

# Biodiversity Net Gains for parks and green spaces



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Biodiversity Net Gain and its relevance to parks and green spaces

Increasing the awareness and understanding of the opportunities presented

New areas of focus and development

# Biodiversity Net Gain and its relevance to parks and green spaces



# What is Biodiversity? (Biological diversity)

**Genetic** diversity within **Species** variation between **Ecosystem**

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Scotland is home to an estimated 90,000 species

## Why do we need ecosystems?

Ecosystem services are vital to society, the economy and the functioning of our natural systems.

- Breathable air
- Fresh water
- fertile soil
- Raw materials for medicine

Biodiversity  
underpins all life  
on earth

World Health Organisation



## What's the problem?

Scotland is one of the most nature-depleted countries globally, ranking in the lowest 25% of nations for biodiversity intactness.



**15%**

**Scottish wildlife has decreased on average by 15% since 1994.**

**47%**

**Since 1970, the distribution of 47% of flowering plants has decreased.**

**11%**

**One in nine (11%) Scottish species are threatened with extinction.**

**49%**

**Scotland's seabirds have declined by 49% between 1986 and 2019.**

## And the “Net Gain” bit?

- ❑ Statutory in English legislation...
- ❑ Town and County Planning Act 1990
- ❑ An approach to development
- ❑ Leave the natural environment in a better state post-development
- ❑ Uses habitats as a proxy measure - focus on change in the biodiversity value of a site
- ❑ Quantifying biodiversity value includes size, condition and location of land.
- ❑ Minimum 10% gain - secured for at least 30 years

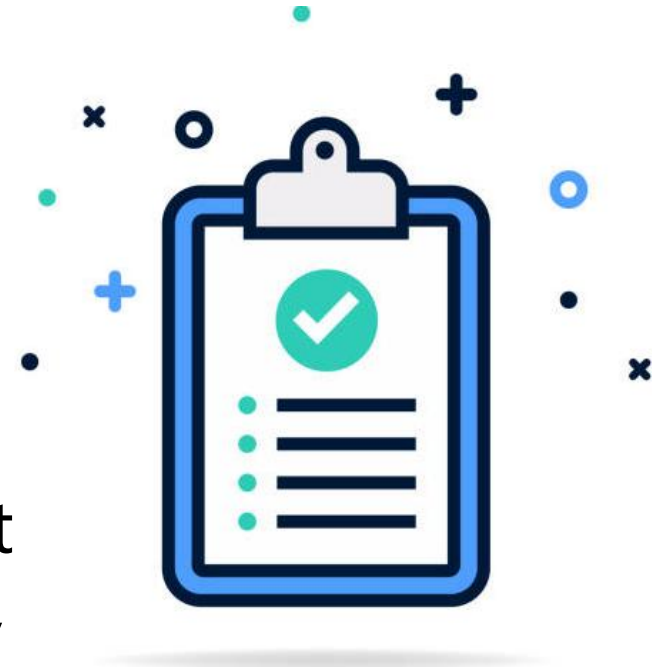


## The BNG Register in England for offsite gains

- Location
- Map or plan showing the boundary of the gain site
- Types of habitats to be enhanced or created
- Habitats on a site that are allocated to a development
- Relevant local planning authority or responsible body

### Note

- Prevents double counting of biodiversity gains
- General public and local communities can access information on habitat sites delivered



# The Scottish Approach

- ❑ A comprehensive biodiversity strategy
- ❑ National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- ❑ Interventions include:
  - Woodland and peatland regeneration (rare rich organic soil in Scotland)
  - Deer management - prevent overgrazing
  - Species Reintroductions - licences from NatureScot. SG holds [National Species Reintroduction Forum](#)
- ❑ Scottish Planning Biodiversity Metric is being developed (SPBM)





## **Climate Adaptation: Advanced Soil Management**

 THURS 23/07/26, WED 29/07/26 & THURS 30/07/26

 09:30 - 12:30 [THREE HALF DAYS]



## **Plant Biosecurity for Local Authorities**

 TUES 23/06/26

 10:00 - 16:00 [ONE FULL DAY]

