

**PURBECK DISTRICT COUNCIL - CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC MAY 2012**

**RESPONSE TO MATTERS AND ISSUES RAISED.**

MATTER 2 - General Location of Development

ISSUE 2.2

Purbeck has a well documented aim to keep Purbeck special. The recent successful bid to become one of only 12 Nature Improvement Areas in England highlights this. *'Purbeck was chosen as one of the new NIAs because of its amazing wildlife wealth and the pressures it faces'* (District Council Information Bulletin - March 2012). Should these developments be allowed they would have serious detrimental effects with the accompanying increase in population resulting in increased urbanisation.

The present infrastructure would not sustain such development.

**MATTER 11**

**ISSUES 11.1-11.4 BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY**

Footprint Ecology's report does not address the general biodiversity of the area, nor does it give an idea of the richness contained therein. It is due to the varied habitat mosaics and the high percentage of protected areas in the parish that Wool Parish Council has asked me to give this report.

The Heathland Mitigation site as put forward and supported by Footprint Ecology's report is inadequate. Coombe Wood, although coniferised for a number of years, has every indication of being an ancient woodland. Even if the woodland was restored by careful management to afford mitigation its biodiversity would decline through increased population pressure. It is poor environmental practice to place the burden of mitigation on a sensitive alternative habitat. If the conifer wood remains it may be less appealing for recreational purposes than the open sunny heathland. It is not compulsory to re-site visitors!

## **AN EVALUATION OF THE WILDLIFE IN WOOL**

One of the problems of evaluating the parish is what criteria to use. Assessments by Footprint Ecology use simply the internationally designated heathland areas and these are certainly some of the most vulnerable areas open to a wide range of pressures.

A rather broader view is to use the habitats and species that are subject to Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP species and habitats). These are habitats and species for which there may be international obligations, be threatened in some way or have suffered a significant decline. Using these is still not wholly satisfactory as a basis for assessment as it ignores the importance of small areas of habitat, wet or dry, tree or shrub covered or open areas of grassland and heath that form a larger mosaic. These areas have always been hard to evaluate but may have a high value in supporting the rarer BAP species from other areas, for example by having a high moth productivity as food for Nightjars.

The Habitat and Species Directive requires the conservation of sites essential for life and reproduction of the annex 3 species but in the case of several species only the nesting sites are protected. Member states are also asked to consider land use planning and development policies to improve the coherence of the designated sites particularly through providing stepping stones and corridors between sites. The river Frome and its water meadows are an example of this.

Although it is difficult to put a value on wildlife the government is attempted to do this by the creation of the National Capital Committee (NCC). The concept of Ecosystem Services has development in recent years and this provides a way of evaluating some areas such as the Frome water meadows, which as well as being important for wildlife are also important for flood management and organic farming.

### Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats occurring in Wool

The Heaths designated as part of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Habitat and Species Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive.

The Frome is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) it is the most westerly chalk

river in Britain.

Taking a wider view of Wool and its immediate surroundings based on OS grid squares the numbers of Nationally Rare (1-15 10km squares in the UK) and Nationally Notable (15-100km squares in the UK) invertebrates is 25 Nationally Rare and 125 Nationally Notable. There is a gradient from the richest areas in the north of the Parish on Wool Heath to the south where for example 7 Nationally Notable species occur on road verges but this is somewhat biased by the amount of invertebrate survey which has been considerable on the Bovington ranges to the north but relatively little to the south.

### IMPACTS OF INCREASE IN HOUSING

- 1 As already identified there will be increased pressure for dog exercise on heaths such as Winfrith Heath. Not only does this create disturbance for birds but there will be enrichment by dog faeces to nutrient deficient heath that will encourage invasive coarse grasses such as Cocksfoot.
2. In recent years there have been several fires that have destroyed large areas of heath locally at Bovington. Vegetation may redevelop quite quickly over 3 to 5 years but invertebrates take 2 to 3 times this to recolonise and even if reptiles survive fire their food resources are depleted for a considerable time.
- 3 Increased housing will increase pressure for a bypass for Wool railway crossing. The obvious route is across the water meadows but this would need to be on a causeway up to 2 metres high that would have considerable noise implications across the whole valley where it is now tranquil. A bypass would reduce considerably the area as important for wildlife and would have implications for flood management and farming. There would be little chance that the management of the remaining wetland would see the re-establishment of Lapwing and other wetland birds.
- 4 Woods in Dorset parishes tend to be many and small, there are at least 14 in Wool, this is in contrast to eastern England where there is often only a single large parish wood. These small woods are ancient woods but are often too small to be

