

Agenda Item 8

Sean Feeney's address under agenda item 8 to Oxford City Council on 18 Feb 2013, speaking on agenda item 22

The Worshipful Lord Mayor, officers, and members of Council, with power comes responsibility. Decision-making elected members, I have a modest proposal: reject your officer's advice to adopt the Sites and Housing Development Plan Document.

The permanent pasture of Port Meadow is *strictly protected* under the Habitats and Species Directive as part of Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation. Three perhaps less well known hay meadows are part of the SAC: Pixey and Yarnton Meads, perhaps the world's best hay meadow, Wolvercote Meadows, and Cassington Meadows.

The JNCC, the UK's own statutory advisor, states these vegetation communities are "perhaps unique in the world". This ecology is literally irreplaceable. I have provided your solicitors with astonishing correspondence from Natural England, confirming there has been a loss of area of around one-third of the hay meadows between 2005 and 2011.

A journal article cited on your website by Dr Alison MacDonald states the very rare plant *apium repens* which grows on Port Meadow was "killed" in 2006 and the underlying cause of the fatal hydrological change "is not known but is being investigated by the Environment Agency and Dr. David Gowing, Open University".

I believe you have breached the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive duty to report "existing environmental problems" and consult the public.

Elected members, unless these problems have been taken into account, which they have not, I believe it is impossible for you, acting as the competent authority, to be certain beyond reasonable scientific doubt that this plan will not have adverse effects on the SAC.

Some things are beyond price. This plan allocates sites which will enrich the employers of some elected members (and/or those of your spouses), such as Oxford University.

The European Commission has opened a formal investigation into my complaint that the UK and its emanations, including this Council, have failed in duties to protect the SAC and avoid deterioration; infraction proceedings against the UK could follow in the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Do not repeat the mistake made by 8 out of 9 members of West Area Committee. Vote against harming Port Meadow. Vote to protect Oxford Meadows SAC. Vote *not* to adopt this environmentally harmful plan.

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