

PLAN  VIVO

PV Nature

Procedures Manual

Version 1.1

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INTRODUCTION

This manual describes the rules and procedures for registering and operating Plan Vivo *Projects* and issuing *Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificates (PVBCs)* under the Plan Vivo Biodiversity Standard (PV Nature). It should be used together with the latest versions of the PV Nature Project Requirements, Methodology and Data Protocol, and Validation and Verification Requirements. The latest PV Nature documents can be accessed on the Plan Vivo website.

Acronyms

The following acronyms are used throughout this document:

- **CAR** – Corrective Action Request
- **FAR** – Forward Action Request
- **IE** – Independent Experts
- **NIR** – New Information Request
- **PDD** – *Project* Design Document
- **PIN** – *Project* Idea Note
- **PVBC** – Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificate
- **TAC** – Technical Advisory Committee
- **TRP** – Technical Review Panel
- **ToR** – Terms of Reference
- **VVB** – Validation and Verification Body

Definitions

Definitions used in this document follow the [PV Nature Glossary](#), and the definitions below:

- **Certified** – The status of a *Project* that signifies its compliance with PV Nature. Can be used interchangeably with *Registered*.
- **Decertified** – The status of a *Project* signifies that it is no longer compliant with PV Nature and is no longer *Certified*. Can be used interchangeably with *Deregistered*.
- **Deregistered** – The status of a *Project* signifies that it is no longer compliant with PV Nature and is no longer *Registered*. Can be used interchangeably with *Decertified*.
- **Registered** – The point in certification process at which a *Project* can be considered compliant with PV Nature. Can be used interchangeably with *Certified*.
- **Remediation plan** – A set of steps, approved by Plan Vivo, that will resolve the problems underpinning a *Project's Suspension*.
- **Retirement** – The action of inactivating a *PVBC* for the purpose of a specified buyer making a claim. Such certificates are inactive, cannot be traded and must not be resold. The action of retiring a *PVBC* is irreversible except in extreme instances where Plan Vivo accept strong evidence that suggests retirements were made in error and no claims have been, or will be, made as a consequence.
- **Suspension** – A status attributed to *Projects* that are not following the certification process or are non-compliant with PV Nature. This status is reversible.
- **Transfer** – The action of trading the ownership of *PVBCs* between account holders on the *PV Nature Registry*.
- **Vintage** – The period within which the biodiversity benefit of a *PVBC* is achieved.

1 Certification Process

Projects meeting the requirements of Plan Vivo Biodiversity Standard (PV Nature) must be *Registered* to generate *Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificates (PVBCs)*. The process to become a *Certified PV Nature Project* is summarised in Figure 1.

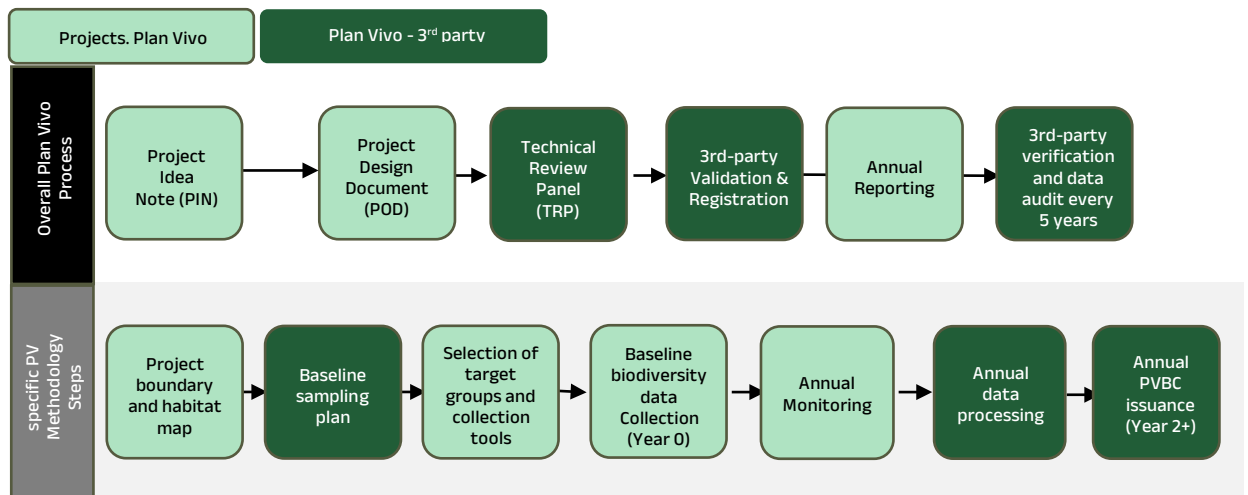


Figure 1 – PV Nature certification process: Boxes in green are led by Projects with support from Plan Vivo. Boxes in blue are led by Plan Vivo and third-party organisations.

The first step towards registration is to submit a *Project Idea Note (PIN)* as part of a screening process where *Projects* are assessed against basic eligibility criteria. If a PIN is approved, a *Project* is listed in the *Project* pipeline and can then submit a *Project Design Document (PDD)* for assessment. Following this, a *Project* may be validated by a *Validation and Verification Body (VVB)* or *Independent Expert (IE)*. Upon successful validation, the *Project* may complete registration and become *Certified*. All *Certified Projects* must submit *Annual Reports* with details of their monitoring results and any requests for issuance of Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificates (*PVBCs*). *Projects* must then undergo *Verification* at least every 5 years throughout their *Project Period*.

1.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Name	Role	Responsibilities
Plan Vivo	Certifier against PV Nature.	Review and certify <i>Projects</i> against PV Nature.
<i>Projects</i>	Applies PV Nature in a <i>Project Area</i> in a specified <i>Project Region</i> .	Ensures all relevant aspects for certification are met under PV Nature (see sections below).
Data Analytic Providers	Manages biodiversity data and conducts data analytics.	Provides sampling plan, calculates <i>Pillar Metrics</i> and <i>Multimetric</i> for calculation of <i>PVBCs</i> .
Technical Review Panel (TRP)	Independent group of experts who provides assessment of the <i>PDD</i> including <i>Technical Specifications</i> against PV Nature.	Reviews the appropriateness of <i>Project Interventions</i> and associated biodiversity monitoring and data collection of <i>Target Groups</i> .
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	Independent group of experts who provides guidance to Plan Vivo on technical matters and the development of PV Nature	Contribute to the ongoing development of PV Nature, including; documentation, tools, and associated guidance.
Validation & Verification Body (VVB)	An organisation that conducts <i>Validation</i> and <i>Verification</i> activities to determine conformance with PV Nature.	Conducts desk-based and on-site reviews of <i>Projects</i> in conformance with the PV Nature <i>Project Requirements</i> and <i>PV Nature Methodology</i> .
Independent Expert (IE)	A team or individual that conducts <i>Validation</i> and <i>Verification</i> activities to determine conformance with PV Nature.	Conducts desk-based and on-site reviews of <i>Projects</i> in conformance with the PV Nature <i>Project Requirements</i> and <i>PV Nature Methodology</i> .

