

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

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Draft Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Revised Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2018 - 2033

Using this guidance — start here

If you are an applicant or agent: the ecological requirements for your proposal depend on its type — see [Chapter 8](#) for what applies to householder, minor, major and outline applications, and [Chapter 7](#) for when ecological information is needed and the steps to follow. The documents to submit are listed in the [Applicant Checklist](#). [Chapter 6](#) sets out the step-wise approach and the DECCA framework used to demonstrate net benefit.

Technical guidance for ecological consultants can be found in [Chapter 9](#).

Before you apply: early engagement is strongly encouraged. Where ecological issues are likely, request pre-application advice from the Council's planning ecology team before submitting ([Paragraphs 7.5-7](#))

The remaining chapters and appendices cover the policy and legislative context, who should use this guidance and in what role, and supporting technical and reference material.

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Abbreviation	Meaning
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CMM	Caeau Mynydd Mawr
DECCA	Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Adaptability
EcIA	Ecological Impact Assessment
EPS	European Protected Species
GBI	Green and Blue Infrastructure
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
LECS	Landscape and Ecological Concept Scheme
LEDs	Landscape and Ecological Design Scheme
LEMP	Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
LDP	Local Development Plan <i>(see Table 3 for relevant policy abbreviations)</i>
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
NBB	Net Benefit for Biodiversity
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
NRP	Nature Recovery Plan
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
PDRs	Permitted Development Rights
PPW	Planning Policy Wales
RIAA	Report to Inform the Appropriate Assessment
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SINC	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
TAN	Technical Advice Note
TPO	Tree Preservation Order

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In 2022, Carmarthenshire County Council declared a Nature Emergency, following a Climate Emergency in 2019. Biodiversity and Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) are now central concerns in Welsh legislation and planning policy, reflecting both the role that development has played in driving biodiversity loss and its potential—when planned and designed thoughtfully from the outset—to contribute positively to nature recovery.
- 1.2. The present Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been prepared to accompany the Revised Carmarthenshire's Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018–2033 and it specifically relates to *NE2 Biodiversity*. It is one of a suite of SPG notes that collectively inform the process, design and quality of sustainable development across the county¹.
- 1.3. The purpose of this SPG is to provide guidance to applicants, developers, landowners, homeowners and other interested parties on how biodiversity should be fully considered, protected and enhanced as part of development proposals. It will be used as a relevant consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals and should therefore be referred to by those intending to submit a planning application.
- 1.4. This SPG has been developed in line with the Council's statutory duties under Welsh legislation and in accordance with Planning Policy Wales (PPW), alongside other relevant national and local planning policy considerations.
- 1.5. This SPG should be read alongside the *GBI SPG*, which provides complementary guidance on GBI design and the GBI Statement, and the *Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows SPG*, which offers detailed guidance relating to trees, woodlands and hedgerows in new developments, and the *Lighting and Dark Skies SPG (where available)*, which sets out requirements for external lighting and the protection of nocturnal wildlife. Applicants submitting proposals within the Caeau Mynydd Mawr (CMM) Project Area, draining into the Burry Inlet, and/or within a nutrient sensitive catchment should refer to the respective SPGs that set out the specific requirements for development in these areas.

Consultation

This draft SPG is subject to a consultation exercise conducted in a manner consistent with the general procedures set out within the Delivery Agreement for the Revised LDP. Any changes agreed in responses to the comments received will be incorporated following its consideration at a future meeting of County Council. Note this SPG will only come into operation following the adoption of the Revised LDP.

¹ excluding the area within the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

2. Who Should Use this SPG?

- 2.1. This SPG is relevant to everyone involved in planning decisions that may affect biodiversity. Table 1 sets out how different users should apply it at each stage of the planning process.

Table 1: Applying this SPG — user guidance by planning stage

User	Pre-Application	Planning Application	Post-Consent
Developer / Applicant	Identify ecological constraints early; commission surveys before design is fixed; use pre-application advice to clarify requirements.	Submit ecological information proportionate to the proposal. Use the Appendix C checklist before submission. Include a GBI Statement.	Discharge conditions; deliver approved ecological measures, management plan and monitoring.
Landowner / Householder	Understand obligations for protected species on your land. Check whether surveys are needed before any site works or vegetation clearance.	Follow Chapter 6–8 for what to submit for your application type. Include an annotated site plan and GBI Statement.	Comply with ecological conditions. Maintain features as approved.
Ecological Consultant	Carry out surveys in optimal seasonal windows. Provide preliminary advice on constraints and NBB. Engage with design team early.	Prepare reports to the standard in Chapter 9. Evidence NBB using the DECCA framework.	Supervise ecological works where conditioned. Support discharge of conditions and monitor outcomes.
Planning Officer	Use this SPG to guide pre-application discussions and set expectations.	Apply this SPG as a material consideration against NE2 and related policies. Refer to Appendix C checklist.	Monitor and enforce compliance with ecological conditions and management plans.
Community / Stakeholder	Use Chapters 4–5 to understand what is protected in the area around a proposed development.	Use Chapters 6–8 to understand what measures should be required and how to frame consultation responses.	Use Chapter 6 and the GBI SPG to understand long-term management commitments.

- 2.2. Applicants are encouraged to use this SPG from the earliest stages of development, including during local site searches and initial pre-application discussions. Early engagement with the local authority, including through the [pre-application advice service](#) where applicable, is welcomed.
- 2.3. Applicants should ensure their proposals accord with current legislative and policy requirements. They should also check the [council website](#) for the latest planning advice and guidance on emerging issues.

3. Why Biodiversity Matters

- 3.1. Biodiversity — the variety of life on Earth, from soil microorganisms to oak woodland and river systems — underpins everything that makes Carmarthenshire a distinctive and valued place to live. It is the foundation of resilient, healthy communities and sustainable economies.
- 3.2. Our environment provides ecosystem services that support Carmarthenshire's communities and cannot be replicated by engineered alternatives. These include clean water, natural flood management, carbon storage, food production and pollination, and benefits for health and wellbeing. Nature-rich, well-connected habitats also strengthen climate resilience by allowing species and ecosystems to adapt to changing conditions.

Carmarthenshire's Natural Environment

- 3.3. Carmarthenshire is one of the most ecologically rich counties in Wales. It contains eight Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), three Special Protection Areas (SPA), 82 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and hundreds of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Its varied landscapes — from the Tywi Valley floodplain and Carmarthen Bay coast to the uplands of the Cambrian Mountains and the ancient oak woodlands of the south — support species and habitats of international importance.
- 3.4. The Carmarthenshire State of Nature report (2024) reveals that, as across Wales, many species and habitats are under severe pressure. Over a quarter of all species nationally assessed are at risk of local extinction. Farmland birds, pollinators, freshwater fish and many grassland plants have declined sharply. The principal causes are habitat loss and fragmentation, agricultural intensification, invasive species, and water quality deterioration.
- 3.5. The Carmarthenshire Nature Recovery Plan (NRP), produced by the Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership, sets out a vision for restoring biodiversity, including safeguarding Section 7 habitats and species, improving ecological connectivity and addressing key pressures.

Planning's Role in Nature Recovery

- 3.6. Development has been one of the most direct drivers of habitat loss. However, the planning system is one of the most powerful tools available for nature recovery. Every planning application represents an opportunity to deliver Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) — if ecology is embedded in design from the start rather than treated as an afterthought.
- 3.7. When approached proactively, development can restore degraded habitats, create new ecological value and improve landscape-scale connectivity. The planning process is central to ensuring these opportunities are realised.

4. Policy and Statutory Framework

4.1. This chapter summarises the key statutory and policy provisions that underpin development management and biodiversity. A non-exhaustive list with excerpts is provided in [Appendix A](#).

Statutory Duties

- 4.2. Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty on all public authorities to *"seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems."* Section 7 of the same Act requires Welsh Ministers to publish a list of habitats and species of principal importance, and all public bodies must take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance them. This Section 7 list² is a material consideration in all planning decisions.
- 4.3. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)³ establish the requirement for Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as undertaken by the local authority, as competent authority, and provides the legal framework for the protection of European Protected Species (EPS) and the National Sites Network⁴.

National Requirements

4.4. PPW⁵ establishes the national planning policy framework for the natural environment. Table 2 summarises the most directly relevant requirements.

Table 2: Key PPW Requirements for Biodiversity

Provision	Core Requirement
Section 6.4.16 — Net benefit for all development	All development must deliver NBB and ecosystem resilience from the baseline state, proportionate to scale. Even where biodiversity value is maintained, a proactive process to secure enhancement is required.
Section 6.4.11 — Step-wise approach	Adverse effects must be firstly avoided, then minimised, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. The sequence is mandatory.
Section 6.4.12 — Refusal for lack of enhancement	Where biodiversity enhancement proportionate to scale is not proposed, significant weight will be given to its absence. Refusal may be necessary.
Section 6.2.12 — GI Statement ⁶	A GBI Statement should be submitted with all planning applications, proportionate to the scale and nature of the development.
Section 6.4.15 — Irreplaceable habitats	Development in exceptional circumstances only.

² <https://www.gov.wales/biodiversity-and-resilience-of-ecosystems-duty-section-7-guidance-for-public-authorities>

³ Hereinafter 'Habitats Regulations'. Colloquially referred to as 'Habs Regs'.

⁴ EPS protection applies to individual species and their breeding or resting places wherever they occur, while SACs, SPAs, and Ramsar sites are geographic-based designations requiring assessment of impacts on site integrity through the HRA process. These regimes operate separately and may both apply to a single development proposal.

⁵ Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12). Welsh Government, 2024.

⁶ synonymous with "GBI statement".

Provision	Core Requirement
Section 6.4.35 — Protected species	Presence of a protected species or Section 7 habitat is a material consideration. Surveys must be completed before permission is granted; post-permission survey conditions are not acceptable.
Section 6.4.42 — Trees, woodland and hedgerows	Permanent removal will only be permitted where it achieves significant and clearly defined public benefits.

Local Planning Policy

4.5. Table 3 summarises the LDP policies most relevant to this SPG.

Table 3: Relevant LDP Policies (see Appendix A for full wording).

Policy	Subject	Core Requirement
SP14	Maintaining and Enhancing the Natural Environment	Development must protect and enhance ecosystem resilience and resilient ecological networks. Development that does not result in enhancement of biodiversity will not be permitted.
NE1	Regional and Local Designations (LNRs, SINCs, peatland, RIGS)	Adverse effects only permitted where all impacts addressed via step-wise approach; or sufficient compensatory measures in place; or exceptional circumstances outweigh conservation interests.
NE2	Biodiversity	Development must provide NBB.
NE3	Corridors, Networks and Features of Distinctiveness	Must maintain and enhance ecological corridors and networks. Adverse effects only permitted subject to step-wise approach, compensation or exceptional circumstances.
NE4	Development within the Caeau Mynydd Mawr (CMM) Project Area	Proposals within the CMM Project Area must contribute to CMM SAC Conservation Objectives and mitigate for loss of potential supporting habitat for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly.
PSD1	Effective Design Solutions: Principles of Placemaking	Maximise retention, protection and integration of existing landscape and ecological elements as GBI assets. Manage and eradicate invasive species where applicable.
PSD3	Green and Blue Infrastructure Network	Prioritise existing GBI assets; maximise multi-functional GBI benefits; include long-term management provisions.
PSD4	Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows	Maximise retention; minimise impacts; compensate unavoidable loss; provide sufficient rooting space; deliver additional planting.
SP16	Climate Change	Contribute towards protection and enhancement of GBI assets and resilient ecological networks as carbon sinks.
CCH4	Water Quality and Protection of Water Resources	No adverse effect on water resources or water quality. Nutrient neutrality must be demonstrated where required.
CCH7	Climate Change — Forest, Woodland and Tree Planting	Support for creation of new or enhancement of existing woodland, forests, tree belts and corridors delivering decarbonisation targets and multiple ecosystem services.

5. Designations and Protected Species

- 5.1. This chapter sets out designated sites and protected species relevant to planning applications in Carmarthenshire, as summarised in Table 4 and 5 respectively.

Designated Sites

International Designations

- 5.2. Carmarthenshire contains eight SACs, three SPAs, and one Ramsar site. These form the National Sites Network and carry the highest level of statutory protection. A list of international sites and qualifying features can be found in [Appendix B](#).
- 5.3. Any development that may have a likely significant effect on a National Network site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, whether directly or indirect through air quality, hydrology, water quality, disturbance or other pathways⁷, must be subject to HRA. The local authority will carry out a Test of Likely Significant Effect (TLSE) and, where necessary, carry out an Appropriate Assessment.
- 5.4. Applicants proposing development that could affect a National Network site should seek pre-application advice from the local authority and NRW at the earliest opportunity. Where a likely significant effect cannot be excluded, a Report to Inform the Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) must be submitted with the planning application.

Caeau Mynydd Mawr SAC

CO5.1

Proposals within the CMM Project Area are subject to LDP Policy NE4. Developer contributions to the CMM project may be required to mitigate impacts on the Marsh Fritillary butterfly metapopulation and its supporting habitat. Please refer to the *Caeau Mynydd Mawr SPG*.

National Designations

- 5.5. Carmarthenshire contains 82 SSSIs and five National Nature Reserves (NNRs). SSSIs are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The local authority must notify NRW of any application that may affect an SSSI and must take account of NRW's advice before reaching a decision. NNRs require specific authorisation from NRW for operations that could damage their features.

Local Designations

- 5.6. Carmarthenshire has seven Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), mostly near urban areas, designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. NE1 applies to all LNRs.

⁷ See Table 15. Or in combination with other plan and programmes.

- 5.7. SINC's are non-statutory and designated based on objective scientific criteria as detailed within the *SINC SPG*. Proposals affecting SINC's must be supported by appropriate ecological survey information.

Table 4: Summary of Designated Sites in Carmarthenshire (excluding Bannau Brycheiniog National Park). Note for the potential for proposals (under certain impact pathways) to affect designated sites located outside the county (which are not here listed).

Designation	No. in Carmarthenshire	Legislation / Policy
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	7	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; NE1
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	5	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; NE1
Ramsar site	1	Convention on Wetlands of International Importance; NE1, NE2
Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site (RIGS)	50	PPW; NE1
Shellfish Water Protected Areas (SWPA)	5	Water Framework Directive Regulations 2017; NE1; CCH4; INF4
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)	Various	PPW; NE1; Local Nature Recovery Plan
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	82	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); NE1
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	8	Habitats Regulations; NE1, NE2, NE4
Special Protection Area (SPA)	3	Habitats Regulations; NE1, NE2

Priority Habitats and Species

- 5.8. Welsh Government has published a list of species and habitats of principal importance under Section 7 of the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016*. All public bodies must take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance these habitats and species. Their presence is a material consideration; development affecting them will be assessed against NE2 and NE3.
- 5.9. Key priority habitats in Carmarthenshire include semi-natural broadleaved woodland, lowland mixed-deciduous woodland, purple moor grass and rush pasture, blanket bog, upland heathland, species-rich neutral grassland, rivers and streams, fens and reedbeds, coastal habitats, and traditional orchards.

- 5.10. The full Section 7 list contain all priority habitats and species is available [online](#).

