



Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 74

April 2007

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY 8 MAY 2007 at 7.30 pm

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH HALL, CHURCH LANE, EATON

followed by an illustrated talk

'THE MARSTON MARSH YEAR'

given by DAVID PAULL

Elaine Tucker

Some of you will have heard that our chairman, Elaine Tucker had an emergency operation in February. She is recovering at home but will be undergoing further treatment. I am sure all the YVS members would want to send very best wishes to Elaine for a speedy recovery. In the meantime, the committee has agreed that an acting chairman should be elected at the annual general meeting.

Cross-valley link

To date the UEA has not submitted a planning application for a cross-valley bus route. At a recent stakeholders' meeting, the University put forward two additional routes, one that followed the existing track, going through the Institute of Food Research and joining Colney Lane at the IFR traffic lights. The other additional proposed route followed the track but did not go through the IFR but alongside the boundary. Representatives from the YVS continued to speak out against a cross-valley link and suggested that the impact of the two-way traffic on University Drive should be assessed. When a planning application is made, it is expected that an environmental impact assessment will have been carried out and will accompany the application. As yet, the University has

given no further detail of the proposed cross-valley route, for example, about any modifications to the current bridge.

UEA decked car park and biomass plant

The University has received planning permission for a multi-storey car park but has recently submitted an application for an additional storey to the car park and a biomass plant at the rear. The Society has written in the following terms to the City Council in connection with the latter:

'We strongly urge that an independent environmental impact assessment be carried out on the whole scheme.

'Although this development does not appear to have an immediate impact on the Yare valley landscape, it is yet another example of incremental growth at UEA on the local infrastructure, including the Yare valley itself. It is a piecemeal application outside an overall plan. Moreover, serious knock-on effects could well damage the valley by increasing pressure for a cross-valley transport link.

'It is UEA's declared intention that "growth will continue in the foreseeable future" (paragraph 8.3). Continuing

growth for an indefinite period can never be reconciled with a finite campus especially in such a sensitive location as this. The present application follows recent applications for two new academic buildings on the west of the campus and the INTO UEA building on the east. Consultation on developing the Blackdale School site is in progress and a very substantial extension to the teaching wall is referred to in paragraph 3.5.1 of the present application. It is very unsatisfactory that these latter schemes were not mentioned in the University's Conservation Development Strategy document which came to Planning Committee last summer. We are not aware of any other published strategic plan for the long term development of UEA. The Society has already made clear its view that the current piecemeal, ad hoc approach to further development at UEA is unacceptable.

'A healthy university is important for Norfolk but, in view of the above, we strongly urge the Planning Committee to call a halt to any further expansion on the present campus. UEA must formulate an honest and open strategy for future development at other locations. This approach has been successfully achieved by other universities such as Kent, on satellite campuses away from the core campus (located in Canterbury in that case, in an environmentally sensitive location very comparable with UEA in Norwich).'

Wildlife sightings in the valley

Colin and Maureen Forbes have written about what they have seen during the past winter months.

It is just past 7.00 am on a day early in February and a pinkish light pervades the water meadow beyond the river before the first low direct shafts of sunlight come. A large pale barn owl patrols to and fro with slow easy wing beats dropping occasionally into the tall browned reeds and grasses to make a kill. Not a regular visitor but when it does, it is wonderful to behold.

During the winter months, a dark female pheasant started to appear out front at first light to glean under the bird feeder which hangs within the judas tree. This prompted us to take out a special helping for her on the ground which led to her all but knocking on the front door each morning to be fed like a domestic fowl.

On another sunny and frosty morning a muntjack wended its way along the opposite bank grazing as it went. Occasionally a fox will hop over the fence from next door to cross the garden to jump the dyke into the Waitrose wild area down to the river.

On the river dabchicks come and go bobbing up from below and then continuing excitedly to dive repeatedly. A heron has a regular beat along the water's edge opposite, moving with deliberate head and neck movements akin to a desert camel underway.

Ducks, including what appeared to be scaup, have appeared on the quay and various swans come and go with different numbers of offspring. One early winter's morning while we were down on the landing feeding a pair

of swans, a shaft of first sunlight sparkled brightly on the dappled surface of the water. A magic moment indeed.

The breeding season last year gave us some exciting bird watching. A pair of greater spotted woodpeckers nesting in a high tree on the island opposite started a food shuttle service, from the nut holders on the patio and on the tree down by the dyke, which lasted many days. A pair of large herons appeared on the quay one day and performed an elaborate dance together, reminiscent of the annual courtship ritual of crested cranes.

The resident pair of kingfishers bred as usual and in the all out frenzy of introducing two young to the river, we have had marvellous fleeting moments when there were actually four kingfishers visible on the quay at the same time.

Finally, one day last September, as we worked on the quay edge, a three-foot grass snake with a most beautiful yellow head came slowly swimming along the water's edge, only to swim off rapidly across towards the island on becoming aware of a human above.

Health Walk Reminder

- ◆ **Tuesday 24 April**
- ◆ **1.45 pm (for a 2.00 pm start)**
- ◆ **Meet at Eaton Park (the golf course car park in the middle of the park)**
- ◆ **2.2 mile walk along the Yare valley**
- ◆ **For more information contact Carrie Kerry, the Health Walks Co-ordinator on 01603 423377**

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