

The Lymington Voice

The Newsletter of the Lymington Society Autumn 2008

Published by the Lymington Society. Hon. Sec. Dr I Johnston, The Chantry, Hollywood Lane, SO41 9ND

Chairman's Note



Society Chairman
Clive Sutton

Dear Members,

I think once again I can start my note to you by saying again that your Committee have been pretty active since the last newsletter. It is because of this activity that we are not as frequent as we would like to be with our newsletters. I hope you agree however that the presentation has now improved and that they are a credit to the Society.

Flats on Avenue Road and Southampton Rd

I will not start with the Ferries because the hot news off the press is the fact that the Inspector has now allowed the latest application by McCarthy & Stone for sheltered housing at the traffic lights. Sheltered housing needs to be one unit and therefore it is one long

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Ferries Latest - Wightlink Walk Away from Safety Sea Trials

Long-Running Ferry Saga Reaches a Crescendo as Wightlink Walk Away from Trials

The long-running saga of the attempt by Wightlink to impose much larger ferries on Lymington reached a crescendo when Wightlink dropped the bombshell news on Monday November 17th that they were walking away from further sea trials, were intending to bypass the approvals process and would be commencing commercial operations with the new



ferries in early December.

By operating the new ferries from the existing ramp, they apparently do not need permission from any of the regulators to start commercial ferry services with the new ferries. Wightlink also increased the pressure on the Lymington Harbour Commissioners (LHC) by announcing that the Passenger Certificates on the

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The 2008 AGM

Unfortunately our chairman was unable to attend the AGM, having been called away suddenly on an important legal matter. It fell to Peter Chitty, Society President, to chair the meeting, starting with a welcome to our members, and to the Mayor, Pauline Ellsworth.

Ivor Johnston read the minutes of the 2007 AGM.

Peter Chitty read the

Chairman's address. The full text of which is available on the Society website www.lymsoc.co.uk

New Subscription Rate

As part of the Chairman's address the subject of an increase of the Subscription from £5 to £10 was introduced, as discussed at the 2007 AGM. The increase was put to the vote and passed by a large majority.

There were then nominations for the Executive Committee. The present members of the

committee were re-elected. Jonathan Hutchison and Rose Tainsh were elected to the committee.

The social secretary gave an illustrated report on events over the past year.

Donald Mackenzie then gave a short presentation about the Green Belt, and there was a discussion about preservation of Green Belt vs. preservation of Lymington. Assuming that new houses have to go somewhere, (an assumption which is being challenged nationwide in the current

economic downturn) should they be crammed into Lymington and Pennington, or should they expand onto Green Belt?

The mood of the meeting was to protect Green Belt, although the excessively dense developments within Lymington were by no means condoned.

The evening concluded with an illustrated address from Joanna Close-Brooks about Buckland Rings. Details on page 3.

Planning Report

*Jonathan Hutchinson, Ivor Johnston,
Nic King, Derek Sheffer*

The complaint we hear most frequently is that the face of Lymington has been changed irrevocably by the profusion of blocks of flats. Many of these have replaced Edwardian houses with large gardens, and the loss of green space is regrettable. Lymington is, after all, a market town not an urban district.

Your committee has opposed many of these, but met little success in the face of central government guidance on planning density. Even if applications are refused by the NFDC, developers have learned that an appeal, decided by a government appointed inspector, is likely to be successful. Avenue Road is a topical example.

Avenue Road/ Lower Buckland Road

1. The large block on the corner of Lower Buckland Road was opposed by neighbours, by your Committee, by the Town Council and by the NFDC. The application went to appeal and was dismissed. A second, barely different, application followed, which we opposed but which was then passed by the planning officers under their delegated powers. We were dismayed that it had been passed without referral to the full planning committee and asked them for an explanation. They told us that the application was passed under the previous planning guidelines and that they would not have passed it under PPS 3, the new regime. The development is now progressing at a snail's pace, apparently a casualty of the recession.

