

Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service Planners' Update

Autumn 2019

Issue 10

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Welcome to the SBIS Planners' Update!

We aim to provide accessible information about biodiversity issues in relation to planning. If we can help with training events, factsheets or in any other way, please do contact us and we'll do our best to provide what you need. Previous Updates are available on the [SBIS Planners' Page >](#)

East Anglian Planning and Biodiversity Seminar 2019

14th November 09:30—15:50, University of Suffolk, Ipswich

This popular annual seminar presents the latest information on biodiversity in spatial planning and development management. We aim to provide practical solutions to support decision-makers, whilst ensuring that legal obligations are met. It provides a much-needed forum for planners, consultees and ecological consultants in East Anglia to exchange ideas.

We listened to last year's feedback and are delighted to welcome speakers on the topics you wanted to know about:

[Key biodiversity issues in planning](#) - Sue Hooton, Association of Local Government Ecologists & Gen Broad, SBIS

[Biodiversity Net Gain in Rivers and Streams](#) - Sarah [Name], Environment Agency

[Suffolk Ecological Network Project](#) - Martin S [Name], SBIS

[Update on District Level Licensing for Great Crested Newts](#) - Gareth Dalglish, Natural England

[Otters and Planning](#) - Simone Bulli [Name], Suffolk Wildlife Trust

[Planning a future landscape with Water Voles](#) - Darren Tansley, UK Water Vole Steering Group

[Bats and watercourses](#) - Jane [Name], Bat Conservation Trust

[Innovative wetlands: the Ingol Case study and planning for the future](#) - David Diggins, Norfolk Rivers Trust

[An overview of the engineering and biodiversity of the SuDS at Bramford](#) - Emma Browning & Michael Hotze, Scottish Power Renewables

The event is now fully booked!

To go on the waiting list, please contact Charlotte Robotham/
David White at Norfolk County Council: NETI@norfolk.gov.uk

Places are free for local authorities and charities; a small fee of
£66 is charged for commercial organisations.

Wildlife Assessment Check launched

The [Wildlife Assessment Check >](#) is a free online planning tool for householders and small developers. Users are asked a series of questions about their project and the tool indicates whether protected and priority species (including bats and other mammals, birds, insects and plants), and designated sites (e.g. SSSIs) may be impacted by a development project and whether an applicant needs to obtain expert ecological advice in advance of making a planning application.

The tool has been created by the Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning, a partnership of 19 conservation, planning and development organisations, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The partnership are keen to help local planning authorities comply with their biodiversity statutory duty and to raise awareness of the need to take account of the potential ecological impact in even smaller-scale projects and permitted developments, in order to protect wildlife species and to avoid costly delays in a project due to a failure to consider biodiversity early on. Further info: www.biodiversityinplanning.org

Biodiversity in Planning Wildlife Assessment Check

Partnership for
Biodiversity in Planning

! Wildlife Assessment Check !

This is a free online tool for **householders** and **small to medium-scale developers** who want to undertake a development project to check whether they will need expert ecological advice **before** submitting a planning application. This tool is **not** intended for large development projects where formal Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are required according to EIA regulations.

Introduction

Local planning authorities have a **statutory duty**, according to UK and EU legislation and policy, to consider the potential impacts of a development on **protected and priority species**, habitats and statutory designated sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSIs), that are protected by law.

The Wildlife Assessment Check considers whether there are any protected and priority wildlife species and statutory designated sites that may be impacted by a development project. It will enable users to undertake a simple check at the pre-planning application stage, before a planning application is submitted. This will help clarify for applicants and planners whether a proposed site needs professional ecological advice and further assessment.

Aims

The key aims of the Wildlife Assessment Check are to:

- Ensure protected and priority species and statutory designated sites for nature conservation are considered early in the planning process
- Ensure professional ecological input is sought at an early stage of a development project
- Ensure necessary **ecological assessments** are carried out and submitted as part of a planning application

Simple SuDS guidance

Written for residents and community groups, the guidance shows how everyone can now play a vital role in how SuDS are deployed and maintained.

Simple SuDS has been designed by residents for residents. The authors have used plain non-technical English with the advice of experts from CIRIA, Newcastle University and JBA consulting.

[Visit LinkedIn for the guidance >](#)

And for a fascinating YouTube animation on how SuDS can work well, visit [CIRIA's Susdrain >](#)



Simple SuDS for Local People

A Guide to Sustainable Drainage in Developments



Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Working with nature to manage water and flood risk

Created by: Phiala Mehring and Teresa Bridgeman

Contact details: Phiala@sky.com, bridgemanteresa@gmail.com

Version #1: July 2019

Suffolk Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) published

RAMS is a collaborative project between East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils to help prevent additional recreational pressure on European designated sites on the Suffolk Coast, in part due to residential development in the area.

The Suffolk Coast RAMS provides a strategic and streamlined approach to mitigation measures, enabling development within the Zone of Influence.

