



RSK WILDING

Biodiversity Net Gain for Landowners and Managers – Jon Davies

RSK
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EXPERTS IN ECOLOGY





RSK Wilding is a new service that brings together landowners and developers to help deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

We work with farmers to create natural landscapes with minimal intervention but maximum natural capital benefit.

We then use our expertise in Natural Capital and Routes to Market to seek funding for the biodiversity and carbon offsets created in order to provide additional revenue streams for our landowners.

So what's the idea behind RSK Wilding?



On the one hand (Demand):

- developers needing to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain
- companies needing to offset their carbon impacts
- people wanting to 'make a difference' with private funds behind them

On the other (Supply):

- farmers and groups of farmers seeking a new funding stream
- farmers or groups of farmers looking to access more funds to run alongside or instead of publicly-funded Government schemes (e.g. ELMS)
- other landowners wanting to do something useful/innovative with their land

RSK Wilding will match the supply to the demand and deliver BNG...

Who are we?

Part of an Unrivalled multidisciplinary offering:

RSK Wilding – ecologists specialising in habitat and protected species surveys, ecology advice to farmers, biodiversity net gain (BNG) calculations, habitat management and ecological monitoring

ADAS and Binnies – work with land managers and landowners, understand Natural Capital metrics (e.g. carbon offsetting, environmental markets), and understand Government policy and public-good schemes

RSK Habitats/TWIG/Salix – specialists in the creation and management of habitat, including site establishment, fencing, vegetation management, watercourse realignment, etc.

Nature Positive – experts in biodiversity and carbon offsetting (as part of a whole carbon package)



What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

“Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected in such a way it is hoped that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.”

Environment Act (Nov 21) mandates BNG in England - target of **10% gain** for all development

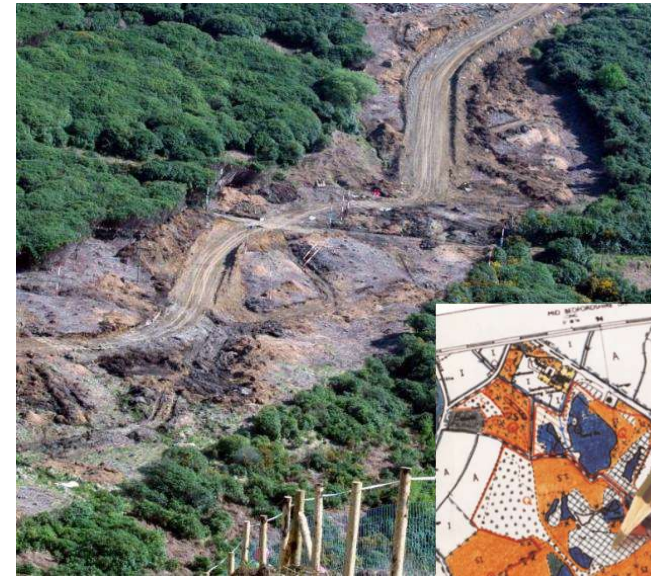


Secondary legislation in Autumn 2023

Essentially applies now. Already part of the NPPF.

The Process

- Calculate the baseline biodiversity within the devpmt red line boundary (using the Defra Biodiversity Metric)
- Map the habitats using UKHab mapping system
- Defra Metric multiplies *area* of each habitat by values of habitat *distinctiveness* and *condition* to produce a figure of pre-construction biodiversity value
- Converted into ‘Biodiversity Units’ (a proxy for biodiversity value) by the Metric
- Design development scheme, retaining, creating and enhancing as much valuable habitat *onsite* as possible
- Calculate what the post-development biodiversity would be (-ve multipliers - delivery risk, time to target condition, spatial relevance of offsite creation)
- Biodiversity Net Change = Post-development BUs – Baseline BUs
- Iterative process..



