



Reprieve for Black Wood

City Council's decision vindicates the Dever Society's objections.

Winchester City Council's planners have rejected proposals for a 130-chalet forest holiday park in Black Wood. Welcoming the decision as "local democracy at its best" the Dever Society's new chairman, Douglas Paterson, added that the news was "a victory for local people, local wildlife and the local environment."

The Dever Society has been actively monitoring the proposals since March 2008, and during that time has held several meetings with representatives from the developers, Forest Holidays.

"We also worked closely with Micheldever Parish Council, so that we could present a united approach to the holiday park plans," said Douglas Paterson. "We were especially grateful to the Parish Council for their generous donation towards our costs, as well as to our members and other local people who wrote in support of our campaign."

The Society's own objection to the proposals for this particular location was amongst more than 120 representations received by the City Council's planners. Other objectors included CPRE Hampshire, the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, local parish councils, and the Government's wildlife agency Natural England.

In rejecting the application, the City Council reflected the Dever Society's view that the proposed development would significantly harm the landscape setting, tranquillity and wildlife of this protected ancient woodland.

"The City Council also accepted our opinion that the scheme would generate an unacceptable increase in the amount of traffic on local roads, posing a danger to pedestrians, cyclists and other road users," said Douglas Paterson. "However, we understand that Forest Holidays are now considering a fresh application for a slightly smaller development. If this goes ahead, we may need to ask members for further support."

- You can read the full text of the City Council's Decision Notice at: <http://planningapplications.winchester.gov.uk/Planning/670964.pdf>



Society elects new chairman

Douglas Paterson succeeded Richard Cowen as chairman at the AGM in January.

Douglas' grandfather began farming Warren and Cranbourne Farms near Micheldever in 1940, and rapidly improved the run-down soils with his system of dairying.

"I'd set my heart on farming at the age of three," says Douglas, "but, having grown up in a musical household, I took up the viola and somehow became a professional musician instead." Nevertheless, Douglas included agriculture in his university studies before embarking on a touring career with leading national and European orchestras.

Tiring of the travelling lifestyle, Douglas returned to take over his father's farming business in 1994, expanding it to include Hunton Grange Farm in the following year. His highly productive arable and dairy farms now participate in Defra's Countryside Stewardship schemes.

Douglas' wife Miranda also counts musicians and farmers amongst her own family. The couple have two young daughters, Emma and Louisa, and Douglas still performs regularly with the Schubert Ensemble of London.

Inside this issue

The South East Plan - published at last!

Page 2

What the South Downs National Park means for the Winchester area

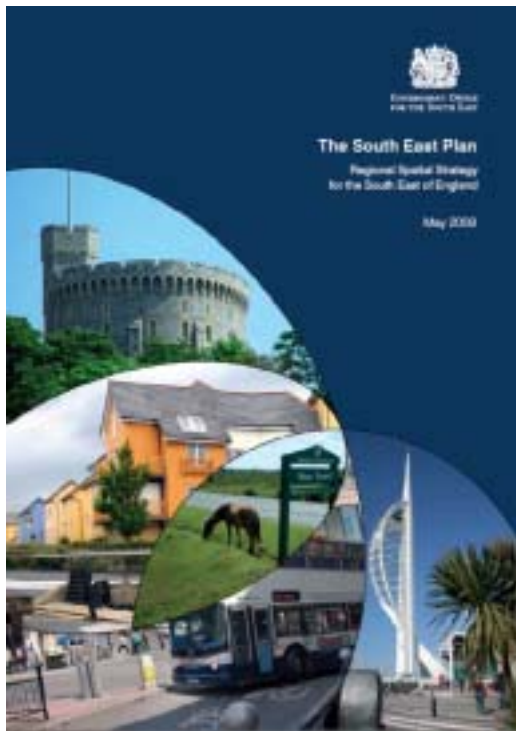
Page 3

An historic alliance

Page 4

South East Plan published

After four years, numerous public consultations and a lengthy public examination, the South East Plan was finally published in May. Tessa Robertson discusses its significance for our local area.



The South East Plan provides a blueprint for the region until the year 2026 on housing, transport, the economy and protecting the environment.

The Dever Society has campaigned on the issues since the start. Our main goal was to ensure that the final Plan did not include a new town at Micheldever, and our efforts were concentrated on combating Eagle Star's intensive lobbying.

"After their failure to persuade the Government that Micheldever should become one of the new eco-towns, we knew that we were almost certainly home and dry," says the Dever Society's vice-chairman Tessa Robertson. "But it's still a huge relief to see that Eagle Star's new town is not included in the final Plan."

