

Biodiversity net gain and the biodiversity metric

>>> DISCUSSION TOPIC 2

Biodiversity net gain and the biodiversity metric
 Led by Dr Nick White, Principal Advisor - Net Gain at Natural England – the government adviser on the natural environment in England

Biodiversity Net Gain: Benefits

- For nature
- For the economy – employment opportunities in the green economy; helping to speed up the planning process and provide more sustainable developments.
- Positives outcomes for people in place making; access to natural environment is unequally distributed across London. Provides opportunity to bring nature closer to where people live and work.

What is Net Gain?

- The image uses lego to explain net loss and net gain.
- Net Gain is where there is an uplift in the amount of nature post development.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- Policies:
- London Environment Strategy (2018)
 - National Planning Policy Framework (2018/2019/2021) – gains become measurable
 - Environment Act (2021) Royal Assent 9th Nov 2021 - biggest change

Environment Act 2021

- Key components of mandatory BNG (biodiversity net gain)
- England only
 - Amends Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA) and 2008 Planning Act (NSIP's) and mandates BNG in the planning process
 - Minimum 10% gain required & approval of net gain plan – need to receive approval before the development is proceed.
 - Off-site habitat secured for at least 30 years.
 - Delivered on site, off-site or via Statutory biodiversity Credits
 - Baseline and post intervention unit values calculated using standardised Biodiversity Metric
 - National register for net gain sites
 - Likely to become law – late 2023 (2 year transition period) & late 2025 (NSIPs)
 - Does not change existing legal protections.

Mechanisms for delivery of BNG

- On-site (units) – habitat creation or enhancement; landscape or green infrastructure (policy encourages)
 - Off-site units – New habitat creation or enhancement on land holdings or via habitat banks
- Potentially in full or combination
- Statutory Biodiversity Credits (only if units not available – last resort)
- Landscape -scale strategic habitat creation delivering nature- based solutions.

BNG Policy Consultation – early '22

- Consultation in 3 parts:
- Part 1: Defining the scope Town and Country Planning Act 1990 development – what level of exemptions/ type of projects
 - Part 2: Applying the biodiversity gain objective to different types of development
 - Part 3: How the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirement will work for Town and Country Planning Act 1990 development. – standardised BNG template
- Govt response= likely January 2023

Statutory Biodiversity Metric Consultation – Autumn '22

- Consultation to inform Statutory Biodiversity Metric – everyone will have to use to calculate BNG

Based upon Metric 3.1 and Small sites metric (SSM)

- Included:
- Calculation tool
 - Guidance
 - GIS interface
 - Case Studies
- Covered short and long-term changes.
- Govt responds= likely January '23 + Statutory metric published late Feb/ early March '23.

Metric Applications

- It is designed to work on different kind of scenarios – from small scale urban interventions all the way through major infrastructure projects. Covers terrestrial and intertidal.

Marine Net Gain Consultation – summer '22

- Establishing basics of a marine net gain approach

- Key principles
 - Biodiversity Net Gain or Environmental Net Gain
 - Metric- based on none metric-based.
- N.B – not part of the Environment Act 2021
- Govt response= likely Spring 2023.

