

Revision of flying hours request June 2016

Prior to this date, the flying hours at St. Marys Lands were greatly reduced in order to appease a few complainers reporting 'noisy planes'. In those days, R.C. planes all ran on I.C. 'fuel' engines. Today we run electric powered planes, classified by our official body, the British Model Flying Association (B.M.F.A.), as 'Silent flight'. The most audible noise now comes from Warwick bypass. The Model Flyers group request was simple:

Noisy planes = reduced flying hours / quiet planes = reinstatement of original flying times

In 2017, there followed a request for a model flying Risk Analysis. This was duly supplied and finally approved, by W.D.C. in February 2018. Over the years, the hobby has enjoyed an excellent safety record with no serious accidents.

To our surprise, this subject then became an ecological matter, with some concerned that we may be affecting the habits of the ground nesting bird population. There then followed a request for an Ecological Study, to be undertaken by Tim Hextell, for sub contracted Company 'Middlemarch' The report relating to the effect of flying proved very little, if anything at all, Tim telling the Flyers as much on site, and concluding that there was a far more serious issue with Dogs. As other elements in the brief (not related to model flying) were not entirely met, the study was rejected and a new one initiated. This was performed by Andrew E. Waller (with some 35years experience), sub contracting on behalf of Henriette Westergaard, (Ecology & Land Management) for Plincke (Landscape).

At the final on site Study, 3 of the Model Flyers Group, including myself, had a good on site discussion with the Ecologist Andrew E Waller, who made the following comments:

- You are not upsetting the ground nesting birds
- They are behaving exactly as they should
- You have a far greater issue with dogs.
- W.D.C. is their own worst enemy through not fencing areas with clear signage
- I will recommend that the flyers proposed hours are accepted, and that the situation is closely monitored over the next twelve months. None of these witnessed comments were included in the final report.

After the final study report was submitted and discussed, the general consensus of the last Working Party meeting, was that the majority of that meeting agreed the study failed to prove any further evidence of harm to wildlife.

In fact one comment by a WDC Councillor noted that the some of the statements in the report were confused and contradictory. The meeting decision was that the Flyers Group request for amended hours be proposed at the next Council Executive meeting on November 17th, with a further study up in 12 months to monitor progress.

Conclusion:

This very simple request has now been in discussion for 4 years. Subsequent ecological studies have failed to prove anything conclusive, and are littered with contradictive statements. This is a similar situation to site studies all over the Country. We want to work with W.D.C. and the Working Party Group to reach a satisfactory middle ground. In fact, during my conversations with WDC Ecology Working Party representative Roland Hopkins, it was suggested that an 8pm cut off in the Summer months could be feasible, but flying to start at 11am. This later start is absolutely not necessary as dawn is between 05:41 to 04:56 May to August, which allows plenty of foraging hours before model flying. It is important to note that Model flyers occupy only some 3.5% of all available daylight hours on the site. In the spirit of cooperation, we are prepared to reduce our original request from a 9pm finish, to **8pm, and for only 4 months of the year.** This is largely to benefit from the lighter Summer evenings, where 'workers' can get home, charge batteries and travel to the airstrip for a flight.

Note: a large swath of long grass is cut and bailed on approximately starting first week in August, leading us to conclude there is no further danger to ground nesting birds after this time.

FINAL FLYERS PROPOSAL

SEPTEMBER 1st to APRIL 30th DAILY 10am until 7pm (no flying on Race days as current)

MAY 1st to AUGUST 31st DAILY 10am until 8pm. (no flying on Race days as current)

(Note: Latest annual dawn is 07:34 at end of December, giving 2hrs 26mins before flying – worst case)

At 1st May Dawn is 05:41 & dusk is 21:12. At End August Dawn is 04:56 & dusk is 20:31

LAURIE BARTON (Spokesperson for Warwick R.C. Model Flyers Group)

