INTERIM STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE & SPATIAL RISK GUIDANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN IN KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK BOROUGH COUNCIL'S LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY AREA

Interim Guidance

January 25, 2024

KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Term
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BCT	Bat Conservation Trust
BOA	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
EPS	European Protected Species
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservancy Council
KLWNBC	King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
LNR	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NBIS	Norfolk Biodiversity Records Service.
NCA	National Character Area
Norfolk GIMP	Norfolk Green Infrastructure Mapping Project

NRN	Nature Recovery Network
PAS	Planning Advisory Service
WFD	Water Framework Directive

Figures

Strategic significance category	Score applied in the metric	Description
Low	1	Where the definitions for high and medium strategic significance are not met. Even if your project is within a plan area, if it does not deliver the specific actions outlined in these plans you should: • record strategic significance as low in the baseline • record strategic significance as low in post-intervention sheets

Figure 1: Screen shot of Strategic Significance options available for the Statutory Biodiversity Metric for Area and Linear Habitats.

Figure 2: Screen shot of the Assessor and Reviewer Comments boxes within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric which can be used to justify level of strategic significance selected for each habitat parcel.

Figure 3: Spatial Risk Categories for Statutory Biodiversity Metric. (Source: Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide).

Figure 4: National Character Areas in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

Report Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Checked by
V.1 Draft	12/09/2023	Claire Wiggs ACIEEM	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides interim guidance on how King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council as a Local Planning Authority (LPA) has decided to define Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk in the context of delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) within its authority area, hereafter referred to as 'King's Lynn and West Norfolk'. This guidance should be used in conjunction with the latest Statutory Biodiversity Metric. It aims to help planning applicants and potential BNG offset providers fill out the Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk elements of all three components of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Area Habitats, Hedgerows and Lines of Trees, and Rivers and Streams). Some background and theory is provided in Sections 1-3 and 5, with a King's Lynn and West Norfolk approach provided in Sections 4 and 6. A list of useful external mapping links that will require consideration to make decisions on both Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk within King's Lynn and West Norfolk are provided in Section 8. Theoretical scenarios are provided in Section 10 to help the user to apply the guidance appropriately. This guidance will be reviewed periodically and eventually will be replaced by the final version of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Norfolk. The new LNRS will provide the ultimate signposting for decisions on Strategic Significance in Norfolk in the future.

Strategic Significance is defined differently for Area and Hedgerows and Lines of Trees Habitat within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide. Below is a table that summarises how these are to be defined in King's Lynn and West Norfolk on an interim basis, based on that guidance.

Strategic significance	Definition in King's Lynn
High Strategic Significance *This decision must be justified to the LPA in writing*	This category can only be applied when habitat enhancement or creation comprises priority habitat that falls within the description or target of a specific Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) and is located specifically within that BOA (see Appendix 2).
Medium Strategic Significance *This decision must be justified to the LPA in writing*	Habitats that are enhanced or created for BNG either on-site or off-site are considered 'ecologically desirable' if the location and type of habitat produced is justified by a professional ecologist.
Low Strategic Significance *This is the default category*	Any other habitat parcel that cannot be assigned either medium or high Strategic Significance

Interim definition of Strategic Significance for Area and Hedgerows and Lines of Trees Habitat categories in King's Lynn and West Norfolk

The Norfolk BAP can be accessed here: Home | Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

The full list of priority habitats and species is here: Habitats and species of principal importance in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and National datasets on priority habitats (MAGIC).

Spatial Risk for **Area and Hedgerow and Line of Trees** metric components are determined as the entire of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's Local Planning Authority area.

Spatial Risk for the **Rivers and Streams** component of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric is defined based on the Environment Agency maps for waterbodies and catchments, details of which can be

found on the Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer:
https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning

It should be noted that if a planning applicant wishes to deliver BNG on a site outside of King's Lynn and West Norfolk they should discuss this with KLWNBC at the earliest opportunity.

1. Introduction and background

This interim guidance has been produced to support the implementation for Biodiversity Net Gain, which becomes mandatory in January 2024.

As part of the mandatory legislation an Assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain Impact using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric must be submitted as a spreadsheet with planning applications so that it can be assessed. It is expected that this guidance regarding strategic significance on biodiversity is used.

Norfolk County Council will be producing the full Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the whole of Norfolk in the next year as the Responsible Authority.

The Environment Act 2021 has a specific duty to 'have regard' to the relevant LNRS. It is anticipated that once complete, the Norfolk LNRS will be used to help determine where best to target areas for Biodiversity Net Gain in Norfolk. This LNRS for Norfolk will reflect local nature conservation priorities in the context of an entire England-wide Nature Recovery Network (NRN). Hence the final LNRS will be used 'to determine the "strategic significance" score that is part of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric scoring approach. King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council has produced this interim guidance on Strategic Significance ahead of the publication of the full LNRS.

2. Aim of Guidance

This guidance aims to:

- Support professional ecologists, working on behalf of planning applicants and planning consultants, to complete the Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk sections of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric that forms part of the submission of a planning application;
- Support landowners, BNG offset providers and their ecological advisors that are looking to potentially put their land forward for the off-site BNG that may be required through the planning process;
- Provide interim guidance on how King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council will define Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk in King's Lynn and West Norfolk ahead of the completion of the full LNRS.

This document will be reviewed periodically between now and the completion of the full LNRS for Norfolk.

3. Defining Strategic Significance

In simple terms, Strategic Significance is the consideration of **how a specific parcel of habitat sits within its landscape context**. **It is a landscape scale approach to ensure that Biodiversity Net Gain is incentivised so that the right habitat is located in the right place within the landscape**. This theory of the requirement for '*more, bigger, better and joined*' habitat in England is now widely referred to as the 'Lawton Principles' highlighted in Sir John Lawton's key '*Making Space for Nature*' review in 2010 (Lawton, 2010). The Lawton Review comprised an ecological evidence base, still influencing government policy today and was included in the Government's 2018 25-year plan which stated the need for the planning system to provide Biodiversity Net Gain (HM Government 2018).

The details of how Strategic Significance is defined in the context of Biodiversity Net Gain is provided in the current Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Here Strategic Significance comprises one of the three components that are used to determine the **quality of a habitat both on-site and off-site of a planning application site.**

The three habitat quality components of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric as outlined in Section 4 of Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide are:

- Distinctiveness
- Condition
- Strategic Significance

In the Statutory Biodiversity Metric:

- **Distinctiveness** values are predetermined **and cannot be changed**;
- **Condition** values are usually determined by an **ecological survey** following standardised condition assessments; and
- **Strategic Significance is determined with reference to local policies and in consultation with the LPA, in this case King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council***

*Assessors should split the habitat parcel and apply the scores accordingly when a habitat parcel is intersected by:

- a boundary between two areas of different strategic significance
- a consenting body or planning authority boundary

Statutory Biodiversity Metric comprises three separate 'modules' of the metric which are a proxy to describe broad categories of biodiversity units. These units are:

1. Area habitats (**Green** in the metric)
2. Hedgerows and lines of trees (**Brown** in the Metric); and
3. Watercourses (**Blue** in the Metric).

Each of these components provide three types of biodiversity units that cannot be summed, traded or converted (UK Government, 2023).

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric highlights that **each parcel of habitat which has a specific condition** (i.e. every line of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Excel spreadsheet**) will require a separate assessment for an appropriate Strategic Significance score**. This is **required for both on-site and off-site Biodiversity Net Gain.**

Strategic Significance can be defined using either **spatial resources** (such as strategic nature conservation priority mapping) and/or **descriptive resources** (e.g. current BAP priorities).

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide highlights that a variety of published local strategies and objectives can be used to identify local importance, such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP), National Character Areas Objectives, Local Planning Authority Local Ecological Networks, Shoreline Management Plans, Estuary Strategies and Green Infrastructure Strategies.

Strategic Significance

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric provides for three categories of Strategic Significance: ***High, Medium or Low****. In the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guidance these categories are defined as follows in*

Strategic significance category	Score applied in the metric	Description
Low	1	Where the definitions for high and medium strategic significance are not met. Even if your project is within a plan area, if it does not deliver the specific actions outlined in these plans you should: • record strategic significance as low in the baseline • record strategic significance as low in post-intervention sheets

Figure 1.

Strategic significance category	Score applied in the metric	Description
High	1.15	Where there is a published LNRS, • 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 or Where there is no published LNRS and 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 measure set out in the LNRS or alternative strategy (where the LNRS is not yet available) you should: • record strategic significance as low in the baseline • record strategic significance as high in post-intervention sheets • record which plan you have used in the user comments
Medium	1.10	This category cannot be applied where the LNRS is published, or where the habitat and location is included within other strategic documents specified by the relevant planning authority. 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

Strategic significance category	Score applied in the metric	Description
Low	1	Where the definitions for high and medium strategic significance are not met. Even if your project is within a plan area, if it does not deliver the specific actions outlined in these plans you should: • record strategic significance as low in the baseline • record strategic significance as low in post-intervention sheets

Figure 1: Screen shot of Strategic Significance options available for the Statutory Biodiversity Metric for Area and Linear Habitats

4. Defining Strategic Significance in King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Introduction and Background

Both spatial and descriptive resources will be used to determine Strategic Significance in this interim period.

