

This document does not form part of the statutory metric package.

Overview of metric changes

March 2023 – February 2024

First published February 2024



Contents

1. General information	3
2. User guide changes.....	4
3. Tool Changes	5
3.1. General metric changes.....	5
3.2. New unit shortfall summary tabs.....	6
3.3. Area module amendments.....	6
3.4. Hedgerow module amendments	6
3.5. Watercourse module amendments	7
4. Condition assessment changes.....	8

1. General information

This list of amendments is not exhaustive but provides an overview of the most significant changes to the biodiversity metric package between Natural England published version 4.0 and the Defra published statutory biodiversity metric.

Amendments were made in consultation with Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency.

This document is not a replacement for the statutory biodiversity metric user guide and is not intended as guidance.

A detailed technical log of all excel tool changes is available on request from biodiversitynetgainequiries@naturalengland.org.uk

2. User guide changes

Clarifications are made in the user guide, including for:

- the application of strategic significance categories
- information on the restoration of intertidal habitats, to clarify how to apply the metric tool where works result in the restoration of coastal processes
- how to consider phased construction
- applying the spatial risk multiplier to intertidal sites
- assessing the partial removal of watercourse encroachment for projects where structural revetment cannot be removed
- trading rules for very high distinctiveness habitats
- methodology for assessing individual trees
- calculating the area of intertidal artificial hard structures and integrated greening of grey infrastructure
- assessing managed realignment and regulated tidal exchanges
- assessing floodplain wetland mosaic and ditches
- preparing a metric for submission
- recording irreplaceable habitats in the baseline

3. Tool Changes

3.1. General metric changes

The following general amendments have been made to the calculation tool:

- 'completed by' and 'date of completion' are now compulsory information
- additional formatting and accessibility symbols have been added
- warning flags added to the headline results page
- enhancement tabs auto-fill function of 'proposed habitat' is now disabled
- trading rule error between hedgerow and area habitats (in certain scenarios) has been fixed

The following changes have been made in the tool relating to irreplaceable habitats:

- new data entry cells and drop-down list
- fixed options for dropdown list
- restrictions on enhancements of irreplaceable habitats
- warning flags added to ensure data is captured

The following changes have been made in the tool in relation to very high distinctiveness habitats, including amendments to trading rules:

- changed to 'same habitat required – bespoke compensation option'
- unit losses of very high distinctiveness habitats are 'cancelled out' where there is bespoke compensation agreed, retained and enhanced units still contribute to the calculation and 10% net gain is still required

The following changes have been made related to the off-site tabs of the metric:

- total off-site areas are shown on the start page
- error flag where off-site reference columns on all off-site data entry tabs (found on the far right of the page) have not been completed (required for accurate calculation of biodiversity unit change on a gain-site by gain-site basis)
- amendments to functions to ensure correct creation difficulty multipliers
- amendments to ensure SRM does not generate negative values
- amendments to apply the baseline SRM value to the corresponding habitat line in the enhancement tab

3.2. New unit shortfall summary tabs

Two new unit shortfall tabs have been created: 'Unit shortfall summary' and 'Unit shortfall calculations' to support input into the statutory credits sales digital service:

- the unit shortfall summary tab provides a breakdown of the requirements to meet the trading rules and net gain target if purchasing statutory credits
- the unit shortfall calculations tab displays the detailed calculations used to calculate the unit shortfall

3.3. Area module amendments

The following tool amendments have been made in relation to area module habitats.

- revision of tree size categories
- felled woodland has now been split into two habitat types to support trading rules:
 - 'Felled woodland', at baseline; and
 - 'Replacement for felled woodland', at post intervention.
- adjustments to enhancement times for following area habitats:
 - blanket bog
 - wet woodland
 - coniferous woodland
 - intertidal habitat group
 - bioswale
 - inland rock and scree

The following amendments have been made in relation to Intertidal Habitats:

- enhancement to 'intertidal hard structures – integrated greening of grey infrastructure' and 'littoral seagrass' from specific habitats is now permitted
- amendments to area calculations cross-check to facilitate changes to guidance on intertidal hard structures

3.4. Hedgerow module amendments

The following tool amendments have been made in relation to the hedgerow module:

- enhancement options for hedgerows have been amended
- formula and cell references to apply trading rules has been amended

3.5. Watercourse module amendments

The following tool amendments have been made in relation to the watercourse module:

- correction to how enhancements of watercourses are calculated for enhancement by re-meandering.
- cell referencing area fixed on watercourse module

There are also the following changes to culverts, ditches and canals in the tool:

- amendments to technical difficulty values for ditches and canals
- amendments to culvert encroachment multipliers
- strategic significance options are amended for culverts
- culverts removed from enhancement tab as an enhancement option

4. Condition assessment changes

Significant changes to condition assessment sheets, which may affect definitions and scoring, are indicated below. Minor wording tweaks for improved clarity are excluded.

Condition Assessment change	Type of change
<p><u>Habitat Definitions tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> removed reference to '<2ha' for Ornamental lake or pond changed '≤ 2ha', from Ponds (priority) and Ponds (non-priority) to '< 2ha' 	Correction
<p><u>Coastal tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wording added to the list of 'general coastal species indicative of suboptimal condition' to say 'sea buckthorn (<i>only outside its restricted native range</i>)'. 	Missing info added
<p><u>Individual trees tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> guidance added on rural lines and urban linear blocks wording tweaked around overlapping canopies guidance added around enhancement 	Wording added for clarity
<p><u>Lines of trees tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> guidance added on rural lines of trees and urban linear blocks 	Wording added for clarity
<p><u>Scrub tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wording added to Criterion A to say sea buckthorn can be 100% cover (<i>only in its restricted native range</i>)' 	Wording added for clarity
<p><u>Urban tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> combined criteria D1 and D2 into one criterion 	Structural change
<p><u>Wetland tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes made to align with guidance on ditches 	Wording added for clarity
<p><u>Woodland tab</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes to criteria B, C and H 	Wording added for clarity

This publication is published by Natural England under the Open Government Licence v3.0 for public sector information. You are encouraged to use, and reuse, information subject to certain conditions. For details of the licence visit

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3. Natural England publications are available as accessible pdfs from www.gov.uk/natural-england.

Should an alternative format of this publication be required, please contact our enquiries line for more information: 0300 060 3900 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk.

Catalogue code: JP039

Please note: Natural England photographs are only available for non-commercial purposes. For information regarding the use of maps or data visit www.gov.uk/how-to-access-natural-englands-maps-and-data.

© Natural England and other parties
2024

