

Fixing Biodiversity Net Gain

Executive summary

- The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) system was introduced to secure positive outcomes for nature from development. Due to application loopholes, enforcement shortfalls, limited ambition and patchy coverage it is currently not capable of fulfilling this policy objective.
- The barriers to successful policy implementation could be swiftly resolved by a package of measures, including:
 - Using the review mechanism in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 to tighten up the de minimis exemption and remove the self and custom build exemption.
 - Introducing a nature conservation project exemption.
 - Amending the Enforcement and Post-Permission matters guidance to require enforcement action to be taken when BNG requirements are not complied with.
 - Ensuring on site biodiversity net gains are registered, ensuring parity between on and off site biodiversity net gain delivery and aiding monitoring and enforcement.
 - Amending the BNG Planning Practice Guidance to encourage local authorities to go beyond 10% net gain.
- In order for BNG to provide more than marginal benefits for nature, the overall ambition of the system should also be increased by:
 - Reassessing the 10% gain requirement, with a view to legislating to increasing minimum gain requirements if 10% is not environmentally sufficient.
 - Introducing regulations this year to apply BNG to all projects consented through the NSIP regime and progressing plans for Marine Net Gain
- These interventions would render BNG more fit for purpose and help ensure that the new Government's development ambitions can be delivered in a way that also contributes to the achievement of biodiversity targets set under the Environment Act.

BNG: Under-delivering for nature

The introduction of BNG through the Environment Act 2021 marked an opportunity to change the relationship between development and nature recovery. Historically development has been a driver of nature decline. The new BNG requirement for development to lead to a measurable uplift in biodiversity has the potential to turn the arc of development impacts into a more positive direction for nature. This change in direction must be secured to benefit local commitments, help ensure that the Government is able to meet its Environment Act target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, and boost wider nature recovery efforts.

For now, this potential remains unrealised. The implementation of mandatory BNG under the previous Government was undermined by a number of policy errors, resulting in many cases from a failure to engage with environmental and green building experts. Overly broad exemptions have allowed too many developers to avoid BNG requirements entirely and enforcement shortfalls will allow others to skimp on delivery and maintenance. Meanwhile, anomalous exemptions mean that projects with the primary aim of delivering environmental improvements are being captured by the regulations and hindering positive action to improve biodiversity through habitat restoration and creation. Restrictive guidance on the scale of net gain has put a cap on the ambitions of developers and local authorities seeking to maximise their nature recovery contributions. Work on promises to extend BNG to major infrastructure and to marine development has been sluggish.

As the new Government progresses plans for a new wave of housing and renewable energy development, it is critically important to correct these errors. Such improvements are feasible; BNG was only implemented six months ago, these are still early days. Some 'snagging' issues were to be expected and those that have developed should be swiftly corrected. After applying the immediate fixes set out in this briefing, the Government should bring forward the wholesale of review of BNG scheduled for 2029, to fundamentally assess how BNG is delivering for nature.

Fixing BNG will be a key step to delivering on the Government's manifesto promise to '*ensure development benefits communities and nature*'. The combination of careful site choice and the guarantee that all projects will generate genuine biodiversity improvements provides a baseline for nature-positive development. Functional BNG provides a strong foundation for delivering genuine gain, on top of Habitats Regulations requirements to prevent harm to the most precious places for nature.¹

We propose the following policy interventions to ensure that BNG actually works as intended, to generate biodiversity improvements at scale and underpin a wider win-win approach to development and nature recovery.

Increasing the effectiveness of BNG

Reviewing exemptions

In August 2024, the Green Finance Institute (GFI) published an assessment of the first five months of mandatory BNG being in place. The assessment, titled a 'roadmap for action' reported a number of significant implementation flaws. One of the most startling findings concerned early data on BNG application:

'On the demand side, feedback from the market suggests that very little demand is coming in due to exemptions and other routes being relied on to circumvent BNG obligations. Early market research from

¹ See https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/planning_ahead_on_land_and_sea.pdf & https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Planning_Reform_that_works_for_nature.pdf

BDP Pitmans suggests that around 0.5% of total planning applications submitted since 12 February 2024 have been subject to BNG.²

The use of exemptions to circumvent BNG obligations is not a surprise. eNGOs and the UK Green Building Council raised concerns with the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in December 2023 around the proposed wording of the 'de minimis' exemption in the draft BNG Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and its potential to function as a loophole.