The key documents to be used for King's Lynn and West Norfolk are the Norfolk Green Infrastructure Mapping Project available here Green Infrastructure (norfolkbiodiversity.org) and Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) available here: Habitats and Species (norfolkbiodiversity.org).

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) are the most important areas for biodiversity in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. BOAs in King's Lynn and West Norfolk take account of existing concentrations of UK BAP habitat (priority habitats), important areas for UK BAP and other rare species and land with potential for habitat restoration. These features form the core areas of BOAs and primarily contained within sites protected by national and international designations.

While the protected sites within King's Lynn and West Norfolk form the core areas of BOAs the key ecological networks identified by the Norfolk GIMP highlight habitat creation opportunities to enhance the connection between these sites. The various components of ecological networks are explained in the Natural Environment White Paper but the main components are core areas and ecological buffer zones connected by linear landscape corridors (see Appendix 2).

The Norfolk GIMP was undertaken by Norfolk County Environment Team on behalf of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Officer Group (NSPG) and used habitat data from the Norfolk Living Map to identify ecological connectivity maps, namely:

- Habitat core area map
- Ecological network and opportunity maps for grassland/heathland habitats
- Ecological network and opportunity maps for woodland
- Ecological network and opportunity maps for wetland habitats
- Combined networks and opportunity maps

Off-site habitat creation effort should be focused on, but not exclusive to, BOAs and priority water catchments – both in improving and creating priority habitats but also other habitats within BOAs.

It is important to remember that each parcel of habitat (each row within the Metric) must be allocated a specific Strategic Significance category in the Metric.

Table 1: Interim definition of Strategic Significance for Area and Linear Habitats in King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Strategic significance	Definition in King's Lynn
High Strategic Significance *This decision must be justified to the LPA in writing*	This category can only be applied when habitat enhancement or creation comprises priority habitat that falls within the description or target of a specific Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) and is located specifically within that BOA (see Appendix 2).
Medium Strategic Significance	Habitats that are enhanced or created for BNG either on-site or off-site are considered 'ecologically desirable' if the location and type

This decision must be justified to the LPA in writing	of habitat produced is justified by a professional ecologist.
Low Strategic Significance *This is the default category*	Any other habitat parcel that cannot be assigned as medium or high Strategic Significance

Examples of this could be to ensure the buffering of habitats considered to be of high strategic significance or providing important links within the existing landscape. This could be improving the ecological condition of a habitat from a botanical perspective and / or creating an important linkage for bats (BCT, 2020).

A range of potential fictional scenarios are provided in Section 10 to this guidance.

Should the professional ecologist wish to allocate a high or medium strategic significance within the Metric then a full justification as to why this is deemed appropriate must be provided in either / or both the Assessor Comments section (see Figure 2 below) of the Metric or the associated BNG Report.

Figure 2: Screen shot of the Assessor and Reviewer Comments boxes within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric which can be used to justify level of strategic significance selected for each habitat parcel.

5. Defining Spatial Risk

Where a project cannot achieve a net gain in biodiversity units on-site, then off-site units can be used to meet the BNG requirement.

The Spatial Risk Multiplier reflects the relationship between the location of on-site biodiversity loss and the location of off-site habitat compensation. It affects the number of biodiversity units provided to a project by penalising proposals where off-site habitat is located at distance from the impact site.

Spatial Risk comprises one of the three components in the Metric that help determine the value of the post-development enhancement and creation interventions scenario and biodiversity unit value for both on and off-site BNG within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The Metric risk multipliers are:

- difficulty of creation or enhancement
- temporal risk
- spatial risk

In the Statutory Biodiversity Metric:

- Difficulty of creating or restoring / enhancing habitat values are automatically assigned and cannot be changed;
- Temporal Risk or 'time to target condition' values are also automatically assigned; and
- Spatial Risk value is an additional multiplier applied to 'reflect the proximity of the off-site changes to the project sites where the biodiversity loss is occurring'.

The Spatial Risk Factor is closely linked to Principle 8 of the metric where the user guidance states that '*Created and enhanced habitats should be, where practical and reasonable, local to any impact and deliver strategically important outcomes for nature conservation'*.

The Spatial Risk categories for all three components of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric are provided in Figure 3 below from the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide.

Spatial risk category	Spatial risk score applied	Area and hedgerow modules	Watercourse modules
Within	1.0	Compensation is within Local Planning Authority (LPA) boundary or National Character Area (NCA) of impact site Intertidal habitats only: Compensation is within Marine Plan Area of impact site	Compensation is within waterbody catchment
Neighbouring	0.75	Compensation is outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but within neighbouring LPA or NCA Intertidal habitats only: Compensation is outside Marine Plan Area of impact site, but within neighbouring Marine Plan Area	Compensation is outside waterbody catchment, but within operational catchment
Outside	0.5	Compensation is outside LPA or NCA of impact site and outside neighbouring LPA or NCA Intertidal habitats only: Compensation is outside Marine Plan Area of impact site and outside neighbouring Marine Plan Area	Compensation is outside operational catchment

Figure 3: Spatial Risk Categories for Statutory Biodiversity Metric. (Source: Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide).

There are 159 National Character Areas (NCA) in England. Natural England describes each NCA as representing an area of distinct and recognisable character at the national scale. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape, not county or district boundaries.

6. Defining Spatial Risk in King's Lynn and West Norfolk

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council define spatial risk for King's Lynn and West Norfolk as the whole of King's Lynn and West Norfolk is the local planning authority.

The consideration of proximity for off-site Biodiversity Net Gain schemes is one of a number of other requirements that need to be considered when determining if a site is suitable for off-site BNG, including security, quantity and equivalence.

In the event that:

• an off-site area for BNG is proposed to fall outside of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's Local Authority Area AND / OR:

• you are proposing off-site BNG that involves river restoration or enhancement

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH KING'S LYNN WEST NORFOLK BOROUGH COUNCIL FOR FURTHER ADVICE.

Defining Spatial Risk for Area Habitats and Hedgerows and Lines of Trees

There are 5 National Character Areas (NCA) that lie within King's Lynn and West Norfolk, as follows:

- The Fens
- North-West Norfolk
- North Norfolk Coast
- Mid-Norfolk
- Brecklands

An interactive map showing the precise boundary of these with links through to detailed descriptions of each NCA nationally is located here: https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/

Figure 4 below shows NCA within King's Lynn and West Norfolk which is extracted from the Landscape Character Assessment available here: Landscape Character Assessment | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk (west-norfolk.gov.uk).

