

## NELMS target statement for **Somerset Levels and Moors (NCA 142)**

Your application is scored and a decision made on the points awarded. Both top priorities and lower priorities score points but you should select at least one top priority.

Scoring is carried out by...

## Choosing priorities

To apply you should choose at least one of the top priorities, and you can choose lower priorities - this may help with your application.

### Top priorities

Priority group	Priority type
<a href="#">Biodiversity</a>	Priority habitats
	Priority species
<a href="#">Water</a>	Water quality
	Flood and coastal risk management
<a href="#">Historic environment</a>	Designated historic and archaeological features
	Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance
<a href="#">Woodland priorities</a>	Woodland management
	Woodland planting
<a href="#">Landscape</a>	
<a href="#">Climate Change</a>	
<a href="#">Multiple environmental benefits</a>	

### Lower priorities

Priority group	Priority type
<a href="#">Lower priorities</a>	Water quality

	Archaeological and historic features
	Woodland

## Biodiversity - top priorities

### Priority habitats

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that maintains, restores and creates priority habitats.

Maintain priority habitat such as:

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Lowland meadows
- Lowland fens
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- Lowland raised bog
- Coastal sand dunes
- Traditional orchard
- Reedbeds
- Coastal saltmarsh
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Mudflats

Restore priority habitats (especially proposals which make existing sites bigger or help join up habitat networks) such as:

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Lowland meadows
- Lowland fens
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- Lowland raised bog
- Coastal sand dunes
- Traditional orchard
- Reedbeds
- Coastal saltmarsh
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Mudflats

Create priority habitats – to extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation. Defra is looking for proposals to create priority habitat that will also contribute significantly to improvements in:

- water quality
- air quality
- flood and coastal risk management

### **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

Proposals to maintain or restore Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs including SACs) with eligible features are a priority, and both on-site and off-site options (such as to reduce diffuse water and air pollution impacts on SSSIs) are relevant.

### **Priority species**

For the majority of priority species found on the priority habitats listed above, their ecological requirements can be met through good generic habitat management. Managing for those essential elements associated with priority habitats - in particular bare ground, areas of scrub, varying sward structures will allow these species to thrive.

A number of priority species associated with the area require specific and tailored management and advice. You should carry out land management practices and capital works that meet the specific needs of the following priority species:

- Lapwing
- Greater Horseshoe Bat
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat
- Greater Water Parsnip
- Brown Hairstreak
- Starved Wood-sedge
- Cornflower
- Spreading Hedge Parsley
- Shrill Carder Bee
- Corn Bunting
- Turtle Dove
- Willow Tit
- Mistletoe Marble moth
- Flowering Rush Weevil

Further guidance on the priority species in this area that require more tailored targeted management and advice, as listed, can be found:

- [Links to guidance on those bespoke species' needs found in this area]

Parts of this area are targeted for their breeding wader assemblage, i.e. they contain area(s) assessed as being nationally significant for two or more species (of Lapwing, Redshank, Curlew & Snipe). Where your land includes such areas, you should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- maintain/enhance conditions for breeding waders

This area has also been identified as a hotspot for wild pollinators, farmland birds and other wildlife associated with the wider countryside – through the Wild Pollinator and farm Wildlife package implement these options to make sure these species thrive all year around:

- option 1
- option 2

## Water - top priorities

### Water quality

The area has particular issues with:

- phosphates, nitrates, sediment, Faecal Indicator Organisms (FIOs), pesticides and morphology in the Tone, Parrett, North Somerset Streams, Brue and Axe catchments.
- Faecal Indicator Organisms (FIOs) in the Lower Severn catchment.

This includes catchments to:

- drinking water abstraction from River Axe to Cheddar reservoir affected by nitrates;
- bathing waters at Weston-Super-Mare Uphill slipway and Burnham Jetty affected by Faecal Indicator Organisms (FIOs);
- the Somerset Levels and Moors Natura 2000 site and SSSIs and North Somerset Levels and Moors SSSIs catchments affected by phosphates, nitrates and sediment.

