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**CHAPTER FIVE**

# Land management

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England is at a crossroad for the governance of land and the natural environment. Actions for addressing and adapting to climate change, achieving food security, and tackling the biodiversity crisis are all embedded in and depend on how land is managed. So far, existing government policy and targets have failed to handle many of these complexities of land, farming<sup>135</sup>, and the natural environment.

Local authorities are a key stakeholder in the management of land. While they have a range of powers, levers, and influence over land use and related emissions through land ownership and development planning, the primary opportunity for local government in this sector is in providing strategic overview through their convening and advisory powers.

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135 Environmental Audit Committee (2021) - Biodiversity in the UK: bloom or bust?

## Key points

### Driving decarbonisation

- Due to the historic undervaluing of the ecosystem services provided by natural land, the UK is the most nature-depleted nation in the G7 and faces multiple climate change-related crises around resilience if land use is not reformed.
- Multiple competing interests must be navigated to drive decarbonisation at both the national and local level, with issues such as biodiversity, food security, and flood risk management all being areas of concern for national resilience.
- Local authorities must take a holistic view of the issue and work with landowners, the local agricultural sector, communities, and businesses to alter land use in a way which is sustainable and efficient.
- Piecemeal and overlapping government policy initiatives, alongside a lack of hard powers and dedicated revenue funding streams, stand as the key barriers to a holistic local approach to decarbonisation across land management.

### Achieving clean growth

- Biodiversity net gain can improve the quality of life and environment in areas, as well as helping to reach net zero, and increase the attractiveness of a place's 'offer'.
- Greater flood resilience is crucial to avoiding major economic damage in many parts of the country.

## 5.1 Current national picture

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) 2018 report on land use highlighted the crucial role of land in providing essential ecosystem services such as food, clean water, timber, as well as natural climate mitigation and adaptation through sequestering and storing carbon and protection from natural hazards such as floods, pests, and diseases. These essential ecosystem services that land provides do not have a private market. As such, their positive impacts are not priced-in and are under-supplied by the market. This has led to historic and ongoing degradation of land, soils, water courses, and a loss of biodiversity<sup>136</sup>. If land continues to be used unsustainably, as it has been in the past, it will not be able to support future demand for settlements or maintain current per capita food

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136 Climate Change Committee (2020) – Land use: Policies for a net zero UK

production. Nor will we be prepared for the warming climate.

For several decades, agricultural policy in the UK had been dominated by the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP emphasised food production and led to a distorted set of uses for land that did not reflect the need to mitigate climate change and reduce the stresses on environmental ecosystems that climate change is causing. Leaving the EU represents an opportunity to overhaul land use to ensure that it contributes to the UK's net-zero emissions ambition and gives priority to climate mitigation. As part of its efforts, the government has designed and implemented frameworks to replace the former subsidy arrangements under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

The Agriculture Bill set out provisions to transition by 2028 from the CAP subsidy scheme based on land area in agricultural production towards payments for public goods. On 11 November 2020, it was granted Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament<sup>137</sup>. The Environment Act 2021<sup>138</sup> sets out a new regulatory framework for environmental improvement targets, plans, and policies. The Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) will be important in signalling not only an intention to break away from the damaging practices of the CAP but also to support farm businesses in adopting sustainable land management practices<sup>139</sup>.

However, there are significant levels of uncertainty within the farming community and the proposals have faced substantial criticism from a wide range of conservation, farming, and political organisations<sup>140</sup><sup>141</sup>. Farmers have cited a lack of access to capital and uncertainty as the biggest barriers to making environmental improvements. At the same time, recent crises at the heart of government have led to doubt over the future of the scheme itself, which was under review by the Truss administration<sup>142</sup>.

