



**BRE National  
Solar Centre  
Biodiversity  
Guidance**

**DLP BRIEFING NOTE 159**

Prepared by  
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## **Introduction**

The BRE National Solar Centre has recently issued a document which gives guidance to the solar industry on how to best support biodiversity on large scale ground mounted solar farms. The guidance has been developed with, and endorsed by, a number of leading UK conservation organisations.

The document aims to provide 'high level' guidance on solar farms and biodiversity through supporting the development of a plan for adding value to solar farm projects by demonstrating the possible measures that can be used for enhancing biodiversity.

## **What does the guidance say?**

The document sets out the best practice for solar farm development seeking to optimise biodiversity enhancement. Subject to constraints, such as legal/lease conditions and other material planning considerations the document recognises that there are opportunities for biodiversity enhancement to maximise benefits for wildlife wherever possible. Further to the '10 Commitments' outlined within the recent Solar PV UK Strategy (Part 2), the document highlights the core areas to secure biodiversity enhancement.

## **Core Considerations**

A Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) is often required to support a planning application for Solar PV farms. The BMP should outline mitigation measures and wider biodiversity objectives where required, including post development monitoring and the eventual decommissioning of the site. The following are considered to represent core considerations in delivering habitat enhancement options for large scale Solar PV development:

**Site considerations:** Biodiversity can be enhanced when located within intensive agricultural landscapes avoiding ecologically sensitive areas by planning for a reversion of use at the end of the life of the development allowing agricultural land to rest.


**Site construction best practice:** Construction should take account of key mitigation identified within the Phase 1 Habitat survey and follow 'good tidy site' best practices, especially with activities which are likely to have a major impact or require the removal of a habitat on site during the statutory seasons.

**Habitat enhancement options:** There is value to be gained through the creation of different habitats e.g. varied treatment of boundary features such as; retention/enhancement of hedgerows and field margins whereas the use of woodland habitat, fostering grassland/wildflower mixes, ponds/water courses and the use of artificial structures can provide varied high value biodiversity habitat.

**Managing the site for biodiversity:** Appropriate management of the enhancement of different habitats is vital. For example; the correct grazing species are identified as well as timing of cultivation, weeding, grass cutting etc. all within the correct times of the year.

**Monitoring Biodiversity:** Key indicators and baselines for monitoring biodiversity levels are recommended to ensure the effective management and maintenance of all habitat enhancement measures.

Notwithstanding the above there are various options to enhance biodiversity on solar farms with each site being as unique in terms of its environment, location, existing biodiversity and land use to the next. Therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution to enhancing biodiversity on sites being planned for large scale ground mounted solar PV development.



DLP Planning Consultants has considerable knowledge of the national planning system and the renewable energy sector with extensive experience in large scale ground mounted solar farms. Senior staff within the practice would be very happy to explain the BRE National Solar Centre Biodiversity Guidance and its particular implication for you. If you wish to utilise DLP's considerable planning expertise to represent you for future solar PV development, please don't hesitate to contact Senior Staff members to discuss your requirements.

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