Avenue Road/ Southampton Road

2. The corner site by the traffic lights at 46, 46a, 48 Southampton Road & 1 Avenue Road is the scene of a long running battle. The first application for 29 flats in 2006 was refused. McCarthy & Stone then applied for a block of 53 'assisted living' flats in June 2006. Neighbours, the Town Council and ourselves opposed the application, which was refused. It went to appeal in March 2007 and, after three days of evidence, it was dismissed by the Inspector, who considered that the large mass of the building would dominate its surroundings.

A further application for 42 such flats followed - still a large block, but with the frontage broken up to give the

impression of several distinct blocks. This was refused but duly went to appeal. Junior planning officers initially commented favourably on the application but - just a few days after our query about the Lower Buckland corner - senior officers of the NFDC opposed it vigorously. However the planning inspector allowed the appeal.

Old Conservative Club

3. The latest application at 91 Southampton Road is to replace Buckland House, the old Conservative Club, with a three-storey block of 12 flats. We are opposing this, as is the Town Council. We agree with the NFDC officers who feel the scheme is not of a quality to mitigate the loss of Buckland House and would like to see an independent assessment of the condition of the building before considering demolition.

Belmore Lane/Fairfield Close

Belmore Lane is at risk of losing what even a developer has described as its "pleasant, semi-rural appearance". We are contesting an appeal against refusal of a bid to build in the garden of 17 Fairfield Close, which in part fronts the lane, and another refusal to build in the garden at 44 Belmore Lane.

4. At 33 Belmore Lane, we opposed an application by Pennyfarthing to replace one house with four, which resulted in a further application to build three even bigger houses on the same garden, which we also opposed. Both applications were refused, the second one by the full development control committee. Inevitably, both refusals were appealed and the first was allowed. The depressing thing about this decision was that it was the appeal against the first refusal that was allowed and the second, carrying the full weight of the local authority's development control committee, was not even considered by the Inspector - what price local democracy?

Cannon Court

5. At Cannon Court, off the High Street, the developer appealed against refusal for a two-storey block of offices. We contested the appeal and the planning inspector dismissed it - but accepted the principle of a more appropriate building on the site.

Some encouraging signs

In spite of this depressing litany, we live

in hope. The recession is belatedly stemming the flow of inappropriate developments, at least for a time. We are also seeing our local planning officers use PPS 3 with growing confidence. The planning guidance encourages them to consider how a proposed development integrates with and complements neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access. It gives them scope to refuse designs which are inappropriate, or which fail to take the opportunity to improve the character and quality of an area.

6. At Undershore Road, Walhampton, the National Park planners refused a proposal to replace Warrens Cottage; as the proposed design would have been out of character and would replace a dwelling of local interest.

7. In the High Street, NFDC refused Tesco permission for illuminated fascia signs, which are contrary to policy within the Conservation Area.


8. At Navarino Court off the High Street the inspector rejected an appeal against refusal for a new property for residential use behind Caffè Uno, but accepted the principle of extending the High St premises to the rear for retail use e.g. storage.

Work in progress

9. We have objected to numerous applications at 33-39 Waterford Lane and in Waterford Close on the sites of Rowland House and Springmead, mainly on the grounds that the very large size of the individual units and the proportionately small gardens is not typical of the local context; we also have concerns about the impact on the privacy of neighbouring properties. The latest application for 5 houses has been withdrawn - there were apparently 13 responses in favour and 33 against. We believe it is important to identify what is left of the rural character of this part of town and protect it

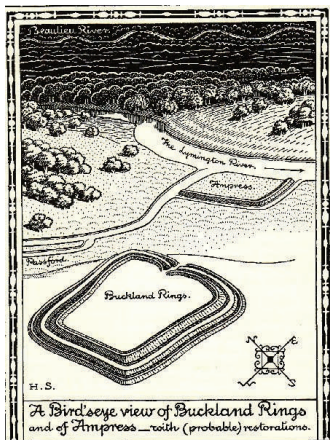
10. At Lymington Pier Ferry Terminal, Wightlink is proposing to install new steel piles and modifications to accommodate introduction of the new ferries; which we believe should be considered in the context of the wider impact of the new ferries e.g. on traffic and the river environment.

