

Biodiversity Gain Case Study

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

We bought the farm in 2016 and have an ambitious plan to create a large-scale biodiversity project over the next 10 years. This initial project sees us start this longer term ambition, with the creation of a **2ha heritage orchard and wildflower meadow paddock** that was a field of horse pasture.

Fruit orchards play a critical role in creating a biodiverse, wildlife rich ecosystem, and with many varieties of apple trees originating from Oxfordshire in the 18th and 19th Century (with some even dating back to the 16th century) our objective is to **re-create a traditional Oxfordshire fruit orchard** managed with as minimal, and if possible, no pesticide intervention.

How does BG impact the farm management?

We have sourced **114 different varieties** of apple, plum, pear, gage, damson, quince and medlar trees along with a selection of **65 fruit bushes** consisting of Gooseberry, Worcesterberry, Loganberry and Jostaberry. A diverse grass and wildflower mix has also been sown. The orchard is being planted to provide an **important habitat for a wide range of species**: for example, mammals such as dormice, hares and bats; birds such as barn owls, woodpeckers, bullfinches, tree sparrows and thrushes; rare insects such as noble chafer and stag beetle; and plants such as mistletoe, as well as a wide range of lichens.

Despite the dry conditions, **there have been no tree losses and the grassland is establishing well**. The latest monitoring visits noted a high abundance of yellow rattle and wild carrot had established from the seed mix sown last autumn. The yellow rattle will set seed for the first time this summer (2022) and its semi-parasitic nature will help to further establish the conditions for a diverse range of wildflowers to flourish.

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

In addition to the **immediate biodiversity uplift** in this horse paddock, this project is the first step on a far more **ambitious programme** or works. Our longer term objective is to establish a much larger area **with the intention of contributing to nature's recovery in the county**. We are keen to adopt a **rewilding approach** to the site whilst also partnering up with our neighbouring farmer who owns 700 acres of surrounding farmland with the intention of using the entire site to create a 1000+ acre biodiverse, wildlife-rich habitat and establish a wider set of new land management techniques to provide extensive benefits for the environment. In the longer term our orchard would then be part of this **network of habitats** that allows populations to move between sites providing a valuable source of food.

How easy was the application process?

The application process was **straightforward and the TOE staff were very approachable and helpful**. Ignoring initial conversations, the whole process took about a month from application to signed contract. The payment process is similarly straightforward and we have always received payment as expected.



TOE perspective

TOE was keen to work with landowners as they galvanise their 10 year plan towards large scale nature recovery. In addition to creating a modest uplift of 8.02 biodiversity units, this provided the opportunity for both TOE and landowners to get a better understanding of how we might work together on future opportunities. TOE was particularly interested in their desire to make a replicable commercial model for their ambitions and is keen to contribute towards this.

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TALK TO US

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