

Environmental Benefit Lots (EBLs) Explained

A practical guide to unlocking subdivision value through environmental enhancement

E-BOOK



Restore Native

Trees for the land, birds and the people



One restoration partner
One point of accountability
From plan to performance





Introduction

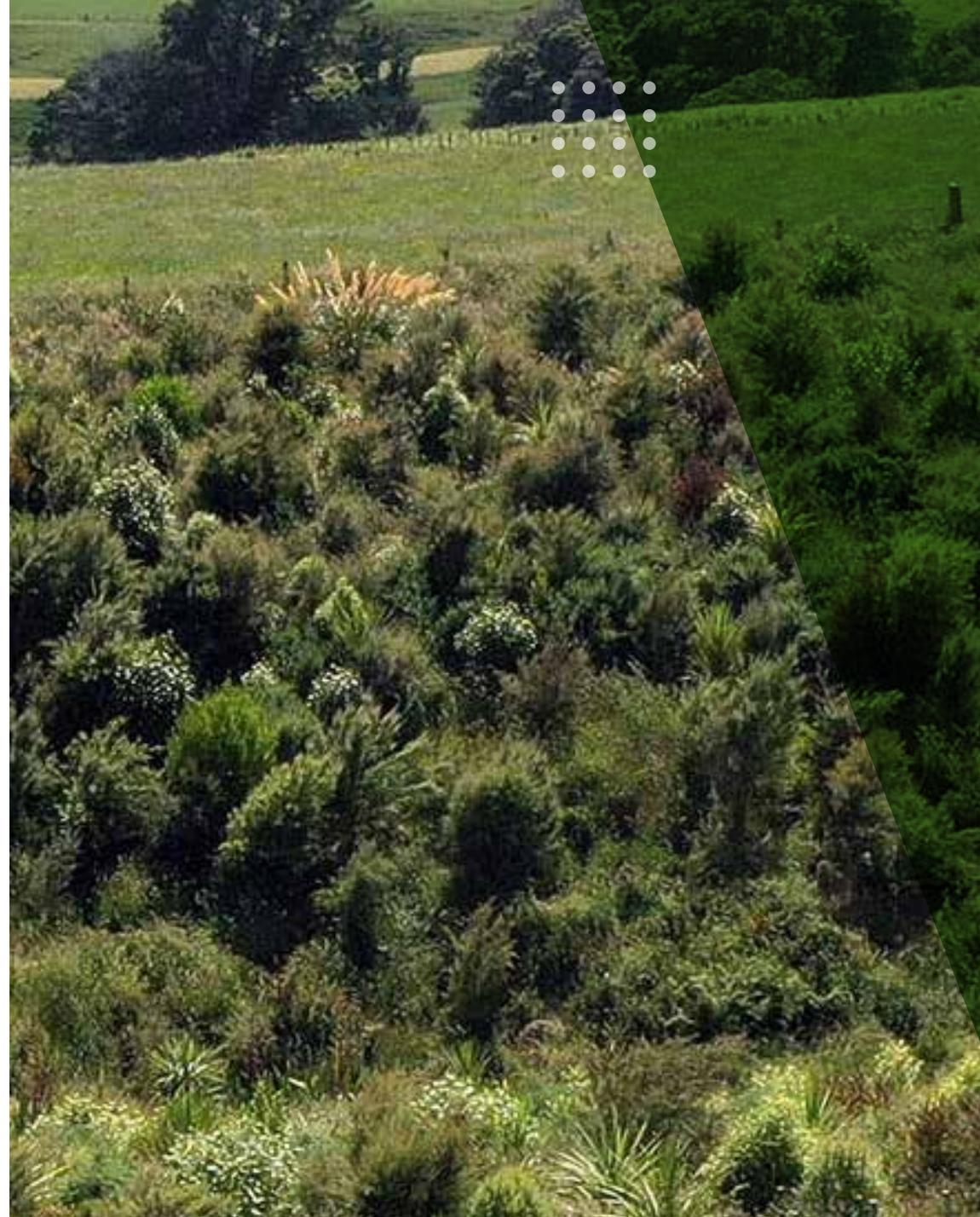
Environmental Benefit Lots (EBLs) are often raised in planning conversations, but rarely explained clearly or consistently.