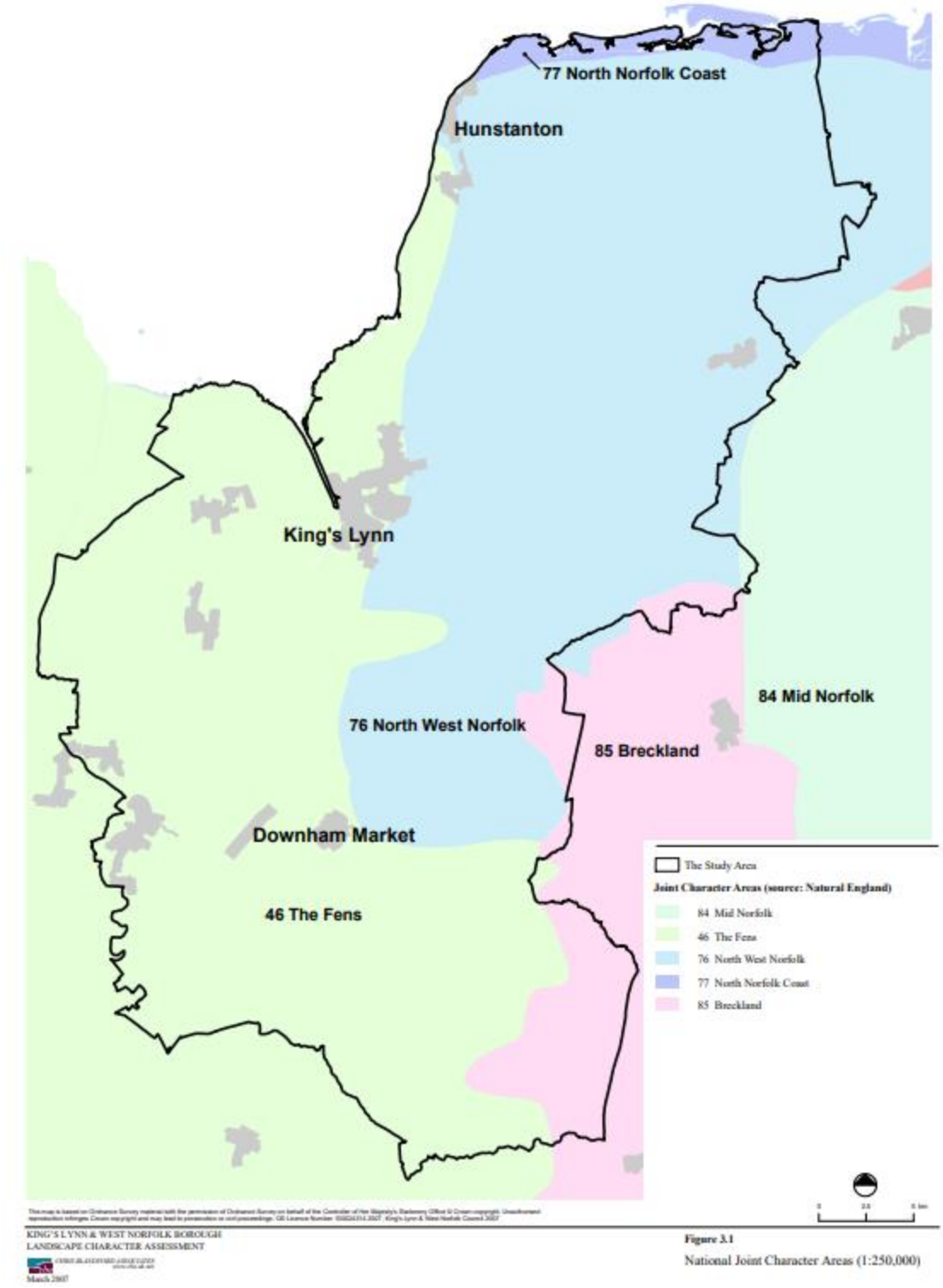


Figure 4: National Character Areas in King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Defining Spatial Risk for Watercourses

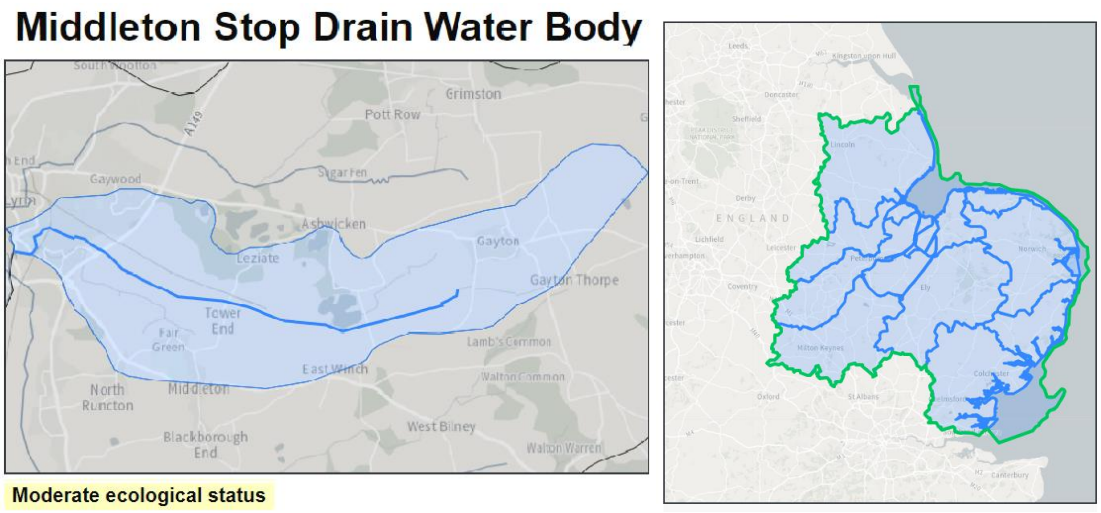
Given the unique nature of rivers, government guidance for Statutory Biodiversity Metric uses a different spatial risk description than for Area Habitats and Hedgerows and Lines of Trees. Spatial Risk for Watercourses is described with reference to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) waterbody and catchment boundaries.

There are 10 River Basin Districts within England; the majority of King's Lynn and West Norfolk lies within the Anglian River Basin District. Each River Basin District has a number of Management Catchments within it, which are occasionally split further into Operational Catchments. Each Management or Operational Catchment supports a number of waterbodies, each of which have a hydrological boundary.

The extent of the waterbody boundary and its associated catchment boundary can be easily located on the Environment Agency's interactive mapping web Portal 'Catchment Data Explorer' that is accessible here: https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning.

Box 1: An example of how to determine the waterbody and catchment boundaries for BNG using Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer (Environment Agency 2023).

A planning application within the Middleton Stop Drain Water body required net gain in river units to be delivered.



The above are screen shots of the relevant waterbody and catchment boundaries from the Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer. Source: https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB105033047670

• If the River BNG component is delivered within the Middleton Stop Drain Water Body boundary as illustrated above a spatial risk multiplier of 1.0 will be applied and units will not be devalued.

• If the River BNG component is delivered within the Anglian River Basin District, also illustrated above, then a spatial risk multiplier of 0.75 will be applied. If outside a multiplier of 0.5 will be applied. The latter meaning that 25 and 50% extra units will be required to be delivered respectively compared to BNG being delivered within the Catchment.

In line with the government Statutory Biodiversity Metric guidance King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council will expect the spatial risk multiplier to be applied to watercourse metric calculations as shown in the example in Box 1 above. This will mean that off-site BNG for watercourses should ideally be delivered within the same hydrological boundary of the waterbody of the planning application site as shown on the Environment Agency's interactive mapping tool. If this is not possible, and the off-site BNG can only be delivered outside of the waterbody boundary but within the same catchment, then a disincentivising spatial risk multiplier of 0.75 will be added to the

river unit delivery. If the BNG is delivered outside of the catchment a 0.5 spatial risk multiplier will be applied.

Please contact King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council if off-site BNG is to be delivered outside of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's authority area, even if this lies within the waterbody boundary for the Application Site.

7. Conclusion

This guidance has been produced ahead of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Norfolk to provide an interim approach to defining both Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain assessments undertaken in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. In this guidance, we ask for clear justification from the applicant's or landowner's ecological advisor as to why they consider a specific habitat parcel to be upgraded from the default of 'low' strategic significance to be considered 'medium' or 'high'.

For all Area Habitat and Hedgerows and Lines of Trees, High Strategic Significance can only be applied when the habitat enhancement or creation comprises a priority habitat that falls within the description or target for a BOA. Medium Strategic Significance can be applied using professional judgement.

Justification for the use of both medium and high Strategic Significance, and any deviation from

Strategic significance category	Score applied in the metric	Description
Low	1	Where the definitions for high and medium strategic significance are not met. Even if your project is within a plan area, if it does not deliver the specific actions outlined in these plans you should: • record strategic significance as low in the baseline • record strategic significance as low in post-intervention sheets

Figure 1, should be provided the BNG Report and reflected in the 'Assessor comments' section of the Metric. This should be agreed with the LPA (see Figure 2).

Spatial Risk for Area and Hedgerows / Lines of Trees has been determined as the entire of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's Local Planning Authority remit (LPA). For watercourses Defra 4.0 guidance as outlined in Figure 3 should be followed, where it is anticipated that watercourse BNG should be delivered where possible within the water body boundary as defined by the Environment Agency.

8. Key Website Links for Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk Decisions in King's Lynn and west Norfolk

This guidance document has referred to a number of websites that should be consulted prior to the publication of the Norfolk LNRS to help determine the Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk for an application site and or BNG site. These have been listed here to help the user.

Statutory Biodiversity Metric

- Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tools and Guides

Strategic Significance

- Biodiversity Action Plans in Norfolk
- Norfolk Rivers Biodiversity Action Plan
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Norfolk Green Infrastructure Map
- Natural England Priority Rivers and Streams Map
  West Norfolk Ecological Networks Map

Spatial Risk

- King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment
- Environment Agency Catchment Data Explorer for waterbody and catchment areas

9. References

Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), 2020. *Core Sustenance Zones and habitats of importance for designing Biodiversity Net Gain for Bats*.

Environment Agency, 2023. *Explore Catchment Data*.

Her Majesty's Government, 2018. *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*.

Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC), 2011. *UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Priority Habitat Descriptions*.

Lawton, J,2010. *Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Site and Ecological Network*.

UK Government, 2023. *Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tools and Guides*.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Example scenarios for defining Strategic Significance in King's Lynn and West Norfolk

SCENARIO 1

A BNG site is proposed within a BOA. The BNG delivery includes the enhancement / creation of three priority habitats: hedgerows, native lowland beech and yew woodland, and lowland calcareous grassland. In addition, the owner wishes to put in a small garden pond which wouldn't be defined as a BAP priority habitat.

Question: What level of strategic significance could be applied to the proposed habitat creation?

Suggested steps to take:

STEP 1: Check the site is within a BOA by checking the Green Infrastructure documents.

In this scenario the site lies within the Heathland and Grassland BOA and Woodland BOA.

STEP 2: Ensure the proposed habitat creation really is a BAP priority habitat (check definitions within the BAP and JNCC guidance against target habitats available here: https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/2728792c-c8c6-4b8c-9ccd-a908cb0f1432).

STEP 3: Check the description of the relevant BOA.

STEP 4: Consider if a strategic significance category above the default of 'low' should be applied.

