



LECKHAMPTON GREEN LAND ACTION GROUP

NEWSLETTER 32

FEBRUARY 2009

XXX-- N.B. Annual General Meeting – 18 March at 7:45pm --XXX

Planning Report

As I write we are waiting for two important decisions by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and also for decisions on planning applications by Tewkesbury Borough Council. Thanks to a tremendous response by our members (and some others) to our calls to them to write and express their views, these decisions will be taken in full knowledge of their local importance, and we hope the decisions will be made wisely – but the waiting is frustrating!

We expect to hear the decision on the appeal by David Wilson Homes concerning their application to build 360 houses at Farm Lane early in March. As you will recall, the Appeal was heard at the end of October and the beginning of November. The developers argued that the revised draft Regional Space Strategy (RSS) had allocated 1300 houses to the South of Cheltenham and that, because Tewkesbury had not enough houses in the pipeline for the next five years there should be no further delay. Tewkesbury Borough Council and the County Council argued that the RSS also said that any development South of Cheltenham should be planned in a comprehensive manner, and this had not yet been done, so the application was premature. Leglag argued that the draft RSS needed considerable modification in view of the numerous objections to it and the drastic change in economic outlook that had occurred in the last few months, and the housing requirement should therefore be reduced, and valuable land such as that at Farm Lane should be saved because of its environmental value.

We are moderately confident that the decision on this Appeal will be against the developer. But in the longer run the really important decision will be whether or not the Government accepts any of the objections to the RSS (there were apparently over 35,000 objections!), and in particular whether they reduce the rate of house-building planned for the next five years. The decision is not now expected until the summer, so there are many frustrating months to wait.

Meanwhile two more developers have put in planning applications to build large developments in the area, at Brizen Farm and at Oaklands, near the Hatherley Way roundabout. Once again, lots of letters of objection have been written, but we understand that Tewkesbury have decided to make no decision until March when they hear the result of the Farm Lane Appeal. Presumably if that gets turned down Tewkesbury will turn down these applications too on the same grounds as before. There will be an opportunity to discuss the planning situation at our AGM on the 18th of March, and to consider our long term strategy. We look forward to hearing ideas from our members!

Kit Brauhnoltz

Mass Protest in London Against the Draft RSS

As you may have seen from the local press, county MPs and a bus-load of campaigners made their voices heard over the plan to build 56,000 houses in Gloucestershire. This protest was mainly arranged by Cheltenham MP Mr. Martin Horwood and Mrs. Helen Wells, chairman of Save the Countryside campaign. A number of Leglag members, both committee and ordinary, joined in the protest. We assembled in Committee Room 14 of the Houses of Parliament and representatives from each of the groups including your Leglag representative had the opportunity to express grave concern over the draft RSS. These views were passionately expressed by all those speaking.

Originally, the Minister Iain Wright had agreed to meet our delegations, but on the evening before the arranged meeting, he said he would only speak to the relevant MPs concerned without particular reference to any of the proposals in the RSS, as the time for objections had been passed. (This was despite the fact that a large part of the time for objection was during the parliamentary recess and practically no time was available to arrange such a visit).

After the MPs meeting with Mr. Wright, the four local MPs (Martin Horwood, Cheltenham; Laurence Robertson, Tewkesbury; David Drew, Stroud and Parmjit Dhanda, Gloucester) reported back to the meeting. Mr. Horwood said, "Officially, the minister made no response at all, but we got a sympathetic hearing." and "Most important was making clear the strength of people's feelings."

It was felt that the visit to Westminster was very worth while, as it would give the minister the opportunity to absorb the passion there is about the draft RSS across the region. We hope the Government will see sense.

After the meeting, protesters from Leglag and other local groups joined together for a brief banner protest on Westminster Bridge, where the usual photo calls were made.

The Leglag committee members present, Gerry Potter and Margaret White, felt much had been gained by the visit, as we could now see that there is so much anger at the present RSS proposals right across the S.W., from places such as Poole in Dorset, Taunton, Bath, Bristol and even Kent as well as our own neighbours in Bishops Cleeve, Shurdington, Gloucester and of course Cheltenham.

Decisions on local affairs must be returned to the jurisdiction of the local councils, not decided by non-elected people in faraway places working in *quango*'s. Developers must be stopped from "jumping the gun" and there must be a total review of the RSS housing numbers.

Of course much, much more was shared among the protesters, but I trust these few lines will show you the enthusiasm of your LEGLAG team and the other groups working to save our countryside,

As stated elsewhere LEGLAG NEEDS YOU to keep our action moving forward. Please take note of the areas where we need help with our tasks.

Gerry Potter

Wildlife Sightings in the Leglag Area

The bird population in the LEGLAG area continues to be varied but there is also a rich peripheral one as proved by several reports I've received recently. This is extremely important as birds have disappeared from gardens across the country.

The highlights of the last 6 months are as follows :

AUGUST, 2008

A **Treecreeper** was seen scaling a tree next to Moat Cottage and a family of **Long-Tailed Tits** and a **Bullfinch** in the same vicinity. Near Leckhampton Farm a **Chiff-Chaff** was heard and a **Whitethroat** spotted. A **Greater-Spotted Woodpecker** appeared over Lotts Meadow and a **Kestrel** was seen flying near Cherringtons.

SEPTEMBER

In a garden near the church a **Greenfinch** and a **Coal Tit** were seen and a **Tawny Owl** heard. A migrant **Whinchat** was seen near Leckhampton Farm. A **Skylark** appeared overhead flying towards Leckhampton Hill. A **Little Owl** and several **Swallows** were seen in Lotts Meadow. A small flock of **Starlings** appeared over Little Vatch. A **Goldcrest** was spotted near Cherringtons and a **Mistle Thrush** in Burrows Field.

OCTOBER

Pheasants were seen at Robinswood and a **Pied Wagtail** near the piggery pens . A **Wren**, **Dunnock**, plus **Blue Tits** and **Great Tits** were spotted in trees along Hatherley Brook. A **Grey Heron** made a dramatic appearance flying over Cherringtons and a **Song Thrush** was spotted at the smallholdings.

NOVEMBER

2 **Jays** visited a garden in Arden Road. **Ravens** were seen and heard on Leckhampton Hill. Male and female **Blackcaps** were spotted scattered around hedgerows in the LEGLAG area.

DECEMBER

A **Buzzard** was seen feeding on the ground in the smallholdings. There were 3 separate sightings of **Green Woodpeckers** and a **Grey Wagtail** was seen near Hatherley Brook. **Jackdaws** were spotted in trees in Kidnappers Lane and several flocks of **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** in various locations.

JANUARY, 2009

The flocks of Redwings were still in evidence and a **Nuthatch** was seen flying near Leckhampton Farm, There were 3 separate sightings of **Herring Gulls**, possibly blown off course as unusual for LEGLAG land. A **Sparrowhawk** was seen at the smallholdings as well as a good number of **Goldfinches**, (The smallholdings provide vital food and cover for birds).

My thanks to those people who have contributed over this period, especially Tony and Frances Meredith. If anyone has any information on wildlife seen in the LEGLAG and surrounding area, could they please contact me.

If more specific information is required on the wildlife scene, please contact me.

Steve Gladstone

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