

# Points of view

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*Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'*

## 5. Let's avoid euphemisms

I can just about stomach 'land improvement' as a term to describe drainage of waterlogged areas, since, from the farmers' point of view, the land is better for growing crops, which is the purpose of agricultural areas.

The euphemistic term 'river improvement', however, describing the often irreparable destruction of a scenically beautiful and wildlife-rich river and its conversion into a 'flowing canal', invariably makes my blood boil. What is so terrifying is that the men carrying out the work with dredgers and earthmovers are often just as upset at what they have to do as I am at seeing them do it. It is some faceless man sitting miles away in some office block who has decreed that 'river improvement' must be carried out. Presumably, such a man coined the phrase, which, personally, I equate with the Nazi's 'Final Solution' of the Jews, the pet-owner's 'putting to sleep' of an unloved animal, or the assassin's 'wasting' of some hapless fellow human being.

Sometimes, I have even noted conservationists using the phrase, writing or saying that 'River improvement has spoiled the area'. Please let's not encourage the uncommitted to think that we are unbalanced. 'River improvement' should be reserved for the restoration of a formerly polluted or ruined area, or the addition of an attractive or useful feature.

And while I'm about it, let's not talk of 'waste ground' when we mean valuable wilderness area. If *we* call it 'waste', we can hardly complain when someone brings in a bulldozer and turns it into a carpark.

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