



## The Environment Bank Newsletter - Spring 2009

The concept of habitat banking is gathering pace very fast indeed! In September 2008 we were asked to advise on a DEFRA study on the use of biodiversity offsetting in the UK, and Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire look set to be the first counties to trial a habitat banking approach to green infrastructure planning. Nick Herbert, Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, is advocating the use of 'bio-banks', and it seems only a matter of time before a habitat banking policy is put into place.

Planning minister Margaret Beckett has recently called on all councils to be forward-thinking by including green infrastructure in local plans. Speaking at ParkCity, a conference organised by CABI and Natural England, she encouraged local authorities to invest section 106 funds in green spaces and announced a £1m fund to train green infrastructure staff through local authority apprenticeships.

According to the Environmental Law Institute, the mitigation banking industry in the US has rocketed and is now worth close to \$3 billion a year, with more than 400 active banks scattered across the country. In the EU habitat banking has been central to numerous recent conferences (e.g. European Biodiversity: the Private Solution, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008) and looks likely to be more widely adopted in the near future. An EU study entitled 'The use of market-based instruments for biodiversity protection - the case of habitat banking' is well underway.

Over the last few months The Environment Bank has met with a number of organisations including the Home Builders Federation, TCPA, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts, Huntingdon DC, RSPB, Beyond Carbon, WebbPaton, Brett Aggregates, Kilmartin Group, CLA, and Savills, all of whom have indicated

support for the concept of habitat banking and a willingness to become involved. We were also asked to explain the concept to staff of Kensington Palace.

We have had articles published in the Journal of Nature Conservation, The CLA newsletter, the IEEM In Practice magazine, Planning Practice and Research Journal, and the Town and Country Planning magazine. The response from landowners has been phenomenal - they can see the potential income that habitat banking could offer, and are keen to use their land in such schemes.

Our first project has involved securing significant funds for the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to purchase and manage an area of habitat for reptiles that are being translocated from a large port development site in Essex. The site connects with existing Wildlife Trust habitat and will also be used for a new education centre.

The conservation organisations continue to discuss the vital importance of 'ecosystem services', but do not as yet suggest any practical means for allowing them to be valued against development projects. Habitat banking offers a mechanism whereby the true cost of using land is accounted for, ensuring that impacts from development and losses to ecosystem services are replaced by a net gain in biodiversity and ecosystem function.

The Environment Bank wants to see developments make contributions to enhance the natural environment which would help to 'stitch back the fabric of the British countryside' The approach also ties in with targets for the health agenda, ecological networks, and climate change. These are exciting times and we hope to bring you further news as our work develops.

The Environment Bank is the first company of its kind in the UK, and provides the mechanism by which effective biodiversity and landscape conservation can be delivered by taking a strategic approach, enabling landscapes of substantial worth to be created, managed and maintained within a long-term framework. Visit [www.environmentbank.com](http://www.environmentbank.com) for more information. Contact Professor David Hill at [dhill@environmentbank.com](mailto:dhill@environmentbank.com) or Rob Gillespie at [rgillespie@environmentbank.com](mailto:rgillespie@environmentbank.com). **Get in touch for help with: Novel mitigation solutions; Purchasing credits; Being a contributing landowner; Discussing your own development project.**

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