

Protecting and enhancing the environment to be at the heart of new housing and infrastructure developments

Plans to ensure wildlife can be better protected and enhanced in developments have been set out in a consultation launched today by Environment Minister Rebecca Pow.

The proposals set out in the Biodiversity Net Gain consultation will help communities, planners, developers and Local Planning Authorities ensure new developments are “nature positive” – which means putting nature and biodiversity gain at the heart of all decision-making and design.

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before – protecting existing habitats and ensuring that any impacts on biodiversity are compensated for with natural habitat and ecological features over and above what is affected.

Developments will have to be delivered in a way which helps to reduce and restore any biodiversity loss during the building phase, and crucially also deliver a 10% boost to the area’s biodiversity. It will help deliver thriving natural spaces for local communities and is a key plank of the Government’s plans to build back better from the pandemic and to help level up all parts of the country.

The Government has also announced a new funding pot of over £4 million to help Local Planning Authorities and other local authorities with planning oversight, to prepare for Biodiversity Net Gain which will become mandatory two years after Royal Assent of the Environment Act.

The funding will help Local Planning Authorities expand ecologist resource and upskill ecologist teams, increasing their capacity to work with developers and communities to provide biodiversity gains by helping restore wildlife, plants and landscapes after building work has taken place. This can take place on the site, elsewhere in the local area or, if this is not possible, by purchasing credits for nature restoration elsewhere in England.

Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, said:

The pandemic has reinforced how much our homes, communities and outdoor spaces mean to us. Our commitment to protecting and enhancing our natural world can and must go hand in hand with our ambition to build more high quality homes.

Our plans to make sure new developments better protect and enhance

wildlife and nature will create better places for people to live and work, and it will ensure we leave our environment in a better state for future generations.

The consultation and associated documents being announced today have been developed with advice from the government's statutory nature body, Natural England.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

Investing in Nature's recovery is a vital national priority and biodiversity net gain is an ambitious and innovative mechanism to help do it. It has the potential to bring real-life benefits, including funding for Nature's recovery, in the process ensuring we leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was before.

It is important to remember, however, that the starting point is to avoid harm in the first place, moving to net gain arrangements only in cases where developments meet all other planning requirements. I'm delighted that Natural England's technical expertise was able to shape this policy and look forward to using it to secure better outcomes for Nature, while streamlining the planning process.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

By focussing on wildlife and nature in planning and development we can make sure that we protect and improve our cherished natural environment for future generations, as well as delivering the homes this country needs.

This is all part of our plan to level up the country and transform our communities into places people want to live and work. I encourage all those in the housing industry to share their views in this important consultation.

The mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement will help to achieve better outcomes for nature and people by making sure developers play their part in reducing habitat loss and investing in mitigations to protect the environment.

The consultation is asking developers, planning authorities, environmental professionals, landowners and other interested parties for their views on the details of how biodiversity net gain should be delivered when building new housing or commercial development.

While some developers, planning authorities and practitioners have already been following a Biodiversity Net Gain approach voluntarily, or in line with

local planning policy, the proposed standardised, mandatory approach would give them clarity and certainty on the Biodiversity Net Gain requirement and how to help enhance the environment through development.

The consultation closes on 5 April 2022 and can be found [here](#).

Today's announcement is part of the Government's commitments aimed at tackling threats to biodiversity and climate change backed up by the Environment Act.

The [Environment Act](#) will deliver the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on earth and drive forward action to protect nature and improve biodiversity, including through a target to halt species decline by 2030.