

# Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Engaging with Housebuilders and Developers  
Across Greater Lincolnshire  
Stakeholder Engagement Report  
November 2024

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County Council

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## Background

Greater Lincolnshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will be a comprehensive plan designed to restore and enhance the natural environment across the region.

As mandated by the Environment Act 2021, the LNRS will map nature recovery actions in specific locations where they are most needed and can deliver optimal environmental outcomes.

Lincolnshire County Council, as the responsible authority, must collaborate with stakeholders from the public, private, and voluntary sectors to:

- Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- Agree on priorities for nature's recovery
- Establish shared proposals for necessary actions and locations
- Map the locations and details of the proposed actions

While LNRSs provide guidance and direction, they do not dictate actions for individual stakeholders. Therefore, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including landowners, managers, farmers, developers, energy suppliers, environmental organisations, political leaders, and the general public, is crucial for both strategy development and securing future support.

The LNRS aims to foster understanding and support among various stakeholders to achieve its goals, aims, and actions.

Lincolnshire County Council has engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders to prepare the LNRS. Recognising the significant role of housebuilders and land developers in the strategy's creation and implementation, given national and regional housing targets, renewable energy commitments, and other planning policies, a targeted engagement programme was initiated.

This report outlines the approach taken to engage with stakeholders from these sectors operating across Greater Lincolnshire and summarises the feedback received.

Ultimately, this engagement programme and report will contribute to the preparation of the LNRS alongside feedback from other stakeholder engagement activities.

# Engagement Approach

The core objectives underpinning this engagement programme were to:

- Present and inform developer stakeholders of the LNRS
- Seek feedback and views on key principles of the LNRS
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to ask questions about the LNRS
- Inform the initial creation of the LNRS by taking the views of developers into account
- Maximise awareness of the LNRS at an early stage and begin early dialogue with developer stakeholders in advance of formal consultation on the draft LNRS.

## Timeframe

Engagement with housebuilders and developers took place between 9th September and 31st October 2024.

The engagement programme aimed to maximise opportunities for feedback through a mix of in-person workshops, an online workshop, an online feedback survey, and feedback submitted to project team members via email.

## Audience

The main purpose of this programme of engagement was to maximise the quantity and quality of engagement with a range of developers operating across Greater Lincolnshire (or within one of the two unitary authority areas, across the county of Lincolnshire or within one of the seven district council areas).

Primarily, this stakeholder engagement programme focused on the following audiences:

- Housebuilders (regional and national) and Registered Providers
- Renewable Energy Developers
- Major Infrastructure and Utilities

To ensure targeted and valuable feedback, it was suggested that attendees should have a wider understanding of their organisation and strategic or planning considerations impacting their organisation or sector throughout the region. This was not, however, a prerequisite.

A short desktop research exercise identified over 50 housebuilders or developers (a summarised/redacted list is included in Appendix A). From this list, 40 known contacts were invited to participate in the planned engagement workshops.

## Engagement Activities

### In-Person Workshops

Given Greater Lincolnshire's size, the location of engagement workshops was a crucial factor.

Three workshops were initially planned, with stakeholders offered the option of attending the venue and date most convenient for them. The sessions were planned for the following dates and locations:

- Thursday 26th September 2024 – Lincoln (Whisby Nature Park)
- Monday 30th September 2024 – Stamford (Stamford College)

- Thursday 3rd October 2024 – Scunthorpe (Fenestra Conference Centre)

An invitation letter (Appendix B) was sent via email directly to identified contacts on Monday 9th September 2024, with reminder emails following during the weeks commencing 16th September 2024 and 23rd September 2024.

The workshop dates were also promoted via the Greater Lincolnshire LNRS website and eNewsletter to ensure other stakeholders were able to attend.

The invitations were also shared with Planning Officers at the District Councils who were encouraged to share details of the workshops with any other contacts they believed might be interested in joining.

In-person workshops only took place if more than five participants had confirmed their attendance.

