



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

A guide to understanding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)



First, what's biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of plants, animals, and fungi that interact with each other and their environment to create ecosystems and ecological networks.



How is biodiversity measured?

Natural England has worked on ways of qualifying and quantifying biodiversity for BNG purposes. It is based on:

Condition

How well the habitat functions

Size

Area of habitat

Strategic significance

In an area prioritised for nature

Distinctiveness

Importance as a habitat

Did you know?

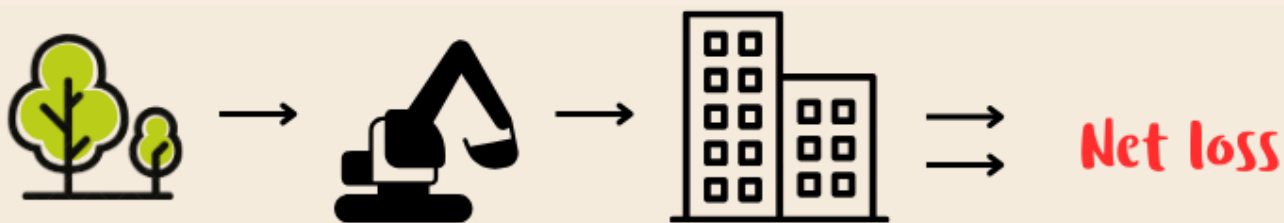
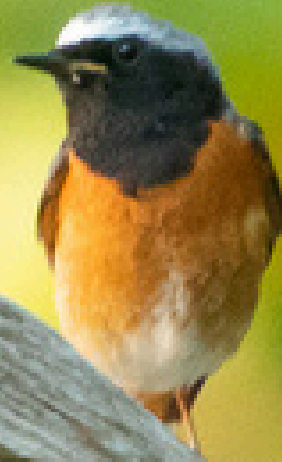
Habitat loss is a big contributor to the biodiversity crisis; remaining habitats are threatened by unsustainable farming and new developments.

What is BNG?

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a new legislation aimed at providing funding and opportunities for nature recovery in England through the planning system.

The aim is to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand by providing at least a

10% net gain



If a woodland is destroyed for development, the result is a net loss.



If a woodland is destroyed for development but replaced elsewhere, the result is no net loss.



If a woodland is destroyed for development but replaced elsewhere and more trees are added, the result is a net gain.

How can BNG be achieved?

Since 12th February, 2024, developers must boost biodiversity by 10% to get planning approval. This can be done by:



On-site

The development is left in better condition after development, through habitat creation or enhancement within the site.



Off-site

If onsite gains can't be achieved, it must be done offsite by improving habitats as close as possible to the site. This can be done through the landowners additional land, other landowners or habitat banks.



Biodiversity credits

Developers buy credits directly from the government, and it gets reinvested in nature recovery projects - this is a last resort and is much more expensive.

BNG for developers

Necessary documents to submit with a planning application

With Application

The Biodiversity Metric: a tool used to measure and ensure that developments improve biodiversity by at least 10%.

It calculates the ecological value of a site before and after development, considering **habitat type**, **size**, **quality**, and **location**. Developers must use this metric to assess their impact and demonstrate how they will enhance or offset biodiversity to gain planning approval.

- For large developments, use the Statutory Metric
- For smaller projects (fewer than 10 dwellings on <1 hectare or sites smaller than 0.5 hectares), use the Small Sites Metric (SSM)

With Application or after approval

- Biodiversity Net Gain Plan/Report:
 - Explains how the development will achieve biodiversity net gain.
 - Demonstrates compliance with regulations.
 - Provides evidence for BNG decisions and helps local planning authorities (LPAs) determine if development meets BNG criteria
- Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP):
 - Details habitat improvements either on-site or off-site.
 - Includes habitat monitoring, report monitoring and management proposals.



Check your local council's requirements as they may differ from national ones.

BNG for developers

BNG is a legal commitment for developers

Developers must legally commit to maintaining biodiversity improvements for 30 years through binding agreements. If they cannot achieve the required 10% net gain on-site, they must secure off-site habitat gains or purchase statutory credits, though credits are costly and limited in use.

Timeframe of Commitment

- On-site gains (habitat improvements within the development) must be maintained for **30 years** from project completion.
- Off-site gains (habitat creation elsewhere) are also legally required for **30 years** from when they are established.

Legal Agreements to Secure BNG

- Developers must enter into a **Section 106 agreement** (a legal obligation with the Local Planning Authority).
- Alternatively, they can set up a '**conservation covenant**' with a responsible body to ensure compliance.

Additional Guidance

- **Off-site Gains:**
 - Should be close to the development and can be bought from landowners, habitat bank operators, brokers, or a responsible body from a trading platform from LPA
 - Land must be registered for BNG to count
- **Statutory Credits:**
 - These are last-resort options if biodiversity gains cannot be achieved on-site or off-site.
 - They cannot be used to compensate for highly valuable or irreplaceable habitats.
 - The cost varies based on habitat type, and two credits are required per 1 biodiversity unit lost.



BNG for land managers

How land managers can sell BNG credits to developers who need to meet biodiversity requirements for planning approval.

It maybe be possible to combine BNG with other credit schemes:

- Agri-environment schemes (e.g., Sustainable Farming Incentive, Countryside Stewardship, Environmental Stewardship, Landscape Recovery)
- Nutrient and carbon credits
- Other nature markets

Selling more BNG credits:

Landowners can only sell additional credits

- After completing their legal commitment once target habitat condition has been achieved
- Before the commitment ends (if targets are already met), but this requires a new legal agreement.

How to sell credits:

- Sell independently.
- Partner with local NGOs or land managers to sell in groups (e.g., forming a habitat bank).
- Use a habitat bank operator, who leases the land and pays a fixed fee.

Who can sell credits?

Landowners, tenant farmers, long-term leaseholders, and businesses or organizations involved in habitat enhancement.

BNG for land managers

Selling credits

1

Register site on BNG registry

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-a-biodiversity-gain-site>

2

Can start habitat creation, enhancement, or management before allocating as gains site:

If creation/enhancement is appropriate to site conditions, meets local demand, or meets requirements of a specific development

3

Consult qualified ecologist to assess habitat units on site

Will get more units/ha if site is already in good condition

4

Price biodiversity units

Consider costs over 30 years, such as:

- initial creation/enhancement
- management of land for 30+ years
- monitoring + reporting
- insurance
- remedial work to correct failures
- machinery
- tools
- staff
- inflation

Keep us updated

We hope this guide has helped you better understand Biodiversity Net Gain!

We know it can be complex, so if you have any questions or need guidance, we're happy to help – just reach out via email:
planning@cheshirewt.org.uk

If you're working on habitat creation or restoration, we'd love to hear about your progress—feel free to share photos and stories with us!

For more information on our campaigns, visit our website:
<https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/take-action/campaign-for-nature>

Keep in touch



Useful resources

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/events/past-events/biodiversity-net-gain-local-authorities/biodiversity-net-gain-faqs>

https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/183/2022/04/BNG-Brochure_Final_Compressed-002.pdf

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