11. At Ampress Lane, we are supporting the use of another plot for car parking for Lymington Hospital.



Recent Social Programme Events

Buckland Rings Talk and Picnic



THANK YOU JOANNA

This year's AGM talk was from Joanna Close-Brooks, who had the unenviable task of following a full and busy AGM agenda. She did this wonderfully, with

insight into the history of this, one of the best preserved Iron age forts in the country. Less well preserved is Ampress Camp, but Joanna showed us how to see the original earthworks where they still exist. The culture of the Celtic people who inhabited the Fort was demonstrated with slides of artefacts, and reconstructions of the Fort when it was a thriving community. It was unusual to have such a large development in a relatively exposed position. Most were on hilltops for better defence. They must have really wanted to live in Lymington, and who can blame them.

On Sunday may 11th we gathered at Clive Sutton's house, Buckland Manor, and spent a pleasant hour or so wandering around the Rings, taking in the lovely views over Lymington, and enjoying the pleasant Spring weather. Then we sat down for a picnic. Did we really have to find shade from the sun? I

believe we did, although it seems as if it must have been the only sunny Sunday this year!

Summer Garden Party



THANK YOU CLIVE AND JENNY

This year's Summer Garden Party was held at Buckland Manor on June 5th. Clive Sutton gave a fascinating talk about the history of the house. Ask him at the Christmas drinks where the staircase came from!

Upcoming Events for your Diary

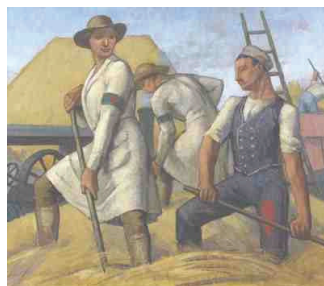
Christmas Drinks at Stanwell House Hotel



Once again we get the season off to a good start with a Society get-together at Stanwell House Hotel. Come and meet your fellow members and the Committee for a drink and a canapé.

Private View St Barbe Museum Women's Land Army Exhibition

Wed. 7th of Jan 2009 - 6.00 - 8.00 pm



AGM and Talk by Photographer Sally Fear

Lymington Community Centre
18th March 2009 7:30



Photo by Sally Fear

Illustrated Talk - "Circumnavigation For Beginners"

Lymington Community Centre
Wed. the 29th of April 6.00- 8.00

Luke McEwen and his wife Emma spent 4 years going round the world in "Eagle Wing" their Tradewind 35 yacht. Come and hear about this inspiring adventure of a lifetime

Summer Garden Party East Grove, Lymington

Wed the 3rd of June 6.00 pm

Once again Sir Robin and Lady Georgina Craufurd kindly invited the Society to use their beautiful and historic garden, at East Grove, Grove Rd, for our Summer Garden Party

To Purchase Tickets for these Events, Please Contact:

Don Mackenzie,

**Solent House Dental Surgery,
Cannon Street, Lymington.
01590 672986**

Or: Nigel Seth-Smith

**21 Waterford Lane, Lymington,
SO41 3PT. 01590 678210**

Nigel.Seth-Smith@gennum.com

**For Latest Dates and Times
Please check the website
www.lymsoc.co.uk**

**We sometimes have to change dates or
venues for our events. Please check
the website before coming.**

Blocks of Flats in Lymington

Dr Ivor Johnston—sec'y

The complaint we hear most frequently is that the face of Lymington has been changed irrevocably by the profusion of blocks of flats. Many of these have replaced Edwardian houses with large gardens, and the loss of family houses and green spaces is regrettable. Lymington is, after all, a market town not an urban district.