Protected Species

- 5.11. The presence of a protected species is a material consideration in planning⁸. As such, planning permission cannot be conditioned to require surveys to be carried out after permission is granted.
- 5.12. Planning permission does not remove the need for a NRW development licence for works affecting protected species. Consent must be obtained independently.

Bats

- 5.13. All bat species are classified as EPS under the Habitats Regulations (by virtue of Schedule 2) and are also protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, with at least 10 regularly recorded in Carmarthenshire.
- 5.14. It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat; to deliberately damage or destroy a bat roost; or to obstruct access to a roost. A roost is protected whether bats are present or not at the time of works.
- 5.15. Bats may be present in any building, tree, bridge or underground structure. All bat surveys should follow the most recent [BCT Good Practice Guidelines](#) and must be carried out by a licensed ecologist. Out-of-date reports will not be accepted.

Roofing Felt

CO5.2

Type 1F bitumen roofing felt is considered safe for bats when used in buildings that support roosts⁹. Non-bitumen coated and breathable roofing membranes should not be specified where bats are present, as the fibres can pose a risk of entanglement and injury to bats. This must be addressed in the specification of any roof works to buildings used by bats.

Birds

- 5.16. All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Section 1 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* while nesting. Works within the bird nesting season (broadly February to August/September) must not affect active nests. The absence of active nests must be confirmed by a suitably qualified ecologist before clearance works commence within the nesting season.
- 5.17. House martins and swifts are Section 7 species in Wales and have declined sharply, with loss of nesting sites a significant contributing factor. Swallows have also

⁸ TAN 5, paragraph 6.2.2, states: "It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted ... It is considered best practice that such a survey is carried out before a planning application is submitted."

⁹ [Roofing membranes – Things to consider when planning works. Bat Conservation Trust.](#)

experienced notable declines. Proposals affecting buildings used by these species should demonstrate the retention or enhancement of nesting opportunities.

- 5.18. Schedule 1 species have additional statutory protection; disturbance at or near an active nest is also an offence.

Bird netting

CO5.3

The use of bird netting to exclude nesting birds is discouraged¹⁰ and does not reflect current best-practice guidance. Netting can result in the entanglement, injury or death of birds and its use is a matter of concern. Developers should adopt a proactive approach to project planning and programming to avoid the need for bird netting, including undertaking works outside the nesting season where feasible, retaining nesting features and incorporating suitable alternative nesting opportunities within development proposals.

Other Protected Species

- 5.19. Table 5 summarises the protected species typically encountered in planning applications.

Table 5: Protected Species Relevant to Planning in Carmarthenshire

Species / Group	Protection	Key Planning Implications
Badger	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	Badgers and setts protected from intentional or reckless interference. Badger survey required where setts may be affected.
European Eel	The Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009	Applicable to any works that could obstruct passage in a watercourse.
European Protected Species (EPS): Bats, Otter, Dormouse, Harbour Porpoise	Habitats Regulations	Pre-application surveys required. NRW development licence needed for works. Local authority must consider Article 16 derogation tests.
Nesting birds (all species)	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section 1	Nests, eggs and birds protected while nesting. Clearance within nesting season requires ecologist confirmation of absence.
Schedule 1 birds (Barn Owl, Peregrine, Red Kite, Cetti's Warbler and others)	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Disturbance at or near nest containing eggs or young is an additional offence.
Schedule 5 Animals (including Otter, Water Vole, Great Crested Newt, all native reptiles, Marsh Fritillary)	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Protection from killing, injuring, taking and disturbance at place of shelter. Targeted surveys and NRW licence may be required.

¹⁰ [Netting of Trees and Hedgerows During Construction](#). Welsh Government. Chief Planning Officer letter. 6 June 2019.

Species / Group	Protection	Key Planning Implications
Schedule 8 Plants	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	It is an offence to pick, uproot, damage or destroy these plants.
Schedule 9 Invasive Species	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Prohibited from spreading or growing in the wild. Invasive species management plan required where present on site.
Section 7 species	Environment (Wales) Act 2016 / PPW12	Material consideration. NE2 and NE3. Guidance in TAN 5 (Chapters 5.5 and 6.5).
Wild Mammals	Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996	Protection from unnecessary suffering. Applies to clearance method statements.

- 5.20. The above summaries are not exhaustive, and applicants are reminded that the full provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Habitats Regulations, and other relevant wildlife legislation apply. Compliance with wildlife legislation is required irrespective of whether a constraint is explicitly identified within this SPG.

Schedule 6 – Prohibited Methods

CO5.4

Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits the use of certain methods for killing or taking wild animals. These restrictions apply irrespective of species status and are relevant to site clearance, pest control and construction methodology. Proposals must demonstrate that methods used during site preparation and construction comply with Schedule 6, typically through an ecological method statement where relevant.

Other Protected Natural Features

Trees and Hedgerows

- 5.21. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) protect trees of amenity value. While not biodiversity legislation, they provide an indirect mechanism safeguarding habitats for bats, birds and invertebrates.
- 5.22. Hedgerows are important semi-natural habitats supporting protected and priority species, including bats, dormice, nesting birds, reptiles and invertebrates, and function as key ecological corridors linking fragmented habitats. Many qualify as “*important hedgerows*” under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, restricting removal without prior consent.
- 5.23. Proposals affecting trees and/or hedgerows must demonstrate compliance with PDS4. Reference is made to *Tree and Hedgerow SPG*.

Watercourses and Riparian Corridors

- 5.24. Watercourses and riparian corridors are among the most ecologically important features in the Carmarthenshire landscape. Rivers, streams, ditches, ponds and their riparian margins support a wide range of protected and priority species, including otter, water vole, great crested newt, breeding and wintering birds, and a diverse invertebrate fauna. They also function as critical ecological corridors, connecting isolated habitat patches across an otherwise fragmented landscape. Their protection and enhancement are a material consideration and must be addressed in ecological surveys wherever present on or adjacent to a site.
- 5.25. Works affecting watercourses must comply with the Water Framework Directive (WFD), including the requirement to prevent deterioration in water body status and to avoid undermining the achievement of good ecological status or ecological potential.

Water Quality SPG

CO5.5

Proposals must demonstrate compliance with Policy CCH4, including the protection of water quality and water resources, the provision of appropriate riparian buffer zones, and no adverse effect on nutrient-sensitive designated sites. Where relevant, development may be required to demonstrate nutrient neutrality. Please refer to the *Water Quality SPG*.

Shellfish Water Protected Areas

- 5.26. Parts of the Carmarthenshire coast and estuarine environments, including the Burry Inlet, are designated as Shellfish Water Protected Areas under the WFD (England and Wales) Regulations 2017. These designations exist to protect and improve water quality in waters supporting economically important shellfish species.
- 5.27. Development proposals which have the potential to affect designated shellfish waters, either directly or indirectly through nutrient loading, wastewater discharges, surface water runoff or hydrological connectivity, may need to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effect on shellfish water quality.
- 5.28. Applicants should engage with the local authority at an early stage where a proposal lies within, or drains to, a shellfish water catchment.

Burry Inlet SPG

CO5.6

Proposals within catchments draining to the Burry Inlet may be required to demonstrate no adverse effect on shellfish water quality, including through nutrient control or surface water betterment measures. Please refer to the *Burry Inlet SPG*.

6. Delivering Net Benefit for Biodiversity

What is Net Benefit for Biodiversity?

- 6.1. NBB means an overall, measurable improvement in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience as a direct result of a development. It is not the same as avoiding damage, compensating for loss, or simply maintaining the status quo. NBB requires that, taken as a whole, the development leaves the natural environment in a genuinely better condition than it was before. This requirement applies to every planning application, regardless of scale or type.
- 6.2. SP14 states that development that does not result in enhancement of biodiversity will not be permitted. NE2 requires that all development provides NBB. PPW¹¹ is equally direct: where enhancement proportionate to the scale and nature of development is not proposed, significant weight will be given to its absence, and refusal will normally be necessary. This position is reinforced by the Chief Planning Officer Letter dated 23 October 2019¹²:

Chief Planning Officer Letter

"Where biodiversity enhancement is not proposed as part of an application, significant weight will be given to its absence, and unless other significant material considerations indicate otherwise it will be necessary to refuse permission."

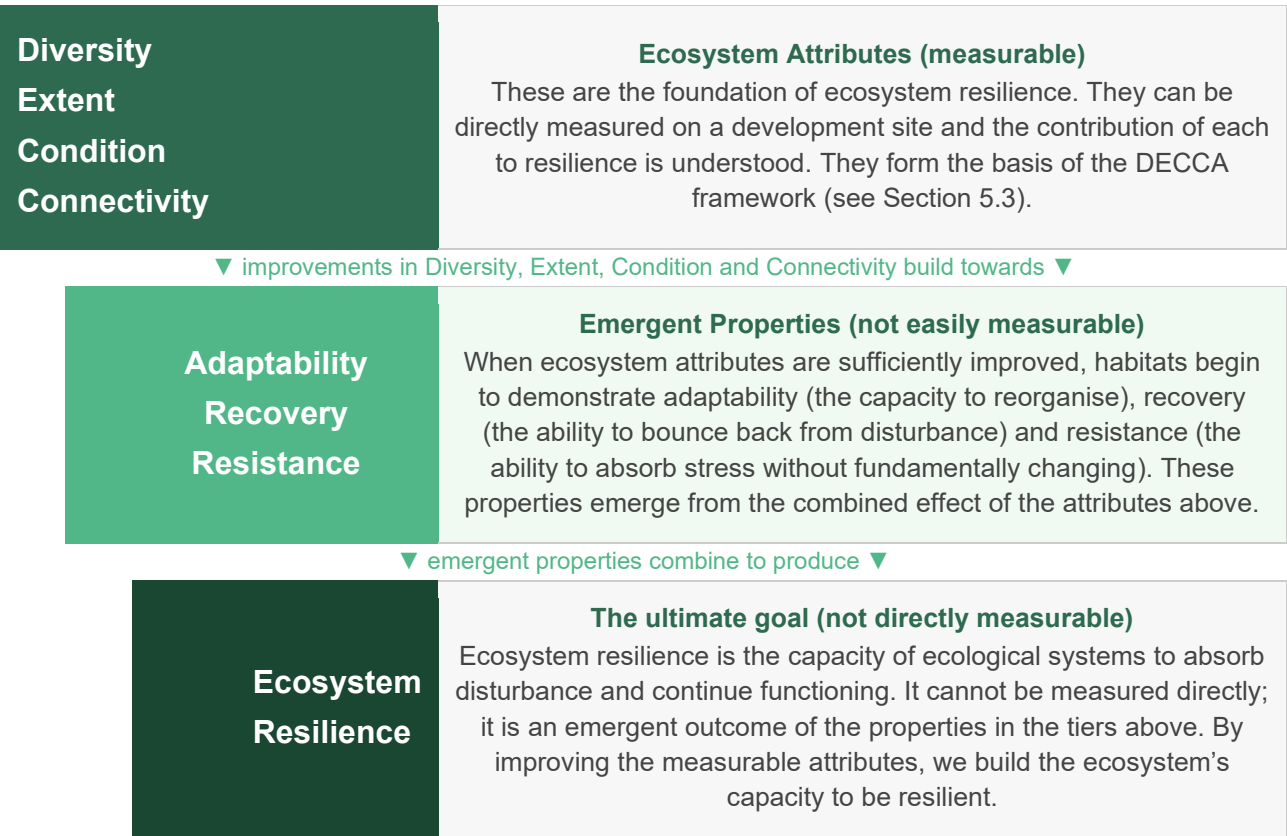
What is Ecosystem Resilience?

- 6.3. Ecosystem resilience is the capacity of ecological systems to absorb disturbance, adapt to change and continue to function. A resilient ecosystem can recover from events such as drought, flood, storm, or disease; a degraded or fragmented one cannot. Resilience is not a single measurable property — it is an emergent quality that arises from the underlying condition of the habitats and species that make up the ecosystem.
- 6.4. Understanding the relationship between what we can measure and what we are ultimately trying to achieve is fundamental to delivering NBB. The Welsh Government's framework, set out in Table 6 below, explains this through three tiers:

¹¹ Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12). Welsh Government, 2024. Section 6.4.12.

¹² [Securing Biodiversity Enhancements](#). Welsh Government. Chief Planning Officer letter. 23 October 2019.

Table 6: Ecosystem Resilience — the relationship between what we can measure and what we are trying to achieve



- 6.5. This tiered relationship has a direct practical implication for development: ecosystem resilience cannot be designed in directly, but it can be built up systematically by improving the measurable attributes at the base of the pyramid. This is why the DECCA framework is the required tool for assessing and evidencing NBB. Improving DECCA attributes is how development contributes to ecosystem resilience in practice.
- 6.6. In Carmarthenshire this is particularly important. Our peatlands regulate water flows and store carbon; river corridors support species and improve water quality; and woodlands and hedgerows provide connectivity across a fragmented landscape. These functions underpin public goods such as flood management, carbon sequestration and agricultural productivity, all of which are increasingly relevant with climate change. A thoughtfully designed development that contributes toward genuine improvements in ecosystem attributes will help strengthen ecosystem resilience throughout the county.

Applicants should not carry out pre-emptive vegetation clearance, demolition or ground preparation before submitting a planning application

CO6.2

In the absence of robust survey evidence to the contrary, cleared habitats will be presumed to have been in good ecological condition, and NBB will be calculated from that baseline. Pre-emptive clearance of habitat supporting protected species may also constitute a criminal offence under wildlife legislation. The ecological baseline is a material consideration; manipulating it before submission does not remove the obligation to address it.

The Step-Wise Approach

- 6.7. PPW¹³ and the LDP¹⁴ require applicants to follow a step-wise approach to biodiversity impacts. The sequence is mandatory, not advisory. Applications that proceed directly to compensation without demonstrating that avoidance and mitigation options have been genuinely exhausted will not be considered compliant with LDP policy.
- 6.8. The most common misconception about the step-wise approach is that compensation is the final destination (i.e., that an application demonstrates compliance by reaching the compensation stage). This is wrong. Enhancement is an obligation at every stage of the sequence, not a step that comes after compensation. An applicant who only proposes compensation for the loss of a hedgerow and does nothing further has not delivered NBB; they have merely replaced what was lost.
- 6.9. As shown in Table 7, the enhancement obligation runs in parallel with and above every step in the hierarchy. In practice, this means the applicant must demonstrate:
- a. that they have genuinely sought to avoid impacts before concluding they are unavoidable;
 - b. that they have sought to minimise before concluding that residual impacts require mitigation; and
 - c. that compensation is only proposed for losses that cannot be avoided, minimised or mitigated.
- 6.10. The burden of justification increases at each step down the hierarchy.
- 6.11. Statutory designated sites are subject to the highest level of protection within the step-wise approach, with avoidance as the default and expected outcome¹⁵; proposals resulting in harm will only be considered in wholly exceptional circumstances where it is clearly demonstrated that no reasonable alternatives exist and that imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), as provided for under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, apply.

¹³ Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12). Welsh Government, 2024. Section 6.4.11.

