*WetlandLIFE: taking the bite out of wetlands* Project

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Interview 1 Alk1

**A little bit about the work that you do, the practice that you have because it sounds like you are really living it, you know, you're living in the area, you're creating artwork in the area, you're responding to the area, which is all fabulous and I wondered how long this process has been going on for.**

**ALK1** Erm, well let's see. I, I've lived in the area, I mean I, I was born in REMOVED, erm, in REMOVED and I've, I've, I spent a bit of time in the West Country during my university years REMOVED SECTION I think a lot of the, my initial kind of like okay, how, how am I going to continue my creative practices? Erm, came out of basically using what was immediately around me as a resource, erm, fuel if you like, erm, but yeah, I mean one of the things of being a stonemason is, you know, we'd drive around all over the county putting up headstones in little churchyards and things like this and there was a great deal of time spent, you know, looking out of van windows or, you know, standing under trees or what not, erm, and it very very quickly gets, you know, starts to soak in. I mean my parents as well, I mean they were, you know, they had like every that would, you know, bore us to tears as kids taking us to interesting little churches and things, [laughs] things like this, erm, yeah, so I mean it comes, it comes from a lot of different, different directions but I mean even when I was down in the West Country I was kind of doing landscapes, orientated things, erm, it was kind of, it was kind of difficult not to because I lived right on the edge of Bath, you know, there was a civil war battlefield just over the ward, there were burrows, there was, erm, Salisbury Hill, the, erm, you know, the Peter Gabriel song?

**Yes, yes.**

**ALK1** Yeah, yeah, that, that was basically the foot of Salisbury Hill, so you, you know, I mean I'm an enquiring curious chap so you immediately just start to draw lines and parallels between all these different points of reference, erm, yeah, and in, then it's sort of, it is quite easy for me to then sort of stitch it together into a kind of map almost, erm, or sort of like a, or another layer to existing maps, of, you know, the territories that I sort of skulk about. I mean I can then go back a bit further, you know, the, as a sort of late teenager, erm, round here we did an awful lot of magic mushrooms and, erm, [laughs] would take ourselves, me and my mates would take ourselves up into the hills, eat loads of mushrooms and, erm, stagger around across fields until dawn, erm, which again is, is, is another, erm, engagement with, with your local area, erm, and it kind of gives, looking back on it now it kind of gives an interesting edge.

**Yeah, well it means that you respond to the landscape in a completely different way doesn't it?**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**And I think those resonances stay with you and.**

**ALK1** Oh completely, I mean I'm, I'm kind of post-psychedelic if you like, erm, that, that was, erm, my, as a kid like being taken to churches and what not, and castles and stone circles and things, kind of like ticks one box and then as a teenager you start to look at things differently because you're off your bonce and it's midnight and, you know, you're, you're in some sketchy field or, you know, by a bypass or something or standing on the Humber gawping at the ferries going out and then as a grown-up, you know, you're sort of working in the landscape and then since then I've been walking out, going to these places very regularly, as fuel to keep the engines and the curiosity and, erm, yeah.

**The ind.**

**ALK1** Keep, keep it going.

**Yeah. So when you take your field notes are you doing a mix between when you respond to the landscape, are you taking pictures, are you drawing, are you making notes, are you doing audio recordings, are you doing a mix of everything?**

**ALK1** A lot of it happens just purely, just in your head and when, when I'm out and about I haven't got time to sit down and, erm, and draw, alright I might, I might write down a couple of phrases but it's, it, I keep it all in my memory, then when I come back I might take another, a couple of photos on my telephone, purely as reference, then I can come back and not even really look at them but the fact that I've taken the, the photos, that I've got that point of reference kind of logged into my memory and then I can, then I can make the drawings.

**Yeah, it's very interesting what you say because there are three sites that we're looking at and Alkborough is one, Somerset Levels is another and Bedfordshire's another and I was, spent some time with an artist who works on the Somerset Levels.**

**ALK1** Right.

**And she does ink washes and she said that she goes to the sites and sometimes she doesn't sketch at all, so like you, she'll just sit there and absorb the atmosphere and spend time just to reflect and actually to kind of recharge and then she goes back and then she paints basically from memory and sometimes will then refine the picture by going back again and by then doing some sketching after that but almost like the first inspiration is just her response to the site which.**

**ALK1** Yeah, I mean I, I go out to these places, I walk out, it's almost entirely done on the spot, erm, I don't drive so I walk everywhere, which means I have to walk a long way, [laughs] erm, so yeah, I mean a lot of is kind of like getting to these destinations, I'm not even sure if it's like, if I, if I sit there and soak it in or it's, it's like, I've got my, erm, I've got my sensors working and I can, I'm quite well drilled in, in doing that now so it's not, I don't like sort of sit there and go now I'm going to meditate on the landscape, I don't do that, I, it's like a constant, erm, feedback almost.

**Yeah, and when you're doing your wonderful sort of subordian[?] walks in nature, do you interact with other people as well, is it quite a solitary kind of?**

**ALK1** Occasionally, yeah, it depends where you are, erm, did a, I mean I do, erm, erm, I do articles for the, sort of the *REMOVED* magazine, *REMOVED*.

**Oh okay, ah yes, okay.**

**ALK1** So, erm, so there was one that I did recently, erm, where I walked, there was a derelict church, erm, near the coast up here, walked out there and every farm that I passed there was a, as I sort of got out into the sticks and every, every farm I passed, old, old boys with big dogs would sort of come up and they were enquiring as to, I don't mean to be funny mate but we've had a bloke round here who matches your description and he's been breaking into houses while people are away and stealing their jewels, I just want to check that you're not the jewel thief.

**[laughs] It makes you sound sort of very David Nivenesque doesn't it to be the jewel thief, like you're going to?**

**ALK1** Yeah, I'm Raffles.

**Yeah, I love it, there's a sort of intrigue and mystery to it but it's interesting isn't it that? You see I wonder if you were a female walking in that space whether you would have a different set of reactions because it's almost like, because I've talked to people before on this project who've said to me that as a lone male walker they are the object of suspicion, if they have a dog with them then the dog completely dissipates that and people see them.**

**ALK1** You can talk about dogs.

**Exactly.**

**ALK1** And you can fuss dogs, I mean I've got, I've got two dogs here right now and they don't come out with me when I do these things because I'm working, you know, erm, and if I'm out with the dogs, I'm out with the dogs, erm, so they're sort of different kettles of fish. Like I do, might be four or five miles every day with my two dogs but that's exercise for me and exercise for them and that's a different kettle of fish for me.

**Yeah, because you're using a different kind of, giving a different kind of attention if you're on your own.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**Yeah.**

**ALK1** Yeah, comp, yeah, oh completely, yeah, the, my attention's fully on, you know, what's happening in front of me or what's happening in my head and all the spaces in between.

**Yeah. And what will determine, you know, which routes you take and the length of walk, is it practicalities about fitting it in around work and life or is it, do you have, say to yourself right this is where I'm going to go today, I've got this particular interest in this landscape?**

**ALK1** Yeah, bit of both, just I've got four children and two dogs, erm.

**Yeah, you're busy.**

**ALK1** And I work these nights and things like this, so a lot of it is fitting stuff around little fellows and all this sort of stuff, erm, but when I can get out. I mean usually once a year, twice a year, I'll get out for like four days in a block, erm, so I, and about three or four years ago I walked from, erm, from the start of the Humber, erm, Alkborough and to Boston Stump all the way down the coast, erm, which was a bit of a trip, erm.

**Yeah, and walking the whole way and where would you stay then overnight?**

**ALK1** I just, I just camped, just wherever, erm, like you, erm, let's see. We started off Alkborough, walked down, erm, past Grimsby to, towards Tetney Lock, erm, and by Nook where there's a big bombing range and it's all country so we watch, I was watching the, erm, Osprey helicopters do practice fire, you know, on the sands there whilst the Pride of Rotterdam ferry was sailing out of the mouth of the Humber.

**Because did you know that they used to, Alkborough used to be a bombing range?**

**ALK1** Oh up there?

**Yeah, in World War Two.**

**ALK1** Ah yeah, now I read something about that.

**Yeah. So when they were doing the excavations and the work on making the breach, one of the archaeological team came across a cache of bombs essentially.**

**ALK1** Ah hum.

**So, but it's one of those things that was never really discussed so it's, that's still to be investigated but it's interesting that that's still then happening but then in another part of the same coastline.**

**ALK1** Yeah, I mean all down the coast as well, you get Skegness, there isn't access between, erm, Gibraltar Point just out of Skegness and Boston as such, erm, but I've got, I've got a special, a special key that, erm, opens a padlock for the bridge that leads me off into this fifty miles of inaccessible marshland and that's full of, erm, iron hulks of ships that the MOD dragged in on to the marsh in the fifties, which they've shot to pieces.

**Okay, they were the targets.**

**ALK1** It looks incredible, absolutely incredible but hardly anyone ever goes out there.

**These are like the lost landscapes of Lincolnshire aren't they?**

**ALK1** Oh yeah, yeah, completely, there's huge swathes where people just don't go to or people go to for, erm, dodgier reasons, like, erm, the coast between Grimsby and say Mablethorpe is quite, especially in the summer months, quite a lot of doggers and things like that there.

**Okay.**

**ALK1** Yeah, there was, there was an old mate of mine who, erm, he used to be a cruise …[12.12] [laughs] at the sand dunes, I kind of quite like that sort of completely different use of places that, it's a bit, it's a bit grim, erm.

**But do you know it's very interesting because some of the work that one of my colleagues has done has been about that as well, about the way that you have these spaces and landscapes and they have different functions at different times of the day and different seasons of the year.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**And it's about recognising that, you know, they are used differently and but.**

**ALK1** Yeah, these places are accessed twenty four hours a day, erm, a lot of the time.

**Yeah, I mean that's it, these landscapes are alive with humans in them.**

**ALK1** Ah hum.

**Doing lots of different things in them and of course so our, on the project, our interest is really understanding how people who really love wetland landscapes, you know, the different things that, the different kinds of the benefits and interest they get from them, so, you know, when you said you were doing this wonderful walk and you started at Alkborough.**

**ALK1** Um.

**I mean Alkborough's quite, I mean especially from when you are, it's quite an awkward place to get to.**

**ALK1** Yeah, yeah, we, I got dropped out there and, erm, waved goodbye and.

**Right, and then off you went. So what made you choose Alkborough out of all the different, you know, walks that you could have done?**

**ALK1** Well I mean the, I wanted to sort of have, erm, a walk that, erm, started with something significant in the landscape and ended with something significant in the landscape. So at Alkborough you've got, erm, Julian Bower, the turf mason, we've got, erm, there's a Julian Bower in Louth as well where I live.

**Oh I didn't know that, oh okay.**

**ALK1** Yeah, it was, erm, a term they used to use for turf mazes and the like and there's all kinds of theories as to what it actually means and all this, anyway, so they got this, this turf maze, this little round medieval turf maze, okay, great, that's a good, good spot, plus it's right up in the corner of the county, right on the border and it's at the convergence of three rivers. Okay, right, well we've got some more interesting stuff here and of course start thinking about the Humber as, you know, the, the last way in that the Vikings came in ten sixty six with Hardrada and all of that and, you know, and stuff like the Trent bore coming up with the spring tides and blah blah blah.

**Yeah, and do you know what, I didn't know about that until yesterday when somebody that I talked to had said oh you know about, and it's got a particular name and I can, Agear, something like that.**

**ALK1** Yes.

**And I'd never heard of it.**

**ALK1** Yeah, it's really weird, it's really strange. There is a story, a bit of, bit of local folklore that suggests that until very recently, or perhaps even still, erm, farmers on the Trent would, erm, give the river, erm, a sacrifice of a lamb.

**Oh really?**

**ALK1** Yeah, erm.

**So, um.**

**ALK1** Just, just before the tidal bore, they say, if, yeah, if, erm, yeah, if, if the Trent doesn't get blood then it takes seven lives or something like that.

**Okay.**

**ALK1** Yeah, yeah.

**Gosh, I hadn't heard of that before.**

**ALK1** Yeah, that's a kind of a cool bit of, almost like a folk horror.

**Yes, exactly, it's very Wickerman isn't it?**

**ALK1** It's a bit of that, it's, you know, there's a territory for it.

**Yes, yeah, and, you know, this, that sort of knelled in between the landscape and folklore, so that particular story, is that just something that, you know, you've heard somewhere or something that you've actively looked for, you know, do?**

**ALK1** I've read it somewhere and, erm, trying to think where, trying to think where. I've got, it'll be in one of my books of which, of which I've got many.

**Oh it's absolutely.**

**ALK1** Erm, let's think, there's the Lincolnshire Calendar by Maureen Stutton, which I can't quite see at the minute but I think it's mentioned in there but I'll, I'll check and when I find the, erm, the quote I'll take a phot of it and, erm.

**Well that's really kind, thanks because we're also doing some work around historical understandings of wetland spaces as well so that would be really helpful to sort of, you know, have a little reference there, that we could explore a little bit.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**But that's wonderful that, you know, Alkborough was, because I think it's, I mean I was, when we were selecting the wetland sites, we were being quite, I guess, technical about it, that we wanted to have different types of wetland, so we've got a reconstructed gravel pit, we've got arable reversion and then we have the, you know, the, Alkborough Flats because of its riverine and estuarine position and also the fact that it's a, you know, a constructed breach.**

**ALK1** Ah hum.

**So they're all very different wetlands and I didn't, and I was thinking oh well it feels a little bit industrial, you've got the bridge there, you've got the Drax power station but when I went and stood on the escarpment I just thought it was such a beautiful landscape.**

**ALK1** It's, almost reminds me of that Eric Ravilious picture of Cuckmere Haven.

**Ah yes.**

**ALK1** You know, where the, sort of the, erm, white of the, of the river snakes out of the, erm, there's a lot of that going on there but of course with a lot of that kind of topographical drawing and, erm, things like that, a lot of it kind of tends, or tended to happen sort of down off the South Downs, erm, even now, you know, people like Robert Macfarlane and what not, erm, there's, there's, it's a South Down centric really and like I kind of want to pull something away from that sort of southern looking at things and, you know, and these places are, they are barren, they are strange and they are bleak but they are fiercely beautiful as well, erm, but fiercely beautiful rather than, it's, it's not.

**It's not a soft benign beauty is it?**

**ALK1** They're not nice places, you know, but.

**Yeah. I mean I've done some work before on the Fens round the River Nene or the Nene, depending where you are on it and it is, it's so different with these big skies and the way that the light completely changes what the landscape looks like from one moment to the next.**

**ALK1** Oh the Fens are terrifying, erm, it's, it's really weird, erm, and it, it's vast as well, I mean I walked across the Fens a little while ago, erm, and it just goes on and on and on.

**So would I be right in saying that when you're accessing these wetland spaces, you are doing it as a traveller thinking about a travelogue, you know, you're responding to the space? Because it's very different from say a dog walker who is walking their dog to A and B and back again.**

**ALK1** Yeah, it sometimes, it, erm, a lot of the time it seems to me to be like a kind of, erm, like I'm walking a movie, so it's like when I'm, when I'm out in these big places or when I, when I finally get to these places, erm, it's like I, I start, I start a recording for my eyes, my, into my imagination, erm, I mean I can't, I can't joke about it but it's, it's true, it's, almost like feel like sort of Werner Hertzog on foot or something, [laughs] erm.

**Yeah. [laughs]**

**ALK1** Erm, it, yeah, there's this, there's this sort of weird, erm, hyper-sensory thing going on, which probably goes back to, you know, necking loads of mushrooms as a, as a kid, erm, and then bit, bit later on, you know, watching Nosferatu, erm, on Channel Four at two o'clock in the morning or something, erm, and then going out to these places that are just like Caspar David Friedrich paintings or Turner or something, erm, and then kind of realising that he's thought of places, even though they're comparatively local to me and very much out of, out of the way of the rest of the country, are like permanently deeply rooted in this nineteenth century sublime tradition and almost everything that comes off that, it's just that people don't really go to these places very often and, you know, they, and they are out the way and they are kind of, erm, not missed but, yeah, they're, they're not on the sort of the main, particular like I said before, your topographical writers and what not tend to be very sort of south based, I mean I know Sebald was down in, in Norwich doing the Suffolk coast and all those things but the way he was doing this was a bit different. Erm, but yeah, I mean I, I kind of go out to these places fairly open but also because I've got a, quite a good handle on all these places now, is, erm, my sort of, my internal receivers kind of pick up on, erm, vibes but, you know, it, it's almost, almost like walking into a blank canvas where I've already got, erm, a huge box full of frames of reference and context and stuff and it's a bit like having, erm, a deck of cards and keep dealing the deck of cards over and over again on a different table but I mean all the cards, that you've got like, you've got your, say your sublime references and your literary references and your movie references and music and, and then things that happen whilst you're there and then you're sort of, you're constantly reconfiguring how you look at a place.

**Yes.**

**ALK1** Does that make sense?

**Yeah, it does make perfect sense because, you know, you do go to different landscapes and what you're feeling on the day and what you respond to them changes all the time. Like for instance it's funny, when you talked about sort of taking magic mushrooms in the field it made me think of the Ben Wheatley film A Week in England.**

[interruption]

**So now of course we're interested in the wetlands in the project but how would you define a wetland? So when you're in a landscape, you know, how do you classify the different landscapes that you walk with and how would you define a wetland for you?**

**ALK1** I mean the thing with Lincolnshire I mean is that as soon as you get off the chalk and the flint, everywhere's wet, so. I think a lot of, a lot of Lincolnshire, apart from the Wolds is, is wetland, so as soon as I come off the Wolds, erm, yeah, you're in, you're into marshy territory or territory that was previously the sea at some point. Interesting thing with Alkborough is that you, that's like, erm, it's a gap in the Wolds there where the, where the Humber comes through and then it continues on the other side of the river as the Yorkshire Wolds, erm, so yeah, the, there's a strange sort of little geological blip there, where, you know, all this, all this water is pouring off Lincolnshire and pouring off Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire and what not, and all coming to this point, erm, breaking the hill, you know, breaking this, this line of chalk, it's, yeah worn into oblivion.

**Yeah, it's a wonderful sort of way of thinking about landscape over big history isn't it?**

**ALK1** Oh yeah, erm, I'm quite into sort of deep time, theological time, I'm of the opinion that stone is just a very slow moving liquid.

**I love that, yeah.**

**ALK1** You know, it's, erm, yeah, it's, it's not static in, in deep time.

**Yeah, it's a bit like when glass changes its shape over time isn't it? You know.**

[laughs]

**You forget that it's, it's actually a viscous liquid, it's not solid.**

**ALK1** Yeah, like if you break a piece of flint, erm, and actually sort of, you know, look at a, a good piece of flint, it, it looks like the surface of water, looks like the surface of murky water, erm, and I mean if you get a really good bit of flint, you know, that's, that's quite dark, erm, it looks like the silt that it was formed from, you know, billions of years ago, you know, which is great really, I quite like that.

**Yeah, so what I'm getting from what you're saying that is that in some way sort of wetlands are there sort of mobile part of chronological, genealogical time over long periods?**

**ALK1** Yeah, and I mean they're, erm, I hate use, I hate the word liminal, I hate it, hate it.

**[laughs]**

Bloody hate it but it, these, these are neither places that are neither here nor there, erm, they kind of, they have to exist at the, at these borders between land and sea and river and what not, erm, yeah, it's, it's where the two things, erm, yeah, mingle and it's, it sort of becomes dodgy and treacherous, you know, you don't sort of go walking, erm, willy nilly.

**No, you have to know where you're walking don't you?**

**ALK1** Yeah, yeah, in these, in these places, erm, like, erm, further down the county, off, erm, off the Witham from Lincoln, erm, down to the Wash, erm, they're all these, erm, prehistoric causeways that led to the river, erm, and, you know, so people can stand, have these little platforms and navigate across these huge boggy weird places and it's that kind of environment where you get, erm, like in Denmark with Tollund man, you know, erm, these halfway houses where people would put things, I know in the wood they would put the, same example of the swords and shields and things like that, which is very sort of Arthurian.

**Yes, the idea that ceremonially placing something in a bog, something that took a long time to make, something that's really important and a beautiful artefact that is then given to the bog, is really, really special and interesting isn't it?**

**ALK1** Yeah, erm, and, and I'm certain there are bog people out in these places, I'm, I'm certain of it, yeah, I would not at all be surprised, erm, if, in the Fens or along the Humber, the Witham there are bodies in the bog, erm. I think we've got a, we've got a very, erm, deep-seated, erm, psychic acknowledgement to these sort of landscapes where it's kind of, it's halfway, this is sort of life and death, yeah, erm. There was a really great interview with, erm, the bass player Jah Wobble.

**Oh yeah.**

**ALK1** In the early nineteen nineties, I think in the Independent and he, you know, he's always, always, always remember it, erm, he said he'd been walking round the Lea Marshes and things like that, and he half jokes, no-one wants to know a man who goes to the marshes.

**[laughs]**

**ALK1** I really like that.

**Yeah, but it is, I mean there is something other worldy about marsh environments and that's one of the things we're looking at in the project in terms of how historically marshes have been viewed and wetlands have been viewed and now they, now they seem to have a different cultural cache then they used to.**

**ALK1** Um.

**There seems to be a different positioning for wetlands now and I'm, we're also really interested in that and I'm going to ask you some more about that in a moment but before I do, because that's my third section of the interview but then, what I'm getting from here is, you know, you're really, your great familiarity with the landscape and one of the things that we are trying to do with the project is think about how different types of humans can access and use wetlands and so from your perspective is encouraging people to access wetland spaces a positive or is it potentially a negative for the landscape?**

**ALK1** It, it depends entirely who you're encouraging, erm. [laughs] Yeah, I think, erm, I think these are the sort of places where for, for the large part best left to, erm, do their own thing and, you know, you can, you can go in, you know, as a, as an individual or as a couple of people, or as a small group, erm, you know, touch, you sort of touch the, the landscape quite gingerly but you don't want to be going laying concrete pathways.

**Footpaths, yes.**

**ALK1** And access points and visitor centres into all these places, that kind of, it kind of, that kind of ruins these, these places, they're not for that. Erm, I think it's, these sort of places demand respect and demand a kind of, solitary or even very small scale kind of, erm, interaction.

**Yeah, we can't Disneyfy all these different spaces.**

**ALK1** No, no, no, not at all, erm, no, erm, but yeah, it's, it's kind of, yeah, you need to sort of, it's a bit like going to a church I suppose, a nice, nice quiet church and you sort of, and you sort of, you step quietly and lightly and, you know, it's sort of like keep, you know, you kind of keep the quiet, that's what, and that's what you want to do in these places.

**Yeah, a certain reverence.**

**ALK1** Not, not, maybe not reverence but, you know, you just, you're not going in there all, you know, loud wearing, erm, noisy clothing.

[laughter]

**Yeah. So it may be really difficult for you to do this but could you sum up, particularly thinking about your experience at Alkborough Flats, the sense of place you get from wetlands?**

**ALK1** Oh with, with Alkborough Flats it's, erm, because you're right there on three rivers, erm, and you have quite a panoramic view, there's a, there's a feeling there of being, very much being between, so you're, you're not, erm, you're not going out on the Humber, out to sea and you're not coming in on the Humber, erm, and you, you're not, erm, on the, on the A1 or the, erm, on the M62 or anything like that, you're not heading west, you're not going to Hull or anything like that, you're not even going to Scunthorpe. Heaven forbid.

**I have been to Scunthorpe. [laughs]**

**ALK1** Well done, it's a strange, it's a strange old place. [laughs] Erm, I mean these kind of. Alkborough Flats is, erm, in some respects it's a bit like Spurn Point in that it's kind out on this limb, out by itself, erm, and what it, what it, I suppose what it does have with, erm, with the turf mace is you have this, this tremendous, erm, view across, you know, three counties give or take, erm. It's this feeling of, erm, kind of removed fluidity, you know, erm, everything's kind of moving in, erm, in directions, so you've got your, you've got your rivers going one way and then joining and then going another way and then you've got these big arterial roads way off, going east to west or north to south, all those things, whereas Alkborough is quite a static, this sort of weird little static place that you don't really go to unless you're going there.

**Yes, I think that's very true.**

**ALK1** Erm.

**It's not on the way to anywhere particularly.**

**ALK1** No, it's not on the way to anywhere.

**No.**

**ALK1** Erm, so it, yeah, if you're going to go there you're going there with purpose, whether it's just photograph the birds or, or just go and be by yourself or whatever, erm, and I think a lot of these wetland places have that same sort of draw which goes back to what I was saying previously, there's a, they kind of require a kind of quietness when you're there, sort of, they need to be a quiet presence in them, erm, yeah.

**I think that's a lovely idea and thinking about, you know, being with the landscape if you like.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**Would you say, when you're undertaking your activities or, you know, the time that you spent at Alkborough Flats, would you say that for you part of it is not, is not just concerned with, with your work but there's also another element which is concerned with the health and wellbeing? You know, that you get something positive, wellbeing wise from being in these landscapes.**

**ALK1** Erm, I suppose, I mean it's nice to be anywhere isn't it? Erm, I think it's always good to be exposed to a sense of scale and I think it's always good to be exposed to a sense of natural drama, erm. I think, erm, I think it's, erm, I think it's, it's good for your brain, erm, well it's certainly good for my brain, erm, to have this kind of, this, this canvas, this great big cinema screen in front of you, erm, and in these fairly sketchy places like, like Alkborough, erm, where all kinds of different things are happening very quietly, erm, I think, you know, I think that's really good and I mean I get a lot from it, erm. Like, like I was saying before, you know, it, for me it is a bit like a movie, erm, it.

**But do you?**

**ALK1** These, these places are, are vast three dimensional interactive films which sort of go in and out of.

**Yeah, and does that mean then that the film can change each time?**

**ALK1** Oh yeah, yeah.

**So that sometimes you might feel invigorated, another time you might feel very rested?**

**ALK1** Erm, I mean I like these places all year round, erm, I'm as thrilled to be out there on a really, really murky thick day as to be out there in, you know, bright sunshine. In fact a lot of the times with, with these coastal places and rural places, I prefer it when the weather's a bit iffy, erm, purely from like a visual sense, it's, it's more dramatic and more atmospheric and, erm.

**Yeah, it's almost counterintuitive isn't it? You know, it may be that maybe some of the wider landscape gets shut down by mist or by rain but then you feel I guess cosseted by the landscape I suppose.**

**ALK1** Maybe, no, I kind of like it when I'm in these big places that you can't see very much, erm, like, I mean like being up, erm, a mountain or something, erm, and it's, it's really, really misty round, I was up, erm, up in the Lake District a while ago, erm, climbed up, erm, Harrison Stickle near, erm, what's it called? Erm, oh it.

**I don't know Harrison Stickle.**

**ALK1** Which one is it? Where's it near? Can't remember now. It's off Pass, what's the big steep road, the really steep road called? Hardknott Pass, off up there.

**Okay, right.**

**ALK1** Yeah, up near the roman fort, erm, we sort of, I wandered off there and it was, it was perfectly nice and there were a few fluffy little clouds and then all of a sudden, you know, you're in Mordor or something. [laughs]

**Yes, the conditions change.**

**ALK1** Erm, I like that.

**Yeah.**

**ALK1** That's, that's really good.

**Well you're with nature aren't you? You don't have any control over it, nature has control.**

**ALK1** For the most part, erm, yeah, it, yeah, I think, I think we might be at a bit of a turning point for that, erm.

**Well, yes. Well in fact that takes me to the sort of second part which is around, you might have seen on the participant information sheets, around mosquitoes. We're using mosquitoes to think about the impacts of climate change on wetland spaces and about whether insect populations will change because of a warming climate and I just wondered whether since you spend so much time in, in the landscape, are mosquitoes or biting insects things that you come across a lot and do they interfere with your practice or support your practice or enhance your practice?**

**ALK1** Erm, let's see. Certainly get bitten, erm, I tend to eat a lot of garlic and when I'm, when I'm walking I eat, I eat bulbs of garlic, erm, they used to issue it to the Roman Army to thin their blood when they were marching.

**Oh.**

**ALK1** Which, always thought that was quite a good idea, [laughs] so if you've got loads of garlic or something like that in your, in your bloodstream you don't tend to get bitten so much, erm, but you do, they do have a go, erm, it's like if you're in Scotland or something, you know, at a certain time of day or certain time of the evening, all the midges come out, erm, and yeah, anywhere along the coast, any of these really swampy places, erm, I, it's a bit close and a bit …

**Yeah, but it wouldn't deter you.**

**ALK1** They'll come and devour you.

**Yeah, but it wouldn't deter you from walking in these spaces and you haven't thought I won't visit there today because I know it's going to be very, you know, bitey.**

**ALK1** No, it's all part of the, it's all part of the fun, yeah, used to draw a bit of blood, erm, yeah, I do, I think that's good. It's, if you're getting feasted upon by all your beasties then that's, yeah, that's just another part of it I suppose but I.

**Yeah, you're part of the ecosystem.**

**ALK1** I've camped, I haven't camped at Alkborough but I've camped further along the coast, erm, before and it, it is a bit boggy but you just kind of have to grin and bear it, like I say it's like when you go to Scotland or something, erm, yeah, you expect midges.

**Yeah, you just accept it as part of the landscape that you're in.**

**ALK1** Yeah, it's, yeah, that's one, that's one that comes.

**Yes. Now the very last section of the interview, it's called Contemporary Social Representations which I think that you will have more to say than the average person in this, this area, it's about how, what would, as I said before, we're trying to work out how wetlands have shifted in cultural perceptions over time and, you know, given that you spend so much of your practice in the landscape and in wetland landscapes, you know, when you talk to people about the work you do do they express sort of, a kind of questioning gaze about why you would choose these landscapes? I mean are wetlands still seen as sort of boggy morasses that have got no interest or do you think people are more receptive to them now?**

**ALK1** Erm, there's a, there's a bit of like, I'm just, erm, I'm doing this so you don't have to kind of, kind of, but, I, I get a bit of that. [laughs] Erm, yeah, I'm glad you're sleeping there tonight mate, sort of thing, erm, yeah, thanks, thanks very much, we're off in the pub. Erm, I, I mean people do go to these places but, but as is so often the way, people tend to go to places that are signposted, erm, or where there's, you know, where there's ample parking, erm, or things like that, erm.

**And why do you think that is? Do you think that's that people don't like being lost, is it that people don't trust themselves in natural spaces with no? Because that's the other thing about wetland spaces is, you know, it's a flattened landscape generally and therefore the land marking, your route finding can sometimes be very tricky, it's not like other kinds of spaces.**

**ALK1** Yeah, I suppose. Erm, I don't think they're particularly inviting places for most people, they're not the sort of thing where you can take a, erm, a sandwich and a flask. Erm, I think this is, erm, you know, people. They, they're challenging quite a, erm, in quite a subtle way and I think you find that all the way down, erm, the east coast from the Humber down to, erm, Suffolk and Essex, erm, it's, there's a kind of, there's a particular sort of eastern kind of melancholy to, to the entire spread of coast which a lot of people find really off-putting and kind of desolate but a lot of people like that as well, you know, you know, erm. I mean I know all this neck of the woods like the back of my hand, I, and I, I really love it and feel part of it, erm, and I find it, always find it quite strange when I'm anywhere that's got cliffs for example, when you can sort of stand over the sea and get this sort of, the sense of this vast body of water in front of you, I find that really disorientating. A little while ago, I mean a little while ago I camped up, erm, up near Whitby, erm, on the, on the cliffs just south of Whitby and it was beautiful and, you know, great and all those things, erm, but being up on those cliffs with all this water in front of me I found quite weird, this is really strange.

**Yeah. [laughs]**

**ALK1** Erm, I'm much, I'm much more used to having the sea or the water as being a vague grey line on the horizon in front of me at any one time, [laughs] erm, and I kind of like it like that.

**Yeah, it's flattened.**

**ALK1** Yeah, I, I think, erm.

**I mean who would you say are your inspirations for the work that you do? I'm trying to get a sense of, I know we talked about some of them but about, I guess if you like, what, who are the drivers of different shift in cultural perceptions of landscapes, you know, I, because I ask people well, you know, what influences how you respond to landscapes, are you influenced by films, by artists, by books?**

**ALK1** Yeah, I mean I don't read as much as I used to, I mean I, I kind of, I've saved up loads of sort of topographical writing and then I've put it, a lot of it to one side, erm, fairly, fairly quickly, erm. I mean Robert, I know Robert Macfarlane, erm, has quite a cultural wallop with these things and even, you know, he's not all that bad, he's been, he's been alright with me, he's been, he's said some nice things about my work and, erm, that's all good but he, yeah, he's got a big cultural wallop with sort of like luring people out, as it is, erm, he could. Chris Packham as well, erm, Countryfile, all those things, I mean there's this whole boom at the minute for, what they call nature writing, erm, which is not what I do, not, I'm not a botanist, I'm not an ornithologist, I'm not doing nature writing.

**No.**

**ALK1** But it could be very, very easily linked in with that, just because it happens in these sort of places, erm, but there's a whole schtick of that at the minute, erm. Like I've done, erm, I've done work before with, do you know REMOVED

**Yes, I do, yes.**

**ALK1** Yeah, yeah, I mean they're really nice people, REMOVED who runs that is a top fella, erm, but that's a bit like, erm, I've always described it as Countryfile for hipsters.

**Right. [laughs] Yeah.**

**ALK1** Erm, and it, and it has that same kind of, same kind of thing, erm, there's all sorts of stuff out there at the minute, erm, that is, erm, land-based or landscape-based, whether it's novels, like Ben Myers, erm, he's doing loads of interesting stuff at the minute.

**Okay, I don't know him.**

**ALK1** Erm, book, erm, about, erm, about, erm, coin clippers in eighteenth century West Yorkshire called the Gallows Pole, won loads of prizes.

**Oh yes.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**Yes, I've heard of the Gallows Pole, I didn't realise he was the author, right.**

**ALK1** Erm, and so there's, there's all sorts out there, erm. I mean from my dealings with people on Twitter, there's all these pyschographers and people like that who go and, you know, look at pylons and feel sad, there's a lot of that, erm. So there, there's, erm, there's a great deal of this kind of cultural drive to, you know, show people these interesting and weird places and kind of put these things into a literary context and, or a cultural context and.

**It is, does seem to be a current vogue of the sort of new wave of nature writing, which is, which is almost like it's part memoire, part response of the landscape isn't it?**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**So I'm thinking Amy Liptrott would be the most classic example of the last year or so, but there are so many of them aren't there? Olivia Lang as well, her work.**

**ALK1** There's, there's tons and some of it's really and, yeah, Amy Liptrott's really nice and, erm, her stuff, her stuff's really cool, erm, I mean but I quite liked the, erm, the Roger Deakin book about, erm, woods, the Wild Wood, I quite liked it until he, there was like this sort of disparaging remark about Skegness.

**Oh I see. [laughs]**

**ALK1** And, you know, he sort of standing on the North Norfolk coast and said if you look north west you can see Skegness if that is your pleasure. I thought that was really snooty but, you know, there's, there's a fellow, you know, I'm sure he's a good egg and all that, you know, hats off to him but he's, started this cult of interminable wild swimming books, every fucker is now writing a wild swimming book, [laughs] you know, every, there's a new one every blood day, erm, do something else for God's sake.

**Yeah, we've kind of reached a critical mass.**

**ALK1** And, and …Nan Shepherd as well, who's to blame for the whole shepherd's … erm.

**Yes, exactly, yeah.**

**ALK1** You know, even David Cameron's got one, erm.

**Well I heard years and years ago, this was before Macfarlane had become the sort of, you know, the love child of Deacon, a wonderful radio documentary that Deacon made about his house.**

**ALK1** Yeah, really good.

**Did you hear it? It's so beautiful.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**So beautiful, that still is with me now and I wish there was more of that on the radio actually, just some sort of sound history, some sound files to capture these very esoteric experience.**

**ALK1** Yeah, he's pretty good for that and they did something recently about forest, erm, Amy Cutler, erm, she's another academic but she's got her hands in all sorts of, erm, erm, weird music and film making type things as well, erm, those, those are really good, erm.

**Yeah. I've got a question for you as well. One of the things that somebody spoke to me about was the way, one of the things they didn't like about the way that nature is currently presented in popular culture, whether it's in books or whether it's, and particularly in TV programmes, is the idea of the spectacle, that nature has to be this big loud thing, whether it's murmurations or it's, you know, a pod of whales or it's something, yes, it's got to be something, you know, you've got to be able to witness this spectacular moment.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

**And it draws people away from paying attention to just nothing much going on, you know.**

**ALK1** I quite like nothing much going on.

**Yeah, exactly and I thought it was a really interesting point about how do we kind of, if you like slow down the pace of expectations and slow it all down?**

**ALK1** I think that's a, erm, a mental and spiritual practice that comes only with age and experience. As soon as you get a few, I mean I'm maybe, I'm only thirty five but I've had quite a hectic life, erm, you know, as soon as you get a few family deaths under your belt and all this sort of stuff, yeah, then you start, then you start to get it, erm, yeah, it's not.

**And do, and.**

**ALK1** Obviously it's not Disneyland where we're sort of going expect a murmuration.

**Exactly.**

**ALK1** People won't go and see a peregrine and all those things.

**No, yeah.**

**ALK1** Erm, yeah, you have to, you have to, I think it's quite good to come out, come through these things a bit beaten sometimes. [laughs]

**Exactly, exactly, just to feel the wind on your face and not very much else going on.**

**ALK1** Yeah, I mean and like, I mean round Humber it's, I mean it is bleak and you get all sort of crap washes up and I mean I've seen fridges floating down and a little while ago, you, actually, you know, on that, erm, the field notes, the book thing?

