



City of
Doncaster
Council

Biodiversity Net Gain

Update to Regeneration & Housing Overview &
Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 7 March 2024

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What is Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)?

*“an approach to development that seeks to leave the natural environment in a **measurably** better state than it was before the development occurred.”*

“It aims to avoid and then mitigate damaging impacts from development and then, having quantified the remaining impacts, it seeks to deliver measurable improvements to biodiversity through habitat creation or enhancement.”

Where has Biodiversity Net Gain come from?

National Planning Policy:

In the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning polices and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

d) Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity

Local Planning Policy: - Policy 30 Doncaster's Local Plan

Planning proposals need to deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Mandatory BNG - The Environment Act

- The Environment Act amends the Town and Country Planning Act meaning that by law development must demonstrate a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Start dates:
 - Major applications – Feb 12th 2024
 - Minor developments – April 2nd 2024
 - Residential dwellings between 1 and 9 or if units unknown less than 0.5 ha
 - Commercial floor space less than 1000 square metres or total area less than 1ha
 - National Infrastructure Projects – November 2025

Does BNG apply to everything?

No – There are some PERMANENT EXEMPTIONS:

- **House holder applications** i.e. extensions
- **Permitted development**
- **Development that impacts on a very small area of habitat.** The de-minimis threshold is if less than 25m² (5mx5m) of an area habitat or 5m of a linear habitat are impacted (provided it is not a Priority Habitat)
- **Self-build and custom build development** which is:
 - No more than 9 dwellings and
 - Carried out on a site no larger than 0.5ha, and
 - Consists exclusively of dwellings which are self- build or customer house building
- **Urgent Crown development**
- Development that is mainly to create a **biodiversity gain site**
- Development related to the **high-speed railway transport network** (i.e. HS2)

How is Biodiversity measured?

Biodiversity is measured in *Biodiversity Units*. A unit of biodiversity is a term of measurement which encompasses three things:

1. The area of a habitat.
2. How 'distinctive' or special that habitat is considered.
3. How good an example the habitat is (It's condition).

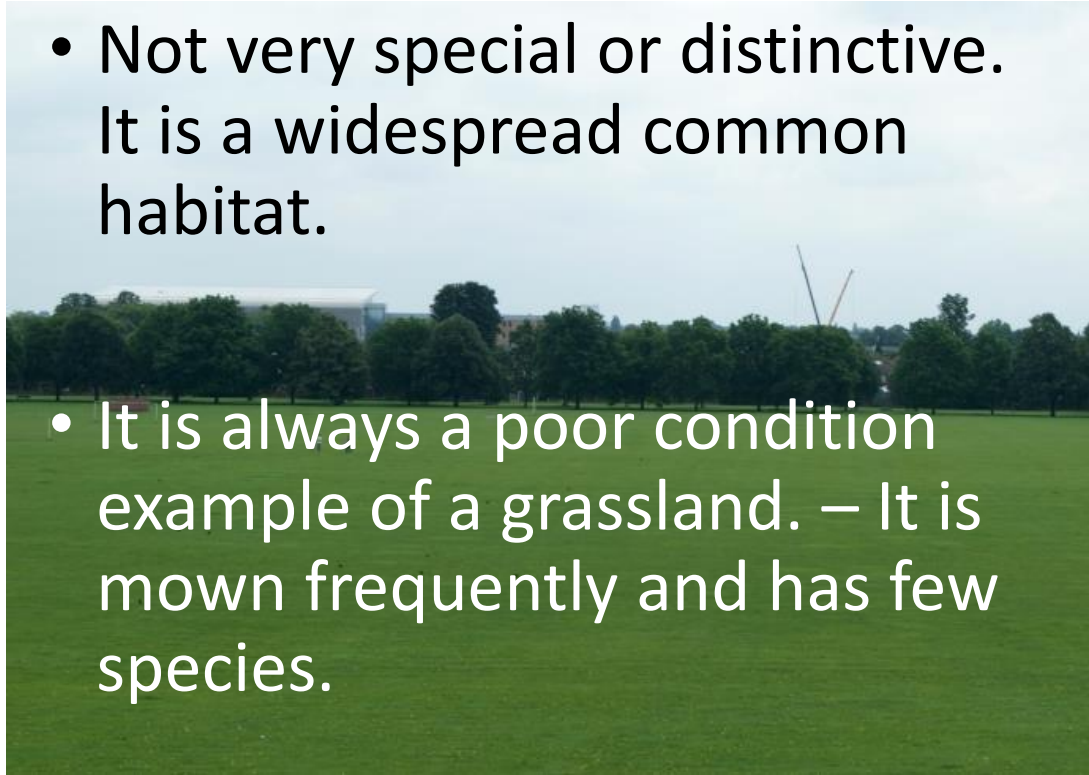
A unit also takes into account:

- Whether the habitat being created or lost is considered important in that location.