Positively, some progress has been made towards decarbonising the agriculture and land use sector with a series of announcements to ensure environmental protection and restoration. In 2018, the *25 Year Environment Plan* (25 YEP) set out the government's ambitions for the natural environment under separate policy

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137 DEFRA (2020) – Agriculture Act 2020

138 DEFRA (2021) – The Environment Act 2021

139 Green Alliance (2021) – Net zero policy tracker: April 2021 update

140 DEFRA (2020) – Environmental Land Management: Policy Discussion

141 Green Alliance Blog (2020) – We need to reset the role of ELMs

142 The Guardian (2022) - Former environment secretary urges successor not to drop nature-friendly farming scheme

areas<sup>143</sup>. Under the Environment Act 2021, the Secretary of State must prepare an 'environmental improvement plan' that outlines ambition to improve the natural environment within a minimum timeframe of 15 years, with the 25 YEP being the first one. While this is an encouraging step, recent government failure to publish required nature recovery targets by the 31 October 2022 deadline has jeopardised meeting the first review of progress of the environmental improvement plan<sup>144</sup>.

Further recent progress includes<sup>145</sup>:

- The new £10m Natural Environment Investment Fund to mobilise investment in nature restoration.
- £640m Nature for Climate Fund, to support afforestation projects and peatland restoration in England<sup>146</sup>
- The launch of an improved Countryside Stewardship Scheme in 2022 to reward farmers for public goods, like good soil management and habitat creation from 2024. These have now been succeeded by the Local Nature Recovery scheme<sup>147</sup>
- A policy paper published by Defra outlining the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme which will encourage land management that delivers for nature, helps reduce emissions, and increases carbon storage.
- An Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)<sup>148</sup>, created in November 2021 under the Environment Act 2021. Its mission is to protect and improve the environment by holding government and other public bodies to account. Its activities include scrutinizing the environmental improvement plan, environmental law, advising government, and enforcing against failure to comply with law.

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143 DEFRA (2018) – A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

144 The Wildlife Trusts (2022) - The Wildlife Trusts call on Office for Environmental Protection to investigate the Government's missed Environment Act targets

145 Green Alliance (2021) – Net zero policy tracker: April 2021 update

146 RSPB - Written evidence submitted by the RSPB to the Environmental Audit Select Committee's inquiry on 'Biodiversity and Ecosystems'

147 DEFRA (2022) – Local Nature Recovery: more information on how the scheme will work

148 Office for Environmental Protection – What we do

## 5.2 Local authority powers and capacity

### Local authority powers and capacity to drive decarbonisation – land management

Power	District/Unitary	County/Unitary	LEP
Soft power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can engage with and consult local farmers on land use management.</li> <li>• Can use convening power to bring together the local agricultural sector to share best practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can engage with and consult local farmers on land use management.</li> <li>• As education authority, can use their convening power to help create training pathways for local agriculture.</li> <li>• Can use convening power to bring together the local agricultural sector to share best practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can ensure representation of agriculture in Skills Advisory Panels.</li> </ul>
Hard power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can use planning powers to facilitate decarbonisation processes for farmers, particularly those in conservation areas.</li> <li>• Can build adaptation to climate scenarios into local plans and planning decisions.</li> <li>• Can embed nature recovery and biodiversity into future local development through land allocations and development conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can drive good practice through ownership of county farms</li> <li>• As lead local flood authorities, can ensure climate scenarios are factored into local flood risk management strategies.</li> </ul>	

### 5.2.1 Local government and agriculture

The agricultural sector is largely governed and influenced by central government and the policy direction set at a national level. As the sector response to government's plans for the Environmental Land Management scheme demonstrate, there is increased unhappiness with certain aspects of national policy. This makes local government action on the ground all the more important in demonstrating support for local farmers and the wider agriculture sector.