**Yeah.**

**ALK1** There's a video with that and in that video, erm, you can see, erm, all these blobs of palm oil that were washing up on the beach that day we were filming, erm, that had been chucked over the side, erm, of a tanker as it was going into Hull Docks, erm, and it caused, it caused some, some sketchy problems with the Environment Agency, but, you know, there's forever this kind of, yeah, mank washing up in these places, erm.

**Yeah, it's gritty and real isn't it? It's not the ...[52.01]**

**ALK1** Yeah, it's not, erm.

**Pristine.**

**ALK1** Yeah, and, and it's not a lifestyle choice, this isn't Sunday supplement things, I mean a lot of the stuff with some of these lesser books of nature writing and what not, not less, I mean don't want to poo-poo anyone's work in particular but they're a bit twee and it's like, erm, wood cuts, fake wood cuts, you know, lino prints and it's all swirly and lovely and there's swifts and the corn flowing and all this sort of thing and that I think is very middle class, very, erm, wishy washy, look at, erm, the, the landscape and the rural landscape because I mean Lincolnshire's dirt poor, erm, you know, I mean we're fairly skint at the best of times but, you know, we have, we have a nice time, erm, it's a struggle but, you know, you, we get on, erm, and, erm, it, like, places like Mablethorpe or Cleethorpes, Skegness, I mean are fascinating, wild, feral, occasionally angry places but come alive for two or three months of the year and then are dead and they're hotbeds of heroin and teenage pregnancy and all those kind of, you know, bad things, erm, and, you know, these aren't places that, that are going to draw, erm, you know, Ptolemy and Jocasta.

**Yes, yes, it's funny isn't it? So you do get these coastal zones where it's okay to holiday in Cornwall but if you were to saying you were holidaying in Skegness you would get a very different kind of response wouldn't you? So.**

**ALK1** Yeah, and these people are wrong because Skegness is feral but it is all, there's a kind of, erm, an almost Mad Maxish razzle dazzle to these places.

**Yeah. [laughs]**

**ALK1** Erm, which is kind of thrilling and fun, erm.

**They almost make you think of the sort of post oil world of what it would look like, you know.**

**ALK1** Yeah, [laughs] there's a bit of that, I mean I'm quite interested in this, from Mablethorpe south along the coast, there's like this unofficial city of caravans, erm, and, you know, permanent caravans, static, erm, semi-permanent caravans, people buy these with their retirement money from, you know, from their factory jobs in the East Midlands, in the Midlands and they retire out to the coast on memories of holidays that they had forty or fifty years ago, this is a big thing, erm, so you get like, erm, the ex-factory workers from Doncaster will retire towards Cleethorpes, the ex-factory workers from, erm, Derbyshire and, and Sheffield tend to go to Mablethorpe and then bit further south, like Derby and Nottingham tend to go to, erm, Skegness and the surrounding area there.

**Do you know it's really interesting you say that because I was lucky enough recently to go to Xi'an in China.**

**ALK1** Cool.

**To look at, to talk with Chinese colleagues about urban regeneration and they did, they used a term called urban villages.**

**ALK1** Ah hum.

**And what they said was because big cities are getting bigger and bigger populations, what's happening is people from different regions move to the cities but they move to specific parts of the city to be with people from their region.**

**ALK1** Ah hum.

**And so you get an area that will be, the city I went to is called Xi'an and that you would have people, you know, from these particular villages, so they might know each other and what you get is these mini villages or these mini cities within these bigger cities and so that's the same I get from what you're saying is that people are drawn to the like-minded because their cultural references are the same.**

**ALK1** Yeah, I mean I quite like the idea that, that they are a migrant population that sort of comes and goes over the space of the summer and for an area that's so deeply entrenched in Brexit and all of those things, erm, to like largely rely on the coastal summer economy, relies on the incoming of people, like relies on the migration, for this area to be so deeply pro-Brexit is really, is really quite weird, especially when you think about on the other side of the beach where you've got Doggerland out there under the sea and which ten thousand years ago our ancestors were migrating backwards and forwards between continental Europe without a, without a blink, you know, I find, I find that, erm, erm, tension and conflict, erm, interesting.

**Yeah, it's almost as if, I mean because once, when you begin to think about what a post-Brexit UK might look like, you do start thinking well will there be a renaissance of these coastal towns because, you know, travelling overseas will become more expensive and more of a faff if you have to get a visa for instance to go to other parts of Europe.**

**ALK1** Um.

**It, you realise that, as you were talking about before, about, you know, big time chronological time we have these moments where, I don't think you'd call them interstitial I don't know, or kairos moments where things can change and shift and the whole trajectory changes and shifts and just, you know, the connection with the landscape is intimate isn't it, you know?**

**ALK1** Well yeah, completely, I mean I, erm, I think a lot of times people don't realise how much we're governed by our, our sense of space and the, and the space around us, erm, and how we move through it, erm, and how we experience it, erm, I think it, it should be a, a topic that we should be taught quite early on.

**Yeah, we need, yeah.**

**ALK1** But just, just understand the implications even, erm, whether it's on an environmental level or, or whatever, erm, yeah, they, I mean it's a huge, huge subject which we could talk, on about now.

**Well exactly, exactly.**

**ALK1** Anything else?

**Yeah, well I was going to say is there, I mean obviously we would love to put on our website, you know, a link to your field notes, so if you wanted to send me something for me to post on our wetland life website, I'd be happy to do one on the twitter.**

**ALK1** That'd be cool.

**If there's anything we can do to be supportive of you and I wondered if there was anything you wanted to ask of the project partners or tell the project partners that I can share with them that you feel passionately about and the work that you do.**

**ALK1** Erm, I, in these sort of instances I tend to play my cards fairly close to the chest, you know, people can come to me and all those things but if you, do, if you want, erm, any images or anything, I mean I've got a stupidly big archive of stuff so I can, I'll email you over some bits and bobs if you want.

**That would be absolutely amazing, that would be really, really wonderful, thank you.**

**ALK1** That's alright, yeah, just give us a credit and.

**Yeah, no, absolutely.**

**ALK1** Thumbs up and what not, and then we can, we can do pints if our paths cross.

**I think our paths will definitely cross, I think this is the beginning and not the end.**

**ALK1** Cool.

**And thank you so much for your support, it's absolutely brilliant because you've just been so wonderful and like I said, I could talk to you all day but hopefully, as you said, over a pint of beer, we can talk more at some point.**

**ALK1** Definitely, yeah.

**Yeah, brilliant. Thank you so much REMOVED, I really appreciate it.**

**ALK1** Not a problem.

**And hopefully speak soon.**

**ALK1** Yeah.

[shift/emailing/school discussion – not transcribed]

**ALK1** Yeah, cool.

**Alright my dear, well it's lovely to speak to you.**

**ALK1** Nice to speak to you too mate.

**Yeah, see you soon.**

**ALK1** Okay.

**Bye.**

**ALK1** Okay, bye bye.

END OF INTERVIEW

**Interview 2 Alk2**

**So I wondered if you could first of all start by, have you got your choir hat on today or your rambler's hat on?**

**Alk2** Erm, well I'm, erm, I'll just say I, I suppose the more ramblers than choir. SECTION REMOVED.

**Yeah, okay. There's always a first though isn't there?**

**Alk2** Yeah, we have not thought of doing that to be fair. So I wouldn't say that the singing and, and the wildlife or the walking round the, the countryside in general's got any connections but individuals, I know individuals are, walk the dog and, so go down there and I, and I've just sent it round, I've your email, original email round, erm, the, there's about twelve of us, so I just sent it round every, I mean actually one of our members does, erm, he does quite a bit of walking and he's, he under, he can look at birds and tell you which, which bird's which, which I found very annoying because I've been doing, looking at birds all my life and still can't do that, but.

[laughter]

But, it, so yeah, one of them might be interested.

**Yeah, well that would be great. It'd be really to speak to you today with your walking hat on if you don't mind.**

**Alk2** Yeah, in terms of walking I'm on the REMOVED and so, erm, now I'm not sure how many walks we do a year but, well we, I know we do two walks a week but I, in terms of Alkborough Flats, it's the, there's a sort of walk on Alkborough Flats top, is, Burton on Stather is, I don't know how much you know in terms of, have you been up here?

**I have, yes, yeah, I have.**

**Alk2** Yeah, well if you look on Burton on Stather and Whitton and Alkborough and, and you can go round South Ferriby, so that arc of the Humber and the, we do quite a few walks in that area.

**Yeah, yeah. So it sounds like then that the Flats are part of your kind of repertoire of walks that you do throughout the year?**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**Yeah, but before we talk about the Flats themselves I wonder if you could just give me a little overview about, about the members of the Scunthorpe Ramblers just in terms of things like age and gender, ethnicity, how long they're likely to have lived in the area, so I get a sense of what, you know, you're, you and your members, you know.**

**Alk2** Well I can tell you there's a hundred and eighty something members, I can tell you probably half of them are active and half of them are in terms of they come out walking sort of regular occasions and half of them are inactive and you think I wonder what, you sort of have a name and you wonder what face that relates to, erm, and you wonder why they're still members because they're spending.

**Yeah, no, that's brilliant.**

**Alk2** Erm, they're not all retired but, erm, I would think maybe fifty percent are, they certainly, they're certainly, erm, mature would be the right, would be a polite way of putting it.

**I like that, like it, like a fine cheese.**

**Alk2** By, yeah, oh yeah, they're all like, well a bit smelly some of them maybe, all like a fine cheese, yeah.

**[laughs]**

**Alk2** They're all mature. There's not many, not many teenagers, no teenagers, no, erm, I don't think there's anybody in their twenties, general, generally speaking they're, they're, when you get to, erm, fifty and sixty you start taking an interest in walking and keeping fit and, and you, and you have the time if you got rid, if you've got rid of your children and not taken on any grandchildren yet and, and you've not taken on, you're not working so much. In terms of ethnicity, well, erm, the vast, the vast majority would come under the title of White British or something if you were filling in one of them forms that the Council give us, and in terms of gender, I would think there's slightly more women, usually there's slightly but it's fairly even, I would say it's fairly even, there's quite a few married couples or quite a few couples and, erm, in terms of the sort of single people they're fairly, they're fairly evenly matched I would say.

**Okay, so I mean so it sound like it's, as you said, sort of people that are let's say over the age of thirty.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**And White British and, you know, and as you said, I mean ninety's a good number of active walkers in your group isn't it? And that sounds like it's probably bigger than the average rambling group I'd say. And I wondered if you could tell me in the work, or the role, the ethos of the organisation.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**Is it really about getting people into the countryside or do you have any campaigning elements to what you do or do you pick up litter or report back to the Council? You know, which other organisations are you sort of linked in with?**

**Alk2** Oh we've got quite good, North Lincs Council, in my opinion, especially as I talk to people in other rambling groups, in my opinion North Lincs Council is quite good at maintaining footpaths because basically all you need in a rambling group for someone to, erm, put signs up if somebody knocks them down but I mean science and public footpath will stay for twenty or thirty years so it's not a big task if you just keep on top of it, I know there's a lot of them but that's another thing. If you can go around with a, and cut the, erm, erm, well mainly the nettles, it doesn't matter if there's any grass but if there's nettles there, that's, or grass, erm, you know, anything with thorns on it, that's a pain, literally, erm, and the other thing if you're a, if you're a councillor, or it's not just the councillor, there's a man there sometimes, if there's a bridge required, you know, over a dyke or a, some sort of a stream or something the Council usually, usually goes back to the Council Footpath Officer and say this one's a bit dodgy here, we've scrambled over it but can you repair it? And in my opinion because we, we, we actually walk in, we go over the Humber Bridge to South Yorkshire and we go, erm, into, into Lincolnshire and I think North Lincs Council's as good as any of them.

**Yeah, so it sounds like basically you're looking after your members and enjoying the countryside but you also have a kind of a civic role as well in terms of helping to maintain the footpaths?**

**Alk2** Um, we, in terms of campaigning because you mentioned picking up litter, well we, we try not to throw it down but we don’t mind to pick it up, we do report that, we do report fly-tipping, erm, and the Council pick that up and we do, erm, occasionally have ongoing, erm, campaigns with, you sometimes find a farmer who would, we've had a bit of an issue in recent times with farmers on the River Ancholme and interested in, erm, extending their farm right to the river and there's supposed to be a footpath along the side of it.

**Oh I see, yes.**

**Alk2** One of the farmers put, the footpath was now about three feet into the river, because the river is, well it's not, it's a canal but it, it's obviously changes its course or whatever but I have to say it, absolutely correct, if you looked at the GPS thing, you think oh he's right but it's still not really what you want to hear.

**No, no.**

**Alk2** There is a footpath there now and he's lost, he's not really lost a bit of the river, he's lost the footpath, or not gained it but, and, and sometimes. Oh we had, and the railway industry seems to me, I think what they think is that they have a, a crossing, whether it's a gated crossing or whether it's, erm, one where you've got a phone and you ring up and say we're just going to cross your railway line, I think that probably does cost them money so the best thing they can do is lock the gate or take the crossing away as far as they're concerned, and, erm, so we, and we don't do very well with them but, erm, they, there's a general theme I think of, let's put a fence down this railway line and keep people off it, which is obviously sensible but, erm, it, it would cut the country up a bit if you did that and that, no footpath or any crossing.

**Yeah, you need that access really don't you?**

**Alk2** Yeah, but, but I understand their point of view and I suspect they understand our point of view but I also suspect that if you, you have to maintain this telephone thing miles from anywhere, there must be a cost.

**Yeah, that is true. In terms of how you plan your walks and where you do them.**

**Alk2** Um.

**What are the factors that determine where and how you do a walk? Is it to do with your members saying I'd like to go and walk here or is it sort of more logistical about where to park or for toilet facilities or do you try and mix up different landscapes? I mean, you know, what's the criteria behind your walks?**

**Alk2** Oh right, well I can, I can tell you how we're supposed to do it and how we actually do it, because I, we've got, we walk on a Wednesday, we walk on a Sunday, and I do the, I, I'm the Wednesday walk coordinator. So the first thing you need, and we've got a, we've got, erm, I think we've got about twenty five people who are called walk leaders and basically walk leaders come to me by about October I hope this year and tell me what walks they're going to do next year. So the first thing to do is to say well you can only walk, if you, there are so many Wednesdays in the year, and we don't, we don't generally walk, erm, the, about the last three in December because particularly Christmas shopping and so basically you need about forty, or forty nine walks, whatever it is, and you can, so you've got to tell walk these, you can't all do it on that date and none on the other days because people would like a walk every day, every week, so firstly and walk leaders, if somebody lives, erm. Ah, the other criteria is, you take Scunthorpe and you, as say well you've got to be able to get there within an hour.

**Oh okay, right.**

**Alk2** And so that's one of the basic things, either that or go and join REMOVED group you see, which we nearly comply with but sometimes it can be an hour and ten minutes.

**Yeah, it's pretty much close to that.**

**Alk2** I have to break the rules occasionally.

**Sure.**

**Alk2** And in fact one of the walks we did this year was an hour and three minutes, it was my wife I had to break the rules with. You have to be bit flexible if you coordinate the, but you don't want to upset your walk leaders.

**No.**

**Alk2** And it's better to upset them than the members.

**Yes, very true. [laughs]**

**Alk2** Yeah. So in terms of the spread, erm. Well, erm, walk leaders, I mean we've got one walk leader who lived in a certain area so he tends to do, although he, although he's moving he tends to go back home if you like so he always does that area, I think it's just going back to his, his routes I think, I think he just loves that area, so that's where he, he goes, so there's not very scientific about that, so, and it's, and it's not balancing, I think that's just, he probably just knows those route, those routes and that's where he's going, and people do have their own favourite walk and people tell you if, if you've led a walk, people tell you that was rubbish and you think oh best not go there again. [laughs]

**[laughs] Do they really? Will they really say at the end of it, that wasn't very good, don't do it again?**

**Alk2** No, they wouldn't put it like that, they're much, they're much more polite than that, we're dealing with mature people but, erm, how can I put this? Sometimes you get the vibes, yes. Now the other thing, when you talk about parking, if you, if you're going to get forty people on a walk and we do sometimes, we certainly get thirty and if they're come in, say if you are, get two or three per car, erm, and the further you are from Scunthorpe the more likely you are to get people to share a car, if it's, if it's a walk, erm, very close then they might all come in their own individual cars and you might get twenty cars then, so you do need a car park, you do, and it, it doesn't, it doesn't look good if you just blocked up a load of people's drives or something like that, so we don't do that. You might ask a pub if we can park in your pub and then when you've finished the walk go in the pub and that, that has benefit, you know, the pub, the pub might think that's good and certainly the walk, the ramblers will think that's good and you, you might do that with a tea shop and that might work better on a Wednesday than it would on a Sunday, that's probably why I coordinate the Wednesday walks this year, erm.

**Yeah, gives you a bit more flexibility.**

**Alk2** Yeah, but walk leaders usually work that out, erm, for each individual walk they usually work that out. Erm, and the other thing it's quite nice to do, if you've, if you, there's, if you look at the list Wednesday and the list for Sunday, it's better to not to do the same walk on the Wednesday and the Sunday so I have to, I look down and it's gets nearly full, we look down and see if we can move people round so that we're, we're not going to Louth twice or something like that.

**Yeah, so you've got a bit of variety, yeah.**

**Alk2** In the same week, so, erm, erm.

**So in terms of say how often you might go to Alkborough, would that be a couple of times of the year do you think or more often?**

**Alk2** It's probably a bit more than that, because it's quite a, erm, it's quite close, it's quite a good area but it's not much more often than that, it's probably about forty times a year I think.

**Okay, but that's still fairly regular though isn't it?**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**And will you do the same walk or will you do it the other way round or will you add little bits on, what's the sort of, you know, the general way that you walk round Alkborough?**

**Alk2** Well I think generally thinking the walk leaders might do the same walk because they know it, they don't get lost, you look a right idiot if you're leading a walk and you say I'm sorry, can we just go back to that gate? Because I've done that and you think I'll not do that again.

**No.**

**Alk2** I encourage people to do a different walk because that's more interesting, so that's, so we, so what I end up doing is sort of half of that walk and then something slightly different. With Alkborough Flats there's not that many routes to do it in my opinion but you tend to, you tend to either go out to the, what was the, they've knocked a hole in what was the barrier between the, the river and the, erm, dry land and you can only walk so far round and then you have to come back but, but it tends to be similar sort of routes. The other way to walk along, near the edge, you know, where it sort of goes up and there's some hides and stuff and you can walk on to Whitton, so, and the other bit we do, I mean the other bits we do is we walk along the top which is not, not the Flats but it's the ridge above the Flats because you get some good views there.

**Yeah, it's very beautiful from there.**

**Alk2** So, erm, so there, it, within a year you'll not exactly, you'll not do the same route twice because that would, that would be silly but, well not silly but it would be boring or not as interesting but there's not that many routes to it.

**And.**

**Alk2** And it, I'm never quite sure how far you decide the Flats go because, erm, there is some quite flat land, it still, it's farmland, erm, further along the Trent, it certainly goes along that with the wind farms, yeah.

**Yeah, so I mean and presumably you're going any weather as well, the weather is not something that will deter you from having a walk?**

**Alk2** No we, we cancelled two, we've got a system which almost works, we cancelled the, we've cancelled two walks in the last twelve months. One was, erm, it would be a really dodgy to, erm, dry, I think they've both been, they were both in January and they were both cancelled by the same walk leader by chance but basically, but it's been quite a while, while before, since, in previous years, we haven't cancelled many, it, if you think something like I wouldn't go out in this weather, you've got to question whether you'd, erm, actually have, erm, your friends go out, erm, in this weather as well.

**Yeah, exactly, because you're going to take responsibility.**

**Alk2** You might have to cancel and you have to sort of, you've got to really look at the weather forecast, you've got to really sort of cancel about twenty four hours beforehand because you've got to let people know.

**Yeah. Can I ask you, so one of the things we're interested in in the project is trying to improve access to wetland spaces for people.**

**Alk2** Right.

**So do you think that is a good thing to widen access and improve access and if so, you know, what would you, from a ramblers perspective, suggest would be useful and helpful?**

**Alk2** Well it, access, access to countryside think's a very good thing, erm, to improve access, whether it's wetland or farmland or what. I mean I, I mean if you look at the system in, in Scotland where, erm, where, I mean our system in the UK, in England and Wales is you basically have public footpaths or, erm, sort of rights of access, different sorts of rights of access to places, whereas theirs are more of a system of you can go anywhere if you don't make any damage, erm, I mean it's probably, probably not the legal way of putting it but that's sort of my thought process.

**Yeah, well it's a right to roam isn't it?**

**Alk2** So they've got a right to roam haven't they I think?

**Yeah.**

**Alk2** But I, I suppose, erm, I, I, I'm, basically I'm in favour of, erm, the right to use the countryside in a responsible way. I mean I, I mean I wouldn't, I'm not too keen on people, erm, you know, getting the motorbike and giving the farmers access, you know, using bigger ruts and otherwise but in terms of people just walking or looking or bird watching, I, I don't think that does too much harm and, and, you know, as long as people don't throw litter and don't go and dump their, their, half a house contents somewhere, that's fine. So I, I do understand where people put blocks of concrete to avoid people parking on their land or, erm, whatever but I, so I'm not, I'm not in favour of free access and do what you like but, erm, I think just, I think just educating people, as I say allowing people to educate themselves I suppose is what I'm really thinking, about the countryside and, and just see it, I think that's what they should be doing but, erm.

**Yeah. So kind of shifting the way that we relate to nature I guess is what I'm hearing you saying, that, to learn to respect nature and enjoy being in nature?**

**Alk2** Respect it, enjoy it, I've always enjoyed it, erm, and I suppose I think don't interfere it, erm, so I'm not, I'm not into sort of hare coursing or fox hunting and all that sort of thing, but, erm, erm, but I do think, I do think we should allow responsible access, I mean I don't know how you police these things, that's the only thing.

**Yeah, and I have a question as well. You talked before about the difference between wetland and farmland and that's one of the things also interested in exploring is different people's perceptions of what a wetland is, so if you could describe for me what you think a, how you see a wetland and then in relation to Alkborough Flats how typical that is of a wetland environment.**

**Alk2** Oh I see what you mean. Well I, when I think you're talking about Alkborough Flats, I think you're talking about the bit they're using as a, as a, erm, what, in terms of, water surging in and stopping it flooding the other parts. We, we've had trouble with areas of Humber bank, flooding and in fact all that area's flooded but they've, they've taken away some farmland effectively and it is now become a, well it's just reeds and, well I shouldn't say just reeds, it's reeds and it's a wildlife area, so I see that as the Alkborough Flats. I mean there are vast areas of wetlands, there's the whole of the Isle of Axholme, which is, well it's not wet at the minute, it's cracked actually and dry. [laughs]

**Right, that's no surprise though is it?**

**Alk2** But if you took, if you took the Trent bank away, I'm sure it'd be very wet because you get wet every high tide I suspect, but I don't honestly know it was, but not going to happen so it doesn't matter. I mean a lot of that, I see that as a sort of part, in terms of farmland, it is a farm but in terms of wildlife it's a bit of a desert because if you, if you've just got some crops there, erm, and they're, they're being sprayed with whatever there is a, there is a sort of strip down the side which is, it's European community I guess have encouraged farmers to leave but there isn't actually a lot of, erm, as I say it, there's an awful lot of, erm, wildlife in those areas, there's some but not, it, I, I wonder if you could do it better.

**Yeah. Now are you talking specifically now about Alkborough Flats?**

**Alk2** No, no, I'm thinking more in terms of, in terms of wetland, I'm think, I'm thinking more in terms of flat low lying land, I think more of the Isle of Axholme, I think, and alongside the Trent between the, between the Trent bank and Scunthorpe, it's low lying and it will be flooded if it, if it wasn't, I mean it's been centuries, it's been not flooded but it, it's also, and it's farmed, it's very good farmland I'm sure the, you know, the crops are in excellent there but I, I do wonder if you could introduce more, if you could co-exist a bit more, if you could still make a living off it, erm, but you could have more, erm, nature there.

**Yeah, so.**

**Alk2** Because I do, I do sort of see a great field of corn or something because there's a sort of desert in a way.

**Yeah, no, that's interesting. So if we return briefly to Alkborough Flats.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**Would you say, because that's then very, it's, they're both wetland landscapes but they, from what I'm hearing, the, in your eyes they're very different and.**

**Alk2** Yeah, they are.

**Because they're managed so differently, so one is very actively drained and the other one has had a deliberate breach in it.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**So.**

**Alk2** And, and the other bit no, I'm guessing nobody's making a living of Alkborough Flats, there's a few cows, there's a few, erm, there's a cow, there's a few, sheep and cows over at, do a bit of grazing but I, the big difference is nobody would make a living off it.

**Yeah. So in some ways then it becomes this place where the only thing that it can be, not used for, but enjoyed by, is really for leisure activities?**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**Because it's not an economic generating area anymore.**

**Alk2** I'm guessing it's that. I mean I, the only reason it's there in my, you'll probably have read the history of it but the only reason it's there is, is, erm, they absolutely need it because, erm, in fact we had somebody on the Committee, I wasn't on the Committee but we had somebody on the Committee when they were, erm, deciding to use this breach and I cannot remember but it makes a difference of quite a few, quite a few inches, if you have a surge tide the water going now, I'm not sure it takes six inches or nine inches off what, erm, what the hide of the tide would otherwise but at Gainsborough or somewhere, in other words it makes it much less likely that the Trent is going to flood, so I mean that's, that's got an economic benefit.

**That's true.**

**Alk2** But it, and it's very true if it's your house, it doesn't flood isn't it?

**Yeah.**

**Alk2** Or your business, so it has got an economic benefit but it's not the same economic benefit as somebody harvesting their crops every autumn and they're selling whatever they're selling, it's got a more community-based economic benefit hasn't it?

**Yeah, no, that's a really interesting way of looking at it.**

**Alk2** Erm.

**And did you ever visit the site before the breach was put in?**

**Alk2** Yes, yes, erm, yes, and there was, there was a, yeah, there was a chance of walking round there, and in terms of what the ramblers can do, erm, it's not, I mean there's far more, erm, erm, birdlife to see, there's, it is far more interesting now, but in terms of just walking in the area, it's not significantly made a difference to us I would suggest but maybe, maybe that's because I, I forget what it was like before but it, it, it was fine, in terms of rambling it was, it was accessible anyway.

**Yeah. So from your perspective, you know, it's kind of almost business as usual, you haven't had to change your walks and you haven't really kind of thought oh that's an extra level of detail now because, you know.**

**Alk2** Um, but we have had to change the walks. We, you can't just walk along the bank anymore because there's a hole in it. We have changed the routes we take but, and, and the paths are better now, so I mean when they, when they did it they actually, erm, created some quite good paths and there's bits now that have flooded so you've changed your walks, you can't walk through the water, so it's, it has changed where we, it's only the detail it's changed, yeah.

**Yeah, so I mean you've answered this partly but one of the things we're interested in is being able to think about the benefits and the disbenefits of these sort of wetland spaces, so.**

**Alk2** Um.

**If you could kind of give a couple of bullet points for the main benefits and the disbenefits how would you frame them?**

**Alk2** Well the, the big benefit is the, is the fact that, erm, is the fact that it's supposed to control the flooding and I, and I often believe that it does, and if it does, I mean that seems to be enormous benefit. The other, the other benefit is it, if you, if you include Blacktoft Sands, which is the other, which is another area on the, erm, where the Ouse and the Trent come together, it, you've got a big area for wildlife, for wild birds to, every now and again you'll see, you'll see a particular species of bird coming into that area and then it goes off. My friends would tell me where they'd gone, go to Siberia or somewhere else or up north or they'd be coming down south, they'll go down to Africa, so you'll get a species of bird coming in and just the fact they're there gives them somewhere to feed and sort of, erm, and to be seen but for them to survive, or at least that's my interpretation what people are thinking, so I, I mean I, and I would like nature to survive, I would like, I think it's, erm, if we just live on this planet with just humans it would be a bit, erm, I don't think it would work very well, so, so, I think it's got those two benefits, it's probably got lots of others but I don't know, yeah.

**Yeah, perfect, perfect. And the disbenefits would you say?**

**Alk2** Well there must be some farmer that's pee'd off with the fact that he had, [laughs] there must be, there must be a negative in the sense of there's a certain amount of food that's either not being produced, I mean that must be a negative to somebody but it, but, erm.

**Yeah, it's interesting and.**

**Alk2** But I sort of think well that's not a big deal to the UK in that I think the price of food is controlled by what we charge for importing it and we can afford to import it and what we produce in this country is, is negligible compared with some of the big parts of the world.

**No, I think you're right. One of the other things we're considering in the project is whether wetland spaces are seen as particular types of landscape that generate a sense of place, so when you have been to visit Alkborough Flats.**

**Alk2** Um.

**Do you get a sense there of being in a landscape which is very different from other types of landscape?**

**Alk2** I suppose I have to say that your phrase, a sense of place, doesn't sort of, erm.

**Doesn't resonate for you?**

**Alk2** It doesn't, no, sorry about that, it doesn't.

**No, that's fair enough, yeah.**

**Alk2** It, I, it is different, I'm pleased it's there, I'm pleased it's different but, erm, no, I don't go, I don't sort of go wow this is. I don't get the same feelings I did when I was walking along the, the Severn Sisters and Beachy Head and looking at the cliff face, I have to say that was, maybe I don't do it often enough, I do, and it was sunny and you got a real, I did get a wow factor there and I did get a wow factor on, erm, on bits of the South Downs where you got three hundred and sixty degrees and, erm, really good views but I also think I might just be a bit more used to Alkborough Flats so, erm.

**Yeah, but I think that says something in itself doesn't it that there are some landscapes that we feel really attracted to, and we're all different, so, you know, if wetlands are not the type of landscape that gives you that wow factor then that's perfectly legitimate and fine isn't it?**

**Alk2** Um.

**It's just.**

**Alk2** It's not, I, what does give you the wow factor is when you get to, you know, thousands and birds and they just all take off and, and you're sat in one of the hides and you just watch then do it and you think bloody hell, so that's the wow factor, yeah.

**Yeah. So that's lovely, so that's sort of nature insitu isn't it, that's?**

**Alk2** Yeah, and it wouldn't happen if you hadn't got that wetland there.

**No. Now this may seem a really obvious question but I have to ask it anyway. Would you say health and wellbeing is a major factor of what your organisation does?**

**Alk2** Health and wellbeing?

**Yes.**

**Alk2** Well I'm told walking's healthy and I'm told talking to people's good for your wellbeing, so yes.

**Yeah, wonderful. And how would you define what wellbeing is for your members?**

**Alk2** Oh, don't think I would, erm. What's wellbeing? Well a lot of people use ramblers as a sort of, erm, and it's a group of friends basically, having friends is good for you and, erm, and like we've, forty five of us went off on a holiday down to Eastbourne last week, so that's, that's the sort of friendshipness of it.

**Yeah, it's not easy to go away with that many people is it?**

**Alk2** What do you mean not easy?

**Well forty five people being together and all getting on with each other is quite a remarkable thing I think.**

**Alk2** Oh is it?

**Yeah.**

**Alk2** Oh it's you southerners.

**[laughs]**

**Alk2** Oh, alright, well I'm.

**I'm married to a northerner though.**

**Alk2** We didn't get on, yeah, I didn't know it was remarkable.

**Yeah, yeah, that's wonderful. So it's not just, for instance physical wellbeing that's part of it, it's also social wellbeing, making friends and doing something sociable.**

**Alk2** Yeah. I sort of see rambling as healthy and, and good for the, good for the soul, if you have a soul.

**Yeah, that's lovely. And another aspect of the project is thinking about climate change and how wetlands will be affected by climate change and we're using mosquitoes as a way of thinking about that, thinking about changing mosquito populations and I wondered, you know, in the walks that you've done and particularly around say Alkborough Flats, whether you have, you know, whether biting insects, whether they're mosquitoes or something else but particularly mosquitoes, whether they're a problem or a factor or, you know, you just see it as part of the everyday walking now?**

**Alk2** Erm, well I, I actually did look at, I ticked on the link you gave me and I saw you was interested in mosquitoes and I, I was thinking well I don't know there are any there but as, erm, probably you'll tell me they are, they are there, erm.

**Well we've got mosquito traps there now and we're surveying over two years.**

**Alk2** Right.

**To try and see, because of course there's lots of different species of mosquito, several of which bite humans.**

**Alk2** If you do a, if you do a bit of walking in the countryside do you eventually get fairly immune to it, you don't feel bites or they don't?

**Okay.**

**Alk2** Anyway, the things that annoy me are the sort of horseflies that are, and they tend to be more near woods and stuff than Alkborough Flats. I see Alkborough Flats as, as quite safe to walk in in terms of bites, er.

**Yeah, so you've never.**

**Alk2** But I will grant you that wet areas and, you know, I can see the theory, um.

**Yeah, but you've never, either in Alkborough Flats or mainly in any of your sort of, we can't walk there at this time of year because we're going to get, you know, bitten or something?**

**Alk2** Oh no, it's not like the west coast of Scotland where you get the midges, erm, but probably now, it's not, it's not like that, erm, anywhere in Lincolnshire I don't think.

**Yeah, okay, so that's interesting because we're sort of interested to know whether people change their habits of walking around certain landscapes because of biting insects but it sounds to me like, that that's not really a factor of how you undertake your walk or plan your walks.**

**Alk2** No, I would have said not, I, erm, no. Certainly this year's been so dry, I can't imagine what insects or doing anyway.

**Yeah, I mean that's the other thing is I mean over, you know, we're using mosquitoes to think about climate change.**

**Alk2** Um.

**But from your experience of doing lots of walk and being in nature a lot have you noticed any changes at all over the last years that you would think to yourself I'm not sure that says to me something about the climate changing?**

**Alk2** Well my, I, I'm not sure if my recollection of life is true but I think when I was a child, or a teenager, and I think we had more, erm, we had more blackfly, I think we had more butterflies, I think we had, I think we had, did have more insects, erm, years and years ago. We used to get sort of, sort of swarms of, we used to get swarms of ladybirds at one time, I think that's far less likely, fair, I don't know if we only got one swarm and I remember it really well or if they were actually far more of them but my, my impression is there is, there are less insects basically in this world.

**Yeah, oh that's interesting to know. Yeah, because there was a study recently about I think it was from Germany where they'd looked at the number of insects squished on car windscreens because that had been, a scientist had been driving and thinking but back in the old days, you know, you couldn't drive very far without your windscreen being green and now it's not like that anymore, so.**

**Alk2** Oh right.

**Yeah, I think there's been some sort of looking at the changes in insect populations.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**It's very small isn't it, that's the thing? It's, it's the sort of when you are suddenly reminded of things and you think well that's not what used to happen in summertime.**

**Alk2** Um.

**The last section of the interview, it's got a very long name but it's called Contemporary Social Representations and what we're trying to find out is how wetlands are viewed by the general public, so I wondered from your perspective as a rambler what you think most people think about wetlands, whether they think anything at all, whether they see them as spaces to park a car and go to a visitor centre with their kids or their grandkids or whether they're still seen as very natural spaces, what do you think from your experience?**

**Alk2** Erm, well I don't think they see them as natural spaces because it's just not natural. Erm, I think it's, it's got the, the bird watchers, it's got the, erm, dog, dog walkers from the local villages and people who turn up in cars and I'm not sure how they come when they, when they're dog walking. Erm, I think it's got some, erm, I suspect some horse riders or something down there, erm, so. What was the question again?

**It was about how you think people perceive of these wetland spaces, I'm sort of also thinking about Alkborough Flats in particular, you know, do they see them as when they, you know, when they go to visit the site, do they think yeah, this is a wetland and I get to see loads of fantastic birds or do they see them as you said a place to walk their dog up and down and it could be almost anywhere as long as it's somewhere for you to park your car? Because, you know, back in the day wetlands used to be seen as sort of barren unforgiving places, you know, marshy and boggy and not really places that you would choose to spend your leisure time in and that seems to have shifted and we're trying to pinpoint well what is the thing that shifted? Is it simply that, you know, we've improved access to these places in terms of car parks and roads or is it something else, is it maybe TV programmes or films or, you know, different legal policies or government policies? You know, what's helped make the shift?**

**Alk2** Oh I see, erm. Well if you think of Blacktoft Sands, which are, sands which you're not thinking of, there's a centre there with a, erm, erm, sort of, erm, place where you can sort of find out what, what you should see as it were or what you will see. At Alkborough Flats, they're, erm, they have improved it in the sense they've got these footpaths in the, in the area, and sort of, erm, raised them up a little bit so they don't get flooded but I mean the other, I mean the other bit is that, erm, because, because there isn't a farmer there anymore or, there's less fencing, there is a bit of fencing that presumably stops you, erm, erm, going to the bit where you might drown but, erm, erm, I guess it's the improved access, erm, and I guess, erm, when you talk about people's attitude, it depends on the, it depends on the individual about how they see it but I, I mean ninety percent of the population round here probably never goes anywhere near them and in fact the ramblers, erm, they're probably an odd lot of people really, going walking round in the countryside.

**[laughs]**

**Alk2** You, you would probably, you'd probably find that most of the population think are a bit odd really.

**Yeah. So do you think, you know, you were saying that ninety percent of people, even maybe from Alkborough may not go on the Flats, what do you put down to? Do you put that down to just a lack of interest or is it because life is so busy with work and with children or grandchildren that they don't have time? You know, what do you think the drivers might be?**

**Alk2** I do think people are, erm, busy, and they like to be busy almost. I do think, erm, I mean I, I do think all this female equality where the women get to go out to work and they get to earn a living and they get to, they look after their children and they get to cook all the dinners and I do think this female equality, I do think you've been sold a pup but, but no, the rest, all my female relatives think it's a wonderful pup and I wonder if they're really pleased with it and I think to myself well, you've got a good job there then.