2 Project Screening

2.1 Project Idea Note (PIN)

The first step towards *Project* certification is to submit a PIN. The PIN must be drafted using the latest PIN Template. Prior to PIN submission, *Project Coordinators* must complete a prospective [Project questionnaire and eligibility form](#). Following eligibility approval, the *Projects* may proceed with the PIN.

In the PIN, *Projects* must provide details of the:

- Proposed *Project* Interventions;
- Proposed *Project Region*, and *Project Areas*, including details of land rights;
- Mapping and involvement of different stakeholders in development and implementation of the *Project*, including the *Project Coordinator*, *Project Participants*, and other *Local Stakeholders*;
- Land use and land management, socioeconomic and environmental conditions in the potential *Project Areas* prior to the *Project* and how these are expected to change in the absence of *Project Interventions*;
- Expected *Outputs* and *Outcomes* of the *Project*;
- Barriers to implementing the *Project Interventions*;
- Potential environmental and social risks and potential for *Double Counting*;
- *Project* governance and administration.

The details provided in the PIN will be assessed against the relevant *Project Requirements*. *Projects* must demonstrate that they have sufficient capacity and expertise to develop the proposed *Project* and identify where they will make use of external technical support for *Project* design and implementation. Where necessary, Plan Vivo may advise on the need for technical support and will facilitate access to potential providers of technical support where possible. Plan Vivo is unable to provide funding or technical support to *Projects*, beyond advising on actions required to meet the requirements of PV Nature. The need for technical support and any associated costs should therefore be considered when assessing the feasibility of developing a *Project* as all *Project* development and implementation costs must be covered by the *Project*.

2.2 PIN Review

On submission of the PIN, *Projects* must pay a PIN review fee. The PIN review process is summarised as follows:

- After initial eligibility screening, *Projects* may request a call with Plan Vivo to discuss timescales and other details by emailing biodiversity@planvivofoundation.org.
- Complete PINs drafted using the latest PIN Template must be submitted by email to biodiversity@planvivofoundation.org.
- The PIN review is completed by Plan Vivo, and Plan Vivo will endeavor to provide the *Project Coordinator* with a PIN Review Report within 6 weeks of PIN submission, although in some cases additional time may be needed. The PIN Review Report provides details of whether the *Project* meets the eligibility criteria, requests for clarification and any *Corrective Action Requests* (CARs) which the *Project* must address before the PIN is approved.
- If a PIN is not approved on first submission, *Projects* are invited to address any feedback provided in the PIN Review Report and submit a revised PIN within six months of receiving the feedback from Plan Vivo.
- If a PIN is not approved after three rounds of feedback (three submissions and sets of feedback in total), or if a PIN is not resubmitted within six-months of receiving feedback from Plan Vivo, any further reviews will be charged an additional PIN re-review fee, or the PIN will be rejected.
- Once a PIN is approved, the *Project* enters the *Project* pipeline and the PIN will be published on the Plan Vivo website.
- If a *Project* fails to submit a PDD within 3-years of PIN approval, the PIN will be removed from the *Project* pipeline and an additional PIN review fee will be charged for resubmission.

3 Methodology Application

3.1 PV Nature Methodology

Before submission of a PDD (see Section 4.1), a *Project* must read and understand the *PV Nature Methodology* and the associated data requirements. All *Projects* are required to follow the *PV Nature Methodology* to quantify the *Biodiversity Benefits* as a result of the *Project Interventions*. Under the *PV Nature Methodology*, *Projects* will be required to use the approved *Data Collection Tools*. Approved *Data Collection Tools* will be shared with eligible *Projects* on request. If existing PV Nature approved *Data Collection Tools* are not applicable to the *Project Area(s)* or *Project Interventions*, new *Data Collection Tools* can be submitted to Plan Vivo for approval. All proposed *Data Collection Tools* must comply with the latest *PV Nature Methodology* data requirements.

Application of the *PV Nature Methodology*, is conducted in the following steps:

- Before submission of a PDD, a *Project* must submit a *Project* boundary (file formats include shapefile, KMZ/KML, etc.) and a draft habitat map to Plan Vivo and an approved *Data Analytic Provider*. The habitat map enables creation of a draft sampling plan.
- A draft sampling plan is provided to the *Project* for inclusion of local knowledge, and consultation on accessibility and safety of sampling points.
- A PDD is submitted with *Technical Specifications* for the application of the *PV Nature Methodology*, including monitoring activities for measuring *Biodiversity Benefits* through selected *Target Groups*.
- The *Data Analytic Provider*, *Project* and Plan Vivo finalise the habitat map and sampling plan after detailed consultation with the *Project*. Once the sampling plan is finalised, the *Project* is able to start collection of biodiversity data in line with the *PV Nature Methodology* and associated Data Protocol.
- Selected *Target Groups* are monitored through approved *Data Collection Tools* (See Section 3.2).
- The biodiversity data collected in line with the *PV Nature Methodology* Data Protocol is sent to Plan Vivo and an approved *Data Analytic Provider* for analysis.
- Biodiversity data is used to calculate the five *Pillar Metrics*. The first three *Pillar Metrics* are based on the species data collected in the *Project Area*. The fourth and fifth *Pillar Metric* are calculated from freely available satellite data. The habitat classifications that underpin the fifth *Pillar Metric* are confirmed via on-site *Validation* and *Verification*.

- The first four *Pillar Metrics* are calculated annually, while the fifth *Pillar Metric* is calculated at Year 0 and then at least every 5 years to coincide with a *Verification* event. All *Pillar Metrics* and the *Multimetric* are calculated by an approved *Data Analytic Provider* for *Projects* using the site-level biodiversity data sent by *Projects*.
- The *Multimetric* is calculated by an approved *Data Analytic Provider* by aggregating the cumulative sum of the year-on-year change in the *Pillar Metric* values.
- Biodiversity data sent by *Projects* to Plan Vivo and an approved *Data Analytic Provider* is processed and analysed by an approved Data Analytic Provider via a series of data pipelines.
- The approved *Data Analytic Provider* platforms conducts species identification, annotation and quality control (QC). *Projects* are not required to conduct species identification or data analysis. Calculations of the *Pillar Metrics* and the *Multimetric* are shared with the *Project* and Plan Vivo before issuance of *PVBCs* are made (See *PV Nature Methodology*).