You should consider options and capital works that address these issues. These are detailed in X guidance document. These options help to improve water quality by controlling the source or the movement of potential pollutants. For this area, this includes:

- nutrients from fertilisers and manures
- sediment problems from soil erosion and run-off
- faecal bacteria from both manures and livestock
- pesticides from their use and disposal

### Flood and Coastal Risk Management

The flood risk in the character area of the Somerset Levels and Moors are complex and derive from the low lying topography resulting in extensive fluvial flooding over the lowland area.

Any land management practices and capital works carried out in the neighbouring area draining to the Somerset Level and Moors might contribute to alleviate flooding in the area.

In this area you should carry out land management and capital works that enable you to adopt more flood resilient farming systems. You should consider options that will:

- reduce the amount and rate of surface water run-off
- reduce soil erosion

Options might include reverting arable land to permanent pasture, restoring damaged wetland habitats in the floodplains or creating new wetlands.

Actions to address flood risk within the Somerset Levels and Moors are highlighted in the Somerset 20 year Flood Action Plan.

## Historic environment - top priorities

Active management is important for the long term survival of historic environment remains and to protect them against damage and decay brought about through cultivation, scrub growth, burrowing animals or poor maintenance. These features cannot be recreated once they have been lost.

In this area there are a number of designated heritage features and other historic environment features reflecting a history of human occupation, adaptation and exploitation of this wetland environment and its fringes, from prehistoric to post medieval times . A vast array of features, including some of the oldest archaeological remains of international and national importance, are contained within peat deposits and other waterlogged soils across the area. The anaerobic soil conditions preserve organic remains including prehistoric trackways, settlements and ritual monuments from the Neolithic to Iron Age. Settlement sites include Iron Age hill forts, Roman villas and salt workings, rare Anglo-Saxon burghs, Saxon and later monastic sites including sites at Glastonbury and Athelney, and medieval moated sites, mottes and fishponds. The area includes one of the best preserved medieval enclosure landscapes in England. Important multi-period remains are preserved in coastal locations such as Brean Down. The wetlands are also reflected in a high concentration of surviving, largely post medieval, duck decoys. There is also an important assemblage of pillboxes and other Second World War remains. Few pre-1750 farm buildings survive except the medieval barns associated with Glastonbury Abbey. Dispersed farmstead plans are predominant, with cider houses from the late 17th and more commonly the 19th century. Timber framing is rare, predominant building stones are Blue Lias, and also a mix of oolitic limestone, sandstone and conglomerate. Brick was increasingly used from late 17th century. Clay pantile roofs are common with occasional thatch.

The 2014 Heritage at Risk 2014 survey has identified [xxx %] of designated features as being 'at risk', particularly from drainage and de-watering, conversion of grassland to arable cultivation and continued arable ploughing.

The following historic environment features are a high priority for active management in this area:

- Designated Features - archaeological features of national significance Scheduled Monuments (SM), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG), Registered Battlefields (RB)
- Designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings and non-domestic historic buildings on holdings
- Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance which are part of the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE)

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- revert archaeological sites under cultivation to permanent grass
- reduce damaging cultivation and harvesting practices through minimum tillage or direct drilling where this offers a suitable level of protection
- remove scrub and bracken from archaeological or historic features
- maintain below-ground archaeology under permanent uncultivated vegetation or actively manage earthworks, standing stones and structures as visible 'above ground' features
- maintain and restore historic water management systems, including those associated with water meadows and designed water bodies
- restore historic buildings that are assessed as a priority in the area.
- address the condition of Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, through the proactive maintenance or restoration of structures or features that make a major contribution to the design intentions or feel of the parkland, provide for their biodiversity and amenity value.
- address the condition of Registered Historic Battlefields and maximises opportunities for its protection, enhancement and amenity value.
- deal with specific issues that are causing damage or decay to archaeological and historic features, but which are not covered by standard options.