**Because you, yeah.**

**Alk2** And I, I sort of look back and when I was a, when I was a youth, there was a worry that we, they still worry that we have automation, we'll only have four day week and everybody will be out of work and poor and the reality is, if I believe what the Government tells us, is that there's actually a bigger percentage of the population working and we can't survive unless we all work to seventy five or something, you know, and they certainly can't retire early, although I have done and I think to myself, well something's wrong here, I, if we've got all this, we, we're richer than we ever have been, we, we desperately want to be richer still and this is a weird set-up. I mean we're healthier, we've got more cars, we've got more, erm, better housing but, I'm not saying we couldn't improve it and we should do but, erm, I think we're running really hard when there's lots of parts of the world where, well I suppose they're running really hard. I'm not sure where the pressure comes from really but there is pressure.

**Yeah, I mean it's.**

**Alk2** And a lot of pressure on the younger generation, younger generations bringing up their kids. I mean the other bit is that, erm, our grandchildren, they, they, every night they're doing something but, and, and it's, it's supposed to be good for them, I think now I'm not sure about this but I, but I help, I help take them right to these different societies and I help my granddaughter, I pay for her piano lessons, all the rest of it, I'm not saying it's a bad thing because I had piano lessons, it was a wonderful thing but, erm, I just wonder if we put, put, there's just a lot of pressure in life isn't there?

**I think you're right. I mean it's really, you know, all the things you're saying, you know, they do touch me quite a lot because, you know, yeah, what are we busy doing exactly?**

**Alk2** Um.

**Apart from not being able to do the things we wish to do with our lives, so, you know, my children are ten and thirteen and, you know, that pressure to always have them doing something, whether they're in badminton club or they're doing an instrument or they're in drama club or.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**You know, they've got to be busy doing something and those days of sort of idly doing nothing.**

**Alk2** Doing nothing.

**Seem to have gone.**

**Alk2** Yeah, we, our, our eldest, I don't know, he's not our eldest, he's, REMOVED, one of our grandchildren, he's in, he's in something called Junior Operatic Societies, he was on stage recently and I'm really proud of him but, and I do think that when I was eleven, I do think I'd have folded given the chance to talk to about seventy five people and tell jokes and all the rest, think bloody hell, I think I wasn't that good. So it's done him good and I do think that you need, if you, in life, I guess in your job, in all these jobs, I think you need a bit of skill but working with other people is, is key and, erm, if you can work with people and get on with people, erm, then, and put across what you're trying to say, that's, that's brilliant. So I think it will set him up quite nicely for life but, and he just needs to learn a, a bit about some topic somewhere and I think that's easy bit but, erm, erm, I think getting an amount of time just to sit around and do nothing but, erm, well, so I don't know, it seems a good idea but I'm not sure about it.

**Yeah, but when your members, when you have new people joining the ramblers.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**Do you find that they're joining because as you said, you know, they've got a certain age where they've got a bit more time on their hands and they want to keep fit or do they ever say oh yeah, we've watched Countryfile and we were reading some books or watching a film about nature or watching Blue Planet and that we really want to get into nature, any of those other references ever brought in or is it really to do with the fact that they want to look after their health and fitness?**

**Alk2** I've never ever had anybody tell me ever watched, I mean obviously some have watched Countryfile, I've never had anybody tell me they, you know, watching Countryfile and they want to get into nature, no I've never heard that. I've heard people tell me they've, they retired sort of six months previously and they, and they've always been interested in walking. I've heard people tell me they've, they've been interested walking but they always get lost, going with a group's not bad. I get some people, I've heard a few people tell me they can't be walk leaders because they always get lost, they're happy to follow the group. Erm, people, they, they join because their friend says come along to this, erm, and, and they, they join because their partner or their husband, wife, whatever, have been a member for a year or two, erm. It tends to be, erm, a fairly stable, I, my, my, I don't know if it, you'd have to ask the ramblers, the head office but I, my impression is that people join, if they, if they join and renew their membership after a year, so they, they last more than a few weeks, my impression is they actually last, they, they might keep rambling until they drop dead. No, that's not true, you can keep rambling until you, until you can't walk more than about eight miles, to the point where you're walking only six miles or less you might have to give it up but that might be what they used to, half this membership, I don't see they're doing, they're just sort of reminiscing but anyway. People either, they tend to, it tends to be a long term stable community of mature people who, erm, I think it's all personal, I think it's the keep fit but it's not the keep fit, go to the gym and be really, gym and be really fit, it's just the, erm, erm, don't be a couch potato bit, it. Fitness gives, might give you the wrong impression actually but it's a, keep healthy and, you know, there is a, there is a, quite a bit of interest, of interest in the countryside, should do it in some different way I think.

**Yeah. Oh that's interesting to know.**

**Alk2** But, no, no they haven't really …[49.32]

**No.**

**Alk2** Or watched, I mean they maybe have and they're just don't say it.

**Yeah, well that's it, that's the other side isn't it? But generally people might say oh yeah, I've been reading x and y, and oh, I've watched this programme about x, but they've not mentioned it because usually those things will kind of drop out on the walk won't they? You know.**

**Alk2** Yeah.

**When people talk about particular things because, you know, that's the other thing is we're really interested to know really how, what other things influence how people access nature and the countryside.**

**Alk2** Um.

**And I do get the sense that for some people, they enjoy, as you said, being part of walking groups where they don't have to read a map as such because maybe the walk leader will do it or it's already a very, you know, well known walk, so it's like an interaction with nature but you can't get lost in nature.**

**Alk2** Um.

**I think people have maybe, are reticent about that, you know, how wild is wild? And as we know most of these landscapes are very highly managed in the UK so.**

**Alk2** Oh they are, I mean the other thing to say is that if you go with a rambling group unless you're at the front, you don't. I mean if you're a rabbit and you see a group of people going towards you, you run off, so the person at the front might see the rabbit but everybody else just knows there was one there and, and that'll be true of the odd, odd deer or whatever you might see in this part of the world but, so you don't actually see as much nature in the rambling group as if you were off on your own.

**No, that's true, yeah, I can see that.**

**Alk2** If you, if you do the reccy, you think oh there's a lot of stuff round here, because what we tend to do is, is we tend to have a walk round on this route that we've put in the programme, in, about a week or a fortnight beforehand because sometimes the route you've put in is probably not as good as it was, so you, you see more on the reccy then you do on the, on the walk.

**Yeah, and you must, if you come down again for another walk on the South Downs you must let me know and I'll tell you some walks that me and my husband like to do.**

**Alk2** [walks – not transcribed]

**Oh that's been so helpful REMOVED, thank you so much for your time.**

**Alk2** Right.

**And, you know, maybe if I come up in September maybe I can come and join on one of your walks.**

**Alk2** Oh you certainly can.

**Yeah, thank you.**

**Alk2** Oh brilliant, yes, certainly you can come and do that.

**That'd be lovely.**

**Alk2** So that, yeah, you can, and then, then you will find, you will find people will flock round you, [laughs] and you'll think what are this lot talking about?

[email/anonymity/film making discussion – not transcribed]

**I've met a lot of women who don't feel comfortable walking on their own in nature and actually some men as well.**

**Alk2** Ah, actually you've just reminded me, there's a lot of women, yeah, they don't feel comfortable, you said in nature but there's a lot of women don't feel comfortable walking on their own and, yeah, and there a lot of women that come in the group because it's a group and they're not on their own, yeah, that's true.

**Yeah, so it's quite, you know, and it does impact on because, you know, impacts on the way people shape their leisure time, but.**

**Alk2** Um.

**Yeah, so anybody.**

**Alk2** There might be a lot of men that don't say that because it's, it's not so good, it's not so good for a man to say now, walking round on his own.

**No, but do you know what, I have seen the other side of it is, I have talked to people, to men who have said they don't feel comfortable walking on their own unless they've got a dog because if they come across people and they're walking on their own they think they're funny blokes but they're just having a walk but, you know, so it's a very strange thing in that.**

**Alk2** Um.

**We, you know, we kind of put labels on people unnecessarily I think, you know, either you're a funny person for walking on your own or the other side of it is that you're a potential thief who's scouting out local houses and stuff, so, yeah, but we want to move away from that and really get people to feel comfortable in nature, yeah, that would be a wonderful outcome for the project really.**

**Alk2** Um.

**Lovely.**

[email/filming/walking/September/website discussion – not transcribed]

**REMOVED, thanks so much for your time, I really appreciate it and hopefully we'll see each other in the autumn.**

**Alk2** Okay, thank you very much.

**Yeah, lovely, thanks, bye.**

**Alk2** Bye.

**Bye.**

END OF INTERVIEW

**Interview 3 Alk3**

**So yeah, so you must remember how it was before the managed realignment of the coast.**

**Alk3** Well I remember them doing it but I don't really, I mean I do remember vaguely, erm, what it was like, I know there was a farm down there on the wetlands, was demolished, erm, to make way for the project and then I think they spent about two years doing it and but apart from that yes, we, we used to come to, what we call Alkborough Hills because, erm, the, the Humber is obviously in the low point and then we've got hills, erm, well they're hills, they're not really hills maybe by what you know as hills but they're, erm, we call them Burton Hills because it was far higher and we could look down on to the rivers and we used to go there for school picnics and things.

**Yeah. So was it sort of felt locally when it was said that this wetland was going to be created, was it seen as?**

**Alk3** Well as you get with everything, there was a difference of opinion, like why are we spending all that money and is that all they've done for the money? This, that and other, like so, I think was greeted quite well really because it's created some quite wonderful walks, even only short or two, four, five mile walks which are enough for a lot of people, erm, but the birdy people, they're the, they're the biggest problem, not, not generally but there's several, two or three in the village I come from and they're just, they don't particularly want to talk about birds, if people put something on the list what they've seen, some of them scrub it out, they don't want people to know where the bitterns are and things like that.

**Oh I see because.**

**Alk3** And they're really not chatty, a lot of them.

**Well do you know what, I'm very glad you said that because it's been quite tricky actually, because I've come up to Alkborough before but it's been quite tricky to try and get people involved in the project, which is quite mysterious given that we've got two other sites, one in Somerset and one in Bedfordshire and people have been quite willing to get involved and we've had no problem recruiting people to get involved in the project but Alkborough has been quite tricky.**

**Alk3** Right.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** Well we do get of visitors from far and wide and they generally say what a lovely site it is, not just for the, for the birdlife but just generally for the walking or the, just the natural beauty of it.

**Yeah. I mean I think, I mean that's a thing that really surprised me was how beautiful it is, because I knew that were was going to be Drax power station in the background and I thought well it's going to be sort of semi industrial, I'm not really sure but being there because of the escarpment and the view you get from there.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**And because of the confluence of the rivers, it really is a really magical site and so quiet, that was the other thing that surprised me.**

**Alk3** And quite historic as well. I don't know if you, you've been down to the Flats obviously.

**I have, yes, yeah.**

**Alk3** I mean and there was several, there was several, erm, historic signs, only two or three but, and they pointed out that there was a, a port down there and also, erm, a battle or a fort down there, was overtaken by, don't know, was it Cromwell's lot or Parliamentarians or whatever? And, erm, I wish they'd taken it down because it rotted away but I wish they'd put it back up again because it were interesting.

**Aww.**

**Alk3** So right on that corner of the confluence of the three rivers there was a, there was a fort that was taken over.

**Gosh. So they did they take it down when they were reconstructing or when they were constructing the wetlands?**

**Alk3** What, when they took the fort down? No, I think it rotted away because it was a four or five hundred year, three, four hundred years old.

**Ah, yeah, yeah. Oh what a great shame. I mean that would have been, again, well I suppose.**

**Alk3** Did you mean did they take the sign down or did they take the fort down?

**No, I mean it's a shame that they got rid of all the markings because that would have been a really interesting feature of the space.**

**Alk3** Think so, yeah, but it obviously didn't fit in with the, the development of the site.

**No.**

**Alk3** No, I, everything would have been in wood, even bows and arrows, mind you there'd be some guns I suppose but the, the fort would have been built in wood I'm sure and so it would have rotted away probably.

**Yeah. So did your interest in the site begin when they constructed the wetlands or did you used to go and walk there, you know, as it was before? I'm not really sure what it.**

**Alk3** Just walk briefly because, because I didn't live here then, then, but I did walk briefly a few times down to the, what was the old farm, the Flats farm before it was demolished and, erm, it was just a nice three, three mile walk I suppose down to the, the Flats farm but it was demolished and, erm.

**Well do you know what happened to the farmer there?**

**Alk3** Well he was relocated or, I say he, maybe whether it was a, it had obviously been a farm but I think the, the farm was sold privately for somebody to develop and live in but that didn't last long, he bought it and then they, then decided to bulldoze it down and so they fixed him up with some more cash and he bought another property in the village, he was well rewarded I think.

**Yeah, so.**

**Alk3** As were the farmers.

**Right, okay. So they were quite happy with the compensation they got?**

**Alk3** I would think so, yes, they're, you know, we're talking millions I think in some cases.

**Oh right, okay.**

**Alk3** And I don't know if you've heard of the Harlands, they're the majority of the owners of the land down there and so I think they were well compensated and then the other one is REMOVED, REMOVED but he rents his land from the college, erm, the college, I can't quite remember where it is really but it's a college down Cambridge, Oxford or somewhere like that.

**Oh I see, so Cambridge University own the land?**

**Alk3** Yes, where REMOVED, REMOVED, where he actually farms, when I say farms, he doesn't, it's just grassland where he keeps his cattle, he keeps pedigree Limousin cattle and so he, he puts them on there when there's grass for them to eat.

**Yeah. It's interesting isn't it how Cambridge University have got investments all over the country that you would never know about?**

**Alk3** That's right, yes.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** I mean the farm that he farms, which is in the village itself, is called College Farm.

**Oh okay.**

**Alk3** Where the name of the college, I can't tell you, I don't know.

**Yeah. Do you think REMOVED would be interested in talking to us?**

**Alk3** I wouldn't have thought so particularly because he's, erm, I just don't think he would really.

**Okay. [laughs]**

**Alk3** I could ask him, by all means, I could ask him.

**Well if you don't mind asking him, I mean you can only get a polite no can't you?**

**Alk3** Yeah, [laughs] yeah. He's not particularly articulate but.

**Yeah, yeah. It's interesting actually because when I was, in the Somerset fieldwork I talked to a lovely farmer called REMOVED and she's very, very vocal about these, she's so passionate about the countryside that she feels that she has to, you know, talk to as many people as possible about things that are changing down on the Somerset Levels, so.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**It's interesting isn't it how people have different perspectives, you know? I appreciate if some people are quite quiet about things and they don't really want to discuss their feelings, but anyway if Mr Ogg's interested that would be wonderful.**

**Alk3** Yeah, I mean he did actually speak because he, when the Flats were taken over as it were, then he did get his picture and a bit of a report, erm, from, from some wildlife trust or from something to do with this changing of, erm, of management from where he had to redivert his cattle to somewhere else and so he got a good picture of, on a couple of magazines but, erm.

**That's nice if you like being a celebrity for a few days.**

**Alk3** Yeah, well it was I think, yeah.

**Yeah. So for you, I mean when you think of the site, I mean we now call it a wetland, would have considered it a wetlands before it'd been redeveloped or would you have just considered it, I don't know?**

**Alk3** No it was, a, just an agricultural, that's all it was. I mean when they put the breach in the, in the river bank that actually made it a wetland but it did flood, I think it did flood naturally at times, erm, when the river came over the bank.

**So it's just really enabled that to happen on a greater.**

**Alk3** Yes, on a, on a basis of when it has and when it needs to.

**Yeah. And has it flooded much then since they put the breach in?**

**Alk3** Yes, [laughs] it flooded badly round about, well it was early December, round about three years ago I think.

**Oh okay, yeah.**

**Alk3** And it flooded over big style, erm, yes, two, three, two metres at least in places.

**Gosh, that's really a lot isn't it?**

**Alk3** Yeah, even the car park, where we park our cars, which is quite a way away from the river, erm, just a mile away from the river, it was six foot deep in the water in the car park.

**Oh my gosh. Was that the lower one or the upper, that's the lower one?**

**Alk3** That's the lower one, yeah.

**Yeah. Gosh, I mean because I've been obviously to that car park and the idea of it being six foot under water is quite terrifying actually isn't it?**

**Alk3** Yeah, yeah. Well the farmer, REMOVED, he lost quite a few sheep down there because the surge came over about eight o'clock at night when it was dark and the sheep, where they were going, going the wrong way and all sorts.

**No, that's it but I'm surprised actually because normally I've got a friend who's a farmer just outside of where I live and, you know, they're pretty, he's pretty tuned in to weather reports and he gets all sorts of alerts on his things, if things.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**If river levels are going to rise, so, yeah, I mean that's quite.**

**Alk3** Well I'm sure that's the case now with him but at the time it maybe wasn't.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** I know I was expecting a tidal surge, it was always mentioned high tides and winds and the moon and things.

**I guess sometimes you can't actually sort of predict how high it's going to go though can you?**

**Alk3** Oh course not, no.

**That's the thing.**

**Alk3** But if you went, did you go in the hides at all, did you go in any of the hides?

**Do you know, I didn't, no, we didn't have time to go in the hides because we spent such a lot of time looking at where the breach had been put in.**

**Alk3** Okay, yeah.

**That we didn't really have time to do that but I mean are they places that you also visit as part of your walk?**

**Alk3** Oh yeah, every, every time I walk into the first hide that you come to, which is about, well three, four, five hundred metres from the car park, call in there, just have a quick look through the windows, if there's nobody there, usually if there's somebody in there then I'll have a quick chat with them and then move on and I walk then to the far, what I call the far hide, which is just a mile from the car park, that's my daily routine really from the, to the car park and back.

**Yeah, and do you always go at the same time of day or does it really depend on what you've got going on?**

**Alk3** No, totally different.

**Yeah, yeah.**

**Alk3** No rhyme or reason for any timings.

**No, well that sometimes, just when you need to walk that, it ceases upon you doesn't it?**

**Alk3** Absolutely true, yeah.

**Yeah, are you?**

**Alk3** And when the sun's been, I've been going earlier in the morning recently when the, when the sun's been hot, when everything's quite baked hard here now.

**Yeah. Well I mean the thing is when it gets too hot you just don't want do anything do you? I mean I.**

**Alk3** No.

**I must say it's much better now the weather's cooled down a little bit.**

**Alk3** Yeah, but I quite like the sun, don't get me wrong, I quite like it.

**Yeah, oh no.**

**Alk3** I don't like working in it or particularly walking in it.

**Well this is it, this is it, I like to, you know, obviously it's great for the flowers but then you have to water the garden a bit more, that's the only thing.**

**Alk3** Yeah, then you can't beat sitting under and umbrella with a gin and tonic.

**Oh that's the stuff, that's the stuff of dreams. I mean are you a kind of all-weather walker as well, you know, if you need a walk will you just put your outdoor stuff on and get out there or?**

**Alk3** Yes, definitely, yes, love the snow, love the frost.

**Do you?**

**Alk3** Yeah, love it.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** In fact I get quite disappointed, really disappointed if we forecast snow and we don't get any, I usually look out the bedroom window sometimes or the curtains and look at maybe when it's first light, no bloody snow today but yeah, love it, love walking in it.

**[laughs] Is it because you like that feeling of being cold and huddled up in your clothes or is it because of the way the snow changes the way the landscape looks?**

**Alk3** Yeah, I think it's just the fact that it's a different, a different siting really, you see things in, generally in green or brown in the farmyard or in the farms but, yeah, to see the snow, everybody's garden looks the same really doesn't it then?

**Yeah, yeah.**

**Alk3** So yes, any time I, I love driving in the snow, I know that's a bit daft but I do, I love it, particularly when you're driving and, with the headlights on at night, you see the snow coming towards you, it's just, I just get a buzz out of it.

**Yeah. Do you know, it makes me think of being in a sort of space ship.**

**Alk3** Right.

**You know, like the stars are going really fast past you, I don't know, so I do know what you mean.**

**Alk3** It makes me feel like Shackleton.

**Oh does it? [laughs]**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**Oh dear, well I hope it doesn't mean you have to eat one of your ponies there.**

**Alk3** [laughs] I don't have any ponies.

**[laughs] So when you, do you always do your walks so low or do you ever, you know, meet up with somebody else or?**

**Alk3** Yes, it's usually solo or on my route I do meet several, erm, walkers, erm, just several solo with the dog or a couple or I'll talk to them and have a natter about what we've seen and what we've not seen and the, just the weather, typical British thing like.

**Yeah. Well are these people that you see quite a lot, so maybe you don't know their names but you know their faces?**

**Alk3** Yes, that's right, in fact I'm terrible with bloody names anyway, erm. I did ask a couple of guys yesterday in the hide because I see them every Thursday and they came from Hull to look and I asked them on purpose what's your name because they know my name and, erm, I asked them and I've asked but I've forgotten straightaway, haven't a clue, within two minutes I've forgotten their names, erm, but yeah, I know there's a Mary and a Bert, they're retired couple and then there's a Pete and his wife, I think it's Val or something like that and they're a bit, well quite a bit younger but then there's a young woman who's married to my cousin, she goes out with her King Charles Spaniel, see her fairly often.

**Yeah. And all these, I mean apart from the bird watchers in Hull, these are people that live in Alkborough?**

**Alk3** Not necessarily no, there's a woman, just, no, definitely not Alkborough people, no, none of them really, further, they come from far and wide, Grimsby, Lincoln, erm, Gainsborough, few from Gainsborough way.

**Gosh, so I mean that's what's so interesting actually is that it seems to be that more people come from far away to visit the site then maybe the people who live in Alkborough itself.**

**Alk3** Absolutely, true, yes, absolutely true, yeah.

**Yeah, and because you work, do you, any idea why?**

**Alk3** I suppose, I suppose maybe the same old thing, people in Alkborough are not particularly interested. Again we get one or two, there's one particularly birdy person who lives here and, erm, he's, he's an out and out birder, he doesn't really want to talk to you about it and he's, or he's the one who scrubs the sightings of the bitterns out of things but yet looking back, people who know him said yeah, he used to have the best collection of birds eggs in the village.

**Oh okay.**

**Alk3** When, when he was a boy, young lad, so, but he's changed his ways obviously. He wouldn't thank anybody for knowing I don't think.

**Oh no, well, you know, everything's anonymous but it's interesting isn't it? So that, do you get a sense that then he scrubs the bird sightings out on the hide board because he just doesn't want people to come to Alkborough?**

**Alk3** No, he doesn't want to know the movement, or people to know the movement of the bitterns, erm, I don't know why because I think we've all a right to see them when they're there and we all get excited if we see the bitterns, because they've only just started coming back these last three years and, erm, and, but this is the first time I think they, they've bred in the, in the reeds.

**I mean it's quite a magical thing when you hear a bittern boom isn't it?**

**Alk3** Oh crikey, yes, yeah, well I don't consider it booming personally, erm, more like, erm, somebody blowing over the top of a coke bottle.

**Yes, that's a nice way of putting it, yeah, but no, it was, because I've never heard one before and I was on one of the Somerset sites and I heard it and.**

**Alk3** Yeah, wondered what it was.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**And then you just sit and wait for the next one don't you?**

**Alk3** Erm, well initially I suppose yeah, but then as you hear it more often than you don't bother, you just carry on walking and maybe just as people are passing by you just say did you hear the bittern over there then? Oh yeah, yeah and they think, well it's magical really to see a bittern there.

**It is and I mean the other thing is that not all, because of the way that the, the wetland is constructed, it's not always that easy to see the birds either.**

**Alk3** Oh crikey no.

**No, so actually to be able to hear the bird is, at least you know that it's there even if you can't spot it easily.**

**Alk3** Yeah, surprising we get a lot of people from far and wide, certainly as far, far, further away than, erm, the places I've mentioned, they could come thirty, forty, fifty miles. Rotherham, we get a few people from Rotherham coming over, which is a good fifty, fifty miles, sixty miles maybe and they come to, just to look, or see if they can see the bearded tits, and, erm, well I've seen them plenty of times because I'm, well just catch them by chance and, erm, they say they can hear them, they, they ping apparently, pinging like, I would think of pings like somebody flicking a wine glass with your finger but I can't hear that because my hearing, that part of my hearing is gone, I don't hear them at all.

**Yeah. So, oh that's interesting. So those people are drawn by the specific bird then rather than the site itself if you like?**

**Alk3** Erm, I think it's, because it's a friendly site basically and it's a good flat site because it's been developed like with disabled people in mind and that it's good, a good gravel, well not gravel, it's a good flat surface really, all the way, certainly for the two miles that I do every day, or the mile I do or the mile back, it's flat because my ankle does not like uneven ground, I've got arthritis in my knee and my left ankle and, but the walking really does it the world of good I think, keep moving.

**Yeah, well that's the important thing I think isn't it? You've got to keep moving, it's good for the body.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**Would you say then that the people that you meet on your walks are of a certain age if you like, that the evenness of the surface is another draw for them and that they can not only see the birds but access is easier for them?**

**Alk3** I would think not particularly, not, not, no, I don't think you can say that, erm, generally because the people who see us are sort of, such different ages and we've got a guy going down and pushes his wife in a wheelchair and there's a, and he goes down regularly, well maybe once a fortnight or so and then we've got, erm, a guy, or two guys go down on their invalid scooters. We've got another guy who's eighty two I think he is and he lives about eight miles away but he comes and he takes, he, he sits in the hide quite okay, he doesn't have a, invalid carriage or anything but he, he's very slow walking, catches his breath and, erm, but he notes down, as a lot of the people do, they note down what they've seen and he also does a lot of photography of birds and flowers and things, not just birds.

**Yeah. That's the thing. I've met, you know, I've talked to a couple of people who are bird watchers but I haven't actually spoken to anybody who looks at the other kinds of wildlife or, you know, fauna that you find in, on the wetlands, so, you know, normally I have talked to bat people and I've talked to people who are interested in wild orchids and things like that, but I've not found anybody like that in Alkborough so far.**

**Alk3** No, erm, well I think I've seen wild orchids in the past but I've not particularly looked for, I don't, I've got a camera but it's a, it's just a simple thing that you carry in your pocket, nothing fancy because I do talk to people about their cameras and things and there's one guy. You see we've had a lot of steelwork retirees in the area from Scunthorpe, way off, Scunthorpe, Sheffield and they've finished up with a bag full of money but they don't know what to spend it on really, you know, and I just said to one guy, you know, do you mind telling me, well I think the reason they started because I was, always with, they were decent cameras or decent compared to mine and I was looking in Tesco's and just see what, what they've got and there was some cameras that looked the part for about a hundred and fifty quid and so I just asked some people, what, you know, what would you expect to pay for a camera? And he said oh this one was eight hundred pound, nine hundred pound and then there was a guy with a tripod, telescope and a big camera, big, big lens on, and he said that, well they've got fifteen thousand quids worth here. [laughs]

**Oh my gosh.**

**Alk3** So.

**That's just, but that's insane isn't it? And that was just to take pictures of birds as a hobby?**

**Alk3** That's right but they take birds who come down and look at these bearded tits and they'll take, oh anything from twenty, thirty, forty, fifty pictures, you know, they're, you know, click click click click, oh it goes on auto I think and, erm, then they'll take it home, put it on the computer and then they'll discard them all because they're not as good as the last ones they've got, I just say to them it's a good job you're not taking your film to Boots to be developed.

**Oh gosh, yeah, can you imagine? Like in the old days.**

**Alk3** Yeah. [laughs]

**And you didn't know what your holiday photos would look like until weeks afterwards. But do you actually get, so.**

**Alk3** I don't take autos really.

**Yeah, I mean because that is another question actually, it's one thing to take the photos but then what are they doing with those photos, like, do you think the members of bird clubs or is it really only for their own personal satisfaction?**

**Alk3** Erm, gratification I think the word you're looking for.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** Erm, I don't know, I think one of them, the birder who lives in the village, he, he does reports, where these reports go to I don't know but there's him and another guy, but I just talked, REMOVED, he's, erm, he prepares all the, the glossy, erm, boards or whatever for the, for the Flat, in the hides and, but he's quite, quite okay, he talks but I think he realised that I come down, well he knows I come down every day practically and he sometimes does himself but, erm, well we just have a general chat.

**Yeah, well it's nice to see a familiar face isn't it? And, you know, you were talking about that lots of, there's a big age range then of people that.**

**Alk3** Oh yes, absolutely, yes.

**Yeah, but would you say that age range reflects the communities in which they come from? Because I get the feeling that it's quite, a kind of white activity, I don't think we get lots of different ethnic groups coming along, would I be right or would I be wrong in that?**

**Alk3** I think you're most probably right, I mean I have seen ethnic there but, erm, I can tell you a little story about ethnicity shall I? I was with my daughter and her, she's got three twins, twin girls and a boy, and they're just, the girls are four and the boy's five and we were walking, we'd gone to a National Trust place just not far from Bristol where she lives and there's, we were walking around and there was this, erm, obviously a Muslim woman dressed from head to toe in black and the little girl said is, ooh is that a ghost?

**Aww.**

**Alk3** And then the, then the one behind her, another one behind her and she said has they come to frighten us?

**Aww.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**Oh that's, I feel a bit sad about that because do you think the lady might have heard, the Muslim lady?**

**Alk3** Well she maybe heard but she wouldn't know what she was talking about I shouldn't think. Erm, well it's, I think if they put themselves in that position then, I mean I'm, I'm quite happy, I don't mind, although I still don't believe they should be covered from head to toe really, not if they're living in this country and they have, it sounds racist but it's not, it's just a common. I mean I'm quite happy, quite, I realise that there's really, really, really nice people, erm, from all walks of life, from every country, I'll chat to them, I really will, I always chat to them if I can but I think those people, they wouldn't want to talk, I don't think they communicate with us to be honest.

**Well I mean it would be, I mean that's one of the challenges isn't it, you know? How do we have a multicultural society? You know, I think we, it's opportunities to actually sit down and learn about each other's lives isn't it?**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**Which is often the way that helps us understand other people but.**

**Alk3** Yeah, I mean I spent quite a long, well a six or seven year spell, erm, touring Western Europe in my camper van, well my motor home actually, it was a, a proper motor home and I used to talk, because I did, I did learn a little bit of French when we as involved with the town twinning and so then I'd no, no fears at all about asking anybody if they speak French or, erm, or English if you will, erm, or Italian or German, ich nein sprechen side Deutsch and, erm, you know, I could carry out a conversation in French, I could talk in French for an hour.

**That's great.**

**Alk3** To be honest I hadn't a clue what they say back.

**[laughs]**

**Alk3** Just looking at a little robin on my fence.

**Aww, oh that's, well I mean you've obviously got a taste for new adventures and for meeting people then, that's what I get a sense of.**

**Alk3** Yeah … is not a problem for me.

**No, no, and I think that's it, we have to be open don't we in life? I think that's the way we get most out of it.**

**Alk3** Yeah, I think just because the people I met while I was on the, on the camping side of it then they were like minded people so they were quite happy to talk, or try to talk.

**Yeah. And do you find that when you're on the Flats, that, you know, people generally like to stop and, as you said, you know, pass the time of day?**

**Alk3** Generally people are quite happy to talk, although some are surprised that you want to talk to them, can you imagine that?

**Yeah. [laughs]**

**Alk3** And some often comment well it's really nice to be able to talk to somebody I've enjoyed our conversation, so I go away feeling happy.

**Well I guess because that's the thing, that some people are, you know, like you said, you know, you enjoy doing the walk at Alkborough because then you get some fresh air and it's good for your arthritic knee and you like to meet people and other people I think want to go there because they actually don't want to talk to anybody, you know.**

**Alk3** Yeah. [laughs]

**They want to get away from everyone because it is such.**

**Alk3** I think you've got a point there, yeah but when they realise how good I am to talk to then they don't.

**Well you see they don't know their own minds, that's the problem, that is the problem.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**So would you say that, you know, that Alkborough is a really special place for you?**

**Alk3** Yes, but it, if I had to move I, I'm sure I could find somewhere almost as interesting but they would take some finding out, it would need to, looking into but I don't know where that would be, erm, so Alkborough's a good place to be.

**Yeah, because would you say that, you know, for you, you're the sort of person that makes the best of wherever you are and you'll, you know, you'll find interesting things wherever you are and that…?**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**Alkborough is a lovely site but it's not unique maybe and, that's what I'm trying to get the sense of is.**

**Alk3** No, it's not unique but, well unique in some ways but not others, I suppose it's not, erm, bit of a contradiction isn't it really?

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** Unique but we do have a share of idiots in the village and so that's a, the, the biggest worry for me and my neighbour really, we've got an idiot lives next, opposite …

**Right, so when, you know, does, what's the behaviour that he exhibits that's really annoying, is it, you know, parking or is it music or is it litter or?**

**Alk3** It's general dislike of us, I mean he come past the window the other night, I mean we've got a big bay window and he just, he walks past there and he just sticks the middle finger up.

**Oh.**

**Alk3** [laughs] Yeah.

**How peculiar.**

**Alk3** Well he's just, oh it's just terrible, he, yeah, he's not good.

**Yeah. I mean, oh. Well I mean you're going to get all sorts wherever you are but obviously one thing I've realised is that Alkborough's quite a small place.**

**Alk3** Yes.

**And so things like that are particularly unpleasant because it's, well you can't get away from it can you?**

**Alk3** Well it wouldn't be so bad but his mother and father live next door to him and he's, he's made a lot of money has his father and he, him and his wife, they just dole it out just as, when he needs it. He's got a Range Rover and a car transporter trailer which he parks outside his how, he's bought two, erm, Land Rover Defenders, he, he just spends money like water but he, he don't earn it. So we, we wonder where he gets it from, but.

**Yes. I mean would you say that that's quite typical of the village that people have maybe retired to Alkborough and they've got a bit of money or? I mean because I still haven't got a sense of what the village itself is like.**

**Alk3** Well when you call we'll have to have a guided tour.

**Yeah, oh that'd be lovely, thank you.**

**Alk3** It's a mixture, it's a mixture, of course you get wherever you live don't you, young and old and the good and the bad and the indifferent?

**Yes.**

**Alk3** But yeah, he's an idiot, he drives round the lanes, because they're only quite narrow roads here, drives round the country roads really fast in his three ton Range Rover towing this car transporter trailer, cutting corners, oh he's just an idiot and. I mean whilst I don't do Facebook or anything like that there's, we've got an REMOVED and he gets his name on there for good, bad or indifferent reasons, like but yeah, he's a, he's sort of thirty six going on twelve.

**[laughs] There's a lot of them around unfortunately aren't there?**

**Alk3** There is indeed, I noticed, the more and more you see, yeah. Not a care about anybody else on the roads, one of his comments was well I've not killed anybody yet.

**Wow.**

**Alk3** Yeah, I mean, and we have lots of runners, cyclists, horses, on these roads, it's, you've not a clue what's going behind you.

**No, so you're.**

**Alk3** And just the other day when I was driving with, erm, REMOVED, who I live with and she was going through this wooded area, not far from where we're going and she said why are you only doing forty miles an hour? I said well you just never know when there's going to be a deer run across the road and she half chuckled as if to say as if and then twenty yards ahead a bloody deer ran out.

**Hah.**

**Alk3** Straight across the road and then obviously she clammed up, she, yeah. [laughs]

**Yeah, she won't be saying that again but it's true, I think if you get, if you're used to country driving, you know that you've got to be really careful because it, and it's not only, there could be mud on the road from farm machinery and that could be send your wheels in a spin, you've got to be careful haven't you?**

**Alk3** Yeah, tractors and, yeah, wildlife, you know, ducks and ducklings going across. Pheasants, deer, we get deer going across the road.

**Yeah, oh that's great but thinking about roads and access, would you say that, the people that you've talked to when you meet them on the wetland side, have they said about access to the site? Because I mean it's quite tricky to get to Alkborough, if you're coming all the way from Grimsby or somewhere like that isn't it?**

**Alk3** Erm, yeah, I think, there was that problem, some people miss the first car park, you know, one down at the bottom?

**Yeah, yeah.**

**Alk3** Because it says on the sign disabled parking.

**That's it, so makes you think you can't go there unless you're disabled.**

**Alk3** And so I took it upon myself, I did ring the Council up, I said it's not true, there's car parking for six disabled people spaces and enough for ten or twelve non-disabled and so they said well we thought that was the best way to do it. There is the other car park up at the, but that way you've got to walk down a, quite a steep bank.

**You do.**

**Alk3** And then you've got to walk back up it of course, which I do sometimes anyway but for somebody in a wheelchair or whatever but the, I made a point of altering the sign myself, erm, by putting a diagonal line across it and putting some little stickers on saying six disabled and ten able-bodied but then unfortunately you can't really see it very, very well.

**No, but that's the thing.**

**Alk3** Some people bypass it.

**Yeah, and so I don't know whether people then say that, people that you've talked to about accessing the site is not so easy and is there security on that top car park? Because someone had said to me they didn't, there'd been break-ins but I don't know whether that was true or not.**

**Alk3** There's no reason why it shouldn't be any different to anywhere else but no, there's no security at all, no, none at all.

**No, but you've not heard of there being break-ins in cars?**

**Alk3** No.

**No.**

**Alk3** No.

**No. So would you say that, if you could sum up what the main benefits for you of using the site are, what would you say they are?**

**Alk3** Well it gives me the freedom to walk about and see some good sites, interesting things and some interesting people. I can't ask for any more than that.

**No, that sounds wonderful. And if you could say any sort of, you know, issues around the site that you think should be improved or things that are challenging, could you say you felt there were any?**

**Alk3** Yes, there's, there is too many reeds really, erm, I mean I was talking to a guy there, he was an out and out birdy as it was, I didn't know his name but we had a conversation and he, erm, he, we discussed that in front of the hides, some of the reeds ought to be chopped down so he could see further into the wet area and he said oh, he said the, but the bearded tits they feed on these, these reeds or the seeds on the caterpillars and things, I said yeah, that's fair enough but I said if you lived in the, somewhere and the, the sweet shop next door to you burned down and your kids had no sweets to eat, you, you'd go find another site wouldn't you? Go and find another shop. And I said there's plenty of bloody reeds here mate. [laughs] And so he, we left with a, I suppose I antagonised him really but I think what I said was true. It's pointless having this site if you can't see out the bloody hide isn't it really?

