

FISHLAKE MEADOWS NATURE RESERVE. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

Principles of management

Fishlake Meadows is one of the most important inland wetland areas in Hampshire and hence is of at least county importance for its wildlife richness. It is also extremely unusual in having developed much of this importance over a relatively short time, against a background of a general massive loss of wetland habitat over recent decades. I strongly support it being declared and managed as a nature reserve to maintain and enhance its wildlife importance as the primary aim.

The principle that must underpin the planning and development of Fishlake Meadows Nature Reserve for public enjoyment, appreciation of its scenery and wildlife, and educational use, is that this be done in a way that is fully compatible with conserving and enhancing its wildlife, including maintaining undisturbed the areas that support the many sensitive species present.

Public Access

1. General. I support the proposals for paths and viewpoints shown on the consultation map, these being compatible with the above principles, and essential to the site becoming a community asset. However, in considering any further access provisions not shown on the map, no more access should be contemplated into the sensitive 'core' of the area, or which would disturb it, this being both essential to maintaining the wildlife importance of the site and to enable the public to enjoy that wildlife from the viewpoints and paths currently proposed. Is not possible to comment on the prospect of other paths beyond this principle without details of the proposed route.

2. Western footpath and proposed bridge. As I understand it from discussions three years ago with Hampshire County Council's legal department over the construction of a bridge on the existing western footpath that would enable the creation of a circular path around Fishlake Meadows, HCC had agreed with the owners of the land that such a bridge could be constructed on an agreed line and width. However, although not involved by this stage, my understanding is that the section of HCC dealing with implementing this proposal then decided that the width of the agreed land on which the bridge was to be sited was too narrow for their current standards.
 - ◆ I urge TVBC to make every effort to work with HCC to find a way to complete the bridge, and hence achieve the extremely desirable aim of a circular walk around Fishlake Meadows, by either innovative engineering design or relaxing other than strictly legally required standards for health and safety, even if it is more expensive.

The existing definitive public footpath running north from Fishlake Meadows Road (number 502), which is currently in very poor condition and marshy in parts, should also be made up to a standard for all year round easy public use.

- ◆ If the bridge really cannot be built, then the section of public footpath 502 described above, should still be made up to a standard for all year round public use. A viewpoint should also be constructed near its northern end overlooking Fishlake Meadows, to the same standard as the others proposed elsewhere on the nature reserve, this requiring the felling of a few trees to open the view. This would provide an excellent walk to extend the section of footpath 502 that runs out of Romsey and up the east side of the Fishlake Stream to Fishlake Meadows Road, and fine views across Fishlake Meadows, even if this is less ideal than completing the circular walk, as above.

Community Involvement

The leaflet says that interpretation, educational and community use, and local involvement in the management of the site could be developed. It is essential that these things are developed (as long as this is in line with the principle for management outlined above). With this, plus the access provisions, Fishlake Meadows and its wildlife will become, and be seen to be, a valued Romsey community asset. Without this, there is the danger that the site could be seen as a specialist one for the wildlife expert, remote from the local community, and of limited value to it.

Water Management

The wildlife richness of Fishlake Meadows depends on the maintenance of its current wetland habitats, including extensive areas of open water. This in turn is dependent on the maintenance of current water levels, with natural seasonal variations, this being what has enabled the current wildlife richness to develop in the first place. I realise that the detailed management plan will cover hydrological management, but any suggestion of lowering water levels must be rejected.

Habitat Management

The site has reached the point where positive conservation management is essential if the variety of habitats and species is to be maintained and enhanced. For instance, wetland areas are being lost to scrub, and meadow habitats lost due to the lack of grazing. Just leaving the site to develop in its own way would mean a progressive loss of its wildlife importance. I therefore support the principles outlined in the leaflet.

Extending the nature reserve

Hampshire County Council owns roughly 2ha of the SINC in the south-western corner of Fishlake Meadows and between the Oxlease Drain and Fishlake Meadows Road, including a section of footpath 502. This area is an integral part of the SINC and in need of positive management. HCC should be approached with a view to incorporating their land into the nature reserve. (N.B. I have a copy of the HCC ownership map).

Organisational arrangement for managing the site and the section 106 money

1. Managing this sensitive wetland will require expertise and experience of managing such wetland sites. I would urge TVBC to jointly manage the site with the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, with the Trust taking on the day to day management. This would also mean that the Trust, as a charity, could access additional funds unavailable to TVBC.
2. The section 106 money should be ring-fenced for Fishlake Meadows, with interest from the investment of the fund added to the basic sum, with details of its management publically available.

I believe fishlake meadows has become an important area for wildlife because its been left to nature. Test Valley has only become interested in this area because of the bribe given by the speculator who now owns the land. For a Local Authority to manage the area will be detrimental and would only benefit the authorities ever increasing bureaucracy, will we soon have a park ranger and assistant and maybe a public relations advisor. Management will mean footpaths giving access to walkers and dogs and will leave the area and its wildlife in decline, an area similar to whats left of Abbotswood which is now now little more than a dogs toilet and exercise area. Lets face it Test valley has hardly got a good track record when it comes to conservation, why can't you leave just one small area to wildlife without your interference. I believe fishlake should be given with the money allocated to the RSPB or a similar organisation who has the expertise to look after this very important site.

Fishlake Meadows Comments

I went on a guided walk round the Meadows on Feb 27th and would like to thank Andy Lester John Durnell and Kevin Harrington for their input. I am delighted that Test Valley are seizing this unique opportunity for securing a very special environment for future Romsonians. I realise that the management programme is difficult when trying to satisfy the needs of different groups.

I appreciate the excellent leaflet you produced but have on very serious complaint. Now that Test Valley no longer has an office in Romsey it is essential to ensure information is available locally. Not everybody reads the Romsey Advertiser. I was horrified to learn that the local Tourist Information Bureau were most upset because they had not been given any information on the Fishlake Meadows consultation process. Whilst in their shop two people came in asking about the Display in the Square on February 28th which they were unable to find. I feel that such an important issue should have publicity here and in the Library

Unique site

This site is so special for wild life but also so fragile that it must be managed very carefully to maintain biodiversity. I would like to know that some covenant would be in place to stop future fickle councils deciding it should be a public amenity area with open access to all (dogs included), draining it and using it for football pitches or even housing (on stilts)

Community Involvement

I was delighted to see representatives from HLOWWT. They have so much expertise in managing sites and also the resources e.g. cattle for grazing. They also have a strong volunteer base. It is essential that it is at least partly wardened. However, I would like to see a Friends of Fishlake Meadows Group formed with regular meetings and walks and volunteer activities who could work with the Trust but be the daily eyes and ears. They could also pick up litter and nip any vandalism in the bud. Also involving the young is essential; local school visits with practical activities e.g. pond dipping so they would learn to care about it. Local Brownie Cub and Scout group could use it as a valuable. I was surprised that no Ornithology association appears to be involved. There could also be links with local WIs and U3A

Dogs versus wild life

I feel it is essential to maintain the site's diversity especially in number of birds to restrict access to most of the site. I am very happy that that everyone has access to footpath 9 and 10 but feel that dogs should be on a lead even here. I am very unhappy if dogs were allowed on the sensitive permissive path as this would cause so much stress to birds resting midway on a long migration flight and also breeding birds.

