West Yorkshire Combined Authority | Tracy Brabin Mayor of West Yorkshire

Private and Confidential

[redacted]
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Nature
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
By Email

4 July 2025

[redacted]

I am writing to you in response to your letter 'Delivery of your Local Nature Recovery Strategy'.

In West Yorkshire, we are committed to achieving our West Yorkshire Plan; this includes Mission 4, which outlines our approach to delivering a sustainable and green region. We see the delivery of our Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) as a key component of this agenda. We recognise that nature recovery will also amplify the impact of the other four missions in the Plan, including economy and safe, healthy and well-connected places and communities.

We have been working tirelessly to develop this LNRS for West Yorkshire since the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) confirmed our role as responsible authority in 2023.

Our programme for the Strategy outlines the steps we are taking to ensure we have a consultation draft by November 2025, with a view to publishing the final Strategy by March 2026. Alongside the development of the Strategy, we are engaging with partners to shape the delivery phase of this work to enable it to commence early in 2026.

We have developed a broad and robust partnership to develop the Strategy, which will put West Yorkshire in a strong position as we transition into a delivery role.

I welcome the financial and technical support we have received from DEFRA and Natural England to develop the strategy so far. This has enabled us to make significant progress in:

- Expanding our in-house team, including project management, policy and mapping/data expertise.
- Undertaking engagement and consultation, using a participatory democracy model.
- Commissioning specialist ecological advice and data.

However, the current approach of providing funding on an annual basis makes this work harder than it needs to be. It results in an approach that is inefficient and resource-intensive, introduces uncertainty both within the Authority and among our partners. It also doesn't allow us to plan on a multi-year basis for team resources to support LNRS development and

delivery. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your teams on a more permanent basis to deliver against the strategy. If there is anything you need from us to support the work your department is doing to allocate your departmental Spending Round budget please let us know.

Officers at the Combined Authority will meet DEFRA officials later this month to discuss the development of our Strategy in more detail.

As part of this discussion, I would welcome clarification on the long-term approach to nature recovery funding for Mayoral Combined Authorities so that we can continue to work with our local partners to deliver our collective ambitions.

I would be delighted to welcome you back to West Yorkshire, on an official visit to one of our fantastic projects already supporting the recovery of our natural environment where we could discuss this in person.

Yours Sincerely,



West Yorkshire Combined Authority