**Yeah. Yeah. well I mean it's a challenge isn't it because you've got a hide but you can't see anything, so.**

**Alk3** Yeah, but really they, they're quite good, I talked to the local, erm, well the Council, well a Council worker and some volunteers and I talk to them always, a good natter, and a good chat and things and that's every Tuesday they're down there and so I can see why they do do it, they're a really good, good group of people but then I do know them and I do, and I do natter, so I think that's part of the battle really, talking to people.

**Yeah, yeah. Do you know I had quite a problem trying to get hold of any people from the Parish Council? I've sent emails and I've left phone messages and they haven't got back to me and.**

**Alk3** [laughs] I think it's your emails don't register up here. [laughs]

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** Erm, well I don't, I don't see why they shouldn't, I, I'm not, off hand without looking, I don't know what their email address is, erm.

**Yeah, but you don't know, there isn't a councillor that you know that is quite helpful that I could talk to, like by name?**

**Alk3** Erm, well there's a REMOVED, and sometimes, I think we get a newsletter every month from them like and Conservative Counsellor, erm, which, erm, and he's the brother of my neighbour but they don't speak, they don't get on but that was, shouldn't mean that you shouldn't speak to them but there's three of them, erm, they come under.

**So, yeah.**

**Alk3** Auspices of.

**So there's three REMOVED but they don't always speak to each other?**

**Alk3** Two REMOVED but they don't speak to each other, just, just leave me one minute, I don't know if the doorbell went.

[break]

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

**We were talking about the disbenefits of the site wasn't it as well?**

**Alk3** Yeah, that's right, yeah.

**And the reeds, yeah.**

**Alk3** Yeah, I think because we get some, a difference of opinion from birders, they want anything to be touched … even though it gives them a better advantages, erm, to view the wildlife on the ponds, erm, but, but where the hide is situated, you need a clear view of the birds that are on the, on the water, as we get, various things, we get lots of avocets and black tailed godwits and the herons, blue, erm, erm, yeah, little egrets, the odd grey, white egret and the spoonbills.

**So a lot of different ranges of birds, so.**

**Alk3** Oh yes, yeah, the, yes, shank, spotted redshanks, in fact the other day when I was down there with some other people in the hide and we counted twelve herons scattered around, I've not seen that many before so I'd taken it upon myself to look to Google, what's the collective noun for a load of herons?

**Oh.**

**Alk3** And there's three different things, a hedge or herons, a siege of herons or a scattering of herons.

**Oh isn't that lovely?**

**Alk3** Um.

**Which one do you prefer? Which of the three options do you prefer?**

**Alk3** Well I'm really not bothered. [laughs] People down there will be so impressed with, that I knew this anyway.

**Yeah. You can just pull that out the bag now the next time you go down.**

**Alk3** Everyone's okay, because then they're all equally as good really. We've made up our own terms for them but we're, I can't remember what they were.

**Yeah. And do you think, would you say that there's a particular sense of place now that Alkborough has this wetland site, do you think that it's both changed Alkborough? You know, does it feel a very sort of particular place that's unlike other types of landscape?**

**Alk3** Well only for the people who come here, certainly not for, I think the people get to know about it through people talking on different sites but there's no real publicity about it really, there's just the odd sign showing that it's, there's wetland this way on, erm, so I don't think it's made such an impact although there is a, we've got a nice tea room here, which is really, a really good tea room to be honest and people come there for a cup of tea and cake but not necessarily to the Flats.

**Oh okay, so they may travel to go to the tea room but not.**

**Alk3** Yes, indeed, yeah.

**But not to go down to the Flat?**

**Alk3** Yeah, yeah. Oh I think because maybe the people who go to the tea room there for sort of cake and coffee people and they're not into walking down the Flats at all. Some are but not, the majority of them I think are the, maybe the blue rinse brigade or the blue rinse brigade, whatever you call them.

**And is the owner of the tea room one of the former farmers, have I understood that right?**

**Alk3** Yeah, the guy who I've just been talking to, who wants the onion rings, he lives next door to me, he's, he's not retired but he's moved out of his farmhouse so his son can live in the farmhouse, now he lives next door to me and he's, he's the one who goes down to the Flats two or three times a day, check on his cattle.

**Right, okay, ah, and so who owns?**

**Alk3** He has the tea room, him, or his wife runs the tea room.

**Oh okay, the son's wife?**

**Alk3** No, no, his wife.

**His wife, oh okay.**

**Alk3** His wife, REMOVED.

**Ah.**

**Alk3** Yeah, so she does all her own, makes all her own cakes and things that, do a really nice cup of coffee.

**Oh yeah, oh lovely.**

**Alk3** It's very popular.

**Oh lovely.**

**Alk3** And, you know, breakfast and good, you know, bacon and egg but, yeah, they sometimes have two or three hundred people in during the course of the day.

**Gosh.**

**Alk3** Very popular.

**Yeah. Well I wonder if she, I mean it sounds like she's pretty busy but it would be nice to speak to her about her experience of running the tea rooms there.**

**Alk3** Yeah, well I can, I could pass that message on and if she wants to then she could ring you.

**Yeah, well that will be very, very kind of you indeed, that'd be lovely.**

**Alk3** But that, the reason they've got the tea room is because they lost some of the land to the reclamation and they were given a grant to do something to diversify and so they decided on this tea room, they used one of the old, erm, buildings in the farmyard, erm, to convert it into a tea room and it's been very, very successful, really good.

**Brilliant, yeah. And there wasn't anything like that before in the village?**

**Alk3** No, no.

**No, oh that's wonderful.**

**Alk3** No, I mean I don't go there because I can, well I mean on the occasions I've been and I get a free cup of coffee, I did some work on the barn for them like but, erm, I just, I can come home and have a cup of tea, make a cup of coffee and I don't each cake anyway.

**Yeah, exactly, you don't need to go and pay for it somewhere else.**

**Alk3** That's right, yeah, yeah, yes.

**Now one of the things that we're interested in exploring in the project is about how wetlands can support wellbeing, now I don't know if wellbeing is a term that you have ever used yourself or you've come across before, it's something you're familiar with.**

**Alk3** What, wellbeing for me or the?

**Yeah, wellbeing for you, yeah.**

**Alk3** Yes, I think for me it's definitely a case of wellbeing, I enjoy going down there so that's something, even in winter you still see the old hardy people going down there as well, only trouble is it's at the bottom of the hill and so, erm, we've been known to get stuck at the bottom of the hill when it's been snowing or frosty. [laughs]

**[laughs] Because it's too slippy to get back up?**

**Alk3** Well yeah, but then I call my neighbour who's got a tractor. [laughs]

**Ah, you've got a back-up plan.**

**Alk3** Erm, but yeah, that can be a problem but again it's not all that often, you know, if there's an inch of snow then you don't go down, erm, or go down the other way, walk down the rocky route as it were, you know. You've got to the breach didn't you, you went to see the breach?

**Yes, we did, yes.**

**Alk3** Now I've been to see the breach several times, I know there's, erm, barbed wire saying don't go past this point but, erm, I think I went before they put the barbed wire up and so I have seen it and I did walk across the breach, that was when I was pretty new, erm, before it all got covered with mud like because there's a bit RSJ across there isn't there?

**Yeah, well they were worried that people will try and use it as a circular route, try and jump over the, the gap.**

**Alk3** That's exactly right.

**Yeah, and so.**

**Alk3** Because I've always maintained that needs to be a footbridge over there, it would cost very little to do and, erm, there's plenty, if you can put a bridge over, over the Avon Gorge, then I'm sure you could put a bridge over, over there.

**Yeah, I guess it's always a matter of health and safety isn't it?**

**Alk3** Well it is but you can still jump off a bridge if you want. Even, you know, get a lot of people jumping off the Humber Bridge and they, they tried to stop it, advised do not jump off the bridge. So yes, I'm not a health and safety person, been in the building trade for all my working life, I've seen some, well in fact the reason I've got an arthritic ankle is because I fell through a, a stairwell on a building site and damaged my ankle.

**Oh gosh.**

**Alk3** Fifty years ago.

**Yeah, well then it stays with you doesn't it?**

**Alk3** It does, well eventually it comes out, yeah, but.

**But it sounds like the wetland site helps you with that.**

**Alk3** Yes, indeed, yeah, the fact that I can walk down there, erm, yeah.

**And would you say that you also get a great sense of enjoyment from looking at the birds as well, so it's?**

**Alk3** Oh yes.

**It's the birdlife as well as the walk, as well as being outdoors and meeting people?**

**Alk3** Yeah, absolutely, yes, because, erm, there's such a diversity of birds there and, erm, whilst I don't know all the names, erm, I know a lot of the birds but I can't tell the difference between a redshank and a spotted redshank and I've really no need to to be honest. [laughs]

**Yeah, you just know it's a lovely bird to look at.**

**Alk3** I can tell when there's oystercatchers or, erm, the egrets or, I did take a picture of a spotted owl, the first picture I took on my mobile phone like but I don't, don't really do photographs at all to be honest.

**Yeah. And within all of this, so going out on the site, we talked very briefly yesterday when we've had a little, just hello to each other, but about biting insects and whether.**

**Alk3** Yeah, [laughs] don't forget the biting insects.

**No, exactly. And whether that had impacted on your use of the site.**

**Alk3** Well only inasmuch as that I like to go down in my shorts, erm, particularly this weather like, it's, erm, I know that some of the birding people, they go down in bloody anoraks and god knows what, even in the summertime but I like to go down in my, in my shorts and t-shirt when it's nice weather and if I walk through the, some of the grass or whatever, if I go into the grass to look into the dykes to see if there's any pitch there then they jump out and get me but, erm, it's more the, not the mosquitoes as much as the, these other things, like, I don't know if they're even horseflies but they're about eight millimetres long and about four, five millimetres wide but that jump out and hang on to your legs and you don't really know they're there until they've bitten you.

**Until it's too late.**

**Alk3** Yeah, yeah. So I use one of those, erm, pens that you get that for dabbing on when they've bit you.

**Yeah, but would you say that they are only there at particular times of the year or you only notice them when you're wearing your shorts say to when it's hot?**

**Alk3** Yeah, I think because at certain times of the day I think, yeah, they're just, erm.

**But in the summertime or all throughout the year.**

**Alk3** Yeah, summertime, not all the way, not through the wintertime I don't think, they keep pretty low.

**No, but you wouldn't, it wouldn't be enough to stop you using the site though?**

**Alk3** Oh crikey, no, no, I mean it doesn't matter.

**Yeah, and would you say that they're all over the site? Is it only when you get down into the undergrowth on the escarpment that you?**

**Alk3** No, everywhere on the public footpath really, yeah, but they just, you can see them ahead, they're jumping, laying down or stood, whatever they do laying on the, on the tarmac footpath or the, the footpath and then the … it could be anywhere under your arms and your legs, back of your legs, again I've been no to three or four bites as any one time and I mean we do get a few midges in the house to be honest, I know not mosquitoes but midges bite and some people are, erm, more resistant than me but I, they, they go for me, they love me and so.

**You've obviously got tasty blood.**

**Alk3** Must be, I don't know how they know that until they've bitten in to you.

**Well, I mean there's something to say about chemicals isn't there that, you know?**

**Alk3** Pheromones.

**Exactly, yeah, but the other people that you talk to in the hides they haven't said oh I'm not coming back again because there's too many mosquitoes.**

**Alk3** No, no, no, no.

**No. Would you say it's?**

**Alk3** I just warn people, just say watch out, there's flies about.

**Yeah, and would you say it's almost like a non-topic in a way, you don't really talk about the insects, you're more, you know, or is it something that does crop up?**

**Alk3** I'll make a point of talking about them because I want to warn people that, you know, if they've got shorts on that they like people.

**Yeah, yeah.**

**Alk3** So it's a topic, yeah, certainly.

**Yeah, yeah. And would you say the time that you've been using the site that they've, it's been pretty much the same or has it got worse or better, you know, has it changed at all?**

**Alk3** I think it's got worse but then maybe I've been going out in my shorts more often but I can't be for certain but I did, I see they've got a mosquito trap there, down there on the site. You know about that do you?

**Yes, that's part of the project.**

**Alk3** I saw it, well I could see it standing out there shinely when I was walking past so there was, the gate was unlocked so I investigated and just saw it said mosquito magic and it worked with a Calor gas bottle of some description and so it's the only time I've been and then they, they put a lock on the gate.

**Yeah. So that's part of the project is to try and actually monitor different populations of mosquito species over the course of the project.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**To actually find out what is on the site, you know, because then.**

**Alk3** Do you want me to catch one of these flies then [laughs] for you?

**No, I don't think it does, I don't think they do because I do think they are, they're, I think they're pheromone traps so I think it's, the mosquitoes attracted to a particular chemical that's being released.**

**Alk3** Yeah, oh right, right, yeah, they could stand me there couldn't they?

**They could do, they could use you REMOVED rather than.**

**Alk3** Yeah, if they paid me as much as they paid for this mosquito trap.

**Well, I'll pass the word around. I'll see what I can do for you.**

**Alk3** Okay.

**You may not find it a very interesting job though.**

**Alk3** No, well I could sit down for the day.

**Exactly. And, you know, we've been thinking about mosquitoes as a way of thinking around climate change, have you, would you say that you've noticed, I mean I know the site is particularly new and I know that you've not been there that long but in the time that you have been there, have you noticed any changes that you would maybe question and think well is that to do with climate change or is that, would you say it's, you know, your use of the site is not long enough to be able to say that?**

**Alk3** Well my theory is that I don't totally believe in climate change, now that's going to put you down a bit isn't it really? Because, erm, I think it's, it's a cycle that we're going through and so I think, I don't think it's a big problem, you may think totally different to me but I think I'm set in my ways and I think that it's, it's not a problem, I realise it's changing but the, things have always changed in my opinion and I'm quite happy to say that I don't believe that there's too much talked about, climate change, erm.

**If that is the case though why would do you think that climate change is on the agenda? Do you think there's something else that sits behind it?**

**Alk3** Erm, not really, just it, natural thing I would think, I know you might say well we've got rid of all the aerosols and things like that but the Chinese and Japanese are just coming in to wanting refrigerators and things that they've never had before and so who are we to deprive them of a refrigerator when we've had them and all these years? And I know they're making refrigerators without CFC gases and things but, erm, I don't know, I think people have a right to want a better quality of life if it means they're not going to have maggots on the fresh meat or milk's not going to go sour, erm, yeah, sure, if we could come up with an alternative that's good then I'm all for it but even this green power, it's all costing us a lot more money isn't it? So I don't agree, well for, for practical reasons and aesthetic reasons I don't believe in, erm, erm, rooftop heating systems if you like because they look ugly don't they?

**Yeah, yeah.**

**Alk3** And to me that aesthetic is as bad as, you know, pollution anyway, aesthetic pollution but.

**Yeah. Well it's interesting, we all have different opinions and that's what makes the world so interesting.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**One of the things we're also interested in looking at in the project is this idea of wetlands is the sense of place and I wondered whether you felt that the people who use the site, whether they not only consider Alkborough Flats to be wetlands but whether somehow wetlands are now seen as something really positive, whereas in the old days, you know, we think of wetlands and we think of marshes and bogs and these sort of redundant areas where the land and the water meet and I wonder if you feel that maybe that's changed now, that people see wetland spaces in a really positive way?**

**Alk3** Well it's interesting that you should bring that up because again one of the birdies friends, it's a girl called REMOVED and she, we, we had a conversation and she was saying that we need more wetlands in, in our area and I said well, said there's a lot of wetlands here already, I said what you're, if you were, if you were to create more wetlands elsewhere then they're going to distract from the bird population that you get here because they'll go to another wetland and she didn't agree, she, she poo poo'd the idea that was a sound idea really, like just thinning down the, diluting the, erm, the problem really by making more wetlands and to be honest we are pretty much saturated with wetland areas around the country surely I think aren't we?

**Um, well I mean as always it's a matter of opinion isn't it about whether we need more but.**

**Alk3** Of course.

**I mean for instance Alkborough Flats is really interesting for us because of course part of its role is as flood alleviation for Hull.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**And so that's a really big thing about, you know, recognising that the flood walls that are built in cities don't necessarily fit their job anymore and we're going to have to do something else with the landscape that sits around it so that's why Alkborough's so interesting and also then it can also incorporate birdlife and leisure time.**

**Alk3** Yeah, course, yeah.

**Which is all wonderful but it's how people, you know, whether people just see these spaces as places to walk or places to go for cups of tea or whether they also understand the different ecosystems that wetlands can provide?**

**Alk3** Well I think you're right, people don't understand the, the ecosystem, same as, as I don't particularly but I know what I see and I'm happy with the status quo actually and I don't think there's any need for any more wetlands in the, in the, erm, Alkborough area, personally, I mean they've just taken over the Whitton Sands project. You're aware of that are you?

**Er.**

**Alk3** We've got the Reeds Island which is just, erm, north of South Ferriby on the, in the middle of the, the estuary and then we've got the Whitton Sands, which is a, like a sand, sandy area that they, the RSPB have taken over, put scrapes with goodness knows what in, erm, so I don't know, I think there's, I think there's a lot of area for wildlife to be honest and I mean some of the whole country was wildlife.

**Yeah. So do you think that maybe there's enough space for wildlife and what else, do you think that other areas should be developed for agriculture or for housing or do you?**

**Alk3** Well not housing particularly but certainly, erm, for agriculture because, erm, the, the wetlands usually are taking up really, really quality oil and it's alright compensating the farmers for it but it, it don't put food on the table.

**Yeah. And do you think, you know, that whole issue around agriculture land and food security, so you think that's going to become more acute if we do leave Europe?**

**Alk3** Really I'm a Brexiteer anyway personally so, erm, only trouble is I think we've dragged on too long and we should, we should have been, well we should never have joined, that's the point. When I, I voted so you, you're not really old enough to have voted are you really on what?

**No, I wasn't, no, no.**

**Alk3** No, they just said do you want to join the Common Market? And so I think well yes, the way it was, way I read it was with pay the same for a pound of carrots in Germany as you do in England and that was going to be it and so, yeah, some of that, we all know where we stand with that and then gradually and gradually and gradually it's worn out and worn through that we are a cheap payer outer and I don't agree with it but I'm not going to resolve it and I shan't be around for such, a whole lot longer to be honest so, I know you could say well I. I voted to stay out because of my grandchildren to be honest.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**So for you, you know, I mean I was the one that introduced the idea of Brexit but do you think there is a link then between how we use land in this country, you know, so the different uses that we choose to put the land to, whether we leave it for wildlife and we have wetland spaces that are also there for flooding and for leisure, you know?**

**Alk3** Above all else we've got to feed ourselves haven't we?

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** We should hate to go down on to the wetlands and shoot ducks because you've not got any food to eat.

**Yeah. Well the thing is, you know, I mean, you know, you remember how life was, you know, quite a long time ago so.**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**As you said with other countries having access to fridges and things, you know, the things that we take for granted now, it's not always been the way and it won't always be the way in the future, so we need to have a balance don't we about how we organise our lives I guess?**

**Alk3** Well I think more to the point we need a, a balance on how we, how we run Europe in general and I just do not see that, erm, out of the twenty six countries, one, one country can veto the rest of everybody else's votes, erm. Like somebody in Romania for example, can say no, we don't like that idea and the, and. I think we've had weak politicians to be honest, erm, and we've been rode roughshod over our. I mean I've enjoyed my time in Europe and I've met some really wonderful people, they were very nice but I've asked people in foreign, erm, countries, from foreign countries, how would you like, would you like your French bank back or would you like you're, erm, Danish? Not Dane, well Danish krona or the, Netherlands.

**It is Danish Krona, yeah.**

**Alk3** Gilder.

**Yeah.**

**Alk3** Italian lira and the people I talk to, maybe because they're like-minded or they didn't want to offend me but say yeah, we'll, we want our own currency back, like in France, I don't know if they still do it but certainly up to a year or two ago.

[European prices – not transcribed]

**So just, because it is all connected but thinking about the wetland sites, would you say there's been anything that's influenced the way that people view wetland sites? If you had to sum up things that would shape how people view wetlands, what would you say would be influential?**

**Alk3** Erm, I can't think that any, anything in particular would, I mean people, people go where they find interest won't they?

**Um.**

**Alk3** And if you've never been to Alkborough or you've never heard of Alkborough, which people in, even people in Scunthorpe which is five miles away, the town nearest, people in there have never heard of Alkborough, so unless you get publicity, which we don't particularly want to be honest, erm, why not visit Alkborough, visit wetlands? I mean the birdy people would have a bloody riot wouldn't they?

**Because they want to keep people away?**

**Alk3** Yeah, they don't want too many, they don't want too many people walking about, no. Erm, I know one of the problems is that I've found and it annoys me, is dogs, I'm not a dog lover but, erm, they do, they, people come, they let the, let their dogs off the leads and they crap all over the place and, erm, so in that respect I would ban the dogs and I know that they let them run into the reeds and all over and totally unaware of the damage they could be doing but you can't educate these people.

**Yeah. So in some ways as long as Alkborough remains a sort of open secret then it will keep other people away that maybe.**

**Alk3** Yeah, that's right, yes, yeah, I think so, yeah.

**Yeah, but you don't think other things like for instance, you know, there's lots of TV programmes now about nature and there's lots of nature writing and there's lots of documentaries on the radio about nature, do you think all those things feed into people's use of the site or do you think it's actually, you know, you said before about these people with huge expensive cameras and things do you think it's that we've just got a retired population with quite a lot of money and good health and spare time and that's what actually fuels people visiting the site?**

**Alk3** Yes, we do, that is, I wouldn't say it's a problem because it's keeping the economy going somewhere along the line, people buying expensive cameras, even though they're most probably Japanese but, erm, I'm sure they've been paying a lot of tax anyway with these increased retirement pensions and things.

**Yeah, but you don't think things like Countryfile and?**

**Alk3** Are you aware of the REMOVED?

**His name rings a bell.**

**Alk3** Well he was the one who helped developed Alkborough Flats, but then it was found out that, later on that he'd been, REMOVED, I think he'd.

**Oh this is an expenses fiddle.**

**Alk3** Yes, it was, yeah, he'd, he'd paid off is mortgage but he was still getting the.

**Oh I see.**

**Alk3** But I mean I'm a, I know REMOVED, I k now them very well, I used to do work for them so I know them and, yes, it was bad, REMOVED.

**Did he?**

**Alk3** Yeah.

**Oh my goodness.**

**Alk3** And then, erm, and I see him down at the Flats because the, they're now, I think official bird counters on the site, so I do see them fairly often down there like, maybe once a month or once every two months, so I do know them fairly well.

**Oh okay, well be very interesting, again if you know them and he would like to get involved in the project just to talk about the development of the site that would be wonderful.**

**Alk3** Yeah, well I could, if I see REMOVED again I'll, I'll mention.

**Yeah, oh that would be really helpful, thank you.**

**Alk3** I'm sure he'd most probably have something to say.

**Well yeah, I mean and, as always, happy to hear lots of different sides of things, you know, always interested in that.**

**Alk3** I mean you can mention my name to him, you know, it would.

**Yes, I mean if I can see if I can get hold of him because I guess if he's retired now, I don't.**

**Alk3** [contact details – not transcribed]

**Just jumping back slightly. I mean do you ever watch things like Countryfile or Springwatch, do you think those have had an influence on how people view wetlands?**

**Alk3** They've certainly had an impact on me, always found it very interesting. Yeah, so I, I'm sure it must have but wetlands, I don't think people understand really what wetlands is, like I maybe didn't three or four years ago, I know it's obviously wet land but it's, it's what it holds isn't it really?

**Yeah. So do you think that part of that is that people almost need to experience wetlands to understand really what they might enjoy there?**

**Alk3** Yeah, I think, I think the majority of people, maybe fifty fifty. People go down for the, for the birds and the wetland joys that that brings, the others just like it because it's a nice peaceful site, they can walk easily and they can see some of the, some of the wildlife, there's always a chance that you can catch a deer running across the road and a Roe deer, Muntjac or something. There's otters down there, although few and far between and.

**Yeah, and do you think, you know, we've obviously been under some austerity politics over the last few years, do you think that's maybe impacted on Alkborough at all, has that been something that's influenced it?**

**Alk3** I wouldn't have thought so, no. No, I can't think, I can't think that it has, there seems to be, there's no shortage of money when they were developing it.

**Yeah. So there's nothing that, I mean and it, because I'm drawing to the end of the interview now because I appreciate I've kept you for too long now but I wondered if there was anything that you wanted to share with the project that we'd not talked about so far, something that you feel really passionate about that you'd like the project team to know about or to be included in any of the reports that we produce?**

**Alk3** Well yes, I think what I'd like, because I see a lot of people who ask me is there a route all the way round, erm, going up to the Far Hide and continue on towards Whitton but then you come across a breach and so I think a bridge across the breach would be, would be ideal and to make it a circular tour. We've got one going the other way, a circular tour which is fine and, and I think that's what, that would be beneficial, it really would because do get people walking up there and it wasn't until I've put a sign on the gate saying this footpath ends in five hundred metres that people didn't realise.

**Right, ah.**

**Alk3** But now there's a bit of an official sign up there saying that this footpath ends and they'd copied off what I had written on the gate, erm.

**Yeah, okay, so something around making sure that it's, the access has improved a little bit.**

**Alk3** Yeah, the access across the breach really, because people love to see the breach and why shouldn't they? It's, it's an important part of anything really.

**Well it would also help them understand the whole reason for making Alkborough.**

**Alk3** It would actually, I think it would be a good idea. It could be put to somebody and maybe REMOVED might.

**Yeah, well I shall forward that on and if you do see REMOVED and mention me it would be great if you.**

**Alk3** Yeah, that's okay, yes.

**If he would be prepared to have a quick chat with me, that would be lovely.**

**Alk3** Sure it will.

[parish priest/Facebook/website discussion – not transcribed]

**Well REMOVED, thank you so much for spending some of your Friday morning with me, I really appreciate it.**

**Alk3** Not a problem, I'd only have been walking down the Flats.

**Well I don't want to think of taking you out of nature but I do appreciate it and it's really helpful for the project, so thanks so much and then when I speak to Adriana and we can figure out coming up, maybe I can ring you again and we can figure meeting up?**

**Alk3** Yeah, yeah, just sort of give you a guided tour or, well, you maybe know more about it than I do.

**Oh no, that'd be really lovely, I'd really like that so because you're not going away in September?**

**Alk3** Who knows?

**Who knows? Okay.**

**Alk3** Don't know what's happening next week to be honest.

**Oh I feel the same, well look, keep in contact and I really appreciate all your time and support.**

**Alk3** Yeah, okay, no problem.

**Lovely. Thanks so much.**

**Alk3** Nice talking to you, bye.

**And you, bye.**

END OF INTERVIEW

**Interview 4 ALK4**

**I wondered if you could first of all tell me, so that I've got it kind of adequately captured, so the work that you do on the wetlands, is this a voluntary role or do you work in conjunction with an organisation? How does it work?**

**ALK4** I work for the REMOVED they jointly run the, the ongoing survey and monitoring of wildlife on the site, which started in two thousand and seven, yeah, two thousand and seven, the breach occurred in late two thousand and six, so yeah, I'm employed by, by them to REMOVED but over the period I've been working there I've done breeding bird surveys, most of the time I've done, erm, dragonfly and butterfly surveys and, and vantage point surveys to study the effect of wildfowling and disturbance on various bird species.

**So the rationale behind your work is really to capture data over time about changing populations and distribution of populations would you say?**

**ALK4** Yeah, I mean it's, it's basically to, to understand the, the effect that the development had on birds on the Humber Estuary and, but particularly in the upper Humber Estuary and, and to see how the change of habitat affected different species and see if it, erm, if it had any sort of like impact estuary wide as it were, you know, increasing or decreasing numbers of birds and how it shifted the populations around the Estuary creating this new area of wetland.

**Yeah. So presumably you were also involved in bird surveys before Alkborough Flats became Alkborough Flats as it is now, so that you've got data before and after?**

**ALK4** Yeah, REMOVED, I think RSPB, Natural England and Environment Agency, erm, sort of like got together and did a preliminary breeding bird survey in two thousand and two, erm, so well in advance of the project, to just get some baseline data on what was there before the wetland was created and I, I took, I took part in that, I did, I organised that, that breeding bird survey but I'd, I'd been going, I'd been going down there on a personal basis, you know, just birding as well, so.

**Yeah. So it's been something that's been part of your professional and personal life for a long time?**

**ALK4** It has, yeah. [laughs]

**Yeah. [laughs] And I wondered in terms of how your work impacts on other organisations as well, the data that you collect, does that stay within the partnership group or do you share it with other organisations in the local area or nationally or do you put it online, so actually anybody can access it?**

**ALK4** I, erm, the results of all the surveys goes to the partnership and then it's, it's basically up to them who they share it with. REMOVED a few years ago when the site manager left, erm, so, and yeah, I mean the, the records speak, the general bird records forward to the Lincolnshire Bird Club who produce the annual county bird report and it goes, you know, things like rare breeding bird records go to national centre like Rare Breeding Birds Panel and what have you.

**Yeah. So the work that you do with the Lincolnshire Bird Club, is that just sharing data or do you have more of a, you know, do you do sort of guided tours of the site and things like that? I mean how closely do you collaborate with them?**

**ALK4** Er, well I, I've been involved with Lincs Bird Club for about REMOVED.

**Yeah, oh you don't seem old enough REMOVED. [laughs]**

**ALK4** [laughs] Just about. But I was, I was county bird recorder for ten years and I've been on most of the committees ever since. I, I have quite a bit of involvement but, you know, visit wise no, it's, it's more of a, erm, Lincs Bird Club, it's more of a, like a compilatory and record and report production organisation than it is a, an in the field organisation where. I, I have, I've taken various groups round from other organisations, from Lincs Wildlife Trust and RSPB groups, people like that, just on sort of like an ad hoc basis, if anyone asks, they ring up.

**Yeah, so it's all very informal and just if you've got time and if you're on the site then you'll do it?**

**ALK4** Yeah, I sometimes, say sometimes will organise and sit with them, I do, I do a talk on Alkborough Flats, I do some lectures for the local bird clubs and organisations. I do one on Alkborough Flats and sometimes when you do it, you know, they'll say oh we, we'd love to go somewhere like in May or June, can you, would you mind showing us round that sort of thing, so.

**Yeah.**

**ALK4** There's that sort of link.

**Yeah, because this site is, I mean I don't know if you're familiar with the other two sites we've got on the project but one's in the Somerset Levels.**

**ALK4** Yeah .

**Shapwick Heath and Westhay Moor and another two in Bedfordshire which are Priory Country Park and Millennium Country Park, which are more connected to Bedford town.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah.

**I mean in comparison Alkborough Flats feels quite remote.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**And one of the challenges I've had is trying to actually capture what groups really use the site because I've asked people at the bat, local bat group and they said they don't really use the site, so if you could kind of, because you're there a lot of and you see a lot of people using the site, who would you say are the main site users?**

**ALK4** Yeah, it's, it is quite difficult and as you say it is, it is quite remote inasmuch as it takes a bit of finding and, erm, there's no main roads go anywhere really nearby, so, so if, the number of, yeah, the number of even bird watches that come, it's relatively low and there, there's probably as many people come from like the north bank of the Humber and, somewhere, the Yorkshire catchment, you know, Doncaster, Rotherham, places like that, than come, than come from Lincolnshire. It's, it's, because it's like the north of the county, it's, I mean collection of bird watchers, apart from birders, naturalists and just general naturalists, I mean don't really see anybody to be absolutely honest.

**Yeah, well do you know what, that makes me feel better because I've been asking the good folk of Lincolnshire, you know, oh, you know, do you use Alkborough Flats? And they all say no it's too, it's too far from where we are because Lincolnshire's such a massive county.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah.

**That the chances of somebody, as you said, like maybe travelling forty miles to go to Alkborough Flats, possibly not because it's kind of disconnected from other wetland sites, so.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**You know, I mean I think that's.**

**ALK4** And the, the other thing in Lincolnshire once, once you like get to Lincoln or somewhere in that vicinity then you're closer to places like Frampton Marsh and, and Frampton has a, you know, quite good visitor facilities. It's RSPB, it's, it's probably better laid out access wise and it, and it's probably got a lot more easily viewable bird and therefore it attracts more people and it gets more publicity so I, and that's, that's the alternative.

**Yeah. I mean it's really interesting because I mean I was really struck by the beauty of Alkborough Flats when I came and I wasn't expecting to because I knew there was the, you know, the Drax power station nearby and that it was quite a remote site but it, there is something so lovely about it and I think, you know, because part of the project is about trying to encourage people to access wetlands, there's also part of me that thinks I'm not sure I want to encourage people to use the Flats because it's so wonderful.**

**ALK4** [laughs]

**Because it's such a wide space with nobody there and you just don't get that anymore do you?**

**ALK4** That's exactly it and that, that's, that's one of the things which you hear from some of, some of the local bird watchers as well, you know, they say there'll be a lot more stuff, like sound and recorded if there were more people here but we like coming down in an evening and being the only person here. [laughs]

**Yeah, it is, it's really special and you don't, you just don't get many places like that anymore.**

**ALK4** No, no.

**So.**

**ALK4** I mean the other, the other thing about it is it's, because it's, erm, I mean I notice this a lot because I do a bit of sound recording because it's at the bottom of that escarpment and it's far enough away from any major motorway, you don't get much background noise, it's, it's quiet, you know, it's got that, that ambience about it where you can actually hear, hear nature rather than just hearing a rumble in the background all the time.

**Well this is it, and you end up learning to sort of drone out that white noise but it's almost as if when you hear the silence you're almost shocked by it aren't you?**

**ALK4** Yeah, definitely, yeah.

**You know, we're so used to that filtering out different noises that just being in nature and listening to the reeds move and listening to the birds, it's very special.**

**ALK4** Um. Yeah.

**So I can understand why it's got a very special place in your heart, I really can. So before I get distracted, in terms of your other, the kind of networking with other organisations, it's really through the partnership that you do, the main connection and then with people who come to the site because you said about dragonfly recording, species recordings, does that go to one of the naturalist groups in Lincolnshire?**

**ALK4** Er, I, I'm not actually sure, I mean I think, I think some of the records have gone to the, the OMU recorder, yeah, I think, yeah, I'm pretty sure they have to be fair but, erm, you know, a lot of the information obviously goes to the partnership, I'm not quite sure where it goes after that, probably.

**Yeah, but in terms of say, apart from Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, there aren't any other naturalists groups that would come to you for advice or guidance? Because, you know, you're the person who knows, seems, you know, knows the site better than most people.**

**ALK4** Yeah, I mean it's, I suppose like the partnership, they tend to, erm, occasionally have, we have meetings, so like a couple of times of year when they, like you say, they ask for information and so, there's still, as you probably appreciate when you meet, meet, met REMOVED and co, there's, there's an ongoing debate as to the future of the site and its, lot of politics involved and, oh the usual sort of lack of resources, erm.

**I mean that's the one thing that I've really learned from visiting these wetland sites, is how really the funding cuts have a massive impact on how these sites are managed.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah.

**And we have a situation where in the, one of the Bedfordshire sites they had three rangers that were managing the site and this is an urban wetland so it's right next to the town and the wetlands are really important for flood storage for the town and they've cut the number of rangers and they think that by getting somebody in just to cut the grass that that's going to replace somebody with, you know, as you would say, thirty, forty years worth of experience of managing an urban wetland site and you just can't do it.**

**ALK4** Well no, absolutely, not, no.

**So do, I mean the discussions around the future of Alkborough, presumably because it's, I got the sense that because it's quite new they were going to just see what happens with the site in terms of.**

[break]

**Yeah, I was just saying about the future of the site, are there discussions about, because I know when I was with REMOVED, he was talking about the management of the reed beds and about how far to leave them to just do their own thing and how far they need to be managed, so is that one of the things that's been discussed about the site?**

**ALK4** It is, yeah, it's still ongoing. Erm, the, the, erm, as I say, it all, it all like, erm, revolves really around who's going to pay to have anything done if anything is done and the main, the main problem was that the, the scheme I think was, oh, it was, it was quite a long time in development, then it was sort of like rushed through in some, in some ways without a lot of forethought but the, the initial idea was well, we've, we've got the money to buy the site, we're going to create this, this area, this flood water catchment and, and we'll see how it goes for like twenty five years and, and they didn't actually think, or what's going to happen in five years, what's going to happen in ten years? Are we actually going to want to do anything to it? So I, physically they didn't build in any, erm, the sort of embankments or anything to allow plant to get back on to the site, once it had developed and, and that's the real problem now that they've got massive reed beds and to get anything done about reverting them to anything other than mature reed bed is going to cost an awful lot of money and, and yeah, I mean the, they can't really decide between them whether, you know, a massive reed bed is, is more useful than mud flats or, or a mixture of both and, and I say, and it's, who's going to pay for this? And they, they've also got of course two tenant farmers which they always have to take into account their sort of like, erm, priorities and working regimes so yeah, it, it is complicated but. Unfortunately I think it's, it's going to take a lot of resolving, it's been going on for the last four years and in the last, the last meeting I went to they were still saying well we've been talking, we've been going round in circles for four years, can we make a decision? And at the end of another three hours they didn't. [laughs]

**Oh, this is the problem of committees isn't it? Especially when.**

**ALK4** It is, it is, that is one of the worst and, erm, and sort of like just between us and, the RSPB have a, you know, a big stakeholder presence in the upper estuary, they're Blacktoft Sands and they're at Whitton Sand and several other sites and they're dying to get hold of Alkborough to, to actually, you know, use their expertise and create a really good wetland out of it but the politics of the Alkborough Flats members state that they don't want the RSPB involved, which. [laughs] It's.

