

Biodiversity Duty Report

Reporting Period Ending 1 January 2026

Executive Summary

Stroud District Council has made significant progress in integrating nature recovery across its operations, land management, partnerships and planning functions. Following the declaration of a Nature Emergency in July 2023, SDC has strengthened strategic leadership, delivered practical habitat enhancements, supported community-led actions, and successfully implemented statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements.

Whilst recognising that there is much more to do, SDC celebrate what has been achieved throughout the district enhancing the nature recovery in our area. There are multiple groups that have made significant contributions and developed projects to increase nature recovery. Many groups have had lots of community engagement and awareness raising events in our local communities. Parish Councils have been particularly active, developing their own Local Nature Action Plans and involving their parishioners in a variety of projects from installing swift boxes to creating nature friendly allotments and the creation of community gardens.

This report fulfils Stroud District Council's (SDC) statutory obligation under the Environment Act 2021 to consider, record and demonstrate the actions it is taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity. It outlines the actions taken to meet the biodiversity duty, the Council's planned actions for the next reporting period, (2026 – 2031) and detailed BNG monitoring data for the period ending 1 January 2026.



1. Actions Taken to Comply with the Biodiversity Duty

1.1 Policy, Strategy and Governance

Nature Emergency Declaration (July 2023)

SDC declared a Nature Emergency, committing the Council to embed nature recovery across all relevant decisions, projects and programmes.

Climate & Nature Strategy (Updated 2025)

SDC has fully revised its corporate strategy to reflect interconnected priorities including water, rivers, coastal environments, climate adaptation and nature recovery.

SDC Nature Recovery Strategy Work

SDC appointed a new role, Strategic Lead for Nature Recovery and Biodiversity in 2023. This role has been key to developing awareness about nature recovery and biodiversity and initiating nature recovery projects across the district. SDC has been fully involved with the development of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including information pertinent to Stroud District.

Town & Parish Council Guidance

Guidance to support the development of Local Nature Action Plans was published to help Town and Parish Councils shape their biodiversity priorities.

Website Resources

SDC maintains an online hub providing information on nature recovery and biodiversity projects and best practice. "What good habitats look like" document is designed to assist people to understand what healthy habitats look like.

Habitat Mitigation Strategies (Cotswold Commons & Beechwoods / Severn Estuary)

Mitigation Strategies are in place for the SACs within Stroud District, Rodborough Common, Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods and Severn Estuary. The mitigation monies levied contribute directly to a ranger post (hosted by National Trust) and habitat management work across protected landscapes.

Countywide BNG Local Authority Group

SDC officer led on the coordination of the countywide BNG working group, leading to developing a shared BNG guidance note, used by all Gloucestershire LPAs.

Government Consultations

SDC contributed evidence-based responses to national consultations, including:

- Planning Reform Working Paper: Development & Nature Recovery
- Land Use Framework

BNG Implementation Leadership

SDC officers have led on the work to finalise agreement on BNG monitoring fees, internal guidance, and integration of BNG into Development Management. SDC appointed a BNG officer who is key to leading on BNG within the Development Management team.

1.2 Land Management and Nature Recovery on SDC-Owned Land

Nature Recovery Programme for SDC Land

Around 30 sites have been identified for enhanced land management to support biodiversity, with public consultation preceding implementation. These are all sites located around SDC housing estate, thus also contributing to engagement and developing understanding amongst the local residents.

Management Plans for Key Sites

Management plans are in preparation for the two largest and most important sites of the SDC owned land:

- Selsley Common
- Stratford Park

These will incorporate ongoing management requirements and future nature recovery work.

Holywell Orchard, Cam

Habitat and access improvements are under review, working with Stroud Valleys Project to improve the quality of the site for local users.

Revised Grounds Maintenance Regime

Ubico have been instructed to reduce mowing frequency of the appropriate grassland areas and avoid cutting within the drip line of any tree. This will protect the tree from compaction and encourage habitat improvement. Many of these areas have had additional wildflower seed added to the sward.

Natural Environment Working Group

Cross-service group meets every two months, involving Planning Strategy, Development Management, Property Services, Housing, Community Services and other services as appropriate.



