

# Dedham Vale Society



# THE DEDHAM VALE SOCIETY



**Founded 1938**  
**Registered Charity No 246007**  
[www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk](http://www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk)

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## DEDHAM VALE SOCIETY WINTER LECTURE 2014

**“Paul and John Nash”  
a talk by Ronald Blythe**

To be followed by the film  
**“John Nash, a Painter in the Country”**  
A film written by Ronald and  
made in 1969

**Dedham Assembly Rooms**  
**Monday November 24th at 8 p.m.**  
**£5 including wine**

*Front Cover*  
*Muniment House, Dedham*

# Dedham Vale Society

*Keeping Dedham Vale Beautiful*

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
will be held at 8.00 p.m. on Monday, 22nd September, 2013  
at Polstead Village Hall

## AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.
2. MINUTES: To receive the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 30th September, 2012, as published in the summer newsletter.
3. PLANNING SECRETARIES' REPORTS: To receive and discuss the reports for 2013/4, as published in the newsletters.
5. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT: To receive the audited accounts for 2013 and to discuss the current financial position.
6. VERIFICATION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2014: To make arrangements.
7. COMMITTEE:
  - Michael Archer and Francis Terry have retired by rotation in 2014 and are willing to stand for re-election. (Paul Gallifant is due to retire in 2015 and Nella Probert and Will Sambrook in 2016.)
  - New nominations for appointment, proposed, seconded and cleared with the nominees themselves, should be submitted to the honorary secretary by Monday, 15th September.
8. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY: To receive details and discuss.
9. OTHER BUSINESS.
10. THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS.

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A TALK BY SIMON AMSTUTZ,  
AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
IN SUFFOLK AND ESSEX  
Conserving our finest landscapes now and in the future

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## THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

In response to its application to extend the Dedham Vale AONB from the present boundary at Wormingford up the Stour Valley to Sudbury, the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project Partnership was asked by Natural England, the body which makes these decisions, to send in a Natural Beauty Evaluation Table.

This involved the Project officers and many others in a great deal of work but the result is a document which makes a powerful case for the Stour Valley extension.

The Partnership was asked to assess the area under a number of headings such as landscape quality, scenic quality, relative tranquillity, natural heritage features and cultural heritage. Much fascinating information was included and I should like to thank all those who contributed. On 31st July the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project sent in the completed document with a most appropriate quote from our distinguished Patron, Dr Ronald Blythe heading the submission. An edited version of my covering letter, as Chairman of the Project Partnership, is published elsewhere in this magazine.

We must now wait and see whether Natural England will ask us to take the next step of undergoing a detailed assessment. We are in competition with at least 15 other areas and only a few will be taken to the next stage in the near future. In our favour is that the extension of the Suffolk Coasts & Heaths AONB to the South bank of the Stour Estuary has now obtained a formal timetable for this evaluation and we have pointed out the value of including the whole of the Stour valley as a coherent unit.

On 5th June, Lord de Mauley, Minister of State at DEFRA

responsible for AONBs visited Dedham Vale and was taken on a tour which included Dedham church, Flatford Mill, Nayland and Tiger Hill by Arger Fen finishing up at Lamarsh. He commented on the beautiful countryside he had seen and praised the voluntary work of the Project.

Another very successful day was the Project Annual Forum held at Shrubs Farm barn, Lamarsh which attracted about 80 people and achieved very favourable press coverage in the East Anglian Daily Times of 30th June.

Last June the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project lost the services of Katherine Potts who has worked for the Project for over 20 years. She has been seconded to another post within Suffolk County Council for 18 months so we may see her back again. She had been a tower of strength and we are indebted to her for a range of schemes carried out with great success and without fuss. On behalf of the Dedham Vale Society I should like to place on record our grateful thanks for all she has done for the Vale.

On the plus side, the administrative merger between the two AONBs is now completed. Simon Amstutz is Manager with Paula Booth and Cathy Smith both very able and experienced officers. Each AONB will, however, continue with a separate Joint Advisory Committee and Partnership.

We look forward to continuing our close working relationship with the Project which undertakes vital work in the whole of the Stour valley.

