

PINKHAM WAY ALLIANCE – DEPUTATION TO CABINET 20/01/15

It's almost two years since we were here to support the Council's statement about future decisions on Pinkham Way. It's rewarding to see the statement's ethos being followed, and proper planning principles applied.

We've commissioned a couple of surveys during these two years, which are furnishing increasing evidence of the site's conservation value. Our ecological study confirmed its Grade 1 status, a conclusion validated by the council's own survey.

There are some 1500 trees there, and well over one hundred species of plant; two endangered animal species were identified, and six threatened species of bird. An invertebrate survey is taking place now, on an area of the site called Open Mosaic; such habitat is listed as a Priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. We've passed latest results to the Council; these indicate an exceptional richness, with more than 70 species of spider and 120 species of beetle already found, including 6 on the endangered list, and some species rare in London. We hope to extend the survey.

For its value to be maintained and enhanced, the site needs proper management; we know council resources for that are lacking. Within our response last March, therefore, we submitted a 5-year site management plan, and asked residents for a commitment to offer practical help in its implementation. More than 130 people came forward.

We're realistic, and know that Haringey's under pressure on housing and employment. If this pressure could be resisted as far as Pinkham Way is concerned, the protection of a rich site would bring long term benefits to everyone. If not, we urge you strongly to ensure that any disturbance is kept to a minimum and restricted to the least environmentally valuable areas.

As the Council knows, however, we've long argued that a waste use would be contrary both to Haringey's own planning policies and to waste policies in the London Plan.

Planning grounds, though, are to us not the only bar to suitability. Between 2001-13 there was a waste site fire in the UK almost every day; a specialist broker told me recently that the sector is now close to uninsurable. Last August, a sizeable waste plant in Rainham burned for about 4 days. The nearest housing is over a kilometre away; residents were still advised to keep doors and windows closed.

Translate a similar event to Pinkham Way. Within a km there are 7 schools and thousands of houses; and take a few seconds to imagine a few days of disruption to the A406 and East Coast Main Line.

We urge you to continue to decide this site's future on proper planning principles, which apply equally to everyone, including the Waste Authority and including Barnet Council. This is surely the best way to resist improper pressure from any interested party.

Pinkham Way has been empty and unused for over 50 years; it's now revealing a rich and growing biodiversity and is showing itself as a haven for endangered species. Whatever decision you make about its future will have repercussions for generations of local residents, long after we've all disappeared. You've a rare opportunity to make a real difference to their future enjoyment of the site and its environs.