

Biodiversity Report

2017-2018



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Foreword

There is a common misconception that England's strategic road network (SRN) consists solely of hard-engineering features and tarmac. This isn't the whole story. The SRN also includes about 30,000 hectares (the size of about 30,000 full-size rugby pitches) of green land – known as the 'soft estate'.

The purpose of this soft estate is to help our roads integrate into the surrounding environment; buffering neighbouring communities from the full impact of busy high-speed roads, and helping our roads fit more smoothly into the built and natural environment.



The soft estate also provides space for wildlife. To quote an ecologist working on one of our major schemes:

“The engineers think they're just building roads. What we're also building is long, thin nature reserves”.

Clearly not all our schemes offer this potential, but with the support of our Biodiversity Plan we are looking for the opportunities to make a difference, wherever they are. We will enhance and manage our soft estate to support wildlife, by reducing habitat severance and supporting a thriving biodiversity.

The year 2017-2018 is the second full year of the Biodiversity Plan in operation. We have pushed-forward with a range of projects (through the feasibility, design and delivery stages) to achieve some important improvements on the ground, as well as preparing for further delivery in coming years. There is still much to do, but our achievement in 2017-2018 represents a significant step forwards.

Ivan Le Fevre
Head of Environment

Introduction

There are some basic objectives for biodiversity, set by Government, for Highways England to achieve:

- The company's licence states: *"We will minimise environmental impacts and enhance the quality of the surrounding environment."*
- The Government's Road Investment Strategy states that, by 2020: *"The company must reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity, and that by 2040 it must deliver a net gain in biodiversity. The company should develop metrics covering broader environmental performance. These should include a new or improved biodiversity metric."*
- Highways England has a key performance indicator: *"The company should publish its Biodiversity Action Plan by the 30 June 2015 and report annually on how it has delivered against the plan to reduce net biodiversity loss on an annual basis."*

- Government has also asked the company to: *"Support the objectives of Biodiversity 2020 (the Government's strategy for biodiversity and ecosystem services) and the National Pollinator Strategy."*

Additionally, in January 2018, Government published 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment'. Highways England's Biodiversity Plan is well aligned to Government's new plan.

The Biodiversity Plan was published and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-plan>

A report for 2015-2016 was included as a commentary in the Highways England 2015-2016 Annual Report. A full report for 2016-2017 was published in May 2018.

This report looks at the five key outcomes described in the Biodiversity Plan, and presents our key actions and achievements, for the 2017-2018 financial year, under each outcome heading.



What has been achieved in 2017-2018

The Biodiversity Plan contains five key outcomes, with a range of actions designed to achieve these by the end of the plan period (March 2020). We have made significant progress in 2017-2018 against these outcomes.

Outcome 1: Highways England and our suppliers are equipped to produce good biodiversity performance

The actions under this outcome have been substantially met in earlier years, however there is an ongoing need to ensure management and governance arrangements remain effective, and our staff are supported with the tools and guidance they need to perform well. The Biodiversity Technical Working Group (BTWG) has continued to oversee the delivery of the plan within the company, including review and support of projects bidding for money from the Environment Designated Fund (EDF). We have progressed 74 EDF projects to either feasibility, detailed design or delivery stages. The BTWG has also developed tracker tools to monitor how the company is delivering against the Biodiversity Plan.

The major part of the company's work in managing and improving the SRN is delivered through supplier contracts, so the Biodiversity Plan recognised the need to review those contracts to consider how best to support the delivery of improved biodiversity outcomes. A review was undertaken in 2016-2017; but as we are now delivering network management in four areas using the new 'Asset Delivery' approach (a new in-house approach to network management) we are working with our Area Teams to optimise delivery of improved biodiversity in these areas. The Biodiversity Plan acknowledged the link to the company's litter strategy in enabling improved management of our road verges (the soft estate). In 2017-2018 a biomass harvesting project (collecting organic material from the soft estate to be used in renewable energy generation) was started (funded by the Innovation Designated Fund). This project is investigating the potential to provide a financial incentive for network management activities (particularly scrub removal) that could benefit both the quality of roadside habitats and enable effective litter removal – whilst also adding to the UK's low-carbon electricity generating capacity.

We have also invested in on-line support information for our internal teams, enabling them to access high-level information on biodiversity, including links to key statutory processes such as assessment against the Habitats Regulations.