## Woodland - top priorities

### Woodland management

Management of all woodland to improve structure and species mix is important for biodiversity and to make them more robust in relation to future threats such as climate change, pests and diseases.

Certain types of woodland are a high priority for bringing into management, including:

- protected woodland – those designated for their national biodiversity value
- priority woodland habitat – other unmanaged broadleaved woodland
- priority species – all woodland within current red squirrel range, or within areas important for woodland butterfly and woodland bird species

- Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) restoration – conversion of conifer plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites to broadleaf woodland where they are in close proximity to existing broadleaf woodland
- United Kingdom Forestry Standard – unmanaged conifer woodland within catchments subject to eutrophication and acidification, both to reduce pressures on the water environment and improve biodiversity

Woodlands not included in the categories above are a lower priority for management.

All management should comply with the United Kingdom Forestry Standard and other relevant guidance such as 'Managing Ancient and Native Woodland in England'.

### **Woodland planting**

High priority areas for the planting of new woodlands include:

- biodiversity – planting to buffer and link existing woodlands and other semi natural open habitats within priority woodland habitat networks
- water quality – planting designed to reduce and intercept diffuse pollution from agriculture
- flood risk – planting designed to increase infiltration of heavy rain into the ground, reduce erosion, or slow the flow of floodwaters on floodplains

In order to provide the required biodiversity and/or water benefits, new woodland planting needs to be in the right part of the landscape and to the right design.

## **Landscape – top priorities**

High priorities are the management, restoration or re-creation of landscape features that contribute significantly to the local character by reinforcing the overall pattern and scale of the landscape, together with other important features that give an area its unique and distinctive sense of place.

Top priority in **Somerset Levels and Moors** is the restoration of these features:

- **Permanent grassland**
- **Bankside trees towards the edges of individual moors**

## **Climate Change**

Climate change will pose variable threats and opportunities in different landscapes. Priority should be given to targeted features and issues that are particularly vulnerable to or affected by climate change.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that help to:

- make existing priority habitat sites bigger
- extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation
- reduce the impacts of climate change on local communities, for example by targeted planting of woodland to reduce flood risk
- reduce loss of carbon and emissions of other greenhouse gases
- increase carbon uptake, for example by tree planting
- increase carbon storage, for example by converting arable land to permanent grassland
- provide shade for wildlife and livestock

## Multiple environmental benefits

### Opportunities for multi-objective agreements

You should look to provide for multiple priorities by selecting options that achieve multiple environmental benefits.

In the **Somerset Levels and Moors** you have the greatest opportunity to achieve multiple objectives with:

- Maintain and restore raised water levels to support nature conservation interests, preserve buried archaeological remains, benefit flood risk and carbon storage.
- Maintain woodland and expand where appropriate and in keeping with the landscape character, to support woodland plants, birds, bats and butterflies. Increasing connectivity of the woodland itself for species movement but also connectivity with the wider landscape through linking with hedgerows, parkland, orchards and grassland providing benefits for biodiversity, reducing water flow, improving water quality and regulating climate change

## Lower priorities

You should select one of the top priorities. However, you can also select lower priorities as well as this will attract points used to score your application.

You should consider the following other priorities that are of specific interest in this area.

## Historic environment - lower priorities

The Historic environment features set out below are a lower priority.

- Maintain designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings.
- Undesignated SHINE features of medium and low Significance

- Priority Undesignated Historic Parklands

## **Woodland – lower priorities**

### **Woodland Management**

Woodlands not included in the top priority categories listed above are a lower priority for management but may still be supported.

### **Woodland Planting**

Areas are prioritised for new planting based on their potential to create biodiversity and water benefits. Woodland planting schemes are scored depending on where the proposed scheme is in relation to the opportunity maps for woodland planting in England and how well the planting design will benefit biodiversity and water.

Lower priorities for appropriately designed biodiversity schemes exist across the whole of England. Opportunities for new woodland planting for water only exist in certain parts of England.