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Biodiversity – Process for designing and implementing biodiversity net gain in development projects

*Biodiversité – Processus de conception et de mise en œuvre du
gain net de biodiversité dans les projets de développement*

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Foreword

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Introduction

Biodiversity encompasses the diverse spectrum of life found on Earth, spanning genetic, species and ecosystem levels. This includes a wide array of organisms, including plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms, along with the communities they form and habitats they live in. Biodiversity provides essential services for people, including carbon storage, clean water, air and food. It also underpins our wellbeing and is valued for its intrinsic worth.^[1]

In recent years, recognition of the joint biodiversity and climate crisis has gained pace. Governments, businesses, organizations and the public are not only seeking to protect biodiversity, but also to enhance biodiversity through all sectors of society and the economy, including construction and development.^[23]

For many years, balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability was seen as a trade-off, either sacrificing the natural environment, or holding back growth in order to protect nature. This is a misunderstanding and several initiatives have emerged wherein development projects play a role in protecting, restoring, and enhancing the environment. One such initiative is Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

BNG is a specific, quantifiable outcome from project activities that deliver demonstrable benefits for biodiversity compared to the starting or baseline state of biodiversity.

Between 2015 and 2018, the IUCN published a number of documents on net positive impacts on biodiversity ^{[9]-[13]} including from business^[11] and conservation perspectives.^[10] In 2018, the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP), an international group of 70 companies, government agencies, financial institutions and civil society organizations, published *The BBOP Principles on Biodiversity Offsets*^[6] and the *Standard on Biodiversity Offsets*^[4] to support developments to achieve BNG in accordance with good practice. These principles aimed to set a benchmark of objectives including adhering to a mitigation hierarchy and avoiding adverse impacts on irreplaceable biodiversity features.

This document provides a conceptual framework for BNG and builds on, and adds to, the foundational work referenced above. It translates the principles and actions to implement them into a process. The aim of this document is to provide a consistent and structured process for designing and implementing BNG that is based on good practice. It is recognized that indicators and metrics for assessing BNG are at various stages of development. This document aims to support their use and development balancing the challenge of measuring the complexity of nature with the need for consistent, transparent and structured processes to halt and reverse loss of biodiversity.

It is intended that this document is of use to actors involved in development including ecologists, planners, biologists, auditors, developers, conservation organizations, land managers, planning authorities and organisations and investors. It can also be used by land managers and organizations aiming to generate BNG through management of their land.

This document is intended for projects of all sizes and for all types of development sectors. It can be applied to any project, including development projects that do not require planning permission or a building permit, as well as land management.

Most development plans and projects involve a logical sequence through the four broad stages of:

- a) preparation;
- b) design;
- c) implementation;
- d) management, monitoring and reporting.

The process of BNG within this document is founded on these stages, with the aim of applying them to small developments with minimal biodiversity impact, as well as large-scale developments involving project option appraisal or strategic planning.