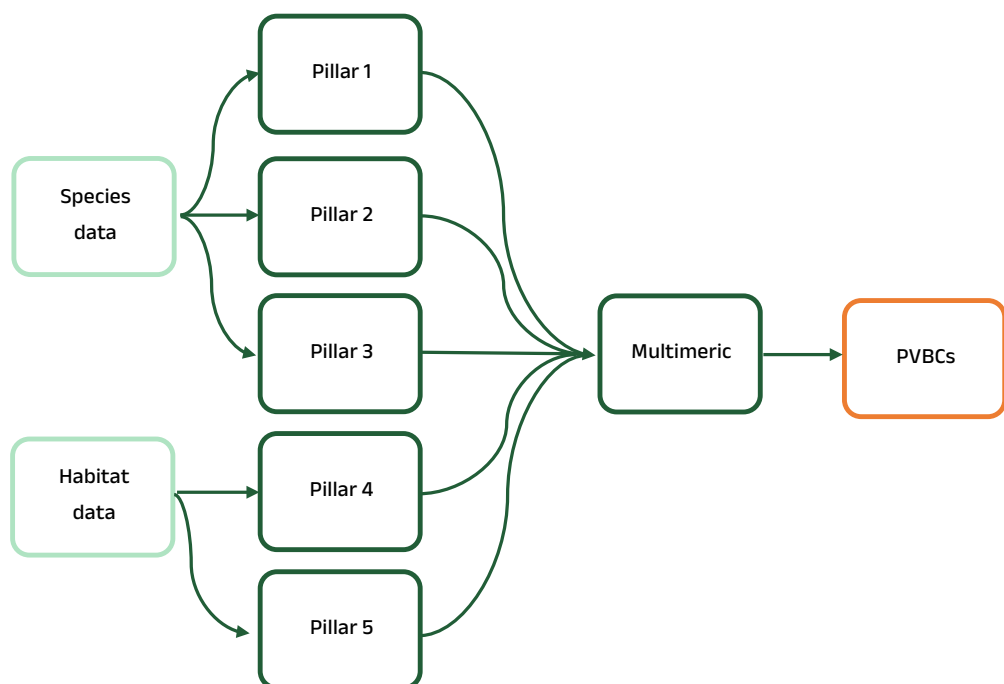


Figure 2 - Overview of the analytical steps used to convert biodiversity survey data to Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificates (PVBCs). From the data collected by Projects (green boxes), five *Pillar Metrics* are calculated by an approved third-party *Data Analytics Provider* (blue boxes), which are then summarised by a *Multimetric*, and finally converted to a number of restoration or conservation PVBCs.

3.2 Approval of Data Analytic Providers

Projects pursuing certification under PV Nature must contract an approved *Data Analytics Provider* to carry out the data analysis, *Pillar Metric* and *Multimetric* calculation in line with the PV Nature Methodology. Requirements for approval of *Data Analytics Providers* are described in the Requirements for Approval of *Data Analytic Providers*. *Projects* must contact and negotiate a contract with an approved *Data Analytic Provider* to conduct the PV Nature data analysis following the Validation Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by Plan Vivo.

3.3 PV Nature Methodology Data Collection Tool Approval

The review process for submission of a new *Data Collection Tools*, is summarised as follows:

- Prior to a new *Data Collection Tools* submission, applicants are encouraged to contact Plan Vivo to discuss their plans by emailing biodiversity@planvivofoundation.org.
- A complete *Data Collection Tools* proposal must be drafted using the latest *Data Collection Tool* Template (currently in development) and submitted by email to biodiversity@planvivofoundation.org.
- The new *Data Collection Tools* proposal is reviewed by Plan Vivo and the PV Nature Technical Review Panel (TRP). On completion of the review, applicants will be provided with a Data Collection Tool Review Report with details of whether the proposed new *Data Collection Tool* meets the *PV Nature Methodology* data requirements. To prevent proliferation of similar *Data Collection Tools*, it will also assess the justification as to why this new *Data Collection Tool* is sufficiently different from other existing approved *Data Collection Tool*, and why existing *Data Collection Tool* could not be used for the intended applications.
- If the new *Data Collection Tool* is not approved on first submission, the applicant is invited to address any feedback provided in the Data Collection Tool Review Report and submit a revised application for review.
- If the new *Data Collection Tool* is not approved after three rounds of feedback (two submissions and sets of feedback in total), the new *Data Collection Tool* will be rejected.
- Once a new *Data Collection Tool* is approved, it will be added to the PV Nature “toolbox” of *Data Collection Tools*.

4 Project Assessment

Once a *Project* has passed the PIN stage, they may complete a PDD and move into the *Project* assessment process. This consists of four stages:

- **PDD Submission** by the *Project Coordinator* (see Section 4.1).
- **PDD Screening** by Plan Vivo (see Section 4.2).
- **PDD review** by Plan Vivo (see Section 4.3).
- **Validation** by an approved *Validation and Verification Body* (VVB) or *Independent Expert* (IE).

4.1 Project Design Document (PDD) Submission

The PDD describes in detail how the *Project* meets the latest PV Nature *Project Requirements*. *Projects* must consult the *Project Requirements* for details on how to demonstrate compliance with each requirement and use the latest PDD Template to provide relevant evidence. PDDs must be submitted by email to biodiversity@planvivofoundation.org.

The PDD must also include details of expected *Biodiversity Benefits* and monitoring approaches that apply the PV Nature Methodology. All PV Nature Methodology *Data Collection Tools* applied in the PDD must be approved prior to submission of the PDD, following the process described in Section 3.

On submission of a PDD for *Validation*, *Projects* must pay the associated *Validation* fees. In addition to these fees that are payable to Plan Vivo, *Projects* must cover the full cost of a *Validation* by a VVB or an *Independent Expert* (IE). PDDs can only be submitted for *Projects* that are listed in the PV Nature *Project* pipeline.

