

# Booker Common & Woods Protection Society

(Registered Charity : No. 289871)

## IT'S WHEATLEY!

The second battle against Mobil Oil's proposed Motorway Service Area (MSA) at Booker has been won. In a letter dated 15th February 1996 the Secretary of State for the Environment dismissed Mobil's Appeal but allows the development of an MSA at Wheatley (Oxon).

This decision marks the end of the second battle, but not the end to the war. The bad news is that the Wheatley site, like the Booker site, is within the Green Belt

The Secretary of State also dismissed the appeal for an MSA at Tetsworth, which is not Green Belt, as an alternative site and a mere 4 miles from Wheatley. This remarkable decision must surely undermine the statutorily protected status of all Green Belt areas.

The new Wheatley MSA will be 16 miles from the Booker site. Because of the Government's recent change of rules to allow MSA's to be spaced at 15 mile intervals instead of 30 mile intervals, it still leaves the Booker site open to further bids.

Mobil could themselves make a third attempt. They could argue that if the proposal to widen the M40 is put into effect, there is a case for another MSA at Booker.

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With regard to the close proximity of Booker Air Park and the specific issue of "Risks to Normal Aviation" the Secretary of State's decision letter said at his para 6:-

"..... he has regard to the Assessor's Report and to his Summary in para 57 that the proposed MSA would be unlikely to add significantly to normal aviation risks or to the already low risk to persons on the ground"

This surprised the Society who had found a witness to testify that immediately after a take off from the east-west runway had crashed by the proposed MSA site. The aircraft had then caught fire, but miraculously he and his passengers had escaped with their lives.

At the Inquiry David Lewry, Managing Director of Wycombe Air Park, gave evidence against Mobil's MSA. Residents in the Public Gallery were astonished to hear that Mr. Rollings, a Director of Booker Gliding Club, gave contrary evidence in support of the MSA.

This latter evidence formed an important third prop for Mobil's case. Mobil's Closing Submission to the Public Inquiry at page 37 para 8.6 said:-

"....Third, Mr. Rollings, who is a very experienced glider pilot and instructor and who wrote on behalf of both Booker Gliding Club and the British Gliding Association, took the view that the MSA would have no effect on normal gliding operations and very minor effects on emergency situations...."

Six months after the end of the Public Inquiry a glider and its powered tug aircraft made a forced landing by the proposed MSA site. On this occasion the incident occurred after take off from the north-south runway.

At a subsequent discussion on the subject at Wycombe Air Park Joint Consultative Committee Meeting on 2nd November 1996, Minute No. 3.1 records:-

"D Draper (Booker Gliding Club) stated that ....although it would mean a reduction in air movements as far as the Gliding Club were concerned, and for which they would be seeking compensation, it was reasonable to state that from their point of view, that the siting of the MSA would not affect their operations".

"D Lewry (Managing Director Wycombe Air Park) stated .... even the moving of the MSA to the east, would still adversely affect the operations of other operators on the airfield .... He further added that the Wycombe Air Park routes had been devised to alleviate noise and could not be further distorted".

Society members are left to compare the above evidence and draw their own conclusions.

Past successes are no reason for complacency, they are no more than a reprieve. It has been proved that vigorous opposition by local resident groups can be effective. Many Society members have given their time and expertise freely to contain the overall cost of presenting a really effective case. Your Committee offers its thanks to all those members supporting them in these battles.

However, there are still many other actual costs to be met. These include research materials, hire of expert advice, professional services, printing, and postage. Furthermore we must pay off an outstanding loan of some £400 for last year's Public Inquiries.

Your Committee asks that, in the coming financial year, in addition to the usual £3.00 per household annual subscription, you give generously to the Green Belt/AONB Fighting Fund.

**POWER IS WITH THE PEOPLE!**

Allan Duggin, Chairman

# WALKER'S VIEW

Reports on our Woodlands Conservation Projects by **Ronald Walker**, Conservation Secretary

The future of Booker Common is in your hands. Yes, I would like your help with our forthcoming Litterblitz, our regular attempt to keep the Common clean and tidy.

