

# Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is defined by DEFRA as 'An approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than before'



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# Achieving Biodiversity Net Gain

Achieving BNG is a key theme in the UK Government's 25-year environment plan. BNG is currently required by Planning Policy in England (and other devolved UK nations) and will be mandated within the forthcoming Environment Bill for development in England. It will require:

- 1 10% mandatory net gain, for the majority of planning applications
- 2 Register of BNG sites
- 3 Maintenance of BNG sites for 30 years
- 4 Conservation covenants
- 5 Local nature reserve strategies



**BNG will be evidenced through the use of Defra Metric supported by use of the UK Habitat Classification Methodology**



**Many Councils and District authorities, and organisations, have already adopted BNG, and have requirements for developments**

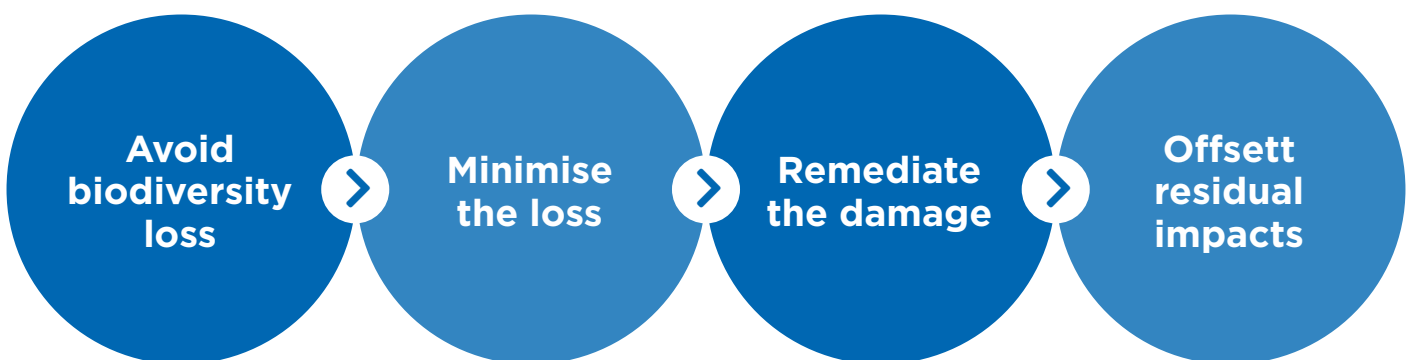
BNG can be delivered on a development/site of any size, whether it requires planning or permitted development. Although the application of BNG should be proportionate to the scale of the development and its impact on biodiversity, there may be opportunities for the delivery of additional BNG on larger sites or small sites with no or little impact. For example, for larger sites, there may be more opportunities for BNG at a landscape scale by linking habitats through habitat creation.



# Principles of Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG is not just about the use of the Metric - in order to achieve BNG, a project must be able to demonstrate that it has followed all 10 of the Principles of BNG (BNG, Good Practice Principles for Development, 2019). This includes consideration of:

## The Mitigation Hierarchy



***Where impacts are avoided, there are likely to be easier opportunities to deliver BNG.***

Importantly, BNG is not just about numbers - measurable outcomes are essential, but BNG must be about meaningful ecological outcomes and ecological functionality. It is also necessary to consider protected species and other legislations/policies relating to these.

BNG should be considered at all stages of a project, and as early as possible in its development:





Early engagement with stakeholders regarding BNG activities should be undertaken in each stage of a project. In addition to being good practice, this can improve the outcome for biodiversity



Impacts on irreplaceable biodiversity should be avoided – these impacts cannot be offset to achieve net gain

# Benefits to developers

- 1 A competitive advantage to developers when tendering for work and improve a companies reputation
- 2 Allow efficiencies to be made by avoiding unnecessary delays and costs from failing to address BNG earlier in the project development
- 3 Improve relationships with stakeholders by being transparent regarding BNG activities, supporting local priorities and engaging early on in the project
- 4 Through the use of BNG and the mitigation hierarchy, it is possible to evidence that proposals are in line with local/national priorities, best practice, and legislation/planning policy, therefore improving the likelihood of securing consents such as planning
- 5 Creating sites with high biodiversity value can enhance the well-being of local communities and attract people into areas, thus increasing investment
- 6 Improving biodiversity can also help developers achieve other commitments such as sustainability, for example, through planting to reduce flood risk

# Potential enhancements

## Potential Enhancements for Small Sites

## Sources (click for details)

Green and brown roofs	<a href="http://livingroofs.org">livingroofs.org</a>
Species rich grassland / wildflower meadows	<a href="http://rspb.org.uk">rspb.org.uk</a>
Species rich tree and hedge planting	<a href="http://woodlandtrust.org.uk">woodlandtrust.org.uk</a>
South facing banks for invertebrates	<a href="http://magnificentmeadows.com">magnificentmeadows.com</a>
Bug hotel and houses	<a href="http://rspb.org.uk">rspb.org.uk</a>
Reptile refugia and hibernacula	<a href="http://rspb.org.uk">rspb.org.uk</a>
Wildlife ponds	<a href="http://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk">freshwaterhabitats.org.uk</a>
Hedgehog gates in fencing / hedgehog boxes	<a href="http://wildlifetrusts.org">wildlifetrusts.org</a>
Bird boxes	<a href="http://rspb.org.uk">rspb.org.uk</a>
Bat boxes	<a href="http://bats.org.uk">bats.org.uk</a>
Altering buildings / new buildings	<a href="http://rspb.org.uk">rspb.org.uk</a>

In some cases, it will be possible through careful design to achieve multiple benefits and improve biodiversity. Natural Solutions are an excellent way to do this. For example, Swales can attenuate surface water drainage, bringing wider benefits such as habitats for species, aesthetic and recreational value.

## Get in touch

Our Environment and Planning Team are happy to assist with any queries you may have and help you smoothly transition to the new metric approach, delivering cost-effective biodiverse schemes.



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