The de minimis exemption had originally been intended to exempt developments with negligible nature impacts across the whole site from BNG, covering development sites which *included* less than 25 square metres of non-priority habitat in its boundaries. The exemption had been proposed primarily to cover very small sites and those on previously developed land. The wording of the PPG did not adopt this expected whole site approach, instead specifying that any development which *impacted* less than 25 square metres of on-site non-priority habitat could be covered by the de minimis exemption.³

The *include* approach would have allowed for swift assessment of whether a development qualified for the exemption, a relatively cut-and-dried matter of calculating the amount of non-priority habitat within the red line of the development boundary. The *impact* wording is much more flexible, allowing developers to carefully locate built footprints with a view to arguing that overall less than 25 square metres of habitat is directly impacted. As the GFI report highlights, habitat next to built footprints might not be directly built on but *'would highly likely be impacted during construction and/or occupation'*. A habitat could be dissected and fragmented by carefully sited buildings, and be subject to denudation and pollution from their construction and occupation, but still not qualify for BNG measures to compensate for the damage. Far from exempting very small sites and sites on previously developed land, as was the original intention, the de minimis exemption could be used to remove sites with a significant amount of affected natural habitat from BNG requirements.

Concerns about this open-door to BNG avoidance were shrugged off by the previous administration and the PPG, and the accompanying exemption regulations⁴, were published with the flexible *impact* wording for the de minimis exemption. The GFI data suggests that many developers have spotted this opportunity to avoid BNG obligations and have chosen to exploit it.

The self and custom build exemption, covering developments of less than 9 dwellings meeting the definitions set out in the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015⁵, poses another problem. Nature does not register whether a damaging development is self-built or conventionally built; unmitigated damage is unmitigated damage. Also, as the GFI report highlights, the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act definitions *'are difficult to verify in practice, leading to a significant risk of*

² <https://legacy.greenfinanceinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/GFI-BNG-ROADMAP.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/47/regulation/9/made>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/17/section/1>

misuse in the context of BNG exemptions... anecdotally, LPAs have received significantly more self-build and custom build applications since 12 February 2024.'

This problem of verification also applies to the de minimis exemption. Planning departments that are still resource strapped, and lacking ecological expertise, will struggle to assess complex claims about the exact relationships between individual buildings on a development and surrounding habitats, and to verify whether a development is genuinely self or custom build. Both exemptions create loopholes for bold applicants to seek to avoid BNG through.

There is a further deviation from standard BNG requirements which actually benefits nature; the stipulation that when special rules apply when irreplaceable habitats would be lost through a development.⁶ This deviation rightly recognises that developers cannot achieve net gain where irreplaceable habitats are damaged or destroyed because the ecological value of these habitats cannot be valued as they cannot be replaced. However, currently the list of irreplaceable habitats for the purposes of BNG (as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework) does not capture all rare and special habitats which cannot be replaced or would take so long to reestablish that they are virtually irreplaceable, such as ancient hedgerows, rivers, lakes, and ponds, long-established woodland and priority grasslands such as floodplain meadows. Without being defined or listed as irreplaceable habitats in the BNG regulations, these special habitats are at risk of being traded away by BNG, harmed or destroyed and replaced by lower quality or commonplace habitats. The previous Government recognised the gaps in the list of irreplaceable habitats, and potential impacts on BNG delivery, and indicated its intention to consult on expanding the list in the NPPF and for the purposes of BNG.⁷ However, this consultation has not yet come forward, and in the meantime, these vital and rare habitats are at risk of being traded away by BNG.

