

West of England and North Somerset Nature Recovery Toolkit: User Guide for Planners, Ecologists and Developers

Introduction

This guide is intended to be used by planners, ecologists and developers to assist them in interpreting the Local Nature Recovery Toolkit (LNRT), in its role as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset, in planning decisions.

This includes the role of the LNRT in deciding whether biodiversity net gain (BNG) units are eligible for the strategic significance multiplier using the Biodiversity Metric.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The LNRS has a role in targeting biodiversity net gain (BNG) to the most impactful locations through a 15% uplift (using the Biodiversity Metric's strategic significance multiplier) in BNG units in certain areas. **If an intervention is to receive a 15% uplift, it must be in a mapped 'focus area for nature recovery' and be a recommended (mapped) measure there.**

There are two ways to ascertain where a given measure would be eligible for an uplift in BNG Units.

- Using the [LNRT Application](#), you can see whether a location is in a focus area for nature recovery and, if so, click on a given location to bring up a table of recommended measures. You can filter measures by 'Core (BNG)' status to view those that would be eligible for BNG uplift in that location.
- Alternatively, there are also online maps and downloadable shapefiles of where each mapped measure is mapped to in the region. These show where each measure would be eligible for BNG uplift. The files can be viewed on the [CA's data portal](#), and you can find more information on which measures are included in which map layer [here](#).

We have also created [a dedicated map](#) showing which habitats within the BNG Metric would be eligible for a BNG uplift within each sub-area (if in the mapped focus areas for nature recovery). Note that the habitats that would be eligible for uplift through enhancement of existing habitats may differ from those eligible for uplift through creation of new habitats.

In some cases, there will need to be some level of ecologist input to make the final decision as to whether an intervention is eligible for BNG uplift or not, using their understanding of the measures and habitat types within the BNG Metric.

Case Study

Developer X is planning to purchase off-site BNG units as part of a planning application. The proposed site for the BNG Units is within a mapped focus area for nature recovery, and so may be eligible for BNG Uplift.

The proposal would result in the enhancement of two hectares of existing semi-natural broadleaved woodland, and the enhancement of two hectares of improved grassland to lowland meadow.

In this location, measures related to woodland enhancement/management are mapped but measures related to the creation of lowland meadows are not mapped.

Therefore, the BNG units gained as a result of the enhancement of woodland would be eligible to apply the Strategic Significance Multiplier and receive the 15% uplift in the BNG metric, whereas the creation of lowland meadow would not.

Baseline

Habitat Type	Area/ha	Habitat condition	Strategic significance	Total Biodiversity Units
Modified grassland	2	Poor	Low	4.00
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	2	Fairly Poor	High	20.70

Post-intervention

Habitat Type	Area/ha	Habitat condition	Strategic significance	Total Biodiversity Units
Lowland meadow	2	Moderate	Low	8.61
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	2	Fairly Good	High	22.93

The Role of the LNRS in Planning

At the time of writing, Government has not yet released additional guidance regarding the role of the LNRS in planning. However, the Levelling up and Regeneration Act (2023) states that any Local Plans and Spatial Strategies must 'take into account' the relevant LNRS for the planning authority, making clear that the LNRS plays a role in place-making and planning.

Firstly, it is important to make clear that the mapped focus areas for nature recovery do not prevent any development (or other activity) from taking place. However, in making planning decisions, it is advised that developers and planners consider:

- That the impact of development on nature may be greater in the mapped focus areas, particularly where it is close to existing habitats or may compromise connectivity between habitats.
- That developments in the mapped focus areas should take particular consideration of how they can make a positive contribution towards the recommended measures in that area. For example, if a development takes place in an area where woodland or wood pasture creation is mapped as a measure, the development could make additional effort to incorporate native trees and wooded corridors so as to make a positive contribution towards nature recovery.

Even outside of the mapped focus areas, the [LNRT Application](#) could be used to help inform how a development could best contribute towards nature recovery by finding out which measures are recommended in the proposed development location.