



Leckhampton Green Land Action Group
Newsletter 37, March 2012

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – WED 28 MARCH 2012 AT 7.45 PM

All members are invited to the Annual General Meeting of LEGLAG, which will be held in the Village Hall, Church Road, Leckhampton on **Wednesday, 28th March, 2012**. Doors will open at 7.30 p.m. for a 7.45 p.m. start. Refreshments will be available before the meeting and during the interval. The meeting will close at 9.30 p.m. at the latest.

The AGM is your chance to hear what LEGLAG has been doing during the last year and contribute to a discussion on what we should be doing in the coming year. As usual, after the business meeting, there will be a short break for refreshments. Following this we have invited Charlie Watson to speak about the work of CPRE (the Campaign to Protect Rural England), a very influential organisation both locally and nationally which has been very supportive of LEGLAG. Charlie was formerly Director of Planning at Gloucestershire County Council and is now the Chairman of CPRE's Gloucestershire Branch.

The AGM is the time when we elect our Officers and Committee members. As always, we need new blood to keep going, so if you feel you could contribute by joining our Committee, please volunteer or discuss it with a committee member (see list on page three). Many of our committee members and other helpers join us soon after retirement, and bring to us the skills they have learnt in their former career. Some of the skills we need are legal expertise (perhaps to represent LEGLAG at Planning Inquiries), and also planning, social media, public speaking and PR skills. But the main requirements are enthusiasm and energy!

Housing proposals in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS)

In December the planners working on this strategy produced a consultation document. This document's dominating feature was a prediction, based on what we believe are unrealistic population projections, that some 38,000 new houses would need to be built in the next twenty years. As a consequence of this prediction, all the favoured "scenarios" offered by the planners included many very large developments on the edges of Cheltenham and Gloucester, including 1,650 houses here at Leckhampton and Shurdington. Responses were required by February 12th 2012, so LEGLAG went all out to ensure a strong response to these disastrous proposals.

We asked you to respond, and hundreds of you did, with well-argued responses. Thank you very much! LEGLAG itself submitted a lengthy response, including an authoritative contribution on the requirement for new housing by Richard Fordham, a nationally recognized expert. It also included an important assessment of the impact that development here would have on the Cotswold AONB, by Ray Woolmore of the Countryside Commission. We are very grateful to both of them for helping our cause. In

addition, we have seen many excellent and well argued responses from other organizations and individuals, virtually all of which agreed with us that the planners' housing projections were much too high.

We also leafleted widely, urging the public (most of whom were unaware of the consultation) to respond. First indications of the results of the consultation suggest that the vast majority of responses received by the planners objected to the proposed scale of housing, so we believe that our efforts were worthwhile and have contributed to an outcome which will force the planners to rethink.

Another element of our campaign was to organise a public meeting to discuss the plans. This meeting, brilliantly addressed by Jonathon Porritt and Martin Horwood and attended by at least three hundred people, was an outstanding success, getting very useful publicity in the local press and on TV. It also raised hundreds of pounds in support of our campaign from the very generous audience.

Development Plans at Leckhampton

Another threat we are facing, and preparing to fight, is the set of plans published by the development consortium RPS in 2010. These plans proposed building 1,300 houses here in Leckhampton and Shurdington. The developers did not submit a Planning Application last year but say that they will submit one this coming summer, hoping for support from the planners' Joint Core Strategy. We of course hope that – as a result of all the objections received – the Joint Core Strategy will NOT include development here. In any case, LEGLAG will object to their planning application when it is submitted, using all the arguments we have just used in objecting to the consultation scenarios. We will of course let you know what is happening and ask you too to object! We are very hopeful that Cheltenham Councillors will continue to support us and turn down the developers' application, in which case the developers are certain to appeal, and the issue will eventually be decided by a Planning Inspector after a Planning Inquiry, probably some time next year.

In the meantime, the developers have set up what they call a “Leckhampton Neighbourhood Forum” to try and ensure their plans get as much local support as they can. Up to now we have not made any attempt to take part in this forum, regarding it as a purely PR exercise but, as we have been advised that our non-participation may be construed at a Planning Inquiry as unwillingness to listen to local opinion, we are now seeking an invitation to join the forum as an observer, but making clear our continued total opposition to the plans. We hope a more democratic neighbourhood forum will soon be set up by our local Parish Councils.

National Planning Policies

There have been two important changes in Government planning policy this year. One is the new “Localism Bill” which is now in force. We hope this will help us protect our land in Leckhampton, but more study of the details is needed. The other change – which has not yet happened – is the introduction of a new “National Planning Policy Framework” (NPPF). The draft version of this NPPF was very biased towards growth at the expense of the environment, and was heavily criticised during the consultation.

LEGLAG was among the critics. The Government said it would take account of some of the criticisms, but has not yet published a revised version. It may be out soon.

New Website LEGLAG has a wonderful new website, thanks to our new webmaster Dave Mullins. It is easy to navigate and well worth having a look! We intend to keep it up to date with the latest news. It can be found at www.leglag.co.uk

Constitutional Amendments

Our auditor has requested that two minor constitutional amendments be made to tidy up our financial arrangements. These will be proposed at the AGM. One concerns the amount the Treasurer can hold in his kitty and the other concerns what should happen to our funds in the unlikely event of our closing down.

Committee Changes

During this year we have lost two very valuable and hard-working committee members. We thank both Klara Sudbury and Angela Rimmer for their many contributions to LEGLAG. Fortunately, Ian Bickerton and Elizabeth Pimley have been co-opted on to the committee in their place and have already made valuable contributions. We are also grateful to other LEGLAG members who assist us on specific issues as required.

Leglag Committee

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