

## Environmental cost of 'Green Energy'

Further to the earlier thread of letters on the proposed Rampion 2 wind farm and its high financial cost and unreliable energy output (July 22<sup>nd</sup> Robert Bishop, August 5<sup>th</sup> Mick Bridle), I am sitting here in a rural pocket of the Horsham District, devastated by the biodiversity destruction which would come if one of the cable route options goes ahead, and the new substation is located next to the A272 at Oakendene (Bolney road/Kent Street option). If you care about the environment, endangered species or just walking in the quiet countryside in Sussex, and particularly around this area around Cowfold/Shermanbury take a good look at the Rampion proposals while there is time to respond to the consultation. There are still some options.

The cable construction would take out a 50m (164 ft) wide section of invaluable habitat of undisturbed hedgerow, blackthorn scrub, lichen and interconnected flood meadow round here – let alone what it does elsewhere along the route. It is apparently that wide to accommodate a road for construction vehicles and the excavated soil, as well as the cable channel. This location is home to nightingales (red list 91% decline in 40 years), cuckoos (65% decline since 1980's), sky larks, great crested newts (protected in law), turtle doves (77% decline since 1970's), purple hairstreak butterflies, adders and grass snakes, toad migrations, wild service trees, wild flower meadows and more. This habitat contains many small tributaries and follows a significant part of the Cowfold stream which feeds into the river Adur. All of this floods regularly to cope with water coming off the fields. It shares many elements with Knepp Castle's 'Wilding' project, yet it has not been a monitored process, but has just been left for flood meadow, grazed or cut for hay for decades. It has not needed rewilding. The undisturbed nature of the soil, trees and hedgerows is a great benefit, including for carbon storage, that will also be lost with this process.

Yes, Rampion contractors are meant to restore habitat or even improve biodiversity at the end of the construction phase, but it is just not possible without losing the continuity of habitat that builds this level of wildlife and the many trees in its path are irreplaceable. We know that Rampion 1 took years before field and hedge restoration, and some hedges at Wineham are still tiny plants in plastic tubes 5/6 years on from that. The sequence is the same this time, that restoration waits until the construction is complete, potentially years after it has begun. The work would start in 2025/2026 and is only planned to be complete 2030. The diversity of wild flowers and therefore insects, birds and mammals that rely on the meadows cannot just be put back. When the continuity is lost the birds like nightingales, cuckoos, turtle doves fail to breed and so do not return and decline further. Adders and grass snakes would be disturbed by the vibration of construction then find the habitat remains as soil heaps and trench for months or years so would likely not return. Toads that migrate on a very specific path, directly on the cable route would be crushed in the process. Yet none of this appears to be in the Rampion biodiversity reports presented for this consultation.

Many field boundaries which are to be crossed contain oak trees, and one boundary is a double row of oaks with a ditch between. These are right in the path of the cable construction and around 25 in this one field alone would either be cut down or drilled under where their tap roots are likely to be damaged. These cannot be put back in our lifetime. We are meant to be planting trees to aid carbon storage, not destroying them because that is the cheapest way to get through. The nightingales and turtle doves nest in thick thorny scrub which is often many metres wide and at least 3 metres high. It takes decades to get to this density. I have many recordings of nightingale song from over the last few years and they return to the same sites year after year. The cable route is all along and across their territory. This is a territory, which has already been reduced when one landowner cut back metres of scrub from along the Cowfold Stream last year. This compresses their territory further, even if they can survive the construction process.

The new substation in this option, would be constructed by the junction of Kent Street and the A272, just after Oakendene. There are likely to be security lights on all night and it will inevitably be massively

visible from the road. Around this new substation are open fields, with hedges, oak trees and a large lake used by wildfowl, and all the other creatures like bats and dragonflies that depend on this quiet habitat. The lake is much enjoyed by local people as there are key footpaths along the perimeter. This would become dominated by industrial building, noise and light and the peace and wildlife lost.

Local people have not been asked to share their knowledge of this landscape, its use and its wildlife to create the 'Preliminary Environmental Information Report' (PEIR). During the consultation Rampion Extension Development Ltd is meant 'to be on hand to help with queries' yet to date they haven't responded to either phone calls or emails. They are based in Coventry and the land agent based in Birmingham. There will be very few wildlife surveys done in this area to date as it is very undisturbed land and is largely private land with public footpaths across it, so the 'desk study' relied on in the report has yielded little of concern.

A final issue that may interest people even if they do not care about local biodiversity is that the construction traffic for this option brings obvious issues on the A272 and all through Kent Street, which is a single carriageway road with inadequate structure for any extra traffic, let alone construction vehicles to create the cable route. Whereas Rampion 1 substation (which we had no objection to) was built on a 2-way road and a fair distance from the A272.

We are all meant to welcome Green Energy options but the more people look into the details they realise that those championed by the government are not always proving to be so good financially and can also be devastating for endangered species, biodiversity, and public access for exercise and wellbeing. This proposal has to be far better researched and planned out.

Rampion2.com Public Consultation is asking for comments until 16<sup>th</sup> September.

Janine Creaye

Off Kent Street, Cowfold