



SHE Standard Operating Procedure - (SOP)

Title:	Ecology Management
Document Reference:	VG-SOP-SHE-09
Relevant Standard(s):	GE700 – Section E: Environment, Sub-section 5: Ecology Section F: Specialist Activities, Sub-section 6: House building

Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides the formal processes and minimum standards required for the company to meet its obligations under The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, The Environment Act 2021 and comply with the company values of Integrity, Caring and Quality. Compliance with this SOP will benefit our organisation by preventing unplanned events, creating a safe work environment, increase efficiencies and profitability.

Scope

To ensure our site operations teams have access to the information they need to minimise the risk of accident or injury, protect the environment so far as reasonably practicable and maintain optimum standards.

Vistry utilise the CITB GE700 as its operating manual.

This procedure sets out the company's arrangements for the identification, management and control of ecological issues on Vistry Group developments and controlled premises.

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the specific minimum standards by which Vistry Group, its employees and contracted parties of all tiers are continually tasked with to achieve SHE excellence. All current SOP's and associated policies, forms and guidance notes are available on the Vistry company intranet – [DUG](#).

Definition: Within this SOP, the term Region represents all Vistry workplaces sites under their control.

GENERAL STANDARDS

Vistry will take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure the survival of ecological resources when encountered throughout the construction process by adopting responsible designs and construction methodologies as well as engaging with regulators, local planning authorities and other relevant parties.

The pre-construction team should consult with the Local Planning Authority or the Client, as appropriate, to determine whether construction activities are likely to impact upon any protected habitats or species and Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP's).

2.0 PRE-CONSTRUCTION PHASE**2.1 Initial Site Appraisal**

During completion of the [VG-FM-SHE-009](#) Initial Site Appraisal, the pre-construction team should determine if the site and areas of access and egress to and from the site are likely to contain any ecologically important areas or invasive plant species. This may be achieved by a visual assessment, together with consultations with the Client/Local Planning Authority and/or Natural England (NE)/Natural Resources Wales (NRW), as applicable.

Where Vistry Group is the client or developer and visual assessments or consultations confirm or suggest the presence of any ecologically important area or invasive plant species, the pre-construction team should ensure that an extended 'Phase 1 Habitat Survey' (ideally conducted in the spring or summer) is conducted by a competent person (e.g., qualified ecologist and/or arboriculturist) to identify the:

- Types of habitats (e.g., watercourse, grassland, wetland, woodland)
- Presence of protected plants, animals or special habitat features (e.g., hedgerows/trees)
- Presence of invasive plant species (e.g., Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam)
- Baseline for biodiversity value to comply with any Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements.
- Hedgehog highways - all sites need to implement this where practicably feasible.
- Recommendations for any remediation, mitigation and/or ecological enhancements.



SHE Standard Operating Procedure - (SOP)

The pre-construction team should ensure that person(s) selected to conduct ecology and habitat surveys are suitably qualified and there is evidence of competency. Refer to [VG-SOP-SHE-38](#) Training Competence and Appointments.

2.2 External Client(s) Site Appraisal

Where Vistry Group is appointed Principal Contractor on behalf of an external Client, the pre-construction team should ensure that the findings and recommendations from any site appraisal(s) are obtained from the Client.

If no such appraisal(s) have been conducted, they should consult with the Client to ensure an appraisal(s) is conducted or that the company's liabilities are protected. Findings and recommendations included in site appraisals(s) initiated by the Region should be issued to the external Client or the Local Planning Authority, as appropriate and necessary.

2.3 Contractors & Consultants

Contractors and or Consultants responsible for organising ecology and habitat surveys, must be pre-qualified and listed on the CQMS approved supplier database to work on behalf of Vistry Group. Refer to [VG-SOP-SHE-38](#) Training Competence and Appointments.

The Contractor and or Consultant is responsible for ensuring individuals appointed to conduct ecology and habitat surveys and or carry out physical works are suitably qualified and there is evidence of their competency.

2.4 Project Design

Project designs should be sensitive to the presence of natural habitats to avoid disturbance, damage or disruption wherever possible.

