



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

# PLANNING NEWSLETTER

By Email Only

## Message from Chief Planner

**28 November 2022**

This newsletter provides updates on the latest announcements from DLUHC and other government departments and agencies relating to planning practice and policy.

In this issues we provide an update on nutrient neutrality and the amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill; the latest opportunities for local planning authorities to get involved in our digital planning programme; and calls for entries to the Housing Design Awards.

There are also a number of announcements from Defra and its agencies, including new PAS guidance on biodiversity net gain, the opening of applications for the Slurry Infrastructure grant, and a chance to attend a webinar on the update to the Planning Practice Guidance on Flood Risk & Coastal Change.

Kind regards

**Joanna Averley**  
Chief Planner



## Nutrient Neutrality Update

An amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will significantly reduce nutrient pollution, placing a new statutory duty on water companies in England to upgrade wastewater treatment works to the highest technically achievable levels for nutrient removal in designated catchments by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2030. These upgrades will then be considered as certain for Habitats Regulations Assessments, meaning lower levels of mitigation will be required from development, reducing costs and enabling sustainable development.

Natural England have provided updates on the Nutrient Mitigation Scheme, which is jointly funded by Defra and DLUHC with up to £30 million over the next three years to pump prime mitigation projects. Costs will then be recouped through the sale of resultant nutrient credits to developers to meet the requirements for nutrient neutrality under the Habitats Regulations.

- Natural England has been working with partners in impacted catchments to identify and develop additional mitigation projects.
- The first projects are currently being negotiated in the Tees Catchment with two partners, and Natural England will be inviting applications from developers for credits in this catchment by March 2023. Details of how the scheme will work in practice will be available ahead of the launch.
- Investment in feasibility studies in five further catchments is underway to identify additional mitigation sites.

More information on the scheme is available on the [Natural England blog](#).

For more updates on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, you may want to visit the [Parliamentary website](#). Government amendments to the Bill were announced last week that aim to ensure more homes are built, vital infrastructure is delivered where needed and the environment is protected.

## Housing Design Awards

The Housing Design Awards, created in 1948 alongside the Act establishing the NHS, open for entry on **1<sup>st</sup> December** for their 74th year.

Awards are given each year for schemes with planning approval but not occupied (Project) and those which are occupied and at least 25% built out (Completed). With council housing now providing about 10,000 additional homes a year, a new award will single out the best of local authority procurement. There are also awards on behalf of DLUHC – for Private Rental Sector, Mixed Methods of Construction and the Good Neighbour Award which recognises a scheme that best complements its surroundings.



Entry is online using a simple standardised template. LPAs are encouraged to invite scheme promoters to put forward any developments that can act as local benchmarks for good quality design. Project Award entries must have received full planning approval between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and the entry deadline date of Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

As part of the awards assessment a panel of 20 judges from key industry stakeholders visit around 50 schemes shortlisted from about 150 entries each year. Films are made of successful schemes in order to share lessons learnt and include interviews with planning officers and members of the Local Authority housing team. Films of more than 100 recent winners and the project information on more than a thousand recent schemes can be seen online at [www.hdawards.org](http://www.hdawards.org). This is a great public resource and readily available.

## **DLUHC Planning Software Improvement Fund: Open for applications**

DLUHC's Digital Planning Team has launched the [Planning Software Improvement Fund](#). This £5 million fund aims to help Local Planning Authorities in England to improve the digital services they use for development management. The fund is now open for applications with £5 million available overall. The closing date for applications is **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022**. Local Planning Authorities are invited to apply for funding via one of three Tracks:

**Track 1: Adopt and design new services with councils** - Join the Open Digital Planning project to adopt and work with other local planning authorities to design the PlanX and BOPS services for submitting and processing planning applications. The project now has a [dedicated website](#) where councils interested in joining can find out more about the work done to date and the expected commitments of new partners.

**Track 2: Adopt new services and integrate with existing software** - Adopt one of the [Open Digital Planning](#) software products [PlanX or BOPS], and work with an existing service provider on targeted service improvements and technical integrations.

**Track 3: Improve existing software products and integrations with service providers** - Work with existing service providers on targeted service improvements and technical integrations in line with DLUHC's ambition for digital planning.

More information and the application forms can be found on the [DLUHC Digital Planning Team's website](#).

## **Natural England testing of a BNG Habitat Management and Monitoring template**



Natural England is seeking feedback from local planning authorities on a draft Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan Template to help standardise biodiversity net gain plan submissions. As part of the upcoming mandatory BNG approach, it is expected that a proportionate plan describing how habitat enhancements will be achieved, managed and monitored will need to be submitted. The draft Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan Template is a tool to help support the Biodiversity Gain Plan submissions, aiming to improve consistency and efficiency for applicants and decisions-makers.

If you are interested in testing the template, or would like further information, please contact [biodiversity.netgain@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:biodiversity.netgain@naturalengland.org.uk). Responses are sought by **6<sup>th</sup> February 2023**.

## **PAS guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain and Nature Recovery**

Working with Defra, the [Planning Advisory Service](#) recently held a number of webinars and events on Biodiversity Net Gain and Nature Recovery for planners. The events included updates for officers and members, with more specific sessions on the implications of BNG for policy and strategy and BNG in development management. Recordings and slides from these events are now available on the [PAS website](#). The next PAS event is on **8th December** and will explore the opportunities, challenges and the journey ahead on delivering nature recovery.

## **Slurry Infrastructure grant and habitats regulations assessment (information for local planning authorities)**

The first round of the [Slurry Infrastructure grant](#) opens for applications on **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December**. The new grant scheme will help livestock farmers upgrade their storage to reach 6 months storage capacity and to cover stores with impermeable covers. The grant has been introduced as part of Defra's actions to reduce nutrient pollution. Investing in good slurry management is an important step that farmers can take to protect the environment, helping them to prevent water and air pollution and make the best of their organic nutrients. Defra will prioritise projects in Round 1 that reduce pollution to protected sites, in line with the Government's commitments to meet water, air and biodiversity targets.

Defra have published [information for local planning authorities](#) to consider when assessing planning applications for stores to be funded through the grant. This explains the features of the Slurry Infrastructure grant that will help farmers to reduce nutrient pollution.

## **Planning practice guidance on flood risk and coastal change training**

The Environment Agency and Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) are running a free training webinar on the recent comprehensive update to the



Planning Practice Guidance on Flood Risk & Coastal Change. The event is on **13<sup>th</sup> December**; find further details and register for the event [here](#). The TCPA are also conducting a survey of local planning authorities to help scope and prioritise future training events. Please complete the survey here: [Planning for climate change and flood risk – training and skills survey for local planning authorities](#).

## **Short films on Natural Flood Management for planners**

In last year's update to the National Planning Policy Framework, we strengthened wording to further encourage the use of natural flood management techniques. The Cumbria Wildlife Trust has made four brilliant animated short-films, introducing some of the principles of natural flood management - [Combating the effects of climate change | Cumbria Wildlife Trust](#). CIRIA have also published [The Natural Flood Management Manual](#) aimed at all those involved in the planning, evaluation and delivery of Natural Flood Management.