

Green Belt Matters by our coordinator, Neil Parry

Wirral Borough

At Saughall Massie, we were greatly disappointed that after the Council reversed a previous decision and allowed the Fire Station, the DCLG (the government) failed to call it in for review. To date we have been without the West Kirby fire station for some 34 months. The Fire Brigade do not seem to be rushing to build this new "Community Fire Station" in the community of Saughall Massie.

At Eastham Village, we await the Council's decision on the "enabling development" of a small housing estate to help fund the rugby club.

At Storeton Hall, there is to be a site visit by the Planning Committee to assess the "Enabling Development" application for a housing estate. The funds from which will be used for the restoration of Storeton Hall (listed historic building).

We have just been notified that the proposals for a "Retirement Complex" at Thornton Hough have been formalised and we await the Council publishing the plans for review. The Wirral Society is in contact with the local societies concerned and will assist where possible.

The great Hoylake Golf Resort saga drags on. The Council have so far spent perhaps £3m on this "vanity" scheme, but claim poverty when it comes to assisting New Ferry after the explosion. We now hear that the Council is pursuing a "Hoylake By-Pass" road that will run from somewhere off Saughall Massie Road through to the level crossing at Hoylake, again at great expense to the taxpayer. Two obvious points - it will increase the traffic through Saughall Massie to/from the motorway, and that the road will still end at the level crossing, with the queues of traffic even longer.

Wirral Council is still working to define its Local Plan, the update to the Unitary Development Plan from the turn of the century, that defines the usage permitted for different areas of land - residential, industrial etc.

The Society attended a discussion in Liverpool on The Raynsford Review - a formal review of the whole planning process - and responded to the issues raised. Responding through CPRE North West Region to the Liverpool City Region's Strategic Housing and Economic Market Analysis (SHELMA), we have grave concern as to the "optimistic" view of economic growth and hence houses "needed".

We have two new consultations on brown field land and on the Green Belt, to be commented upon by 6th December 2017. A very tight timetable seems to have become the norm!

In comparison to The Wirral, the borough of Chester West and Cheshire is nearing finalisation of its Local Plan, defining areas of development, green space etc.

If anyone has any issues with their local Green Belt, please contact planning@wirralsociety.net

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WIRRAL MATTERS

News and Views from The Wirral Society - founded 1928

The Wirral Committee of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

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WINTER 2017-2018

Summer Tour of Bidston Lighthouse

With the dangerous seas and shifting sandbanks of Liverpool Bay, lighthouses were a welcome invention for the beleaguered mariners. The original Sea Lights were often washed away , so in 1771 William Hutchinson , Liverpool's dockmaster, used his ingenious parabolic mirror reflector invention to site a land based light at Bidston. The light could travel further with the mirrors , unlike the earlier coalfire - stoked lights . Building on a convenient hill was cheaper , the lighthouse itself could be shorter. Bidston Lighthouse at 2.4 miles from the sea is the worlds' most inland lighthouse for mariners, although last lit over a century ago.

Bidston Hill also hosted a colourful array of Signal Flags . These gave companies in Liverpool early warning of approaching trading ships. In conjunction with an optical telescope, messages could be passed in a chain from Holyhead, the Welsh coast, Hilbre and Bidston Hill. If you look closely you'll be able to see the flagpost holes still along the sandstone ridge.

The lighthouse is now in private hands. We enjoyed a fascinating tour, right to the top, and you can too. Most summer Saturday afternoons. Free entry to the ground floor and first floor book shop. Guided tours of the rest have a small charge. Check their website. www.bidstonlighthouse.org.uk



Bidston Lighthouse and its gate commemorating the Signal Flags

Civic Pride - In villages and towns throughout Wirral, local businesses and volunteers have been instrumental in planting flowers, herbs and vegetables to raise the spirits of residents and visitors. This display in Hoylake



Some Current Casework

Issues relating to the Wirral Green Belt associated with problems over how future housing need is calculated, in the north of the Peninsula, is perhaps our single major concern.

England Coastal Path – Wirral Section: The Government’s Natural England (NE), is investigating how coastal access around the whole of the Peninsula can be achieved, and then linked to the existing Welsh Coastal Path. It’s hoped to have this route in place by 2020 using current paths and routes wherever possible, so minimizing new works and resultant maintenance costs. NE recently held an open day to explain its proposals to residents living on the coast and to seek their views. We are satisfied that this work will not impact on people’s private property.

The Gilroy ‘Scrape’ West Kirby: It is good to learn that some 3-5,000 Black-tailed Godwits are roosting at a Caldry pond, but the Society would like the ‘scrape’ site re-instated if possible. Sadly, events have not progressed very quickly during the summer to enable the necessary level surveys to be completed, to enable the RSPB to finalise the proposal.

We understand there are related issues to be resolved with the landowner regarding funding and maintenance. It is hoped the Council and RSPB can meet the landowner soon to clarify whether he will agree to a managed solution and to establish the likely short and long term financial implications before committing further significant resources to the project. It is expected this should happen once a new RSPB site manager is appointed.

Proposed Hoylake Golf Resort with its 160 Luxury Homes: The Society’s efforts to encourage Councillor Davies, Leader of Wirral Council, to explain the economics and financial viability of this project have made no progress over the last few months. Wirral West’s MP, Margaret Greenwood,

has been convinced by the Stop the Golf Resort (STGR) Group, with the support of our Society and will try to bring the full details of the project into the open; at a public meeting where she would invite a Council representative to provide detailed answers. Given this project is a political initiative, we would expect Cllr Davies to be the Council’s representative.

Housing Land Availability: Wirral Council has plans to undertake a “further development options review” to help it to meet the Borough’s housing needs. The Society is concerned at these plans to change the review procedure which will, for the first time, formally include land within the Wirral Green Belt. Whilst the Council has not - as yet at least - committed to release land from the Green Belt for housing development, this is a worrying first step towards this possibility.

There is currently a consultation on this proposal, but we are at something of a loss to know what this is expected to achieve. It is already evident to us that all those who value our limited open space in Wirral Borough will wish to oppose this change and, by the same token, property developers and landowners wanting to take advantage will see the opportunity to encourage the Council towards releasing currently protected land. The outcome of the latter would result in, in many cases, the loss of the land for food production.



The Great Wirral Tree Census

The Wirral Initiative on Trees is an umbrella grouping of interested organisations who aim to take on the mammoth task of mapping all the trees across Wirral. Wirral Wildlife, Conservation Areas Wirral, Wirral Tree Wardens and Urban Beekeepers Association are all offering their expertise. The Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and the Open University are also involved.

If you'd like to get involved contact wirralinitiativetrees@gmail.com by email or on Facebook /Wirral Initiative Trees

Above and below - at Ness Gardens you will find many unusual and well documented trees

