



**SAVE
RADLEY LAKES**

www.saveradleylakes.org.uk

email: info@saveradleylakes.org.uk

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Oxfordshire County Council discards chance to Save the Radley Lakes on a casting vote in favour of Half a Million Lorry Loads of Rubbish

Today, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning and Regulation Committee voted, by the narrowest possible margin, to condemn Oxfordshire's roads to half a million additional lorry movements while, at the same time, throwing away the remnants of an opportunity to save Thrupp Lake at Radley from being destroyed by being filled with PFA.

The planning application before the Committee this afternoon was one submitted by Waste Recycling Group (WRG) to extend their operations at the Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site by 9 years and to allow 350,000 tonnes of waste to be imported onto the site by road every year between now and 2021. Save Radley Lakes had argued that the 500,000 tonnes of pulverised fuel ash (PFA) from the adjacent Didcot A Power Station, currently destined to be dumped into Thrupp Lake at Radley, should be sent to Sutton Courtenay instead, thus saving about 50,000 of those lorry movements, and Thrupp Lake itself from destruction. The Committee was evenly split on whether to grant the permission today, or to defer it, pending further assessments and consultation. It was only the casting vote of newly-re-elected Chairman, Steve Hayward, that led to this permission being irrevocably given today.

Save Radley Lakes campaigners present at the meeting were disappointed. "If only we could have persuaded one more councillor, or they had elected a different chairman." said Save Radley Lakes vice chairman David Guyoncourt "It seems the course of history sometimes hinges on very small differences of opinion."

Save Radley Lakes chairman, Basil Crowley, who spoke at the meeting, said "We are obviously disappointed at this outcome, which means that another door is now closed to us and to Oxfordshire Council, whose Officers seem hell bent on overseeing the destruction of Thrupp Lake¹. Still, a deferment, which was what we wanted, would have been no guarantee of an eventual positive outcome for us."

"The real losers here are the people of Oxfordshire², who will have to suffer these lorries, particularly people in the Didcot area who will remain at the focus of this traffic for a further 14 years. Until now, they had been looking forward to a decline in this traffic from later this year."

“There was not enough consultation on the issues of lorry movements³. The A34 is already overloaded and yet Oxfordshire County Council Officers seem to think that the extra lorries will only come during off-peak times and won’t adversely affect traffic round Didcot.”

“It is also a lost opportunity for Oxfordshire County Council to be seen to be making amends for their decision last year to grant planning permission to RWE npower to destroy Thrupp Lake. And, of course, it is another nail in the coffin for Thrupp Lake.”

“Nevertheless it is still open to WRG and RWE npower to come to an arrangement. People do not understand why half a million tonnes of ash has to be dumped into a beautiful lake while there is an empty eight million cubic metre hole right next to the Power Station. Surely the technical and commercial difficulties referred to⁴, but never properly discussed, at the meeting, cannot be insurmountable.”

Failing this, the only hope of salvation for Thrupp Lake now seems to be the Town Green Public Inquiry that is currently underway to determine whether Thrupp Lake, and its smaller companion, Bullfield Lake, are a Town or Village Green according to the Commons Registration Act 1965. If this were found to be so, it would effectively prevent the development. The public inquiry, currently adjourned, is due to resume on 20 June, and could carry on into September.

On another item before the Committee this afternoon, campaigners scored a minor victory. Councillors agreed that the remaining proposals to meet the Conditions Precedent of RWE npower’s planning consent for Thrupp Lake, those for which Officers had been unable to recommend approving today, should be referred back to the Committee, rather than delegated to the Officers. This introduces a possible additional delay before npower can start development, and will allow the Committee proper scrutiny of those proposals in due course. Speaking afterwards, Lynda Pasquire of Save Radley Lakes commented “It is notable that there was more debate on these Conditions than there ever was on the planning application itself.”

For further information contact: Marjorie White on 01235 216428 or 01235 530174, or visit www.saveradleylakes.org.uk or the news pages at www.radleyvillage.org.uk .

Additional Notes for Editors

For more information about this issue, please see our Press Release of 14 May 2007.

Additional Information

¹ A new face on the Planning Committee, Barbara Gatehouse picked up on the fact that the power station was next door and asked if nothing could be done to facilitate the void being used for PFA instead of having all the extra lorry movements. The Officers stuck rigidly to their recommendations trying to obfuscate with technical arguments, which even they did not understand, which was evident from the gobbledegook that was spouted by them in answer to Mrs Gatehouse's enquiry.

² Councillor Hibbert Biles was concerned that truckloads of rubbish from Banbury would descent southwards down the A361, because the A34 was already overloaded, and felt there should be a deferment for further information to be provided. Cllr Gatehouse agreed with this, but they were defeated when it came to the vote.

³ The committee's decision seemed to go against SEERA's recommendations that Oxfordshire County Council needed to be fully satisfied that the need for the operation of the waste site and the extra traffic were fully warranted until 2021. However, Officers regarded the extra traffic to be not significant enough to warrant rejecting the application. However they were unable to quantify what a "significant" traffic increase would be, other than that it would have to be a lot, "enough to convince a public inquiry". SEERA's recommendation was ignored.

⁴ Councillor Joslin, always a fan of the Power Station, tried to explain, incorrectly, why Waste Recycling Group didn't want Didcot's ash, and then confined his arguments to why the Ladygrove Estate should be excluded from any lorry traffic which would result from the planning decision.