

The Environment Agency is delivering a Flood Risk Management Scheme (FRMS) to better protect homes and businesses from flooding in the Kent Catchment, enhance the local environment, and improve community amenities.

Our aim is to enhance biodiversity through the scheme, across the catchment and beyond. This factsheet will provide you with a snapshot of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), explaining what it is, the benefits to you as a landowner, and how you can get involved.

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Under the Environment Act 2021, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a government initiative aimed at enhancing the natural environment through development and land management practices. The goal is to ensure that all development projects result in a measurable positive impact, or "net gain," on biodiversity. This approach seeks to leave the environment in a better condition than it was prior to the development. By increasing biodiversity, we can contribute to a sustainable future that is more resilient to climate change.

Mandatory since February 2024, BNG applies to all new developments seeking planning permission, including small-scale developments. As a result, local planning authorities such as Westmorland and Furness Council require a 10% increase in biodiversity value, compared to the land's previous condition. This biodiversity gain must then be maintained for at least 30 years.

Benefits to landowners

BNG offers several benefits to landowners which can include:

- **Long term financial security** – BNG provides sustainable financing for habitat management and maintenance generating a stable, long-term income/funding stream.
- **Enhanced land value** – Enhanced biodiversity can lead to a rise in land value, especially if it becomes part of a wider network of conservation areas.
- **Environmental stewardship** – Contributing to biodiversity helps improve the ecology of the land, benefitting local wildlife and ecosystems.
- **Eligibility for Grants** - BNG projects can often be combined with other grants or agri-environmental schemes, providing additional financial support.



Hydro dam



Kerplunk structure

What does Biodiversity Net Gain look like?

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) does not have to be a 'big' project, it can be scaled to fit different sizes and types of land and developments. Examples include:

- **Changes in land management** – Improvements to species-rich grasslands or hedgerows contribute to wildlife habitats.
- **Habitat creation and enhancement** - Planting native trees, establishing wetlands (including ponds, marshes, or reed beds), and developing new woodlands, wood pastures, or wildflower meadows all contribute to the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- **Green infrastructure** – Developing buffer strips planted with native vegetation along watercourses or field margins helps reduce runoff, improve water quality, and provide habitats.
- **Diversified income** – Diversification of land management can result in additional income generated through the sale of biodiversity units.
- **Sustainable land use and agroforestry** – Incorporating trees into agricultural landscapes supports nature recovery and helps address climate change.
- **Natural Flood Management** – Introducing features such as leaky dams, swales, and retention ponds effectively manages waterflow and creates wet habitats.
- **Connecting people with nature** - Creating greener neighbourhoods and improve health and wellbeing.



Peatland restoration



Reston Scar, Staveley

Through delivery of the Kendal and the Upper Kent Flood Risk Management Scheme, the Environment Agency aim to work with landowners and their partners (including Westmorland and Furness Council, the Lake District National Park, DEFRA, Natural England, and others), to support and deliver BNG through the restoration of watercourses, wetlands, natural flood management and more. This could be delivered on-site, off-site, or where this is not possible, by purchasing landowners' statutory biodiversity credits.

To date the Environment Agency has worked with landowners and the community to create and enhance new wetland habitats, woodland, and species-rich grassland areas at Mintsfeet, Kendal, and created a sensory path at Beeson Fields.

