Environment Act Habitat Target – Definitions and Descriptions

May 2026

Version 2

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN219

www.gov.uk/natural-england

Contents

The habitat targets 3

Wildlife-rich habitat types 3

Definitions of restoration and creation 3

Actions and delivery mechanisms that will count towards the targets 6

Actions that will not count towards the targets 7

When actions will need to have commenced to count towards the targets 9

How habitat loss is considered 9

The meaning of “sufficient quality” for the different habitat types 9

References 19

The habitat targets

The long-term legally binding Environment Act habitat target is to restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside of protected sites by 31st December 2042.

The Environmental Improvement Plan published in December 2025 (EIP25) sets an interim target to restore or create a total of 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside of protected sites by December 2030.

This paper was prepared jointly by Defra and Natural England and sets out how the habitat targets will be defined and measured. This information serves two purposes: to provide high-level clarification for non-experts, and to provide detail for experts/those advising in the context of on-the-ground action. It includes definitions for restoration and creation and the list of wildlife-rich habitats to support understanding of the actions that will count toward the target.

Wildlife-rich habitat types

The Statutory Instrument (SI) that sets the habitat target [1] defines wildlife-rich habitat as a habitat that is one of the following types of habitat and which is of sufficient quality that it is, or will be, capable of supporting flora and fauna which are typically found in the habitat in question:

- a habitat type of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity listed by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; or
- another habitat type listed in Schedule 1 of the SI.

Desired outcomes for individual habitat types to meet ‘sufficient quality’ are detailed in Table 2.

Definitions of restoration and creation

Creation refers to the establishment of a wildlife-rich habitat type where wildlife-rich habitat was previously absent. There are three types of action that may constitute habitat restoration (see below). Creation and restoration both lead to an increase in extent of wildlife-rich habitat that is of sufficient quality. Restoration and creation will not need to be reported separately for this target.

Actions should result in an increased extent of wildlife-rich habitat, not improved condition of existing wildlife-rich habitat – the only exceptions are for the wildlife-rich habitat types that can be considered degraded as listed below.

There are three types of action that may constitute habitat restoration:

1. **Action on sites which support relict habitat that leads to the expansion of wildlife-rich habitat.**

   Relict habitat refers to small, fragmented, remnant patches of wildlife-rich habitat in an area where the habitat in question would previously have been more widespread, or where the surrounding habitat is not currently considered wildlife-rich. Actions to restore wildlife-rich habitat should lead to the expansion of wildlife-rich habitat to cover the whole area. Only the newly established habitat will be counted towards the target.

2. **Action on existing habitat (possibly wildlife-rich) that has developed in a degraded ecosystem.**

   Due to the degradation of the ecosystem in which the habitat has developed, the existing habitat may be considered degraded. Examples include the restoration of blanket bog from dry heath on drained peat, or action to reduce grazing pressure on upland acid grassland to restore priority habitat such as upland heath or upland oakwood. There is still a change in habitat type in these situations.

3. **Action on degraded habitat where action(s) are needed to address on or off-site pressures so that wildlife-rich habitats of sufficient quality can establish**.

   Degraded habitat no longer exhibits the required level of natural functioning and consequently no longer supports the typical flora and fauna expected in that habitat, so cannot continue to be recognised as that wildlife-rich habitat type. This may be due to changes to the hydrological regime, addition of nutrients and chemicals, intensive vegetation control, modifications to the physical or soil environment, or biological pressures such as invasive non-native species, stocking and diseases.

   The following are the only habitats that may be considered sufficiently degraded and therefore capable of being restored to a wildlife-rich habitat:

   - Any existing habitat on drained peat where hydrological restoration is required to restore the peatland wildlife-rich habitat. Table 1 provides examples of habitats usually considered wildlife-rich but classed as degraded habitat when on drained peat.
   - Coastal floodplain grazing marsh even when not on peat, where it is being restored to a wetland habitat.
   - Freshwater, coastal and estuarine habitats affected by pollution, physical modifications or damage, impacted hydrological regimes, and invasive non-native species, where sufficient action is taken to remove these pressures to facilitate restoration to sufficient quality, as described in Table 2.