**Yeah, and. Oh gosh.**

**ALK4** Really, you know.

**Yeah, it is difficult, and I suppose the other side of it is this idea about what a wetland is because as you said you've got a lot of visitors who maybe go to Marsh and they have an expectation of what a wetland looks like and obviously the RSPB have their own idea of what a functioning wetland is composed of.**

**ALK4** Yes.

**But because Alkborough Flats is a constructed site it's not going to be the same as other long standing wetlands but what's to, who's to say that that can't have its own benefits by being quite radically different from other sites, you know?**

**ALK4** Yes, I mean it's got a lot of , you know, it's got a lot of potential and it's got a lot, lot of importance and but public amenity wise it's, it's quite poor, you know, and it's, it's become more and more difficult for people to actually see anything because, because the leaves have got so extensively and so tall but, erm, it's, it's become a sort of like a walk from one viewing spot to another really for people rather than, you know, a, a frequent scanning and vista locality as it were.

**Yeah, I mean that's the impression I got because obviously, you know, you were there and you were undertaking your work with your wonderful binoculars and other equipment and then we met the birding with flowers group which seemed to use the site on quite a regular basis.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**But apart from that I get the sense there was a lot of people who were dog walking and they liked the linearity of up and down and then you're back in the car again.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, and that's what it comes down to and, erm, even quite a few of the bird watchers and, and photographers who, who go don't actually walk that far but sort of like walk to the hide and walk another hundred yards and then like you say back to the car and that's, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, so I guess that's it, it's trying to encourage them to use the site more widely but as you said.**

**ALK4** Um, um.

**There's no public amenities and the reed beds kind of disguise some of the wildlife, it's tricky isn't it?**

**ALK4** It is, absolutely, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, and would you say, I mean when I was there, which of course is a one off but that there's the demographics of the people that use the site are, you know, they don't say bring together different members of communities, so I got the sense that people walk their dogs and they're a certain age and, you know, there weren't very many young people there when I went, there weren't any disabled people there when I went, would you say that that is from your experience that that is true of the site all year round or does it change?**

**ALK4** No, I would say that's, that's a very adequate summary, erm, and in the, in the winter, you know, there's far less people because, you know, you have got like a lack of facilities and in, even the spring and summer the majority of people who arrive, like arrive about ten o'clock in the morning and by about three o'clock in the afternoon most of them have gone, so, so you've got that sort of like midday, [laughs] erm, yeah, attendance I'd say, like REMOVED, I think he, actually met REMOVED while you were there?

**Yes, that's right, yes.**

**ALK4** He goes, he goes down every night, you know, and after, after work and he said, you know, for like weeks on end he doesn't, doesn't see anybody after sort of like six o'clock at night.

**That's amazing isn't it? That's amazing to think you can go to the space and almost guarantee not to see someone.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, exactly, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, and I guess the other side of it is, because I can't remember, is there parking free? I can't remember now.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah. So I mean that's a thing that would encourage people.**

**ALK4** It's free but it's relatively restricted at the bottom, that's.

**Yeah, but I mean there are, at least there are two sites to park but that's it, walking, we did a little walk on the, on the footpath between the two which was really nice but I can see that, erm, it was, it, it was quite steep in some areas, you know, up the escarpment and that might deter people from taking some walks, I don't know, it's, I mean as I said before, it's kind of a pull and tug between encouraging people to go but also keeping it a special because it's so quiet.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, that's right, yeah.

**So what do you?**

**ALK4** I mean the, the actual car park at the bottom of the hill was originally, erm, just designed for disabled people and nobody else was meant to walk up and down the hill.

**Ah.**

**ALK4** Obviously that's, you know, it's not particularly practical for even a lot of able-bodied.

**No, it's not, no.**

**ALK4** So, no, yeah.

**And that's it, and I can also think, you know, I was just walking with my backpack but if I also had a lot of say birding equipment with me, I could imagine that's quite ungainly actually because it's quite narrow in between the different trees and obviously a sloping site, so it's, again, it makes things a little bit tricky doesn't it?**

**ALK4** It does, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, but I guess, you know, for you part of the wetland life project is, is really understanding how these spaces generate a particular sense of place and, you know, obviously you're really, really familiar with the site, if you could kind of sum up the things that really attract you to the site or really special to the site, what would they be?**

**ALK4** Yes. That's a quite difficult one because I think, I suppose it's the, the openness of the, of the area full stop, you know, I spent a lot of time actually sort of like sat on the escarpment with a telescope looking over the whole area and looking over the, look over the Trent and the Humber and, and sort of like looking to the distance and it's, you've got that sense of space and that openness for one thing but then you've got the, the birds I suppose it's, you know, you've always got …little egrets, avocets and godwits and marsh harriers … study species so I, I just love sitting up there and watching them, erm, so yeah, it's a combination of sort of like the birds but the, the atmosphere as much as anything I think, you know, and as I said before, the quiet, well the, the naturalness of the sound rather than the, the annoyance of, of.

**Yeah, I mean it can't be underestimated can it really?**

**ALK4** No.

**How revivifying it is just to listen to bird sounds and not listen to anything else, you're not hearing anyone's mobile phone chirrup, you're not hearing a road, you're not hearing anyone else talk, as you said, it's just natural sounds isn't it?**

**ALK4** Yeah, and, and sort of, the general lack of people I'd have to say as well, you know, when you compare it to somewhere like Denton Cliffs where I went last week, you know, and it's almost a bit like walking into Tesco's when you go there. [laughs]

**Yeah, that's it, yeah, that's the last thing you need isn't it, lots of people?**

**ALK4** People are looking at birds but there's an awful lot of them so, you know.

**Yeah, and I'm always amazed actually that given that, to be with wildlife you need to be quite quiet, how much chatting there is that goes on.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**Particularly in places like hides, you know.**

**ALK4** Yeah, absolutely, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Do you think it's also that people want an immediate gain, you know, they want to go somewhere and immediately see something, whereas I get the sense in Alkborough Flats you actually have to sit still and be with nature and let your eyes adjust to the space, to be able to see the things that are actually there but they just may not be entirely obvious.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, that's probably true, yeah.

**Yeah. And would you say, compared with other wetland sites that there is something special or different about Alkborough Flats?**

**ALK4** Yeah, again tricky one, erm. [pause] I'm not sure, it, it's, it's different, your wetland sites, erm. I suppose it's, it's got its own, its own nature and variety and, yeah, I think does, I've been going there for so long and so, so often, it be, it becomes familiarity as much as anything, which makes it, makes you think it's probably better than anywhere else.

**Yeah. It's funny isn't it that probably if you compare it to other wetland sites there, well it doesn't compare, you know, it's too small or the?**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**Or the vistas not the same, I mean to have the confluence of two huge rivers is quite an amazing thing, in such a small, you know, in one location.**

**ALK4** Yes.

**That's one thing I was really struck by, was the way that they light played upon the water and as you said, how quiet it was.**

**ALK4** Um.

**Not having been to a site that was so remote and I mean do you ever get a sense, so the, do you get a sense that the community that live in Alkborough actually use the site at all? Because I, you know, when we were there was some starling murmurations.**

**ALK4** Relatively few of them to be absolutely honest. I mean when it was sort of like first set up for the first two or three years, the, erm, the flat, Alkborough Flats Partnership, it really, they really tried to engage with the local populous and they, they used to, started putting on bus tours and take them down to the breach and things like that but I mean there's, there's a few that, which you come across on a regular basis but the vast majority of the village, you never see them down there at all, you know, and no. I, I get the impression that most of them just don't appreciate what they've got on the doorstep.

**Yeah, do you think because I still haven't kind of got to grips with the sort of things like that age profile of the village and things like that, do you think a lot of people are, I mean this is just speculation, I'm just trying to work out whether it's that people don't appreciate it because, as you said if you don't notice things on your own doorstep or is there something else, is it that, you know, people have to commute quite long distances to look for work and things like that? I wonder what would stop you.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, I think virtually everybody does commute, I mean it works but I think it's, it's quite an aged village as well, erm, you know, it's got a lot of, a lot of old retired people and, erm.

**Who would normally actually be a huge contingent of people that would enjoy having a walk along the wetland path wouldn't they?**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, possibly, possibly so, yeah.

**Yeah. But I mean when I sort of think about the site itself, one of the questions I have on, asking different people who use wetlands is about the main benefits they get from the site, so if you could sort of say two or three main benefits and two or three disbenefits, if that's possible, you may find that tricky but what would you say your main benefits are that you get from the site?**

**ALK4** [pause] I suppose it's seeing lots of special birds and, erm, being, being able to, erm, as someone who's always been interested in finding something different, having that ability to go and, and not know that eighty people have already looked at the same bit of water as you're going to look at, so you stand a higher chance of actually seeing something different, you're not, you're not following a crowd, you're actually doing something, erm, yourself and that's one of the main benefits I think of, of the area, erm. Yeah, and just, just as I say, just having that space and, and quiet, is the great thing, and sort of like, and I suppose you have an attachment as well, you know, the more time you spend somewhere the greater the attachment you've got to it and the more you, [laughs] you keep going back, erm.

**Yeah. It's a blessing really isn't it?**

**ALK4** And I suppose, I suppose the, the things which you sort of like, as a negative are the fact that there are, you know it could be an awful lot better if it was better managed and you don't really have a lot of control over, over decisions, I think that's it. You know, you've got your input.

**So.**

**ALK4** But you, you never really know how much influence anything's going to have.

**No, I mean if you could wave a magic wand say and you would be able to reshape the Alkborough Flats in a way that you think is more conducive, what would be say your, the three things that you would do for that site?**

**ALK4** The, the major one would obviously be water management, you'd crate, you know, a system where you could, erm, have sort of like shallow water and deep water and, and move water around and, and then create a more dynamic wetland, which, which would, you know, undoubtedly attract more wildlife in all respects, that, that would be a key I think would, but then that's what, that's what you need big money for isn't it and then? And, you know, sort of like increase, yeah, yeah, I mean increase visitors facilities, I think that's another thing which you can, which again is, is funding applicable but, yeah, so the big major wetlands which are really successful have to com, you know, I mean we have to combine, erm, natural development with human interest because if you don't have human interest then the sites are never going to be, really prosper I think.

**No, because it's interesting that some wetlands have been almost, I mean people have described them to me as being Disneyfied in that they become these.**

**ALK4** Um.

**Kind of very slick operations that attract young families for all sorts of different things, whether it's the feeding of the ducks or it's pond dipping or different things.**

**ALK4** Um.

**And that seems to then, the idea being of trying to get that next generation of people interested in nature.**

**ALK4** Um.

**Do you think that is something that the site would benefit from trying to have some sort of programme to get families involved or do you think that that's okay in those spaces but this space doesn't need to do that?**

**ALK4** I, I think it's, it's a site which maybe really doesn't lend itself easily to that sort of, that sort of involvement, you know what I mean? It, it's, it sort of hasn't got the places to go pond dipping, it's, it's got a lot of biting insects and it's, [laughs] it's, it, and as I say, I mean some of the visitor facilities are lacking and it's, it's difficult to, difficult to engage people with things if they can't see them and I think, it, again it's, it's like an area which is probably far enough removed from any big population centre to, to attract any, any involvement on a regular basis.

**Yeah. Now it's interesting that you mention biting insects because of course another aspects of the project is looking at mosquito populations and when you say biting insects obviously there's a whole range of insects that bite, so which ones have you encountered regularly on the site? [laughs]**

**ALK4** [laughs] Well this time of year horseflies are really bad.

**Oh dear.**

**ALK4** I met a guy yesterday, he was walking round and he said, he said oh we're absolutely caned by cleggs and horseflies today so, yeah, but they're one, one of my, my nightmares. Erm, mosquitoes definitely, they don't actually tend to be that bad there in my, in my experience but what we, what we do get is, are midges, we've got, since it was created, they get these big swarms of midges on sort of like a humid day and, and they, they, it's a serious effect on me, make me itch for about four weeks afterwards.

**Is it, am I making you itchy even now, just the thought of them here?**

**ALK4** [laughs] You're making me think of those little red dots that.

**Oh I'm sorry to, I should have signed a form saying that I was going to traumatise you, I'm very sorry.**

**ALK4** [laughs]

**But it's very interesting isn't it? Because do you think, I mean obviously, you know, you know when it's likely to be a bit of a nightmare with insects and things like that, and obviously the person that you met that had been bitten by the horseflies wasn't quite as prepared as maybe they could have been.**

**ALK4** Um, um.

**Do you think that, is it a case that it's in some areas so bad that it might deter people from going to the site or is it more that, you know, if you're an avid bird watcher, this is just par for the course?**

**ALK4** It, yeah, I think you know, birds do, they do, obviously appreciate there are places where they're going to get bitten at certain times of the year, certain times of day, erm, and I do see some sort of like people turning up on a bad midge day wearing shorts and starting to jump around a bit once you start walking down the banks I think well, people probably weren't aware of what's but they, they tend to be sort of like more, more people who've come for a walk, you know, they, gone down on a Saturday or a Sunday for walk and never heard of the place.

**Yeah. So in terms of were those insects congregate, just in terms of the site, is it normally, your obvious place where, you know, as you said, it's sort of where there's quite a lot of vegetation all down by the reed beds, where would you say is the worst spot?**

**ALK4** The worse spot for horseflies seems to be along the, the bank of the, bank of the Trent and the, the new reed bed in the southern, at the southern end of the site, that that new reed bed seems to have really, erm, turned a lot of horseflies, it did, they don't seem quite so bad the other spots but the midges, I mean, yeah, they're obviously where, especially where the mud starts to dry, starts to dry out at this time of year, they, they seem to appear over the edges of the grass and where the, where the cows have been grazing, so.

**Yeah. So has it been particularly bad then in the last couple of weeks with this very dry weather?**

**ALK4** No, it's not actually, it's not, it's not been too bad at all but then, I say apart from the horseflies that are starting now, they seem to be, they're building up but, erm, otherwise it's not been too bad, it's been, it's been nothing like some of the forest areas I've been going in just lately. [laughs] They've been really bad for mosquitoes.

**Oh no, but is that part of the, that's not part of the Alkborough Flats though is it, in another spot?**

**ALK4** No, no, no, no, no.

**No. I think that's it, is that you just have to be prepared for all terrains don't you? With your special bat.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**I mean I don't know what you, it's interesting when I've been talking to people who were involved in bat groups they say well of course, you know, mosquitoes are what bats feed on, so we come to expect that we're going to encounter mosquitoes.**

**ALK4** Um.

**So have our gear and we have our sprays and everything. I mean is that sort of part of your survival kit when you go down to the wetlands that you have your spray and you've got your cover up for your arms and your legs and things?**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, and just try and wear thin clothes, all the mosquitoes I've noticed now seem to manage to get straight through my trousers so I think they're getting, probably getting long, longer proboscis[?]. [laughs]

**They're adapting exponentially to the coat with canvas trousers.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, yeah, but, yeah, I have a, I have a mossie, a mossie bud net for the head, yeah.

**Oh that's, yeah. Oh you're all tooled up then in that case, but do you think from your experience of being on this site for quite a long time, have those insect populations shifted at all or actually they're unpredictable from season to season and year to year?**

**ALK4** I think, I think the midges seem to, they did seem to peak about a couple of years ago, they, they built up quite quickly after about three years and they seemed to build, although they do seem to have eased off a little bit in the last couple of years, whether that's been, you know, due to the weather at their peak time hasn't been great for them I'm not sure but, yeah, but.

**Yeah, because.**

**ALK4** Mosquitoes seem to be, I don't know, they're variable, they've never seem to really be quite as bad as they are in a lot of places though.

**Yeah, yeah, because somebody I talked to had said that they'd noticed that starling populations had fallen and they wondered whether there was a connection with the mosquito population but that was just really speculation, I just wondered if you'd noticed any correlation between bird species and insect species since you've been there?**

**ALK4** Not particularly, not that I would, I could directly relate to and I mean, one or the other, erm, I mean just, obviously you assume that once you're getting more reed beds you're getting more reed warblers and sedge warblers and bearded tits now, so they're all feeding on insects at the water's edge but, erm, you know, the insects at the water's edge because you've got the water and you've got the reed and the combination of the two and so the birds are going to prosper but the birds won't be there if the reeds weren't there but would the insects be there? So it's, I think it's, that's too, rather too many factors involved to.

**I know. It's the dynamic problem isn't it, you know?**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah.

**What influences what?**

**ALK4** Direct comparison, yeah.

**Yeah, I mean so thinking, because one of the reasons why we're interested in mosquitoes is to think about the impacts that climate change might have on wetlands and I wondered if you had noticed any impacts on Alkborough Flats in the time that you've been there, which you might attribute to, to climate change?**

**ALK4** Er, ooh, don't know, we got, we got more dragonflies species, erm, but I mean that's been a general, a general feature of North Lincolnshire in recent years, you know.

**Oh okay.**

**ALK4** Dragonflies, you know, we used to have sort of like in the late eighties we used to have probably eight or nine species on a regular basis, now we've got like twenty one, twenty two, so.

**Yeah, okay. That's a significant change then?**

**ALK4** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, and so in, and quite rapid as well, you know, things like blacktail skinnards, sort of like spread over fifty miles in and sort of like two years and then they, they've gone from being rare to being on the commonest dragonflies in, yeah.

**Yeah. So I mean in some ways that's a really positive thing isn't it?**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**You know, we always think about a changing climate being negative but there will be some positives as well.**

**ALK4** Yeah, and, erm, I mean one of the, one of the species, birds which we get on a regular basis now is breeding Hobbys and Hobby have spread north in sort of like quite big numbers and studies have shown, well sort of the initial studies, certainly suggested that the, the reason that they, they managed to move further north is because of the dragonfly population moving north at the same time and the young need to feed on dragonflies in all August and September so, erm, that's, that's allowed them to colonise areas where there never were in the past.

**Yeah. And where do you they tend to sort of settle on Alkborough Flats then?**

**ALK4** What the Hobbys

**Yeah.**

**ALK4** Yeah, well they only just started breeding actually, we, we had a pair in the last couple of years but they'd go in the woodlands on the hilltop.

**Oh okay, yeah.**

**ALK4** So they're, I mean there's nowhere actually down on the bottom part.

**No, I mean I suppose that's.**

**ALK4** But they, they feed down there but they, so they breed up in the woods, yeah.

**Yeah, I mean it's amazing actually the difference that escarpment makes isn't it to the wetland?**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Because most of the wetlands that I've been to are all flat, you know, and.**

**ALK4** Right, yeah, yeah.

**So isn't really a kind of hilly area that then enables different types of nesting sites, so.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**I think it's really, again interesting part of the Flats really.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**I'm going to just, I've got two more sections that I just need to talk to you about and the first one is about, because this is about, the project's very, very focused on improving human health and wellbeing through access to wetlands and I wondered with, I, I mean you may not want to talk on behalf of REMOVED you may want to talk about it from your own perspective but would you say that the creation and the maintenance of Alkborough Flats, that wellbeing is part of it or is it really all about flood management?**

**ALK4** [laughs] Yeah, I, I, I'm not sure to be honest which, I think initially it was certainly, certainly all about flood management, well the basis of it was. I think, but I think, you know, it's part of the EA Humber plan, which is part of the national plan so, human wellbeing. I don't know, I wouldn't have said there was a lot of, a lot of emphasis placed on that certainly, yeah, in most of the, the way the sites have been developed.

**Yeah, because it's really been developed for the management and then to encourage the reed beds for the birds so in some ways humans have been, not factored out but certainly not factored in maybe.**

**ALK4** No, I think, they've been more peripheral than part of the, the main impetus of the, of site development, put it like that. Yeah.

**Yeah, yeah. That's interesting and I get a sense from you that you get a lot of wellbeing from the site and what you do and with the other birders that you come across that it's restorative to work and be on the wetlands.**

**ALK4** Yeah, I'm sure it is, yeah, yeah, I mean I think a lot of people would benefit from it, you know, yeah. I think, the, the trouble is there are a lot of people that go down just on a casual basis, so, but we, we've developed this, [laughs] sense in the British human population that you have to gain something from doing something and I, and I think, you know, people go down and, and they, it's almost as if they need to come away with something for it to have been a success.

**[laughs]**

**ALK4** They, they can't just actually enjoy being there. [laughs] If that sounds.

**Do you know what, I think that's really?**

**ALK4** A bit trite.

**No, I think that's really important. It's as if everything has to be an exchange where there's a benefit that comes out of the exchange, you know.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**So you give your time to the site and the site has to give you something, whereas as you said why not just go there and experience it in all the different weathers and sometimes you'll see something and sometimes you won't see anything and that's just part of the experience.**

**ALK4** That's right, yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah, yeah, but, erm. I mean I think that's one of the, it's like when you're talking about engaging, you know, sort of like children are the next generation, I think we, we always see that from like an adult point of view I'd, I think we, we want, we think well we've got to provide something for the children to enjoy as it were, you know, we've got to, we've got to have, provide an activity for them which is going to engage them, which is that necessarily what needs to be done, you know? Certainly when I was a kid, you know, you just went into the countryside and you did what you felt like doing and.

**Yes.**

**ALK4** You know, being outside, that was it.

**No, I agree.**

**ALK4** Didn't have a set objective.

**No, it's interesting but that kind of links back doesn't it to this idea the justification of wetland sites where there has to be a programme of events, almost like an outdoor Butlins, rather than saying look, you just get your wellies on and you go for a walk and that's it.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, exactly, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, you come at ten o'clock and we, we run until one o'clock and we do this and we do that and we do this and, [laughs] yeah, it's, it's strange but it's, you know, seems to be the way that things have developed in the last.

**But, yeah, but I mean is that, because I like the idea that okay some wetland sites can do that but not all wetland sites have to do it and engagement can just mean going to a site and enjoying it as a space and that.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**You get something from that because actually that's time for your brain to go into a different kind of mode where it isn't constantly being stimulated, you know, you can just be in a space can't you and?**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah.

**Let those different sights and sounds wash over you and, yeah, I'm all for just being in nature really.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**You know, I find great benefits personally for me so I'd like to pass that on to other people including my kids who keep asking what are we doing now?**

**ALK4** Um.

**We're here, that's what we're doing now, we're here.**

**ALK4** [laughs]

**[laughs]**

**ALK4** Yes, indeed, yes.

**So I mean what you've just said really kind of ties in, this is the very last section of the interview and I appreciate your time so I won't take up much more of your time but it's about how our relationship with wetlands maybe has changed over the years and how wetlands are maybe seen slightly differently and what I mean by that is, now you were saying look why do we have to have a programme of events, why can't we just be in nature? And I know that for, for many years wetlands were seen as places that were slightly, well I guess nothing was really happening there, you know, they're sort of barren places where there isn't, you know, often they've got quite a flat eye line, the visibility is quite limited and now there seems to be a lot more focus on the importance of wetlands for lots of different reasons, not just flood storage and carbon sequestrian and water quality but also for being in nature and I wondered if you had experienced that and if you could say maybe what might have culturally shifted to make wetlands appear differently.**

**ALK4** Erm, yeah, erm, yeah, I suppose, um, again bit of a tricky one really, I mean when I was starting out birding, you know, a lot of the sites I used to go which were wetlands I suppose and you'd describe as wetlands then, the only person if I ever saw anybody it was somebody wildfowling in the middle of winter and you didn't see, you know, people engaging with wetlands in any way, shape or form really, it was just like somewhere on the periphery for everyone's interests, so and, yeah, I think the more people have sort of like got "interested" in, inverted commas, in nature, that's the way it's, it's, you know, changed their perception of what a, how good a wetland can be. I wonder how much sort of like television programmes have also have like changed their idea of what a wetland is as well in some ways I guess. Some of the sort of like big wetlands that they see abroad and like teeming with wildlife and they, do they compare that with wetlands in Britain? I don't know, do they? Maybe, yeah, but, erm, yeah, it's.

**But when you were talking about people wildfowling that was people hunting to?**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, because I think that's also, I don't know if you would say that's changed now as well, that, you know, when I think of people going out and say shooting ducks or going angling, it always feels quite licensed and controlled whereas there was always something maybe a little bit maybe wilder and free about it before.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah.

**I don't know if you feel that.**

**ALK4** Yeah, but I, I think it's, it's inevitable I think the, a dwindling number of resources and an increasing number of people wanting to do things, you, it's inevitable it becomes, it has to be regulated to, to fit in with modern criteria really and.

**Yeah, but then so then the upshot of that then is that you move from say these kind of wilder spaces where these maybe under the radar activities go on to somewhere that is, as you said, you know, has got managed footpaths and car parks and it's quite clearly managed.**

**ALK4** Yeah.

**Yeah, I'm always just curious about so when, obviously you've always had a passion for nature and that's always been there but when you meet some other birders do, especially maybe ones that are quite new to birding, do they ever say to you, oh, you know, I've only got into it because of x, y or z or is it led by equipment or is it led by actually having a bit of, having a hobby that takes you away from other activities?**

**ALK4** I, yeah, I think it's, yeah, for, for a lot of people it's, it's like a, it is a way to, to get away from like stresses of life if we can just summarise it as far as that I guess, you know, and to, to connect with something which isn't human related I think, they, I think that's why several people get into nowadays, they're having to, but I suppose the biggest, the biggest change in, erm, motivation I suppose in the last few years has been this explosion in digital photography, you know, which there's, has sort of like dragged in thousands, thousands of people who've sort of like see pictures of wildlife and, and want to go out and emulate it themselves and it, it's, it's produced a mass of people who don't, they're, they've got a, quite a different attitude to, to wildlife then what, what we ever had was just, they, they just want, they just want to sort of like photograph it and interact with each other rather than interact with nature, I think it's, there's slightly worrying development in some ways.

**Yeah, that's interesting. So it's kind of equipment led in that it's taking the good shot.**

**ALK4** Yeah, and they're increasing, you know, because, because of sort of like social media and what have you, that in some ways that, that started to increase pressure on some of the, the better wetland sites by attracting more people and to smaller areas and, yeah.

**Yeah, that's interesting. So rather than just engaging with nature then everything's mediated through the camera.**

**ALK4** Indeed, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's, you know, I get, you get people down at Alkborough Flats saying, you know, in the hide there with a camera and they, they click it away and clicking away and they're, they'll be seven hundred avocets in front of them and they'll say could you tell me what this is and then look, you look and it's an avocet and I think, [laughs] that's a fairly basic one.

**Oh so they don't even know what they're photographing.**

**ALK4** No, no, a lot, a lot of the time they don't, no, no.

**Oh, oh my gosh. [laughs] So what will they do, will they go back and load it up and then try and work out what it is by doing some sort of Google search or something, I mean?**

**ALK4** Yeah, that's, that's the general gist, I think and, but it's more about sort of like sharing it with like-minded people than, than anything else.

**I mean that's a curious turn isn't it, you know, the? Because I guess that's also that extension of having spare money to spend on things without really understanding the things that you're getting involved with, which seems quite peculiar.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah, yeah.

**But that must mean then that you must feel like a god when you're there then because.**

**ALK4** [laughs]

**Basically you have all knowledge.**

**ALK4** I'm not sure about a god, unusual is maybe another term for it.

**Yeah, no go with it, go with it REMOVED go with the godlike status, that's a good one. Oh thank.**

**ALK4** Okay.

**Well thank you so much for your time, I just wondered if there is, is there anything else that you would like to share with the project, anything that you feel a need to, you know, that you'd like to say?**

**ALK4** Er, I shall probably think of something afterwards but nothing, [laughs] nothing springs to mind at the moment, yeah.

**Okay. Well if there is anything, if you suddenly think afterwards I really want them to know this because hopefully the outcome of all these different activities that we're doing is to really help improve the management of these sites and to show the importance of these sites and the fact that, you know, it's, they're all different and they're all important in their own special way and really, you know, to validate that and to celebrate that so yeah, if there is anything afterwards you think no, I'd really like to share that, whether it's about funding, whether it's about management, whether it's about site access, whatever it may be, you know, it's all, I mean you've got really wonderful experience and so we, you know, love to share it with others.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah, not a problem.

**Brilliant.**

**ALK4** I shall have a bit of time in this hot weather to think about it.

**Exactly, you can contemplate as you let the sounds of nature drift over you and if you do come across anybody who you think might be, who might like to get involved in the project, because as I said I found it quite tricky to find people to talk to about Alkborough Flats, I would really, any contact would be really, really gratefully received.**

**ALK4** Yeah, yeah. And I certainly know what you mean, it's like finding people.

**Exactly.**

**ALK4** For me to think of people, you know, but, erm, yeah, if I come across anybody down there I, I'll direct them to you.

**You are a very kind of godlike man, thank you so much. [laughs]**

**ALK4** [laughs]

**Oh REMOVED, thanks ever so much for your time today, that's absolutely brilliant, I really appreciate it.**

**ALK4** Not a problem.

**And hopefully our paths will cross some time soon and I can buy you a nice cup of coffee somewhere, somehow.**

**ALK4** Sounds excellent. [laughs]

**Yeah, okay, well enjoy the rest of the day.**

**ALK4** Alright, thanks very much.

**Lovely, take care.**

**ALK4** Alright, okay, cheers.

**Bye.**

**ALK4** Bye.

END OF INTERVIEW

**Interview 5 Alk5**

**Now I wondered if you could just begin by giving me a little overview about whereabouts you are in relation to the wetlands and how long you've been there and what you do there and who you do it with and those sorts of things?**

**ALK5** Okay. So we live on the REMOVED of the River Trent on Alkborough Flats, farm called REMOVED. We have a REMOVED acre farm which we farm for both wildlife, predominantly for wildlife benefit but with some more commercial agriculture as well. I do that with my partner, REMOVED who takes the lead on the farming REMOVED. I work, as well as what I do here, I work freelance as REMOVED. Erm, I also keep our small flock of premium free range hens and I have an egg and vegetable business REMOVED.

**Gosh, so you've got, you're the ultimate multitasker.**

**ALK5** Supposedly, yeah.

**[laughs] But that's wonderful that you can bring together, if you like, you know, you're sort of theoretical side of sustainability with a practical element of actually doing it yourself as well.**

**ALK5** Supposedly, yeah.

**Yeah, and with the consultancy work that you do, does that mean that you have to often leave the farm or can you do it remotely, is it kind of project based?**

**ALK5** Erm, I still have clients who require to see me face to face but a lot of them are happy for me to work, erm, over the phone or Skype. I probably leave the farm now once, for work purposes, probably twice a month.

**Yeah. I mean that's a real blessing isn't it, that you can do the work in the place that you love?**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**And do the work that you love.**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**I mean that's what we're all aiming to try and achieve really isn't it?**

**ALK5** Yeah, I think so.

**Yeah. And how long have you actually lived on REMOVED farm?**

**ALK5** Yes, I've got to say, so we have lived here for REMOVED years and we have owned it for eighteen years.

**Okay. So before you actually lived there you were commuting remotely because I've got.**

**ALK5** We, we built a house, we, we had to build, we built a house on the ruin of the old house we were living in the village, we've been in REMOVED for twenty years.

**Okay, because I have a farmer friend and he has one farm in one location and then another part of the farm in another location.**

**ALK5** No, no, we're not like that.

**No, so you're all consolidated on the same site?**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**So because it's called REMOVED that tells me that you might often be cut off from various parts of mainland.**

**ALK5** No, it was an REMOVED. Erm, there, there used to be a back channel of the Trent which when that back channel was in use, which probably wasn't all year round we suspect but, but certainly was for large parts of the year, then yeah, the farm was an island but due to, erm, the banking of the River Trent, building up the flood banks, the back channel is no longer, erm, the water does not go into the back channel any longer.

**Yeah. So presumably that was really before the manage realignment happened?**

**ALK5** Oh gosh, that was a long time ago, yeah. Erm, I think that the, the island nature of the place has become less island like over the last, probably over about the last hundred years, it was an island when it, when the farm was first, the island was first settled and the farm was first built, it was definitely an island then.

**Yeah. So it's a nice sort of historical legacy really that reminds us all of how.**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**Actually how managed the landscape is round Alkborough.**

**ALK5** Yes, I mean on our side, on the west side from Alkborough, yes, it's heavily drained, erm, etcetera, etcetera, so it's all, it's all very regimented now.

**Yeah. And you don't have any issues around flooding or anything like that where you are?**

**ALK5** Because the bank on our side of the river was well, very well improved in the last seventies, probably at the peak time for expenditure on raising defences, we are lucky enough in that we were not affected by the tidal surge in twenty thirteen but we have taken additional precautions in the building of the house because we had to rebuild the house here, we've taken additional precautions just in case the level rise gets to the point where even our flood bank is over-topped, but in twenty thirteen was the highest on record etcetera, etcetera, I'm sure you know all about twenty thirteen, we were not flooded.

**Yeah. Which is really remarkable isn't it?**

**ALK5** So I think, we like to think that it was, erm, might have been remarkable to people who don't know the area but to us it was just confirmation that what we believed and the measurements we took when we bought the house were valid that we're well protected.

**Yeah, because that's it. I mean, you know, did you say you built the house fifteen years or eighteen years ago?**

**ALK5** Erm, we started building it about, erm, about eighteen years ago.

**Yeah. Which, I mean at that time, you know, most people's modelling for flood risk was very different then as it is now, you know, I think the whole model around building flood resistant housing is such a modern idea that it's wonderful that you were that forward thinking really about thinking?**

**ALK5** I think it was, I mean it was, it was partly because of the work we, we both do that we, we know about the issue of sea level rise, erm, but I think from memory. No, I'm sure the authorities, Environment Agency and the Planning Authority, were quite sensitised to it. In fact Environment Agency objected to our planning permission, our planning applications for, for the house, even though it was on the exact footprint of the previous house because they said that it was contravening their policy of building houses on a flood plain and we said well that's, we're only replacing a house that's always been there.

**Well this is it, this is it and I think.**

**ALK5** The planning authorities required us to have, still require us to have an emergency plan to demonstrate that should we be flooded we're not going to immediately, you know, demand the, erm, emergency services to come and help us, we've got to demonstrate that we're reasonably capable of surviving here if we were flooded.

**Yeah. So what does that, I mean I don't want to go off topic but I am very interested in that, so what does that actually mean in terms of, you know, sort of pre-planning, does that mean that you have to, I don't know, have a boat in place, have a back-up generator?**

**ALK5** Oh no, no, no, we simply, we interpreted their requirements demonstrating, erm, we have our own electricity supply here, erm, we have, erm, large freezers, erm, some essential medicines that my partner must take every day, we always have a month extra in back-up, erm, yeah, that's about it really, and, and that we have no need to leave the farm, so should we be flooded. If we, if there was a major surge we would be isolated on an island again and we're simply concerning, we can carry on living in the house without needing to get off the island or anyone deliver things to us.

**Yes, so you can basically wait for that flood to subside.**

**ALK5** Yes, we'd better keep to the topic otherwise we're going to run out of time.

**That is very true, yes. So in terms of your relationship with the partnership group who manage Alkborough Flats, do you have any relationship with them or is that more to do with just it's?**

**ALK5** Erm, no, no, erm, personally I know a bit about it because REMOVED did some consultancy for the partnership, REMOVED my partner, he did some consultancy for REMOVED at North Lincs Council and co, when the thing was being designed. He prides himself on having done all that consultancy without ever going there, he did it from his office window here.

**Wow.**

**ALK5** He could see, he could see enough of the Flats from here, in fact you can see more from where we live than he could from going on site, so I knew about it from that and from general talk in the area. We know the RSPB quite well.

**Okay, wonderful. So, and is that an ongoing relationship then do you?**

**ALK5** No REMOVED doesn't do any, doesn't work for them anymore. We still see a lot of the RSPB but we have very little contact with North Lincs.

**Yeah, so.**

**ALK5** And I no longer have any, I have minimal professional contact with the Environment Agency.

**Okay. So in terms of say your, you know, as people that live on the site, what other organisations do you, and, you know, do you tend to have any contacts with or do you not at all? You know, that there isn't any need for you to have, I don't know.**

**ALK5** Organisations at Alkborough?

**I mean, yeah, for say for instance what other wildlife organisations?**

**ALK5** Well we have, we have lots of contact with wildlife organisations generally, as far as Alkborough is concerned, erm, very little. We have very little with North Lincs now, erm, very little with the Environment Agency, we, RSPB we're in close touch with because of our own farm and our own interests, erm. Alkborough is another world socially, so we, we know one person who lives in Alkborough. We probably, I probably go there twice a year, simply when I take visitors up there to have a look at it.

**Yeah. Which is interesting given that geographically it's not so far away.**

**ALK5** Well it's a forty minute drive. Erm, it's, so socially completely disconnected, erm, that's about it really. I do, [laughs] I do have email contact or, or internet contact with a photographer who lives up there because she always takes photographs of our place which you can see very well from up there and she's kind enough to send copies of the photographs to me from time to time. She works for, she's involved in Alkborough REMOVED.

**Oh okay, because I will be honest with you, it's been very interesting, because we've worked on, we're working on three different sites, one's in Somerset, one's in Bedfordshire and the other one's Alkborough and in terms of being able to connect with the local community, Alkborough has proved to be extremely tricky and I didn't know whether that's just because, you know, geographically it's much further away from us but then there's no reason why it would be given that Somerset's quite far away from the University of Brighton as well and I don't know. I mean do you get the sense that there is, I don't know, a particular mindset in Alkborough or is it just that everyone's busy doing their own thing?**

**ALK5** I just, I just don't know, as I say Alkborough is a long way from here, erm, you know, it's, it's a forty minute drive, you wouldn't expect you need to know any other village that's, that's forty minutes away. When one goes up there you get the feeling it is slightly weighted towards higher income and retired or privileged, close to retirement, that's simply looking at the houses and the cars.

**Okay. Yeah, oh that's interesting, that's very interesting.**

**ALK5** But when we go, we have been up there for conference and the church once or twice and seems a perfectly normal Lincolnshire village.