[To find out more visit the East Suffolk Council website >](#)

Suffolk Biodiversity Validation Checklist updated

The checklist for Suffolk was updated by members of the Suffolk Planning Group in September 2019. The updated version can be found on the [SBIS Planners' page >](#)

The Town & Country Planning Association supports Green Infrastructure

From the [TCPA website >](#)

Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities.

Green infrastructure is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. It includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands – and also street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and soils. It includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'.

The biggest barrier to investment in green infrastructure is that decision makers still see it as risky. For the past two years we have worked with partners across Europe to help challenge this and other barriers to investment by demonstrating that, in our modern world, it is now much more hazardous not to invest in nature-based solutions.

Our Planning and Environment resource Efficiency in European Cities and Towns (PERFECT) resource library presents case studies from across the continent to illustrate why green infrastructure is a safe and cost-effective tool for dealing with changing healthcare needs, extreme weather and dangerous levels of air pollution. To access the library, click [here](#).

Nature can help people's health in urban areas

Two hours' immersion in nature each week can have a significant impact on a people's health and wellbeing, according to new research. Based on interviews with 20,000 people living in dense urban areas, findings show that only one-seventh of people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature each week report bad health compared to almost a quarter of those who spent little or no time outdoors. [For more details, visit Open Access Journal >](#)

Green infrastructure explained in planning guidance

The government has updated and strengthened the green infrastructure section in its planning practice guidance for England. The documents now refer to the 25 Year Environment Plan; clarify the links between green infrastructure, health and the economy; and include a section on 'net gain'. [For more details, visit gov.uk >](#)

Can parks help cities fight crime?

Some scholars say parks and other urban green spaces prevent violence. When vacant lots and deteriorating urban spaces are transformed into more appealing and useful places for residents, violence and crime typically decline in the immediate vicinity. In a study of public housing developments in Chicago, researchers found 52% fewer crimes reported near buildings surrounded by trees and other vegetation. [For more details, visit The Conversation.com >](#)

Green Infrastructure Partnership

The Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP) is a rapidly growing network of people and organisations that support the creation, enhancement and promotion of green infrastructure in the UK to improve quality of life, health, ecological diversity, resilience to climate change and economic attractiveness. Membership is free. The GIP enables people to share information - research, innovation, news and best practice - via newsletters and events. Its strategic focus is to influence key decision-makers by ensuring they have appropriate evidence about the value of GI to inform their decisions.

[Visit Green Infrastructure Partnership >](#)



Protected Species focus - Eurasian or European Otter

Key facts

- The Eurasian otter is fully protected as a European protected species (EPS) and is also protected under sections 9 and 11 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- Resident breeder in UK, found in rivers and streams.
- Diet: Mostly fish or shellfish (70%-95%) but opportunistic feeders on birds, small mammals and amphibians.
- Otters typically hold territories of 10-15km of river corridor in East Anglia, but these may be larger in poor habitat.
- They deposit faeces (known as spraints, with a characteristic sweet musky odour) in prominent places around their ranges. These mark an otter's range and help maintain social contact.
- Otters can live up to 16 years in captivity, though 7 years is more likely in the wild.
- Cubs are normally born in dens (holts), typically in a tree root system or a hole in a bank. Cubs leave the holt with their mother after about 10 weeks but are not independent until about 10-12 months old.

Survey for otters if:

- Distribution and historical records suggest otters may be present.
- The development will affect a water body (e.g. river, stream or lake).
- The development will affect habitats near a water body directly or through environmental impacts, e.g. noise, light.

Surveys should be done by a suitably experienced surveyor.

Mitigation measures include designs that:

- Retain otter habitats in the water body and bank.
- Avoid road crossings and culverts.
- Use otter-proof fences to stop otters getting into sites.

Compensation measures include:

- Constructing artificial holts to replace those damaged or lost.
- Building viaducts or underpasses to allow otters to cross barriers like roads.
- Installing mammal ledges on bridges and culverts to allow for continued passage alongside water bodies.
- Restoring or improving otter habitats.

How the Planning System can help otters

- *Ensure safe connectivity of habitat through sites if there will be an impact on water courses.*
- *The biggest danger for otters is road collision. Build in otter ledges or dry culverts for any water courses that need bridging. Without these, otters will avoid the stream or river during storm flows and cross roads instead.*
- *Buffer river banks to avoid the need for hard engineered banks. Buffers should be left with natural growth because otters rest above ground in high vegetation as much as below ground and leave bankside trees in place. If they need management, then pollarding is best as otters will rest in the crown of willow pollards.*



Eurasian or European Otter. Credit: Roger Hance

Please send me information about any relevant biodiversity and planning issues that should be highlighted. The update is published twice a year and goes to a wide audience in East Anglia. I look forward to hearing from you!

Gen Broad

Suffolk Biodiversity Planning Group members

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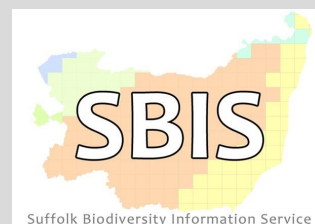
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Visit us at www.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity/statutoryobligations/plannerspage