2.5 Consent(s)

Where it is necessary to disturb a protected species, all relevant licenses/consents must be obtained from the relevant regulatory body prior to works. **Note:** The netting of trees and hedgerows is not permitted on any Vistry Group site.

2.6 Communication

The technical team should ensure that details of ecology and habitat surveys, and any recommended mitigation is included within the Project Environment Plan [VG-FM-SHE-068](#), Environmental Aspect and Impact Register [VG-FM-SHE-029](#) and, ensure the environmental elements are shown on the Environmental Constraints Plan, refer to [VG-SOP-SHE-19](#) Safety, Health and Environmental Risk Management.

The findings and recommendations arising from any ecology and habitat surveys must be issued to the contractors engaged in work activities. These should be included in the contractor's site-specific risk assessment and method statements (RAMS).

3.0 CONSTRUCTION PHASE

3.1 Site Controls

The site management team should ensure that all control measures recommended within [VG-FM-SHE-029](#) Environmental Aspect & Impact Register are implemented before commencement of works.

The Site Management team should ensure that any recommended actions arising from ecology and habitat surveys, ecological licenses or consents are listed within [VG-FM-SHE-068](#) Project Environmental Plan – section 5 (Biodiversity Action Plan). They should consult the technical team if there is any doubt.

Control measures should be regularly reviewed and monitored for effectiveness. Any changes made must be updated within [VG-FM-SHE-068](#) Project Environmental Plan, [VG-FM-SHE-029](#) Environmental Aspect & Impact Register.



SHE Standard Operating Procedure - (SOP)

3.2 RAMS Evaluation

Risk assessments and method statements (RAMS) produced by contractors engaged in work activities must be evaluated by a competent person and recorded on [VG-FM-SHE-050](#) Method Statement/Risk Assessment Review Form.

3.3 Reporting

In the event of unplanned or unauthorised disturbance of natural habitats within or near the site boundary, works must be stopped immediately and access restricted to preserve the area. The site management team must report it to the technical team and the 22-minute hotline number is 03337 001 177 as indicated in [VG-SOP-SHE-01](#) Accident and Incident Reporting and Investigation.

In the event of any unexpected ecological finds (i.e., protected flora or fauna) being discovered during construction works, all activities in the immediate area must be stopped and the discovery reported to the technical team and the 22-minute hotline number is 03337 001 177 as indicated in [VG-SOP-SHE-01](#) Accident and Incident Reporting and Investigation.

Construction should not resume until guidance has been obtained from the SHE team and/or a competent ecologist.

4.0 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a way of creating and improving natural habitats. BNG makes sure development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development. Biodiversity Net Gain applies to new full or outline planning applications. A condition will be applied to every planning permission (except those exempt from BNG requirements) that a biodiversity gain plan should be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of development. It is essential to consider BNG at the earliest stage when considering a site. The preference is to deliver on site where possible, however, it is possible to mitigate through off-site provision or through the purchase of statutory BNG credits. For further information about Biodiversity Net Gain please refer to the Group Planning page on [DUG](#)

RACI Matrix

The following RACI matrices detail key activities which must be undertaken to meet the requirements of the SOP. Separate RACI's are provided for both Developments and Contracting. The following requirements apply:

- **R:** This is the person or team **R**esponsible for completing the activity
- **A:** This is the person or team who is **A**ccountable for ensuring the activity is completed
- **C:** This person or team should be **C**onsulted in relation to the activity (2-way communication)
- **I:** This person or team should be kept **I**nformed of progress (1-way communication).