**Yeah, oh wonderful. Now our great love in the project is obviously wetlands and how they are different from other types of landscape, now having lived on a wetland for some time, for you is this, would you say that this particular kind of landscape, you know, calls your attention, is it something, you know, is it different from being say on the coast or being in the hills? What's very special for you about a wetlands landscape?**

**ALK5** Erm, it's definitely different, I like the sense of openness and I guess I like the variety of wildlife.

**Yeah. Would you say it's the wildlife that draws you the most or?**

**ALK5** Yeah, I find it more appealing than woodland for instance, but that's partly because it tends to be more visible, woodland wildlife is, tends to be more specialist.

**Yes. I mean could you imagine, for instance what were the reasons that drew you to, you know, making your life in this particular area?**

**ALK5** Because we wanted some land that we could manage for the benefit of wildlife and this farm was just there[?].

**Yeah, are you both, you're both not from Lincolnshire?**

**ALK5** Our previous house was Lincolnshire but neither of us are Lincolnshire born.

**Okay, so you're emigres to wonderful Lincolnshire.**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**So if you could, I mean you may find this a sort of difficult question to answer or maybe not defined enough but what would you define as the main benefits for you of living on these wetlands?**

**ALK5** Yeah, I mean I will say that we couldn’t really fairly say we live on a wetland. [laughs] We live on heavily drained Isle of Axholme farmland. We've done our best on our REMOVED acres to reverse that heavy drainage but we live in, ignoring our immediate surroundings, I mean I can see Grey Lags out of the window right now, ignoring our immediate surroundings we live on heavily drained, very profitable, intensively arably farmed Isle of Axholme farmland, which is amongst the most productive land in the country. So we don't live really on a wetland, except for our little local bit. We can, I can see it if I go out and stand on the bank and look across but I wouldn't say I live in a wetland.

**Okay. In terms of, for instance, the ecosystem services that you derive from the area in which you live, would you be able to kind of sum up what they are?**

**ALK5** Erm, [pause] well being a vegetable gardener, I mean I clearly get the, erm, benefit of the productivity of the land round here, erm, we also have substantial fruit, erm, as well, not just veg, it's fruit. Erm, drainage, erm, our house is not connected to the mains, so we have a, erm, small reed bed type, erm, effluence treatment system. Erm, you could say the bank provides us with a degree of, erm, flood protection and also it provides a bit of shelter, erm, that's probably the ones that spring to mind.

**Yeah, wonderful. Do you think then the bank in some ways almost creates its own microclimate for the farm?**

**ALK5** Very minor, when I say some protection, pretty minor, it's basically quite windy here, but Alkborough, the ridge on which Alkborough sits, Alkborough village, not the Flats, that ridge also provides us with a degree of shelter, I mean when it's a north easterly or an easterly in Lincolnshire, it tends to be pretty grim and the escarpments upon the other side of the river, certainly gives us some psychological sense of protection and it probably gives us real weather protection as well.

**Yeah. I mean I'm imagining that where you are you must have, because of the big skies and the open vista, you must have some wonderful sun rises and sunsets from.**

**ALK5** Yeah, yeah, yes we do, yeah, got plenty of light, light in the sky.

**Yeah. I was very interested that there's an organisation which I think's called Lincolnshire Skies which I thought was such a beautiful idea that, you know, you'd have an organisation just devoted to that because that's the thing about living in other parts of the country is you don't have these huge skies that you would have say in Lincolnshire or you'd have in the Fens, I think it's just wonderful.**

**ALK5** Is that founded in opposition to Simon Jenkins' recent remark?

**Oh I don't know, no.**

**ALK5** [laughs] You know he said you had to have a hill to have a view?

**Oh. [laughs] Well I think some wetland life would disagree with that.**

**ALK5** Lot of us in Lincolnshire thought he was a bit wacky.

**Yeah, well this is it, I mean it's, but it's interesting isn't it, this idea of landscape really does end up being quite divisive for people because for some people they, you know, some people cannot understand why wetlands are such special places but I think that's because if you're not, say let's say for instance you're not particularly a birder you may not be drawn to wetland spaces but having been involved in the project, you have such wonderful views and such a, it's so quiet in these spaces, it's really.**

**ALK5** Um.

**I mean I find it really special and that's been really exciting for me being in the project, so I get a sense of place from being there but.**

**ALK5** Um.

**And so what I'd like to find out is, you know, the particular things that generate a sense of place for the people who live and work on the wetlands, so, you know, you've mentioned the light, I mean presumably it's also the fact that you have all this open space as well that you love so much?**

**ALK5** Erm, yes, yes, I mean certainly if I, erm, look at living in a, North Wales in a hilly area I would feel a sense of slightly being overshadowed the whole time but, yeah, I, I'm drawn to open landscapes and open skies. I was brought in East Anglia, that's what I'm used to.

**Yeah. Wonderful. Now as part of the project we're also looking at health and wellbeing of people using and accessing wetland sites.**

**ALK5** Um.

**I wondered whether you feel that your wellbeing is improved by living where you are and enjoying these wonderful vistas and how would you yourself define wellbeing?**

**ALK5** Oh goodness. Erm. [pause] Okay, so living where I am I have opportunity and also reason for plenty of outdoor activity, erm, so I both get, you know, I get lots of exercise, I get lots of fresh air, I don't have to go jogging because I get, I get that naturally in my lifestyle, erm, so that's good for my wellbeing. Erm, I think that probably a sense of openness helps, erm. So if one has had a bad day at the desk or, erm, maybe a period of too many people in the house, like Christmas or something like that, one can go out and walk on the bank and clear one's head a bit. The woman who used to live here before us always said whenever I feel low I go for a walk on the bank and then I feel alright. Erm, [pause] what else, what ways does it contribute to wellbeing? Erm, I think the fact that we are farming to benefit wildlife and that those benefits will be permanent because we're, we're transferring the farm to a wildlife organisation in due course, erm, gives me a sense of purpose, the work we've done in developing the farm and the wildlife attributes that it has is not going to be reversed the moment we sell. I have a sense that we've achieved something, I mean I had to work quite hard in corporate life, I had to get up very early, I had to be in London five days a week, this was a long time ago before I went freelance, erm, that was quite hard work but it produced lots of money and it is nice to know that money is now going to a permanent good cause.

**Yeah, it's wonderful. It sounds as if, you know, the farm is your legacy and as you said this.**

**ALK5** The bits of the land are, yes, certainly, not the house, but the land is, will, will end up with wildlife organisations, yeah.

**Yeah. So can I ask just a little bit more about that in terms of, you know, you had said farming for wildlife, so what exactly have you done on the farm?**

**ALK5** Okay, so we came here, it's a REMOVED acres intensive arable, apart from the river bank which we'd occasionally crop for hay. Erm, it is now roughly one third, erm, grazing, where we've managed to raise the water levels a bit, not as much as we wanted but a bit. One third is still fairly conventional arable and the remaining third is things like pluralistic margins, erm, wild bird cover, erm, and nectar strips, all of which we have entered into using various countryside stewardship schemes, high level schemes etcetera etcetera.

**Wonderful.**

**ALK5** And we still have the river bank on which either we have cattle or a hay crop or both.

**Yeah. And is your farm ever, you know, do you ever welcome other farmers in to sort of see what you've done as in?**

**ALK5** [laughs] Erm, not conventional farmers I would say because, not, I mean not that they're not welcome, erm, but because they would regard what they've done as being the opposite of what they sought to achieve all their lives, which is high yield encouraged by more intensive drainage and we're doing the opposite. Erm, although having said that the man who does the arable here works, farms more conventionally on his own land and he always says he likes seeing what we're doing here because it gives him ideas about his own land, erm, so we've had very few conventional farmers here. We've had a few people with wildlife interests come here and we've had a few people with flood defence interests come here.

**Yeah. Well that's positive to know that, you know, learning by doing, people can see that you can take a different approach and it can work.**

**ALK5** Erm, I'm not sure frankly we're demonstrating that to your normal conventional farmer because you, we've both got consultancy income, right? So we're not demonstrating you can make a viable farm out of this, the farm's far too small to be viable anyway, only works because we're, we came to it relatively late in life so we already had some capital and, and because we both had on off farm income, so actually we're, if anything we're probably better at, this is probably off the topic anyway but we're better at demonstrating to people who've got a bit of land and they don't know what to do with it, you know, garden is too big for them or something like that, that there are lots of little things you can do that benefit, I think we're probably more illustrative of that then we are of anything in the conventional world.

**Got you. So yeah, it's kind of what you can do on the small scale but you're doing it on the large scale.**

**ALK5** Yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, oh that's fantastic. As part of that, so I mean part of the project as well, aside from wellbeing we're also using, or thinking about climate change and we're using mosquitoes as a way of, of thinking about climate change by exploring mosquito populations and I wondered if where you are, whether mosquitoes or biting insects are an issue for you?**

**ALK5** Certainly not an issue, erm, we have them but they're not an issue.

**Yeah. So you just see them as part of parcel of being in a natural environment?**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**Yeah, and have you noticed.**

**ALK5** They're food and they are food for, for swallows and bats and swifts and what have you.

**Yeah, absolutely, I mean they are fundamental to the ecosystem.**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**Do you, from your time on the farm, have you noticed any changes in mosquito populations or where they are or anything like that?**

**ALK5** Mosquitoes, no, no, I wouldn't, I think we might say that we've got more flying insects in general, which is probably because of the way in which we've improved the variety of wildlife, and we've got stock on the farm which weren't here before of course, I don't know, know that the stock encourage flies but there's always the theory they do. Erm, and some years we get big, big crowds of particular insects and other years we don't, very patchy.

**Yeah. So there's just a kind of natural ebb and flow of the different kinds of species.**

**ALK5** Yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, but it's certainly not a kind of dramatic increase or a dramatic drop off.**

**ALK5** No.

**That you've noticed.**

**ALK5** Um.

**Well that's worth knowing. In terms of sort of how you live alongside the mosquitoes, do you end up, well, you know, just, you use the right clothing, you go out at certain times of the day.**

**ALK5** Really here, I don't think I do anything to protect myself, the only thing is if we have guests and we eat outside, I will light an anti-mossie candle just to say that I'm trying because guests sometimes find insects more irritating than we do.

**Yes, yeah.**

**ALK5** But otherwise I don't think I have ever taken any particular precautions no, no, I just get on with it really. Horseflies are a nuisance, that's not, if I'm doing something like pulling ragwort and it's the wrong time of, type of weather I might say right, I'll wear my overalls because of the horseflies.

**Right, yes. It's interesting actually, on the project that it's not the mosquitoes that seem to be an issue for people, it is the horseflies.**

**ALK5** Ah hum, right, yeah. And I react pretty badly to horsefly bites, I do try and avoid them.

**Yeah, and I mean I've had anecdotal stories of, you know, that people have tried to wear the right clothing and the horseflies have still managed to get through, so.**

**ALK5** That's why I mentioned overalls because I want to protect myself from horseflies then I need overalls, a t-shirt won't do it.

**No, that's it. So that'll be an interesting possible outcome of the project actually, is actually discussing more about horseflies but we shall see.**

**ALK5** [laughs]

**Now the very last section of the interview is around, it's got a fancy name, it's called Contemporary Social Representations but essentially what we're trying to capture is this change over time from wetlands being seen as barren unforgiving places that need to be drained to now I think I'm, maybe a more balanced approach and I wondered if you had felt that yourself, whether people had maybe taken a different approach to understanding and viewing different types of landscapes and particularly wetland landscapes and if you have noticed a change over time, if you could say what you think might be the things that influence those changes, whether it's something cultural so something in the media and literature or if it's something maybe more?**

**ALK5** This is changes in other people rather than changes in ourselves?

**Well I think both for yourself, for your own perspective, from your, from how you see things but also how you think the general public might view a wetland, yeah.**

**ALK5** Yeah, I mean I think we've, REMOVED and I, probably have seen sufficient in this world to say that we've always been aware of the benefits of wetlands, erm, I mean I've, I've worked, we've both worked on projects that are similar to Alkborough Flats but a managed retreat type projects going back years, erm, and I've always worked in flood defence and so I think that that's sort of the end of that. As far as other people are concerned, erm, visitors, very much depends on their own background, so, so some of our visitors are, have similar professional backgrounds to ourselves, so they are bird watchers or whatever and they come obviously and they don't need, they don't need it explaining to them. [laughs] Some of our friends and family who come here are extremely urban, erm, maybe some of our friends actually, erm, and they come here and they simply don't get it at all and we have to explain in very, as best we can, what it's all about, erm, and what the benefits are, so there are some who simply don't get it and there are quite a few in the middle who I think come with some understanding that people are worried about wetlands and doing things about wetlands but they don't really know the details and when they see what they're, we have done on, or we show them Alkborough Flats, because we stand them on the bank and we point over there and we say that's one of the biggest managed retreats in England, you may have read about it in the papers, we explain to them what Alkborough Flats is trying to do because you can see, you can see it really well from here and they go ah yes, I do, you know, I, I've heard about something similar or whatever, so there are certainly, erm, there are, people are generally I think more aware, erm, but very often people don't sort of get it until they've actually seen how it works.

**I think that's it isn't it? I mean especially because of the site of Alkborough Flats, until you see it with your own eyes and you see the confluence of the two rivers and you see what, you know, the way it's been cut in.**

**ALK5** Um.

**I mean the scale of it is quite phenomenal and.**

**ALK5** Um.

**I think also it is that very visceral imprint on the fact that, you know, what's being done there is to help with flooding further down and.**

**ALK5** Um.

**And I think sometimes you have to live through flooding to really understand the importance of it. Someone I was talking to said that when the floods came in twenty thirteen the lower car park at Alkborough was flooded up to six feet and I mean that's absolutely phenomenal when you've been there and you just think of the absolute volume of water.**

**ALK5** Um.

**That's moving around.**

**ALK5** Yes, yeah.

**So for me it's a really fascinating site and I do wonder, as you said, you know, with maybe people who are a bit more urban and aren't so close to nature, whether it's that you have to experience something to really understand it, that's one of the things I'm trying to wrestle with really is how do we relink people with nature when we live in such urbanised environments?**

**ALK5** Um, um. I think that's particularly, erm, it is particularly challenging and I think that it doesn't help that people who are very urbanised, their experience of nature tends to be of the individual species, very often a spectacular[?] species or an exotic species or a species that's being filmed very close up because their experience is largely television wildlife. Erm, and so standing back and seeing an expanse of reed bed or in our case an area of, erm, nectar links, erm, tells a slightly different sort of story about the, the broader picture and all the interlinking of it all. I think the televisions have been focussing on the spectacular, doesn't always help. I think, I'm, I'm interested that you think people in, I'd be interested to know whether people who had experienced Alkborough from the Alkborough side understand the flooding, flood defence arguments in favour of Alkborough as well as our visitors do. I'm not recommending, I stress, underlined, [laughs] that we have people coming over here, but you can get, you get stories so clearly when you stand on our side.

**I think that's it.**

**ALK5** Because you can see the natural escarpment and you see the triangle of land and you, so if they just think how much it was costing the Environment Agency to try and protect that triangle. It's got two sides that, that, of sea defences they've got the pay for and it's only whatever it was, it was only about a thousand hectares in there, a thousand acres in there wasn't it? So you can immediately see the folly of constantly trying to spend a lot of money on flood defences when you're behind the Flats, you've got the natural escarpment and with the exception of flat farm which has been demolished now, erm, everyone lives up the escarpment.

**Well this is it and I mean as you said it's part of the sort of broader agenda around managed retreat, you know, particularly on areas of the coast and so.**

**ALK5** Um.

**But it's almost as if it's a close secret with the Environment Agency, you know, they're not pretending it's not happening but people aren't willing to address it either, particularly around Suffolk and Norfolk, you know, those lovely coastal villages.**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**Some of those are not going to survive because there is not the money to, there's not the money and it, in some ways, you know, you're fighting a losing battle by trying to keep the sea back.**

**ALK5** Um.

**But it is very problematic because of course there, you know, you've got populations who live there and populations who holiday there and so it's not just about relocating people, it's also about reshifting economies and that is very, it's, so coming.**

**ALK5** With the expectations that villages and property and places should be protected rather than just letting it go is very, very high.

**Yeah.**

**ALK5** Yeah.

**Yeah, exactly, it's a conundrum.**

**ALK5** I'd expect you've picked that up even on our side of the river and that, and people who live in the villages between us and Goole who are exposed to flooding off the Ouse rather than the Trent, erm, they feel, I don't, you know, know, they're absolutely adamant that the cause of solution is high defences and, and that was demonstrated in twenty thirteen because Reedness has had its defences raised over half its boundary, half its waterfront and not the other half and the water came up and it was horrible and, you know, talk about unfair, water came up straight up the Ouse, great wall of water, this tidal surge, I mean it was uphill slightly, you know, but there was a distinct peaked bulge of water that came up and it came through Reedness and the first bit, the banks would have been raised quite recently and the moment it got to the point where the banks hadn't been raised of course it all came over so half the village really, really copped it and half the village didn't, you know, what is that but in, if you lived in Reedness, of course you'd say it's absolutely disgraceful they never finished the second half of the defences and of course the defences have now been finished.

**Yeah, well that's it.**

**ALK5** [laughs] Ooh magic, surprise, surprise, someone's rushed along there and said we must finish that job and they've been, they've raised the wall all the way along.

**Yeah, but why does it have to take, you know, an experience like that, an event like that for somebody to recognise it? I mean it's, as you said it's about the social justice element of it actually, about.**

**ALK5** So certainly I must say, I do, I do question the decision making, I can see that there are budgetary issues and you can only do a section at a time but I do slightly question the wisdom of doing a section that stops halfway through a village because that was, I thought particularly cruel to the people who are affected.

**Yes, and as you said, because it is all joined up isn't it, you know? If you're going to be cutting, you know, one of the impacts of austerity politics is not just the lack of financial resources for the Environment Agency but also, you know, the shedding of experienced staff and logistical planning and the constant restructuring that the Environment Agency seem to be going through.**

**ALK5** Um, um, ah hum.

**But just jumping back slightly and this is one of the last things I want to ask you but thinking about you had said about the emphasis of certain television programmes to kind of focus on the spectacular, I think that's really interesting from what you said because a lot of people I've talked to say how wonderful Countryfile is and how wonderful Blue Planet is and Springwatch because they draw more people into nature and I really like what you've said in that it's an artificial distortion if you like, that doesn't actually enable people to truly engage with.**

**ALK5** Um.

**If you like, I mean, you know, because a lot of being in nature is actually nothing really happens, you know, there isn't a big spectacle to see, there isn't a big show, there isn't a big event, you know, sometimes it's difficult to get there and it's a bit wet and it's a bit cold.**

**ALK5** Um.

**So I like that fact that to some extent it both pulls people in and pushes people away, these sorts of things.**

**ALK5** Um.

**Do you think, because there's been a big surge in nature writing and I don't know if you're a fan of nature writing but.**

**ALK5** I hate all those, most of those books that have come out in the last five years, I have not enjoyed at all. [laughs]

**Now that is really fantastic to hear and can you tell me why?**

**ALK5** Oh dear, erm. I just find them incredibly boring, erm. REMOVED has a similar view, some of them he's liked, erm, but no, I think we both have a similar perspective and yet we have friends who are not in the wildlife world who come and say oh I really enjoyed it. In fact we had a friend who just came to supper last week and said how much he'd enjoyed the Secret Life of Trees.

**Okay.**

**ALK5** And we both choked because it was a particularly, erm, silly book we thought and she's a psychotherapist you see, so that shows, you know, we have friends with different, different professions. [laughs] As a psychotherapist she thought it was brilliant, erm.

**Because you think it's a flight of fancy too far?**

**ALK5** I, yeah, that's one way of putting it I suppose, yeah, they just, just don't do anything for me, erm, and I tend to skim, skim read them. REMOVED, who's a genuine, erm, very robust ecologist, reads them very critically and finds lots of faults in them, so that makes him really cross. [laughs] So between the two of us, no, we are not.

**It's a busman's holiday. Well I won't be sending you any Robert McFarlane in that case.**

**ALK5** No please don't, no, we don't want that one. Helen McDonald, we didn't enjoy her. Land Skipping, put that on one side.

**Oh good.**

**ALK5** George Monbiot REMOVED didn't get further than page nine, erm, the Feral one, you know, I'm afraid it just goes on and on, we shouldn't be so rude but no, it's not doing anything for us.

**No, and this will be the last thing I ask you but just thinking about George Monbiot that, how do you stand on the rewilding issue because it sounds?**

**ALK5** Oh don't, don't, if you, if we get introduced to someone at a party and so, the introducer says oh this is REMOVED, they've got a wildlife farm, which is the sort of thing we hate anyway, and the next person says oh are you doing that rewilding business like we hear about on the telly? [laughs] No, I mean I mustn't, I mustn't be rude. Erm, we're very keen to stress to people that what we are doing is we're very, very, very long way from rewilding and that rewilding is a very unique set of circumstances and even on the scale they're doing it in Sussex, and I've forgotten where the other place is, erm, it's not genuine rewilding because even though you have fencing and, you know, and, so we, we do stress to people that what we're doing is very different.

**Yeah, okay, well I'm happy to hear that, not because I'm against rewilding but I think that what happens is often terms get collapsed into each other.**

**ALK5** Yes, no, absolutely, that's a good point, people, people in REMOVED to the extent they take any interest in what we're doing here at all, you know, need to understand that we're not planning rewild REMOVED, we have just introduced a greater proportion of land for the benefit of wildlife, that we still have crops and we still have cattle and, you know, we still do make some money out of it.

**Yes. Because I think the thing with Charlie Burrell in Sussex is he has got the financial resources to let some of his land kind of be left alone.**

**ALK5** Um.

**And that isn't an option for most people.**

**ALK5** Yeah, is Charlie Burrell doing rewilding?

**Yes, he is, yeah.**

**ALK5** Oh okay, no, we're talking about two, I'm talking about those other people in Sussex on the clay, REMOVED done some work for Charlie Burrell, erm. Didn't, I didn't know he was doing that, right, okay, um, okay.

**Yeah, and I think his, I can't remember what Charlie Burrell's wife is called unfortunately but I think she kind of takes the lead maybe with sort of media things around that but I'm not sure, because I don't, I'm not in the rewilding world so.**

**ALK5** Yeah, right.

**Just because I've done some work on the Adur so that's how I know of the Burrells.**

**ALK5** Right, okay.

**Yeah, oh well thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it and, you know, and it's been really wonderful to have a perspective from the other side of Alkborough Flats.**

**ALK5** [laughs]

**You know, you've got the long view.**

**ALK5** The other world.

**The other world and so it's, you know, it's been absolutely wonderful to speak to you.**

**ALK5** Oh cool and I hope it's helpful.

**Yeah, it's really great and I'll let you know how we get on with the project.**

**ALK5** That.

**Because I'm sure you'll see some interesting things coming out.**

**ALK5** Okay, thanks a lot.

**Thank you.**

**ALK5** Thanks, cheers, bye bye.

**Bye, bye.**

END OF INTERVIEW

**Interview 6 ALK6**

**From the get go when they were planning what they were going to do and how they were going to do it?**

**ALK6** No, erm, as far as I remember it, that initial work they'll have done will, they'll have done it in consultation with the North Lincolnshire, what would have been in effect monuments records then, they advised us to planning and our works will have come about as a result of tendering to undertake the watching brief elements when they, they ask for them.

**Right. So when you sat watching brief, does that mean sort of making sure that all the archaeology is done before any works are done on the site?**

**ALK6** No, in these cases it's, it's, it's having somebody there to monitor their works and record things that turn up during the process of the construction programme that they're doing.

**Okay, because we.**

**ALK6** So it's quite limited really and, and we just have to record what we can while excavating and things whilst we can.

**Right. So it sounds like rather than it being a sort of active dig and you having time to dig your trenches and look for things, it's the other way round and that you just have, you have to record what they found and ensure that if they found anything that it's protected?**

**ALK6** It's recorded, yeah, it's recorded.

**Oh right, okay.**

**ALK6** It's, it's in the, this world of the planning, planning and archaeology, it's sort of a, a lowest level of response.

**Yes.**

**ALK6** On these things, so as far as excavations go, we have no control on that, we just record what, what we can during the process.

**Yeah, and does that?**

**ALK6** There are special circumstances, if you've got human remains you'd be able to say woo, hang on, there. For the most part you've just got to bear with it and do what you can during the programme.

**Yeah, and is that dictated by each type of site? So for instance because it's in a sort of, you know, riverine environment presumably they're not really sure what they might find, so I'm just trying to gauge, you know, how, these different levels of sort of intervention, what dictates them?**

**ALK6** Yeah, well I'm just having a look myself at a couple of those, back at those reports to see what was written in them, erm, because there are very different circumstances with regard to. A lot of the work is done by condition on a planning application, so the, erm, in this case North Lincolnshire Council Archaeologist, will have looked at their application or their pre-planning application and said there are archaeological, there are assets in this area, we want a record making of them but there's insufficient information to say we need to do specific excavations in various areas but we want the scheme monitoring.

**Yes, well.**

**ALK6** And, erm, basically, so then that goes out to various contracting organisations and you give them your rates and they pick one they want to use and so although we'd done a few bits of work on there there may well be other companies that have done a lot more, different times and I don't know whether you've spoken with REMOVED at North Lincolnshire.

**I've not spoken to REMOVED no, you see I've had more contact with REMOVED who's the ecologist there, just because.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**Because of the nature what we're doing with the project, so is REMOVED in part of planning?**

**ALK6** Yeah, it's REMOVED and, erm, if you'll bear with me I'll find her phone number for you.

**Oh thank you.**

**ALK6** Yeah, so she's the REMOVED now, so she's also the REMOVED person for North Lincolnshire Council, yeah, so she looks at all REMOVED with a view to calling to, on them for their impact on archaeology and I say I'm not totally sure with the Environment Agency whether that was a planning thing or whether, what, what category of work it comes under.

[contact details – not transcribed]

She'll be able to fill you in on the background for that and any other potential things that have happened, particularly around the Flats there.

**Yeah. No, that'd be really, really helpful to know if things have changed since because presumably your organisation got involved right at the very beginning.**

**ALK6** Yeah, I say, well we, we were asked to undertake the watching briefs that, that those, you've got those reports for now and, erm, we did a few other bits of work for the Environment Agency a bit further up near Barton, so Far Ings and that area, was with them as well and so I'm, at the time that they were going I wasn't privy to that information so.

**Oh right. [laughs]**

**ALK6** We had project managers who were dealing with that.

**Yeah. So presumably your work takes you all across the county in all different types of landscapes.**

**ALK6** Absolutely, yes, we, we work within the, predominantly the old Humberside Council area, we were originally a REMOVED.

**Ah okay.**

**ALK6** And then in ninety six, so that was abolished, the four councils were formed, so there was Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire chose to go their own way. Hull and the East Riding still share their archaeological advice with Humber Historic Environment Record, which is REMOVED, the field unit that used to belong in the Council, they transferred to Hull, REMOVED we REMOVED operate as a self-funding contract unit.

**Yeah, I think the same has actually happened in Sussex as well.**

**ALK6** Yeah, yeah, there's very few council units left these days, they've all gone commercial.

**Yeah, but you work in the sort of Humberside area, you don't work outside of that region then?**

**ALK6** Not very often, no. We, we have done, I mean we were, we did do the rapid coastal zone assessment for English Heritage it was then, we did the section from REMOVED down to REMOVED on the Norfolk border, so we did the whole of the Holderness coast and the Lincolnshire.

**Yeah, that's a long stretch isn't it?**

**ALK6** It's a very long stretch, and, erm, but subsequently we're not doing, we're not involved with the Humber one that's happening now I think, another organisation is doing that. We're very small now with cutbacks and everything.

**Right. So how many people are in your organisation then?**

**ALK6** Eight.

**Eight, okay.**

**ALK6** Eight full-time staff, yeah.

**Yeah, wonderful.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**And would you say, I mean I ask this of all the participants, that, you know, I make assumptions about what the ethos and the remit of your organisation is but would you say that you are, I mean, you know, you are obviously field archaeologists but do you have any role in any education or do you have any role in advocacy or policymaking, or you're there to basically document and report back?**

**ALK6** Well basically, we've very reactive, we, most of our work comes through the planning process which we, we tender for and do the excavation assessments or whatever is required that we win through the tendering process and that is, that is pretty much it. We just don't have the resources, as I say we have to fund ourselves through that work, so we do sometimes have people who come on work experience with us, erm, but even those numbers have been reduced down so much because it's so difficult for us with our.

**Well it takes a person out doesn't it? That's the problem, you know.**

**ALK6** Oh it takes, it takes a lot out to be honest with you, yeah. I mean with our reports and things we have deadlines within the planning process, we have to meet, things like that and yes, as we all know some of the larger projects slide up, slide back and back but the, the day to day run of the mill things, such as, erm, more scale watching, I mean the watching brief works can go from a single extension on the back of a house to, to a pipeline that runs right across the country or a massive housing estate or things like the, the wetland creations and things like that and so you, yeah, you're, you're struggling with your resources all the time.

**Well it must be a constant state of logistics of working out who to put where and when when you're trying to work on these different timelines, it's not easy is it?**

**ALK6** It is, I've got a big board up on my wall where I've got the jobs and people's initials and everything and it changes every day, so.

**Yeah, and I think that's it, you have to make these things really highly visible don't you, otherwise?**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**It's all very well having electronic resources but I'm of an age where I don't trust technology, I do trust boards and pens and, you know, it's.**

**ALK6** Well I've got a really good example for you of problems with technology. For the past two days, so Monday, Tuesday, we have been without any computers, no phones, there was no email, no internet until just after one yesterday afternoon.

**Ooh wow.**

**ALK6** The whole lot had gone. So obviously with our own personal mobile phones we could contact the odd person about, but everything was down, we couldn't access anything on the system and that was due to power failure on the grid, so. [laughs]

**Yeah. And it makes you realise doesn't it how things have changed? And I'm going to move on with the questions but it does make you think about how things have changed from how they used to be in terms of, you know, we didn't have to rely on computers and email calendars and things like that, so, you know, I still believe in pen and paper, I'm a big fan, I'm a big fan.**

**ALK6** Yeah, we still have paper records.

**Yeah, that's it, and they're there for a reason.**

**ALK6** Physical archive as well as a digital.

**Yeah, I think that's very sensible. So it's fabulous that you were there at Alkborough before it has changed, so because of course, you know, at that, you can see things on photos but it's very different when you're actually on site and what it looks like before and after.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**So I wondered if, you know, because of the main things of this project is trying to capture a sense of place and I wonder if, you know, if you can go back in the midst of time, I don't know how recently you've visited Alkborough but if you could kind of, you know, paint me a picture of what your memories are of that particular site.**

**ALK6** Well most sites, as far as I remember, I wasn't actually on site, it was, erm, some of our temporary staff who are no longer with us on this now, amount of time but, erm, I do believe it was mainly arable farmland down at the bottom there, on the Flats and you're on the edge of the, well, well the Lincoln edge, which is the actual village sits on on the top and you don't, but that's really about the limit of my knowledge, there's certainly farmland and I struggle after that I'm afraid.

**Yeah, and your organisation's had no cause to return to the site since that first initial piece of work was done?**

**ALK6** Not, not since we've done those, erm, was it four pieces of work I think, three or four pieces of work in that early period? No, we've had, we've had no other work on there. Erm, we've got less and less work on the south side of the river over the years.

**Right. Is there any particular reason for that or is it just to do with logistics and finance and all those other sorts of things?**

**ALK6** I think it's certainly logistics and finances because obviously it's easier and cheaper for an organisation based on the south side of the Humber to go and do the work there than it is one on the north with your tolls or your travel round and, and things like that.

**Yeah. It's just interesting isn't it? Because if you think about say organisational memory, you know, the idea that your organisation's done a piece of work you'd be in the best position really to, you know, continue with pieces of work on that site since you know it well.**

**ALK6** Um.

**So I'm always interested when decisions are made which are maybe, like you said, to do with finance or logistics rather than this idea of actually really knowing a place.**

**ALK6** Yeah, well I mean there's, obviously some of that's out, just out of our hands because you're, you're, all the work goes out to tender and unfortunately with the tendering process best value doesn't necessarily come into it, it's the cheapest, and.

**Yeah, that's it, it's just.**

**ALK6** And you don't when you're doing that whether you're going to be or not.

**No, it's very true, but does your organisation do a lot of work on wetlands or does your work take you elsewhere really?**

**ALK6** Our work since, since then, that's some of the last we've done. We've done work with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, erm, on sites at North Cave and at Spurn Point, erm, but again we tendered for that work and we got that work and yes, we got one piece of work and we got some more work from them, so but, to be honest with you, some of the very big organisations, like the Environment Agency will go to a much bigger provider, the archaeological services these days, the sort of things like, erm, for argument's sake, like MOLA[?] or Wessex or, you know, erm, Oxford Archaeology, sort of spread a nationally and internationally, massive resources and they tend to go there other than, there's a lot of, you know, we end up with our local clients if you like, and so that how it's seems to work these days.

**Yeah, but then you know the area better than anyone else as a result which is really positive.**

**ALK6** Um.

**When.**

**ALK6** We certainly like to think we did, erm, but, erm, I mean yeah, since, trying to think how much work we've done on the south side of the river there since and it's not a huge amount anymore, we did, we did quite a bit of work when we were with the oil refineries because we'd been working there for a while but that, that, obviously they, they'd done their, erm, redevelopment and things so stopped that, you know. So ours, ours is mainly based on, erm, mineral extractions and residential commercial development at the moment.

**Right, okay. And presumably those different sites take different skillsets because one thing I was going to ask you is, or you may not be able to answer this if you didn't work on Alkborough Flats but about the different challenges of doing archaeology on wetland sites.**

**ALK6** Um that's, that's a little bit difficult because of the nature of the work that was done, erm, obviously when that work, when we did that work, that was shortly after the Humber wetlands project, which was Hull University, Robert Van de Noort, and, erm, in fact my wife worked on that project at the University, and, erm, so they did the, they did the wetlands stuff in that period and then we, we just carried on doing our sort of commercial work and doing our long, long term projects, so, erm, we're mainly, even now, our main work's sort of in the rural, the villages and on the Wolds and then Hull Valley and then yes, the Vale of York, erm, but it is, it is and a lot of it's small scale, single houses, small development and.

**Because, and not so much that but earlier today I talked to a chap who's a local historian and I was talking to him about why he thinks that, because when I, you know, I don't know if you've ever been to Alkborough Flats but it's quite a quiet place, you know, it's not one of the popular wetland sites that you see in other parts of the country.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**And I was trying to, I was asking him what he thought was the possible reason why not many people other than birders go and dog walkers, you know, why don't the general public go and look at this wonderful spot? Because if you've ever been there, if you're on the escarpment and you look over you see, you know, the wonderful confluence of the rivers and you see the Drax power station.**

**ALK6** Oh it's a fantastic spot when you're, if you're up standing, when you're up on Julian's Bower.

**Yeah, exactly. So, you know, and how long has it been since you last went to?**

**ALK6** Myself.

**Yeah.**

**ALK6** There's, well I, last time I went to Julian's Bower would have been about six years ago.

**Yeah. I mean because that in itself would have been an amazing draw and I haven't managed to go to the church to look at the labyrinth inside the church.**

**ALK6** No, it's the same here, it's, erm, I think myself, personally, it's just worked related stuff, working all week on, and doing those projects and then I've got a couple of days at home on the weekend with the daughter and things like that and you're concentrating on that.

**Yeah, this is it.**

**ALK6** We've been to places on this side of the river, which are more, you know, more convenient for us to get to and timewise and, and things like that, erm, but yeah, I think it's just, just that sort of thing and I mean when, casting my mind back, erm, people weren't over keen on the idea of lots of visitors at Alkborough I seem to remember anyway, so I don't know how, whether their promotion has been quite low.

**Well it's an interesting thing that you say that because I've had sort of conflicting things where one, the Parish Council that I spoke to said we were promised, this is presumably by the Council that we would have thirty thousand visitors a year to come to see the Flats, which seemed a little bit over the top to me but that's what she said.**

**ALK6** Um.

**And she said, you know, we haven't had anything like that number and yet.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**As you said there isn't really, there isn't really anything that would particularly, they haven't made the most of trying to draw people in so when I spoke to this, this historian, who said well what people really like is a story, you know, either they want a story around Julian's Bower or they want a story about maybe shipwrecks and floods on the river.**

**ALK6** Um.

**And the flats can be part of that and I just wondered when you were having a look through, I don't know if you had a chance to look through the reports that you kindly sent me but whether there was, you know, any sort of sense of heritage that's been lost and not made the most of by the Partnership Committee for Alkborough Flats.**

**ALK6** Um, yeah, that's the thing, we've not been involved with any of that, we just did that, that was our job, the watching briefs, we did the reports, we went away, involved in any of the infrastructure setting, with it being set up or anything like that, it's just that because we've known people. The lady who did the main works watching brief actually lives in Scunthorpe, she loves the area there, she's really interested and in fact it was REMOVED who actually found the information about the, it being a bombing range.

**Oh okay.**

**ALK6** Erm, because one of the things would, that would have been recommended for that area before any work was done would have been a, perhaps a desk based assessment, now from memory I seem to think that the Environment Agency declined to do one and if they had then that would have been flagged up beforehand and whereas it was the, the, erm, the bombs and things were only found during, so, and so that was, that's something, as I say, that was a positive for sort of doing some pre-research really.

**No, I mean because that's a really big story that could be told about the area isn't it?**

**ALK6** Well the fact it was used during the Second World War, there's a copy of that one person's log, there must be others, [laughs] and the fact that there must be local people who remember that, going, you know, the planes coming in low and, and doing that sort of thing but, and that's really. REMOVED will know more about that side of things, that they hold all the records for the area, they know what's going on, they know what sort of groups they've got there, you know, but she's definitely the person to speak in the first instance.