## **Online Workshop**

To allow more participants to join a workshop, a further online engagement workshop was held on:

- Thursday 24th October 2024 – via Microsoft Teams

A follow-up letter (Appendix C) was shared via email with the shortlisted contacts on Tuesday 15th October 2024 to invite them to join the online workshop or to complete the online survey (if they were unable to attend a workshop).

## **Workshop Format**

A consistent format was adopted at each workshop, comprising a structured discussion guided by a presentation from the LNRS Officer. The presentation provided information about the LNRS to help guide and contextualise discussions and conversations. The presentations also included four key areas for discussion:

1. What does ‘nature recovery’ mean to you, your sector, and customers/audiences? What are the main pressures on nature that you are experiencing through your work now (and what do you think they might be in 2035)?
2. What are your environmental aspirations (now and future) and what improvements in nature would you like to see in Greater Lincolnshire by 2035?
3. Where do you believe development will be prioritised across Lincolnshire over the next 10 years, and what opportunities might there be to better enable nature’s recovery?
4. Where can nature recovery be best supported through development? What can the LNRS do to help developers when creating their plans?

A copy of the workshop presentation has been provided in Appendix D.

A notetaker captured the main points of discussion raised in each section, and participants were also asked to note key points of discussion. A summary of points raised has been produced for each workshop.

As commercially sensitive information was discussed, the information shared in the sessions was not recorded and notes taken have summarised the key points.

## **Online Survey and Email Feedback**

To maximise opportunities for developers to provide feedback, especially those unable to attend the workshops, an online survey was provided in the follow-up letter (Appendix C).

The online survey opened on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024 until Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and provided a brief overview and context, before providing opportunities for respondents to provide comments in line with the workshop discussions. A copy of the online survey has been provided in Appendix E.

Some respondents also provided feedback and information via email (in response to the invitation emails). These comments have also been incorporated into the summary of feedback received.

# Summary of Engagement Feedback

## Number of Responses

Activity	Responses/RSVPs	Attendees
Lincoln Workshop (26 <sup>th</sup> September)	3	<i>Workshop cancelled due to low numbers of attendees</i>
Stamford Workshop (30 <sup>th</sup> September)	10	7
Scunthorpe Workshop (3 <sup>rd</sup> October)	8	7
Online Workshop (24 <sup>th</sup> October)	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>

Activity	Responses
Online Survey	0
Email Feedback	1

## Emerging Themes from Workshops

Below is a summary of notes captured through the discussions at each workshop.

They are intended to be a qualitative summary of the different points that were raised and discussed, either through group discussion or written on sticky notes during group consideration. While they reflect what was said, they will paraphrase and condense the key points and are not verbatim.

Discussion	Summary of Comments
<p><b>What does 'nature recovery' mean to you, your sector, and customers/audiences?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For housebuilders, it's about meeting Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements.</li> <li>• It's about creating larger, more valuable wildlife/biodiverse sites.</li> <li>• It's about delivering at least 10% BNG on-site wherever possible.</li> <li>• BNG can lead to fewer homes on sites, varying approaches between housebuilders, and may not always contribute to areas of significant value.</li> <li>• We need to deliver BNG efficiently and viably within site constraints.</li> <li>• Habitat creation is socially recognised but often considered a 'nice to have'.</li> <li>• We need habitat creation, but it's often seen as a 'nice to have'.</li> <li>• Customers expect BNG to be visually appealing (green/colourful), often requiring us to explain why areas are left unmown and preventing them from doing so themselves.</li> <li>• We've started to educate and inform customers about our BNG initiatives on-site.</li> <li>• We survey customers on how they perceive our spending on BNG.</li> <li>• It's not just about BNG; it's about recovery. We are starting to embed these concepts into our project narratives.</li> <li>• Renewable energy sites often have a low footprint or significantly improved BNG compared to intensive farming. While our impact may be low, our customers/stakeholders expect us to contribute.</li> <li>• As one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, the more we lose, the worse the situation becomes.</li> <li>• We aim to contribute to planetary health by improving Biodiversity Net Gain on our sites as much as possible.</li> <li>• Monitoring, protecting, and enhancing the natural environment.</li> </ul>

