

Leisure

Wild bird food-supplier donates to Wildlife Trust

WALTER Harrison's, one of the UK's leading suppliers of wild bird foods and accessories, is helping Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to enthuse the next generation of naturalists with a generous donation of more than £13,000.

The donation results from sales of Walter Harrison's range of wild bird care products across the UK. Every purchase made of Walter Harrison's wild bird foods and accessories goes to support the work of the Wildlife Trust.

Walter Harrison's products are stocked by the Wildlife Trust at Attenborough Nature Centre (ANC). The local centre is renowned for providing a 'lifeline to the natural world'.

Walter Harrison's make a minimum annual donation of £10,000 to support the work of the Trust. This latest donation will help to support more than 1000 educational visits to the reserve from schools across the country, which provide information on wildlife care and the importance of feeding garden birds as well as funding vital habitat conservation work.

Support for the kids

Speaking about the donation, Wildlife Trust Chief Executive John Everitt said: "Attenborough Nature Centre provides a gateway to local wildlife for thousands of local children each year. Since 2005, we have welcomed more than 20,000 school children through our education programme, but because schools cannot cover the full cost of visits, we, as a charity, have to subsidise almost every visit. Effectively it costs us £5 for each child so we rely upon the support of donations and sponsorship to continue and expand our work. We are therefore extremely grateful to Walter Harrison for their continued support – it makes a tremendous difference and helps us plan for the future with confidence."

One of the key costs that Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has to subsidise is transport. Without the support of companies, grant-making trusts and Wildlife Trust members, the charity, which cares for 70 nature reserves across the county, wouldn't be able to work with as many schools.

Support for the birds

Steve Brown, Managing Director of Walter Harrison's, said: "We have been supporting the work of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and the ANC for a number of years.

Providing food for birds has real benefits for birds and homeowners alike. During the colder winter months, the provision of food can be a lifesaver. Combined with the loss of habitats due to modern farming practices, gardens are now an important habitat for wild birds."

As well as providing an annual cash donation, Walter Harrison frequently supports events at the nature centre. Staff from the centre also regularly trial new seed mixes and feeders from the company's range.

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

Wind Farm Woes

WITH the erection of the tower which now sits on the university's Grove Farm site (by Clifton Bridge) we now have a clear indication that their plan for a wind farm on it is progressing.

The recent BBC series, 'Wind Wars' will have provided anyone hoping to object to this development with some sobering viewing. These programmes covered the struggle of the residents of Den Brook Valley in Devon to prevent the construction of a wind farm and highlighted the problems that they had in doing so and that those opposed to the Grove Farm plan may face.

One of these is that, under current planning guidelines, the amount of power that any proposed wind farm is likely to generate under the prevailing local wind conditions is not taken in to account in the planning process. Instead it is the amount of power that it is capable of producing under ideal conditions that is considered. It is this guideline, which might seem to many completely illogical, which allows such farms to be constructed in places where their power generation potential is limited. It makes it almost impossible to object to a wind farm development on the grounds of its inefficiency and presents a high hurdle for any objectors to the Grove Farm scheme to clear.

Something else that this programme made clear was that it was possible for wind farm developers to obtain planning permission, even after a public inquiry, whilst withholding crucial

information that has been used in the application from objectors. In the case of Den Brook, it was the raw data from the noise measurements that were denied to those objecting. It was not until the case had reached the Court of Appeal that they were released and, after independent analysis, the conclusions drawn from them found to be deeply flawed, particularly in the area of a phenomenon known as 'amplitude modulation'.

Even after all this, the appeal ruling did not overturn the granting of planning permission but did impose conditions which may prevent the Den Brook farm from proceeding at all. Although this may have represented a victory for objectors upholding the original planning decision meant they were still liable for costs. To anyone watching 'Wind Wars' it would be clear that to object to wind farm developments you need courage, fortitude, legal and technical advice and, preferably, deep pockets!

The programme revealed that the developers certainly had the last of these; the amount they were prepared to spend on gaining planning permission is an indication of the profits they foresaw. The farmer who owned the land on which the turbines were to be built was portrayed on the programme as trying to persuade his neighbours that he wanted to 'save the planet' but convincing most of them that he was only in it for the money and that the whole business was something of a 'racket'.

As things stand at the moment, the grounds for objecting to wind turbines

appear to be limited. However, there is a growing group of experts in the field who are calling for the expansion of onshore wind farms to be halted and resources directed to the development of offshore facilities. Many of them also contend that, in a world where CO₂ emissions are still increasing, the effect of Britain's wind farms on their reduction is insignificant but they can make sense in terms of sustainability and energy security. For this the blades have to turn with a degree of reliability and consistency – something that offshore turbines, despite their cost, can do much better than sites such as Grove Farm.

Although there are still concerns, as with all turbines, over the hazard that they represent to birds, there is growing evidence that offshore wind farms can be of some benefit to wildlife. The underwater sections of their structure soon become a habitat for sea life that can cling to them and the ban on fishing within and around offshore wind farms turns them, in effect, into marine reserves.

Wind turbines in highly visible locations might be seen as symbols that both those developing them and the taxpayers who subsidise them are 'doing their bit' for CO₂ emissions, global warming, sustainability, or something.

Whether the growing body of opinion that this is an expensive illusion results in changes to planning guidelines in time to affect the Grove Farm development remains to be seen.

Jack Smith
Local ecologist

The Beekeeper



Thought for the Fortnight

Worry is interest paid on trouble before it's due.