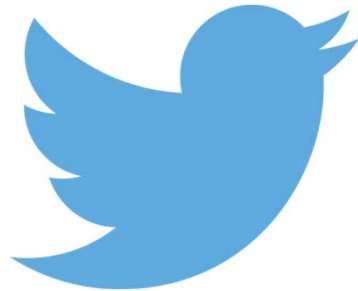


Be part of the conversation!
Follow APSE on Twitter and LinkedIn

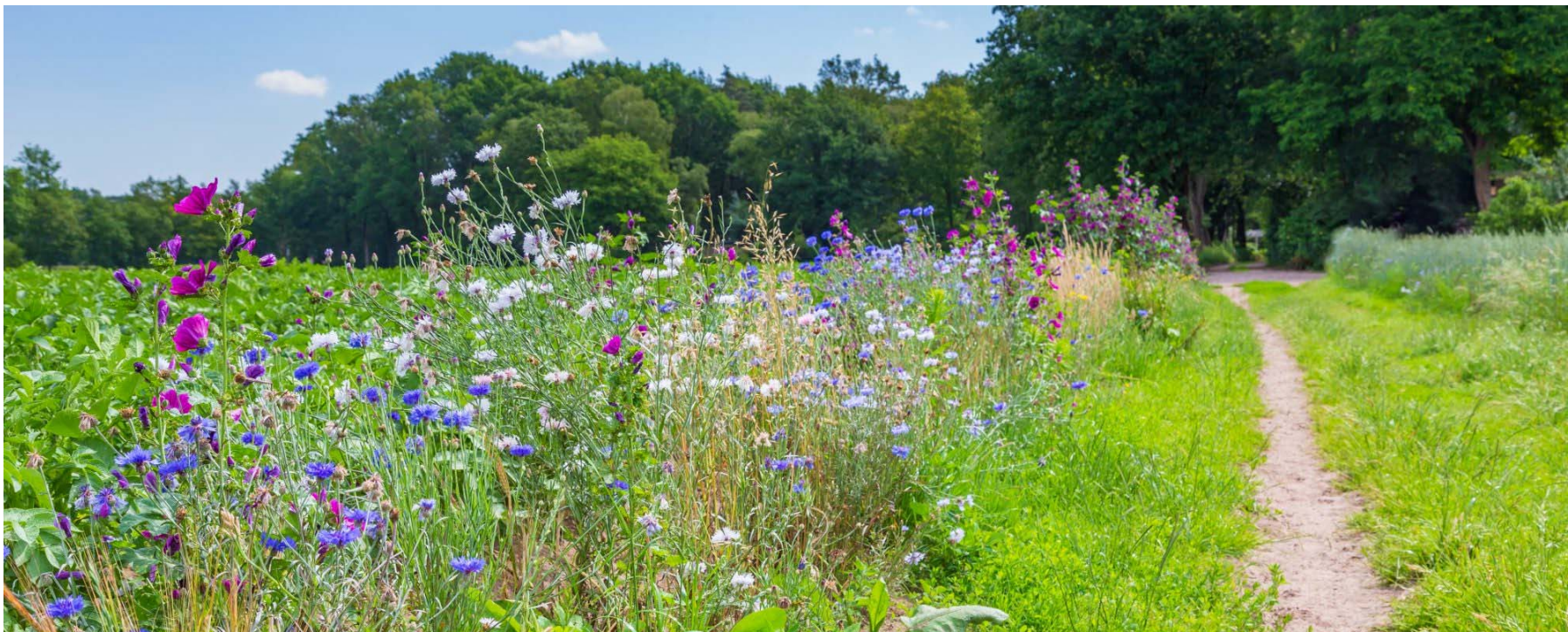


@apseevents
@apsenews



**@APSE - Association for
Public Service Excellence**

Biodiversity Net Gain – What does it mean for Parks and Greenspace Managers?



Biodiversity Net Gain?

