Biodiversity Duty and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report

Reporting Authority: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Reporting Period: 12 February 2024 – 01 January 2026
Date Published: 24/03/2026

---

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This report outlines how Sandwell Council has fulfilled its biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021, including actions taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity and deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through the planning system.

It also sets out the council's planned actions for the next reporting period.

---

2. Summary of Actions Taken to Comply with the Biodiversity Duty

2.1 Resources

To ensure that Sandwell was able to meet the statutory duty of delivering BNG, a full time ecologist was appointed in January 2024 to review the applications, provide advice and guidance, and deliver inhouse training.

The software tool, Mycelia, has been procured to assist with the management and validation of planning applications coming in and forward looking to assist in the monitoring of sites going forward into the next reporting period. Mycelia has also been used for the quantitative side of this year's report.

2.2 Integration into council services

Sandwell is in the process of setting up a special purpose vehicle with West Midlands Combined Authority, to deliver habitat banks within the council area. This will be integrated into Parks and Green Spaces to ensure the delivery of these habitat banks.

Upskilling of inhouse architects and planning officers has been delivered and BNG is taken into account for each development within the Sandwell Area. Training was also provided to elected member who sit on the planning committee.

---

3. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Actions

3.1 Actions taken to meet BNG obligations

BNG validation has been assisted by the purchase of the Mycelia software. This has aided with the speed and accuracy of validation of planning applications. We have taken a position as a council to require self-build applications to still produce a BNG metric to ensure that a baseline is recorded if the self-build aspect of the development defaults.

Staff have been trained by the inhouse ecologist and repeat training is delivered as policies evolve. The inhouse ecologist is attending training externally where required.

Sandwell has published clear guidance for developers on their website, including the requirements for the self-build metric. Where further guidance is required, the in-house ecologist assists one-to-one and takes the lessons learned forward.

The emerging Sandwell Local Plan, due to be adopted later this year, contains a clear and appropriate set of planning policies on the natural environment. They are designed to promote the retention and enhancement of BNG and environmental value within Sandwell itself, which is a heavily urbanised area at the heart of the West Midlands conurbation. The importance of the extant natural environment to the health, wellbeing and enjoyment of local communities is recognised in the policies, which include:

- protection of the biodiversity hierarchy of international, national and local sites of importance
- protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats, including BNG and the creation of local habitat banks on Council-owned land; this policy also includes a requirement for swift bricks prior to their inclusion in the draft NPPF
- provision, retention and protection of trees, woodlands, and hedgerows
- geodiversity and the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark
- The Rowley Hills
- canals

The policies have been through significant public consultation and an examination into the plan itself, and the policies are generally considered to be robust and deliverable.

---

4. Plans for the Next Reporting Period

4.1 Biodiversity Duty

By the next reporting period, Sandwell council plans to have habitat banks set up within the council area and have a new adopted local plan. Sandwell is encouraging private habitat banks to be delivered within the area and continue to strengthen partnerships with local environmental organisations such as Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, as well as a strong partnership with the combined authority and local councils within the Black Country.

Sandwell would have started some major developments within the council area, and the aim is to ensure that habitat loss is kept to a minimum with required units being used to deliver improved or new habitats within Sandwell itself.

4.2 Biodiversity Net Gain and Monitoring

Mycelia has captured all the information for BNG within Sandwell to date. The use of this software will continue for the foreseeable future to assist in the delivery of BNG, and the upcoming reporting periods. Sandwell will continue to assess and review any renewal of contracts to ensure value for money is being upheld.

Monitoring has not yet started within the Sandwell Council area but it is expected that first reports will be submitted soon. Sandwell is committed to ensuring that the monitoring reports are submitted and will be using Mycelia to record the monitoring period. Where necessary the internal enforcement team will support with enforcement action, if BNG has not been delivered as detailed within the Biodiversity Gain Plans.

---

5. Biodiversity Ney Gain Highlights and Challenges

Key achievements

- BNG is being delivered within the area where possible

- The appointment of an inhouse ecologist for the first time within the planning team
- Habitat Banks are close to being secured within Sandwell Council Area.

