



envirotech

**Ecological Consultants
Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveyors**

Biodiversity Net Gain

High House Farm, Whitehaven, CA28 9RB



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ACCURACY OF REPORT

This report has been compiled based on the methodology as detailed and the professional experience of the surveyor. Whilst the report reflects the situation found as accurately as possible, all of the protected species this survey covers are wild and can move freely from site to site. Their presence or absence detailed in this report does not entirely preclude the possibility of a different past, current or future use of the site surveyed.

We would ask all clients acting upon the contents of this report to show due diligence when undertaking work on their site and/or in their interaction with protected species. If protected species are found during a work programme, and continuing the work programme could result in their disturbance, injury or death, either directly or indirectly an offence may be committed.

If in doubt, stop work and seek further professional advice.

Quality and Environmental Assurance

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Author	Bradley Foster	Date	14/01/2026
Checked by	Andrew Gardner	Date	14/01/2026
Report Version	1		
Field data entered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Report Reference	10032		

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Planning Portal Questions

Please provide the date the onsite pre-development biodiversity value was calculated (this should be either the date of the application, or an earlier proposed date)	07/01/2026	
If an earlier date, to the date of the planning application, has been used, please provide details why this date has been used.	Site conditions have not changed between date of assessment and planning submission	
When was the version of the biodiversity metric published?	3 July 2025	
Please provide the pre-development biodiversity value of onsite habitats on the date of calculation	0.61	Habitat Units
	0	Hedgerow Units
	0	Watercourse Units
Please provide the reference or supporting document/plan names for the: i. Biodiversity metric calculation ii. Onsite irreplaceable habitats (if applicable) iii. Onsite habitats existing on the date of the application for planning permission (if applicable)	Biodiversity Net Gain-High House Farm, Whitehaven	
	N/A	
	Biodiversity Net Gain-High House Farm, Whitehaven	
Do you believe that, if the development is granted permission, the general Biodiversity Gain Condition (as set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)) would apply?	Yes	
Has there been any loss (or degradation) of any onsite habitat(s), resulting from activities carried out before the date of the onsite pre-development biodiversity value was calculated. Either: - On or after 30 January 2020 which were not in accordance with a planning permission; or - On or after 25 August 2023 which were in accordance with a planning permission?	No	
Does the development site have irreplaceable habitats (corresponding to the descriptions in column 1 of [Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations (2023)]) which are: i. On land to which the application relates; and	No	

ii. Exist on the date of the application for planning permission (or an earlier agreed date)	
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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Report

Envirotech were requested to carry out a biodiversity assessment of land at High House Farm, Whitehaven. The aim was for an ecologist with botanical expertise to carry out a site visit to map the habitat types present at the site in order to establish the biodiversity baseline.

It is proposed four new dwellings are constructed on site. The existing farmhouse is to be retained but will be altered.

Each habitat type was mapped using the standard habitat mapping convention using UK Habitat Classification V2 (Butcher et al., 2023) for the purposes of using the Defra metric.

Using the findings of the baseline surveys, pre-construction ecology was measured against proposed habitat changes arising from future ecological enhancements based on an Illustrative Landscape Plan (post-construction) provided by the client.

This report presents the results of this desk-based study to assess net change in biodiversity 'units' in connection with the removal of habitats for the proposed development at the site.

Ecological Context

The site is 0.43ha, comprising an occupied farmhouse and workshop/garage surrounded by vegetated garden, hardstanding, modified grassland, ornamental shrub, mixed scrub and bramble scrub.

Figure 1 shows the site location, grid reference NX 97372 15641.



 Red Line Boundary

Figure 1
Site Location



Policy context

The primary aims of Biodiversity Net Gain are to secure a measurable improvement in habitat for biodiversity, to minimise biodiversity losses and to help to restore ecological networks whilst streamlining development processes.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes provisions for the delivery of biodiversity net gain. Additionally, there is a 10% net gain requirement in the Environment Bill.

METHODS

Introduction

The statutory biodiversity metric is designed to quantify biodiversity to inform and improve planning, design, land management and decision-making (Natural England, 2024).

This study has been carried out as a desk-based exercise, using the results of field surveys carried out at the site by Envirotech and an Illustrative Landscape Plan provided by the client.

Biodiversity Assessment Methods

To calculate biodiversity units for the site and assess any changes arising from the proposed development this study uses methods set out in the latest Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide (Natural England, 2024).

The biodiversity metric uses three core measurements:

- Habitat area
- Length of linear terrestrial habitats
- Length of linear aquatic habitats.