¹⁴ NE1, NE2 and NE3

¹⁵ Reference is given to [Annex 1, Minister for Climate Change letter, 11 October 2023](#).

Table 7: Step-Wise Approach and Enhancement

Step 1 AVOID	The default position. Retain and protect all habitats of ecological value through iterative layout design. Exclude development from irreplaceable habitats (ancient woodland, species-rich grassland, veteran trees, peatland). Where a feature cannot be retained (other than irreplaceable habitats), consider whether the development could be redesigned or relocated. Retained features must be actively protected from harm during construction through appropriate buffer zones and exclusion fencing.	
		ENHANCE
Step 2 MINIMISE	Where some impact is genuinely unavoidable, reduce its extent and severity. Set back development from sensitive features. Reduce the footprint of built form. Consider alternative materials, construction techniques or engineering solutions that reduce the zone of influence. Phase works to avoid sensitive periods (nesting season, reptile hibernation, periods of low water). Minimisation must be demonstrated, not asserted.	▶ At every stage of the sequence, actively seek and deliver enhancement that goes beyond the baseline position. Enhancement is not a discrete final step — it is a continuous obligation running alongside the entire hierarchy. On a well-designed application, enhancement measures are integrated into avoidance (retaining features in better condition), minimisation (reducing impact zones to create habitat buffer zones), mitigation (creating species-specific features as part of method statements) and compensation (delivering habitat of higher quality than that lost). All developments must leave biodiversity in a measurably better state.
Step 3 MITIGATE	Apply targeted measures to address residual impacts that cannot be avoided or minimised. This includes: species translocation following appropriate survey and licensing; sensitive working methods (hand clearance, ecological supervision, construction exclusion zones); management of retained habitats during construction; species-specific method statements (reptile, dormouse, otter); compliance with lighting guidance.	
Step 4 COMPENSATE	As a last resort only, provide proportionate compensation for unavoidable, residual losses of habitat or species value that cannot be addressed by mitigation. On-site compensation is strongly preferred. Off-site compensation or financial contributions are exceptional measures and require robust justification that on-site delivery is physically impossible. Compensation must deliver equivalent or greater ecological value to what was lost, not simply replace lost area on a like-for-like basis.	

Measuring NBB: The DECCA Framework

- 6.12. The step-wise approach defines how to handle impacts. But it leaves an important question unanswered: how do we know whether the development has actually delivered a net benefit? How is improvement measured? The answer is the DECCA framework, set out in the Welsh Government’s *Approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity and the DECCA Framework in the Terrestrial Planning System* (CIEEM Briefing Paper, September 2022). NE3 and PPW¹⁶ both reference the DECCA attributes as the basis for assessing ecosystem resilience.
- 6.13. DECCA identifies the five ecosystem attributes that are measurable on a development site and whose contribution to ecosystem resilience is understood (Table 8). By assessing the change in each attribute before and after development, it is possible to demonstrate — objectively and consistently — whether NBB has been achieved. DECCA is not a scoring system that produces a single pass/fail number; it is a structured framework for evidencing qualitative and quantitative improvement across multiple dimensions of ecological value.

Table 8: DECCA Framework

Attribute	What it means	What it looks like on a development site
D — Diversity	<i>Increase the range of habitats and species present.</i>	A development that creates only a single habitat type — for example, a uniform amenity grassland — scores poorly on Diversity however large it is. Good Diversity means creating a mosaic of habitat types: woodland edge, wildflower grassland, wetland margin, scrub. For species, it means selecting planting species that support a wide range of invertebrates, birds and bats rather than simply maximising green cover.
E — Extent	<i>Increase the total area of habitat, not merely replace what was lost.</i>	A development that removes 0.5 ha of grassland and creates 0.5 ha of grassland elsewhere has not increased Extent; it has maintained it. NBB requires a net gain in habitat area. This applies not only to the development site but to the wider landscape context: a small area of new riparian planting that connects two existing habitat patches may contribute more to Extent in a functional sense than a much larger area of isolated habitat.
C — Condition	<i>Improve the quality and ecological function of habitats.</i>	Condition is not just about coverage; it is about ecological integrity. A species-poor, heavily shaded grassland managed as amenity turf scores poorly on Condition regardless of its area. Improving Condition means: introducing appropriate management regimes (low-nutrient grassland management, coppice rotation, watercourse bank management); removing invasive species; improving soil structure; and ensuring habitats are functioning as ecological systems, not just green surfaces.

¹⁶ Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12). Welsh Government, 2024. Paragraph 6.4.5.

Attribute	What it means	What it looks like on a development site
C — Connectivity	<i>Enhance physical and functional links between habitats within and beyond the site boundary.</i>	Isolated habitat patches cannot sustain populations over time. Connectivity means ensuring that habitats on the development site are linked to the wider ecological network — through retained or new hedgerows, tree lines, watercourse corridors, wildlife-friendly planting across site boundaries, and the careful positioning of new features to bridge existing gaps in the network. This is the most spatially important DECCA attribute and the one most likely to distinguish a genuinely beneficial development from one that merely achieves local compensation.
A — Adaptability	<i>Enhance the capacity of ecosystems to adapt to change — including climate change, disturbance and management interventions — while continuing to function and support biodiversity.</i>	A development that incorporates structural complexity, habitat heterogeneity, and space for natural processes to operate over time. This includes creating variable habitat structure and microclimates, allowing natural regeneration, avoiding over-engineered solutions, and designing habitats that can change in response to future pressures (e.g. wetter winters, drought, species movement). Adaptability is strengthened where long-term management supports ecological processes rather than fixing habitats in a static state.]

Table 8 continued

- 6.14. A DECCA assessment should be submitted as part of the GBI Statement where required to demonstrate NBB, having regard to the scale, nature and potential ecological impacts of the proposal. For applications supported by an ecological report, the DECCA assessment should normally be completed by a suitably qualified ecological consultant within that report.
- 6.15. The GBI Statement should present the overall picture and demonstrate how the combined effect of all proposed measures delivers NBB across all five DECCA attributes. Applications that evidence improvement in only a limited number of DECCA attributes, or that rely solely on the provision of bird boxes or bat boxes to demonstrate enhancement, are unlikely to satisfy the NBB requirement.
- 6.16. The GBI Statement is the primary submission document for demonstrating NBB and should be prepared at feasibility stage, not retrofitted after design decisions have been made. For major developments, the GBI Statement should also include a Greenspace Factor score, which provides a quantitative measure of the ecological quality of open and landscaped areas. Detailed guidance, including the Statement template and Greenspace Factor scoring methodology, is in the *GBI SPG*.
- 6.17. Guidance for ecological consultants on completing the DECCA assessment within ecological reports is in Chapter 9 of this SPG.

Delivering NBB: Onsite, Offsite and Through Legal Agreements

- 6.18. Where NBB measures are delivered, and through what legal mechanism, matters. The local authority operates a clear hierarchy of preference that reflects both the quality of ecological outcomes and the enforceability of commitments.

Multifunctionality as a design strength

CO6.3

Well-designed GBI can deliver multiple planning objectives simultaneously, including NBB, SuDS, and placemaking. Embedding multifunctionality from the outset reduces land-take, avoids duplicated infrastructure, and can lower both capital and long-term management costs while creating richer, more resilient places. Development proposals that integrate multifunctional GBI early and coherently will generally be better placed to deliver measurable enhancement.

On-site delivery — ideally preferred

- 6.19. On-site delivery of NBB is the default assumption for all development. The reasons are not merely procedural: on-site enhancement delivers direct benefits to the users of the development, contributes to the local ecological network, is visible to the community, and can be monitored and enforced through planning conditions without requiring off-site access agreements or complex legal arrangements.
- 6.20. Even small developments can deliver meaningful on-site enhancement (Table 9). The key is integration into the design from the outset, not addition at the end.

Table 9: Measures appropriate for smaller developments linked to the DECCA attributes they deliver.

Enhancement Measure	Primary Attribute	Notes
Bee bricks / masonry cavities	Diversity	Integrated into construction fabric. Supplement with native flowering planting within foraging distance (max. 500 m).
Green roof (sedum or wildflower substrate min. 80 mm)	Diversity, Extent Connectivity	Wildflower substrate preferred over monoculture sedum. Include some bare aggregate areas for invertebrates.
Integrated bat roost features (bat bricks/loft)	Diversity	Integrated (built-in) features are strongly preferred over externally fixed boxes. Position informed by bat survey.
Integrated swift bricks and bird boxes	Diversity	Integrated features preferred. Position and type to be informed by survey data for declining species.
Log piles and stone refugia	Diversity	Create invertebrate and reptile habitat. Position in sheltered, sunny locations with adjacent rough grassland.
Native hedge planting along boundaries	Connectivity, Diversity	Connect to existing hedgerow network where possible. Use a species-rich native mix appropriate to local landscape character (see Trees and Hedgerows SPG).

Enhancement Measure	Primary Attribute	Notes
Native tree planting (single trees or small groups)	Diversity, Connectivity	Select species appropriate to soil type and space available at maturity. See Trees and Hedgerows SPG.
Permeable surfaces replacing hardstanding	Condition, Diversity	Reduces surface water runoff and supports invertebrates. Combine with low-growing native planting where space permits.
Wildflower grassland (from seed on low-nutrient substrate)	Diversity, Condition Connectivity	Avoid plugs from commercial mixes. Use a seed mix of locally appropriate native species. Manage as low-intensity cut-and-remove regime.
Wildlife pond creation (min. 4 m ²)	Diversity, Extent, Connectivity	Avoid fish stocking. Incorporate gently sloping margins, emergent and submerged planting. Valuable for great crested newts, amphibians and invertebrates.

Table 9 continued

Embedding Multifunctionality

- 6.21. Applicants are encouraged to recognise that thoughtful design can meet multiple planning requirements through integrated solutions. The multi-functional nature of GBI means that requirements for open space, sustainable drainage (SuDS) and NBB can frequently be delivered together, reducing the overall land take required and combining implementation and maintenance costs. Well-designed development that integrates GBI from the outset can also add value to the development and reduce long-term management costs compared with equivalent grey infrastructure solutions.
- 6.22. To realise these benefits, GBI must be designed in at the earliest stage of the project (not retrofitted after layout decisions have been fixed). Applicants should take an infrastructure-first approach, identifying existing GBI assets, ecological constraints and NBB opportunities before the built footprint is determined. This approach is the most effective way to avoid abortive costs and ensure that GBI features can serve multiple functions simultaneously.
- 6.23. In practice, where an applicant demonstrates that the step-wise approach has been properly applied to existing on-site biodiversity (including any effects on adjoining/impacted habitats and/or species), they will typically be well positioned to achieve NBB where this is combined with compliance with wider LDP policy requirements. In particular, proposals that integrate required nature-based solutions within their design proposals (such as the provision of multifunctional open space¹⁷, additional planting¹⁸, and SuDS¹⁹) will ordinarily deliver measurable enhancement.

¹⁷ PDS9 for developments of five or more dwellings. Multifunctional open space should form an integral part of the development's contribution to the GBI network, delivering benefits for biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, recreation, health and well-being. It should be planned and designed as a positive landscape feature and not treated as residual or left-over space within a development. Further guidance on integrating Open Space and nature can be found in the Open Space SPG.

¹⁸ PDS4 (f)

¹⁹ Developments comprising more than one dwelling or with a construction area of 100 m² or more, in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010

- 6.24. Multifunctionality may not always be appropriate in all locations. Where protected species or priority habitats are present, any proposed dual use must be demonstrably compatible with the ecological function of the feature. Poorly resolved conflict between recreation, SuDS operation and ecological requirements is a common and avoidable design failure. Proposals must clearly distinguish areas intended for exclusive ecological function from those that are genuinely multifunctional, with justification provided in the supporting ecological survey reports. Multifunctionality should not be used to justify the under-provision of any individual requirement.

Integrating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

- 6.25. Statutory SuDS standards place strong emphasis on delivering multiple benefits (i.e., water quantity management, water quality improvement, amenity value and biodiversity enhancement). Nature-based SuDS features are actively encouraged where they can replicate natural drainage processes and contribute to biodiversity.
- 6.26. Applicants are encouraged to design SuDS as multi-functional landscape features, integrated with open space and habitat provision rather than as isolated engineering components. Well-designed SuDS can contribute directly to NBB by creating new habitats, improving ecological connectivity, and enhancing habitat condition, in addition to managing surface water and reducing flood risk.
- 6.27. Early coordination between the planning process and the SAB approval process is essential. Drainage design should be developed alongside site layout and landscape proposals to ensure that SuDS features are spatially and functionally integrated into the overall scheme. Failure to consider SuDS at an early stage commonly results in avoidable redesign, loss of multifunctional opportunities, or conflict between drainage infrastructure and ecological or placemaking objectives.
- 6.28. Within Carmarthenshire, applicants are strongly encouraged to engage with the local authority in its role as SuDS Approving Body at pre-application stage to agree SuDS principles, adoption arrangements and maintenance responsibilities. SuDS proposals submitted as part of a planning application should be consistent with the GBI Statement, LEDS, and any ecological survey findings, clearly demonstrating how drainage infrastructure contributes to multifunctional GBI and the delivery of NBB. Applicants seeking SAB pre-application advice should visit the council website.

Strengthening Nature-Based SuDS

CO6.4

Nature-based SuDS features — swales, rain gardens, detention basins, constructed wetlands and permeable surfaces — can deliver measurable biodiversity enhancement when designed as multifunctional landscape features rather than isolated drainage infrastructure. Because SuDS are mandatory on most new development in Wales, they represent a significant, cost-neutral opportunity to contribute to NBB. Drainage infrastructure designed in isolation — added after layout decisions are fixed — is an opportunity lost.

Major applications

- 6.29. Major applications should be supported by professional ecological advice on how NBB will be delivered, evidenced through the full DECCA framework and presented in a LEDS (showing the spatial design of habitats and features) and a LEMP (showing how they will be managed and funded over the long term). An ecological consultant should complete a DECCA assessment in the ecological report; the landscape architect should translate that assessment into detailed design proposals in the LEDS. These documents must be consistent with each other and with the GBI Statement.
- 6.30. Recognised industry standards and professional benchmarks provide guidance on achieving high-quality ecological design in development²⁰. Accreditation under such schemes is viewed favourably.

Offsite delivery — exceptional circumstances only

- 6.31. Where it can be positively and robustly demonstrated that full on-site delivery of NBB is physically impossible — not merely inconvenient or difficult to manage — offsite delivery may be acceptable. The applicant bears the burden of demonstrating impossibility; the default assumption is always that on-site delivery is achievable. Offsite delivery will be secured through:
- ➔ Planning conditions, where the offsite land is within the red line boundary. The land will be set aside in perpetuity and will carry a restraint against future development.
 - ➔ Section 106 agreement, where the offsite land is outside the red line boundary. The agreement will similarly be a restraint against future development, with a management plan covering a specified period.
 - ➔ Financial contributions to an off-site scheme delivered by the local authority or a third-party provider are only available at the discretion of the local authority where both on-site and developer-led off-site delivery are genuinely unachievable. Any such contribution must meet the statutory tests for planning obligations and will be used to deliver equivalent or greater ecological benefit.

