



BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN • FOR FARMERS AND LANDOWNERS

Get paid to put nature back on part of your land

Builders in England must now pay for new wildlife habitat. If you have a field to spare, they can pay you to create it.

Since 2024

Required by law

30 years

Agreement length

Free

To list your land

THE SCHEME IN PLAIN ENGLISH

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Since 2024, builders in England must leave nature at least 10% better off than before they built.



New estates, warehouses and roads take away fields, hedges and trees. The builder must put back more nature than they took.



Often there isn't room on the building site. Then the builder must buy “**biodiversity units**” from a landowner who creates habitat elsewhere.



Habitat can be a wildflower meadow, new hedgerows, a small wood or a pond. An ecologist counts the units with the official government method.

STEP 1**A builder needs units**

Their planning permission depends on it.

STEP 2**You create habitat**

On a field or corner you choose.

STEP 3**You get paid**

The builder buys your units.

From 2 November 2026 the rule also covers nationally significant infrastructure projects. Since August 2026 the smallest developments (0.2 ha or less) are exempt.

HOW IT WORKS WITH US

Five simple steps



- 1 **Register.** Tell us about your field at fieldgain.co.uk or by email. We give you a rough estimate.
- 2 **Survey.** A partner ecologist measures your land with the official statutory biodiversity metric and works out how many units you could create.
- 3 **Secure.** You sign a 30-year legal agreement (a conservation covenant or section 106 agreement), agree a habitat management plan, and register the site with Natural England.
- 4 **Match.** We match your units with developers across England whose planning applications need them.
- 5 **Sell.** You sell the units, then create and look after the habitat under your plan.

Free to list. 5% on completion, minimum £1,000.

Invoiced only after you have been paid. We never lease or take your land.

WHAT IT COULD EARN

Indicative price per unit

Grassland	about £24,000
Hedgerow	£24,000–£28,000
Woodland	£33,000–£46,000
Ditches	about £94,000
Rivers	about £165,000

Indicative recent market prices per unit (biodiversityunits.com, July 2026 report). These are not offers. A hectare typically produces a few units. Prices must cover 30 years of habitat management, so your real return depends on your costs and your survey. Land close to the development is worth more to the buyer.



What it means for you

- ✓ **You keep the land.** It stays yours.
- ✓ You are paid to create the habitat and look after it for 30 years, registered with Natural England.
- ✓ Some habitats can still be grazed or cut for hay, if your plan allows.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Common questions

Based on official guidance at 28 October 2026. Where the position is unclear we say so.

Is it really 30 years? What if I sell the land or it is inherited?

Yes. The legal agreement (a conservation covenant with a responsible body, or a section 106 planning obligation with the council) must secure the habitat for at least 30 years.

For off-site sites, the 30 years runs from when the habitat works are completed, so the total period can be longer. The agreement is registered as a local land charge and binds future owners, including buyers and heirs. You should get legal advice before signing, and you pay your own legal costs.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Enter a legal agreement for biodiversity net gain](#) · [GOV.UK: Getting and using a conservation covenant agreement](#)

I am a tenant farmer. Can I take part?

Yes, but you need the landowner's agreement. Defra says tenants can sell units with the landlord's agreement, and landlords need affected tenants' agreement.

You can only enter a BNG agreement alone if your lease is at least as long as the agreement; otherwise the freeholder must be included. Registering someone else's land needs their signed, dated written consent. How the income is split between landlord and tenant is a matter for negotiation and advice.

Sources: [Defra blog: Biodiversity net gain for land managers step by step flowcharts](#) · [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#)

My land is mortgaged. Does the bank need to agree?

Government guidance does not deal with this directly, so we will not guess. A 30-year binding obligation may affect the land's value, and many mortgage deeds require lender consent before burdening the land. Check your mortgage terms and ask your solicitor and lender early.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Enter a legal agreement for biodiversity net gain](#)

How is it taxed? Inheritance tax, agricultural property relief, income tax and VAT.

Tax depends on your circumstances, so take advice from your accountant or a rural tax specialist. In outline:

- Income tax: HMRC's technical note (May 2026) says BNG receipts are taxable, normally as income of a trade, often your existing farming trade.
- VAT: units sold by a VAT-registered person are standard-rated.
- Inheritance tax: since 6 April 2025, agricultural property relief can extend to land managed under an environmental agreement with a public body, council or approved responsible body, provided the land was agricultural for at least 2 years before the change of use. The value relieved is restricted to existing-use value. The wider APR/BPR reforms from April 2026 also apply.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Ecosystem services](#) · [GOV.UK: Agricultural property relief and environmental land management](#) · [GOV.UK: Summary of reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief](#)

Can I combine it with SFI or Countryside Stewardship?

