



Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment
Category information and entry form

Submission deadline: Monday 16 December 2019

The RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence are the longest running, best attended and most high-profile in the industry. The awards champion very best examples of planning and planners in our society.

Being shortlisted or winning these prestigious awards is a clear demonstration of the quality of your work. All shortlisted and winning entrants will be provided with an RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence logo, which can be used on your website, email, social media and promotional materials. We wish you the best of luck!

Eligibility

This category recognises projects that improve the natural environment through conservation, enhancement or restoration. For example, green and blue infrastructure plans, natural resource management or improving biodiversity.

Work completed during 2018 and 2019 is eligible for entry. Particular care should be taken to avoid entering schemes prematurely before they can be satisfactorily assessed. For example, if your project has only receiving planning permission and no tangible benefits have yet been realised, this would be considered too premature. We recommend projects are completed, or substantially completed, in order to be assessed fully against all the judging criteria and other submissions.

You may enter a project into more than one category, but we do ask that you provide an entry form for each category.

Projects or work that has previously won an RTPI Award for Planning Excellence may not be re-entered in the same category, but those shortlisted or commended may be re-entered.

How to enter

1. Download and save this document (please make sure you have the document for the correct category, there are some slight variations)
2. Complete the entry form below and save
3. Send your completed form, as a Word document, and up to 3 images (please see below guidance on the images) to awards@rtpi.org.uk by **5pm on Monday 16 December 2019**
4. Upon receiving your entry form and images we will acknowledge receipt by close of play **Thursday 18 December**. If we do not receive an entry form **and** images entries will not be accepted



Entry form – Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment

Contact name: Ian King

Contact job title: Spatial Planning Manager

Contact email: ian.king@nelincs.gov.uk

Contact telephone: 01472 323370

Organisation submitting this project: North East Lincolnshire Council/Engie

Organisation address: Engie, New Oxford House, 2 George Street, Grimsby, DN31 1HB

Name of project (**we will use this name in all publicity should you be shortlisted, so please ensure it is accurate**): South Humber Gateway Mitigation Strategy

Location of project (**please also include a postcode**): South Humber Bank, Stallingborough, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire, DN41 8DZ.

RTPI nation/region the project is in (**please select**): Yorkshire

Please advise which (if any) other organisations you have worked with on this project:
North Lincolnshire Council, Natural England, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Humber Nature Partnership, Environment Agency

Media/PR contact (**name and email address**): Brad Greenwood,
Brad.Greenwood@nelincs.gov.uk

Social media accounts (**we will engage with shortlisted and winning entries on social media. Please list accounts where possible**):

Twitter: @NEL_Partnership

Instagram:

Facebook: @NELCouncil

Please provide a 25 word and a 100 word overview of your project, **written in the third person**. Should you be shortlisted the 25 word summary will feature on our website and in the awards ceremony programme. The 100 words will feature in our brochure for winners and commended, which will be available on the RTPi website post event.

(25 word summary)

The South Humber Mitigation Strategy is a strategic planning approach securing ecological mitigation for protected birds in advance of industrial development allowing it without delay.

(100 word summary)

The South Humber Mitigation Strategy is a ground breaking planning approach, delivering wetland habitat. Developed through the Local Plan and implemented by planners addressing the challenges faced by landowners, developers and environmental bodies. The South Humber Bank is an area of economic growth also significant to birds recognised as important to the Humber Special Protection Area (SPA), SSSI and Ramsar site (Natura 2000). This planning approach enables sites to be developed quickly whilst ensuring that mitigation is in place which maximises bird use. The key to the strategic approach has been to develop a mechanism whereby the mitigation land is delivered “up front” of development through Planning Agreements.

You will need to critically evaluate the work carried out and must demonstrate the strengths of your project. Please highlight the specific role planning has played in the project and highlight any difficulties and constraints planners had to overcome. It is crucial you demonstrate throughout the submission the planning value the project has.

