

West of England Nature Partnership

Business Plan 2026–2030

Laying the foundations for transformative nature recovery in the West of England

1. Executive Summary

The West of England Nature Partnership (WENP) brings together cross-sector organisations to coordinate and accelerate action for nature across the region. This business plan sets out what WENP will deliver in 2026 – and what it is building towards by 2030.

The plan is built around a clear strategic architecture: one overarching impact priority – the development and delivery of strategic nature projects – supported by four enabling priorities (finance, policy influence, communications and advocacy, and data and evidence), and underpinned by a sixth strand focused on governance and ways of working. Together, these six strands form a coherent, mutually reinforcing system for driving nature recovery at regional scale.

WENP's core team is lean – a Partnership Manager, a voluntary Chair and part-time administrative support. But WENP's strength lies in the partnership, not simply its core team. This is therefore a partnership business plan: it sets out what the partnership will deliver collectively, with the WENP team providing coordination and leadership, and with delivery supported by partner organisations including the West of England Combined Authority in its role as Responsible Authority for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The partnership has significant ambitions and there are real gaps between those ambitions and current capacity. We are explicit about those gaps in this plan, because recognising them is the first step to filling them – whether through increased partner capacity, pro bono partnerships, secondments, or new funding secured on the strength of this plan itself.

2026 is a foundation year. Our ambition is to demonstrate proof of concept – that the WENP model works, is self-sustaining and scalable, that finance can be attracted into nature projects in the West of England, and that coordinated regional action can shift the policy environment. This track record is what will unlock larger, more sustained funding and delivery from 2027 onwards. This is an adaptive five-year framework: we expect to learn through delivery, refine our approach over time, and respond to emerging opportunities and constraints as the regional context evolves.

2. Context and Strategic Rationale

Why now?

Nature underpins food security, water supply, climate resilience, population health and long-term economic stability. It is not a luxury or an optional extra. It is critical infrastructure. Short-term growth pursued at the expense of nature will not best serve the interests of current or future generations.

Governments and financial institutions are increasingly recognising nature loss as a systemic risk theoretically, but nature is rarely valued properly or accounted for in policy, economic or business decisions, and as a result continues to be degraded rather than restored.

The policy and investment landscape for nature is changing rapidly. New frameworks, such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Spatial Development Strategies, are sharpening the focus on regional devolution and delivery. New policy mechanisms and markets have potential to mobilise private investment into nature recovery, but progress is slow. At the same time, governments at all levels are prioritising economic growth, which is often portrayed as being in tension with nature recovery.

Reconciling these agendas is one of the defining challenges of the coming decade. Regions that can successfully integrate nature recovery with economic development will be better placed to build resilience, attract investment, and create places where people actively choose to live and work.

The West of England starts from a position for great advantage and has the potential to lead, and show the realisable benefits, of this transition.

The role of WENP

No single organisation in the West of England can do what WENP does. Public bodies shape policy and planning, statutory agencies provide regulation and expertise, environmental organisations deliver conservation action, and developers, businesses and investors shape how the region grows.

WENP sits at the intersection of these communities – connecting policy, investment and delivery. By bringing together partners from across the public, private and third sectors, the partnership provides the connective tissue that turns individual efforts into collective impact and supports coordinated delivery across organisations with different roles, powers and resources.

This breadth gives WENP democratic legitimacy, delivery reach and a powerful platform for influencing policy and practice. The next phase for WENP is to convert this strategic platform into tangible regional outcomes: investable projects, stronger policy frameworks, credible evidence, and visible partnership leadership. This business plan sets out how WENP will build the institutional credibility, delivery systems and external relationships required to attract the partners, funders and investors needed to accelerate nature recovery across the West of England.

3. Our Strategic Architecture

WENP's Strategy 2021-30 is organised around a single overarching impact priority, supported by four enabling priorities and underpinned by a governance and ways-of-working strand. This architecture reflects the reality that nature recovery at regional scale requires both action on the ground and the systemic conditions – finance, policy, communications and evidence – that enable it.