An Environmental Benefit Lot (EBL) is an entitlement to subdivide, awarded by council in return for providing an environmental benefit to the district.

That is the core trade. It's also why EBLs are most commonly explored for commercial and strategic reasons — such as unlocking subdivision potential, supporting succession planning, or making better use of land that is difficult or inefficient to farm. Environmental enhancement is the qualifying pathway that underpins that entitlement.

This guide provides a practical overview of Environmental Benefit Lots, focused on what is typically involved and how environmental delivery fits into the wider process.

District plan rules vary between councils, and this guide does not replace planning or legal advice, but the fundamentals of EBL pathways — and what is required on the ground — are consistent enough to be understood at a high level.





Terminology across different districts

While “Environmental Benefit Lot” is a commonly used term, different councils may use different names for the same underlying mechanism within their district plan rules.

While the terminology may vary between districts, but the underlying principle is consistent:

A subdivision entitlement granted in exchange for a secured, long-term environmental benefit.

Why landowners explore EBLs

In practice, EBLs are usually considered as part of a broader land-use or planning discussion.

Common drivers include:

- unlocking an additional subdivision entitlement
- creating a lifestyle or residential lot where rules allow
- supporting succession planning or long-term land strategy
- extracting value from land that is steep, wet, marginal, or inefficient to farm

While environmental stewardship is often part of the conversation, many landowners begin exploring EBLs from a practical standpoint:

- What options exist for this land, and what pathways are realistically available?
- EBLs provide a structured mechanism through which environmental enhancement can support those wider objectives.

What types of land do EBLs commonly relate to?

EBLs are typically associated with land that already contains, or has the potential to deliver, recognised environmental value.

This often includes:

- **existing native vegetation**, such as gullies, sidelings, or bush remnants
- **wetlands or wet areas**, including natural wetlands
- **stream margins and waterways** where riparian protection and enhancement can be achieved
- **areas set aside for restoration**, often land that is steep, marginal, or less suitable for ongoing farming

The defining factor is not the label applied to the land, but whether the environmental values can be secured and enhanced in a way that delivers a durable outcome over time.

Where an EBL pathway is pursued, the environmental benefit is expected to be ongoing and actively supported — not simply identified and left unmanaged.



The environmental benefit and what councils are looking for

Environmental Benefit Lots are assessed on the quality and durability of the environmental benefit being provided to the district — not simply the presence of land that appears environmentally valuable.

In practice, councils are looking for outcomes that are intentional, measurable, and capable of being secured long-term.

Environmental benefit may be recognised where land is provided for outcomes such as:

- **the protection or creation** of biodiversity corridors
- **the restoration, fencing, and ongoing protection** of ecologically significant areas
- **the enhancement** of wetlands, waterways, or riparian margins
- **in specific circumstances, the provision of public access** where this aligns with district plan objectives

What councils typically require

Across most districts, councils require that environmental benefits are:

- **legally secured on the land title** (for example via a covenant, consent notice, or QEII National Trust covenant)
- **protected in perpetuity**, regardless of future ownership changes
- **supported by an Ecological Management Plan (EMP)**

The EMP sets out how the area will be established, protected, and managed over time, ensuring the intended outcome is not just proposed — but delivered and sustained.

The defining test is not the category of land, but whether the proposed outcome delivers genuine ecological improvement and can be maintained over time.

The EBL application pathway

While requirements vary between councils, EBL pathways generally follow a structured, multi-disciplinary process

1. Feasibility and early planning input

A planner or surveyor confirms whether an EBL pathway is available under the relevant district plan and whether the site may qualify in principle. This stage tests feasibility before significant investment is made.

2. Ecological assessment

An ecologist assesses the site's ecological values and defines the protection and enhancement required to support an EBL. This assessment, typically supported by a draft Ecological Management Plan (EMP), forms the technical foundation of the application.

3. Council review and entitlement framework

Council reviews the proposal, confirms alignment with district plan objectives, and determines the EBL entitlement framework, subject to conditions being met.