Fishlake Meadow Road

This poses a problem as it if the footpath alongside the Meadows was upgraded and viewing areas provided it would be essential that both dogs and humans were unable to access the reserve directly.

Thank you for organising the consultation and I would be grateful if you could let me know about further developments

Fishlake Meadows Nature Reserve
Public Engagement Comments

My wife and I thoroughly enjoyed our guided walk which was well informed and interesting due to the information provided by the IOW Wild Life Team, Ian Tripp and you.

We are supporters of this scheme, and having had the benefit of this walk, approve of the bias towards nature preservation vs leisure. Having said that, we are essentially people who enjoy walking in natural surroundings and enjoy viewing wild life and plants and flowers rather than being 'bird or fish enthusiasts'. Our comments thus reflect that viewpoint. We would use this wetland asset as a nature walk easily accessible from our home and would enjoy taking our grandchildren with us (they are currently aged 6 and 10).

The Canal Path north of Fishlake Meadows Rd (indeed, from the bridge at Old Road) would benefit from upgrading to be 'all weather'. Today, the need to keep looking at the ground to avoid mud and puddles detracted from taking in the views while walking. In places the path slopes badly from one side to the other and in places the protruding hardcore infill is hard on the soles of wellington boots and lighter footwear.

Dual use with cyclists was discussed: we think the path is too narrow to encourage cycling as well as walking. It should not be dual use unless widened, which would entail considerable work to widen the bank.

Interpretation boards will be a great benefit along the walk. Today we learned that Elder used to be used to make charcoal for explosives and Poplar was used to make match sticks. That history should be on some of the boards as well as 'this is a picture of the leaf of an elder tree', etc.

Parking was raised as a concern by some local residents. We think that this is an asset that may well attract visitors by car – just from 'the other side of Romsey', from Tadburn for example, even though the distance to the start of the canal walk by the Plaza is quite short. (Crossing the road from at the Southampton Road roundabout and again by the Plaza can be tricky). So the proposed limited size carpark is necessary. I propose that in partnership with two businesses that would benefit from being associated with this asset more parking could be provided to mutual benefit, namely World of Water and the Duke's Head Public House. Having access to the perimeter path from both of these locations would help all concerned.

We liked the potential for professionally guided walks and appreciated being told about how Ashfield Meadow could be used. School parties were mentioned: good idea, where will their school bus transport be parked? Provision in the Belbins area and access via footpath nine may be an answer!

We particularly enjoyed being guided into the centre of the site by means of the permissive path. Neither of us has walked there before. The narrow winding path between high reeds and grasses was a joy! So we support keeping this path narrow and winding – but with some all-weather improvement and boardwalks over the boggy bits. I personally like boardwalks having used them in nature reserves in the USA, but I can see that cost would be an issue in providing that all the way from the east-west path to the proposed viewing platform. I understand the reasoning for proposing screening between people and the wildlife on the viewing platform but think it would detract from the panoramic vista.

We would agree with the proposal not to provide picnic facilities at this point, it would seriously detract and clog up the limited space available.

Finally, some concerns. There is not a complete circular path proposed that would allow one to enter where we did today and return to that point without backtracking. There are two gaps where one has to walk along the A3057 and then Fishlake Meadow Road. That is a shame, but not a 'showstopper'. A boardwalk path along the north side of Fishlake Meadow Rd would be a boon.

As motorists, we can't encourage driving along there with the driver looking at the view rather than the road! Worse still would be to encourage them to stop on that road to see the view. The viewpoint shown on the map would be an accident waiting to happen.

FISHLAKE MEADOWS NATURE RESERVE

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
COMMENT FORM

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____
(Please provide if you wish to be kept informed as the project progresses)

Comments:
A fantastic walk, well led by enthusiastic
informed people who communicated well.
Please go ahead with your plans -
I cannot improve on them other than to
suggest a bird hide accessed off
Fishlake Meadow Rd - this would be
useful to local schools who could
~~with~~ walk to the site.
Locally grazed, slaughtered & sold beef!
Yes - fab idea.
Parking - where will this be?
Disabled access - I had a discussion
with someone about this & I'm sure
it will be sorted.
PTD

I am prepared to forgo my off lead
local dogwalk for such an important
site so wild life can be preserved.

09 FEB 2015



RECEIVED

FISHLAKE MEADOWS NATURE RESERVE

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
COMMENT FORM

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____
(Please provide if you wish to be kept informed as the project progresses)

- Comments: Thank you for a very useful and enjoyable guided tour of the site on 29th January 2015.
- ① I fully support the plan that Fishlake Meadows be managed as a nature reserve. It has a wonderful riches of wildlife species both animals, birds, plants and these should be protected.
 - ② I hope management will be some form of partnership between T.V.B.C. & Hants & IOW Naturalists Trust.
 - ③ I strongly believe that access to the majority of the site should be for wildlife enthusiasts. Dogs should be restricted to canal path 10, and a lead. Dogs should be excluded from the spiral/central path. I am not anti-dog but visit many reserves in Hampshire & observe that the best ones for wildlife viewing are the ones which exclude dog-access!
 - ④ Recreational pursuits such as fishing, boating, etc are adequately available elsewhere & are not compatible with conservation on a site this rich & this size.
 - ⑤ I would like to see the canal path improved - with wider hoggid surface & viewing platforms.
 - ⑥ The "permissive" central path is the real opportunity for something very special! It might be developed

P.T.O.

as a boardwalk or causeway with a more winding course.

~~to have a more~~

Ideally there should be spurs off this central path leading deeper into the site to platforms screens or hides.

(Either Blashford Lakes or Titchfield Haven provide the sort of trip I mean).

⑦ I hope this helpful. I really look forward to being kept up to date on progress. I am willing to be more involved on some level if possible & useful.

26 February 2015

TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY & LEISURE SERVICES

Test Valley Borough Council
Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road
Andover SP10 3AJ

27 FEB 2015

Re: *Fishlake Consultation*

RECEIVED

Dear Sirs

The conducted tour at the end of January was interesting and informative and together with the leaflet gives a very good indication of the aspirations and plans to maintain and improve this unique wetland habitat. Our comments endorse all of those on the leaflet.

1. *Access to the land at present under private ownership:*

- a. Along the barge canal path from the proposed car park in the new Oxlease development;
- b. Through wooded path from Cupernham Lane.

The canal path certainly requires upgrading and the canal bank strengthened – with suitable planting – to prevent further erosion and to encourage habitats for water voles, invertebrates and wildfowl, but firstly the rat population must be eradicated (their presence will not be welcomed by prospective house buyers of Oxlease!) In upgrading the canal path we do not believe a cycle path to be a priority; pleasant but expensive and only a short cut to the Test Way at Timsbury when funds can be more urgently targeted to the management and ecology of the Fishlake site.

