

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)



HTA Briefing

Introduction

UK Environmental Horticulture is key for delivering clean air, habitat for wildlife and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Horticulture is a key stakeholder for many nature-based solutions and, through utilising the knowledge and best practice of the sector, will help deliver BNG regulations.

Wildlife and biodiversity

By supplying plants, trees and food for wildlife we help to maintain UK biodiversity. Our industry supports wildlife across the breadth of the terrestrial food web. All the living creatures on Earth rely on pollinators – the health of our ecosystem services is determined by the health of pollinator populations.

Biodiversity underpins the entire ecosystem of the UK – protecting it is a national priority. Through properly managed green space, biodiversity gain can be supported and accelerated.

Protected horticulture (glass houses)

Glass house growing takes up a large area and would likely be subject to the highest costs due to the size of their operations. Within these premises plants and trees which could be used to deliver BNG are produced. Without an exemption, glass house growers will likely be forced to reduce their production capacity. This will impact the sectors ability to deliver the plants and trees required to meet the goals of the Governments Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP23). Modern protected horticultural structures, known as CEFs (Controlled Environment Facilities) are not buildings. They cost around £2m per hectare for tomato production and require flat land. Adding more land to meet BNG requirements could limit development.

Key asks for Parliament & Policy Makers

- Establish an exemption for Protected Horticultural growers (glasshouse growing) from BNG regulations.
- Environmental horticulture must be recognised as a key stakeholder for delivering BNG.
- Local Planning Authorities should utilise industry expertise to facilitate BNG delivery and protect UK biosecurity through best practice.
- Create a Government Office for Green Spaces - a cross-government group tasked to maximise the value of Green Spaces in all aspects of policy-making and regulatory impact assessments.
- Increase UK production capacity to deliver the necessary plants and trees for public procurement targets.
- Collaborate with industry to identify skills gaps to ensure the future workforce are equipped to deliver the significant volume of trees and plants that are required to deliver EIP23 goals.
- To avoid a shortfall of around 100 million finished plants and trees in 2027, current and future governments must provide adequate time as well as immediate and sustained R&D support for the sector to transition to peat-free growing media.
- A national program of urban greening (linking planning and development guidelines), setting out clear targets in relation to location, size, proportionality and biodiversity is required. Maintenance and protection of existing urban green sites cannot be underestimated either.

About us

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) represents 1500 members in the Environmental Horticulture Sector including; garden centre retailers, tree and plant growers, goods manufacturers, landscapers,

and service providers. Our industry supports nearly 700,000 jobs, has a national GDP of £28.8 billion, mitigates climate change and benefits health and wellbeing for 30 million gardeners in the UK.

Further information

For further information contact the HTA Policy Team via email at policy@hta.org.uk and visit hta.org.uk/policy

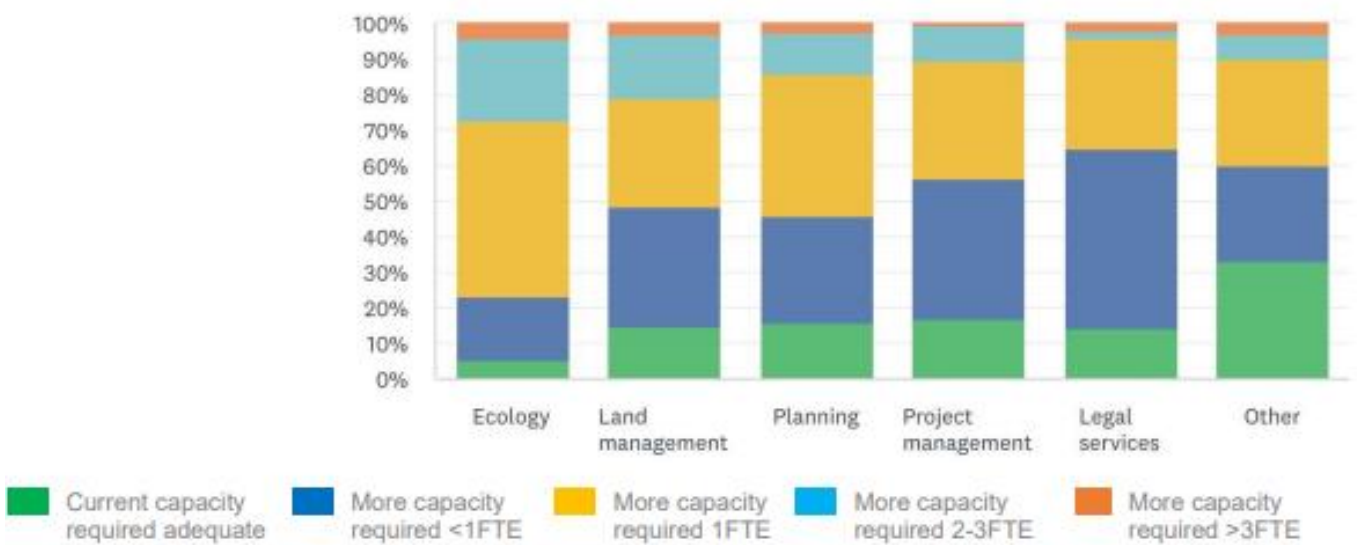
Industry expertise to help support the implementation of BNG

Through exempting Protected Horticulture, this will reduce the pressure put on LPAs, who are already facing shortages of staff resourcing to deliver BNG.

Industry expertise can also be used to facilitate BNG delivery and protect UK biosecurity through best practice.

Local Planning Authority preparedness

Adequacy of existing staff resources for BNG



Source: Snell, L. and Oxford, M. (2022) *Survey of LPAs Ability to Deliver Biodiversity Net Gain in England. Do LPAs currently have the necessary expertise and capacity?* <https://www.alge.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/06/ALGE-ADEPT-Report-on-LPAs-and-BNG-2022.pdf>

The Value of Plants

The HTA has recently published two research documents on the *Value of Plants from Nursery to Nature* [<https://hta.org.uk/value-of-plants>].

This includes the value in public spaces where research has shown that increasing the richness, cover or density of native plants in urban green spaces is linked to increases in animal biodiversity, with the biggest factor being the resources provided by the plant itself.

November 2023

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