Compensation for high-priority habitats

- 6.32. Where development involves loss of high-priority habitats or habitats supporting EPS, compensation measures must be secured before development commences, not after. A GIS layer must be submitted detailing all land included in the compensation package, together with funding arrangements and a management plan for the required period. Compensation measures that cannot be legally secured before commencement will not be acceptable as a condition of consent.

²⁰ [Building with Nature](#) is one such standard which provides a framework for demonstrating ecological outcomes. BREEAM and other recognised standards and accreditations may also be relevant where they assess equivalent ecological benefits.

Long-Term Management and Monitoring

- 6.33. Delivering NBB does not end at the grant of planning permission. Biodiversity enhancement measures must be implemented, managed and maintained for the long term if they are to deliver lasting ecological benefit. This section sets out what the local authority expects after consent is granted, how compliance will be monitored, and what happens when commitments are not met.

The Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)

- 6.34. The LEMP is the primary mechanism by which long-term management commitments are secured and enforced. For all major applications, and for minor applications on ecologically sensitive sites, a LEMP must be submitted and agreed before development commences. It will be secured as a pre-commencement planning condition or through a Section 106 agreement, depending on the nature of the site and the complexity of the management requirements.
- 6.35. The LEMP must set out clear, site-specific management objectives for all retained and newly created ecological features, referenced to the DECCA attributes they are intended to maintain and improve. It must specify:
- a. the management prescriptions for each habitat type and their frequency;
 - b. the person or body responsible for implementation;
 - c. funding arrangements that will sustain management for the required period²¹; and
 - d. the monitoring programme that will confirm whether objectives are being met (vague prescriptions such as “manage grassland appropriately” or “maintain features in good condition” will not be accepted).

Condition Discharge and Implementation

- 6.36. Ecological conditions attached to a planning permission are legally binding and must be discharged in full before the relevant works commence or before occupation, as specified. Applications to discharge conditions must demonstrate, with supporting evidence, that the ecological measures set out in the LEMP, LEDS and any species method statements have been implemented to the required standard. Post-implementation inspection reports, prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist, will normally be required to confirm that habitat creation, planting, species features and protective measures have been installed correctly.
- 6.37. Where habitat creation or planting has failed to establish, or where features have been installed incorrectly, remediation must be carried out and confirmed before the

²¹ (potentially a minimum of 30 years, with longer periods likely to be required for woodland, peatland and other long-rotation habitats. Management periods may extend to 100 years or beyond where justified by the habitat type and ecological objectives);

condition is discharged. The local authority will not discharge an ecological condition on the basis of stated intent alone; evidence of successful implementation is required.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

- 6.38. The LEMP must include a monitoring programme that tracks ecological outcomes against the DECCA targets set at application stage. Monitoring reports must be submitted to the local authority at the intervals specified in the LEMP — typically annually for the first five years following implementation, and at agreed intervals thereafter. Reports must be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and must assess performance against each DECCA attribute, not simply confirm that management operations have been carried out.
- 6.39. Where monitoring identifies that ecological outcomes are not on track to meet LEMP targets, an adaptive management response must be implemented without delay. The LEMP must set out in advance what triggers an adaptive management review, what remedial actions are available, and who is responsible for commissioning and funding them. Reactive management — waiting until a habitat has fully deteriorated before intervening — is not acceptable. The local authority may require a revised LEMP where the original management prescriptions have demonstrably failed.

Enforcement

- 6.40. Failure to implement, maintain or monitor ecological measures in accordance with approved documents is a breach of planning condition and may result in enforcement action. The local authority will use its enforcement powers where ecological commitments are not being honoured, including requiring reinstatement of lost or damaged habitats and species features at the applicant's expense.
- 6.41. Where management obligations are secured through a Section 106 agreement, breach of those obligations may be subject to legal action. Applicants should be aware that the duty to deliver NBB does not lapse on sale of the site; management obligations transfer with land ownership and must be reflected in any future conveyance.

7. When is Ecological Information Required?

- 7.1. Table 10 describes the types of development most commonly likely to require specific ecological surveys or assessments. The table is indicative, not exhaustive. The fundamental test is whether a proposed development site or its surroundings contain features that could support protected species or habitats (and that question applies to any development type, regardless of whether it appears in the table). The local authority may request further ecological information on any application where there are reasonable grounds to believe such features are present.
- 7.2. Not providing required surveys at the point of submission may result in an application being invalidated or, if validated, refused.

Plan ahead — surveys cannot be conditioned after permission is granted

CO7.1

Many key survey windows run from spring to late summer. Applicants who commission surveys in the autumn for a spring or summer submission risk missing windows entirely, delaying their application by up to a year. Planning permission cannot be granted subject to a condition requiring surveys to be completed post-permission — all required surveys must be submitted with the application. Engage with an ecological consultant as early as possible.

- 7.3. The following steps set out a recommended sequence for identifying, scoping and providing the ecological information required to support a planning application.

Step 1: Data Search (Site Screening and Feasibility)

- 7.4. Before commissioning site-based ecological surveys, applicants should undertake a preliminary desk study (data search) to establish whether ecological constraints are known or likely to be present on or near the site. This step is intended not only to inform the scope and timing of any subsequent surveys, but also to support early site selection and feasibility, prior to land acquisition, by identifying potential ecological constraints that may influence the suitability, layout or viability of a development. The recommended sequence is:
- Request a data search from the [West Wales Biodiversity Records Centre \(WWBIC\)](#). These searches will identify records of protected and priority species and habitats within and around the site. A search radius of at least 1 km is typically appropriate for most proposals; a wider radius may be needed for larger sites or where impact pathways extend further.
 - Review the results against Table 10 to identify which scenarios apply to the site and the types of surveys that are likely to be required.
 - Use this information to scope a proportionate survey strategy, taking account of known records, habitat features and potential impact pathways. A data search is a standard component of a PEA, and is normally required to inform it. Many

ecological consultants will include this within their PEA scope; applicants should confirm this when commissioning work.

Step 2: Pre-Application Advice (Where required)

- 7.5. Where there is uncertainty about survey requirements — particularly for sites with complex ecological sensitivities, sites near designated sites, or proposals in a nutrient sensitive SAC catchment or the CMM Project Area — the local authority's Pre-Application service can provide site-specific advice before surveys are commissioned.
- 7.6. This step is particularly important where ecological constraints identified at Step 1 may influence site selection, layout, or the scope of survey work required.
- 7.7. Early engagement will reduce the risk of invalid applications and avoid delays arising from requests for further information.

Step 3: Survey Requirements and Submission

- 7.8. Following Steps 1 and 2, applicants should commission and complete all necessary ecological surveys in accordance with current best practice and within the appropriate seasonal windows (see Table 11).
- 7.9. Where a data search identifies confirmed records of a protected species, targeted surveys for that species will normally be required, regardless of whether the development type appears in Table 10.

Table 10: Development Proposals Likely to Require Ecological Information. Note, this is in addition to a GBI statement which is a requirement for all proposals.

Development Proposal	Information Required	Likely Targeted Surveys
Proposals likely to require a bat survey — all surveys by a licensed ecologist following current BCT Good Practice Guidelines		
Work to the roof of any building: eaves, soffit, ridge tiles, hanging tiles, slates or wall tops; work within loft space; replacing the ceiling below the roof space.	Bat roost assessment	<i>Emergence/re-entry surveys where roost features identified</i>
Demolition in full or in part of any building, including agricultural buildings, barns, outbuildings, Dutch barns, farmhouses and livestock buildings — particularly traditional brick or stone construction.	Bat roost assessment	<i>Emergence/re-entry surveys; activity transects where relevant</i>
Work to any built structure: bridges, viaducts, tunnels, mines, kilns, icehouses, air raid	Bat roost assessment	<i>Emergence/re-entry surveys</i>

Development Proposal	Information Required	Likely Targeted Surveys
shelters, cellars and similar underground structures.		
External illumination causing light spill onto a building, mature tree, woodland, field hedgerow, watercourse or known bat roost.	Bat activity assessment	<i>Transect surveys to characterise use of affected features</i>
Tree work: felling, significant lopping or topping of any tree with bat roost potential (i.e. with cavities, bark pockets, cracks, splits or ivy cover).	Bat roost assessment (tree)	<i>Preliminary roost assessment; emergence/re-entry surveys if features identified</i>
Proposals likely to require a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) — targeted species surveys will normally follow where the PEA identifies likely presence		
Proposals affecting woodland, hedgerows, hedge banks, stone walls, lines of trees, scrub or other habitat connectivity features.	PEA	<i>Bat surveys; dormouse surveys; reptile surveys; nesting bird surveys</i>
Proposals within or adjacent to quarries, gravel pits or rock outcrops with crevices or caves.	PEA	<i>Bat surveys; reptile surveys; invertebrate surveys</i>
Proposals affecting derelict land (brownfield sites), allotments or railway land.	PEA	<i>Reptile surveys; invertebrate surveys; nesting bird surveys</i>
Renewable energy proposals include wind turbines (single or multiple), hydro schemes or solar farms.	PEA	<i>Bat activity surveys (multi-season); breeding and wintering bird surveys; reptile surveys</i>
Impacts on any watercourse, intertidal area or standing water body — excluding ornamental garden fishponds.	PEA	<i>Otter survey; water vole survey; great crested newt survey; eel assessment</i>
Removal of rank, tussocky, wet, marshy or species-rich grassland, or heathland.	PEA	<i>Botanical survey (NVC); reptile surveys; invertebrate surveys</i>
Development affecting any location where protected or priority species or habitats are known or suspected to be present. *	PEA + targeted survey	<i>Targeted species surveys for the specific species or habitat identified</i>
May impact (directly or indirectly) * on a local/national designated (SSSI, LNR, SINCR) or international site (SAC, SPA, Ramsar site)	PEA (+ HRA screening)	<i>Pre-application advice strongly recommended. (RIAA needed where likely significant effect cannot be screened out at the TLSE stage).</i>

* As notified by the local authority and/or NRW or confirmed qualifying feature presence via WWBIC or another accredited data record centre. See Table 15 for potential pathways concerning National Network sites.

Invasive species

CO7.2

Where Schedule 9 invasive species are present on site (such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam or Giant Hogweed), an Invasive Species Management Plan will be required. This is not a survey document but a management commitment; it must set out the proposed treatment method, eradication timescale and monitoring arrangements. Development must not commence in infested areas until effective control has been demonstrated.

Survey Seasonality

- 7.10. Ecological surveys are strongly influenced by seasonality — species behave, reproduce and are detectable at particular times of year²².
- 7.11. Surveys carried out outside optimal windows are not simply suboptimal — they may be rejected by the local authority or NRW and will need to be repeated in the correct season, potentially at significant cost and delay.
- 7.12. Where the local authority has sufficient evidence that a submitted survey does not accurately reflect site conditions²³, further information may be required, which could delay determination.
- 7.13. Table 11 sets out the optimal seasonal windows for the surveys most typically required in Carmarthenshire. Where surveys are carried out in constrained or sub-optimal conditions, the report must clearly state the limitations and their implications for the conclusions drawn.

Table 11: Key Ecological Survey Windows

Survey Type	Optimal Season	Validity / Notes
Bat roost assessment (emergence/re-entry)	April – October (May–August for maternity roosts)	Typically valid for up to 2 years of survey date, subject to no significant change to the structure or surrounding vegetation. Minimum two visits at appropriate intervals; BCT Guidelines . Cannot be conditioned post-permission.
Bat activity transects	April – October	Typically valid for up to 2 years. Full-season surveys require multiple visits at set intervals; number of visits determined by BCT Guidelines .
Nesting bird survey	March – August	Surveys valid for the season in which they are carried out. Absence of active nests before clearance works must be confirmed by a qualified ecologist within the nesting season.

²² For instance, a bat roost survey carried out in February cannot reliably identify a maternity roost that forms in May; a botanical survey in October cannot classify the grassland community that was present in July.

²³ For example, because it was carried out in poor conditions, outside the recommended season, or the site has changed since the survey date.

Survey Type	Optimal Season	Validity / Notes
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	April – October (best May–July)	Typically valid for up to 2 years, provided the site has not materially changed. Winter surveys permissible but constrained; supplementary visits during the growing season may be required.
Great crested newt survey (traditional)	Mid-March – mid-May	Valid for one survey season. Statutory survey methods; specialist licence required. eDNA surveys typically valid April–June only; confirm current NRW/CIEEM guidance as methodology is subject to revision.
Reptile survey	March – October (best April–June and September)	Valid for one survey season. Minimum six visits using artificial refugia at appropriate intervals.
Otter survey	Year-round (best late winter/early spring)	Typically valid for up to 6 months. Update required if survey is more than 6 months old at the point of submission.
Water vole survey	May – October	Valid for one survey season. Winter surveys may significantly undercount populations.
Botanical survey (NVC)	May – August	Typically valid for up to 3 years for stable habitats. Winter surveys cannot classify most grassland or wetland communities; supplementary summer visits will be required.
Badger survey	Year-round	Valid for 6 months. Update required if survey is more than 6 months old at the point of submission.

Survey validity: applying the guidance

CO7.3

Survey validity is influenced not only by the time elapsed since survey, but also by changes to the site and its surroundings.

- Surveys may no longer be reliable where vegetation has been cleared, habitats altered, buildings modified, or adjacent land uses have changed since the original survey.
- The presence of new species records (e.g. identified through an updated data search) may trigger the need for updated or additional surveys.
- For species with highly seasonal detectability, surveys more than one survey season old should be treated with caution and will often require updating.
- Even where surveys fall within the typical validity periods set out in Table 11, the local authority may require updated information where there is reasonable doubt that the survey reflects current site conditions.

Applicants should confirm the validity of any existing survey with a suitably qualified ecological consultant before relying on it to support a planning application.

8. Requirements by Application Type

- 8.1. This chapter sets out what ecological and landscape information is typically required for each type of planning application and should be read in conjunction with [Chapter 7](#), including Table 10. Definitions of all document types are provided in [Appendix E](#). The [Appendix C](#) checklist should be used to confirm requirements before submission.

Householder Applications

- 8.2. Most householder proposals can be assessed from a clearly annotated site plan or block plan showing all trees, hedgerows, watercourses and key habitats on and adjacent to the site, with retention/removal indicated.
- 8.3. A GBI Statement is required for all householder applications; for most this will be a short document or annotated plan describing proposed ecological features.
- 8.4. Even modest householder developments can deliver meaningful enhancement (see Table 9).
- 8.5. As bats frequently use buildings for roosting, householder proposals involving alterations to, extensions of, or works affecting existing roofs should be screened by a licensed ecologist and may require a bat survey prior to submission. Bat surveys will also be required where proposals affect outbuildings, mature trees or other features with bat roost potential. Additional information such as a PEA, hedgerow survey or tree survey may be required where potential impacts on ecological features are identified.

Minor Applications

- 8.6. A PEA must be submitted with all minor applications where habitats of potential ecological value are present on or adjacent to the site. Where the PEA identifies a reasonable likelihood of protected species being present, targeted surveys must be submitted with the application; they cannot be conditioned after permission is granted. Applications without the required survey information will not be validated.
- 8.7. A GBI Statement evidencing compliance with the DECCA framework is required with all minor applications. A LEDS must demonstrate how retained ecological features are protected within the layout and how new planting and habitat features contribute to NBB. Where long-term management is secured by planning condition or obligation, a LEMP will also typically be required.

