

WWT Malvern Group, Thursday 5th November

Steve Bloomfield, Conservation Officer of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust: Nature Conservation and Urban Development

The Malvern Group enjoyed an especially topical, interesting and controversial talk on 5.11.15 from Steve Bloomfield, who essentially took a pragmatic and optimistic view of planning and development.

While there is currently unprecedented pressure on our environment for housing and general social infrastructure, Steve's point was that there are nevertheless huge opportunities for delivering benefit to natural habitats and wildlife. The legislation is in place to support this; several recent Acts of Parliament define the legal position, and the National Planning Policy Framework explicitly aims not only to minimise the impact on biodiversity, but to achieve net gains for nature. Local Authorities understand competing demands and juggle many issues when planning, but also are always very much aware of the need to protect individual species like barn owls, bats, otters and water voles, along with the native grasslands, orchards, water courses and woodlands which sustain them.

The Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's headquarters at Lower Smite Farm was used as an excellent example of the redevelopment of an old building which successfully took into account the wild species which live there, and indeed encouraged more to take up residence. Another excellent example is Hopwood Service Station on the M42, where co-operation between the developers and the Trust resulted in the creation of 50 acres of wildflower meadow and a large pond full of great crested newts. Warndon Villages in Worcester retains the old hedges and creates a green link between two areas of ancient woodland.

Our next meeting is a Question and Answer session with an excellent panel of experts. Harry Green, Rosemary Winnall, John Tilt and Johnny Birks will answer any wildlife question you care to ask. Non-members are welcome. It is on Thursday December 3rd at 7.30 pm, at the Lyttelton Rooms in Church Street, Malvern.

Alison Uren