Biodiversity Net Gain

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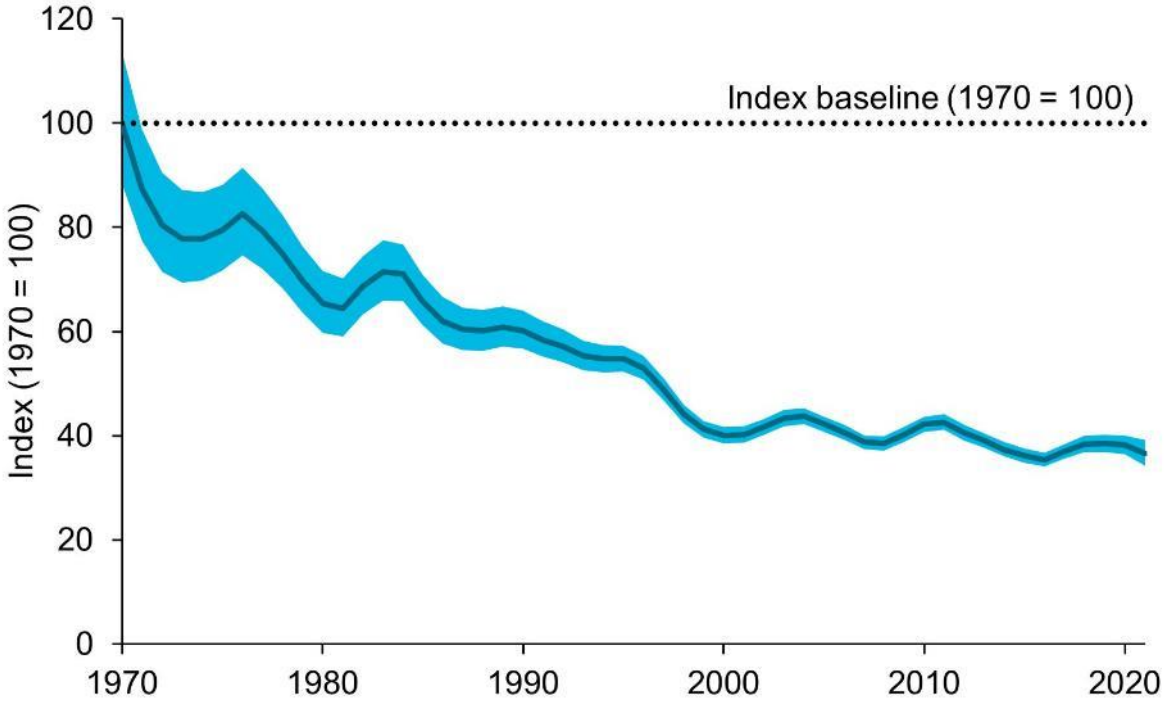
Nature & Development Pre BNG

- United Kingdom is the most nature depleted country in Europe
- Polarised debate: nature vs development
- Highly contested + subjective
- Inequalities in access to green/blue space
- Limited ecological connectivity
- Declining public expenditure on nature, limited private investment in nature
- Small number of no net loss/net gain initiatives



Nature & Development – Pre BNG

- Limited join-up between ecologists and other professions in project design
- Nature an afterthought – last minute consideration to get planning permission
- Post-permission nature often ‘value engineered’ out – part of design plans but not fully implemented
- Remaining nature rarely managed or maintained post construction
- Limited awareness/knowledge amongst maintenance contractors

Mandatory BNG - Policy Intent

- **Nature Benefits**
  - Reinforces the mitigation hierarchy
  - Local Nature recovery – on and off site
- **People Benefits**
  - Nature close to where people live and work
- **Development Process Benefits**
  - More objective + consistent process
  - De-risk development process

Nature & Development With BNG

- Too early to identify/quantify ecological outcomes delivered

BUT

- Nature considered at site selection/outline design – detailed design
- Reinforces mitigation hierarchy – avoid, mitigate, compensate
- BNG as a ‘team sport’ – ecologist, landscape architects, civil engineers, architects etc co-creating/designing
- Long-term management & maintenance (minimum 30 years) factored in

A New Asset Class

Zero to well over 150 registered gain sites in < 2 years

+5,200 ha of land set aside for nature recovery, including more challenging habitats like OMH, watercourses and (soon to come) intertidal habitat

Greater diversity of organisations committing to deliver nature restoration on their land including:

