



# Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 80

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## Annual general meeting 2009

Over 40 members attended the AGM early in May at St Andrew's church hall, Eaton. This was followed by an illustrated talk by the local historian Chris Barringer who in his inimitable style took us to a number of Norfolk villages and looked at factors that had affected their development.

In his annual report, the chairman drew attention to the Society's website ([www.yarevalleysociety.org](http://www.yarevalleysociety.org)). Subsequently, the committee has recently agreed that all letters written on behalf of the Society will be put on the website, as well as details of significant planning applications.

Other matters included in the chairman's report were the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Norwich Research Park Development Framework. In relation to the latter, 'a glossy document was produced by South Norfolk Council which in the opinion of the Society's committee contained some very muddled thinking. It put forward the view that the Research Park should be enlarged to include the university and then stated that no rivers ran through the enlarged Research Park. One valuable assertion was that the Colney Hall part of the Park was of a special quality which needed preserving. We put forward our view that there should be a much stronger statement so that any potential developers know of special restrictions on site development near Colney Hall.'

The chairman went on to say that 'by far the biggest threat to the valley comes in the Colney area. There has been an application to extend the Colney burial park out towards the river by about an acre. Your committee was undecided about this with arguments in favour and against. It was agreed that we should not oppose the application completely but that we should question the need for a series of lakes by the side of the river . . . It is sufficient to say here that the Colney Parish Committee were completely opposed to the idea and put forward very good reasons for their objections. The application was withdrawn and another smaller application has now been proposed. In view of the additional information we now know, we have written questioning the later proposal.

'The Colney Hall site which is part of the Norwich Research Park is the place where most applications for building are taking place or may do so soon. An application to extend the existing medical consulting rooms has been proposed. We did not object as long as the tree line was not affected, as the extension was in sympathy with the present buildings'.

The final matter raised in the report was about the bluebell planting day. 'We applied for and were granted £1,000 for planting bluebell bulbs along Bluebell Road. We consulted with the city horticultural experts and it was agreed that the planting should take place on the north side of the Bluebell Road flyover—bluebells on the city side and snowdrops on the other. A lot of work went into this - traffic control, risk assessment, publicity, insurance and liaison with the city authorities. Only a day or two before the event we were informed that no member of the public was allowed to dig on a highway and that the land chosen was part of the highway, so we had to cancel the planned event. In the end the city council did agree to plant the bulbs we had already bought using their contractors and they made a good job of it, so we have our bluebells and our snowdrops after all.' *See overleaf for a further update of this saga.*

## UEA Temporary Car Park

The Society wrote to the City Council in connection with the proposed extension to the Music Centre and suggested that if the application was approved, a condition should be made that the temporary car park be removed and the area reinstated. The City Council has replied in the following terms:

*'The haul road/parking area close to the site was provided to assist with the development of new student residences to the north. This has a significant impact and is inappropriate to the setting of this area. This use is not directly related to the proposed extension and its removal through condition on this application would not be appropriate; however, given that the majority of works have been completed this should now be removed and the University have confirmed that they are taking steps this summer to reinstate this part of the valley. Recommendation 2 refers to this matter.'*



*'Recommendation 2 states:*

*'That enforcement action, including prosecution if necessary, under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to secure by 31 December 2009;*

*(1) The cessation of the use of the adjacent land to the east as a car park and haul road*

*(2) The restoration of the land to grassed open space.'*

## **Bluebells—latest news**

The 5000 bulbs which were planted by Citycare had grown healthy leaves during April. However sadly, another breakdown in communication within the City Council resulted in the plants being mown down by the city's contractors in May! We hope this will not destroy the plants but the resulting damage will, at least, delay flowering for another year.

We have complained about this whole sorry episode and have received a letter of apology from the Director of Regeneration and Development in which he says, '... I can fully understand the Society's dismay over what should have been a wonderful example of community activity that was most relevant to the area and for which I apologise to the group on behalf of the Council'.

## **More on wildlife in the valley**

Colin Forbes has sent news of their encounters with a resident pair of swans, deer, foxes, and various pheasants. He also included the following *'Tree Saga'*.

'Back in early October when the river Yare was in particular flood and flow after the heavy rains. Morning light revealed a tree lengthways in the river embedded into the island with its branches towards the flow which goes to left and right. Soon the branches were facilitating the build-up of a 'beaver-type' dam/island, with the debris in the flood flow which the ducks soon found to be a safe haven. To add to the hazard, a log lay humped across the tree trunk at right angles, thus increasing the problem, particularly if the debris turned across the flow to dam the river. Accordingly a call was made to the Environment Agency Report line which took twenty minutes for a response which was a recorded message listing all the items NOT to be reported, ending with another number to ring.

'There was another long wait at the next number before a very hard-pressed voice from Peterborough apologised for being the only person there to take calls. He took the details and half an hour later a call from a man at Haddiscoe asked for details again—promising action. Days passed and in the meantime neighbours had taken their boat out and cut away much of the branches and the cross log in order to reduce potential hazard. With no action by end of the month, Charles Clarke MP, was prompted to become involved. This resulted in a letter from the Environment Agency dated 21 November informing us that machinery would be required and their assessment was that flood risk was low since with available water meadow/flood plain to cope with the blockage. Sadly we were not here to see a team which came with gear early December and hauled the tree out of the river and left it cut up on the far bank.'

## **Greater Norwich Development Strategy -**

## **Green Infrastructure Strategy**

The Green Infrastructure Strategy has been prepared by consultants (Chris Blandford Associates) "informed by key stakeholders" which has included the Society. The Vision of the strategy is described as defining a multifunctional network of green spaces and green links, to provide sustainable and accessible quality "green" areas and corridors, including wildlife habitats throughout the Greater Norwich area. There is a particular reference to the importance of the river valleys in this context. The Strategy identifies, in broad terms, a network of sub-regional corridors, including north-west and south-west Norwich to Wymondham and Attleborough, Local Corridors and an Urban Area Green Infrastructure. The Yare valley is identified as an important element in this concept. Submissions were invited for "green" projects in the context of this strategy and on behalf of the Society a proposal was submitted for a River Yare Parkway, for the management of the valley from Whitlingham to Bawburgh for wildlife, recreation and the movement of people on foot, bicycle and water. The consultants and local authorities have held meetings to identify and prioritise projects and at the most recent meeting a short list of 5 schemes which were considered feasible and realistic in the context of the current limitations on public spending were put forward. Two of the projects concerned the Yare valley, one relating to Lakenham common and opening up Harford Tip, the other a project put forward by Matt Davies on behalf of the Fringe Project (arising from the Society's proposal) for improving access to the valley through improvements to the Yare Valley Walk, including investigating the scope for completing missing links.

The meeting was somewhat confused and inconclusive and we await further contacts.

## **UEA Landscape Strategy**

UEA has very recently produced a *Landscape Strategy* document upon which the YVS committee has been asked to comment. More information about this in the next newsletter and on the website.

*Articles, comments and letters for possible publication can*

## **Compost Corner**

*I'm worried about rats in my compost bin. What can I do?*

Rats like food and they like shelter, but they don't like humans. So to make things unattractive to them, avoid putting stuff they like to eat in your bin—such as scraps of meat, cheese, cooked food or bread (you can dispose of these in a wormery). Taking the cover off the bin from time to time will also help to deter rats. Also, regular human contact around the compost is a good deterrent—visit regularly and even if you don't mix and turn the compost, then at least give the bin a good kick from time to time!

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