Management, monitoring & reporting of BNG

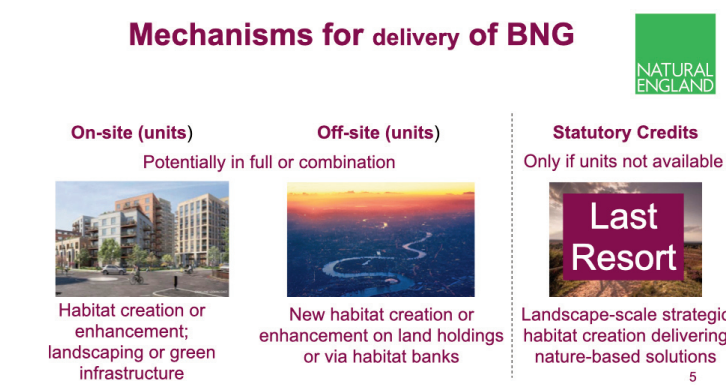
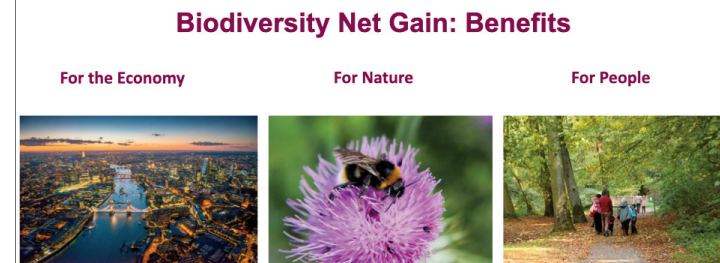
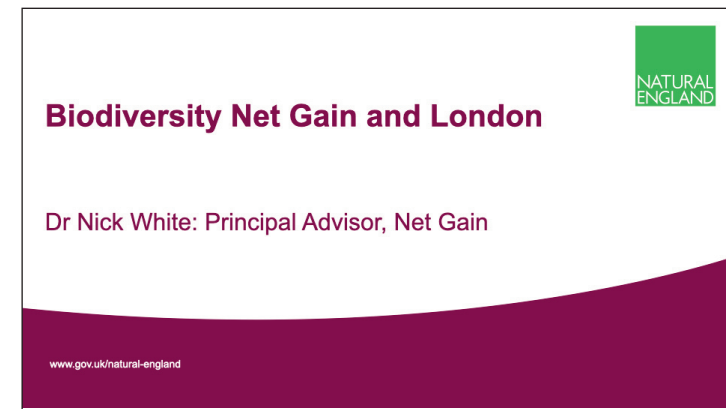
- Monitoring requirements are likely to be set by: The LPA as part of planning conditions & obligations
- The Responsible Body where enhancements are secured via Conservation Covenants – obligations to be passed from generation to another;
- It will be the landowner or developer's responsibility to fulfil there or to delegate them to another body
 - Failure to deliver BNG outcomes can result in enforcement action by planning authority.

NE are developing a standardised template for habitat management and monitoring.

- To summarise where we are currently:
- BNG now vs. mandatory BNG**
- BNG now
- The percentage required is dependent on the Local Plan
 - BNG can be delivered on-site or off-site in the market, both via units.
 - Land delivering BNG is not formally registered on a national database.
 - Projects delivering BNG can use any metric to calculate losses and/or gains in habitat
 - Land delivering habitats for BNG purposes is not required to be legally secured.

Mandatory BNG (Nov 2023)

- The percentage BNG required is a minimum of 10%. This can also be higher if stated in the Local Plan.
- BNG can be delivered on-site or off-site, as units, or as a last resort via the statutory credits system.
- Land delivering BNG off-site is required to be formally registered on the national Biodiversity Gain Site Register.
- Development delivering BNG is required to use the Secretary of State Biodiversity Metric to quantify losses and/or gains in habitat.
- Land delivering habitats for BNG purpose is required to be legally secured and maintained for a



minimum of 30 years.

Additional Information

- Habitat, Management & Monitoring Plan (HMMP) template – currently being trialled
- BNG Reporting template – due to be trialled
- BNG guidance for developers, landowners and LPAs.
- Stacking & Bundling+ Additionality rules.

BNG and London

- Key considerations:
- Site baseline biodiversity value
 - Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)- data service can provide ecological & greenspace data to help calculate baseline biodiversity value
 - Site Survey Data
 - Delivering London habitat priorities
 - All London Green Grid
 - London LNRS (London Nature Recovery Strategy)

(coming)

- Scheme Design
- Ecological & development outcomes
- Availability of offsite delivery
- SINC's
- Other existing greenspace/blue space.

Biodiversity Net Gain & Urban Greening Factor BNG

- NPPF + coming legal requirement.
- Biodiversity focus
- Requirement is delivering a % gain for all developments
- Site baseline drives target

UGF

- Linked to London Plan greening framework
- Ecosystem services focus
- Requirement is meeting a fixed target depending on development type.
- Site baseline not relevant to target.