Answer:

- Lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland calcareous grassland and priority hedgerows are all priority habitats that have a target associated with them.
- Two of these habitats (Lowland beech and yew woodland, and lowland calcareous grassland) are described in the BOA under the heading 'Biodiversity'. These habitat parcels should therefore be assigned a score of 'High Strategic Significance' in accordance with the Interim Guidance on Strategic Significance and Spatial Risk.
- Priority hedgerows (that fit the definition of a BAP priority hedgerow) are mentioned in the targets for the BOA for management, restoration and creation so should also be assigned a score of 'High Strategic Significance'.
- Ponds to be created are not listed in the BAP and will not be of a BAP priority habitat quality and hence should be entered into the Metric as 'Low Strategic Significance'.

SCENARIO 2

A building to be retained but renovated within a planning application has been found to support a maternity roost of brown long-eared bats. During the bat surveys several flight lines used by commuting and foraging bats were identified. Additional hedgerow planting will be provided to enhance existing connections with adjacent woodland. This hedgerow enhancement forms part of the EPS licence. The site does not lie within a BOA.

Question: What level of strategic significance could be assigned to this new planting?

Answer: The planning applicant's ecologist may wish to demonstrate, using their professional judgement, that a 'medium' strategic significance score could be applied to the hedgerow

enhancement in question. Reference should be made to the Bat Conservation Trust's 2020 guidance on 'Core Sustenance Zones and Habitats of Importance for Designing Biodiversity Net Gain for Bats'. The allocation of a medium score should be clearly justified in either or both the BNG report and or the Metric 'Assessor Comments', see Figure 3.

However, please note that this habitat creation / enhancement for non-BNG outcomes (in this case a European Protected Species (EPS) licence for bats) could only ever 'contribute up to a point of equivalent to no net loss of BNG (as calculated by the Biodiversity Metric) but not beyond'. Hence these enhancement measures alone cannot contribute to net gain as per current advice.

SCENARIO 3

A BNG site is proposed to create an area of Other Neutral Grassland on a currently predominantly arable site within a planning application within the BOA of Heathland and Grassland in the north of the county.

Question: What level of strategic significance could be assigned to this habitat parcel of new Other Neutral Grassland?

Suggested steps to take:

STEP 1: Check the site does lie within the BOA.

STEP 2: Check the precise habitat that is to be created or enhanced by the proposed BNG (in this case 'Other Neutral Grassland' is not a BAP priority habitat).

STEP 3: Check the description of the BOA and appropriate targets.

STEP 4: Consider the appropriate level of strategic significance.

Answer: Other Neutral Grassland is not a BAP priority habitat, neither is it listed in the BOA biodiversity description or targets. Hence the Strategic Significance of this parcel of land should remain as the default of 'low' (no change).

SCENARIO 4

Question: A BNG off-set site is proposing to create some woodland planting outside of a BOA but the planting connects up two previously isolated areas of woodland. What strategic significance be applied to this proposed woodland area?

Answer: The planning applicant's ecological advisor may wish to put forward justification to enable this woodland planting to be given a 'medium' strategic significance in the Metric given its ecologically functionality in the landscape. This would be provided in the 'Assessor Comments' (see Figure 3) in the Metric as well as the BNG report and need to be agreed with the LPA.

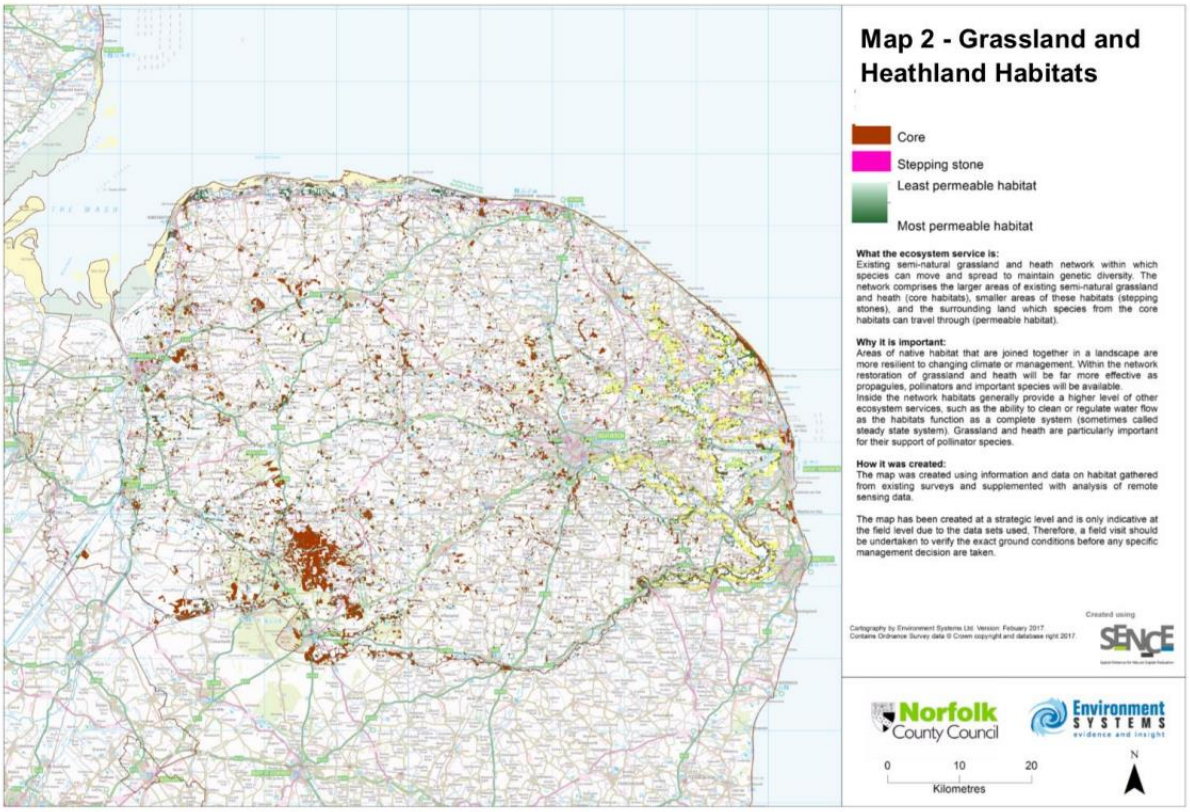
SCENARIO 5

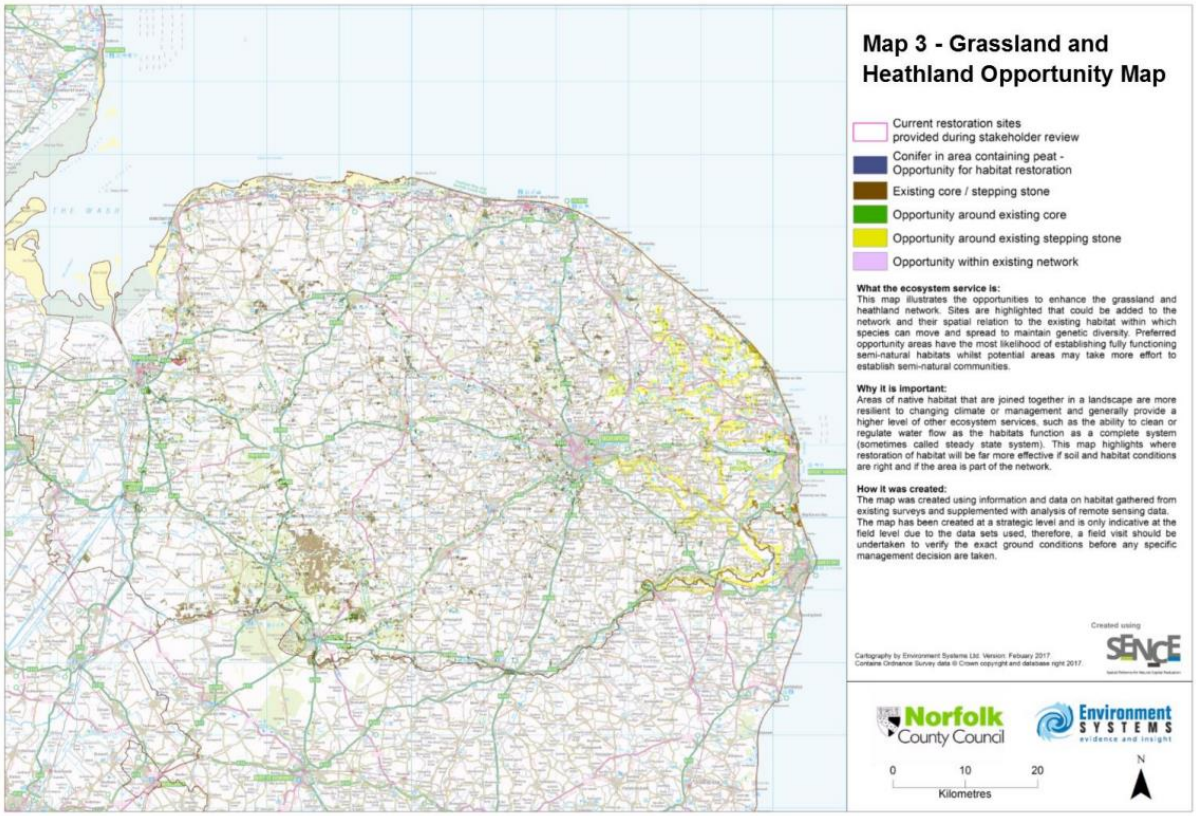
Question: A planning applicant wishes to create an isolated small area of BAP priority woodland within an open area of predominantly arable land use. The area where the woodland is proposed has no landscape connections to other woodlands or hedgerows in the area. This site lies within a BOA, but BAP priority woodland is not listed in either the description or targets for enhancement / creation within the BOA. What Strategic Significance should this woodland be assigned?