Consequently, a site can have three biodiversity unit values, which are assessed using the same metric, but cannot be summed together.

Habitat area is multiplied by several factors that indicate its quality: distinctiveness, condition, strategic location and connectivity, and this gives its biodiversity unit value. This can be used for existing and future created habitats. In addition, when habitats are to be enhanced or newly-created, the risk of failure is accounted for by applying multipliers for risk factors (difficulty, time to target condition, and off-site risk).

Habitat Distinctiveness

Habitats are classified using the UK habitat classification V2 system (Butcher et al., 2023).

The metric pre-assigns each habitat type to a distinctiveness band according to its distinguishing features, i.e. species richness, rarity (at local, regional, national and international scales), and the degree to which it supports species rarely found in other habitats. On rare occasions, the habitat distinctiveness of a habitat can be altered up or down from the preassigned value. Any

alterations must then be fully explained using evidence relevant to the site, e.g. an increase in distinctiveness because of rare flora or fauna or a decrease in distinctiveness because of significant damage to the habitat.

Habitat Condition

Habitat condition measures the varying quality of similar habitats against what is perceived to be their optimal state. The statutory biodiversity metric technical supplement (Natural England, 2023) contains condition sheets for all habitats to which the metric can apply. The condition sheets contain a habitat description, contextual information to aid the assessment, and the assessment criteria. The criteria describe what components need to be present for a habitat to be in good, moderate or poor condition.

Strategic Location

Strategic location - sometimes called 'strategic significance' - works at a landscape scale, allowing additional value to be added to habitats in 'priority' or 'biodiversity target areas'. They include statutory and non-statutory sites and other areas with biodiversity value or potential, and they are mainly identified from local plans and objectives. If a habitat is within such a target area, a multiplier is applied to increase its value.

Difficulty of Creation and Restoration

The risks associated with creating new or enhancing existing habitats, are known as difficulty factors; for example, where habitats fail to establish owing to natural changes in local conditions, incorrect management or for unknown reasons. The statutory biodiversity metric contains default values for each habitat based on the average difficulty of creating or enhancing a habitat. Occasionally, under exceptional circumstances, these can be modified, but any deviation from the default value must be fully justified.

Time to Target Condition

There is often a lag between a habitat being removed and the new compensation habitats achieving their target condition. This gives reduced biodiversity value for a time. The statutory biodiversity metric preassigns the time to target condition based on good practice and typical conditions, and assigns a multiplier based on the number of years required to achieve it.

Using bespoke techniques under unique conditions, or creating compensation habitats prior to impacts taking place, the time to target condition can be adjusted. Any changes must again be fully justified.

Off-site Risk

Sometimes it is not possible to compensate adequately for loss of biodiversity within the site boundary, so off-site compensation is required. If the off-site compensation is a significant distance from the development site, then there will be a local loss of biodiversity and a multiplier is applied to any off-site compensation.

BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

Baseline:

The sites baseline BNG value was calculated using the Statutory BNG metric and UKHabs v2 methodology. This was shown in the PEA report, reproduced as Figure 2 below.

The baseline value for the site is as at 07/01/2026. This is the date that our assessment was undertaken. We consider there will have been no substantive changes to habitat condition at the time of the planning application being made.

We are not aware of any habitat features which have been purposefully degraded after 30th January 2020.

We consider planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition.

A watercourse was mapped and is more than 10m from the redline boundary.

The type, area and distinctiveness values are shown on Table 1.



Habitat Reference	Habitat	Irreplaceable Habitat	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Notes
1	Developed land; sealed surface	No	0.1956	V.Low	Buildings, yard and access road.
2	Introduced shrub	No	0.006	Low	Leylandii and Barberry sp. with Bramble and occasional Privet. Shrubs sit to the top of the retaining wall bounding the yard.
3	Vegetated garden	No	0.0083	Low	Amenity lawn and shrubs within the curtilage of the farmhouse. Shrubs include Lonicera sp., Euonymus sp., Jerusalem Sage and others.
4	Bramble scrub	No	0.0337	Medium	Platform of Bramble scrub to the west of the site. Bramble is interlaced with Nettle and occasional Bracken.
5	Mixed scrub	No	0.038	Medium	An informal bank of mixed scrub comprising Hawthorn, Elderberry, Willow, Privet and Bramble. Scrub is fringed by thickets of Nettle, False oat grass, Rough-stalked Meadow Grass, Hoary willowherb and Cleavers.
6	Modified grassland	No	0.1485	Low	Modified grassland and ephemeral/ruderal vegetation with Perennial Ryegrass, Meadow fescue, Red Fescue, Cocksfoot, Creeping Bent, Annual Meadow Grass, Hairy Bittercress, Square-stalked Willowherb, Daisy, Chickweed , Creeping Buttercup, White Clover, Plantain, Ribwort Plantain, Ragwort, Slender Borage and Spiny Sowthistle.

