

Restoring for the future...

HeidelbergCement AG and BirdLife International have been working in partnership since 2011 to achieve better protection of biodiversity at extraction sites. Both organisations have identified the importance of collaborating across sectors if we are to halt biodiversity loss, and ensure the topic is embedded in decision making at all levels of society. The science has proven that we cannot just reduce our impacts, but we need to reverse things completely and start putting back – restore nature.

General Principles

The two organisations agree that the biodiversity crisis is a global priority alongside the climate emergency and understanding. As these two agendas are profoundly connected they must be addressed together.

We recognise maintaining the integrity of existing biodiversity is a priority and therefore support the global 30x30 target, which means that for business planning, the mitigation hierarchy is paramount: first avoid harm, then minimise, rectify, reduce, or offset.

It is clear from the ecological restoration experience gained over past decades, that nature can and does recover if given the chance, often even quicker than realised. There is a push to speed up recovery, but facilitating natural regeneration is often more effective than prescriptive planting, which is evident through the sensitive restoration of extraction sites.

While restoration through working with nature and reactivating natural processes is preferred, it is recognised that human intervention may be required and that geomorphological reprofiling through the extraction of inert materials such as soil, gravel, and other aggregates can be part of the solution.

The wealth of co-benefits of restoration must also be widely recognised by decision makers and society, with restored habitats acting as carbon sinks, while providing flood and drought mitigation, health, well-being and jobs.

Policy asks

HeidelbergCement and BirdLife want to make it evident that they both individually and as a united voice, strongly support the EU Biodiversity Strategy commitment to establish legally binding restoration targets. Restoration must be a priority and the concept of restoring 15% of nature should be considered as a target. We challenge the European Commission to be bold and progressive in developing targets that:

- 1 Are binding and enforceable
- 2 Have strong governance
- 3 Are underpinned by science-based plans taking into consideration good involvement of stakeholders.

In addition, we need EU policy to be more enabling, and:

- 1 Support the notion to include biodiversity into all post-extraction schemes
- 2 Prohibit the plantation of invasive alien species
- 3 Facilitate and remunerate the return of quarries to priority habitats which could support the restoration agenda
- 4 Prioritise non-recyclable inert material (for example subsoils from construction projects) to be directed towards quarry reclamation for optimal land forming
- 5 Incentivise organisations for their active management of land for nature conservation and quarry restoration through the sustainable finance framework
- 6 Implement a harmonized concept of temporary habitats in all EU Member States

Businesses must understand that conservation should not be seen as a cost. Urgent action for nature and climate simply must happen for businesses to survive. The benefits go beyond species protection, as restoration has the potential to contribute to humanity's health and wellbeing. Therefore, we need to move from a linear, extractive, and wasteful economic model to a circular, efficient, and regenerative one.

Photo: Blue-tailed Damselfly © Lars Soerink

