Landscape Institute Technical Information Note

BRE Strategic Ecological Framework

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Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 The Strategic Ecological Framework (SEF) is a new approach to the way BRE assesses ecology related criteria within all its UK BREEAM and Home Quality Mark (HQM) schemes. It has been developed through a year-long process of collaboration with industry professionals, clients, assessors, CIEEM and the Landscape Institute and designed to respond to industry feedback and bring BRE's methodology in-line with current ecological best practice.

1.2 The SEF sits above all BRE's UK schemes, acting as a common reference for the development of ecology and related criteria. They provide a strategic set of principles, methodology and a common foundation that can be applied to the assessment of any scale of development, from a single office to housing infill, road infrastructure or new towns. They will be developed by BRE scheme managers into bespoke ecological assessment criteria for each BREEAM and HQM scheme. This will ensure a consistent and robust approach across BREEAM/ HQM, whilst providing scope for scheme specific requirements to be appropriate and proportional to the type and scale of development being assessed.

1.3 This Technical Information Note has been produced to help Landscape Institute members learn more about the Framework.

2. Aims of BRE's Strategic Ecological Framework

2.1 The SEF aims to:

- Support BREEAM's wider aim to reduce the impact of the built environment;
- Reward best practice above statutory minimums;
- Reflect current and future best practice in Ecology;
- Drive improved value for biodiversity and positive ecological outcomes;
- Promote and maximise opportunities to align or integrate with wider sustainability related activities such as landscape, wellbeing and climate change resilience;
- Encourage design team collaboration to maximize and realize the ecological and wider sustainability related potential of the asset, project and development; and
- Balance the cost and ease of carrying out ecological enhancements with the scale and type of development

3. How the SEF is different from previous approaches

3.1 The SEF is different from previous approaches in that it more clearly articulates that

ecology issues cannot be addressed in isolation.

3.2 Under the SEF, positive ecological outcomes are achieved by integrating proposals within a site's context, ensuring that they consider future use, lifecycle considerations and intended maintenance regimes and rewarding wildlife friendly measures (opposed to numbers-based native habitat creation).

3.3 The SEF values the input of professionals and will promote collaboration between design team members and measure success based on achievement of agreed design team recommendations, rather than species calculators. The SEF recognises that the best solution for Ecology should also be balanced with other sustainability benefits such as landscape, health and wellbeing and climate change resilience and that proposals should promote a proportionate "do something" approach, especially for very small schemes.

3.4 The SEF recognises that handover, monitoring and review of ecological performance against targets set are vital to meeting ecological objectives and realising anticipated project outcomes.

4. SEF Principles

4.1 The SEF requires that future BREEAM and HQM schemes are developed based on the following key principles:

- Understand the existing ecological value and condition of a site and its associated areas, in order to identify appropriate objectives;
- Identify, protect and enhance key existing ecological features;
- Remove or limit as far as possible, existing features identified as having negative impacts on the ecological value of the site;
- Mitigate unavoidable impacts and compensate against residual impacts;
- Enhance the broader ecological value of the site and its links to associated areas through the creation and/or management of ecological features on or near the site; and
- Secure ongoing management and maintenance to ensure intended outcomes are realised over the life of the site.

5. SEF Methodology

5.1 The SEF requires all projects to carry out six ecological tasks. Tasks have been designed to ensure that ecological proposals are robust, meaningful, deliver strategic outcomes and coordinate with other BREEAM sustainability criteria. While tasks have the potential to fit in

with CIC, RIBA and Landscape Institute work stages, it assumed that they are iterative and may be returned to at various stages of the project where new options or further detail is required.

5.2 **Task 1: Assessment and evaluation of ecological value & condition**

1a) Collate and assess information about the site and associated areas to identify the existing ecological value and condition. Including the existing:

- Zone of influence, flora, fauna and habitat
- Habitat connectivity and fragmentation;
- Neighbouring land/habitat;
- Recent and historic site condition;
- Management and maintenance;
- Ecological initiatives, biodiversity action plans, statutory protection; and
- Relevant stakeholders impacted/ affected by the site.