Outcome 2: The SRN is managed to support biodiversity

We have continued to work with our key stakeholders, including some of the most active environmental and wildlife conservation organisations with an interest in our network. Their involvement is vital to our understanding of how best to manage our roads to support biodiversity. The company uses a range of meetings, events and workshops for stakeholder engagement and the most relevant for biodiversity are the Designated Funds stakeholder workshops.

We have also engaged with stakeholders on a one-to-one basis; for example, Natural England has continued its involvement in the BTWG, and also on our Strategic Design Panel alongside organisations such as the Campaign for Protection of Rural England and the National Trust. The Wildlife Trust has been involved in partnership projects in Cumbria.

Working with Natural England we have produced the definitive list of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) where a part is within Highways England's ownership. This has been an essential first step in enabling us to appropriately manage these valuable sites. We produced new management plans for a further 15 of these SSSI sites in 2017-2018.

During the year we delivered five very different projects to improve the condition of SSSIs on or adjacent to the SRN as well as continuing to undertake desk based studies and supporting field-work to establish a baseline for biodiversity for SSSI locations. We continue to evaluate whether projects have met their improvement objectives and this activity will continue in support of projects in future years.

Outcome 3: We will have delivered biodiversity enhancements whilst implementing our capital programme of network improvement

Our programme of major schemes represents the biggest investment in our network in a generation. Activity on this scale provides opportunities to enhance the biodiversity performance of the network, putting right some of the issues of the past. In delivering this programme, it remains critical that we also continue to mitigate as many of the adverse impacts of our schemes as we reasonably can.

Opportunities for major project schemes to deliver enhancements using designated funds have been assessed. For example the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme has considered what additional works can be delivered (above and beyond core scheme delivery) to leave an enhanced legacy of community facilities (including for biodiversity) once the scheme is complete. Given the relatively poor biodiversity of the arable farmland over which this scheme is being built, there is a real opportunity to leave an improved environment for wildlife as a result of this scheme. In 2017-2018 significant work has already been undertaken (such as provision of new water vole habitat), and design and planning work is underway for substantial areas of wetland, wet-woodland and species rich grassland.



Outcome 4: We have addressed the legacy of biodiversity problems on our network through a targeted programme of investment

In 2017-2018 the BTWG has approved for design and delivery a range of projects for funding from the Environment Designated Funds, For example two projects in the south west of England where we have completed an extensive scheme that covers 21 sites on the A30 and A38 all-purpose roads in Cornwall and Devon to enhance the characteristic lowland heathland habitats of this busy holiday route. 10,000 trees have been planted and 26,000 square metres of conservation management has been implemented to enhance this rare habitat alongside these roads.

We also worked with Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts to continue the delivery of improvements to two key Nature Improvement Areas in Morecambe Bay and the Humberhead Levels.

The BTWG has looked at a significant number of biodiversity project proposals – reviewing their technical robustness and deliverability. A proportion of those projects needed further work, and will be reconsidered on return to the group. The BTWG recommended the following projects for funding in 2017-2018. This is part of a developing ‘pipe-line’ of projects that will lead to more substantial delivery on the network through the remainder of Roads Period 1.

Figure 1



	Projects recommended for progress	Contribution to species rich grassland	Nature improvement areas	SSSI	Connectivity projects
Recommended for feasibility funding	26	16	1	4	4
Recommended for detailed design/delivery funding	48	17	10	10	12

Outcome 5: We are fully transparent about our biodiversity performance

By the end of Roads Period 1 we want to be able to demonstrate that we have slowed the rate of biodiversity decline on our network. To do this we need a means of measuring what the biodiversity condition and value is like within our estate at a given point of time, and to then assess change

against that position. Such a mechanism is called a ‘metric’. Working with Natural England we have developed a metric that will deliver useful information and be recognised as robust and reliable. Further information is provided later in this report.

Case study:

South West England Habitat Connectivity Project

This project has taken place at 21 sites in Devon and Cornwall and involved the planting of 10,000 native trees and shrubs to fill or reduce gaps in hedgerow and woodland along the roadside. In total the planting provides around three extra miles of vegetation and connects over 105 miles of habitat on the verge and land adjacent to the A30 and A38.