*Robert Erith*

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## FROM THE CHAIRMAN MASSACRE OF THE VERGES

In late June on Manningtree Road, Dedham, the cow parsley was turning to seed and about to become a goldfinch's lunch. The verges were still full of white campion, controversial ragwort and the odd last buttercup, food for the wild pollinating insects about which there is now so much concern. The council had just resurfaced the road, leaving flimsy "loose chippings" signs at regular intervals. What did a council contractor do? He mowed the lot.

To be fair, he only mowed a metre in from the road, but in the process he managed to destroy at least two signs which had been recently placed there, as you can see from the picture. He didn't stop and pick up the bits. Apart from the obvious lunacy of mowing over the signs, you might ask what was the need to mow these verges, more than a month before their seeding time, when there was still food in them for pollinators and they still had a rough beauty? This was a piece of perfectly straight road – so it was difficult to see the safety case. It was just on somebody's list.

You really do wonder if our local authorities have taken to trouble to think about the health of our bees, wild and cultivated, and our other pollinating insects. It is something their electorate takes seriously. According to a YouGov poll, also taken in June, the decline of bees is now the environmental issue of most concern for the British, 85 per cent of whom say it is very serious, compared with 73 per cent saying the same about climate change and only 54 per cent caring about fracking. We actually have about 1500 species of wild pollinating insects. Cow parsley has about 45 species of insect reliant upon it for food, including bees, micro-moths, macro-moths and beetles. So why are we cutting down these plants before they have seeded when the verges are the last refuge of the meadow species that used to grow in the fields?

It took me quite some time to get a sensible reply from the county council about Manningtree Road. Then it was more perplexing than I had imagined. I was informed that "the

verge in question is no longer protected by our Special Roadside Verges policy and may be freely cut.” Apparently it was once regarded as being of scientific interest because of the floral diversity it contained but now, for a reason the spokesman could not identify, it had been down-listed. Could this possibly have had something to do with the bonkers management regime, which cuts the verge at precisely the wrong time each year and leaves the residue to enrich the soil and stimulate the coarse grasses? The ecologist who knew about the 44 kms of Special Roadside Verges in Essex worked only two days a week, so it proved impossible to find out why this one had been down-listed or why the county council’s verges policy is so obviously out of step with the National Pollinator Strategy, published in draft this spring. This calls for “diverse and flower-rich habitats to support our pollinators on farmland and public land, in towns, cities and gardens, along transport networks and on land surrounding other infrastructure such as water treatment works and flood defences.”

What the policy in Essex seems to be based upon, at least florally speaking, is the idea that rare must be preserved but that everything else is expendable. In Suffolk the verges were cut a metre in several weeks earlier, which is even worse. Now we are realizing that we need every flower that our gardens, pastures and verges can provide, because there are so few in the countryside, we need to protect the common as well as the rare as pollinator food. The charity Plantlife has been calling on councils to protect all verges from the routine short back and sides from March to August, unless there is a need to maintain sightlines around dangerous bends or around junctions. Ideally the mowers should be geared up to take off the resulting hay. Please

would our councillors in Essex and Suffolk consider signing up to this pledge? And where should councils be pursuing this strategy above all? Well, in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Or so you would have thought.

*Charles Clover*



*Manningtree Road, Dedham, 25th June 2014.*

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## REVIEW OF THE BOUNDARY OF THE DEDHAM VALE AONB

The next stage in the process of seeking an extension of our AONB has been completed with the submission to Natural England of “The Table of Natural Beauty Evaluation”, a complex document extending to 18 pages.

The application already has the strong support of both local MPs, Essex and Suffolk County Councils, Colchester Borough Council, Babergh and Braintree District Councils, all the local Parish Councils, local amenity societies and Essex University. Despite wide coverage in local media there has not been a single objection raised.

Along with the proposal to include the south side of the River Stour in the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB which is already under detailed consideration we believe that this extension up the Stour valley has the potential to develop and enhance the coastal ecological network right into the heart of Essex and Suffolk, creating a significantly larger and better connected area for maximum landscape and biodiversity benefit.

Our existing AONB is tiny and the proposed extension

would be a natural and long sought after inclusion of contiguous countryside which has a beauty of at least as high a quality as the existing AONB. The proposed extension is into an area already managed by the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project since 1981. As a result much of what would need to be done if AONB status is granted is already in place. Indeed the area of the extension has always been included in the AONB Management Plan and already benefits from the input from the dedicated Project Staff Team.

