

UK biodiversity targets unachievable without tech adoption - AiDash launches BNGAI

AI and satellite technology critical to scaling up BNG efforts - AiDash launches BNGAI to turn improbable biodiversity hopes into a viable reality

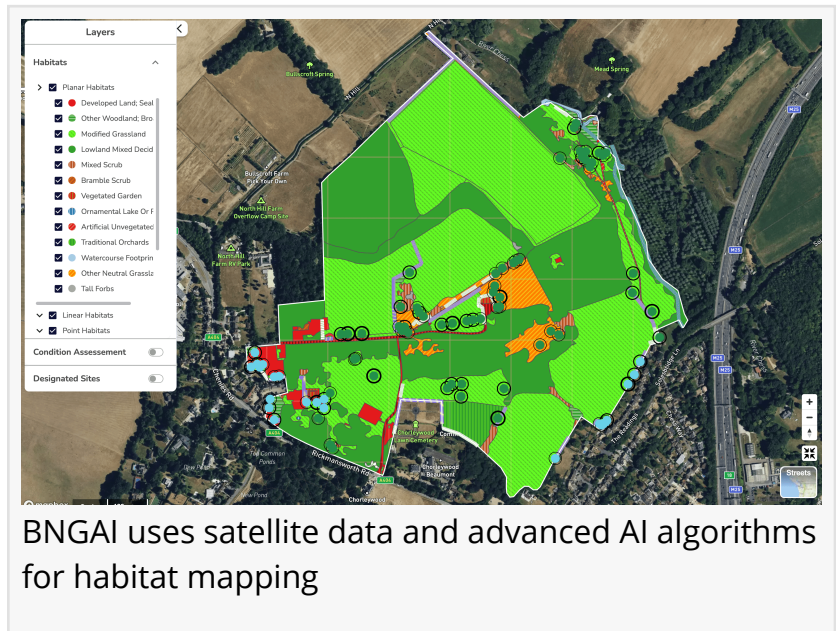
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, February 21, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The UK is facing crunch time in the historic battle to reverse decades of intense biodiversity degradation, leading to its categorisation as one of the most nature-depleted countries on earth.

The government's implementation of new BNG regulations, as set forth in the ambitious 2021 Environment Act, effective from February 12th, mandating development projects to achieve a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, represents a welcome and vital step forward. But it is in desperate need of practical modern solutions to achieve those well-intentioned ambitions, with UK businesses facing the enormous and costly task of sourcing appropriate and timely expertise and support.

Central to these concerns is an alarming scarcity of qualified ecologists to carry out the volume of necessary work. With approximately 150,000 BNG project applications expected to be submitted annually, leading SaaS company AiDash calculates the UK would need 40% more ecologists - or 4,000 to 6,000 - to meet that demand.

Even then, the complex logistics of gathering specific data, especially in hard-to-access areas or large habitats, will leave BNG's credibility at severe risk of being compromised by a wave of inadequate and imprecise data. A fate well-documented in the recent history of the global carbon credits market. Moreover, the lack of human resource brings with it substantial implications in terms of missed deadlines and soaring costs.

But innovative new technologies are emerging to bridge the skills gap, turning weeks of work into days, and helping ecologists radically scale up the quantity and quality of the work they are



able to deliver. As part of a pioneering new programme, AiDash is introducing [BNGAI](#) – leading-edge software that uses artificial intelligence and satellite technology to turn highly challenging biodiversity ambitions into a realistic and practical reality.

BNGAI uses advanced satellite data and AI algorithms to ensure accurate and reliable habitat mapping, detecting invasive plants that pose a risk to native species, and providing insights into the health profile of trees and other plant populations. Traditional on-the-ground methods are time-consuming, expensive, and frequently inaccurate and low on detail, with some habitats either too large or wholly inaccessible for ecologists to survey.

Without the fast-paced and wide-ranging support of new technology, wetlands, peatlands, and other critical ecosystems for protected and vulnerable species face destruction, with the effects of climate change increasing the frequency, scale, and severity of extreme weather, droughts, and flooding. Additionally, features encroaching on rivers might not be accurately mapped and managed exacerbating water provisioning issues.

Protecting vulnerable areas is not the only benefit. From the initial biodiversity baseline assessment to the final application submission, AiDash BNGAI delivers a robust and comprehensive solution to assist developers in meeting BNG compliance requirements at every stage.

AiDash has embedded transparency and collaboration throughout the platform. Its workflow involves AI-based habitat mapping, alongside on-the-ground verification by AiDash's team of ecologists. This collaborative approach builds trust and maintains the accuracy of habitat maps, assuring the technology enhances, not replaces, human expertise. Barratt Homes, the UK's largest home developer, is collaborating with AiDash to not just meet, but exceed the BNG requirements of its ongoing and future developments.

Shashin Mishra, VP of EMEA at AiDash, said: "Preserving biodiversity is crucial for maintaining the delicate balance of ecosystems that sustain life on earth. BNG becoming a legal requirement is a positive step in the right direction. But it's a massive undertaking, with significant challenges surrounding viability, resourcing, costs, efficiency, accuracy, and credibility. At AiDash, our aim is to support developers in reaching the 10% net gain target by utilising all the cutting-edge resources at our disposal. The scale and impact of this transformative technology will be supercharged through widespread and rapid adoption, alongside partnerships with the government, LPAs, commercial organisations, conservation groups, and stakeholders committed to meaningful biodiversity preservation and enhancement."

Helen Nyul, Group Head of Biodiversity, Barratt Developments Plc, said: "At Barratt, we have been committed to BNG since the outset, aligning our practices with the evolving regulatory landscape and committing to delivering a 10% uplift a year ahead of the legislation. The work undertaken with AiDash has helped us to better understand the habitat constraints and opportunities at a site level, and integrate this into our development processes early. Remote

surveying is allowing us to frontload habitat data, which is key to a successful biodiversity net gain outcome. This marks a significant step forward in our efforts to foster sustainable development and contribute positively to the biodiversity landscape”.

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