Outcomes

Please outline what positive impacts the project has provided for:

- the local community
- the economy
- the environment

It has in the past been recognised by developers of the South Humber Bank that fulfilling the requirements of the Habitat Regulations through the planning process can be an expensive and time consuming process often involving conflict with environmental bodies and with uncertain outcomes. Simply put the development of greenfield land on the estuary removes habitat vitally important to wintering birds. This loss is difficult to mitigate on a case by case basis. Historically this has been a major constraint on industrial developments coming forward. This was the starting point for the development of a strategic approach. The key to the approach was to bring together divergent groups to develop an approach that provided benefits for landowners and developers but also provided optimum benefits for the environmental bodies; effectively a “win win”. The Spatial Planning Team took the lead with this approach.

The strategic approach which has been developed, is embedded in Policy 9 of the North East Lincolnshire Local Plan, adopted March 2018. (<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/20180518-AdoptedLocalPlan2018-WEB.pdf>) It provides developers with a fast track planning process, certainty over the mitigation to address SPA birds, and opens the door to investment which creates wealth and employment. Details of the first developers to benefit from the strategic approach are identified in the table below:

Project Name/Developer	Site location	Development Status App ref	Investment/Jobs	Mitigation drawn down
Stallingborough Link Road, North East Lincolnshire Council/Engie	Energy Park Way, Grimsby	Under construction DM/0094/18/FUL	£8mill	6.3ha
Energy from Waste facility 49.9MW UK EP Investments (Note: NSIP application to increase generating capacity to 95 MW submitted)	South Marsh Road, Stallingborough	Full Planning Approved DM/1070/18/FUL	£220mill 40jobs	9.1ha
Waste to Jet Fuel Plant Velocys/Altalto	Hobson Way Stallingborough	Planning submitted DM/0664/19/FUL	£- mill 130jobs	6.0ha

The approach is dependent on the early implementation of mitigation to ensure development is not delayed and required a commitment from North East Lincolnshire Council to secure the mitigation land, construct the mitigation sites and set up an appropriate management and monitoring regime. Significant funding has been secured from the European Regional Development Fund, Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership and from North East Lincolnshire Council which has enabled delivery of the first 39ha of mitigation land in 2019. Discussions are advanced with further landowners to secure the others strategic mitigation sites identified in the Local Plan.

The design of the mitigation sites has been developed in association with the environmental bodies to ensure the sites offer the optimal habitat for the SPA birds. The scale of the sites also means that wider environmental benefits can be delivered. It is acknowledged that the sites are attractive to other bird species and wildlife, (already spoonbills a rare visitor to the UK have been recorded on site, along with roe deer, water voles and bats to name a few.) The initial site also includes a large hide which is available to book by community and educational groups who can utilise the site to learn more about the local environment and wider environmental issues.

Planning contribution

Please outline how the project has benefitted from a planner or planners:

- providing strong and effective leadership and vision
- working in partnership with others
- managing implementation and delivery

It was clear from the outset that developing a strategic approach to habitat mitigation would need to be embedded as Local Plan Policy. The Spatial Planning Team led on the South Humber Bank Ecology Group, this was made up of representatives of North and North East Lincolnshire Councils, nature conservation bodies and industry representatives. It was recognised that only through the Local Plan process that such a complex issue could be delivered. Importantly it needed the backing of developers and environmental bodies. The approach was tested at Local Plan Examination and considered to be robust. Planners had been instrumental in establishing the principles upon which the strategy was to be developed, securing the evidence base in the form of wintering bird surveys to provide a good understanding of the nature and scale of the issues, developing an initial Memorandum of Understanding to mark the commitments to the approach, and developing the balance sheet spreadsheet.