The whole Stour Valley still provides precious open space in a region experiencing fast population growth and the consequent development pressures. The rapidly growing

Haven Ports of Harwich and Felixstowe, Stansted Airport and major new housing planned for North Essex will inevitably impact on the area whose natural beauty and tranquillity must not be taken for granted. Dr Ronal Blythe, who lives almost on the banks of the River Stour at Wormingford writes of the Valley as “....one of those subtle English places which tend not to declare themselves in any deliberate way.....the valley is extraordinarily beautiful and I would like those who do not know it to come to it and experience its unique landscape”. We must hope that his wish can continue to be realised and the unique landscape preserved for future generations. Extending the AONB will be a big step in the right direction.



*View from Sbrub's Farm, Lamarsh.*

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## SUFFOLK VILLAGERS SAY “NO” TO LAST ORDERS AT THEIR LOCAL

**Membership Secretary John Osborn on how his seemingly doomed local pub, just a mile from the Dedham Vale village of E Bergholt, has bucked the trend and is now a flourishing community-owned enterprise.**

Passers-by using the Capel Road in the Suffolk village of Bentley in the summer of 2013 could be forgiven for thinking it unlikely that the sad-looking building still bearing the name of the village pub ‘The Case is Altered’, on land that has housed a village inn for at least 170 years, would still be standing five years hence. The giant board advertising ‘for sale’ seemed to have become a permanent feature, the extensive garden, surrounded by broken fence, was overrun with weeds and most of the windows were badly rotted with flaking paintwork. To add insult to injury the entrance to the car park had been blocked off by the laying down of massive concrete blocks. It had all the hallmarks of another abandoned pub awaiting planning consent for change of use. But that didn’t happen and now 12-months later a partially refurbished village pub is

enjoying a new lease of life. So with pubs elsewhere closing down on a regular basis why should Bentley be any different?

The answer has a lot to do with local man, David Westley, an Ipswich-based IT specialist, volunteer First Responder and until it closed, regular pub user. David discovered Bentley ten years ago during visits to his sister Gail Nye and her family who already lived in the village where Gail occasionally helped out in ‘The Case’. Bentley seemed a good place to live and David decided to move there. Sadly within a few years, with licensee changes, the pub declined and eventually closed down.

Whilst many were sceptical David firmly believed that local people and others could be persuaded to raise enough to secure the outright purchase of The Case from the owners Punch Taverns even though the original asking price was in the region of £350,000. When asked why the pub could succeed after years of failure David was able to point to the

overwhelming success of village buy-outs elsewhere once the money has been raised. On the need to generate the funding David's optimism and a firm belief that others would also see this as a one-off opportunity to bring a lasting benefit to the whole community, and not just pub users, convinced him that it had to be worth trying. Since 1836 the present building has served the needs of local people and he firmly believed that it was worth fighting to continue that tradition.

A questionnaire was sent to each of the 350 village homes in June 2013 and with positive responses resulting the newly-formed steering group called a public meeting on July 1st 2013. The village was packed to capacity with many being forced to stand and whilst those in attendance were left in no doubt as to the enormity of the task there was a feeling amongst them that this just could happen.

Through widespread internet use respondents were asked to list the area of help they could give and within three weeks a second meeting enabled a management committee to be formed. David Westley was elected Chairman with Liz Whitman as Vice Chair and later Secretary. Liz had been the first person to come forward to offer help even though she and her husband were not pub users. Annie Owen initially became Secretary with Peter Cross as Treasurer, Nicky Moxey took on grant applications and business planning, Helen Crapnell took on marketing and Gail Nye, whose previous bar work was seen as helpful, oversaw operations. A significant offer of help came from Bentley resident David Telling who had successfully managed public houses in the past. Later, when the decision was made to only use volunteer staff, David's contribution would become invaluable.

The first requirement was to obtain a moratorium on any third party sale for the maximum allowed period of six months through the granting of an Asset of Community

Value order. Having made the decision that the money would have to be raised in its entirety through a share offer Nicky's more immediate task was for finance to cover setting up costs. The Parish Council and The Bentley Bugle chipped in with several hundred pounds and a successful bid for funds from the Social Investment Business Group resulted in £5,666 being given to cover start-up costs.

The group also approached the Plunkett Foundation, a national charity that provides advice and support to community enterprises, and they gave legal and operational assistance including help with launching the share issue plus time with a business adviser and an established co-operative pub, the Green Man in Toppesfield, Essex.