Finally, there is a need for a new exemption, for projects that can clearly evidence that their primary purpose is for environmental management and restoration. Since the implementation of BNG, it has become clear that some conservation projects requiring planning permission, particularly in freshwater habitats, do not have the capacity to meet the BNG requirements that apply to them. The Rivers Trust reports that a number of river restoration schemes have been held up as planning authorities have pursued BNG contributions in excess of the project's ability to contribute, with the ecological gain inherent to the project not being factored into its credit (especially when the gain is improved water quality, rather than direct habitat creation). Conservation projects typically have limited funding available, the time and resources required to overcome BNG hurdles is creating unnecessary barriers to environmental improvement - directly counter to the aims of the legislation. This inability within BNG to register when projects are genuinely conservation focussed is putting crucial freshwater habitat restoration at risk. A new exemption is the simplest way to resolve this.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/irreplaceable-habitats>

⁷ <https://defraenvironment.blog.gov.uk/2023/10/05/irreplaceable-habitats-and-bng-what-you-need-to-know/>

Recommended action:

- The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 require the Secretary of State to review the exemptions from 'time to time'. MHCLG and DEFRA should instigate such a review this autumn, with a view to amending the regulations and PPG to change the threshold for the de minimis exemption so that it applies to the amount of habitat across the whole site, and is fixed at an appropriate level (perhaps 5 metres squared). The review should also consider removing the self and custom build exemption, create an environmental management and restoration projects exemption and seek to ensure that across the board sufficient evidence requirements are in place to disincentivise abuse of all exemptions.
- MHCLG and DEFRA should also immediately issue new guidance to local authorities, to help them better navigate the current exemptions as the review takes place.
- MHCLG and DEFRA should consult this year on expanding the list of irreplaceable habitats in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to ensure that all such habitats are not included within BNG calculations. This consultation should also propose a definition of irreplaceability, to inform subsequent necessary guidance on assessments of irreplaceable habitats within the planning system.

Improving enforcement

BNG will only deliver for nature if the gains it intends are actually delivered and then sustained. Currently, there is reason to doubt that this will be the case.

A horizon-scan of risks to mandatory BNG, published in Conservation Biology in October 2023, identified enforcement as a key danger area. The paper concluded that *'Gains promised on-site risk being legally unenforceable because of a significant lack of resourcing and the majority of LPAs having no in-house ecological expertise, plus, violations may not reach the legal threshold required for LPAs to launch enforcement action.'*⁸

Resourcing for BNG enforcement remains insufficient. In 2022 80% of enforcement officers surveyed by the RTPI reported that there were not enough officers in their team to carry out their workload⁹, a workload which BNG has now significantly increased. The previous Government did provide new funding for local authorities to cover BNG monitoring and enforcement, however this amounted to 0.2 FTE post per authority. Further funding, ranging from 0.33 FTE and 0.66 FTE equivalents, was provided to enable greater ecological expertise.¹⁰

⁸ <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cobi.14198>

⁹ <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/13292/planning-enforcement-resourcing-report-final.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/implementing-statutory-biodiversity-net-gain.pdf>

This combined provision is less than half of that identified as the minimum required to deliver BNG well by local authority professionals.¹¹ Even with the proposed further increase in planning officers¹² it will not be enough to allow for the level of monitoring required to check that developers are delivering on BNG promises, especially on-site. It is for this reason that the National Audit Office (NAO), in their 2023 report on BNG, identified compliance and enforcement as one of the main risks to the long-term benefits of statutory BNG.¹³ Shortfalls in ecological expertise at planning consent stage may also cause BNG issues.

International experience of biodiversity offsets shows that lack of capacity in and enforcement by local councils is a key reason why offsets fail to deliver.¹⁴ This mistake must not be repeated in mandatory BNG in England. Further investment and guidance are needed to enable and empower enforcement officers and LPAs to monitor and enforce the delivery of BNG. An uplift in resourcing would also allow for potential expansion in the BNG quality assurance scheme currently being piloted by Natural England, the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and some eNGOs. to enable further enforcement improvements.

