

# Biodiversity Metric 3.1

Auditing and accounting for biodiversity

## **Summary of Changes from Biodiversity Metric 3.0 to Version 3.1**

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## Further information

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## Summary

Metric 3.1 represents a relatively small-scale change from version 3.0, primarily focusing on clarifications to guidance and revisions to the condition assessments. Except for a very small number of select habitats, the metric 3.1 update is unlikely to have a significant impact on the range of overall outputs generated. This document sets out high level changes to the guidance and metric.

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# 1: General Changes

## Accessibility

- 1.1. Colour coding of cells within the biodiversity metric 3.1 calculation tool have been updated to aid data entry and interpretation. Icons are also used to convey important information. Changes are shown in Figure 4-1 of the User Guide.

## Defining on-site and off-site

- 1.2. **Chapter 3** of the User Guide now defines 'on-site' and 'off-site' in the context of the biodiversity metric. This includes new guidance on setting the red line boundary and setting the spatial risk multiplier for off-site land.

## Condition Assessments – General

- 1.3. '**Undesirable species**' has been renamed to '**species indicative of sub-optimal condition**'. Furthermore, paragraph 1.12, part (g) of the Technical Supplement now states that the lists of species indicative of sub-optimal condition (found within condition assessment sheets) are '**not exhaustive. The assessment allows for expert judgement by the ecological surveyor to consider additional species within this category, such as those of specific geographical relevance**'.
- 1.4. '**Non-negotiable**' criterion has been renamed to '**essential**' criterion.
- 1.5. All instances of '**N/A - Agricultural**' have been changed to '**Condition Assessment N/A**' to provide clarity to users that a condition assessment is not required for this habitat type. This classification is also used for those habitats which have a fixed condition.
- 1.6. The following text has been added to paragraph 3.10 of the User Guide: '**in the absence of seasonally appropriate survey data / evidence the assessor must use a precautionary approach to assessing condition criteria which are not measurable at the time of year the survey is undertaken**'.

## Process Principles and Rules

- 1.7. A series of case studies has been published to demonstrate how the biodiversity metric 3.1 may be applied. These can be found on the metric [publication page](#).
- 1.8. Additional guidance has been provided to make clear the metric should be considered separately to management advice:
  - User Guide, paragraph 2.20 now states that: '**neither the metric nor the accompanying condition sheets are a guide on how to best manage a site**'.
  - Paragraph 1.4 of the Technical Supplement states that '**although the condition criteria may be used to monitor the effectiveness of habitat creation / management through the biodiversity metric 3.1, they have not been developed as management guidance. Any habitat creation and management plans should make use of the wide array of guidance developed by government, conservation NGOs, industry and professional bodies**'.

- 1.9. The wording of Rule 4 in the User Guide has been amended to be consistent with the rest of the document – the text ***‘traded or converted’*** has been added.
- 1.10. The wording of **Principle 5** in the User Guide has been amended to read: ***‘consideration should also be given to locally relevant species interests when creating or enhancing habitats’***.
- 1.11. **Principle 7** of the metric has been updated to explain how the metric follows the Lawton Principles: ***‘through the strategic significance and spatial risk factor the biodiversity metric 3.1 places greater reward for habitat creation where it is strategically important and locally relevant’***.

### **Use of the ‘Notes’ Column**

- 1.12. Text has been amended throughout the User Guide explaining the use of the comments box. Justification or details should be added to the comments box ‘if required’, where previously they were ‘optional’. This is because there are some instances where guidance states the comments box must be used to explain a decision.
- 1.13. Within the User Guide, a ‘Top Tip’ has been added below paragraph 4.39 which explains that when using the notes column ***‘the assessor should avoid duplication of evidence / information provided in the condition assessment sheets unless there is specific reason or additional consideration’***.