Your Committee has opposed many of these, but met little success in the face of central government guidance on planning density and of the rising price of family houses. Even if applications are refused by the NFDC, developers have learned that an appeal, decided by a government appointed Inspector, is likely to be successful.

Avenue Road is a topical example (and where is the tree-lined street conjured up by this name?). The large block on the corner of Lower Buckland Road, now a casualty of the recession and progressing at a snail's pace, was opposed by neighbours, by your Committee, by the Town Council and by the NFDC. The application went to appeal and was dismissed. A second, barely different, application followed, which we opposed but which was then passed by the planning officers under their delegated powers. We were dismayed that it had been passed without referral to the Planning Committee asked for an explanation. We were told that the application was passed under the terms of central government Planning Guidance then, and that it would not pass under the current Planning Statement.



Southampton Road & Avenue Road

The corner by the traffic lights is the site of several long running battles. The first application for 29 flats in 2006 was

refused. McCarthy & Stone then applied for a block of 53 'assisted living' flats in June 2006. Neighbours, ourselves and the Town Council opposed and the application was refused. It went to appeal in March 2007 and, after three days of evidence; it was dismissed by the Inspector, who considered that the large mass of the building would dominate its surroundings.

A further application for 42 such flats followed. This building is still a large block, but the frontage is broken up to give the impression of several distinct blocks. This was refused but duly went to appeal. Junior planning officers initially commented favourably on the application but, just a few days after our query about the Lower Buckland corner, senior officers of the NFDC opposed it vigorously at the appeal. However, we have just learned that, in the light of the precedents like Cavendish Mews, the developers' appeal has been successful.



Buckland House

The latest application is on the opposite corner; to demolish and replace Buckland House, the former Conservative Club, with 12 flats. We are opposing, as is the Town Council.

In spite of the catalogue of defeats, we have hope that the combination of the current planning policy and the knowledge that we will scrutinize every major decision, together with the recession may belatedly stem the flow of inappropriate developments. It is a pity we cannot imitate the Rev. Spooner and turn 'blocks of flats' into 'flocks of bats'!

Take control of your Driving Future

County Council Scheme

Older motorists have a wealth of experience, confidence and tolerance. However sight, reaction times, judgement of speed and distance won't be as sharp as it once was. Fragility increases with age, so injuries tend to be more serious and recovery takes longer, the chance of surviving an accident is much lower.

The County Council's **Older Driver Skills Scheme** aims to find ways of helping older people drive safely for as long as they are fit to do so, rather than taking measures to prevent them from driving at all.

It's ideal for people who've been driving for years and want to update their skills or gain confidence; those recovering from illness or injury; those advised on health grounds; people returning to driving or finding it difficult to adapt to a new car.

What does it involve?

It's not a test – there's no pass / fail. Instead it's an informal, confidential appraisal aiming to offer help and advice, which will enable that person to continue driving with improved safety. General ability is assessed but particular concerns can be investigated. Each person is given a comprehensive de-brief and any concerns or remedial action discussed, a written report follows.

A current driving licence is required and eyesight is checked. The appraisal costs £25 and is delivered from the persons home, using their own car.

Road safety officers manage the award winning scheme with appraisals delivered by Driving Standards Agency (DSA) Approved Driving Instructors (ADI's).

For further information or to arrange an appraisal please contact Hampshire's Road Safety Team on 01962 874600 or email road.safety@hants.gov.uk

Former Wellworthy Social Club Site



Architects sketches of the proposed Art Deco style building at the top of Stanford Hill

Clive Sutton Chairman

The pass has been sold at the traffic lights by the approval of the McCarthy and Stone sheltered housing block designed to try to look like individual houses. Buckland House is under threat of demolition and that curious quirk of Lymington's character may be difficult to retain.

This puts the spotlight even more strongly on the other entrance to Lymington at the one-way system dominated by the site of the Wellworthy Social Club. The Club was formerly a modest house with views out over the open fields opposite to the Solent. Those views, believe it or not, were protected by restrictive covenants until quite recently.

