



Save Our South Coast Alliance November Bulletin

ENOUGH

The UK has the most polluted seas across Europe
The UK has the most polluted rivers across Europe
The UK has the most depleted wildlife across Europe

Chichester Coastal Plain is drowning - in developments, in sewage, in congestion, in flooding, in sea levels rises, in pollution, in wildlife loss, in coalescence, and more. And still the building goes on: Havant 444, Emsworth 200, Southbourne 1250, Chidham 294, Hambrook 118, Bosham 300, East Chichester 1750, Birdham 245 (in the AONB!), East Wittering 280, Witterings 70, Bracklesham 150, North Mundham 66, Shopwyke 88, and Pagham, and Fishbourne, and Nutbourne and Selsey, and Bersted and on.....and on.....suffocating and eventually extinguishing the very environment everyone wishes to experience and hand on for future generations.

BUILDING ON AONBs

Statutory Protections - AONBs are areas designated for the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty. This includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries.

The impact of continual development around our AONB resulted in the SSSI protection of Chichester Harbour to be downgraded by Natural England in 2021. There is a real danger that the remainder of protections will also be downgraded. Were it not for the Chichester Harbour Trust and other voluntary groups the entire AONB would now be a forest of houses

The Government appears to recognise development within the 'setting' of AONBs is a growing issue. The draft new National Planning Policy Framework, published in January 2021, states (at paragraph 175) that 'any development within their (AONBs and National Parks) 'settings' should be sensitively located and designed to avoid adverse impacts on the designated landscapes.'

Land between Emsworth and Havant in the Chichester Harbour AONB is earmarked for 516 houses as part of the Havant Borough Local Plan. – creating a precedent across our AONB.

BUILDING ON KNOWN FLOOD PLAINS

Across the Manhood Peninsula there are green field sites that are earmarked by CDC as suitable for development. There is photographic evidence that these sites flood regularly.

Where developments have been newly built these have created flood conditions for the original communities who were, prior to the new housing, free from flooding. Mortgages and insurance premiums then become untenable. Planning Inspectors continue to turn a blind eye and agree permission in 91% of submissions.

BUILDING ON PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND

Food security is, we are led to believe, of extreme concern to the government and yet there is this continual push to cover the whole of the South East in housing and concrete. According to the Guardian UK's biggest housebuilders are sitting on 600,000 plots of land with planning permission. Berkeley, Barrett, Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey account for more than 450,000 plots. The driving force to this situation is money – average price for agricultural land is £21,000 per hectare. Land with planning permission is around £6 million per hectare.

Not a single brownfield site instead all level green field prime agricultural land. And yet the entire region stretching from Havant across to the Kent coast is registered as containing Grade 1 and Grade 2 areas of prime agricultural land – imperative for producing food - yet deemed suitable for building upon.

BUILDING WITHOUT INFRASTRUCTURE

The NPPF, which is still the official guide to development, states that infrastructure should be in place before development – which so rarely happens and never seems to be a contributing factor to be used by Planning Inspectors to reject permission.

The developments along the A259 are causing huge disruptions to traffic flow, to pollution, to the well being of the communities as cars and lorries thunder past. It is also used as a relief route when there is an incident along the A27. Most of the planning applications are along this route. It is the only way the communities can access the A27 either at Emsworth or at Fishbourne.

The A286 and the B2145 are the main arteries for the Manhood Peninsula. They are essentially cul de sacs as they start at the A27 and end at the sea. In the summer the volume doubles and at weekends trebles. The rising levels of traffic hinders access to all the emergency services and to public transport as the schools and surgeries are over subscribed.

The only way to access amenities in the City is using these two roads which are then blocked by the A27. There is a continuous stream of traffic because the A27 is the main strategic

route east and west along the south. The cry to consider a northern bypass falls on deaf ears.

BUILDING CAUSING POLLUTION

Sewage outflows, discharges, and leaks are continually occurring across the entire region culminating in poisoning our seas, our harbours, our chalk streams, our rifes and our villages. Local communities regularly challenge the Planning Authorities as they suffer from sewage leaks across their lanes and roads, and watch the tankers as they shuffle content from one sewage works to another, as they know full well water companies are at overcapacity. Legally water companies cannot admit they are unable to cope and so the Environment Agency gives the nod to development so the Planning Inspector allows building.