Key challenges

- Economic challenges and political uncertainty
- Public consultation regarding the revised NPPF and site thresholds reducing the scope of site where BNG can be delivered in Sandwell
- Skills and expertise shortages within the biodiversity sector

---

Table 1: Eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain

ID	Consented applications requiring net gains	Number	Proportion (%)
A	Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period	126	Not applicable
B	Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies	141	Not applicable
C	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	8	Not applicable
D	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	4	50.00
E	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	1	12.50
F	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	1	12.50
G	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	1	12.50
H	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
I	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
J	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	1	12.50

Table 2: Overall expected gains and losses across all biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period

ID	Overall expected gains and losses	Area habitat	Hedgerow	Watercourse
A	Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site	13.29	0.34	0.00
B	Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site	12.84	0.41	0.00
C	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site	-0.45	0.06	0.00
D	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	-3.42	17.65	0.00
E	Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site	1.50	0.00	0.00
F	Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site	2.66	0.00	0.00
G	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site	1.16	0.00	0.00
H	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	77.18	0.00	0.00
I	Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits	1.33	0.00	0.00
J	Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	2.04	0.06	0.00
K	Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	13.76	17.65	0.00

Table 3: Impact on Irreplaceable Habitat

ID	Impact on irreplaceable habitat	Total	Proportion (%)
A	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period where the on-site change negatively impacts irreplaceable habitats	0	0.00

Table 4: Location of off-site biodiversity units

ID	Location of off-site biodiversity units	Total	Proportion (%)
A	Number of off-site biodiversity units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site	2.66	100.00
B	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA	0.00	0.00
C	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA	0.00	0.00

Table 5: Results of monitoring biodiversity gains

ID	Results of monitoring biodiversity gains where the LPA is part of the legal agreement	Total	Proportion (%)
A	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of 'significant' on-site gains	2	25.00
B	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
C	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
D	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
E	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
F	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of off-site gains, where the LPA are responsible for monitoring.	0	0.00
G	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00
H	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00
I	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00
J	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00

ID	Enforcement actions taken in the reporting period	Total	Proportion (%)
L	Number of enforcement actions taken during the reporting period associated with Biodiversity Net Gain policy	0	0.00

ID	Tracking monitoring of biodiversity gains	Free Text
K	Please describe how you have collected information on monitoring (e.g., use of digital software to collect and analyse monitoring data/ manual checking of monitoring reports/ internal monitoring system etc.	Mycelia

Table 6: Composition of biodiversity gains - areas

ID	Habitat Type - Area	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
A	Cropland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
B	Grassland	3.27	1.45	3.50	0.64	0.23	-0.81
C	Heathland and shrub	0.10	0.02	0.16	0.02	0.07	0.00
D	Lakes	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
E	Sparsely vegetated land	0.31	0.05	0.00	0.00	-0.31	-0.05
F	Urban	0.14	2.87	0.78	3.28	0.64	0.40
G	Wetland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
H	Woodland and forest	0.87	0.20	1.42	0.19	0.55	-0.01
I	Intertidal sediment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
J	Coastal saltmarsh	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K	Rocky shore	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
L	Coastal lagoons	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
M	Intertidal hard structures	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
N	Watercourse footprint	Not applicable	0.00	Not applicable	0.00	Not applicable	0.00
O	Individual trees	10.10	1.43	9.63	1.44	-0.47	0.02
	Total	14.79	6.03	15.49	5.57	0.70	-0.46

Table 7: Composition of biodiversity gains - hedgerows and lines of trees

ID	Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometres at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometres post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometres
A	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
B	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.01
C	Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
D	Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
E	Species-rich native hedgerow	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
G	Native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
H	Ecologically valuable line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
I	Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
J	Native hedgerow	0.27	0.12	0.32	0.14	0.05	0.01
K	Line of trees	0.07	0.04	0.00	0.00	-0.07	-0.04
L	Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
M	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Total	0.34	0.16	0.41	0.15	0.06	-0.01

Table 8: Composition of biodiversity gains - watercourses

ID	Habitat type - watercourse	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometers at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometers post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometers
A	Priority habitat	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
B	Other rivers and streams	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C	Ditches	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
D	Canals	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
E	Culvert	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00