4.2 PDD Screening

After PDD submission, a PDD screening is undertaken by Plan Vivo. This is summarised in the following steps:

- An assessment for completeness of information, clarity and consistency with the PDD Template.
- Provision of a PDD Screening Review Report to the *Project*, identifying any *Corrective Action Requests (CARs)* or *New Information Requests (NIRs)* that should be addressed by the *Project*.
- If *CARs* are identified in the PDD Screening Report, *Projects* are invited to address these and submit a revised PDD within six months of receiving the feedback from Plan Vivo.
- If the PDD is not resubmitted within six months of receiving the feedback, or if all *CARs* or *NIRs* are not fully addressed after three rounds of feedback (three submissions and sets of feedback in total), the PDD will be rejected, and an additional PDD review fee will be charged for resubmission.
- Once all (if any) *CARs* and *NIRs* have been closed, the PDD will be published on the Plan Vivo website for a 4-week public consultation period, and the *Project* may move to the PDD review stage. The feedback from the public consultation phase is shared with the *Project* prior to the *Validation* stage (see Section 4.4).

4.3 PDD Review

An assessment of the PDD, against PV Nature, is undertaken by Plan Vivo. This consists of:

- A review of the PDD against the *Project Requirements*, and
- A technical review of the PDD by an expert in the geographic region, chosen *Target Groups*, and *Project Interventions* applied.

The findings from the PDD review are provided to the *Project* in the PDD Review Report and shared with the *Project* and the VVB or IE selected for *Validation*. Any *CARs* or *NIRs* raised in this report must be addressed by the *Project* and PDD resubmitted to the VVB before being assessed and closed by the VVB during *Validation*. A *Project* cannot register if any *CARs* or *NIRs* from the PDD Review Report remain open after *Validation*.

4.4 Validation via Validation and Verification Body (VVB)

Projects following a *Validation* process via a VVB must contract an approved VVB to carry out the *Validation* audit. Requirements for approval of VVBs are described in the [Validation and Verification Requirements](#). *Projects* must contact and negotiate a contract with an approved VVB to conduct a *Validation* audit following the Validation Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by Plan Vivo.

The *Project* must contract a VVB prior to the VVB signing the Plan Vivo Validation ToR, within which details of the proposed audit team must be provided (see the Validation and Verification Guidance Manual for information about audit teams). After the ToR has been signed, the VVB must submit an audit plan for Plan Vivo approval. The site visit may only commence once the audit plan has been accepted.

Any *Corrective Action Requests (CARs)* raised by Plan Vivo from its assessment of the PDD, and any feedback gathered from the PDD public consultation, will have been shared with the *Project* prior to the *Validation* process and the *Project* may choose to update its PDD prior to submitting it to the VVB for assessment. The same information will be submitted to the VVB for their consideration through the provision of a Validation Report Template. Plan Vivo may also require a meeting with the VVB prior to the commencement of the *Validation* audit.

The VVB must undertake a review of the PDD prior to completing a site visit. The details of this would depend on the VVB's internal procedures. When a site visit is completed by a VVB, the process is carried out as follows:

- The VVB visits the *Project Region*, conducting interviews with relevant stakeholders, visiting *Project Areas*, and assessing relevant *Project* documentation.
- Based on the results of the PDD review and site visit, the VVB may raise *CARs* or *NIRs* that must be addressed before the *Project* can be registered. Plan Vivo will provide guidance and advice to *Project Coordinator(s)* and VVBs, if required, during the *Validation* process, and the final Validation Report must be approved by Plan Vivo.
- In some instances, a *CAR* may be converted into a *Forward Action Request (FAR)*, which requires action to be taken on a non-conformance within a defined period (for example, before the first *Annual Report* is submitted).
- Once the *Project* is validated by the VVB and the Validation Report is approved by Plan Vivo, the *Project* can be registered (see Section 5).

All Validation Reports and PDDs will be made publicly available on a dedicated *Project* page after registration. The Validation Report will include all feedback submitted to Plan Vivo during the PDD public consultation phase, alongside the VVB's opinions on this feedback.

If a *Project* fails *Validation* and the findings in the Validation Report are accepted by Plan Vivo, to pursue registration the *Project* would need to re-start the *Validation* audit process and pay an additional *Validation* coordination fee to Plan Vivo and any fees charged by the VVB.

If a *Project* fails to complete *Validation* within 3-years of PDD submission (see Section 4), the *Project* will be removed from the *Project* pipeline. To again pursue registration, the PDD will need to be resubmitted to undertake the *Project* assessment process (see Section 4) from the start and pay any new associated fees.

4.5 Validation via an Independent Expert (IE)

Projects following *Validation* process via an IE must contract an approved IE to carry out the *Validation* audit. Requirements for approval of IEs are described in the PV Nature Validation and Verification Requirements. *Projects* must contact and negotiate a contract with an approved IE to conduct a *Validation* audit following the IE Validation Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by Plan Vivo.

The process for *Project* assessment via an IE consists of three stages:

- **PDD submission** by the *Project Coordinator* (see Section 4.5.1).
- **PDD screening** by Plan Vivo (see Section 4.5.2).
- **Validation** by Plan Vivo using an IE (see Section 4.5.3).

4.5.1 PDD Submission

The PDD describes in detail how the *Project* meets the latest *Project Requirements*. *Projects* must consult the *Project Requirements* for details on how to demonstrate compliance with each requirement and use the latest PDD Template to provide relevant evidence. PDDs must be submitted by email to biodiversity@planvivofoundation.org.

The PDD must also include details of expected *Biodiversity Benefits* and monitoring approaches that apply the *PV Nature Methodology*. All methodologies applied in the PDD must be approved prior to submission of the PDD, following the process described in Section 3.

On submission of a PDD for *Validation*, *Projects* must pay the associated *Validation* fees. In addition to these fees that are payable to Plan Vivo, *Projects* must cover the full cost of a *Project* visit by an IE. PDDs can only be submitted for *Projects* that are listed in the *Project* pipeline.

4.5.2 PDD Screening

After PDD submission, a PDD screening is undertaken by Plan Vivo. This involves:

- An assessment for completeness of information, clarity, and consistency with the PDD Template.
- Provision of a PDD Screening Review Report to the *Project*, identifying any CARs or NIRs that should be addressed by the *Project*.
- If CARs are identified in the PDD Screening Report, *Projects* are invited to address these and submit a revised PDD within six months of receiving the feedback from Plan Vivo.
- If the PDD is not resubmitted within six months of receiving the feedback, or if all CARs or NIRs are not fully addressed after three rounds of feedback (three submissions and sets of feedback in total), the PDD will be rejected, and an additional PDD review fee will be charged for resubmission.
- Once all (if any) CARs and NIRs have been closed, the PDD will be published on the Plan Vivo website for a 4-week public consultation period, and the *Project* may move to the PDD review stage. The feedback from the public consultation phase is shared with the *Project* prior to the *Validation* stage (see Section 4.0).

4.5.3 Validation

The process for the *Project Validation* stage via an IE consists of three components:

- A review of the PDD against the *Project Requirements*.
- A technical review of the PDD by an expert including how the *PV Nature Methodology* is applied.
- A site visit by an appropriate *Independent Expert* (IE).