Southern Water is fined huge sums on a regular basis which has no effect whatsoever as they continue to pay bonuses and eye watering salaries to their CEO. To boast they are putting into effect measures which will bring pollution down to zero by 2050 is laughable. They will have no funds to do this as all their profits go into paying debts. The Env Agency has powers that could stop the 400,000 illegal discharges a year but instead they leave the water companies to self regulate. Scotland does not have these problems because they did not privatise their water companies.

What other nation across Europe shuts down its beaches at the height of summer to the public due to fears for their health over sewage discharges into the seas? What other country allows raw sewage to flow directly into their highly protected waters?

Lord Burns challenged the Environment Agency on 11th October asking ‘when did they know that Combined Sewer Overflows were a problem?’ The response was negative. Lord Burns responded : “The EU Commission wrote to the UK Government in April 2003 giving formal notice that Water Companies were acting illegally by dumping sewage into rivers.”

BUILDING THAT IGNORES CLIMATE CHANGE

On 23rd July Lord Debden declared that UK “houses were NOT fit for purpose”. He went on: “The NPPF calls for ‘sustainable development’ but buildings don’t meet that standard.” They are not only built without future proofing but are built on unsustainable sites such as directly along vulnerable coastlines.

Sea level rise is increasing more than anticipated such as those expected in 2050 are happening now. For example according to The Times by 2050 the rise is forecast to be about 35 cms putting at risk about 200,000 homes. Added to this foreshores will be eroded which will lead to higher waves. With no thought to long term strategy developers continue to be given permission to build along the coast of the Manhood Peninsula.

Coastal Change Management Areas were introduced by the Government in 2012 to create ‘buffer zones’ to reduce the impact of coastal erosion. According to a Plymouth University paper only 5% of the coast is so designated.

BUILDING DESTROYING BIODIVERSITY

The Living Planet Report, 13th October 2022 states that monitored wildlife populations declined between 1970 and 2018 across all assessed regions – with an average 69% decline in relative abundance globally. This also includes alarming statistics on monitored freshwater populations which have declined by an average of 83%.

With the growing impact of avian flu it is crucial that our AONB and its estuaries provide a safe haven for all wildlife.

85% of the world's chalk rivers and streams are in the south of the UK and many flow into this region. For example The Ems. It is not a winterbourne course. It should be a full flowing river throughout the year as it used to be, providing a rich haven for everything in its waters and its banks. It used to have mills, water cress beds, and an abundance of fish and fed by aquifers from deep inside the South Downs. Thanks to Portsmouth Water with its continual abstraction it is nothing more than a shingle path. The huge increase in households in a relatively short time and with successive droughts has virtually destroyed this natural gem together with undermining the long term survival of the aquifers.

It is internationally acknowledged that wetlands and their special grasses are crucial for carbon capture but they too are in decline right across our harbours.

Pollution levels, caused mostly by sewage, that are being monitored by Clean Harbours Project, indicate that they are deeply entrenched within the mud and silt. The presumption must be that there is an impact across our wildlife including the fish we eat.

CONCLUSION

Until and unless our Government recognises that the responsibility for all of the above rests with them and the laws they pass the decline will continue. The mantra of 'levelling up' by Government seems to be just that – a mantra otherwise why continue to pour housing into the south east especially along a vulnerable coast when it is already one of the most densely populated regions in Europe. All the declarations at COP26, all the policies in Manifestos, all the rhetoric declared by each successive Environment Ministers, are just that – hot air. We need not only the restoration of local democracy, but also to challenge the overarching power of Planning Inspectors who continue to pass 91% of Planning Applications, to acknowledge the true value of land and the environment as a national asset, and the number of 300,000 houses to be built to be explained, and much more.

In 2020 the Government declared it would protect 30% of the land and sea for nature by 2030. Chichester Harbour AONB's SSSI has been downgraded by Natural England. This is not the definition of protection.

The Government is not on course to protect 30% of the land and sea for nature by 2030. Just 3.22% of England's land and 8% of the sea was effectively protected by 2022. This is an increase of just 0.22% of the land and 4% of the sea compared with 2021. Deregulatory

proposals to reform or repeal the strongest laws for nature and to liberalise planning laws would take England even further away from meeting nature targets.

This lack of progress, coupled with a Government deregulatory agenda, is putting the UK at risk of moving even further away from where it needs to be to protect and restore nature.

Westminster can make the laws. We can make the politicians. It is now in our hands.

SOSCA (Save Our South Coast Alliance) - November 2022