

Hebden Bridge Mill Pond: demonstration

Press Release from residents of Windsor View, Windsor Road and Spring Grove



The demonstration yesterday (Saturday 30th October) against the proposed development on the old Salem Millpond in Hebden Bridge has shown the depth of feeling against the development of green spaces in the Calder Valley.

Hundreds of people gathered in St. George's Square to listen to speakers and live music in a peaceful gathering that lasted over two hours.

Chris Ratcliffe, a resident of Windsor Road, opened the speeches to the packed square by giving his support to eco housing - but not at the expense of land designated as 'open space' by the Council and by destroying valuable community spaces. He pointed out that many Hebden Bridge residents had been environmentalists for years and gave their regular support, often hours of unpaid time, to respected green organisations. Where, he asked, was their environmental record?

"The trees are important but this isn't just a story of tree protesters. This is people fighting against the destruction of the Hebden Bridge we love. This is people fighting to stop their houses falling down the hillside."



Anthony Rae (Friends of the Earth, Calderdale Sustainability Forum and Calder Future) spoke to welcome the Calderdale Council's investigation into the illegal tree

felling on the Millpond site and fully expected there to be a prosecution by the Council. He also highlighted how widespread these tactics are being used, most recently in the Britannia Homes development in Mytholmroyd where protected trees were again deliberately felled because they stood in the way of Britannia's development.

Anthony also pointed out how the proposed development did not fit with the Friends of the Earth definitions of sustainable and 'eco-friendly'.

Patrick Phillips, Calderdale councilor, undertook to ensure that the truth of what has happened in relation to the trees would be thoroughly investigated and made public.

Peter Palmer, representing the Green Party, spoke to give his Party's full support to the campaign to the Keep the Millpond Green and made it clear that developments like this against popular public opinion and with no community consultation were condemned by his organisation.

Also speaking to the crowd, Town and Calderdale Ward Councillor **Nader Fekri** pledged his full support to the idea of making the Millpond site a community managed wildlife and woodland habitat.

One resident of Spring Grove held up the new brochure produced by Green Tops - one of the photos supposedly showing the Mill Pond was actually of her back garden. The photo was taken, she said, without her agreement or knowledge.

Finally, Windsor View resident **Moni Noszkay** spoke about how the only consultation she had received from the developers was through chainsaws and hired security guards and about how the events of 'Chainsaw Tuesday' had effected her. She urged everyone present to back the campaign by signing the petition and objecting to any planning application when the time comes.



Town and Calderdale councillors, including **Dave Young** and **Stuart Brown** and **Janet Battye** also attended the demonstration. Although not at the demonstration due to prior commitments, Calderdale Ward Councillor **Michael Taylor** and local MP **Chris McCafferty** sent messages of support.

To highlight their specific concerns against the development of the Millpond the residents produced a large display of the proposals together with photos of the site to stress how unsuitable the site is for a housing development. People who were familiar with the Millpond were astonished by the inaccurate photographs and out-of-scale drawings being circulated by the developers as part of their public relations strategy to portray the Millpond site as an unvalued wasteland.

In another display, a 'tangled web' illustrated the complex relationships between the many companies and people involved with the development which were found through searches of the Land Registry and Companies House records. The residents believe they now know the names of the local businessmen who are behind - and linked to - this proposed development and they made them public on Saturday. After viewing this 'tangled web' many people asked the question 'Why are they hiding?'.

More information, photos and video clips may be found on the Hebden Bridge Website (www.hebdenbridge.co.uk/steepfields). You can contact us via email at greenmillpond@yahoo.com. Hi resolution version of photos are available upon request.

Contacts: Chris Ratcliffe: (01422 843724) Michael Parkin (01422 843378)