The job of currently stretched enforcement teams will be made yet harder by the lack of a central register of on-site BNG gains (a register of off-site credits has been created). In the words of the GFI report: *'Developers are not required to register their on-site biodiversity units on the biodiversity gain sites register or any equivalent register for transparency and monitoring purposes. Though information about on-site gains can be found on individual applications in the Planning Portal, this information is not easily accessed or scrutinised by market stakeholders, preventing an equal assessment with off-site units.'*¹⁵

As well as making the job of local authority enforcement teams harder, this lack of an on-site register will hinder efforts by Natural England, environmental groups and academics to support enforcement through their own monitoring and analysis of BNG promise delivery. It will also prevent local residents and groups from understanding and seeing where and how new development is delivering for nature in their communities, alongside new built infrastructure. In early August, Natural England's BNG Evaluation Advisory Group published an open letter calling for a register of on-site BNG gains in order to ensure transparency, boost monitoring and secure the desired policy outcomes.¹⁶

Even if monitoring is sufficient to detect shortfalls in agreed BNG delivery, that will not guarantee enforcement action in every case. Existing guidance on enforcement advises local authorities to only

¹¹<https://randd.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectID=20638&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=NR0183&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10>

¹²<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-rachel-reeves-is-taking-immediate-action-to-fix-the-foundations-of-our-economy>

¹³<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/implementing-statutory-biodiversity-net-gain.pdf>

¹⁴<https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12820>

¹⁵<https://legacy.greenfinanceinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/GFI-BNG-ROADMAP.pdf> p32

¹⁶https://www.naturerecovery.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/OpenLetterSpatialData_6.8.24.pdf

take action against violations of planning conditions where the violation represents a *'serious harm to a local public amenity.'*¹⁷ This is a high bar that is unlikely to capture violations of BNG planning conditions.

There is a real risk that many BNG promises from developers are not delivered on the ground, and that these broken commitments are not picked up or acted on, undermining the efficacy of the entire policy. Public trust in BNG remains low, without action on enforcement this trust will deteriorate further as communities see promised nature gains failing to materialise or to be sustained.

Recommended actions:

- The 2024 Budget and ensuing Comprehensive Spending Review should earmark dedicated funds for increasing enforcement and ecological capacity in local authorities, to better monitor and enforce delivery of BNG commitments over the full thirty year period. This should be accompanied by a wider uplift in local authority resourcing, to ensure adequate expertise to assess BNG proposals before the grant of planning permissions. A further increase in fees chargeable by local authorities and statutory agencies could help secure this uplift.
- MHCLG and Defra should amend The Biodiversity Gain Site Register Regulations 2024 to require the creation and maintenance of a register for on-site BNG units across England to support monitoring, alongside the current off-site register.
- MHCLG and Defra should revise and reissue the enforcement and post-permission matters guidance, to make clear that enforcement action is required whenever violations of BNG conditions will harm the natural environment.

Going beyond 10%

10% net gain represents a bare minimum for nature. The original 2018 impact assessment for the policy highlighted that 10% gain in theory would be chipped away in practice by a number of factors, including habitat degradation between initial assessment and construction completion, pressures from occupation (such as light and sound pollution) and the possible loss of gains over decades. As such the impact assessment described 10% as the *'lowest level of net gain that the department could confidently expect to deliver genuine net gain, or at least no net loss, of biodiversity and thereby meet its policy objectives.'*¹⁸

A sliver of genuine biodiversity net gain, or at least no net loss, does not represent a level of ambition commensurate with the scale of the nature recovery challenge. The 2023 State of Nature report presented evidence of a 16% decline in the average abundance of terrestrial and freshwater species in

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-effective-enforcement>

¹⁸ https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net-gain/supporting_documents/181121%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Consultation%20IA%20FINAL%20for%20publication.pdf

the UK since 1970 (an earlier 2019 assessment had put the figure at 13%).¹⁹ The new Government is committed to meeting Environment Act targets, including the target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.²⁰ Given this scale of challenge, the 10% figure should be swiftly reviewed to establish whether it is still sufficient to meet nature recovery policy objectives and to help provide private finance to help fill the estimated £56 billion nature funding gap.²¹