We suggest an addition small car park (layby) at the Belbins end of Cupernham Lane to connect more directly to the wetland central entrance via footpath 9. (This may be a more direct and safe route for groups of visiting schoolchildren – see my note 3)

2. *The area at present privately owned.*

We agree that no time should be lost in work necessary to re-balance the ecology. We welcome the introduction of livestock – suitable breeds of cattle and possibly sheep – to graze scrub, tussock grass and undesirable plants and enable a rich marsh flora to regenerate. Monitor closely and eradicate invasive plants like Himalayan balsam in wetland areas and the canal bank! Open out as many drains as possible in the original water-meadow structures to prevent stagnation. Encourage breeding areas in the wetlands by scrub and reed management, perhaps make artificial islands to create predator-safe areas for ground-nesting birds, (ref those at Arundel) and monitor fish stocks in connection with otters and fish-eating birds.

3. *Public access to the wetland area.*

Standing in the area of the proposed viewing platform was a fantastic and other-worldly experience reminiscent of the best East Anglian nature reserves. The colours and the quietness was an amazing experience. In order for these features to be enjoyed

- a. a serpentine board walk to be constructed to the viewing platform with (possibly) a hide and outdoor seating. A second board walk might be a future project to give a different view of Fishlake. Notices/display boards to be positioned at the entrance indicating required behaviour of persons and dogs (on leads at all times). Preferably no dogs on the board walks – any excessive noise will disturb the wildlife. No radios and no phones turned on. (Most nature reserves allow dogs on leads only on the causeways).
- b. small educational groups under strict supervision (for their own safety above all) to appreciate and enjoy the uniqueness of the site would be welcomed, with perhaps a picnic area sited at the junction of Ashley Meadows, the wetland itself and footpath 9.
- c. Ultimately, it would be very good to invite volunteers to work with staff in maintaining the site.

For everyone self discipline is going to be a key feature, To monitor it will be difficult. But good management, and the rewards of visitors of seeing rare species will hopefully make this very special habitat a wonderful experience for all who enjoy the natural world.

Fishlake Meadows Nature Reserve.

Public engagement comment.

TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY & LEISURE SERVICES

17 FEB 2015

RECEIVED

COMMENTS

Great idea, which I support.

However, the path structure is not satisfactory.

- 1) Path '10' which runs North on the East side of the reserve should be upgraded to a cycle path, which is in accordance with current Test Valley strategy (October 2014) The path/cycle route should connect properly to the path/cycle path along the A3057 towards Timsbury, properly is not on the road, but a dedicated path, thus families/women are much more likely to use it, which will help change the public perception of cycling. Should this be done one can then cycle off road from Romsey to Stockbrige..particularly if a descent surface is put on the Test Valley Way..radical!
- 2) Footpaths on the West do not join, I'm sure it's possible to walk along the A3057, however, a path within the reserve should be constructed. The opportunity to build a path along the Southern boundary should be seized, thus creating a circular walk around the reserve...wow!
- 3) Footpath '9' properly connected to the Abbotswood development.

The above enable people to access the site without the use of a car and avoid unpleasant/dangerous cycling or walking on the roads, thus the project is certain to be more successful. Descent paths allows bikes, wheelchairs, buggies, kids bikes/scooters etc, while hides will allow more serious users better access.

Thanks.

Alternative aspirations for Fishlake Meadows

Fishlake Meadows is a man-made structure originally developed by cutting out blocks for use as fuel in the town as recorded by Dr Latham writing in the late 1700s. Its future is currently being discussed with wildlife enthusiasts from a number of organisations but the view expressed here is that its use for leisure (walking, cycling, fishing, boating etc) would be of huge value to the town and should also be considered.

Its use for leisure and as a nature reserve are, in fact, compatible concepts. An example of this is Fleet Pond in Hampshire which is the same size as Fishlake Meadows and was developed by members of Fleet Pond Society who provided over 100 volunteers to construct a neatly gravelled path with seats and display boards around the perimeter, and piers for viewing, fishing, boating etc. The whole site is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and since its development began in 1974, many species of birds have increased and new ones have arrived.

Another example is Frensham Ponds in Surrey which are also SSSIs and located in an area of outstanding natural beauty. They have been developed similarly to Fleet Pond and are immensely popular with the local community.

FISHLAKE MEADOWS CONSULTATION

Thank you for organising the guided walk, which was very informative

The priority is that this site should be used and managed for the benefit of the diversification of flora and fauna, especially the bird and wildlife. This site should be considered the jewel in the crown of Hampshire nature reserves and probably should enjoy even higher statutory secure status, as evidenced that this site has the highest recorded number of bird species within the past 6 years, including a number of unusual visiting and breeding species.

Public access should generally be limited to existing paths (especially dog walking) to ensure that there is no detriment to the wildlife, together with controlled access to other parts e.g. guided walks, educational visits. I am totally opposed to allowing boats onto any of the water areas and fishing should be limited to the canal. I totally oppose any activities on the site that could be akin to a 'Country Park', which would be totally against the principle of a Nature Reserve and detrimental to wildlife.

The future management of the site should be appropriate to enhancing biodiversity and encourage the bird and wildlife use by provision of appropriate habitats. I believe such management would be empathetic to and support general flood prevention measures around Romsey, which is an important factor. Overall such management is most appropriately provided in conjunction with an experienced volunteer organisation, such as the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust thus involving the wider community.

I generally support the ideas set out in the consultation brochure with the following detailed comments;

- Footpaths should be improved without the use of hard surfacing or lighting and fencing / hedging should be unobtrusive. Board walks would be acceptable.
- Viewing Screens and Interpretation Boards are very acceptable.
- Access from the A3057 along Footpath 9 should be maintained appropriately to allow all season access (specifically the western end). Perhaps an arrangement with World of Water for parking in their secondary car park could be negotiated.
- The observation screen on Fishlake Meadows Road (as shown on the brochure) should be moved westwards to just short of the bus stop, to provide a relatively full view of the lake.

The priority for this very important wildlife site is that it be managed as a Nature Reserve.

Fishlake Meadows Consultation,
Community, Leisure and Countryside Service,
TVBC,
Beech Hurst,
Weyhill Road,
Andover.

Dear Sir,

My group wish to make our views known regarding the existing Rights of Way and possible permissive paths around Fishlake. Thank you for giving us this opportunity.

The Canal Path, Romsey Extra FP 10. We note in your notes, "An accessible place" you talk about improvements to the surface and an up-grade to a shared footpath and cycleway. The section alongside the water meadows between Fishlake Road and Belbins Bridge owes its attraction to the existing rural situation. Some damage occurred to the surface last year when water overflowed into the Meadows. *Some of the muddy sections could be improved with gravel. We would not like to have a tarmac surface in this pleasant rural area.* As we have noted in our response to the Cycleway Strategy Consultation of 2014, for cyclists to be able to use the path all the vegetation would have to be removed. This would destroy the tranquillity of the path. The existing width of the tow path is 2.60m. At one point it is 1.60. The Ramblers Association consider 3meters to be the absolute minimum for shared use. Two people walking together need 2 m with a cyclist passing needing 1m. *This cannot be achieved safely with water one side and a drop the other side without extensive engineering work along this poplar path.*

You suggest a scenic and safe route into the countryside. We do not agree, the A3057 is a no-go route. With large housing developments being built and being planned to the north of the town cyclists using an up-graded FP 9 could travel at speed down the hill to the detriment of walkers. This track is also used by vehicles accessing the bungalow at the bottom. *Our suggestion is to provide Cupernham Lane which is without a footway, with a shared footway and cycleway leaving the canal path for walkers and families to enjoy.*

The Southern Path. When Kevin Keegan was the owner of Oxlease Farm the Golf Course application included a public path from the Cupernham Roundabout, through the bottom of the proposed Oxlease Estate, over the canal and onto the existing path to the pump house. The path then extended across a piece of land owned by HCC to connected to what is now FP502 at The Fishlake. *As you are proposing a car park in the new estate and a view point on the southern boundary, could this path be reinstated please.* In the original application the path was accepted by HCC, but unfortunately did not proceed when the application was withdrawn.

