

WENP Terms of Reference

Revised April 2026



1. WENP Overview

- WENP is a strategic cross-sector partnership through which organisations across the West of England collaborate to protect, enhance and restore the natural environment.
- WENP is a Local Nature Partnerships (LNP). LNPs were established following the Government's 2011 Natural Environment White Paper. The West of England Nature Partnership (WENP) gained formal recognition as an LNP in 2012.
- WENP's vision, set out in the 2021-30 Strategy, is: a thriving and well-connected natural environment in the West of England that underpins a healthy and resilient society and economy.
- WENP covers the four Unitary Authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire; the area known as the West of England.

2. WENP Structure

WENP's structure balances accountability with agility and effectiveness. It operates through a small number of complementary governance bodies that together provide strategic leadership, specialist expertise and financial oversight. Together, these governance layers constitute the delivery partnership for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, combining strategic leadership, delivery reach, specialist expertise and broad cross-sector engagement.

- The Partnership Board sets the strategic direction of WENP and oversees delivery of the business plan. Members also provide advocacy and leadership within the sectors and organisations they represent.
- The Strategic Board (established in 2026) brings specialist expertise, strategic insight and external networks to support delivery of WENP's priorities.
- The Executive Group consists of representatives of the organisations that fund WENP and is responsible for oversight of WENP funding and financial governance.
- Working Groups are established to support specific strategic workstreams or tasks identified within the business plan.

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- The WENP Network comprises the wider partnership ecosystem engaged through working groups, programme activity, annual conference participation and broader collaboration across WENP. It provides the wider cross-sector network through which delivery, intelligence-sharing and partner engagement are sustained.

The roles and responsibilities of these groups are outlined further in this document.

3. The Partnership Board

The multi-disciplinary Partnership Board comprises senior decision-makers from WENP's key partner organisations. The Board sets WENP's strategic direction and oversees delivery of the work programme, taking account of advice from the Strategic Board. Members also provide leadership and advocacy within their sectors to help ensure that the natural environment is placed at the heart of decision-making across the West of England.

3.1 Partnership Board Membership

Membership of the Board will consist of:

- The independent Chair (see section 7.1);
- The Chair of the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership;
- The Director of the Natural History Consortium;

Alongside representatives from:

- Each of the four Unitary Authorities;
- West of England Combined Authority;
- WENP Nature and Health Programme Board;
- Each of the DEFRA bodies: Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission;
- Key regional environmental NGOs (up to six);
- Wessex Water;
- Bristol Water;
- National Farmers Union;
- Heads of Planning - *To be reviewed on an annual basis and who commits to keeping other Heads of Planning well informed on the relevant activities of WENP*

The WENP Manager will also be in attendance.

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Co-opted members as may be agreed by the Board on an ad-hoc basis. The process for which is proposition by the chair at a Partnership Board meeting and agreed by a majority of members present.

The leads of working groups, if not represented above, will be invited to meetings as appropriate while such groups are active. Representatives of other organisations and sectors may also be invited to attend meetings as appropriate to the agenda.

3.2 Partnership Board Function and Protocols

The Board will support WENP by:

- Setting the Strategic Direction of WENP, having regard to the advice of the WENP Manager, WENP Chair, Executive Group and Strategic Board;
- Verifying and approving the work programme and business plan, having regard to the advice of the WENP Manager, WENP Chair, Executive Group and Strategic Board, and monitoring its implementation;
- Convening working groups as necessary to deliver the work programme, and setting objectives for these;
- Supporting the delivery of specific tasks within the business plan;
- Identifying and supporting engagement with government initiatives (at the national, regional and local level), and developing and funding opportunities that align with the WENP business plan;
- Providing support to campaigns that WENP or individual partners may be developing if there is general consensus to do so and they are in line with the WENP strategy;
- Championing the work of WENP at public meetings, events and conferences;
- Agreeing public statements from WENP in advance of publication, with delegated authority being given to the WENP Manager in agreement with the Chair, to issue public statements where time is of the essence, subject to subsequent ratification by the Board.

Decisions regarding core WENP funding (and not funds restricted to projects) beyond day-to-day budget management will be made by the Executive Group (funders of WENP), but the Board will be kept regularly updated on such matters and wherever possible consulted in advance of such decisions being taken, particularly in cases where there are clear alternative options.

3.3 Operational Arrangements, Representation, and Accountability

To ensure the Board's time together is used for maximum impact and the Board is fully accountable to the Partnership, the following operational arrangements have been agreed:

- The Board will meet in person at least three times per year, with additional online or in person meetings as required;
- Agenda and papers will be circulated at least one week in advance of meetings;
- Each Board member will represent their organisation in a way that is constructive, collaborative and in line with the principles and strategy of WENP;
- Board members will declare any conflicts of interest where they relate to Board matters and activities; any confidential interests should be declared to the Chair prior to the discussion;
- The Partnership Board will normally operate on the basis of consensus when making decisions, where this is not possible the Chair will propose an approach and make a decision based on strategic judgement;
- Actions taken by the Board should be made in the interest of WENP's agreed priorities; and
- Organisations or sectors represented on the Board must ensure that an appropriate representative attends Board meetings; nominated representatives may attend meetings where this will be of value.