From a planning perspective any strategic approach needed to consider the South Humber Bank as whole rather than considering individual development sites. In North East Lincolnshire this presented significant challenges as the existing patchwork of industrial sites and bird usage required agreement between many landowners and interested parties. Planners performed a key mediating role, steering discussions and outlining alternative approaches. After much detailed discussion on options and refinement of site areas and boundaries, final agreement was reached on the sites. In North East Lincolnshire this equates to 5 sites totalling circa 120ha. This will ultimately provide the full mitigation to address the impact on SPA birds and release the full potential of the employment land available for development in North East Lincolnshire.

(Note: In North Lincolnshire the approach involves a single landowner/developer (Able UK) and is delivered through the creation of one very large mitigation site).

The strategic approach works on the basis that appropriate mitigation land will always be in place ahead of development to offset the consequences of development. The approach works by establishing the value of each development site, and accordingly the mitigation required (determined from the evidence base and set out in a balance sheet spreadsheet). This determines the amount of land that must be “drawn down” from “the mitigation pot” that has been delivered. Development will be considered to have met the mitigation requirements provided the balance remains in credit. Local Plan Policy 9 requires developers simply to provide an appropriate financial contribution, through a section 106 agreement, as defined by planning policy, which is ring fenced to delivery of the mitigation strategy. Developers are not required to undertake any wintering bird surveys, identify land for mitigation or develop appropriate management and monitoring.

The form and layout of the individual sites was presented by planners to the Ecology Group. Importantly the regimes for the management and monitoring of the sites were compiled by the Spatial Planning Team, details of which are set out in the South Humber Gateway Ecological Mitigation Delivery Plan, Oct 2018. <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/20190130-NELincsSouthHumberGatewayMitigationDeliveryPlan-Jan2019.pdf>)

Sustainable development

Please outline how the project has:

- a positive short, medium and long term public benefit
- a balance of economic, social and environmental objectives
- supported the UN's Sustainable Development Goals
- Aimed to prevent or mitigate climate change

The mitigation approach represents a clear case of sustainable development ensuring that there is a true balance of objectives. It ensures that the development of the South Humber Bank delivers the economic and social benefits whilst ensuring the potential negative effects on roosting and feeding SPA birds are addressed in a manner which maintains the integrity of the Humber Natura 2000 sites (UN Goal 8 'Economic Growth' and 15 'Life on Land'). This has been done in a manner that presents wider environmental benefits through the scale and form of the habitat provided. This is effectively an example of biodiversity net gain.

The approach is dependent on the mitigation being in place prior to development. Spatial planners and other council colleagues are working hard to secure all the identified and safeguarded sites as quickly as possible to ensure investors will always be able to benefit from the approach. It should be recognised however, that once in place, the full mitigation package will provide mitigation for the whole of the South Humber Bank. Development on this scale is likely to take many years to achieve and stretch beyond the Local Plan period. Once established the mitigation and management of it must remain as long as the impacts remain ie, as long as the development is in place. The approach is therefore robust and planned to operate in the very long term.

The mitigation sites also have significant social value, whilst the jobs they facilitate is an obvious link, the education potential of the sites will prove invaluable. (UN Goal 4 'Quality Education'). There are also strong links with local farmers and volunteers associated with the ongoing management of the sites and monitoring.

The mitigation sites are specifically being developed to deliver appropriate habitat for the functional needs of SPA birds, namely foraging, roosting and loafing. This requires a mosaic of dry and wet grassland. Seasonal management of water levels does need to be actively managed however, this can provide additional benefits in terms of wider water and flood management. Wetlands are also very efficient at carbon sequestration and are globally important for carbon storage (UN Goal 13 'Climate Change'). The management regime proposed will result in varied sward heights and flora composition, this will result in increased botanical diversity, and increase biodiversity of invertebrates both terrestrial and aquatic.

One thing that is quite striking to any visitor to the first mitigation site is the scale of the land that has been safeguarded for environmental benefits. In a landscape that features many large scale and complex chemical and energy plants, the mitigation sites reflect the scale of the landscape within which they are located. The South Humber bank approach has placed environmental considerations on an equal footing. A shining example of what can be achieved when a true balance of economic social and environmental objectives is pursued.