## Existing powers in Scotland

- ❑ Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019)
- ❑ National Planning Framework (a spatial plan)
  - health and wellbeing,
  - reduction of emissions (link with Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009)
  - positive effects for biodiversity
  - Open Space Strategy (green infrastructure and green networks)
  - audit open space provision
  - Engaging people in local place plans

## Legislative framework (cont.)

Other legislation includes:

- Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009
  - Inc Climate adaptation
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
  - Community food growing
  - Manage land for environmental wellbeing
  - Sale of neglected land/ transfer of public assets
- Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016

Note: Legislation directly enables nature restoration and community-led rewilding

## Who owns and controls the land assets in Scotland?

- No official data set - sources include: General Register of Sasines; Registers of Scotland Land Ownership; and ScotLIS - Scotland's Land Information service
- Scottish Gov Community Ownership Statistics - Local Authorities own about 2% of Scotland - most owned in Highlands [21%] and Na h-Eileanan Siar (outer Hebrides)[72%] 81,000 hectares owned by local authorities
- Who Owns Scotland?
- 50 municipal golf courses...

# **Increasing the awareness and understanding of the opportunities presented**



# Example BNG principles employed

**Working in partnership: creating wetland in London**

- ❑ **Berkeley has worked with the London Wildlife Trust to restore an 11 hectare wetland**
- ❑ **13 000 m<sup>2</sup> of newly-planted reed bed and 550 m<sup>2</sup> of new hedgerow, as well as wildflower meadows and fruit trees**



## What planners do...

- Designate sites for development
- Review development to check if BNG applies
- Assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures and the 30-year management plan for on-site BNG
- Make a legal agreement with developers and approve the application
- Monitor implementation and management of on-site and off site BNG

## What can parks and green spaces professionals do?

**Develop plans in line with the mitigation hierarchy and**

**AVOID:** Where possible, habitat damage should be avoided

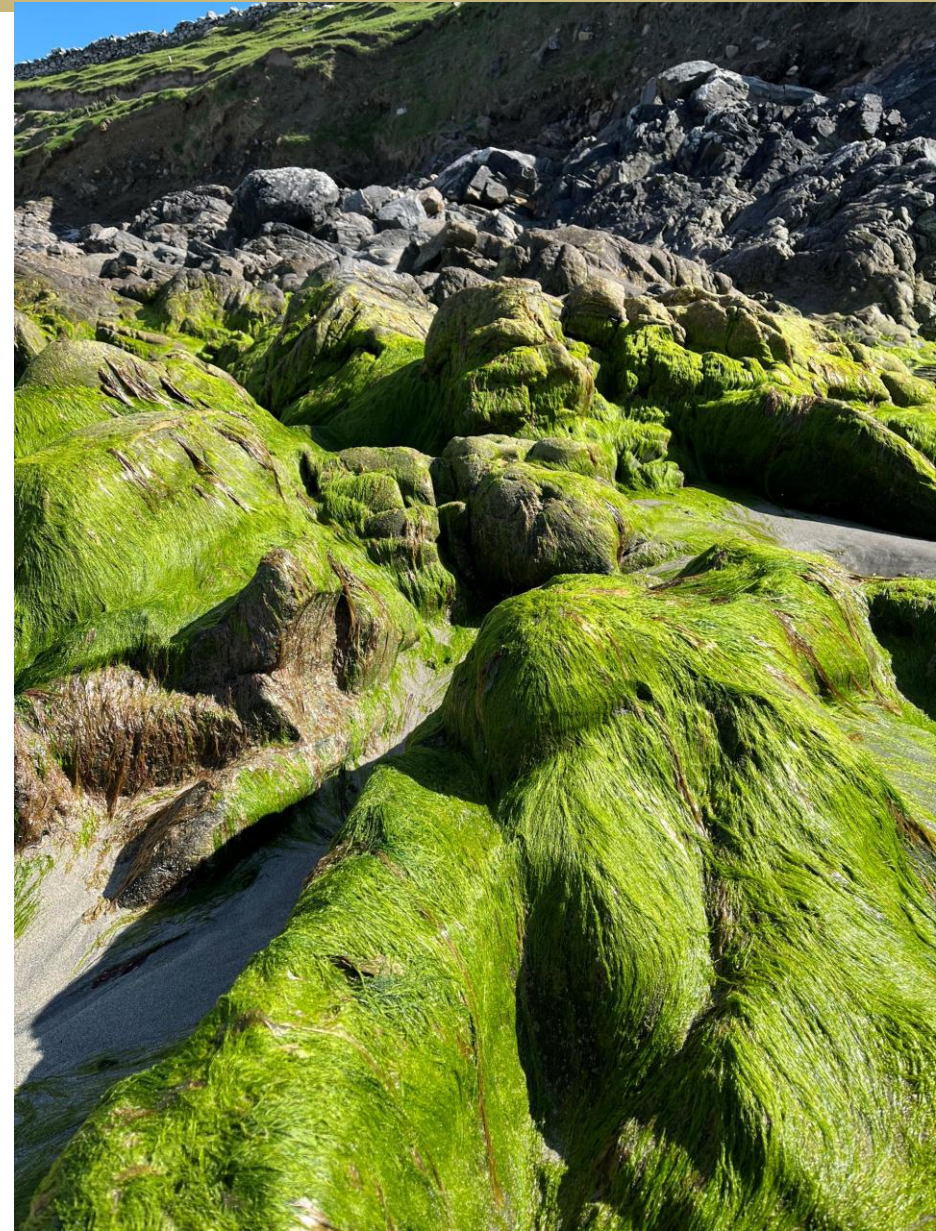
**MINIMISE:** Where possible, habitat damage and loss should be minimised