Major Applications

- 8.8. A PEA is required for validation of all major applications. All targeted surveys identified by the PEA as necessary must be submitted with the application. No major application will be validated or determined without the full suite of required ecological surveys. Surveys are season-dependent: applicants must plan survey programmes well in advance of the anticipated submission date.
- 8.9. Pre-application engagement is strongly recommended before surveys are commissioned, to agree the scope of ecological work and avoid abortive costs.
- 8.10. Major applications are typically supported by a GBI Statement, LEDS, and LEMP.

Outline Applications

- 8.11. A PEA must be submitted with all outline applications. It must identify all ecologically sensitive features on and adjacent to the site and demonstrate that the developable area has been determined through a constraints-led approach. The indicative layout must show that mandatory buffer zones (Table 12) have been incorporated and that the site can accommodate the anticipated landscape strategy at reserved matters stage.
- 8.12. A GBI Statement must be submitted at outline stage, setting out the ecological and landscape principles to be applied at reserved matters. The LEDS and LEMP will also typically be required at outline. Applicants must demonstrate at outline that sufficient land has been identified to deliver the landscape strategy and that all ecological constraints can be resolved within the proposed layout. Unresolved constraints will not be deferred to reserved matters.

Cross-Cutting Considerations *(regardless of application type)*

- 8.13. Where the site may have a likely significant effect on an SAC, SPA or Ramsar site, a RIAA must be submitted prior to determination; early engagement with the local authority and NRW is essential.
- 8.14. Where any hedgerow is proposed for removal or significant alteration, a dedicated Hedgerow Survey should be submitted. The mandatory buffer zones set out in Table 12 must be incorporated into the site layout from the outset, before other design decisions are fixed. Reference is made to the *Tree and Hedgerow SPG*.

Buffer zones

- 8.15. Buffer zones must be incorporated into site layouts before design decisions are fixed. They protect ecological features from the direct and indirect impacts of development.

Table 12: The minimum buffer distances set out below are indicative and represent typical recommendations at the time of writing. Buffer requirements may vary depending on site-specific circumstances, ecological value, and regulatory requirements. Applicants should confirm current requirements with the local authority, NRW, and/or a suitably qualified ecologist at an early stage, where relevant.

Feature	Minimum Recommended Buffer
Main river (designated by NRW)	8 m from top of bank (non-tidal)
Ordinary watercourse (stream, ditch, drain)	7 metres from bank top, both sides
Pond (non-ornamental)	5–10 m minimum depending on ecological value
Ancient woodland	Minimum 50 m; site-specific based on survey evidence
Semi-natural woodland (Section 7 habitat)	Site-specific; usually RPA as minimum guide
Hedgerow (for hedge line trees, see below)	Site-specific based on ecological value; typically 2–4 m
Trees (Root Protection Area)	As calculated per BS 5837; typically 12 times the stem diameter
SAC, SPA, or Ramsar	Site-specific; based on HRA screening and NRW advice
SSSI, SINC	Site-specific based on ecological value of ecological features

- 8.16. Where protected species are present, larger buffers may be required (for example, up to 30 m for otter, or variable bat buffer zones around roosts and foraging routes depending on roost type). The appropriate buffer must be specified by the ecological consultant in the PEA or survey report.
- 8.17. Buffer zones may need to only be place during construction as part of a Construction Exclusion Zone (CEZ), or, for more sensitive ecological features, may need to be permanent buffers protected by suitable fencing.

Seasonality and works scheduling

- 8.18. Vegetation clearance must not be carried out during the bird nesting season (broadly February to August/September) without prior confirmation from a suitably qualified ecologist that no active nests are present. Where bats are present, clearance of vegetation cover must be informed by bat survey results and NRW licensing arrangements. Method statements for vegetation clearance must always specify these constraints.

Legal consents separate from planning permission

- 8.19. Planning permission does not remove the need for additional legal consents, which must be obtained independently. These include: NRW development licences for works affecting European Protected Species; NRW licences for badger interference; Hedgerow Removal Notices where applicable²⁴; and TPO consent.

Lighting and biodiversity

- 8.20. Artificial light at night can disrupt bats and other nocturnal wildlife, affecting roost emergence, commuting routes and foraging, and drawing in invertebrate prey. Light spill onto a building, mature tree, woodland, hedgerow, watercourse or known roost may trigger a bat activity assessment (see Table 10) and must be addressed in the Landscape and Ecological Design Scheme (or Lighting Statement). External lighting should follow [BCT/ILP Guidance Note 08/23](#).
- 8.21. For the full requirements on lighting pollution and biodiversity, reference is made to the *Lighting and Dark Skies SPG*.

Permitted Development

- 8.22. Development carried out under Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) does not typically require the submission of planning documentation; however, this does not remove the responsibility to consider biodiversity and the natural environment on, adjacent to, or potentially affected by the works.
- 8.23. PDRs do not remove the requirement to comply with other statutory controls. Separate consents may therefore be required, including (but not limited to):
- a. licences for works affecting protected species or designated sites (if relevant);
 - b. consents or permits for works affecting watercourses;
 - c. Hedgerow Removal Notices (for removal of protected hedgerows); and
 - d. tree works applications (for trees within conservation areas or TPOs).
- 8.24. Those carrying out works under PDRs are expected to:
- a. comply fully with all relevant legislation relating to biodiversity including protected species, trees, hedgerows and invasive species;
 - b. take all reasonable steps to avoid harm to biodiversity, trees, hedgerows and other ecological features on site and on neighbouring land, recognising that liability may arise under common law where damage is caused; and

²⁴ Only required where works are dependent on permitted development rights (i.e., not required where removals are proposed as part of a planning application).

- c. apply the principles of the step-wise approach by first avoiding ecological harm, then minimising and mitigating impacts where avoidance is not possible.
- 8.25. In some circumstances, permitted development may be subject to additional approval requirements under the Habitats Regulations²⁵.
- 8.26. Where there is uncertainty as to whether ecological constraints may be present, applicants and landowners are strongly encouraged to seek advice from a suitably qualified ecologist before works commence. Any ecological harm arising from permitted development may result in enforcement and/or prosecution under relevant wildlife legislation.

²⁵ particularly where a National Network site may be affected.

9. Technical Guidance for Ecological Consultants

- 9.1. This chapter sets out the standard of ecological work the local authority requires in support of planning applications. Applicants and design teams will also find this chapter useful in understanding what good ecological advice looks like and what they should expect from the consultants they commission.
- 9.2. Work that does not meet this standard may not be accepted as an adequate basis for determining an application. Ecological reports that are incomplete, out of date, insufficiently detailed or non-compliant with the professional standards set out below may be returned without assessment, and the application may be invalidated or refused on the grounds of insufficient information.
- 9.3. Consultants who are uncertain about the level of detail, methodology or scope required for a specific site are strongly encouraged to seek pre-application engagement with the local authority before commissioning surveys. This will reduce the risk of post-submission delays and ensure that the scope of the work will be acceptable.

Pre-Application Engagement

- 9.4. Pre-application engagement between the consultant ecologist and the local authority's Planning Ecology team is one of the most effective ways to reduce post-submission delay. It allows the scope of surveys, the level of DECCA evidence, the content of the LEMP and the overall approach to NBB to be discussed and agreed before reports are written.
- 9.5. Where a scope of survey work or approach to assessment has been agreed at pre-application stage, that agreement will be material to the local authority's assessment of the submitted reports. Consultants should keep a written record of pre-application discussions and reference any agreed scope in the submitted report. However, pre-application agreement on scope does not guarantee that the application will be supported; the local authority's assessment will always be based on the quality and completeness of the submitted information.
- 9.6. For complex applications — particularly those involving EPS, significant habitat loss or sites within or adjacent to National Network sites (HRA) — early engagement is essential and should be sought before surveys are commissioned, not after the reports are written.

Professional Standards

- 9.7. All ecological work submitted in support of planning applications should comply with the standards set out in Table 13. The local authority will assess submitted reports against these standards; reports that do not comply may not be accepted as a sufficient basis for determination.

Table 13: Professional Standards for Ecological Reports (current at the time of writing; the most up-to-date versions of the standards should be used).

Standard	What it requires on a Carmarthenshire application
BS 42020:2013 — British Standard for Biodiversity in Planning and Development	Sets out requirements for biodiversity management through the planning process, including survey scope, report content, the evidence required to demonstrate NBB, and the competencies required of practitioners. All ecological reports must demonstrate compliance with BS 42020 as a baseline. Reports that do not follow the BS 42020 framework for survey scope and impact assessment will be considered deficient.
CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing, Second Edition (December 2017)	All ecological reports must follow these guidelines in structure, content and language. Reports must contain a clear, unambiguous executive summary setting out the key findings, conclusions and recommendations so that the planning officer can identify the ecological position without having to synthesise findings across multiple chapters. Recommendations must be numbered and clearly distinguished from descriptive text.
Welsh Government Approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity and the DECCA Framework (CIEEM Briefing Paper, September 2022)	The DECCA framework must be applied to all NBB assessments. This means the ecological report must contain a structured assessment of the change in each DECCA attribute before and after development. A qualitative assertion of benefit is not sufficient. The assessment must demonstrate measurable improvement across all five attributes, or explicitly justify where specific attributes cannot be improved and identify what compensating measures address the deficit. See Chapter 6.
Species-specific professional guidance	All species-specific surveys must follow the current guidance published by the relevant professional body and/or the statutory nature conservation body. Where NRW has published site-specific advice for designated sites, that advice must be followed. Outdated methodology will not be accepted.

Licensing requirements

- 9.8. All surveys that require a NRW survey licence must be carried out by, or under the direct on-site supervision²⁶ of, a current NRW licence-holder for the relevant species group. This applies to bat roost assessments (emergence/re-entry surveys), greatcrested newt surveys, dormouse surveys, and surveys of Schedule 5 animals. A report signed by a licence-holder who was not present during the survey visits, or who has not personally reviewed the primary data, will not be accepted.
- 9.9. Surveys conducted without the required NRW licence, or without the direct on-site supervision of a licence-holder, will not be accepted as valid submissions and will not be considered a sufficient basis for determining the application. Where an unlicensed survey is submitted, the local authority will request a replacement survey within the appropriate seasonal window. Delays arising from unlicensed surveys are the responsibility of the applicant.
- 9.10. Membership of a relevant professional body²⁷, together with appropriate professional accreditation and demonstrable technical competence, is strongly recommended. When assessing the adequacy of submitted ecological information, the local authority will have regard to the professional qualifications, relevant experience and competence of report authors and surveyors²⁸.

Required Content for Ecological Reports

- 9.11. All ecological reports submitted in support of planning applications must be in-date at the time of submission, not only at the time of survey. A report that was within its validity period when commissioned but has since expired will not be accepted. Validity periods are set out in Table 11.
- 9.12. All reports must be proportionate to the scale of the survey and the significance of the findings²⁹. Required content for all ecological reports is as follows:
- a. Survey details: specific dates and times of all site visits; weather conditions; names, qualifications, relevant experience and NRW licence numbers (where applicable) of all surveyors and report authors.
 - b. Methods: clear description of survey methods and effort for each survey type, referenced to the relevant professional guidance. Any deviation from standard methods must be explicitly noted and justified.

²⁶ 'Direct supervision' means the licence-holder must be physically present on site for all licensed survey activities and must personally review and verify the raw survey data before the report is signed off

²⁷ For ecological work, the [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management \(CIEEM\)](#) is the recognised professional body in the UK, with defined membership grades and competency frameworks relevant to ecological survey, assessment and reporting.

²⁸ Professional membership is an important indicator of appropriate standards, ethical practice and continuing professional development; however, competence should also be demonstrated through relevant experience and technical expertise appropriate to the proposal.

²⁹ For instance, a PEA for a householder extension is not the same document as one for a 300-home allocation; the level of detail, the number of targeted survey recommendations and the depth of DECCA assessment must reflect the scale and sensitivity of the proposal.

- c. Limitations: a specific statement of survey limitations and, critically, their implications for the reliability of the conclusions. A limitations statement that does not engage with what the limitations mean for the findings is not acceptable.
- d. Impact assessment: a clear assessment of how the development will affect all designated sites (international, national and local), protected and priority species and habitats identified on or near the site, including indirect and cumulative effects. Any further requirements for a [NRW development licence](#).
- e. Step-wise approach: a structured demonstration of how the step-wise approach has been followed, showing what avoidance and minimisation measures were considered at each stage before mitigation and compensation were identified.
- f. DECCA assessment: a structured assessment of the change in each DECCA attribute before and after development, evidencing how NBB will be achieved. See Chapter 6 for the required depth of assessment.
- g. Pre-clearance baseline: where any vegetation clearance, demolition or ground preparation has occurred on the site before the survey was carried out, the report should reconstruct the pre-clearance ecological value using aerial photography, historical surveys, habitat records and any other available evidence. NBB must be calculated from this baseline, not from the surveyed (post-clearance) condition.
- h. Executive summary: a clear, standalone summary of the key findings, conclusions and numbered recommendations, written so that the planning officer can identify the ecological position without having to read the full report.

9.13. Table 14 sets out the required content for the main report types. This is a minimum standard; more detailed content may be required for complex or sensitive sites.

Table 14: Required Content by Report Type — * = If relevant

Required Content	PEA	Bat Survey	Species Survey	EclA	Notes
Survey dates, times, surveyors, qualifications and licence numbers	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Required in all cases.</i>
Methods referenced to current guidance; deviations noted	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Outdated methodology will not be accepted.</i>
Survey limitations and implications for conclusions	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Must engage with what limitations mean for reliability of findings.</i>
Data search results (WWBIC)	✓	*	*	✓	<i>PEA must include data search. Bat surveys and species surveys may incorporate data search findings.</i>
Habitat map (Phase 1 or UKHab)	✓	—	—	✓	<i>PEA and EclA must include habitat map.</i>
Impact assessment against designated sites and protected species	✓	*	✓	✓	<i>Required wherever designated sites or protected species are present or potentially present.</i>

Required Content	PEA	Bat Survey	Species Survey	EclA	Notes
Step-wise approach demonstration	✓	*	*	✓	<i>Bat and species surveys should address mitigation hierarchy for the relevant species.</i>
DECCA assessment	✓	*	—	✓	<i>Full DECCA assessment in PEA and EclA. Bat surveys should address NBB for bats where roosts are affected.</i>
Pre-clearance baseline	*	*	*	*	<i>When clearance has occurred before survey.</i>
NRW licence requirement statement	*	✓	✓	✓	<i>Must state clearly whether a NRW development licence is or is not required.</i>
EPS derogation test assessment	—	✓	*	✓	<i>Required where EPS are present and will be affected.</i>
Executive summary with numbered recommendations	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Must be self-contained and unambiguous.</i>

Additional Content where the Habitats Regulations are concerned

9.14. Where the development may affect EPS, the ecological report must:

- a. Confirm, based on survey evidence, whether EPS are present and, if so, what species, what populations or roost sizes, and what habitats they use.
- b. Assess the likely effects of the development on the conservation status of the species at the local and national scale, distinguishing between direct mortality, disturbance, and loss of habitat.
- c. State clearly and unambiguously whether a NRW development licence will be required before the development can proceed.
- d. Where a licence will be required, demonstrate compliance with all three Article 16 derogation tests (Habitats Regulations, Regulation 55):
 - i. No satisfactory alternative — demonstrate that no alternative site, layout or construction method that would avoid or adequately reduce the impact has been identified or is feasible.
 - ii. Imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) — demonstrate specific public benefits that are commensurate with the impact and outweighs the conservational interest.
 - iii. Favourable conservation status maintained — demonstrate that the proposed mitigation and compensation measures are sufficient to ensure the long-term favourable conservation status of the species/site affected

9.15. NRW must be consulted where a licence is likely to be required. Pre-application engagement with both the local authority and NRW is strongly recommended for all proposals affecting EPS. Planning permission will not necessarily be granted because a licence application has been submitted; both consents must be addressed independently and in parallel.

