

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): Getting it right

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10th November 2021



Measuring Biodiversity Value

- Early calculators were too simplistic
- Species/m²



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Policy and Legislation

The Lawton Review, 2010
'Bigger, Better and More Joined Up'

NPPF, 2016 'No Net Loss'

25 Year Environment Plan, 2018
Strategies and targets for a greener
more prosperous future

NPPF, 2019 'Net Gain'

The Environment Bill, 2021?
**Mandatory for all developments
(with certain exceptions) subject
to the Town and Country Planning
Act to achieve a 10% net gain**

Defra Metric

- Piloted in 2012
- Version 3.0 released in July 2021
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey replaced by Habs

‘...designed to provide a means of assessing changes in biodiversity value (losses or gains) brought about by development or changes in land management. The metric is a **habitat based approach to determining a proxy biodiversity value**’

Defra Metric 3.0

Value

- Habitat type
- Condition
- Distinctiveness
- Difficulty to recreate

Impact

- Enhanced
- Retained
- Degraded
- Compensated (time and difficulty factors)
- Lost

Mitigation Hierarchy

- Avoid– retain, protect and enhance
- Mitigate– Recreate and enhance ON SITE
- Compensate– Create and enhance OFF SITE

The metric is weighted towards compensation being the last resort!

On-site Quick Wins

- Keep most valuable bits, i.e. rarer habitats or those that take longer to establish (woodland)
- Include non-developable land, e.g. steep areas or areas liable to flooding
- Native landscaping that is species rich or has pockets of woodland
- Species rich, e.g. wildflower meadows
- Dual purpose area, e.g. SuDS and POS

Off-Site Options

Local First

- Other land within your land holding
- Wildlife Trusts
 - Typically donation at £/biodiversity unit contributing to a specific project or management of a site
- The Environment Bank
 - Private business established to facilitate offsetting through 3rd party land owners

Off-Site Options

➤ Biodiversity Credits

- Online credit trade system with network of Biodiversity Credit Project Partners
- Project Partners deliver habitat enhancement and sell 'biodiversity units' to the credit platform
- Developers purchase credits to offset the impact of the development

Very much still in development!

Ecus & Natural England Biodiversity Credits Pilot Project

Aim: To prepare, manage and evaluate activities to make nine habitat provision projects ready for to receive investment under a Biodiversity Credits Scheme.

Objectives:

- Deliver the preliminary activities required to make a project 'investment ready', including:
 - Biodiversity net gain calculations (pre and post management)
 - 30 year Habitat management Plan ;
 - Set out required governance structures; and
 - Pricing calculations.

BCP Project

- 9 Sites
- 48Ha– 8600Ha
- ‘Project Partners’ e.g. Essex Wildlife Trust, Farm consortiums, Private estates and farms
- Establish the baseline value
- Develop a Habitat Management Plan and cost its delivery over 30 years
- Establish postintervention score (8% 219%)

Case Study 1

Client	Volume House Builder
Site	4.7Ha near Halifax
Baseline habitats	Poor semi-improved grassland, scrub, broadleaved and coniferous woodland, bare-ground, buildings and hard standing
Baseline land use	Mixed commercial and small holding (low level horse grazing and pigs)
Proposals	140-150 residential units
Baseline Score	18.58 HU
Option 1 75% grey infrastructure 25% 'typical' green infrastructure	-14.36 HU (-77.28 %)
Option 2 75% grey infrastructure 25% 'ecological' green infrastructure	-13.81 BU (-74.36 %)

Case Study 1

Option 3 Option 2 plus 0.35Ha of adjacent woodland	-13.42 HU (-58.81 %)
Option 4 65% grey infrastructure 35% 'ecological' green infrastructure 0.35Ha of adjacent woodland	-10.11 HU (-44.30 %)

- All Options presume total loss – retention would play an important role in the post-development score
- Local policy: 10% gain



Case Study 2

Client	HBD
Site	22Ha
Baseline habitats	Mainly cropland with some hardstanding, scrub, woodland and grassland
Baseline land use	Arable farm
Proposals	Commercial units with retained buffer of woodland
Baseline Score	68.26 HU
Change	-25.29 (-37.05%)
Off-site compensation required	32.27 HU to achieve 10%

Complications:

- Council policy refers to 'biodiversity gain where possible' but condition relates to 10%
- BNG not raised at pre-app therefore not considered within feasibility
- Local provision project difficult (Environment Bank and Local Wildlife Trust unable to assist)

Next steps for Ecus

- Ecus design, create and manage service
- Lunchtime learning sessions for clients
- Pilot project and postpilot project work continues with Natural England (investment readiness fund)
- Aid our clients to understand and achieve BNG through early engagement

What does this mean for our you?

- Engage an ecologist early, really early, ideally at viability!
- Ecologist will be able to provide advice on constraints and opportunities (e.g. Ecus digital mapping service)
- Existing value calculated with higher value habitats identified which can then help to inform the site layout
- Habitat retention and protection will become the norm...no more soil stripping entire sites
- Biodiversity Protection Zones BPZ

Questions?

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