The claimed path, now Romsey Extra FP 502. As you know this saga goes back 36 years when Ron Genge of the Romsey & District Society claimed the path from Duttons Road. The route up around The World of Water and Fishlake House still has not been resolved. The matter is still with the County Court. HCC have now withdrawn from the case and are waiting to see the outcome of Test Valleys proposals for The Water Meadows. *My groups preference is for the path to be connected up to FP 9 as originally intended.* This would give walkers the opportunity to walk to the Tea Rooms, or to use (hopefully) a raised path around the west bank of the Fishlake.

One other option would be, if you could consider a path from the existing end of FP 502 to a point to the viewing platform in the centre of the Water Meadows. This would then connect up with your permissive path, which we welcome. *This would be a facility that could be enjoyed by all members of the community within walking distance from the town*

Comments:

I fully support this development of the R. T. Wet Woodplain @ Fishlake Meadows, as a nature reserve.

This month, (February 2015) we have witnessed on 2 separate dates - Wed 25 & Wed 18th a barn owl hunting in this area @ twilight.

As a runner in this area, I have also rescued several tracks crossing to the meadows!

As an "open" resource for public and education use, it will be an extra natural "attraction"

Comments:

THE PLANS SOUND VERY GOOD. I HOPE THEY GO AHEAD WITH THEM.

Comments:

I am looking forward to walking this area along the planned paths + boardwalks. It is good that it is to become more accessible. I understand that it is a fine balance between accessibility + conservation & think that this will be a challenge to H.C.C. I would be happy to keep dogs on a lead along the central boardwalk - in the really sensitive nesting area etc, but would hope that the paths to the side, i.e. along the canal, would remain areas where dogs could be off the lead. Perhaps a gate and sign, when entering the 'sensitive area' would be a good idea & form a practical barrier & cutoff point for dogs off leads.

I am enjoying the way that this consultation is being opened up to the general public.

Comments:

Fully support the plans.

TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY & LEISURE SERVICES

25 FEB 2015

RECEIVED

Comments:

THIS IS A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP, AND ENHANCE, A VERY RARE AND RICH NATURAL HABITAT. THE EXPERTISE OF THE HAMPSHIRE AND I.O.W WILDLIFE TRUST, WHO HAVE A PROVEN RECORD IN THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURE RESERVES, WILL BE A GREAT ASSET TO THIS PROJECT, AS I AM SURE THEY WILL BALANCE THE NEEDS OF THE FLORA AND FAUNA WITH THAT OF THE PUBLIC WHO WISH ~~TO~~ ~~SEE~~ ~~IT~~ ~~AND~~ ~~WANT~~ ~~TO~~ ~~SEE~~ ~~IT~~ TO VISIT SUCH A FABULOUS UNSPOILT SITE.

Comments:

1. The upgrade of the cycle path is an excellent proposal. This will connect with the path to be north alongside the main road and provide a SAFE route to Romsey for cyclists of all ages.
2. Footpaths - a new footpath to join up with the one that goes nowhere is sorely needed. The footpath action for path 9 is often very wet & impassable near where it approaches the water garden centre & needs a boardwalk & other improvement.

Comments:

ITS ALREADY A NATURE RESERVE.
WHY SPEND ANY MONEY TRYING
TO IMPROVE ACCESS?

Comments:

- We are very supportive of the proposal to manage Fishlake Meadows as a nature reserve with improved public access.
- It is also essential that the land remains as a wetland area so as to contain excess floodwater should the need arise again.
- The existing public rights of way (FRs 9+10) do need improvement, particularly FR 10 to the north of the junction with FR 9. In addition the western section of FR 9 is not good at the moment.
- FR 10 could certainly be improved for joint use as a cycle route, but would need significant widening. The concept of a "safe route out into the countryside" is a good one, but once the A3057 is reached the road is anything but safe. A proper footway/cycleway/verge is needed there, both to the north and south. (The shared-use footway/cycleway north of Bury Lane shows what is needed.)
- The other cul-de-sac right of way (FR No ?) from Fishlake Meadows (road) needs linking in with the other paths to "make sense". Could it be linked to the proposed "permissive path" using the existing concrete bridge across the watercourse beside the permissive path? (As you will be aware, this path is already in existence, but very wet in places).
- Improving the "permissive path" is an excellent idea. Could it be extended a bit further to the south beyond the area of the concrete bridge to provide a better view, probably through screens, of the main area of water?

We hope these comments are useful and
look forward to hearing from you further.

Comments:

NO BICYCLES PLEASE. THE TOW PATH IS
TWO NARROW FOR BIKES & PEDESTRIANS &
WOULD COST TOO MUCH TO MAKE
WIDER, WHEN WALKERS & CYCLISTS SHARE
a PATH, WALKERS ALWAYS LOOSE OUT.

Comments:

Nice for wildlife but not much use to do community work
even a circular footpath!

What was the point of Romsey Nature when it was recommended
by a large majority that the site should be developed for both
a nature reserve and for leisure purposes?

Comments:

- ① Canal tow path needs to be wide enough to allow free flow of cyclists / walkers / walkers with dogs
- ② Current problem along tow path dogs often off leads - this creates problems for other users - I have a dog that is walked along the path twice a day but always on a lead - too many dogs run along the inner & outer paths without an owner in sight - this spoils enjoyment of other users - also currently the sides of all the canal side paths are strewn with dog poo - this will have to be addressed if you want to make this area for families to enjoy together. More dog poo boxes may help.
- ③ If the area proves very popular where will overflow parking be available? Already tricycle riders are parking in Robert Whitworth Drive, also college students catching the early bus to Winchester are parking all day in Robert Whitworth Drive. Families visiting the soft ball play centre are parking at the bottom of Fishlake Road on either sides of the road.
- ④ I presume the managed site will encourage more birds - at certain times of the year my car is covered in goat bird droppings - not ideal !!!

COMMISSIONER & SECRETARY
LESLAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Comments:

Your most important role is to manage the water levels. Surely, last winter taught us all that a large area of Rowsey is at risk and all efforts should be made to reduce risk of flooding ⁱⁿ the future.

LESLAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Comments:

I have always felt that the meadows is an ideal place for a wildlife reserve being a keen birdwatcher. However I would hate the ambience and tranquility of the canal walk to be destroyed by the proposed development. It is wonderful to be able to walk straight into the countryside and have the world of nature at my door.

~~(Please provide if you wish to be kept informed as the project progresses)~~

Comments:

Can you tell me the current position with the Ciperanhou Lane on road parking proposals that were being circulated last year.

Comments:

As a non Romsey resident, we would visit but where would there be parking? Will provisions be made.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ISLANDS

Josh Lake Meadows should be developed for the whole community, i.e. Bird Watchers, Walkers, Cyclists. Which appreciates the need for restricted areas to protect wild life I would like to be able to walk all round Josh Lake. This will mean an improvement alongside the canal, and along the northern extremity.

