

Yare Valley Society Newsletter



The objects of the society are to protect the natural landscape and wildlife habitats of the Yare Valley south and west of Norwich, principally between Harford and Bowthorpe. We oppose any development that would detract from its natural qualities and support projects which would preserve the valley for the benefit of all.

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See important item about AGM and election of committee, page 4

We need new committee members – can you help?

The Joy of Green Space

Never before have our green spaces been appreciated and used so much as in this time of Covid19. Many have discovered for the first time the benefits of the Yare Valley on their doorstep. A recent letter in the EDP describes what many of us have experienced “When out walking I met many people who had been unaware of this marvellous natural landscape so close to the city. Some were even completing all the local walks in a publication by the Yare Valley Society ...” (We have made “The Yare Valley Walk” guide freely available on line during the pandemic.)



Social distancing on Marston Marsh

The Threat to Green Space – Overuse and Build Build Build

The increase in use of green space can be expected to continue into the future, supplemented by new residents from current house building. Many of the paths in the Valley have become very worn, and it is uncertain what impact the extra traffic is having on the wildlife of the Valley. Is our green space becoming degraded by overuse?

At a time when the need to safeguard and extend local green space for wildlife and community well-being has never been more apparent, environmental bodies are raising concerns over government plans to sweep away many of our present planning controls as part of the government's "Build Build Build" strategy.

Nikki Williams, Director of Campaigning and Policy at The Wildlife Trusts writes: "We live in one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. The White Paper proposes a planning system with three categories of land – earmarked for growth, renewal and protection – but this simplification brings the risk of creating a disconnected landscape, one in which wildlife continues to decline because nature doesn't slot into neat little boxes."

Tom Fyans, CPRE deputy chief executive writes: "The key acid test for the planning reforms is community involvement and on first reading, it's still not clear how this will work under a zoning system. ...[We] ... need robust legal guarantees that the public are consulted regarding new development. Red lines on a map are not going to build trust in the planning system."

The Government is consulting on its "Planning for the Future" reforms, and the closing date is 29 October. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future> .

How do we handle this one -the big one!?

Are we prepared to lose our previous rights to respond to individual planning applications? Are we happy about the reduction in local government influence? Will the zoning proposed destroy rather than promote interconnected green space for wildlife and leisure?

The Yare Valley Society committee will be studying the documentation and formulating its response: but do not leave it to the Society alone. We all, as individuals, must respond to the consultation. We must demand the right to be properly consulted on local developments. We must highlight the importance of expanding and enhancing interconnected green space; and emphasize its role in countering climate change, promoting biodiversity, and contributing to the well-being of our communities.

Make your views known to the government **and to your MP**

Find out more

More details of the new government planning proposals and also on some of the other items in this Newsletter are available on our website www.yarevalleysociety.org.uk.

While government plans seem to threaten to compartmentalise our green space other initiatives are being launched to link it together. One of these is the creation of B-lines:

Whitlingham Broad, Marston Marsh and Eaton Common on B-line.

Agriculture and urban expansion have put pressure on some of the most valuable habitats for pollinators in our region. Many of the remaining wildflower-rich habitats are small and increasingly isolated within the landscape. A new B-Lines project by the Invertebrate Conservation Trust, [Buglife](#), and funded by Defra, aims “to create an interconnected web of potential and existing wildflower habitats across the UK, aiming to help restore populations of insects”.



Purple Orchid and Yellow Rattle await a visit on Marston Marsh

Photo: June Gentle

Norwich is at a B-lines crossroads. One of the B-lines follows the Yare Valley from Whitlingham Broad through Lakenham wetlands, Marston Marsh and Eaton Common, before turning south towards Diss. The B-lines will help link the saltmarsh and coastal habitats to the region’s inland wetlands, heathlands, flower-rich grasslands and brownfield sites. The B-lines will benefit a whole host of species, including important pollinators.

If you live, work, own land or go to school on a B-Line, Buglife gives guidance on how you can help with the project.

AGM and Election of Committee

The lockdown has meant that we have not been able to hold our AGM at the normal time. It is now evident that an in-person meeting of our members cannot be arranged safely for this year. The committee have looked at some options, including the logistics of an on-line election of the committee and officers, together with arrangements for off-line members, but numerous difficulties have emerged.