As the principal delivery partnership for the West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), WENP's strategic architecture is aligned directly with Government's LNRS implementation pillars and the West of England Combined Authority's LNRS delivery plan. The terms of this arrangement are set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between WENP and WECA.

IMPACT PRIORITY: Strategic Project Pipeline

Our 2021-30 strategy says: *"Identify, develop and deliver a **pipeline of large, high-impact projects** aligned to the West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy and wider regional goals for nature, people and place."*

This is the core purpose of WENP: identifying, developing and supporting delivery of strategic nature projects across the West of England. These projects demonstrate what is possible at regional scale and attract the funding and investment needed to accelerate nature recovery.

Enabled by four enabling priorities:

Enabling Priority 1 - Nature finance

Our 2021-30 strategy says: *"Secure and align **diverse sources of funding and investment** to enable partners and stakeholders across the region to work at greater scale and pace."*

This priority focuses on building the investor relationships, financial mechanisms and regional expertise needed to direct private capital into nature projects. Nature recovery is also an economic opportunity; making the investment case for nature is therefore a core objective.

Enabling Priority 2 - Policy Influence

Our 2021-30 strategy says: *"Embed **nature recovery into regional strategies, policies and systems** – ensuring that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is integrated into spatial planning, development and investment frameworks."*

This priority ensures that nature is planned, funded and governed as infrastructure rather than treated as a discretionary add-on. WENP will target key planning policy, including the West of England Spatial Development Strategy, while also working with health system partners to embed nature more strongly in regional healthcare pathways. While also working with partners to make better use of the institutional and delivery levers already available through regional governance, public policy, planning, infrastructure and health systems.

Enabling Priority 3 - Communications & Advocacy

Our 2021-30 strategy says: “**Champion nature’s recovery through communications, advocacy and engagement**—building public, political and cross-sector support, and bringing in new voices and sectors to embed nature as a shared regional priority.”

This priority focuses on building WENP’s public profile and coordinating partner communications. It includes testing a collaborative communications model through initiatives such as the State of Nature launch and building new partnerships needed to deliver nature recovery at scale.

Enabling Priority 4 - Data & Evidence

Our 2021-30 strategy says: “**Strengthen the regional evidence base for nature recovery, ensuring that policy, investment and delivery decisions are informed by robust data, analysis and shared intelligence.**”

This priority ensures that WENP’s work is grounded in credible and accessible evidence. It focuses on ensuring that policy, investment and project development are informed by the best available data and analysis, while working with WECA and partners to strengthen and coordinate the region’s evidence base over time.

Underpinned by:

Strand 6 - Governance & Ways of Working

Our 2021-30 strategy says: “**Coordinate regional action for nature recovery through strong and inclusive collaboration, working closely with the West of England Combined Authority as Responsible Authority for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and mobilising partners across sectors to deliver nature recovery across the region, each bringing their expertise, resources and powers to the shared mission.**”

This strand underpins the entire strategy, providing the governance, partnership structures and organisational mandate to drive regional action. It includes business planning, board development, partnership management, impact reporting and the systems that support delivery across all five priorities.

4. Activity Plan 2026

These activities focus on the key actions WENP will deliver in 2026 within current capacity. In many areas this involves establishing processes, partnerships and evidence that enable more ambitious delivery in subsequent years.

In this context, WENP refers to the partnership as a whole, with delivery led through different combinations of the WENP core team, WECA—who have a dedicated team to support LNRS delivery—and partner organisations depending on the activity. Within this model:

- WENP provides regional coordination, pipeline development, strategic convening, communications leadership and cross-sector alignment
- WECA, as Responsible Authority for the LNRS, provides statutory leadership, implementation resource and alignment with wider regional strategy
- Partner organisations lead thematic, place-based and programme delivery, bringing operational capacity, specialist expertise and delivery powers

IMPACT PRIORITY Strategic Project Pipeline

Pipeline development in 2026 has three objectives: establishing a clear regional pipeline process with partners; identifying and developing priority nature projects towards investment readiness; and building the professional support, market intelligence and demand-side engagement needed to connect projects with finance.

