



# Thomson

environmental  
consultants

Enabling business and  
nature to thrive together

“Most people say that it is intellect  
which makes a great scientist.  
They are wrong: it is character.”

Albert Einstein

Balancing our clients' objectives alongside our responsibility  
to the environment is the manifestation of this statement.

We work with our clients to compliance and beyond.

**Welcome to Thomson environmental consultants.**

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#### What makes us different

- 100% employee owned and independent.
- Expertise in all ecosystems: from the bottom of the sea to the tops of mountains.
- Environmental consultancy and contracting under one-roof
- Rapid nationwide deployment
- Specialist environmental data management and digital end-to-end service.
- High profile project experience, trusted provider on the most complex projects
- Innovation at the heart of everything we do

## Message from our Chair

**Since 2004, we've had a clear mission for Thomson environmental consultants. To be chosen by clients as their preferred specialists, admired by competitors and regarded by people as the company to work for. We aim to be the most innovative, pragmatic and fast-growing environmental consultancy in the UK.**

Now nearing 20 years we've remained mission focussed and become a leading environmental consultancy. We have a team of over 150 specialists on hand, with a wealth of knowledge and experience to share. Our commitment to excellence and attention to detail has enabled us to build a strong reputation, and we pride ourselves on delivering high-quality, practical solutions to help our clients achieve their goals.

Biodiversity Net Gain is a new approach to development that ensures that the natural environment is left in a measurably better state than before development activities began. It goes beyond the traditional approach of mitigating negative impacts to one that actively enhances biodiversity and ecosystem services.

As awareness about the importance of biodiversity increases, governments, corporations and society are looking for ways to reduce the negative impact of development and restore ecosystems. Biodiversity Net Gain is a key tool to achieve this goal.

Our team of experienced professionals uses a variety of techniques and tools to assess, plan, and implement Biodiversity Net Gain solutions. We work with our clients to identify potential impacts of their development activities and develop customized plans to enhance biodiversity. Our approach is based on the latest scientific research, best practices, and local regulations, ensuring that our clients receive the highest quality of service.

Our aim is to help our clients achieve their development goals while also contributing to the conservation of biodiversity. Enabling business and nature to thrive together is at the core of everything we do.

Welcome to Thomson Environmental Consultants

**Nancy Thomson**  
Founder and Chair

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# Our Consultancy Team

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Our team of expert ecological consultants provide a full range of ecological consultancy services across a broad range of client sectors, including construction and engineering, housing and commercial development, rail and highways, as well as government and local authorities. We partner our clients to deliver cost effective solutions to environmental issues that respect progress and the natural world. We work collaboratively and are pragmatic in our approach to help clients achieve compliance with environmental legislation and planning policy.

## Services we offer include:

- Ecological consultancy advice, assessments and plans for a wide range of project types, making complex ecology straightforward to understand and implement for clients.
- Strategic Ecology Consulting services focussing on broader ecology strategy and corporate social responsibility.
- Helping our clients achieve “Biodiversity Net Gain” requirements – providing advice, strategies and calculations that are tailored to individual client and project needs.
- Simplification of the ‘Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)’ process – providing robust and fast turn-around HRA reports.
- Provision of ecological input and reports for BREEAM projects, from site selection through to close out, helping clients to achieve high BREEAM ecology scores.

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# Our ecological consultancy services

## Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- Early stage Biodiversity Net Gain advice to inform site selection and design
- Biodiversity Net Gain calculations and strategies
- Biodiversity Net Gain unit trading advice
- Habitat restoration and creation to realise BNG on site

## BREEAM or Code for sustainable homes (CfSH)

- BREEAM Ecology Assessments
  - LE02 – LE05 assessments
- Code for sustainable homes (CfSH)
  - ECO1 – ECO5 assessments
- BREEAM and CfSH post construction sign-off

## Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report
- EclA Reports
- Ecology ES Scoping
- Ecology ES Chapters
- Ecology ES Chapter Review

## Habitat Regulation Assessment

- HRA Screening
- HRA Appropriate assessment

## Planning Permission

- Review of planning application ecology submissions (for local authorities)
- Review and advise on local plan ecology policies and land allocations (for local authorities)
- Habitat Regulation Assessment of Local Plans (for local authorities)
- Third party review of planning application ecology reports
- Advice on ecology legislation and planning policy requirements for planning permission

## Marine and Freshwater

- Freshwater Surveys and Impact Assessments
- Catchment Management
- Nutrient Neutrality assessment and advice
- Species Translocation Services including fish rescue
- Protected Species Licensing Work
- Marine and Estuarine Surveys
- Macrobenthic Sample Analysis

## Strategic Ecology

- Strategic ecology consultancy advice for a wide range of projects
- Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) ecology strategies
- Ecology reporting for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Biodiversity strategies and plans
- Ecology mitigation and enhancement plans
- Habitat creation, management and monitoring plans
- Interactive ecology mapping via our online portal

## Protected Species

- Baseline Protected Species Surveys
- Protected Species Licensing Work
- Species Translocation Services
- Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)





# How we support our clients

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- Proven track record for delivering high quality ecology support and advice to achieve legal and planning policy compliance, even on the largest and most challenging projects
- Efficiency of our one-stop-shop for the supply and management of environmental services and contracting at every stage of a project, from consultancy through to on site habitat creation.
- End-to-end digital solutions with 'live' project updates to identify constraints and reduce project risks.
- Central resourcing and nationwide coverage to allow rapid turn-around of ecological services for time-constrained works.
- Expert, trusted technical support during liaison with key stakeholders such as regulators and local planning authorities, helping secure positive outcomes.
- Assured performance through established health, safety, quality and environment systems.