- Woodlands with less than 70% native tree species, where sufficient action is being taken to reduce the cover of the non-native canopy trees to establish a woodland with at least 70% native tree canopy cover. This includes Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).
- Terrestrial semi-natural habitats behind sea defences where the primary aim involves the restoration of coastal processes including re-alignment allowing saline inundation, cliff erosion or the removal of defences to allow roll-back of coastal wildlife-rich habitats. Action here needs to be of sufficient scale to distinguish this from improvements to on-site management.
- Habitat listed on schedule 1 that has been assessed by BNG as only being of medium distinctiveness and is not in good condition, that is being restored to a priority habitat. This would include:
    - Lowland acid grassland (not priority habitat)
    - Neutral grasslands (not priority habitat)
    - The various scrub types
    - Inland rock and scree (not priority habitat).
    - Upland acid grassland that is not 1 of the following 3 sub-types
        (i) The lowland dry acid grassland priority habitat but occur in the uplands
        (ii) The annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive habitat type *Nardus* grassland on siliceous substrates in mountain areas.
        (iii) Habitats that meet the criteria for wax cap grasslands and are in the uplands

Table 1. Degraded and restored habitats on peat. Note that habitats that would be wildlife-rich but are considered degraded habitat when on drained peat are in the left column and may be restored to any of the habitat types shown in the right column.

Any of the following habitats as listed in the SI may be considered 'degraded' if they are situated on drained peatland	**Restoration to the following where the action includes re-wetting of the habitat to restore peat**
• Lowland dry acid grassland • Lowland acid grassland • Upland acid grassland • Neutral grassland • Lowland heathland • Upland heathland • Purple moor-grass and rush pasture	• Blanket bog • Lowland raised bog • Wet heathland • Upland fen, marsh or swamp • Purple moor-grass and rush pasture • Lowland fen, reedbed or other wetland type within floodplains

Actions and delivery mechanisms that will count towards the targets

An action is defined as the interventions needed to create or restore habitat that would reasonably be expected to lead to wildlife-rich habitat.

Creation and restoration include actions on a range of different aspects of natural ecosystem function. These can be actions to redress adverse impacts of human modifications or less interventionist measures based on promoting natural processes. The former can include grip blocking or restoration of ancient woodland on plantation sites, whilst the latter could include natural recolonisation, managed re-alignment or re-instatement of natural drainage.

When promoting natural processes, the precise habitat type that will develop may be unknown. The target allows for the reporting of dynamic mosaics of wildlife-rich habitats that can develop through the restoration of natural processes and ecosystems, where the exact outcomes of actions will not be known.

In many cases a suite of interventions will be required to be confident that wildlife-rich habitat will be established as a result. Where there is confidence that all these interventions will be undertaken and that they are sufficient to result in wildlife-rich habitat they should be grouped as a single action and their area of influence reported.

For action to count towards the habitat target, all the actions that need to be taken for a habitat to reach sufficient quality as defined in Table 2 must be implemented but habitat recovery as a response may be ongoing.

Actions to restore or create wildlife-rich habitat undertaken through established or future schemes, such as agri-environment schemes or government grants, will count towards the target. This is because they are ‘reasonably expected to lead’ to the creation/restoration of wildlife-rich habitat that is of sufficient quality for the purpose of measuring progress towards the target.

For action taken outside of established schemes, we will use expert opinion and trusted providers as appropriate to determine whether the action is considered as being ‘reasonably expected to lead’ to the restoration or creation of wildlife-rich habitat.

The EIP25 habitat target delivery plan [2][1] outlines how we aim to achieve the habitat targets, and annual progress reports will outline the major contributory delivery mechanisms. The major delivery mechanisms will be the Agri-Environment schemes.