**REMEDiate:** Where possible, any damaged or lost habitat should be restored

**COMPENSATE:** As a last resort, damaged or lost habitat should be compensated for (with a gain)

## Review land assets to determine good BNG sites

- Current level of biodiversity
- Potential to improve
- Not be developed for at least 30 years
- Public Access
- Pollution, Security, Health & Safety - detrimental factors?
- Funding
- Consider engaging an ecologist
- Develop enhancement and improvement plan



# New areas of focus and development





- ❑ Scottish methodology (SPDM) still being finalised.
- ❑ SSER Project Toolkit
- ❑ Proposed habitat classification based on the Averis Review of the English metric.



## Scottish Planning Biodiversity Metric

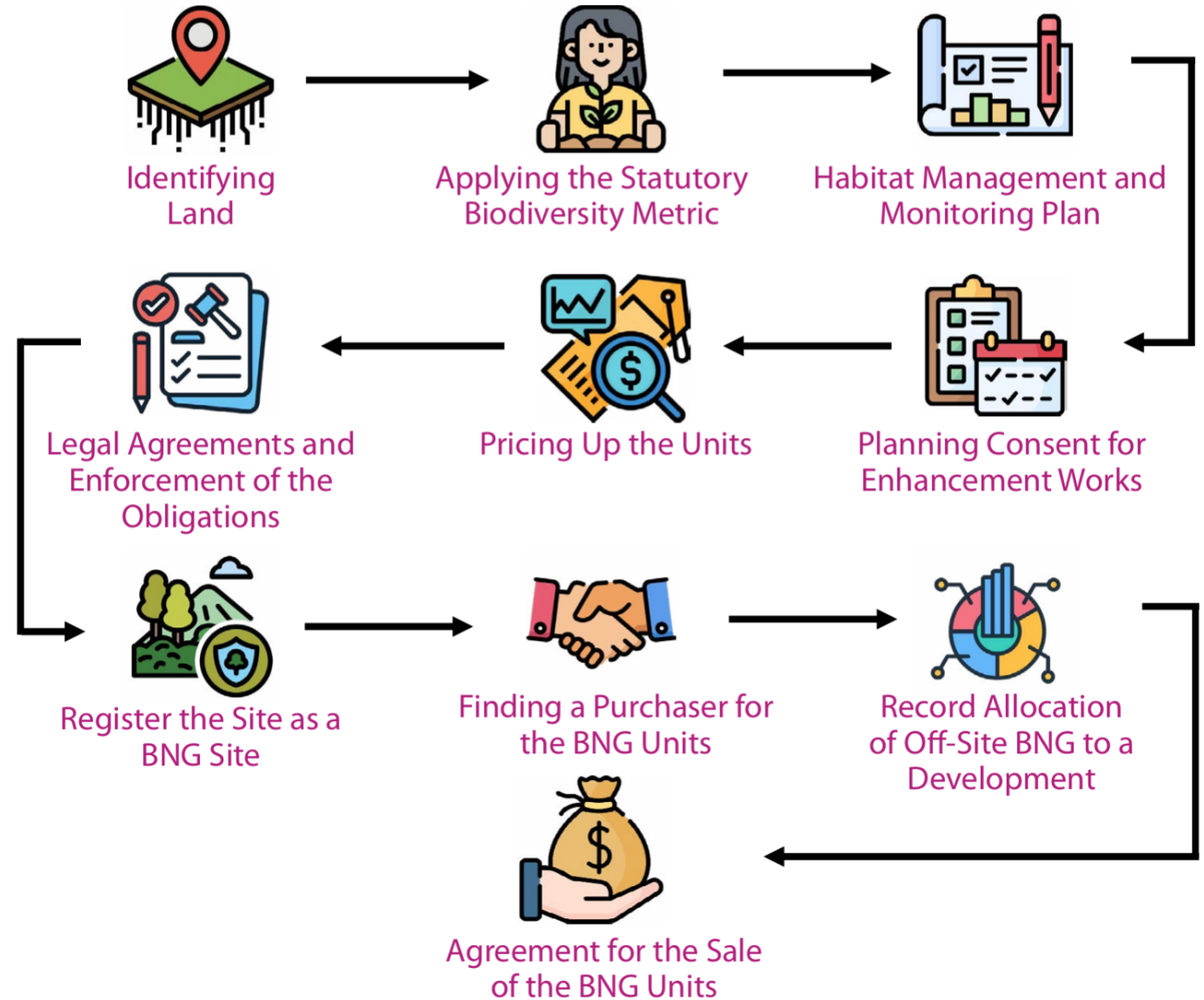
2026 - public consultation  
2027 - guidance available

Unlike the English system's rigid target, the SPBM will **adapt habitat distinctiveness, strategic significance, and risk multipliers** to specifically reflect Scottish ecological features, including unique peatlands and native woodlands.

### **Key Stages in the Process:**

1. Identifying land
2. Applying the Metric