On 13 August the group became incorporated as Bentley Community Pub Ltd. Using the Plunkett Foundation's model rules for community ownership, it was structured as an Industrial & Provident Society for the benefit of the community. Operating on a 'one member, one vote' basis shareholders have an equal say regardless of the amount invested. As a not-for-profit society, all trading surpluses, after the payment of a capped rate of interest to shareholders and financing share withdrawals, must be reinvested in the business or used for other community projects.

The Share Offer Document was sent to every household on the launch date 19 October 2013. The target was £350k with a minimum, below which the offer would fail, at £230k. By the closing date 30 November, with shares some way short of the minimum the date was extended. Throughout this period Peter Cross and Stewart Rowe utilised their considerable persuasive skills and unflagging optimism to great effect and through countless personal visits to potential investors the minimum target was reached in the closing days of 2013. The fact that Bentley Community Pub qualified for the government's Enterprise Investment



*The pub has altered little since this photograph from a century ago.*

Scheme made Peter's efforts slightly easier as the scheme allows tax paying shareholders some tax relief. Peter's personal approach was crucial but other opportunities to encourage share buying were also hugely significant. The East Anglian Daily Times and BBC Radio Suffolk were seen as essential ways of reaching a wider audience and David and Peter gave a number of on-site interviews right up to the actual date of opening. Stewart, who lives opposite the pub, offered to erect and maintain a progress board for passers-by to note the latest news on share sales. This became particularly persuasive after a large surge in the final stages. In addition the use of Microgenius, a dedicated web platform for community share purchases, meant that potential shareholders were able to monitor the number of shares sold on a daily basis.

The offer, on behalf of around 140 Bentley shareholders and 40 from elsewhere, to purchase the pub outright for £220k was accepted by the Punch Taverns Board in January 2014 and the sale was completed on February 17th. Within a week shareholders and others were able to view their purchase for the first time during an open day. Within two months, following a hive of activity both inside and out by teams of volunteers, the pub was re-opened to the public on April 17th.

Share sales prior to the purchase were insufficient to cover VAT requirements nor the need for large scale refurbishment and ruled out any possibility of recruiting professional staff in the early months. The decision was

made therefore to ask volunteers to work behind the bar and carry out cleaning duties so that profits could be used, alongside further share sales, for the refurbishment programme. Gareth Robins agreed to maintain the volunteer rota and with Nicky's help a 'real-time' online rota was introduced. Induction courses were held with more than thirty volunteers coming forward. Although the pub boasts adequate kitchens it was not possible to offer food nor could the opening hours generally extend beyond four days a week. Nevertheless even with limited opening times the early success continued into the summer giving an air of optimism amongst users and volunteers that this time the pub was definitely here to stay.

The optimism was heightened when it was learned that The Case had been shortlisted for the Plunkett Foundation's Rural Foundation Ownership Awards in the Better Co-operation Category. The very organisation who had played such a vital part in helping the community during the previous year were now putting The Case up for one of their national awards. So it was that David Westley and Peter Cross journeyed to Oxford on July 1st to fly the flag for Bentley and to their delight they carried off the award against strong contenders from elsewhere in the UK. Coincidentally it was just twelve months to the day since a packed village hall supported David and his new team in their efforts to buy the pub. For those people, and the many other supporters, it was a year in which the dream of a genuine community-owned public house in Bentley, the first Co-operative pub in Suffolk, became a reality.



*On 17th April 2014 the pub re-opened and Stewart Rose managed to persuade some of the first day customers to pose outside.*

## ALL THE COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW AND MORE



One of the distinctive and memorable sights in the villages of the AONB is the bright colours in which so many of the older houses are painted. Although this page is headed “All the colours of the rainbow” that is something of a misnomer. As these photographs show the colours chosen are generally much more subtle and discrete, normally pastel shades that fit into and enhance the street scene and the often elegant architecture. All the houses are in villages in the AONB but we have not identified each individual house. Many of you will, I am sure, recognise several.



# THE SUMMER PARTY

Scrutton Bland was delighted to be the Dedham Vale Summer Garden Party, Gold sponsors for the 2nd year and it was a pleasure to meet so many members on what turned out to be a lovely dry summers evening at Mr & Mrs John Rix beautiful Wissington Grove Farm.

