

# The nature of development ? by Andre Farrar (RSPB ? BirdLife in the UK)

Title Yesterday I was involved in discussions about two cases we have been following in these posts ? the Humber Estuary on England?s east coast and the Kenya?s Dakatcha Woodlands. In talking about them on the same day, it dawned on me that there were some striking similarities despite their obvious difference. They are both examples of intense development pressure posing a real risk to the natural environment ? that doesn?t single them out at all - that?s a familiar pattern across so many of the stories we follow. But both Dakatacha and the Humber?s South Banks involve land that is not fully formally designated (a real lesson that failure to designate sets up conflict ? if the best sites are properly identified its fate is more likely to be taken into account). There is no doubt that in both cases there is a real and compelling case for economic development ? yet progress to find a way forward is frustrated by claims that the natural environment is put ahead of the future of local communities - birds being put before jobs in tabloid terms. Communities in Kenya see proposals for developing the Dakatcha woodlands for pig farming and pineapple growing come and go trailing promises of community benefits. The latest scheme involves growing fuel-oil rich jatropha bringing jobs and benefits but sacrificing an important part of Kenya?s natural heritage. So the latest [news](#) from the area is very encouraging ? the veteran Kenyan politician and Environment Minister, the Honourable John Michuki attended a meeting to explore the issues around the controversial plans to develop the area for jatropha growing. (Here, addressing the meeting):



At the meeting

he ordered work to identify zoning that will deliver development and provide the means (if it is done well ? big if) to protect the importance of the woodlands. The minister congratulated the communities for having safeguarded their woodland cover so far ? and called for the use of science to determine environmental decisions. A welcome and significant intervention. Nature Kenya?s campaign has been highly influential in getting the future of Dakatcha the attention it deserves ? the minister?s significant visit is testament to that. But passions are running high and the meeting gave Serah Munguti, Nature Kenya?s Communications and Advocacy manager the chance to make clear her organisation?s position. ?There is now hope that the minister?s words will lead to real progress, Nature Kenya has always recognised the need for investment in the area but it needs to be planned to conform to conservation principles and that local people themselves should be at the heart of that planning?. And Serah?s words could equally apply to the Humber ? it?s a message my colleagues working to secure a positive future for the natural environment alongside well planned investment are regularly giving ? yet progress is often slow and blighted by perceptions that it?s easier to justify avoidable damage rather than get the plans right. Jobs **and** birds please. By Andre Farrar (RSPB ? BirdLife in the UK). To read more blogs by Andre, please [click here](#).