The PDD review process of *Validation* via an IE is carried out as follows:

- A review of the PDD by Plan Vivo to assess compliance with the *Project Requirements*.
- An in-depth technical review of PDD by an expert in the geography and *Target Groups* selected.
- Provision of a *Validation* findings with details of any CARs or NIRs that must be addressed before a site visit is conducted.
- If CARs or NIRs are identified, *Projects* are invited to address these and submit a revised PDD for assessment within six-months of receiving the feedback from Plan Vivo.
- If any CARs or NIRs are not addressed within six-months of receiving the initial feedback, the IE PDD review fee will be charged for resubmission.
- Once a PDD passes the PDD review, the *Project Coordinator* will be provided with Terms of Reference for an IE to conduct the *Project* visit with details of expertise required. The *Project Coordinator* must then identify one or more IE with the necessary expertise to carry out the site visit.

Once the *Project Coordinator* has identified one or more appropriate IEs, a proposal for the site visit must be submitted to Plan Vivo for approval. If a proposed IE is not already on the roster of approved IEs, an application for approval must be submitted following the procedures described in the Validation and Verification Guidance Manual. Plan Vivo may require proposed IEs to complete additional training before they are approved to conduct a *Project* visit.

Once the *Project* visit proposal has been approved by Plan Vivo, the *Project* may contract the IE(s) to complete the *Project* visit, following the Site Visit Terms of Reference provided by Plan Vivo. The IE should engage with the *Project Coordinator* directly to ensure that transport, meetings and agendas are set up to follow the *Project* visit plan. The *Project* visit process is described as follows:

- The *Project Coordinator* agrees on the scope and timescales for the site visit and contracts for the IE(s) to complete the site visit following the Site Visit Terms of Reference provided by Plan Vivo. The Site Visit Terms of Reference outlines the role of the IE, and any specific issues to be addressed, and provides a report template for recording all findings.

- The IE and Plan Vivo collaborate on creating a site visit plan, which includes a sampling plan for the *Project Areas* and details of how specific issues should be assessed.
- After the site visit, Plan Vivo will provide the *Project* with its validation findings which may raise further CARs or NIRs for the *Project* to address before the *Project* can be validated.
- In some instances, a CAR may be converted into a FAR, which requires action to be taken on a non-conformance within a defined period (for example before the first *Annual Report* is submitted).
- Once the *Project* is validated by Plan Vivo, the *Project* can be *Registered* (see Section 5).

All Validation Reports and PDDs will be made publicly available on a dedicated *Project* page after registration. The Validation Report will include all feedback submitted to Plan Vivo during the public consultation phase, alongside the Plan Vivo's opinions on this feedback.

If a *Project* fails *Validation*, to pursue registration the *Project* would need to re-start the *Validation* audit process and pay an additional *Validation* coordination fee to Plan Vivo and any fees charged by the IE.

If a *Project* fails to complete *Validation* within 3-years of PDD submission (see Section 4), the *Project* will be removed from the *Project* pipeline. To again pursue registration, the PDD will need to be resubmitted to undertake the *Project* assessment process (see Section 4) from the start and pay any new associated fees.

5 Registration

Once a *Project* is validated, the *Project Coordinator* must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Plan Vivo and register the *Project* on the *PV Nature Registry*.

5.1 MoU and Registration Certificate

All *Projects* that have been successfully validated may proceed to registration. To complete registration, all *Project Coordinators* are required to sign an MoU with Plan Vivo which details the responsibilities of both parties, as well as terms and conditions to be met to maintain the *Project's* registration status, including the responsibility of the *Project* to:

- Submit *Annual Reports* and biodiversity monitoring data;

- Pay fees to Plan Vivo associated with the certification process; and
- Undergo periodic *Verifications*, at least every 5 years throughout the *Project's Crediting Period*.

MoUs are under continuous review and may be updated periodically based on changing legislation or updated legal advice. Once an MoU has been signed, Plan Vivo will issue a registration certificate which includes the date of registration and the *Project's* unique registration number (for example see Figure 3). Any non-compliance with the conditions outlined in the MoU that is not approved by Plan Vivo may lead to *Suspension* of the *Project's* certification.



Figure 3 – Sample registration certificate

5.2 PV Nature Registry

All *PVBCs* will be issued, transacted, and retired on an independent *PV Nature Registry*. By using this third-party registry, *PVBCs* will be allocated a unique serial number to prevent double-counting.

6 Annual Reports

All registered *Projects* must submit *Annual Reports* to Plan Vivo, describing progress during the *Reporting Period*, any changes to the *Project* design, and the results of any monitoring carried out. *Annual Reports* may also include a request for issuance of *PVBCs* based on the results of their monitoring, as described in the PDD. There is no fee charged for submission of *Annual Reports* by *Projects* that generate *PVBCs*, but issuance fees are charged for each *PVBC* issued. *Projects* that do not generate *PVBCs* must pay an *Annual Report* review fee for each *Annual Report*.

The first *Reporting Period* must start at the *Project Start Date* and end no more than 12-months after the date of *Project* registration. The *Start Date* for a *Project Area* is the date on which the *Project Intervention* was first implemented and cannot be more than 5-years prior to the date of completing *Validation*. Subsequent *Annual Reports* must cover a 12-month period, and there must be a continuous record of *Annual Reports* throughout the *Project Period*. The latest *Annual Report* Template must be used for all *Annual Reports*. All approved *Annual Reports* are published on the Plan Vivo website.

The review process of Annual Reports involves:

- A review of the Annual Report by Plan Vivo;
- Feedback provided to the *Project* in an Annual Report Review Form, which may include further requests for data or information; and,
- The issuance of *PVBCs*, where applicable and assuming that appropriate monitoring data has been submitted.

Projects that do not submit an *Annual Report* within 12 months of the end of their last monitoring period will be subjected to an *Annual Report* late fee. *Projects* that do not submit an *Annual Report* within 24 months of the end of their last monitoring period will be suspended (see Section 11). In such instances, a *Project's* certification status may be restored if all absent *Annual Reports* are resubmitted and approved and there is sufficient evidence suggesting that the *Project* has been operating as described in their PDD.

7 Verification

Project Verification Periods cannot be greater than 5 years. *Projects* that have not completed a successful *Verification* by 2 years after the end of a *Verification Period* will enter the suspension process (see Section 11).

For each *Verification*, *Projects* must pay the *Verification* coordination fee to Plan Vivo and the *Verification* audit fees charged by the VVB or *Independent Expert* (IE).

