
Necton Greener Grid Park
on behalf of Statkraft UK
Appendix 6: Biodiversity Management Plan



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) sets out habitat protection and enhancement measures for a proposed Greener Grid Park development located on land at Necton, Norfolk (the 'Site'). This document also details ecological management practices to be adopted with the aim of developing and maintaining wildlife habitats to provide a net gain for local biodiversity.
- 1.1.2 The site-specific approach provided within this report provides recommendations for long-term management of the land to conserve and improve landscape habitat connectivity with the wider landscape for wildlife through protecting and enhancing potentially important wildlife corridors and habitats. This will contribute to the establishment of coherent ecological networks, supporting the biodiversity net-gain targets of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021¹).

1.2 Implementation of the BMP

- 1.2.1 The implementation of the BMP will be the responsibility of the Developer of the Site, working in conjunction with the landowners ("Owners") and/or appointed management organisation.
- 1.2.2 All works associated with the implementation of the BMP will be undertaken by experienced contractors and / or under the watch of a suitably qualified (and where required, licenced) ecologist.
- 1.2.3 The Developer shall be responsible for the cost of implementing the BMP including the cost of carrying out any management, monitoring, or other such activities.

2 ECOLOGICAL BASELINE – PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1.1 This Biodiversity Management Plan should be read in conjunction with the *Landscape Mitigation Plan (Drawing N^o: 12202_LPM_GA_01 (6))*. Detailed descriptions of habitats and species can be found in the *Ecological Assessment Report* (Avian Ecology Limited, 2023²).
- 2.1.2 The Site comprises an area of land of approximately 11.75ha, located adjacent to the south of the operational Necton Onshore Substation at approximate central grid reference TF 88826 10460
- 2.1.3 The Site is predominantly formed of arable land with adjacent parcels of woodland to the west and east of the Proposed Development.
- 2.1.4 In the wider context the Site is surrounded by further extensive areas of arable and pastoral farmland and Necton village to the south.
- 2.1.5 The arable farmland does not qualify as important habitats under LWS criteria or LBAP and such habitats are ubiquitous within the local landscape and therefore the overall ecological effect is considered to be low. The adjacent woodland are of higher value and are likely to provide shelter, foraging and commuting habitat for a range of species typical of the local area.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>.

² Avian Ecology Ltd (2023) *Necton Greener Grid Park: Ecological Assessment Report*. A report prepared on behalf of Statkraft UK.

3 ECOLOGICAL MITIGATION MEASURES

3.1 Designated Sites and Habitats

- 3.1.1 Adjacent habitats will be protected by perimeter security fencing which will be erected first to prevent the encroachment of construction works beyond the Site boundary.
- 3.1.2 Standard measures to ensure runoff control and pollution prevention will be implemented; these measures will safeguard retained habitats within and surrounding the Site.
- 3.1.3 Woodland adjacent to the Site and retained habitats within the construction area will be retained and protected in-line with BS 5837:2012 *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*. A short 10m section of hedgerow will be lost, however this will be compensated through the planting of 330m of species-diverse hedgerow.
- 3.1.4 There will be clear delineation of working areas and access routes for vehicles entering the Site and instructions on these will be given to all site construction staff, delivery drivers and subcontractors.

3.2 Badger

- 3.2.1 Construction of the proposed development will not result in disturbance, or destruction of any badger sett.
- 3.2.2 A pre-construction badger survey will be undertaken immediately prior to works commencing to check for active or any newly constructed setts (between the initial baseline survey and the construction start date) within at least 30m of construction areas.
- 3.2.3 If baseline conditions have altered and significant disturbance to badgers or their setts is considered likely during the proposed works, one or both of the following options will be incorporated:
 - The development design will be amended to avoid works which may impact upon badgers and their setts (e.g. alteration of the configuration of panels and/or fencing); and/or,
 - A disturbance licence will be obtained from Natural England before construction commences.
- 3.2.4 Any excavations of trenches created during construction will be backfilled or covered overnight to prevent animal entrapment.
- 3.2.5 During operation, disturbance will be minimal and limited to intermittent maintenance activities.