The Plan also includes some good news on housing numbers. The Dever Society objected to proposals to build 6,000 new homes in the parts of Winchester District outside the agreed growth areas of Southampton and Portsmouth, and this number has now been reduced by 500. But, says Tessa Robertson, "we remain concerned that 5,500 is still a high figure in this mainly rural area".

Unfortunately, the Society can't just sit back and relax until 2026. "The Government has built regular reviews into the regional strategy process," explains Tessa Robertson. "We remain prepared to resist Eagle Star's inevitable attempts to use these reviews to promote their plans for a new town at Micheldever."

Winchester's plans for the future

City Council launches the first document in its new Local Development Framework.

The document is being prepared under the Government's new planning system, and will eventually replace the Winchester District Local Plan.

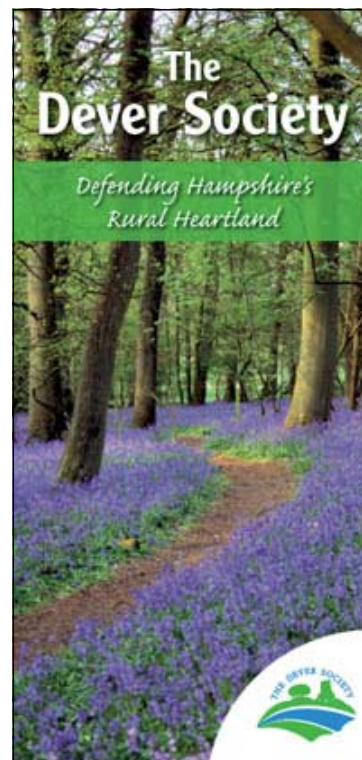
Entitled *Core Strategy Preferred Option*, the document was published in May following public consultation and information gathering during 2007 and 2008. Its purpose is "to ensure that development across the District happens in the right places, at the right time and with the necessary roads, drainage, schools and community facilities to support and benefit both new and existing communities."

The document is divided into two main parts. The first, on core strategies, can be loosely described as including policies on health, transport, economic prosperity, high quality environment and inclusive communities. The second part divides the district into three areas: Winchester Town and South Hampshire, which will be the main focus for new development, and Market Towns and Rural Area.

- A series of exhibitions has been held in halls and community centres around the District, and the Core Strategy was open for public consultation until 3rd July. You can read the full document at www.winchester.gov.uk/preferredoption

Spreading the word ...

A fresh new publicity leaflet is getting our message out to a wider audience.



Look out for an attractive new publicity leaflet on the Society's website, and on our stand at local village fetes this summer.

The full colour leaflet presents a fresh image of the Society, replacing the familiar blue and white design that has served us for many years. It explains the charms of mid-Hampshire's countryside, as well as the threats that the Society is working to defeat.

We hope that the new leaflet will attract talented and committed people to join us. Please use the enclosed copy to recruit a friend or neighbour – or to upgrade your own membership by making a regular donation!

AGM round-up

Members elected a new chairman and approved constitutional changes at January's AGM.

But first, retiring chairman Richard Cowen reviewed the Society's success in defeating Zurich/Eagle Star's eco-town proposals. He considered that the Government's rejection of this scheme, despite their own ambitious housebuilding targets, completely vindicated the Society's campaign.

As we report on this page, Phil Bryant also retired from the committee, and members elected Douglas Paterson as the Society's new chairman. He told the meeting that he was honoured and excited to take over the chair in the wake of eco-town campaign, but that the Society must remain vigilant. Referring to the name of a local field that his family has farmed since the Second World War, Douglas declared; "we'll fight Eagle Star on The Beeches if we have to!"

Members also approved changes to the structure of the committee, and voted to hold future AGMs in the first quarter of each year. This, in turn, means that the newsletter can now be published in January and July, taking the pressure off the production and delivery team in the run-up to Christmas.

The Society's President, Khalid Aziz, closed the meeting with a tribute to everyone who had worked tirelessly to defeat Eagle Star's proposals, and exhorted the Society not to relax its guard. The eco-town campaign had been an expensive fight, he said – "but make no mistake. It was a very necessary one."

- During a drinks reception after the meeting, members had the chance to question Richard Palmer of Forest Holidays about the proposed Black Wood development, featured on our front page.

Bowing out

Members said farewell to two of the Society's longest standing supporters at January's AGM.



Chairman **Richard Cowen** was involved from the beginning, and served on the executive committee three times over the years. "He was initially elected as chairman for two years," says vice-chairman Tessa Robertson. "But we traded shamelessly on his good nature and persuaded him to stay on for three and then four years. And, when the eco-town news broke in late 2007, Richard readily agreed to stay on to guide our campaign."