- **Biodiversity** is a term used to describe the enormous variety of life on Earth. It can be used more specifically to refer to all of the species in one region or ecosystem. Biodiversity refers to every living thing, including plants, bacteria, animals, and humans.
- **Net Gain** is defined as the total increase in the amount or level of something after deducting losses.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain** is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.



Why is there a need for Biodiversity Net Gain?

- The UK boasts more than 70,000 known species of animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms, but the majority of assessments indicate that the abundance of its wildlife is declining
- Centuries of farming, building and industry have made the UK one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe.
- Extensive agricultural lands and road networks, in combination with other factors, have reduced the wildlife in the UK to a point hardly seen elsewhere.
- Since the 1970s, it has been shown that 41% of all UK species studied have declined
- The UK only has half of its natural biodiversity left and is in the bottom 10% of all countries globally.

The origins and purpose of Biodiversity Net Gain

- Previously an **optional requirement** until the UK government passed the Environment Act in 2021.
- The **Environment Act** sets out the following key components of mandatory biodiversity gain:
 - Amends Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA);
 - **Minimum 10% gain** required calculated using the Biodiversity Metric & approval of a biodiversity gain plan;
 - **Habitat secured for at least 30 years** via planning obligations or conservation covenants;
 - Delivered on-site, off-site or via a new statutory biodiversity credits scheme; and
 - **National register** for net gain delivery sites.
- It **does not change existing legal protections** for important habitats and wildlife species. It maintains the **mitigation hierarchy** of avoid impacts first, then mitigate and only compensate as a last resort. It will apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) but not marine development.
- Biodiversity Net Gain is expected to become **mandatory in November 2023**

How prepared are local authorities for BNG?

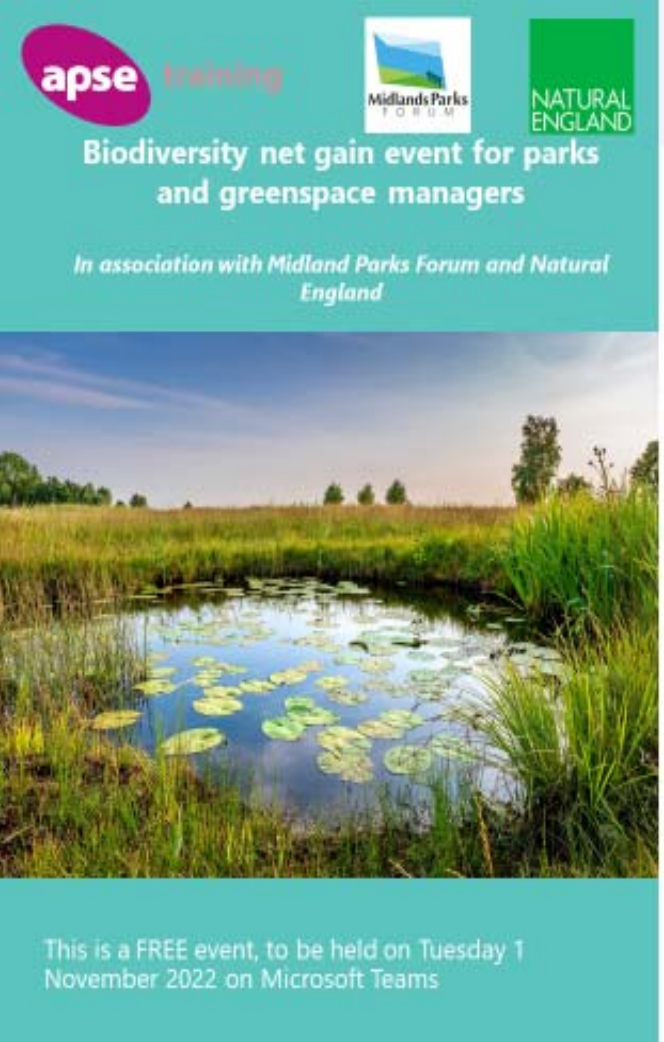
- Lots of Government Advice and guidance.
- Some funding to help local planning authorities to increase ecologist and upskill teams, particularly in relation to using **Biodiversity metric**.
- **Requirements on local authorities** will include developing plans which will:
 - *Ensure planning application meet BNG requirements*
 - *Ensure plans include gains to be made*
 - *Ensure off-site BNG is delivered according to agreements*
 - *Monitor compliance planning conditions and legal agreements are met*
 - *Report on BNG delivery in their area.*
 - *Developing clear and consistent BNG plans which developers can show BNG requirements are being met.*
- Skills required will include: ecology, planning expertise, legal skills, data management project management, finance and property, land management and importantly negotiation skills.
- A recent survey showed that only 5% of respondents said their current ecological resource is adequate to scrutinise all applications that might affect biodiversity, while fewer than 10% reported that their current expertise and resources will be adequate to deliver BNG.

