

Leisure

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

PROPOSALS by The University of Nottingham to install wind turbines on their land at Grove Farm by the River Trent have been quite rightly receiving a good deal of coverage in *The Beeston Express*.

If permission for this development is granted, it will dominate the area in which they are placed and the view from many parts west of the city. In addition to the visual intrusion, there could well be issues of noise pollution for nearby residents – particularly if the turbines are operating to their maximum speed and their blades together generate a disturbing resonant frequency. This is something that is difficult to measure in terms of decibels and therefore lies outside most noise control legislation. As with their visual impact, this is something that, should it occur, will be impossible to rectify after the turbines are constructed.

The effect of wind turbines on wildlife, especially birds, is still not clear. What is clear is that the funding for research into this is a tiny fraction of the subsidies that are available for the construction and operation of wind turbines, and it may be that scientists can do little more than identify and count the corpses of birds around wind turbines in an attempt to assess their impact.

Once again, it could be that by the time a problem is identified, it will be too late to do anything about it. It would seem that any birds using the River Trent as an aid to navigation might have an extra hazard to negotiate should this plan go ahead.

Power : cost

Given their cost relative to the power they produce, one might suppose that there is a government policy that wind farms should be sited exclusively in the best positions to harvest wind, such as in coastal areas or on high ground. Bizarrely, this is not the case. Any landowner who wishes to have a wind farm on their land can do so. They can provide a considerable income over a long period, with the added advantage that the land can still be used for agriculture. Although the university is keen to do an environmental halo to justify this proposal, it is unlikely that the commercial advantages have escaped them – they were, after all, recently awarded the title 'Entrepreneurial University of the Year'!

Few would regard the Trent valley as the ideal place to harvest wind. One only has to think of the long periods of still misty weather that often occur in the area – often at just the time (autumn and winter) when power is in most demand. Because of this, it may take a considerable time for this farm to 'work off' the carbon emissions that arise from its manufacture and erection and begin to save the world from global warming.

On analysis some might decide that as well as being visually invasive, wind turbines are an expensive vanity project fatally flawed because, when they do not turn – as may happen regularly to those proposed at Grove Farm – electricity has to be found from other sources.

In the long term, the only solution to the issue of carbon emissions and the dwindling supply of fossil fuels is to use less – much less – of them. This is something that is difficult to achieve in a world where its sale of electricity and these fuels for profit is such a lucrative enterprise. This proposal may, on paper, contribute to meeting the arbitrary targets set by the previous government for renewable energy sources but even the most enthusiastic supporters of wind power would not claim that it could ever meet more than a small fraction of the country's energy needs.

The rest will have to come from somewhere. Recent events in Japan have reduced the appeal of nuclear power as a low carbon energy source but a determined effort to significantly reduce Britain's carbon emissions overall, with a particular emphasis on transport, might allow more power generation from what is currently the pariah fuel – coal – whilst keeping a relatively clear 'carbon conscience'.

The Grove Farm proposal offers little actual benefit to offset the effect it will have on the local landscape. Those determining any planning application should look beyond the environmental hype and consider that it is just as much about a hard-nosed business decision.

Jack Smith
Local ecologist

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The University will be asked to respond to Mr Smith's comments in a future issue.*

Rugby

Play-off disappointment

NOTTINGHAM Rugby's Championship play-off campaign may have been a disappointing end to the season but all concerned can still take immense pride from what has been achieved over the last eight months.

Their fifth place finish in the 'regular season' to reach that play-off stage was all the more remarkable given the financial constraints they have operated under. But with the takeover of the club by Notts County Chairman Ray Trew's company now complete, the focus at Meadow Lane is firmly on going at least one better next season.

To that end, Director of Rugby Glenn Delaney has already made several key

signings, with prop Matt Parr and second rows Nic Rouse and Lee Morley returning to the squad.

Joining them is Argentinian outside half Juan Pablo Socino, who has been a key man for Rotherham Titans over the season.

With more arrivals expected to be announced, Delaney believes Nottingham will be in a position to make a much stronger bid for promotion next season.

"We were obviously frustrated not to progress further in the competition," he said. "But we recognise where our weaknesses have been and by strengthening in those areas we can make real progress."

"All year we've gone out to play some real attacking rugby and that has been successful in the amount of points we've scored. The next step for us will be to take that confidence and ability into the new campaign when we'll have a reinforced pack that will provide a good platform to build our next campaign from."

"We've already made some real quality additions who will make a real difference next season. Combine those with new contracts for our top-scorers like David Jackson and Tim Streather, and we're looking to build strongly for the new season."

Softball

Wooden Spoon for the Beeston Beavers

TWO local teams from Broxtowe Softball club, the Beeston Beavers and the Alea Alleycats, took part in the Annual East Midlands Softball League First Ball Tournament on Sunday, April 10 at Grove Farm sports field.

Twelve teams were involved, who came from Nottingham, Birmingham, Leeds, Leicester and Leamington Spa.

The tournament is the traditional season opener for the league and both of the local teams played very well, despite some disappointing results. The Beavers and Alleycats lost their first two

opening games and were entered into the Wooden Spoon contest, which is between the bottom four teams in the tournament. The Beavers went on to win their last two games and claim the Wooden Spoon title. The Alleycats, however, lost their next two games, despite a closely fought third game that required an extra innings because the scores were tied.

The prizes for the Beavers did not end with the Wooden Spoon title. Jason Smith and Alex Keegan won male and female 'Most Valuable Player' awards for the whole tournament. Special mention must also be given to John

Ellis, club umpire, who officiated throughout the day. Club secretary Matt Johnson said: "It was great to see the club involved in every part of the start of the season opener, from helping organise the tournament, setting up at eight o'clock in the morning on the day, and playing."

"The perfect end to a fantastic event came when our players won both of the 'Most Valuable Player' awards for the whole tournament."

The regular season is already under way at Chilwell Olympia, with games taking place every Thursday until September.

Thought for the Fortnight

Song of Joy

"Dance like nobody's watching,
Love like you've never been hurt,
Sing like nobody's listening,
Live like it's heaven on earth."

Mark Twain (1835-1910)