At this stage, landowners typically decide whether any approved EBLs will be used on-site, or transferred as a Transferable Development Right (TDR) — depending on district plan rules and wider land strategy.

4. Environmental delivery and legal protection

Required environmental works are completed and legally secured, typically in accordance with an EMP. This step underpins the entitlement itself and is a core part of the approval pathway, not a post-approval formality.

5. EBL entitlements issued

Once council is satisfied the environmental outcomes have been delivered and protected in line with consent conditions, EBL entitlements are formally issued.



Roles and responsibilities in an EBL project

Environmental Benefit Lot projects are inherently multi-disciplinary. Each party plays a distinct role in achieving a successful outcome.

Planners and surveyors

Interpret district plan rules and manage the consent and subdivision process.

Ecologists

Assess ecological values, define protection and enhancement requirements, and prepare ecological reports and management plans.

Council

Reviews proposals and supporting information, confirms entitlement numbers, and sets legal and compliance conditions.

Environmental delivery partners

Deliver the on-the-ground work required to establish and maintain the environmental outcome, ensuring planting, protection, and ongoing care align with consent conditions and ecological requirements.

Successful EBL projects depend on these roles being well aligned — particularly where environmental delivery underpins subdivision outcomes.

Why environmental delivery matters

Before EBLs are issued, the required environmental outcomes must typically be delivered and legally secured.

This commonly includes:

- fencing and stock exclusion where required
- restoration planting and ecological enhancement
- weed and pest control to support establishment
- implementation of an Ecological Management Plan (EMP)
- legal protection mechanisms recorded on title

Environmental delivery is not a post-approval afterthought — it is a core part of the pathway that underpins the EBL entitlement itself.





Why work with Restore Native

At Restore Native, we specialise in delivering the environmental work that sits behind Environmental Benefit Lot outcomes — and making sure it stands up over time.

EBL projects rely on environmental delivery being practical, well-planned, and executed properly on working land. That's where our experience matters.

Restore Native brings this perspective not just as a delivery partner, but from firsthand experience establishing and managing environmental enhancement on our own working farm.

We work closely alongside planners, ecologists, surveyors and councils to deliver the on-the-ground outcomes that underpin EBL approvals — translating environmental intent into durable, real-world results.

What sets us apart

Full-service, end-to-end restoration delivery.

We manage the full scope of environmental delivery, including:

- Practical site planning and layout input
- Locally sourced native plant supply from our Waikato nursery
- Restoration planting using experienced in-house crews
- Weed and animal pest control
- Establishment and ongoing maintenance

This provides clarity, consistency, and accountability from planning through to long-term outcomes.



.....
FULL-SERVICE
FULL-ACCOUNTABILITY
.....

Scale, reliability & delivery

Restore Native is the largest full-service native planting provider in the Waikato, with the capacity to deliver complex projects at scale.

- Over 1 million native plants grown annually
- 400,000+ trees planted by our team each year
- Proven systems, experienced crews, and local knowledge

EBL outcomes depend on more than initial planting. They rely on establishment success, ongoing management, and environmental areas that continue to improve year after year.

Our focus is on delivery that protects both the ecological outcome and the long-term integrity of the protected land.



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Restore Native

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Let's talk about your land

If you're exploring an Environmental Benefit Lot as part of a wider land or subdivision strategy, a practical conversation can be a useful place to start.

If you'd like to talk through the environmental delivery side of an EBL project, Adam is always happy to share practical insight based on real-world experience.



Adam is a passionate conservationist, farmer and founder of Restore Native.

Through Restore Native, Adam has worked alongside planners, ecologists, councils, and landowners to deliver large-scale environmental projects across working farms and rural land. His approach is practical and grounded — focused on outcomes that work in the real world and continue to deliver over time.

In 2023, Adam received national recognition at the Primary Industries New Zealand Awards, winning the Kaitiakitanga / Guardianship & Conservation Award. He also founded the Te Miro Kiwi Project, a community-driven effort to return kiwi to the local bush.

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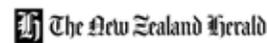
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