The Society is clearly very well supported as the turnout was truly awesome and again very interesting from our perspective to hear the words of the Chairman as the aims of the Society became very clear.

Our competition was very popular on the evening; to guess 3 questions regarding 'The Allies' Sculpture of Winston Churchill & Franklin Roosevelt; this stumped quite a few people expect Gill Jackson who guessed all three correctly! The answers being:

**Name of the Sculpture:** The Allies  
**Insurance Value:** £1m  
**Location:** Old Bond Street, London

*I have emailed and phoned Gill to arrange delivery of the winning champagne but with no success so please do contact me Gill.*

Thank you very much to those of you that also completed our enquiry forms. As promised, I will be contacting you personally before your renewal date to enable us to discuss your Insurance to see if we can be of assistance and for every policy that goes on cover, Scrutton Bland will make a £25 donation to the Society.

If in the meantime should you wish to contact me to discuss any Insurance questions or problems please feel free to do so, my contact details are noted below.

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*The Chairman and our host, John Rix.*



*Guests in the Garden at Wissington Grove.*

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## CHIPPING AWAY AT THE EDGES

Many members will be familiar with the Inventories published by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments during the first quarter of the twentieth century. They included most towns and villages listing in order, (a) Earthworks and Roman, (b) Ecclesiastical, (c) Secular; the brief was to record all important examples, “from ancient times until 1700”, which they considered, “worthy of preservation”. The latter date was raised to 1714 six years after the first survey in 1908 but no reason was given for the change. The investigating staff were meticulous in their work and it seems extraordinary that they could gain access to so many properties in order not only to report upon their construction and condition but also to photograph the exterior and interiors of the most important examples. It would appear that every building built before 1714, however grand or humble, was inspected and a written report made on a record card of those deemed most worthy of preservation. Each card contained drawings of tracery or mouldings as well as plans and sketches and could be viewed at the Public Record Office by, “any properly accredited persons”.

Essex was divided into four parts, volume three for North East Essex being published in 1922 and it reported that it was, “an area containing 1,311 monuments in 101 parishes, with an average of 13 monuments per parish as compared with averages of 14.5 monuments in Central and S.W. Essex, 24 per parish in N.W. Essex and 8 per parish in Hertfordshire”.

Despite the Commission’s noble aim of preservation of those buildings they had listed, many have not survived the intervening years and Lawford on the eastern border of the AONB has perhaps suffered more than most villages in this respect. The Society’s Committee has always kept a watchful eye on the areas immediately surrounding the Vale in order to try to prevent the, “Central Park Syndrome”, skyscrapers on the boundary. Of course buildings such as these are unlikely to appear but Colchester is rapidly spilling-over into adjoining villages and we must be ever-vigilant. The Commission listed four houses amongst a group of mainly timber-framed buildings in Lower Lawford abutting Manningtree’s western boundary, an area now subsumed into the town. The street pattern was reminiscent of the centre of a town such as Holt in Norfolk where small lanes are bordered by houses and small businesses. But to no avail; everything was razed, the last building remaining until the early 1970s, its front wall daubed with the words “Judson’s Pet”, a reference to the heroic defence against its demolition by the late Tom Judson RIBA MRTPI who lived at The Old Rectory, Lawford and was a DVS stalwart. Station Road is now an exceedingly ugly approach to a delightful town in complete contrast to the Walls and its proximity to the river as the road winds down from Mistley to the east.

Wignall Street, Lawford forms the southern boundary of the AONB yet two cottages bordering the road within the conservation area were demolished in the 1980s to be

replaced by large modern houses. So have we learned any lessons? Perhaps. Earlier this year a developer applied for permission to demolish a cottage in Crown Street, Dedham but following representations from neighbours and bodies including the DVS the application was refused. The removal of a small building might appear to be insignificant but this particular cottage with its mansard roof so typical of East Essex forms an important part of the street frontage and it

is vital that examples like this remain.

If you haven't seen any of the Inventories they are well worth obtaining not least for the quality of the photographs which record faithfully the buildings deemed worthy of note ninety years ago.

