



Smart guide to biodiversity in planning and development

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Biodiversity in planning and development

Integrating biodiversity into all stages of the planning process

Biodiversity is variability among living organisms, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and ecological complexes of which they are a part, including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.



Biodiversity strategies are in place for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, with the general objective to halt overall loss of biodiversity by 2020 in line with the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2020 and the UN Aichi targets. This will require taking better account of biodiversity in public and private sector decision-making. In particular, this means taking a structured approach to planning for nature, and at every stage of the planning process from before application for permission to construction.

Incorporating biodiversity into planning and development

High-quality ecological information is important for:

- effective decision-making, including local planning decisions;
- compliance with statutory obligations and policy requirements;
- successful implementation of practical conservation and enhancement measures during development; and
- the achievement of desired outcomes.

Effective decision-making over biodiversity provides:

- certainty and clarity for developers, local planning authorities and other regulatory bodies;
- sufficient information with which to identify and track cumulative biodiversity outcomes (e.g. net losses and gains arising from all planning decisions);
- greater confidence for all stakeholders that decisions and proposed actions involving biodiversity conservation are transparent, fair, adequate and legally sound; and
- reduced likelihood of a planning appeal or legal challenge.

BS 42020 – a code of practice for biodiversity in planning and development

BS 42020 is a standard developed by BSI in association with biodiversity experts and stakeholders from across all sectors. The standard provides clear recommendations and guidance to ensure that actions and decisions taken at each stage of the planning process are informed by sufficient and appropriate ecological information.

This standard therefore seeks to:

- promote transparency and consistency in the quality and appropriateness of ecological information submitted with planning applications, and applications for other regulatory approvals;
- give planning authorities and other regulatory bodies greater confidence in the information when they consider proposals for development that potentially affects biodiversity; and
- encourage proportionality and a good environmental legacy following development.

Professional practice

High standards of professional practice are essential for the successful integration of biodiversity into the planning and development process. BS 42020 gives recommendations on professional ethics, conduct, competence and judgement that are intended to give confidence that proposals for biodiversity conservation, and consequent decisions/actions taken, are sound and appropriate.

Biodiversity professionals have to work collaboratively with all other disciplines in the planning and development process, to find a course of action that balances the needs of the developer with the constraints of statutory obligations, local planning policy and the biodiversity of the site.

Incorporating biodiversity management into each stage

Incorporating biodiversity management into each stage of the planning process is essential to avoid unnecessary costs and delays at later stages. BS 42020 makes appropriate recommendations for the various stages of the planning process, as follows:

- **Pre-application:**
 - design considerations for biodiversity;
 - ecological surveys and assessments
 - preparation of ecological reports
 - non-technical summaries.
- **Validation and registration:**
 - validation and registration;
 - adequate information.
- **Decision-making:**
 - quality decision-making;
 - professional scrutiny;
 - consultation;
 - adequate information.
- **Determination:**
 - planning conditions;
 - planning obligations;
 - other consent regimes.
- **Implementation/construction:**
 - construction environmental management plan;
 - long-term management; and
 - ecological monitoring.



Mitigation hierarchy

The overarching aim of ecological survey and assessment work used to inform planning proposals is to minimize impacts, and to maximize benefits for biodiversity, as a result of the development. The generally accepted way of doing this, now embedded within the planning system, is to follow the “mitigation hierarchy”. This seeks as a preference to avoid impacts then to mitigate unavoidable impacts, and, as a last resort, to compensate for unavoidable residual impacts that remain after avoidance and mitigation measures.

Alongside this approach, opportunities should also be explored in all development proposals to provide new benefits for wildlife.

Practice and legislation

BS 42020 also provides guidance on the planning process and consent regimes in the UK, and on statutory obligations and planning guidance that relate to biodiversity. Also listed are: professional bodies with relevant codes of conduct, suggested pro formas for net loss or gain of biodiversity, model planning conditions, and forms for reports on European protected species.

Further information

To find out more about BS 42020 and download a PDF of this guide, visit shop.bsigroup.com/bs42020



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