1.3 Engagement, Education and Community Support

Support for Town & Parish Councils

Nature recovery training, local nature action plan reviews, and launch events to support Local Nature Action Plans have been undertaken with parish councils across SDC area. Support, advice and facilitation has been provided to parish councils wishing to develop their own Local Nature Action Plans.

Stroud Farmer Cluster Group

4 meetings have been held for farmers within Stroud District, focusing on regenerative agriculture techniques, shared learning and enhancing nature-friendly farming. SDC has supported Hartpury University, with their Agri-tech project. This focused on working with farmers within Stroud district, supporting them with information and training related to technical upskilling.

Schools Nature Recovery Support

SDC has worked with 6 schools within Stroud District, supporting them in reviewing the management of their school grounds and to consider what changes could be made to help enable nature recovery. This has

included encouraging the schools to undertake baseline ecology assessment of their school grounds, then assisting schools to create their own nature management plans.

Nature Recovery Grants

£50K small grant fund was developed and allocated (2025/26) to support projects involving climate and nature themes/aims and objectives. This supported 33 projects across the district covering projects from art, with a nature theme, developing children's playgrounds with a pollinator theme, to the installation of community electric charging points.

Bird Aware Severn Branding

SDC has worked with multiple organisations around the Severn Estuary, on the development of logo and branding to align with national estuarine schemes to raise the awareness of the effects dogs can have on the bird populations.

Coast & Countryside Canines Initiative

Similar to the Bird Aware promotion, this initiative is aimed at promoting responsible dog ownership in sensitive wildlife areas.

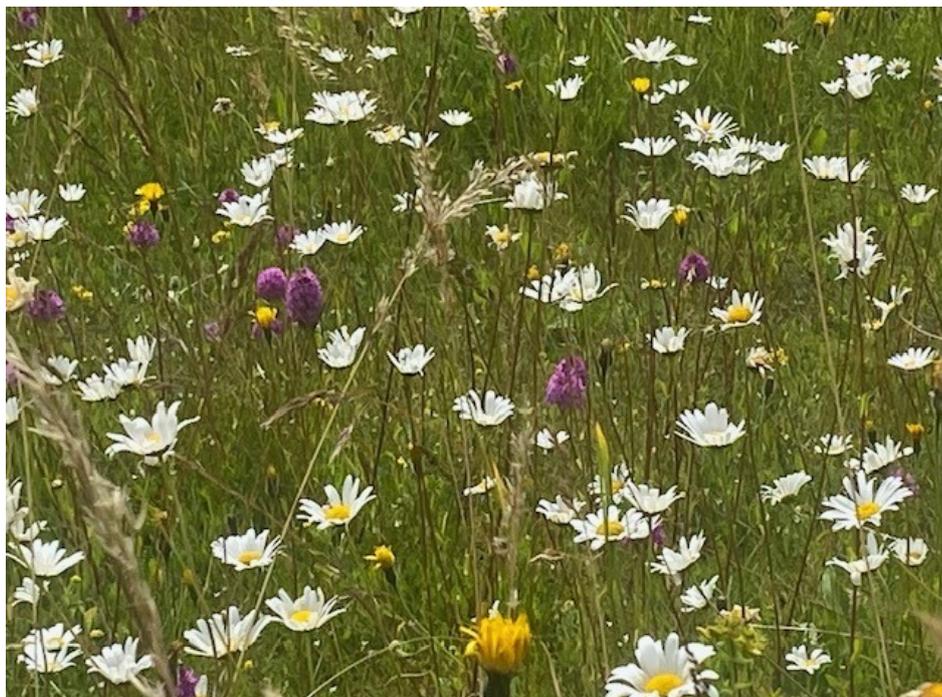
Educational Signage on Rodborough Common

Eight new interpretation signs installed in partnership with the National Trust.

1.4 Supporting Landowners and Delivering Landscape-Scale Recovery

Ranger Post for Protected Sites

A ranger, hosted by the National Trust was appointed in September 2025, to work on the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods primarily to engage with the users of these sites to promote knowledge and understanding of their vulnerability and importance. The post is funded from the monies raised from the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods mitigation strategy levy.