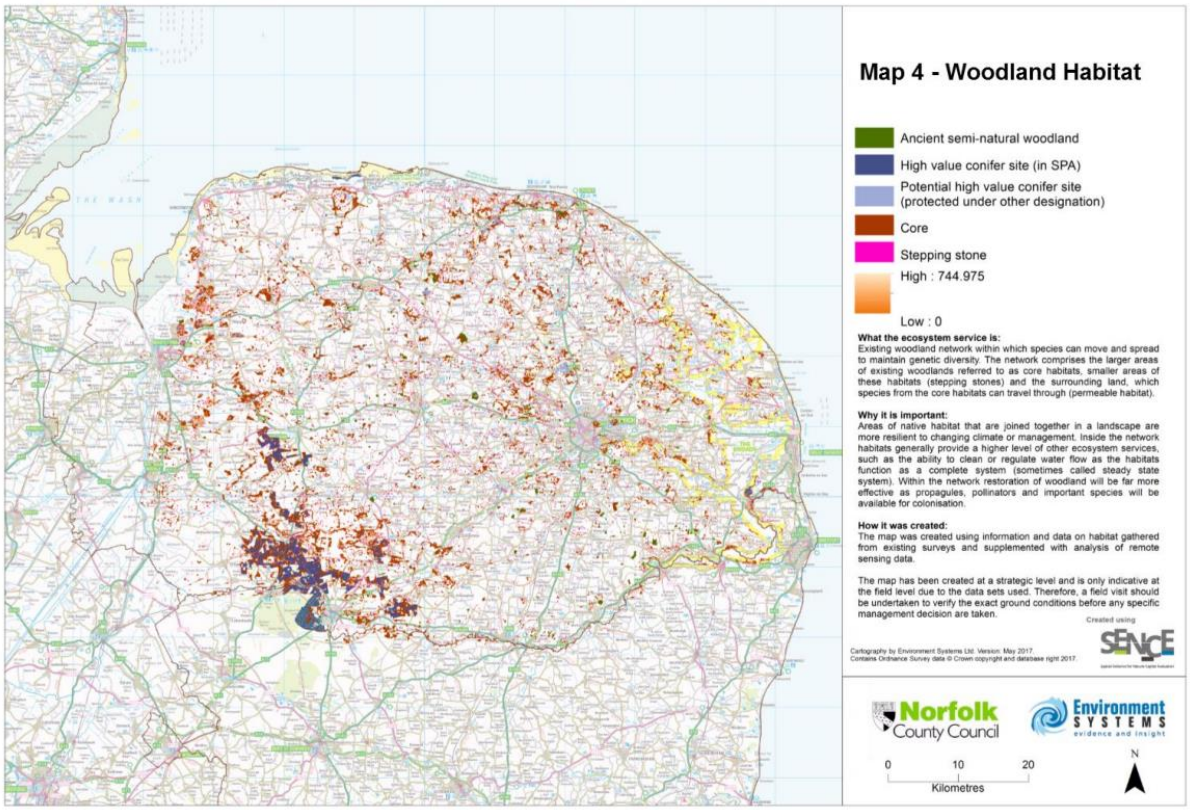
Answer: In this instance despite a priority habitat being created that would contribute to targets set for the BAP within the county as a whole, this isn't a specific priority habitat for this BOA and, due to

its poor placing in the landscape, its ‘landscape context’ is not considered appropriate. The default of a low strategic significance multiplier should be applied to this habitat parcel.