3.3 Bats

- 3.3.1 Protection of woodland on and adjacent to the Site or along access routes will safeguard potential roost sites and maintain foraging and commuting opportunities.
- 3.3.2 The proposed access track will require a 25m section of hedgerow and trees to be removed. All trees within this section were assessed for their bat roost potential (BRP) during a preliminary bat roost assessment (PRA) and all trees were categorized as a Negligible for bat roost potential. One tree, an oak species *Quercus sp*, located c55m south west of the 25m section was categorised as Low, but the tree is not anticipated to be impacted by the development.
- 3.3.3 In order to protect foraging / commuting bats, lighting required during construction and/or operation of the Greener Grid Park will be used in a sensitive manner and directed away from field boundary habitats, habitats bordering the Site. This will be achieved in a number of ways, including the use of

low-level lighting and use of hoods and careful selection of lighting (further information is provided in BCT guidance (2009) *Bats and Lighting in the UK: Bats and the Built Environment Series*³).

3.3.4 During operation, disturbance will be minimal and limited to intermittent maintenance activities.

3.4 Birds

3.4.1 Site clearance works should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season in so far as reasonably practical. The breeding bird season is generally considered to be 01st March to 31st August inclusive. Where this cannot be avoided, a suitably experienced ecologist will be appointed to undertake a pre-site clearance survey to identify the presence of any wild bird nests being built or in use (including those of ground nesting birds such as skylarks *Alauda arvensis*). Only once the appointed ecologist is satisfied that an offence under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) will not occur, may works proceed.

3.4.2 If a nesting species is identified, suitable work exclusion zone will be established around nest site where required, in line with best practice guidance and in consultation with the advising ecologist.

3.4.3 During operation, disturbance will be minimal and limited to intermittent maintenance activities.

3.5 Reptiles

3.5.1 Habitats within the Site are dominated by arable land which is considered to be unsuitable for supporting and maintaining viable reptile populations. Woodland that will be retained on and adjacent to the Site may provide suitable habitat for widespread reptiles such as common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and grass snake *Natrix natrix*.

3.5.2 It is considered that the implementation of a series of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) will be sufficient to avoid impacts on individual reptiles, as detailed within Appendix 4 of the *Ecological Assessment Report* (Avian Ecology Ltd. 2021); this will ensure that the potential for effects on reptiles during construction will be avoided.

4 ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

4.1 Habitat Enhancement

4.1.1 Management practices are proposed that will enhance the Site for the benefit of local wildlife. The design and long-term management of the land seeks to maintain and improve functionality through protecting and enhancing potentially important wildlife corridors i.e. through creation, enhancement and maintenance of native species hedgerows within and around the Site. The *Landscape Mitigation Plan (Drawing N^o: 12202_LPM_GA_01 (6))* sets out the landscape planting and maintenance specifications.

4.1.2 All planting stock supplied shall be healthy and viable and comply with BS 3936: Parts 1 to 10 as relevant, and BS 4043, the National Plant Specification, published by the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) as appropriate. Supplying nurseries will be registered under the HTA Nursery Certification Scheme. All plants will be packed and transported in accordance with the Code and Practice for Plant Handling as produced by CPSE.

³ Bat Conservation Trust. (2009). *Bats and Lighting in the UK: Bats and the Built Environment Series*. available at: http://www.bats.org.uk/data/files/bats_and_lighting_in_the_uk_final_version_version_3_may_09.pdf

- 4.1.3 All seeding shall be carried out in accordance with BS 4428:1989 Code of Practice for general landscape operations (excluding hard surfaces), or the most up to date and current British Standard and in accordance with seed supplier's technical advice.
- 4.1.4 It is advised that herbicides are not used on Site; however, if herbicides are required, the herbicide handbook (English Nature, 2003⁴) provides guidance on appropriate herbicide use in relation to nature conservation works.
- 4.1.5 Planting will not be carried out when the ground is waterlogged, frost bound or during periods of cold drying winds.
- 4.1.6 All bare-root planting stock will be kept covered until actually planted in order to minimise water-loss and prevent the roots from drying out. Bare root stock shall be planted while dormant (November-April) or alternatively cell or container grown stock shall be used.

