



South East England
Biodiversity Forum

National Indicator 197

What is National Indicator 197?

It measures the performance of Local Authorities at protecting and improving their local biodiversity. It is a calculation of the **“proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented”**.

Biodiversity forms a part of many other National Indicators but NI 197 is the only indicator which directly measures the results of Local Authority actions on wildlife. NI 197 acts as a proxy for the state of local biodiversity as it is specific and measurable.

County Councils and Unitary Authorities must report on NI 197 regardless of whether they have chosen it as a performance improvement target in their Local Area Agreements.

What are Local Sites?

Local Sites are identified and selected for their significant nature conservation value (local wildlife sites) or their significant geological value (local geological sites). Sites are designated by the Local Sites Partnership in accordance with criteria published by DEFRA in 2006. All Local Sites that meet the criteria are designated. This differs from the process of identifying Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which are a representative sample of nationally important sites for flora and fauna.

Local Sites do not have legal protection in their own right, although many are protected from damaging activities through the planning system. They are important for their:

- **Biodiversity value:** They can be of equal quality to nationally designated SSSIs and provide widely distributed refuges for most of the UK's wildlife
- **Value as Green Infrastructure:** They serve as stepping stones, linkages or buffers that complement other green spaces including internationally and nationally designated wildlife sites
- **Community value:** They can contribute to quality of life, health and wellbeing by providing cherished local green spaces. They can provide opportunities for community involvement in management, education and research.



What can Local Authorities do to improve their NI 197 performance?

Good performance is defined as a year on year increase in the indicator against a baseline. Local Authorities can improve their performance by:

- Establishing a proactive programme through the Local Sites Partnership, or organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, for providing management advice on Local Sites and monitoring implementation of this advice
- Ensuring effective management is taking place on Local Sites controlled by Local Authorities by establishing management plans and confirming delivery of identified actions
- Supporting the Local Sites Partnership in its role in identifying Local Sites and administering the Local Sites system
- Choosing NI 197 as a performance improvement target in Local Area Agreements
- Ensuring Local Sites are adequately protected in the planning system through appropriate policies in Local Development Frameworks.

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The Government wants to see biodiversity valued, safeguarded and enhanced. Biodiversity benefits are highly dependent on local action because biodiversity is ultimately lost or conserved at the local level. Therefore Local Authorities have a key role to play in conserving biodiversity. ”

*DEFRA, Revised Guidance Note
(see 'Further information' below),
December 2008*

Further information:

DEFRA - Guidance on the Improved Local Biodiversity Indicator (NI 197)
(Revised Guidance Note)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/about/what/localgovindicators/documents/ni197-guidance-revised.pdf>



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Biodiversity and its contribution to Sustainable Communities

Improving biodiversity is a genuine cross-cutting agenda. It can generate other social, economic and environmental benefits that contribute towards sustainable communities, including:

- **Stronger and Safer Communities:**
Management of Local Sites by volunteers and community consultation on local wildlife projects increases participation, belonging and general satisfaction in the local area, contributing towards National Indicators 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8. Anti-social behaviour can be reduced and seen to be reduced by engaging young people, communities and offenders in local conservation programmes, contributing towards National Indicators 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25 and 27
- **Children and Young People who are Healthy, Enjoy the Outdoors and Make a Positive Contribution:**
Mental, physical and emotional health of children can be improved through experience of local wildlife, open spaces, and contributing to conservation work. Satisfaction of parks and play spaces can be improved with the addition of wildlife areas, all of which contribute towards National Indicators 50, 55, 56, 58, 110 and 199
- **Adult Health & Wellbeing:**
Health and wellbeing is improved through use of open space, appreciation of local wildlife and engagement in conservation activities, contributing towards National Indicators 119, 120, 121, 137
- **Environmental Sustainability:**
As well as providing wildlife habitat, multi-functional Green Infrastructure can provide measures for climate change adaptation, contributing towards National Indicator 188.