The Club building is clearly past its sell by date and is not capable of redevelopment in its current form. Something else will have to be put there. The question is what.

The Society had been approached by the previous owner whose scheme came to nothing and now the current Developer's architect has approached us on two occasions. The first proposal was a rather bland copy or pastiche of everything else and too large.

The second proposal is something which I would like to share with you as members for your opinions.

This is a proposal for a striking art deco 1930s style building to cover the whole of the corner site joining up the new but traditionally built buildings in Priestlands Place with the original

cottages in Stanford Hill.

The building, if it is to be approved, will make a statement and an impact, but its design is not repeated anywhere in Lymington apart from the old Dawsons Garage and the Antique Centre in the High Street and more recently the development behind the Yacht Club car park at Bath Road, which I expect many of you will agree has been attractively done and is a considerable improvement on what was there before.

By itself 1930s art deco style is quite attractive and well known and liked but only in the right place. You have two artists impressions of the frontage, one more hidden behind the existing tree and the other more dominant as one passes the tree. It is a striking design but I would imagine that you would ask yourselves whether that building is in the right place and whether that is the sort of statement that should be made at the entrance to Lymington and in particular at the entrance to Lymington's Georgian High Street.

On the other hand you may feel that this is an exciting development which will complement the existing buildings surrounding it and even the traditional large houses in Highfield opposite. The greatest clash is going to come with the juxtaposition with the smaller Stanford Hill Cottages.

I have to say the Committee have mixed views about this. I think the majority would feel that this is a striking building but in the wrong place.

We pride ourselves on not being a NIMBY organisation but in looking at

each proposal constructively. The Developers and their architects have approached us twice and accepted criticisms on the first occasion. I told them that I would defer to the members on this occasion and I should be very interested for your considered views on this building.

I appreciate that it is easy to have a knee-jerk reaction to say that it is out of place and out of keeping. That may well be the case but give it a moment's thought, as the Committee have to do with all planning applications, and e-mail your views to one of the Committee and preferably Ivor Johnston as Secretary who will collate them. We would prefer to hear from our members but we may hear from non-members. When replying please advise whether you are a member or not.

A Personal View

Ivor Johnston

This site at the entrance to the town centre calls for a striking building. An earlier suggestion tried to echo the red brick of the cottage terrace opposite Waitrose – it looked drab, almost a Victorian workhouse. The imposing houses of neighbouring Highfield do not need an imitation, they stand alone. Do we want a neo-georgian pastiche, perhaps a mockery of the genuine Georgian High Street, or the "pensioners' Poundbury" style we are now offered at the traffic lights corner of Southampton Road?

In the end it is an aesthetic judgement. I am in the minority, but I would like to see it there.

Chairman's Note (contd from page 1)

block going round the corner on both roads. The developers' architects have done their best to disguise this with all sorts of different roof lines and setting it back allowing for a fountain in front, which seems to have attracted the Inspector.

Buckland House

The domino effect theory now makes Buckland House vulnerable to Colten's planning application to redevelop it on the basis that, whereas they originally wanted it as an administrative headquarters, they now discover that the cost of renovation would be too great.

Your Committee will oppose this because that building does complement the mixture of buildings on the town side of the traffic lights and if preserved will leave three corners of that junction with original buildings, retaining the majority of its character, rather than having that part of Southampton road completely dominated by new building.

Domino effect

How have we got to this state of affairs, where effectively Avenue Road is now a new street and Southampton Road will shortly follow? The answer seems to be in the nature of the planning system itself. Obviously buildings which have passed their usefulness and cannot be preserved need to be redeveloped. That gives the opening for unremarkable houses and bungalows in large gardens to be redeveloped. That cannot be prevented on the basis of current planning guidance, but the type of redevelopment can be opposed and it should be in keeping with the existing character. The difficulty is that it does not always happen and as a result of that the character becomes that of the new unsuitable buildings, and the argument is then that the character has changed neighbouring buildings can change with it.

