

BOOKER COMMON AND WOODS PROTECTION SOCIETY

(Registered Charity : No. 289871)

THE
BATTLE
WITH
MOBIL
SEE OVER

RECEIPT for 1989/90 Fighting fund donation

RECEIPT for 1989/90 Annual Subscription

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

on
WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 1990 at 8:00 PM
at

BOOKER MEMORIAL HALL, BOOKER COMMON

All members are urged to attend the AGM for updated reports on our several environmental protection activities. Also to decide the Society's future policies and activities.

If we locals are not seen to protect our own patch we can't expect outsiders to do it for us. We would be all the more likely to get steamrollered.

Non-members resident in Booker/Sands are also invited if they agree with our environmental protection policies and offer financial support. Membership subscription is £2.00 per annum per family.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of last meeting (22 May 1989) by Hon. Secretary.
2. Annual Reports on past years activities by Chairman and Hon Treasurer.
3. Members Vote the annual subscription for 1990/91.
4. Question Time on Reports in Item 2 above.
5. Proposals for future conservation activity and for future protection of your local environment.
6. Vote of Thanks for the outgoing committee.
7. Election of Committee for 1990/91; and the offices of Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer.
8. Any other business.

NEW COMMITTEE FOR 1990/91

Subscribing members are invited to offer themselves for election to the new year's committee. Please phone nominations before 16 May 1990 to High Wycombe 25665.

Present list of candidates for the new committee are:-
Mesdames: Rita Luxton, Lyn Pearce, Gaynor Taffurelli (present Hon Secretary), Claire Wylot. Messrs: Paul Baker, Syd Codling, David Crowther (present Hon Treasurer), Allan Duggin (present Chairman), Rodney Forrest, Tony Hall, Ronald Walker, Victor West.

PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE FOLLOWING SOCIETY ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROJECTS WILL BE GIVEN AT THE AGM.

1. Conservation of Booker Common Woodlands. Also a Report on Wycombe Councils new 'Woodland Strategy'. A 5 year plan which the Society supports.
2. Local Green Belt/AONB Protection. In the Past year the Society has opposed 8 Planning applications and 2 Appeals to the Minister. Property developers must not be allowed to concrete over this designated countryside. They are unlikely to stop trying because the financial stakes are very high, so we must always resist.
3. Wycombe Air Park
 - i) Safety: The information about the Air Park disclosed at the recent Public Inquiry greatly alarmed local residents. Wycombe Council has arranged a meeting with Air Park Operators, Air Park Joint Consultative Committee and representatives of Local Interest Groups.
 - ii) Aircraft Noise: Following the Society's representations 3 years ago, Wycombe Council requested Dept of Transport to implement Section 5 Civil Aviation Act 1982 regarding noise control. Minister of Aviation has now begun investigations. His letter of 13 December 1989 also states "...complaints suggest...there is something wrong at the aerodrome.."
4. M40 Widening and Completion. Dept of Transport forecast that daily traffic flow will increase from the present 43,200 vehicles passing Booker to 72,800 in 1993 and eventually 134,300. The Society has written to the Dept of Transport at Bedford requesting 'Noise Barriers' be erected at Booker. Also that the proposed lighting is an unnecessary intrusion. Residents are also advised to write to Dept. of Transport.

BOOKER HOSPITAL CARES FOR THE ELDERLY & DISABLED

The Society received this letter from a patient 'Daisy Allen'. We shall all be old one day and possibly lonely. Why not start caring by giving a little of your time today.

"This has been my home for the last 15 years.

"The staff care for my basic needs, but at times I long for someone to give their time without interruption.

"I and my friends at Booker would really appreciate an hour or two of your time to read to us, talk to us and help introduce new events into our lives.

"Visit us and see if you can help. If you feel you can offer some of your time, please phone Miss Brenda Mackin, Hospital Manager: High Wycombe 26161."

Signed : Daisy Allen - a grateful patient.

PUBLIC INQUIRY

MOTORWAY SERVICE AREA (MSA) AT BOOKER

Summary of events below: a full report to be given at the AGM

The Public Inquiry was in session from 24th January to 14th February 1990 at the old Lady Verney School.

Contestants who actively participated in the action were Mobil Oil Co. Ltd., the appellants and Wycombe District Council, Dept of Transport and Booker Common & Woods Protection Society all of whom were against the appeal. In addition, five other interest groups participated on specified days and lodged their particular objections.

