

INVESTMENT & PARTNERSHIP PROSPECTUS

Nature markets need a new kind of science-practitioner.

NETGAIN is the UK's dedicated doctoral training programme for the science and practice of Biodiversity Net Gain and nature markets. We are building the talent and evidence base on which an entire sector depends.

A co-created multi-disciplinary doctoral training programme

45+

PhD researchers
trained across three
cohorts

60+

External partners
across industry,
government & NGOs

£3M+

In financial support
secured to date

4

Leading UK
universities, one
shared mission

THE MOMENT

A sector in rapid transition

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is now embedded in planning and development policy across the UK nations. Nature markets, from biodiversity credits to habitat banking, are scaling rapidly in response, with businesses of every kind facing growing obligations to measure, disclose and address their biodiversity impacts and dependencies.

"All businesses depend on and impact biodiversity and can be agents of positive change."

— IPBES Business & Biodiversity Assessment, 2026 (Manchester Plenary)

What is a doctoral training programme? A doctoral training programme funds and trains PhD researchers — the people who generate the rigorous, independent science and professional expertise an emerging field depends on. NETGAIN is the UK's only programme dedicated entirely to Biodiversity Net Gain and nature markets.

The IPBES 2026 Business and Biodiversity Assessment is the most authoritative global review of its kind. It identified **capacity and knowledge gaps as a primary barrier** to action across all sectors. Existing methods for measuring business impacts and dependencies remain under-developed and under-adopted. Businesses want to act. Both the evidence and the expertise to act on it remain critically underdeveloped.

THE GAP

The expertise the sector urgently needs

Nature markets that deliver genuine environmental benefits do not belong to any single discipline or sector. They require cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary thinking, grounded in co-creation between scientists, practitioners, policymakers and communities. Yet doctoral training remains largely siloed, producing specialists who are deeply expert in one domain but ill-equipped to work across the boundaries that nature markets demand.

SCIENCE IS UNDERDEVELOPED

BNG and nature market methodologies are in their infancy. Rigorous, independent science is urgently needed.

PRACTITIONERS ARE SCARCE

Regulators, developers and NGOs report acute shortages of professionals able to integrate ecological, economic and policy expertise.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Decisions worth billions of pounds and affecting irreplaceable habitats deserve the best available science and the most capable workforce.

THE RESPONSE

NETGAIN: purpose-built for the nature markets transition

NETGAIN is a UKRI Doctoral Focal Award — a concentrated, challenge-led programme co-created with industry, government, and civil society. It trains a new generation of science-practitioners able to navigate the full complexity of nature markets and translate rigorous research into real-world impact.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

Cohorts span ecology, statistics, economics, law, spatial science and social science — trained to work across boundaries.

CO-CREATED

Research and training shaped by partners through annual open sandpit events and ongoing collaboration.

TRANSLATIONAL

Every PhD generates findings immediately usable by practitioners and policymakers.

CHALLENGE-LED

Projects address real knowledge gaps defined by the sector, not by academic convention.

A TRAINING BLUEPRINT

The NETGAIN e-book, co-authored with leading experts and student researchers, will define net gain theory and practice as a living standard-setting resource for the profession.

INCLUSIVE

Widening participation and industry-sponsored pathways broaden access to doctoral-level training.

ACADEMIC PARTNERS

Four universities. One shared mission.

NETGAIN brings together leading researchers from the Universities of St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Durham. Their combined expertise spans ecology, statistics, economics, law, physical geography, and social science, forming a deliberately multidisciplinary foundation built for the complexity of nature markets.




THE OPPORTUNITY


Shape the science. Build the workforce.


NETGAIN offers organisations a spectrum of ways to engage, from shaping research and training at no financial cost to making strategic investments in the talent pipeline on which your sector depends. Every level of partnership is genuinely valued and formally acknowledged.

Contribution & Involvement

Help shape the direction of NETGAIN research and training. No financial commitment required.


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Internships
 Host a NETGAIN researcher in your organisation. A 1-month experience placement (in-kind) offers a low-commitment way to trial talent and co-generate insights. A 3 to 6 month embedded placement (paid) integrates a researcher more deeply, co-producing directly applicable outputs.


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Training & Networking Event *(in-kind)*
 Host or co-deliver a training session exposing our cohort to real-world challenges, tools and sector perspectives. A direct channel to tomorrow's talent.


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NETGAIN Seminar *(in-kind)*
 Share your organisation's expertise, challenges or innovations in nature markets with our research community. Builds your profile and stimulates new research questions.

Investment Opportunities

Strategic financial partnerships that grow the talent pool and generate rigorous evidence. All investment is formally acknowledged across NETGAIN communications and outputs.

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Programme Support
 Support NETGAIN at a level meaningful to your organisation. We work with organisations of all sizes and that flexibility is a deliberate feature of how we operate. Your contribution enhances our training capacity and reach, and is formally acknowledged.
Flexible — we welcome a conversation about what works for you

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Project Sponsorship
 Sponsor a PhD project on a topic of strategic importance to your sector. Research is conducted independently to ensure full scientific credibility, while directly addressing questions you care about. Formally acknowledged as a Project Sponsor.
~£30,000/year over a 4-year PhD · approx. £120,000 total

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Project Co-Development & Co-Supervision
 Co-design a project and contribute to supervision in genuine partnership with our academic team. Can also support a member of your staff undertaking a part-time PhD. A 4-year commitment that builds lasting in-house capability.
£15,000-£30,000/year · 4-year commitment · 50-100% match funding

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & CO-CREATION DAY

Meet us in Glasgow. Help shape what comes next.

11 June 2026 · University of Glasgow

Our annual conference and co-creation day is the centrepiece of the NETGAIN calendar. It is a genuine working session where partners, researchers and new contacts come together to share findings, identify emerging needs, and co-develop the ideas that will define the next phase of our work. Whether you are an existing partner, exploring involvement for the first time, or simply someone who cares about where nature markets are headed, this is the event to attend.

Attend the Co-Creation Day

Register your interest in joining us on 11 June 2026 at the University of Glasgow. We welcome organisations at all stages of engagement.

[Register your interest →](#)

Start a Conversation Now

You do not need to wait for the conference. We welcome enquiries at any point about any level of involvement.

[Send us an email →](#)

Explore the Programme

Browse current PhD projects, meet our researchers, and discover the full range of involvement pathways.

[Visit the NETGAIN website →](#)

Industry-Sponsored Pathway

Is someone in your team ready for a doctorate? Our industry-sponsored route enables professionals to undertake a PhD part-time.

[Find out more →](#)

◆ NETGAIN's vision is of a self-sustaining programme positioning the UK as a global leader in ecologically, economically, and socially effective nature markets. **Your involvement makes that possible.**