**What are the main pressures on nature that you are experiencing through your work now (and what do you think they might be in 2035)?**

- Site constraints often necessitate delivering BNG in small spaces, affordably, and in ways that can be protected in the future.
- For viability reasons, the easier and often cheaper route to BNG is often taken.
- Human use of sites can disrupt wildlife.
- Education is needed on nature recovery, BNG, and its often-unconventional appearance.
- Housing targets must be met.
- Water temperature and quality are important considerations.
- Flooding can be an issue.
- We often prefer to focus BNG efforts off-site, but the NPPF doesn't always support this.
- Population growth and migration northwards/away from London are significant factors.
- Renewable energy and infrastructure will be needed to support population growth. How can we balance development and sustainability needs?
- Understanding areas of highest value and how to support the strategy would be beneficial.
- Energy and distribution networks will need to expand to meet increased demand (population growth, electric vehicles, etc.).
- Development viability and cost can impact homebuyers as more requirements are added to developments.
- We do as much as possible, but there are limitations. Where we have land options, we can do more, but this can be time-limited or ownership-dependent.
- While we market BNG as a benefit for both development and nature, it can be a significant departure from traditional approaches. Customers are accustomed to well-maintained, hard-wearing green spaces, not the sometimes-unkempt appearance of BNG areas.
- Resident management companies, responsible for ongoing maintenance, often prioritise the aesthetic appeal and usability of BNG areas, which can conflict with ecological needs.
- Limited land ownership and alternative land uses (e.g., farming) can hinder efforts to improve connectivity between key nature sites.
- BNG is a planning requirement, but ecologists/consultants often have the final say on its implementation, leading to variations in approach between developers in the same area.

**What are your environmental aspirations (now and future) and what improvements in nature would you like to see in Greater Lincolnshire by 2035?**

- BNG requirements largely guide our development practices, and we must meet these on-site wherever possible.
- We're implementing various measures, including surveys, mitigations, bat and bird boxes, hedgehog highways, wildflower planting, and wild roadside verges.
- Identifying strategic and valuable areas and exploring ways to support them on-site or off-site would be beneficial.
- Could BNG funds or contributions be used to support Nature Recovery in identified areas?
- Clarity is needed on how the LNRS will be integrated with planning policies.
- Public understanding of the 'why' and 'what good looks like' in terms of nature recovery is crucial.
- Major infrastructure and renewable energy schemes often deliver significant BNG. We must align these with the LNRS, local character areas, and work collaboratively with local authorities to create supportive schemes.
- Delivering green spaces in urban areas, particularly for Registered Providers, can be challenging. We often focus on small pockets to support BNG, mental health, and wellbeing, but larger-scale initiatives could be explored.
- Balancing target achievement on both sides is important. A joined-up approach between the LNRS and planning policies is essential. We'll always need to adhere to planning policy requirements to obtain permissions.
- As more land is developed, we must strive to create higher-quality spaces within developments or improve the quality of undeveloped/identified spaces elsewhere, guided by clear plans and guidance.
- We approach each site on a project-by-project basis, conducting site-specific reviews and following ecologists' recommendations.
- While we're all committed to delivering BNG, different approaches are being taken to meet these requirements.