The project ecologist said: "Highways England is committed to protecting the environment through its biodiversity plan and improving the connectivity of habitats along our roads is one of our top nature conservation priorities. The main aim of this improvement scheme is to reconnect wildlife habitat and ecosystems on a significant scale across our road network in the South West allowing species to move between core areas. The work is expected to have a huge benefit for a wide variety of species of animals including butterflies, bees, flies and dormice; providing suitable places to forage, shelter and breed. Tree and shrub species planted include oak, field maple, holly, willow, honeysuckle and rose at locations between Pocombe Bridge and Pulsack on the A30 and Wrangaton and Bellamarsh on the A38".



SSSI: towards enhanced management of our most valuable sites

Highways England has been working in partnership with Natural England to establish a baseline of SSSIs within full or partial Highways England ownership to enable accurate reporting. Highways England and Natural England have agreed boundaries for **480 SSSI units** ('SSSI units' have a variable physical area reflecting the minimum area for management purposes appropriate for a particular SSSI).

Following this exercise, Highways England is now producing strategic management plans for SSSIs across all parts of our network. The management plans will then be used to support enhancement works leading to a recovery of condition by 2020.

To emphasise the importance of this SSSI work, the company included a delivery target for SSSI management plans in its performance related pay arrangements for staff. For 2017-2018, the target was set as 15 management plans to be produced by the end of the year.

This target was achieved, with plans produced for the following sites:

- Chobham Common SSSI
- Langstone Harbour SSSI
- River Itchen SSSI
- Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI
- Pevensey Levels SSSI
- Titsey Woods SSSI
- Thorpe Park SSSI
- Weather Horns Heath SSSI
- Breckland Farmland SSSI
- Orwell Estuary SSSI
- Breckland Forest SSSI
- Woolston Eyes SSSI
- Rochdale Canal SSSI
- Morecambe Bay SSSI
- River Eden and Tributaries SSSI

Note: The list contains sites that have been designated for both Geological and Nature Conservation value. All meet the requirements of Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Schedule 9 Section 28G.

Case study:

M60 Rochdale Canal SSSI Improvements

This project involved improvement works to three sections of canal associated with the Rochdale Canal SSSI. The scope of works was identified following consultation with Natural England and the Canal and River Trust. The primary aims of the project were to enhance suitable habitat for floating water-plantain, and the known population of white-clawed crayfish (a protected species) within the canal. This was achieved with a combination of removing vegetation overhanging the canal, removing overly competitive plant species within the canal, planting of marginal floral species and the introduction of artificial refuge features on the canal floor for the crayfish.

The project was constructed in March 2018. The Canal and River Trust will be undertaking annual monitoring of floating water plantain along the length of Rochdale Canal for the next three years.



Working to deliver our contribution to the Government's Insect Pollinator Strategy

In 2014 the Government published its Insect Pollinator Strategy. This details how Government can work with a range of partners to ensure that the UK's pollinating insects thrive, so that they carry out their essential service of pollinating our flowers and crops. Our network, with its 30,000 hectares of roadside estate, has the potential to provide the nectar lanes of the 21st century. Our commitment is to provide 3,500 hectares of wild flower rich grassland. We already have just under 1,000 hectares of wild flower grassland, with our target being to have 2,500 hectares of what amounts to linear wild flower meadows from Cornwall to Cumbria by 2024.

Case study:

North West England Wildflower Corridors

We have undertaken projects to improve grassland, and create areas rich in wildflowers, at 19 sites on the M67, M58, A56, M64 and the M53 in and around Greater Manchester. The aim of these projects is to support the National Pollinator Strategy by increasing and enhancing suitable habitat and food supply for pollinator species within the highway corridor. The sites were selected as good candidates for enhancement because of their soil type, sloping aspect and good connectivity to adjacent and surrounding habitats in the wider area. The project was constructed in March 2018.



Measuring biodiversity: developing our method for describing change on our network

The Roads Investment Strategy contained commitments to develop a biodiversity metric. These commitments are to:

- *Demonstrate what activities have been undertaken, and how effective they have been, to improve environmental outcomes.*
- *The Company should develop metrics covering broader environmental performance. These should include a new or improved biodiversity metric.*

Work on a new biodiversity metric started in 2015-2016:

Initial work (2015-2016)

- We developed the basic structure and calculation for a new biodiversity metric for the SRN, aligned with an approach that is becoming an industry standard.
- We calculated a biodiversity baseline for the SRN (ie a current 'snap-shot' of the biodiversity position of the network) based on 2007 satellite imagery provided by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology together with other national data sets.

