

Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

User Guide for Planners, Developers and Biodiversity Net Gain
Practitioners

Version 1 February 2026



Who is this guide for?

This guide has been written to assist developers, planners, landscape architects and ecologists (both consultant and local authority) in how to use the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and for projects that utilise Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This document has therefore been created to help practitioners that use or work with BNG in their projects, either for development, habitat banks or other projects where BNG is used.

It also explains how the LNRS is written into planning policy and therefore how this will impact plan and decision making. This document will be updated as and when any additional government guidance is published.

Biodiversity Net Gain and the LNRS

Biodiversity Net Gain is a mandatory requirement for developments to demonstrate measurably, the impact on biodiversity as a result of the development or BNG project. Biodiversity Net Gain pre and post development is quantified using the relevant Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which means that achieving 10% has to be delivered, preferably on site for most developments. Where developments cannot achieve net gain on-site, they may design their own "off-site" scheme to generate the required units. Alternatively they can purchase biodiversity "units" from what are known as Habitat Banks, which are sites that are purposefully managed for habitats, where the BNG units achieved in doing so can be sold to offset developments.

Strategic Significance: what it is and how to assign it

Within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, there are a range of "multipliers" that together determine the total units derived from a particular action, such as habitat creation or enhancement. The multiplier for Strategic Significance describes the "local significance of the habitat based on its location and habitat type", as defined in the [Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide](#). Where a Local Nature Recovery Strategy is published the Local Habitat Map should be used to determine whether a created or enhanced habitat has either *low* or *high* Strategic Significance (see Table 7 in the Statutory Biodiversity User Guide).

Within the Gloucestershire LNRS Local Habitat Map, the mapped habitat (not species) measures that form the summary layer of "**Areas that Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity**"(ACIB) are the layers which should be used to determine whether a habitat intervention has Strategic Significance. If a habitat intervention aligns with the potential measure description that is mapped over it, it can achieve "high" strategic significance - resulting in an additional 15% uplift in Biodiversity Units. That same parcel of land should be listed as having "low" strategic significance in the baseline tab of the metric. This helps target Biodiversity Net Gain to the most important areas.

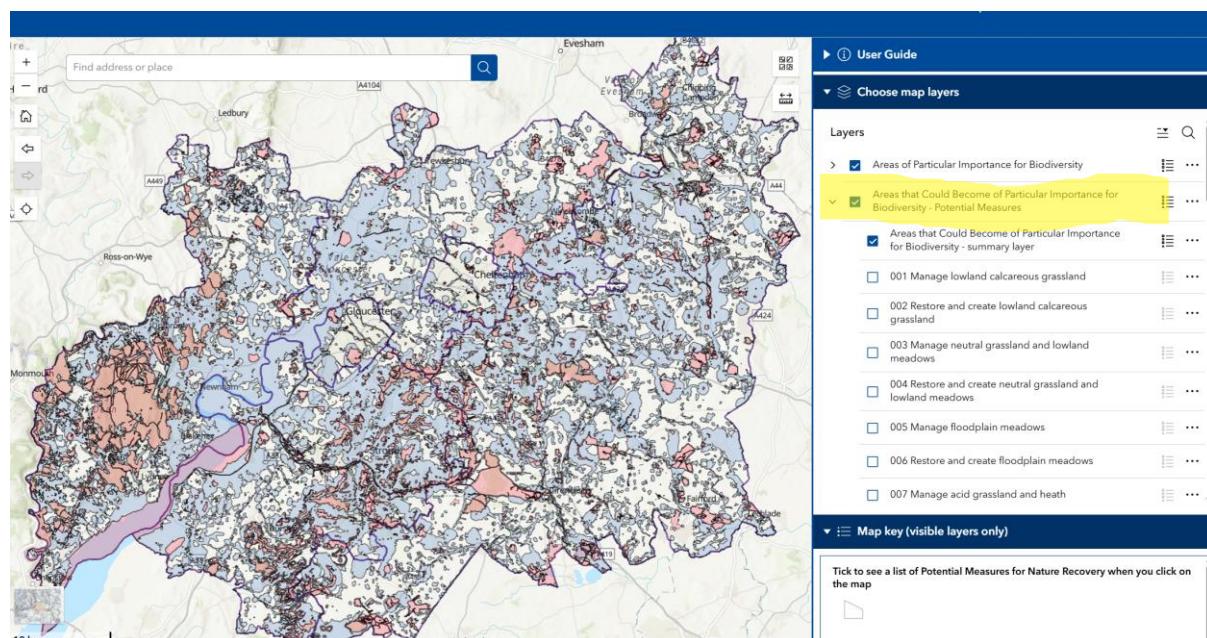


Figure 1 - Where to find Potential Measures relevant for assigning Strategic Significance on the Local Habitat Map

Linear Measures

In addition, if **Measure 053: Hedgerows, 055: Riparian Tree planting or 056: Riparian Buffer Strips** is listed as “applying in relation to...” an ACIB measure over the location of the proposed liner habitat, high strategic significance can be applied to newly created or enhanced habitat, if the linear action is carried out.

