



Bingfield Habitat Bank

Habitat Management and Supporting Information

Our vision for nature recovery | September 2025

About this document

This document provides insight into the integrity of the biodiversity units created at our Bingfield Habitat Bank (NTH09). As outlined in government legislation, the depth of this information is not required to be shared with LPAs, but we want to provide full transparency to all involved in the process and act as leaders in the field.

In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 makes provision for grants of planning permission in England to be subject to a condition to secure that the biodiversity gain objective is met.

The statutory framework for biodiversity net gain requires a Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted and approved by the planning authority to discharge the biodiversity gain condition prior to the commencement of development.

The plan must be submitted in writing, no earlier than the day after planning permission has been granted. Within the Biodiversity Gain Plan the developer must specify among other things any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development.

This document will serve to provide further context to the integrity and legitimacy of the units that have been purchased for this development for the interest of the LPA.

Summary of Habitat Bank / Habitat Proposed on site

Environment Bank secured the Bingfield Habitat Bank (NTH09) Site (the Site) on the Biodiversity Gain Site Register (BGSR) on 9th December 2024 (Reference: BGS-101024001). To register the Site on the BGSR, the following activities were completed in line with the Biodiversity Net Gain regulations and associated good practice guidance:

- Comprehensive ecological baseline surveys and extensive desk-based assessments were completed in 2023;
- An ecologically sound habitat creation and enhancement design, taking into account the Site's strategic significance, hydrology, topography and soils, was completed in 2024;
- A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) was co-created and agreed with the land manager in 2024;
- A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) detailing creation, enhancement, management, and monitoring proposals was completed in 2024.
- A Biodiversity Appraisal Report (BAR) detailing the enhancement proposals and biodiversity accounting was completed in 2024.
- A fully compliant Statutory Biodiversity Metric for the Habitat Bank (MST), including both baseline conditions and proposed habitats for the Site, was finalised in 2024.

Following the completion of these activities and significant legal and environmental due diligence for the Site, Environment Bank secured a Conservation Covenant agreement with Responsible Body (RSK Biocensus Limited (RSK)) on 2nd October 2024. This agreement ensures the land is legally bound for the purposes of nature conservation for the full term and in line with the requirements of the Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations 2024. This legal agreement was registered as a local land charge, following which the application for registration on the BGSR was submitted.

Due to the above process being adopted, there is no requirement for supplementary documentation (i.e. the HMMP and Biodiversity Metric) to be submitted to the planning authority in order to discharge any BNG related planning conditions for the provision of off-site Biodiversity Units secured through a Conservation Covenant with a Responsible Body. As such, this document provides a high-level overview of the proposed habitats on the Site, the creation / enhancement approach and how these habitats will be managed and maintained in the long-term.

The Bingfield Habitat Bank (NTH09) comprises two pasture fields (Parcel A and B) which are being enhanced into a diverse mosaic of wildflower grassland, native mixed scrub and pond habitats.

Species-rich Lowland meadows is being targeted throughout the Site, complemented with large areas of new Mixed scrub planting. Strategically located, these habitats will be established adjacent to the off-site priority woodland to create ecotones and enhance ecological connectivity across the local area.

One Pond (priority habitat) and three Ponds (non-priority) have been created in the southern parcel of the Site (Parcel B). Their location is helping slow the surface run off, and once they are fully established, they should provide important amphibian breeding and wading bird habitat respectively.

These proposals are summarised in Table 1 below with the proposed habitats illustrated on Figure 2.

Table 1: Proposed habitats, creation and enhancement approach and long-term management

Habitat Type	Creation / Enhancement Approach	Long Term Management Actions
Lowland meadows/ Other neutral grassland	The fields were lightly harrowed and then oversown in Autumn 2024 with a brush-harvested seed mix from a local source.	The grasslands will be managed as traditional hay-meadows with an annual hay cut followed by low intensity conservation grazing.
Mixed scrub	The grassland has been prepared alongside the Lowland meadows/Other neutral grassland habitats to encourage a species-rich understorey. In early 2025 a mix of native shrub whips of local provenance were planted and temporarily fenced to allow the plants to establish in the early years.	Once established, the scrub will be managed through low-intensity livestock grazing. The livestock will browse, trample, and create open areas within the scrub, forming glades and rides. This process will provide space for seedlings and saplings to establish while allowing others to mature and age naturally.
Ponds (priority-habitat)	The Pond (priority habitat) was dug in Autumn 2024 and features both deeper sections and ephemeral areas which will support amphibians and invertebrates. Marginal and aquatic plant species will be allowed to establish naturally.	The pond edges will be maintained to reduce scrub encroachment and the impacts of livestock managed closely.
Ponds (non-priority)	The Ponds (non-priority) were dug in Autumn 2024 and were created working with the existing topography of the Site. They ponds are relatively shallow, designed to target wading farmland birds.	The pond edges will be maintained from scrub encroachment and the impacts of livestock managed closely.

