



Norwich Western Link

Statutory Biodiversity Metric

Approach

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1 Approach to changing metric versions

1.1.1 The Scheme design and supporting surveys and assessments were undertaken using Biodiversity Metric 3.1 which was the latest version of the Biodiversity Metric available at the time. Prior to the November 2023 release of government BNG publications, the Natural England metric publication webpage (Natural England, 2023) stated: “Users of previous versions of the Biodiversity Metric should continue to use that metric (unless requested to do otherwise by their client or consenting body) for the duration of the project it is being used for. This is because users may find that certain biodiversity unit values generated in biodiversity metric 4.0 will differ from those generated by earlier versions”. Therefore Metric 3.1 was used throughout the project until December 2023.

1.1.2 In December 2023, the updated government guidance ‘Calculate biodiversity value using the biodiversity metric’ stated under the section ‘Which version of the metric tool to use’ (Defra, 2023b):

“You must use the statutory version of the metric tool when BNG becomes mandatory. Do not use previous versions (4.0 or before) as these calculations will not be accepted in planning applications... If you already started calculations in version 4.0 or before, you will need to copy and paste these into the statutory biodiversity metric tool”.

1.1.3 Therefore, to follow the above advice, the Metric 3.1 data was copied directly into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric version published 30 November 2023 (Defra, 2023a). The final Statutory Metric was not available at the time that the data was copied over as it was prior to the commencement date of 12th February 2024.

1.1.4 In order to carry out the copy and paste exercise between metric 3.1 and the Statutory Metric, the following changes to the data were made:

- It was assumed at this stage that there was no riparian encroachment of ditches, and that riparian encroachment was the same on both banks of all

watercourses. This assumption was required because the statutory metric requires riparian encroachment to be assessed separately for each bank and for ditches, whereas metric 3.1 had one assessment for both banks, and did not require this information for ditches.

- One area of poor condition 'other woodland: mixed' baseline habitat which would be enhanced to 'lowland mixed deciduous woodland' was previously targeted to be poor condition lowland mixed deciduous woodland in Metric 3.1. However, the targeted condition was increased to moderate in the Statutory Metric because input of poor condition was not possible. This is still considered to be an achievable objective but increases the time to target condition for this habitat to 30+ years, therefore it may be necessary to extend legal agreements for this area of woodland to achieve the targeted condition.
- Individual trees classified as irreplaceable habitat (i.e. veteran trees) were added to the Statutory Metric. No other individual trees were added.

1.1.5 This approach was required due to the availability of data and the timing of the change in government guidance coinciding with the time that the planning application was being finalised. The assessment will be updated following the Statutory Metric Guidance and reported in the Biodiversity Gain Plan to discharge the pre-commencement biodiversity gain condition.

1.1.6 The copy and paste exercise shows a slightly greater net gain in watercourse and area habitats when the data is copied into the Statutory Metric, due to changes in difficulty of creation and enhancement of certain habitats.