

Environmental Information Regulations – Response - 27787

Ecological capacity

1. As of 1 April 2026, how many posts within the authority provide ecological advice on planning applications? Please state the number of posts and the total full-time equivalent (FTE).

4 FTE:

- Senior Ecologist
- Ecologist (x2)
- Assistant Ecologist

2. Do the duties of any of those posts include the assessment of biodiversity gain plans or statutory biodiversity metric calculations submitted under Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990? Yes/No is OK.

Yes

3. Does the authority obtain ecological advice on planning applications other than from its own directly employed staff? Please indicate which of the following apply and name the body concerned:

Yes. As the Suffolk County Council (SCC) Ecology Team does not hold specific species licences for bats, great-crested newt, dormouse etc. where such surveys may be required, external support is used.

- (a) a county council or other local authority;
- (b) a shared or joint service, or a local authority owned company;
- (c) external consultants under a framework or standing contract;
- (d) external consultants instructed case by case.

Where a shared arrangement operates, please state the total FTE of the shared resource and the number of authorities it serves.

Option (d) case-by-case.

Legal capacity

4. As at 1 April 2026, how does the authority obtain legal advice on planning matters?

Please indicate all that apply and name the advice provider:

(a) an in-house legal team employed directly by the authority; (b) a shared legal service, joint arrangement or LPA-owned company; (c) legal services provided by a county council or other local authority (e.g. under a service-level agreement); (d) a framework, panel or standing contract with external solicitors; (e) external solicitors or counsel instructed case by case.

Suffolk County Council uses both (a) and (d) above (Bevan Brittan).

5.

(A) As of 1 April 2026, how many posts within the authority or within any shared service serving it are held by qualified lawyers, including those without an active practising certificate? Please state the number of posts and total FTE.

Suffolk County Council's in-house Legal Services team includes 30 posts held by qualified lawyers (solicitors and CILEX); 29.11 FTE.

(B) Of the posts in 5(A), how many are responsible for planning, property or environmental law, either in practice or by way of a post description or team structure?
4 qualified lawyers; 3.6 FTE.

6. Does the authority hold a written policy, protocol or similar document stating who drafts agreements under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, for example, whether such agreements are drafted by the authority or by the applicant's solicitors on the authority's pro-forma? If so, please provide it or a link to it.

No.

7. Does the authority maintain a pro-forma/template section 106 agreement? If so, does that template contain provisions relating to biodiversity net gain? Please provide it or a link to it.

A template Section 106 agreement is published on the Council's website; please see the following page:

[Developers guide to infrastructure contributions in Suffolk - Suffolk County Council](#)

The template does not contain provisions relating to biodiversity net gain.

Monitoring and enforcement

8. Does the authority charge a monitoring fee in respect of section 106 obligations in relation to BNG (e.g. for site visits and the review of Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans? If so, please state:

(a) the basis on which the fee is calculated; (b) the total sum collected in the most recent complete financial year; and (c) whether that income funds any identified post or posts, and if so the total FTE of those posts.

SCC does not charge a monitoring fee in respect of section 106 obligations in relation to BNG.

9. As at 1 April 2026, how many posts within the authority have responsibility for monitoring compliance with section 106 obligations after planning permission has been granted? Please state the number of posts and total FTE. If this responsibility is not assigned to any identified post, please confirm that.

1.8 FTE

10 (severable). From February 2024 to the present, on how many occasions has the authority taken formal enforcement action in respect of a breach of a planning condition or section 106 obligation relating to ecological or biodiversity requirements? If this is not recorded in a way that distinguishes ecological breaches, please say so.

None

11 (severable). Has the authority received any government grant funding specifically to support the implementation of biodiversity net gain? If so, please state the amount and the period covered.

- i. **SCC Planning:** For the financial year 2025-2026 the County Council received a £27,000 grant from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- ii. **Natural Environment:** team received £8,600 p.a. in 2025/2026, and 2026/2027 from the 'Biodiversity grant' for BNG provision.