Table 1- Habitat, Area and Distinctiveness Values

Avoidance: the first step of the mitigation hierarchy comprises measures taken to avoid creating impacts from the outset, such as careful spatial placement of infrastructure, or timing construction sensitively to avoid or disturbance. Examples include the placement of roads outside of rare habitats or key species' breeding grounds, or timing of seismic operations when aggregations of whales are not present. Avoidance is often the easiest, cheapest and most effective way of reducing potential negative impacts, but it requires biodiversity to be considered in the early stages of a project.

There are no irreplaceable habitats on the site

There are no Very High distinctiveness habitats on the site

There are no High distinctiveness habitats on the site

There are two Medium distinctiveness habitats on the site, these being mixed scrub and bramble scrub.

Development is largely to Low and or Very low distinctiveness habitats.

Minimisation: these are measures taken to reduce the duration, intensity and/or extent of impacts that cannot be completely avoided. Effective minimisation can eliminate some negative impacts, such as measures to reduce noise and pollution, designing powerlines to reduce the likelihood of bird electrocutions, or building wildlife crossings on roads.

Gardens are backed onto boundary areas of open land so that there is connectivity across the site boundary. Pre-start checks will be made of habitats to ensure invasive species are not present on site and or are not spread off site. Build out of the scheme will be quickly as possible with landscaping prioritised in order that new habitats are created within two years of loss of baseline habitats.

Rehabilitation/restoration: The aim of this step is to improve degraded or removed ecosystems following exposure to impacts that cannot be completely avoided or minimised. Restoration tries to return an area to the original ecosystem that was present before impacts, whereas rehabilitation only aims to restore basic ecological functions and/or ecosystem services - such as through planting trees to stabilise bare soil. Rehabilitation and restoration are frequently needed towards the end of a project's life cycle but may be possible in some areas during operation.

Boundary scrub is to be enhanced from poor to moderate condition. Amenity grassland to the verge bordering the access track is also to be enhanced.

New native tree planting will be undertaken.

New species-rich native hedgerows with trees will be planted to the site entrance.

Collectively, avoidance, minimisation and rehabilitation/restoration serve to reduce, as far as possible, the residual impacts that a project has on biodiversity. Typically, however, even after their effective application, additional steps will be required to achieve no overall negative impact or a net gain for biodiversity.

Offset: offsetting aims to compensate for any residual, adverse impacts after full implementation of the previous three steps of the mitigation hierarchy. Biodiversity offsets are of two main types: 'restoration offsets' which aim to rehabilitate or restore degraded habitat, and 'averted loss offsets' which aim to reduce or stop biodiversity loss in areas where this is predicted. Offsets are often complex and expensive, so attention to earlier steps in the mitigation hierarchy is usually preferable.

Following avoidance, minimisation and rehabilitation/restoration, onsite BNG can be achieved within the site boundary. Purchase of offsite habitat units is not considered necessary at this time.

The UK Habs V2 habitat survey has been used to identify relevant habitat, hedgerow and watercourse units.

These habitats have been input into the statutory biodiversity metric calculator and indicate a total of 0.61 habitat units. There are no hedgerows on site or watercourses within 10m of the redline boundary. The results of the calculations are presented in the full biodiversity assessment calculation in the Excel document 'Biodiversity Net Gain- High House Farm, Whitehaven'.

The condition assessments for each of the habitat types are presented in Appendix A. No deviations have been made from the default methods for baseline habitats assessment.

Post-development Habitat Creation and Enhancement

The Illustrative Landscape Plan has been used to identify that all vegetated garden and introduced shrub will be lost from the site.

Approximately two thirds of the existing area of modified grassland is to be lost from the site, being principally replaced with new vegetated garden. The remaining third of the modified grassland (to the bank of the access track) is to be enhanced to other neutral grassland in moderate condition via overseeding and establishment of a cut-and-collect regime.

Approximately 90% of the existing bramble scrub is to be enhanced to mixed scrub in moderate condition via supplementary planting of new shrubs, small trees and establishment of species-rich grassland.

Approximately 85% of the mixed scrub to the south of the site is to remain undeveloped and be enhanced from poor to moderate condition (as per the above).