However a good deal of work needs to be done near the 'World of Water'.

Also along Josh Lake (the road) the existing path is on the opposite side of road. People will end up cross-crossing the road which is barely used. Alternative is to build a footpath within the meadows.

Comments:

I fully endorse and support the development and management of Fishlake as a wildlife reserve. There should be minimal change except for improving access and viewing. Extended leisure use - boating, beach, motorised activity - should not be considered.

I believe that the development and future management should be heavily influenced by the Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust.

~~I was~~ Before retirement I was a professional project manager and would welcome the opportunity to get involved.

Comments:

Eager to see project started!

Comments:

I hope that sufficient off road parking will be provided. We already have students from Peter Symonds parking in Robert Whitehead Drive to catch the 50s from Fishlake. Because of the high increase in nesting birds I hope that sufficient areas will be kept free from dog walks. I understand from someone who went on the council led walk (I was away for a few days and unable to attend) that the dead trees will be taken down. This will be a pity. For the last 2-3 years I have had the Greater Spotted Woodpecker visit the garden to feed off nuts & nibbles. Also we have had Osprey - both birds I believe like dead trees. In the summer a few youngsters take a dingy onto the lake. I get worried about their safety. I hope this will be discouraged.

Comments:

A very interesting and informative walk thanks to the knowledgeable guides who were with us. They outlined an imaginative project with winners all round: an amenity for the town, security for the farmer, more houses to meet requirements and especially the release of money for the maintenance or improvement of the site.

All the improvements will add to walkers' enjoyment and I particularly like the intention to incorporate a stretch of the Garpe Canal into the project as it is badly in need of attention. Another attractive feature is the ambitious boardwalk to make a safe pedestrian pathway. However after carefully considering remarks about dogs being allowed even on a lead it is not a good idea. Dogs' mess on the boardwalk is just as unwelcome as on a pavement. I doubt if owners would think they needed to clean up in such open space. They (the dogs) could well be a frightening presence to wild life & there is plenty of room for exercise around the nature reserve borders.

11.01.15/17/18/19/20/21/22/23/24/25/26/27/28/29/30/31

Comments:

Following a very informative walk on the site on 30.1.15, I would like to make the following comments:-

- 1) I think that the overall proposed management for the site is excellent.
- 2) The co-operation that exists between all the agencies concerned is very pleasing.
- 3) The valuable wetland site for wildlife is being taken seriously and is being given the most importance.
- 4) I think that the footpaths shown on the map i.e. footpaths 9 and 10 should be surfaced in some way. Also that they should remain as footpaths only to preserve the rural nature of the area.
- 5) I feel strongly that the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust should manage the site. They have a proven track record in this area and know how to accommodate people at the same time as protecting wildlife.

Comments:

- sign @ entrance 'damaged' (Splan)
- plan to see canal managed & buffer as part of LNR

Comments:

The primary purpose of Fishlake Meadows should be to act as a flood plain and protect the town of Romsey in the event of severe weather conditions.

If indeed the wetlands have evolved as a result of cessation of pump drainage in the 1990s then it should be reinstated immediately. The wetlands look very ugly and even with a few fancy looking board walks are hardly an environment to be cherished. They would be a safety hazard for children on bicycles

On the other hand if they were drained and kept properly managed we could all enjoy them and they could then be used as overflow flood relief when we again get extreme weather. The people living near to Memorial park and the businesses in Budds Lane are far more important than a few water voles and migrating bird life.

Dear Test Valley,

I am writing to support the development of Fishlake Meadows as a nature reserve. It is a wonderful site for wildlife and can continue to be a wonderful asset for Romsey. I live in Winchester. I see you are only inviting comments from Romsey residents - I was put off from commenting at first but have decided to comment anyway as I visit Romsey regularly and enjoy walking on the paths of Fishlake Meadows looking for the birds and other wildlife there. As a nature reserve, the site can also I am sure provide some flood protection for Romsey town - as I think it did last winter.

I am very concerned at one aspect of your proposals in your leaflet, and that is the proposal to open the dead end path in the middle of the reserve to dog walking. It is unfortunate that even if dogs are meant to be kept on a lead, many will be let off the lead and left to roam, where they will disturb ground nesting birds and other ground dwelling wildlife. Even dogs on leads disturb many wild creatures which see them as a threat. This path has not traditionally been used for dog walking and I urge you to make it a dog free area. Also, to ensure that some areas of the site are not subject to disturbance by people visiting, as many of the ducks and other wintering birds are very easily disturbed. The site is big enough to allow some access while also providing some protected areas. The protection of the wonderful wildlife on this site should have the priority so it can be enjoyed into the future by Romsey residents and other visitors.

I hope I have not missed the deadline for comments. I see you have a stall in Romsey this coming weekend so I hope you are still open for comments, and that you will accept a comment from a supportive visitor.

Dear Test Valley facilitators and contributors to information/guided walk,

Thank you very much for the walk on the 31st that was extremely informative. Apologies for delay with feedback. We very much enjoyed the walk, despite the cold. We were also very impressed by the knowledge, enthusiasm and passion evident in the whole team that led the walk. Please thank them again.

We are very excited to have such a great habitat on our doorstep, we have walked along the footpaths that are open many times (we live on Fishlake Meadows estate). It is refreshing to learn that it will be managed in a collaborative way, with the interested parties, so that there will be a suitable balance reflecting the sensitive nature of the development. We liked the idea of the boardwalk, pond dipping area and redevelopment of the paths. The possibility of a cycleway along the canal would be very welcome, but realise this may be more difficult on a practical level mixing pedestrians and cyclists safely and possible impact on wildlife - if possible, it would be great.

A few years down the line, the team mentioned the opportunities that may be possible on the perimeter. Obviously a formal 'park' is out of the question, understandably, for fear of scaring off the wildlife and attracting large groups of people for the same reason. However, might a well placed picnic table or two and/or benches be considered if the impact would not be detrimental?

Also, we LOVE the idea of grazing cattle. One of the team mentioned that volunteer helpers may be able to help look after the site. I can count and should be able recognise if a cow is the right way up or not!

I would be very happy to be part of a team keeping an eye on them..

Have just returned from the guided walk concerning the proposals for Fishlake Meadows.
We are very impressed and think it is a wonderful idea.
Good luck. Let's hope there are not too many snags and that the project can soon be started.

Thank you for the very informative and enjoyable walk on Friday.

I think the ideas are excellent, especially the viewing platforms.

It would be really good if a circular route could be provided.

Linking up with World of Water would be good for both extra parking and the ever-welcome tea opportunity.

Litter bins somewhere would be good - I collected a good handful of litter on the return part of the walk - maybe this would have been put in a bin if it had been available, and not dropped on the ground.

A downloadable or online Eye-Spy type sheet would be good for both children and adults.

An online "recent sightings" would be helpful

I am looking forward to this happening, and to the forming of a friends group.

To: Test Valley Borough Council Public Consultation.

