

Summary Document

Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance Note

Summary of Interim Strategic Significance Guidance for Biodiversity Net Gain in Kent and Medway.



Biodiversity Net Gain for Kent and Medway



January 2024

Prepared by Kent County Council, in consultation with Kent
and Medway's Local Planning Authorities.

Prepared by:

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- 1.1. This BNG Guidance Note (hereafter referred to as 'guidance') has been produced by Kent County Council (KCC), under consultation with the Kent Nature Partnership (KNP). It has been developed to help planning applicants and potential Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) offset providers complete the strategic significance elements of The Biodiversity Metric for area habitats and linear habitats (hedgerows and watercourses).
- 1.2. The strategic significance multiplier within the [Biodiversity Metric](#) seeks to promote the delivery of habitat creation and enhancement within areas which are strategically important for nature's recovery.
- 1.3. [The draft user guide for the Statutory Biodiversity Metric](#) sets out that strategic significance should be defined by a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). However, *"If an LNRS has not yet been published, a relevant planning authority should specify alternative documents for assigning strategic significance whilst an LNRS is put in place."* Until a LNRS for Kent is published, this guidance sets out a standardised approach for applying strategic significance in Kent and Medway. This guidance will be reviewed periodically and will eventually be replaced by a published LNRS for Kent.
- 1.4. BNG assessors should use Tables 1, 2 and 3 to assign high, medium or low strategic significance for each habitat parcel (each row of the metric spreadsheet) both for the habitat baseline, creation and enhancement tabs. Where a habitat parcel spans multiple strategic significance categories, or across local planning authority boundaries, then that habitat parcel should be split, with the relevant categories assigned accordingly.
- 1.5. The assigning of a strategic significance category should be justified in the user comments of the metric spreadsheet for each habitat parcel.
- 1.6. Table 1 sets out how strategic significance should be assigned for area-based habitats. The criteria are based on existing published strategies for Kent and Medway, which are evidence led and have previously gone through public consultation.

High (1.15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Biodiversity Strategy¹ priority habitats (see Appendix B) located within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area² • Habitats of importance identified within Biodiversity Opportunity Area descriptions (see Appendix A) • Widely dispersed habitats of importance identified within Biodiversity Opportunity Area descriptions located across the whole of Kent and Medway³ • National and International statutory protected sites (Ramsar, SAC, SPA, SSSI, NNR)* • Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)* • Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs)* • Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs)* • Irreplaceable habitats^{4*}
Medium (1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats outside of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas • Any Section 41 priority habitat that do not meet the criteria for high strategic significance
Low (1.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other area-based habitats

Table 1: Interim definition of strategic significance for area-based habitat units in Kent and Medway.

Note: the strategic significance score of individual trees should be assigned using the same methodology as for hedgerow units, i.e. the strategic significance category (high, medium or low) for individual trees should be the same as the distinctiveness score.

1.7. Table 2 sets out how strategic significance should be assigned for hedgerows units. Hedgerows are identified as a priority habitat by the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020 – 2045. Hedgerows are a widely distributed habitat across Kent and Medway, and therefore it is not deemed appropriate to assign spatial constraints for strategic significance. Instead, the strategic significance of hedgerows is defined by their distinctiveness, as defined by The Biodiversity Metric.

High (1.15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All very high and high distinctiveness hedgerows as defined by The Biodiversity Metric
Medium (1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All medium distinctiveness hedgerows as defined by The Biodiversity Metric
Low (1.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All low and very low distinctiveness hedgerows as defined by The Biodiversity Metric

Table 2: Interim definition of strategic significance for hedgerow units in Kent and Medway.

¹ Kent Nature Partnership. (2020) Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy, from: Kent Biodiversity Strategy | Kent Nature

² Biodiversity Opportunity Areas available in Appendix C.

³ Ponds and traditional orchards.

⁴ As defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023).

* The deterioration in quality of statutory protected sites, LNRs, RNRs, LWSs and irreplaceable habitats below the condition recorded at the time of designation should not be used as justification for downgrading of strategic significance. This includes where deterioration in quality occurred prior to the relevant date as specified in the Environment Act 2021. Exceptions apply where it can be demonstrated that activities leading to the deterioration of habitats was carried out in accordance with a planning permission or any other permission of a kind specified by the Secretary of State by regulations.

1.8. Table 3 sets out how strategic significance should be assigned for watercourse units. Rivers and chalk streams are identified as priority habitats by the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2045. Several statutory and non-statutory designated wildlife sites are defined by, or include, features of natural, semi-natural and manmade watercourses.

High (1.15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers (priority habitat) • All other rivers and streams (including all ephemeral streams) • Ditches/Canals within statutory and non-statutory designated sites and priority habitats • All culverts, channels or mill leats that link high priority rivers, streams, ditches and canals
Medium (1.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ditches and canals without designations
Low (1.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other flow paths and dry drainage channels

Table 3: *Interim definition of strategic significance for watercourse units in Kent and Medway. Habitats as defined by the Biodiversity Metric user guide.*

Appendix A. Habitats identified within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOAs) descriptions and targets.

