



## NATURE NOW OR NEVER!

### 'It's time to draw a line in the sand!' Community urges council not to U-turn on plans to re-wild quarry site.

A concerned community in South Leicestershire are appealing to their local council to honour the written agreement requiring the restoration of land upon cessation of quarrying. In 1958 a temporary permit was granted for sand and gravel extraction to commence at a site near Lutterworth [1], which is now reaching the end of its life. Despite previous planning rejections, Harborough District Council are considering proposals submitted by Tarmac, BMI Redland and Beauparc, which would see the creation of a permanent industrial zone, rather than the promised restoration of the site to agricultural land.

Angry campaigners against this potential U-turn point out that *'we have waited almost 60 years for quarrying to cease and for this land to be returned to green fields. That's always been the deal. If the council don't honour their side of the agreement, then another large piece of our countryside will disappear forever. It's time to let nature have it back. This really is a case of 'NATURE: NOW OR NEVER!'* The community are petitioning for the site not just to be returned to agricultural land as per the agreement, but to become a publicly accessible park and nature reserve to protect it for future generations and prevent further planning applications.

Since 1988 when the first phase of Magna Park near Lutterworth was created, around 100 million sq feet of warehousing, logistics and industrial development has been permitted along the A5 corridor from Magna Park down to DIRFT at Crick [3]. In fact, the area is known as 'The Golden Triangle of Logistics' [4]. In contrast with this, data from The Woodland Trust [5] shows that South Leicestershire has only 4.3% of woodland, compared to the UK average of 13%. Campaigners say that due to the shrinking area of nearby green space, hedgerows, and trees, it is more important than ever to create a sanctuary for nature and a recreational space to improve the wellbeing of the community and should be prioritised above permanent development of greenfield sites. They point out that allowing this site to become industrialised contravenes national waste policies, and fails on sustainability criteria saying, *'the council has a one-time opportunity here to draw a line in the sand. Stop yet more green land being lost forever and instead make a positive difference to the people of South Leicestershire, and the environment'*.

Campaigners plan to bring attention to this issue on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> of October, when they will arrive outside the gates of the quarry site dressed as all the animals, birds, trees and flowers who have been patiently waiting for decades to return to the site. Under the slogan 'Nature Now Or Never' they hope to raise public support for their vision of creating a

country park and nature reserve, and prevent this last corner of South Leicestershire from disappearing under concrete and tarmac, like so much of the surrounding countryside. We are engaging with Local Wildlife organisations to add their support to the idea of creating a community park and nature reserve.

Large areas of this site where mineral extraction has ceased have already been restored and have become a wildlife success story. Settlement ponds, re-wilded areas and reed beds have attracted species such as otters, water voles, great crested newts and an annual starling murmuration. The green vision of the local community includes ideas such as creating a network of cycling trails, wheelchair accessible paths, bird hides, or even an outdoor activity centre which would create employment and boost tourism. Similar post-industrial restoration projects prove that projects like this can bring immense benefits to the environment and society.

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#### REFERENCES:

[1] Wording of the Leicestershire Minerals & Waste Local Plan & Policy DM12 is available from the LCC website or the relevant sections for reference can be provided if necessary.

[3] [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ku4M8\\_5Rl7Qa\\_sFO1st6NZSPkmWfq59/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ku4M8_5Rl7Qa_sFO1st6NZSPkmWfq59/view?usp=sharing)

[4] [https://eu.glp.com/property/magna-park-lutterworth/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhY-aBhCUARIsALNIC05sQlmiyjtEfMP0vPBWr5upU\\_ZB5ngn-HGt0dstBlmaxE9F80RnVAaAhSZEALw\\_wcB](https://eu.glp.com/property/magna-park-lutterworth/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhY-aBhCUARIsALNIC05sQlmiyjtEfMP0vPBWr5upU_ZB5ngn-HGt0dstBlmaxE9F80RnVAaAhSZEALw_wcB)

[5] <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/43913/woodland-indicators-by-parliamentary-constituency.pdf>



Nature: Now or Never! The local community urge the council to not U-turn on policy. Nature has been waiting long enough for the land at Shawell Quarry to be restored.