The original character therefore disappears. It only needs a couple of permissions to start the ball rolling. In Avenue Road the two major blocks of flats masquerading as large houses were passed by the council's officers some time ago without hardly any reference to the planners or to the public. At one of our meetings with the planning officers

one officer said, "What's wrong with flats anyway". Well, nothing in the right place, and some of the flats in the right places in Lymington are in keeping with their surroundings, for instance the Hillcroft site and at Ampress.

Avenue Rd and Lower Buckland Rd

The current visual nail in the coffin of the north side of Avenue Road being the development at the corner of Lower Buckland Road, now dominating the surrounding area, was originally dismissed on appeal by the Inspector in its earlier form. The application was modified slightly and the planning officers then allowed it to go through under delegated powers without Planning Committee discussion.

When the Society asked to know how this happened it appears that the Council suddenly realised that the same thing was happening at the other end of Avenue Road (at the traffic lights). The original planning application submitted there had been turned down on appeal, then been modified. The council officers led the developers to believe that the new application would be approved. A dramatic change of policy by the Council, which we learned of at the public enquiry, led the developers to cry foul. That no doubt did not help in opposing the current application on appeal, which has now been allowed.

Unwanted Change of Character

The majority of the local population complain about the change in the character of Lymington. They do not want it but it gets passed by a series of mishaps. Much of Lymington's development is in keeping with its original character as evidenced by some of the recently completed developments such as Angel Yard, the Ampress site and the two blocks of affordable housing near Ampress. Even the new houses on the corner of Southampton Road and Marsh Lane which do not clash with any other existing building and which stand on their own below the open landscape of Buckland Rings, are acceptable.

What is not acceptable is to intrude with development, which is dense for the sake of being dense, into areas which set the scene for the character of the Town, particularly the approach roads to the

Town, changing the overall character of the Town as that happens.

Councillors are doing their best

We now have a set of Councillors, who we are normally able to agree with, but they are still having to cope with the result of the previous permissions which have been given, or allowed on appeal. There is now an appeals team within the NFDC but they are already on the back foot as a result of their predecessors' actions.

We are doing our best too

I do have to report at this stage of the day that during my chairmanship of the Lymington Society we have protested strenuously on your behalf with your help to retain the character of the Town in its residential areas, but with mixed success.

Permissions deferred but not gone

Due to the downturn in the property market we will not see the results of the current permissions, no doubt for some years to come. It may be that by then people regret even more the permissions that have been given as time passes but those permissions will be implemented in due course.


Ferries

Now back to a more immediate campaign on which the Society are succeeding. Our policy in relation to the Ferries is to ensure that the issues are aired and not passed through on the nod, as appeared to be happening before our public meeting a year ago. Since that meeting Don Mackenzie on our behalf has followed up many of the concerns. We have obtained the Council's legal advice in relation to the limited Appropriate Assessment and that has enabled the Lymington River Association to call for the Minister to step in and order an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Call for an EIA

The NFDC Councillor responsible for transport has also called for such an Environmental Impact Assessment. Desmond Swayne, our MP, having been alerted to the strength of feeling at our public meeting has been diligent in calling an adjournment debate and asking numerous questions of the

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Chairman's Note (contd)

national regulators to the point where there is now a considerable rethink going on as to how the decision should be taken.

In our last magazine you saw it first. The montages of the new Ferries on page 11 are exactly as they are, now that they have arrived. How it will turn out no one can say, but at the end of the day the subject will have been well and truly aired so that every consideration will be given to the introduction of these very large vessels into the river.

Your Committee

At the AGM I always pay credit to the hard-working Committee. Some of our readers may not attend the AGM so I repeat that here. Peter Chitty, President, is still active with his wise advice. Ivor Johnston, Secretary, similarly writing representation letters on our behalf. Derek Sheffer, Membership Secretary and Treasurer. Donald Mackenzie, active Press Secretary. Nic King and now Jonathan Hutchison, dealing with the numerous ongoing planning representations. Nigel Seth-Smith as Social Secretary, and now Marion Jakes who came forward as a result of my call for new Committee Members at the last AGM. My thanks to them all.

