

The developing world of BNG

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There's no doubt that across the warehousing sector, there's increasing focus on ESG. Yet the requirement for developers to deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10% on new developments is perhaps not so widely known. New legislation introduced in February this year is now in force to ensure that habitats are left in a better state than prior to development.

Whilst developers can effectively buy credits to meet their BNG obligations, Tritax Big Box's primary focus is on delivering solutions that enhance the natural environment of its parks and warehouses under development. Where that's not possible on site, Tritax Big Box works with the landowners to identify other suitable plots of land. Additionally,

we have biodiversity initiatives at existing sites, which we undertake on a voluntary and collaborative basis with clients.

As part of her mission to visit 80 warehouses to celebrate UKWA's 80th anniversary, Clare Bottle visited Tritax Big Box's Littlebrook development in June. Home to Amazon, IKEA and Powerhouse (a large speculatively built unit), this development pre-dates the legislation but was designed to incorporate biodiversity features.

During her visit, Clare gamely donned a beekeeper suit for a hands-on introduction to the hives and visited the large, onsite wildflower areas, cultivated to attract the over one million bees who also call Littlebrook home! Not only do these initiatives help to protect a key species, critical to our ecosystem, but they also

enable us to host visits by local schools and youth groups – creating value for the local community. Our Tritax-branded BeeBox Honey is another plus!

In addition to biodiversity initiatives, broader ESG-related site design is critical for developers, like Tritax Big Box, who want to support client staff wellbeing and make a positive contribution to the neighbouring area. For example, across a range of Tritax Big Box parks both colleagues and local people have access to cycling and walking paths, outdoor gyms and outdoor seating in areas that have been sensitively designed to complement the natural environment.

At existing sites, where natural space may be more constrained, a number of clients are still keen to enhance biodiversity and are installing bug hotels, bat boxes and creating staff gardens. In the gardens, we are seeing staff being actively encouraged to take ownership of planting and upkeep: creating opportunities to get fresh air and exercise during breaks, and take pride in their daily working environment.

There's no doubt that the initiatives developed to date will help guide our future BNG strategy – but it's likely that each site will require a tailored approach based on the soil quality and type (e.g. brownfield, arable) of land earmarked for development.

The 10% net gain is certainly a challenging requirement for developers. But for those who embrace it, it's also a great opportunity to improve working environments for their clients (helping them to attract, engage and retain their people) and add value for the local communities they're part of. ■