Headline Results		Return to results menu
On-site baseline	Habitat units	63.53
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
On-site post-intervention <small>(including habitat retention, creation, enhancement & succession)</small>	Habitat units	70.29
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Off-site post-intervention <small>(including habitat retention, creation, enhancement & succession)</small>	Habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Total net unit change <small>(including all on-site & off-site habitat retention/creation)</small>	Habitat units	6.76
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Total net % change <small>(including all on-site & off-site habitat creation + retained)</small>	Habitat units	10.64%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	River units	0.00%

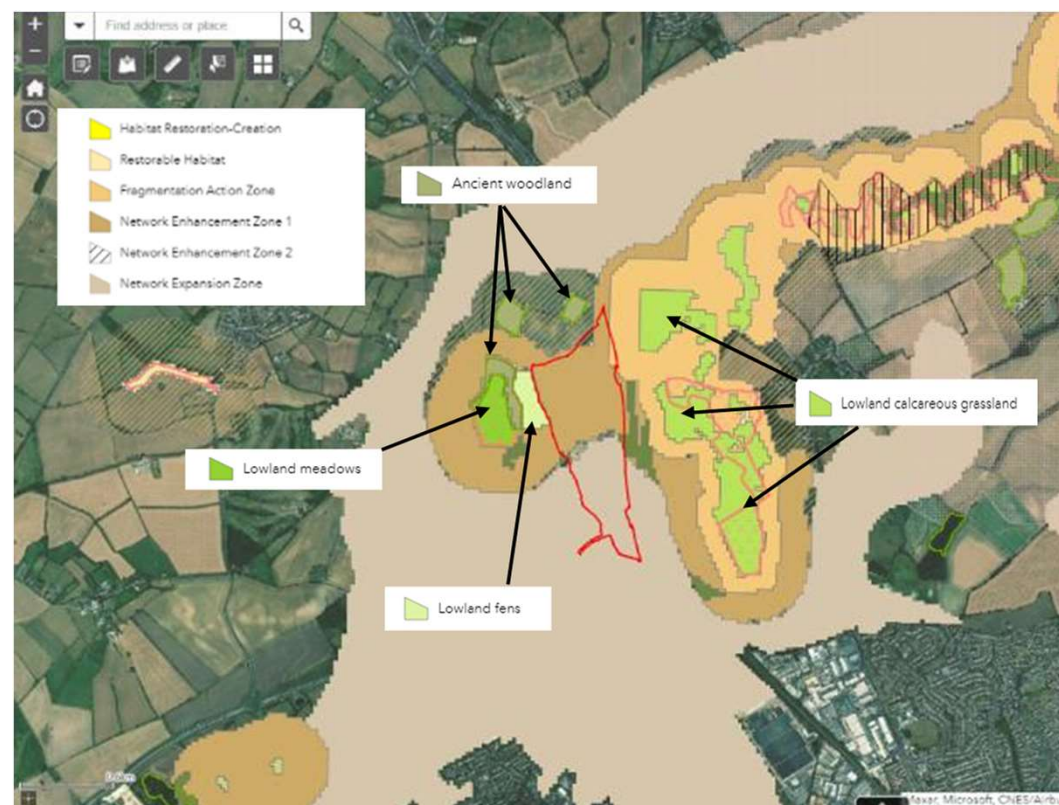


The Process (Cont'd)

- If 10% BNG not achieved (very possible), developer will need to consider offsetting options:
 - Purchase Biodiversity Units/credits from LPA?
 - Purchase BUs from alternative private supplier/ landowner?
 - Purchase statutory credits from NE (last resort)?
- Offset needs to be approved (NE/LPA) and registered on the Net Gain Register
- 30-year Conservation Covenant – not short term!
- Need to demonstrate that the uplift in biodiversity committed to is being achieved
- Regulation, accreditation and monitoring of delivery therefore essential!
- A good offset provider will must provide assurance of delivery (important for consenting purposes for the developer)

What to do if you want to consider delivering BNG?