Refinement of the metric (2016-2017)

- We developed an approach to annual reporting of changes in loss of biodiversity.
- We have held stakeholder workshops (including representatives from Natural England) to review the approach and preliminary results.
- We started an update of baseline calculations from 2007 data to 2015 data – to give information relevant to the establishment of Highways England and the company's biodiversity activity during Roads Period 1.

Testing (2017-2018)

- We have undertaken final desk-top checks of the metric, to enable operation of the metric, initially on a live trial basis, beginning in April 2018. The metric will then be used to give evidence of biodiversity change over the remainder of Roads Period 1.

How does the metric work?

This metric uses satellite imagery and on-site surveys to identify the distinctiveness and condition of the various habitats within the land (soft estate) managed by Highways England.

The calculation is expressed as:


$$\text{Distinctiveness Score} \times \text{Condition Score} \times \text{Area} = \text{Biodiversity Units}$$

Where:

- **Distinctiveness Score** – based on broad habitat type, is a measure of how rare and difficult to create each of our habitat plots are.
- **Condition Score** – based on established national data sets and/or assumptions, updated with on-site surveys, is a measure of the current state each of our habitat plots is in.
- **Area** – is the size of each plot in hectares.

Using this calculation we can identify the 'biodiversity units' of each of our habitat plots within the soft estate and provide a total position for biodiversity around our roads. The calculation can be re-run periodically, with the results tracked to understand trends in biodiversity over time.

We know, from Government data, we're likely to have a historic trend of declining biodiversity on our network. Our objective is to slow the rate of biodiversity loss in Roads Period 1, moving to a neutral position in Roads Period 2 (where we're maintaining the biodiversity value of the network at a steady level). Ultimately we want to be improving the biodiversity value of the network.

This metric will be a key tool in helping us deliver that positive change.



Appendix

Commentary against the Biodiversity Plan actions.

Outcome 1: Highways England and our suppliers are equipped to produce good biodiversity performance

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
1.1	Establish a biodiversity technical working group and identify a highways biodiversity plan officer to act as the company's single point of contact. The technical working group will include representatives from across the business, including areas responsible for road improvement projects and road maintenance.	The group was fully established in 2015-2016 and has continued to meet on a quarterly basis.	Action complete.
1.2	Develop a set of criteria to guide the allocation of Environment Designated Fund monies through our road improvement and road management works, to develop biodiversity projects based on local priorities.	Project criteria were produced in 2016-2017 to assist colleagues in developing biodiversity projects.	Action complete.
1.3	Undertake an awareness raising exercise within the business on the biodiversity plan and the associated criteria and undertake a consultation exercise on the forthcoming written guidance (see Action 1.4).	Following the development of the biodiversity plan, training events were held, in 2016-2017, in Manchester, Birmingham and London to embed the plan within the business. This activity was supported by individual sessions with service providers.	Action complete.
1.4	Develop written technical guidance to embed the biodiversity plan and provide a guide to its implementation for Highways England and its service providers.	Some written guidance provided in support of training events, with additional guidance planned to support the new Asset Delivery approach (see 1.5).	50% complete.

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
1.5	Review the operational requirements given to our service providers, to ensure that biodiversity work is fully reflected in their contracts, as such contracts are renewed.	In 2016-2017, a review of all supply-chain contracts was undertaken in order to understand the operations that should be undertaken on the soft estate for biodiversity. Given the change of approach towards the new form of 'Asset Delivery' in-house provision, this is now the focus for future work.	Action complete.
1.6	Explore how measures to improve biodiversity can be integrated with Highways England's litter strategy. The key themes of this are: to influence littering behaviour; to improve operational delivery and asset maintenance; to seek and respond to customer feedback; and to improve partnership working.	In 2016-2017 A biomass collection and energy generation project (that will improve the soft estate verge for biodiversity whilst potentially also removing litter), was funded by the Innovation Designated Fund. The project is currently underway in 2018-2019.	Project underway.
1.7	Undertake an annual awareness exercise to maintain our staff and supplier knowledge of the plan, and collect and collate reporting evidence from our road improvement and road management works and report back to the company on the level of success against the Biodiversity KPI.	In 2016-2017, two tracker tools were developed in order to understand the progress that is being made against the various biodiversity targets within the Biodiversity Plan. An awareness raising web-seminar was delivered to support staff understanding of the Biodiversity Plan.	Annual actions complete.