Appendix 2 – Ecological Connectivity Network maps transposed from Norfolk GIMP






Map 4 - Woodland Habitat
Ancient semi-natural woodland
High value conifer site (in SPA)
Potential high value conifer site (protected under other designation)
Core
Stepping stone
High : 744.975
Low : 0
What the ecosystem service is:
Existing woodland network within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. The network comprises the larger areas of existing woodlands referred to as core habitats, smaller areas of these habitats (stepping stones) and the surrounding land, which species from the core habitats can travel through (permeable habitat).
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management. Inside the network habitats generally provide a higher level of other ecosystem services, such as the ability to clean or regulate water flow as the habitats function as a complete system (sometimes called steady state system). Within the network restoration of woodland will be far more effective as propagules, pollinators and important species will be available for colonisation.
How it was created:
The map was created using information and data on habitat gathered from existing surveys and supplemented with analysis of remote sensing data.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used. Therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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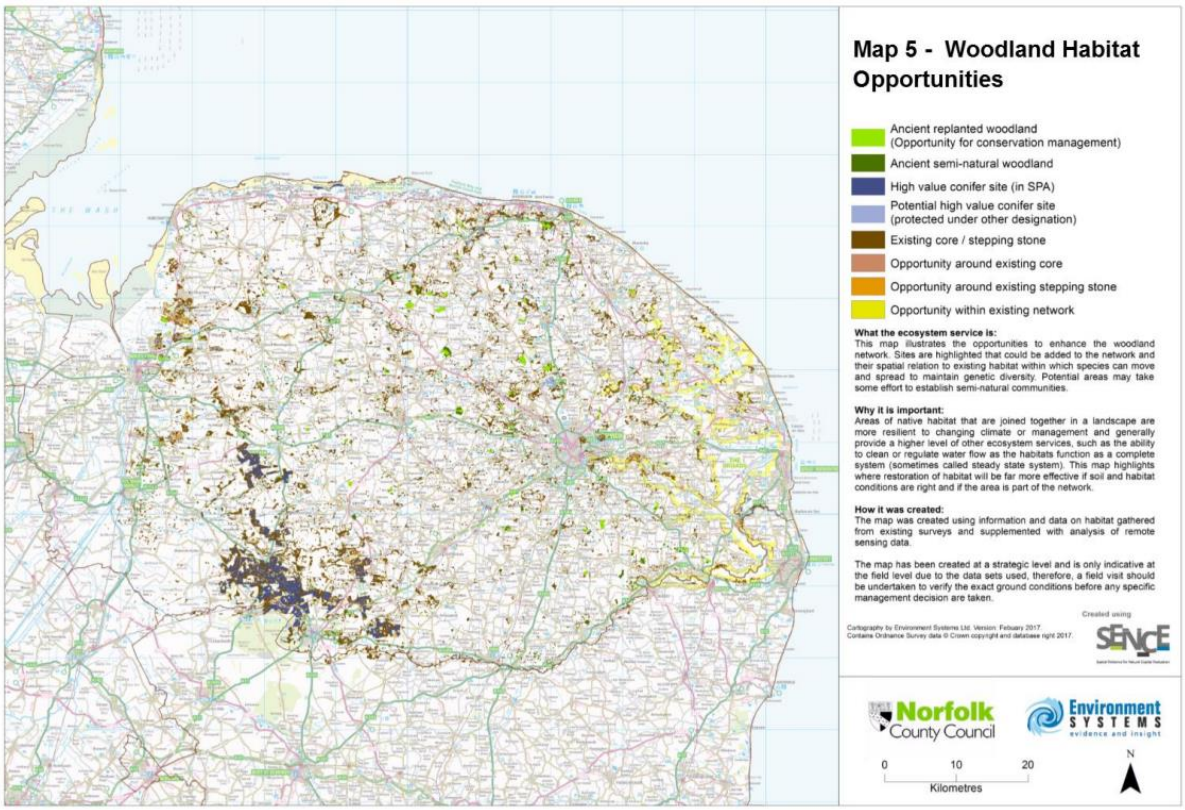
Map 5 - Woodland Habitat Opportunities
Ancient replanted woodland (Opportunity for conservation management)
Ancient semi-natural woodland
High value conifer site (in SPA)
Potential high value conifer site (protected under other designation)
Existing core / stepping stone
Opportunity around existing core
Opportunity around existing stepping stone
Opportunity within existing network
What the ecosystem service is:
This map illustrates the opportunities to enhance the woodland network. Sites are highlighted that could be added to the network and their spatial relation to existing habitat within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. Potential areas may take some effort to establish semi-natural communities.
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management and generally provide a higher level of other ecosystem services, such as the ability to clean or regulate water flow as the habitats function as a complete system (sometimes called steady state system). This map highlights where restoration of habitat will be far more effective if soil and habitat conditions are right and if the area is part of the network.
How it was created:
The map was created using information and data on habitat gathered from existing surveys and supplemented with analysis of remote sensing data.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used, therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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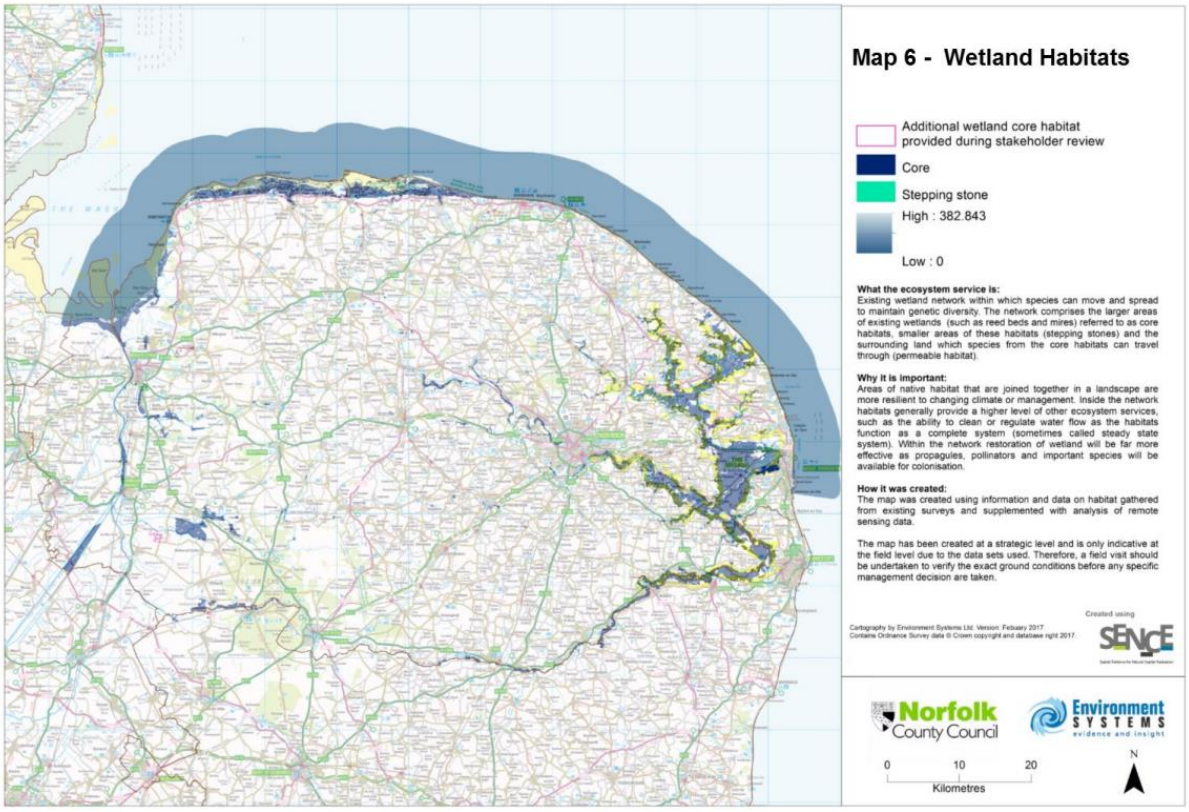
Map 6 - Wetland Habitats
Additional wetland core habitat provided during stakeholder review
Core
Stepping stone
High : 382.843
Low : 0
What the ecosystem service is:
Existing wetland network within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. The network comprises the larger areas of existing wetlands (such as reed beds and mires) referred to as core habitats, smaller areas of these habitats (stepping stones) and the surrounding land which species from the core habitats can travel through (permeable habitat).
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management. Inside the network habitats generally provide a higher level of other ecosystem services, such as the ability to clean or regulate water flow as the habitats function as a complete system (sometimes called steady state system). Within the network restoration of wetland will be far more effective as propagules, pollinators and important species will be available for colonisation.
