

Nature in Green Belts

Birkbeck Free Lecture Series, Spring 2019, Birkbeck, University of London
Six Friday evenings, beginning 8th February. The first three lectures will be in lecture theatre B36, downstairs in the Birkbeck main building. The other three will be allocated soon.

Green Belts occupy around 13% of the land area of England. They are meant to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. This is to prevent encroachment on the countryside, prevent neighbouring towns merging, preserve the setting of historic towns and encourage the recycling of urban land. The secondary objectives come into play only when land has been designated Green Belt: farming, forestry, land improvement, access, outdoor sport, recreation, landscape enhancement, visual amenity and biodiversity. However, mineral extraction is allowed in Green Belts. Although not a consideration in their designation, Green Belts include much wildlife habitat and can provide access to nature near where people live. Green Belt policies help prevent much harm from development, but more explicit designations are needed to conserve nature fully. Not all Green Belt is high quality landscape, indeed, a fifth of it is regarded as “neglected”, but Green Belt land is at least as good for nature and access to nature as is the rest of the countryside. There are many projects promoting nature in Green Belts. Green Belt policies restrict the scope for new towns providing affordable housing in places where people wish to live, so increasing commuter journeys. Also, the encouraging of the recycling of urban land can lead to “town cramming” and pressure on nature in places that are even closer to where many people live. Town cramming may increase land values, thus making housing targets difficult to achieve. In this context, this series examines some of the excellent initiatives for nature in the Green Belt.

Thanks to Mathew Frith of London Wildlife Trust for putting this programme together.

8th February: **From grey to green to grey. Will a tightly protected Belt squeeze out city wildlife?** Mathew Frith, Director of Conservation, London Wildlife Trust.

15th February **A Greener future for the Belt?** Paul Miner, Head of Strategic Plans & Devolution, Campaign for Protection of Rural England (CPRE).

22nd February **Conservation grazing in the Green Belt.** Katy Fielding, Surrey Wildlife Trust.

1st March. **The contribution of the Green Belt to landscape scale conservation.** Nicki Brunt, Living Landscapes and Seas Manager – East, Dorset Wildlife Trust

8th March. **London’s Biodiversity Booster Belt.** Dr Doug McNab,

15th March. **Nature in London’s Green Belt and MOL; the contribution of protected land?** Neil Sinden, CPRE London, and Emma Knowles, Greenspace information for Greater London.

Further details, and venues, will be posted at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geography/our-research/ecss/free-public-lectures> or email: ecssoc@gmail.com.