An example with grassland...

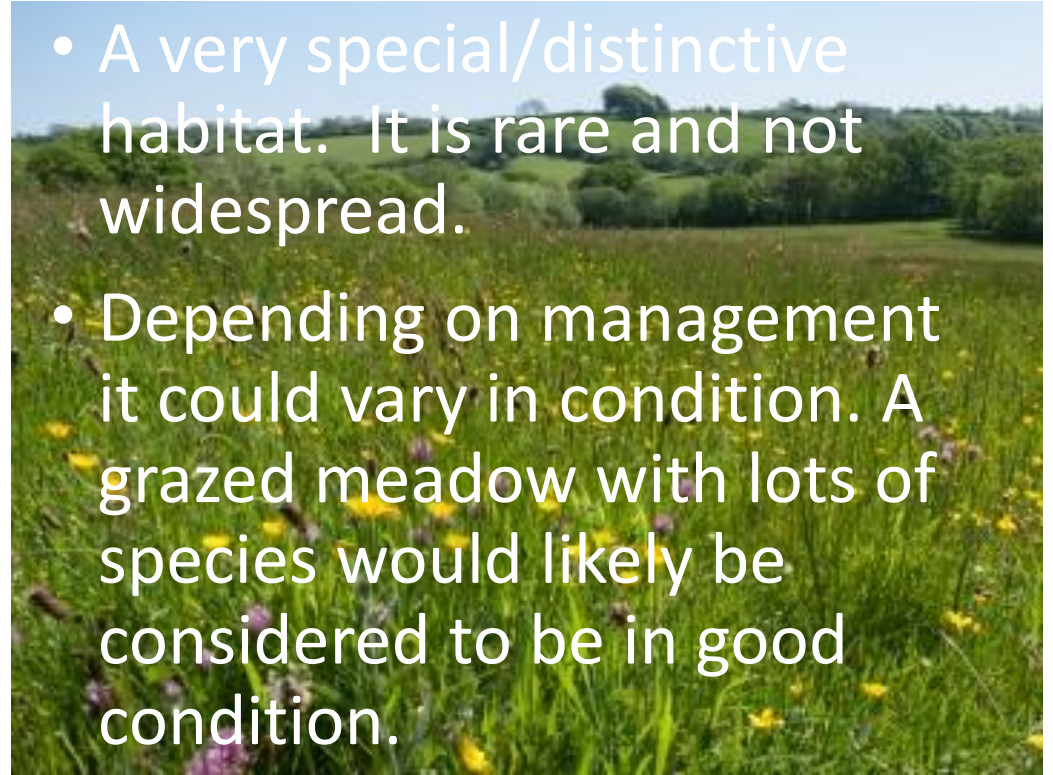
Playing field

- Not very special or distinctive. It is a widespread common habitat.
- It is always a poor condition example of a grassland. – It is mown frequently and has few species.



Species Rich Limestone grassland

- A very special/distinctive habitat. It is rare and not widespread.
- Depending on management it could vary in condition. A grazed meadow with lots of species would likely be considered to be in good condition.



In terms of biodiversity units 1 ha of limestone grassland = 20.7 units BUT 1 ha playing field = 2 units.
Or around 10 ha of playing field = the same units as 1ha unit of limestone grassland.

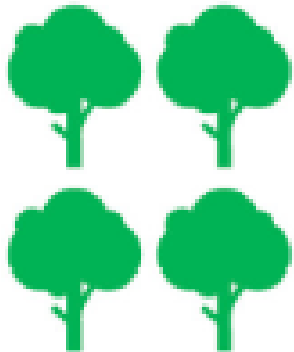
How are losses and gains in Biodiversity Assessed?

Metric is used to assess the baseline value of a proposed development site.

Same metric used to predict the value of the site after development

Metric used to assess value of additional offsite habitat creation restoration

Baseline Units
10



Onsite 4 Units + Offsite 7 Units = 11 Units

10% net gain achieved

Net Gain in Doncaster Prior to Mandatory BNG

Local Planning Policy: - Policy 30 Doncaster's Local Plan

Planning proposals need to deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity.