Phil Bryant joined the executive committee when the Society was founded in 1990 to fight the new town threat. He edited and produced the regular newsletter, as well as masterminding contact with the local media. "Beyond this specific role, Phil has been an invaluable committee member," says outgoing chairman Richard Cowen. "He was always ready with ideas, advice and support in all areas of the Society's work, despite his many other community activities."



National Park gets the green light

The South Downs are set to become England's ninth National Park – but what are the implications for mid-Hampshire?

Environmental campaigners have been celebrating the Government's decision to create a new South Downs National Park, stretching from Winchester to Beachy Head. The announcement comes sixty years after the radical legislation that launched Britain's National Parks in 1949.

Now, following a 19-month public inquiry, the long campaign is almost over – but not everyone is celebrating. "We opposed the National Park during the designation process," says Steve Opacic, Head of Strategic Planning at Winchester City Council. "The new National Park Authority will determine planning policy and applications, meaning that decisions won't be taken as locally as they are now."

Nevertheless, Steve Opacic doesn't believe that the National Park will increase development pressures in the Winchester district. "In planning terms, the National Park offers similar protection to the present Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty," he explains. "It may limit our options in places like Bishop's Waltham, which will adjoin the Park boundary, but major development areas like Barton Farm are outside the National Park anyway."

The new National Park Authority will be established next year, and become fully operational in 2011. Meanwhile, Winchester City Council will continue to press for locally-based planning, perhaps through a system of delegated powers.

An historic alliance

Dever Valley Local History Society affiliates to The Dever Society.

Two groups that celebrate and promote our local area have decided to collaborate!

The Dever Society is committed to extending public understanding of the history and architecture of the area, and to protecting features of historic interest.

The Dever Valley Local History Society is already active in this field – so the Dever Society's committee welcomed the proposal to affiliate the two organisations.



The Local History Society arranges about six popular evening talks every year on aspects of local history, in one of the village halls. It also organises summer visits – this year, members heard a talk in Wonston Church to mark the centenary of the church's restoration after the fire in 1908, and there was also a visit to Winchester Cathedral.

- E-mail hugh@sandars.org.uk to join the mailing list for future events, or ring Hugh Sandars on 01962 774220

Taking a stand

The Society's new display stand will be on tour at village fetes throughout the summer.

As in previous years, the Society will be out and about at this year's summer fêtes, meeting old friends and explaining our campaigns to visitors and new residents.

It's a sociable way to pass a summer afternoon, but of course these events also give us an opportunity to recruit new supporters. This year, the team will benefit from the professional new display materials first seen by members at the AGM in January. The display, which Phil Bryant put together just before his retirement from the committee, will also carry the new publicity leaflets featured on page 2.

Look for us first at **Wonston** fête on 11th July, followed by **Micheldever** a week later on the 18th. The season closes with **Micheldever Station** fête on 29th August, at the start of the late summer Bank Holiday weekend.

If you'd like to do more than just drop by for a chat, we can always make use of an extra pair of hands. Whether it's helping to erect the gazebo, putting up the displays or signing up new members, we'd be delighted to see you.

- To find out more about helping on our stand, give David Foster a ring on 07958 241738 or e-mail admin@deversociety.org

Be first with the news!

In the last two years, the number of newsletters delivered by e-mail has climbed by more than a third.

Some 420 copies of this issue will go out by e-mail, up from about 300 in 2007. It's an impressive growth rate – but, says the Society's administrator David Foster, "it represents just 12% of our total mailing list, so many members are still missing out on the benefits of electronic delivery".

Our e-mail subscribers receive a short message highlighting the main feature articles. There are no bulky attachments, and the message includes a link to download the newsletter from the Society's website with a single click. What's more, the full colour electronic version is normally distributed before the paper copies have left the printers.

Of course, the benefits aren't all one way; electronic delivery saves the Society over £250 every year in postage costs alone. It also eases the load on our volunteers, who 'lick and stick' or hand deliver more than 3,000 copies of every issue we send out.



- To join the growing band of members enjoying electronic delivery, simply e-mail admin@deversociety.org with your full name and postal address, to confirm your identity on our database. The Society will not disclose your details to third parties.

The Dever Society, PO Box 508, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 3DQ
tel: 07958 241738 (office hours) ♦ e-mail: admin@deversociety.org ♦ web: www.deversociety.org

President: Khalid Aziz, LVO, DL, FRSA ♦ Chairman: Douglas Paterson
Vice Chairman: Tessa Robertson ♦ Hon Secretary: Charles Hobbs ♦ Hon Treasurer: Phil Dowson
Executive Committee: Hugh Sandars, Brian Walker

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