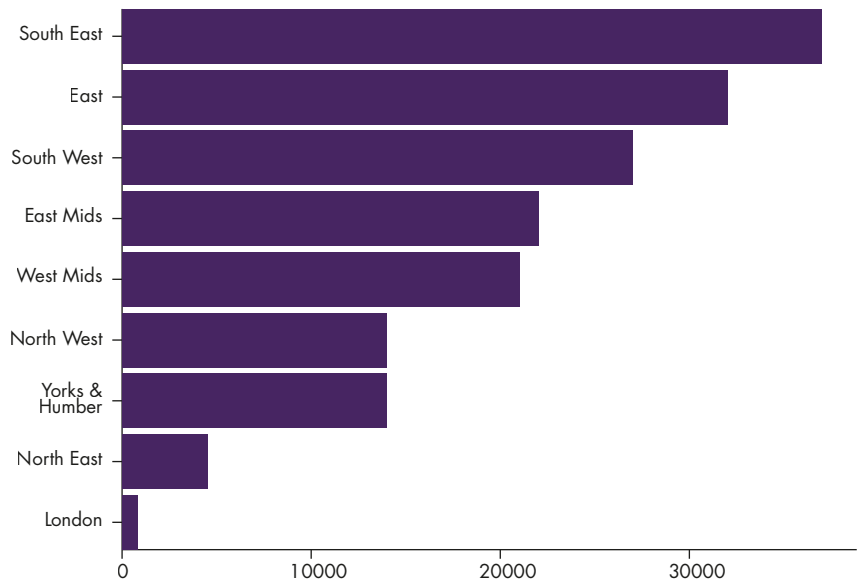
District, county, and unitary authorities can support their local agricultural sector through engagement. Particularly, involving farmers with policy formation and decisions in areas that directly affect them. For example, with regards to carbon offsetting it has been argued<sup>149</sup> that authorities need to work closely with farmers on initiatives such as tree planting, especially when looking in the longer term at the management of these trees and how best to utilise land available. This close collaboration will be important in finding a mutually-beneficial solution that doesn't force farmers into a binary choice of utilising their land solely for offsetting or agricultural production purposes.

There are numerous ways through which local district, county, and unitary authorities can engage with their farming community. Working with bodies such as the National Farmers' Union can help gain a better understanding of common concerns and how best to tackle them. This will be particularly useful in council areas with large numbers of private farms. The NFU have developed a guide<sup>150</sup> to help show where the largest challenges are and how local authorities can help tackle them locally.

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149 Policy Interview

150 NFU – Net zero & agriculture

**Figure 20.** Jobs in agriculture

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey

As the agricultural sector prepares itself for the transition to net zero, there will be a focus on certain areas, including developing locally sustainable models of food production. Rural authorities can use existing powers and capacities in areas such as public procurement to encourage and propel this. For example, by using their procurement strategies to reflect an emphasis on buying and using locally-sourced produce, they can help support the growth and promotion of sustainable models of local food production and kick-start the development of a market for it.

Embedding sustainability in local food production will involve reviewing the suitability of current agricultural and farming buildings, as well as developing new state of the art facilities. However, farms in conservation areas or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty might face hurdles in doing this when placed against more stringent planning regulations. Therefore, local planning authorities can use their powers to help ease and facilitate the process for farmers. Another straightforward way that rural authorities can help their local agricultural sector can be through supporting, either financially or a commitment to closely work with, those farmers who are showing a shift to decarbonised agricultural practices. Doing this will highlight their role as champions of local innovation.