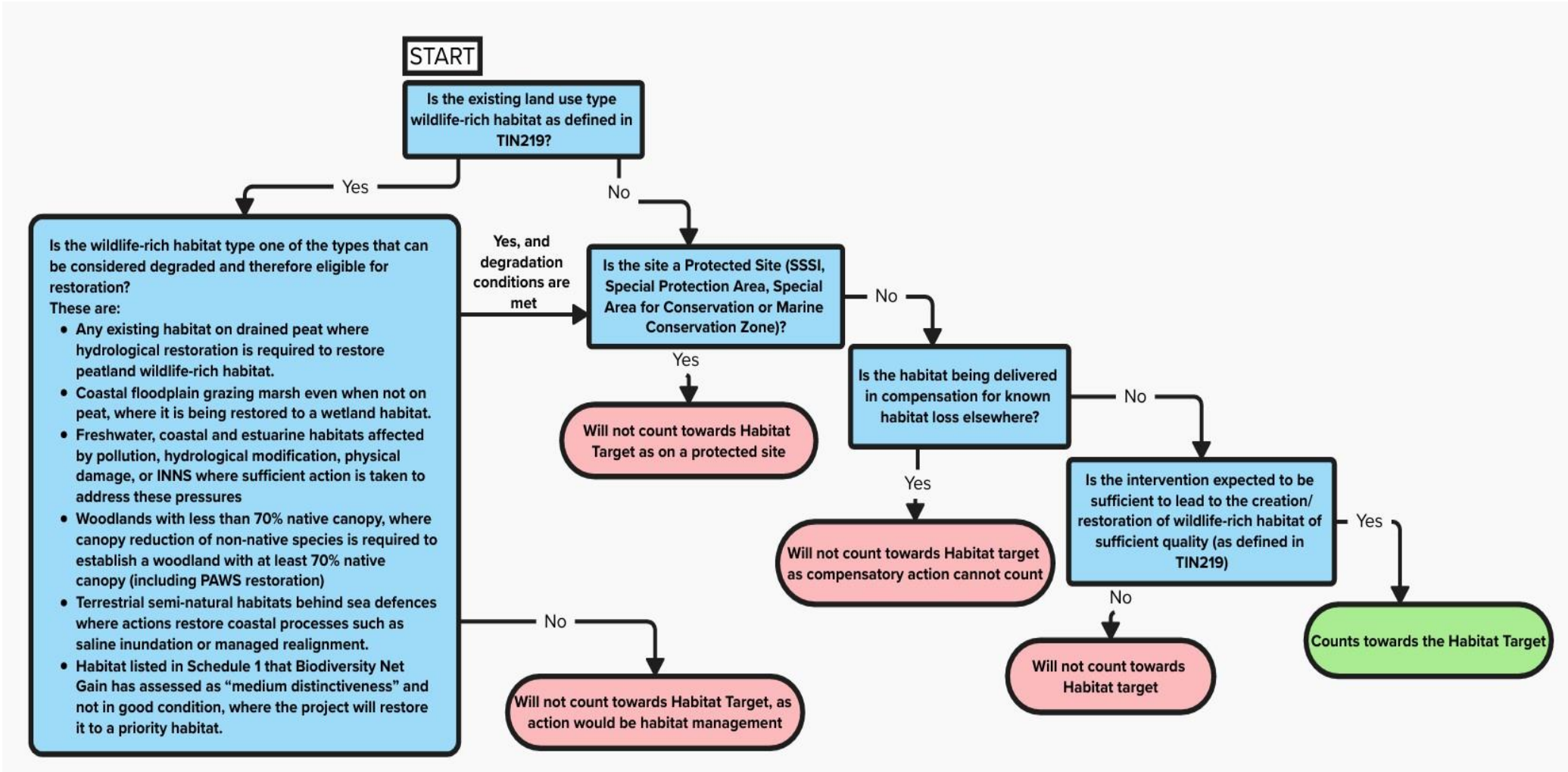
[1] Habitat creation and restoration Environment Act target delivery plan - GOV.UK