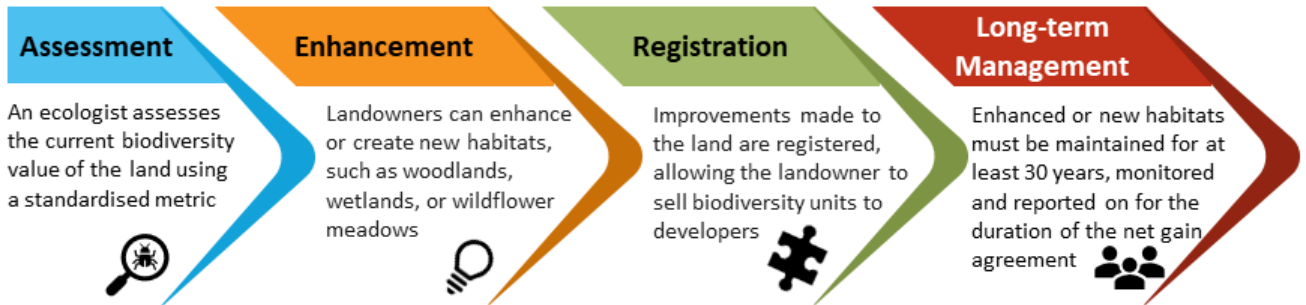
We have collaborated with Natural England, the Freshwater Biological Association, and South Cumbria Rivers Trust on the EU LIFE R4ever Kent Project. This will aim to restore at least 1.9km of river within the Kent Catchment, providing suitable habitats for fish, freshwater pearl mussels and white-clawed crayfish.

For more information on how we can partner with you to deliver BNG please contact us for an informal discussion.

How does Biodiversity Net Gain work?

Those looking to submit a planning application will seek sites suitable for creating or enhancing BNG habitats. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) offers a great opportunity for landowners to earn additional income from their land, whilst contributing to nature recovery.

It is important to engage early with organisations such as Westmorland and Furness Council, the Lake District National Park Authority, and the Environment Agency, as well as environmental organisations such as local Rivers Trusts, and ecologists. Working in partnership will help ensure that BNG habitats meet the standards required.



Once a BNG plan is established, setting out how to create, enhance, maintain, and monitor biodiversity, the landowner will enter into a legal agreement with a responsible body, e.g. a local authority, the Environment Agency, or a non-government organisation.

Managing the site can then become an additional income stream for landowners, with the change in land use and future maintenance funded through Biodiversity Net Gain unit sales, alongside their regular business activities.

One such project is Town View Fields, which is being used to test how effective and viable Natural Flood Management techniques (NFM) are in urban areas to reduce peak flows during storm events. Some aspects of the project include:

- 90 meters of de-culverted watercourse
- A meandering stream running into two bunded wetland areas
- Creation of leaky dams and bunds using natural materials
- Planting of native tree species and wetland species



Town View Fields, Kendal



Birds Park, Stock Beck



Reston Scar, Staveley

What funding is available?

There are several funding opportunities available to landowners interested in developing Biodiversity Net Gain projects that can help cover the costs of creating and maintaining habitats for BNG, making it a viable and attractive opportunity, to include:

- **Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)** – is set to replace the Basic Payment Scheme and offers payments for public goods, including biodiversity improvements such as wetland habitats, woodland, trees and agroforestry
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services/environmental-land-management-elm-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services>
- **Landscape Recovery Project** – is one of the Environmental Land Management schemes. It funds landscape scale projects through bespoke, long-term agreements that extend beyond 20 plus years. <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-landscape-recovery-scheme>
- **Countryside Stewardship Scheme** – provides funding for landowners to manage their land in an environmentally sustainable way, including BNG <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-stewardship-get-funding-to-protect-and-improve-the-land-you-manage>
- **Habitat Banks** – larger-scale projects where multiple landowners collaborate to create a bank of biodiversity units that can be sold to developers. <https://defralanduse.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/276/2023/11/BNG-flowcharts-for-landowners.pdf>
- **Off-site Biodiversity Units** – individual Landowners can create or enhance habitats on their land and sell the resulting biodiversity units to developers who need to meet their BNG obligations <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sell-biodiversity-units-as-a-land-manager>

Where do I find out more?

For more information on how you can deliver Biodiversity Net Gain please visit the following links:

- **Natural England's Biodiversity Net Gain brochure**
<https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/12/get-ready-for-new-biodiversity-net-gain-legislation>
- **Natural England's blog on The Government website**
<https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/?s=biodiversity+net+gain+2024>
- **Local Government Association** <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/environment/biodiversity-net-gain-bng-local-planning-authorities>

If you are interested in working with The Environment Agency and our partners to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain, please contact us via the details below.

Contact us
and keeping
up to date

Visit our online information hub at:
www.thefloodhub.co.uk/Kendal
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