They are different but if you achieve the BNG, it will likely contribute to UGF and vice versa. GLA published a design guide on Urban Greening for Biodiversity Net Gain. and London Wildlife Trust : https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/urban_greening_and_bng_design_guide_march_2021.pdf

BNG London Examples:

1 Kidbrooke Village – Cator Park
 Berkeley Homes Development - worked with London Wildlife Trust RB Greenwich + HCA Design to deliver 4800 homes. Onsite BNG delivery (+200%) Sir David Attenborough Awards for Enhancing Biodiversity

2 Transport for London

Long term partnership with GiGL – developed a biodiversity baseline. Committed to delivering 10% BNG for relevant TFL projects. General net gain for biodiversity across >>>

estate- road, rail, etc.

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3 London Borough of Sutton Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2025 – No Net Loss & Biodiversity Net Gain.

Development types - Large, medium and some small applications

- Use of a metric
- Onsite gains where possible
- Secured & maintained 30 years.

Pilot project with GiGL – BNG mapping products for the Borough.

Things to consider in preparation for mandatory BNG

- Minimum 10% requirement, but this could be higher depending on local policy
- Current uses of the space and realistic ecological ambitions
- Other factors impacting the site, such as land-

scape/historic/recreational etc.

- Engagement with local communities to highlight any changes that may be taking place.

Top Tips For Developers

- Consider early – site selection/design stage
- o Avoid high nature value sites if possible.
- o Integrate nature into scheme design.
- Retain good existing habitat where possible
- On or off site or both? Consider strategy – pros and cons
- Deliver local priorities to achieve BNG more easily.

Discussion:

BW: An obvious concern is about the availability of the skills as it is a new industry.. What measure should be taken to fulfil the skills demand?

On parallel, I would like to talk about off site market. I went to a conference about BNG in Chester led by 2 planning barristers. They already have clients,

mainly land owners of large rural estates who hired them to explore the commercial possibility to lift up the value of valueless, marginal land and develop it for creating the credits. Would you like to comment on this aspect and can this value be applied to the missing resource that the BNG policies demand?

NW: It is a new industry; the professional body for ecologists - CIEEM is doing a lot of training courses for ecologists based on BNG and quite specifically on the metrics. Other professional bodies like the landscape institute RTPI are also running training for this. We've been running a 2 years contract with the planning advisory service, specifically for local authority offices and members.

There was a discussion if people using the metrics should be accredited. I think in a long term this would be useful, but this is the point that you BW made about resources capacity. If it was introduced immediately there would be a blockage as there is not sufficient trainers.

Statutory Biodiversity Metric Consultation – Autumn '22

Consultation to inform Statutory Biodiversity Metric

- Based upon Metric 4.0 and Small Sites Metric (SSM)
- Included:
 - > Calculation tool
 - > Guidance
 - > GIS interface
 - > Case studies
- Covered short & long-term changes



Govt response = likely January '23 + Statutory metric published March '23

Metric Applications



Marine Net Gain Consultation – summer '22

Establishing basics of a marine net gain approach

- Key principles
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- Metric-based on none metric-based

N.B. – NOT part of the Environment Act 2021

Govt response = likely Spring 2023



Management, monitoring & reporting of BNG

- Monitoring requirements are likely to be set by:
 - the LPA as part of planning conditions & obligations
 - the Responsible Body where enhancements are secured via Conservation Covenants

- It will be the landowner or developers responsibility to fulfil these, or to delegate them to another body

- Failure to deliver BNG outcomes can result in enforcement action
- **NE are developing a standardised template for habitat management & monitoring**



BNG now vs. mandatory BNG

BNG NOW	MANDATORY BNG (NOV 2023)
The percentage BNG required is dependent on the Local Plan.	The percentage BNG required is a minimum of 10%. This can be higher if stated in the Local Plan.
BNG can be delivered on-site or off-site in the market, both via units.	BNG can be delivered on-site or off-site, on units, or as a last resort via the statutory credits system.
Land delivering BNG to meet formally registered in a national database.	Land delivering BNG off-site is required to be formally registered on the National Biodiversity Gain Site Register.
Projects delivering BNG can use any metric to calculate losses and/or gains in habitat.	Development delivering BNG is required to use the Secretary of State's Biodiversity Metric to quantify losses and/or gains in habitat.
Land delivering habitats for BNG purposes is not required to be legally secured.	Land delivering habitats for BNG purposes is required to be legally secured and maintained for a minimum of 30 years.