We know from our meetings and social events that we have the active support of our members. Please don't hesitate to let us have your views by telephone or e-mail so that we can feel that when put forward our opinions, write to the press, and lobby on your behalf, we are doing so with your active involvement.

Finally I would like to think that, as Shami Chakrabarti, the Chief Executive of Liberty, said on Desert Island Discs: "People may not all agree with all that we do, but they would miss as if we weren't there"

Change to Committee

Nigel Seth-Smith has stepped down from the position of Social Secretary to concentrate on Newsletters and the Website

Donald Mackenzie is now the Social Secretary, on top of his many other roles for the Society. Please continue to help him by booking your social events as early as possible, so he has an idea of numbers.

Ferries (contd from p.1)

current ferries would expire in February 2009, which could leave the route without any service if they are unable to operate the new ferries.



Desmond Swayne

To complete this dramatic week, local MP Desmond Swayne, with whom the Society has been actively liaising over the Wightlink proposals, launched an attack on Wightlink's decision in the House of Commons, during an Adjournment Debate concerning the Wightlink proposals on Wednesday the 19th. He went on to describe the vital importance of completing the Sea Trials and Appropriate Assessment process, to ensure that the full effects of the ferries were properly investigated before they were allowed to enter service. He called on the Government to prevent the ferries from entering service without proper consideration of all the likely effects they may cause. Mr Swayne went on to criticise the design of the Appropriate Assessment supervised by Natural England which appeared to be ignoring the major effects of the ferries and their propulsion units on the riverbed.



Huw Irranca-Davies

In reply, the newly appointed Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies, congratulated Mr. Swayne for

his knowledge on this topic and praised Lymington organisations that had raised important questions about the likely effects of the new ferries on the important local natural habitats protected under European legislation.

Mr. Irranca-Davies, in a thoughtful and well researched speech, set out the importance the Government attached to preservation of the protected habitats, and urged Wightlink to think again about their unilateral decision to start without approval. He described how he had requested urgent clarification from the Department of Transport as to any reserve powers that the Government may have available to use in this situation. He assured Mr. Swayne and concerned Lymington residents that the Appropriate Assessment would be followed through rigorously.

Mr. Peter Griffiths, the Chairman of the Harbour Commissioners, was reported to have also angrily denounced the Wightlink decision at a meeting of the LHC on Monday the 17th of November. Amid calls from fellow Commissioners for an Injunction against Wightlink, LHC will also investigate any legal powers they may have to compel Wightlink to complete the approval process and in conjunction with marine consultants BMT SeaTech, LHC were reported to be working on a "safe operating protocol" for the new ferries using the *Precautionary Principle*, which they might impose on Wightlink should they continue with their plan to start the new ferries in early December.

The ferry service to Yarmouth from Lymington is obviously a vital link for both the New Forest region and the Isle of Wight and the Society is positively in favour of a modern and safe ferry service, which is designed to not only further the economic development of the region but which is also designed to minimise the damage to the river caused by the 22,000 trips carried out each year.

In order to ensure that the new ferries comply with the need to protect these habitats and has been reported in previous newsletters and in local papers, the Lymington Society has been active in trying to persuade the authorities to carry out the fullest possible investigation of all aspects of the arrival

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Ferries (contd from p.7)

of the new ferries.

The position of the Society is that a full Environment of Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Wightlink proposals should be carried out, which should examine not only the safety of other river users but also environmental effects, traffic issues caused by the increased number of cars and lorries likely to come to Lymington, as well as the possible effects on the economy of Lymington if recreational sailors are discouraged from coming to the river by the presence of a very much larger ferries.

