

Why Bother with Biodiversity ?

All companies have an impact on biodiversity, or the wealth of wildlife, during the course of their business. Using natural resources such as paper, food products and clean water during their operations, producing or consuming products, owning and managing areas of land, or financing other activities which have biodiversity impacts. Businesses therefore have a duty to help protect and conserve their natural environment.

In the UK, the framework of national and international legislation places an obligation on business to manage the potential effects of their operations on wildlife and habitats. For example, under UK legislation, restrictions are imposed on planning and development of sites containing protected species and habitats.

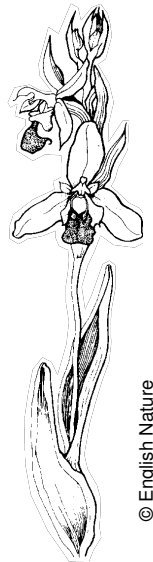
The cost or risks of failing to address these issues include:

- Prosecution and fines – e.g. Environmental Liability and ‘polluter pays’ principle.
- Restrictions on development – e.g. planning permission may be refused.
- Third party claims for damages – e.g. through air/water pollution etc.
- Bad PR or damage to reputation – e.g. bad for business, leading to loss of market share.
- Poor morale amongst staff – e.g. lower productivity and recruitment problems.

Biodiversity affects business success and efficiency because of its contribution to maintaining a healthy and stable environment needed for operations. Availability of these resources is maintained through the interactions between species and habitats.

Business activities that are detrimental to biodiversity include;

- using products from species which are over-harvested,
- planting or accidentally introducing non-native species on land-holdings,
- over-use of water, which deprives local ecosystems,
- building, development or sudden changes in land-use which could destroy biodiversity-rich habitats or reduce the variety of species.



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However, it is not just a case of having to keep within the law. It is now recognised that positive and visible engagement in biodiversity conservation can bring many benefits to businesses through:

- Proactively managing and minimising environmental risk.
- Good PR by enhancing a company’s reputation both locally and beyond.
- Attracting/retaining the best staff.
- Increasing consumer/shareholder satisfaction.
- Gaining & retaining investment.
- Building positive partnerships.
- Supporting development proposals.
- Minimising negative impacts of, or preventing any environmental accidents.
- Improving resource use, and thus saving money.



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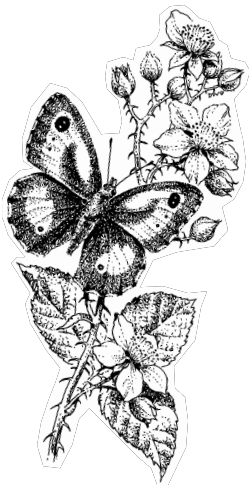
What can your company do?

Doing something for biodiversity will not necessarily require a great deal of resources, in fact you may already be engaging with biodiversity in many different ways!



Some ways in which your company can contribute to UK and local biodiversity targets:

- Use environmentally responsible suppliers, or encourage businesses in your supply chain to move towards more biodiversity-friendly operations.
- Incorporate biodiversity into Environmental Management Systems to ensure that negative impacts on biodiversity are minimised and positive ones maximised. Become accredited to the Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Benchmark or ISO14001.
- Implement energy efficiency measures, which not only saves your company money but also helps to minimise the environmental impacts associated with harmful emissions. Reduce, re-use and recycle.
- Encourage employees to volunteer with local conservation organisations; release employees to work on local conservation projects, or arrange organised days. This can bring benefits to employees, employer and conservation organisations.
- Provide funds or in-kind support to organisations for specific biodiversity activities/projects. Why not become a species or habitat champion or sponsor your local reserve?
- Join local biodiversity partnerships or become a Corporate Member of a conservation organisation.
- Hold 'Green Days', 'Green Weeks' or even 'Green Months' as a means to raise employee awareness. Encourage employee involvement by holding team-building days, implement biodiversity related projects, launch company or site BAPs etc.



How you look after your site can also have an impact on your local biodiversity

- Manage landholdings or grounds in a way which is sensitive to biodiversity. You could help to create or restore small areas of priority habitats.
- Plant native trees and wild flowers on any land that you own, fitting your land into the local habitat - even if this is only in hanging baskets.
- Undertake some practical habitat/species work on your grounds. Involve employees in making and installing bird and bat boxes, lacing and hedgehog hotels or even frog lodges!
- If landholdings are recognised as County Wildlife Sites, ensure that the management of the site maintains its wildlife value.
- Conduct some wildlife surveys on your land.



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