Habitats identified within the BOA description and targets	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)																								
	Lowland beech and yew woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Other woodland broadleaved / Other woodland mixed	Lowland calcareous grassland	Lowland meadow	Other neutral grassland	Lowland dry acid grassland	Other lowland acid grassland	Lowland heathland	Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land (OMHPDL)	Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Coastal saltmarsh	Wet woodland	Coastal vegetated shingle	Intertidal mudflats	Intertidal chalk	Coastal sand dunes	<i>Sabellaria alveolata</i> reefs	Fens (Upland and lowland) / Lowland raised bog	Maritime cliffs and slopes	Reedbeds	Coastal lagoons	Wood pasture and parkland	Lakes (all high and very high distinctiveness lakes)	
Central North Downs	x	x	x	x	x	x					x												x		
Dover & Folkestone Cliffs & Downs	x	x	x	x	x	x							x	x		x		x	x	x					
East Kent Woodlands & Downs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x																x	
Greensand Heaths and Commons		x	x		x		x	x	x															x	
High Weald		x	x		x	x	x	x	x				x											x	
Low Weald Woodlands		x	x		x	x																			
Lower Stour wetlands		x	x		x		x	x			x	x	x		x		x		x	x	x				
Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands		x	x		x	x					x		x						x		x				
Medway Gap and North Kent Downs	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x			x				x		x				
Mid Kent Downs, Woods and Scarp	x	x	x	x	x	x																		x	
Mid Kent Greensand and Gault		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x						x					x	x
North Kent Marshes		x	x		x	x					x	x		x	x					x				x	
Romney Marshes and Rye Bay					x	x	x	x			x	x		x					x		x	x			
Thames-side Green Corridors		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x													
Thanet Cliffs and Shore		x	x		x	x														x				x	
The Blean		x	x		x	x	x	x	x										x						

Appendix B. Designated Sites

Ramsar sites, SPAs and SACs afford the highest level of protection to habitats and species. These sites support internationally important habitats and populations of species. These sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Nationally protected sites

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These sites represent the best sites for nature conservation and are designated to conserve species, habitats or geological features. In Kent there are 99 SSSIs covering a vast range of habitats, of which only 69% are in favourable condition.

There are 11 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Kent which are designated under section 35 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. NNRs are owned by or managed through agreements with Natural England.

Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. LNRs are designated by the local authority for being locally important for wildlife, geology, education and enjoyment (without disturbing wildlife). The local authority must have control over the LNR either through ownership, lease or legal agreement with the owner. Kent has 42 LNRs many of which are also covered by other designations.

Roadside Nature Reserves

The Kent and Medway Road Verge Project was established in 1994 as a partnership between Kent County Council Highways and Kent Wildlife Trust. Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) are selected to identify, protect and manage road verges which contain threatened habitats or wildlife.

Local Wildlife Sites

Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) in Kent and Medway are designated at the county level to support threatened habitats and species. They act as buffers, stepping stones and corridors between nationally-designated wildlife sites. In Kent, there are over 460 Local Wildlife Sites, covering a total area of over 27,500 hectares (~68,000 acres) (roughly 7% of the county). They vary greatly in size ranging from a 0.12 ha churchyard important for its orchids, to grazing marsh sites of over 1,000 ha.

Unlike SSSIs, LWSs are not afforded statutory protection and the owner of land which has been designated as a LWS is not obliged to maintain the site's wildlife interest. However, the Local Planning Authorities in Kent recognise the importance of LWSs, and provide protection for them through planning policy and guidance documents. Generally, planning policies protect against development which would damage the wildlife interest of any LWS, except where the need for development is so great that it is judged to override that interest.

Irreplaceable Habitats

The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024 provides a list of habitats considered to be irreplaceable:

- Ancient woodland
- Ancient and veteran trees
- Blanket bog
- Lowland fens

- Limestone pavements
- Coastal sand dunes
- Spartina saltmarsh swards
- Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub

Appendix C. Kent Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

It is advised that you access the BOA maps via the Kent Landscape Information System (KLIS) which allows you to view an interact map of each of the BOA areas.

The BOA Statements can be access via the links embedded in the list below:

[Central North Downs](#)

[Dover & Folkestone Cliffs & Downs](#)

[East Kent Woodlands & Downs](#)

[Greensand Heaths and Commons](#)

[High Weald](#)

[Low Weald Woodlands](#)

[Lower Stour wetlands](#)

[Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands](#)

[Medway Gap and North Kent Downs](#)

[Mid Kent Downs, Woods and Scarp](#)

[Mid Kent Greensand and Gault](#)

[North Kent Marshes](#)

[Romney Marshes and Rye Bay](#)

[Thames-side Green Corridors](#)

[Thanet Cliffs and Shore](#)

[The Blean](#)