4. The Strategic Advisory Board

The Strategic Advisory Board is a skills-based body established in 2026 to complement the Partnership Board. While the Partnership Board provides democratic legitimacy and delivery reach through partner representation, the Strategic Advisory Board brings specialist expertise, strategic insight and external networks to support delivery of WENP's priorities.

Strategic Advisory Board members will gain from working in a multi-disciplinary 'power-house' environment with peers representing the diversity of expertise, and experience, across current environmental matters.

4.1 Strategic Advisory Board Purpose and Membership

The Strategic Advisory Board will comprise individuals appointed for their specialist expertise and leadership in areas relevant to WENP's strategic priorities, in particular:

- Environmental finance, investment and economics
- Corporate leadership, risk management and ESG strategy
- Planning, development and infrastructure
- Agriculture, land management and rural enterprise
- Public policy and government relations
- Environmental data, analytics and research
- Strategic communications and engagement

The Strategic Advisory Board will comprise between six and ten members, recruited through a transparent process led by the Chair and approved by the Partnership Board.

Strategic Advisory Board members will serve in a personal capacity rather than as representatives of their organisations. Members will serve a three-year term, renewable once.

The Strategic Advisory Board operates in an advisory capacity and complements, but does not replace, the governance role of the Partnership Board.

4.2 Strategic Board Functions and Protocols

The Strategic Board will support WENP by:

- Providing specialist advice on WENP's strategic priorities, programmes and emerging opportunities;
- Advising on specific thematic priorities, investable propositions or project issues where specialist input would help unlock progress;
- Opening relationships with investors, senior government leaders, corporate partners and other strategic stakeholders.
- Reviewing and constructively challenging WENP's strategic priorities and delivery plans;
- Supporting the Chair, Partnership Manager and Partners as needed in key strategic conversations and negotiations;
- Identifying funding and partnership opportunities;
- Acting as ambassadors for WENP within their professional networks.

4.3 Operational Arrangements

The following operational arrangements have been agreed:

- The Strategic Board will meet at least quarterly, with additional meetings convened as needed. Agenda and papers will be circulated at least one week prior to meetings;
- Members may also contribute flexibly through ad hoc advice, task-and-finish input, or attendance at selected Partnership Board or Working Group discussions where their expertise is relevant.
- Board members will declare any conflicts of interest where they relate to Board matters and activities; any confidential interests should be declared to the Chair prior to the discussion;

4.4 Relationship between the two Boards

The Partnership Board and Strategic Advisory Board serve complementary functions. The Partnership Board sets WENP's strategic direction and provides accountability to the partner network. The Strategic Board provides specialist expertise, strategic insight and access to external networks.

Both boards advise the Chair and Partnership Manager, who are responsible for ensuring alignment between them. There will be a joint Board 'away day' once a year.

5. The Executive Group

5.1 Executive Group Membership

The WENP Manager will be in attendance and membership of the Executive Group will consist of WENP's funding partners:

- An independent Chair (see section 7.1);
- A representative of each of the four Unitary Authorities;
- A representative of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA);
- Representatives of Wessex Water and Bristol Water; and
- Co-opted members as may be agreed by the Executive Group, for example a new funder of WENP.

5.2 Executive Group Functions and Protocols

In addition to the support provided by their role as Board members, the Executive Group members will support WENP by:

- Agreeing on and verifying the use of WENP funds, in accordance with the strategic direction set out in the business plan;
- Managing the recruitment process for the WENP Manager as required;
- Managing the appointment process for the WENP as required;
- Responding to any financial, legal or other matters on behalf of WENP, including decisions relating to the continuance or cessation of the partnership.

5.3 Operational Arrangements

To ensure the Executive Group's time together is used for maximum impact and the Group is fully accountable to the Board and the wider Partnership the following operational arrangements have been agreed in addition to those agreed for the Board:

- The Executive Group will meet at least twice per year;
- Each Executive Group member will have regard to the how the wider interests of the Partnership can best be achieved, and not just their organisation's objectives at Executive Group meetings;

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- Executive Group members will declare any conflicts of interest where they relate to Executive Group matters and activities; any confidential interests should be declared to the Chair prior to the discussion;
- Actions taken by the Executive Group should be made in the interest of WENP's agreed priorities; and
- Organisations or sectors represented on the Executive Group should make every effort to attend the meeting to ensure consistency of membership; With prior notice, nominated representatives (if appropriately briefed and empowered to act as if they are the member they are substituting) may attend meetings where the representative attending is not able to do so.
- The WENP Manager will circulate papers at least one week in advance.

6. Working Groups

Working groups provide an opportunity for wider stakeholders to engage with, and help meet, WENP's strategic objectives by providing support and expertise on specific issues.

