

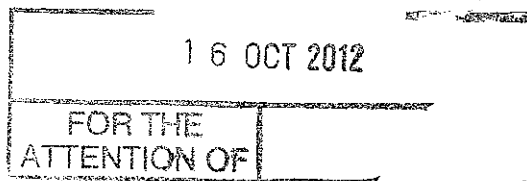


nature's voice

John Macholc
Planning Development Control Manager
Ribbles Valley Borough Council
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 2RA

16 October 2012

Dear Mr Macholc



PLANNING APPLICATION no 3/2012/0578-OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CENTRE, DEVIL'S ELBOW

RSPB's professional opinion has been sought on the likelihood of Grey Herons continuing to nest in the woodland at Devil's Elbow if proposals for an outdoor activity are permitted within this woodland. In short it is extremely unlikely that Grey Herons will continue to use this traditional nesting site if the proposal goes ahead. It is noteworthy that there are no public footpaths through this small wood at the moment.

Herons usually choose to nest in trees in undisturbed woodland. Proximity to water for feeding is not important but freedom from disturbance is. Heronries are traditional, with some sites having a history that dates back centuries. I think there are approximately 30 heron nesting sites in the county of Lancashire, including one at Cloughton-on-Brock that has been in continuous use since at least 1850.

Herons commence nesting very early in the year, with the first eggs being laid in February, long before the leaves appear on the trees. They pair up and select nests as early as December, and disturbance during this pre-nesting period is most likely to result in site abandonment. The birds will be highly exposed during this vulnerable period due to the lack of leaves. I also think that the noise, and the arboreal human activities are likely to disturb the Herons.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tim Melling
Senior Conservation Officer
RSPB North England Region

Cc Graham Thorpe Planning Case Officer RVDC
Dave Hewitt Countryside Officer RVDC
Rebecca Stevens LCC
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