

Biodiversity offsetting at the coast

Presentation by
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Biodiversity offsetting background

- Development, including at the coast, continues to lead to a net loss of biodiversity
- 2011 Natural Environment White Paper acknowledges the need to balance jobs and services with a healthy environment
- Biodiversity offsetting is 'one option' to contribute to the overall objective of no net loss of biodiversity by 2020



Biodiversity offsetting introduction

- Biodiversity offsetting is a process for identifying conservation actions (such as habitat restoration, creation or enhancement) designed to deliver biodiversity benefits in compensation for losses in a measurable way
- Losses from impacts and gains elsewhere are measured in the same way even if the habitats involved are different
- A standard metric is used to determine the amount of compensation required based on an assessment of habitat distinctiveness, extent, condition, location, etc.



Biodiversity offsetting: key points

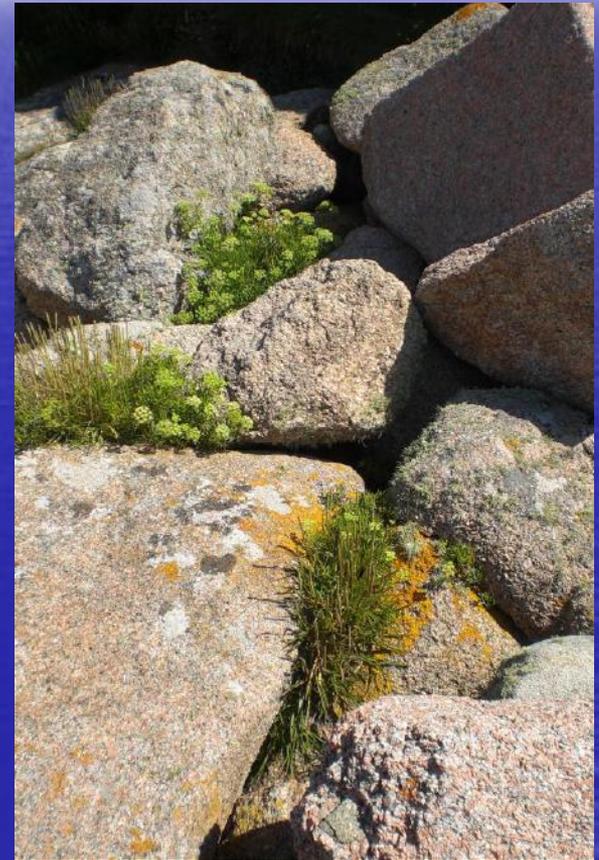
- Voluntary initiative with pilot studies under White Paper
 - Emphasis on terrestrial development
 - Recent consultation via Green Paper
 - Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into consultation: attention in national press
- Biodiversity offsetting not a 'licence to trash'
- Intended to sit within the mitigation hierarchy
- Not intended to compensate for losses of protected habitats and species (?)
- Not intended to protect the condition of what is already there: the objective is to prevent net loss
- A mechanism to support sustainable development

Background to ICE initiative

- Offsetting at the coast: many similarities to the terrestrial environment but additional issues and challenges
- ICE Working Group set up in response to biodiversity offsetting proposals in White Paper, specifically to explore coastal issues
- Also taking into account:
 - Concern about 'death by a thousand cuts'
 - Possible new EU instrument on No Net Loss under 2020 Biodiversity Strategy Target 2
 - Experience gained from Habitats Directive requirements
- ICE Discussion Paper (May 2013) and Position Paper (July 2013)

Potential challenges of offsetting at the coast: what is different? (1)

- Significant proportion already protected
- More complex regulatory regime
- Scale: fewer opportunities for large scale initiatives
- Distinctiveness of existing habitats typically high: like-for-like or like-for better
- Natural processes: erosion, salinity
- Landownership: 'in perpetuity'



Potential challenges of offsetting at the coast: what is different? (2)

- Role of sediment: sediment-dependent habitats, offset action miles from beneficiary site
- Supply of sediment a valid offset?
- Habitat evolution: should objective outside protected areas be 'saltmarsh for saltmarsh' or a 'dynamic, sediment-rich habitat for a dynamic, sediment-rich habitat'?
- Timescales: create habitat vs. create functioning habitat
- Opportunities for habitat banking



Likely demand for coastal offsets?

- Flood or coastal defence
- Port or navigation infrastructure
- Waterfront development or regeneration
- Renewables and energy infrastructure
- Marinas, moorings, jetties
- Intakes or outfalls, pipelines
- Offshore / marine developments?
- Terrestrial developments (if applying like-for-better)



Opportunities for offsetting at the coast

- Biodiversity offsetting within context of Shoreline Management Plans: demonstrate additionality
- Promote opportunities to coastal landowners: need clear, coast-specific guidance
- Exploit scope for appropriate enhancement within protected areas
- Investigate feasibility of sites specifically designed for offsetting multiple small losses of coastal biodiversity: role of habitat banks; maturity of habitat banks
- Clarify respective roles of terrestrial planning authorities and Marine Management Organisation

Summary of ICE position

- Biodiversity offsetting could make a significant contribution to delivering no net loss of coastal habitats, through win-win projects which also offer opportunities for coastal landowners
- The additional certainty provided by a consistent policy framework will be important in helping to secure the delivery of such benefits
- However, various physical/technical and administrative issues require early attention in order to ensure biodiversity offsetting at the coast is successful

Thanks for listening!



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