



Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 72

August 2006

Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting which took place on 8 May at Cringleford Playing Field Pavilion was probably the best attended ever. Forty-eight people actually signed the attendance sheet and there were a number of apologies.

The following extracts from the chairman's report for the preceding year give an indication of what the Society has been involved in recently.

'... several issues have occupied us during the past twelve months but two are of especial importance to us. One is the preparation by the planning authorities of the Local Development Framework that will guide how development will take place over the next fifteen years. The other is the amount of development that is going on at UEA.

'As for the first, everyone has already been invited to be involved in the processes leading up to the preparation of the new local plans through exhibitions, questionnaires and the need to comment on maps showing sites suggested for development by landowners and developers. ... It is all part of the emphasis now being given to public participation in producing these new plans. ... So far South Norfolk is a little ahead of Norwich City in all this but, in due course, both will publish their own preferred options for development and then go on to further public consultation, in which of course we will take part. These are vital processes for us as through them the future of the Yare valley is determined.

'Alongside all this, UEA is rapidly developing. Building sites within its defined building envelope are being used up fast. The university has declared its intention to continue to grow and we, of course, strongly support the idea of a dynamic and healthy university in Norwich. But we are concerned on at least two points, especially as the university's declared intention is to stay on just one campus. Firstly, we are concerned about the increased strain on the local infrastructure as the campus is gradually filled up with buildings. Secondly, the university could have eyes on river valley land for future development, even though it says it values it so much for its setting. As there must be a limit to growth on the present campus, the

solution of course is to have a second one and this we have put to the City.

'You may remember the resolution we passed at our AGM last year about future development at UEA being comprehensively planned and respecting the preservation of the Yare valley. This was sent to all the local planning authorities and responses were received saying that a joint area Action Plan dealing comprehensively with all future development at UEA and the Norwich Research Park was being prepared. In the meantime, UEA has prepared a draft Conservation Development Strategy and draft Transport Plan, to both of which we have responded. Eventually these will be published for public consultation. *(See below for update).*

'There is also much to thank others for—our councillors who help us in our task of protecting the valley; those who contribute to and distribute our newsletter; and all our members as they support and encourage us and put their pens to paper from time to time. We appreciate you all and can certainly achieve nothing without you.'

Public liability insurance

A straw poll taken following discussion on the subject of public liability insurance at the AGM revealed that the majority of those present felt that the Society should have such insurance. Cover has been taken out at a cost of £130 a year. Paying this insurance annually will put a great strain on our finances and any voluntary contributions towards the cost would be welcomed. In January 2007, subscriptions will go up to £20 for new life members; £8 for five years and £2 per year, all per household.

UEA Conservation Development Strategy

In June this year, UEA published the final version of its Conservation Development Strategy. This had been in process of preparation for about two years and the YVS committee, together with other interested committees, was invited in October last year, to discuss it with UEA and then comment upon it, which of course we did. We were asked not to make it public in any way.

The original reason for the Strategy was as an exemplar for

a Government White Paper which is being considered by a Commons Committee preparatory to a Bill that will go before Parliament next year targeted at reforming the way in which listed buildings and historic sites are protected. But UEA added something to it as the word 'Development' in its title suggests.

There are several good things that come out of the document from the point of view of the YVS, including a proposed landscape and management strategy and recognition of the landscape significance of the Yare valley. But there are also several omissions that concern us, such as how the infrastructure could cope with further intensification of use of the university site. However, there is one particular matter with which we strongly disagreed and that is the proposed development of meadowland east of Suffolk Terrace encroaching almost to the valley floor.

Needless to say, we have made strong protests about this to all concerned but the Strategy went before the Norwich City Planning Committee on 20 July 2006 and was accepted in its totality by 10 votes to 2. The proposal for the development east of Suffolk Terrace was, of course, not a planning application, but our concern was that 'acceptance' of it at this stage would seriously prejudice the normal democratic process when, and if, the application is made. We know that many would have objected to this proposal if they had known about it.

If anyone would like to see the document, please contact Elaine on 458657 or elainetucker@tiscali.co.uk

Yare valley near Cringleford Bridge

Several members have been in contact about what has happened in the area near Cringleford Bridge. However it should be said that not everyone sees the giant hogweed as a foe!

Paul Holley, the Natural Areas Officer for the City Council, explained the situation thus:

'Unfortunately, this plant had become so well established and dominant at this location that any concerted attempt at controlling it was bound to look unattractive in the short term. For the reasons explained in my earlier article, any responsible landowner really has little choice but to control, and preferably eradicate, this plant. Furthermore, the Council has been under pressure (quite justifiably), from Councillors and the public to take action against giant hogweed.'

'The original plan at Cringleford was for all the giant hogweed to be sprayed using a glyphosate-based herbicide. Glyphosate-based herbicides are amongst the most 'environmentally friendly' types available, but they do tend to be toxic to some aquatic life, so a new brand of herbicide which is much safer for use near watercourses was chosen. Unfortunately, the required paperwork for the herbicide took a long time to arrive, and by the time it did the hogweed was too tall to be effectively treated. The plants were therefore cut to prevent them from seeding, and future growth will be monitored and spot-treated using herbicide. In the long run, the preferred option will

be to allow native vegetation to re-colonise the site, but if necessary re-seeding with native wetland plants will be undertaken.'

'I appreciate that the site does look unattractive at present, but the area should recover quickly. In the long term, we should have a much more interesting and attractive area of native vegetation, which will also be safer for visitors. Furthermore, we will have eradicated a major threat to native wildlife along the river Yare; the large concentration of giant hogweed at Cringleford was acting as a reservoir of seed, which could be carried further down the river to colonise new sites.'

In a subsequent communication Paul Holley added:

'The site is recovering well, with plenty of regeneration of species other than giant hogweed; the surviving GH will be spot-treated. We shall be monitoring what comes back before deciding on the future management of the former GH area, but it will probably be mown 1-2 times per year, at least initially, to discourage thistles, docks etc from taking over.'

Land north of Chancellors Drive at UEA

The February newsletter contained the Society's comments relating to UEA's planning application for two academic buildings on land north of Chancellors Drive. In May, the City Planning Committee unanimously refused the application. The committee concentrated their concerns on the increase in staff and student numbers and the effect this would have on local roads. It was hoped that a public transport policy for the UEA, the hospital and the Research Park could be worked out which would include an exit for buses from University Drive on to Earlham Road.

Road and car park east of Suffolk Terrace UEA

The Society has continued to ask when this land will be re-instated as promised. The planning officer concerned assures us that the City Council will press for this to happen, but not yet.

UEA stakeholders' meetings

The YVS is one of the stakeholders and is now regularly invited to meetings to discuss potential developments. A recent meeting discussed the proposed new International School near Bluebell Road.

Wildlife in the valley

Many members walk in different parts of the valley. Do let Alison Ward know of any interesting sightings of birds, plants, animals and butterflies in the area. It is always interesting to read about what members have seen or heard.

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