1b) Conduct an evaluation to establish the:

- Value of the site and associated area in terms of ecology, biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Direct and indirect risks to ecological value;
- Qualitative ecological thresholds; and
- Impact of the proposed design, works and operation.

5.3 **Task 2: Identify and select the optimal strategic outcome for the site**

2a) Consider a range of realistic ecology focused and sustainability strategic outcomes for the site and associated areas, including the following during the project's pre, during, post completion and maintenance/ operation phases:

- Ecological value and benefit offered;
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services benefits offered;
- Local microclimatic conditions;
- Habitat connectivity and fragmentation;
- Opportunities to enhance the value of existing habitats and ecosystems;
- Opportunities to align and integrate with existing ecological features and initiatives in the associated area; and
- Alignment with the aims of the SEF.

2b) Consider a range of realistic ecology focused and sustainability strategic outcomes for the site and associated areas, including the following during the project's pre, during, post completion and maintenance/ operation phases:

- Landscape design, heritage, local character and green infrastructure;
- Health and Wellbeing including recreational space, water and air quality, control of noise and light pollution;
- Resilience including climate change mitigation, climate sensitive urban design, management of flood risk and surface water runoff;
- Habitat connectivity and fragmentation;
- Opportunities to enhance the value of existing habitats and ecosystems;
- Opportunities to align and integrate with existing ecological features, action plans, designated sites and initiatives in the associated area; and
- Alignment with the aims of the SEF.

2c) Select the desired strategic outcome for the site.

5.4 Task 3: Identify and select the optimal strategic outcome for the site

3a) Identify the options for delivering the desired strategic outcome selected for the site and, where viable, the associated areas. Consider:

- Alignment with the aims of the BREEAM UK SEF;
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services benefits accounting for local priorities, long term viability of the outcome/option and alignment with the sites function, amenity and value; and
- Practicality, including consideration of timing, costs, procurement structures, availability of resources and long term management and maintenance implications;

3b) Revisit task 2, to refine the selected strategic outcome in line with task 3;

3c) Liaise with relevant stakeholders to support optimal option identification and selection.

3d) Select the finalised outcome and options for the site.

5.5 Task 4: Develop the Action Plan

4a) Liaise with stakeholders to develop an Action Plan for the delivery of the strategic outcome and associated options identified in tasks 2 and 3. This should cover both the

ecology and wider sustainability benefits in a focused, practical, feasible and cost efficient way, including:

- Responsibilities, relationships and management required to implement the Action Plan including clear strategic ownership of each task of the Action Plan to fully support implementation;
- Timescales for implementing the Action Plan, taking into consideration ecological seasonality, planned activities/ processes, statutory timescales and project phasing;
- Collaboration opportunities between relevant stakeholders;
- Reducing and managing potential knock-on impacts;
- Contractual and other handover points; and
- Long term management/maintenance requirements and outline costs.

4b) Formal adoption of final Action Plan by the client and all key stakeholders.

5.6 **Task 5: Implement the Action Plan**

5a) Implement the Action Plan incorporating:

- Allocation of roles and responsibilities to deliver the plan;
- Allocation of adequate resources (including financial, time, technical and skills);
- Procedures to promote effective implementation, and monitoring and feedback for continual improvement;
- Alignment with related activities and processes; and
- Measures for effective handover and collaborative activities where responsibility is transferred or shared, including transition to long term management and maintenance arrangements.

6. Anticipated scheme timescales

6.1 The SEF will feed into the ecological issues sections of the Home Quality Mark (HQM), BREEAM UK New Construction, BREEAM UK Infrastructure, BREEAM UK Communities, BREEAM UK Refurbishment and BREEAM In Use as they are updated.

6.2 The current programme for updates is as follows:

- Home Quality Mark (HQM) - 2016
- BREEAM UK New Construction - 2017
- BREEAM Infrastructure - 2017
- BREEAM UK Communities - 2017
- BREEAM UK Refurbishment – 2017
- BREEAM In-Use – 2017

7. References

Briefing Paper BREEAM Strategic Ecology Framework

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