

Planners concerned about Net Gain duties

Almost two-thirds of planners cannot confirm they will have resources in place to meet November's biodiversity net gain (BNG) deadline, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has found.

According to the survey findings, planners claim they need more help to ensure they can oversee the new duties being implemented under impending the BNG regime.

Introduced under the [Environment Act 2021](#), the measures require local planning authorities to assess and seek mitigation of the predicted BNG impact of planning proposals.

The new rules will apply to new major applications from November 2023 and all minor applications from next April.

The RTPI's ongoing survey of members found that:

- 61 per cent of public sector planners cannot confirm they will have in-house dedicated BNG resource and ecological expertise in place by November.
- 79 per cent of public sector planners believe BNG practice would be improved with confirmation of additional "skills and staff".
- 78 per cent of public sector planners believe BNG practice would be improved with additional "guidance, advice and support".
- 54 per cent of planners across the public and private sectors believe BNG practice would be improved by giving "case studies of best practice".

The RTPI also found public and private sector planners report having extremely low levels of confidence in the practical requirements of BNG. This, it finds, includes core aspects of the scheme such as "identifying BNG receptor sites", "interpreting the robustness of ecological reports and BNG proposals", "using the biodiversity metric" and "negotiating with landowners over site provision".

RTPI chief executive Victoria Hills said: "These new findings show that government is running out of time to prepare local planning authorities to assess biodiversity net gain on major planning applications as expected in November.

"The RTPI fully supports the scheme's intention to improve our natural environment and we'll continue to engage with ministers and officials behind the scenes to urgently clarify the details of new BNG regulations, funding and training."

RTPI research found that [25 per cent of local authority planners have left over the past seven years](#).

Hills added: "Immediate clarity and support will be crucial to the successful implementation of BNG and to avoid adding to England's planning backlog."

A statement from the RTPI said the latest survey results, collected between May and August 2023, "add to a growing body of evidence that shows planners are concerned about the implementation of this new addition to their workload".