We will contact as many of our usual helpers as possible, but if you want to be a part of the team and don't want to feel left out, please contact me (Tel: 444824).

## LITTERBLITZ

On Sunday Morning 14th April 1996

from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

Assembly points:

- i) On the Green below Squirrel Pub - Squirrel Lane
- ii) Arundel Road entrance to Booker Woods - routing down to the Lane End Road Party
- iii) At the junction of Rydal Way and Booker Woods and route along Lane End Road and Hornes Lane

Plastic bags are provided and filled bags of litter will be collected along the way. Strong gardening gloves should be worn as well as strong footwear. It's your backyard so please telephone and offer your help to keep it tidy.

Due to serious attacks on the bollards surrounding the woods by apparently driverless "stolen" vehicles and wayward wind-assisted trees, approximately 60 bollards need replacing this year. Allan Duggin and I are getting some estimates together and an assault team will be put together later this year.

Because of the hazard associated with working close to the road, this exercise requires meticulous planning and some training for the operatives involved. Please watch this space. I will be contacting previous workers and getting a team together.

Maintenance on the area is sporadic and weather dependent. So we cut when we can and when we can find a volunteer for the strimmer. Again, all you dog walkers, please help out in passing on to me details of areas and path that are becoming inaccessible.

With the assistance of some pyromaniac vandals and a strong wind, a superb mature beech fell on the night of 12th February. Fortunately no one was in the vicinity and it had been a hazard to walkers for some time due to the fire damage to its bole and root system. It was dying and would have fallen sometime, but blame should be laid on the vandals, not nature.

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## FURTHER NEWS AND OTHER GREEN BELT MATTERS

A planning application for a Waste Transfer Station at Booker has been refused. After 40 years Booker Tip is due to be closed at the end of this year, as scheduled.

However, it will still be possible for residents to take their domestic waste to the Booker Tip site for onward transmission. We hope this will help reduce the fly-tipping on Booker Common and surrounds.

Planning application for 'Agricultural Accommodation' on a site adjacent to Booker Tip by Grundons was refused in January 1996. It remains open to Grundons to 'Appeal to the Secretary of State against this refusal.

If they do so this Society will oppose them yet again. It will be recalled that Grundons previously lost their Appeal at a Public Inquiry to extend Booker Tip further into the local Green Belt/AONB.

Our First Line of Defence in all of these matters is:-

'The Strategic Plan and Wycombe District Local Plan' which offers the local and statutory protection for your environment. Unfortunately all legalities are subject to 'Interpretation' therefore, we have public enquiries and expensive increases on your Council Taxes.

From May 1996 a Public Consultation document will be presented by the Local Authorities inviting responses from the

public. It is vital that they be made aware of your experience and local knowledge. Wycombe District Council have agreed that Mr. Jerry Unsworth (who is its Planning and Transport Projects Manager) shall be our Guest Speaker at the Society's Annual General Meeting on Monday 20th May 1996 at 8.00 p.m. in Booker Memorial Hall.

It is crucial that we make Wycombe District Council aware of our concerns and the problems we have been encountering. Action now will ensure that local problems can be properly considered and taken into account before this Revised Local Plan is finally implemented.

To ensure that no aspect of importance is omitted members are urged to phone Allan Duggin (HW 525665) immediately and voice their concerns, suggestions and any other ideas. These will be passed on to Jerry Unsworth in advance of our AGM and give him time to respond with well considered answers. Failing your action, then **"Who Dares Whinge?"**

The next meeting of Wycombe Air Park Joint Consultation Committee (JCC) is at 7.00 p.m. on Thursday 18th April 1996 at Wycombe Air Park. From 7 - 7.30 p.m. the public are allowed to question the Air Park Operators.

This Society campaigned for several years before this privilege was granted but public attendance is usually small. Your committee must remind local residents of the truism - 'If you don't use it - you lose it'.