

## **ENVIRONMENT BANK ESTIMATES £2 BILLION SHORTFALL IN PREVENTING BIODIVERSITY LOSS**

**14 October 2010:** Every fortnight England loses a species of wildlife, according to a detailed study of extinction rates by Oxford University. Yet reports and recommendations ignore the one sector whose involvement could really make a difference – property developers.

While various green initiatives and the very recent DEFRA commissioned review 'Making Space for Nature' by Sir John Lawton highlight the importance of arresting biodiversity loss for future economic prosperity and quality of life, the real cost of stopping biodiversity loss could be vastly underestimated.

Professor David Hill of the Environment Bank has evaluated a number of studies and believes the forecast costs to fund, for example, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list are too low, especially as it has recently been expanded from 43 to 65 habitats and from about 350 to 1150 species. Scaling up the existing shortfall to cover this new list, together with a likely decline in public funds, suggests a funding gap of around £980 million per year.

The Lawton review also estimated a further £600 million - £ 1.1 billion would be needed to fund the recommended rebuilding of Britain's biodiversity heritage. This requires an annual capital maintenance charge to join up protected sites, enable species and habitats to be more resilient to climate change and redress the losses from the past 100 years, is closer to £2 billion.

David Hill said: "Just paying for biodiversity when the times are good is incredibly bad business management. We need investment in biodiversity for future generations if we are to avoid a catastrophic failure of our life support mechanisms and so we have set up a conservation credit scheme to provide a way."

The Environment Bank believes we need to be far more intelligent in the way land is used and valued as biodiversity is currently zero-costed, and because it has no price, it has no value. The Environment Bank's new conservation credits scheme,

currently under consideration, requires developers to purchase credits to offset impacts caused by land lost to development, in return for greater planning clarity, reduced programme timing costs and better net developable areas for developers.

The concept of offsets, mentioned in the Lawton review, is being tested by The Environment Bank and, NGO partners and landowners, in a 1000 square mile pilot scheme in the Thames Headwaters. It involves local authorities, three wildlife trusts and a national conservation NGO. The work of the Environment Bank has been met with huge interest and praise in the United States, where such a mechanism has been in operation for over 20 years, creating new wildlife habitat on a large scale and several sustainable jobs too.

Hill added: "In times of austerity and a shrinking contribution from the public sector, this private sector money would be used to fund biodiversity at a large scale and could be extended to pay for landscape conservation and other ecosystem services."

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For further information, photographs or an opportunity to talk to Professor Hill please contact Gaye Spencer on 01635 56992 or [gaye@gspr.co.uk](mailto:gaye@gspr.co.uk)

### **THE ENVIRONMENT BANK ([www.environmentbank.com](http://www.environmentbank.com))**

The Environment Bank aims to assist planning authorities in developing habitat banking policy; identify and assess potential landscape scale sites; assist land owners in putting their land forward for identification as conservation sites if suitable; implement environmental enhancement plans for chosen conservation sites.

In addition the Environment Bank intends to monitor credit spending and delivery through reporting practice tailored to assist with a local planning authorities ARM and take action where contractual management obligations are not being met by land owners.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and The Environment Bank Ltd have already worked together on a pilot mitigation scheme involving the translocation of reptiles from a brown field development

site in exchange for a calculated sum which was used to purchase land as part of a Living Landscape project within the Cotswold Water Park.

One specific area where biodiversity has no price is in relation to development. The compensation currently paid for impacts to the environment through development planning is hugely insufficient. In fact, development compensation fails to deliver anything of worth and is woefully inadequate to meet the costs of the conservation of natural resources that we need to deliver economic stability for future generations.