

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG) STATEMENT

Havant Thicket Reservoir - Pipeline Planning Application

INTRODUCTION

This BNG Statement has been prepared to support s106 discussions relating to the pipeline planning application (APP/24/00405).

A final BNG assessment will be undertaken prior to the Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) being completed and submitted to the LPA (Havant Borough Council) and offsite units registered with Natural England.

The Pipeline development (based on BNG assessment submitted with the planning application) will result in unit losses of high distinctiveness area habitats (lowland mixed deciduous woodland – minus 2.21 units and wet woodland – minus 1.61 units) and medium distinctiveness area habitats (other neutral grassland – minus 3.38, urban tree – minus 1.04 and other woodland; broadleaved – minus 0.14). There is also a net loss in high distinctiveness watercourse units (minus 1.48). These losses, in addition to a 10% uplift in baseline units required by legislation, must be accounted for in any off-site gain sites found otherwise the trading rules of the metric will not be met. We do not anticipate any offsite requirement for hedgerow units based on our previous BNG assessment results; however, this will be confirmed.

A summary of the BNG units required is provided in Table 1 below, and the specific objectives for off-site gain sites for Bedhampton pipeline are as follows:

1. Secure units of high distinctiveness area habitats to meet trading rules.
2. Secure units of medium distinctiveness area habitats to meet trading rules by delivering units in the same broad habitat type or 'trading up' by securing high or very high distinctiveness habitats.
3. Secure units of medium distinctiveness watercourse habitats.
4. Achieve a 10% uplift from the baseline in area habitat units, hedgerows and watercourse units.

Note: these results are based on the BNG assessment calculations carried out on the design which accompanied the planning application, these calculations are currently being updated for the BGP.

Table 1 - Bedhampton Pipeline BNG Objectives

Unit Type	Baseline units	Post-development Total Units required	Total on-site post-development units	Total off-site post-development units
Habitat units	135.91	149.50	128.89	20.61
Hedgerow units	1.24	1.37	3.83	0.00
Watercourse units	5.40	5.94	3.91	2.02

Mitigation Hierarchy

The aims of this statement align with the application of the BNG mitigation hierarchy and the BNG hierarchy (with reference to off-site gain sites) and the good practice principles for BNG. These are important principles of both BNG and ecological good practice. Portsmouth Water has set the following aims for their off-site BNG for the dual pipeline, these are based on current understanding of indicative project programmes and internal drivers:

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- Avoid the need to purchase statutory BNG credits.
- Where Portsmouth Water's own operational sites, or land holdings, are to be brought forward as off-site Biodiversity Gain sites the habitat improvements required for BNG cannot contravene the operational requirements of the site/s.
- Wherever possible, target off-site Biodiversity Gain sites that deliver habitat connectivity and contribute to the aims of the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (this has been communicated as a preference by the LPA Ecologist).

An initial desk study (reviewing existing habitat management plans, aerial photographs and condition assessments) was undertaken to explore improvement options and potential unit uplift available to Portsmouth Water to secure off-site Biodiversity Gain sites. Offsite opportunities being investigated further are described below.

HABITAT UNITS LOST/TRADING RULES

High distinctiveness habitats

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (2.21 units) and Wet woodland (1.61 units).

Offsite delivery summary

There is not sufficient habitat available on the Portsmouth Water owned sites to provide compensation for lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Therefore, to offset for this habitat loss, it will be necessary to enter partnerships with external organisations to provide offsite habitat enhancement / creation. Information on these partnership discussions are detailed in the following sections.

For wet woodland further work will be carried out to ascertain the feasibility of offsite wet woodland creation at Bedhampton and Bidbury however if this is deemed to be an unrealistic target that the trading rules for wet woodland will not be met. This is due to the lack of opportunity to create the necessary conditions required for wet woodland in the offsite areas available to Portsmouth Water. In this instance creation of lowland mixed deciduous woodland will be targeted instead.

Pig Shed Trust

The Pig Shed Trust are a private landowner who have identified a site of 9.81 hectares available for BNG opportunities at South Holt Farm. The site forms part of a larger field, of which an additional 1.83 hectares is designated for off-site woodland compensation associated with the Havant Thicket Reservoir project. This may provide good opportunities for Portsmouth Water, as agreements have already been set up.

Potential units delivered

While no ecological information is available for this site (baseline surveys to be completed in February 2025), an estimation of the potential habitat units provided has been made based on the area of the land available and initial discussions with the landholder. Previous woodland compensation works on other parts of the site also provide an indication of likelihood of success.

The habitat enhancements are not yet confirmed; however, they are likely to follow a 're-wilding' approach to woodland creation, targeting a mix of lowland mixed deciduous woodland, mixed scrub and other neutral grassland.

Medium distinctiveness habitats

Offsite units required; Other neutral grassland (3.38 units), urban tree (1.04 units) and other broadleaved woodland (0.14 units).

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Offsite delivery summary

There is not sufficient habitat available on the Portsmouth Water owned sites to provide compensation for urban tree or other broadleaved woodland. These habitat units, or a higher distinctiveness habitat type (i.e. 'trading up') will also be delivered at South Holt Farm.

Potential units delivered

Bedhampton and Bidbury are Portsmouth Water owned sites ('Bedhampton' refers to areas outside of the Pipeline Red Line Boundary in Bedhampton). It is likely that some delivery of medium distinctiveness habitats will be targeted here (e.g. other neutral grassland in good condition which would achieve approximately 10.31 units).

