



# Biodiversity Net Gain in GM

Update on progress



# Context

- Overview of biodiversity net gain and the GM work at the September meeting
- You asked us to undertake further engagement with the district LPAs
- Summary of discussions with all the district LPAs to better understand the current position of each, their strengths and opportunities for embedding biodiversity net gain, and where there may be issues
- The LPA Action Plan is one part of a GM-wide Roadmap for biodiversity net gain to help deliver a strategic Nature Recovery Network for the City-region

# The Environment Bill

- Published by previous Government on 14 October 2019
- Introduces mandatory requirement for all TCPA developments to achieve minimum 10% net gain
- Measured using biodiversity metric, maintained for a minimum of 30 years
- Biodiversity net gain to be a general planning condition
- Planning permission is conditional upon the developer preparing a biodiversity gain plan and that plan being signed off by the relevant planning authority
- Queens Speech on 19 December confirmed the new government's intention to mandate 'biodiversity net gain' into the planning system as part of the proposed Environment and Animal Welfare Bill

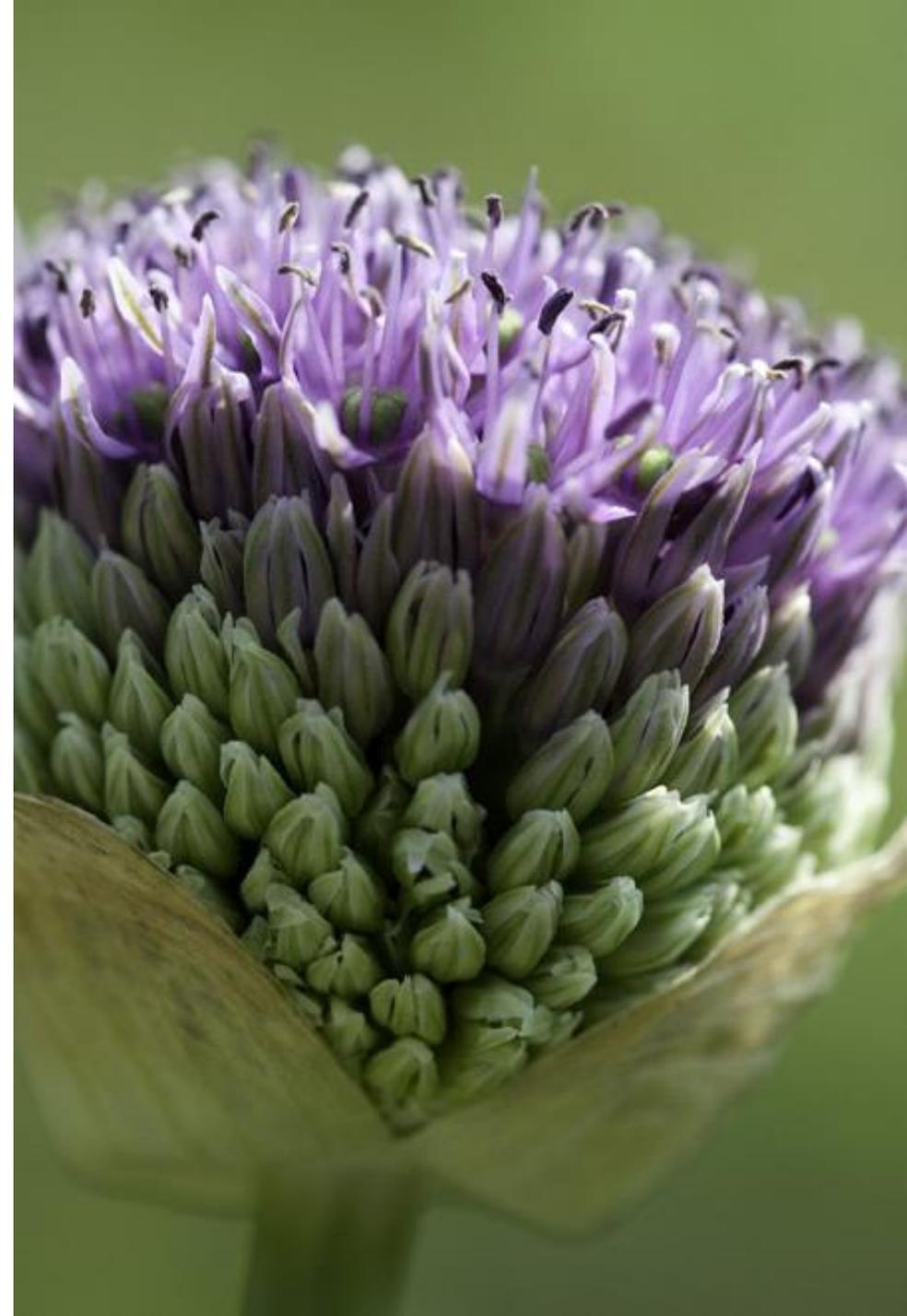
# LPA Roadshow - objectives

- Move towards a successful proactive GM approach prior to a mandatory requirement through **testing, and building the necessary processes** to embed within each planning function across the 10 GM LPAs
- Working closely with each local planning authority to enable both **consistency** across the city region and **local flexibility**, responding to local circumstances
- To be ready for the mandatory requirement and be a **national leader** in biodiversity net gain implementation across the city region.



# Headlines

- Lots of enthusiasm across all 10 LPAs in getting BNG ready, testing approaches and working together to make it a success
- Significant opportunities to deliver, test, share best practice and learn lessons
- Considerable variation in the current progression of each Local Plan
- Variation in confidence in requiring BNG with reliance on NPPF prior to mandatory requirement



# What they said about strategic planning...

- No **existing policies** referring to BNG
- One LPA with '**no net loss**' policy, one with a Local Plan progressing towards EIP next year, with **BNG policy** included
- Most districts have **hooks** through the Local Plan, SPDs and other relevant plans or strategies
- Recognition of need to develop BNG policy in **emerging Local Plans** rather than wait for GMSF policy.

# What they said about development management...

- BNG has tended to be raised by a few **proactive developers**, but now some LPAs raising in pre-app discussions
- All referred to ecological requirements within **validation checklist**, and are keen to update to refer to BNG
- Varying **pre-application advice** service, from virtually none, to comprehensive
- All reliant on **GMEU** to provide advice on applications
- Lack of proper application of the **mitigation hierarchy** (which effectively requires no net loss), means there is a perception that BNG is a big ask