**Lovely, well I will definitely give her a, send her an email and see if, you know, we can have a little chat about that because I think this is it, you know, in some ways like the historian said, if there's a story that could be sort of told about the area, especially over time, like the timeline then it would be really fantastic.**

**ALK6** Yeah, I mean they may, they may have something because there was some project, erm, done that one of my colleagues had some involvement with at Countess Close in the village of Alkborough on the top there.

**Oh yes, yes.**

**ALK6** Had some public involvement with but I'm not aware of the details.

**Yeah, in fact this historian I talked to earlier was talking to me about that and.**

**ALK6** Um.

**Yeah, I mean that whole history of the pilgrims, you know, in Lincolnshire.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**And the civil war and the connection with that, I mean it's fantastic historical resources that almost just seem to disappear, the only thing that's a kind of visual historical record is Julian's Bower isn't it?**

**ALK6** Yeah, and I think there's, erm, forgotten his first name now …(Abraham) de la Pryme, made lots of notes on his sort of travels around that area and, erm, yeah, and I'm sure there's, there's, I think that's where some types of things, references to perhaps the civil war, erm, site came from that's on the Flats below us. There's nothing been found from the physical remains I don't think.

**Yeah, no.**

**ALK6** And again the exact locations of these things is always a little bit.

**Yeah, you need a local person who knows and then you need to be able to find the local person who knows.**

**ALK6** Yeah, yes, yes.

**That's always the challenge isn't it?**

**ALK6** So yeah. I say with that, erm, with North Lincs, I know they have employed a person for doing, erm, work, community work and things, with the Isle of Axholme, but obviously I don't know about the Flats area.

**Yeah, I mean that's the thing, it's just trying to link the Flats up with the whole kind of different geography of the area and the historical narrative of the area would be fantastic and one of the things we're trying to do with the project is improve, when I say improve access, think about different ways to improve access and.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**And not just physical access about getting people on the site but getting people engaged with the site and part of that is also about human health and wellbeing, you know, we're very concerned with wanting to ensure that wetland sites can be used as recreational sites as well as respectfully recognising that they're wetland reserves and they're wildlife reserves.**

**ALK6** Yes, yes.

**And I don't know, from your experience of the work you've done, you know, even north of the river, you know, whether you consider wetland sites as being places for wellbeing or whether you see them as distinctly just for the birders.**

**ALK6** Oh I think they're fantastic places, erm, I say I love taking my daughter there and she's really enjoyed it. Yeah, you go, you can have a nice walk round, you can see the birds that's going on and, I'll use North Cave as an example, they do have some information boards up showing where the, the Anglo-Saxon burial site was. Whole, the whole of that area is actually crisscrossed with Iron Age and …Romano-British remains, erm, perhaps the, you know, the, some of that's obviously where, we're doing that work there with the quarry people, so a lot of that is at the moment commercially sensitive so [laughs] got to wait, got to wait.

**Yeah, can't discuss.**

**ALK6** You'll have maybe seen on our pages we've got Iron Age burials and kilns and all sorts of things coming up and that's generally, most of that's been that sort of area, erm, and, erm, yes, that, so having that information out to be people, be it either on noticeboards or apps or something like that is, is probably a really good way of doing it.

**Yeah, because is that, it's that connectivity about people in landscape but people over time.**

**ALK6** Um.

**And that's the fascinating thing to try and show that, you know, these wetland sites they, yes, they are highly managed but over that time they've been managed by different types of people for different reasons, you know, so.**

**ALK6** Yeah. Well that's right, they've been managed for thousand years if not more haven't they? Various, in various states, you've had your warping, you've had the previous drainage and now we've gone back to reflooding and say, it, it's constant and, erm, tie it, I think something like the sort of phone app type of thing where you can, you can wander round and the, where various information pops up as you're going around, saying well this is the, this is where such and such a site used to be or specific, erm, erm, flora or fauna. I think if it was integrated I think it would be really good.

**And I think you're right because I think that would really draw in, not just a different set of people but potentially a different generation of people as well because you don't want wetlands to become the site of dog walkers of a certain age, I don't mean to be disrespectful but we're only going to make these places alive if they stay alive in people's imaginations.**

**ALK6** I agree, I agree totally on that, that's, erm, I. I mean personally I do like going and seeing the birds, I do like going for a walk out there, erm, I like taking my daughter and being able to tell her well we've, we've found such and such here and so and so's done that there and that's, you know, and I think bringing the, all the incidents of different things in, the archaeology, geology, erm, natural history, anything like that is, to, erm, more information you can put in the more interest it is to the larger group of people isn't it?

**Yeah, I think that's right and I think especially these days, as much as we were bemoaning technology before it can work in wonderful ways, you know, with, sometimes, you know, just keep it nice and simple, doesn't have to be complicated does it?**

**ALK6** Yeah, oh no, no, I think you, I think, yeah, if you can keep it straightforward because it, the, the point to that is if somebody wants to know more as long as there's a, an arrow pointing them in the direction where they can find out more then they'll go and do it and that, that benefits us all doesn't it?

**Yeah.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**I mean one of the things that my kids have always liked and they're ten and thirteen now, is the geocaching that you can do.**

**ALK6** Well that's, that's the sort of thing I was, erm, sort of thinking as well of along those lines it's that, it's great fun for the family, we've done that with our daughter.

**Yeah, and that's it, you know, it's making people feel comfortable being in these slightly wilder spaces as well, you know.**

**ALK6** Um.

**To enjoy being in nature and that's the thing that we need to encourage and get these kids off screens, you know, or that.**

**ALK6** Yeah, or walking around with the screen.

**Yeah, I was going to say, I'm actually being a bit of a hypocrite aren't I but? Maybe using the screens in a more educational way.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**Even if I'm being a bit prescriptive because it's the way I think it should be educational.**

**ALK6** Well you've seen the way they all went with the Pokémon.

**Yes.**

**ALK6** And the, erm, then it can be done can't it?

**It can, exactly.**

**ALK6** They made it entertaining enough for them, I think but, yeah.

**Exactly, exactly.**

**ALK6** It's way beyond my skills mind.

**I know, I'm a real technophobe, I really am but I don't care, I revel in it now, I like, like the fact I'm a tech dinosaur.**

**ALK6** Yeah, yeah.

**One of the other things that you might have seen on the project website is that we are thinking about climate change and how climate change may impact on our wetland sites and one of the things we've used is a kind of motif for climate change is changing mosquito populations so we've got entomologists who are doing surveying to find out actually what mosquito populations are on site and I wondered in the work that you do whether mosquitoes or biting insects ever become an issue for you?**

**ALK6** Well they do for me personally because they all seem to like me enormously.

**You're giving off the right chemicals, that's what I'm hearing. [laughs]**

**ALK6** Yeah, I'm giving off the wrong stuff, yes, [laughs] yeah. Erm, it does seem to be mosquitoes more with me than anything else, erm, but then.

**And would you say?**

**ALK6** I used to fish so I, I've, I, so you end up being wrapped up completely in certain places just to avoid being bitten but.

**Yeah. So I mean in terms of, do you find then that, you know, outside of your work life that it impacts on where you might go for walks with your daughter, that you think oh that could be a bit full of mosquitoes, I'm not going to do it?**

**ALK6** Once or twice, I have felt that once or twice when we've been places. I remember when we were down in Rufford[?] there was, there was, as I say, we went on a walk and both my wife and daughter not touched at all, I just got mobbed my mosquitoes, so, and it, it's made me think and in fact it made me think when we went abroad to, Majorca, there's a big wetland up there, near Alcudia, you know, reeds and everything and it was just ooh no, I don't think I will, [laughs] so.

**Yeah, it's really interesting isn't it? Because one of our research participants in the Bedfordshire site, she went to that wetland in Majorca, she came back, I think she came back in the middle of June and she had, she showed me a photo of her holiday villa and it was overlooking the wetland and I said weren't you bitten alive? And she said they didn't go near me. So it's really interesting isn't it?**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**I think it just depends on the chemicals in your skin and whether they're attracted to you or not.**

**ALK6** Yeah, yeah, well I got, I, yeah, I just, I got bitten a few times anyway, you know, I didn't actually go near, you know.

**But, I mean, yeah.**

**ALK6** Yeah, that's just the way it is for, some people do, some don't do they?

**Yeah, I think that's it but, you know, for instance if you recall going to Alkborough Flats you didn't ever have any issues there?**

**ALK6** Oh not, not then, I mean you, you're going to get the odd thing, I mean from work, from a work point of view, erm, this time of year is really bad for those like thunder fly, especially when everybody wants you to wear yellow high vis.

**Right, yes. Do you know what, I haven't heard of thunderflies before, most people talk about horseflies and how dreadful they are.**

**ALK6** Well these are the little black, tiny little black ones. [laughs] They don't, they don't bite or anything, you just get covered in them.

**Oh okay.**

**ALK6** In the crop fields but yeah, horse, you don't want a horsefly bite, no.

**No, no.**

**ALK6** Erm, no.

**It's been very interesting talking to people and most people say look mosquitoes can, you know, they don't really bother me, it's the horseflies that are the problem and they seem to be the problem everywhere.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**And I don't recall them being a problem, you know, ten, fifteen years ago, so I don't know.**

**ALK6** You do see, I mean you see them around, I see them around but I don't, you know, they don't seem to bother many of our staff that much, it's in, it's these small ones that are just nuisance value.

**Yes, like a midge, they're kind of just an irritant.**

**ALK6** Yeah, because they just land, they just, you just get covered if you've got anything yellow or green[?] on, yeah.

**Yeah, the downfalls, the pitfalls of the job. The last part of the interview is about, it sounds a bit, it's a bit of a mouthful, it's called Contemporary Social Representations but you'll know, as an archaeologist, you'll know what I mean by that, since I know that modern archaeology is all about representations over time. What we're trying to really kind of work out is how people, not just how they enjoy and use wetlands but how the general public perceive wetlands, so do they see these wetland spaces as just actually places to go and look at birds and to walk dogs or do they see them as marshes and as barren places that are not so great to go to? How do you think, from the work that you've done and the way you interact with other people, do you think that people have changed their attitudes towards wetlands in the last few years?**

**ALK6** Erm, I think people really still see them as somewhere to go for a walk, go and look at the wildlife and they enjoy that aspect of it, erm. There's certain people who, who obviously use, use some of them, erm, for, erm, activities, perhaps, erm. I know somebody who sort of goes open water swimming and they use some of the ponds and things that have been created to do that sort of thing, erm, but mostly I think the general public, they, they'll go for a wander round, have that walk that's perhaps a mile or two round, round these, the footpath and things and, erm, call that a nice little stroll in the afternoon, rather than anything more specific.

**Yeah. And so do you think it's actually to do with the way that wetlands are sort of physically presented to them, so like you said having a nice flat footpath to walk around with the, you know, a toilet here and a visitor centre there? Or do you think it's something else that's shifted, you know? I'm thinking about whether it's the new genre of nature books or whether it's TV programmes and documentaries or whether it's something in the paper, you know, like George Monbiot is quite a big influence for some people, or documentaries on the radio, do you think all those other things feed in or do you think that's only to a certain?**

**ALK6** I think they do feed in, and I think there's certain programmes that, erm, really grab people and, you know, you need to look at sort of Blue Planet and things like that to see what effect that sort of programme can have a, on people's perceptions of things, erm, particularly with regards in, in that instance with the plastics in the ocean and things like that, that's had a huge impact hasn't it, that particular?

**Yes, it's really quite amazing actually isn't it?**

**ALK6** Yeah, and so I think, you know, yes, and I think people perceptions do change on things and you're right, I think at what point people did think these were just for the avid twitcher to go and see some rare bird but these days the footpaths better, visitor centres, good toilet facilities, make a big difference to people, bit, if they're a bit older or if you've got kids you'll know yourself you need to have places that you can go and sort them out.

**Yeah, no, absolutely, yeah, absolutely.**

**ALK6** And, erm, yeah, they're, certain places, seems to be a lot of resistance to having new sort of visitor centres and, but in some places, like I think at Barton on the south bank there their visitor centre at the Far Ings there has proved really popular and, and the walks aren't, aren't too big, they're fairly flat and everything and people can get around and, erm, that, that's the one, of the ones I know on that sort of side of the river that people seem to talk about more than anything, it's convenient from Hull, you just go across the Humber Bridge and you're there. I know Alkborough's not that much further but there's one just there, so I think that. [laughs]

**Well I think that plays a lot into it doesn't it? Because I mean you touched on that earlier which is if you're working all week and you've got your two days of leisure, you know, you have to max out those two days of leisure don't you? So are you going to go that extra two miles down the road that doesn't have such easy parking, you know, are you going to go a forty minute drive extra if you don't quite know what you're going to get?**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**You know, I wonder what.**

**ALK6** You know this yourself, having had two, that like your Saturday generally is just cramming everything in you need to try and do, your shopping, your everything and getting them to their, whatever clubs and sorting things they're doing, yeah, you're left with a couple of hours perhaps on a Sunday afternoon where you might be able to do something.

**Yeah, but it's very true because it's the logistics of modern life isn't it?**

**ALK6** Um.

**And that we're all juggling, trying to work with, trying to, you know, make things nice for the kids and all their activities, it's a continual juggle, so I think that idea of modern life and convenience also does have to play a part in how we think about wetlands because otherwise they become the preserve of a certain generation that have retired because they've got the time to go and explore and it means that other younger people.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**With younger families may not necessarily get the chance to do the same and it, and it's a real shame I think. One of the things I just wanted to sort of, the last question I wanted to finish with was, and, you know, actually we've touched on it throughout the whole of our discussion together is about how far austerity politics has impacted on wetlands, so now you've kind of talked about it really in terms of your organisation and how that's shaped things in terms of the Council's cutting money and shifting and moving out their archaeological units, do you think that austerity politics has impacted on wetlands in terms of how they're managed and where they are?**

**ALK6** That's a very difficult one for me to answer because in this area, although it, we've had, you've got all this austerity, the, the wetlands its sort of along the Humber here, have been created in because of, erm, the climate change and the risk of sea level rise, that's being done, so these areas are still being created, there's another one shortly I believe at Skeffling on the north side of the Humber and so the areas are still being created and so, erm, and again, so they're in the news that these, these places come, so people are going and they're, they're getting more places a bit more local and, you know, there's that but overall austerity cuts will, do impact, so as we were saying perhaps they're not being promoted as much as they would be, you know, you haven't got the staff to do that sort of thing, erm, you, you, like I say they've got an officer say for the Isle of Axholme but they haven't got one perhaps for the, the Humber wetlands or something like that to do that sort of promotion on, and coordinate the local interest groups and things like that, so I think, yeah, the cuts do impact a lot. I mean over the past we have besides ourselves, just, you know, on the archaeology front, erm, done a lot of that through cuts to the Council, although we're a self-funding bit we still obviously have to do certain things because the Council's our employer so.

**Yeah, it's a big turnaround isn't it? Really is.**

**ALK6** Um, yeah.

**But I think you're right, the kind of wetland expansion around the whole Humber estuary is really interesting and it looks set to continue. I think, you know, I've talked to quite a few people also about the importance of urban wetlands as a way of having flood storage and then also blue green space for people, so I think, you know, it's, for me it's really interesting the way that the Government are supporting the expansion of wetlands and we just need to make sure that people can get to use them in other ways.**

**ALK6** Well yes, there's, there's, I mean there are a lot of, erm, flood prevention schemes in operation, now there's some going on in the Wolds just to the west of Hull, another, another round of them, erm. In fact one of the things out today on the Twitter or Facebook I think it was, is one of the schools to the west of Hull, the kids have been out because they named the, the new, erm, the tunnelling mole, tunnelling mole that's going to be used. [laughs]

**Oh I see.**

**ALK6** Some of the flood works, so, there's, they're trying to, people are trying to engage with the local community definitely.

**Yeah, I think that's really positive.**

**ALK6** And, erm, but yeah, I, the wetlands probably need a hand.

**Yeah, I think so. Well I'm a big fan of wetlands.**

**ALK6** Yes.

**As a last sort of, just to finish off, is there anything that you would like to share with the project or anything you'd like to ask of the project that I can feed back to my other project partners?**

**ALK6** What I want to really say to you is that, I say, we're so divorced from it now, particularly with the Alkborough thing but we're happy for you to use any information, things you want that from us or ask you, you know, if you want to use any photos, you want to come and look at the stuff we've got.

**Oh thank you.**

**ALK6** That, for that area, I think that's the best thing we can do is to be able to just say look, we have these things here, if you want to use some of them then come and have a look and please do if you want to.

**Oh that's really fabulous and likewise if there's anything the project can do to support your work then please just say and we'll be happy to support.**

**ALK6** Yeah, yeah, well what, erm, one of the things might be able to look at it is, I'll have to go back through the files and things but if you wish, there's certain things come up, you may want us to put out on our social media and things like that, you know, Facebook, Twitter, specifically related to that to promote your programme we're happy to do that as well.

**Well that's fabulous. Well I think there's a lot of mutual things we can do for each other for sure and I really appreciate your support and we would like to show you the same support to because these are not easy times for us all.**

**ALK6** No, they're not, they're not, we're never quite sure where we're going to end up are we at the moment?

**Well this is it and it's the same for universities, so I think.**

**ALK6** Um.

**You know, we have to just show solidarity is the only thing we can do I think.**

**ALK6** Yeah, well I mean we'd love to do, I mean we used to do a lot more things there with the local communities and the local groups and things but it's just not possible for us these days.

**Yeah, that's it.**

**ALK6** Yeah.

**Well, you know, it's got to be funded somehow hasn't it otherwise it's not possible?**

**ALK6** It does, does and as you say, we're all suffering funding cuts and, erm, well we would, we're cut to the bone basically and we're, we're such a small thing now that we can only do, we have to be quite particularly about even things we can tender for.

**Yeah, no, I appreciate that and I appreciate that, you know, even this time is time out of your day so I won't keep you any longer and just say thank you so much for all your time and hopefully we'll speak again soon.**

**ALK6** Yeah, that's great, yeah. Just drop me an email or something or if you want to see something or you want us to have a look, see if we can send you something.

**Yeah, that's fabulous, lovely. Thanks so much REMOVED**

**ALK6** Right, thank you very much.

**Right, I speak to you soon.**

**ALK6** Cheers, bye.

**Yeah, cheers bye.**

END OF INTERVIEW

**Interview 7 ALK7**

**So I guess the easiest way to start is to ask you about your, I know you may even say look I really only go to the site very infrequently but, you know, how often do you ever go to the site, what are your leisure interests, which is why you kind of evolved with the project in the first place? You know, what's the organisation that you're part of? How many people are in it? What kind of age range or sociodemographics? Just so I get an idea of, you know, what you're doing up there.**

**ALK7** Right, okay. Well, erm, one of our, erm, major hobbies, since, erm, well, since the children got to an age where they didn't want to go out anywhere with us anymore [laughs] we started walking and obviously since we've retired, don't say I've had much more time to do it but that is, erm, what we do, both me and my wife like to, you know, unusual I suppose, we both like the same hobby, so it's, it's very.

**It's either a blessing or a curse isn't it? [laughs]**

**ALK7** Yeah. [laughs] So, erm, yeah, so what I, I'm, erm, on the committee of the REMOVED, which was established in REMOVED, erm, it is affiliated to the ramblers but it's just, it's, erm, based in REMOVED and, erm, we've got about two hundred and thirty members, erm, some of whom are of an age now they don't walk but they like the social side, so they don't, erm, perhaps engage in the walking and we, erm, we sup, we give them walks every month, every first and third and fifth Sunday, if there is a fifth Sunday, erm, and we range from six miles up to fifteen miles.

**Okay, so that's quite, and do you have then different, both different walks on the same day so you can choose a sixteen or a fifteen?**

**ALK7** Yeah, what they do is they do, say they do a six, a six mile which is, erm, every first, first Sunday and in the summer they, we put it on on the third Sunday as well and there's a ten mile walk on the second, sorry on the first and the third Sunday and on the third Sunday we do a fifteen mile longer walk, so there's, there's plenty of choice for everybody. Erm, I, for my, erm, sins, I'm the, erm, Vice Chairman of the Club and also the Ramble Secretary which means I have to put the programme together, so. [laughs]

**Right, you're the man with all the power is what I'm hearing.**

**ALK7** No, no, no, no, no, I haven't got the power, I just have to put the programme together, get all walk leaders together, so we do put them on a programme.

**Yeah, make sure everybody knows where they're going.**

**ALK7** We've got fifty or sixty walks so it's quite a, quite a job, so, erm.

**And do you find that people want to do the same walks every year or do them the different way round or do people want a lot of variety year from year?**

**ALK7** Well we try to do a little bit of variety but it is very difficult and, erm, if you ask some people, they're quite, erm, they're quite comfortable doing this certain walk and they will do that every year and some people don't mind. To be honest, some people can go on a walk, they walk, erm, with their friends or acquaintances in the walk, they're talking away and in some case you can ask them where they've been and they don't know because they're, they talking all the time.

**Yeah, they're too busy catching up.**

**ALK7** So, erm, from that point of view people don't, you know, don't mind if they do the same walk. I, I personally try and put something a little bit different on, even if it's, you know, a path we haven't walked for quite a number of years, I try and, try and do that if I can, so, erm.

**Yeah, and what's the geographical spread of the walks that you do? So you do all over and because Lincolnshire's a gigantic county of course, so is it mainly.**

**ALK7** It is a gigantic county but we're, we're mainly in the Lincolnshire Wolds, sort of, erm, really from, erm, I suppose really from Grimsby, erm, down to, erm, possibly Horncastle, which is like the bottom of the, the bottom end of the, getting towards the bottom end of the Wolds but we tend to go about, a drive that's only about sort of twenty five, thirty minutes away because people aren't so keen of driving, erm, much further than that because a lot of our walkers are, erm, over sixty I would think, we do have some, we don't have a lot of young walkers in our group.

**Yeah. So you've got mainly retired people who, again, especially if you're doing a fifteen mile walk, you don't want an hour's drive each way when you've done fifteen miles.**

**ALK7** No, although there is a core of, core of fifteen mile walkers who are probably, probably a little bit more, erm, ambitious shall I say, than the ten mile walkers.

**Right, okay, that's interesting.**

**ALK7** They're, they're more sort of, erm, if I said we're going to go, erm, we're going to go forty five minutes up there to do a walk, erm, they would, they would, erm, they would go because they're quite keen but, erm, it's the, the lower walks that people don't want to walk to, to ride fifty minutes to do a six mile walk or they don't want to do, do a ten mile walk, they're not so keen but they do find the fifteen miles are a bit more, a bit more relaxed about it.

**Okay, yeah. And would you say the rationale behind your organisation is really to go out and have a walk in the countryside or are there other elements to it? Do you network with other organisations in terms of campaigning about access to the countryside or about keeping the countryside, you know, accessible and clean?**

**ALK7** Well we are affiliated to the, erm, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, erm, and I say we are affiliated to the ramblers, so we, erm, and we are in very close contact with our local ramblers group because they do walks that go on a, on the opposite Sundays to us.

**Oh okay.**

**ALK7** So when they do their programme and we do our programme, we've got to get our heads together because otherwise we'll be going from, you know, if we're not careful we'll be going from the same place, erm, you know, two weeks running which isn't ideal so we try and, you know, get our heads together and come up, try and avoid that.

**Yeah, well it's sounds very collegiate.**

**ALK7** Um.

**And in the walks that you choose, is it the length of walk that determines where you go or is it the landscape itself that determines the walk?**

**ALK7** Erm, it's, erm, I think we could, we could virtually walk, erm, I think from any, any point if you like to do a, to do a ten mile or a fifteen mile or even a six, so I think really it's just, erm, we've just, somebody says I want to do a walk from A, it's going to be a six mile walk. Somebody might say I want do a walk from there as well and a bit later in the year, it's a ten and somebody can't do one, it's a fifteen, so we can do walks of, adapt[?], of a different length from the same place, so it doesn't really, erm, matter to us.

**Yeah, but do you have to have consideration such as, you know, where people can stop for toilet breaks, car parks and things like that or?**

**ALK7** Well it's car parking that is our major problem, erm. I think the issue is that, erm, over the years the car parking situation causes a bit of a problem because, erm, we have been able to park on the verge sides in some places, on a regular, you know, on a regular basis, it's sort of, a said thing that we go and park on a verge but as you probably know the verges aren't clipped back anymore so, erm, there's sometimes not the, not the room now to park, so, erm, you have then to find some hard standing or a, or another car park and that is extremely difficult, especially if you want to walk, you know, right in the heart of the, of the Wolds, so.

**Yeah, and would you say that is something then that's changed in the last few years, that, you know, the change to the cutting of the verges?**

**ALK7** Yeah, because, well you'll know that, erm, as I say the farmers and councils haven't got the money to, erm, erm, keep some of these verges in this time, at the time of the year they're not cutting them back, erm, so obviously that means that you can't get the cars off the road if you want to park on the verge, erm, there are one, one or two farmers who are very kind of let us park in their, erm, farmyard, erm, and we give them a donation for the local church, that sort of, that sort of thing, only, only one or two of those, erm.

**Yeah, makes a big difference though doesn't it?**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, it, it is a, it is a big problem because also in Lincolnshire they have the, erm, the Lincolnshire Walking Festival which is done sort of the last couple of weeks in May, covering the May, the May Bank Holiday and I know, erm, they have sort of, erm, more stringent rules than us and I think parking does determine where they can go from because they can have a lot more people going on a walk than, than we do.

**Yeah, and whilst thinking about all these different potential walks how often does Alkborough Flats appear as one of your favoured walks?**

**ALK7** Erm, I would think we don't actually go from the Flats, erm, when we do the walk, erm, we go from a, I don't know if you, I don't know if you've been that, we used to go through a place called, erm, Winteringham.

**No, I don't know Winteringham, is that quite close by?**

**ALK7** Well it's just up the river, erm, towards the Humber Bridge, erm, it's probably about four, four miles I suppose from the Flats, four or five miles from the Flats and another place that I know, one of the other local, erm, ramblers group, the REMOVED group go from Burton Stather, which is at the, erm, the east, the, yeah, the west, the west, west of the Flats.

**Yeah, so.**

**ALK7** They do, they do a walk from there.

**Right. So why is it then that people, they may incorporate the Flats in their walk but they wouldn't start from the Flats?**

**ALK7** Erm, I think the fact is possibly that it's, erm, a bit of habit for want of, [laughs] because people who've done, led walks on this, from, particularly from Winteringham for, for a number of years and, and that is where they start.

**Ah ha, yes. So it's just really habit and usage that mean?**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Because there is car parking at.**

**ALK7** Because, as you probably realise if we park at Winteringham which of course is a little bit nearer as well for parking from Grimsby, if you go to, erm, Alkborough, it's, it's, erm, a bit further on, so you actually, you know, that is another issue that you've got, that you've got parking a little bit nearer and, erm, so that's probably why they go there.

**Right, okay. So it's nothing really to, because there is car parking at Alkborough, so it's nothing to do with the site itself, is really just convenience for the walk, yeah.**

**ALK7** No, no, no, no, no, there's not, it's nothing to do with the fact that, erm. No, it's nothing to do with that really, it's just, I think it's just, erm, habit I think is the.

**Yeah, yeah, no, and that's fair enough.**

**ALK7** Certainly creatures of habit in the, in the walking, walking fraternity.

**Yeah, but we're all like that aren't we? We all are.**

**ALK7** A lot of people are anyway.

**Yeah, exactly. And.**

**ALK7** Yeah.

**And I mean how often, because you, just saying before we put the recorder on that you went to visit the site not long ago.**

**ALK7** Yesterday, yeah.

**Yeah, well it's amazing, so was that in anticipation of us having a chat today?**

**ALK7** Well it, it was, but we do, we do try and perhaps, erm, do the walk from Winteringham once a year ourselves, I said ooh well we might as well go do it now then at least I can, [laughs] you know, have had a look at it, you know, and.

**Oh that's fabulous, that's fabulous, thank you.**

**ALK7** Er, yeah.

**So because, before I ask you about your experience on the site itself the once a year, is that just because of actually the different range of walks that you do and that's just the way it often falls for walks that you mainly do them once a year or is it, is there something that deters you from the site or something that attracts you more by another site?**

**ALK7** No, I mean the, the, from my point of view, erm, you know, from a personal point of view we do find that the, the, erm, the path that's on the edge of the, the, erm, the Flats, the sort of, the, one as you go into the car park and turn right there's a, a wide path going down there and, erm, I find, erm, and the wife finds, that it's a very, very stony path and if anybody's got thin soled shoes on, they would find it very uncomfortable, you know, because there's stones sticking up all over the place, it's not, erm, ideal.

**No, but it does make a difference doesn't it? Yeah. So it's almost like it's a deterrent which they hadn't anticipated while trying to make this path.**

**ALK7** Um, I mean we just, you know, grin and, grin and bear it a bit but you do, you do also, if you're not careful, end up walking on the grass verge which I wouldn't think is what you want.

**No, no, exactly.**

**ALK7** No, because of the, erm, the, you know, the insects and various other, erm, creatures that may be there and disturbing habitat.

**Yes, yeah. Oh well that's interesting to know. And so.**

**ALK7** I mean to be honest we've not walked right down to the, is it the breach?

**Yes.**

**ALK7** Where there's a, we've not walked down there because said we must walk down there because once you get down there on the public footpath you've got to come back because there isn't another way round, that's another thing that you'd have to go up there and come back on the public footpath, so that's, that's one thing that might put somebody off in the fact you've got to go somewhere and come back again, you can't get right round.

**Yes, and.**

**ALK7** I know you can't do too much about it because there's no, you'd have, it'd be a major investment trying to make a circular route right the way round.

**But still you think that maybe if there was that opportunity of making it circular that more people would use it?**

**ALK7** Possibly, yeah.

**Yeah.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah.

**Because.**

**ALK7** Yeah, I mean that's, that's our, you know, one of our thoughts about it because it's, erm, you're having to walk a mile down there then mile back, if you put it on a, if you put that on a, on a, one of our walks, erm, I don't think it'd be very popular.

**No, well that.**

**ALK7** You know, to do, to do that.

**No.**

**ALK7** Walking down that, the first bit, you know, I've just described, that's fine because it goes somewhere but the other bit that goes out, is it the Trent Falls and out, out to the, to the breach and then having to come all the way back again isn't really ideal on a, on a club walk.

**No, exactly because you want it to be circular without any divergence really don't you?**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah.

**So the determination of when you go really is just fitting in with the whole club's schedule because one.**

**ALK7** Yeah, I mean because we just went because we just thought oh we'll just go, we, we'll just go off on a, we, and say oh we'll just go and do it ourselves you see, so we, we, as a, as a club we have to get somebody, somebody might say well I'm going to, erm, you know, lead a walk from Winteringham and it's going to be in, I'll lead, I'll lead it in February but necessarily, you know, they don't pick a date, I don't think they'd pick a date necessarily, erm, because there's something more to see, if you like. [laughs] I mean we do have some people who say well we're going to go from this site because this is, the rhododendrons will be out and they go and look at that in one of the, erm, places in, in Lincolnshire but that's the only one I know that they say oh well they just go there because the flowers will be out but, erm, not to go down to the Flats, they don't go down say oh well such and such will be, you know, some birds will be down there or something like that, they wouldn't, they wouldn't, erm, they wouldn't do that because they're not, I don't think they've got, we have people who are bird, bird watchers, some who are, you know, fairly keen I think but, erm, we wouldn't necessarily just go down there because the, some, a certain bird was going to be there.

**Yeah, because one of the things I felt when I was on the site and I don't know how you, if you felt this was the same yesterday and I didn't, I haven't been for a little bit, is that I'm not, it's quite hard to gauge who uses the site in that I don't think there's any say regular users who often use the site, I think people, the birders will come according to the birds and it sounds like the walkers will come if it fits in with the walk but there's not a particular draw that will draw them there.**

**ALK7** No.

**So it's been a little bit challenging to work out who uses the site and when and I just wondered.**

**ALK7** It's not dog walkers is it?

**Well, I.**

**ALK7** That's a possibility because there are quite a few people who see, particularly as it, as it's not far out of the, the village, erm, dog walkers are, are, erm, could, could use it.

**Yeah, that's true, yeah.**

**ALK7** Erm.

**But how did you find it, when you were there yesterday did it feel quite populated by people?**

**ALK7** Well I looked in the car park, so was just looking at the sign because I was interested to say that you'd seen the REMOVED sign or something, I didn't know where that was.

**Yes, oh what a shame.**

**ALK7** [laughs] I didn't know where that was.

**So it was, I suppose, just trying to think now the way best describing it, there, I suppose it's actually closer to Far Ings wetlands than it is to Alkborough but it's in between the two, so if you were to park at Far Ings where the visitor centre is and you walk along the side of the river, it's in a little copse, I mean I'll send you the little, you can't see it very well but I'll send you the little plaque but it's in a little copse just off the side of the footpath.**

**ALK7** It's nothing to do, it's nothing to do with a gentleman called Nev Cole is it?

**Well I don't know, I mean I'll send you the photo, it doesn't have Nev Cole's number on it, it just REMOVED and so it was nineteen, would, nineteen eighty five, something like that? I don't know if that fits in. Maybe it was nineteen eighty seven and yeah, and it was just tucked away in this little copse of trees surrounded by primroses. I thought well that's very sweet, I wonder if you're still going.**

**ALK7** Oh right, right, oh well I was nowhere near that then. [laughs] No wonder I couldn't see it.

**No, yeah, so it was kind of, it's not quite Far Ings but it's not quite Alkborough either, it's.**

**ALK7** Um, yeah.

**It's quite a strange location to have it in.**

**ALK7** Because there is a, we do have a, erm, a walk, erm, that starts at Burton Stather which, you know, up on the top of the ridge if you like, above the Flats, that goes right the way round, erm, down the Humber Bank and finishes in the Lincolnshire Wolds, it's fifty seven miles and it was devised by, it was, erm, done, it's called the Nev Cole way and Nev Cole was one of the founder members of REMOVED Club.

**Got you, yeah.**

**ALK7** But it doesn't actually go through the Flats.

**Got you, okay.**

**ALK7** Because the Flats haven't, have only been there since two thousand and six haven't they?

**Yes, they have, yes.**

**ALK7** Yeah, so when.

**Two thousand and seven, yeah.**

**ALK7** When the walk was devised, obviously it goes along the, the ridge above it but you do get a good view of it, don't get me wrong. [laughs]

**It is quite mysterious really isn't it, to have a plaque from nineteen eighty seven?**

**ALK7** Um.

**For a walk that would have been quite infrequently used given that before then it would have just been a river bank.**

**ALK7** Um.

**The mystery deepens.**

**ALK7** I don't know what, I don't know, erm, I'll have to ask the chairman about that, if you send me I'll ask him and see what he's got to say about that, because he, his father, his gran, grandfather was a founder member as well so he probably knows a bit more about the.

**Maybe they might know.**

**ALK7** About the history of the, you know, that sort of thing than I do but.

**Yeah, well I can definitely email you the picture and you can see what you think of it, you know.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**It's quite small so you'll have to have your specs on but yeah.**

**ALK7** Blimey, magnifying glass.

**I had to get in the undergrowth to take it so it was, you know, it was painful. But when you went yesterday, I mean did you, one of the things we're really trying to find out in the project is if wetland landscapes, people who use them, you know, treat them as different landscapes away from say, you know, mountainous or away from say lowland, do you feel something when you're on a wetland space such as Alkborough?**

**ALK7** I would think that there's, there's certainly more people who are, erm, I mean we didn't see that many people down there to be honest, when they have been down there there's quite a few, erm, down there with their tripods and their, you know, their binoculars and their cameras for taking photographs of the birds, erm, so if you was up in the mountains, erm, or hills of the Pennines, erm, you'd very very rarely, I think you'd very rarely see that because it's cumbersome to carry for one thing, all the stuff.

**That's very true, yeah.**

**ALK7** Erm, and, erm, also I would imagine that, erm, it is something that, erm, can be used by, erm, all, if you're in a wheelchair or you've got a pushchair or whatever you'd be able to go round the, erm, round the wetlands.

**Yeah. So in terms of access Alkborough Flats is quite accessible isn't it?**

**ALK7** Yeah, so, yeah, accessible to all really isn't it?

**Yeah.**

**ALK7** Because, erm, once you get, if you're in, especially if you're on a, in a car, once you're at the bottom it is flat and that, that is, erm, that is advantage.

**Yeah, but I mean.**

**ALK7** Because it is, it is quite a, you know, the, there's quite a slope to come down to it from the village.

**It is, I mean although it's not a huge escarpment it's still quite steep isn't it?**

**ALK7** Um, well there is, one question I was going to ask actually. There's, erm, from Alkborough you can, there's a little path that you can come down, erm, to the Flats, not, not by the road, a path and it's a permissive path and I wondered, it's certainly got a signpost which is very unusual for a permissive path and I wondered if that was a permanent permissive path or if it was one that was, had got a date attached to it because all the permissive paths, erm, usually have a, erm, expiry date.

**Oh I see. So this is not the one by Julian's Bower?**

**ALK7** Yes.

**Oh yeah, okay. I don't know, because that seemed, like you said that was signposted wasn't it?**

**ALK7** Um.

**So I just presumed it was a footpath that has got all the, you know, traditional.**

**ALK7** Well it's not a, it's not a, erm, as far as I know because I have the ordinance survey, erm, access to the ordinance survey maps, through ordinance survey, erm, and I had a look and it doesn't appear to me to be a public footpath as, erm, the main one is through to the, erm, Trent Falls and the breach and the other bit across the bottom to Whitton, it doesn't appear to be a public footpath, it's not marked on there. Erm, now some, some permissive paths are more or less permanent but I just wondered if that was one, as is there another one at the, the little car park at the other end, there's another permissive path and again I don't know whether that's, erm, permanent.