*Paul Gallifant*



*Lower Lawford. The Commission listed four "monuments here but by 1970 nothing remained on the right side of the road.*



*Wignall St, Lawford. Cottage on the left was demolished in 1980, the other many years earlier. The King's Arms Pub on the right of the photo recently closed the last survivor of three at this junction.*

## UNDERGROUNDING OF EXISTING POWER LINES

On 22nd July, along with Cllr David Wood, Chairman of Suffolk Coasts & Heaths AONB Partnership, Simon Amstutz, now Manager of both AONBs and Paula Booth, I attended a briefing by National Grid about what it calls Visual Impact Provision.

This is the provision of £500 million agreed by OFGEM for electricity transmission owners to "mitigate the visual impact of existing electricity infrastructure" in nationally protected landscapes in Great Britain. It can only be spent on existing lines through National Parks and AONBs but it can include lines adjacent to or affecting the setting of these protected areas.

The money is to be spent over a period of eight years starting in April 2013. For National Grid it equates to 571km of Overhead Line, about 7% of the network. National Grid has developed a landscape assessment methodology to provide greater clarity around how decisions would be made, which has been supported by OFGEM.

A Stakeholder Advisory Group chaired by Chris Baines, an independent environmentalist, has been set up to set the priorities for spending the £500m. It includes bodies such as Natural England, CPRE, National Trust, Visit England,



English Heritage, the National Association of AONBs and National Grid.

The guiding principles are to prioritise proposals which:

- Result in the greatest landscape enhancement
- Result in the greatest opportunities to encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the protected landscape
- Are technically feasible in context of the wider transmission system
- Are economical and efficient

Schemes will be progressed one by one and a final report will be due in September this year which will identify a shortlist for further assessment. A meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group is due to be held at the end of October which will put forward successful candidates. Work will start to evaluate the shortlist of sites in late November. It was suggested that the National Association of AONBs should also come up with a formula for mitigating transmission infrastructure through other means such as screening from strategic viewpoints. In some areas this could be achieved with off-site planting which

could also bring added biodiversity and landscape benefits. OFGEM has still to decide whether this will be allowed.

I do not think that Dedham Vale or the Stour Valley will be included in this round. The reason is that it would make most sense to underground existing wires when the new 400kV lines go in, probably in the early 2020s.

However, providing the present scheme is a success and the undergrounding makes a positive impact, there is every

reason to suppose that a further tranche of funding will be available after 2021, perhaps on a rolling basis and our projects could very well benefit from that.

More information is available from National Grid via Hector Pearson [hector.pearson@nationalgrid.com](mailto:hector.pearson@nationalgrid.com)  
Or from their communications team led by Stuart Fox at Camargue, [sfox@camarguepr.com](mailto:sfox@camarguepr.com)

*Robert Erith*

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## ESSEX PLANNING NOTES

**How refreshing it is to write my report without having to brief you on planning issues at Horkesley Park: a 13 year battle came to an end in May when the Secretary of State refused the appeal from Bunting & Sons and we all are aware of the subsequent developments.**

However, the detailed plans of the new owners, W & H Park Ltd, a subsidiary of Pigeon Investments, are yet to be revealed to the public, although they have consulted widely with the local community including with the Dedham Vale Society.

The future debate may focus on whether:

- any plans are contrary to the Local Plan
- the site is agricultural land – CBC have already sought legal advice on this point - and would permission to build on it set a precedent in the area;
- could any planning permission granted be so tightly defined to prevent any subsequent variation;
- could the land be covenanted in such a way to control any future use?

A further complication is the future of Westwood Park. If it were to be developed into a major tourist attraction, just outside the Dedham Vale AONB, it could pose a threat to the peace and tranquillity we have fought to protect.

I would use Churchill's famous remark after the battles of WWII in North Africa – this is the end of the beginning – not the beginning of the end.

There are very serious issues ahead for the DVS to focus on with the Colchester Local Plan being reviewed in 2015 and the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project Management Plan 2015 – 2020 currently being re-examined. These two documents were pivotal to the Planning Inspector/Secretary of State's rejection of the Bunting Appeal and form the framework of virtually every objection I write across the area.

At a less macro level, an increasing problem is the urbanisation of our villages across the whole of the Vale. If there is a row of similar cottages, typical of a period in our history, almost certainly there will be a planning application to erect an extension, which would destroy the



*A typical Road Junction in the AONB.*

uniformity of the street scene. In extreme circumstances plans to demolish a property and build another, with total disregard to the cultural heritage of an area, are not uncommon. Even apparently small applications can destroy the historical heritage of an area. If we wish to preserve our villages we must allow a degree of flexibility for change but this must be within context of the cultural heritage of an area.