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Co-design the regional pipeline process and governance with delivery partners — defining how projects are identified, developed, supported and matched with finance	✓	✓		
Develop the pipeline tool (spreadsheet) reflecting co-designed criteria for project inclusion, prioritisation and support	✓	✓		
Identify priority opportunity areas by mapping LNRS priorities alongside key demand drivers and market opportunities (e.g. BNG, water risk, ecosystem services, corporate and investor interest)		✓		
Map and assess nature projects across the region for investment readiness		✓	✓	
Provide active investment readiness support to at least three projects		✓	✓	
Establish at least one pro bono professional services partnership to support pipeline development		✓	✓	
Progress at least one project to a credible investment pathway by year end		✓	✓	✓

Enabling Priority 1 - Nature finance

The finance priority focuses on strengthening the regional conditions for nature finance and building relationships with investors and finance innovators. While the pipeline priority develops a supply of investment-ready projects, this priority focuses on building the market conditions and investor confidence needed to finance them.

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Identify strategic interventions to create the conditions for investment (policy/incentives, corporate engagement, market intelligence, data)		✓		
Develop a structured approach to engaging demand-side stakeholders and matching them with pipeline opportunities – <i>with expert support</i>		✓		
Implement demand-side engagement and wider nature finance strategy developed in Q2			✓	✓
Develop investor-facing materials presenting the West of England pipeline opportunity				✓

Ongoing nature finance activities:

- Maintain existing and build new relationships with priority investors, impact funds and nature finance innovators.
- Participate in, learn from and influence national nature finance discussions and initiatives, such as Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC).

Enabling Priority 2 – Policy Influence

In 2026, WENP's policy contribution, scrutiny and challenge capacity will be focused on a small number of high-impact opportunities: the West of England Spatial Development Strategy, embedding nature within regional health and prevention agendas, supporting partners to raise standards in development and planning practice, and making better use of existing regional policy and delivery levers where these can help accelerate nature recovery.

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Engage with the Spatial Development Strategy process, identifying key influencing points and supporting ambitious but deliverable nature commitments	✓	✓	✓	✓
Initiate a programme of dialogue with developers and public sector partners on raising standards in nature-positive development			✓	✓
Fundraise to embed nature within health and prevention agendas, building on Healthier with Nature and the Green Recovery Fund	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify priority policy influencing opportunities and capacity needs for 2027, including options for strengthening WENP’s policy capability				✓

Ongoing policy activities:

- Maintain strategic relationships with the Mayor, WECA and local authority leadership.
- Engage with the WECA Environment Advisory Board and relevant regional governance structures.
- Identify practical opportunities to use existing regional powers, strategies and delivery mechanisms to strengthen outcomes for nature.
- Engage national policy networks and consultations, sharing West of England learning and influencing emerging policy where capacity allows

Enabling Priority 3 - Communications & Advocacy

The comms priority in 2026 is purposefully focused: test the collaborative comms model through the State of Nature launch, then build on what works. The Partnership Manager's capacity is insufficient to develop and deliver a broad rolling comms programme working in isolation. This plan explicitly names that gap and commits to filling it through pro bono partnerships.

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Update WENP’s public messaging and digital presence to reflect the business plan and core narratives around nature as infrastructure and an investment opportunity	✓	✓		
Develop and deliver a collaborative partner communications activation around the State of Nature report launch and subsequent year of activity	✓	✓	✓	✓

Deliver leadership roundtables as part of the State of Nature programme (June and October), convening regional cross-sector leaders and supporting follow-through between meetings		✓	✓	✓
Develop a WENP communications strategy informed by lessons from the year's collaborative campaign				✓
Identify and secure communications support to address gaps in delivery capacity				✓
Host an annual gathering providing a touchpoint for the partnership				✓

Ongoing communications activity:

- Maintain WENP's digital presence and regular communications outputs.
- Strengthen WENP's external profile through hosting events and strategic speaking opportunities (e.g. Valley Fest, Wild Summit)

Enabling Priority 4 - Data & Evidence

WENP's data and evidence work supports better decisions across policy, investment and delivery. In 2026, the focus will be on delivering the State of Nature report, developing a practical approach to LNRS monitoring, and laying the groundwork for more integrated and advanced regional environmental data capability.

