



Campaign Against the Levels Motorway
Website: www.savethelevels.org.uk

NEWSLETTER – September 2008

Welcome to you all, especially our new readers - an amazing 152 supporters have signed up since the beginning of June! At the latest count we had 300 people on our database - of course many of these are representatives of groups, so our actual contact numbers are far greater.

Thank you all for your interest and commitment. This brings me on to an important forthcoming event that we hope you will be able to support - **The Big CALM Protest** (Please see the accompanying poster) - Ed.

From the Chairman



The current M4 - Picture by Dave Yates

I really hope to see you all at our lobby of the Welsh Assembly this month. On Tuesday 23rd September, we have arranged to be outside the Assembly debating chamber (the Senedd, in Cardiff Bay), for an hour from noon, to show our concern about this awful road scheme. I really hope you will manage to make it – we need to show that there are many people with deep concerns about a new M4. Get in touch with the Wildlife Trust (01600-740600, sjones@gwentwildlife.org) if you want to share space in your car, or you want to join us in one of the buses we are organising.

The thinking behind this scheme is so dated. We all know that for as long as there is fuel to go around, building more roads will encourage more car journeys. The traffic bottlenecks will be moved to other places as soon as the road is built, whilst it won't take long for the new motorway to fill up. We can certainly expect the existing M4 to remain busy at peak times whether or not Newport has this new bypass.

Having just been to the excellent information day organised by Piers Propert (solicitors) in Magor, I know that many Magor residents are horrified by the prospect of the motorway thundering past their gardens just to the west of the village. As an environmentalist, my biggest concern is the loss of more precious Gwent Levels wildlife habitat. Furthermore, the extra road travel encouraged by the new M4 will contribute more polluting emissions which will help cause climate change.

This really is the moment when we have to get out and be counted. If the Assembly decides to go through with this scheme, it will commit Wales to spending hundreds – perhaps even thousands – of millions on making our problems worse. Instead, this money really should be spent on making the existing M4 safer and more reliable, and providing better public transport. With the price of fuel rising, as growing demand exceeds dwindling supply, it is hard even to be sure that there will be a need for the road in coming decades. Perhaps it is time the South Wales economy organised itself around the needs of the future, rather than the pattern of the past.

Now is the time for us to act, to save the people and wildlife of South Wales from a terrible mistake.

Lobbying



No New M4! - The Big CALM Protest on Tuesday 23rd September (Please see the accompanying poster for details)

We are planning to have buses running from main towns in the area if there is enough demand.

Please contact Sorrel Jones at the Gwent Wildlife Trust to let us know if:

- You are intending to join the Big CALM Protest.
- You are interested in using the proposed bus service.
- You want to offer space in your car.

Contact details:

e-mail - sjones@gwentwildlife.org
phone - 01600-740600

Publicity for CALM

- **GWT Appeal** - The response to this has been really encouraging, so a big thank you to all who have given so generously. This money will be used for campaign resources, as well as to commission consultants and hire expert witnesses at the public inquiry. Please keep the donations coming in! We hope to be rolling out the Appeal across all the UK Wildlife Trusts soon.
- On 20th August there was an article in the **South Wales Argus** and on their website, headed "**Pressure grows for M4 relief road**", stating that the South East Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta) had announced in a recent transport plan that they endorse the idea of encouraging early construction of the new M4 south of Newport. They reported that environmentalists have attacked the plans - and Sewta's support for them - Sorrel Jones, Conservation Officer for the Gwent Wildlife Trust and Secretary for the Campaign against the Levels Motorway, said she was disappointed by Sewta's endorsement of early construction. She said the M4 Relief Road is totally contrary to the National Assembly's commitments to reduce climate change and to encourage public transport and car sharing, adding that plans to build more motorway will put more cars on the road. She also stressed the potential damage to wildlife in the affected Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The article led to an extensive debate on the website.

- There was a short article in the Countryside Jobs Service supplement.
- CALM will also feature in the next edition of Green Matters, Wales.

Recent Events

Chepstow Festival (6th July) :

Gwent Wildlife held an exhibition at the Drill Hall in Chepstow, explaining many of the activities of the Trust. Although attendance figures were not large, the CALM stand, manned by Nikki Williams, Steve Rawlings, Sorrel Jones, Brenda and David Calver, attracted a great deal of interest and we added some new names to our membership list.