Evidence from a range of local authorities strongly suggests that an increase to 20% would be financially viable. In the words of the Local Government Association, drawing on a study conducted by Kent Nature Partnership:

*'A shift from 10% to 15% or 20% BNG would not materially affect viability in the majority of instances when delivered onsite or offsite. The biggest cost in most cases is to get to mandatory, minimum 10% BNG. The increase to 15% or 20% BNG in most cases costs much less and is generally negligible. Because the BNG costs are low when compared to other policy costs, they are highly unlikely to be what renders development unviable.'*²²

February 2024 analysis by Link profiled a number of local authorities who have proceeded to set BNG rates in their area above 10%, including Guildford Council's decision to adopt 20% in their Local Plan and plans from Kingston Upon Thames to set a 30% rate.²³ As demonstrated by the high number of planning authorities who have declared a climate emergency, appetite for increased environmental ambition across local government is high.²⁴ National Park Authorities in particular are encouraged to maximise the contribution their protected landscape makes to nature recovery, BNG in excess of 10% would be a useful tool to help deliver this.

Developers have also expressed interest requirements being lifted above 10%, especially if the proportion of offsite enhancement can be increased.²⁵ As the GFI roadmap for action observed: *'research has shown that developers are broadly supportive of BNG and want to see it work well – one survey showed that 95% of surveyed developers and land promoters are in support of BNG.'*²⁶

Unfortunately the BNG Planning Practice Guidance published by the previous Government in the same month contained phrasing designed to discourage further pioneers, replacing an initial permissive approach to going beyond 10% with a strong steer not to do so:

¹⁹ https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf

²⁰ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/24073046000012/SavingNature>

²¹ <https://legacy.greenfinanceinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Appendix2.pdf>

²² See <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/events/pas-past-events/biodiversity-net-gain-local-authorities/journey-biodiversity-net-gain> & <https://kentnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Justification-for-biodiversity-net-gain-in-Kent-Sept-2020.pdf>

²³ https://wcl.org.uk/docs/Biodiversity_Net_Gain_progress_report_7.2.2024.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.local.gov.uk/delivering-local-net-zero>

²⁵ https://irp.cdn-website.com/bdbb2d99/files/uploaded/FHTF%20Report_COMPACT_update_Dec%202021.pdf

p36

²⁶ <https://legacy.greenfinanceinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/GFI-BNG-ROADMAP.pdf> p54

*'Plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain, either on an area-wide basis or for specific allocations for development unless justified. To justify such policies they will need to be evidenced including as to local need for a higher percentage, local opportunities for a higher percentage and any impacts on viability for development.'*²⁷

This wording has put a damper on local ambition. It has made it more difficult for planning authorities with emerging local plans who want to go further than 10% to do so

Local and developer ambition to go beyond 10% is also undercut by the previous Government's decision to allow developers to sell excess on-site biodiversity units as off-site gains for another development.²⁸ In particular, solar farms and mineral sites often get approved with conditions for biodiversity gains much greater than 10%. Allowing the selling of excess units could see a backward step for some counties for nature recovery if big developments like these are allowed to sell off excess units. By allowing such excesses to simply be sold on, excess gains become part of another developer's gain, meaning the additional contribution to nature recovery is removed. It also effectively caps BNG at 10%, undermining developer and local authority ambition to deliver more for nature. Given the insufficiency of on-site gain recording and enforcement (see above), there is also a risk that the gains sold-on could actually fall under the 10% threshold, rather than coming in excess of it.

Recommended actions:

- MHCLG and Defra should revise and reissue the BNG PPG to replace the incentive against going beyond 10% net gain in local policies with a strong encouragement to do so.
- MHCLG and Defra should jointly review whether to take legislative action to set a new mandatory BNG rate higher than the current 10%, in order better equip BNG to contribute to nature recovery.
- MHCLG and Defra should reverse the decision by the previous Government to allow the selling of excess on-site units to another development.

