

Dorset Deserves

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Better <dorsetdeservesbetter@gmail.com>

to bcc: me

Please find enclosed a very pertinent letter sent earlier today from Dr Tony Warne to Cllr Spencer Flower:

Dear Councillor Flower,

I am becoming increasingly confused, and I am sure I am not alone, by the separate development of the Dorset Local Plan and the Purbeck Local Plan and the changes in policy regarding the former.

The Dorset Local Plan is now to be “reshaped to place the right development in the right places, the right quality and on climate and ecological considerations”. The Purbeck Local Plan, however, seems to remain largely as it is despite Purbeck being generally the most ecologically sensitive part of Dorset and a core area in any possible National Park. The rethink on the Dorset Local Plan has to a large extent been brought about by the problems of nitrates and phosphates in Poole harbour but this also applies to the Purbeck Local Plan.

I have said in all the consultations, along with many others, that the Purbeck Local Plan should be integrated into the Dorset Local Plan so that there is one clear document for the whole area. The Purbeck Local Plan is very inadequate in its treatment of ecological issues as exemplified by the wholesale use of mitigation, a clear admission of potential damage to the internationally important wildlife sites but there is also no real consideration of the very important matrix of wildlife into which these sites are set. At present for the defined important species does not include a consideration of the food required by these species that in many cases occurs outside the defined important sites.

The environmental disaster proposed by the Purbeck Local Plan is exemplified by its proposals for Wool. Wool is, maybe surprisingly, one of the richest areas for biodiversity in Dorset, it might be argued that this is because we know so much about Wool compared with other parishes but analysis of the data on wildlife shows that it is the combination of biotopes and the abundance of organic farmland and the agrochemical free areas of the army ranges that make this area so rich. The housing proposals for Wool are all on organic farmland. Organic farmland is known from widespread surveys to be on average 30% better than traditional farmland and this has been so found to be so for Wool. Both the Dorset Local Plan and the Purbeck Local Plan contain proposals for Wool as well as some other areas in Purbeck so there is considerable scope for confusion.

The current solution for the problem in Poole harbour of nitrates and phosphates is unproven and will if it works take 25 to 30 years to have an effect but the problem exists now and has been steadily building for many years. On the one hand Natural England shrug off this problem but also, together with the Environment Agency, produced a report

showing the need for immediate action and remedies to put the clock back to times when the problem was not the disaster it is now. Very large amounts of money have already been spent on hoping to offset the additional nitrates and phosphates from housing proposed in plans but it is already too late with a ghastly smell presumably together with methane production as anaerobic conditions develop in Midsummer.

The inadequate consideration of environmental issues aided and abetted by Natural England show that the Purbeck Local Plan does not satisfy the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

If the ambitions of the new criteria set out for the Dorset Local Plan are to be achieved then the same ambitions must apply to the Purbeck Local Plan which needs to be fully integrated into it.

Yours sincerely

Dr. A. C. Warne
Ecologist, Entomologist & Conservationist
c.c

Cllr David Walsh

Giles Watts

CPRE