

# Summary of Changes

## The Biodiversity Metric Version 3.1 to 4.0

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DEFRA Group



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## Contents

1. Changes .....	5
1.1. Summary.....	5
1.2. Guidance documents .....	5
1.3. Updated habitat classifications.....	5
1.4. Condition assessment changes .....	6
1.5. Metric calculation tool changes .....	7
1.6. QGIS.....	9
1.7. Small Sites Metric .....	9

# 1. Changes

## 1.1. Summary

- 1.1.1. The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 is a substantial update to previous versions of the metric. However, the majority of changes are focused on providing an enhanced user experience and are unlikely to have significant impact on the range of outputs generated.
- 1.1.2. Given the scale and breadth of minor changes it is recommended that assessors refamiliarise themselves with the workings and assessment methodology of the metric.
- 1.1.3. Key changes are outline in the sections below.

## 1.2. Guidance documents

- 1.2.1. The guidance documents have been streamlined to:
- place greater emphasis on ecological expertise
  - provide clarity on several issues raised by metric users
  - reduce repetition between documents
- 1.2.2. Metric guidance documents have been updated to ensure that the guidance covers use of the metric only. Where practical, references to other policy and mechanisms have been removed.

## 1.3. Updated habitat classifications

- 1.3.1. A number of new habitat classifications are included within The Biodiversity Metric 4.0. These are outlined in the table below.

**Table 1-1 Habitat changes**

Area habitat name in metric 3.1	Area habitat name in metric 4.0
<b>New habitats</b>	
N/A	Willow scrub
N/A	Tall forbs
N/A	Rural trees

Area habitat name in metric 3.1	Area habitat name in metric 4.0
N/A	Watercourse footprint
<b>Habitats split into two</b>	
Vacant/derelict land/ bareground	Vacant or derelict land
Vacant/derelict land/ bareground	Bare ground
<b>Name changes</b>	
Cereal crops winter stubble	Winter stubble
Floodplain Wetland Mosaic (CFGM)	Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM
Sea buckthorn scrub (Annex 1)	Dunes with sea buckthorn (H2160)
Sea buckthorn scrub (other)	Other sea buckthorn scrub
Sustainable urban drainage feature	Sustainable drainage system
Tall herb communities	Tall herb communities (H6430)
Temporary lakes, ponds and pools	Temporary lakes ponds and pools (H3170)

1.3.2. With the exception of ‘watercourse footprint’ and ‘rural trees’ the definitions for these habitat types can be found within source material, as set out in The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 – Technical Annex 1. Notes on the use of ‘Watercourse footprint’ and ‘Rural trees’ can be found in The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 – User guide.

1.3.3. There are other minor formatting and spelling changes to habitat names.

## 1.4. Condition assessment changes

1.4.1. Natural England have conducted a review of metric condition assessment sheets, resulting in notable changes to the following condition sheets.

- Grassland – low distinctiveness
- Grassland – medium and higher distinctiveness
- Heathland
- Hedgerows
- Limestone pavement
- Line of trees
- Traditional orchards
- Ponds
- Urban

- Woodland
  - Wood-pasture and parkland
- 1.4.2. The 'Urban trees' condition sheet has been changed to 'Individual trees' and now includes urban and rural trees.
- 1.4.3. In addition, there are a large number of minor formatting and usability edits to condition sheets, including; updating habitat names, correcting grammar and using more accessible terms. Where required, additional footnotes have been added to provide assessors with greater clarity.
- 1.4.4. All definitions for ancient and veteran trees have been removed, ensuring that contemporary methodologies in identifying these habitats takes precedent.

## **1.5. Metric calculation tool changes**

### **Summary tables**

- 1.5.1. A summary table, summarising total net change and trading rules, has been added to each habitat data entry sheet.

### **Spatial risk multiplier (SRM)**

- 1.5.2. The formula for the application of the spatial risk multiplier has been amended so that it now applies to any overall off-site net gains in area habitat, hedgerow or watercourse units. Previously, the SRM was applied only to all off-site creation and enhancement, making it difficult to achieve off-site gains in many scenarios.

### **Additional error and warning flags**

- 1.5.3. Additional error and warning flags have been added throughout the tool to help highlight potential errors the user may have made or display warnings when data may not have been entered correctly.

### **Translation tool**

- 1.5.4. The phase 1 to metric habitat translation tool has been updated.

## **Start page**

- 1.5.5. The option for the user to set their own net gain target (defaulted to 10%) has been added to the start page.
- 1.5.6. Information on the total site area and total area of irreplaceable habitats has been added to the start page.
- 1.5.7. The cell style conventions key has been expanded to include additional cell styles and error flags.
- 1.5.8. The user must now specify if there are irreplaceable habitats present on site or not. If irreplaceable habitats are present, this will cause a new irreplaceable habitats tab to open where the user must enter details of irreplaceable habitats on site at baseline.
- 1.5.9. A new off-site site summary tab has been created that summarises the unit gains achieved by individual off-site sites.

## **Results**

- 1.5.10. The results page has been amended to improve usability and accessibility. Additional error flags have been implemented to show users and reviewers where errors may have occurred. A new 'unit deficit' section allows users to quickly see the remaining units that are required to meet their targets.
- 1.5.11. The charts within the details results page have been amended and simplified to improve usability and accessibility

## **Area habitats**

- 1.5.12. A tool that allows the user to convert metres squared to hectares and vice-versa has been added to the bottom of the area habitat sheets.

## **Hedgerows**

- 1.5.13. A new trading summary tab has been created along with updated trading rules for the hedgerow module.

## **Watercourses**

- 1.5.14. The rivers module has been renamed to the watercourse module
- 1.5.15. A new watercourse trading summary has been created alongside updated trading rules for watercourses



- 1.5.16. The user will now only be able to select the option 'N/A - Culverts' for riparian and watercourse encroachment
- 1.5.17. The categories for watercourse and riparian encroachment have been amended
- 1.5.18. Bespoke compensation is now required for any loss of Very high distinctiveness watercourse habitats.

## 1.6. QGIS

### QGIS Template

- 1.6.1. Updated the QGIS template to match the changed habitat names, and reworded options for Strategic Significance, Spatial Risk Multiplier.
- 1.6.2. Added the new habitat types according to the metric changes, and aligned symbology with habitats in the same broad habitat.

### QGIS template and GIS import tool guidance:

- 1.6.3. Updated this guidance to reflect that this GIS import tool now works for the Small Sites Metric.
- 1.6.4. Refined wording of this guidance to be more streamlined, directional and accessible.
- 1.6.5. Updated screenshots in the guidance to match the latest version of the QGIS template, as it has different habitat module names.
- 1.6.6. Fixed broken symbology around distinctiveness and added new symbology layers which include renamed and new habitats.

### QGIS data standard

- 1.6.7. Updated the data standard to match the updated habitat names and options.

## 1.7. Small Sites Metric

The small sites metric has undergone small scale changes to improve usability, accessibility and to align it with the main Biodiversity Metric 4.0. For simplicity, the detailed and headline results pages have been combined.





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