

Projects

Assessing the success of habitat compensation/mitigation schemes



Housing estate encroaching on heathland

Image: Andy Hay

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Significant resources are applied to habitat creation/restoration schemes to offset the impacts of development. There has been a large increase in such schemes in the UK as a consequence of port expansion, renewable energy developments and improvements to transport infrastructure. Currently, there is only a legal requirement to compensate for damage to designated sites, but there has been increasing interest from planning authorities in the possibility of using biodiversity offsetting as a mechanism for compensating for habitat loss on unprotected sites too. Compensatory measures may take the form of habitat creation or restoration and enhancement of existing degraded habitat, but it is still unclear whether these practices can provide habitat that is ecologically equivalent to that which is lost to development, and if so, whether this is really achieved in practice.

Project objectives

- To collate data on habitat creation and compensation schemes in the UK, with a particular focus on intertidal habitats
- To compare created habitats of different ages with natural equivalents using a variety of biodiversity

measures

- To compare created compensation habitats with those lost to development
- To conduct a review of the DEFRA offsetting pilot, with a particular focus on whether it will deliver for biodiversity
- To conduct a broader literature review on metrics for biodiversity offsetting
- To build knowledge and understanding within the RSPB to underpin policy, advocacy, casework support and improve site and wildlife protection.

Work planned or underway

Work is underway to compile a database of compensation schemes (and other intertidal habitat creation projects) in the UK.

Contacts with developers, consultancies and other organisations responsible for surveying and monitoring development and compensation sites have been established.

Gallery



Kings North and Isle of Grain Power Station, Kent

Who to contact

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