Actions that will not count towards the targets

- Actions within protected sites (European sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Marine Conservation Zones) which were designated on or before 30th January 2023. Action on protected sites that are designated after 30th January 2023 will be counted as will action on land surrounding protected sites, which is encouraged.
- Compensatory action that replaces habitat lost due to land-use change such as permitted developments and compensation measures for European Sites. Note that where excess habitat is created the excess can count, but not the replacement habitat.
- Action on sites already commenced prior to 30 January 2023 which achieved successful wildlife-rich habitat creation or restoration, such as the delivery reported of arable field margins recorded prior to the commencement of the Act.
- Habitat Management, meaning action to maintain or improve the condition of existing habitat which is already meeting any of the habitat descriptions in Table 2. Whilst actions to improve the condition, structure or composition of existing wildlife-rich habitats will be important in delivering statutory species targets, these actions are out of scope of the habitat target.
- Additional actions on sites already recorded as contributing towards the target i.e., BNG stacking/bundling as this is an area-based target.
- Action to create wildlife-rich habitat types which results in the degradation of another existing wildlife-rich habitat type which would naturally be found in that location, e.g., inappropriate establishment of dry habitat types on peat.

Figure 1 shows a flow chart that can help in considering whether an action could count towards the habitat target.

Figure 1 Flow chart to support consideration of whether an action could count towards the habitat target



When actions will need to have commenced to count towards the targets

Actions that start after the regulations came into force (30 January 2023) will be counted towards the target.

How habitat loss is considered

The habitats target is not designed to measure net additions at a national scale; the target will comprise the gross number of hectares of habitat restored or created. Data on losses of wildlife-rich habitat are not always available, making an exact assessment of a net increase difficult.

Habitat loss should be recorded where it is known about. Where habitat created or restored includes direct replacement habitat, only excess habitat will count towards the target. Situations where knowledge on habitat loss is likely to be available includes habitat which is subject to EIA (Agriculture) regulations or replacement habitat for Biodiversity Net Gain. Information on habitat loss can be used to inform understanding of the status of habitats in addition to the habitats target.

The meaning of “sufficient quality” for the different habitat types

The term ‘sufficient quality’ relates to the ultimate condition of the habitat developed. The SI defines ‘sufficient quality’ as: “…habitat […] which is of sufficient quality that it is, or will be, capable of supporting flora and fauna which are typically found in the habitats in question”.

To be considered as “sufficient quality,” all the actions that need to be taken for a habitat to reach this quality must be implemented but habitat recovery as a response may be ongoing. Desired outcomes for individual habitat types are detailed in Table 2.

This is an action-based target, and habitat condition will not be assessed. Those actions under schemes which we reasonably expect to lead to the restoration or creation of wildlife-rich habitat, as described above, will count towards the target.

For priority habitats what is meant by sufficient quality is generally set out within the priority habitat descriptions and for those habitats included within the BNG Metric the aim would be to meet ‘good condition’.

Some wildlife-rich habitats of coastal waters are not covered by priority habitat or BNG; instead, the JNCC Marine Habitat Classification (MHC) or the EUNIS habitat classification is used to understand sufficient quality.

For river and lake habitats the B6 25 Year Environment Plan indicator and the naturalness assessment published on the Freshwater Biological Association website can be used to understand what is meant by sufficient quality.

Some UKHab types are equivalent to wildlife-rich habitat as outlined in Table 2. Further information about which UKHab types will be considered allowable for the wildlife-rich habitat target is available upon request to habitat.target@defra.gov.uk.

Table 2. The list of wildlife-rich habitats and their habitat descriptions or condition information.