In the past two weeks Don Mackenzie, representing the Lymington Society, has had meetings with Desmond Swayne, Claire Lambert the Case Officer for Natural England, and technical experts from HR Wallingford, who conducted the original investigation into the likely effects of the Wightlink ferries proposed in 1991

In these discussions, the Society pressed the regulators to ensure that the full impact of the new ferries is taken into account, rather than simply the increase in damage which the new ferries may cause. In this age of environmental awareness and using the Precautionary Principle, it is important that any damage caused to the internationally important habitats through which the ferries travel, should be properly investigated and the Society feels that a full EIA is the best way forward. What is not appreciated locally is that, because of a quirk of planning law, shipping is generally exempt from usual planning procedures, and that only by the imposition of a full EIA does the local planning authority regain the normal planning powers to properly investigate all aspects of this proposal

The Society has also written to Mr Irranca-Davies, who is the Minister who has to make the ultimate decision concerning the ferries, requesting that he uses his reserve powers to order the EIA which the Society feels is appropriate. We have also been in correspondence with the Chief Executive of Natural England, Dr Helen Phillips, requesting that the Appropriate Assessment process is widened to include a full assessment of the effects of the hugely powerful Voight Schneider

thrusters which have the potential to deepen the river thereby causing the river banks to collapse even faster than they currently are. Currently only the effects of the bow waves on the sides of the river are being investigated and not the deeper effects acting on the riverbed which the Society feels should also be investigated.

We have also written to the Harbour Commissioners and Solent Protection Society requesting meetings to discuss the best way forward in ensuring that the regulators take full notice of all local concerns, and that they do not allow the obvious commercial importance of the

ferry to the Isle of Wight to overshadow other concerns such as the safety of river users and protection of the environment.

The Society will continue to act in a responsible manner to ensure that the Wightlink proposals are fully investigated and we hope that, if the new ferries are found to be too big for the river, the Harbour Commissioners will have the necessary powers to prevent them starting commercial service and will compel Wightlink to continue the service with the old ferries until new vessels more suited to the river can be ordered.

Lymington Society joins Civic Trust

The Lymington Society is now a Civic Society, affiliated with the Civic Trust.

The Civic Trust is an independent, national organisation with charitable status. It is the umbrella body for over 750 civic societies, representing over 250,000 individuals committed to improving and caring for places where people live and work. It is the leading UK charity dedicated to bringing vitality and high quality design to the built environment.

Plans to speed up Planning

The Civic Trust has made its longest ever response to a Government consultation. Members contributed to the Trust's response on the Killian Pretty Report, which examines how the current planning system can be accelerated and made more "customer focused".

<http://www.civictrust.org.uk/documents/KillianPrettyReportResponseOct08.pdf>

Housing Minister supports independent High Street stores

Housing minister Iain Wright told the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) recently that new protections included in the government's revised PPS6, published in July, will help them through the economic downturn and keep town centres vibrant.

The revised planning policy statement on town centres (PPS6) gives councils more scope to refuse out-of-town development proposals that threaten the survival of high streets and small shops.

It scraps the need test in favour of an impact test and retains the sequential test

that requires the most central town centre sites to be developed first.

Wright said: "We're proposing to scrap the needs test because it just isn't working. It's created a quagmire. Instead, our revised impact test will make it easier for councils to turn down developments if they threaten the vibrancy of the town centre."

He highlighted concerns that "identikit" high streets are increasingly dominated by big chains, while smaller, independent shops are being squeezed out.

"Independent stores reflecting a town's heritage and identity are more than just a place to shop, they represent the heart of our community," he said.

"We need to both protect smaller retailers threatened by increased competition and tougher trading conditions and also ensure investment isn't stifled and the market is not restricted," he added.

The revised PPS6 is expected to be published early next year following consultation on the changes.

The decision on whether to introduce a competition test, as recommended by the Competition Commission in April, will not be made clear until the outcome of Tesco's legal challenge against the proposal is announced.

**Please check the website
www.lymsoc.co.uk**

It is slowly improving, and does have up to date information as events unfold. E.g. the Ferries speeches from Hansard

