



Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 56

July 2002

Annual General Meeting

Forty-seven members attended the AGM and enjoyed a fascinating talk by Steven Henson of the Anglian Otters and Rivers Project. As you will see below, the talk has inspired us to ask you for more sightings of water voles and otters.

The chairman's report summarised the many issues that had been dealt with during the year and emphasised, as usual, the great impact made on decision makers by individual letters about valley issues. The chairman thanked councillors on both sides of the valley who strongly uphold our aims and also, Matt Davies of the Norwich Fringe Project, for his continual efforts on our behalf. She also thanked the 'willing and dedicated committee' of the Society. Sadly, Graham Hussey and Ron Bocking were resigning 'to make way for new blood'. They were thanked for the very valuable contribution they had made over the years. Otherwise the committee remains as before, with the addition of Elizabeth Groves, a long-standing member of the Society who was welcomed as a new committee member. During the evening, our membership secretary announced that the 400th member had joined.

Throughout the year, the Society has also made practical efforts to share the delights of the Yare valley: with the continued sale of the Millennium guide; the publication in card form of some of the original drawings in the guide; the creation of a Natural History Group and the installation of two benches in the valley between Cringleford Bridge and UEA.

UEA Development

An application, falling within the campus, to erect a student residence comprising 401 study bedrooms behind The Prospect has been approved by the City Council. The Society objected to the scale of the development. However, an application asking for a new access for construction traffic from Bluebell Road was withdrawn by UEA after strong opposition to it became clear.

New threat to Valley

Currently UEA has put in an application to use the northern end of its farm site on Bluebell Road for **Biological Sciences and UEA grounds facilities**. This would involve the erection of four very large glasshouses (each 11x19x5.4 metres), a covered corridor linking them to the existing farm building, a large horticultural shed (9x18x6 metres), a further glasshouse, etc, all surrounded by a wide area of hard-standing. **This would be a very substantial complex of buildings, if approved.**

We have strongly objected to the proposal as a serious and unjustified intrusion into the protected river valley. It is contrary to statutory planning policy, on a prominent site, large in scale and a dangerous precedent for similar development elsewhere. It would also require a much upgraded track from the University across the footpath down from Bluebell Road. We have suggested alternative sites. You can see the proposal at City Hall or contact Elaine (458657).

If you wish to comment on it (and we of course urge you to do so) please write to **John Andrews, Principal Planner, Directorate of Spatial Planning, City Hall, Norwich NR2 1WP** as soon as possible, reference, **4/2002/0638/F**. The deadline for us was 8 July but there is always some leeway in receiving and taking into account further letters.

Sightings of otters and water voles

We also asked for these some time ago, with some success as far as otters were concerned. We might be more successful this time as otters are on the increase and one may see them on the valley sides as well as the river banks. Those of you who saw Steve Henson's slides may also recognise the signs of them and water voles being around, from the distinctive stools they leave. If you want to know more, we are sure that Steve would be willing to help. He can be contacted at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, telephone 625540.

Cards

Ian Levene, one of our members, produced some superb drawings for our Yare Valley Guide and four of these are now available in postcard form at 50p, available from John Thurman, telephone 455329.

Walks

A lovely summer afternoon produced only three members (apart from Glenn Collier, the leader) for the walk on Eaton Common, due to various genuine ailments on the part of the others who had been looking forward to the walk. However, those who went greatly appreciated Glenn's interest and expertise in pointing out many moths, butterflies and birds. We are grateful to Glenn and look forward to another walk with him some time soon.

Lakenham Way Ramble

Matt Davies has kindly agreed to lead a walk on **Sunday 22 September**. Meet at 2.30 pm at the entrance to Lakenham Way, adjacent to Sainsbury's, Brazengate, formerly an old railway line. The walk will go down to Coopers Wood returning along the River Yare to Trowse and back to Sainsbury's via Bracondale. Please wear suitable footwear and bring a drink and binoculars. More details from Matt Davies, Norwich Fringe Project Officer, 01603 423303.

New roads to the hospital and research park

County Council proposals are about to be published and will be open for choice and comment until 9 August 2002. Our main concern is that the undeveloped part of Colney Lane running alongside the valley remains unspoilt. We encourage you to comment to the County Council at County Hall on the proposals keeping this in mind. Public funding is probably paying for these roads.

Possible visit to John Innes Institute Archive

We are hoping that it may be possible for the archivist at John Innes to take a group of Yare Valley Society members around the archive at the John Innes Institute in Colney Lane, some time in the autumn. The archive contains a collection of valuable books and illustrations of plants and flowers.

Harford Park and Ride

The County Council has now submitted a planning application for a site off the southern bypass and Ipswich Road roundabout, with access from the roundabout and from a re-opened Short Lane to serve people from the Mulbarton Road.

This is an altogether better solution than the earlier site about which there was so much protest. We intend to support this proposal. If you wish to comment on it, please write as soon as possible, to **The Chief Planning Officer, South Norfolk District Council, Long Stratton, Norfolk, reference 007/02/10077F.**

Extracts from the Chairman's report at the AGM

'Here are some of the issues with which we have been dealing. Perhaps the most basic of all in the long term has been our consideration of the Planning Green Paper which proposes the biggest change in planning for over 50 years. This Paper makes many proposals that would improve planning. But it also removes much of the preparation of plans to remote and, at present, un-elected regional bodies and leaves most areas without detailed policies and maps. This would mean uncertainty for communities and encouragement for opportunistic developers. As you can imagine, we have strongly opposed these aspects of it, in common with other environmental societies. We await the outcome.

'Also basic to the planning process under the present system, is the preparation of Local Plans. This year we have had to deal with proposed revisions both for the Norwich and South Norfolk Plans. Each has involved careful scrutiny. Each has also involved our members' assistance, particularly in relation to the Bartram Mowers' objection that its site was not designated for housing or high technology on the new Norwich Plan and also to the proposal for Research Park development at Colney Hall. If Bartram Mowers does not withdraw its objection, we will no doubt be represented at the Inquiry into the Local Plan next year, as we have already been at the South Norfolk Inquiry into the Colney Hall development. We are most grateful to all of you who take the trouble to write letters on these, and other matters—there is no doubt that they make an impact on the decision makers.

'There is evidence of this, I think, in the good news that Norfolk County Council is now not pursuing a cross-valley link road between UEA and Colney Lane and is reviewing its approval of the Park and Ride site at Harford. There is also evidence in the withdrawal of the high technology plan for Earlham Park by Norwich City.

'Currently, there is a lot going on in and around the valley that can affect it. For example, we need to keep our eye on what is happening in the Research Park Cluster where 80 hectares more are being sought for development. It is a time when people are looking for more and more land to develop everywhere. We need to be very vigilant.'

Subscription reminder

If you have not yet paid your annual subscription of £1 for the year 2002, please either give this to the person who delivers your newsletter, or to a committee member, or send it to the membership secretary, at 42 Bluebell Road, Norwich, NR4 7LG. If you need clarification about the state of your subscription, do contact the membership secretary.

Articles, comments and letters for possible publication in future newsletters can be sent to Alison Ward, 20 Brettingham Avenue, Cringleford, Norwich NR4 6XG