Magor Marsh Open Day (19th July) :

Wind was the order of the day for this popular family event, but after anchoring everything securely, all went according to plan. Sorrel Jones, Dave Yates, Brenda and David Calver represented CALM on the day, and recruited some very concerned local residents.

St Mellons Agricultural Show (13th August) :



This year's show was the 134th to be held at Tredegar House & Park, and included a long list of events and displays. Despite the absolutely appalling weather - heavy rain and howling gales - people still flocked there in their hundreds, so plenty of people passed by the Gwent Wildlife Trust stand. I suspect some were quite attracted by our offer of a seat out of the rain, but whatever the reason, Kate Hanley, together with Brenda and David Calver, were able to discuss the motorway proposals with a completely new audience, and we received a lot of support.

The Monmouth Show (28th August) :

Only last year, the Monmouthshire Show Society not only celebrated its 150th Anniversary but also moved the show to its new home on the Redbrook Road, Monmouth. It was estimated that about 20,000 people took advantage of the dry weather to enjoy the event. In the Countryside tent, CALM was represented by Sorrel Jones and Gemma Bode, who did a great job - adding yet more names to our supporter base.

Magor Residents Have Their Say (28th August) :

Magor Solicitors, Piers Probert, held an open day for the residents of Magor who wished to find out more information about the proposed new M4 motorway.

They decided to hold an open day, as many of their clients had expressed concern about how the motorway would affect their property, their way of life and the local environment. In order to create a forum for discussion, and a balanced argument, they invited CALM chairman, Julian Branscombe, and the RSPB's Casework Officer, James Byrne, as well as officials from the Assembly.

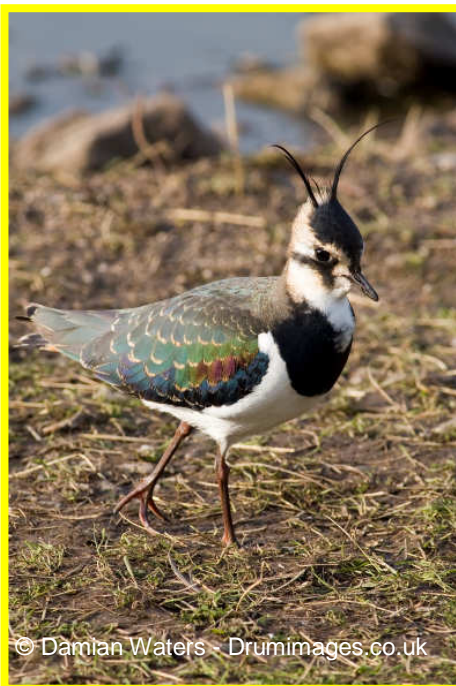
(P.T.O.)

(Magor Residents Have Their Say - continued from previous page)

James and Julian informed residents of the consequences of the proposed Motorway on the ecology of the Gwent Levels, the environment in general and of the Assembly's duty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Mrs Jane Probert informed the residents about the likely consequences of the Motorway on the day to day life of the residents within Magor.

The residents questioned the need for the motorway, the cost of the motorway, how the motorway was going to be paid for, the implications of road closures, noise and air quality pollution as well as the ecological implications for the motorway on **their** Levels. The Assembly officials tried, and in the most part failed, to allay the fears of the residents.

The overwhelming view of those people who attended thought the Motorway was, as one resident put it, "ghastly", and at times exchanges between the Assembly officials and residents was heated. Many of the residents took away CALM literature and expressed support for our campaign and hope to join us to petition the Assembly on the 23rd September.



Species Spotlight: Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Lapwings on the Levels: There is a small breeding population of lapwings on the levels, but numbers swell in the winter when additional birds migrate to the area. Lapwings feed on worms, beetles and other invertebrates, so the levels are a rich feeding ground.

Motorway impacts: The new M4 would cut across the levels, destroying open fields which could otherwise be suitable as lapwing habitat. Although adult lapwings can fly, their chicks cannot; in other parts of Gwent, they have been known to walk their chicks across roads from nest sites to feeding grounds. They would be well-advised not to try that across a motorway!

Talks to Groups

Would your group like to hear more about the motorway proposals? Members of CALM can give a presentation about the potential impacts. Please contact CALM for more information.

CALM Committee Meetings in 2008

All meetings are at Newport Civic Centre, starting at 7.00pm. Please feel free to attend.

- 17th September
- 19th November

Get in Touch with CALM:

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