Woodland and Scrub Planting

- 4.1.7 A woodland is proposed to be planted within the Site boundaries, surrounding the Proposed Development along the boundary of the development area. It is proposed that the following native species will form the woodland planting at this Site:
- Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* (10%);
 - Pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* (20%);
 - Field maple *Acer campestre*(20%);
 - Black poplar *Populus nigra* (10%);
 - Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* (20%); and,
 - Hazel *Corylus avellana* (20%).
- 4.1.8 An area of native scrub planting is proposed within the boundary of the Site dominating the north east and southern parts of the landscaped area within the redline boundary comprising:
- Hawthorn (30%);
 - Hazel (30%);
 - Goat willow *Salix caprea* (20%); and,
 - White willow *Salix alba* (20%).

Ground Preparation and Tree Pit Excavation

- 4.1.9 If the formation level is compacted it will be ripped through before topsoiling.
- 4.1.10 Where necessary existing weeds will be uprooted or will be treated with a suitable herbicide as specified within the herbicide handbook (English Nature, 2003). No use of chemicals within 10m from the top of ditches/pond will be undertaken.
- 4.1.11 Select standard trees/shrubs are to be placed into pits that will accommodate the roots comfortably, with approximately 75mm space outside the extent of the roots.
- 4.1.12 The bottom and sides shall be forked to break up the subsoil. All extraneous matter such as plastic, wood, metal and stones greater than half brick size will be removed from site.

⁴ English Nature (2003) *The Herbicide Handbook: Guidance on the use of herbicides on nature conservation sites*. Natural England, Peterborough.

- 4.1.13 Topsoil to be stored in accordance with British Standards or other guidance current at the time of planting. Imported topsoil to conform to requirements of British Standards or other guidance current at the time of planting.

Planting

- 4.1.14 The exact timing of the proposed planting will be dependent on the ground conditions but planting should ideally take place between the months of December and February inclusive, this will allow the plants more time to establish a network of feeder roots before the onset of spring. Planting should avoid freezing and water-logged conditions.
- 4.1.15 Trees/shrubs are to be placed into the pits and backfilled with local topsoil previously stripped from the Site. A general-purpose slow-release fertiliser (at the rate of 75gm/m²) and Tree Planting and Mulching Compost (at the rate of 20litres/m²) are to be incorporated into the top 150mm of topsoil during backfilling. Where tree pits are more than 300mm deep, backfilled material shall be consolidated / firmed in 150mm layers. Additional topsoil will be imported onto the site if topsoil stripping operations do not provide sufficient topsoil for the entire tree planting.
- 4.1.16 Trees shall be well firmed-in and secured with stakes, proprietary rubber tree ties and spacers as below.
- 4.1.17 All select standard trees will be held so that movement at the root collar is minimised until new roots have developed to anchor the tree. Therefore, low staking (75mm diameter x 1.5m length) will be used and attached to the tree at approximately 1200mm above ground level. Stakes will be driven 300mm into undisturbed ground of the bottom of the tree pit before planting the tree, taking care to avoid underground services and cables. The trees will be staked using proprietary rubber ties and must be firmly fixed with a spacing device used to prevent chafing against the tree.
- 4.1.18 All trees will be protected from grazing damage by the fitting of approved tree guards. If the bushiness of the tree prevents the use of standard tree guards then an alternative design of guard shall be used in agreement with the project landscape architect. Composted bark mulch will be spread to a depth of 75mm in a 1m diameter circle around all individual trees, ensuring that desirable groundcover plants (where present) are not buried.
- 4.1.19 All woodland/shrubs shall be watered in at the end of each day of planting.