- Understand the potential your land has for delivering BNG (existing habitat, restoration potential, context, etc.)
- Find a market for your biodiversity units either through a broker/partner (like RSK Wilding), a market platform, or the LPA
- Have a management plan in place for how the BNG will be delivered in perpetuity (at least 30 years) which can be used to create a Conservation Covenant
- Register your land and BNG proposals on the local planning authority 'net gain register' or find a local property developer who requires BNG
- Consider teaming up with neighbours..





Baseline habitat = 14.19ha of modified grassland, lowland deciduous woodland and hedges

104.13 habitat units
14.34 linear terrestrial units (for the hedges)



Proposed habitat = mix of species rich grassland, increased amount of deciduous woodland, ponds

Uplift of 68.1 habitat units (to 172.22BUs)
Uplift of 15.72 linear terrestrial units (to 30.06)

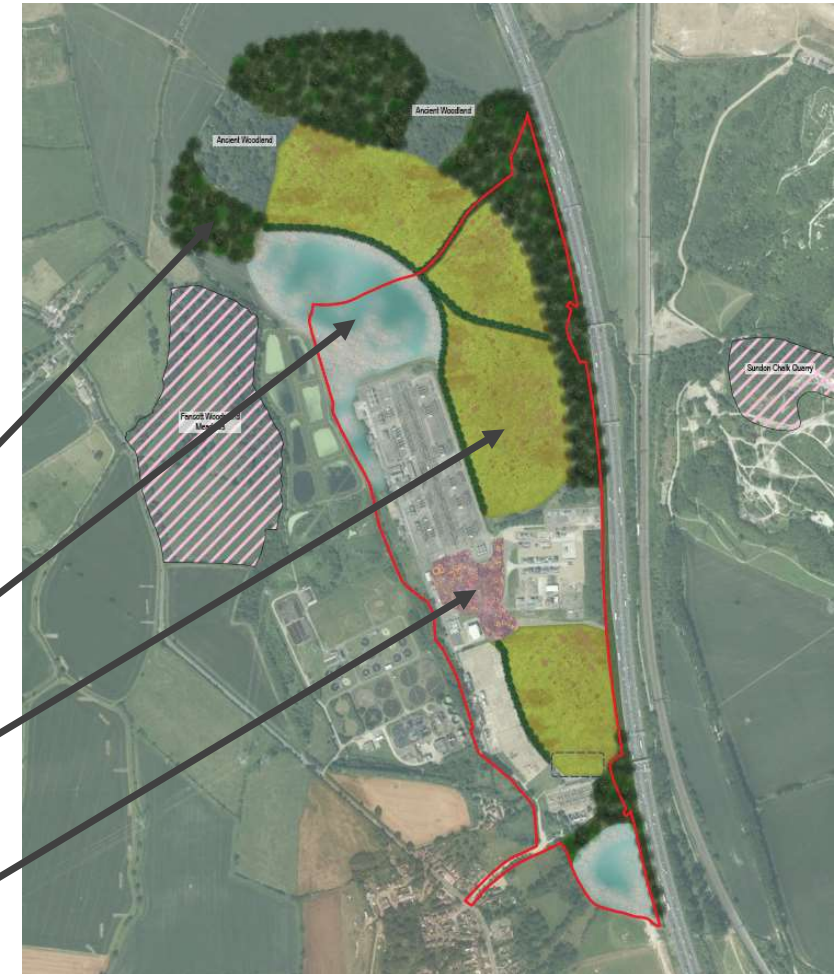
1BU = approx. £25k [68 x £25k = £1.7m]

What might a 'good' offset look like..?