The purpose of *Verification* is to verify the *Biodiversity Benefits* achieved by the *Project*, that *Project* implementation is consistent with the PDD and PV Nature, and that the expected *Socioeconomic* and *Environmental Benefits* are likely to be realised. *Verifications* also assess the level of engagement of *Project Participants* and other *Local Stakeholders*, as well as assessing whether the *Project Coordinator* and their partners have sufficient capacity to administer and implement the *Project*.

7.1 Verification by Validation and Verification Body (VVB)

Projects that are verified by VVBs should use an approved VVB. Requirements for approval of VVBs are described in the Validation and Verification Requirements. *Projects* must contact and negotiate a contract with an approved VVB to conduct a *Verification* audit following the Verification Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by Plan Vivo.

The *Project* must contract a VVB prior to the VVB signing the Plan Vivo Verification ToR, within which details of the proposed audit team must be provided (see the Validation and Verification Guidance Manual for information about audit teams). After the ToR has been signed, the VVB must submit an audit plan for Plan Vivo approval. The site visit may only commence once the audit plan has been accepted.

The process for *Verification* by a VVB involves the following:

- Any updates to the PDD must be reviewed by the Plan Vivo Secretariat and/or TRP (depending on the scopes of the updates) prior to desk-based review by a VVB. Feedback from Plan Vivo may be provided to the VVB for consideration in their *Verification*.
- The contracted VVB carries out a desk-based review of *Annual Reports* and any relevant *Project* documentation based on the Verification Terms of Reference provided by Plan Vivo, as well as any FARs from previous validation and/or verification reports.
- The contracted VVB conducts a site visit based on an approved audit plan.
- *Verification* findings are sent to the *Project*, including all CARs and NIRs to be addressed before a Verification Report can be finalised.

A final Verification Report must be approved by Plan Vivo for the *Project* to maintain its certified status, and before further *PVBCs* are issued. Any CARs or NIRs that cannot be closed or converted to FARs may result in suspension of the *Project's* certification.

7.2 Verification by an Independent Expert (IE)

Projects may contract a VVB for verification or choose to use an IE. The IE verification process involves a desk-based assessment by Plan Vivo, and a site visit by an approved IE.

Projects that follow the IE verification process should identify an approved IE, whose suitability will then be assessed against the context of the *Project*. Alternatively, a *Project* may propose a new IE for approval by submitting their CV and information of their relevant experience to Plan Vivo. Plan Vivo will then assess their suitability to act as an IE for PV Nature *Projects* and for the *Project* in question. IEs may be required to complete specific training before they are approved to conduct a site visit (see Validation and Verification Guidance Manual for more information). In all instances, IEs must be approved by Plan Vivo before they are contracted to complete the site visit. For further details, see the Validation and Verification Guidance.

The IE verification process involves the following:

- The Plan Vivo Secretariat and/or TRP (depending on the scope of the updates) will carry out a desk-based review of updated *Project* documentation and *Annual Reports* based on the Verification Terms of Reference (ToR) and develop a site visit plan and report template in consultation with the IE.
- The contracted IE carries out the site visit following the agreed site visit plan and completes a Site Visit Report using the template provided.
- Plan Vivo completes a Verification Report that is sent to the *Project* detailing findings, including all CARs and NIRs to be addressed before a Verification Report can be finalised.
- Any CARs or NIRs that cannot be closed or converted to FARs within 1-year may result in suspension of the *Project's* certification.

8 Timescales

The length of time for a *Project* to complete the certification process will depend on the time required to address CARs and NIRs, and time constraints from third-parties that the *Project* contracts. However, some **approximate** timeframes are provided as reference for *Projects* in Table 1 and 2. Please note that where the process covers:

- The creation of review reports, the timelines do not account for the *Project* response time or multiple rounds of feedback; and/or,
- An audit with a VVB or an IE, the timelines do not account for their availability, speed of outputs or the lengths of site visit length.

Table 1 – Indicative review timelines for Projects audited via a VVB

Review Processes	Indicative Timelines
PIN review	Initial review: 6 weeks. Review of CAR/NIR response: 6 weeks
PDD screening	Initial screening: 6 weeks Review of CAR/NIR responses: 6 weeks
PDD review	Plan Vivo review: 8 weeks
Validation	Dependent upon VVB availability and processes
Annual Reports	6 weeks
Verification	Dependent upon VVB availability and process

Table 2 – Indicative review timelines for Projects audited via an IE

Review Processes	Indicative Timelines
PIN review	Initial review: 6 weeks. Review of CAR/NIR response: 6 weeks
PDD screening phase	Initial review: 6 weeks. Review of CAR/NIR response: 6 weeks
Validation – PDD review	Initial review: 8 weeks Review of CAR/NIR responses: 5 weeks
Validation – Site visit	Development of site visit plan: 4 weeks Assessing findings and drafting of report: 4 weeks
Annual Reports	6 weeks
Verification	Review of PDD update and monitoring data: Dependent upon scale up PDD update Review of CAR/NIR responses: 3 weeks Development of site visit plan: 4 weeks Assessing findings and drafting of report: 4 weeks
Assessing suitability of proposed IE	2 weeks

Table 3 – Indicative review timelines for new Data Collection Tool(s)

Review Processes	Indicative Timelines
New Data Collection Tool	Initial review: 2 weeks

9 Updating Project Design Documents (PDDs)

9.1 Adding New *Project* Interventions or *Project* Regions

Projects that wish to add *Project Interventions* or *Project Regions* that are not described in their PDD after the *Project* has been registered must submit a PDD update to Plan Vivo with all relevant PDD sections revised. A *Validation* audit must then be carried out (see Sections 4) prior to generating *PVBCs* from the new *Project Interventions* or *Project Regions*.

9.2 Updating Existing Information

Projects are required to update their PDDs throughout the *Project Period* to ensure that the documentation accurately represents the current context of the *Project*, and the *Project* adheres to best practice through aligning to the latest versions of the Standard and the *PV Nature Methodology*. An exception to this is the reporting of the addition of *Project Areas* within a *Project Region* and under the described eligibility criteria, which does not require a PDD update and can be reported through *Annual Reports*.

As described in the *PV Nature Project Requirements*, the following PDD sections must be reviewed and updated at least every 10 years prior to a *Verification* event (see Section 9):

- Baseline Scenario
- Socioeconomic Baseline
- Environmental Baseline
- *Project* Logic
- Additionality
- Technical Specification(s)
- Risks to Biodiversity Benefits

It is also recommended that *Land Management Plans* and monitoring plans are reviewed and updated at least every 10 years.