Grassland Creation within Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS)

- 4.1.20 A small section of landscaping to the immediate east of the development will be set aside for Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS). This area is not anticipated to regularly hold water and will be utilised by grassland for the majority of the year. Due to the potential for waterlogging, this area will be sown with a 0.04ha area of grassland seed mix suitable for wetlands. Emorsgate EM8 Meadow Mixture for Wetlands (or similar) would be suitable to use within the proposed grassland within the Site.

Establishment

- 4.1.21 The areas to be sown will be lightly scarified with low-impact machinery/equipment, designed to avoid impacting the sub-soil and any archaeological interests beneath the surface of the Site.
- 4.1.22 The seed bed will be prepared by removing weeds using repeated surface cultivation or a suitable non-residual herbicide.

4.1.23 Areas will be sown in accordance with the supplier's instructions, ideally during early spring following the completion of development and underground cabling (although seeding is possible at other times of year). Seed will be sown by machine or where this is not possible, seed will be broadcast by hand.

Hedgerow

4.1.24 New hedgerow planting proposed as part of the development as shown on the *Landscape Mitigation Plan (Drawing N^o: 12202_LPM_GA_01 (6)).* will provide additional well-structured hedgerow within the Site.

4.1.25 The following native species will form the hedgerow planting and infilling at the Site:

- Field maple (20%);
- Hawthorn (20%);
- Hazel (20%);
- Holly *Ilex aquifolium* (20%); and,
- Pedunculate oak (20%).

Ground Preparation

4.1.26 Where necessary existing weeds will be removed, or treated with a suitable herbicide as specified within the herbicide handbook (English Nature, 2003) to ensure a clean seed bed.

4.1.27 All extraneous matter present such as plastic, wood, metal will be removed from site to a registered waste disposal facility.

Planting

4.1.28 Hedgerows shall be planted as according to the *Landscape Strategy*.

4.1.29 Hedgerows will be notch planted in a double staggered row at 5 plants per linear metre.

4.1.30 The exact timing of the proposed hedgerow planting will be dependent on the ground conditions but bare-root planting should ideally take place between the months of November-February inclusive. Planting should avoid freezing and waterlogged conditions.

4.1.31 Hedgerow planting slots shall be made using a planting spade. Plant notches should be L- shaped, using spades of a design suitable for this purpose. The planting notches must be vertical and deep enough for the roots to hang freely, with the transplant being planted so that the root collar is exactly level with the ground surface. The notch must then be closed and the soil will be well firmed round the roots in line with the guidelines as set out in BS 4428 (1989).

4.1.32 If ground conditions are dry during the time of planting (unlikely during November-February) then all individual plants should be well watered following planting.

4.1.33 All hedgerow planting stock will be protected from rabbit damage using approved proprietary 600mm clear plastic spiral guards, supported with 0.9m 12/14lb canes as advised by the manufacturer. Spiral guards must be removed approximately three years after planting and disposed of in a responsible manner. Trees will be protected by appropriate tree guards and stakes with rubber tree ties and spacers.

5 HABITAT MANAGEMENT

5.1 Scrub and Woodland Management

- 5.1.1 During the establishment period all dead, dying or diseased trees/shrubs will be replaced with specimens of similar size and species by the appointed contractor. If the failure of the plant is due to disease and the disease is considered likely to re-occur, then an alternative native species of local provenance may be used as a replacement with agreement from the LPA. The exact timing of the planting of replacement trees is dependent on the ground conditions; however, planting should take place between the months of December and February inclusive, this will allow the plants more time to establish a network of feeder roots before the onset of spring.
- 5.1.2 Existing trees within hedgerows will be left to grow naturally and not cut. These will be clearly marked to ensure that they are not cut back during hedgerow trimming/maintenance works.
- 5.1.3 During the establishment period weeds around the base of each tree will be removed within a 1m to 1.5m radius, using approved hand-weeding or if necessary, herbicide treatment (applications in April, June and August). The herbicide handbook (English Nature, 2003) provides guidance on appropriate herbicide use in relation to nature conservation works. Where used, herbicides will be sprayed in appropriate weather conditions, to avoid affecting adjacent habitats.
- 5.1.4 Tree guards and stakes will also be checked and replaced where necessary and removed after two years.