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Support delivery and launch of the West of England State of Nature report, providing an accessible and credible evidence base on the region's natural environment	✓	✓	✓	
Develop supporting materials and data outputs from the State of Nature programme to support communications, policy and investment narratives			✓	✓
Work with WECA and partners to develop a practical approach to LNRS and wider nature recovery target setting and monitoring (e.g. 30x30), identifying indicators, data sources and defining roles and responsibilities.		✓	✓	✓
Identify priorities for strengthening the region's environmental data infrastructure and analytical capability, including improved data integration, accessibility and the potential role of advanced analytics and AI in supporting policy, investment and planning decisions.			✓	✓
Identify and explore partnership with an academic or research institution to support development of the regional evidence base			✓	✓

Strand 6 - Governance & Ways of Working

Effective governance is the foundation that enables the partnership to deliver its strategic priorities and ensure all partnership views are heard as we do so. In 2026 WENP will strengthen its governance framework, clarify partner roles and contributions, and establish a new Strategic Advisory Board to support delivery and external engagement.

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Finalise and present the WENP Business Plan (2026–2030) for board approval	✓	✓		
Review and update WENP’s Terms of Reference, including consultation with partners and legal advice where needed	✓	✓		
Develop and approve the Strategic Board proposal, including role, composition and recruitment approach	✓	✓		
Recruit members for the Strategic Advisory Board		✓	✓	
Hold the inaugural Strategic Advisory Board meeting and embed it within WENP’s governance structure			✓	
Establish quarterly board reporting against this business plan		✓	✓	✓
Produce and publish the WENP annual impact report				✓

5. Five-Year Arc: 2026-2030

Year one always looks like groundwork. Systems are put in place, relationships are built, processes are established. What makes that groundwork worthwhile is knowing what it is building towards. This section sets out the five-year arc – so that partners, funders and board members can see not just what WENP is doing in 2026, but why it matters and what it will make possible by 2030.

Priority	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Impact Priority: Pipeline	Pipeline process co-designed; initial projects identified; pro bono support established; first credible investment pathway emerging	Pipeline operational with projects progressing towards investment readiness	Transactions beginning to complete; proof of concept demonstrated	Multiple deals active; regional pipeline referenced nationally	Significant nature investment flowing; West of England a leading nature finance region
Nature Finance	Investment narrative	First transactions and	Finance model tested and	Pipeline generating	A mature and self-sustaining

Priority	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
	developed; key relationships built; emerging finance mechanisms explored	blended finance approaches tested; corporate nature commitments secured	replicable; regional expertise embedded	service income; WENP financially sustainable	nature finance ecosystem emerging in the West of England
Policy	Spatial Development Strategy engagement underway; leadership roundtable held; Environment Advisory Board engagement established	Secure additional policy capacity to support systematic monitoring and influencing of regional and local policy	WENP systematically monitoring and influencing regional policy, including local plans, infrastructure planning and other policy frameworks	Final Spatial Development Strategy reflects strong nature recovery commitments	Support WECA with LNRS review and update; nature recovery embedded within regional decision-making
Comms & Advocacy	State of Nature launch; collaborative communication s model tested; pro bono partnerships secured; impact report published; annual gathering held	Collaborative communications model operating; growing public profile for partnership communication	Established regional voice; WENP brand respected and acting as an amplifier of shared messages and campaigns	National profile growing; WENP contributing to national narrative on nature recovery	Nature recovery is a shared regional priority by residents, public and private sector
Data & Evidence	Workstream formalised; State of Nature report published and used; LNRS monitoring approach agreed	Scope a regional environmental data intelligence and analytics; embed LNRS monitoring approach; establish academic and research partnerships to support the regional evidence base	Begin implementing programme to strengthen regional environmental data and analytical capability	Regional environmental data capability increasingly supporting policy, planning and investment decisions	Updated State of Nature report published showing improvement in both state of nature itself and quality of evidence; environmental data and monitoring systems supporting nature recovery across the region
Governance	Business plan adopted; Terms of Reference updated; Strategic	Strategic Advisory Board fully operational; governance model refined	WENP governance model influencing	Governance supporting larger programmes	Exemplary governance supporting a mature regional partnership

Priority	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
	Advisory Board recruited; impact report published		other regional partnerships	and partnerships	

Our 2030 vision

By 2030, the West of England is a nationally recognised leader in nature recovery – a region where private investment flows into nature projects, where nature is embedded in spatial planning and infrastructure decisions, and where a thriving partnership of public, private and community organisations works together to restore and protect the natural environment.

