

From: Councillor Jane Milner-Barry <janemilnerbarry@swindon.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, August 21, 2025 7:38:48 PM
To: Richard Hailstone <richardhailstone@haydonwick.gov.uk>
Subject: ExternalBiodiversity Net Gain - Search for Sites

Dear Richard,

Swindon Council's Building a Greener Swindon Committee needs your parish's help to increase biodiversity in the Borough, by suggesting sites which might be suitable for adding to the Government's Biodiversity Gain Site Register.

Since 2024, developers have an obligation to achieve 10% Biodiversity Net Gain related to any proposed development large or small (with some exemptions). They can achieve this:

- Preferably on site
- If the 10% improvement, or part of it, can't be achieved on site, then on another site within the Borough
- Then if there is no suitable site within the Borough, on a site outside the Borough, or as a last resort through buying Government net gain units.

Biodiversity Net Gain is an ingenious system for linking development with real improvements in our natural environment. But the only way to ensure that those improvements take place within the Borough and not elsewhere – maybe hundreds of miles away – is to have plenty of sites within the Borough which could be offered as “biodiversity net gain units”. If we had enough sites, our green infrastructure could even benefit from development taking place elsewhere.

This is a link to the Officer's Report which explains more fully why we need your help:

<https://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s142225/The%20Operation%20and%20Impact%20of%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20funding.pdf>

As Chair of Parks and Open Spaces, you know your area well. Please could you consider what areas there are within the parish, large or small, which could be possible biodiversity net gain units, and let me know as soon as possible. Suggestions are all that is needed at this stage. The next step would be for suitable sites to be surveyed by an ecologist to establish the site's current biodiversity status.

What sort of sites can be considered? Sites do not need to be greenfield sites already, though they may well be; they just need to be capable of biodiversity enhancement. So they could include “green deserts” around flats, and even disused industrial sites or contaminated land. There is no minimum area. Sites can be SBC-owned or privately owned; landowners can create and sell biodiversity units on their land. Registered sites are managed for diversity increase under 30-year agreements, so any with development potential should be avoided.

I hope we can make the most of this opportunity to achieve a more biodiverse borough. The Build a Greener Swindon Committee is hoping to report back to Cabinet in late September with an initial list of possible sites. Please get back to me with your suggestions and/or queries.

Looking forward to hearing from you

Jane

Jane Milner-Barry

Councillor for Old Town and East Wichel

Building a Greener Swindon Policy & Performance Committee
Swindon Borough Council

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