5.2 Grassland Management

- 5.2.1 The grassland vegetation within the Site will be managed to provide a varied habitat structure providing nesting opportunities for birds and nectar, pollen and shelter for invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals. Taller grassland vegetation will be encouraged to develop at the base of hedgerows to provide foraging and shelter opportunities for wildlife.

Initial Management

- 5.2.2 Initially, in the first year following sowing, checks will be made to assess and control annual weeds. Problem perennial weeds will be controlled by hand pulling or if necessary careful targeted application of a non-residual herbicide by way of spot spraying with a knapsack (low pressure to avoid spray drift), or weed wiping (herbicide application may be used in April, June and August). Alternatively, annual weeds can be managed by topping and mowing prior to setting seed which will encourage lateral development of the grasses. Any topping undertaken between April and July should be no lower than 200mm to prevent harm to any ground nesting birds.
- 5.2.3 Specific attention should be paid to the potential presence of the following five injurious (harmful) weeds: common ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, curled dock *Rumex crispus* and broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*; which are all listed within the Weeds Act 1959. These species should be removed from the grassland areas prior to enhancement works commencing^{5 & 6}.

⁵https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/525269/pb9840-cop-ragwort-rev.pdf (accessed 14/07/2023)

⁶https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69296/pb7190-harmful-weed-control.pdf (accessed 14/07/2023)

- 5.2.4 In the unlikely event that the grassland / meadow planting fails and the area of bare ground is greater than 20%, these areas will be re-seeded.

Long-term Management

- 5.2.5 Following establishment of a suitable sward, the grassland habitats will be managed through a combination of grazing and/or mechanical cuts, as detailed below.

Cutting Regime

- 5.2.6 Following establishment, up to two cuts will be taken per year, an early cut in February (if necessary), to manage regrowth around panels and a second later in the season between August and September (each cut reducing sward height to approximately 150mm). No cutting will take place throughout the summer to allow the seeds of the later flowering species to fall prior to the cut.
- 5.2.7 There may be circumstances when an additional summer cut is required to prevent vegetation obscuring panels, in such cases cuts should reduce sward height to no lower 200mm to avoid impacts on nesting birds.
- 5.2.8 Cutting should adopt a systematic method (i.e. working outwards towards the boundary features); this will allow fauna such as invertebrates, amphibians, birds and small mammals to temporarily and safely vacate the area.
- 5.2.9 The management will take a flexible approach and the exact dates will be dependent upon weather conditions. A phased (rotational) cutting regime is recommended (i.e. ideally the entire area should not be cut at the same time) in order to allow for more structured grassland.
- 5.2.10 Cuttings will remain on-site for three to five days following the cut to allow seeds to disperse, and then be removed in order to remove nutrients and promote the development of a species-rich sward and placed on habitat piles located on the periphery of the site.
- 5.2.1 The growth of the five injurious (harmful) weeds listed within the Weeds Act 1959: common ragwort, spear thistle, creeping thistle, curled dock, and broad-leaved dock, should be managed on Site in order to protect grazing animals and to enhance the species richness of the enhanced grassland habitats. The management of such species should follow that listed within published guidance documents ^{6 & 7}.

5.3 Hedgerow Management

- 5.3.1 During the first five years after planting, all dead, dying or diseased stock will be replaced with stock of similar size and species by the appointed contractor at their own cost.
- 5.3.2 If the failure of the plant is due to disease and the disease is considered likely to re-occur then an alternative native species of local provenance may be used as a replacement. The exact timing of the planting of replacement hedgerow is dependent on the ground conditions; however, planting should ideally take place between the months of December and February inclusive, this will allow the plants more time to establish a network of feeder roots before the onset of spring.
- 5.3.3 The planting areas will be kept weed-free during the first two years of planting, using approved hand-weeding or if necessary herbicide treatment (applications in April, June and August). The herbicide handbook (English Nature, 2003⁷) provides guidance on appropriate herbicide use in relation to nature

⁷ English Nature (2003) *The Herbicide Handbook*: Guidance on the use of herbicides on nature conservation sites. (https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/574168/response/1408137/attach/4/The%20Herbicide%20Handbook%202003%20PT1.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)

conservation works. Where used, herbicides will be sprayed in appropriate weather conditions, to avoid affecting adjacent grassland areas.

