

Matter 1
ID/7 1 Appendix_RRLimportance

Respondent 821
Cam Valley Wildlife Group

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Why Radstock Railway Land is so important for wildlife

1. Previous land usage has led to a habitat unique to the area, which supports its own diverse species of flora and fauna including exceptional plant and animal communities.
2. It is one of the best wildlife sites in B&NES supporting an estimated 6000 species, including many that are nationally rare and endangered, and a mosaic of habitats including UK priority habitats. It has been described by Natural England as close to SSSI (nationally important site designation) quality and as of national importance by Buglife, The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, and Mike Lush, professional entomologist working in international consultancy.
3. Survey work has identified about 140 B&NES Priority species, including at least 25 UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species and at least a further 69 species that are nationally scarce, rare, or threatened. There are at least 33 Red Data Book and red list species. The site is most notable for its impressive invertebrate communities, as a Key Reptile Site and for its important bat commuting corridors. There are 14 Red Data Book (in danger of extinction in the country) and 50 nationally scarce invertebrates (all insects), plus an additional 7 that are UK BAP Priority species. Species include a fly that appears rather scarce in Europe and was found for the first time in the UK on this site; it is still the only known site for this species in the UK, but is a leaf miner of a very common plant and is almost certainly dependent on a particular ecotype, habitat or microclimate found at the Radstock Railway Land that could be rare elsewhere due to the varying nature of post-industrial land, as are other rare species found on the land .
4. The site is an important element of the local ecological network and of a wider ecological network. This network is vital for maintaining the population of a host of species, for populating the countryside with species that have been lost from it, and to enable species to move from their present climate spaces to those they are yet to occupy in the countryside of the future as the climate changes. The need to maintain habitats and ecosystems in the face of an uncertain ecological future is more important now than ever and the species on the rail land site are an important part of this necessary process. It is an important biological educational resource for a wide area and provides a high quality green space and leisure amenity for local people in an area where the publicly accessible green spaces are categorised as low quality
5. Knowledgeable, respected organisations and individuals have expressed strong opinions:
 - The most sensible way forward is to ensure that it is treated as an exceptional Site of Nature Conservation Importance and as a Local Nature Reserve, both for planning purposes and in general day to day management - *English Nature*
 - In addition to the site's wildlife importance, the importance to local people of an accessible countryside setting within the urban area must not be underestimated - *Avon Wildlife Trust*
 - It is abundantly clear that the site is of national importance for biodiversity. The loss of any of these [rare and scarce] species would be a risk to the England Biodiversity Strategy - *Buglife, The Invertebrate Conservation Trust*
 - The adverse impacts could be successfully avoided only by considerable redesign of the development to leave the bulk of the track bed and adjacent valuable features intact - *B&NES Environmental Practice Team*
 - The application is therefore recommended for REFUSAL on ecological grounds and in line with PPS 9 Para 16: "Planning authorities should refuse permission where harm to the species or their habitats would result unless the need for and benefits of the development clearly outweigh that harm" (Para 16) - *B&NES' Ecological Consultant in the*

Officer's report for the NRR/Bellway outline planning application of 2006

- I fully accept the importance of this site to the regeneration of Norton-Radstock. However, the maintenance of large parts of the site as a nature reserve can also be of value to the community...some development could take place whilst conserving the ecological importance of the site, but it needs to be demonstrated that the development is confined to areas which are not of significant value - *UK Planning Inspectorate (B&NES Local Plan Inquiry, Inspector's report)*
- Radstock Railway lands is probably the most biodiverse site for invertebrates I've had the good fortune to get involved with. It is probably of high enough quality to be designated as a SSSI and is one of the most important sites for invertebrates in southwest, if not southern, England. It contains one of the highest proportions of nationally rare or scarce species for any site I've encountered. Should it be allowed to be destroyed, as this development would certainly result in, it would be a national travesty - *Mike Lush, professional ecologist and entomologist working in consultancy*