<p><b>Where do you believe development will be prioritised across Lincolnshire over the next 10 years, and what opportunities might there be to better enable nature's recovery?</b></p>	<p><i>Attendees were invited to use Post-it notes to highlight potential development areas on a large map of Lincolnshire. Images of these maps are included in Appendix F. A summary of locations and discussion is noted below:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housebuilders primarily focused on strategic locations around major towns and cities across Lincolnshire. However, all referenced adhering to Local Plan allocations and National Planning Policy Framework guidelines.</li> <li>• Housebuilders also acknowledged that future development would depend on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, new government housing targets, and specific regulations regarding brownfield, 'grey belt', and 'green belt' land.</li> <li>• Major infrastructure providers (water and electricity supply) did not anticipate significant development beyond already announced projects (e.g., proposed new reservoirs and supply lines).</li> <li>• Renewable energy development seemed to be considered across the region, with known or expected projects concentrated in the east. Some offshore projects were also mentioned.</li> <li>• All workshop attendees expressed general support for the LNRS and sought clear guidance on priority areas, regional recommendations, and actionable steps (both on-site and off-site) for developers to support the LNRS through their developments.</li> </ul> <p>Renewable and major infrastructure developers typically felt less constrained by BNG requirements and often define areas for habitat creation. However, these efforts are currently isolated. They welcomed guidance from the LNRS on how to enhance nature recovery through their schemes. It was noted that energy development location is often influenced by proximity to existing National Grid infrastructure and substations.</p> <p>Several participants inquired about the possibility of developers supporting identified priority sites through off-site subsidies (e.g., Section 106/BNG Credits) if this would deliver greater environmental value than smaller on-site BNG measures. However, they acknowledged that changes to the National Planning Policy Framework would be necessary to enable this approach.</p>
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<p><b>Where can nature recovery be best supported through development?</b></p> <p><b>What can the LNRS do to help developers when creating their plans?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throughout Lincolnshire, nature recovery could support or mitigate flood risk, which can also hinder development.</li> <li>• Water security for the region is important. Nature recovery could both support and be supported by some of these projects.</li> <li>• Tackling invasive non-native species would improve biodiversity and reduce financial risk for landowners and developers.</li> <li>• Ideally, the LNRS would align with planning policies and help developers deliver both BNG and nature recovery in different character areas.</li> <li>• The LNRS should raise awareness of potential actions and positive outcomes, both at the early stages of site development and for the wider public.</li> <li>• The LNRS would guide developers to maximize impact for the region.</li> <li>• Could the LNRS help define where off-site BNG credits can be delivered, supporting local, established programs that maximize impact and reduce the challenge of maintaining on-site BNG programs?</li> <li>• Significant ditches, often poorly maintained, could improve surface water drainage, alleviate flood risk, and maximize the impact of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs), which often have limited BNG value.</li> <li>• Could the LNRS identify financial opportunities for landowners, such as funding or mechanisms to invest in nature recovery on privately owned land?</li> <li>• The LNRS would help educate and inform the public about the 'why' and 'what' of nature recovery, building trust and understanding.</li> <li>• Developers need to integrate BNG into their plans. The LNRS could explain how BNG or nature recovery can be enhanced with or through development.</li> <li>• Most of our plans are led by ecologists who conduct site-specific assessments. The LNRS could provide guidance on potential actions and partnerships.</li> <li>• Independent literature explaining the 'what' and 'why' of nature recovery would be helpful for different audiences.</li> <li>• In Northern Lincolnshire, the LNRS could provide guidance on how people can better interact with nature.</li> <li>• Currently, woodland planting offers limited BNG value over 30 years. The LNRS could provide additional guidance to support this practice.</li> </ul>
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## Themes of Discussion

A variety of themes became apparent during the discussions.

1. Biodiversity Net Gain
2. Customer/Stakeholder Perception
3. Education and Awareness
4. Planning and Policy
5. Delivery and Implementation
6. Challenges and Opportunities

For clarity, the table below collates all of the points raised through the various discussions against different thematic areas. Some comments have been split where they clearly relate to different themes.