Note 1. S41 refers to Section 41 of Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (Habitats and species of principal importance in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)) and S1 refers to Schedule 1 of the Statutory Instrument for The Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023 (legislation.gov.uk).

Note 2. Coastal waters are included where they are situated less than one nautical mile from the shore.

Note 3. Actions to reach Good Ecological Status will have a considerable role in restoring freshwater and coastal habitats but additional action may also be required.

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Arable and horticulture	Arable field margins	Yes	No	Aim to meet agreed habitat definition for arable field margins Recorded simply as the area of selected AES options
Acid Grassland	Lowland dry acid grassland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for Lowland dry acid grassland also see PHI Guidance and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'
Acid Grassland	Lowland acid grassland	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' for 'other lowland acid grassland' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'.

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Acid Grassland	Upland acid grassland	No	Yes	Wildlife-rich upland acid grasslands of sufficient quality should aim to meet one of the following 3 criteria: (i) The lowland dry acid grassland definition but occur in the uplands (ii) Meet the annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive habitat definition for nardus grassland on siliceous substrates in mountain areas. (iii) Meet the criteria for wax cap grasslands and be in the uplands. Also aim to meet 'good condition' for 'upland acidic grassland' as outlined in the BNG Metric Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'.
Calcareous Grassland	Lowland calcareous grassland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for lowland calcareous grassland also see PHI Guidance and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'
Calcareous Grassland	Upland calcareous grassland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for upland calcareous grassland also see PHI Guidance and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'
Neutral Grassland	Lowland meadows	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for lowland meadows also see PHI Guidance and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'
Neutral Grassland	Upland hay meadows	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for upland hay meadows also see PHI Guidance and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'
Neutral Grassland	Neutral grassland	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' for 'other neutral grassland' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V. High'.
Improved Grassland	Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Yes	No	Aim to improve natural function wherever possible as part of future restoration within the floodplain. A definition for Floodplain wetland mosaic habitat is proposed to replace the definition for Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. A brief definition of floodplain wetland mosaic habitat can be found in UK Habitat Classification. The locations of modified floodplain areas providing highly important refuges for wetland wildlife of high biodiversity value within the existing inventory form part of this new habitat definition. Aim to meet 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23A 'Wetland'
Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Floodplain wetland mosaic	No	Yes	A short definition for floodplain wetland mosaic habitat can be found in UK Habitat Classification. Aim to meet the 6 general criteria and the different criteria for any habitats anticipated to form mosaics as outlined in 'Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23A 'Wetland'. The ditches condition assessment should only be used where they are a key component of the modified floodplain areas providing highly important refuges for wetland wildlife.

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Purple moor-grass and rush pastures	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for purple moor-grass and rush pastures also see PHI Guidance and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23A 'Wetland'
Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Lowland fens	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for lowland fens and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23A 'Wetland'
Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Reedbeds	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for reedbeds and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23A 'Wetland'
Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Upland flushes, fens and swamps	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for upland flushes, fens and swamps and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23 A 'Wetland'
Bogs	Blanket bog	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for blanket bog and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23A 'Wetland'
Bogs	Lowland raised bog	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for lowland raised bog and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 23A 'Wetland'
Montane Habitats	Mountain heaths and willow scrub	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for Mountain heaths and willow scrub and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 7A 'Heathlands'
Dwarf Shrub Heath	Lowland heathland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for lowland heathland and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 7A 'Heathland'
Dwarf Shrub Heath	Upland heathland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for upland heathland and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 7A 'Heathland'
Inland rock	Calaminarian grasslands	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for calaminarian grasslands and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 6A 'Grassland Med High & V High'
Inland rock	Inland rock outcrop and scree habitats	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for inland rock outcrop and scree habitats and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 21A 'Sparsely vegetated land'
Inland rock	Limestone pavements	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for limestone pavements and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 15A 'Limestone pavement'
Inland rock	Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for open mosaic habitats on previously developed land