Creating a BNG, 'rewilding' or natural capital vision allows you to optimise biodiversity, carbon and other natural capital benefits

In this example, the conversion of arable land to biodiverse habitats would lead to a significant increase in biodiversity whilst also providing numerous other environmental and societal benefits:

- tree planting on existing topsoil will connect up ancient woodland whilst providing carbon offsetting, woodland walks, etc.;
- wetland creation will extend existing fen habitat, providing flood retention and WQ improvement and providing carbon offsets;
- natural establishment of a species-rich mosaic of bare ground, grassland and scrub on agricultural soil would provide cost-effective, low-maintenance biodiversity plus a natural landscape;
- wildflower meadow creation on thin soils would enhance biodiversity whilst also being attractive for people and being beneficial for pollinators (i.e. food security benefit)

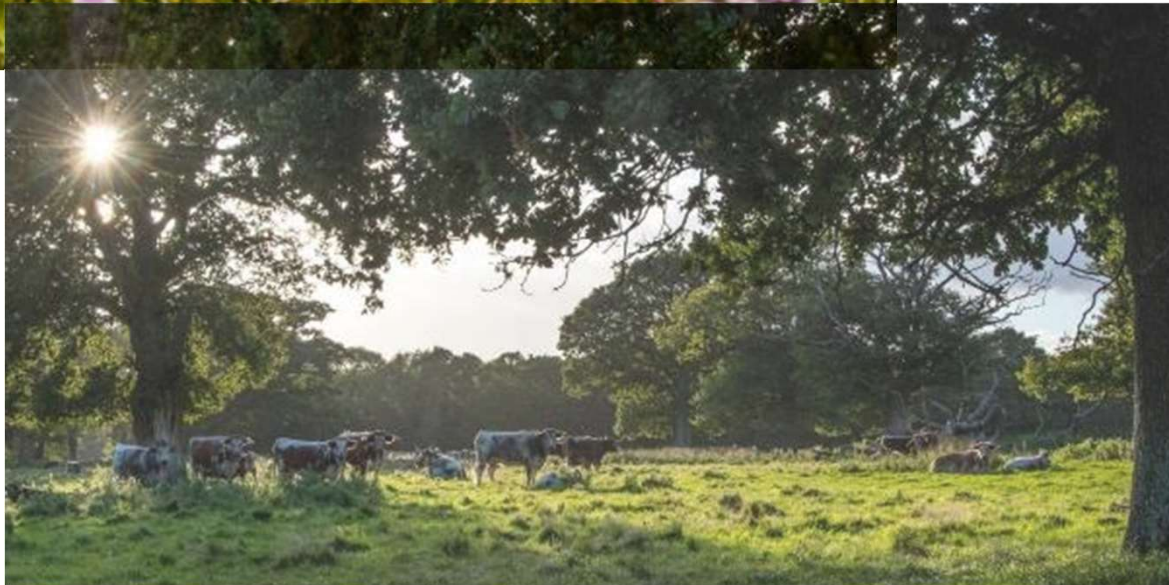


So, increasing biodiversity can also provide numerous NC and societal benefits – opens up other markets...

The opportunities

- Complimentary income to diversify farm business on less productive areas of land (Defra expectation of £10,000 - £25,000 per Biodiversity Unit)
- Can work alongside food production - RegenAg
- Flexible payment arrangements - payment up front or separation of capital and management costs to provide income for 30 years
- Flexibility of land management to achieve biodiversity objectives: from low intervention rewilding to active restoration (less prescriptive than agri-environment schemes)
- Flexibility on land management control: lease the land; sell it; or continue to manage in hand for BNG