Over 0.03ha of new mixed scrub will be re-established around the fringes of the site (bordering garden areas to the south and replacing some of the bramble scrub to the west lost during demolition of the workshop and garage).

New garden areas will be established, replacing much of the former yard.

Small areas of introduced shrub will be created to the site entrance, being accompanied with two small rural trees. Approximately 32m of species-rich native hedgerow with trees will flank the proposed site entrance.

In line with the BNG guidelines, all hedgerow, tree and shrub planting demarcated within the proposed garden areas have been assessed as part of the wider vegetated garden classification (owing to possible retention issues).

These figures have been put in to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and would comprise a total of 1.25 habitat units.

There are no changes to default values for post development habitats.

Details of the assumptions made to achieve the proposed conditions are found in Appendix B.



- ▭ Red Line Boundary
- ▬ h2a5 Species Rich Native Hedgerow
- ▬ r2 Rivers and Streams
- Urban Tree
- ▭ g3c Other Neutral Grassland
- ▭ h3h Mixed Scrub
- ▭ u1 Built Up Areas and Gardens
- ▭ u1b Developed Land Sealed surface

Figure 4
UK Habs V2 Map
Post- Development



Change in Biodiversity Value

Under the current proposals set out in the Illustrative Landscape Plan there will be a GAIN of 0.64 habitat units (+104.91%) and a GAIN of 0.27 hedgerow units. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Change in Biodiversity Units Calculation

On-site baseline	Area habitat units	0.61
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	1.25
	Hedgerow units	0.27
	Watercourse units	0.00
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	0.64
	Hedgerow units	0.27
	Watercourse units	0.00
Off-site baseline	Area habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.64
	Hedgerow units	0.27
	Watercourse units	0.00
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Area habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.64
	Hedgerow units	0.27
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	104.91%
	Hedgerow units	N/A
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

REFERENCES

Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023), UK Habitat Classification - Habitat Definitions V2.01 at <http://ukhab.org>

Natural England 2025. Natural England The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide.

APPENDIX A – BASELINE DETAILED CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

This appendix presents the assessment of the post-development habitats against the condition sheets in the statutory biodiversity metric technical supplement published by Natural England, 2023. Any deviations from the published guidance is explained and justified.

UK Hab	Condition Sheet	Other Habitat Criteria Score									Total Score	Condition Assessment	Notes
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9			
Modified Grassland	GRASSLAND: Low distinctiveness	F	F	P	F	P	P	P			4	Poor	Grassland fails C1 and can therefore only be considered poor-quality.
Scrub	Scrub	P	F	F	F	F					1	Poor	At least three native woody species.
Scrub	Bramble Scrub										-	-	Fixed condition score.
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Not assessed										-	-	Building and hardstanding.
Vegetated Garden	Not assessed										-	-	Fixed condition score.
Introduced Shrub	Not assessed										-	-	Fixed condition score.
Key: P – Criteria passed F – Criteria failed													
Appendix Table A1: Condition Assessment for Area Habitats													

APPENDIX B – POST DEVELOPMENT DETAILED CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

This appendix presents the assessment of the post-development habitats against the condition sheets in the statutory biodiversity metric technical supplement published by Natural England, 2023. Any deviations from the published guidance is explained and justified.

UK Hab	Condition Sheet	Other Habitat Criteria Score									Total Score	Condition Assessment	Notes
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9			
Other neutral grassland	GRASSLAND: Medium-Very High distinctiveness	P	F	P	P	P	F				4	Moderate	Enhanced grassland to bank adjacent access track.
Scrub	Mixed Scrub	P	F	P	P	F					3	Moderate	Tall grassland and forbs to fringe the edge of the scrub.
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Not assessed										-	-	Building and hardstanding.
Garden	Vegetated Garden										-	-	Front and rear garden areas.
Introduced Shrub	Not assessed										-	-	Areas of introduced shrub adjacent the main site access.
Urban trees	URBAN TREES	F	P	F	P	F	P				3	Moderate	2x small urban trees planted adjacent site entrance. One of the trees to be ornamental.
Key: P – Criteria passed F – Criteria failed													

Appendix Table B1: Condition Assessment for Area Habitats

UK Hab	Hedgerow Criteria Score										Condition Assessment	Notes
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E1*	E2*		
Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees	F	P	F	P	F	P	P	F	F	P	Moderate	32m of species-rich native hedgerow planted as two lengths adjacent the main site entrance
Key: P – Criteria passed F – Criteria failed * - Application to Hedgerows with trees only												

Appendix Table B2: Hedgerow Condition Assessment