North East Lincolnshire Council through it's planning lead are at the forefront of creating a sustainable city and community (UN Goal 11).

Community benefit

Please outline how the project has provided:

- positive and constructive engagement and dialogue with local people and businesses
- a better quality of life for people, especially for disadvantaged communities
- tangible benefits for communities such as facilities, infrastructure, jobs, training etc

The mitigation approach forms a central strand of the South Humber Industrial Investment Programme (SHIIP). A programme of key enabling works designed to open up land for investment. This has also included facilitating development of a business park and construction of an important highway link road connecting industrial sites.

Planners have listened to investors, and removed planning barriers through planning policy and implementation. It is recognised that it is only by being brave and innovative, that the right circumstances prevail, so the area can develop as a place where people wish to invest.

Whilst the driver to greater prosperity for the area has been jobs growth this cannot be delivered by allocating employment land alone. The recently adopted Local Plan is unashamedly pro-growth, progressed alongside development of the SHIIP. The Local Plan allocates sites, outlines key infrastructure, and supports expansion of specific training facilities such as the Centre for Assessment of Technical Competence Humberside (CATCH), but does this whilst also balancing social and environmental objectives.

The ongoing management and monitoring of the sites builds on the network of environmental experts and local volunteers who have already, and who are continuing to give time and energy to the project. Discussions are currently taking place with a farmer of land adjacent to the first mitigation site. He is supportive of the environmental initiatives. These discussions include the future introduction of cattle to the site as part of the sensitive management approach.

Through planning contacts, the first site is already being utilised to promote environmental best practice. Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust have asked to include a site visit as part of the Northern Area Planning Authority Training Conference covering Biodiversity Net Gain, Nature Recovery Networks and Planning.

Indeed, the proactive approach that has been demonstrated has fostered a good and important working relationship from the outset with developers and statutory bodies when planners are dealing with planning applications.

For planners the development of the mitigation approach has been a hard and particularly complex area of work, but one which ultimately has been most rewarding. It will also potentially have the greatest impact on the prosperity of the Borough and the lives of its residents. The following high praise as to its world class status is noteworthy;

“This £2 million investment from the Local Growth Fund will protect local wildlife and ecology while at the same time opening up new land for businesses which will create up to 4,000 new jobs within the local economy as part of a world-class conservation and development strategy” Jake Berry MP, Minister for Local Growth <https://investnel.co.uk/news/first-phase-of-mitigation-works-completed>

“The process is a forerunner to how Biodiversity and Environmental Net Gain could be delivered, it has taken a decade of great partnership working with some hard and honest conversations, but is and should be the way all authorities and developers should look to work with the environmental sector. An exemplar for the future and how to get things done in a changing world, for people and wildlife”. Tammy Smalley Head of Conservation, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

Leading practice

Please outline how the project:

- is creative and innovative
- is an exemplar that is transferable across the UK and Ireland
- promotes equality and diversity

When the issues effecting the development of the South Humber Bank were first discussed the frustrations of developers and environmental bodies were clear to planners. Developers saw the need to address the environmental impacts as a burden that delayed development and often resulted in the loss of development land to provide a parcel of mitigation land. On the flip side the environmental bodies often fought hard to secure mitigation, but were often left frustrated by the small parcels of land that were secured in a piecemeal fragmented way. All interested parties were sure there was a better approach.

The task was grasped by planners and environmental bodies who searched for a blueprint of an approach that met the requirements of the South Humber Bank. Whilst there were other approaches to addressing mitigation none provided the mechanism that was required, it was clear something innovative was required. Planners listened to the views of a diverse range of groups to ensure all views were represented.

As with any innovative approach, many challenges have been faced by planners, agreeing, establishing the overall requirement, identifying the sites to be safeguarded and establishing an equitable mechanism that works for all sites across the South Humber Bank.

