News release from Extinction Rebellion Winchester

A public meeting took place on Saturday 28th January to discuss plans to develop Bushfield Camp at the southern tip of Winchester, this is the third time developers have tried to build on the site. But should it be developed at all? Extinction Rebellion Winchester doesn't think so.

The UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, with only about half its biodiversity remaining, far below the global average of 75%. This places the UK in the bottom 10% globally.

We have lost many species including the Common Tree Frog, White stork, Large Copper Butterfly and Apple Bumblebee. Many more such starlings, newts, snakes and otters are at severe risk of extinction. In fact, more than one in seven native species face extinction.

At Bushfield Camp, there are records of many important species such as the common lizard, slow worm, tawny owl, woodpecker and badger many of which now heavily rely on the site.

The varied history of brownfield sites like Bushfield Camp means that there is much variation in the pH and chemical composition of the soils. This creates a great deal of variety across the range of the habitat. As a result, as well as being left largely untouched for 50 years, it is possible that it now contains a far higher level of biodiversity than the surrounding fields.

Friedrich Priesemann from XR Winchester said "Biodiversity isn't just something attractive to look at, it is the web that we all rely on, and yet here we are discussing removing one of the last remaining pieces of that in Winchester."

We believe that today's conversation shouldn't just be about jobs. It should be about managing and enriching a vital habitat, a habitat that has been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, for biodiversity that we all depend on.

It seems that the Church of England agrees with us too, at least in principle anyway. One of the Church's Five Marks Of Mission is to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and renew the life of the earth. So why isn't that principle being applied to the plans for Bushfield Camp?

Don't be taken in by developer-speak about enhancing biodiversity, these plans represent the destruction of yet another important habitat. The developer says they want to "carefully protect, manage, and enhance the existing habitats", that's achievable by building on top of it.

Bushfield Camp is a site of opportunity, not an opportunity to make money but rather an opportunity to contribute to the preservation and restoration of our ecosystems. Let's put nature first. Let us watch as nature slowly reclaims a piece of our concrete past and celebrate it as a beacon of biodiversity for the future rather than another soulless development that benefits few.

Extinction Rebellion Winchester are asking the public to join their campaign to Save Bushfield Camp for Nature.