Finally, skills and training in the agricultural sector will become increasingly

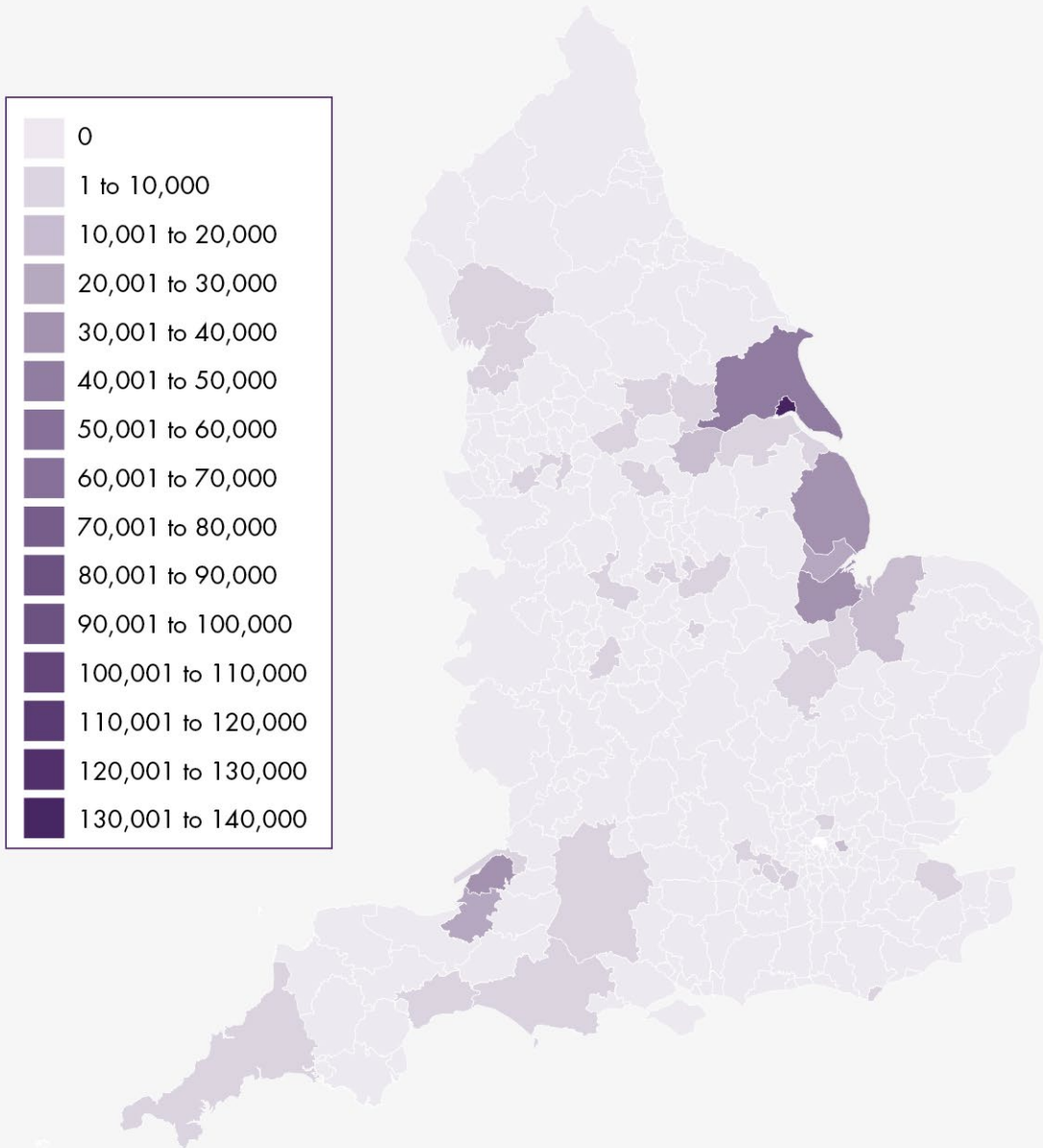
important as new agricultural technologies and practices embed themselves in the sector. Here, rural authorities can collaborate with skills providers to create training and educational opportunities for the local labour market. They can work with the local agricultural sector to hold networking events for local farmers looking to learn and adopt new technology and practices.

### 5.2.2 Climate adaptation

As well as decarbonisation, local authorities across the country have a crucial role in adapting to and mitigating against the impacts of climate change which are already being experienced and will continue to increase in severity for years to come under any emission scenario. The UK is already experiencing hotter, drier summers and colder, wetter winters, with these changes likely to intensify in the coming years. The suitability of local infrastructure for prolonged dry spells and heatwaves in the summer alongside an elevated flood risk in the winter is, therefore, of great concern to national resilience.