NB. Key differences only. Not an exhaustive list of every change.

NB. NSIP's = 2025

Additional Information

- **Habitat, Management & Monitoring Plan (HMMP)** template – currently being trialled
- **BNG Reporting** template – due to be trialled
- **BNG guidance** for developers, landowners and LPAs
- **Stacking & Bundling + Additionality** rules

Dates of above all tbc



More Information

BNG and London

Key considerations

- Site baseline biodiversity value
 - Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) – data service
 - Site survey data
- Delivering London habitat priorities
 - All London Green Grid
 - London LNRS (coming)
- Scheme design
 - Ecological & development outcomes
- Availability of offsite delivery
 - SINCs
 - Other existing greenspace/blue space



BNG – London Example 1

Kidbrooke Village –Cator Park

Berkeley Homes, London Wildlife Trust, RB Greenwich + HCA Design

4,800 homes

Onsite BNG delivery (+200%)

Sir David Attenborough Award for Enhancing Biodiversity



BNG London Example 3

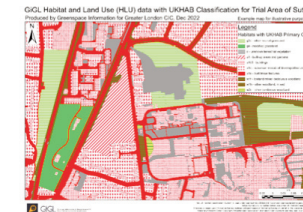
London Borough of Sutton

Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2025 – No Net Loss & Biodiversity Net Gain

Large, medium and some small applications

- Use of a metric
- Onsite gains where possible
- Secured & maintained 30 years

Pilot project with GiGL – BNG mapping products for the Borough



Biodiversity Net Gain & Urban Greening Factor



BNG – London Example 2

Transport for London

Long-term data partnership with GiGL

Developed a biodiversity baseline

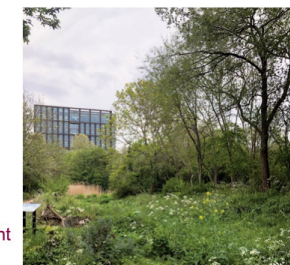
Committed to delivering 10% BNG for relevant TFL projects

General net gain for biodiversity across estate – road, rail etc



To consider in preparation for mandatory BNG

- Minimum 10% requirement, but this could be higher depending on local policy
- Current uses of the space and realistic ecological ambitions
- Other factors impacting the site, such as landscape/historic/recreational etc
- Engagement with local communities to highlight any changes that may be taking place



Government made a promise that it will meet any additional burdens that planning authority is facing. An initial sum of money was provided to help. We are expecting to see more on that.

About off-site market, for any landowner that has a land without much value to it, this can be an opportunity to lift up the value. Financial institution started to invest in this sector.

Brian Whiteley: Will this affect Neighbourhood Plan preparation as well as local plans? Will steering groups without effective LPA support find difficulties setting any local priorities for development sites they identified?

NW: Outside of London there are LPA that that issued calls for local sites to be used as credits for developers. From legislative point of view the focus is on the planning authority but it is scope to be integrated on neighbourhood plans.

Nicholas Falk (NF): Much of the land in the London Green Belt is apparently of low ecological value. Could the principles of Biodiversity Net Gain

be used to assess land in the Green Belt that is located in areas of high demand near railway stations so that more precious areas can be conserved?

Stefanos Koryzis: or framed differently: Can BNG be used to unlock certain Green Belt sites for development – where building on a portion of a given 'poor quality' Green Belt site can be paired with a marked improvement of the rest of the site's green spaces, wildlife habitats?

NW: I agree with NF, there are sites on Green Belt with little biodiversity value. Those sites could provide good opportunity for the value to be enhanced.

To the second point, BNG does not change existing policies.

Nigel Moor: The success of Green Belt policy depends on confidence in retaining its openness. It cannot be compromised.

BW: Maybe this is a rationale to be more critical-selective about land which contributes usefully to Green Belt.



- Consider early – site selection/design stage
 - > Avoid high nature value sites if possible
 - > Integrate nature into scheme design
- Retain good existing habitat where possible
- On or off-site or both? Consider strategy and pros and cons
- Deliver local priorities to achieve BNG more easily

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