I am strongly supportive of the Fishlake Meadows Nature Reserve and am very glad that the future of this land has been secured. I consider that a reasonable trade-off has been achieved with the associated enabling development of 64 houses at Oxlease Farm. Although the Nature Reserve is in Romsey Extra, it is primarily the residents of Fishlake Meadows in Romsey, of whom I am one, who will suffer increased congestion etc associated with the Oxlease development. There must therefore be a balance between Nature conservation in the Reserve and local amenity. I think this will best be achieved by ensuring that the balance of the management committee is split approximately 50 : 50 between Nature Conservation groups and Amenity groups, the latter to include elected representatives of TVBC and of Romsey TC and Romsey Extra PC. I support the outline management plan with the proviso that cattle initially be restricted to 9 and that the effects of grazing and disturbance to wild life be carefully monitored as already envisioned.

An early priority of the management committee should be the formation of a Friends of Fishlake Reserve Group, which might serve both as a source of volunteers for practical projects as well as advocacy among the general public.

As a Fishlake Meadows resident I know the area of the proposed reserve very well. Thank you for the opportunity to respond. The associated leaflet was eminently clear.

Fishlake Meadows is an important wetland area in Hampshire, and very important for its rich and diverse wildlife. I strongly support it being declared and managed as a nature reserve and managed specifically to maintain and enhance its wildlife importance.

Fishlake Meadows, as a Nature Reserve, will provide much public enjoyment, as well as an appreciation of the scenery and wildlife, it would have an educational use compatible with conserving the wildlife. Therefore the area could be used by lots of different people, with differing interests. I particularly value the use of this area as an educational resource, not only for our local children but also for those from further afield. This would require careful management and interpretation, but within a generation or so, we would see that the children we teach about its significance now, would grow up to value it even more.

I support the proposals for paths and viewpoints as illustrated on the consultation map.

As I live fairly close to the area, I look forward to the day when access is made somewhat easier, and of course the knowledge that the whole area and its wildlife will be safeguarded for future generations.

I attended one of the guided walks of Fishlake meadows as part of the consultation exercise. I am strongly supportive of what I understand to be the current development priorities for the site. Its biggest asset to Romsey is the richness of the wildlife on the site and it should be developed primarily as a nature reserve. Public access should be improved but only with a view to seeing and appreciating the wildlife. There will need to be appropriate parking at the perimeter. The path from the barge canal to the world of water needs improvement but only to a standard to make it more reliably passable and not as a purely recreational facility. In conjunction with this, it should be possible to walk down the Fishlake stream back into Romsey without interruption to the path. There was a suggestion that the barge canal path should be upgraded into a cycle way. It would be better to run a cycle way through the new development at Oxlease to connect with the current barge canal route which empties into Old Road. The connection along the necessary short stretch of Cupernham Lane could be achieved by making the wide verge a shared use pedestrian/cycle path.

I think the plans are very exciting but would like to see how some income could be generated to maintain the site once complete.

Especially can there be provision for fishing, I suspect coarse but examine the possibility of trout.

This is the largest participant sport in Britain and this could be a unique opportunity to get synergistic income and benefits from this activity.

I'm contacting you as I feel strongly that as Fishlake Meadow Nature Reserve is a unique area of land that hosts many rare & interesting species of wildlife, it is therefore immensely importance to nurture & preserve Fishlake Meadow as a Nature Reserve with the protection of its wildlife as the main priority & focus. Access should be managed to improve the impact on the reserves' rare & diverse wildlife above all else.

Dear Sir

I wish to advise you that I object to one of the viewing platforms (number 2 on the left of the picture),
and request that it is moved away from the current position.

Hello

Thanks to the people from the Wildlife Trust, TVBC & others involved with the guided walks last week. We were given excellent information on what needed to be done, and why. They patiently answered all the questions, even the odd silly one (there is no way hundreds of people will visit the site unless a very rare bird is on site, & the twitchers would come, reserve or not).

We understand the need for scrub management, reed cutting & cattle grazing, as they are done at other reserves we have visited, both RSPB and Wildlife Trusts.

We agree with the concept of it being a local reserve for local people, especially NO visitor centre. We understand why the Wildlife Trust would prefer not to have a hide, even though this would be more acceptable to us. We are sure the Trust would ensure screens would have portholes at different levels, to help children.

It was very obvious that a boardwalk (as at Radipole Lake at Weymouth) is needed along the permissive path(point 4) to a raised viewing screen.

Access to the southern side along Fishlake Meadows Road needs very careful consideration. Vehicles often exceed the speed limit, & parts of it are on a bus route. The ideal would be a new path at a lower level alongside the water but this may not be possible. An alternative, as mentioned on the day, would be occasional chances to view the lake from viewing screens with pedestrian access. If that is the case then how about designated parking areas with yellow lines in between? We don't like that idea but it is better than indiscriminate parking on both sides of the road.

We are strongly opposed to making the canal path a cycle route. It is not wide enough, & would be dangerous with people looking at the wildlife. Some minor changes could be made to make it less muddy in Winter. The same applies to the path at the north of the site. The path in from Belbins is reasonable except for a muddy area at the bottom of the slope. However access in from the north-west, near World of Water, is a disgrace (I complained to the County footpaths section but it hasn't improved). There was rarely a problem until the adjacent property owner built a duck pond (they should be paying for the damage they have caused).

Canoeing should be banned on the main part of the reserve but allowed on the canal as long as it doesn't interfere with the wildlife. The same could be said for fishing. As for pedalos the Monster Raving Loony Party has better ideas than that! This is NOT going to be a Country Park.

We think dogs must be on a lead on the public paths on the edge of the area but only guide dogs allowed on the permissive path.

It will make an excellent education resource. Children do not get out into the country enough. However the car park would need to allow for minibuses.

It might be worth investigating a joint scheme with World of Water whereby their facilities could be used at off-peak times (not weekends). This could involve pay & display partly or wholly refunded on purchases there. This could also help to complete the missing link in the path in from the South west. This would be conditional on the path improvements mentioned above.

I would like to thank all those involved in the walk around Fishlake Meadows last Thursday, it was very enjoyable and informative. I was left in no doubt about the value and importance of this area for wildlife conservation and right on the doorstep of Romsey.

I would broadly support the proposals outlined in the leaflet handed out at the walk. The low level of features suggested for giving public access and the opportunity for viewing the area seem about right. Although I would personally like to see an additional viewpoint of the flooded lagoon at the southern end of the site. Certainly one of the main attractions is the very large numbers of wildfowl that builds up during the winter months. However I understand the delicate balance between conservation and public access.

The area is clearly a very wild and peaceful environment but one aspect of the outline proposals would I am afraid destroy this. Opening up the barge canal footpath and footpath nine to cyclists would change the character completely. The engineering works to create shared foot ways/cycle ways in itself would be visually very destructive and intrusive. The idea of off-road cyclists in groups pounding through the area is horrifying.

The distances around the reserve are quite short and for family groups with children walking is not only very practical but much more rewarding for viewing wildlife.

I hope you find these comments constructive and useful and I will look forward to hearing about the progress on securing this area for us all. (pity about the houses) Very best wishes for the project.

Dear Sirs

Firstly we would like to say thank you for the opportunity to see and hear the plans being made for the development of a nature site at Oxlease Farm/Fishlake Meadows.

The walk on Thursday 29 January was very well organised and very informative. We were most impressed with the knowledge, enthusiasm and passion of all those leading the public walk.