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Inland rock	Inland rock and scree	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' for 'other inland rock and scree' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 21A 'Sparsely vegetated land'
Standing open waters	Aquifer-fed naturally fluctuating water bodies	Yes	No	Aim for naturally functioning habitat as described in B6 and the Lake naturalness assessment – guidance document. Note that entirely pristine habitat is not required for this target, class 2 in the above assessments will be acceptable. For attributes such as water quality included in Water Environment Regulations this equates to good. Actions to reach Good Ecological Status will have a considerable role in restoring these habitats but additional actions may also be required.
Standing open waters	Eutrophic standing waters	Yes	No	Aim for naturally functioning habitat as described in B6 and the Lake naturalness assessment – guidance document. Note that entirely pristine habitat is not required for this target, class 2 in the above assessments will be acceptable. For attributes such as water quality included in Water Environment Regulations this equates to good. Actions to reach Good Ecological Status will have a considerable role in restoring these habitats but additional actions may also be required.
Standing open waters	Mesotrophic lakes	Yes	No	Aim for naturally functioning habitat as described in B6 and the Lake naturalness assessment – guidance document. Note that entirely pristine habitat is not required for this target, class 2 in the above assessments will be acceptable. For attributes such as water quality included in Water Environment Regulations this equates to good. Actions to reach Good Ecological Status will have a considerable role in restoring these habitats but additional actions may also be required.
Standing open waters	Oligotrophic and dystrophic lakes	Yes	No	Aim for naturally functioning habitat as described in B6 and the Lake naturalness assessment – guidance document. Note that entirely pristine habitat is not required for this target, class 2 in the above assessments will be acceptable. For attributes such as water quality included in Water Environment Regulations this equates to good. Actions to reach Good Ecological Status will have a considerable role in restoring these habitats but additional actions may also be required.
Standing open waters	Ponds	Yes	Yes	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for ponds and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 18A 'Pond'
Rivers and streams	Rivers	Yes	No	Aim for naturally functioning habitat as described in B6 and the River-naturalness-assessment-guidance-document. Note that entirely pristine habitat is not required for this target, class 2 in the above assessments will be acceptable. For attributes such as water quality included in Water Environment Regulations this equates to good. Actions to reach Good Ecological Status will have a considerable role in restoring these habitats but additional actions may also be required.
Rivers and streams	Rivers and Streams	No	Yes	Aim for naturally functioning habitat as described in B6 and the River-naturalness-assessment-guidance-document. Note that entirely pristine habitat is not required for this target, class 2 in the above assessments will be acceptable. For attributes such as water quality included in Water Environment Regulations this equates to good. Actions to reach Good Ecological Status will have a considerable role in restoring these habitats but additional actions may also be required.

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Lowland beech and yew woodland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for lowland beech and yew woodland and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 24A 'Woodland' All new woodlands should follow the FC woodland establishment guidance, delivery of the woodland habitats may best be achieved through natural woodland colonisation
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for lowland mixed deciduous woodland and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 24A 'Woodland' All new woodlands should follow the FC woodland establishment guidance, delivery of the woodland habitats may best be achieved through natural woodland colonisation
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Upland mixed ashwoods	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for upland mixed ashwoods and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 24A 'Woodland' All new woodlands should follow the FC woodland establishment guidance, delivery of the woodland habitats may best be achieved through natural woodland colonisation
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Upland oakwood	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for upland oakwood and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 24A 'Woodland' All new woodlands should follow the FC woodland establishment guidance, delivery of the woodland habitats may best be achieved through natural woodland colonisation
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Wet woodland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for wet woodland and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 24A 'Woodland' All new woodlands should follow the FC woodland establishment guidance, delivery of the woodland habitats may best be achieved through natural woodland colonisation
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Mixed woodland	No	Yes	Mixed woodland: mainly native broadleaved (with a minimum requirement of 70% native broadleaved species). Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 24 A 'Woodland', except for criteria E cover of native tree and shrub species which may be 70% All new woodlands should follow the FC woodland establishment guidance, delivery of the woodland habitats may best be achieved through natural woodland colonisation
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Wood-pasture and parkland	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for Wood-pasture and parkland. The long term aim, for creating or restoring, would be to meet BNG 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 25A 'Wood-pasture and parkland' but as an interim, for the creation of new habitat within the first 30years (or restoration of an historic site where the veteran trees are no longer present), we suggest an aim to meet 'moderate' condition for BNG 4.0 aiming to pass at least criteria C, D, E, G and H.
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Traditional orchards	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for Traditional orchards and 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 17A 'Orchard'
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Blackthorn scrub	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 20A 'Scrub'
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Bramble scrub	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 20A 'Scrub'