- 9.16. Where a proposed development may have a likely significant effect on an SAC, SPA or Ramsar site — whether within Carmarthenshire or elsewhere, and whether the site is directly affected or affected through air quality, water quality, hydrology, noise, lighting, increased recreational pressure or any other pathway — sufficient information must be provided to enable the local authority to undertake an HRA.
- 9.17. A RIAA will be required where impacts on the qualifying features of a National Network site are plausible and cannot be screened out at the TLSE stage. The RIAA must:
- Identify all plausible pathways by which the development could affect the qualifying features of the designated site.
 - Assess the magnitude and significance of each pathway, with reference to the current conservation status and condition of the qualifying features.
 - Demonstrate, with supporting evidence, whether significant effects on the site's integrity can be excluded.
 - Where significant effects cannot be excluded, set out all proposed avoidance and mitigation measures and demonstrate that they are sufficient to reduce effects below significance.
- 9.18. For National Network sites, pathways in Table 15 should always be considered in the RIAA, in addition to any site-specific pathways identified through the TLSE.

Table 15: Designated Sites, Qualifying Features and Key Impact Pathways

Designated Site	Key Qualifying Features	Pathways to Routinely Consider
Afon Tywi SAC / Afon Teifi SAC	Otter, river lamprey, sea lamprey, twaite shad, bullhead, white-clawed crayfish (Teifi); aquatic habitats	Water quality deterioration (silt, chemicals, nutrient enrichment); hydrological change (altered flow regime, abstraction); physical barrier to fish migration; disturbance of riparian habitats during construction.
Burry Inlet SPA / Ramsar	Oystercatcher, dunlin, pintail, knot, curlew (non-breeding); intertidal habitat	Increased recreational disturbance from development within access distance; disturbance and predation pressure linked to domestic pets associated with new residential development in close proximity to the site, particularly at intertidal, saltmarsh and supporting habitat margins; lighting spill onto roosting areas; hydrological change; water quality.
Carmarthen Bay SPA	Common scoter (non-breeding)	Marine disturbance; water quality; offshore infrastructure.
Carmarthen Bay Dunes SAC	Sand dune habitats, fen orchid, narrow-mouthed whorl snail, petalwort	Recreational pressure (trampling, dog fouling); hydrological change; scrub encroachment; air quality from increased traffic.
Caeau Mynydd Mawr SAC	Molinia meadows; marsh fritillary butterfly	Loss of potential supporting habitat within the CMM Project Area; fragmentation of butterfly metapopulation

Designated Site	Key Qualifying Features	Pathways to Routinely Consider
		habitat; changes to hydrology or management of grassland habitats. See <i>CMM SPG</i> .
Bristol Channel Approaches SAC	Harbour porpoise	Noise and disturbance from marine and coastal construction activities; vessel traffic; pollution.

- 9.19. Advice for individual SACs and SPAs, along with the Burry Inlet Ramsar site is available through pre-application engagement with NRW and the local authority.
- 9.20. Applicants should not assume that the absence of planning history on a site means that HRA issues have already been screened out. The local authority will carry out its own TLSE for every application with the potential to affect a National Network site.

Coordination with the Landscape Framework

- 9.21. One of the most common causes of inadequate NBB delivery is the disconnect between the ecological report and the landscape design: the ecologist identifies NBB measures and the DECCA assessment evidences them, but the landscape architect then produces a Leds that specifies inappropriate planting, incorrect management regimes or insufficient habitat areas. The ecological consultant has a responsibility to prevent this disconnect.
- 9.22. An ecological consultant should review the Leds before it is finalised and confirm in writing³⁰ that the planting specifications, habitat creation details, mitigation measures and management provisions in the Leds are consistent with the ecological report and will deliver the NBB measures described. Where the Leds cannot be confirmed as consistent, the report must identify the discrepancies and the revisions required. Applications submitted with a Leds that is inconsistent with the ecological report may be treated as deficient.
- 9.23. Table 16 sets out the ecological consultant's specific responsibilities in relation to each landscape framework document.

Table 16: Ecological Consultant Responsibilities within the Landscape Framework

Document	Ecological Consultant's Responsibilities	Quality Standard
GBI Statement	Complete the DECCA assessment and NBB evidence that underpins the Statement. Ensure consistency with any ecological reports. Confirm that the overall NBB position described in the GBI Statement is supported by sound ecological evidence.	The DECCA assessment must evidence measurable improvement or explain justified exceptions. Assertions without supporting evidence will not be accepted.
Landscape and Ecological Design Scheme (LEDS)	Review draft before finalisation. Confirm in writing that: planting species are ecologically appropriate (native provenance, locally appropriate, selected to maximise Diversity); habitat creation specifications	Written confirmation of consistency between the ecological report and the LEDS must be submitted

³⁰ either in a covering letter, a review note appended to the LEDS, or a revision to the ecological report

Document	Ecological Consultant's Responsibilities	Quality Standard
	are technically correct (seed mixes, substrate depths, pond profiles, hedgerow stocking densities); mitigation measures are correctly specified; and all NBB measures identified in the ecological report are present in the LEDS. Lead on specification of complex elements: hedgerow translocation, species-specific habitat creation (great crested newt terrestrial habitat, otter holts, dormouse habitat), wildlife corridor design and bat-sensitive lighting design.	with the application. Inconsistencies must be resolved before submission, not flagged for post-submission resolution.
Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)	Contribute the ecological management objectives for all retained and new habitats (referenced to the condition and connectivity DECCA targets identified in the assessment). Draft the monitoring programme: what will be monitored, by whom, at what intervals, against what success criteria, and what adaptive management actions will be triggered if targets are not met. Specify the ecological supervision requirements for implementation of the LEDS. Confirm that management periods are adequate for the habitat types proposed.	The LEMP must be specific and enforceable. Vague management prescriptions such as <i>"manage grassland appropriately"</i> or <i>"maintain ponds in good condition"</i> are not acceptable. Management must be referenced to recognised guidance (e.g. BSBI, CCW/NRW management standards for Section 7 habitats).
Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	Lead on all biodiversity management provisions of the CEMP. This includes: pre-clearance survey requirements and protocols (who surveys, when, what triggers a work stoppage); Construction Exclusion Zone (CEZ) specifications and fencing standards; invasive species management and disposal; pollution prevention measures specific to sensitive ecological receptors (watercourses, bat roosts, protected species habitat); construction lighting management; ecological clerk of works (ECoW) requirements including supervision frequency, records to be kept and reporting obligations.	The CEMP must name the ecological consultant or ECoW responsible for construction supervision. Supervision records must be kept and made available to the local authority on request. Post-construction ecological inspection reports must be submitted to discharge relevant planning conditions.

Quality Assurance

- 9.24. Ecological reports submitted in support of major applications, applications involving EPS, and/or applications requiring a RIAA should demonstrate that they have been subject to internal quality assurance review before submission. This means a suitably experienced ecologist within the consultant's organisation, or an independent peer reviewer, has reviewed the report for internal consistency; adequacy of survey effort and methodology; completeness of the impact assessment; robustness of the DECCA assessment; and accuracy of the compliance statement.
- 9.25. Peer-reviewed reports for complex applications are viewed favourably by the local authority. Reports that contain internal inconsistencies, unsupported conclusions, incomplete DECCA assessments or missing methodology sections are a common cause of post-submission

delay and are, in the most serious cases, grounds for recommending refusal on the basis of insufficient information.

- 9.26. The local authority reserves the right to return reports that do not meet the required standard without a full assessment. Where a report is returned, the applicant will be advised of the specific deficiencies and the information required to remedy them. The clock for determination will not run while deficient information is being remedied.

Appendices

Appendix A: Legislative and Policy Context

- A.1. This appendix provides a concise overview of the national, regional and local policy and legislative framework relevant to this SPG. It summarises the key legislation, strategies and guidance that shape how biodiversity is protected, managed and enhanced within the planning process, and provides the full text of the LDP policies most relevant to this SPG.

National

- A.2. PPW sets out the Welsh Government's land use planning policies for Wales. Chapter 6 (Natural Environment) is of most direct relevance to this SPG. Table 2 of this SPG summarises key requirements; the extracts below provide the full text of the most directly relevant provisions.

Section 6.4.5 — Biodiversity and net benefit

"Planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species (not including non-native invasive species), locally or nationally and must work alongside nature and it must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and improve, or enable the improvement of, the resilience of ecosystems."

Section 6.4.11 — Step-wise approach

"Planning authorities must follow a stepwise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for."

Section 6.4.12 — Enhancement requirement

"Where biodiversity enhancement proportionate to the scale and nature of the development is not proposed as part of an application, significant weight will be given to its absence, and unless other significant material considerations indicate otherwise, it will be necessary to refuse permission."

Section 6.4.15 — Irreplaceable habitats

"Planning authorities must give the highest level of protection to irreplaceable habitats, including: ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees; blanket peat, lowland raised bogs, fens, blanket heaths and moorlands, calcareous grasslands, coastal floodplain grazing marsh, reedbeds, river floodplain grazing marsh, saltmarsh, sand dune habitats, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, limestone pavements, machair, mudflats, purple moor grass and rush pastures, seagrass beds, and species-rich grasslands. These habitats are irreplaceable and must be excluded from site searches undertaken by developers and it will be wholly exceptional for development to be justifiable in such instances."

Section 6.4.16 — Net benefit for all development

"All development must deliver a net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience from the baseline state (proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed). Even if the biodiversity value has been maintained, there must still be a pro-active process to look for and secure enhancement through the design and implementation of the development."

Section 6.2.12 — GBI Statement

"A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal."

Section 6.4.42 — Trees, woodland and hedgerows

"Permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits."

Future Wales — The National Plan 2040

- A.3. Future Wales is the national development framework for Wales. Policy 15 (National Forest) promotes tree planting and woodland creation. The ecological network of habitats connecting Carmarthenshire's designated sites and priority habitats is integral to the Future Wales spatial strategy.

Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

- A.4. TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009) provides detailed advice on how the land use planning system should contribute to biodiversity and geological conservation. It is the principal technical guidance supporting PPW12 Chapter 6 for planning purposes. It includes advice on protected species surveys, Habitats Regulations Assessment, and planning conditions and obligations.
- A.5. TAN 10: Tree Preservation Orders (1997) provides guidance for local planning authorities on ensuring adequate measures are in place to preserve and plant trees when granting planning permission. Refer to the Trees and Hedgerows SPG for further guidance.

Key Legislation

A.6. Table A summarises key legislation relevant to biodiversity and nature conservation of direct relevance to this SPG. This list is indicative and not exhaustive.

Table A: Key Legislation

Legislation	Key Relevance to This SPG
Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)	Implements the Habitats Directive. Designates the National Sites Network (SACs and SPAs). Provides for European Protected Species (EPS). Requires Habitats Regulations Assessment for plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on a National Network site.
Environment (Wales) Act 2016	Section 6: duty on all public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience. Section 7: Welsh Ministers must publish and act on a list of species and habitats of principal importance. Material to all planning decisions.
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	Protects wild birds (Section 1), Schedule 5 animals, Schedule 8 plants and Schedule 9 invasive species. Provides for SSSIs. Fundamental to the protection of all the most commonly encountered protected species in Carmarthenshire.
Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended)	Protects badgers and their setts from intentional or reckless interference. Relevant to any development that may affect areas used by badgers.
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	Requires public bodies to carry out sustainable development, including contributing to "A Resilient Wales": a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems.
Town and Country Planning (EIA) (Wales) Regulations 2017	Requires Environmental Impact Assessment for certain types of project. The ecological chapter of an EIA must comply with this SPG and relevant guidance.
Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (as amended)	Protect important countryside hedgerows from removal. Hedgerows meeting defined criteria require a Hedgerow Removal Notice before removal. Note: a Hedgerow Removal Notice is not required where hedgerow is removed to implement a planning permission (except where works rely on PDRs).
Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017	Aims to achieve or maintain good ecological status in all water bodies. Relevant to any development affecting rivers, streams, ditches, ponds or coastal waters.
Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996	Makes it an offence to inflict unnecessary suffering on wild mammals. Applies to site clearance and translocation method statements.
The Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 (as amended)	Makes it an offence to obstruct the passage of European eels. Applies to any works in or across watercourses.

Regional

- A.7. The South West Wales Area Statement identifies key risks, opportunities and priorities to build the resilience of the region's ecosystems and support sustainable management of natural resources. It includes the theme of Reversing the Decline of, and Enhancing, Biodiversity, which encompasses protecting and restoring habitats, safeguarding areas of high biodiversity value and ensuring land management integrates biodiversity objectives. Relevant to this SPG, the Area Statement supports actions to restore degraded habitats, protect wetlands and grasslands, and strengthen ecological connectivity.
- A.8. Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) will be prepared by the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee. Where adopted, SDPs will form part of the development plan framework and will address biodiversity and GBI matters at a regional scale.

Local

- A.9. The Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2018–2033 sets out proposals and policies for the future use of all land within the county, excluding the area within the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. As part of the development plan framework for Wales it reflects national planning policy. The policies most relevant to this SPG are set out below with their full policy wording. Related SPGs should also be regarded.

SP14 *Maintaining and Enhancing the Natural Environment*

Development proposals must protect and enhance the County's natural environment's ecosystem resilience and resilient ecological networks.

Proposals must reflect the role that natural environment aspects and features and an ecologically connected environment have in protecting and enhancing biodiversity, defining the landscape, contributing to well-being and the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.

Any development proposal should contribute towards the overall aim of building resilience of our ecosystems and enhancing the benefits they provide. Development that would result in unacceptable adverse environmental effects or that does not result in enhancement of biodiversity will not be permitted.

NE1 *Regional and Local Designations*

Development proposals that will result in adverse effects to a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), peatland habitat, and/or Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site (RIGS), will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- a) All adverse impacts are addressed in accordance with the step-wise approach;*
- b) Where this is not feasible, ensure sufficient compensatory measures are put in place which address all potential adverse impacts upon these sites resulting from the proposal; or*
- c) In exceptional circumstances, where the reasons for the development and/or land use change clearly outweighs the need to safeguard the conservational interests of the site.*

Proposals must not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally, ecological connectivity and must provide net benefits for biodiversity.

