

UoR Central Square Cycle Storage

Habitat Management Statement

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Ecological Planning & Research Ltd (EPR) was commissioned by the University of Reading to provide a Biodiversity Gains Plan (BGP) for a proposed cycle storage unit at Central Square of the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus, as well as a supporting statement to outline the management regime for the proposed habitats, in order to meet informative 2 of the decision notice, which states:

“2. As of 2nd April 2024, a 10% Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor developments is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, this planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met (the biodiversity gain condition).

The biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition: once planning permission has been granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development.”

- 1.2 This statement should be read in conjunction with the Biodiversity Gains Plan (DEFRA 2025a) and Biodiversity Net Gain Report (EPR 2025).

Description of Site

- 1.3 The Site consists of 0.01ha of hardstanding and Portuguese Laurel *Prunus lusitanica* planting immediately north of the Edith Morley building and west of Minghella Studios of the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus. A mature tree stands immediately north-west of the site boundary. The Root Protection Zone (RPZ) of this tree may encroach into the Site.
- 1.4 The Portuguese Laurel, which also extended north of the Site boundary, was removed in May 2025 but has been included in the BNG report to ensure legal compliance with Schedule 14 of the Environment Act (HMSO, 2021), which sets out the biodiversity gain condition for development, includes measures that allow planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since 30th January 2020 – the date the Environment Bill entered Parliament. Such measures include using aerial imagery and other datasets to determine onsite habitat features and their condition on 30th January 2020. When habitat degradation is present, planning authorities will consider the earlier habitat state as baseline for assessing on-site biodiversity value. Therefore, all existing habitat features noted during the baseline assessment must be included in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric to reflect the site's original ecological condition.
- 1.5 A 0.0025ha area of Laurel Planting immediately north of the Site will be used for the creation of Other Neutral Grassland in Moderate condition to satisfy the BNG requirement.

2. HABITAT CREATION

- 2.1 The proposed area of grassland will be prepared by manually removing weeds using repeated cultivation, followed by digging in of surface vegetation. Ground will then be harrowed or raked to produce a medium tilth before rolling or treading to create a firm surface.
- 2.2 Prepared ground will be seeded using Emorsgate EM3 – “Special General-Purpose Meadow Mixture”, or similar approved, with seeding carried out in line with supplier instructions.
- 2.3 The grassland will follow a management regime (**Sections 3 and 4**) whereby swards of varied heights are allowed to develop, providing shelter for wildlife such as reptiles and amphibians during their terrestrial life phase.
- 2.4 The herb-rich grassland mix will provide wildlife friendly foraging habitat for invertebrates and in turn, birds and bats, contributing to overall biodiversity within the site.

3. MANAGEMENT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Ecological Management Aims

- 3.1 The principal aims for this Management Statement are to:
 - Provide a system of long-term management with appropriate monitoring of new habitats to achieve the suitable target conditions outlined in the Biodiversity Net Gain Report (EPR 2025) and Biodiversity Gains Plan (DEFRA 2025a); and
 - Ensure created habitat enhances the biodiversity on site by providing a range of ecological niches and diversifying food sources for a variety of protected, priority and other species.

Responsibilities for Delivering Ecological Management Objectives

- 3.2 The University of Reading will be responsible for overseeing the implementation during construction and may appoint appropriate parties to help.
- 3.3 The University of Reading, or their appointed Managing Agent, will manage and maintain the areas and will be responsible for ongoing management, monitoring and review.
- 3.4 Should the site be sold, or the site owners no longer wish to continue with the management, the site will be passed onto an appropriate management company who will continue to manage and maintain areas covered by this document in accordance with the obligations as above, and will be responsible for the ongoing management, monitoring and review.

4. PRESCRIPTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE ACTIONS

- 4.1 The following section provides details of habitat management and maintenance works required over the first thirty years from project completion. The area of Other Neutral Grassland will be managed to promote diversity and provide habitat opportunities for birds, reptiles, invertebrates and other wildlife, as well as to provide a visually attractive feature to the public
- 4.2 In the first year after sowing, the grassland is to be cut regularly, approximately every two months throughout the growing season, to a height of c. 70 – 100 mm.