SDC has worked closely with the National Trust to support their Stroud Valleys Landscape restoration project, with the aim of creating a landscape scale species rich grasslands around the hills and valleys of Stroud.

Stroud Valleys Natural Flood Management Project

Since 2021:

- 617 NFM measures delivered
- 13.45 ha habitat restored
- 4.42 ha water-dependent habitat created
- 492 woody dams installed

Catchment Partnership – Wilder Frome

SDC jointly funded the Ebley Mill fish passage feasibility study, and have fully supported the development work for beaver reintroduction.



Tree Planting

SDC have planted over 6000 trees, in Stratford Park, Salmon Springs and other smaller sites around the district. These have been planted by volunteer groups, thus broadening the engagement of the local community.

Stinchcombe Common Conservation Work

Robo-mowing as a means of scrub control, with the aim of working towards the recovery of the species rich grasslands has been funded by SDC using SANGS money, part of the mitigation strategy for the Severn Estuary. This work has been to enhance the visitor access to the site by footpath enhancement.

Severn Estuary Stakeholders Group

SDC Officers actively contributed to the development of this group and worked collaboratively with other partners to assist with the delivery of projects such as the Bird Aware campaign. SDC continues to be a member of this Stakeholder group.

Wetland enhancement work

Canal Restoration project contains habitat enhancement programmes including the development of additional wetland areas along riparian locations.

2. How Stroud District Council Plans to Comply with the Duty in the Next Reporting Period (2026–2031)

2.1 Strengthening Governance and Corporate Integration

- Create and embed the District Nature Recovery Policy across all service areas by integrating it within the new local plan.
- Integrate nature recovery within service planning and business case processes, with services using the new Climate and Nature Decision tool.
- Expand the remit of the Natural Environment Working Group to oversee delivery of the nature recovery actions within the Climate and Nature Strategy.
- Adopt and implement the Tree Management Policy for the District.
- Update and implement Governance and implementation for the SAC mitigation funds

2.2 Enhancing Delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain

- Fully utilise Exacom's BNG monitoring system.
- Produce annual internal BNG performance summaries.
- Continue to improve the implementation of BNG enforcement and compliance processes.
- Update developer guidance and validation requirements as required.
- Support the development of new off-site Biodiversity Gain Sites.

2.3 Improving Land Management on SDC-Owned Sites

- Roll out revised grounds management across the identified 30 sites.
- Implement approved management plans at Selsley Common, Stratford Park and Stringers Wood.
- Expand species-rich grassland creation, wetland creation, hedgerow restoration and woodland edge enhancements wherever feasible.

2.4 Community and Landowner Support

- Continue support for town/parish Local Nature Action Plans.
- Develop a mapping layer showing the stage at which the parish councils are at, with regard to producing their own Local Nature Action Plans.
- Expand the Stroud Farmer Cluster, promoting collaborative landscape-scale projects.
- Increase school engagement and additional educational initiatives.

2.5 Landscape-Scale Recovery

- Continue expanding the Natural Flood Management programme.
- Continue to work with the National Trust on their Stroud Valleys Landscape grassland project.
- Enhance delivery through key partnerships with National Trust, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Severn Rivers Trust, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Gloucestershire Nature & Climate Fund and others.
- Align all project work with priorities identified in the newly adopted and published Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

2.6 Monitoring, Reporting and Continuous Improvement

- Develop biodiversity monitoring measures in conjunction with other Gloucestershire local authorities, with particular note moving forward to the combined unitary authority.
- Prepare early for the next statutory Biodiversity Duty Report (due by 2031).
- Update internal policies as national BNG reforms evolve, and new government guidance emerges.

3. Biodiversity Net Gain Information

3.1 Actions Delivered to Meet BNG Obligations

A full table of BNG actions and impacts is included, detailing the recruitment and training of the BNG Officer, development of monitoring fees, procurement of Exacom's BNG module, updates to guidance, support for market development, and responses to government consultations.