Going further: Infrastructure & marine

The previous Government initially focused on applying BNG only to the planning system founded on the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. After eNGOs and parliamentarians highlighted that this would miss the opportunity to secure nature gains from new major infrastructure²⁹, an amendment to the Environment Act applied BNG to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime founded on the Planning Act 2008. However, the Government's slow start on applying BNG to major

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>

²⁸ See July 2023 Link letter: <https://wcl.org.uk/docs/Link%20-%20Harrison%20-%20BNG%20-%202023.08.23.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Habitat%20loss%20from%20major%20infrastructure%20projects%20-%20The%20case%20for%20action%20April%202021.pdf>

infrastructure continues to be felt; the target date for introduction is November 2025 and no detailed proposals have yet come forward.

The new Government's commitment to doubling onshore wind capacity and tripling solar capacity by 2030 makes it imperative to swiftly and effectively apply BNG to major infrastructure. As new renewable energy projects and electricity infrastructure start to come forward, all projects consented under the NSIP regime should make their contribution for nature through BNG. Given the scale of the progress needed to achieve the Environment Act target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, the funding delivered by major infrastructure BNG should be generous in scale, and directed towards strategic habitat restoration and species support projects that will advance to deliver national environmental priorities. To achieve these objectives, it will be necessary to develop a new form of BNG specially fitted to major infrastructure projects, founded on adherence to existing nature protections and the deployment of pooled, long term funding to support strategic nature recovery projects at scale. This bespoke form of major infrastructure BNG could provide a meaningful boost to nature recovery, as well as providing a smooth process for developers.

Recommended action:

- The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government should use their powers under the Environment Act 2021 to lay regulations to apply BNG to all projects consented through the NSIP regime. The regulations should be introduced before the end of 2024 and apply a form of BNG to major infrastructure that will support strategic, large-scale nature recovery projects.

After some prodding, the previous Government also conceded the need for BNG to apply to developments at sea. A DEFRA consultation on principles for 'Marine Net Gain' was held in 2022, to which the Government only formally responded to December in 2023.³⁰ There has been no further update on the development of the policy since then.

As with renewable energy on land, the new Government's plans to quadruple offshore wind by 2030 provides an urgent imperative to get Marine Net Gain right, and in place quickly. Without the policy, marine ecosystems could be exposed to development harms at scale, without the level of mitigation that applies on land. It will be particularly important for Marine Net Gain to go beyond habitats. As the marine environment is highly dynamic and interconnected, focussing only on habitats may not benefit all species, particularly those which are highly mobile, such as seabirds and marine mammals. As such Marine Net Gain should be based around assessment of, and mitigation for, development impacts on both habitats and species.³¹ Overall Marine Net Gain delivery should contribute to tackling regional and national marine environmental targets.

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-principles-of-marine-net-gain/outcome/government-response>

³¹ https://wcl.org.uk/docs/assets/uploads/Marine_Net_Gain_consultation_response.WCL.pdf

Recommended action:

- MHCLG should contribute its terrestrial BNG expertise to joint work with DEFRA, DESNZ and DfT to prepare a system of Marine Net Gain,
- Marine Net Gain should be urgently progressed including committing to 3 pilot projects. Outputs from the pilots should be integrated into policy and legislative development to ensure implementation by 2026.

None of the above recommendations require primary legislation. The Government should swiftly instigate the full range of actions, to make BNG fit for purpose and capable of realising its full potential to align new development with progress towards the achievement of nature recovery targets.

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest nature coalition in England, bringing together 84 organisations to campaign for the natural world.

This briefing is also supported by the following organisations:

The Wildlife Trusts
Woodland Trust
Friends of the Earth
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)
Buglife
Bumblebee Conservation Trust
Badger Trust
The Rivers Trust
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Open Spaces Society
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