

RESPONSE TO PANEL QUESTION

Response to the further question to Place Directorate following meeting on 13 Sep:

Q: What is the role that the Planning Ecologist plays in the sustainability statements? The Panel understand that a Biodiversity Officer is involved but they feel that the Ecologist could be involved because they are able to assess whether the contractors are serious about the issues, are committed to taking them forward and they could also monitor that the commitments made have been taken forward.

A: *An ecologist would only need to play a limited role in the preparation of sustainability statements and only then for larger corporate contracts that would have an impact on the natural environment. This would be, for example, when advising whether an ecological assessment would be required and what type would be needed. This information would be one of a number of inputs from various disciplines to be coordinated by the sustainable development/green infrastructure advisor on the project. It would not need to be a planning ecologist that provides this advice, and in any event as the Council's Biodiversity Officer is a qualified ecologist this element would be covered off by their involvement.*

Any ecological assessment thus identified would need to be completed by the contractor's own appointed ecologist and would set out in a binding report the ecological requirements- protection, mitigation, etc to be undertaken as a prerequisite to, during and post completion of the project. Any assessment would need to meet competency standards set out by the ecologist's professional body so there would be no issues regarding the seriousness of matters to be addressed. Post completion monitoring would be for the service procuring the contract to follow up on and they would be responsible for buying in any ecological expertise necessary whether it be in-house from Planning Services or external. Furthermore, any major contract/development would most likely need planning permission so would be scrutinised by the Council's Planning Ecologist in any event as part of the planning application process.