3.2 Habitat Bank Summary

- **1 registered commercial site** (Environment Bank, Frocester)
- **2 sites nearing legal completion** (Orchard House Farm, Elmore Court)

3.3 Quantitative BNG Data

Summary:

- 441 BNG-exempt applications
- 129 BNG-applicable applications
 - i. 40 withdrawn/refused
 - ii. 49 awaiting decision
 - iii. 40 granted permission
- 9 Biodiversity Gain Plan Condition submissions (BGPCON); 8 discharged
- 8 approved Biodiversity Gain Plans:
 - i. 75% on-site
 - ii. 25% mixed on-site/off-site
- 74% of gains came from grassland habitat enhancements
- Off-site gains: 1.27 area units, 0.02 hedgerow units, 0 watercourse units
- 39% of off-site gains located within same NCA; 61% in neighbouring NCAs

4. Conclusion

Stroud District Council has demonstrated strong commitment to meeting its biodiversity duty, embedding nature recovery across governance, land management, planning and community initiatives. The Council has implemented BNG robustly in its first year, developed new policies and partnerships, and initiated landscape-scale projects with measurable environmental benefit. The next reporting period will focus on deeper integration, improved monitoring, and accelerating habitat creation across the district.

Appendix 1

Section 3: Biodiversity net gain information – Full details

Actions that have been carried out to meet BNG obligations:

Action	Impact
BNG Officer Hired	Since January 2025, BNG Officer has provided technical ecological advice on BNG to the Development Management (DM) team and dealt with additional workload created by BNG legislation – reviewing Biodiversity Metrics, BNG Reports, Biodiversity Gain Plans, and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans.
Paid for BNG Officer to complete the following training courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKHab For BNG (CIEEM) • Biodiversity Metric Water Module (CIEEM) • River Condition Assessment Training (Cartographer & Royal Geographical Society) • Positive Planning for Biodiversity (CIEEM) • BNG at Year One: reflections lessons and future directions (CIEEM) 	Increased technical expertise and competency – enabling more accurate BNG advice to be provided on behalf of Stroud District Council (SDC).
BNG Monitoring Fees calculated and approved at Environment Committee.	The ongoing cost of monitoring significant on-site gains, and off-site gain sites for 30-years has been covered.
BNG Monitoring Software procured	SDC are using Exacom’s BNG Module to assist with long-term monitoring of BNG gain sites.
Internal Validation Guidance Updated	Internal validation guidance has been updated to ensure sufficient information relating to BNG is provided to enable planning applications to be determined.
Delivered BNG Training for Planning, Validation, and Enforcement Officers	Increased understanding of BNG process amongst the DM Team.
BNG Guidance on SDC Website Updated	Clear and concise guidance has increased applicant’s awareness of BNG requirements resulting in fewer applications being invalidated for BNG reasons.
Development of Local BNG Market supported	Assisted the Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund (GNCF), and other independent landowners in the creation of a Biodiversity Gain sites within the district. As of January 2026 we have two sites very close to being legally secured with S106 agreements.
Provided response to DEFRA consultations on proposed BNG reforms.	The implications of the proposed BNG reforms were given, using evidence from the first year of implementing BNG legislation.

Habitat Banks (Biodiversity Gain Sites):

There is currently one commercial biodiversity gain site registered within Stroud District (Environment Bank Site in Frocester), and two that SDC are finalising legal agreements for:

