

## Spring 2018

Issue 8

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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 2017

24th November 2017 East Suffolk Councils' offices, Melton

Over 100 planners and ecological consultants from Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire attended this popular annual event. The day covered a wide range of issues related to planning within local government.

Mike Oxford (Association of Local Government Ecologists) gave a national update, focusing on the Raynsford Review of the planning system. There was a lively debate on the natural environment after Brexit and Natural England described their progress with the district level licencing programme for great crested newts in 150 local authority areas. Julia Baker from Balfour Beatty, a multinational construction service group, provided expert advice on Good Practice Principles for Biodiversity Net Gain.

Dusty Gedge, President of the European Federation of Green Roof Associations, talked about *Nature-based solutions - green roofs and rain gardens* with such energy and enthusiasm that everyone went away uplifted and inspired. Using examples from around the world, Dusty demonstrated what could be achieved for biodiversity on the roofs and walls of developments, relatively easily, and often for low expense.



Clare Dawson, Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils, describing the progress of RAMS

Ipswich and Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils and Natural England described the progress and lessons learnt whilst developing their innovative Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). The talks demonstrating practical actions at a species level were delivered with enthusiasm and authority by Sam Lee of the RSPB

(farmland birds) and Simone Bullion of Suffolk Wildlife Trust (dormice).

The seminar was organised by Suffolk Planning Group, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, ALGE and Place Services, Essex County Council. Grateful thanks are due to the excellent speakers and to our hosts, East Suffolk Councils for hosting the event.

To view the presentations and the article in EADT, visit the [SBIS Planners page >](#)

## UK and England Biodiversity Indicators updated

Defra has published an update to the UK Biodiversity indicators, and reports on UK progress towards meeting the Aichi targets agreed in 2010. These targets were set out in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The UK is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

[Download the UK Biodiversity Indicators 2017 - Gov.UK >](#)

[Download Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, Biodiversity 2020 Indicators - Gov.UK >](#)

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## Bat Mitigation Case Studies Forum – Proceedings now available

In January 2017, as a first step to addressing the lack of evidence in this area, Bat Conservation Trust's Built Environment team ran a Mitigation Case Studies Forum. The case study abstracts and live polling results have been compiled in a proceedings document, which is available to download for free [here >](#)

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## Algorithm learns to understand natural beauty

Researchers at the University of Warwick have trained an algorithm to rate scenic images from one to 10. To do this, they focused the algorithm on 200,000 images rated by people on the website 'ScenicOrNot', which has images of scenes that cover 95% of Great Britain. The algorithm was able to recognise the difference between countryside landscapes and pictures of derelict buildings and rate them accordingly with the most beautiful scenes scoring 10. The researchers say that their algorithm could be useful as a tool to aid planning and preservation of beauty spots. [Read more on BBC website >](#)

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## Crime conviction for destroying bat roosts in Dorset

On 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017 David Stokes of Blandford Forum pleaded guilty to a charge of destroying a pipistrelle roost and a second charge of destroying a brown long eared bat roost at Poole magistrates Court. He was fined £800 on each charge and ordered to pay £600 costs and £120 victim surcharge. [Bat Conservation Trust >](#) [BCT's Bat Crime report 2016 can be downloaded here >](#)

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## Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)

### Background

The Essex Coast is rich and diverse and has many protected Natura 2000 sites for wildlife. There are a large number of Local Plans in preparation in Essex set to deliver up to 180,000 new homes over the coming 15-20 years. These new homes have the potential to bring new visitors to the sensitive coastal area, resulting in impacts on protected sites both individually and in combination through recreational disturbance.

Natural England has engaged with individual Local Planning Authorities on each Local Plan, to ensure that any impacts are being identified appropriately through

Habitats Regulations Assessments. In the absence of a joint approach, individual Authorities would need to provide measures to avoid and mitigate any recreational impacts identified. In reality they would find this difficult to undertake as individual authorities, or smaller groups of authorities.

In September 2017 Natural England proposed a strategic approach to identifying the scale of the disturbance and implementing measures to mitigate impacts through the preparation of a joint Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). Based on existing evidence of visitor pressures, Natural England advised that 11 district/borough Councils across Greater Essex should be partners in the preparation of the Strategy. To reflect the differing Local Plan adoption dates of these authorities, Natural England advised that

a Supplementary Planning Document should be the mechanism to secure developer contributions towards the mitigation measures identified as necessary by the Strategy.