The Village Design Statements (VDS), which most of our villages have produced at enormous effort, were designed to set out the characteristic values of our communities, and are key to assessing what is, and is not, acceptable. However, there are unfortunate examples where the Planning Offices have ignored a local VDS which had previously been approved by the same Planning Officers. Do these Village Design Statements have real power in the planning process or can they be set aside by Planning Officers without regard to the wishes of a community?

Another issue is road signage right across the Dedham Vale. On the A134 at Nayland there are 13 signs within 0.3 miles

and I would suggest less than 10 % of them are relevant to road safety issues. The plethora of signs go back to the days when County Councils had excessive amounts of money and spent it without regard to the impact of these signs on the landscape – perhaps now is the time to turn back the flood of signage which is engulfing the countryside. Apparently in National Parks all traffic signs are written on the road itself, thus removing the need for intrusive vertical signs – on a recent visit to Lincolnshire this practice made arrival in a village a much more pleasant experience. However, if we are going to tackle the problem I need you help. Please advise me of any examples of excessive signage in the Vale.

So the year ahead looks to be a busy one with many potential challenges to the countryside we love and I hope, once again, you will keep me informed of any developments which you see as a threat to the peace and tranquillity of the Vale.

*Roger Drury*

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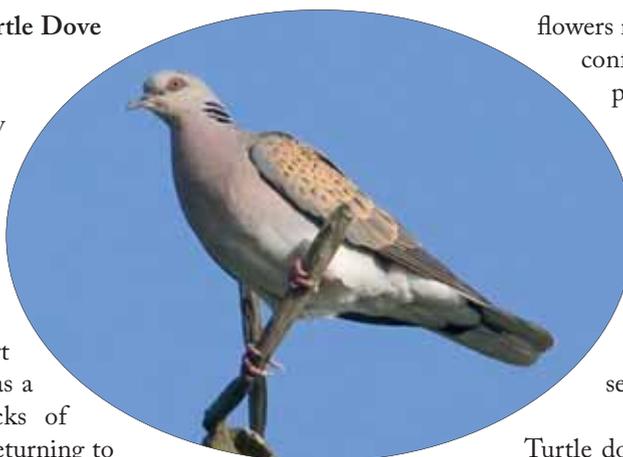
## HAVE YOU SEEN THIS BIRD? – MANY MAY NEVER GET THE CHANCE

By Samantha Lee, RSPB Turtle Dove Conservation Adviser

Few people would wish away the years and fewer still, I suspect, would say what I'm about to: 'I wish I'd been born 15 years earlier'. Because I have been denied something, something that those watching a relatively short time ago probably thought was a fairly common sight – flocks of several hundred turtle doves returning to the UK for summer. The biggest 'flock' I have seen was the grand size of three. Three. If only I had been on the coasts of East Anglia where I could have regularly witnessed numbers c 800 on passage just two decades ago.

The turtle dove is a dainty and delicately patterned, relatively shy bird – especially compared to its bigger, more populous cousin the collared dove. The latter, probably one of the most commonly seen birds in the UK and frequent raider of garden feeders, is a simple beige with dark ring or 'collar' around its neck. Turtle doves on the other hand, have orange eyes accentuated with a further pink-red ring around them, a patch about the size of a two piece coin on their neck is stripes of black and white, wings are decorated with black and rich chestnut diamonds and all that is left is coloured by shades of soft lilac and grey.

Unlike any other dove or pigeon we get in this country, turtle doves are migratory. They travel over 3,000 miles from their wintering grounds in West Africa to get here. Arriving from mid-April, the gentle 'purring' sound of the males is a sign that summer has arrived just as much as blossoms on



flowers mean spring is here. Among the confusing cacophony of the high pitched, fluty and variable songs of other birds also singing at this time, there is something so understated and calming (and easy to identify!) about the song of a turtle dove. But each year, fewer people get to hear this sound of summer; fewer still get the delight of seeing them.

Turtle doves are one of the UK's fastest declining birds with a population which has plummeted by 93% since the late 1970's. Estimates suggest they will go extinct as a breeding species in the UK within the decade if no action is taken. The future certainly looks bleak. So what went wrong and, ultimately is there anything we can do to save them?

