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Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain — Specification

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 August 2021. It was prepared by Technical Committee BDY/1, *Biodiversity management*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to the committee manager.

BSI Committee BDY/1 takes collective responsibility for the preparation of this British Standard. The Committee wishes to acknowledge the personal contribution of the late Rachel Hoskin.

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Requirements in this standard are drafted in accordance with *Rules for the structure and drafting of UK standards*, subclause **G.1.1**, which states, “Requirements should be expressed using wording such as: ‘When tested as described in [Annex A](#), the product shall ...’”. This means that only those products that are capable of passing the specified test will be deemed to conform to this standard.

It has been assumed in the preparation of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “shall”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

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Section 1: Biodiversity Net Gain

Introduction

Biodiversity represents the variety of life and includes plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms, the communities they form and habitats they live in. Biodiversity provides essential services for people, including carbon storage, clean air and food. It also underpins our wellbeing and is valued for its intrinsic worth.

In recent years, recognition of the joint biodiversity and climate crisis has gained pace. Now governments, businesses, organizations and the public are not only seeking to protect biodiversity, but also to enhance biodiversity through all sectors of society and the economy, including economic development.

For many years, balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability was seen as “either or” with difficult trade-offs of either sacrificing the natural environment, or holding back growth in order to protect nature. Recently, however, several initiatives have emerged for development to play its role in protecting, restoring, and enhancing the environment. One such initiative is Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

BNG is a specific, quantifiable outcome from project activities that deliver demonstrable benefits for biodiversity compared to the baseline situation.

In 2016, environmental professional institutes published the *BNG: Good practice principles for development* [N1] to support developments across the UK achieve BNG in accordance with good practice. These principles aimed to set a benchmark of “what good looks like” and they include the mitigation hierarchy (see [3.1.9](#)) and avoiding impacts on irreplaceable habitats (see [3.1.8](#)). In 2019, the principles were supplemented with practical guidance on designing, implementing and the long-term maintenance and monitoring of BNG throughout a project lifecycle [N2].

This British Standard builds on, and adds to, that foundational work. It translates the principles, and actions to implement them, into a process. The aim is to provide a consistent and structured process for designing and implementing BNG that is based on good practice.

This British Standard is intended for all sizes of projects, and for all types of development sectors. It can be applied to any project, including development not requiring planning permission, as well as land or estate management.

Most developments involve a logical sequence through the four broad stages of:

- a) preparation;
- b) design;
- c) implementation; and
- d) maintenance and management.

The process of BNG within this British Standard is founded on those stages, with the aim that these stages can be applied to small developments with minimal biodiversity impact, as well as large-scale developments involving optioneering or master planning.

Some activities described in this British Standard are refined and updated as the BNG process is implemented. For example, when the project’s biodiversity baseline is assessed using desk-based studies during the Preparation stage, and then updated following site surveys during the

Design stage. [Annex A](#) contains a guide on which activities might be relevant to different stages of the process.

The ecological impact of some development projects will be assessed and mitigated through Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). The process for achieving BNG, as set out in this British Standard, complements but does not replace EcIA. EcIA is a process of identifying, quantifying and evaluating potential impacts of development-related or other proposed actions on habitats, species and ecosystems [N3]. Mitigation recommendations arising from an EcIA based on specialist input need to be followed.

This British Standard was written at a time when BNG policies and practice across the UK were emerging and evolving rapidly. It was also written at a time of policy change, with widespread reforms at national and local policy levels being discussed as the UK emerges from COVID-19 restrictions. This British Standard is independent of legislation and policy, and based on the UK's BNG Good Practice Principles [N1].

1 Scope

This British Standard specifies a process to design, implement, maintain and monitor BNG outcomes from a development project.

It does not cover the actual delivery of BNG. It provides a framework to demonstrate that a project has followed a process that is based on the UK's BNG Good Practice Principles [N1]. Complying with the requirements within this British Standard is to follow a process to achieve BNG that is based on good practice.

This British Standard is for any sector of industry, including residential, mixed-use, energy, water, transport, communications and infrastructure across the UK. It is for any scale of project from individual house-builds to larger developments, as well as estate management, whether they are subject to consent through the planning system, or another consenting process (e.g. Development Consent Orders) or are classified as permitted development. It can also be used by land managers aiming to generate BNG through management of an estate. Hereafter the term "project" refers to both development projects and land management activities.

This British Standard covers terrestrial and freshwater habitats, and intertidal habitats down to the mean low water mark. It is applicable across the UK and for projects that affect biodiversity and those with limited or no impact on biodiversity, as well as projects aiming to achieve BNG on- and/or off-site.

It first sets out requirements that apply throughout the BNG process; these requirements are in [Clause 4](#).

[Clause 5](#) to [Clause 8](#) contain requirements for each of these stages of the BNG process:

- a) [Clause 5](#): Preparation
- b) [Clause 6](#): Design
- c) [Clause 7](#): Implementation
- d) [Clause 8](#): Maintenance and management

A project might involve requirements to achieve BNG from, for example, a planning condition or compliance with legislation. This British Standard covers a process to achieve BNG, notwithstanding any such requirements. It does not infer compliance with any planning condition, legislation or statutory requirement, and is independent from any mandatory or legislative requirement for BNG.