Theme/Category	Point	Relevance (Housebuilders, General, Renewables, etc.)
<b>Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)</b>	For housebuilders, it's about meeting Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements.	Housebuilders
	It's about creating larger, more valuable wildlife/biodiverse sites.	General
	It's about delivering at least 10% BNG on-site wherever possible.	Housebuilders
	BNG can lead to fewer homes on sites, varying approaches between housebuilders, and may not always contribute to areas of significant value.	Housebuilders
	We need to deliver BNG efficiently and viably within site constraints.	Housebuilders
	Site constraints often necessitate delivering BNG in small spaces, affordably, and in ways that can be protected in the future.	Housebuilders
	For viability reasons, the easier and often cheaper route to BNG is often taken.	Housebuilders
	Renewable energy sites often have a low footprint or significantly improved BNG compared to intensive farming.	Renewables
	We aim to contribute to planetary health by improving Biodiversity Net Gain on our sites as much as possible.	General
	BNG is a planning requirement, but ecologists/consultants often have the final say on its implementation, leading to variations in approach between developers in the same area.	Housebuilders
	BNG requirements largely guide our development practices, and we must meet these on-site wherever possible.	Housebuilders
	Major infrastructure and renewable energy schemes often deliver significant BNG. We must align these with the LNRS, local character areas, and work collaboratively with local authorities to create supportive schemes.	Renewables, Infrastructure
	Balancing target achievement on both sides is important. A joined-up approach between the LNRS and planning policies	General

	is essential. We'll always need to adhere to planning policy requirements to obtain permissions.	
	While we're all committed to delivering BNG, different approaches are being taken to meet these requirements.	General
<b>Customer Perception</b>	Customers expect BNG to be visually appealing (green/colourful), often requiring us to explain why areas are left unmown and preventing them from doing so themselves.	Housebuilders
	While we market BNG as a benefit for both development and nature, it can be a significant departure from traditional approaches. Customers are accustomed to well-maintained, hard-wearing green spaces, not the sometimes-unkept appearance of BNG areas.	Housebuilders
	Resident management companies, responsible for ongoing maintenance, often prioritise the aesthetic appeal and usability of BNG areas, which can conflict with ecological needs.	Housebuilders
<b>Education &amp; Awareness</b>	Habitat creation is socially recognised but often considered a 'nice to have'.	General
	We need habitat creation, but it's often seen as a 'nice to have'.	General
	Education is needed on nature recovery, BNG, and its often-unconventional appearance.	General
	Public understanding of the 'why' and 'what good looks like' in terms of nature recovery is crucial.	General
	The LNRS would help educate and inform the public about the 'why' and 'what' of nature recovery, building trust and understanding.	General
	Independent literature explaining the 'what' and 'why' of nature recovery would be helpful for different audiences.	General
	In Northern Lincolnshire, the LNRS could provide guidance on how people can better interact with nature.	General
<b>Planning &amp; Policy</b>	We often prefer to focus BNG efforts off-site, but the NPPF doesn't always support this.	Housebuilders
	Clarity is needed on how the LNRS will be integrated with planning policies.	General
	Ideally, the LNRS would align with planning policies and help developers deliver both BNG and nature recovery in different character areas.	General
	Housebuilders primarily focused on strategic locations around major towns and cities across Lincolnshire. However, all referenced adhering to Local Plan allocations and National Planning Policy Framework guidelines.	Housebuilders
	Housebuilders also acknowledged that future development would depend on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, new government housing targets, and specific regulations regarding brownfield, 'grey belt', and 'green belt' land.	Housebuilders
<b>Delivery &amp; Implementation</b>	We've started to educate and inform customers about our BNG initiatives on-site.	Housebuilders
	We survey customers on how they perceive our spending on BNG.	Housebuilders

