



Biodiversity Net Gain Consultation – ADEPT comments

By email to bngconsultation@defra.gov.uk 24th July 2025

About ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) represents directors of place who are responsible for providing day-to-day services including local highways, recycling, waste and planning as well as the strategic long-term planning and delivery of sustainable places. ADEPT members are at the very heart of delivering clean sustainable growth, tackling climate change at a local level. We manage the projects that are fundamental to creating more resilient, inclusive and safe communities, economies and infrastructure. ADEPT is a membership based professional organisation with:

- 100+ county, unitary and combined authority members
- 5 sub-national transport bodies
- 22 Corporate Partner members across England.

The importance of Biodiversity Net Gain

ADEPT has consistently supported the aims of the Environment Act 2021 and in particular the principle of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Our submission to the Defra consultation in 2022 [here](#) set this out clearly, along with the case for ensuring that local authorities are properly resourced to deliver it. Since the implementation of mandatory BNG we have engaged with Defra and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to help share best practice and address some of the practical issues identified by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), but overall we consider that BNG has been successful in delivering improvements for nature while facilitating local growth and sustainable development.

Areas for improvement in the future include greater support for local authorities to build the capacity and capability to develop off-site nature markets and attract wider private sector investment into nature recovery. BNG implementation should align with the aims of the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs). More generally, we believe that the 'new' government's ambitions with respect to devolution and local government reorganisation offer opportunities to strengthen the environmental leadership and delivery roles of strategic and unitary authorities. We aim to work with officials at Defra and MHCLG to maximise these opportunities.

Consultation on improving the implementation of BNG

Meanwhile, we welcome the current consultation with proposals to amend immediate operational issues. Our main message is that minor development (small sites) should not be exempted from BNG requirements: this would exempt many applications, and it is clear that small developments individually and collectively can have a significant impact on local ecosystems and biodiversity. For this reason alone they should not be exempted. The de minimus threshold should not be extended.

Maintaining BNG requirements for minor developments ensures that every project contributes positively to the environment. It encourages developers to think creatively about how they can protect and improve nature, if only on a small scale. Green spaces and good planting are vitally important not just for biodiversity but also for the health and wellbeing of people.

The wholesale removal of small sites would also have the effect of significantly reducing the demand for off-site BNG units and so undermine nature markets and the ability of local authorities and land managers to attract other investment. The new BNG market is an important lever to drive private investment in nature.

Instead, we would support targeted revisions to the existing exemptions, recognising that where small sites have a very minor impact on biodiversity they could be exempted. We do not agree that development within parks, public gardens and playing fields should be exempted. We would support some of the proposed changes to the Small Sites Metric, such as reviewing the habitat descriptors to make them more easily understood by non-ecologists.

We welcome the introduction of BNG for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) that are not determined by LPAs. As with the current BNG regime, compensation and improvement measures should be delivered on-site wherever possible – and the large scale of NSIPs makes this very likely – or close to the site(s). We believe that where NSIPs span two or more LPA boundaries the BNG measures should be delivered in all the LPAs affected, not just one of them: the principle of requiring off-site improvements to be made as close as possible to the site where habitat is lost is a core principle of BNG that should not be compromised.

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