

Motion in relation to Rye Meads

Proposed by: Councillor George Williams

Seconded by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward

Overview

Earlier this year the RSPB, after conducting a review of its operations, announced its intention to withdraw from RSPB Rye Meads by the 30th of November 2026. Without new arrangements in place the management of the site will fall to the owners, Thames Water. As the Site is a designated SSSI, an SPA and has Ramsar designation it is afforded protections and Thames Water are obliged to manage it in accordance with those protections.

Those protections do not include public access, educational experiences or a visitors' centre. These facilities are vital to ensuring future interest in nature conservation for both local residents and visitors from further afield.

As the district council in which this precious site is located we must not risk losing the effort invested over decades, in building the hides, bridges, walkways, ponds and educational facilities. We should instead make sure that legacy continues and is built upon.

Action

I ask that the Council consider this motion.

That this Council believes public access to Rye Meads must be maintained.

That this Council requests that the Executive consider working with its partners, Thames Water, HMWT, Broxbourne Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, the RSPB, LVRPA and other interested voluntary organisations to produce a management framework that ensures the public are able to enjoy the site far into the future.

That this Council requests the that the Executive consider all practical options including but not limited to financial commitments to achieve these aims and direct its officers to investigate options for this site to be retained in the public domain.

That Executive is requested to share any work on this matter with all members of the Council as soon as possible.