**Figure 21:** Properties at risk of flooding (risk >0.1%)



Local government powers to boost resilience range from general actions like ensuring the risk profile of council property and assets in the face of climate change is fully understood, to policy of direct consequence like ensuring that Local Plans and planning decisions take future climate scenarios into account. This is particularly important in councils where a large proportion of land is on floodplains, which are often in the East of England and in coastal regions but can also be found surrounding rivers in all regions of the country. In many cases, these authorities are in the difficult situation of having to meet challenging housing targets by building on floodplains due to the lack of an alternative. In these instances, the Local Plan and the local planning department rely on flood impact assessments, which are required in areas marked as at-risk of flooding by the Environment Agency.

Local authorities at the county/unitary level have the added responsibility of being the lead local flood authority for their areas. This places them in charge of maintaining a register of flood risk assets, keeping up-to-date emergency response plans, and coordinating flood risk management across the wider local state. Importantly, these authorities are also empowered to take the lead on community recovery in instances of major, disruptive flooding. Put in place through the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, these measures also include the production of a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, setting out how the council intends to reduce and respond to instances of flooding in the area.

Local flood authorities therefore take the lead on Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM), an increasingly important area of policy in response to climate change. In the past three years, the Environment Agency have published both an FCERM strategy and an accompanying Action Plan, involving £860m of investment into over 1,000 flood defence schemes. The action plan recognises the role of councils in using planning authority status, as well as lead local flood authorities, in increasing resilience, through formal policy as well as working in partnership with local stakeholders.

### 5.2.3 Nature and biodiversity

Biodiversity net gain (BNG)<sup>151</sup> is an approach to the development of land that attempts to improve the natural environment from the state it was in before. BNG is a significant aspect of land management and has been a focal point for environmental policy in recent years. Naturally, local authorities will have a role in enhancing the local natural environment and enacting the policies to do

so. Recently, powers have been made available to local government and place stakeholders giving them greater capacity to act in this area.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)<sup>152</sup> are a flagship government policy established through the Environment Act 2021, the purpose of which is to help reverse an ongoing decline of nature and biodiversity in England. They will act as a country-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for action to drive natural recovery across specific localities. Government anticipates there will be 50 LNRS that will cover the entirety of England with no gaps or overlaps. The environment secretary will appoint a 'responsible authority' to lead on its production in the designated area, which in most cases will be the local authority. However, it is not clear as yet what tier of local government is preferred to lead on the LNRS development.

The LNRS will be evidence-based, locally-led, and will require strategic collaboration between local nature and agricultural stakeholders - including farmers - to create a network of shared plans that can be delivered by the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Each strategy will have an obligation to consider priorities for local nature and biodiversity recovery, map the most valuable nature assets, and outline specific proposals for achieving local environmental improvements. So far, there have been five LNRS pilots. What is clear so far is that local authorities will have to use their strategic planning and coordination powers to the full extent if the initiative is to be a success.

In addition to the rollout of LNRS, the funding available to local authorities provides an avenue through which to lead on nature and biodiversity recovery. The £6m Trees Call for Action Fund<sup>153</sup> was launched in November 2021, which gives grants of between £250,000 to £500,000 to projects across England that are managed by partnerships of environmental charities, not-for-profit organisations, local authorities, and landscape bodies. There is also the Local Authority Treescapes Fund<sup>154</sup>, which similarly supports tree planning and natural regeneration in non-woodland areas. For the period 2022/2023 £5.4m is being made available, with the government expecting up to 100 grants of between £50,000 to £300,000 being made available to local authorities that are working with climate NGOs, community groups, and volunteers.

Finally, the planning system can be used by local planning authorities to embed nature recovery and biodiversity in the ongoing development of a locality. This

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152 DEFRA (2021) – Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include

153 DEFRA, Forestry Commission (2021) – Extra funding to create jobs, expand woodlands and protect trees

154 Forestry Commission (2022) – Local Authority treescapes Fund

is something acknowledged by government and the rollout of the LNRS, where a main objective of the pilots has been to see where they can fit into existing spatial planning tools such as the Local Plan. Stakeholders have also been examining what role design codes can play in linking nature recovery to placemaking and the design of the local built environment. The RTPI<sup>155</sup> have argued that, with the increased importance of design codes following the revision of the NPPF in 2021, they can help drive clean growth if used properly and frontloaded in the development process. This can ensure that considerations around nature recovery can be locked in from the beginning.