NE2 Biodiversity

Development proposals must maintain and enhance biodiversity in accordance with Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Proposals will not be permitted where they would result in an adverse impact on priority species and habitats, and features of recognised importance to the conservation of biodiversity, except where it can be demonstrated that:

- a) All adverse impacts are addressed in accordance with the step-wise approach;*
- b) Where this is not feasible, ensure sufficient compensatory measures are put in place which address all potential adverse impact upon biodiversity resulting from the proposals and ensure a net benefit for biodiversity; and*
- c) In exceptional circumstances, where the reasons for the development and/or land use change clearly outweighs the need to safeguard the biodiversity and nature conservation interests of the site.*

Development proposals must not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally, and must provide net benefits for biodiversity.

NE3 Corridors, Networks and Features of Distinctiveness

Development proposals will be expected to maintain and enhance ecological corridors, networks, and features of distinctiveness. Proposals which include provision for the retention and appropriate management of such features will be supported.

Proposals that result in an adverse effect on the connectivity or integrity of ecological corridors, networks or features of distinctiveness will only be permitted where:

- a) All adverse impacts are addressed in accordance with the step-wise approach;*
- b) Where this is not feasible, ensure sufficient compensatory measures are put in place which address all potential adverse effects upon biodiversity resulting from the proposals; and*
- c) In exceptional circumstances, where the reasons for the development and/or land use change clearly outweighs the need to safeguard the biodiversity and nature conservation interests of the site.*

Development proposals must not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally, and must provide net benefits for biodiversity.

NE4 Development within the Caeau Mynydd Mawr (CMM) Project Area

Development proposals will be permitted where they promote and contribute to the delivery of the Conservation Objectives of the Caeau Mynydd Mawr Special Area of Conservation (CMM SAC).

Proposals located within the CMM Project Area as defined on the Proposals Map will, where applicable, be required to contribute towards achieving the CMM SAC Conservation Objectives and to mitigate for the loss of potential supporting habitat and connectivity for the marsh fritillary butterfly.

PSD1 Effective Design Solutions: Principles of Placemaking

Development proposals shall demonstrate effective delivery of site-specific design and the principles of placemaking. Development shall deliver quality design solutions which are appropriate to the specific site, local area, and nature of development.

Proposals shall clearly demonstrate:

a. That the development reflects local context through consideration of landscape; built environment; and historic and cultural characteristics, including the:

- 1. layout and landscape design scheme;*
- 2. form, scale, massing, materials and detailing of all built elements and surfaces.*

To ensure that development proposals retain a connection to, and complement, the local 'sense of place'.

b. High-quality design solutions which deliver:

- 1. built form which effectively integrates sustainable building design principles to maximise opportunities for carbon reduction, energy efficiency and flexibility in use;*
- 2. efficient use of site area, whilst maximising the retention, protection and integration of existing landscape and ecological elements and features, as Green and Blue Infrastructure assets;*
- 3. effective, safe, and inclusive site layout which promotes the health, well-being and amenity of residents, users, and visitors;*
- 4. positive contribution to an effective and attractive public realm through the integration of built form with adequate and clearly defined private and public amenity space.*

c. That the development will not result in significant adverse impacts to the amenity of adjacent land uses, properties, residents, or the community; and that any potential adverse impacts have been avoided, minimised, and mitigated.

d. Quality landscapes design solutions which:

- 1. maximise opportunities for enhancement to the quality and extent of existing, and the creation of new, landscape and ecological elements and features, as Green and Blue Infrastructure assets;*
- 2. enhance visual amenity and landscape character to establish a clear and legible sense of place and contribute to an attractive public realm;*
- 3. minimise, and mitigate against potential adverse landscape and visual impacts.*

e. Effective design solutions which take account of existing ground conditions and utilise existing site topography to address ground stability; minimise excavation and filling; optimise delivery of Policy PSD5 (Development and the Circular Economy); and minimise landscape and visual impacts.

f. That the development delivers or contributes to:

- 1. safe and efficient connections to existing access networks including Active Travel and the public transport network;*
- 2. appropriate access routes and surfaces which promote effective accessibility for all and ease of movement into and through the site;*

3. provision of appropriate onsite highway standards including parking and servicing.

g. That the development delivers sustainable and resilient measures for the treatment and disposal of surface and foul water; which are fully integrated into the site's development and its layout and maximise opportunities for water resilience in impacted nutrient neutrality areas and for the provision of additional value through functions which deliver landscape, ecological and green and blue infrastructure policy objectives.

h. That design solutions are deliverable for the lifetime of the proposed development through effective maintenance and management proposals.

i. It includes, where applicable, provision for the appropriate management and eradication of invasive species.

PSD3 Green and Blue Infrastructure Network

Development proposals are required to demonstrate effective Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) design solutions which:

a. Maximise retention, protection, and integration of existing GBI assets and prioritise those of highest value, within and on the development site boundaries;

b. Deliver overall enhancement to the value, quality, and condition; and extent, diversity, and connectivity of the GBI network within and on the development site boundaries;

c. Deliver effective integration and maximise connectivity with existing GBI assets adjacent to the development site boundaries and with the wider GBI network;

d. Maximise opportunities to achieve multi-functionality by integrating GBI functions to deliver combined objectives which benefit Biodiversity, Climate Change and Sustainability, Health and Wellbeing, Sense of Place, and Economy; and where this will not compromise the purpose of the GBI;

e. Include long-term management and maintenance proposals to ensure that effective GBI design solutions are deliverable for the lifetime of the proposed development; and,

f. Avoid illumination of GBI provided for the purpose of wildlife conservation.

Planning applications will require submission of surveys and assessments appropriate to the site and nature of development, to establish a baseline for GBI design solutions.

All planning applications will be required to submit a Green Infrastructure Statement to demonstrate how GBI design solutions have been considered and accommodated as part of the proposed development.

PSD4 Green and Blue Infrastructure — Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows in New Developments

Development proposals will be required to:

a) Maximise retention, protection, and integration of existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows and prioritise those of highest value, quality, and condition within and on the development site boundaries through iterative site layout design which avoids potential impacts;

- b) Minimise potential impacts to retained trees, woodlands and hedgerows through site specific design, method statements and protection measures;
- c) Provide appropriate compensation planting for unavoidable loss of trees, woodlands, and hedgerows to deliver overall enhancement to extent and cover. Opportunities for translocation of existing hedgerows should be considered where feasible;
- d) Provide sufficient space and rooting volume within site layout and in relation to adjacent land uses to enable effective growth of existing and newly planted trees, woodlands, and hedgerows to maturity and to avoid potential challenges to retention for the lifetime of the development;
- e) Identify and deliver management works to improve the value, quality and condition of existing trees, woodlands, and hedgerows within and on the development site boundaries; and
- f) Deliver additional planting of trees, woodlands, and hedgerows appropriate to the site and development type that will deliver both long term landscape benefits and net benefits for biodiversity.

PSD8 Provision of New Open Space

All new residential developments of 5 or more homes will be required to contribute towards open space in accordance with the open space standards for Carmarthenshire as set out below.

Open Space Category	Quantity Standard		Accessibility Standard
	Per 1000 People (ha)	Per Person (m2)	
Play Space	0.8	8	Doorstep: 1½-minute walk (100m) Local: 5-minute walk (400m) Neighbourhood: 12½-minute walk (1,000m)
Outdoor Sports	1.6	16	Playing Fields: 15-minute walk (1,200m)
Accessible Greenspace	0.25	2.5	Wherever possible
Community Growing Space	0.2	2	-

If the standards cannot be met on site, or where there is sufficient existing provision already available to service the development, then a commuted sum will be sought where appropriate.

CCH4 Water Quality and Protection of Water Resources

Development proposals must make efficient use of water resources and, where appropriate, contribute towards improvements in water quality. Proposals will be permitted where they do not have an adverse effect upon water resources, water quality, fisheries, nature conservation, public access, or water-related recreation use in the County.

Proposals will be supported if they promote the safeguarding of watercourses through ecological buffer zones or corridors, protecting riparian habitats and species, water quality, and providing for flood plain capacity.

Development will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that there is no adverse effect on the integrity of nutrient sensitive protected sites. Where appropriate, development will be required to achieve nutrient neutrality.

CCH7 Climate Change — Forest, Woodland, and Tree Planting

Support will be given to development proposals which seek the creation of new (or the enhancement of existing) woodland, forests, tree belts and corridors, and where they promote the delivery of the national and local decarbonisation targets.

Support will be given to proposals that will deliver the multiple (ecosystems) benefits associated with well-designed and well managed trees, woodlands, and forests (e.g., carbon sequestration, flood alleviation, improvements in air and water quality, nutrient mitigation, biodiversity and nature recovery, landscape, health and well-being, and amenity value).

Proposals should consider potential adverse effects upon the environment, flood risk management, cultural heritage, communities, and landscape, and, where appropriate, follow the mitigation hierarchy.

SP16 Climate Change

Development proposals will be supported if they respond, adapt, increase resilience, and minimise the causes and impacts of climate change. Proposals must:

- a. Contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions by reflecting sustainable transport principles and minimising the need to travel, particularly by private motor car;*
- b. Avoid, or where appropriate, minimise the risk of flooding including the incorporation of measures (such as SuDS and flood resilient design);*
- c. Promote the energy hierarchy by reducing energy demand, promoting energy efficiency, and increasing the supply of renewable energy;*
- d. Incorporate appropriate climate responsive design solutions including orientation, layout, density, and low carbon solutions (including design and construction methods) and utilise sustainable construction methods where feasible; and*
- e. Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of GBI assets and resilient ecological networks as carbon sinks.*

Development proposals which are located within areas at risk from flooding will not be permitted unless they accord with the provisions of Planning Policy Wales and TAN 15.

- A.10. The *Carmarthenshire Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023–2028* sets out shared objectives to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the county. Relevant to this SPG, the Plan identifies the importance of embedding a partnership approach to developing GBI and recognises GBI as a key mechanism responding to the climate and nature emergencies.
- A.11. The draft *Carmarthenshire GBI Strategy* (subject to consideration for adoption) sets out a strategic, county-wide approach to the planning, delivery and management of GBI. The Strategy recognises the role of GBI in addressing the climate and nature emergencies, supporting biodiversity recovery, improving ecosystem resilience and delivering multiple social, health and economic benefits. Relevant to this SPG, the draft Strategy promotes the integration of GBI into new development and regeneration, supports the use of nature-based solutions, and emphasises partnership working to secure coherent and multifunctional GBI networks across Carmarthenshire.
- A.12. The Carmarthenshire Nature Recovery Plan 2020–2030, produced by the Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership, sets out local priorities and actions to contribute to the national objectives of the Wales Nature Recovery Action Plan. The Plan focuses on reversing biodiversity decline, restoring habitats, and improving ecological connectivity across the county. It provides an important local evidence base and strategic context for biodiversity enhancement and NBB, which this SPG seeks to support through the planning system.
- A.13. The Council's Forward Plan, prepared under the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016* to meet the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty, establishes how the council will maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience. The Plan explicitly recognises the role of GBI in delivering these duties, including through nature-based solutions that support biodiversity, climate resilience and wider well-being outcomes.
- A.14. The *Tree and Woodland Strategy 2023–2028* sets out the council's approach to the sustainable management of existing trees and the creation of new woodlands in response to the climate and nature emergencies.
- A.15. The draft *Allotment and Community Growing Strategy* (subject to consideration for adoption) seeks to increase opportunities for communities to grow food locally and to encourage greater engagement with the natural environment. The Strategy promotes place-based solutions to addressing the climate and nature emergencies and recognises allotments and community growing spaces as important multifunctional GBI assets. Design thoughtfully, these spaces can contribute towards biodiversity enhancement and are therefore relevant to the implementation of this SPG.

Appendix B: International Sites in Carmarthenshire

B.1. Table B lists all SACs and SPAs in Carmarthenshire, and the county's Ramsar site, along with their qualifying features. Development that may have a likely significant effect on such sites is subject to HRA. Note that SAC boundaries shown on the LDP Proposals Map may extend beyond the county boundary, and the potential for proposals (under certain impact pathways) to affect designated sites located outside the county (which are not here listed).

Table B: International Sites in Carmarthenshire, together with their qualifying features at the time writing.

European Site	Designation	Qualifying Features (Summary)	Approx. Size (ha)
Afon Tywi / River Tywi SAC	SAC	Twaite shad, Otter, Sea lamprey, River lamprey, Brook lamprey, Allis shad, Bullhead	363
Bristol Channel Approaches SAC	SAC	Harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)	585,000
Caeau Mynydd Mawr SAC	SAC	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; Marsh fritillary butterfly	25
Cernydd Carmel SAC	SAC	Turloughs; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> ; European dry heaths; Active raised bogs; Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines	361
Carmarthen Bay Dunes SAC	SAC	Embryonic shifting dunes; Shifting dunes with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ; Fixed dunes; Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ; Humid dune slacks; Narrow-mouthed whorl snail; Petalwort; Fen orchid	1,206
Afon Teifi / River Teifi SAC	SAC	Water courses with <i>Ranunculus fluitans</i> ; Oligotrophic standing waters; Otter; Sea lamprey; River lamprey; Brook lamprey; Allis shad; White-clawed crayfish	716
Pembrokeshire Marine SAC (part)	SAC	Reefs; Sandbanks; Grey seal; Harbour porpoise	137,613
Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries SAC	SAC	Estuaries; Mudflats; Reefs; Otter; Harbour porpoise	13,630
Burry Inlet SPA	SPA	Internationally important numbers of Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Pintail and Knot; Curlew	5,274
Carmarthen Bay SPA	SPA	Common Scoter (non-breeding)	Part marine
Ramsar — Burry Inlet	Ramsar	Wetland of international importance; estuarine and intertidal features; waterfowl habitat; invertebrate assemblage	5,274

Appendix C: Applicant Checklist

- D.1.** Use this checklist to confirm what ecological documents are required before submitting your planning application. Requirements vary by application type and the ecological sensitivity of the site. This checklist is a guide; the exact requirements for any specific application should be confirmed through pre-application advice with the Council's Ecology team.
- D.2.** All documents must be consistent with each other. Ecological information must inform and be reflected in the GBI Statement, LEDS and LEMP.