Often yes, but never paid twice for the same thing. You cannot sell an enhancement already funded by an agri-environment scheme as a biodiversity unit.

You can add further enhancements on top: count what your SFI, CS, ES or Landscape Recovery agreement will achieve in your baseline, and sell only units from new work. SFI26 rules allow land in other schemes only where activities are compatible and there is no double funding. You can also stack BNG with nutrient credits from the same land. Basic Payment Scheme recipients can still take part.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Combining environmental payments biodiversity net gain BNG and nutrient mitigation](#) · [GOV.UK: SFI26 scheme rules and guidance](#)

Does where my land is affect what it's worth?

Yes. Builders get the most credit for habitat close to their development: land in the same council area (local planning authority) or the same national character area counts in full.

Land further away counts for less, so a builder needs more units to make up the difference. This rule is called the spatial risk multiplier. It means the value of your units varies by location, and we can work out how your land compares for developers near you.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides](#) · [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#)

Who does the survey and who pays?

A qualified ecologist surveys the land and calculates units with the statutory biodiversity metric, and usually helps write the habitat management and monitoring plan. The landowner normally pays.

Published prices start from about £500 + VAT, and one firm quotes £1,200–1,600 per assessment; bigger sites cost more. These costs, plus Natural England's £639 registration fee and £45 per allocation, should be built into your unit price.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#) · [GOV.UK: Register a biodiversity gain site](#)

What monitoring and reporting will I have to do?

This is set in your legal agreement and habitat management and monitoring plan, agreed with the council or responsible body.

It includes a monitoring schedule, access to the land, and reporting on habitat condition over the 30 years. There is no single national schedule; the frequency is agreed site by site. Monitoring costs are often funded by a fee in the agreement.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Creating a habitat management and monitoring plan for BNG](#) · [GOV.UK: Enter a legal agreement for biodiversity net gain](#)

How and when do I get paid?

Prices and terms are agreed privately between you and the buyer. Government guidance says payment can be a lump sum, staged, or by results.

Developers often will not complete until their biodiversity gain plan is likely to be approved. Off-site BNG is a private market and there is no guarantee of a buyer. Our 5% fee is invoiced only after you are paid.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#)

What if the habitat does not reach its target?

You, as landowner, are legally responsible for reaching the target condition.

Your agreement must set out what you will do if things do not go to plan and what enforcement action the council or responsible body can take. Build remedial work and insurance into your price, and read these clauses carefully with your solicitor.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Enter a legal agreement for biodiversity net gain](#) · [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#)

Can I still farm or graze the land?

Not as before on the habitat area, but many habitats need management, and grazing, hay cutting or hedge work can be part of the plan if it is written into your habitat management plan.

Anything that harms the target habitat would breach the agreement. Defra notes BNG can sit alongside farming, often on land that is less productive. Agree the details with your ecologist before signing.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#)

Does my site need to be a certain size?

There is no minimum for a gain site. Since August 2026 small developments of 0.2 ha or less are exempt from BNG, which reduces demand from the smallest schemes. Some sites may also need a screening decision before registration.

Sources: [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#)

NEXT STEPS

Find out what your land could earn

It costs nothing to ask and there is no obligation. Here is how we start.

1

Tell us about your field

Fill in the short form at fieldgain.co.uk or email us. Rough size and location is enough.

2

Get a free estimate

We come back to you with a rough idea of the units and income your land could produce.

3

Decide in your own time

If it looks worthwhile, we introduce a partner ecologist for a survey. You only sign once you have taken advice.



Talk to Tim Johnson

EMAIL hello@fieldgain.co.uk

WEB fieldgain.co.uk

[Tell us about your field →](#)

Further reading

- [GOV.UK: Sell biodiversity units as a land manager](#)
- [GOV.UK: Register a biodiversity gain site](#)
- [NFU](#) and [CLA](#) BNG guidance for members (some is members only)
- Your land agent, solicitor or accountant

This is not legal, tax or financial advice. Please take independent advice before entering any agreement. Free to list · 5% fee on completion, minimum £1,000, invoiced only after you are paid.