### 5.3 Achieving clean local growth through land management policy

Opportunities	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councils can improve resilience and community engagement through empowering communities at-risk of flooding by working with flood action groups.</li> <li>• Long-term planning can <b>create a pipeline of projects to boost resilience</b>, bringing in multiple parts of the local and regional economy and public sector.</li> <li>• The Local Nature Recovery Strategies pilot programme demonstrated the potential for <b>bringing together stakeholders from across society to work together on biodiversity</b> at the local level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issue of <b>piecemeal and overlapping policy directives</b> from central government can lead to inefficient carbon offsetting and conflicts between goals of sustainable food production, nature recovery and biodiversity.</li> <li>• Sustained flood-resilience is difficult due to the lack of a dedicated revenue stream for resilience and adaptation.</li> <li>• Considering the severity of the issue, councils are under-powered to act on privately-held flood defences in poor condition.</li> </ul>

### **Creating market conditions for clean local growth in land management**

Local authorities have a strong role to play in providing market confidence and bringing in the investment needed to accelerate the decarbonisation and clean growth of their local economy. Creating the right market conditions for clean local growth in land management will entail the need to:

- Embed nature recovery and biodiversity in future local development and the Local Plan.
- Convene with agriculture, natural realm and affected local state partners to better understand how to incentivise innovation in the decarbonisation of land use.
- Work with farmers to understand the potential for land use management and alternate uses of land including possibilities around renewable energy generation through solar panels.
- Commit dedicated support to agriculture workers and farmers in helping them scale up low-carbon practices.

#### **5.3.1 Decarbonising agriculture**

The guidance<sup>156</sup> set out by the NFU sets out its aspiration for net zero against three pillars that include reducing emissions through productivity, carbon storage, and the role of renewable technology in the agricultural sector. The process of decarbonising agriculture will require the development of effective land management policy that speaks to each one of these areas in a holistic manner.

However, a barrier in the face of developing such an approach is that often policies dealing with biodiversity net gain and carbon offsetting advances these issues at the expense of agricultural production, which inhibits the use of land to its full potential.

Taking a holistic approach to land management policy will be vital for local government to adequately lead on the decarbonisation of agriculture at the level of place. How this looks will be different across the country. For example, in the South East of England, where land availability is already constrained, focus needs to be directed at how best to unlock land to increase production whilst respecting the need to use farm land for carbon offsetting.

### 5.3.2 Flood and coastal erosion risk management

For local authorities, applying risk management against flooding and coastal erosion means action on a range of timescales and working with multiple different partners. On the one hand, there is the need to deal with risks in the short term and with the immediate and sustained responses to actual occurrences of flooding. On the other, there is the need to work with leading scientific institutions and industrial sectors such as housebuilding and utilities to model different scenarios and build long-term resilience into local planning.

The most important stakeholders on the ground are of course the communities who live in areas at risk of flooding. In at-risk areas, local flood authorities are working to ensure that communities are informed of plans and processes which might impact them in the event of a flood or better protect their area in the long term. Many such communities have self-organised into Flood Action Groups, supported as a network by the National Flood Forum, an organisation founded in 2002 to help communities in speaking out on flooding. It is important that all local authorities affected by flood risk engage with these groups, especially the lead local flood authority. In March 2021, Cambridgeshire County Council approved funding for a Community Flood Action Programme, including a series of projects across the county to increase resilience. Part of the remit of the programme is to support local people in establishing action groups and producing community flood plans. This kind of action empowers communities and helps move away from a paradigm where policy around resilience is something that happens “to” rather than “with” communities.