Table C1: Ecological Document Checklist by Application Type

Document	Householder	Minor	Major / Outline	Guidance
Annotated site plan (trees, hedgerows, habitats, watercourses)	✓	✓	✓	Required for all applications. Show all ecological features within and adjacent to the site, with retention/removal indicated. Required for validation.
GBI Statement	✓	✓	✓	Mandatory for all applications. Proportionate to scale. Include DECCA assessment. Greenspace factor score recommended for Major. Template in GBI SPG.
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)	If required (Ch.7, Table 10)	✓ where habitats present	✓ (validation requirement)	Establishes ecological baseline, recommends surveys, identifies constraints and NBB opportunities. Must be by a suitably qualified ecologist. In-date (within 2 years).
Bat Survey Report	If required (Ch.7, Table 10)	If required	If required	Required where features with bat roost potential will be affected. BCT Guidelines. Licensed ecologist. In-date. Cannot be conditioned post-permission.
Protected species surveys	If recommended by PEA	If recommended	If recommended	Targeted surveys for species identified as potentially present. Appropriate seasonal window (Table 11). Cannot be conditioned post-permission.
Invasive species management plan	If Schedule 9 species present	If Schedule 9 species present	If Schedule 9 species present	Required where Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed or other Sch.9 species are present on site.
Landscape and Ecological Concept Scheme (LECS)	Not normally required	If LEDS not submitted	If LEDS not submitted at outline	Intermediate design document where full LEDS is not submitted. Must show retained and proposed ecological features.
Landscape and Ecological Design Scheme (LEDS)	If significant works proposed	✓ normally required	✓ (reserved matters for outline)	Detailed design document. Must be consistent with GBI Statement and LEMP. See Chapter 7.1.
Landscape and Ecological	Rarely required	If significant management	✓	Long-term management plan. Minimum 30-year period. Clear

Document	Householder	Minor	Major / Outline	Guidance
Management Plan (LEMP)		secured by condition		responsibilities and funding. See Chapter 7.1.
Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	Not normally required	If adjacent to designated site	✓ if near designated site	Sets out construction safeguards for biodiversity and pollution prevention. See Chapter 7.3.
Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA)	Not normally required	If required by local authority	If impacts on SAC/SPA/Ramsar possible	Required where likely significant effects on a National Sites Network site cannot be excluded. See Chapter 7.3.
Species / translocation method statement	Not normally required	If required by condition	If required	Pre-commencement condition where protected species may be affected by clearance or habitat works. See Chapter 7.3.

Pre-application advice

The local authority's planning ecologists can provide pre-application advice on ecological requirements for specific sites. Using this service reduces the risk of invalid applications, survey gaps and post-submission delays.

Appendix D: Glossary

Term	Definition
Appropriate Assessment (AA)	An assessment required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on an SAC, SPA or Ramsar site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
Bat Roost	Any place that a wild bat uses for shelter or protection, whether or not bats are present at the time. Roosts are protected year-round under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
Buffer Zone	An area around a sensitive ecological feature within which development is avoided or restricted to prevent direct and indirect harm. Buffer zones must be incorporated into site layouts from the outset of design.
Caeau Mynydd Mawr (CMM) Project Area	The area defined on the LDP Proposals Map within which LDP Policy NE4 applies. Development within the CMM Project Area may be required to contribute to habitat management to mitigate impacts on the Marsh Fritillary butterfly metapopulation and the CMM SAC.
Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	A document setting out the measures to be taken during construction to prevent and minimise impacts on biodiversity, water quality, air quality and noise.
DECCA Framework	The framework used to assess and evidence NNB: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Adaptability.
Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)	A systematic assessment of the likely positive and negative, direct and indirect impacts of a development on biodiversity, including identification of mitigation and compensation measures.
Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)	A systematic assessment of the likely positive and negative, direct and indirect ecological impacts of a development proposal. Typically required for major applications affecting sensitive sites or species. Must include a DECCA assessment and comply with CIEEM guidelines.
Ecosystem Services	The benefits that healthy, functioning ecosystems provide to people. These include provisioning services (food, clean water, timber), regulating services (flood management, carbon storage, climate regulation, pollination), cultural services (recreation, health and wellbeing, landscape character) and supporting services (soil formation, nutrient cycling). The planning system is a key tool for protecting and enhancing ecosystem services through the delivery of NBB and GBI.
European Protected Species (EPS)	Species afforded the highest level of legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In Carmarthenshire these include all bat species, Otter, Dormouse and Harbour Porpoise. Works affecting EPS or their roosts/breeding sites require a NRW development licence in addition to any planning permission.

Term	Definition
GI/GBI Statement	A mandatory submission document for all planning applications, setting out how the proposal responds to existing GBI assets and delivers Net Benefit for Biodiversity. Proportionate to scale and nature of development. Guidance and template in the <i>GBI SPG</i> .
Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI)	A multi-functional network of natural and semi-natural features, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. Carmarthenshire uses the term GBI (instead of just GI) to make explicit the importance of blue (water) features within the definition.
Greenspace Factor Tool	A quantitative scoring tool used to measure the ecological quality of open and landscaped areas within a development. Recommended for major applications as part of the GBI Statement. Scoring methodology and guidance are set out in the <i>GBI SPG</i> .
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	An assessment carried out by the competent authority (the local authority) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to determine whether a plan or project could adversely affect the integrity of an SAC, SPA or Ramsar site.
Landscape and Ecological Concept Scheme (LECS)	An intermediate design drawing showing how the principles set out in the GBI Statement will be applied to the site layout. Typically required where a full LEDS is not submitted at application.
Landscape and Ecological Design Scheme (LEDS)	A detailed technical document specifying the design of all retained and new landscape and ecological features, sufficient for contractors to implement the scheme.
Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)	A document setting out how retained and newly created landscape and ecological features will be managed and monitored over the long term, typically for a minimum of 30 years. Required for Major applications.
Main River	A watercourse designated as a main river by NRW.
Major Application	A planning application for development that exceeds the thresholds for minor development, typically including residential development of 10 or more dwellings, non-residential floorspace of 1,000 m ² or more, or development on a site of 1 hectare or more. The precise thresholds are defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012.
Minor Application	A planning application below the thresholds for major development, typically including residential development of between 1 and 9 dwellings, or non-residential development below 1,000 m ² floorspace or 1 hectare site area. See the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 for full definitions.
National Vegetation Classification (NVC)	The standard classification system for British vegetation communities. Used in botanical surveys to identify and describe semi-natural habitats including grasslands, wetlands, heathlands and woodlands. NVC surveys are typically required where species-rich or priority habitats are present or suspected.

Term	Definition
Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB)	An overall improvement in the biodiversity value and ecosystem resilience of a site resulting from a development, achieved by following the step-wise approach and delivering genuine enhancement above and beyond any mitigation or compensation.
Nutrient Neutrality	A requirement that applies where development could increase nutrient inputs to a nutrient-sensitive protected site. See <i>Water Quality SPG</i> .
Ordinary Watercourse	Any watercourse that is not a designated main river, including streams, ditches (whether dry or not), field drains, ponds and culverts.
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)	A desktop and walkover survey establishing the ecological baseline, identifying habitats and potential for protected and priority species, recommending targeted surveys and identifying NBB opportunities.
Report to Inform the Appropriate Assessment (RIAA)	A document submitted by the applicant to enable the local authority to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment. Must assess all plausible pathways to impact on a National Network site and conclude whether significant effects on site integrity can be excluded.
Root Protection Area (RPA)	A circular area around a tree stem calculated in accordance with BS 5837, representing the minimum area of soil that must remain undisturbed to safeguard rooting during development.
Section 7 Habitats and Species	Habitats and species listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as of principal importance for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Wales. Their presence is a material consideration. All public authorities must take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance them.
SINC	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. A locally designated site in Carmarthenshire of significant nature conservation value, designated in accordance with Wales Biodiversity Partnership guidelines and protected under LDP Policy NE1.
Step-Wise Approach	The mandatory sequence for addressing biodiversity impacts: Avoid first; then Minimise remaining impacts; then Mitigate/Restore residual impacts; then Compensate (as a last resort) for unavoidable losses. Enhancement is required at every stage.
Test of Likely Significant Effect (TLSE)	A screening exercise carried out by the local authority to determine whether a proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on a National Network site, triggering the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment.

Appendix E: Document Definitions

1. This appendix defines the ecological and landscape documents that may be required in support of a planning application in Carmarthenshire. Each entry sets out when the document is required, what it must contain, and who is responsible for preparing it. Chapter 8 sets out which documents apply to each application type.

Landscape Framework Documents

2. Landscape framework documents set out how biodiversity and green infrastructure are embedded in the design of a development. They must be prepared in conjunction with the design team from the earliest stage and must be consistent with each other and with all ecological survey reports submitted.

Green Infrastructure Statement (GBI Statement)

3. **When required:** Required with every planning application (scale and detail are proportionate to the nature and size of the proposal).
4. **Contents:** A description of existing ecological and GBI assets on and surrounding the site; how the step-wise approach has been applied in the design; which features are retained and how they are protected during construction; proposed enhancement measures; and an assessment of how the development delivers overall NBB using the DECCA framework. For further guidance and the Statement template, see the *GBI SPG*.
5. **Prepared by:** Applicant, agent or suitably qualified landscape or ecological consultant. For minor and major applications, the ecology sections must be contributed to by a suitably qualified ecologist.

Landscape and Ecological Concept Scheme (LECS)

6. **When required:** Required where a full LEDS is not submitted at application stage. The LECS bridges the gap between the GBI Statement principles and the detailed LEDS, which may be conditioned for later submission.
7. **Contents:** An intermediate design drawing showing existing and proposed ecological features, retained and new planting, and the key spatial relationships between ecological features and the built layout. Must be sufficiently detailed to confirm that the scheme is deliverable.
8. **Prepared by:** Landscape architect or suitably qualified ecological consultant, working in collaboration with the design team.

Landscape and Ecological Design Scheme (LEDS)

9. **When required:** Required for all minor and major applications. On ecologically sensitive sites, the LEDS must be submitted at application stage. In other cases, it may discharge a pre-commencement planning condition, provided the LECS submitted at application stage contains sufficient detail.

10. **Contents:** A detailed technical document providing sufficient information for contractors to implement the scheme without further design input. Must include: plant species, numbers, sizes and densities; sowing rates for seed mixes; specifications for habitat features; models and locations of bird and bat boxes; and details of hibernacula or other artificial structures. Must be consistent with the GBI Statement and all ecological survey reports.
11. **Prepared by:** Landscape architect or suitably qualified ecologist, in collaboration with the design team. The ecology sections must be prepared or reviewed by a suitably qualified ecologist.

Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)

12. **When required:** Required for all major applications and for any application where long-term management of ecological features is secured by planning condition or obligation. May also be required for minor applications on ecologically sensitive sites.
13. **Contents:** A site plan showing land ownership and management boundaries; management objectives for all retained and new landscape and ecological features; detailed management prescriptions with timescales; inspection and monitoring regimes; adaptive management provisions; and clear responsibilities, funding arrangements over the minimum management period. Must be consistent with the LEDS and GBI Statement.
14. **Prepared by:** Suitably qualified ecologist or landscape architect with relevant ecological experience. Responsibilities and funding arrangements must be agreed with all relevant landowners before submission.

Ecological Survey Documents

15. Ecological survey documents establish the biological baseline for the site and provide the evidence base for the GBI Statement, LEDS and LEMP. All survey work must be carried out by suitably qualified ecologists within the appropriate seasonal windows. Survey reports must be in-date at the time of submission (generally within two years, or within one year for species with rapidly changing populations).

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

16. **When required:** Required for all minor and major applications, and for any householder or outline application where habitats of ecological value are present on or adjacent to the site. The PEA is the starting point for all ecological assessment and must be in-date (within two years of submission).
17. **Contents:** A desktop study and walkover survey establishing the ecological baseline, identifying habitats and their condition, assessing the potential for protected and priority species, recommending targeted surveys, and identifying NBB opportunities. Must be prepared in accordance with CIEEM guidelines.
18. **Prepared by:** Suitably qualified ecologist (CIEEM member or equivalent). Must be carried out in an appropriate season to allow adequate assessment of habitats and species potential.

Bat Survey Report

19. **When required:** Required where the proposal affects buildings, structures, trees or other features assessed as having bat roost potential. Surveys are season-dependent and cannot be conditioned after permission is granted.
20. **Contents:** All surveys must follow the most recent BCT Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. The report must confirm species present, the nature and size of any roost, and the likely impact of the proposed works, with mitigation and compensation measures where necessary.
21. **Prepared by:** Licensed bat ecologist. Where a roost is confirmed and a development licence is required, the report must be prepared by a Natural Resources Wales (NRW) licence holder.

Protected Species Surveys

22. **When required:** Required for any species identified as potentially present by the PEA. Relevant species include great crested newts, otter, water vole, reptiles, dormice, nesting birds and others identified as present or likely in the site context. All surveys must be submitted with the application; they cannot be conditioned post-permission.
23. **Contents:** Survey methodology, results, assessment of impact, and proposed mitigation and compensation. All surveys must be carried out within the appropriate seasonal windows (see Table 11) and in accordance with current best practice guidance for the species concerned.
24. **Prepared by:** Suitably qualified and, where necessary, licensed ecologist. Surveyors must hold the appropriate NRW licence for species requiring one (e.g. great crested newts, dormice, otters).

Invasive Species Management Plan

25. **When required:** Required where Schedule 9 invasive non-native species (including Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed or others) are present on or adjacent to the site. Development must not commence in infested areas until eradication or effective control has been demonstrated.
26. **Contents:** Identification and mapping of infested areas; proposed treatment method (chemical, physical or combined); eradication or control timescale; disposal arrangements; and a monitoring programme confirming success before works commence.
27. **Prepared by:** Suitably qualified ecologist or invasive species specialist with demonstrable experience in the management of the species concerned.

Other Required Documents

28. The following documents address specific circumstances that arise on particular sites or application types. They are required in addition to, not instead of, the survey and framework documents described above.

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

29. **When required:** Required where the application site is near a statutory designated site (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar), or where significant construction-phase impacts on protected species or habitats are likely. Typically required for all major applications.
30. **Contents:** Safeguards against pollution (silt, chemicals, noise, and artificial lighting); biodiversity management during construction including habitat retention zones, invasive species management, and nesting bird and bat survey protocols for vegetation clearance; and a site plan showing Construction Exclusion Zones and the location of all retained ecological features.
31. **Prepared by:** Suitably qualified ecologist, in collaboration with the principal contractor and design team. The CEMP must be agreed with the local authority before construction commences.

Species or Translocation Method Statements

32. **When required:** Required as pre-commencement conditions or as part of the main submission on ecologically sensitive sites. Typical examples include reptile-sensitive vegetation clearance statements, dormouse-sensitive works protocols, and hedgerow translocation method statements.
33. **Contents:** A step-by-step description of the proposed works methodology, timing constraints, the personnel responsible, and the measures to be taken to avoid harm to protected species or habitats. Must be specific to the site and species concerned; generic method statements will not be accepted.
34. **Prepared by:** Suitably qualified and, where required, licensed ecologist. The supervising ecologist must be named in the statement and available throughout the relevant works.

Report to Inform the Appropriate Assessment (RIAA)

35. **When required:** Required where a proposed development may have a likely significant effect on an SAC, SPA or Ramsar site (a National Network site), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Must be submitted prior to determination. Early engagement with local authority and/or NRW is essential to agree the scope of the assessment.
36. **Contents:** An assessment of all plausible pathways by which the development could affect the qualifying features of the National Network site, including in-combination effects. Must conclude with a reasoned assessment of whether adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded. The RIAA informs but does not replace the Appropriate Assessment carried out by the local authority (in its capacity as the competent authority).
37. **Prepared by:** Suitably qualified ecologist with demonstrable experience dealing with the Habitats Regulations.