



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

NEWSLETTER – March 2009

New Year, New Directions?

As the credit crunch bites, and governments begin to tighten their belts, we might be forgiven for hoping that a lack of finance spells the end for the new M4 motorway plans. Two of our political parties, Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats, have openly stated their opposition to the road. So why not sit back and take a breather?

The point is, we don't want these plans dropped because they're too expensive – we want them dropped because the impacts of a new motorway across the levels would be devastating, to people, wildlife and the environment. Furthermore, we don't want these plans to be put on the backburner, to be dragged up again in months or years to come. We need an absolute, irrevocable, resounding 'no' – in the name of sustainability and respect for the natural world.



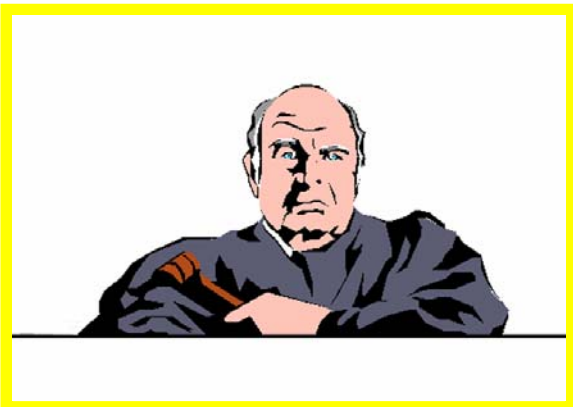
Our worst enemy now is complacency. We need to be prepared for the business case, and the potential Public Inquiry. Continuing to raise local and national awareness, and to put pressure on our political leaders, is our priority. We need to make the decision to protect the Gwent Levels an easy choice for the Welsh Assembly. Get ready for a busy year!

Julian Branscombe
Chair, CALM (jbranscombe@gwentwildlife.org)

Preparation of our response to the Outline Business Case and for the Public Inquiry

The Outline Business Case is expected to be presented to the Welsh Assembly Government Minister any time now, and it is hoped we shall be given access to it soon thereafter. A Public Local Inquiry is expected in late 2009 or 2010, if WAG decide to continue to pursue this ambition.

The environmental case against the road will be orchestrated by CALM, through the offices of Gwent Wildlife Trust. The case against is strong, diverse, and will require considerable input from appropriate expertise. The broad structure of the case against the proposals from an environmental perspective has been outlined and help is being sought from many organisations, including the Gwent Wildlife Trust, RSPB Cymru, FOE Cymru and CPRW.



GWT has confirmed its intention to present evidence in person at any Public Inquiry, and can provide amateur advocacy to support presentation of case through expert witness if funding for professional advocacy cannot be found. Again, expertise and resource is also being sought from interested bodies.

There will be continued dialogue with CCW, Environment Agency Wales and Cadw with regard to the technical issues. It is presumed that joint case will not be able to be made with these bodies, as they are Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies.

Can you offer your Expertise?

We need help with expertise to challenge the Assembly's Outline Business Case for the road which is expected soon. This will involve input on everything from archaeology and ecology, to sustainability, the Assembly policy context, economics, cost-benefit analysis, transport alternatives, and the implications on congestion elsewhere in Wales which would result from encouraging more traffic past Newport.

Publicity for CALM



World Wetlands Day was celebrated at Magor Marsh on 2nd February this year. Kathy Barclay (left) led a walk around the Reserve and once we were back in the warmth of the Centre, Sorrel Jones gave an illustrated talk about the Campaign against the new M4.

We signed up some new members, bringing our CALM database up to 340. Many of the members represent organisations, so our outreach is really gaining ground!



Species Spotlight: Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*)

Water vole status: Most of our water voles have vanished from South Wales. Considerable efforts are now being made to control mink and improve habitats for them, especially on the Gwent Levels.

Motorway impacts: Conservationists were beginning to think that water voles might have gone extinct in Gwent. However, they were rediscovered in 2007 – but right in the path of the proposed road. The new M4 would destroy their habitat, by culverting the reens, and tarmacing over the waterside grassland which water voles graze. The road would also fragment the water vole population, providing a barrier that voles could not cross.

Sign Here!

If you haven't signed the online petition against the new M4, now is the time! It's crucial that we don't sit back and relax in the hope that the credit crunch will put an end to the motorway plans. If everyone who receives this newsletter persuaded 5 others to sign, there would be another 1000 names opposing this devastating scheme. Go on, send round an email to family and friends – it only takes a minute, and will really show politicians just how many people value the natural world over their cars!

The petition is linked from our website: www.savethelevels.org.uk

Lobbying

Got any spare time? Get in touch with your local AMs (see the www.savethelevels.org.uk or ring GWT on 01600 740600 if you need help in doing this).

Can you offer other help?

Please get in touch with Sorrel Jones at the GWT office (sjones@gwentwildlife.org) if you can help in any other way – could you deliver leaflets, organise events or draft press releases?

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

Everyone is welcome to attend CALM meetings. These are held on the 3rd Wednesday of every second month at 7pm at Newport Civic Centre. The next meeting is on 18th March 2009.



These imposing and beautiful works of art by Rumen Dimitrov have recently been put up at Magor Marsh.

They stand quite close to the entry, acting as guardians to the Reserve.

Perhaps they will see to it that no Motorway gets built here!

Get in Touch with CALM:

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