

NELMS target statement for **Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges (NCA 118)**

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 meadows
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Reedbeds
- Traditional orchard
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- 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 meadows
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Reedbeds
- Traditional orchard
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- 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:

- Locally important species of Whitebeam including: *Sorbus bristoliensis*, *Sorbus eminensis* and *Sorbus wilmottiana*
- Brown Galingale
- Greater Horseshoe Bat
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat
- Bechstein's Bat
- Lapwing
- Corn Bunting
- Willow Tit
- Mistletoe Marble moth
- Upright Goosefoot
- Silky Wave moth

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

Water - top priorities

Water quality

Water quality

The area has particular issues with:

- Phosphates, nitrates, sediment, Faecal Indicator Organisms (FIOs), pesticides, eutrophication & algae in the Bristol Avon Rural and North Somerset Streams catchments. The Bristol Avon Rural catchment contains the drinking water safeguard zones for Chew Valley and Blagdon Lakes which are at risk of contamination by pesticides, nutrients and algae.

This includes catchments to:

- groundwater drinking sources close to Chew Valley affected by nitrates, pesticides and faecal bacteria;
- Drinking Water Safeguard Zones to Bristol Water supply reservoirs including the Natura 2000 sites Chew Valley Lake and Blagdon Lake affected by pesticides, eutrophication & algae;
- North Somerset Levels and Moors SSSI catchment 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

This characteristic area includes the lower reaches of the River Avon catchment and the foot hills of the Mendips and hills around Bristol as well as parts of the Severn Estuary tidal flood plain.

The watercourses which originate and drain the catchments falling off the Mendips are the River Yeo (Congresbury), Land Yeo, River Banwell, Lox Yeo, Colliters Brook and Malago in the North Somerset Council area and the headwaters and upper reaches of the River Chew, Cam Brook and Wellow Brook in the Bath and North East Somerset Council area.

The River Chew catchment is a rapid response catchment leading to flood risk on the low lying land. Chew Magna is the community within this catchment with the most properties at risk but there is also significant flood risk at Chew Stoke. Better land management would be beneficial in this area.

The catchment around and to the north of Bristol including the Tryms, Colliters Brook, Malago, Bristol Frome, River Boyd, often drain from steeply sloping ground in the upper parts of the catchment which leads to fluvial flood risk within the catchment. Application to address flood risk in this catchment would mostly benefit the local communities such as Bitton, Winterbourne, and Frampton Cotterill. Bristol and suburbs would also benefit from works in the upper catchments with the potential to ease flood risk.

In the very north of this character area is the Little Avon catchment. This catchment drains off steep sided hills which form part of the Cotswolds. The communities particularly at risk in this area are Kingswood and Charfield.

For the upper catchment you should consider options that:

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

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 long, historic timeline, with Neolithic long barrows and stone circles, iron-age hill forts, Roman settlements and historic associations with Bristol's medieval and civil war defences and its industrial activities, all creating important landscape features. The legacy of Bristol's wealth as a port in the post-medieval period is evidenced by the landscape parks and grand mansions which surround the city. The Wansdyke is an impressive Saxon earthwork consisting of a bank and ditch cutting across the ridges to the south of Bristol. Many traditional farm buildings have been lost to development or converted for residential use. Those that remain are often associated with large estates and include structures within designed parkland landscapes. There is much variation in the building stone used across the area, including a variety of limestone, Lias and Pennant Sandstone. The 2014 Heritage at Risk 2014 survey has identified xxx % of designated features as being 'at risk', particularly from arable ploughing, lack of management and neglect, and scrub invasion.

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

- Designated Features - archaeological features of national significance (Scheduled Monuments) and Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG).
- 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].
- 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 **Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges** is the restoration of these features:

- Management of hedgerows
- Hedgerow trees
- Stone walls
- In-field trees
- Small farm woodlands and other distinctive tree features – copses, clumps, shelterbelts.

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 **Bristol Avon Valleys and Ridges** you have the greatest opportunity to achieve multiple objectives with:

- Management of peat soils in the Gordano Valley and other wetland habitats to benefit wildlife associated with wet meadow, reedbed, ditches of high environmental value and carr communities, water quality, and carbon sequestration and protect existing carbon storage.
- Management of the Avon Gorge thin calcareous soils to maintain, enhance and restore priority grasslands, ancient woodlands, rare and threatened vascular plants, uncommon invertebrates, bats and important geological features as part of an iconic landscape.
- Changing arable cropping systems to low-intensity grassland along the length of the Wansdyke Scheduled Ancient Monument where the new management system will protect underground archaeology and benefit water quality, landscape character, flood risk and biodiversity.
- Restoring areas of low-intensity grassland, hedgerows and woodland to manage water flow, decrease soil erosion, create wildlife habitats and corridors, and strengthen the local landscape in particular within the River Chew catchment.
- Conservation and active management of existing woodland, including ancient woodland, mixed woodland blocks and shelterbelts; and promoting new planting where appropriate in accordance with the strategic ambition of the Forest of Avon Trust and the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management plan. This will benefit landscape, water quality, flood risk and biodiversity.
- 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.