	Their form and location will be chosen to allow them to dry seasonally.	
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Regular monitoring visits will be conducted to assess the progress of the habitats. These visits will include a variety of surveys, such as botanical surveys, breeding bird surveys and habitat condition assessments. Based on the monitoring results, management prescriptions may be adjusted as necessary to ensure the habitats remain on track to achieve their target type and condition.

Figure 1: Bingfield Habitat Bank (pre-habitat creation works)



Figure 2: Bingfield Habitat Bank established visualisation



Generalised location of Habitat Bank – LPA and NCA

- Local Planning Authority (LPA): Northumberland County Council
- National Character Area (NCA) : Mid Northumberland

A statement of how units are legally secured - to replace governance and enforcement of Habitat Banks

Our Habitat Banks, which serve a variety of developments locally and nationally, are governed and overseen through three important governance structures:

1. Legal: our Leases and Habitat Management Agreements with landowners contain robust step-in rights in favour of Environment Bank so we are able to step in and ensure delivery of the habitats in line with the biodiversity objectives for that Habitat Bank.
2. Financial: landowners are paid for their management actions annually in arrears upon evidence of the works having been carried out to a high standard. This means that works are regularly monitored and assessed throughout the life of the Habitat Bank, and lump sums of cash are not received by landowners early, risking less compliance in the later years due to lack of funding; and
3. Section 106/Conservation Covenant: a Section 106 or Conservation Covenant provides LPAs or Responsible Bodies with oversight and enforcement rights. Environment Bank is required to provide regular monitoring reports together with monitoring payments to the LPA/Responsible Body for the full 30 year covenant period.

Our Bingfield Habitat Bank (NTH09) is legally secured with a Conservation Covenant via our Responsible Body, RSK. Our BGSR number is: **BGS-101024001** and details for the Site can be found by searching the register via the following link:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/biodiversity-net-gain>.

7. Statement of funding and information on Evergreen Bond – security of units

Environment Bank are proud to have created an Evergreen Bond with NatWest. In our Conservation Covenant with RSK, Environment Bank are required to bond the management and monitoring payments for the 30 year maintenance period following completion of the habitat creation and enhancement works. NatWest have agreed the facility which operates by the issuing a Standby Letter of Credit (SBLC) which works as a Financial Guarantee. The beneficiary for the SBLC will be RSK. The SBLC is an on-demand guarantee as NatWest would be obligated to accept and pay any claim in the event of our insolvency and make the necessary payment within 3 banking days. The SBLC also has an 'Evergreen' auto renewal clause so it will automatically renew every year for the full 30 years. If for any reason it does not renew, RSK may claim for payment.

Information on the mandatory BNG planning condition

The Planning Advisory Service website contains a model Biodiversity Gain Condition to secure onsite and offsite units (see below). Planning decisions requiring offsite delivery must include the first element of the condition. We have observed planning decisions using only the 'General Onsite Biodiversity Condition' element when offsite biodiversity units are required.

If these units are acquired from a Habitat Bank, using this section of the condition alone leads to unnecessary 'double counting', with both the LPA and the Responsible Body administering the Conservation Covenant being tied into approving the HMMP and monitoring the offsite units.

For offsite units secured from a Habitat Bank, it is the sole obligation of the Responsible Body issuing the Conservation Covenant, or LPA issuing the Section 106 Agreement for the Habitat Bank, to monitor the units in the Habitat Bank.

The decision-making LPA should only require a Biodiversity Gain Plan and proof of sale for the required number of units from a formally registered Habitat Bank to discharge the condition, secure in the knowledge that the Bank is already being stringently monitored.

This is covered in parts (d) and (e) of the key requirements below.

It is advised that planning officers use this condition and that developers promote the use of this condition to planners when offsite units are required.

Statutory Biodiversity Condition

Development may not commence unless:

- a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority; and
- b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Key Requirements

The biodiversity gain plan must include:

- a) information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat;
- b) the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- c) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- d) any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development;
- e) any biodiversity credits purchased for the development; and
- f) any such other matters as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify.

General Onsite Biodiversity Condition

The development shall not commence until a [Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP)] for the onsite units, prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan and including:

- a) a non-technical summary;
- b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the [HMMP];
- c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
- e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

Notice in writing shall be given to the Council when the:

- a) [HMMP] has been implemented; and
- b) habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the [HMMP] have been completed.

No [] shall take place until:

- c) the habitat creation and enhancement works set out in the approved [HMMP] have been completed; and
- d) a completion report, evidencing the completed habitat enhancements, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved [HMMP] shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved [HMMP].

Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved [HMMP].

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 [and policy []].

**The
biodiversity
experts**



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