- 5.3.4 During the first five years after planting, hedgerows will be trimmed outside each growing season; hedgerows will be cut back by half the growth of that year with pruning aiming to encourage the development of healthy well-shaped specimens.
- 5.3.5 Five years after planting, hedgerows will cut on a 2-3 year flexible basis as necessary to avoid shading of the panels and protect the perimeter fencing from encroachment. Ideally not all hedgerows will be cut in the same year for the benefit of wildlife and to allow plants to flower and set seed/fruit.
- 5.3.6 Hedgerow cutting will be ideally be undertaken in late January/February. No cutting or trimming is to be undertaken during the breeding bird season (1st March to 31st August inclusive).
- 5.3.7 After the establishment period planting guards (where used) will be removed from stock within hedgerows and woodland and all hedgerows will be maintained at a height of approximately 2-4m or higher as appropriate for the operation of the Site.

6 ECOLOGICAL MONITORING

- 6.1.1 The development of the biodiversity interest of the Site will be monitored over time by a suitably experienced ecologist. A walkover survey will be undertaken on years 1, 2, 5 and 10. This will involve an inspection of the hedgerows and any other ecological features to ensure that they are being managed in a manner suitable for the enhancement of wildlife interest. The results of these monitoring surveys will be used to inform future changes in management. The management plan will be amended if necessary based on the monitoring recommendations.
- 6.1.2 Following the outcomes of each monitoring survey it will be the duty of “the Owner” of the site to amend the BMP to inform future changes in management including amending the grazing and cutting regime, if needed.
- 6.1.3 Monitoring procedures are outlined in **Table 6.1** (adapted from BRE guidance):

Table 6.1: Monitoring procedures and key indicators.

Biodiversity feature	Monitoring procedure	Key indicators
Hedgerows, scrub and woodland	Walk full length of planted hedgerows and areas of scrub and woodland	Browse damage, dead whips, weeds, gaps, dead or damaged hedgerow plants. Note areas requiring replacement planting and (after year five) removal of spiral guards.
Grassland	Walkover of planted areas	<p>Increase in the amount of uneaten grass/accumulation of litter/vigorous rank and unpalatable grasses – indicates need to increase stock densities.</p> <p>Reduction in density of plants or plant species present (count and check against original seed mix species list) - Indicates need to amend cutting regime.</p> <p>Excessive poaching, weed or scrub invasion or unwanted perennial weeds (docks, thistles) may need control by occasional spot treatment with a herbicide or other specific remediation.</p> <p>Occasional bare patches at the edges of the grassland are acceptable as they provide diversity within the grassland habitat for invertebrates and birds.</p>

7 INDICATIVE MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE

7.1.1 The following management programme shows possible months in which activities will commence within the first planting period after construction:

Initial Habitat Enhancement Year 1

Management Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Grassland creation (*recommended)			✓*	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Tree and shrub planting	✓	✓										✓*
Hedgerow and woodland planting	✓	✓									✓	✓

Habitat Management Year 2

Management Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Initial management of grassland / meadows areas (targeted herbicide treatment of perennial weeds or cutting/topping where necessary)				✓		✓		✓				
Trimming of new shrub and hedgerow planting	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓

Ongoing Annual Management

Management Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Grassland cutting		✓						✓	✓			
Trimming of new shrub and hedgerows (up to year 3 and established)	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
Established hedgerows cut on a 2 or 3 year cycle (no more than 1/3 cut in any one year).	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓

Management Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Removal of stakes and tubes from planted stock after 5 years.	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