

Biodiversity Net Gain

What is it?

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development that ensures habitats for the wildlife are in a better state than they were prior to the development. This is a pre-commencement condition where, once planning permission has been granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development.

BNG is mandatory under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021\)](#) and developers must deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.

How is BNG measured?

The statutory biodiversity metric measures all types of habitats (grassland, hedgerows, lakes, woodland, rivers, streams etc.) in standardised biodiversity units. It calculates how many units a habitat contained before development and how many units are needed to replace the units of habitat lost to achieve 10% BNG. The formula takes into account the habitat's size, condition, strategic significance and type. Furthermore, for created or enhanced habitats the formula also considers the difficulty of creation or enhancement, the time it takes a habitat to reach its target condition and the distance from the habitat loss. This is calculated with the [statutory biodiversity metric tool](#) and is further explained in the [biodiversity metric guide](#).

A developer should hire an ecologist to use the metric tool and advise on the metric tool's calculations.

These calculations are reviewed by the Local Planning Authority and may reject them if they do not believe the calculations to have been completed by a competent person.

The 10% increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

Who is affected by BNG?

Developers of major developments, developers of small sites from 2 April 2024, developers of nationally significant infrastructure projects from late November 2025, land managers wanting to sell in the BNG market and Local Planning Authorities.

Who is exempt?

Unless a development meets one of the statutory exemptions listed below, it will be required to deliver a minimum of 10% BNG.

- Existing planning applications – if the application was made before BNG became mandatory on 12 February 2024
- Variations of planning permission – transitional arrangements apply for variations to existing planning permissions.
- Developments below the threshold – a development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square meters (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat, or 5 meters of on-site linear habitats, such as hedgerows. Note that a development 'impacts' a habitat if it decreases the biodiversity value.
- Householder applications – applications made by householders (as defined within article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order

2015. This includes small projects such as home extensions, conservatories or loft conversions.

- Self-build and custom build applications – the exemption applies to this type of development when it consists of no more than 9 dwellings, is on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares and it consists exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Customer Housebuilding Act 2015.
- Biodiversity gain site – developments undertaken for the purpose of fulfilling the BNG planning condition for another development are exempt.
- High speed rail transport network – exemptions apply to any development that forms part of, or ancillary to, the high-speed railway transport network, comprising connections between all or any of the places or parts of the transport network specified in section 1(2) of the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Act 2013.
- Urgent Crown Developments are exempt by the Environment Act 2021.
- Developments that are granted planning permission by a development order (including permitted development rights) are exempt by the Environment Act 2021.

Local Planning Authority

An LPA must check that the following has been submitted with the planning application when the development is subject to the BNG condition:

- a statement confirming whether the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition.
- the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat on the date of application (or an earlier date) including the completed metric calculation (showing the calculations, the publication date and version of the biodiversity metric used to calculate that value).
- where the applicant wishes to use an earlier date, the proposed earlier date and the reasons for that date.
- a statement confirming whether the biodiversity value of the on-site habitat is lower on the date of application (or an earlier date) because of the carrying on of activities ('degradation').
- where unauthorised degradation has taken place between 30 January 2020 and the submission of the planning application, the relevant date should be immediately before these activities were carried out.
- a description of any [irreplaceable habitat](#) on the land, that exists on the date of application (or an earlier date).
- a plan drawn to an identified scale (including the direction of north), showing on-site habitat existing on the date of application (or an earlier date), and any irreplaceable habitat.

When determining a planning application, biodiversity net gain will often be a material consideration and LPAs will want to consider, when relevant, whether the biodiversity gain condition will be met. When the Biodiversity Gain Plan has been approved and development commenced, LPAs will need to monitor the implementation of the plan and, where appropriate, take enforcement action if commitments related to the plan are not met.