1. Orchard House Farm (Independent)
2. Elmore Court (GNCF)

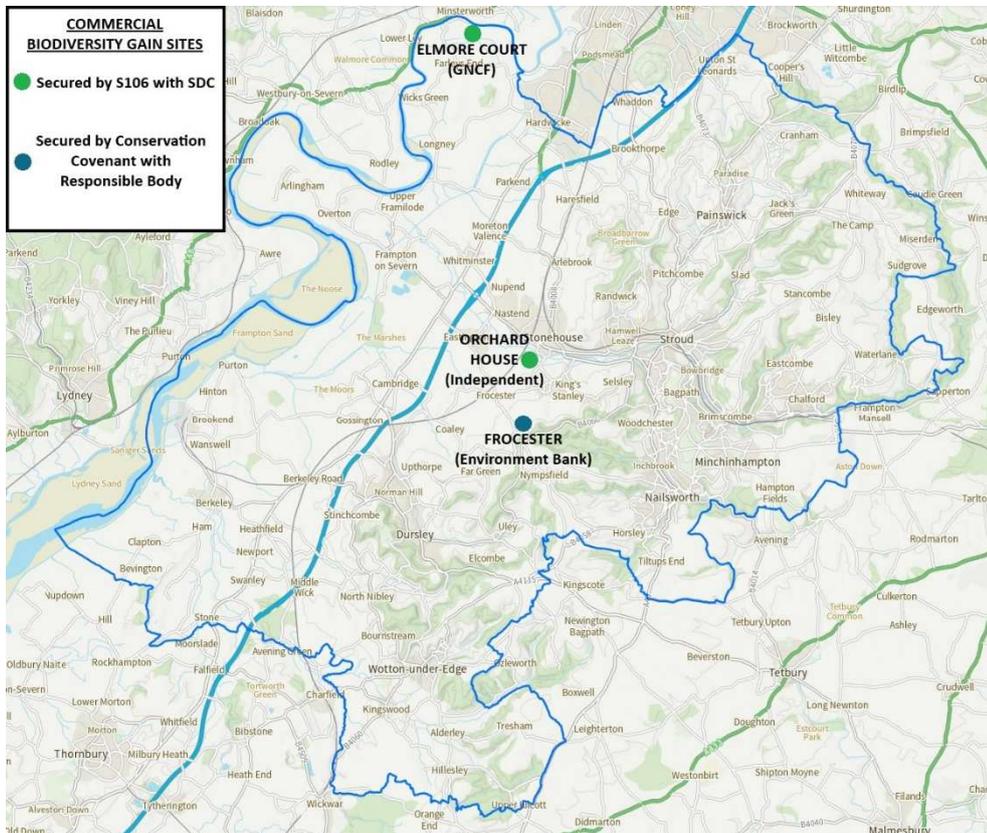


Figure 1 Commercial Biodiversity Gain Sites in Stroud District

Quantitative BNG Data:

BNG has been mandatory for all planning applications (subject to some exemptions) for major developments since the 12th February 2024 and for small sites from the 2nd April 2024.

Since the legislation came into effect:

- 441 applications have been made which are exempt from BNG (the frequency of each reason is shown in Figure 2)

