

## Clerk's / Somerset Council meeting, 1 November 2023

### Biodiversity Net Gain Focus

- **Somerset Council Budget** will be going to committee on 8 November. Parish Councils are encouraged to look at the [Financial Strategy paper at item 7, particularly paragraphs 10, 11, and 12.](#)  
There is a £100m gap, largely due to the cost of care
- **LCNs** - Somerset Council is looking to develop a strategic approach. LCN priorities are becoming apparent, highlighting local approaches. Some working groups have been set up and work towards achieving aims. The team will be reviewing the Terms of Reference as well as the boundaries for some councils that may prefer to be in a neighbouring LCN. Those councils are encouraged to visit neighbouring meetings before making a decision.  
An evaluation paper will be developed to glean feedback on how parishes feel the system is working, which will include an update of LCN progress across the county.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** - Graham Thompson, Principle Planning Policy Officer gave an overview of work on this. Slides will be available later.  
National Guidance is not yet fully available.  
Somerset Council will be issuing a consultation from Monday 6 November, closing 30 November - it is a short window. This link will be accessible from Monday.  
Aimed primarily at major developments, BNG requires that developments leave the environment in a measurably better state. [The link should be available from Monday at this webpage.](#)
  - National guidance requires policy is in place for major developments by January 2024, i.e. it will apply to planning applications from Jan '24. Policy for smaller developments must be in place by April 2024. It is prioritising the development industry but will take on smaller developments with aim to move from 'no net loss' to a cost-effective 'net gain of at least 10%'.
  - The BNG complements existing protections.
  - It cannot be negotiated away, and should inform developments from the design stage, i.e. not added on as an afterthought.
  - There is a priority of application of BNG - on-site; off-site; credits. On site net gain is favoured i.e. off-site BNG will only be considered if the development cannot deliver on-site BNG. There will be a call for land that could be used for off-site net gain in the New Year. Credits are very expensive - these would be taken out through Natural England.
  - Monitoring will be the landowners' responsibility.
  - Developers that work in partnership with environmental bodies such as the Somerset Wildlife trust will have a stronger application.
  - There is a national metric which calculates % of net gain.
  - Biodiversity Net Gain is the priority at planning approval state, over other requirements.
  - There is a list of exemptions, which includes householder applications and small-scale build.
  - A BNG plan will be drawn up after planning applications are approved. Guidance notes will be provided.
  - Developers are expected to take an holistic approach to BNG, which could include approaches to mitigate against phosphate level increase or carbon sequestration.
  - Somerset Council has ecological mapping, which will be used to deliver the objectives.