Outcome 2: The SRN is managed to support biodiversity

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
2.1	We will use the Regional Programme Boards to work with local wildlife partners, for example by establishing local highways biodiversity steering groups.	The company has moved away from the Regional Programme Board approach. The most significant form of stakeholder engagement is now through the Designated Funds stakeholder workshops (two held in-year) – together with direct working engagement with key organisations such as Natural England.	Action complete.
2.2	<p>Our service providers to liaise with Natural England and local partners to identify actions required to achieve, maintain and/or enhance favourable conservation status of SSSI and other statutory designated sites. Potentially, these actions might include buffering initiatives that contribute to site protection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ These actions will meet the national objective of securing 50% of SSSI in favourable condition and 95% of SSSI in favourable of recovering condition by 2020 in line with Biodiversity 2020. ■ Currently there approximately 70 SSSI on or adjacent to the network, of which approximately 40 require intervention to achieve the above. ■ For agreed sites a management plan for 2017-2020 will be submitted to Highways England for review. Each management plan must include a statement on the current condition of the site, actions designed to improve the status of the site and reporting each year. 	<p>In 2016-2017 Highways England and Natural England have worked together to produce a revised base plan that identifies the boundaries of the SSSIs that lie within Highways England's ownership.</p> <p>Work also took place on the development of a template for the production of SSSI management plans. This ensured the development of 15 SSSI plans by the business, in 2016-2017, and the delivery against the in-year PRP target. A further 15 SSSI management plans have been approved in 2017-2018. It is planned to approve a further 10 plans in 2018-2019.</p>	75% complete.

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
2.3	Commission, arrange and undertake targeted baseline studies to improve our understanding of the biodiversity status of the network, to monitor the effects of management on biodiversity and to identify opportunities for the enhancement projects required under Action 4.1.	In 2016-2017 we undertook desk based studies and, on occasions, field work to prepare biodiversity projects that met the criteria laid out in the Environment Designated Fund plan document. This approach has continued in 2017-2018.	Action complete.
2.4	Using the Regional Programme Boards and local wildlife partner engagement (Action 2.1), service providers to identify and implement revised management activities* to improve biodiversity** and monitor progress against the baseline (Action 2.3), in line with the forthcoming written guidance. Report progress annually to the biodiversity technical working group.	Engagement is now done through the Designated Funds stakeholder workshops.	Action complete.
2.5	Negotiate with land owners and managers, including motorway service area operators, to identify significant areas of land that could be managed to achieve biodiversity gains. Each region to produce a report that identifies areas of land of potential interest and proposals for revised management arrangements for enhanced biodiversity outcomes.	No action in 2017-2018.	N/A

Outcome 3: We have delivered biodiversity enhancements whilst implementing a capital programme of network improvement

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
3.1	We will ensure that the proposals within the biodiversity plan and supporting technical guidance are incorporated within network improvement projects. Project teams will undertake the co-ordination and delivery of all biodiversity reporting and monitoring of their projects, and report to the technical working group.	In 2016-2017, guidance for the development of biodiversity projects by service providers was issued, together with a requirement for monitoring and reporting of these projects.	Action complete.
3.2	As part of normal delivery, network improvement projects will mitigate and compensate their biodiversity impacts in order to achieve no net loss of biodiversity, as far as the projects are reasonably able. In addition, projects will identify biodiversity opportunities and deliver actions that will achieve net biodiversity gain, wherever possible. The identification of such opportunities should be included within the Environmental Assessment Report. If no such opportunities are found then a clear statement explaining why should be provided instead.	Major schemes continue to put considerable effort into mitigating their impacts (for example, the provision of a Green Bridge on the new A556 Bypass – which was substantially undertaken in 2016-2017). Project Teams have also started considering how they could use designated funds to provide enhancement (A14 Cambridge-Huntingdon as a leading example).	Action now standard for major schemes.
3.3	Project teams to liaise with local wildlife partners as part of their project design and development to identify how the project could best contribute towards landscape-scale biodiversity gains. Information on these opportunities to be provided to the relevant regional programme board and technical working group.	Project teams liaise with key stakeholder during scheme development and design. Further work to support more biodiversity-focused engagement will be provided in 2018-2019.	Action now standard for major schemes.
3.4	Where projects have passed through Action 3.3 and opportunities have arisen within projects for biodiversity enhancement which are over and above that which would normally be undertaken, potential biodiversity investment opportunities that meet the criteria of the Environment Designated Fund, will be submitted to the technical working group for approval and onward funding decision by the Capital Investment Group.		Action now standard for major schemes.
3.5	We will monitor and ensure the delivery of the agreed enhancements (under Action 3.4) during the on-going detailed design and construction phase of the project.		Action now standard for major schemes.

