

Friends of St Mary's Lands survey summary.

1. There was no public consultation.
Users only found out after the fence was erected
2. Only 21% found the signage explaining the purpose of the fencing fit for purpose.
15% didn't see any signage.
3. Warwick District Council was named by 62% as being behind the erection of the fencing.
9% thought it was a partnership between WDC and the 'Racecourse /Jockey Club'.
4. **90% of users would prefer to see alternative solutions to the green plastic fencing e.g., mown pathways, wooden marker posts, professional signage.**
10% were prepared to accept the green plastic fencing on the proviso it offered protection to the skylark population.

Skylark facts (See RSPB, British Trust for Ornithology, and others)

-) Skylarks nest on the ground in grass between 20-50 cm high
-) They will abandon nesting attempts in grass over 60cm.
-) Skylarks nest from March/April – August/September depending on the weather. It is crucial they raise three broods to maintain their numbers.

Photographic evidence gathered by FoSML throughout 2021 shows the grass inside fencing 100-150 cm

Implications

-) Larks cannot nest in grass this high
-) They will abandon nesting attempts after first brood
-) Not a success



Response to ecologist report commissioned for WDC

Questions raised

-) Why only two site visits and neither of them in the crucial 2nd half of breeding season?
-) Why did he not notice and photograph the height of the grass sward?
-) Was he aware of the nesting preferences of Skylarks?
-) Why was the actual fenced area not indicated on his report when this was the area he was assessing?

FoSML report

Questions raised

-) Why has WDC sat on the FoSML report for nearly 3 months?
-) Does WDC intend to repeat the 'experiment' again and even enlarge the fenced area further?
-) Are WDC or Warwick County Council aware that part of Footpath 335/WB13/2 fell inside the fencing?

More than a year since the last Working Party meeting

The skylarks had abandoned the area in May

There is a strong possibility that they will not choose to return to the same nesting ground.

Saw no evidence of male singing displays from June to August.

They moved to the area of the pathway used by dog walkers.

The 100-150 cm Grass has now collapsed as it has not been cut. Advice from a specialist qualified in grass management states that the grass underneath will die and leave bare patches.

WDC are still planning to fence off the area this year.