

Motion concerning consultation and habitat assessment of University planning applications

Proposer: Karl Phillips (Conservation & Wildlife)

Seconded: Leejjah Dorward (PhotoSoc)

Passed 19/03/09

Council notes:

- 1) That the University is planning to build a large car park on land adjoining the research park
- 2) That this planning application is all but unknown to the student body
- 3) That the University has a history of poor consultation and publicity with its building projects, e.g. the car park in front of BIO
- 4) That the habitat assessment of the site was undertaken by a small, little-known consultancy from outside the region, and with no involvement of UEA's wealth of ecological expertise
- 5) That the habitat assessment of the site was not of the best quality – the conclusions on potential for bats and nesting birds were questionable, the work failed to detect the presence of BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) Priority Listed species on land immediately adjacent to the site, and the taxonomic knowledge of the surveyors was inconsistent

Council believes:

- 1) That students have a right to be made fully aware of University building plans, and to be given an opportunity to express their opinions and voice their concerns
- 2) That the habitat assessment of applications should be more transparent, with opportunity for input from UEA experts

Council resolves:

- 1) To request that the University notify the Union of all current planning applications, and of all applications that are made in the future
- 2) To inform the wider student population of planning applications through appropriate available routes, e.g. notices in Concrete, e-mails from the Environment and Communications Officers
- 3) To demand a better standard of publicity from the University concerning planning applications, including: i) putting up more signs and ensure that they are clearly visible; ii) inviting submission of comments from students; iii) offering at least one opportunity for a student consultation meeting
- 4) To ask that the University test the conclusions of habitat assessments by actively offering the reports to UEA ecological staff for critique
- 5) To ask that this critique be made available to the Union and its students, who can then form their own opinion about the plans
- 6) To invoke the Freedom of Information Act if the University is not forthcoming with either the plans or the habitat report

<p>867</p> <p>Received:</p> <p>Noted:</p>	<p><u>CONSULTATION ON AND HABITAT ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY PLANNING APPLICATIONS</u></p> <p>A resolution from K Phillips (Conservation and Wildlife Soc) and L Dorward (PhotoSoc). (copy placed in the minute book)</p> <p>K Phillips, proposing, argued that University policy on both these issues is unsound. Students were not consulted: when the car park by BIO was built, the first thing students knew was when work started, the only consultation was two very small notices being put up in the area to be affected. On Habitat Assessment, on this project a small firm was employed that displayed a woeful lack of expertise, not knowing the difference between particular members of the Verbascum plant family, and failing to detect the presence of bats and otters. The University failed to make use of the expertise of academic staff members. The University has broken the law, until recently, with its hedge trimming policy and on one occasion illegally killed nesting wrens when a bank was bulldozed. He was concerned about the possible plans for a multi-storey car park. His proposal will mandate the Executive to press the University on both</p>	
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<p>Resolved:</p>	<p>issues and if the University's response is deemed inadequate then to mandate the Executive to invoke the Freedom of Information Act.</p> <p>To adopt the resolution by an overwhelming majority.</p>	
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