During the course of the Inquiry Booker Gliding Club Ltd., a sub-tenant of the air park, had a change of mind and withdrew their objection to the MSA. This occurred whilst evidence against the MSA was being presented by A.A.A. Ltd., the main tenant of the Air Park and witness on behalf of Wycombe District Council.

The Society's case against the MSA was presented by four people:-

The Society's Advocate, Mr. Herbert Pollard, an experienced Solicitor who is well practised in planning matters and public inquiries. He is also concerned for the wellbeing of the environment.

He guided our witnesses, subjected Mobil Oil's witnesses to fierce cross-examination forcing useful admissions and made score-point interventions throughout the Inquiry. Finally he delivered a brilliant closing speech against the MSA.

During the two years leading up to the Inquiry he gave the Society continuous legal advice, guiding us through the meticulous preparatory and investigative work which was necessary to make a strong case.

Allan Duggin, Chairman of the Society, presented a 29 page 'Proof of Evidence' comprising of warnings of the many adverse effects on the quality of life to Booker & Sands residents from an MSA. His evidence also pointed out that all of the residents not only lived in close proximity, but were also downwind of the prevailing wind conditions which made matters worse.

On this written evidence he was subjected to a vigorous cross-examination by Mobil Oil's Solicitor, but who failed to secure any withdrawal. On the contrary Allan Duggin counter-attacked with the advantage of deep local knowledge which Mobil Oil appeared to lack.

Furthermore our case was immensely strengthened by the evidence of the survey of 1784 Booker & Sands residents conducted by the society. This demonstrated that whilst 95% of the residents objected to the MSA on this site; only 2% did not object and 3% held no strong views.

Mobil Oil failed to discredit the integrity of the survey. It follows that the voice of the people was duly noted for the record.

Allan Duggin had also organised and co-ordinated the preparatory work in the 2 years prior to the Inquiry in association with the Society's Advocate, Mr. Pollard. Overall control was exerted by the Society Committee.

Dr. Andrew Ellis is a chartered chemist & specialist in pollution problems and appeared as an expert witness on behalf of the Society.

His evidence demonstrated that vehicles at the MSA would produce Carbon Monoxide at up to 10 times the rate they would when passing on the M40. Also in the area of a refuelling station the levels of potentially carcinogenic aromatic hydrocarbons are increased by up to 30 times.

Dr. Ellis concluded with his professional opinion "It is difficult to imagine a worse MSA site for placing people at risk to health in the High Wycombe section of the M40"

Mr. Bob Johnson is Senior Lecturer in Plant Physiology at the School of Biological and Molecular Sciences at Oxford Polytechnic where he teaches honours degree students. He appeared as an expert witness on behalf of the Society.

He demonstrated in his evidence that the effects of the various exhaust pollutants in such close proximity would damage our ancient woodlands. Parked vehicles starting from cold are at their most polluting. He concluded that in ecological terms it is a most unsuitable site for an MSA.

Both of our expert witnesses came under intensive cross examination by Mobil's solicitor but he was unable to move them from their professional opinions.

By contrast - Mobil did not produce any experts in pollution as witnesses to support their case. They therefore avoided cross examination by our Mr. Pollard.

At the conclusion it was considered that the Society established beyond doubt the difference between the existing situation and the situation which would exist after an MSA came into existence. This was exactly what we set out to prove some two years ago.

(Note: Copies of the Society's Proofs of Evidence are available - price £3.00 per set).

Community Effort and People Power

With grateful thanks -

The above summary records only the culmination of long and intensive preparatory work by a great many residents to whom we extend our grateful thanks. Without their active help and actual participation in the background, our highly effective and professional presentation to the Inquiry would not have been possible.

Space prevents naming all helpers and the variety jobs they did, but a very special thanks is due to Jeff Woodhouse, of Starbase Systems, Lane End. He acted as 'reader and corrector' and then printed the Society's formal documents required by the Inquiry (some 2,000 pages). The highly professional printed presentation added a final polish to an already formidable case against the MSA.

At the Inquiry the Society's overall professional approach was remarked upon (unsurprisingly, since many helpers are professionals).

Decision Date of Yes or No is not yet known, but is probably several months ahead. The bad news is that Mobil Oil wish to be represented at the Tetsworth MSA Inquiry (provisional date 3rd July 1990). At the Booker MSA Inquiry they attempted an adjournment and reconsideration with the Tetsworth Inquiry. Only this Society objected and the Booker Inquiry was closed and not adjourned. Both Oxford County Council and South Oxford District Council's position is that the southern MSA should be in the Chilterns including Booker not Testworth.

The Society will watch events and take any necessary action in defence of Booker/Sands.