

**FARMING**

# Demand for Biodiversity Net Gain units is seeing big rise

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AS a Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) regulated firm which is the leading independent national broker of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Hugh Townsend Chartered Surveyors is uniquely well placed to observe the BNG market.

With Q1 and Q2 now behind the industry in 2026, it is time to analyse

how the market has moved on from 2025.

Demand for BNG units has increased substantially. The number of purchaser approaches Hugh Townsend Chartered Surveyors (HTCS) had in first two quarters of 2026 was up 142% for the same period as last year, and in the third quar-

ter of 2026 approaches are already outstripping 2025 Q3 approaches by more than twofold. This indicates the hiatus since February 2024 may be coming to an end as more planning applications are being approved.

Looking at how this translates into monetary value, in the second half of 2025 HTCS put in place over £7 million worth of sales. In Q1 and Q2 of 2026, HTCS had demand for £4.4 million worth of sales.

If demand in 2026 continues at the same rate, by the end of 2026 this will represent a 25% increase in the value of demand between 2025 and 2026.

In Q1 and Q2 of 2026, the average

lot size was 19.33 units. In 2025, it was 25.81 units. Lot sizes in 2025/26 so far have ranged from 0.01 to 260 units.

Whilst it is evident that there is significant year-on-year change in where the demand is concentrated, HTCS does not consider this to be reflective of any particular changes in planning policy.

However, this does illustrate what HTCS considers the common mistake of thinking the demand for different unit types will remain the same, going forward.

The market is ever evolving and its unpredictability cannot be over emphasised especially when creating a habitat bank.

The rule, if there is one, is set up the bank with the greatest amount of flexibility you can, so that where possible you can react, as quickly to market demand, that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) or Responsible Body will allow.

This highlights the need, when creating a habitat bank, to avoid the doubling up by LPAs and Responsible Bodies of what the Biodiversity Gain Site Register does already that can add cost and extra bureaucracy, making it harder to react to a changing market.

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# Bluetongue disease cases soar in Devon and Cornwall

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- Three sheep in Devon with clinical signs including drooling, ulcers around nose and redness in mouths;
- One heifer with clinical signs including crusty nostrils, lameness, ulcers in mouth and frothing from mouth;
- One male llama in Devon with clinical signs including lethargy, fever, noisy breathing with audible crackles.

A total of 19 new cases had been reported in England the previous day, July 29, and again almost all were in the South West, with the only exception being a case in Cheshire. Cases were confirmed that day in Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset, as well as in Cornwall and Devon.

The highest number of new cases on one day last month was on July 24, when 21 new cases were reported.

Again, almost all of that day's cases were in the Westcountry.

As a result of the rapid rise in cases, cattle and sheep classes at the Launceston Show, in Cornwall, on July 30 were cancelled.

Show Secretary Sharon Horsington told the BBC: "It's upsetting, it's disappointing... great sympathy to the farmers and no doubt the other farmers around us now."

Ian May, South West regional manager for the National Sheep Association (NSA), told the BBC: "There are a significant number of deaths that will occur through it, but it is vaccinatable... a significant number of the sheep and cattle that we've been working with have been responding to treatment as well."

"If you do suspect it on your farm, then you should really contact your vet and they will help identify it and send away a blood test so that you can confirm that it is bluetongue."

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) says bluetongue can affect cloven-hoofed animals like sheep and cattle, but it poses no threat to the public or food safety.

The NFU stresses that bluetongue is notifiable, so suspected cases must be reported immediately, but surveillance depends heavily on farmers and vets spotting signs and raising the alarm. Official testing and national rules matter, but they cannot replace active, on-farm prevention, says the NFU, which is urging farmers to treat bluetongue



► Police tape on a gate on farmland near to where the UK's first confirmed case of bluetongue disease was discovered at Baylham House Farm rare breeds centre, in Suffolk, in September 2007. The virus was detected in a Highland cow and was suspected to have arrived in England via midges blown across the sea from continental Europe.

Graham Barclay/Bloomberg/Getty Images

control as a management priority now, not something to consider once disease is nearby.

Once infected midges are active locally, it becomes harder to vaccinate safely, since shared needles can spread infection between animals if vaccination starts too late, the NFU warns.

Timing is everything, the NFU says, as the virus spreads mainly through midges rather than animal-to-animal contact, but once midges are active, disease can move quickly, especially where susceptible animals are moved, mixed or exposed during peak activity.

Vaccination should sit at the centre of every farm's plan, the NFU adds, which is urging farmers to speak to their vet about vaccine options, timing and suitability for herds or flocks, particularly for breeding animals,

youngstock, higher-value animals, and any holding already in a hot-spot area.

Vaccination is not a last resort, the NFU insists, but it is one of the few tools that reduces the impact of infection before the virus reaches a holding. Vaccine protection is serotype-specific, so veterinary advice is essential to make sure farms covered against the strain in circulation.

The NFU is urging farmers to watch their stock closely, checking animals daily for fever, lameness, drooling, mouth or nose ulcers, facial swelling, eye discharge, milk drop, abortion, stillbirths, or weak and deformed newborns. Sheep tend to show more obvious signs, while cattle may show mild disease and act as a less visible source of infection.

Reducing midge exposure where possible is important, the NFU says, by avoiding grazing high-risk stock in wet, sheltered areas at dawn and dusk, when midge activity peaks.

The NFU says farmers should consider housing vulnerable animals during peak risk periods and reduce standing water and muck where midges breed. Insecticides and repellents can reduce exposure and midge burden, but will not remove the risk entirely.

The message from the NFU is simple – don't wait. Report suspected disease immediately, vaccinate where appropriate, tighten movement decisions, monitor stock daily and work with your vet. By the time disease is obvious locally, the midges may already have done their work.

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