

## **Lindow Moss, Transition Wilmslow Statement on Application 15/0016M**

Transition Wilmslow is part of the national Transition Towns movement which seeks to promote the sustainability and liveability of our localities. We would normally oppose housing development in the Green Belt, especially in the historic Lindow Moss landscape. The special circumstances here are the linkage of this application to 15/0064 which concerns the current area of peat working, much of which is a severely degraded environment.

Current planning conditions permit peat extraction to continue up to 2042 and, worse still, the extensive area of the site in Wilmslow is to be backfilled with inert waste and 'restored' to agriculture. This would irrevocably change the area's landscape character, destroy its ecological potential and compromise the findspot of Lindow Man. As Rick Turner, the archaeologist who discovered Lindow Man has said:

'In five hundred years do we want the burial place of Lindow Man to be similar to that of poor King Richard III? The choice is between a landfill site covered by dull rye-grass fields or a vibrant habitat buzzing with unusual plants and animals. We have the chance to return Lindow Moss into a place that Lindow man would have recognised, and in which he met his end.'

The proposed housing development on the Peat Farm site has facilitated a second application (15/0064M) which will bring an end to commercial peat extraction, rescind the inappropriate planning conditions and initiate a comprehensive programme of ecological restoration: Lindow Moss will be placed on the return path to a wildlife rich mossland, capturing rather than releasing carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

To secure these benefits it's imperative that the two applications are locked firmly together through a Section 106 Agreement. During consultation we also proposed a Minerals Planning Bond to lock in

the finance for restoration and aftercare and we still think that's needed to guarantee a successful outcome. There also needs to be a proper governance framework to oversee the restoration process and to engage with the wider community.

Our principal concerns with the proposed housing development are to ensure that the low impact approach to house design is retained and the regrettable loss of woodland to development at the north end of the site. The residual woodland block is vital for screening the housing development from the Moss, and it needs to be strengthened. We propose a planning condition to require underplanting with holly, Scots pine and oak (all of which are present there naturally), and that this should be done immediately, in advance of development.

In summary, despite our reservations, we support the principle of development because it brings an end to peat extraction and secures the restoration of Lindow Moss.