### **Habitat creation and enhancement**

- 2.1. Guidance within the User Guide has been added to Step 4: Site visit (a): ***‘when determining target habitat types for creation and enhancement it’s crucial that the site conditions are suitable to support the target habitat. Additional information may be requested of a project to evidence the land suitability, this is particularly important to include for the creation / enhancement of priority habitats (high – very high distinctiveness habitats) which are often more difficult to create’***.
- 2.2. Within the User Guide, text has been added as paragraphs 5.37 and 5.38, stating that ***‘post-development outcomes should be set and entered into the metric within a timeframe appropriate to the scope of the project’*** and adding that ***‘at appropriate stages through a project lifecycle, monitoring is required to confirm if habitat type and condition achieved matches the habitat outcomes proposed within the post-development sections of the biodiversity tool’***.

### **Trading Rules**

- 2.3. The Glossary in Chapter 11 of the User Guide adds the reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for the term ‘irreplaceable habitats’.

## 2: Area Habitat Specific Changes

### Habitat Mosaics

- 2.5. Additional guidance has been provided for Allotments, Cemeteries and Churchyards and Arable habitats to make it clear that if there are areas of habitat that ***'meet the definition of a 'better' or higher distinctiveness habitat, these should be recorded as such within the metric.'***
- 2.6. Within the User Guide, text has been added to paragraph 6.20: 'whilst the metric considers habitats individually, consideration should be given to their structure when designing new habitat management and when considering the value and species potential of existing habitats. ***Therefore, when assessing habitat condition on sites with complex mosaics, consideration should be given to utilising one of the intermediate condition scores within the metric. Where such judgement has been exercised this should be recorded in the notes section of the metric and agreed with the relevant decision maker'***.

### Urban Roofs

- 2.7. Following consultation with industry, urban roof classifications have been changed to reflect a range of contemporary urban roof specifications. The revised categories are as follows:
- **Biodiverse Green Roof** (Medium distinctiveness)
  - **Intensive Green Roof** (Low distinctiveness)
  - **Other Green Roof** (Low distinctiveness)
- 2.8. Definitions for these new classifications are found within Table TS2-1 of the Technical Supplement. Creation / enhancement values within the metric have been amended to address new habitat definitions.
- 2.9. The 'Urban Non-priority Habitat' condition sheet has been renamed 'Urban Habitat Condition Sheet'. The Urban Habitat Condition Sheet have been amended to address new habitat classifications.

### Urban trees

- 2.10. Chapter 7 within the User Guide has been revised to add clarity on a number of issues raised during user feedback, although the overall approach remains the same. Key points are summarised below:
- The formula and methodology for calculating area of trees has been amended to provide greater detail. This now covers single-stemmed trees, multi-stemmed trees, blocks of trees and post development trees.
  - Following user feedback, a range of tree diameter values has been provided to determine size.
  - Guidance is provided on how to use information provided through an Arboricultural Impact Assessment.
  - The Urban Tree Helper has been amended to allow for trees of separate size / condition to be entered separately.

- Additional guidance has been provided around urban trees and trading rules, which states that ‘like for like’ compensation is the preferred approach.

## Woodland and Forest

- 2.11. Addition guidance on how to assess recently felled woodland has been added to table TS1-1 of the Technical supplement.
- 2.12. Following user feedback, the time to a target condition of ‘Fairly Good’ for newly created ‘**Other woodland; broadleaved**’ has been reduced to 25 years.

## Grassland

- 2.13. Following user feedback, the following grassland condition sheets have been amended:
- **Grassland – low distinctiveness.** The condition criteria for achieving ‘Good’ and ‘Moderate’ conditions have been amended.
  - **Grassland – medium, high & very high distinctiveness** has been amended to reflect differences between acid and non-acid grassland types.

## Heathland

- 2.14. Following user feedback, the threshold of Criteria 7 for the **heathland condition sheet** has been changed (to pass, there must be an absence of invasive non-native species listed on Schedule 9 (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)).

## Scrub habitats

- 2.15. **Bramble scrub** has been removed from the list of habitats on the ‘Scrub’ condition assessment sheet, as condition for bramble scrub is fixed through the metric and no condition assessment is required.

## Wetland habitats

- 2.16. Additional guidance has been provided on how to record **Floodplain Wetland Mosaic** (CFGM). The wetland condition sheet should be used unless there is a species rich grassland sward which meets the definition of a priority habitat, reedbed or fen. If these habitats are present, then the relevant habitat type / condition sheet should be recorded and used within the metric. In all cases the Ditch condition sheet should be used to record the condition of any ditches.