- 4.3 In the first 6 months – 1 year of establishment, grassland may need to be fenced off from public use, as heavy disturbance is likely to cause wear and tear and affect establishment, however it is anticipated that the public will largely keep to the footpaths adjacent to these grasslands.
- 4.4 From year two, the grassland is to be cut once a year between July and early August, after flowers have set seed. Arisings are to be collected within seven days of cutting to prevent the build-up of nutrients in the soil and will be removed from site.
- 4.5 From year two, the grassland is to be cut annually between October and February. No more than half the area of neutral grassland is to be cut in any one year, to ensure that sufficient habitat remains for invertebrates and to achieve a varied sward height, as well as allowing fauna present within the grassland to escape into the unmown habitat. Grassland will be cut to no lower than c. 150 mm, using machinery that does not have a roller component, to further avoid harm to fauna that may be present at ground level.
- 4.6 Any encroaching and undesirable scrub or plant growth reaching or exceeding 20% cover, such as Dock *Rumex sp.*, Nettles *Urtica dioica* and Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, shall be removed by hand picking/weeding and hand excavation/pulling. Herbicides will not be used as this would negatively impact the grassland to be retained.
- 4.7 If herbicide use or cutting regimes contrary to that outlined above cannot be avoided, the grassland is unlikely to achieve its target condition and so additional compensation, either on or offsite, must be demonstrated.
- 4.8 Where swards fail to establish or die out, or where the diversity of the species is poor, areas will be re-sown. It is expected that after establishment, species diversity will naturally increase with time.
- 4.9 Litter shall be hand-picked from all grassland areas prior to cutting and shall be removed from site and legally disposed of.

5. TIMINGS

- 5.1 **Table 5.1** below shows the timing of works associated with the above-described habitat creation, enhancement and management prescriptions. Year 1 is to be interpreted as the year of habitat creation / enhancement (seeding, planting, pruning etc.).

Table 5.1: Summary and Timings

Feature	Years	Timing	Notes
Grassland creation - seeding	Year 1	Spring or autumn	
Supplementary seeding	Year 2 onward	Spring or autumn	Where swards fail to establish or die out, or where the diversity is poor, areas will be re-sown
Grassland management – wildflower meadow	Year 1	Bi-monthly during the growing period	Arisings are to be collected within seven days of cutting and removed from site.
	Year 2 onward	Mown annually between July and early August	

Feature	Years	Timing	Notes
Grassland management – Modified grassland	Year 1	Spring or autumn	Seeding, rolling, mowing and fencing
	Year 2	March - October	Mowing as required to maintain short sward
Litter picking	Year 1 onward	As required	By hand / using hand tools.
Scrub control	Year 2 onward	To be undertaken in winter months, outside the nesting bird period (March – August inclusive)	Encroaching / undesirable scrub or plant growth removed through hand picking / weeding and hand excavation / pulling.

6. MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 The management plan will be informed by monitoring of the created habitat. Success of the management regime will be assessed against the criteria set out in the BNG Statutory Metric Condition Assessment sheet for Medium, High and Very High distinctiveness Grasslands (DEFRA 2025).
- 6.2 For the first five years, monitoring visits and management plan review will take place annually, so as to evaluate the condition of the created habitat, to identify and address any problems which may arise and identify any modifications which may be needed to the management regime. After the initial five years, monitoring and review will take place at five years intervals for 25 years, in order to ensure the management plan remains appropriate.
- 6.3 Monitoring visits will be undertaken by a suitably experienced Ecologist. The results of these visits will be submitted to the University of Reading in monitoring reports to inform the review of the management plan.

Roles and Responsibilities

- 6.4 The University of Reading will be responsible for overseeing the implementation and may appoint appropriate parties to help.
- 6.5 The University of Reading will also be responsible for appointing a suitably qualified Ecologist to carry out the required monitoring.

7. REFERENCES

Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (2025) *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology*. July 2025.

DEFRA (2025a) *Biodiversity Gains Plan: Planning application reference number 251526*. August 2025.

EPR (2025) *UoR Cycle Storage – Central Square: Biodiversity Net Gain Report* 18th August 2025.

HMSO (2021). *The Environment Act: Schedule 14 - Biodiversity gain as condition of planning permission*. HMSO, London.

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