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Gorse scrub	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 20A 'Scrub'
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Hawthorn scrub	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 20A 'Scrub'
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Hazel scrub	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 20A 'Scrub'
Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland	Mixed scrub	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 20A 'Scrub'
Boundary and Linear Features	Hedgerows	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for Hedgerows with the aim of meeting favourable condition as outlined in Annex 9 of the Hedgerow survey handbook.
Boundary and Linear Features	Native Species-Rich Hedgerow with trees	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 8A 'Hedgerow'.
Boundary and Linear Features	Native Species-Rich Hedgerow - Associated with bank or ditch	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 8A 'Hedgerow'.
Boundary and Linear Features	Native Hedgerow with trees - Associated with bank or ditch	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 8A 'Hedgerow'.
Boundary and Linear Features	Native Hedgerow - Associated with bank or ditch	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 8A 'Hedgerow'.
Boundary and Linear Features	Native Hedgerow with trees	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 8A 'Hedgerow'.
Boundary and Linear Features	Native Species-Rich Hedgerow	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 8A 'Hedgerow'.
Boundary and Linear Features	Line of Trees (Ecologically Valuable)	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' as outlined the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 16A 'Line of Trees'.
Boundary and Linear Features	Line of Trees (Ecologically Valuable) - with Bank or Ditch	No	Yes	Aim to meet 'good condition' as outlined the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 16A 'Line of Trees'.
Littoral sediment	Coastal saltmarsh	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for coastal saltmarsh and biotopes therein

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Littoral sediment	Intertidal mudflats	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for intertidal mudflats and biotopes therein
Littoral sediment	Peat and clay exposures with Piddocks	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for peat and clay exposures and biotopes therein
Littoral sediment	Seagrass beds	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for seagrass beds and biotopes therein
Littoral sediment	Sheltered muddy gravels	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for sheltered muddy gravels and biotopes therein
Littoral sediment	Coastal Saltmarsh and saline reedbeds	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for coastal Saltmarsh and saline reedbeds and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Metric Tab 3A 'Coastal Saltmarsh'
Littoral sediment	Littoral muddy sand	No	Yes	Aim to meet agreed habitat definition in EUNIS -Factsheet for Littoral sand and muddy sand (europa.eu)
Littoral sediment	Littoral coarse sediment	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for littoral coarse sediment and 'good condition' as outlined in the BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 13A 'Intertidal sediment'
Littoral sediment	Littoral sand	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for littoral sand and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 13A 'Intertidal sediment'
Littoral sediment	Littoral mixed sediments	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for Littoral mixed sediment and biotopes therein and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 13A 'Intertidal sediment'
Littoral sediment	Features of littoral sediment	No	Yes	Aim to meet agreed habitat definition in EUNIS - Factsheet for Features of littoral sediment (europa.eu)
Littoral Rock	Intertidal boulder communities	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for intertidal boulder communities and biotopes therein
Littoral Rock	Intertidal chalk	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for intertidal chalk and biotopes therein
Littoral Rock	*Sabellaria alveolata* reefs	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for *Sabellaria alveolata* reefs and biotopes therein
Littoral Rock	High energy littoral rock	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for high energy littoral rock and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 19A 'Rocky Shore'
Littoral Rock	Moderate energy littoral rock	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for moderate energy littoral rock and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 19A 'Rocky Shore'
Littoral Rock	Low energy littoral rock	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for low energy littoral rock and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 19A 'Rocky Shore'

