

## Written evidence from Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (PAE0014)

1. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) responsible authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has been awarded to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). The CPCA have contracted the responsibility to develop the LNRS to Cambridgeshire County Council, in partnership with Natural Cambridgeshire (LNP). The LNP will contribute by building the vision, the cross-sectoral support and the promotion of a vision for nature in local policies.
2. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LNRS will be developed through an evidence based, locally led and collaborative approach. The area has already adopted a 'Doubling Nature' ambition (developed by Natural Cambridgeshire) that responds to the current deficit of wildlife-rich areas across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and the national decline in biodiversity. The LNP will contribute by building awareness of the barriers and opportunities to securing this vision for nature and the actions needed by parties to embed action for nature across the county.
3. The Doubling Nature ambition aims to contribute towards the Government's commitment to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030. Cambridgeshire has one of the fastest growing economies in the UK. The aim is to put nature at the heart of Cambridgeshire by doubling the area of wildlife-rich habitats and greenspace from 8.5% to 17% over the next 30 years.
4. In January 2023, to start early engagement to assist the development of LNRS, the LNP and County Council organised 1 to 1 conversations with City and District councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The main challenges discussed were:
  - Conflict between space for people and space for nature - there is demand for high quality greenspace and biodiversity sites can suffer damage as a result of this pressure.
  - Tensions around environmental land use and allocation for land, as well as land required for agriculture, there may be competition for land from a range of projects, from development, from flood alleviation schemes, creation of new accessible greenspaces, climate change mitigation and nature restoration.
  - Management burden - who will manage the habitat restoration after creation?
  - Support and Guidance - there is a need to share knowledge and skillsets required to meet these new requirements from environment act (e.g., Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) so a joined-up approach is required.
  - Consultation fatigue - there is a lot of consultation happening on range of topics - how do you avoid consultation fatigue and maximum engagement?
  - How does blue infrastructure fit into the wider LNRS Strategy?
5. The following challenges have also been identified by Natural Cambridgeshire, through their own networks.
  - Environmental Incentives for landowners – the complexities and uncertainties of these incentives. Including the lack of clarity, how advice is emerging slowly and in small pieces, such as eligibility rules round capital items in relation to BNG and nutrient neutrality.
  - Cambridgeshire does not have a National Park or AONB so is more focused on increasing areas of undesignated land under management for nature, the LNP

has collaborated stakeholders to create six 'Priority Landscapes' which are a focus for restoration and management effort in the absence of these landscape designations.

- The absence of large-scale landscapes that provide countryside recreation, unlike in many other parts of the country and that we don't have large-scale areas of downland, moorland, coast or commons is the reason so many of the remaining high value nature areas are under pressure from recreational uses and their quality is declining. We are keen to explore what could be done to promote and embed landscape and habitat restoration at the landscape-scale in a place such as Cambridgeshire which is devoid of protected landscapes.
- There is potential for areas that are achieving long term and effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity outside of protected areas to be recognised by government as OECMs (Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures). It would be useful too to explore the opportunity for land under active restoration to be considered and recognised as candidate OECMs.
- In Cambridgeshire, restoration work which could be recognised as contributing to Target 2 of the Global Biodiversity Framework to restore 30% of degraded land has the potential to complement the 30 by 30 target for Protected Areas

6. Another challenge we anticipate to face is a gap around resourcing, expertise, and skills and in particular the support and guidance to deliver nature-based solutions and to deliver the government's 30 by 30 ambition. In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, there is a skills gap and requirement for ecological skills and expertise in delivering BNG and other potential future requirements such as Nutrient Neutrality and Carbon Credits which may increase the area of land managed for nature. Through country-wide webinars and workshops, this theme is not just isolated to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

7. We have benefitted from excellent engagement by our LNRS Senior Advisor from Natural England who has been providing ongoing advisory support. We have been attending webinars, workshops and training hosted by Natural England, Defra and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to help prepare for LNRS. However, the levels of resource for statutory bodies to fulfil their core duties in relation to protected sites including monitoring, securing appropriate management, and enforcement to a good standard, needs to be increased to ensure that the 30% of land contributing towards the target is properly protected and effectively managed sites. This will help guarantee that the best land for nature contributes towards the 30% and that this land is set within a wider, more nature friendly, nature recovery network.

8. The lack of alignment of land use policies with the LNRS is an issue. For example, the timeline for mandatory BNG is not aligned with the development the LNRS which will create a shared understanding of the nature recovery priorities. This is necessary for local planning authorities to determine the 'strategic significance' score that is part of the Biodiversity Metric in relation to targeting offsite BNG delivery. The Green Finance markets remain immature and the guidance for stacking and bundling of land-based incentives remains unclear. This means that the complexity of funding opportunities and the relationship between funding streams inhibits land managers from taking up nature recovery incentives.

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