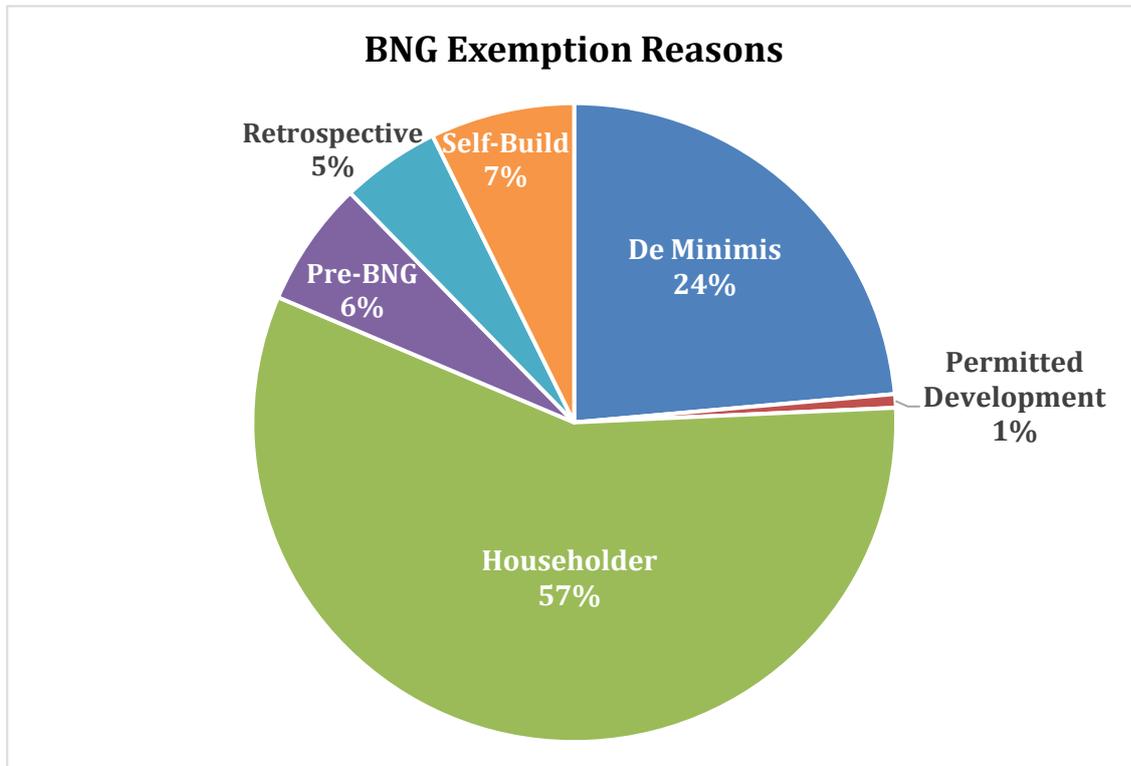


Figure 2 BNG Exemption Reasons

- 129 applications have been made to which the BNG Condition would apply, of which:
 - 40 (31%) have been withdrawn or refused.
 - 49 (38%) are awaiting a decision.
 - 40 (31%) have been granted permission.

Of the 40 BNG applicable applications that have been granted permission, nine (23%) have applied to discharge the pre-commencement Biodiversity Gain Condition (BGPCON) – eight of which have been discharged.

The following statistics relate to the eight Biodiversity Gain Plans that have been approved in the reporting period ending 1st January 2026.

- 75% of the approved Biodiversity Gain Plans delivered BNG on-site, with the remaining 25% delivering BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units.
- The majority of biodiversity units are expected to come from 'Area Habitats', followed by 'Hedgerows Habitats', and then 'Watercourses Habitats' (see Figure 3).

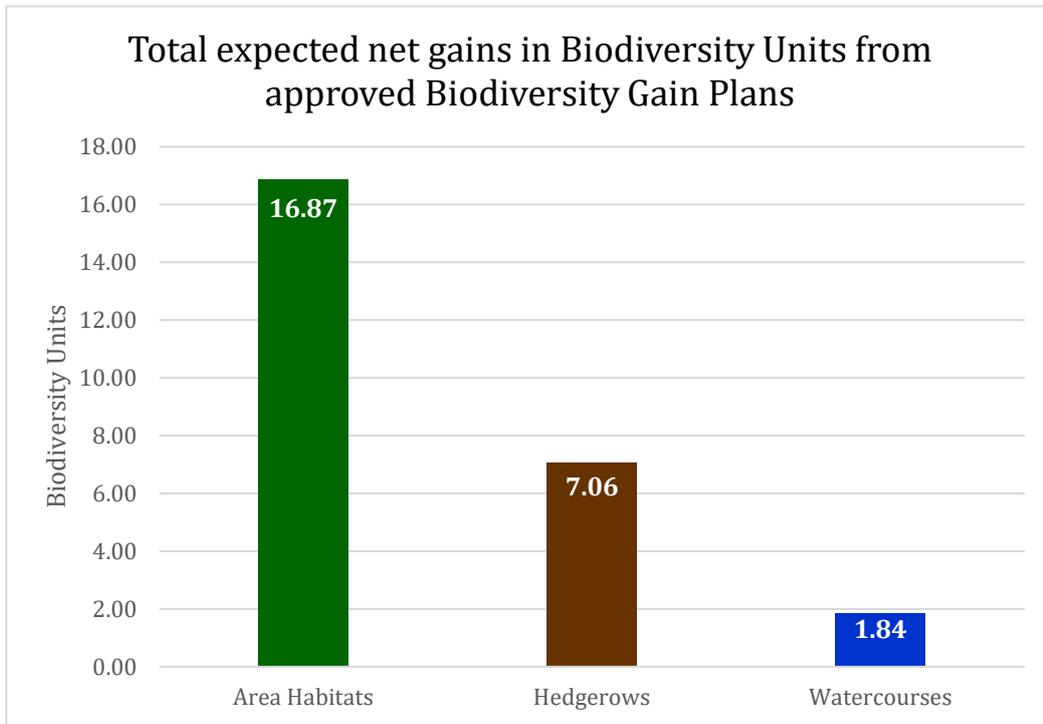


Figure 3 Total expected net gains in biodiversity units

- A large majority (74%) of biodiversity gains have come from the creation and enhancement of grassland habitats (see Figure 4).

