

Biodiversity Gain Case Study

"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."



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.

"Our longer term objective is to establish a much larger area with the intention of contributing to nature's recovery in the county."

TALK TO US

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

The farm is 750ha, mainly arable land with some permanent pasture and 77ha of woodland. I've been the farm manager here for 30 years and have implemented a lot of changes over the years that have improved it from an environmental perspective. We already carry out carbon footprinting on an annual basis, have put in numerous wildflower margins and shelter belts and have extended our rotation to include more spring cropping. We do not use any routine insecticides and other inputs are being gradually reduced through focusing on soil and plant health.

The piece of land that is in the Biodiversity Gain agreement is a section of an old gallop and an area of less productive arable land. Biodiversity Gain funds felt like a good match to improve the biodiversity of this parcel of land while providing a good return for this area of the farm that was fairly unproductive. 1.2ha of woodland will be created (15 mixed native species suitable for chalk soil will be planted, but which will eventually culminate in predominantly Beech as the climax species)

and the creation of about 4 ha of species rich chalk grassland along with the enhancement of 1 ha neutral grassland. The field is entered into a countryside stewardship scheme and has an area of ABg Winter bird food which is presently situated on part of the land designated for Biodiversity Gain. This is a temporary scheme (on long term arable land). The ABg area will be relocated to arable land on the east side of the Gallops and extended to link with Abbots Heath Wood to the north east.

How does BG impact the farm management?

It's early days with the project yet, we will be preparing the ground for seeding in late summer/early Autumn. The deer fencing for the woodland will be erected later in the year and the planting will take place winter 22/23. The grassland sward will be managed to maximise the floral diversity.

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

In addition to providing the biodiversity enhancement, the estate will be getting a decent financial return on an area of land that currently provides little or no income. Having a biodiversity hotspot on this location will also provide habitat for many beneficial invertebrates that will help manage pest species. The woodland will provide a wind break and will improve the soil, providing structure to retain the water on this free draining site.

How easy was the application process?

The TOE advisors were helpful and the independent assessor provided helpful feedback on the design and encouraged us to extend the area to link with the current area of woodland, providing increased natural connectivity.