Measures that do not contribute to Strategic Significance

Whilst in total, the Local Habitat Map contains 65 mapped Potential Measures, those listed under the *Other Potential Measures* cannot be used for assigning High Strategic Significance. The Strategy has been designed so that it can be used by various groups, and is not solely for the purpose of BNG. Some mapped measures are designed to help wider groups such as Environmental NGOs and community volunteer groups, to design and plan projects in their local area, and if future we hope some measures can become key resources for obtaining agri-environment funding.

Notes for ecologists carrying out BNG Assessments

It is recommended that Ecologists request the ACIB Potential Measure shapefiles by emailing lnrs@gloucestershire.gov.uk, and overlaying these with UKHab baseline and post-intervention mapping. Whilst on the Local Habitat Map, click on the site, to enable the pop up box which lists Potential Measures that lie within a 200m² grid square. Clicking on the measures listed will link to a pdf document, that describes the measure and the actions that should be taken to deliver that measure. You should compare this with what can be reasonably achieved on site in practice.

Potential Measures that are relevant to Biodiversity Net Gain are mostly described using UK Habitat Classification¹ habitat names, and where habitat condition is also given, this corresponds to the Biodiversity Metric².

¹ UK Habitat Classification <https://www.ukhab.org/>

² Statutory Metric User Guide - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/689c5ee17b2e384441636196/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_-_July_2025.pdf

Notes for developers and planners

All public bodies must adhere to the biodiversity duty, which includes a requirement to "have regard" to Local Nature Recovery Strategies. This means that from a planning perspective, local planning authorities must consider their LNRS when developing Local Plans, Spatial Development Strategies and Local Growth Plans, as well as at the decision making stage, when considering a planning application. Further information on plan making requirements and LNRS can be found in the [National Planning Guidance on the Natural Environment](#) (Paragraph: 046).

The LNRS is a 'material consideration' in making planning decisions, which will be based on the individual circumstances of the case. Therefore, it is recommended that the LNRS is considered at the early stages of master-planning, to ensure that sensitive areas of ecological importance are avoided (shown on the map as Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity), whilst ensuring that there is not further fragmentation between sensitive areas.

It is important to note that the LNRS Local Habitat Map **is not** designed to inhibit or prevent development in the areas that it covers, however it should be a key consideration when planning and selecting sites for development. If the LNRS *Areas that Could Become Important for Biodiversity* (ACIB) layers in particular lie within a proposed development site, it can be an opportunity to ensure delivery of LNRS measures, whilst also ensuring developments contain sufficient green space and enhance access to nature. Utilising the Potential Measures on site can also help with developments achieving their 10% net gain requirement as incentivised by the strategic significance multiplier on the Statutory Metric.

The ACIB layers are designed and modelled to create connectivity between areas of existing ecological importance including designated sites, irreplaceable habitats and known priority habitats. A large development site that lies entirely within the ACIB summary layer on the map, and therefore potentially fragments and restricts connectivity between existing sites, may be looked upon less favourably by decision makers.

Consult the ACIB layer first

When planning developments priority should be given to ensuring that if an ACIB layer lies within the site, it should at least in part, inform the design and spread of open space that is retained within the development. For example, if a development lies between two areas mapped as Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity, which comprise ancient woodland and Wood pasture and Parkland, a wildlife corridor containing hedgerows, scrub and tree cover could be created to create connectivity. The habitats created can be informed by the Potential Measures mapped over the site, and the supporting information provided for each measure.

Habitat Banks

We generally prefer that these *are* located within the ACIB summary layer on the Local Habitat Map to help with strategy delivery, and this will help the habitat bank generate more Biodiversity Units via the strategic significance multiplier - so a win-win. We do however understand that this may not always align with land availability, and Habitat Banks outside of the LNRS can still be considered by the respective Local Planning Authority they sit within.

Review the Other Potential Measures that might cover the site

Whilst the *Other Potential Measures* cannot be used for the purpose of achieving high strategic significance in the BNG Metric, they can still be used to inform site design, and are designed to encourage *all* LNRS users to

consider the ways in which they can support nature recovery; through increasing connectivity, tree cover or doing actions that provide natural flood management, for example.