10 Standard and Methodology Updates

10.1 Standard Updates

PV Nature (Project Requirements, PV Nature Methodology and Data Protocol, and Validation and Verification Requirements) will be updated periodically to ensure that Plan Vivo certification continues to represent high quality biodiversity, environmental and socioeconomic impacts.

All draft updates will be sorted into one of the following four categories (see Table 4), which influences who is consulted on new drafts to the Standard and Procedures manual, and who makes the final decision. Updating guidance documents does not require consultation and can be completed at the discretion of the secretariat.

Table 4 – Types of updates made to PV Nature

Update type	Description	Consulted by*	Final decision made by
Type 1	Correcting errors, adding clarity without substantially changing a requirement	No one	Plan Vivo Secretariat
Type 2	Adding a new non-technical requirement or substantially changing a technical requirement	<i>Projects</i>	Plan Vivo Secretariat
Type 3	Adding a new technical requirement or substantially changing a technical requirement	PV Nature TRP, <i>Projects</i>	Plan Vivo Secretariat
Type 4	Adding or changing the fees associated with the certification process	Parties for whom the fees affect	Plan Vivo Board of Trustees

* These are the minimum stakeholder groups to be consulted, though others may be included.

The latest versions of the Standard documents and supporting documents will be uploaded to the [Plan Vivo website](#) and all updates will be publicised through the Plan Vivo mailing list.

An archive of all previous versions of the Standard is available on the Plan Vivo website, and all new versions include a description of changes from the previous version. Updated requirements come into effect within 12 months if not otherwise indicated.

Projects will be validated and verified against the latest version of the Standard, regardless of the version they were registered under. This gives *Projects* the time within their *Verification* cycles to update their documentation prior to the subsequent *Verification*.

10.2 PV Nature Methodology Updates

The *PV Nature Methodology* may be updated periodically to ensure it continues to reflect best practices. *Projects* will not be penalised for having already started measuring under the latest version; for example, any additional costs due to updates to the *PV Nature Methodology* will not be borne by *Projects*. Updates or changes to the *PV Nature Methodology* will always be transparent and evidence-driven.

Further, a range of 'modules' will be added over the coming months, to support *Projects* with practical implementation. These will be developed in partnership with *Projects*, incorporating their feedback on the practicalities of implementation. Modules to be added after launch will include, for example:

- Data collection 'toolboxes', to provide practical support to *Projects* collecting data on different target groups in a range of ecosystems;
- A protocol that will guide and standardise use of eDNA, for example as a source of data on the biodiversity of freshwater and soils; this protocol is currently in development with experts in the eDNA field;
- Evidence-based sampling protocols for sites larger than 10,000 hectares that minimise effort and cost while maintaining scientific rigour; this protocol is currently under development with early *Project* partners.

11 Suspension

Registered Projects that are not appropriately following the certification process will be considered suspended. Specific levels of inactivity that can trigger suspension are provided in previous sections of this manual. Plan Vivo also holds the right to trigger the suspension process for a *Project* at any time if sufficient evidence is provided to suggest that the *Project* is non-compliant with PV Nature. Plan Vivo will notify a *Project* of their suspension in writing. Suspended *Projects* will be highlighted as such on the Plan Vivo website alongside a description of the reason for their suspension.

Projects may challenge their suspension via the formal grievance process as detailed on the [Plan Vivo website](#).

Plan Vivo may disallow the further issuance, transfer and/or retirement of *PVBCs* until suspension has been lifted.

Suspended *Projects* must submit a remediation plan, which is available upon request to the public. These can be created with the support of Plan Vivo and must outline a route to resolving the issue underpinning the suspension. Such plans must include:

- Actions to be taken,
- Timeframes for each action, and
- Parties responsible for implementing each action.

Remediation plans must be approved by Plan Vivo. Suspended *Projects* may be *Decertified* if the:

- *Project* fails to submit a remediation plan within 6 months of suspension,
- Proposed remediation plan is not accepted by Plan Vivo, or
- *Project* deviates significantly from the agreed-upon remediation plan.

12 Decertification

Suspended *Projects* that cannot resolve their suspension (see Section 12) will be *Decertified*. When a *Project* is *Decertified*, Plan Vivo will:

- Mark their *Project* page as *Decertified* on the Plan Vivo website and move it to the discontinued section;
- Provide a description on the *Project* page as to the reason why they were not aligned with PV Nature and could not continue the certification process until the end of their *Project Period*;
- Inform all necessary stakeholders of the *Project's* decertification via any medium deemed appropriate;
- For Restoration *Projects*, retire any *PVBCs* from the *Risk Buffer* that are deemed necessary to ensure the integrity of any *Project PVBCs*; and,
- Request to the PV Nature Registry provider that the *Project's* account is closed on the Plan Vivo registry.

Where possible, Plan Vivo will also take steps to provide assurance as to the credibility of any *PVBCs* previously generated. Plan Vivo would be open to collaborating with the *Project Coordinator* and/or previous buyers of the *Project's PVBCs* to achieve this.

13 Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificates (PVBCs)

Registered Projects can generate *PVBCs* based on their *Biodiversity Benefit* estimation and monitoring plans described in their PDD. There are two types of *PVBCs*:

- **Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificate - Restoration (PVBC_{RESTORE})** issued for restoration of degraded ecosystems through a measured increase of biodiversity in the *Project Area* representing a 1% increase in the *Multimetric* in one year in one hectare of the *Project Area*.
- **Plan Vivo Biodiversity Certificate - Conservation (PVBC_{CONSERVE})** issued for when the *Biodiversity Baseline* of the *Pillar Metric Values* are maintained over time, as measured by the *Multimetric*. A *Multimetric* value of zero for a given year means that 100% of the *Biodiversity Baseline* has been maintained. If 100% of the *Biodiversity Baseline* is maintained, a *Project* can issue 20 PVBC_{CONSERVE} certificates per hectare per year.

PVBCs are issued onto the *PV Nature Registry* and can be allocated to individual buyers. All *PVBCs* have a vintage that corresponds to the period in which the *Biodiversity Benefit* is achieved.

14 Loss Events

A *Loss Event* is a noticeable event that results in a reduction of the *Biodiversity Benefits* achieved within a *Project Area* (this does not include reductions in *Biodiversity Benefits* that cannot be ascribed to any noticeable event and may therefore be due to natural cycles or oscillations). *Loss Events* can be caused by factors that are within the control of the *Project* ('*Avoidable Losses*') or factors beyond the control of the *Project* ('*Unavoidable Losses*').

