Nitrogen Offsetting

Natural England published advice for Local Planning Authorities on 2nd June 2019 which sets out the requirement for all new development in the Solent region to achieve nitrate neutrality [Natural-England’s-latest-guidance-on-achieving-nutrient-neutrality-for-new-housing-development-June-2020.pdf (push.gov.uk)](https://scanner.topsec.com/?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.push.gov.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F06%2FNatural-England%25E2%2580%2599s-latest-guidance-on-achieving-nutrient-neutrality-for-new-housing-development-June-2020.pdf&d=2475&t=cb7aaa1014d23a2a914f078179f76c937d6e344c)

The Solent water environment is internationally important for its wildlife and is protected under the Water Environment Regulations and the Conservation of Habits and Species Regulations as well as national protection for many parts of the coastline and their sea. Natural England’s advice has outlined serious concerns about high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous input in this water environment with evidence that these nutrients are causing eutrophication (a process which causes excessive growth of green algae) which is having a detrimental impact upon protected habitats and bird species.

New development, residential or uses which create an overnight stay (i.e. tourist or student accommodation) necessitates a connection to the foul water drainage network which could increase the nutrient load at the Solent European sites. Nutrient enrichment can come from wastewater treatment required in support of new development.

The Local Plan review will be required to prepare a nitrogen budget for the whole plan which must be prepared in line with the methodology and advice from Natural England and Southern Water. A HRA and any necessary mitigation strategy will accompany the local plan. The council will be required to demonstrate that housing growth can be accommodated and adequately mitigated.

Primarily new development will be expected to be nitrogen neutral and for any mitigation needed to be provided on site but it is recognised that there may be occasions where this is not possible. In such cases there could be a scheme which could allow developers to buy “Nitrogen Credits” which could be used to fund the provision of suitable mitigation off site. For this to be effective there must be sites available which are available to provide off site mitigation which could be funded by developer contributions and it may be necessary for the Local Plan to allocate land for offsetting to mitigate the adverse effects of development for a period generally between 80 – 125 years. This could allow for those schemes which are unable to fully mitigate on site to be able to purchase credits to allow the offsetting to be provided off site at a suitable location.

We are therefore looking for landowners / promotors to put forward sites that they consider could be used as offsetting land for Nitrogen mitigation.

Detailed information is given in the link to the Natural England advice note above but generally sites suitable for mitigation could be by taking land out of high nitrogen uses such as crops or intensive livestock systems or the provision of woodland, heathland, saltmarsh, wetland or conservation grassland.