- Farmers
- eNGOs
- Housebuilders
- ‘Stranded’ asset owners
- LPAs
- etc

New Products, Services and Technologies

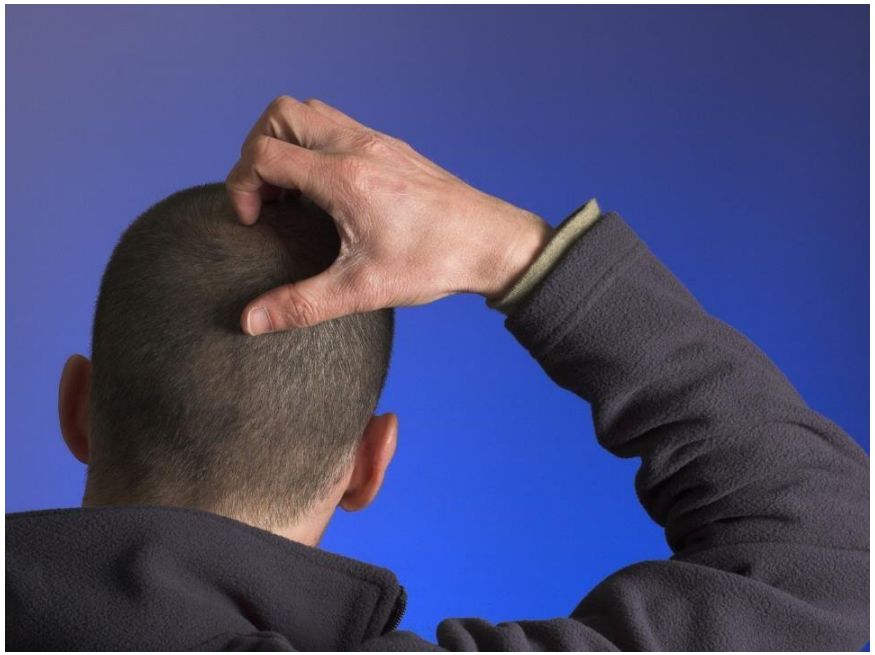
- New legal mechanisms – conservation covenants
- Re-purposed existing legal mechanisms – s106s
- New insurance products – ecological risks
- Re-purposed existing insurance products – financial, contractor, equipment risks
- New technologies – AI, eDNA, eAcoustics, drones
- Existing technologies – Satellites, image analysis, spreadsheets ☺
- Upskilled and specialised contractors and sub-contractors
- New seed mixes and nursery stocks
- More ecologists
- Significant private and venture capital investment

BNG Implementation - Then

A new legal planning requirement interacting with an already complex and stretched planning system

INITIALLY

- Limited time between publication of final secondary legislation and implementation
- Variable levels of understanding and awareness amongst professions, developers and LPAs
- Concerns about ‘exploitation’ of exemptions
- Limited offsite unit supply
- Legislative + guidance gaps
- SMEs and other small developments affected the most



BNG Implementation - Now

A new legal planning requirement interacting with an already complex and stretched planning system

TODAY

- Much greater knowledge, awareness and understanding
- S106 + con cov templates
- Still instances of people being incorrectly advised or LPAs not adhering to the law + also examples of good practice
- Greater realism in proposals
- Focus on communication & engagement with people
- 932 offsite allocations (08/12/25) = 6% of total registered land
- **571ha woodland registered, 139ha traditional orchard & 21ha individual trees** (08/11/25)
- 26 statutory biodiversity credits sold (08/12/2025)
- Steady rate of exemptions - 80% (minus householder apps)

What Next for BNG?

Minor, Medium & Brownfield Sites Consultation (closed July)

- Range of options suggested – from full exemption for minor developments to more targeted or area-based exemptions + suggestions for metric changes and the treatment of OMH
- Significant level of responses
- Defra continuing to analyse. Ministers will then decide on final response
- IF any changes announced implementation would take months as legislation would likely need amending, guidance re-written etc

NSIP Consultation (closed July)

- Proposed BNG text for National Policy Statement covering calculation of baseline, metric, temporary use of land, onsite & offsite etc
- May 2026 commencement of BNG for NSIPs

BNG – Global Impact

BNG as an example of soft power & influence

- Versions of the biodiversity metric in use on every continent bar Antarctica, including growing use in voluntary biodiversity credits market
- Policy interest from the EU, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, China etc, etc
- BS 8683 led to ISO 17620 a process framework for designing, implementing, and monitoring BNG outcomes in projects internationally
- Cited by the World Economic Forum as one of top 10 nature finance models

Thank You