

Policy 3: Nature crisis

a) Development plans should facilitate biodiversity enhancement, nature recovery and nature restoration across the development plan area, including by: facilitating the creation of nature networks and strengthening connections between them to support improved ecological connectivity; through the creation of new or restoration of degraded habitats; and, through measures to increase populations of priority species. Nature networks, which connect biodiversity rich areas, may include international, national and locally protected sites, and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation measures (OECMs).

b) Development proposals should contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, including restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them.

c) Any potential adverse impacts of development proposals on biodiversity, nature networks and the natural environment should be minimised through careful planning and design. Design should take into account the need to reverse biodiversity loss, safeguard the services that the natural environment provides and build the resilience of nature by enhancing nature networks and maximising the potential for restoration.

d) Development proposals for national, major and of EIA development or development for which an Appropriate Assessment is required should only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks within and adjacent to the site, so that they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention, including through future management. Applications for farmed fish or shellfish development are excluded from this requirement. To inform this, proposals should:

- be based on an understanding of the existing characteristics of the site and its local, regional and national ecological context prior to development, including the presence of any irreplaceable habitats;
- wherever feasible, integrate and make best use of nature-based solutions, demonstrating how this has been achieved;
- be supported by an assessment of potential negative effects which should be fully mitigated in line with the mitigation hierarchy prior to identifying enhancements;
- provide significant biodiversity enhancements, in addition to any proposed mitigation. Biodiversity enhancements should include supporting nature networks, linking to and strengthening habitat connectivity within and beyond the development. Biodiversity enhancements should be secured within a reasonable timescale and with reasonable certainty. They should include management arrangements for their long term retention and monitoring, wherever appropriate.

e) Proposals for local development should only be supported if they include appropriate measures to enhance biodiversity, in proportion to the nature and scale of development. Applications for individual householder development, farmed fish or shellfish development, or which fall within scope of the policy above, are excluded from this requirement. Development proposals which integrate nature-based solutions and deliver positive effects for biodiversity should be supported.