Outcome 4: We have addressed the legacy of biodiversity problems on our network via a targeted programme of investment

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
4.1	In locations outside of committed network improvement projects, and following on from Action 2.3, we will work with local wildlife partners and other stakeholders to identify a programme, for each of our regions, of potential biodiversity investment opportunities that meet the criteria of the Environment Designated Fund. These programmes will be submitted to the technical working group for approval and onward funding decision by the Capital Investment Group. Potential biodiversity projects could either be within or outside of the land associated with the SRN. The programmes identified will:	Stakeholders are now engaged through the Designated Funds stakeholder workshops. The Biodiversity Technical Working Group recommended for funding 41 projects to provide biodiversity enhancement – with many more projects under consideration and in development for consideration in future years.	Action covered within the Environment Designated Fund Plan.
4.1.2	Identify locations suitable for the enhancement and creation of invertebrate friendly habitats including wildflower rich grasslands of benefit to insects, in line with the National Pollinator Strategy. This will comprise at least 20 hectares of new or improved wildflower rich grassland per year of the programme in each of our network areas.	In 2017-2018 five projects leading to a potential of 31 hectares of species rich grassland have been delivered on the SRN estate.	20% complete.
4.1.3	Support the objectives of each of the ten Nature Improvement Areas which are adjacent to or form part of our network.	In 2017-2018 Highways England has continued to work with Natural England on a key NIA in Cumbria. Preliminary work has been completed on the NIA at the Humberhead Levels.	20% complete.
4.1.4	Consider habitats in the wider ecological context, including the landscape character (eg using Natural England's National Character Area profiles) and look to improve links between protected sites or to buffer existing sites (in line with Action 2.2).	In 2017-2018, one connectivity project was delivered in Area 1 in the A30 corridor.	30% complete.
4.1.5	Include projects specifically designed to improve urban environments with low biodiversity.	No action in 2017-2018.	N/A

Outcome 4 continued: We have addressed the legacy of biodiversity problems on our network via a targeted programme of investment

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
4.1.6.	Include at least five measures to maximise habitat connectivity, linking road verges and associated land with the wider landscape wherever possible. This will include consideration of measures to improve connectivity across roads, which might include green bridges and/or tunnels.	A landscape scale bridge over the A38 at Haldon west of Exeter is in design for delivery in 2020-2021.	20% complete.
4.1.7.	Identify synergies with other initiatives being undertaken to address landscape, cultural heritage, cycling and accessibility, noise, air and water quality.	Synergies between various topics are identified within the Designated Fund Appraisal Tool Guidance, which was produced in 2016-2017.	Action complete.
4.1.8	All projects to monitor their biodiversity performance (against the baseline established in Action 2.3), post-completion for an appropriate period. Monitoring details will necessarily be project specific and agreed with the technical working group and local wildlife partners.	In 2016-2017, the need to ensure appropriate post completion monitoring was included in project team guidance for the development of biodiversity projects.	Action now standard for Environment Designated Fund projects.

Outcome 5: We are fully transparent about our biodiversity performance

Action No.	Action	Comment	Status
5.1	We will collate and interpret pre-existing (2015) and new (2016-2020) biodiversity data (see Action 2.3), as part of our road improvement and road management work, for integration with a biodiversity metric.		Action complete.
5.2	We will develop and/or adopt an appropriate biodiversity metric which uses the ecological baseline on the verges and associated land against which change can be measured and which potentially, captures the wider ecosystem services benefits.	Development work on the biodiversity metric was completed by March 2018.	Action complete.
5.3	We will report on the success of the biodiversity plan through the Government's recognised biodiversity reporting tool known as the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).	BARS has now been closed down by Natural England. We will maintain contact with Natural England to support any plans by Government to develop a replacement comprehensive reporting tool.	Action complete.
5.4	We will produce an annual non-technical public report on biodiversity and publish this on our website. We will look for opportunities to engage and enthuse the public in our biodiversity work.	A brief report for 2015-2016 was provided within Highways England's Annual Report for that year. The report for 2016-2017 was published in May 2018. This document is the report for 2017-2018.	Action complete.

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