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# Biodiversity Net Gain

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## What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Biodiversity Net Gain refers to an intervention which results in the net improvement to biodiversity for a defined area of land. An intervention is defined as a human-induced impact which results in a change to the type or condition of a habitat. Developing land or changing the management regime, are both examples of interventions.

Biodiversity Net Gain has been used for many years by various local planning authorities, utility providers, housing developers and other organisations to demonstrate and ensure that developments achieve positive biodiversity outcomes.

The Environment Act, 2021 has introduced new legislation which makes Biodiversity Net Gain an integral part of the planning consent process, which include a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain of 10% for most developments.

# What is a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment



A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment compares baseline conditions to post-development plans. Biodiversity Net Gain is achieved if the post-development plans provide a net improvement to the biodiversity of a site.

## The following steps are used to calculate Biodiversity Net Gain or loss

1. A field survey is undertaken to collect pre-development habitat data.
2. Post-development habitat data is defined using the landscaping plans.
3. Pre-development habitat data and post-development habitat data is converted into 'biodiversity units' using a biodiversity metric. Additional biodiversity units may be added to post-development data using offsite compensation or biodiversity credits if required.
4. The Biodiversity Net Gain or Loss is calculated using the difference between the pre-development and post development habitat data. It is often presented as a percentage.
5. If Biodiversity Net Gain is not achieved on the site, then offsite compensation or biodiversity credits can be considered.

## What metrics are available for calculating Biodiversity Net Gain?

There have previously been many different metrics developed for calculating Biodiversity Net Gain. This has been simplified more recently with the production of The Biodiversity Metric, published by Natural England to provide a standardised way of carrying out Biodiversity Net Gain assessments. This metric is updated periodically to extend the range of habitat types it covers and to allow changes to the underpinning calculation formula.

A Small Sites Metric calculator is also available, which can be used to assess Biodiversity Net Gain on small sites, which uses a simplified format.

At Thomson we will always ensure that our projects are using the most appropriate version of the metric available for the site.



## What are the current requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places a responsibility on local planning authorities to encourage net gains for biodiversity to be sought through planning policies and decisions. This allows the local planning authority to determine how Biodiversity Net Gain is assessed and enforced within their jurisdiction. Many local authorities have planning policies which specify that development is expected to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain, or even a specific percentage of Biodiversity Net Gain (minimum), in order to achieve planning permission.





# The Environment Act

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## How significant are the changes included in the Environment Act?

The Environment Act, 2001 passed into law on 9 November 2021. One of the key components of the Act is a requirement for the majority of planning applications to demonstrate that their proposals can deliver at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

In February 2023, the government published its response to a consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations and Implementation. The consultation set out Defra's proposals and asked questions on how the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain will be applied to developments and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. Based on the published response to this consultation we can see the direction that the secondary legislation and guidance will take in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain.

From November 2023, most planning applications will be subject to a condition that the development may not begin unless the local planning authority approves a biodiversity gain plan. The planning authority can only approve the plan if they are confident of its accuracy and that any offsite biodiversity gain or credits are already allocated or purchased.

The intention is for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain to be mandatory for all Town and Country Planning Act 1990 developments from November 2023, 2 years after the Act received Royal Assent. An extended transition period, until April 2024, will apply to smaller developments and an updated small sites metric will be published for use for these schemes.

The Government is also proposing to make 10% Biodiversity Net Gain mandatory for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects ("NSIPs") no later than November 2025.

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## Does my development require a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment?

Many Local Planning Authorities already require Biodiversity Net Gain, through their local plans and policies. From November 2023 the Environment Act, 2021 will make a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain mandatory for most planning applications.

If you have a development proposal that requires planning permission, it is likely that BNG will be required. Expert ecological advice from an early stage will be essential to ensure an efficient process and positive outcome for your development.

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# Our expertise and experience

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We have extensive knowledge and experience undertaking Biodiversity Net Gain calculations and producing Biodiversity Strategies for clients. We have used a variety of the current metrics, and have staff specially trained in BNG assessment. This means we can adapt our approach to find pragmatic solutions tailored to individual project needs.

Our award-winning Geospatial team support our ecology experts to provide accurate and rapid Biodiversity Net Gain calculations using baseline survey data and post-development plans.

We aim to maximise efficiency for clients by utilising data collected during Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) to produce baseline data for BNG calculations which saves time and minimises costs.

Our Climate Change and Sustainability team can add further value to plans for post-development enhancement, with climate resilient planting recommendations that also maximise carbon sequestration.

Our one-stop ecological consultancy and contracting service means we can deliver the practical site work to transform plans into reality, realising those net gains for biodiversity on site.

## **A selection of projects for which our expert team of ecologists have carried out Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments**

- In Oxfordshire Thomson used a commercial Biodiversity Impact Calculator to assess Biodiversity Net Gain on a residential development of 100 homes.
- In South Cambridgeshire, Thomson used the Cambridge and Peterborough Habitat Impact Calculator to assess Biodiversity Net Gain for a residential development of 3,500 homes.
- In Welbourne Garden Village in Hampshire, we used the Biodiversity Metric to assess Biodiversity Net Gain on 6,000 homes for Buckland Developments.
- In Cambridgeshire, Thomson have used the Biodiversity Metric to assess Biodiversity Net Gain on a major infrastructure project, to ensure that a 10% net gain can be achieved.
- In Warwickshire, Thomson have used the Biodiversity Metric on a scheme for the Local Council to ensure that proposals for a new cycle route in a 100ha Country Park deliver a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. This has been supported with Ecological Management and Monitoring Plans.

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Contact us today to discuss your  
Biodiversity Net Gain requirements

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