An assessment of risk of *Loss Events* and any actions that the *Project* will take to mitigate these must be included in the PDD. Only *Projects* with a low risk of *Loss Events* can be *Registered* under PV Nature.

This section outlines the mechanisms available for mitigating *Loss Events* under specific scenarios and differentiating by *Project* type.

14.1 Avoidable Loss

An *Avoidable Loss* occurs if a loss event could have been prevented by the *Project*. There are two types of avoidable *Loss Events*, which are described in Table 5.

Table 5 – Description of different avoidable loss events

Type of Loss Event	Description
Improper management	Clear and/or wilful negligence of the <i>Project Coordinator</i> , <i>Project</i> or <i>Project Participants</i> that results in activities not being implemented as described in the <i>Project's Technical Specifications</i> or being less effective than expected. For example, if a habitat is lost in a wildfire after a failure to create planned firebreaks.
Participants leaving the <i>Project</i>	If <i>Project Participants</i> leaves the <i>Project</i> before the end of their <i>Crediting Period</i> , it is assumed that all of the <i>Biodiversity Benefits</i> achieved from the <i>Project Area</i> up to the point when the <i>Project Participant</i> leaves the <i>Project</i> will be lost, and that this loss was avoidable.

14.2 Unavoidable Loss

An *Unavoidable Loss* occurs if a *Loss Event* could not have reasonably been prevented or avoided by the *Project Coordinator*, for example force majeure events such as extreme weather or geological events, or civil unrest. This also includes any instances where activities were correctly implemented as described in the *Project's Technical Specifications* but were less effective than expected.

14.3 Loss events in Restoration Projects

14.3.1 Risk Buffer

Restoration Projects are required to contribute 20% of the *PVBCs* that they generate to a *Project*-specific *Risk Buffer*. This is a group of *PVBCs* that remain unsold and supports the integrity of that *Project's PVBCs*. *Risk buffer* certificates are retired for any *Reversals* of *PVBCs*. Requests for claims against a *Risk Buffer* can be submitted via the claims form available as an annex of the *Annual Report* Template.

A *Restoration Project* may pool their *Risk Buffer* with another *Restoration Project* if both *Projects*:

- Operate in the same *Ecoregion*;
- Are applying a similar *Project Intervention*; and

- Demonstrate understood and accepted shared risk and liability of the pooled *Risk Buffer* through an agreement signed by the *Project Coordinators*.

14.3.2 Demonstrating Loss Event

A *Loss Event* for *Restoration Projects* may lead to a *Reversal* if:

- The *Biodiversity Benefits* are reported as negative across three consecutive *Reporting Periods*; or,
- Negative *Biodiversity Benefits* are reported due to an *Unavoidable Loss*.

A *Reversal* can be demonstrated through monitoring data provided in *Annual Reports*, alongside justification and evidence as to whether it was caused by an *Avoidable Loss* or *Unavoidable Loss*. This is then verified at the following *Verification*.

14.3.3 Rectifying Loss Event

Projects must submit a claim against the *Risk Buffer* and buffer certificates equal to the reversed *Biodiversity Benefits* will be retired. If the *Risk Buffer* is depleted before the *Reversal* is remedied, then cancellations of the *Project's PVBCs* will be made on the *PV Nature Registry* to remedy the remainder *Reversed Biodiversity Benefits*. Plan Vivo will cooperate with the *Project* to select which *PVBCs* are most appropriate to cancel.

If the *Reversal* is caused by an *Avoidable Loss*, then the *Project* must pay back any certificates claimed from the *Risk Buffer* through an agreed reallocation process, before any further *PVBCs* are issued.

Claims on the *Risk Buffer* can be submitted at any time. If approved for an *Unavoidable Loss* before the following *Verification*, and the *Verification* deems that the *Reversal* was caused by an *Avoidable Loss*, then the *Project* will be required to pay back any *Risk Buffer* certificates that were retired before any further *PVBCs* are issued.

14.4 Loss events in Conservation Projects

14.4.1 Financial Reserve

Conservation Projects are required to contribute 20% of their income from the sale of *PVBCs* to a *Financial Reserve* for up to a maximum of the latest five consecutive *Reporting Periods*. This serves to financially support the activities of a *Conservation Project* when their expected net *Biodiversity Benefits* decrease due to an *Unavoidable Loss* (see Section 14.2).

Conservation *Projects* can access their Financial Reserves when:

- *Project* income has been negatively impacted by an *Unavoidable Loss*;
- Deposits were made into the *Financial Reserve* outside of the rolling 5-year *Reporting Period* window and have been fully or partially unused; and/or
- They are in the final year of their *Project Period*.

Requests for claims against a *Risk Buffer* can be submitted via the claims form available as an annex of the *Annual Report* Template. All withdrawals from a *Financial Reserve* must abide by the *Benefit Sharing Mechanism* as outlined in the *Project Agreement*.

14.4.2 Demonstrating a Loss Event

If the *Biodiversity Benefits* reported are less than expected due to a *Loss Event*, then this can be demonstrated through monitoring data provided in *Annual Reports*, alongside justification and evidence as to whether it was caused by an *Avoidable Loss* or *Unavoidable Loss*. This is then verified at the following *Verification*.

Reversals are not possible for *Conservation Projects* due to the different certificate types being generated (see Section 13).

14.4.3 Rectifying a Loss Event

If an *Avoidable Loss* occurs, no action is necessary. This is because the *Loss Event* will influence the number of *PVBCs* that the *Conservation Project* can generate in the subsequent years.

If an *Unavoidable Loss* occurs, then the *Project* may submit a claim against the *Financial Reserve*. This claim may continue for subsequent years until the *Biodiversity Benefits* have returned to expected levels or until the *Financial Reserve* is depleted. All claims are checked at the subsequent *Verification* and, if the *Verifier* deems that the *Reversal* was caused by an *Avoidable Loss*, then the *Project* will be required to pay back any claims made on the *Financial Reserve* in an expedited time frame.

Annex 1 – Version Control

Version Number	Date of release (DD/MM/YYYY)	Changes and additions since previous version
V1.1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update of the mention of Pivotal to Data Analytics Provider throughout. • Acronym TAC – Technical Advisory Committee added to list of acronyms. • Acronym TRP – Technical Review Panel added to list of acronyms. • Additional of TAC in the Roles & Responsibilities table section 1. • Update of the time frame for PIN review, PDD screening review, and Annual Report review from 4 to 6 weeks. • Addition of new section 3.2 – Approval of Data Analytic Providers • All hyperlinks now changed to footnotes <p>The section on grievances has been removed due to the creation of a new, standalone grievance mechanism. This can now be found on the Plan Vivo website.</p>