

# Brownfield's hidden treasures under threat

Press release - Tuesday 2nd May 2006



Some of the most important wildlife in London and the Thames Gateway is small and lives in unusual places. Research by Buglife and other wildlife conservationists is showing that critically endangered bees, beetles, moths, dragonflies, flies and bugs are hanging on in brownfield sites, the very sites where current Government policies are encouraging vigorous redevelopment. About 40% of these brownfield sites appear to be important for wildlife. Today conservationists met Greg Barker, Shadow Environment Minister and visited a number of sites that show the potential scale of the environmental calamity and also investigated some potential solutions.

“When we hear about the global extinction crisis it sounds like something distant that might happen one day in the South American rainforests, but in fact extinctions are happening right here and right now, in and around London” said Matt Shardlow, Buglife Conservation Director.

Until recently little priority was given to conserving populations of insects and other invertebrates; however the 1992 ‘Rio’ Biodiversity Convention has led governments to try to halt the disappearance of all types of wildlife. In addition, recent research has shown that we are more dependent than we thought on invertebrates – two out of every three mouthfuls of our food is the result of insect pollination.

In some areas quarries, railway cuttings and sidings, old wharves, fly-ash and dredgings, military sites and ex-built sites are the last wild habitats pinned in between buildings, minutely manicured parks and intensively farmed greenfield. As well as being Londoner’s unofficial countryside, these sites are now the last refuge of about 40 species and home to endangered insects such as the Shrilla carder bee, 5-banded weevil wasp and the Phoenix fly.

**Buglife-The Invertebrate Conservation Trust** is the first organisation in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates, and is actively engaged in saving Britain’s rarest bugs, slugs, snails, bees, wasps, ants, spiders, beetles and many more fascinating invertebrates.