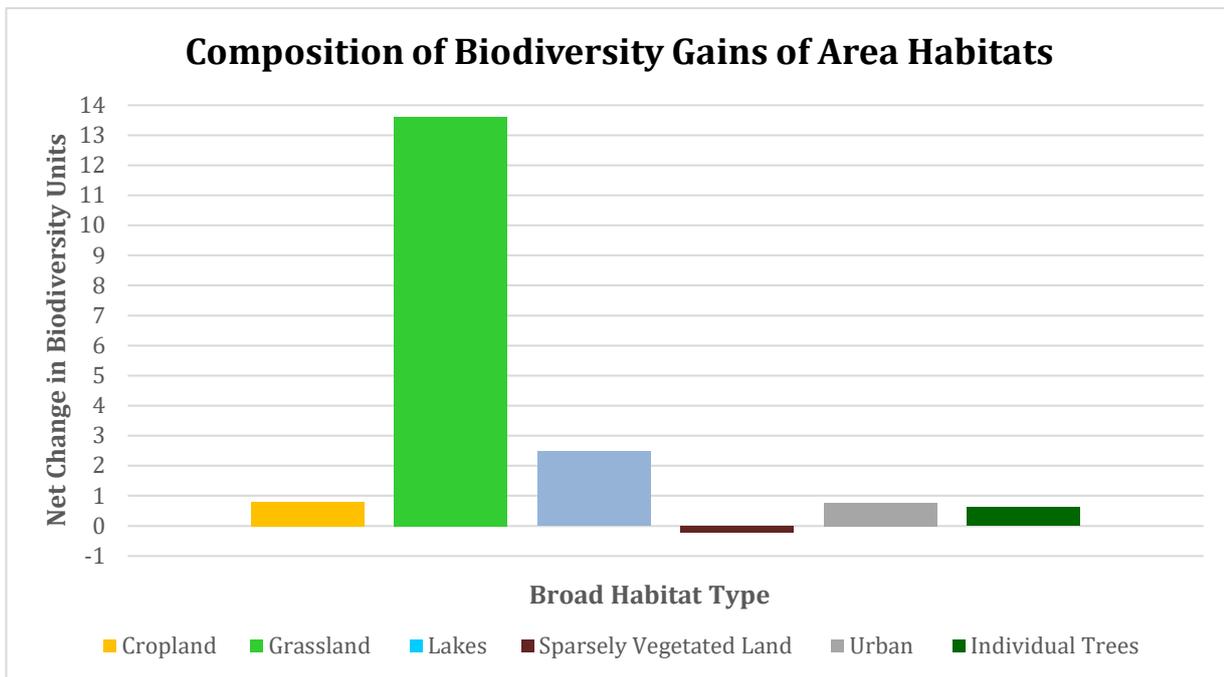


Figure 4 Composition of Biodiversity Gains

- Off-site gains accounted for 1.27 units of area habitats (7.5% of total), 0.02 of hedgerow habitats (0.28%), and zero watercourse habitats.
- 39% of off-site gains were delivered within the same National Character Area of impact site, and 61% within the neighbouring National Character Area, from Environment Bank sites in The Malvern Hills and West Oxfordshire.

Appendix 2: BNG Quantitative Data

Table 1: Eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain

ID	Consented applications requiring net gains	Number	Proportion
A	Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period		not applicable
B	Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies		not applicable
C	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	8	not applicable
D	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	6	75%
E	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	0	0%
F	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	0	0%
G	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	2	25%
H	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0%
I	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0%
J	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	0	0%

Table 2: Overall expected gains and losses across all biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period

ID	Overall expected gains and losses	Area Habitats	Hedgerows	Watercourses	Total
A	Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	99.96	11.86	17.39	129.20
B	Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	116.83	18.92	19.22	154.97
C	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	16.87	7.06	1.84	25.77
D	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	0.17	0.60	0.11	0.87
E	Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.79
F	Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	2.23	0.00	0.00	2.23
G	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	1.44	0.00	0.00	1.44
H	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	1.83	0.00	0.00	1.83
I	Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
J	Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	18.31	7.06	1.84	27.21
K	Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	0.18	0.60	0.11	0.88