## Quarries and Mines

- 2.17. ‘Sand pit quarry or open cast mine’ has been renamed ‘Actively worked sand pit quarry or open cast mine’. Tables TS1-1, TS2-1 and TS2-16 has been amended to make clear that ‘This classification relates to non-vegetated working areas only. Mineral extraction sites can support a wide range of habitats, including ponds, heathland, grassland, sparsely vegetated land, bare ground, flushes and springs etc. These should be assessed separately using the relevant condition sheet.’

## Agricultural

- 2.18. The habitat type ‘**Cropland – Cereal crops other**’ has been removed, as this habitat classification can be captured using ‘**Cropland – Cereal crops**’.

- 2.19. The distinctiveness of **Cropland - Winter stubble** has been revised from Medium to Low.

### **Intertidal habitats**

- 2.20. The condition sheet for 'intertidal hard structures' has been renamed from 'artificial hard structures' within the Technical Supplement.
- 2.21. Following user feedback the range of scores to determine condition for intertidal biogenic reefs, intertidal hard structures, intertidal seagrass, intertidal sediment, rocky shore, coastal lagoons and coastal saltmarsh have been amended.



### **3: Linear Habitats**

#### **Hedgerows and lines of trees**

- 3.1. Errors within criterion C1 of the hedgerows and lines of trees condition sheet have been amended. The criterion was a duplication, and the condition sheet now gives a detailed explanation of C1.
- 3.2. Criterion C2 has been renamed from 'Undesirable perennial vegetation' to 'Nutrient-enriched perennial vegetation' to better reflect the content of the criterion.

#### **Rivers and Streams**

- 3.3. Information on how to assess rivers and streams now sits within a separate chapter of the User Guide (Chapter 9). The content of chapter has been revised to add clarity on a number of issues raised during user feedback. Key changes include:
  - Additional guidance on survey effort and scope has been provided under new sections 'Survey efforts' and 'Red line boundary'.
  - The definition for riparian encroachment has been expanded to describe encroachment within the context of baseline 'development'. This includes a list of features not considered to be riparian encroachment.
  - Additional guidance has been provided on forecasting post-development condition, under the new section 'Forecasting condition'.
  - 'Local Nature Recovery Strategies' have been added to Table 9-5 of the User Guide as a source to determine strategic significance of a watercourse.

## 4: Minor corrections and amendments

### Table and Figure Numbers

4.1 Table 4-1 below details changes to numbering of Figures, Tables and Boxes in the User Guide.

**TABLE 4-1 Numbering Changes to Figures, Tables and Boxes**

Feature	Metric 3.0	Metric 3.1
<b>User Guide</b>		
Figure	5-8	5-1
Figure	N/A	3-2 (new figure)
Figure	8-1	9-1
Figure	8-2	9-2
Table	3-1	3-1; and 3-2 (new table)
Table	8-2	9-1
Table	8-5	9-2
Table	8-6	9-3
Table	8-7	9-4
Table	8-8	9-5
Table	8-9	9-6
Table	8-10	9-7
Table	8-11	9-8
Table	8-12	9-9
Table	8-13	9-10
Box	6-2	6-2; and 6-3 (new box)
Box	N/A	7-1 (new box)
Box	8-3	9-1
Box	8-5	9-2
Box	8-6	9-3
Box	9-1	10-1
<b>Technical Supplement</b>		
Table	TS3-7	TS3-9
Table	TS3-8	TS3-10

### Text

- 4.2 In text references to Paragraphs, Figures, Tables and Boxes have been updated to reflect wider changes.
- 4.3 Errors to binomial naming conventions have been made throughout the guidance documentation.

## **Linear Habitats, New Chapter Headings**

4.4 Guidance on assessing linear habitats (previously covered under Chapter 8) is now split into two chapters:

- Chapter 8 covers hedgerows and lines of trees.
- Chapter 9 covers rivers and streams.