included on the Ancient Woodland Register. There is a presumption against loss and damage to ancient woodland. Small woods have a proportionally longer perimeter and

are therefore more vulnerable to edge effect damage. Although several have been converted to conifer plantations, it is possible to manage them back to deciduous woodland as is happening at Blind Man's Wood. Cole Wood is already heavily used by ramblers, dog walkers and other recreation including mountain biking. Along the northern edge there is soil compaction and it is denuded of vegetation.

**BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (BAP) SPECIES OCCURRING IN WOOL**

<b>Mammals</b>	
Water Vole	The Frome and its water meadows are one of the best sites remaining in Dorset
Otter	Occasional sightings in the Frome
Brown Hare	Populations in fields to west of Wool.
Dormouse	Present in bramble and blackthorn thickets and Hazel Coppice
Bats	Several species present in houses and hollow trees etc.
<b>Birds</b>	
Bullfinch	Pairs regularly seen in gardens in Wool but national decline
Cuckoo	At least 3 singing males have been heard along Frome.
House Sparrow	Nationally in decline but breeding successfully in Wool
Lapwing	Former nesting species in water meadow now in decline but sightings to west of Dorset Green Technology site.
Nightjar	Nests on Wool Heath and feeds over much wider area.
Reed Bunting	Declined in last 30 years but occurs in waterside vegetation along the Frome
Song Thrush	Much declined but still found in gardens and hedges in Wool
Starling	In decline nationally but breeding in Wool

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (BAP) contd

Skylark	Declined nationally but still present in fields around Wool
Wood Lark	Breeds on Wool Heath
Willow/Marsh Tit	Regularly seen in gardens around Wool, yet declining nationally
Yellow Hammer	Found in hedges around Wool
<b><u>Reptiles</u></b>	
Sand Lizard	Wool Heath
Smooth Snake	Wool Heath
<b><u>Amphibia</u></b>	
Gt. Crested Newt	Found in some ponds in Wool
<b><u>Fish</u></b>	
Atlantic Salmon	All Migrate up the Frome to Spawn
River Lamprey	
Sea lamprey	
<b><u>Invertebrates</u></b>	
Agabus brunneus	Water beetle almost entirely confined to New Forest can be found close to Wool at E.Stoke
Asilus crabroniformis	Very large robber fly - present at Lulworth, could occur in Wool
Bombus humilis	Found in Lulworth could occur in Wool
Bombylius minor	Bee fly found on Wool Heath
Donacia bicolora	Bur Reed Leaf Beetle. Major British site at Woolbridge. Feeds on Bur Reed on the Frome margins. 90% decline nationally.
Thyridanthrax fenestratus	Bee fly found on Wool Heath

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (BAP) contd

<b><u>PLANTS</u></b>	
<u>Cicindia fiiformis</u>	Yellow Centaury, occasional on Wool Heath
<u>Illecebrum verticillatum</u>	Coral necklace. Good populations on Wool Heath
<u>Lycopodiella inundata</u>	March club moss - good population on Wool Heath. Very dispersed national occurrence
<b><u>SUMMARY</u></b>	
<b>International Importance</b>	Heathlands designated SPA/SAC Species listed in annexes of Birds Directive & Habitat & Species Directive.
<b>National importance</b>	River Frome SSSI Other BAP species and nationally rare species
<b>Regional Importance</b>	Ancient Woodland esp. woods on Ancient Woodland Inventory Species listed in Dorset Red Data Book Sites of Nature Conservation Importance Statutory Local Nature Reserves (8 Acre Coppice, Bovington) Nationally notable species Watermeadows as part of the corridor from Poole Harbour to Dorchester and beyond
<b>County Importance</b>	Non SSCI woodland
<b>Under assessed</b>	Mosaics Damaged but recovering important habitats

Dr A C Warne April 2012

**POSTSCRIPT**

Wool Parish Council would like to thank Dr Warne for his professional expertise, knowledge and time taken in writing this submission.