SHE Standard Operating Procedure - (SOP)

Developments

Responsibilities matrix

R= Responsible A= Accountable C= Consulted I= Informed

		Regional Managing Director	Regional Construction Lead	Contracts Management	Site/Project Lead	Regional Technical Lead	Regional Commercial Lead	Land Lead (Strategic or Region)	Regional Sales Lead	People Team	Regional Customer Services Lead	SHE Team	Regional Premises Manager	Contractor/Consultant	Manufacturing
Stage 1 Planning	Complete Initial Site Appraisal using VG-FM-SHE-009	A	C			R	I	C							
	Consult with client (if applicable), local authorities & other relevant parties to decide if construction activities will impact on any Biodiversity Action Plans	A	C			R	I	C				C			
	If required, ensure an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is undertaken	A	C			R	I	C				C			
	If required, appoint competent consultants to undertake any ecology works	A	I			R	C					C			
	Appoint Ecologist to complete Biodiversity Metric Tool to assess areas value to wildlife	A	I	I	I	R	I	R							
	Include details in VG-FM-SHE-068, VG-FM-SHE-029 and the Environmental Constraints Plan	A	I	I	I	R	I								
Stage 2 Operational	Communicate the requirements of the SOP to contractors	A	C	C	C		R							I	
	Ensure all contractor personnel on site are aware of any actions arising from ecological surveys		I	A	R	C								I	
	Ensure any required control measures identified in ecological surveys are implemented and maintained		I	A	R	C								C	
	Review and update VG-FM-SHE-068, VG-FM-SHE-029 and Constraints Plan every month		I	A	R	C								I	
	Ensure Contractor RAMS have addressed any ecological risks and are accepted using VG-FM-SHE-050		I	A	R	C						C		C	
	Report any ecological incidents in accordance with VG-SOP-SHE-01	I	I	A	R	C						C		C	
END	Review documentation in line with this SOP. Continue SHE Monitoring	All Affected Parties													

Notes:

Where a role states 'Lead', this is referring to the most senior person within that function. They can delegate activities to others within their team.

Contracts Management refers to the person who the Site/Project Lead reports to. Job titles could be Area Build Manager/Director, Contracts Manager or Production Director.

Contractor/Consultant covers external Principal Contractors, Sub-Contractors, Designers, Consultants and Suppliers.

Where there is any ambiguity on who is undertaking which role, the Regional MD must decide on the most appropriate person. The Regional MD holds the ultimate accountability for SHE within the Region.

Construction phase roles are to be identified in the VG-FM-SHE-002 CPP and/or VG-FM-SHE-117 Appointment of Site Responsibilities

SHE Standard Operating Procedure - (SOP)

Contracting

Responsibilities matrix

R= Responsible A= Accountable C= Consulted I= Informed

		Regional Managing Director	Regional Construction Lead	Contracts Management	Site/Project Lead	Regional Pre-Construction Lead	Regional Design Lead	Regional Commercial Lead	Regional Sales Lead	People Team	Regional Customer Services Lead	SHE Team	Regional Premises Manager	Contractor/Consultant	Manufacturing
Stage 1 Planning	Complete Initial Site Appraisal using VG-FM-SHE-009	A	C			R	I	I							
	Consult with client (if applicable), local authorities & other relevant parties to decide if construction activities will impact on any Biodiversity Action Plans	A	C			R	I	I				C			
	If required, ensure an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is undertaken	A	C			R	I	I				C			
	If required, appoint competent consultants to undertake any ecology works	A	I			R	I	C				C			
	Appoint Ecologist to complete Biodiversity Metric Tool to assess areas value to wildlife	A	I	I	I	R	I	C							
	Include details in VG-FM-SHE-068, VG-FM-SHE-029 and the Environmental Constraints Plan	A	I	I	I	R	I	I							
Stage 2 Operational	Communicate the requirements of the SOP to contractors	A	C	C	C	C	C	R						I	
	Ensure all contractor personnel on site are aware of any actions arising from ecological surveys and BNG requirements		I	A	R	C		C						I	
	Ensure any required control measures identified in ecological surveys are implemented and maintained		I	A	R	C								C	
	Review and update VG-FM-SHE-068, VG-FM-SHE-029 and Constraints Plan every month		I	A	R	C								I	
	Ensure Contractor RAMS have addressed any ecological risks and are accepted using VG-FM-SHE-050		I	A	R	C						C		C	
	Report any ecological incidents in accordance with VG-SOP-SHE-01	I	I	A	R	C						C		C	
END	Review documentation in line with this SOP. Continue SHE Monitoring	All Affected Parties													

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