

## Prioritising ecological infrastructure



Your summer issue has a number of articles highlighting the importance of recognising, protecting, and where possible, enhancing, our ecosystems' fundamental connectivity – their infrastructure.

It's this largely unseen framework that provides us with trillions of dollars worth of critical environmental services each year, yet it is being increasingly disrupted by many of our age old, localised habits of over utilising Earth's provisions. Could new adaptive approaches allow us to better protect these vital and largely unseen connections?

On page 22, Jacqui McArthur reviews the early work of Keith Bristow and Steve Marchant, which is highlighting

the arguably urgent need for 'bail-out' investment in ecological infrastructure to the same degree that the recent financial crisis attracted.

It is a well-functioning ecosystem that will ultimately support a rapidly growing population through climate change and other environmental impacts ahead, so it would certainly pay back to invest in rehabilitating these foundations. But how much interest is there?

Our Urban Food Focus on pages 18-22 looks at how our cities and towns are being reconsidered for food producing capacity – a point becoming both more popular and important as people try to mitigate environmental impacts and develop more sustainable communities. Page 12 reviews how desert knowledge can be part of that too.

We also look at the important social, economic and environmental functions that rivers quietly perform for our cities

(pages 14-15). The recent drought has renewed assessments of what they're actually worth to us.

Finally, we also review the revolutionary REDD scheme (Focus, pages 24-27), essentially a mechanism designed to make it more profitable to preserve original forest than cut it down. If REDD is endorsed at Copenhagen in December, with its various perverse incentives ironed out, it will represent the first ever global, working deforestation framework, allowing the multiple benefits of preserving the Earth's forest ecosystems to speak for themselves.

Enjoy your reading.

**James Porteous**  
Managing Editor



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