How it was created:
The map was created using information and data on habitat gathered from existing surveys and supplemented with analysis of remote sensing data.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used. Therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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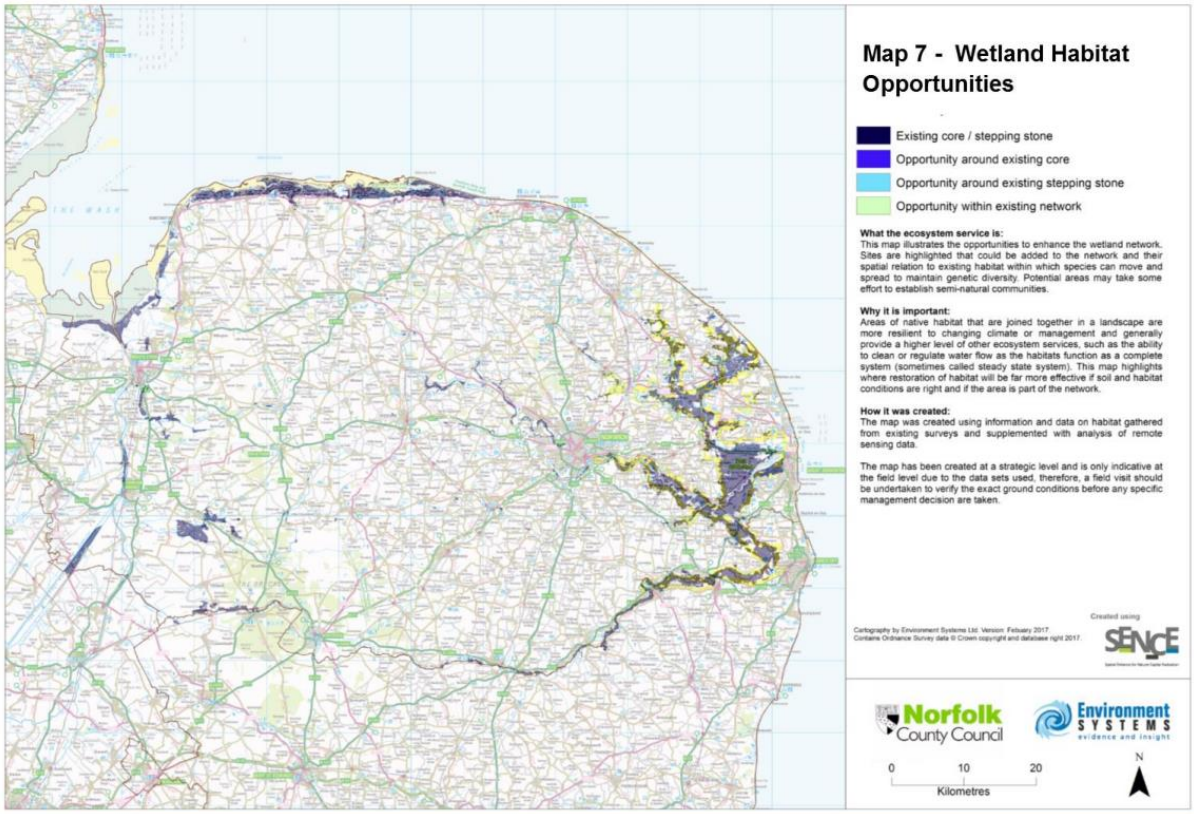
Map 7 - Wetland Habitat Opportunities
Existing core / stepping stone
Opportunity around existing core
Opportunity around existing stepping stone
Opportunity within existing network
What the ecosystem service is:
This map illustrates the opportunities to enhance the wetland network. Sites are highlighted that could be added to the network and their spatial relation to existing habitat within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. Potential areas may take some effort to establish semi-natural communities.
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management and generally provide a higher level of other ecosystem services, such as the ability to clean or regulate water flow as the habitats function as a complete system (sometimes called steady state system). This map highlights where restoration of habitat will be far more effective if soil and habitat conditions are right and if the area is part of the network.
How it was created:
The map was created using information and data on habitat gathered from existing surveys and supplemented with analysis of remote sensing data.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used, therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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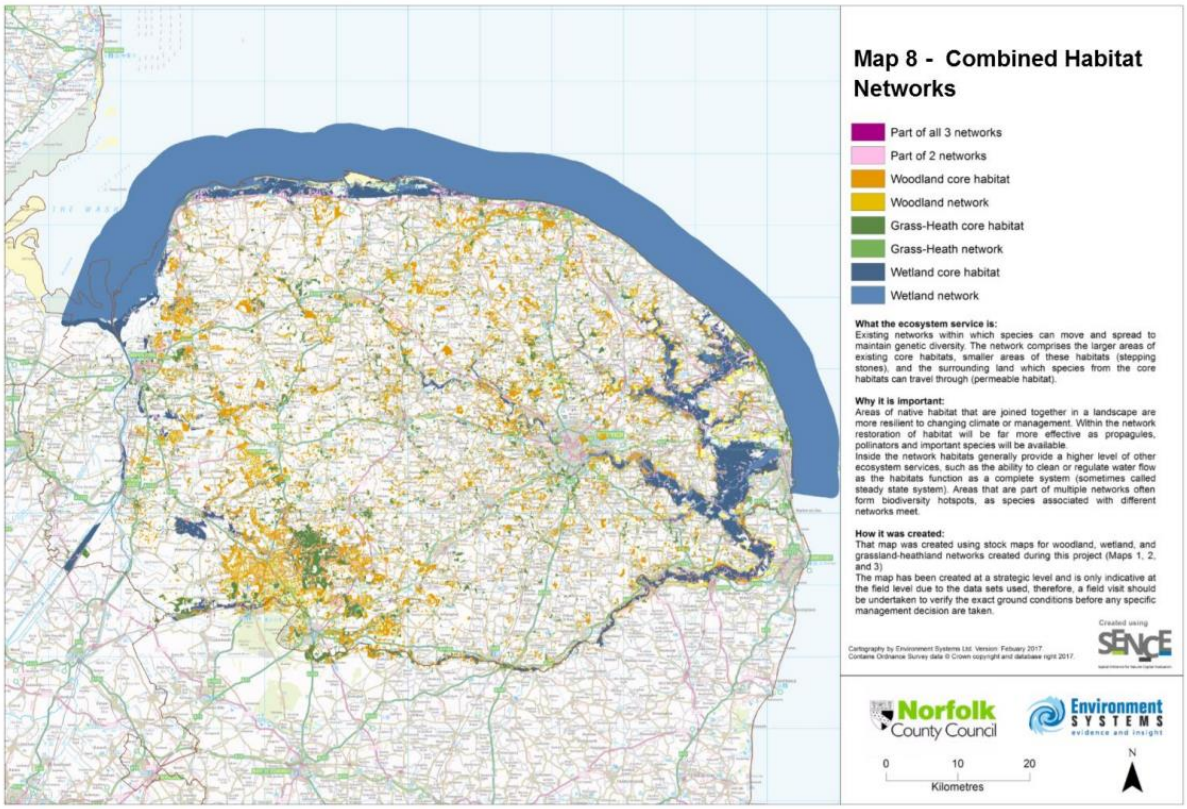
Map 8 - Combined Habitat Networks
Part of all 3 networks
Part of 2 networks
Woodland core habitat
Woodland network
Grass-Heath core habitat
Grass-Heath network
Wetland core habitat
Wetland network
What the ecosystem service is:
Existing networks within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. The network comprises the larger areas of existing core habitats, smaller areas of these habitats (stepping stones), and the surrounding land which species from the core habitats can travel through (permeable habitat).
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management. Within the network restoration of habitat will be far more effective as propagules, pollinators and important species will be available.
Inside the network habitats generally provide a higher level of other ecosystem services, such as the ability to clean or regulate water flow as the habitats function as a complete system (sometimes called steady state system). Areas that are part of multiple networks often form biodiversity hotspots, as species associated with different networks meet.
How it was created:
That map was created using stock maps for woodland, wetland, and grassland-heathland networks created during this project (Maps 1, 2, and 3)
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used, therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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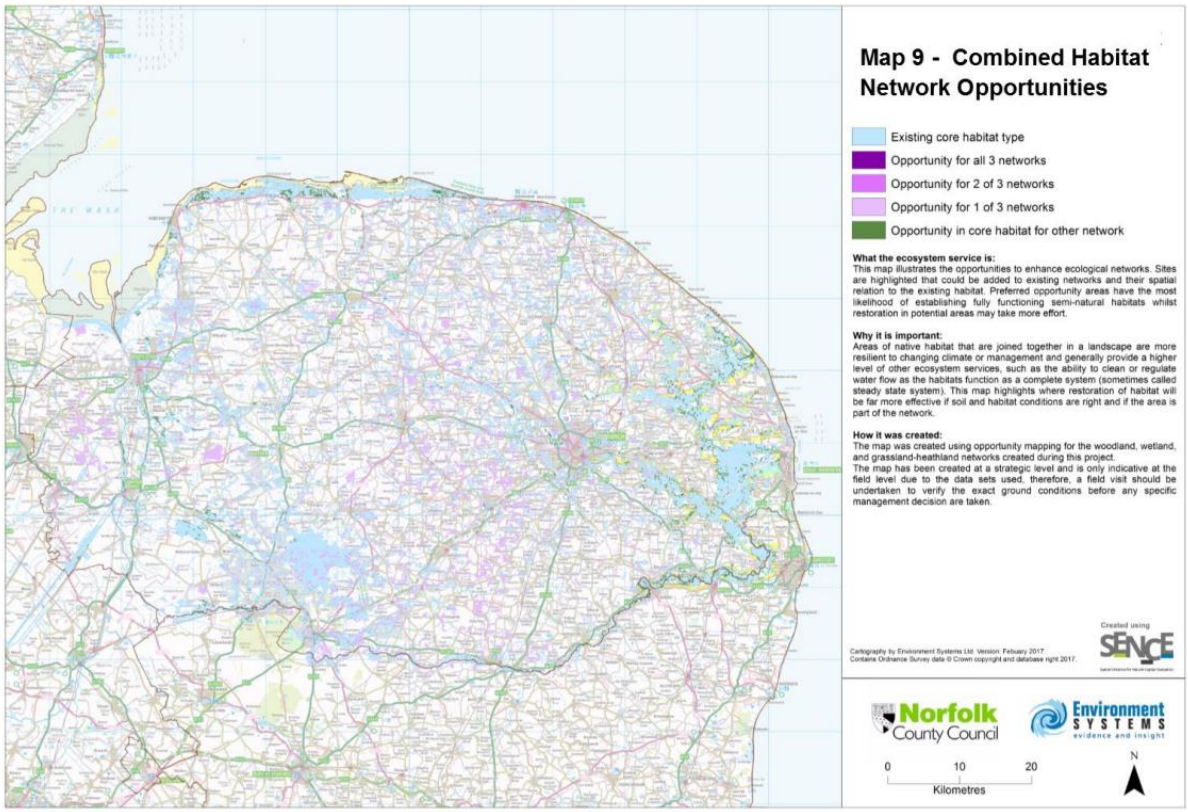
Map 9 - Combined Habitat Network Opportunities
Existing core habitat type
Opportunity for all 3 networks
Opportunity for 2 of 3 networks
Opportunity for 1 of 3 networks
Opportunity in core habitat for other network
What the ecosystem service is:
This map illustrates the opportunities to enhance ecological networks. Sites are highlighted that could be added to existing networks and their spatial relation to the existing habitat. Preferred opportunity areas have the most likelihood of establishing fully functioning semi-natural habitats whilst restoration in potential areas may take more effort.