Opportunities for Parks and Greenspaces

- APSE, in partnership with Natural England and Midlands Parks Forum, undertook local authority survey to discover readiness of parks and greenspace managers to implement BNG projects
- Questions included:
 - *Level of understanding of BNG and its purpose*
 - *Understanding of biodiversity metric*
 - *How BNG can be applied: on-site, off-site, biodiversity credit banking*
 - *Level of awareness of BNG operating in their authority*
 - *Level of involvement in delivery of BNG projects*
 - *Do they have requisite level of skills required by BNG*
- Findings included:
 - *Limited understanding of BNG*
 - *Little if any training on BNG*
 - *'Sketchy' level of understanding of how biodiversity metric works*
 - *Clear demand for more information across all aspects of BNG*
 - *50:50 awareness of opportunities BNG offers to parks and greenspaces.*
 - *Clear indication that skills levels are wanting in relation to understanding creating and delivering BNG projects*

Biodiversity Net Gain Seminar – November 2022

- Aimed at parks and greenspace managers.
- Explanation of BNG, Biodiversity Metric
- Flowchart on BNG Process
- Case studies of pre-mandatory BNG
- Series of Workshops on how to implement BNG
- Some of the comments received included:
 - *‘How can we incentivise parks for BNG credits?’*
 - *‘Can habitats be traded e.g. grassland for woodland creation?’*
 - *Many local authorities do not have ecologists will there be support?’*
 - *‘What is the distance that determines an off-site location?’*
 - *‘Are there training courses available on the BNG metric?’*
 - *‘Can LA’s challenge developers biodiversity values scores?’*
 - *‘How will LA’s enforce and maintenance failures by developers?’*
 - *‘Will there be a standard Biodiversity register for LA’S to use?’*
- A recording of the day’s events can be found using the following link [The link to the recording is here.](#)



apse training

Midlands Parks Forum

NATURAL ENGLAND

Biodiversity net gain event for parks and greenspace managers

In association with Midland Parks Forum and Natural England

This is a FREE event, to be held on Tuesday 1 November 2022 on Microsoft Teams

Conclusions

- It is clear there is still a need for more information/training to allow parks and greenspace managers the skills to access the opportunities offered by BNG.
- Information and guidance notes both from Government and pilot local authorities is becoming more readily available.
- It is anticipated that there may well be more ‘tweaks’ to the guidance as the mandatory requirement date approaches.
- Local authorities need to begin to prepare themselves both internally and with developers to ensure legal compliance with BNG is delivered.
- There is a need to develop a list of strategic sites which could be used to deliver off-site or banked BNG credits, as such parks and associated greenspaces would be ideal options, as would the ‘greening of the public realm, introduction of SUDS, tree planting, green roofs etc. as ways of creating greater connectivity across an areas green infrastructure.
- APSE will be looking at ways to help member authorities to be ready for the introduction of BNG by using the exchange of information through network queries, advisory groups, training course and seminars as well as providing updates of new information via briefing notes.





NEW MUNICIPALISM

Delivering for local people and local economies

Contact details

Wayne Priestley, Principal Advisor

Email: wpriestley@apse.org.uk