In these difficult times, the simplest and most straightforward way forward is that we do not have elections this year, and that the present committee and officers remain in place through to next year, when an AGM may be feasible. If this proposal is acceptable to members, the next Newsletter would contain the Chair's and Treasurer's Reports for this year as would normally appear at the AGM. There will be an opportunity to comment or ask questions via email. A review of the comments, questions, and answers would then be an item for a subsequent Newsletter.

If you unhappy about us proceeding in this way, please email us at yarevalleysociety@gmail.com, with a viable alternative suggestion.

Vice Chair John Ayton steps down from the Committee

The Chair writes:

“On retiring from the Norfolk County Council Planning Authority (as it then was) John joined the Society. For 30 years he has served on the committee. He has chaired a number of meetings and most recently held the post of Vice Chair. His experience in planning matters has been invaluable over the years in helping to formulate the Society's response to numerous planning applications, and in preparing for Planning Inspectorate Public Enquiries. His thoughtful perceptive approach to planning and other matters will be sorely missed. Even more, the committee will miss his calm and friendly presence at meetings. I, as Chair, will miss his unstinting support. We all wish him well on his latest retirement.”

We need new committee members – can you help?

The committee has the power to co-opt members. Many of our committee members have given valuable service on the committee for many years, and it should come as no surprise that some may wish to stand down. Please give careful thought to whether you can play your part in protecting and enhancing the Yare Valley Green Space by serving on the committee. It is not an arduous task and you give as much as you feel able. As a first step please email yarevalleysociety@gmail.com with your name and telephone number. We will then get in touch by telephone to explain what is involved and answer any questions.

A key role of the committee is to review and comment on planning applications that could impact on the green space of the Valley. Where a serious impact is expected (consultations on Local Plans, the UEA/Rugby Club application, etc) the committee launches a campaign to enlist the support of members and the general public. Here is some recent planning news:

Revised Plans for Bartram Mowers site on Bluebell Road

McCarthy and Stone have put forward revised plans. They include 32 bungalows, 18 apartments, a resident's pavilion, and an area of Public Open Space, along with new pedestrian links from Bluebell Road to the Yare Valley Walk. The height of one of the buildings has been reduced, but otherwise the proposals are little changed from the previous application. The Society has submitted similar objections, asking for the density to be reduced to accord with the Local Plans, for improved connectivity of footpaths, and for landscape planting. A copy of our response is on the website.

The promised Public Open Space will be on the south west boundary of the site and will link with the Strawberry Field meadow.

Green space of UEA Playing Fields saved for the present

Norwich Rugby Club have made the decision not to re-locate to UEA Playing Fields after UEA expressed a wish to withdraw from the project. For many the building of a large new Club House with adjacent car parking in the centre of the playing fields was a serious intrusion into the Yare Valley Green Corridor, seemingly contradicting its protected status.

In anticipation of building the Club House, a car park on Colney Lane has already been extended, taking green space from the Valley. As the Yare Valley Society warned at the time of the planning application, the granting of planning permission could result in car parking being created for a non-existent facility. This would seem to have turned out to be the case.

Due to the circumstances of the approval given, the planning permission for a Club House, etc. remains in place. Keep alert!

Donkey Diversion

Taking a quick walk or run round the University Broad? It will take longer than you think. The section of boardwalk at the south east end of the Broad has been closed. A diversion has been signed which, from the University side of the Broad takes you along the lower edge of the donkey fields as far as the recently opened Strawberry Field Meadow. The return is along by the river.

To give you a better idea of the extra distance we have marked with a star the point at which you reach the Strawberry Field Meadow. Children will enjoy seeing the donkeys!

Finally, signposts and Goddesses:



Dragonflies point the way



More help to guide people along the main line of the Yare Valley Walk. Look out for the new signposts and way-marking posts that have appeared at key points. They carry the new symbol of a dragonfly to signify the walk.

Rabbit Goddess on Yare Valley Walk

Two new additions to the Sainsbury Sculpture Park are planned. One is a three-metre-high bronze cast sculpture of a Rabbit Goddess by LEIKO IKEMURA. The other is Sun's Roots II by PHILLIP KING, a sculpture comprised of brightly painted steel forms, standing 4 metres high, and reflecting on the relationship between the sun and the earth. The sculptures can be expected to add interest, fun and novelty to the Yare Valley Walk.

The Rabbit Goddess promises to prove a great favourite with young children. A picture, of the Rabbit Goddess, together with further details on both sculptures, can be reached via a link on the Society website. Sun's Roots II is more abstract. It is already on site at UEA, prior to being moved to its planned location. We finish with a preview picture of Sun's Roots II.

