

Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 60

July 2003

WIND TURBINES IN THE VALLEY?

UEA's School of Environmental Sciences would like to put two wind turbines in the UEA playing fields area of the Yare valley (and a third on the old abattoir site at Harford). Because of the importance of the valley, the public is being widely consulted on the issue. Two documents are attached: the map shows the proposed location and the project description is provided by UEA who have also arranged a meeting about it on Friday 18 July, 1.00 pm, in Lecture Theatre 1, at UEA, to which all are invited.

Our committee believes that this is such an important issue that we need the views of our members in order to comment on it. Please complete the slip at the bottom of the newsletter and return it to Alison Ward at the address overleaf by 21 July. We should like to have the reaction of each member, not just a household.

The case for wind turbines in the valley

Almost everyone now agrees that climate change is a real, immediate and serious issue. The consequences of wetter stormier winters, drier hotter summers, and rising sea levels will be felt in Norfolk and in the Yare valley—let alone their potentially devastating impact on global food supply, and the fate of low-lying populated land and coastal cities. Our children and grandchildren may not have a Yare valley in its present form to protect. Worse, because of other pressing concerns related to climate, they may not even be particularly bothered!

It is for these reasons that UEA's Carbon Reduction Initiative is so important. If we in Norfolk, who are fortunate enough to be well informed about the issues and who care about the environment, do not back this initiative then what hope is there elsewhere? Norfolk needs to set an example to the rest of the world, and the Yare Valley Society needs to set an example to Norfolk.

We may have our personal reservations about the specific location proposed for the turbines but these should be set aside for the sake of the big picture. If the Society opposes these turbines, what signal would this send out to the rest of the county? We exist to protect the environment. The responsible position is to make this small sacrifice in order to do so.

The case against wind turbines in the valley

Whilst accepting the case for much more emphasis on wind generated energy, it should not mean the windmills can go anywhere, and certainly not just where some willing landowner is kindly disposed regardless of other environmental constraints.

The river valleys of Norfolk are a particularly important environmental and landscape resource which is acknowledged as under threat and in need of protection by all the planning authorities. The Yare valley is especially important because of its situation in relation to the largest urban area of the county, which also makes it vulnerable to pressures for development. It is not just another piece of open land of parochial interest. What is left of it needs to be strongly protected against incessant "nibbling"

The proposed two turbines would be very intrusive in the valley and quite contrary to the general concept of protecting its landscape and recreational value. They could well be a precedent for more elsewhere in the valley.

The proposers seem only to have considered sites within the ownership of the UEA. There are many other options on open land nearby which would not have the environmental implications of the current proposals and should be thoroughly considered and investigated.

I am in favour/I am not in favour of wind turbines in the Yare valley (please delete as applicable)

I am in favour/I am not in favour of wind turbines in the Yare valley (please delete as applicable)

Comments:

Bartram Mowers' appeal

At least sixteen of our members attended the Norwich Local Plan Inquiry on 10 June into the Bartram objection and all wore the little green Yare Valley Society badge to draw attention to their presence. Apparently, this was by far the best attendance of interested persons at any session of the Inquiry to date. Thank you to all those who attended.

The Inspector's decisions are expected in the next month or two.

Cross valley street lights

You may remember that the Norwich City planning committee deferred its decision about this issue. When it came up for consideration again at the end of May, it was passed by 7 votes to 3 after considerable debate and a verbal input by as many as four people representing UEA as applicant.

Clearly the planning committee wished to protect the Yare valley but accepted that high level lighting as opposed to bollards would provide greater security. However, the committee included a condition which states that "following the implementation of the upgraded lighting, the roadway shall not be used by vehicular traffic outside the hours of 10.00 am to 4.00 pm on any day of the week". This condition is now being challenged by UEA, (application number 4/2003/0602/F).

Annual general meeting

About forty members attended quite a lively meeting in St Andrew's Church Hall, Eaton, which was followed by a interesting talk and discussion given by Mike and Carol Blackwell, to whom we offer our thanks. At the meeting the chairman welcomed June Gentle on to the committee to fill one of the two vacancies and at the same time expressed our sadness that Elizabeth Groves who only joined us on the committee last year, has decided to resign because of her increased teaching commitment. During her short time with us Elizabeth has made a real contribution by organising several walks and taking a particular interest in the biodiversity aspects of the valley. We are very sorry to lose her and thank her for all she has done and hope she may find time to provide us with some advice from time to time.

Walks—past and future

We offer our sincere thanks to Mike Freer, Tom Green and Glen Collier who have each led walks this year and which have been enjoyed by a number of members.

Glen reports that on the walk in June, members saw the following:

- Birds

Whitethroat, chiffchaff, herons, blackcap, sedge warbler, reed bunting, linnet, skylark, swans with five cygnets, a family of willow warblers, lapwings and sparrow hawk.

- Butterflies

Speckled wood, green veined white, painted lady, tortoiseshell, common blue, large skipper, meadow brown and a cinnabar moth.

