

NELMS target statement for **Mid Somerset Hills (NCA 143)**

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
Biodiversity	Priority habitats
	Priority species
Water	Water quality
	Flood and coastal risk management
Historic environment	Designated historic and archaeological features
	Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance
Woodland priorities	Woodland management
	Woodland planting
Landscape	
Climate Change	
Multiple environmental benefits	

Lower priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Lower priorities	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 calcareous grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland meadows
- Lowland raised bog
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- Traditional orchard
- Wood Pasture and Parkland

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

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland meadows
- Lowland raised bog
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- Traditional orchard
- Wood Pasture and Parkland

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:

- Shriill Carder Bee
- Corn Bunting
- Lapwing
- Willow Tit
- Duke of Burgundy
- Large Blue
- Brown Hairstreak
- Greenweed Flat-body Moth
- Mistletoe Marble, a moth
- Liquorice Piercer
- Greater Horseshoe Bat
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat
- Shepherds Needle
- Thorow-wax
- Greater Water Parsnip
- Spreading Hedge Parsley
- Broad-fruited corn salad

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 woodland bird assemblage, i.e. they contain area(s) assessed as being nationally significant for four or more species (of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Pipit, Redstart,

Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, Marsh Tit, Lesser Redpoll and Hawfinch). Where your land includes such areas, you should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- maintain/enhance conditions for woodland birds

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, eutrophication & algae in the Parrett, Tone, Brue and Axe catchments.

This includes catchments to:

- bathing waters at the Burnham Jetty affected by faecal Indicator organisms (FIOs);
- the Somerset Levels and Moors Natura 2000 site and SSSIs affected by phosphates and nitrates.

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

This characteristic area includes the Upper Isle and the Upper Cary catchment which are all draining to the River Parrett through the Somerset Level and Moors.

The Upper catchments within the Character Area have small and steep watercourses.

These catchments would benefit from better land management to reduce local flood risk. Application to address flood risk in this catchment could potentially benefit the communities at risk within the Somerset Level and Moors Character Area.

In the upper catchments you should carry out land management and capital works that intercept and retain water, reduce run off and erosion and maximise the benefits obtainable from natural flood management actions throughout the catchments.

You should consider options that:

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

Actions to address flood risk within the Mid Somerset Hills NCA 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 the long human occupation of this landscape since prehistory. Iron-age lake villages are found on the wetland edges and trackways provided access to the seasonal grazing on the Levels, although there is little designated prehistoric archaeology, the most notable being the hillfort at Compton Dundon. There are more Roman and then medieval remains, although designation is by no means comprehensive. The present settlement pattern was established by the Saxon period. The NCA contains earthworks of deserted medieval settlements of all scales from farmsteads to villages and field systems; moats, manors and bishops palaces and mottes. Few pre-1750 farm buildings survive except the medieval barns associated with Glastonbury Abbey. Cider houses from the late 17th and more commonly the 19th century are often integrated into combination ranges. Timber framing is rare, predominant building stones are Blue Lias limestone and sandstone.

The 2014 Heritage at Risk 2014 survey has identified [xxx %] of designated features as being 'at risk', particularly from arable ploughing and animal burrowing.

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 **Mid Somerset Hills** is the restoration of these features:

- **Management of hedgerows**
- **Hedgerow trees**
- **Permanent grassland**

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 **Mid Somerset Hills** you have the greatest opportunity to achieve multiple objectives with:

- Targeted woodland planting to reduce soil erosion and nutrient leaching to improve the water quality of the River Brue.
- Establish new wetland and woodland habitat within sub-catchments where they're likely to improve water quality, reduce run-off rates into watercourses, add to biodiversity and landscape character and protect historical features
- Change arable cropping systems to low-intensity grassland within the Upper Isle and River Cary catchments where the new management system will protect water quality, landscape character, flood risk and biodiversity
- Restore hedgerows to manage water flow, decrease soil erosion, create wildlife habitats and corridors, and strengthen the local landscape
- Select options such as the use of rural sustainable drainage systems, buffer strips and erosion control in the Upper Isle and River Cary catchments to improve both water quality and support flood risk management
- 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.