We wholeheartedly agree with the plans for the canal, boardwalks, platforms, etc. Maybe a few discreet information boards with the wildlife and fauna that can be seen could be placed near viewing areas.

We would not like to see an overdevelopment of the area, ie picnic areas, seating, etc. causing disturbance to the wildlife.

Could the site be given a protection status to prevent any future development of the site?

One of the gentlemen said the development site would be a maximum of 56 houses, but the outline application is for 64. We know it is only a small increase, but would not like to see that number increase in the full application.

Again many thanks to all and good luck with the scheme.

What is there not to get excited about concerning future developments at Fishlake Medfows! Having joined the group of local wildlife enthusiasts yesterday at Oxlease Farm I quickly realised what a benefit this site will be for not only our local community, but with the huge number of different species of birds, flora and fauna, but to a much wider audience.

All the representatives of Test Valley, Hampshire Wildlife Trust etc. were so passionate whilst speaking about and answering questions on the project that I have complete confidence that the site they envisage will be a fantastic asset to us all.

My one concern is that too many will want to enjoy it! Perhaps that's the least of our worries!

Dear Sirs,

Following on from last Friday's Fishlake Meadows Walk led by your TVBC and Hampshire Wildlife Trust team I am writing to offer my comment and observations.

Firstly thanks to the team for providing an enthusiastic and informative overview of the proposals under consideration at the site and I will try to summarise my comment and points of discussion: -

- In order to maximise the potential benefit I firmly believe it is essential to ensure the individual footpaths are linked in such a way as to enable a circular route around the perimeter of the site to be achievable.
- With regard to the proposed observation areas I raised the idea of elevated viewing points and I am pleased to hear this is under consideration for the central location. However I would strongly suggest there is a case for such at all three of the proposed locations, particularly on the East side of the site, adjacent to the existing Barge Canal. The footpath alongside the canal here is already at an elevated level and the observation level should ensure viewing is above the reeds and shrub in a Westerly direction across the site.
- Currently the proposals only show parking at the Oxlease Farm area. There are other additional locations that would further enhance the accessibility of the site: -
 - Belbins; at the North end of Footpath 9. There is an existing Lay-by which, with minimal improvements, could accommodate several cars. There is of course alterations currently in progress to the junction at Belbins which might have embraced such improvements tho' I guess too late to consider this.
 - World of Water; Clearly of commercial interest to encourage environmental interest by facilitating car parking to visit the Fishlake Meadows site, particularly if the circular walk can be established.
 - Fishlake Meadows Link Road; The existing East/West link road running along the Southern boundary of the site has several areas of extensive verges that with minimal investment could provide simple hard standing for a few parked vehicles.

The overall site is indeed a unique opportunity for Romsey and one that could/ should be further enhanced to great effect by future lottery funding. Initially the maximum advantage has to be grasped by establishing a circular route from the beginning. In reality this is already in place by improving footpath 9 from the existing footbridge over the river on the Western side of the site, Southwards to the Footpath adjacent to the property next to the World of Water. This footpath already exists but requires drainage/raised boardwalking to traverse the pinch points comfortably when the weather is wet. Visitors could then have the opportunity to join the walks from other (parking) locations around the site and relieve any congestion on the Oxlease site which will become an issue when the proposed building of 64 houses is complete.



The opportunities for local schools, University study and environmental research is inspiring for our grass roots and future generations of Romsey if the meadows are well managed. Please take care that the facilities ultimately provided are protected against the vandalism, graffiti and litter sometimes evident on the existing canal footpath, does not occur here.

The site should, in my opinion, be allowed to develop in as natural way as possible and absolutely not, in any circumstances, be allowed to become a themed, entertainment park of any description.

I look forward to reviewing the final proposals with interest.

I have been studying and recording the wildlife of Fishlake and Ashley Meadows for approximately 30 years and photographing it for around 10 and so have quite a good grasp of how it has changed over that time period and under the current owner's guardianship whose cooperation in allowing studying to continue I much appreciate. I have been pleased to contribute to the current species lists held for birds, butterflies and dragonflies, but also have some independent records for other insect groups such as beetles, hoverflies, and grasshoppers and crickets although these are from casual observation rather than full studies.

The most important lesson to be learned from the dramatic change during its extensive flooding is how extraordinarily biodiverse the area has become under no management whatsoever and indeed, many naturalists would argue has been key to its success to date.

One of the major benefits the wildlife of area has enjoyed over recent times is the comparative lack of disturbance due to the difficulty of access to some areas of the site. Although this means even birdlife is difficult to record accurately, it also means that many easily disturbed species have found a home here and any future plans should understand the importance of not opening up these areas with to public access.

I have looked with interest at the map with the proposed plans provided and have one or two concerns. Whilst I appreciate the educational possibilities of the site, I note a pond dipping site proposed at the small pond along the permissive path which has been used by a number of breeding wildfowl. Much better surely to have this type of activity perhaps just west of where footpath 9 crosses the canal in the drainage ditch by the new gate. This is likely to cause a minimum of disturbance and also a much greater range of species being part of the larger drainage system rather than the closed small pool.

With regard to the permissive path which I agree, if open to the public, will need certain lengths raised to avoid damage in the often waterlogged conditions, but I would question the sagacity of permitting dogs on leads access to this path. I have a dog myself and am well aware that a proportion of dog walkers interpret dogs on leads as well behaved dogs off leads with inevitable consequences. I have no problem with dog walking around the existing perimeter footpaths, in fact I think it should be encouraged.

I am not entirely sure from the map exactly where the viewpoint is to be at the south end of the permissive path but it should be noted that the current ponds to the south east and south west of the south end of the permissive path are particularly prone to disturbance at certain times of year, so I am hoping the proposed hide/screen is no further south than the vicinity of the concrete bridge.

With regards to Ashley Meadows and the proposed grazing with cattle, I cannot more strongly ask the council to reconsider this management plan. I understand that grazing is often the first management tool that the Wildlife Trusts and other charities employ as it attracts immediate grants and funds to swell the coffers as well as in SOME cases being beneficial in keeping down some aggressive plant and grass species. However, as with Fishlake Meadows, Ashley Meadows are still in a state of change with regards to incoming species, both botanical and zoological, after the rise in water levels. Considered as "rank grassland" just a short time ago, many plant species have now taken a hold as per not just the recent botanical survey but the comparative wealth of plants in flower last summer. Of particular concern,

amongst others, would be the estimated 1500 Southern Marsh Orchid and hybrids which are likely to lost or severely depleted to trampling by cattle.

Although during the winter at first glance the area may not appear to be of great interest, depending on the water levels, it is used by both Snipe and significantly Jack Snipe (both Amber Listed) as well as other birds found elsewhere on Fishlake. In the spring the area is found attractive by Grasshopper Warblers which would be lost to a short sward created by cattle. Another Red Data List species that I have found occasionally around this area is Tawny Longhorn Beetle, a rare beetle whose larval stages and foodplant is currently unknown, a particularly obvious example of why any chosen change of management has to be tackled sensitively and with a considerable amount of prior knowledge. Another plant/beetle relationship obviously present on Ashley Meadows is Common Fleabane and Green Tortoise Beetle, a not especially common beetle which can be quite numerous here in some years due to the high concentration of Fleabane which also has a very long flowering season and on the whole site is a particularly important nectaring species for summer and late summer beetles, butterflies, hoverflies, bees and other insects. Askley Meadows also holds a considerable variety of Grasshoppers and Crickets in common with the northern half of Fishlake Meadows.