WENP is the engine that made this possible

6. Resourcing this plan

Delivery of this plan is shared across the partnership and is not the sole responsibility of the WENP core team alone. While core capacity sits with the Partnership Manager, Chair and part-time administrative support, delivery resource also sits within the West of England Combined Authority (particularly in relation to LNRS implementation), as well as across partner organisations whose programmes and activities contribute to these shared priorities.

The delivery plan set out in this document highlights several areas where additional capability would accelerate progress. Recognising these gaps allows WENP to explore how they might be addressed in a structured way.

Where additional capacity is needed, WENP will consider a range of routes depending on opportunity and best fit – including pro bono support, increased partner capacity and targeted additions to the WENP core team. This flexible approach allows the partnership to expand capability while maintaining a focused and efficient operating model.

Capacity gaps

Strategic priority	Capacity gap	Impact if unfilled	Route to fill
Impact Priority: Strategic Pipeline	Strategic pipeline development capacity	Projects and programmes stall before reaching delivery or investment readiness; programme-level coordination across partners becomes harder to sustain; partner capacity constraints limit meaningful engagement in pipeline development	Pursuit of funding and pro bono contributions to bring in technical support, coordination resource and partner capacity on strategic programmes
Enabling Priority: Nature Finance	Transaction and investment structuring expertise	Reduced confidence and leverage in negotiations with investors; slower development of investable propositions	Collaboration with WECA (LNRS Responsible Authority); targeted pro bono or commissioned support from finance and infrastructure advisory firms; strategic board expertise
Enabling Priority: Policy and System Influence	Strategic policy capacity	Limited ability to monitor, coordinate and influence policy and funding developments systematically; WENP is less able to anticipate opportunities and shape regional decisions	Targeted additional capacity within WENP, with support from partners where useful
Enabling Priority: Policy and System Influence	Strategic health system coordination and influence	Risk of losing momentum from significant investment between 2022–2026 embedding nature within health systems and pathways	Dedicated coordination capacity – either within WENP or a partner organisation with explicit partnership-facing responsibilities
Enabling Priority: Communications & Advocacy	Strategic communications capacity beyond Partnership Manager	Limited ability to deliver strategic, coordinated communications across partners, remaining piecemeal and reactive	Pro bono communications partnerships; collaborative communications model tested through the State of Nature launch; strategic board expertise; potential increased WENP core team capacity
Governance & Ways of Working	Legal and governance support	Slower governance reform; increased risk in contracts and partnership agreements	Targeted pro bono partnerships with legal firms specialising in ESG and environmental law

Longer term operating model and sustainability

The 2026–2030 period is intended not only to grow delivery impact, but also to strengthen WENP’s long-term operating resilience.

Over this period, WENP will develop a blended operating model built from five complementary sources of capacity and income:

- Core partnership contributions and in-kind strategic support
- Commissioned programme and coordination support linked to LNRS and wider regional priorities
- Grant and philanthropic investment for innovation, evidence and programme development
- Pipeline development and investment-readiness support that may generate service income over time
- Pro bono and secondee capacity that strengthens specialist capability without significantly increasing fixed costs

This diversified model is designed to reduce reliance on any single funding source while allowing WENP to scale in response to opportunity.

7. Measuring Success

Progress will be reviewed quarterly, drawing on contributions from partners and existing programme reporting where possible, to provide a partnership-wide view of delivery, risk and emerging priorities. The plan will be refreshed annually to reflect delivery learning and priorities for the year ahead, alongside an annual public impact report.

