

Green Finance Workshop 12/01/2024

Presentation

Paul Leadbitter opened the workshop with a brief presentation on privatisation and nature restoration. Noted that the current drive to recruit more private finance into restoration has raised a number of ethical issues.

In PL's area of expertise, the North Pennines, the vast majority of the funding has come from biodiversity credits, however other factors are of course important, including:

- Carbon
- Water colour and quality
- Sediment loading
- Water supply
- Flooding
- Historical record
- Economy
- The next generation

Discussion

Greenwashing

Concerns were raised over greenwashing, which stimulated a productive conversation.

Josh argued that, when engaging with private capital, we will always be seen as greenwashing. Paul Leadbitter (PL) and Aldert argued that restoration organisations have the ability to choose where they draw the line, and some control over how joint public-private activities are publicised. Josh then argued that this would impact how attractive the UK is for public/ private nature conservation investment internationally. Alde, PL, and others in the room then argued that the UK was a particularly attractive place, because of comparatively high trust, as well as because much of the investment is coming from the UK itself, and there's a strong desire to invest in reasonably local programs. Mike Longden (ML) of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust pointed out that local construction companies in particular want local links.

Offsets

Renée Kerkvliet-Hermans (RK) of the peatland code then argued that there have been 3 independent studies analysing companies that use offsets, and their emissions reduction trajectories. Companies that buy CCs as offsets are way further along with emissions reductions than the companies that are not involved in these markets at all. PL then added that most of the companies he works with just want to do the right thing. It's not that different from a farmer who wants to make money and still gets money from the government. However, cracks do start to form when private money starts coming in. For Mike Longden (ML), it was interesting seeing the kind of discussions that happen when private companies are brought to the table.

Taking Corporate Money

PL pointed out that, while we often think about whether or not we want to take corporate money, corporations often have very specific portfolios, and there may be aspects of conservation work which they don't want to be associated with. For instance, some corporations won't work with

grouse moors, as it's a blood sport. PL also noted that the burning of heather moorland does not look wonderful. Josh then pointed out that if we are able to ignore all of the corporate actions which are destroying the planet, then they could ignore some moor burning. Significant complexities then arose regarding donations (as against finance), and how certain donations go towards specific practices.

Miscellaneous

Several points of discussion then came in quick succession, RK pointed out that the Peatland Code often receive calls from people hoping to invest in carbon or BNG credit programs, however there was no structured way of distributing those calls. The room was unanimous in agreement that a structured way of approaching this would benefit everyone.

Another key point was about the impact of restoration, and carbon credit programs, on land values. RK pointed out that the central question was whether or not the credits had already been sold as PIUs, as if credits haven't been sold yet, then they are potentially quite a lucrative long term investment.