



Information Governance Team

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17 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

Request ID: FOI648126888

Thank you for your request for information relating to Biodiversity Net Gain implementation (planning/ecology).

You have requested the following information:

Please find below some questions about how the council is implementing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

1. Please can you indicate what, if any, software the council has obtained specifically to help with implementing the following aspects of BNG?

Coventry City Council has not obtained any software in relation to BNG. Planning uses Idox and the related BNG modules are being considered but no decisions have been made.

Ecology has appointed two full time officers to undertake BNG and other ecology planning work. The officers comment on all relevant planning applications and seek to ensure that the minimum 10% net gain is achieved. In most cases this includes independently undertaking site survey and completing the DEFRA metric. Where significant discrepancies are found between any biodiversity value suggested by the applicant and that assessed internally schemes will be adjusted to meet statutory requirements.

a. Validation of applications, including checking that the correct version of the Biodiversity Metric has been submitted.

See above.

b. Determination of applications subject to BNG, including assessment of ecological

considerations.

See above.

c. Determining if the biodiversity gain objective (biodiversity gain condition) is met.

See above.

d. Monitoring of planning obligations set out under S106 agreements or Conservation Covenants, analogous to other planning obligations.

The need to monitor sites has not yet arisen but will do so in coming years. (see below).

e. Ecological monitoring of BNG habitats, a new statutory duty required by legislation, including ensuring that individual habitats on a given site are progressing in line with expectations set out in the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

The Council contributes to a Warwickshire County Ecology Service (NCAP) who undertake ecological survey and monitoring of sites including Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves, potentially this could be extended to BNG. Remote sensing data is being used to understand the extent of natural habitats within the city and should allow us to monitor changes in natural habitat.

The Council is also working with Warwick University developing novel eDNA techniques which may allow overall gains and losses in biodiversity to be assessed.

Within Coventry it is expected that for larger developments most biodiversity mitigation will be off site. The Council has identified a series of sites for BNG which are in the process of being submitted to the register. Council ownership and management of the sites should facilitate long term monitoring.

f. Statutory reporting of BNG habitat progress under the NERC Act Biodiversity Duty.

See above.

2. Is the council generating income, or planning to generate income, by charging BNG monitoring fees? If so, how are you calculating this fee?

No decisions have been made. The Council does not currently have the skills or resources to monitor BNG on sites but will develop a solution together with local partners. Any fee would be calculated using Full Cost Recovery and guided by other local authorities. It is unlikely that Coventry will expand the team in order to offer services to other local authorities but this is possible. Any longer term solution will include management/monitoring of SuDS, BNG on development sites and similar issues in a single package.

3. Please answer the questions below to indicate if the council has made use of the government's new burdens funding for BNG in the financial year 23/24:

a. How much of the funding was spent by the council in this year?

100%.

b. What was the funding spent on?

Staff.

4. Please answer the questions below to indicate if the council has made use of the government's new burdens funding for BNG in the financial year 24/25:

a. How much of the funding was spent by the council in this year?

100%.

b. What was the funding spent on?

Staff.

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If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email icocasework@ico.org.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours faithfully

Information Governance