

Biodiversity Gain Case Study



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How did you come to look at Biodiversity Gain (BG)?

My name is Lucy Shaw and I manage an estate near Goring. The Estate consists of **arable, permanent grassland and woodland**. Much of our woodland is **Ancient Semi-Natural woodland** and managed as such through a Countryside Stewardship agreement. Our aspiration is to **improve and enhance the overall biodiversity of the Estate**, for wildflowers, wild grasses, and other plants and also all the animal, microbial and other species that live off such areas.

After hearing about the Coronation Meadows and Pollinator Meadow projects we were really inspired to create wildflower and grass meadows on the areas of permanent pasture. I heard about Biodiversity Gain funding through our Natural England adviser who supported our aspirations.

How does BG impact the estate management?

The permanent pasture has been managed through mechanical means for at least the last 20 years as we have no livestock. This project has enabled us to fence and provide water to 5 fields so we can lease the land to a grazier to bring in stock to help diversify the botanical species. In addition, it will **cover all the costs of preparing the grassland** for introduction of appropriate seed to create a lowland meadow from poor quality modified grassland.

What are the benefits to the estate in having a BG Project?

The principal benefit is that **we can increase the ecological diversity of the Estate**. It may follow in time that it enables us to **diversify our income opportunities** – for example, fencing the fields will enable some additional income through grass keep. Knowing we can monitor the progress through regular botanical surveys and then tweak the management in response is a real change from the established agri-environment schemes which can be very inflexible both in terms of processes and timing of works. It has been possible to make the **planned habitat creation fit with the long-term vision** for the Estate as we have been very much part of designing the Biodiversity Management Plan.

Receiving funding that is implemented over a medium-term time horizon provides the Estate with some certainty to reinforce our management activities and helps to shelter us a little from some of the fluctuations in income we usually experience (market force). This is especially relevant in the current climate.

How easy was the application process?

From the outset I have been **able to engage proactively with the advisors from TOE**. This has enabled a practical and thorough assessment of the Estate's aspirations, how these align with TOE's wider objectives, and has enabled tailoring our project to provide mutual benefits. The application process has been very **clear, considered, and responsive**, and we continue to engage positively with TOE now that the project is underway.

TOE perspective

We look to strategically deliver projects in line with emergent local nature recovery plans so when we were approached by Lucy we were excited by the opportunity to increase the area of lowland meadow and secure long term management for this habitat – a long identified priority habitat for Oxfordshire and this habitat is a priority within this Conservation Target Area, Chilterns Escarpment South. The grassland location also borders an existing lowland meadow Local Wildlife Site which will expand the habitat range for associated bird and insect species.

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TALK TO US

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