Given the complexity of the partnerships required and dramatic scale of the issue, a long-term project pipeline is crucial. In Somerset, the devastating flooding of 2014 led to the formation of the Somerset Rivers Authority, where the county council as lead local flood authority worked with districts and a broad range of other stakeholders in producing a twenty-year plan to increase flood resilience across the county. As of summer 2022, the partnership was still meeting regularly and overseeing the delivery of the plan. This is despite multiple changes of government and massive global instability in recent years, showing the stability that can be provided by the local state if partners are well-coordinated under an agreed long-term vision. On the coast of the South West, a similar approach has been taken by the council of Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole in the establishment of a ‘centre of excellence’ for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management. This follows years of collaboration across the wider area, formalising the FCERM partnership into an independent body to devise solutions to build resilience across the area using multiple public and private sector actors.

Despite the increase in policy focus on flooding which brought about the FCERM Strategy and action plan, there remain significant barriers to local authority action which require a step-change from central government to address. The need for long-term financial surety and dedicated revenue streams remains a central issue. The disconnect inherent in a policy where capital injections for flood defences are supplied without revenue-funding for their maintenance is a major obstacle to building resilience identified by local government stakeholders<sup>157</sup>. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many flood defences are in private hands, with very poor available data on the condition of this vital infrastructure. Even in cases where the working condition of privately-owned flood defences is known, councils have no power to compel landowners to address the issue<sup>158</sup>. These twin pressures leave councils with limited resources to maintain public defences and almost no resources to ensure the good working order of those in private hands.

### 5.3.3 Driving biodiversity and nature recovery

The Local Nature Recovery Strategies, if done properly, have the ability to cover the need of involving each main agricultural stakeholder, including local farmers, to deliver a truly holistic plan for land management. And already, the experiences of the five pilot projects give an insight into what works as well as lessons learnt.

The five pilot tests were conducted by Nature England and included the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Buckinghamshire County Council, Cornwall Council, Northumberland County Council, and Cumbria County Council. The pilots were carried out from mid-2020 and concluded in May 2021, with the experiences of these councils helping to inform the regulatory framework of the strategies to ensure consistency in their rollout.

According to the principal advisor for the LNRS at Natural England<sup>159</sup>, the experience of piloting the strategies has been overwhelmingly positive. All councils showed enthusiasm and dedication to making a success of it. In terms of lessons learned, it has been highlighted that owing to how new the policy is, the strategies can look very familiar in places, especially in evidence collection and mapping of priorities. However, a strength of the policy that is already becoming apparent is in its ability to bring together planners, farmers, protected areas, residents, and local climate NGOs to establish a locally-led collaborative process.

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157 LGA (2019) - LGA response to draft National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for England

158 The Guardian (2021) - Revealed: a third of England's vital flood defences are in private hands

159 Nature England (2021) - Shaping the future of Nature Recovery: Developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies

At the same time, transparency and consensus in decision-making will need to be baked-in from the beginning in overcoming difficulties and differences of opinion. And relatedly, more work needs to be done to understand how LNRS can link with and complement other plans and spatial strategies – particularly Local Plans.

Alongside LNRS, there are other examples of district councils acting on their own volition to drive biodiversity and nature recovery. Folkestone and Hythe District Council have been encouraging biodiversity through grounds maintenance within the district area. The district's grounds maintenance team works to encourage wildlife and minimise the team's climate impact. The district is home to some rare habitats and species, such as the short-haired bumble bee, late spider orchid and turtle dove. Folkestone and Hythe's green infrastructure strategy is being updated with climate change as a major cross-cutting theme. The strategy will tackle five main areas: biodiversity, access, health, blue infrastructure (such as rivers, canals and ponds), and landscape character. An action plan is currently being drafted which will go out to public consultation.





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## 5.4 Case study: Cornwall

Cornwall Council are a leading example of an authority that has successfully managed to devise land management policy which concurrently responds to the three aligned challenges of the climate emergency, the ecological emergency, and the need to adapt to a changing climate. The council were the first in the country to declare both a climate emergency in January 2019, and an ecological emergency in November 2021. The latter being led by the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership.