### **How will the Strategy be prepared?**

With the support of the Essex Planning Officer Association, a partnership of the 11 Authorities has been formalised, with a memorandum of understanding signed in January 2018. As staff resources are fully committed to the delivery of Local Plans, the 11 Authorities identified a need to secure external support for the delivery of the project. Place Services, Essex County Council's multidisciplinary commercial function, with specialist Planning and Ecology teams, was identified as a suitable project lead and delivery team for preparation of the Strategy.

### **About the Strategy**

The Essex Coast RAMS is currently being produced by Place Services, on behalf 11 Local Authorities in Greater Essex: Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Maldon, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Tendring and Thurrock.

The strategy will identify mitigation measures necessary to avoid impacts on the sensitive wildlife of the Natura 2000 sites, especially wintering wildfowl and wading birds. The measures will need to be implemented in areas that are deemed at risk to the impacts of planned residential growth. This is in order to prevent any adverse impacts arising from increased pressures upon

the wildlife of protected sites at the coast.

Visitor survey work for the winter has now been completed to inform the Strategy although a few sites need visitor surveys in the summer. This work aims to gather information on the number of visitors expected at protected sites and the distances visitors to the sites will travel to access coastal locations for recreation purposes. A number of focused workshops are planned throughout 2018 to gather information about visitors to the coast, the types of recreational activity undertaken and what mitigation measures might be effective in addressing impacts on protected sites.

Mitigation to be undertaken as a result of the strategy will be specific to each Natura 2000 Site. The scale and types of mitigation will be based upon the scale and type of housing to be constructed. Large residential schemes will be expected to provide funding for mitigation measures at the coast as part of their overall development, in addition to greenspace provision within each layout.

### **How can you get involved?**

The purpose of this note is for you to gain a broad understanding of the project, and to encourage you to provide any local knowledge of recreational uses at coastal areas across Essex.

If you believe that you can help with the execution and development of this project then please contact:

Sue Hooton and Alethea Evans

Email: [ecology.placeservices@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ecology.placeservices@essex.gov.uk)

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## **SBIS Biodiversity Checking Service Pilot Extended**

The SBIS Biodiversity Checking Service (BCS) is an innovative pilot project running in Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts which has been extended until the end of September 2018. The aim is to streamline the planning process for applicants with low impact developments by avoiding delays, providing certainty about biodiversity requirements and ensuring a lawful decision based on high quality information. This is achieved by checking that the biodiversity surveys and assessments are appropriate and mitigation measures are deliverable *pre-submission* for an application to the Local Planning Authority. Step by step guidance is provided. A successful application receives a Certificate to be submitted with the Planning Application documents, thus ensuring a smooth application process. The success of this Service will be reviewed in September 2018.

Assuming no further surveys are required after a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report and there is sufficient design information to allow an assessment of no significant effects, then a *low-impact* Ecological Impact Assessment can be produced (CIEEM Report Writing Guidelines, 2nd edition Dec 2017).

This is proportionate to the scale of the project and the report is sufficient to accompany a planning submission. If further surveys have been recommended, applicants should NOT submit a request to Suffolk BCS.

The Suffolk Low Impact EclA report template and the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal December 2017 (2nd Ed.) can be downloaded from the [SBIS website >](#)

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## A Vision for Housing and Nature

The Wildlife Trusts has published new guidelines to show how new housing developments can be built in a way that gives people 'green, inspirational' homes that help to reverse decades of wildlife and habitat decline. The guidelines come as the government looks to build 300,000 homes a year, a commitment announced in November 2017's autumn budget.

For The Wildlife Trusts, the natural environment must be "at the heart of planning" to give the government a chance of meeting its commitment to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than it found it as well as to build new homes and communities that people enjoy living in.

The charity wants the focus on the number of new homes to be replaced by a visionary approach to where and how the country builds. "*Homes for People and Wildlife – How to Build Housing in a Nature-Friendly Way* highlights the benefits of a nature-friendly approach to delivering the homes required.

These include better protection for wildlife sites, wildlife-friendly buildings, daily contact for residents with nature, improved health for residents, cost-effective environmental protection – and developers would have satisfied customers.

"We should prioritise places for new housing that are already well served by infrastructure" said Rachel Hackett, Living Landscapes Development Manager for The Wildlife Trusts. She continued: "We should avoid destroying wildlife sites and locate new houses in places where they can help to restore the landscape and aid natural recovery. It's possible to create nature-friendly housing by planting wildlife-rich community green spaces, walkways, gardens, verges, roofs, wetlands and other natural features. These gains for wildlife improve people's health and quality of life too."

