc on how best to land the LNRS with farmers and landowners.

Discussion:

With reference to the W2W offer of reviewing the LNRS prior to publication, noted that the farmers/landowners in question would prefer to do this via a Teams call rather than reviewing the documents.

1. **Next Steps**

As summarised in general update.

1. **AOB**

None.

1. **DONM**

21/07/25, 11:00-13:00.