6.1 Working Group Functions and Protocols

- Working Groups may be recommended by the Partnership Board, Strategic Board, WENP Chair or Manager, or a partner or group of partners, and a proposal put to the partnership board for approval;
- The scope of each working group will depend on the particular issues under consideration and will be set out in a terms of reference. They may be short-term task-and-finish groups providing technical input, or longer-term groups supporting strategy delivery.
- Each working group will assign a lead who will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the group's outputs, reporting back to the Board and providing any relevant information for the WENP website;
- Working groups will not commit WENP to any financial or other obligation unless this has been agreed by the Board in advance having taken the advice of the WENP Manager, WENP Chair and Executive Group.

7. WENP Network

The WENP Network comprises the wider partnership ecosystem engaged through working groups, programme activity, events and collaboration across WENP.

This wider network ensures that WENP's activities benefit from broad cross-sector engagement beyond the formal governance bodies, while also giving partners wider access to regional intelligence, collaboration opportunities, strategic discussions and routes into programme development and delivery.

The WENP Network:

- Provides a wider route for partner engagement, intelligence-sharing and collaboration across strategic priorities and delivery programmes;
- Broadens the reach of WENP across sectors, places and programmes through active participation in partnership activity.

The WENP Network is kept engaged through:

- Regular partnership-wide email communications and newsletters;
- The annual partnership gatherings;
- Participation in relevant working groups, programme activity and specific strategic workstreams.

8. Staff and Governance

8.1 The Independent Chair

The Chair will be appointed on a three-year term, renewable once. The post will be publicly advertised and appointed through a transparent selection panel comprising at least one Executive Group member and one Partnership Board member. The function of the Chair will be to:

- Work with the Executive Group, both Boards and stakeholders to coordinate a coherent vision for WENP's work;
- Chair meetings of the WENP Partnership Board, Strategic Board and Executive Group;
- Support the WENP Manager to ensure delivery of WENP's work programme;
- Champion WENP and build support for the aims and priorities of the Partnership;

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- Influence local decision-making relating to the natural environment, and provide advice and guidance to relevant sectors, organisations and policymakers promoting the economic and social benefits of the environment;
- Build relationships with funders, investors and pro bono partners to advance WENP's strategic priorities;
- Lead the recruitment of the Strategic Board;
- Act as a spokesperson and represent WENP at appropriate events, meetings or functions.

The Chair's effectiveness will be reviewed annually against an agreed set of objectives linked to the business plan. The review will be carried out by two members of the Partnership Board and informed by partner consultation through the annual survey.

The role carries an honorarium, reviewed by the Executive Group at the end of each Chair's term, unless the responsibilities of the role materially change earlier. In the case of an extended period of absence, the Chair will propose a Deputy Chair to cover their responsibilities. This arrangement will be reviewed annually.

8.2 Partnership Manager and other staff

The Partnership Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management and coordination of all of the activities associated with the partnership. They will be:

- The main point of contact for the Partnership Board, Strategic Board, Executive Group and Working Groups and provide leadership and coordination to enable them to function effectively
- An ambassador for WENP, representing the Partnership at external meetings, talks and presentations.
- Responsible for managing the WENP budget hosted on WENP's behalf by the West of England Combined Authority.

Support to the Partnership Manager will be provided in-kind by the West of England Combined Authority, focused primarily on administration and communications but with other ad hoc support as required. The Partnership Manager's performance will be reviewed annually against agreed objectives aligned with the business plan. The review will be conducted by the line manager (WECA) in consultation with the Chair. Partnership consultation will form part of the review process.

8.3 Relationship with the West of England Combined Authority

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) is the statutory Responsible Authority for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the West of England.

WENP works in close collaboration with WECA to support the delivery of the LNRS and wider regional priorities relating to nature recovery, climate resilience and sustainable growth. This relationship is formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding between WECA and WENP.

Under this arrangement, WECA provides strategic leadership and oversight of LNRS delivery in line with its statutory responsibilities, while WENP acts as the principal partnership through which organisations across the region collaborate to support LNRS delivery. WENP convenes partners, supports coordination across sectors, and helps enable delivery by organisations best placed to lead specific actions.

WECA also hosts WENP, including employment and professional development of the WENP Manager and any additional core staff, management of the WENP finances, and provision of administrative and organisational support to enable the partnership to operate effectively.

8.4 Resources and Intellectual Property

WENP is established as an independent voluntary partnership, without formal legal status. As such, the Partnership cannot hold or expend funds itself. Where activities are supported by WENP, they will be led by other organisations best placed to do so. Grants and funding secured to resource a specific task will be held and expended by a nominated member of the Partnership. This nominated member will be accountable to the WENP Executive Group and Partnership Board, and will provide appropriate financial reporting as requested.

Similarly, any data or intellectual property of the Partnership will be held by a nominated member which will be accountable to the Partnership Board regarding its accessibility, use and distribution. From time to time, WENP may wish to endorse the work of other organisations or partnerships. Any endorsements must be relevant to the themes of WENP's work programme and agreed by the Board.

8.5 Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure appropriateness for WENP's strategy. The Partnership Board will monitor the performance of WENP and the delivery of its aims and objectives, ensuring that WENP remains effective and relevant to local needs.

A survey will be carried out annually to seek partner feedback on WENP's overall effectiveness.

*Approved by the WENP Board: April 2026
Next review: April 2027*