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management and generally provide a higher level of other ecosystem services, such as the ability to clean or regulate water flow as the habitats function as a complete system (sometimes called steady state system). This map highlights where restoration of habitat will be far more effective if soil and habitat conditions are right and if the area is part of the network.
How it was created:
The map was created using opportunity mapping for the woodland, wetland, and grassland-heathland networks created during this project.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used, therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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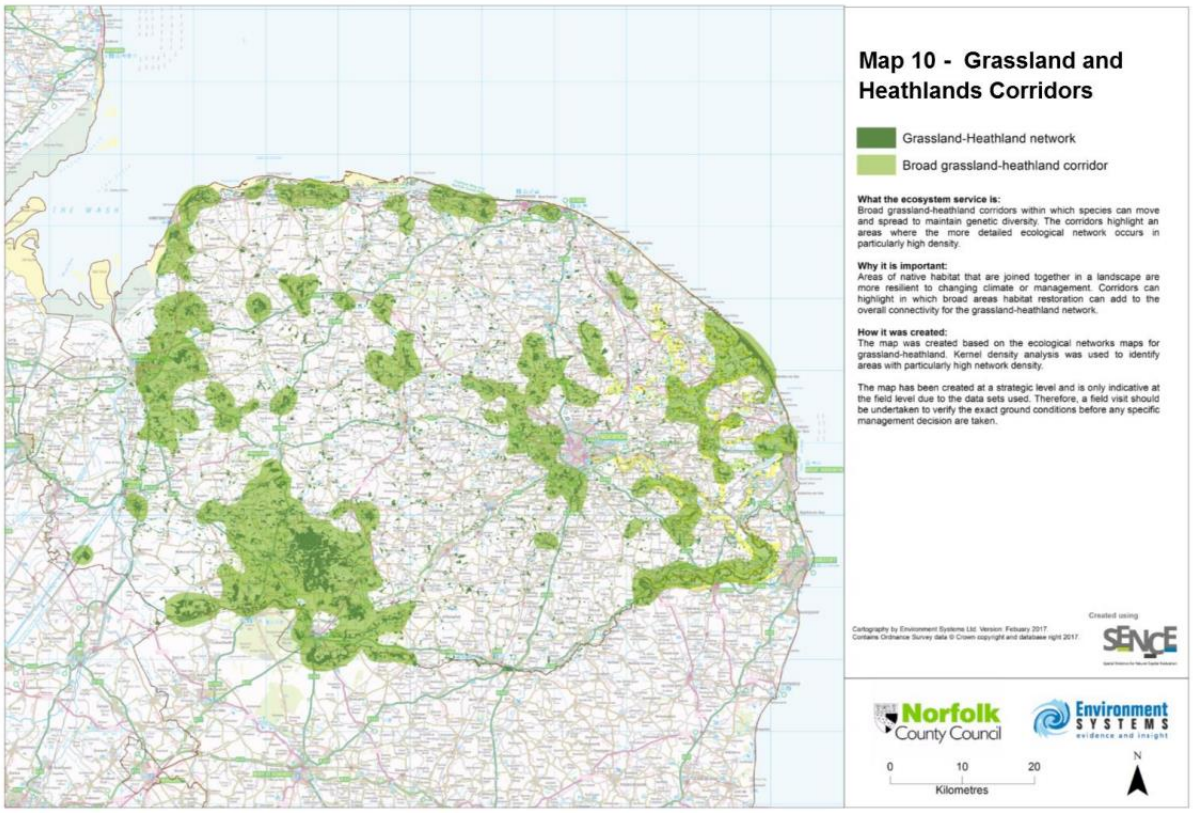
Map 10 - Grassland and Heathlands Corridors
Grassland-Heathland network
Broad grassland-heathland corridor
What the ecosystem service is:
Broad grassland-heathland corridors within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. The corridors highlight an areas where the more detailed ecological network occurs in particularly high density.
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management. Corridors can highlight in which broad areas habitat restoration can add to the overall connectivity for the grassland-heathland network.
How it was created:
The map was created based on the ecological networks maps for grassland-heathland. Kernel density analysis was used to identify areas with particularly high network density.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used. Therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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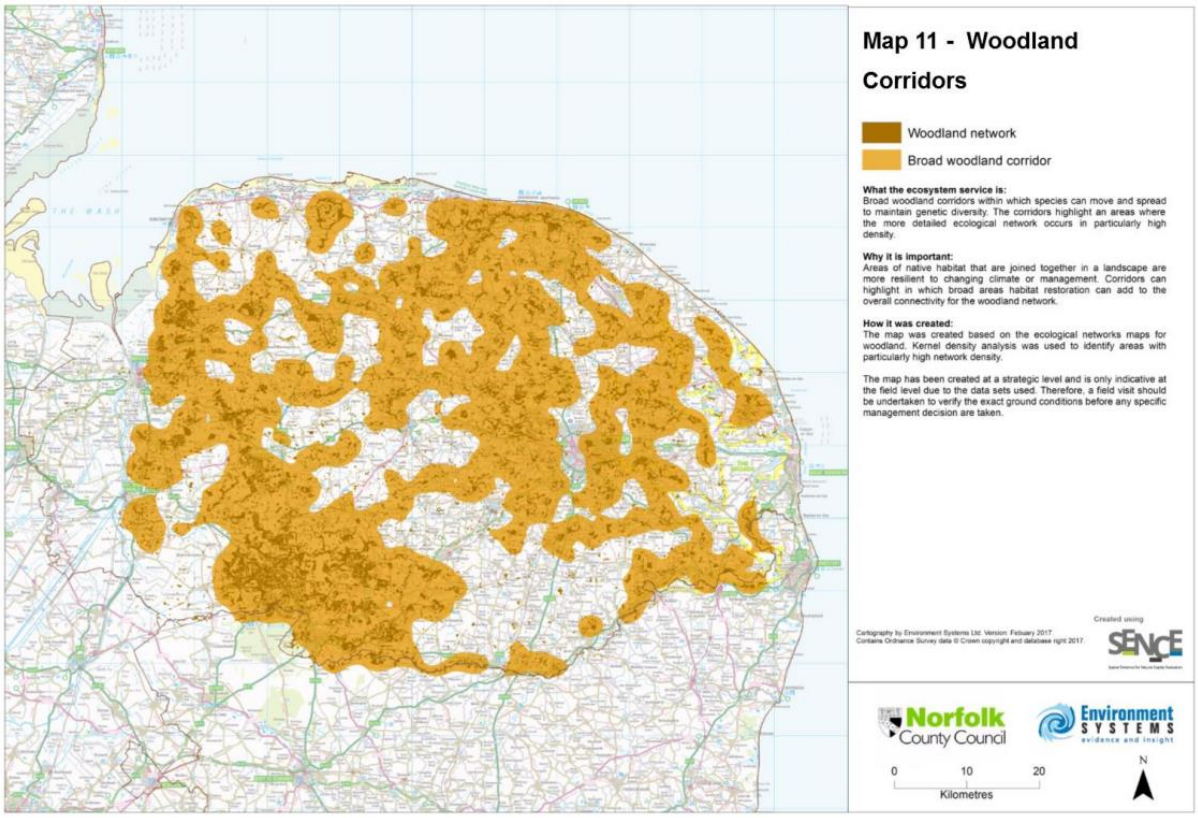
Map 11 - Woodland Corridors
Woodland network
Broad woodland corridor
What the ecosystem service is:
Broad woodland corridors within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. The corridors highlight an areas where the more detailed ecological network occurs in particularly high density.
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management. Corridors can highlight in which broad areas habitat restoration can add to the overall connectivity for the woodland network.
How it was created:
The map was created based on the ecological networks maps for woodland. Kernel density analysis was used to identify areas with particularly high network density.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used. Therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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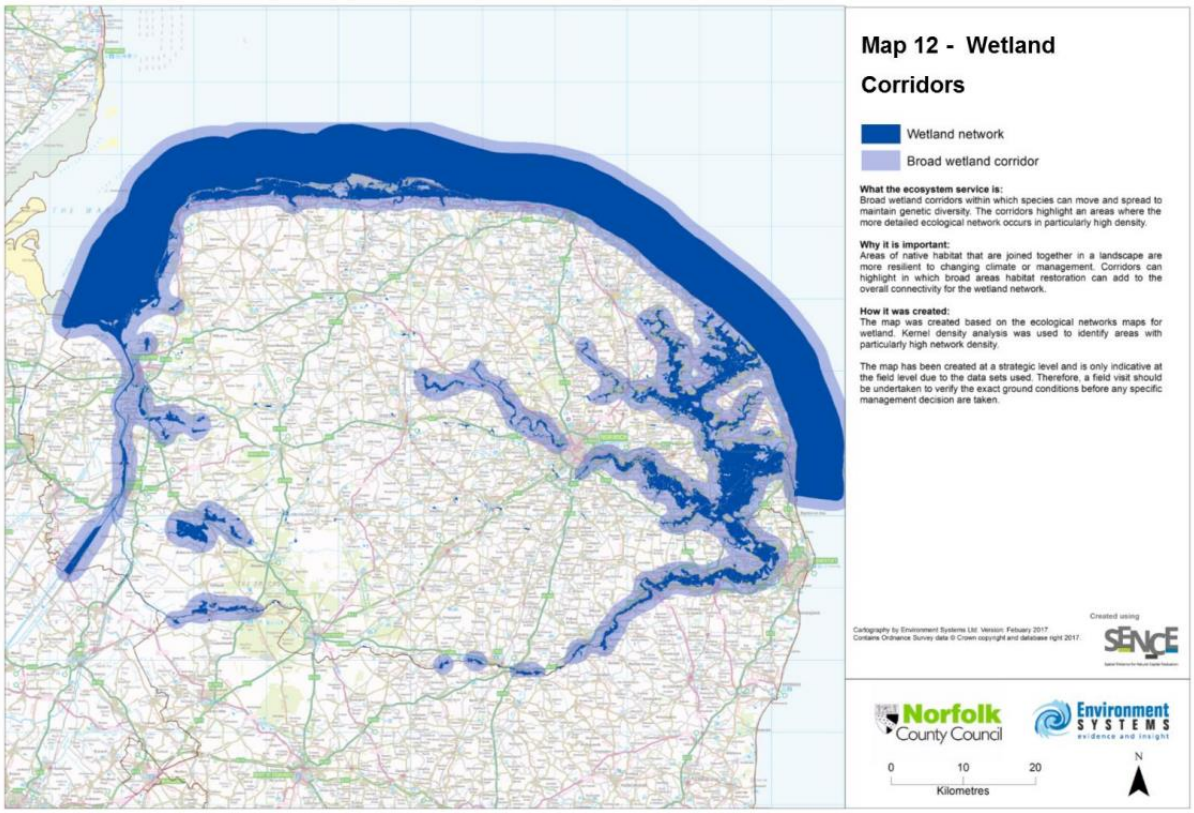
Map 12 - Wetland Corridors
Wetland network
Broad wetland corridor
What the ecosystem service is:
Broad wetland corridors within which species can move and spread to maintain genetic diversity. The corridors highlight an areas where the more detailed ecological network occurs in particularly high density.
Why it is important:
Areas of native habitat that are joined together in a landscape are more resilient to changing climate or management. Corridors can highlight in which broad areas habitat restoration can add to the overall connectivity for the wetland network.
How it was created:
The map was created based on the ecological networks maps for wetland. Kernel density analysis was used to identify areas with particularly high network density.
The map has been created at a strategic level and is only indicative at the field level due to the data sets used. Therefore, a field visit should be undertaken to verify the exact ground conditions before any specific management decision are taken.
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