Building upon the success of the South Humber approach, East Riding of Yorkshire Council recently organised and facilitated the first meeting of the Humber Habitat Compensation & Mitigation Plan (HHCMP) Task & Finish Group. This was to investigate options for developing a strategic approach to habitat creation around the entire Humber Estuary, in line with one of the aims of the Hull & Humber City Deal.

Strong praise for the project has been received:

"We believe this is the first example in the UK where habitat has been specifically created and managed in advance of predicted impacts from proposed developments.

"We would like to congratulate the council for the forward thinking and hard work in bringing this to fruition. North East Lincolnshire Council can be proud of a ground-breaking example of a fully sustainable development." Emma Hawthorne, Natural England, Grimsby

Telegraph 28 Oct 2018. <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/grimsby-telegraph/20181026/281706910670853>

The comments of the first developers to have experienced the mitigation approach and those of the environmental bodies have also shown that the hard work put in by all partners of the ecology group has been successful.

"The South Humber Bank mitigation scheme provides confidence to developers on the practical requirements of the Habitat Regulations. We found engagement with North East Lincolnshire Council to be a positive experience and the speed and scale of habitat delivery is impressive. We hope other local authorities set up similar scheme. EP UK Investments, (Secured planning consent to develop a waste to energy recovery facility).

<https://bdaily.co.uk/articles/2019/01/15/plans-in-for-300m-energy-centre-at-south-humber-bank-power-station>

"Whilst developing our municipal solid waste to jet fuel project, Velocys has been incredibly impressed with the support that North East Lincolnshire Council has provided. In particular, the council's mitigation model has helped to both speed up our project development and reduce the risk profile for our investors".

Velocys (seeking consent to develop a waste to jet fuel plant) <https://lincolnshirereporter.co.uk/2019/08/plans-for-uks-first-commercial-waste-to-jet-fuel-plant-in-lincolnshire/>

For help with your submission, please view our 'How to win' guide [here](#).

Judging process

The awards are judged by a team of respected planning professionals. The judges will review all entries received and determine a shortlist for each category. The shortlist will be announced on the RTPI's website on Monday 10 February 2020. Profiles of the shortlisted entrants will be taken from this entry form and will be published on our website.

Awards ceremony

The winners of the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2020 will be announced at an awards ceremony, to be held at Milton Court in Central London on the evening of Thursday 30 April 2020. All entrants will be invited to book places at the ceremony when tickets go on sale in February 2020.

Contact us

If you have any questions about entering the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence, please contact awards@rtpi.org.uk.

Terms and Conditions

- Full submissions must be received by the RTPI by Monday 16 December 2019.
- Without both the entry form and images the submission will not be counted.
- Word counts will be checked. A variation of up to 10% will be allowed, but anything beyond that will not be considered by the judges.
- The RTPI are not responsible for any undelivered emails or late entries. We will confirm receipt of all entries by close of play on Thursday 18 December 2019.
- Should your submission be shortlisted, the entrant is required to attend the Awards Ceremony on the evening of the Thursday 30 April 2020 at Milton Court in Central London.
- The RTPI reserves the right to use any images and logos you submit for promotional purposes.
- The RTPI reserves the right to share submissions with our member magazine *The Planner*.
- The RTPI reserves the right to share submissions and entry forms with our judging panel.
- An entry will presume that there are no restrictions or fees payable for the reproduction of the photographs or any other submission materials.
- The RTPI retains permission to publish all submitted material and particulars of successful entries, including the judges' reports. This may include online and print publication, and successful entrants may be offered other promotional opportunities. Winning and shortlisted entries may feature as case studies in future RTPI work demonstrating best practice and the value of planning.
- Submitted material will be retained electronically by the RTPI.
- The Royal Town Planning Institute is not liable for any costs you incur submitting this entry.
- The decisions of the judging panel are final and no correspondence will be entered into before or after the event.