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Littoral Rock	Features of littoral rock	No	Yes	Aim to meet agreed habitat definition in EUNIS - Factsheet for Features of littoral rock (europa.eu)
Supralittoral rock	Maritime cliff and slopes	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for maritime cliff and slopes and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 1A 'Coastal'
Sublittoral rock	Estuarine rocky habitats	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for estuarine rocky habitats and biotopes therein
Sublittoral rock	Fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats and biotopes therein
Sublittoral rock	*Sabellaria spinulosa* reefs	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for *Sabellaria spinulosa* reefs and biotopes therein, definition of 'reefiness' in Defining and managing Sabellaria spinulosa reefs esp. Table 2 & 4
Sublittoral rock	Subtidal chalk	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for subtidal chalk and biotopes therein
Sublittoral rock	Tide-swept channels	Yes	No	Aim to meet priority habitat definition for tide-swept channels and biotopes therein
Sublittoral rock	Infralittoral rock	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for infralittoral rock
Sublittoral rock	Circalittoral rock	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for circalittoral rock
Sublittoral rock	Subtidal stony reef	No	Yes	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for subtidal stony reef
Supralittoral Sediment	Coastal sand dunes	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for coastal sand dunes and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 1A 'Coastal'
Supralittoral Sediment	Coastal vegetated shingle	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for coastal vegetated shingle and 'good condition' as outlined in BNG Condition Assessments sheets Tab 1A 'Coastal'
Sublittoral Sediment	Saline lagoons	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for saline lagoons and biotopes therein
Sublittoral Sediment	Blue mussel beds on sediment	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for blue mussel beds and biotopes therein
Sublittoral Sediment	Horse mussel beds	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for horse mussel beds and biotopes therein

Broad habitat type	Wildlife-rich habitat name	S41	S1	Desired Outcome
Sublittoral Sediment	Maërl beds	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for maërl beds and biotopes therein
Sublittoral Sediment	Mud habitats in deep water	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for mud habitats in deep water and biotypes therein
Sublittoral Sediment	Subtidal sands and gravels	Yes	No	Aim to meet the priority habitat definition for subtidal sands and gravels and biotypes therein
Sublittoral Sediment	Native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) beds[2]	No	Yes	Aim to meet the habitat definition for native oyster (Ostrea edulis) beds
Sublittoral Sediment	Subtidal coarse sediment	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for subtidal coarse sediment
Sublittoral Sediment	Subtidal mixed sediments	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for subtidal mixed sediments
Sublittoral Sediment	Subtidal mud	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for subtidal mud
Sublittoral Sediment	Subtidal sand	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for subtidal sand
Sublittoral Sediment	Subtidal seagrass beds	No	Yes	Aim to meet MHC definition for subtidal seagrass beds

References

[1] The Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/91/contents/made?view=plain

About Natural England

Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

Further Information

This report can be downloaded from the Natural England Access to Evidence Catalogue. For information on Natural England publications or if you require an alternative format, please contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0300 060 3900 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk.

Citation

Natural England. 2026. Environment Act Habitat Target – Definitions and Descriptions. TIN219. Natural England.

Copyright

This publication is published by Natural England under the Open Government Licence v3.0 for public sector information. You are encouraged to use, and reuse, information subject to certain conditions.

Natural England images and photographs are only available for non-commercial purposes. If any other photographs, images, or information such as maps, or data cannot be used commercially this will be made clear within the report.

For information regarding the use of maps or data see our guidance on how to access Natural England's maps and data.

© Natural England 2026

Catalogue code: TIN219