As a migrant, turtle doves face threats right across their flyway: the route travelled between summer and wintering grounds. This includes loss of habitat (both ends and en route), illegal hunting and disease. These threats feed into what is currently recognised as being the main driver of their rapid decline – that they are having fewer young. During the sixties, turtle dove pairs, which mate for life, were having up to four nesting attempts with the potential to produce eight chicks (two eggs per nest) over the breeding season. This has now halved. The reason is believed to be a lack of food when the birds first arrive back on their breeding grounds, the small seeds of our native arable plants upon which they feed are no longer available in the quantities they once were. Whilst they do feed on wheat and oil seed rape, often these sources of food are available

later on in the season and without a good range they lack certain sources of protein. It's the equivalent of us eating white bread all the time, whilst we can survive on it, we certainly wouldn't be as healthy as someone getting their five-a-day.

So what can be done about it? Operation Turtle Dove is a partnership project between the RSPB, Natural England, Conservation Grade and Pensthorpe Conservation Trust. The project aims to reverse the decline of turtle doves by working across the birds migration route and leading on scientific research which will help to focus conservation efforts where they are most needed. And how does this affect you? The Dedham Vale and Stour Estuary are a real hot spot for turtle doves, one of the last strongholds in the country and for that reason I'm based in this region to offer free advice to farmers and landowners on how they can be part of saving a species from extinction.

So, if you or a friend have a spare bit of land or garden, maybe think about how it could be used to make a difference to a species that has long been an icon of summer and English countryside and to generations of young people who in years to come may wish they had been around decades earlier so that they could have witnessed the pleasure of the sights and sounds of the turtle dove.

Designated AONB's are described as 'in the nation's interest to safeguard them', it's the wildlife that brings these places alive and it is surely within our interests to safeguard the turtle dove.

For more information please visit

<http://operationturtledove.org/>

Or contact me: Samantha Lee [Samantha.lee@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Samantha.lee@rspb.org.uk)

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## SUFFOLK PLANNING NOTES

Since I last wrote these notes I am pleased to report that Babergh District Council adopted its Local Development Framework (LDF) last February and we do now have some more protection from unsuitable development. We are no longer dependent on the loose generalities of the National Planning Policy Framework. More recently the Council has gone further and put out for consultation a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) expanding on their Rural Housing Policy set out in their Core Strategy Policy CS11. This deals particularly with housing developments proposed in or adjacent to the villages and hamlets of the District. In most respects it is reassuringly prescriptive and should make it very unlikely that anything seriously damaging can be added to any of the villages within the AONB. It does, however, by implication allow for easier breaches in the Built Up Area Boundary of villages, a line that has always been accepted heretofore as a very firm edge almost impossible to go beyond. It also expects street lighting to be provided from any development to the centre of the village. As it now seems to be accepted that street lighting does not enhance either personal or road safety and its running costs would fall to already financially stretched Parish Councils this seems a requirement too far.

On the more mundane Householder Planning Application front most of the applications drawn to my attention are for extensions to existing properties, seldom objectionable in themselves except in far as they reduce yet further the already very small stock of genuinely "affordable" housing in the vale. Every now and again one does appear that is objectionable, for example a recent one in Nayland with Wissington on the slopes of the beautiful valley towards Bures where the applicant seeks to replace an admittedly decrepit farmhouse with a large detached suburban house complete with pillared portico entirely out of keeping with the vernacular of the area. The Society and the Project have both objected.

We have also commented adversely on an application for a new cowshed at Scotland Hall Farm. These farm buildings on the edge of a wood above Scotland Street were the original site of Jim Lawrence's very successful wrought Ironworks, now in a modern factory on an industrial estate in Hadleigh. They were greatly expanded to accommodate his growing business but always discretely. Since the business moved to Hadleigh the buildings appear largely underused with very little activity, certainly nothing to disturb the tranquillity of the AONB. We have questioned whether a large, and very ugly, new cowshed is really necessary when it ought to be possible to convert a portion of the existing buildings back to its original use.

The application to convert the old Maltings in Stratford St Mary into 6 apartments to which I referred last time has still not been decided. The original submission was a year ago but clearly even now not everybody is satisfied.

*David Eking*



*Cygnets at Boxted Mill.*

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