	It's not just about BNG; it's about recovery. We are starting to embed these concepts into our project narratives.	General
	Monitoring, protecting, and enhancing the natural environment.	General
	We're implementing various measures, including surveys, mitigations, bat and bird boxes, hedgehog highways, wildflower planting, and wild roadside verges.	Housebuilders
	Identifying strategic and valuable areas and exploring ways to support them on-site or off-site would be beneficial.	General
	As more land is developed, we must strive to create higher-quality spaces within developments or improve the quality of undeveloped/identified spaces elsewhere, guided by clear plans and guidance.	General
	We approach each site on a project-by-project basis, conducting site-specific reviews and following ecologists' recommendations.	General
	The LNRS would guide developers to maximize impact for the region.	General
	Developers need to integrate BNG into their plans. The LNRS could explain how BNG or nature recovery can be enhanced with or through development.	General
	Most of our plans are led by ecologists who conduct site-specific assessments. The LNRS could provide guidance on potential actions and partnerships.	General
	Currently, woodland planting offers limited BNG value over 30 years. The LNRS could provide additional guidance to support this practice.	General
<b>Challenges &amp; Opportunities</b>	Human use of sites can disrupt wildlife.	General
	Housing targets must be met.	Housebuilders
	Water temperature and quality are important considerations.	General
	Flooding can be an issue.	General
	Population growth and migration northwards/away from London are significant factors.	General
	Renewable energy and infrastructure will be needed to support population growth. How can we balance development and sustainability needs?	Renewables, Infrastructure
	Understanding areas of highest value and how to support the strategy would be beneficial.	General
	Energy and distribution networks will need to expand to meet increased demand (population growth, electric vehicles, etc.).	General
	Development viability and cost can impact homebuyers as more requirements are added to developments.	General
	We do as much as possible, but there are limitations. Where we have land options, we can do more, but this can be time-limited or ownership-dependent.	General
	Limited land ownership and alternative land uses (e.g., farming) can hinder efforts to improve connectivity between key nature sites.	General

Could BNG funds or contributions be used to support Nature Recovery in identified areas?	General
Delivering green spaces in urban areas, particularly for Registered Providers, can be challenging. We often focus on small pockets to support BNG, mental health, and wellbeing, but larger-scale initiatives could be explored.	General
Major infrastructure providers (water and electricity supply) did not anticipate significant development beyond already announced projects (e.g., proposed new reservoirs and supply lines).	Infrastructure
Renewable energy development seemed to be considered across the region, with known or expected projects concentrated in the east. Some offshore projects were also mentioned.	Renewables
Throughout Lincolnshire, nature recovery could support or mitigate flood risk, which can also hinder development.	General
Water security for the region is important. Nature recovery could both support and be supported by some of these projects.	General
Tackling invasive non-native species would improve biodiversity and reduce financial risk for landowners and developers.	General
The LNRS should raise awareness of potential actions and positive outcomes, both at the early stages of site development and for the wider public.	General
Could the LNRS help define where off-site BNG credits can be delivered, supporting local, established programs that maximize impact and reduce the challenge of maintaining on-site BNG programs?	General
Significant ditches, often poorly maintained, could improve surface water drainage, alleviate flood risk, and maximize the impact of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs), which often have limited BNG value.	General
Could the LNRS identify financial opportunities for landowners, such as funding or mechanisms to invest in nature recovery on privately owned land?	General

## Key themes and considerations

Based on the feedback collated during the engagement programme, the following themes emerged that could be considered as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is developed:

1. Housebuilders and developers primarily focused on meeting on-site Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, with limited understanding of broader nature recovery concepts.
2. Developers were guided by local and national planning policies, particularly Local Plan allocations and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements (10% on-site improvement).
3. While all developers were meeting BNG requirements, implementation varied based on site constraints, ecologist recommendations, and company preferences. BNG was often delivered in cost-effective ways that maximised development space.
4. Renewable energy and infrastructure developers were less constrained by BNG requirements (e.g., some sites could achieve 100% BNG through land use change). These sites could potentially support nature recovery measures more easily.
5. Developers welcomed a document identifying priority areas for nature recovery and providing guidance on how this can be delivered, both on-site and off-site.
6. Developers expressed interest in supporting priority habitats or nature recovery through off-site financial contributions where benefits could outweigh on-site measures, although current planning policy limitations hinder this approach.
7. Developers highlighted the need to increase public awareness of Biodiversity Net Gain and nature recovery, particularly regarding the sometimes-untidy appearance of these areas. The LNRS could help educate the public and build trust.
8. Site constraints, including size, scale, viability, and land ownership, can limit connectivity to nature and habitats.
9. Developers supported early dialogue with LNRS Officers to integrate Biodiversity Net Gain requirements into their development plans.