- Dragonflies

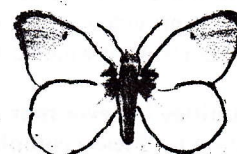
A male emperor, black tailed skimmer, four spotted chaser, large red damselfly, common blue damselfly, azure damselfly, many banded demoiselle.

Glen has very kindly agreed to lead another walk, this time on Eaton Common to look for **butterflies** and other wildlife.

This will take place on **Sunday 20 July**, starting at 2.30 pm.

Please ring Glen on 01603

451193 for details of where to meet. You may wish to take binoculars if you have them.



Matt Davies from the Norwich Fringe Project has also kindly offered to lead a walk for members of the Society in the Charters Wood area of the valley on **Sunday 5 October 2003**, meeting at 2.30 pm, at Roys Car Park, Bowthorpe.

SOCIAL EVENING—ADVANCE NOTICE

Monday 20 October 2003

7.30 pm

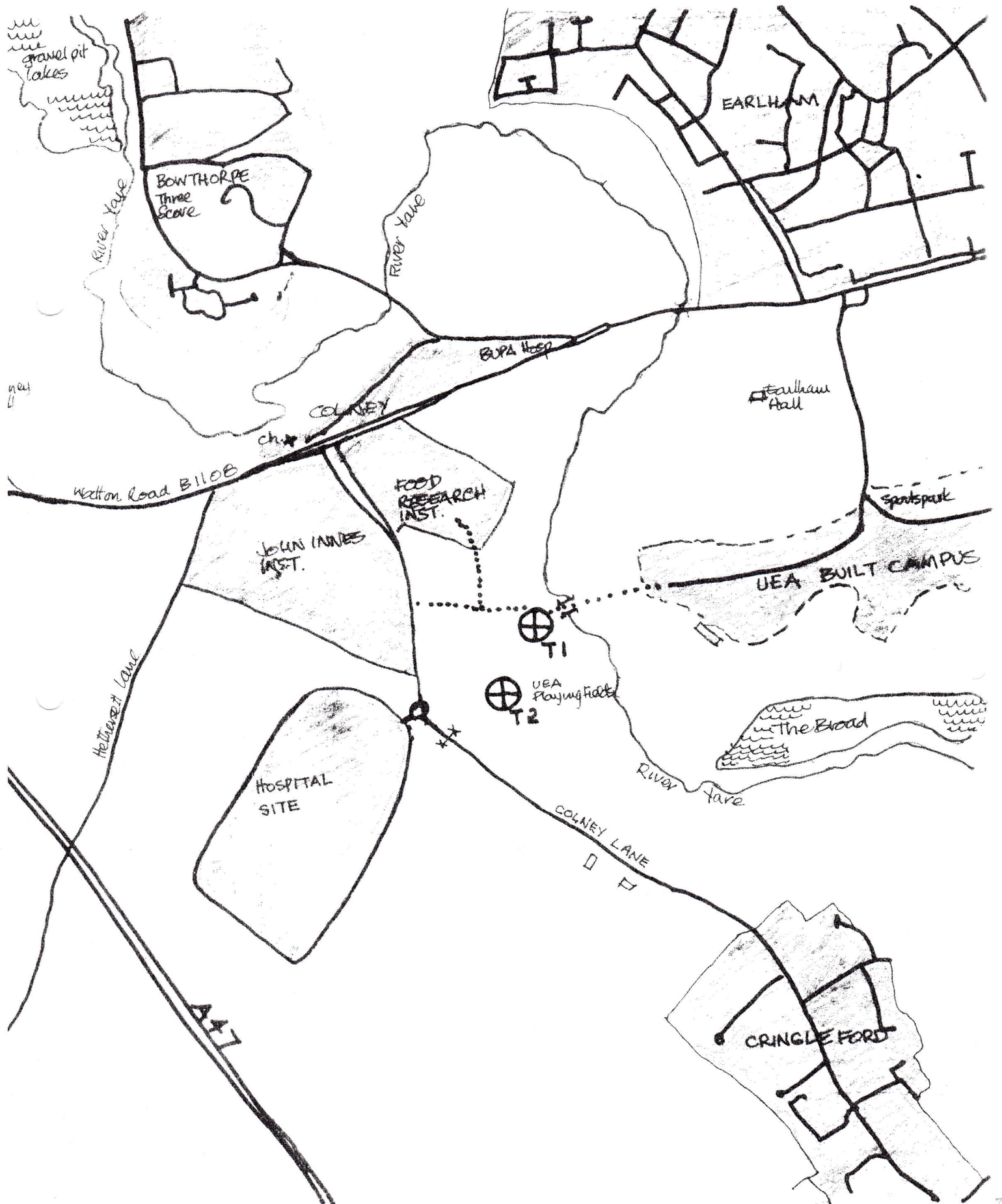
Cringleford Playing Field Pavilion

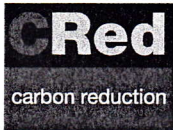
Wine and Nibbles

Cost £3 per person payable at the door

Please ring Alison Ward (452330) to indicate you will be attending

WIND TURBINES T1 & T2 UEA CAMPUS IN YARE VALLEY





local action for a global challenge



CRed is the Community Carbon Reduction Project: working together in the East of England to take the lead in tackling climate change

A consultative note from CRed

Wind Turbines on the University Campus?