Indicator	Priority	Target by Dec 2026
Strategic programmes mapped and assessed for investment readiness	Pipeline	Minimum 5 programmes
Programmes receiving active investment readiness support	Pipeline	At least 3 projects
Credible investment pathways developed	Pipeline	At least 1 fully developed
Pro bono consultancy arrangement established	Pipeline	At least 1 in place by Q3
Investment transaction or mechanism initiated	Finance	At least 1 by year end

Private finance relationships cultivated (investors, funds, corporates)	Finance	At least 5 meaningful engagements by year end
Nature embedded in emerging Spatial Development Strategy	Policy	Identifiable, meaningful incorporation of nature into SDS documentation
WECA Environment Advisory Board engagement	Policy	Quarterly engagement maintained
Leadership roundtable held	Policy	1 event by Q3
State of Nature launch – collaborative comms model tested	Comms/data	Delivered by Q2
Strategic events hosted/spoken at	Comms	2 per year
Annual WENP gathering delivered	Comms	Delivered Q4
Annual impact report produced and published	Comms	Published Q4
Business plan and terms of reference signed off at board	Governance	Q2
Strategic Board recruited and operational	Governance	Meeting in Q3
Additional income (in-kind or financial) raised against plan	All	Quantifiable in kind / pro bono / financial contributions by Q4

Longer-term outcome measures to 2030

In addition to annual delivery KPIs, the Board will oversee a small set of strategic outcome measures across the five-year period, including:

- Value of public, private and blended finance mobilised into strategic nature programmes
- Number and maturity of investable regional propositions
- Contribution of strategic programmes to LNRS priority outcomes and target areas
- Extent to which nature recovery is embedded in regional spatial and infrastructure policy
- Number of partners contributing delivery capacity, data, funding or specialist expertise

8. Risks and Risk Management

Risks are reviewed at each quarterly board meeting.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Over-reliance on a small number of individuals creates continuity risk	High	High	Broaden leadership through the Strategic Board, clearer delegation and shared partner ownership of workstreams.
Nature finance market develops more slowly than expected	High	High	Maintain a diversified finance approach and build relationships early so WENP is positioned when the market matures.
Partners support the strategy but lack delivery capacity	High	Medium	Align asks with existing partner programmes and focus on areas where WENP adds greatest coordination value.
2026 proof of concept does not generate sufficient traction for 2027 scale-up	Medium	High	Prioritise a small number of visible proof points and review quarterly against the 2027 funding and delivery trajectory.
Unclear roles across WENP, WECA and partners slow delivery	Medium	Medium	Maintain clear accountabilities through ToR, named leads, delivery plans and regular coordination meetings.
Pipeline does not convert into credible investable propositions	Medium	High	Focus on a small number of high-potential projects with stage gates and targeted technical support.
Regional growth and political priorities weaken nature's policy traction	Medium	High	Maintain strong strategic relationships and continue framing nature as infrastructure for resilience and growth.
Communications outpace demonstrable delivery, creating reputational risk	Medium	Medium	Keep external messaging evidence-led, realistic and closely aligned with delivery progress.
Data and monitoring systems are too weak to support investment and policy influence	Medium	High	Prioritise a practical monitoring framework with WECA and partners focused on key indicators first.
The operating model does not diversify quickly enough	Medium	High	Track income and in-kind diversification as a Board metric and prioritise early wins across multiple routes.

9. Looking Ahead

This business plan is a foundation, not a ceiling. A successful 2026, in which WENP delivers across all six strands, establishes its Strategic Board, demonstrates at least one credible investment pathway, and builds the pro bono partnerships it needs, will fundamentally change the partnership's position.

Going into 2027, WENP will be able to make a significantly stronger case for larger, multi-year funding. A proven pipeline development function could generate service income. A demonstrated policy influencing track record will attract higher-profile board members. A tested collaborative comms model will scale. And a cohesive, active partner network will provide the delivery infrastructure for programmes that no single organisation could contemplate alone.

We know what the West of England can become by 2030: a nationally recognised leader in nature recovery, where private investment flows into nature projects, where nature is embedded in spatial planning and infrastructure decisions, and where a thriving multi-sector partnership drives real, measurable restoration at landscape scale. 2026 is the year we lay that foundation with clear eyes about where we are starting from and genuine ambition about where we are going.

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