

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, and why it is important.

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Under the Environment Act 2021, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a government approach to development and land management that aims to improve the natural environment and ensure all development has a measurably positive impact or 'net gain' on biodiversity. The goal is to leave the environment in a better condition than it was before.

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 condition prior to development. This biodiversity gain must then be maintained for at least 30 years.

Why is it important?

BNG can help deliver numerous environmental, social and economic benefits, contributing to a long lasting, climate ready, sustainable future for people and wildlife, through for example:

- **Habitat creation and enhancement** - planting native trees, establishing wetlands (including ponds, marshes, or reed beds), and improving hedgerows and grasslands contribute to wildlife habitats and add 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.
- **Long term financial security** – BNG provides sustainable financing for habitat management and maintenance generating a stable, long-term income/funding stream.
- **Sustainable land use and agroforestry** – incorporating trees into agricultural landscapes supports nature recovery and helps address climate change.
- **Natural Flood Management (NFM)** – introducing features such as leaky dams, swales and retention ponds effectively manages waterflow and creates wet habitats.
- **Connecting people with nature** - creating greener neighbourhoods, improving health and wellbeing.

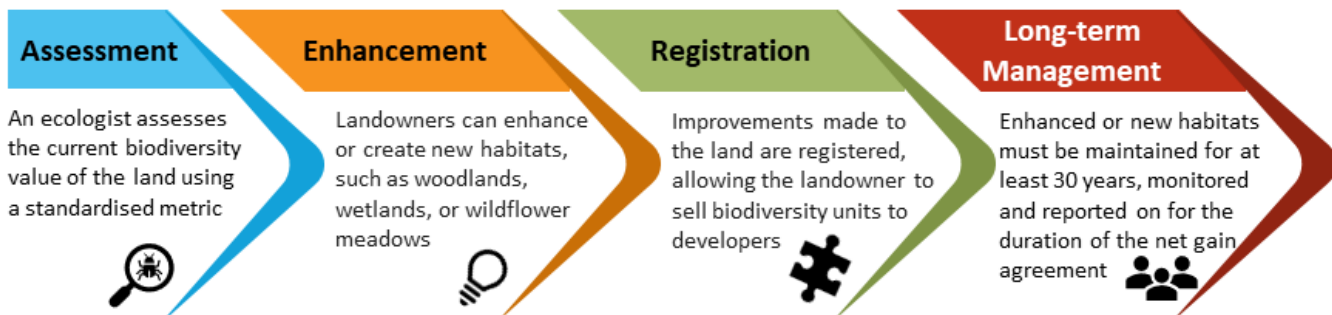


Hydro dam



Peatland restoration

How does it work?



Our approach

Through delivery of the Kendal and Upper Kent Flood Risk Management Scheme, the Environment Agency aim to work with landowners and their partners (including DEFRA, Natural England, and others) to support and deliver BNG through, for example, the restoration of watercourses, wetlands, natural flood management and more.

This could be delivered through one or a combination of on-site, off-site measures, improving biodiversity in other locations across the Kent catchment, or where this is not possible, by purchasing statutory biodiversity credits.

- **Onsite** - Through the scheme design our preferred solution is to work with landowners to deliver onsite solutions integrating green infrastructure and/or soft landscaping, improving existing habitats. For example, we have created new habitats for people and wildlife at Mintsfeet, Gooseholme, and Bezon Fields.
- **Offsite** - Where onsite enhancements are not feasible, we will focus on enhancing and/or creating habitats throughout the Kent Catchment. We plan to register these projects as a 'habitat bank'. Additionally, we will source opportunities to work with others to boost habitat and biodiversity. For instance, we have collaborated with South Cumbria Rivers Trust, landowners, Westmorland and Furness Council, Natural England, and partners, to deliver a multi-million pound restoration project on the River Kent Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Life R4ever Kent.
- **Statutory credits** - Where the above is not possible we will purchase government-sourced credits.



Birds Park, Stock Beck

As with any other flood risk management scheme, there will be some impacts. However, we continue to undertake habitat surveys and environmental assessments to ensure we understand those risks and ensure they can be managed. By identifying opportunities across the catchment, our proposals will not only provide mitigation to lessen the impacts, but will result in an improved environment for wildlife, the community, and visitors to the area.

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and keeping
up to date

Visit our online information hub at:
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