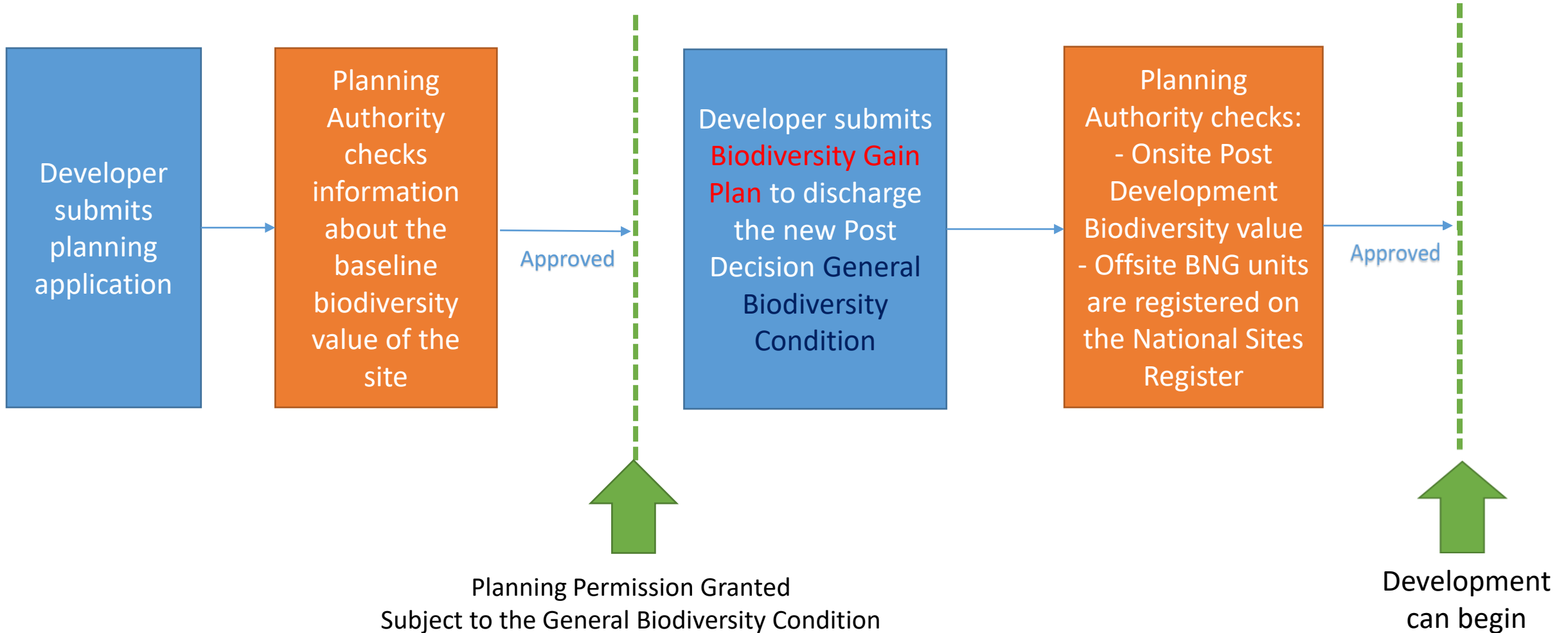
Biodiversity Net Gain SPD: When developers could not deliver 10% net gain on-site we asked them to try and find an offsite BNG site as close to the development as possible or as a last resort pay the Council a Biodiversity Offsetting Contribution fee of £25-£27,500 per biodiversity Unit as per of a s106 agreement.

Under Mandatory BNG this will change...

New Terms - Biodiversity Gain Objective and General Biodiversity Condition and Biodiversity Gain Plan

- The **Biodiversity Gain Objective** is to ensure that any planning permission granted (where not exempt) will deliver at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.
- The statutory framework for biodiversity net gain will principally be delivered through **the NEW post decision General Biodiversity Condition**
- To discharge the **General Biodiversity Condition** a developer needs to provide a **Biodiversity Net Gain Plan**. This document will set out how the net gain objective. What onsite biodiversity will be secured and where offsite biodiversity will be secured.

The New BNG Planning Process



NEW Statutory Biodiversity Credits

OFF-SITE BNG – The last resort is now Statutory Government Credits

- For NEW applications from Feb 12th we can no longer say to developers that they can pay a Biodiversity Offsetting Contribution to CDC secured via a s106 agreement.
- Instead they have to buy units on the open market and show us where those units are coming from in their Biodiversity Gain Plan.
- We cannot choose where these offsite units are delivered. There are incentives though for more local delivery.
- If the applicant can demonstrate to the LPA that there are no suitable off-site options – they can buy Statutory Biodiversity Credits to achieve all or part of their min 10% BNG objective.
- Credits are priced deliberately high to be a disincentive for use and as the local markets get up and running will be eventually phased out as an option
- Current costs are tiered depending on the habitat itself

BNG sites in Doncaster

- It is important we try and support a developing market for offsite BNG sites in Doncaster.
- Officers are working to develop BNG schemes on Council owned land.

BUT

- The private market will also have an important role to play.
 - Private landowners e.g. Farmers could deliver BNG units.

A photograph of a forest path lined with tall, thin trees. The ground is covered in a carpet of small purple flowers, likely bluebells, and fallen brown leaves. The path leads into the distance, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting a bright day with some overcast sky.

Questions...