Table 3: Impact on Irreplaceable Habitat

ID	Impact on irreplaceable habitat	Total	Proportion
A	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period where the on-site change negatively impacts irreplaceable habitats	0	0%

Table 4: Location of off-site biodiversity units

ID	Location of off-site biodiversity units	Total	Proportion
A	Number of off-site biodiversity units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site.	0.859506	39%
B	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA	1.368654	61%
C	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA	0	0%

Table 5: Results of monitoring biodiversity gains

ID	Results of monitoring biodiversity gains where the LPA is part of the legal agreement	Total	Proportion (%)
A	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of 'significant' on-site gains	2	25%
B	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	N/A	0%
C	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	N/A	0%
D	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for 'significant' on-site gains	N/A	0%
E	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for 'significant' on-site gains	N/A	0%
F	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of off-site gains, where the LPA are responsible for monitoring.	0	0%
G	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	N/A	0%
H	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	N/A	0%
I	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	N/A	0%

J	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	N/A	0%
ID	Enforcement actions taken in the reporting period	Total	Proportion
L	Number of enforcement actions taken during the reporting period associated with Biodiversity Net Gain policy	0	0%

Table 6: Composition of biodiversity gains - areas

ID	Habitat Type - Area	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
A	Cropland	0.4568	0.224	1.2545	0.65	0.7977	0.426
B	Grassland	96.84698	15.6393	110.453627	12.5019	13.606647	-3.1374
C	Heathland and Scrub	0	0	0	0	0	0
D	Lakes	0	0	2.4802247	0.3	2.4802247	0.3
E	Sparsely Vegetated Land	0.22	0.1	0	0	-0.22	-0.1
F	Urban	0.2426	0.7237	1.009776	1.8096	0.767176	1.0859
G	Wetland	0	0	0	0	0	0
H	Woodland and Forest	0	1.208	0	1.208	0	0
I	Intertidal sediment	0	0	0	0	0	0
J	Coastal Saltmarsh	0	0	0	0	0	0
K	Rocky Shore	0	0	0	0	0	0
L	Coastal Lagoons	0	0	0	0	0	0
M	Intertidal Hard Structures	0	0	0	0	0	0
N	Watercourse footprint	0	0	0	0	0	0

O	Individual Trees	0.9128	0.0815	1.5333951	0.2895	0.6205951	0.208
	Total	98.67918	17.9765	116.7315228	16.759	18.0523428	-1.2175

Table 7: Composition of biodiversity gains - hedgerows and lines of trees

ID	Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total km at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total km post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in km
A	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	3.06	0.17	3.06	0.17	0	0
C	Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	1.728	0.096	1.728	0.096	0	0
D	Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0	0	0	0	0	0
E	Species -rich native hedgerow	0.759	0.055	7.5847441	0.9885	6.8257441	0.9335
F	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.84	0.07	0.84	0.07	0	0
G	Native hedgerow with trees	0.36	0.045	0.36	0.045	0	0
H	Ecologically valuable line of trees	0	0	0	0	0	0
I	Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0	0	0	0	0	0
J	Native hedgerow	2.9301	0.509	2.8806292	0.525	-0.0494708	0.016
K	Line of trees	0	0	0	0	0	0
L	Line of trees associated with bank or ditch	0	0	0	0	0	0
M	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0	0	0.012545	0.013	0.012545	0.013
	Total	9.6771	0.945	16.4659183	1.9075	6.7888183	0.9625

Table 8: Composition of biodiversity gains - watercourses

ID	Habitat type - watercourse	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometers at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometers post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometers
A	Priority Habitat	0	0	0	0.00	0	0
B	Other Rivers and Streams	12.1095	1.28	13.03686	1.28	0.92736	0
C	Ditches	0	0	0	0.00	0	0
D	Canals	5.22468	0.73	6.1332676	0.73	0.9085876	0
E	Culverts	0.0544	0.04	0.0544	0.04	0	0
	Total	17.38858	2.05	19.2245276	2.05	1.8359476	0