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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHY GREEN TOURISM CAN SAVE
KENYA'S MAGNIFICENT
ELEPHANTS...AND GIVE A PAY
BOOST TO THE COUNTRY'S MASSAI
WARRIORS

University lecturer hopes for harmony between wildlife and Man in
Africa

KENYA'S population of wild elephants - and the Massai people who used to live in harmony alongside them - face a much brighter future if they choose ecotourism over cultivation.

That's the message Dr Chris Southgate, a senior lecturer in environmental management at the University of Central Lancashire, is taking to Massailand where he is building a new field centre for research into ecotourism.

Dr Southgate fears that the traditional Massai way of life - tending cattle in the semi-arid lands overshadowed by Mount Kilimanjaro - could vanish within a generation, along with much of the wildlife that lives there.

Increasingly, Massai warriors are forsaking their time-honoured way of life to grow relatively lucrative food crops like onions and tomatoes to sell in the country's large markets.

Unfortunately, 70 per cent of Africa's distinctive wildlife shares the same land - outside the national parks where they are protected - and elephants, giraffes and zebras are losing out in the inevitable clashes with Man.

Dr Southgate said: "In the past the Massai lived in harmony with the wildlife. They tended

herds of cattle and during the day took them to the traditional watering holes and springs.

“These were used by the wildlife at night and there was no conflict of interest.”

However, the situation is now changing rapidly, said Dr Southgate, who has been assessing the threats posed by environmental developments in Massailand for the last eight years.

“More and more of the Massai people are irrigating the land to grow lucrative cash crops and this is putting enormous pressure on the watering holes, many of which are drying up,” he said.

“Increasingly, wild animals that have relied on them are wandering into agriculture areas to search for water. In the resulting conflict they are losing out and being killed. This never happened before.”

Dr Southgate, who has just launched a new degree in ecotourism at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston, warned that killing elephants was bad economics.

“The Massai people could actually earn five times as much (per acre) from sustainable ecotourism than from growing cash crops,” he said.

“As the human population increases there needs to be much more strategic awareness of the balance needed between agriculture, tourism and the traditional way of life in Massailand.

“In the past tourism has been viewed - often quite rightly - as environmentally destructive. But if the right structures can be put in place the Massai people can benefit directly from Western ecotourism - but only if the wildlife that people want to see is still there.”

Dr Southgate is currently trying to raise £25,000 to build a new research centre in Massailand.

It will be used to provide educational training for local Massai as well as students from the University of Central Lancashire and schools throughout Britain on educational field trips.

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Notes to editors:

- Dr Southgate is available for interview and/or photograph. He can be contacted at the University of Central Lancashire on Tel: 01772 201201.
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