In short, prior to any management plan being put together, this should be done in consultation with local naturalists who hold a wealth of knowledge, records and experience and not just those organisations who may have experience in creating different habitats but lack the day on day, year on year, change on change intimate experience of this unique site that several Romsey residents have.

We enjoyed a very interesting trip across the meadows organised by your team along with Andy Leicester for which you should be commended. I would much prefer that the present demand for housing were met from multiple small developments sensitively placed rather than single agglomerations such as Abbotswood and that proposed for Whitenap. The 'gift' of the water meadow in return for the development at the farm would seem a reasonable exchange provided of course there was some financial input to set up and run the nature reserve without placing an additional burden on the Borough.

I've been visiting the meadows for a few years using the footpath by the canal. The walk into the heart of the land was quite a revelation and a privilege to be able to get in amongst the particular features. Things that stick in my mind:

There was a real sense of visiting a wild environment - somewhere distinctly different to the town yet so close at hand. Not wishing to sound over dramatic but I was reminded of pushing through the furs at the back of the wardrobe and entering another world with Mr Timnus and a lamp post nearby! Something to do with the tall grasses and reeds forming a screen separating the footpath from the rest of the world outside the sanctuary of the reserve.

Our views from within the meadow were almost entirely without evidence of the town. It would be worth considering maintaining this and planting to ensure this remains the case in the future.

The walk along the canal must remain part of the sanctuary and without visual encroachment from the new houses to be developed. I think it was mentioned that they would be set back but consider also planting to establish a screen.

New footpaths must be 'soft' so that they remain as natural as possible and without appearing too municipal.

Use of board walks to protect ground and prevent walkers straying onto sensitive areas.

Maintain tall grass and reed screens as these maintain the sense of secrecy and privacy of the various habitats.

Supervision - I hope the scheme will allow for some level of supervision to ensure that the area is not abused.

Dogs will be a problem if wildlife is to be encouraged and sustained. I'm not a fan and so would prefer that there were areas in which dogs are not allowed and others where they should be kept on a lead.

Interpretation should be placed sensitively and minimally so as not to suggest over management. A chalk bulletin board with recent sightings etc will be a great focus for keeping events current as a week as a stimulus for opening peoples eyes to whats around them.

Links and access - the scheme should be used to prompt improvements to the existing network of footpaths to and from this area. The ability to walk from the town centre and out to the meadows

with minimal exposure to traffic and noise is a particular virtue of Romsey and the few remaining weaknesses in this opportunity should be targeted. This must include the links north to Timsbury and eliminating contact with the A3057 around the Dukes Head area. This is not easy but would be a great prize if achieved.

Improve bank maintenance of the canal leading down to the Plaza. This is a lovely walk from the town and a little more effort in keeping the path width clear and the growth of bramble will be appreciated, especially along beside the new Croudace development.

I hope there are plans to improve the footpath from the station behind the houses in Malmsbury Road to link to the canal path.

Thank you for setting up the trip to the meadows and I hope the scheme is a success.

I visited the site as part of an organised tour recently, this was the first time I had visited the place. I think the plans to open the site up more to public access are great. There are not enough open (free access) natural spaces in Romsey for the residents.

- It will be lovely to be able to walk or cycle along footpath ten into the countryside, along the canal. I can see there will be issues with dog walkers, there will need to be maintained access points where dogs can enter the canal, as dogs have already eroded the canal bank in places, narrowing the bank and path, which can then lead to breaching of the bank during heavy rainfall. Also dog litter bins will need to be put in and regularly emptied. As so many beauty spots are marred by small plastic bags hanging in trees and bushes where dog walkers have scooped up dog waste, tied the bag and thrown it into bushes, to very slowly decay and be weathered by the elements, until the plastic breaks down enough to split the bag.
- Footpath nine needs to also be protected as a natural (virgin) bit of woodland, as many rare birds, animals and plants are located here as well on the wetland itself. This is a gateway into the Reserve for both rare species of animal and plant and for people to enjoy Nature and exercise - walking being a very important non-impact form of exercise for all ages.
- The permissive path into the centre of the wetland where a pond dipping platform and observation hide are planned will be an amazing resource for all ages, from small children pond dipping and learning about nature, to bird enthusiasts of all ages, to people just going to a quiet natural place to relax and recharge themselves. While visiting for a short time, we observed several different species of bird. There are so few wetlands of this kind left in England, this Wetland must be protected forever for future generations to enjoy and to protect many endangered species of birds, animals, insects and plants. This wetland also serves Romsey as an important soak of excess water coming down the Test in times of high rainfall ie last year's floods of Romsey could have been much worse for the town without this area to absorb and take the flood water.
- Dog walking should be prevented in the interior area (Permissive path), as dogs scare off nesting birds. I think allowing dog walking along the other paths would allow ample exercise for dogs, maintaining the calm of the interior and keeping it clean of dog waste. I also think perhaps someone should be responsible for locking this area at night and unlocking at dawn, to prevent untoward activity of teenagers and young people in the hide. Much expensive damage could be done. Also if someone is paid to lock and unlock this area, they would also serve as a on-site ranger, looking out for problems before they get too difficult to manage, ie litter picking.
- Viewing screens at number 2 (next to Fishlake Meadows Rd) on the map would be good close to the road, for easy access for those less mobile.
- I often take my 3 young children to Winnall Moor and have attended many fantastic educational events there hosted by The Wildlife Trust, it would be great to have Fishlake Meadows developed along similar lines. My children have learnt so much about Nature, have had a lot of fun and exercise and have learnt to respect the countryside by not leaving litter and damaging trees and plants.
- Having grazing cattle in the North section is a lovely idea, like in Winchester. My children like to watch the cattle grazing on our trips. A small group of native-breed beef cattle are a good way to keep the grass down and stop the wetland developing into pastureland.

- Some 'find the' tick box info leaflets for children of different ages and perhaps different seasons would be great for visitors to download on the internet and print off for visits. Not everyone has an iphone and parents don't want to encourage too much on-screen learning with young children. Also bookable trips to observe birds, animals, insects and plants and learn from an expert would be great and could bring in revenue for the Wildlife Trust or whoever was doing the event. We also attended a papermaking and natural ink print making workshop on Winnall Moor which was fantastic, an equally inspiring spot for artists would be Fishlake Meadows.
- House building adjacent to Fishlake Meadows Nature Reserve should be prevented, as it will have a serious negative impact on such a rare area of wetland beauty and oasis for many endangered species. Risk of flooding is also a serious factor to be considered. But if it must happen it should be on a small scale and have serious screening to lessen the impact on the site, areas of virgin woodland (with all the plants and animal species that they contain) should not be built upon.
- A viewing site at number 2 on footpath 10 would also allow those less mobile to view birds without having to walk all the way round into the interior.
- Would proper footpaths or boardwalk be installed to prevent erosion? If large numbers of visitors attend in wet weather the ground could become quite churned up and difficult to walk on.