Guidance Note: Biodiversity Net Gain Strategic Significance and the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

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Introduction

This guidance note sets out the approach that should be taken by Local Planning Authorities in determining strategic significance in relation to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric in Greater Manchester from 15th February 2025. The approach set out in this document aligns with the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guidance (July 2024).

Strategic significance in the Biodiversity Metric

Strategic significance is defined in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guidance as the local significance of the habitat parcel based on its location and habitat type. Following the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guidance, when calculating biodiversity unit losses and gains, each individual habitat parcel should be assessed for strategic significance both at baseline and at post intervention, for on-site and off-site. Habitat parcels should split where they are intersected by (1) a boundary between two areas of different strategic significance, and (2) a planning authority boundary.

Assigning Strategic Significance in Greater Manchester

From 15th February 2025, the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy should be the only local document used to assign strategic significance for habitat parcels in Greater Manchester.

- **Draft status**
  While the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy is in draft form, the descriptions in table 8 (see appendix 1) of the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guidance (July 2024), should be followed in assigning strategic significance.

- **Adopted status**
  When the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy is adopted later in 2025, the descriptions in table 7 (see appendix 2) of the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guidance (July 2024), should be followed in assigning strategic significance.

Further information and queries

For any queries or further information regarding this approach please contact: naturerecovery@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Accessing the GM Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy

You can access the GM Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy on the GMCA website and using the information below:

- Statement of Biodiversity Priorities: https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/hmsj013u/gm-local-nature-recovery-strategy-consultation-draft.pdf
- Areas mapped as within the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1137e2f8065f4e449cc02a685ba11ef8

Accessing the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guidance (July 2024): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e45fba3c2a28abb50d426/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide__23.07.24_.pdf

Appendix 1.

Table 8 Biodiversity metric strategic significance categories and score applied in the metric where an LNRS has not yet been published

Category	Score	Description
High (Formally identified in local strategy)	1.15	The habitat type is mapped and described as locally ecologically important within a specific location, within documents specified by the relevant planning authority. If your project delivers the mapped habitat creation, enhancement or actions set out within specified alternative documents, or enhances an existing habitat identified within specified alternative documents as locally ecologically important, strategic significance can be recorded as high in the post-intervention sheets. If the specified alternative documents identify existing habitat as locally ecologically important within a specified location, strategic significance may be recorded as high in the baseline. You should record the name of the plan the relevant planning authority has specified in the user comments and record that you have used the specified document in your gain plan.
Medium (Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy)	1.10	This category can be applied when the LPA has not identified a suitable document for assessing strategic significance. Users should: • explain how the habitat type is ecologically important within a specific location • demonstrate the importance of that habitat in providing ecological linkage to other strategically significant locations • use professional judgement When the above criteria are met, strategic significance may be recorded as medium in the baseline and post-intervention sheets.
Low (Area / compensation not in local strategy)	1	Where the definitions for high or medium strategic significance are not met.

Appendix 2.

Table 7 Biodiversity metric strategic significance categories and score applied in the metric where an LNRS has been published

Category	Score	Description
High (Formally identified in local strategy)	1.15	This category can be applied when: • the location of the habitat parcel has been mapped in the Local Habitat Map as an area where a potential measure has been proposed to help deliver the priorities of that LNRS; and • the intervention is consistent with the potential measure proposed for that location If your project delivers the mapped potential measure set out in the LNRS you should: • record strategic significance as low in the baseline • record strategic significance as high in post-intervention sheets • record that you have applied the published LNRS in your gain plan
Medium	1.10	This category cannot be applied.
Low (Area / compensation not in local strategy)	1	Where the definitions for high strategic significance are not met. Even if your project is an area mapped with a potential measure, if it does not deliver the specific actions outlined for your location you should record strategic significance as low.