- General positivity to take on BNG, but want **training**

# Key issues & concerns

- Getting the right balance between **proximity to the development generating a financial contribution** and investments in **strategic and landscape opportunities**
- Resources and expertise
- Challenge from developers on **viability** grounds
- LPAs unsure about **requiring net gain** ahead of it being mandatory
- Varying levels of **awareness and understanding** amongst senior officers and members



# Action Plan themes

- Local Plan (strategic) - policy/SPDs/biodiversity strategies
- Local Plan (allocations) – master planning/town centre regeneration/large scale greenbelt development
- Development Management - practical process through development management, including validation
- Practicalities - legal/administration/s106/conditions
- Working with GMEU

# Action Plan themes

- Off site options – LPA-led habitat banks
- Off site options - working with external partners on third party land.
- Practical solutions to known challenges – viability, deep urban, moving from no net loss to net gain, layering up opportunities whilst retaining additionality
- Communications – training, awareness raising
- Case studies - live planning applications to work proactively with developers to test and demonstrate good practice

# Project management

- Co-ordination/oversight of Action Plan
- Communication across all LPAs on progression of actions
- Training and awareness raising
- Dedicated time for progressing actions
- Spatial priorities and opportunities



# Next steps....

- Finalise LPA Roadshow report (January 20)
- Draft LPA Action Plan as part of Roadmap (January 20)
- Develop spatial priorities and opportunities for GM linked to future NRN
- Stakeholder event to test and refine the Roadmap and engage wider stakeholders
- Establish 2 year Project to deliver Roadmap (reporting to NCG) – March 2020 onwards



# Putting it into practice

Delivering, testing and learning lessons for real



# The GM Ecology Unit is currently -

- Assisting and advising Local Authorities on the wording and implementation of Net Gain Policies in Local Plans
- Piloting the use of the Net Gain Metric on selected planning applications in GM and developing a 'GM-specific' Metric
- Working out the potential implications of implementing Net Gain on potential development sites (including strategic allocations)

- Developing a range of Net Gain enhancements which may apply to smaller or more urban sites (e.g. tree planting, swift nest boxes, bat boxes, green roofs)
- Identifying ‘opportunity’ areas and sites across GM where off-site Net Gain may be most beneficial and where Habitat Banks may best be located (informed by the developing Nature Recovery Networks)
- Working with others to develop effective mechanisms for collecting and distributing off-site contributions to Net Gain
- Developing mechanisms for the future oversight and monitoring of Net Gain implementation

# Discussion and questions

Your thoughts on the work and emerging themes,  
issues and opportunities