Utilising its relevant functions and statutory duties the declaration of both emergencies has allowed the council to take a holistic approach in responding to the three aligned challenges. This led to the development of the environmental partnerships and climate change service which has oversight of the agenda leading on cross cutting projects aimed at addressing the climate and ecological emergencies.

Work to date includes the implementation of the Carbon Neutral Cornwall Action Plan<sup>160</sup> that looks at how to fully decarbonise the county by 2030, working with the Local Nature Partnership in the development and implementation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy<sup>161</sup> and the creation of the Forest for Cornwall.

The Forest for Cornwall<sup>162</sup> is a project born out of the Carbon Neutral Cornwall Action Plan and has been highlighted as a leading example of how a single project can deliver multiple benefits for Cornwall and its residents. Based on carbon sequestration, its aim is to develop a forest covering 8,000 hectares (two percent of Cornwall's land mass) with trees and hedges to absorb carbon from the atmosphere. This will also have significant benefits for the council's wider approach to nature recovery and biodiversity along with creating natural flood management solutions.

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160 Cornwall Council (2022) – Our Action Plan

161 Cornwall Council – What is a Nature Recovery Strategy?

162 Cornwall Council – Forest for Cornwall

Key to the success of the council's approach has been the ability to work at a higher strategic level of spatial planning. As a unitary authority, with statutory duties as the local flood authority and local planning authority, Cornwall Council has been able to look at where synergies and opportunities lie in developing projects such as Forest for Cornwall that deliver results across a range of challenges from carbon mitigation and nature recovery to adaptation and resilience.

This is exemplified by their Climate Emergency Development Plan Document<sup>163</sup>, which brought together a wide range of issues including biodiversity net gain and allocation of land for renewable energy and was compiled using this level of strategic thought and engagement with communities and key sector representatives. Having a greater oversight, whilst being able to utilise local knowledge intelligently, will allow for the development of schemes that will have meaningful impact.

Another advantage of being a unitary authority is in the scale of bodies being contiguous with one another. For example, the Local Nature Partnership, Local Enterprise Partnership, and council can come together easier. This does not mean to say that it is simple, there are many complexities that need to be faced. However, strategic working together across sectors has allowed a number of initiatives to be tested across Cornwall that have resulted in it having a number of progressive land management policies.

For example the innovative Lagas<sup>164</sup> project, which provides a mapping tool that details

the Cornish landscape and environment. It maps a range of different land management related issues all integral to the transition to net zero ranging from Net Gain Zones to future farming opportunities that could be pioneered across the county. Lagas supports the council's Environmental Growth Strategy and helps provide the framework for local action.

It also aids increased strategic working between local partners on issues such as nature recovery as it helps illustrate what needs to be done and who can play their part in making a success of projects. Lagas has been used to facilitate the development of an investment programme for nature recovery and provide investor confidence. It helped map out £40m worth of investment opportunities the council has developed with partners across the county, all of which deliver against the pilot Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

While the climate change development planning document will establish planning policies on renewable energy, biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure, their refreshed Local Transport Plan and Plan for their Places show how they are embedding nature within broader spatial strategies and policies. Cornwall Council will also be the Responsible Authority for the region's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and having been selected as one of five pilot regions they understand how this will strengthen local action, help guide development through things like Biodiversity Net Gain, guide agri-environment funding, and shape wider investment to support their climate and environmental ambitions.

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163 Cornwall Council – Forest for Cornwall

164 Lagas Cornwall – Homepage

## **5.5 Recommendations to central government**

- Reaffirm support for nature recovery and the protection of the environment in planning regulations.
- Give councils power to act on privately-held flood defences
- Create a comprehensive, cross-departmental national land management framework – so that councils and landowners are aware of the different options for decarbonisation and how these aggregate to a national reduction in emissions.