



CLYDEBELT NEWS (18) AUTUMN 2006

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A.G.M. TIME AGAIN

It's a year since you last heard from us but we are still trying to uphold the aims of Clydebelt and dealing, as before, with the likes of :

- Making people aware of threats to their heritage.
- Holding public and members meetings.
- Producing newsletters and web pages.
- Questioning local authority planning departments.
- Objecting to undesirable planning applications.
- Giving evidence and questioning witnesses at public enquiries
- Lobbying councillors, MSP's and MP'S.
- Working with other like-minded organisations.
- Influencing planning and environmental policies.
- Helping local communities express objections.

AGM

As a current member you are invited to our AGM. This will be on the 21st November 2006, at the Duntocher Trinity Church, 7.30pm.

Non-members and new members are also welcome so why not bring a friend On the night you can find out a bit more about what we've been up to and what we have planned.

Guest speaker - Helen Lundie, WDC Access Officer is coming to talk on the Access Laws and answer any questions.

Refreshments will be provided.

Please Remember:

Clydebelt can't continue without your support

AGENDA FOR THE AGM

1. Chairman's Introduction
2. Apologies and Minutes of last meeting
3. Matters arising from minutes
4. Secretary's report on activities since the last AGM
5. Current issues
6. Future plans
7. Election of committee members
8. AOCB
9. Helen Lundie, WDC Access Officer talk on Access Laws

POLICY ON GREEN BELTS

Clydebelt thanks those who filled in a Scottish Green Belts Alliance form in response to the consultation on changing green belt policy. Some of our points made a difference.

In May the Scottish Executive announced the final version of the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 21 on Green Belts. It is to be welcomed in that it recognizes the value of Green Belts and aims to strengthen and enhance their role. Green Belts have proved their worth for more than half a century. They help to prevent unnecessary urban sprawl, assist in reviving town centres and provide opportunities for improving the countryside and access to it.

But there is an implication that Green Belts at town fringes should be removed out to natural features such as rivers. A lot of greenbelt could be lost around our areas where near to housing.

CLYDE VALLEY PLAN

Consultations ended in December 2005 on alterations to the Structure Plan that governs the entire Glasgow & Clyde Valley region. There were no responses to our comments on green belts and housing. But they improved the policy on Renewable Energy from Wind Sources. We are glad that they no longer indicate a potential area for windfarm development in the Kilpatrick Hills.

NEW WILDLIFE IN THE HILLS

Reports from fishermen tell us that an osprey has been regularly seen fishing over Burncrooks reservoir and that a pine marten was seen nearby.

CONTACTING CLYDEBELT

When Clydebelt was first founded membership was a one off £1. This is still the case however, it is expensive to post to all our members and this is only done with our annual newsletter / AGM notice, many of which are hand delivered. We would like to build up our list of members e-mail addresses so that we could send the newsletter and also inform you of any meetings or events. If you want to receive these or contact us please send an e-mail to assist@clydebelt.org.uk. You can also have a look at our website at www.clydebelt.org.uk which we try to keep up to date.

Should you wish to contact Clydebelt you can do so via our website or on 01389 872490

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OVERTOUN HOUSE

Overtoun House and grounds lie less than a mile up Milton brae from Milton village. It is a good starting point for walks through the grounds and past the Lang Crags to the Black Linn, Doughnot Hill and beyond. The grounds are always open daily and parking, if available, is allowed beside the house. Members may know that Clydebelt, along with others, recently opposed WDC giving Overtoun House (not the grounds) on an 99 year lease at £ 1 a year, to the Overtoun Christian Group, a American group lead by pastor Bob Hill. This was an alienation of the wishes of Dr White, who gave the estate to the people of Dumbarton in 1939. This required a Sheriff Court ruling and objectors could be held responsible for all court costs if they lost. After considerable negotiation involving several meetings with WDC's lawyer and council officials, a compromise was reached and the objectors reluctantly dropped their objection without going to a full court hearing. In the compromise WDC changed the request to a lease of 35 years with the option of applying for a further 30 years at completion.

This was agreed by the Sheriff and has still to be ratified by the Scottish Executive. Pastor Bob has a website at www.overtounhouse.com and his American missionary society at www.gme.org

COCHNOHILL FARM

Cochnochill Farm lies above the old Cochno Waterworks and to the east and north of Greenside Reservoir as far back as Duncolm. Access is along the Water Board road from Cochno Road at the now disused waterworks. This gives easy access to Greenside reservoir and several other walks in the hills. It was the only ground bought (eventually) by the consortium that were going to create all sort of wonders on the Kilpatrick Hills. It was to oppose these plans that Clydebelt was formed. Since then this ground has had about four owners. However, it would now seem that the ground is now being bought by the Forestry Commission who intend to have community hardwood woodlands on the southern slopes and some commercial conifers to the north but no planting on the hill tops. That's how the story goes, but we would welcome communication with the Commission when their ownership is confirmed and perhaps be allowed to comment on their plans.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

In May we sent in objections and reservations on the West Dunbartonshire Draft Local Plan, combining Clydebank and Dumbarton, although we did support many of the policies. We objected to removal of the Green Belt wedge through Auchentoshan from the Duntocher Burn to Dalmuir Park. We reminded them that they had previously agreed to keep this area as Green Belt. We disagreed with housing needs being projected assuming that there will be significant economic growth. This optimistic assumption will lead to far more land being released for housing than necessary. We are particularly concerned that there should not be ribbon development along main roads and bus routes, to prevent the coalescence of settlements that Green Belts currently protect.

We strongly supported the objective to "Protect, Enhance and Where Necessary Restore the Historic Environment". Archaeological and nature conservation sites have been sacrificed for quarrying, which is also eroding tourist views from across the Clyde and through the Council's area.

AUCHENTOSHAN ESTATE

Planning application has been sought for the building of a Bath centre, two houses, a new adult handicapped centre and associated car parks in Auchentoshan estate, off Mountblow Road. In addition, the site of the present adult handicapped centre and the estate gardens are being proposed for private housing. This is a major breach of greenbelt regulations and would reduce considerably the Dalmuir greenbelt 'wedge' which also includes Dalmuir Park and the Golf Course.

The planning hearing was held in Dumbarton Burgh chambers on Wednesday 6th September. Clydebelt spoke against the application in its proposed form. The councillors voted 2 - 1 for the matter to be 'continued', Councillor Linda McColl having voted for the proposals. We are concerned that many important planning applications are being voted on when less than half the planning committee turn up and on one occasion, only two councillors voted. Even your Clydebelt committee has a quorum of six. At the October council meeting the matter was again 'continued', none of the objectors was notified that these proposals were again on the agenda. The Dunbartonshire Consultative Draft Plan, now under consideration, intends to remove this whole wedge from green belt. Clydebelt have objected to this.

Auchentoshan makes a pleasant short-cut from the pedestrian fly-over at the Duntocher junction with Great Western Road to Mountblow Road or down across the Golf Course to Dalmuir Park by the newly formed 'Mill Trail'. Best seen in May when carpeted in bluebells.