

Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are for both people and wildlife. They offer people special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.

All district and county councils have powers to acquire, declare and manage LNRs. To qualify for LNR status, a site must be of importance for wildlife, [geology](#), education or public enjoyment. Some are also nationally important [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#).

LNRs must be controlled by the local authority through ownership, lease or agreement with the owner. The main aim must be to care for the natural features which make the site special.

1. How many LNRs are there?

There are now more than 1400 LNRs in England. They range from windswept coastal headlands, ancient woodlands and flower-rich meadows to former inner city railways, abandoned landfill sites and industrial areas now re-colonised by wildlife. In total they cover about 35,000 ha. This is an impressive natural resource which makes an important contribution to England's biodiversity.

2. Why declare LNRs?

By declaring Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), local authorities can provide many benefits for both people and wildlife to:

- increase people's awareness and enjoyment of their natural environment
- provide an ideal environment for everyone to learn about and study nature
- help to build relationships with national and local nature conservation organisations and local people
- protect wildlife habitats and natural features
- provide a great opportunity for people to become involved in managing their local environment
- offer a positive use for land which they would prefer was left undeveloped
- make it possible to apply bye-laws which can help in managing and protecting the site.

In addition, because Local Nature Reserve is a statutory designation, it is a very clear signal to a local community of the local authority's commitment to nature conservation.

LNRs can also help local authorities meet Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and sustainable development targets.

LNRs are one way to provide Greenspace, particularly in urban areas.

Natural England recommends to local authorities that LNRs should be:

- greater than 2ha in size,
- capable of being managed with the conservation of nature and the maintenance of special opportunities for study, research or enjoyment of nature as the main concern;

We also recommend that there should be 1ha of Local Nature Reserve space per 1000 people in England. LNRs should be either:

- of high natural interest in the local context, or
- of some reasonable natural interest and of high value in the local context for formal education or research, or
- of some reasonable natural interest and of high value in the local context for the informal enjoyment of nature by the public.

3. How are Local Nature Reserves declared?

Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Parish and Town Councils can also declare LNRs but they must have the powers to do so delegated to them by a principal local authority.

- To establish an LNR, the declaring local authority must first have a legal interest in the land concerned. This means owning the freehold, leasing it or having a nature reserve agreement with the owner.
- The land need not lie within the area which the declaring authority controls but if it does not, the authority within whose jurisdiction the land falls must be in agreement.

Local authorities must consult Natural England in the process of selecting, acquiring, declaring and managing LNRs and their expertise and advice can help smooth the process.

If a local authority has, or knows of, any area of land which it thinks would make a good LNR, they should contact their Natural England [regional team](#) and discuss the proposal informally.

The area team will be able to advise whether they consider the land to be suitable and, if so, the sort of management it might require. The team can also provide help on how to go about making the declaration.

The local authority should also consult local communities and voluntary conservation bodies such as the county Wildlife Trust and put together outline management proposals for the site, making it clear what the long term objectives are. Thought should be given as to how the desired management of the site could be funded and any other costs involved.

The local authority then needs to write formally to the Natural England regional team to the effect that it intends to make the LNR declaration.

The following steps should then be taken:

- a formal declaration document should be drawn up (this need only be on one side of A4 paper) accompanied by a map at a scale which accurately shows the LNR boundary;
- the declaration should be agreed by the relevant local authority committees;
- a public notice announcing the declaration should be placed in a local paper and copies of the declaration and map made available for the public to inspect free of charge;
- the local authority should formally notify the Natural England regional team of the LNR declaration in writing and send them a copy of the declaration, together with maps and any other details required about the reserve. Natural England will advise on what these are.

An official opening ceremony can be held after the above formalities have been completed, so allowing time to plan events and carry out initial management and interpretive work.

Parish and Town Councils

Both Parish and Town Councils are defined as local authorities by the Local Government Act 1972. See, respectively, Sections 270 and 245(6).

Under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, a principal local authority (i.e. a county or district) can, with the agreement of both parties, delegate its powers to declare an LNR either to a Parish or a Town Council.

4. How are Local Nature Reserves managed?

Local authorities manage Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) to maintain and enhance their special wildlife and geology. For example, without suitable management coppiced woodland, grazing meadows and heathland would lose their interest for both wildlife and visitors.

Whilst many LNRs are managed directly by local authorities, a growing number are managed by local community volunteer groups, "Friends of" groups or organisations like county Wildlife Trusts, in agreement with the local authority. Where the reserve is managed by the local authority itself, management committees with representatives of local organisations can offer helpful advice.

Some LNRs now have Junior Management Boards, made up of local school children, to offer a young person's perspective on the reserve. Many LNRs are used extensively by schools. All LNR managers should seek the involvement of the local education authority so that the full potential of the LNR for education is realised.

Site-based rangers are particularly useful in helping to make the most of the LNR for both people and wildlife. These may be funded by the local authority, sponsorship, or through Lottery projects.

5. How do I get involved?

To find out if there are Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in your area and who manages them, contact the Countryside Section or Leisure Services Department of your local council.

Your [local Natural England office](#) will also be able to help. Alternatively, use the [LNR search facility](#).

Many LNRs have 'Friends of' groups, who carry out practical work on the reserves. Some local groups of the conservation charity [BTCV](#) may also get involved. Contact them to find what they do in your area.

Volunteers like 'Friends of' groups also get involved in things like fund raising events and open days.

You may find that your local council ranger service manages the reserve and takes on volunteers to help out with LNR site management. They may be able to offer you training as well.

LNRs are ideal places to learn about and study wildlife. If you are a teacher or run youth groups or summer activity programmes, for example, why not find out what your local LNR can offer you?

If you know of an area of land which you think might make a good LNR, get in touch with your local council, Wildlife Trust or Natural England office. Local Councillors are often happy to help as well. The more you can tell them about the land, the better, so gather some background information first.