[Visit the Wildlife Trust's website to see case studies >](#)

[Read the BBC article >](#)

[Read the Open Access Government article >](#)



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## Suffolk Wildlife Trust Professional Ecology Courses

Suffolk Wildlife Trust are running a series of courses for ecological consultants and other professionals. These are running from May to November in locations around Suffolk and include **Water vole ecology, surveying and mitigation, Hedgehogs & development, Introduction to NVC surveying, Hedgehog ecology & management for conservation practitioners** and **Surveying hazel dormice**. Each course costs £50, except for NVC surveying, which costs £65.

[Visit Suffolk Wildlife Trust What's On to book >](#)

## Big Biodiversity Challenge for the Construction Industry!



The BIG Biodiversity Challenge to 'do one thing' invites the construction industry to add at least one new biodiversity enhancement to construction sites, developments or existing buildings.

The Challenge aims to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the built environment to all those who work in the construction industry
- Encourage construction teams to collaborate with local communities to ensure long term awareness and protection of local biodiversity
- Promote the integration of biodiversity in green infrastructure initiatives
- Support the targets of Biodiversity 2020 strategy in the built environment.

There are nine award categories and the awards are **free to enter**. Entries must be in by **11 June**.

Find out more about [how to enter](#) the 2018 BIG Biodiversity Challenge.

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## Green Belt (Protection) Bill 2017-19

A Bill to establish a national register of green belt land in England; to restrict the ability of local authorities to de-designate green belt land; to make provision about future development of de-designated green belt land; and for connected purposes. This is a Private Member's Bill. 1st reading 5th September 2017; 2nd reading 23rd November 2018.

[Visit www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) >

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## Nature & Environment Charities questioned on 25-year plan for Environment

15th March 2018

The Environmental Audit Committee takes evidence on the Government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment. The session focuses on the Plan as a whole, particularly the ambition, principles and implementation.

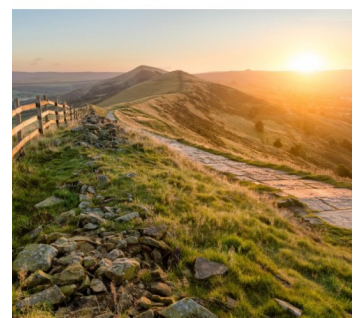
[Read the 25-year Plan for the Environment here](#) >

[The Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environment Management \(CIEEM\) response to the Plan can be found here](#) >

[Find out more at www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) >



A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment



## Protected Species focus - Hedgehogs

### Key facts

- Priority Species under Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Urban populations dropped by up to 1/3 between 2000 - 2014. Recent analyses suggests urban population decline may be slowing, but further action is still needed.
- Hedgehogs are good for gardens - they eat slugs, snails and caterpillars
- Travel 1 to 2km every night looking for food and mates
- Healthy populations need access to hundreds of gardens
- Impermeable fences are a key contributing factor in population decline



### Planners should be aware of :

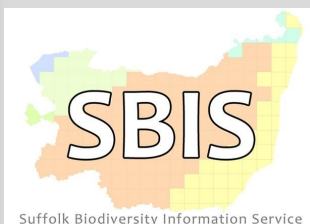
- **Habitat loss and fragmentation** - smaller gardens and impermeable fencing
- **Mitigate development impacts**
  - ⇒ Construction - method and timing of clearance
  - ⇒ Habitat change - retain habitats, design of development
- **Developments can provide**
  - ⇒ Nesting opportunities (daytime, breeding, hibernation nests)
  - ⇒ Feeding opportunities
  - ⇒ Connected networks
- **Examples**
  - ⇒ [Bovis Homes >](#)
  - ⇒ [Russell Armer Homes >](#)
  - ⇒ [Barratt Developments >](#)



Hedgehog Highway. Photo: Ann Havard

### Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service

Contact: Gen Broad  
Ipswich Museum  
High Street  
Ipswich  
Suffolk IP1 3QH  
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Mobile: 078948 85337  
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[gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk)



### Suffolk Biodiversity Planning Group members:

Sarah Barker, Ipswich Borough Council (Chair)  
Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service  
Simone Bullion, Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Lisa Chandler, East Suffolk Council  
Alison Collins, Natural England  
Clare Dawson, Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils  
Jaki Fisher, West Suffolk Councils  
James Meyer, Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Jacqui Miller, RSPB

### Collaborative members:

Sue Hooton, Place Services Essex County Council  
David White, Norfolk County Council  
Martin Horlock, Norfolk County Council

*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*

Visit us at [www.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity/statutoryobligations/plannerspage](http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity/statutoryobligations/plannerspage)