As part of an innovative and ambitious plan to confront the challenge of climate change, scientists in the School of Environmental Sciences at UEA, and officers from South Norfolk District Council, and the City, have established the business and technical sense of two wind turbines on the UEA campus (and one on the old abattoir site near Harford Bridge). Each would produce enough electricity for 1000 homes. Consultations - at the earliest possible opportunity - have now started with representatives of, and groups from, the local community, including the Yare Valley Society, to assess the local response to this possibility.

UEA has recently launched a carbon reduction project called CRed, which has been described by some national figures as “an exemplar for the world”. It directly confronts the biggest environmental challenge facing the world; that of climate change because of global warming. Climate change is already having a significant impact in this country and around the world, and projections of warming over the next few decades indicate serious consequences; many scientists and governments are using the term “dangerous climate change”. There are many likely impacts, outside the category of “dangerous”, but which will produce landscape changes in this country. Reedbed systems will be under threat and summer river-flow is likely to be lower, with Norfolk being one of the areas most affected.

The main reason is the emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂) to the atmosphere. To avoid the worst consequences of future climate change there needs to be a reduction in CO₂ emissions of 60%. There is little effective action at international level. The UK Government has recognised this overwhelming priority and, in the recent White Paper on energy, has expressed its “aspiration” for the country to achieve this cut by 2050. However, it did not identify how to get there, except to point out that it was a very big challenge and would require unprecedented action and partnership in local communities. The White Paper also confirmed what CRed had already recognised; that there are immense benefits to those who lead the way into the low carbon economy – besides that of avoiding the worst consequences of climate change.

CRed is building a community in Norwich and Norfolk with the target of reducing CO₂ emissions within the community of partnerships by 60% by 2025. It wants to show the rest of the country, and the rest of the world, that it can be done and how to do it. CRed would like this to be as inclusive as possible.

Some have described CRed as the world’s best chance of encouraging politicians and business leaders to be bolder on our behalf in confronting the challenge of climate change.

The CRed partnerships intend to identify and implement much more efficient use of energy and will encourage the use of renewable energy sources (which emit no, or little, CO₂ into the
.....over

atmosphere). One of the most effective, and cheapest sources of renewable energy, is land-based wind turbines. If CRed is going to work, and if we are going to persuade other to follow suit, it is important that we can demonstrate that local communities can accept and take ownership of low-carbon energy sources. CRed and the major commercial company which would build and operate the turbines are pioneering a new way of going about this. This consultation is part of this. Other innovations are considering how financial benefits might be used within the community. The way this is likely to work is that – as landowner – UEA would receive an annual rent from the company, which could generate a surplus. In those circumstances, the UEA administration has agreed to create a fund which could be used for local initiatives consistent with the aims of CRed. Discussions have also been had about making real-time data from the turbines available to schools – weather information, electricity produced, CO₂ “saved”, etc. – the learning opportunities are immense.

If we can learn to work with the major company, and it with our community, it could provide a model for other initiatives which could be of major benefit to Norfolk; for example, producing energy from crops grown by Norfolk farmers.

CRed is very aware of the value the local community places on the Valley and its environs. UEA shares that value, and does its bit to provide access and maintain the walking trails. CRed hopes, however, that we are all able to consider the bigger picture – the serious environmental threat which faces the whole Planet, as well as the local effects of that global threat.

The two candidate sites for the UEA turbines are in the area of the playing fields. They would be approximately the size of Swaffham’s, but “cleaner” in appearance, since there would be no observation deck, and no buildings associated with them. Access would be right up to the base of the masts, and the electricity would be fed directly into the 11kV transmission lines which already run across that area of the campus.

The reason for the choice of sites is the “smoothness” of the wind – there are no nearby buildings to disturb the airflow -, and the company’s priority of ensuring that there is no disturbance whatsoever to people in residential properties. No other location on the campus meets the strict criteria adopted.

Given the current level of noise in the vicinity, it is most unlikely that the turbines will be heard at all more than 150-200m away. All houses and buildings are currently much further away than that. At a distance of 50m the level of noise will probably be less than a person talking.

The RSPB has no concerns about the locations.

CRed has not considered any other turbines beyond the three (2 on the campus, one at the abattoir site) mentioned here.

To help visualise what they may look like, some images are available on the CRed website at www.cred-uk.org. The website will also allow you to indicate if you would like the CRed project team to arrange a meeting at UEA to provide further explanation, show more images, answer questions, and hear your views.

6 June 2003



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