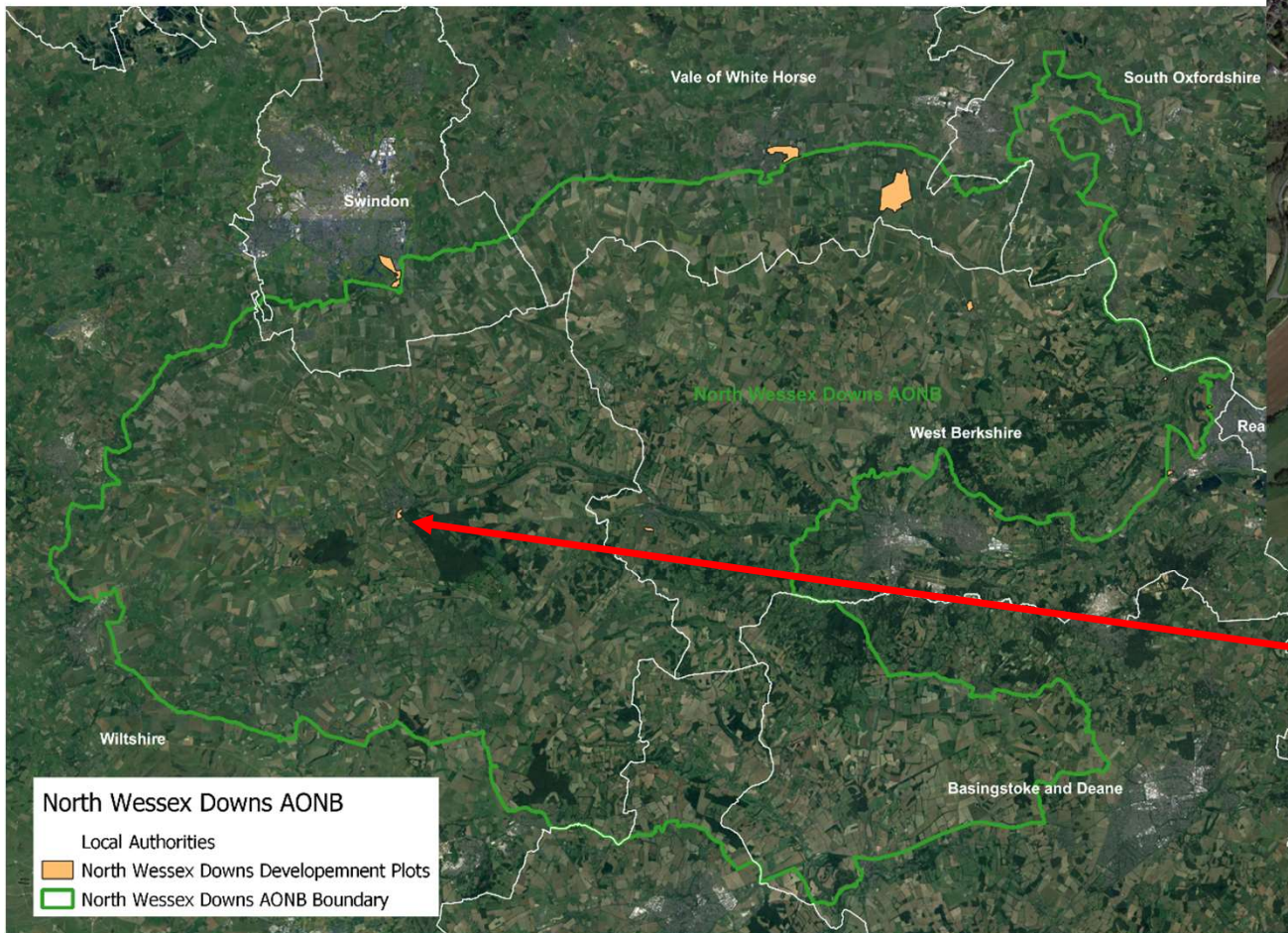




To Consider...

- Committing land for 30 years
- Monitoring arrangements
- Implications of land use change
- Tax position (loss of Agricultural property/Business property relief?) – managing meadows is still farming!
- Succession planning
- Availability of demand (i.e. developers needing BUs)...

Find a developer



Wiltshire Local Plan
Marlborough Community Area
Housing allocation
220 homes - partially complete



4 stages:

Register an interest: on GIS

BNG Feasibility Studies:

Opportunities of your land for BNG, carbon, etc. – approx. number of BUs achievable

BNG Delivery Plans:

Detailed design of habitat creation, management and monitoring, for submission to Net Gain Register – access to developers

Implementation:

Team of habitat creation specialists (e.g. wetland establishment, grassland creation, tree planting, etc.), as well as habitat management and long-term ecological monitoring



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