3. Creating a Habitat Management & Maintenance Plan
4. Planning consent for works
5. Pricing units
6. Legal agreements and Land Charge registration (Section 75)
7. Registration as a Biodiversity Gain Site
8. Allocation of BNG units to a development

In England offsite units can be sold to different developers for different aspects of the local authority site (e.g. wetlands, hedgerows).



## And the role for Local Authorities

- Let your voice be heard –  
13 Scottish Local  
Authorities responded to  
the 2024 consultation
- Regulator
- Supplier of BNG units  
(potential cash value)
- Developer

ScotBioMetric@nature.scot



# Next steps



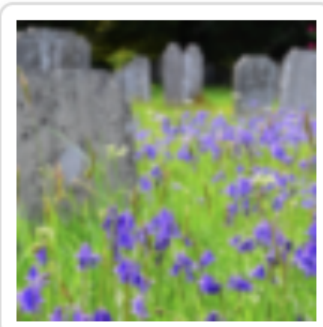
- Familiarise yourself with UKHab - this will help you with the Scottish metric
- Develop a plan/strategy/approach - get buy in (engage people)
- Identify land
- Plot a route to delivery (enhancement and improvement)



## **Biodiversity Net Gain for Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces**

 THU 11/06/2026

 09:00 - 16:00 [ONE FULL DAY]



## **Making Space for Nature in our Burial Grounds and Churchyards**

 TUES 30/06/26

 10:00 - 16:00 (ONE FULL DAY)



**Thank you**  
**Any questions?**