10% NET GAIN

To achieve the required 10% uplift from the baseline in area habitat units we envisage delivering a mixture of grassland enhancement (other neutral grassland), mixed scrub creation, and potentially pond creation. As long as trading rules are met (as discussed in previous sections) the habitat types delivered to achieve the required net gain in units can be of any distinctiveness type, however we are targeting these habitats as they are high valuable habitats for urban sites and associated wildlife and they are in-keeping with the habitats present at, and surrounding, the offsite gain sites.

These habitats will be delivered at South Holt Farm and Bedhampton and Bidbury.

We do not anticipate the need for any offsite uplift of hedgerow units based on our previous BNG assessment results; however, this will be confirmed.

Watercourse uplift is discussed below.

WATERCOURSE UNITS

Offsite units required; Watercourse units 2.02.

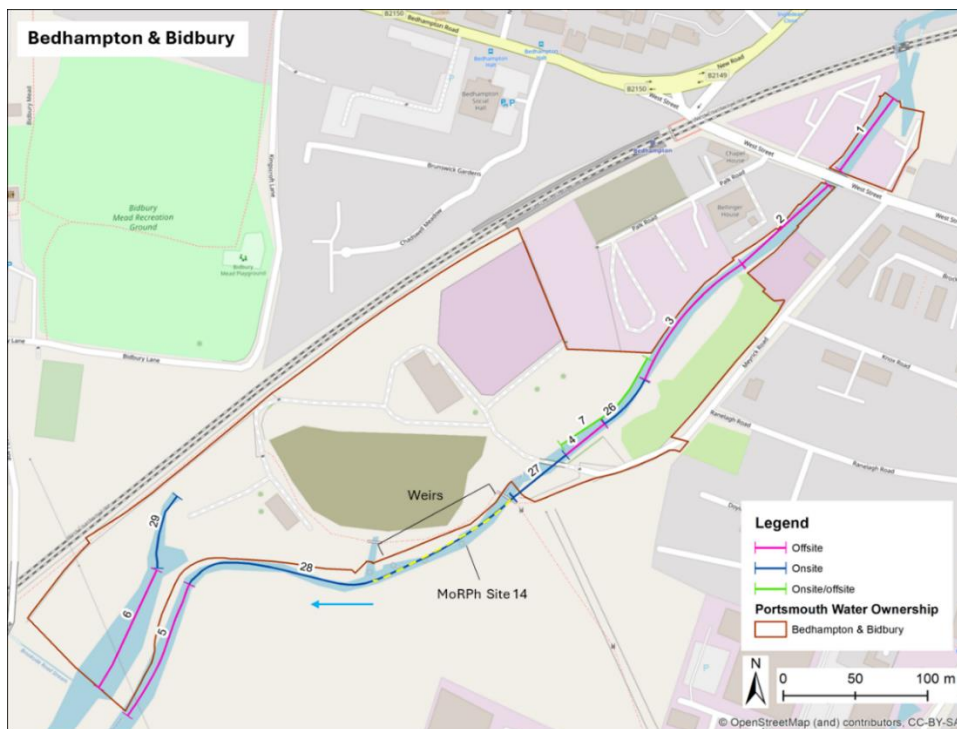
Offsite delivery summary

Bedhampton and Bidbury – Hermitage Stream

The lower Hermitage Stream at Portsmouth Water's Bedhampton and Bidbury site has potential to generate additional watercourse units. Based on a desk study analysis involving a review of aerial imagery, testing of different improvement scenarios (e.g. a full river restoration approach), and metric analysis, potential offsite watercourse unit uplift was explored.

Based on a full river restoration scenario (e.g. the assumed watercourse condition class could be increased to 'Fairly Good' condition from Fairly Poor or Moderate baseline condition), and improvement to a length of (0.41 km) of the Hermitage Stream a maximum potential uplift of 2.87 watercourse units could be achieved at Bedhampton and Bidbury. The figure below shows the reaches or sections where watercourse unit uplift could be achieved. Development and determination of uplift of watercourse units at this site is subject to further assessment including: MoRPh survey and River Condition Assessment, options consideration/feasibility, assessment of constraints (e.g. utilities, ground contamination, implications for flood risk) and MoRPh scenario testing. MoRPh survey and River Condition Assessment is planned in February 2025.

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Staunton Country Park - Lake stream

Off-site watercourse unit opportunities were also identified on the Lake Stream (at Staunton Country Park). This location was investigated because it lies within the Hermitage Stream water body. This location could be a back-up site for delivering offsite watercourse units, if they cannot be achieved at the Bedhampton and Bidbury site (following the further investigations). Hampshire County Council has confirmed through initial discussions that they are receptive to potential BNG opportunities.

The Lake Stream flows through Staunton Country Park and whilst containing some existing natural features there is a potential maximum 0.97 watercourse units uplift from the estimated baseline condition, which could be achieved through, for example, enhancing in-channel forms and creating bank top water features (based on a desk study and assuming a full river restoration scenario). The Pipeline BNG assessment, Site ID 1 crosses the Lake Stream and showed that there would be a 10 m loss associated with riparian vegetation (trees) removal on both banks to facilitate open cut trenching works. In the assessment it was assumed that the 10 m length would be re-created at same condition post works. If while undertaking works on the Lake Stream there is potential to make enhancements along the additional 10 m length where the pipeline will cross, this could potentially lead to an additional uplift of 0.02 watercourse unit uplift from the baseline condition.

Further consideration would be required around the timing / potential delay to achieving enhancement due to disturbance of pipeline (this has not been factored into BNG calculations at present). Development and determination of uplift of watercourse units at this site is subject to further assessment including: MoRPh survey and River Condition Assessment, options consideration/feasibility, assessment of constraints (e.g. utilities, ground contamination, implications for flood risk) and MoRPh scenario testing. MoRPh survey and River Condition Assessment is planned in February 2025.