**And this is the one that's at the top you mean, sort of by the stables?**

**ALK7** Yeah, if you, if you went down the main, the road to that little car park that you mentioned then we're on to that bottom path again, the one, I turn right there and just before the gate, there's a gate, just before there there's a turn right and you can walk up and it's supposed to come, it comes to a car park.

**I know the one, I've walked up that one.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah.

**And that's, oh I see, so that's still a permissive path there is it?**

**ALK7** I think that's, I think that's a permissive path, erm, but, erm.

**Well.**

**ALK7** The ones that we have usually in the countryside, erm, are done by Natural England, managed by them and there's usually a map and it'll say this, this path, erm, expires on, in January two thousand and twenty or whatever.

**Oh I see, yeah. Well I'm.**

**ALK7** But there isn't one on that so it may well be that it's, erm, it's permanent somehow.

**Yeah. Well I will ask, I'm hoping to speak to the footpaths officer for North Lincs, as soon as they respond to my email, so I could ask them, you know.**

**ALK7** Um.

**Because actually those are, those, both of those paths are essentially to the footpath of, of Alkborough Flats, both if you're going.**

**ALK7** Yeah, because otherwise you'd only have one.

**Yeah, exactly, and actually because a lot of people will go and visit Julian's Bower as part of going to the Flats and of course if you're at the lower car park and you want to get up to the upper car park, if you've say parked in the wrong place or you just want to walk on the escarpment and have the views you do need to use that path, so, yeah.**

**ALK7** Oh yeah, and of course you can make it a circular walk by going down from Julian's Bower, turn, turn right and you, past the, past the official little car park and then on and right and up and round again, you could, you could possible do that and make that a, a circular walk that way without going down to the breach but, erm, no if you didn't have those two you'd just have one entrance.

**Yes, exactly. I mean.**

**ALK7** One entrance.

**I'll be interested to.**

**ALK7** Which might.

**When I get a chance I will ask them and if I have any information I'll pass it on.**

**ALK7** Yeah, it's just, it's just it makes it, erm.

**Yeah, just for interest.**

**ALK7** Um.

**But it was interesting when you said before that when you went yesterday, so, you know, it's a lovely sunny day, you would imagine that it would be quite populated by people visiting and that it was still quiet.**

**ALK7** Yeah.

**Even on a lovely sunny day.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Can you think, have you got any sort of idea why that may be, why less people are accessing the site?**

**ALK7** Well I think yesterday, erm, to be honest was extremely warm and, erm, I think a lot of people are maybe not as mad as we are and want to go. [laughs] It's, when it's warm, erm, especially if they've got to walk down the hill and back up it again, they might think oh it's too much heat, you know, especially if they're of an age where they, erm, you know, they've got a, an old dog and they don't want to take it down there and come back again and, you know, and also, I noticed that, erm, your research is into the old mosquitoes and insects, that's another thing that might well put people off because, erm, erm, we were lucky yesterday because, erm, we didn't get any, any, any bites but, erm, it, it's unusual not to, erm. I used to react quite badly to bites, they're not quite so bad now but, erm, erm, it's my wife who seems to get bitten more than I do now but we, there's certain places we know to avoid in the summer because of the horseflies and that sort of thing.

**Would you say that the horseflies are more of an issue than mosquitoes?**

**ALK7** I would think so because, erm, there was an incident, erm, only last year I think with the, with the Ramblers, erm, and they had, erm, two or three people who had to seek medical advice after going on a walk.

**Oh no.**

**ALK7** Round these fishing lakes, so, [laughs] erm.

**Oh no.**

**ALK7** So yeah, I would think, erm, it probably is. I mean there's these particular fishing lakes, we, if we walked through them, we don't stop, you know, we don't stop and look, stare, we would carry on and that may well be a thing, erm, and the Flats as well, if they are prevalent to horseflies and mosquitoes, people may think well we'll, we'll just walk through there pretty quickly and get away from the insects, that's another, that is another, erm, another thing because I don't know whether there are any, anymore insects further into the Flats then there are around the edge, I don't know, there's that.

**Yeah. Well from your experience yesterday, I mean it sounds like you went at quite a warm time of the day, you didn't have any, no insects bothered you yesterday on the site?**

**ALK7** Well we didn't, we weren't particularly bothered by any, no, no.

**No, but it's interesting isn't it? So are there some of the walks that you will do as part of your group that maybe you might change, like you said, you might not stop, you might just walk through the walk or is it times of the year that you may not go because you think well look, it's just going to be just unpleasant? You know, how much of a?**

**ALK7** Well it's, it's some, you see, erm, one thing we do do before we actually do take a group on a walk is we do, erm, we reccy the walk, so if we were, if we were going from a particular place and we found that we come across, erm, you know, we, we got attacked by mosquitoes or horseflies or whatever, might think well hang on a minute, we need to be changing the route, so we'd probably just take it out of the walk altogether and go somewhere, you know, go from the same starting point but move the walk to a different, you know, a, a, just do a different route.

**Yeah, but it sounds like that's kind of part of the general risk assessment in terms of, you know, how enjoyable a walk is.**

**ALK7** It is, yeah, we did do that, I mean you can come across, erm, you know, the, the rape fields in particular that, erm, you can't get through. We, we had one the other week when we couldn't get through it but we, we did get through it but it was so difficult, we say well we can't take it, we can't take, bring a group through here so we had to, you know, reassess the, reassess the walk and ended up doing a bit more road walking than we wanted to but just, it's just not worth it.

**Yeah, it's frustrating.**

**ALK7** Especially if it's wet because it's. [laughs]

**Oh, well you get just covered in yellow pollen don't you as well then?**

**ALK7** Pollen or get soaked if it's been raining so it's, erm, yeah. So that, that is another thing we will do if we, if we'd gone down there and, and we intended to, erm, you know, walk part of the Flats and we found it was, there was a lot of insects about we would probably avoid it because you don't know who's on the walk and what their, erm, how resistant they are to the different insects that may be attack us as it were.

**Yeah, well that's it, so you've kind of got to think about all sorts of different issues when you plan your walks don't you?**

**ALK7** Um.

**But would you say then out of the walks that you undertake, that wetland spaces feature quite prominently or?**

**ALK7** Um, no not really, no.

**No.**

**ALK7** No, because there aren't that many wetland areas in Lincolnshire where we walk because it's mainly, erm, arable and pasture.

**Yeah. So on the rare occasion that you do foray into wetlands, does that feel very different from the Wolds walking and the arable walking that you do?**

**ALK7** Erm, yes, it does, I think it's, erm, I mean I, I personally, I quite like walking down the, the Trent there and, erm, up on the, erm, up on the escarpment, then come, then, erm, looking down on to the Flats to be honest. I, I like the view from the top looking at the Flats and looking at all the, you see the water better, erm, but, erm.

**Yeah, I mean I, for me.**

**ALK7** But I mean you can't, once you're in the bottom you can't see anything because it's.

**Well that is the thing isn't it? That's the thing, you can't actually see the breach when you're actually down at that.**

**ALK7** You can't see the breach and you can't see the various, erm, little bodies of water there are.

**No, you're almost too close to it aren't you? That's the frustrating thing.**

**ALK7** Um.

**So it's interesting that I think if you really wanted to enjoy Alkborough you wouldn't go to Alkborough, you'd go somewhere else where you could get a view of Alkborough I think.**

**ALK7** Yeah, well that's it, you can go up on the top then, you can get a view of, a view of the Flats and see what it was because I can remember, when somebody, we did, we did a walk down there and somebody said oh they're going to make this a, you know, to help York with the, you know, levels, levels of water in York, they're, they're doing this, you know, this, erm, particular flats to do that and, erm, but oh, that's a good idea but, erm, we've seen them sort of evolve over time but the, the, erm, the grasses or reeds are very high, so you can't actually see anything now. [laughs]

**That.**

**ALK7** And you're actually walking down you can't see the water very well.

**Yeah, so it's a frustration isn't it because then?**

**ALK7** Um.

**Just because of that actually there isn't such a great view when you're on that lower footpath.**

**ALK7** No.

**Which of course may deter some walkers from going because all you see is a bank of reeds isn't it?**

**ALK7** Um.

**Yeah, yeah, but from your experience yesterday what would you say having gone to Alkborough Flats, what was the kind of main positive element you got out of and are there any negative elements that you experienced yesterday?**

**ALK7** Well I say the, the negative element for us was, was the actual, erm, footpath itself, with it being very stony, erm, that was the only one I think, and we had boots on so you've got quite thick soles but for anybody with a, with, with very thin soles I think would be a bit uncomfortable on there and, erm, I think also pushing a wheelchair with the stones and that, I would imagine it's, erm, a little bit, could be a little bit difficult.

**Quite a lot of hard work isn't it?**

**ALK7** Um, yeah, yeah. I'd imagine so anyway, I'm from, pushing a buggy round on a, with the grandchildren in, I think that's probably, might well be the taster.

**You would actually.**

**ALK7** I think it's a very, I always think it's quite a peaceful place in a sense.

**Yeah, I.**

**ALK7** Erm, quite peaceful and, erm, it's, erm, as I say I do like the view from the top, I think it's quite a lovely looking, you know, with all the water and everything, I think it's, and the Humber at the, the Trent and the Ouse and the Humber, I think it's, erm, you know, a lovely spot myself, erm, quite a, quite a calm place really.

**Yes, I mean I thought that before and I think also when you're up at Julian's Bower and looking over it's quite amazing isn't it? Especially from the lights on the water.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, so I say I, from our point of view I think we, you know, we like, you know, you can see more from up above.

**Yeah, you want a walk with a view.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think that's, erm, you know, what we, we prefer to be, erm, up a bit I think really.

**Yeah. So I get the sense with your walking then, because part of the project is thinking about human health and wellbeing, would you say that, you know, part of your activities in the wanderlust club is about wellbeing?**

**ALK7** Oh yeah, definitely, erm, I think, erm, there's people, erm, who have, erm, have sort of said, you know, I feel so much, so much better being out on a, on a walk, you know, both mentally and physically.

**Yeah, it's very restorative isn't it?**

**ALK7** Yes, yeah, yeah.

**And I also get the sense of the social side of things is really important as well.**

**ALK7** Well I think that, yeah, I think so and I think, erm, certainly in the sort of, the, particularly in the seventies and eighties there were many, erm, very strong friendships, erm, formed, people and they ended up going on, you know, group holidays together etcetera, etcetera but I mean, erm, yeah, we are, we hope[?], you know, we are a very, erm, social, social bunch and, erm, creates, everybody talks to everybody else and, erm, new members are, are welcomed and eventually they, you know, they, they feel part of the, of the, the family if you like to, erm, er.

**And because you had said a bit earlier that the majority of your members are retired.**

**ALK7** Um, yeah.

**Is there, do you feel a sort of, you know, does your group feel a need to try and attract a younger contingent of walkers or do you think it's actually just the reason why it's for people who are sixty and over is people don't have the time until they retire?**

**ALK7** I think that's probably, that's probably, that's probably the case that, erm, erm, it's, it seems to be, erm, more of a, an old, an older person's sort of need if you like to join the club. I mean we do have quite a few, erm, women who walk on their own, you know, walk, I don't mean, you know, come to us and they're on their own if you like so they, they don't like to walk on their own in the countryside, they'd rather be in a group so they can come and walk with, walk with us, so that's, so that's another thing that, erm, can happen.

**Yeah. So it enables people that like walking but wouldn't otherwise be comfortable doing it?**

**ALK7** Yeah, and some people aren't confident in map reading or, erm, they don't feel safe around cattle or they don't feel safe, [laughs] you know, just don't feel safe at all in the countryside, they're on their own, so they think well if we go with a group that's fine, we're all going to be alright, if anything happens we'll get looked after which is, you know.

**I mean I think that map reading element is really important because I've talked to people on part of the project who have said one of the things they like about wetlands is that you've got quite a defined place where you can walk, you know, you can walk around the body of water and you know where you are and there's usually footpaths and that in some ways people have lost their confidence about being in nature and getting lost in nature and being ab le to navigate their way around nature that.**

**ALK7** Yeah.

**You know, that there is this reticence about getting an ordinance survey map and being able to read it.**

**ALK7** Oh there is, there definitely is, erm, there definitely is that, that element and, erm, I do think if people have got something with, erm, very straightforward instructions on, I think they're far better to follow that then they are looking at a map. I mean I personally don't have any, I have to say I don't have any problem looking at a map but, erm, it's probably one of my things, so it doesn't matter to me but, erm, some people I know who are very, very, say well I can't read a map. I mean I don't know whether it's, it, I think it's lack of confidence to be honest, I think if they probably did look at it they might be able to sort it out but they don't, erm, you know, they're straightaway, well I can't read a map and that's it, but if you give them a, a leaflet or a, a little book with something in and say right, well you need to go down and there's a, there's a white gate, you go through the white gate etcetera, etcetera and they're, you know, you go up there, turn round, you'll come to this turn, turn right and they can follow that quite easily.

**Yeah, it's interesting isn't it about that, building that confidence of accessing nature I think? And this is the last section of the interview now, it's about, we've called it Contemporary Social Representations but it's connected to what we're talking about really which is how it is that over time our connection with nature either weakens or gets stronger and, you know, we're really interested in finding out what the general public think about wetlands and whether they have any thoughts on them or they don't think about them at all or whether you think, say the word wetland and they think about a wild file trust where you can pay and you can park and go to the cafe or whether people do understand that wetland spaces are, you know, this incredible mix of different ecosystems according to when water sits on the land and when it goes away again according to the wetland system that's there? And I wondered, you know, from your enjoyment of being in nature, whether you think there's anything that's either increased people's connection with nature or kind of divorced people from nature, what do you think are the different influences either way?**

**ALK7** Well I think, erm, I think, you know, the, the wetland areas, I. We went to another one actually, well I suppose it's a, I don't know if you're familiar with it, there's one near Lincoln called, it's, erm, Whisby, it's more a nature reserve I suppose but there's about six or seven lakes there, erm.

**Yeah, what's it called?**

**ALK7** I wouldn't describe it as a wetland area but it's, erm, there's lakes and lots of birds and, erm, what have you, and there's quite, quite a number of people visit that, erm.

**Sorry, what was it called?**

**ALK7** Whisby.

**Whisby, okay.**

**ALK7** Yeah, erm, and there's another one we've been to at, erm, a place called, erm, Attenborough, near Nottingham, it's a reclaimed, erm, quarry, erm, and again it's a similar set, it's a similar set-up but I mean it's quite a bit bigger than Alkborough Flats, it's, erm, you know, again got two or three lakes, it's on, on the banks, on the banks of the Trent actually, as it happens, erm, but, erm, there's a lot, always lots of people walking, walking round there and I think, you know, the, the, erm, they, they tend to be more looking at the, the birds that are on the edge, the ducks and the, you know, with the children, I think, erm, you know, they're more looking at that rather than the other, because there aren't many birds like that I don't think at Alkborough are there? It's all, there's a lot of seabirds and a lot of, erm. I saw there was some geese, Canadian Geese I think down there etcetera, erm, but, erm, I do think that if you walk, if people did walk through it, there's a lot of people who are very, erm, very interested to see what's going on and if you took some, if you took a group round there they'd be, you know, a lot of them will be looking at it and looking at all the, you know, the birds as we walked past, I don't think they'd necessarily, erm, perhaps linger, I think, you know, they would be interested in, erm, saying well what's, what's going on here? Well it's, erm, you know, I've got the breach and all this, I think a lot of people will be very interested and, erm, I, erm, I think that, erm, if you've got, you know, if they've got lots of, notices about all the different birds, you know, different birds that visit, you know, the signage and everything, I don't know whether I saw anything about that. Was, is there anything down there?

**About the birds you might be able to see?**

**ALK7** Yeah.

**I think there's a board where people can write up what they've seen, so.**

**ALK7** Is there, is there a board with the? Because a lot of places have boards with the pictures on of the birds that you can, that you may see.

**Yes, I am not sure that that is there, you know, I think it's more that there's a chalk board and you can, outside of the hides and you can write down what you've seen that day, so you're kind of.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, but I think for the, erm, non-bird watchers of us, some people say oh I wonder what that is and you can't, you know, you, unless there's somebody who knows, you, you haven't got anything to refer to and I think that's one or two of those, erm, signs maybe.

**Yeah. So what I'm sort of getting from what you're saying is that, you know, that when, when you visit a wetland space you almost want a little bit more information about what you might be able to see.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah.

**And that birds are a big part of it, so, you know, you're not going just to see the light on the water, you'll be going to see the different bird life that will be there as well.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, it's quite nice to see some of the, you know, the, erm, you know, particularly when the, you know, the young, the young birds are, erm, hatched and they're.

**Yeah, and do you think that there's been any sort of cultural influences that have impacted on, you know, people being drawn to those sorts of spaces? You know, so I'm thinking more about television programmes or films or documentaries or pieces of writing or thinkers. Do you think, you know, if you, anything that comes to mind.**

**ALK7** I think maybe, maybe some of the, erm, programmes, such as, erm, you know, like the coast programmes that were on and that sort of thing, if they're, or maybe even Countryfile, if anything like that is, erm, showing some of these areas, I think it may, erm, tempt some people to go.

**Yeah, but do you think?**

**ALK7** I think more, I think more of a visual thing than a, these days, than a, erm, erm, something in the local newspaper or whatever because local newspapers are very, erm, losing their, losing their sales aren't they because everything's on the internet? So, erm, I think if you can see something that's o the TV, that's, erm, quite high profile you may well find that some, you know, it may encourage some people to go.

**Yeah. And do you think that things have changed recently in terms of how people connect with nature? Do you think there's maybe, I mean I don't want to put words in your mouth or anything like that but that people think a little bit more about the environment then they did in the past or do you think actually that's still just certain sectors of the population and most people don't?**

**ALK7** I think it's, I think it's certain sectors, I don't think, erm, I don't think everybody, erm, as a, as a rule think about, erm, nature because you see all these, erm, people who are, you, when you're walking round and you see, oh there's, there's a McDonalds, there's a McDonalds wrapper, there's another beer can, there's another, you know, erm, Red Bull can, there's everything kicking about and some of the, erm, little car parks where nature, you know, there's a, there's a walk and there's, there's litter, there's litter about or there's fly-tipping, so I think, you know, there's certainly a lot of people, there are a lot of people who, who sort of, erm, take nature to their heart but there are certainly some people who just, erm, have a very cavalier attitude and think well while they're somewhere I'll just chuck, chuck some rubbish down there and, erm, and that's it, you know, and I feel, I, I get really, really frustrated when we come across fly-tipping because we have to report it to the local council. So, erm, you know, for them to, as well as sort of signage that we get that we, we have that's, erm, broken or problem on the footpath, we have to report it to the Council but they tell us we've got fly-tipping as well, so that, from that point of view there are people who have a complete disregard of nature, if you like.

**Yeah, and presumably, do you think that level of fly-tipping has altered when there's been cuts to local council provisions and services or do you think it's always been there and it doesn't really change?**

**ALK7** I think, I think it's, I seem to think it's got worse over the last few years.

**And what would you put that down to?**

**ALK7** In some respects I would say, I would say laziness but, but where you see them putting some of this stuff they throw away, it must take a monumental effort for them to get there.

[laughter]

To get down some lanes and throw these things somewhere and I think well my god, that must have taken, but I think it's down, a lot of it's down to, erm, erm, money because they say to somebody I will get rid of your, erm, I can get rid of your, you know, the stuff, the stuff from your, from your extension that we've done if you like, if you give us fifty pound and we'll take it to the local tip and what they do is they go and chuck it away and keep the fifty pound, so there's a bit of a moneymaking effort in it sometimes but, erm, but there's no, there's no regard when people do that, they just chuck it anywhere and I just think it's terrible.

**Yeah, I suppose they think that someone else will sort it out.**

**ALK7** Um.

**But there isn't anyone to sort it out anymore is there? So.**

**ALK7** No, no, and then you see some people who are near a, well I suppose a beauty spot or whatever they like to call them and they, you can see that it's obviously the younger element who have had say McDonalds and the lager and that and just thrown it out the car window because they think well doesn't matter, we're in the countryside, somebody, somebody will sort it out, chuck it out in the country, chuck it out the car window, have no, no regard whatsoever for, erm, any wildlife or, that it may well affect.

**Yeah. So do you think that, you know, that those elements are always going to be in society or do you think it's about education, it's about?**

**ALK7** Well I think, I think you can, as I say I think you can educate, erm, as, as much as you like but there's always going to be certain elements that are not going to be, erm, take anything onboard like that, there's always going to be certain elements like that, you're never going to, never going to get rid of it I'm afraid.

**Yeah, well no, that's, you know, that's that reality isn't it, you know? We can't pretend otherwise.**

**ALK7** Um.

**Thank you so much for your time, it's really brilliant to talk to you.**

**ALK7** Right.

**And I could keep talking to you but we've almost talked for an hour now so, you know, I promised you forty minutes and I've already exploited you shamelessly but.**

**ALK7** [laughs]

**I wondered if, sort of a last note, is there anything you would like to ask the project or would you like to tell the project, I can share with my project team that you would like to pass on, either personally or as part of your group?**

**ALK7** Erm, no, I don't think, I mean I say the only thing I, only comment I had was about the, you know, to ensure that, erm, if there are, erm, sort of permissive paths round some of these, erm, wetlands, is to make sure that they are open all the time and not somebody going to suddenly come along and say well sorry, the path, the path permission has now expired, that's it because that would, erm, certainly have a negative effect on what you're, you know, on the, erm, visit, visiting of them.

**Yeah. Well I will definitely share that with the team and when I get to speak to the chap from North Lincolnshire, Footpaths Officer, I will certainly pass that on and see if I can get some more information about those two specific ones.**

**ALK7** Yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, and I'll let you know if I've got any positive info but I'll let you know how the project comes along anyway, so.**

**ALK7** Okay then, yeah, thanks very much, yeah.

**Yeah, that'd be really, and I really, really appreciate your time, so thank you ever so much REMOVED, that's been brilliant.**

**ALK7** That's alright then, okay and good luck, yeah.

**And speak to you again soon hopefully.**

**ALK7** Okay then, thank you.

**Okay, take care, bye bye.**

**ALK7** Bye, bye.

**Bye.**

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview 8 ALK8

**So thanks so much for talking to me today, I've got a little kind of topic guide that I follow, so the interview follow three different sections.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**The first one is thinking about widening access for people using wetlands, and how can we focus on that.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**And the different senses of place that people get from wetland sites.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**And then a kind of quick diversion to talk about mosquitoes because that's obviously one of the aims of the project is to understand mosquito populations and how they might impact on people using wetland spaces.**

**ALK8** Yes, of course, yes.

**And then the last section is just to think about how wetlands are perceived by the general public, whether they're seen as places of great relaxation, whether they're still seen as sort of barren or unforgiving places, you know, how does the general public know feel about wetlands? Which is a bit of a tricky one but. So thank you very much for your time.**

**ALK8** Oh you're welcome.

**So the first thing just to kind of get things going really is if you could give me a little outline of the organisation that you're involved in.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**And really kind of what you all do and how you do it and things like the age range of the members or the other social demographics of the members.**

**ALK8** Okay, yeah.

**Be really helpful, thank you.**

**ALK8** Alright. Right, it's, erm, a rambling club that I belong to, the REMOVED and we're one of the REMOVED in the country I understand because it started soon after the mass trespass on Kinder Scout in nineteen thirty two. So, erm, a lot of members have been with the Club a long time, which means that basically the average age of the Club is fairly high but, erm, that's a good thing we think, to see the eighty year olds still going out on walks. Erm, the youngest is, erm, she would be one year old now.

**Ooh.**

**ALK8** Who has been sometimes taken on her back, you know, on her parents back.

**Yeah.**

**ALK8** Erm, we've got a little boy.

**Aww wonderful.**

**ALK8** And then the rest are presently thirty five upwards and at one point, erm, a few years ago our eldest who was walking was ninety, so that's very good isn't it?

**Gosh. Yeah, that's really wonderful isn't it? And do you find that when people join they never leave?**

**ALK8** Yes, erm, some people join purely with expectations of walking, erm, and sometimes the social part of it isn't what they're looking for but they become involved in it, so we don't get many that drop out again, they do tend to stay with us.

**Yeah. So would you say that it's half and half, it's people that really do want to do a nice walk at the weekend and like the guided aspect of it or do you think it's also the social side is equally as important for a lot of your members?**

**ALK8** Erm, it's really a combination of the two because a lot of the people who walk in our rambling club are single people, often, often they're female and to walk in the countryside alone is not something that they would try to do and so it's the safety, erm, of walking in a large group and, erm, the couples that come are usually the keen walkers and they tend to do the longer walks. The, erm, single women who come tend to do the shorter walks and we do have a range of walks from, erm, six miles to fifteen, so some Sundays in summer there will be three different walks going on and they all have a walk leader and a back marker, so, erm, people feel very safe when they do walk with us.

**Yeah. No-one's going to get left behind.**

**ALK8** No, we walk at the pace of the slowest walker. I mean you do get strung out occasionally and then you do get plumped together occasionally when you're all trying to get over a stile but, erm, we don't push people to go faster than they're able to and you, you sort out your own level and degree of difficulty really.

**Yeah, so it sounds like it's very inclusive.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Would you say that your club, I mean represents if you like the social demographics of the area that you cover? Because obviously you're, I mean would you say that your members come from urban environments or rural environments?**

**ALK8** Oh well that's interesting, we do have one or two walk with us who have come from other areas. I would say the furthest was Boston or Skegness which is what, fifty, sixty miles away maybe?

**Gosh.**

**ALK8** Erm, because they're walking with local groups and then occasionally want to walk with different group in a different area, so we get a little bit of that, erm, there's quite a nucleus of people who come from the small town of Louth which is just sixteen miles south of us, erm. The bulk of people come from Cleethorpes and Grimsby which is a sort of conurbation where we, you can't really tell where the boundary is between us and then one or two from outlying villages.

**So I mean your geographical spread.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**How do you describe it, you know, are you Lincolnshire only, are you Lincolnshire and Yorkshire?**

**ALK8** Oh yes, I would say we're mainly, yes, I can't think of any one who comes from another county, so, erm, it's North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire that, erm, walk on our walks, we occasionally had a man from Australia. [laughs]

**Oh that sounds curious.**

**ALK8** Because he'd been a member of REMOVED before he emigrated and, erm, on coming back he would, erm, walk with the Club, but that's, that's our most exotic.

**Oh that sounds wonderful.**

**ALK8** Oh.

**And in terms of the sort of remit of the Club, is it solely to do walking or do you do other activities alongside? So for instance do you do litter picking as part of your walks or do you do awareness raising? So do you work with say the Council in terms of reporting broken stiles or?**

**ALK8** Yes, we do do that, I'm the Footpath Officer as well as the media and, erm, the walk leaders will report to the walk secretary, the ramble secretary and he would send their report to me and I will forward it to the relevant authority, and, erm, yes, we do work together in that respect and then we usually send a report back to say in what timescale they would repair the damage or the problem.

**So you, yeah.**

**ALK8** So what was the, what was the other thing? Oh yes, what other things do we do as we go along?

**Um.**

**ALK8** Erm, no, we don't pick litter but then again we don't see it really, erm, I think if you were to walk in one of the more popular woods you probably would but generally the path that we walk along, I can't recall that I've seen litter, erm, but that might be becoming more of a problem and I, I do do voluntary litter picks in Cleethorpes itself, erm, with Anglia Water and Keep Britain Tidy and, erm, it's horrendous, it really is, it's, it's become a problem and it's getting worse, so as I haven't walked out in the country for a while now because of foot problems, erm, I'm probably giving a rosier picture than it actually is.

**Yeah, but your organisation then, you know, aside from the work you do in Cleethorpes.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**That it sounds like it's, the main focus is really on just walking for health and benefit reasons.**

**ALK8** It is, it is, yeah.

**And then you will report things if there are issues about footpaths either being blocked or with stiles being broken.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**But in terms of sort of campaigning, you're not a campaigning organisation?**

**ALK8** No, we're just, erm, stressing the health benefits, the social benefits and, erm, the, and liaising with the various councils to get rid of any footpath problems, yeah. I mean we'd report something if, erm, I don't know, dirt bikes were churning up the path, you know, to make it difficult to walk, that kind of thing, we might, erm, try and find someone to report that to, erm.

**Yeah, but you don't work say in partnership with any other organisations like one of the wildlife trusts or anything like that?**

**ALK8** Well we are affiliated to the Wildlife Trust but I don't think there's a lot of contact between us to be quite honest, I would like to see more but I don't know in what way we'd do it. Erm, and, erm, depending on who the walk leader is, because it's a purely voluntary thing, if you, erm, ask if you, if you offer to lead a walk, some of them like to give a little bit of information as we go along and others are just leading the walk if you know what I mean. So I can think of one walk leader in particularly who used to give you points of interest as you walked along, like little bits of history, erm, or tell you about a flower or a, an orchid or a bird or something like that, you know, it, erm, it really depends on the walk leader as to how the walk is done, some, some don't talk much at all, [laughs] because they're walkers and they're there to walk and others are more chatty and, you know, give a bit of information.

**Yeah, and I guess it depends on for some walkers they like one style, others like another because sometimes we like to walk in silence but as you said.**

**ALK8** Yes, that's right, it's not a very sociable activity in that some of, and the majority of most walks, you're walking in single file, watching the ground, [laughs] so that you don't trip or go down a rabbit hole, erm, and you can't actually walk side by side with people in some, erm, respects. I mean certainly if it widened out you would and you, you do stop and have a joke sometimes or take a photograph or, or whatever but, erm, it's quite a solitary occupation to say you're in a group of say twenty or thirty sometimes but of course when we stop to have lunch that's when we talk.

**Yeah. And so am I right in thinking that you use all different types of landscapes for your walks?**

**ALK8** Yes, we do, we do try to have a variety of walks, we walk a lot on the flat marshland, erm, around Somercotes, Tetney, I don't know if you know, if you've, erm, seen the map of the area.

**Yeah.**

**ALK8** Erm, we, most walks would be on the Wolds because that's very attractive countryside and it's nice to have slopes and hills to walk up and down and, erm, some are along the coast so you get a view of the sea and it really depends on where you can fit in a walk that is a circular walk where there is room to park cars and leave them safely while you go off and to complete that walk in the number of miles that people are able to walk, so a six mile circular or a fifteen mile circular, erm, so those are the constraints upon us.

**So would you say that the logistics comes first then, sort of planning is around the, as you said, where people can park, is there a tea shop along the way?**

**ALK8** Yeah, that's absolutely right, yes. I mean if, if there is a, a toilet at the start of a walk that's a bonus, of course in the countryside you wouldn't expect that but sometimes if you were, erm, walking from a place like Saltfleetby which is on the coast and there are public toilets with a big car park there that would be an ideal starting place.

**Yeah, and do your members give you feedback about the walks that they like the most and if they do, is there a kind of guiding principle that draws them together? So for instance if they like a particular walk, is it the logistics that come first or would you say it's the views and the walk itself that they like?**

**ALK8** Erm, I think that people in their own minds know the countryside so well and because of the constraints on parking cars and circular walks that are possible, erm, we probably don't vary the walks an awful lot, you know, we might go the other way round, you know, we might start, go clockwise one time, next year maybe do it anticlockwise or add a little bump on it or take a bump away and head off down a lane, erm. The walks don't vary greatly but I think the way the walk, the ramble secretary would analyse it, I don't know, I've not spoken to him about it, he would see, erm, which were popular because he does keep a list of how many attended and so you would see what the popular walks would be and sometimes I've heard people comment that, oh no, I don't want to go round Covenham Reservoir because it's boring, you know, so, erm, and get, so it does seem to be the sort of scenery and the variety of scenery that you see on a walk.

**Yeah, that is one of the guiding factors.**

**ALK8** Exactly, in winter, erm, you probably wouldn't want to go on a walk that had a lot of farmland because it would be quite muddy and in summer you would probably choose, erm, woodland because it's cool so, you know, it's things like that that people.

**Yeah, it's seasonality.**

**ALK8** In their own mind sort out whether they want to go on that walk or not.

**Yeah, and would you say within that sort of widespread of different landscapes that you are able to enjoy on your walks?**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**That wetlands are a feature of that?**

**ALK8** They are, erm, well let me think. We're a little bit too far from Alkborough Flats to really go to that sort of area, erm, and we do do them on the marshland here but it's not really what you would call a wetland I suppose because it's drained marsh isn't it? So it's, it's more just sort of flat landscape and drains or dykes as you would probably call them, erm, so.

**So really the thing that maybe deters.**

**ALK8** Can't think that we do, no.

**Oh okay, and would say that the thing that maybe deters you from access Alkborough is simply that it's in a fairly inaccessible part of the county or from where you are?**

**ALK8** Yeah, definitely, I think it's one of the most amazing places there is for views and habitat but it's thirty five miles from here, you know, so I, I personally haven't been up there, I'm sure it must be about twenty five years, erm, but it's also in, in my mind, ooh it would be lovely to go to Alkborough today, you know, that it's, it's just so far, thirty five miles isn't far is it? But on small country roads it can take a while.

**Well this is it and if you get stuck behind something then it's.**

**ALK8** Yeah, yeah.

**It's other extra time.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Yeah, I mean that's a sense I do get from, about Alkborough is it's an amazing site.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**But it's not as well used as other sites just because it feels a little bit further away.**

**ALK8** Yes, that's right, you might find if you were to contact rambling group in REMOVED that they use them quite regularly but I don't think you would find that they go down the slope into what you would call the wetland, they're probably keeping to the path that gives them the view because, erm, people are quite, erm, focussed on walking when they belong to a rambling group.

**Yes, not necessarily staring at the views and waiting for the birds to appear, yes.**

**ALK8** No, that's right, or I mean I, erm, I don't know how many people like me belong to the Lincolnshire Trust as well, I'd like to stop and look at the fungus[?] or the, erm, moth or whatever as I go along, there isn't always that, erm, opportunity but having said that, people would stop if there was something a bit unusual but, erm, no. Particularly the walkers of the fifteen miles and the ten miles they walk at quite a pace, the six mile walkers are a bit more sociable and strolling and tend to be people who like to just look around and hear the birdsong and, erm, you know, see the butterfly.

**Yeah. Now of course as we had spoken before I first contacted you because there was REMOVED at Alkborough Flats.**

**ALK8** That's correct, yes.

**That had a twenty five, had a jubilee celebration for the REMOVED so presumably for somebody, or for some members.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Which would have been in the early eighties then it was an important walk because otherwise they wouldn't have put the plaque on that particular walk so.**

**ALK8** Exactly, yes. Well the history of that is that, erm, Nev Cole was REMOVED and the walk that is from Alkborough down into I think it stops at Nettleton but I'm not sure, is a sixty seven mile walk, linear walk which was named in his memory, erm. So the members of the club at the time, erm, would have probably done that walk more in memory of him or with him before he died of course, erm, and he was a member of the Lincolnshire Trust and to him the countryside and the nature reserves and all that kind of aspect to it was just as important as the walking but of course newer members now, I mean I've looked into his history because, erm, you know, I was doing something about him but, erm, newer members aren't aware of him possibly, erm, unless they've looked at the website and seen what we've put there but, erm, I would say that the long distance walkers, well the fifteen mile ones, milers, would probably have done all if not so much the Nev Cole way.

**Yeah, but you have said also that you felt that that particular route wasn't as popular anymore because of some changes to the pathway.**

**ALK8** Erm, yes. Well our, our, Nev Cole way has got a break in it now, it's about halfway at Stallingborough where a new road has been constructed and they've closed part of it and you can't complete the sixty five mile, sixty seven mile walk in one go now and you either put yourself in danger trying to find a way or you do it two separate parts. So we've been liaising with the Footpath Officer for North East Lincolnshire and he's got the, erm, unenviable job of trying to contact landowners. It's on, erm, land that belongs to the Brockelsby Estate, that there are three different landowners within that and I think one is probably a Chinese businessman or something like that and that's been mentioned, I don't know whether that's true but finding him to contact and getting permission from him has proved very long winded and we still haven't got anywhere. The other two landowners are quite happy for the footpath to be diverted in the way that the Footpath Officer has suggested, so that has made, erm, someone who wants a challenge of a very long walk, erm, has made that impossible to do really.

**Yeah, yeah. And so I wonder if that also then has an impact on people using the Alkborough site because of that.**

**ALK8** Yeah, I think so, yes, that's right, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah. So it's interesting isn't it? Because, you know, if we're thinking about widening access for these wetland spaces and given how wonderful Alkborough is, it's really frustrating isn't it?**

**ALK8** It is, yeah, definitely, yeah.

**There's something that is.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**It's something really, I mean it's not minor because it's a big physical thing to change a footpath but something like that would then deter lots of people from accessing the site.**

**ALK8** It would, yes, one group of people, it's probably not, erm, considering that now.

**Yeah, so.**

**ALK8** Yeah, I think it starts at Burton on Stather actually, the Nev Cole way which is a bit further along the Trent isn't it before you get to Alkborough?

**Yeah.**

**ALK8** So yes, and, and also, erm, they, they would walk by on the highland, I don't think any of the walkers would be deviating to go down on to the wetland as such.

**Yeah, because as you said before if you've got long distance walkers you're really focussed on getting that completed.**

**ALK8** That's right, yeah, yeah.

**And a deviation to maybe look at some reed beds may not be what the walkers, yeah.**

**ALK8** No, no, think that's more like, that's more the realm of the, erm, birdwatchers and plant specialists.

**Yeah, because, yeah, I was going to say, because there isn't any crossover with any of your members whereby they are both walkers and bird watchers and therefore maybe request sometimes walks that will include wildlife or would you say that the majority of your members are walkers and that's their main focus?**

**ALK8** Yes, they don't seem to have a wider interest but, erm, I wouldn't know that without personally, erm, speaking to some of them. I don't meet them even now unfortunately because I'm not walking and we don't have a clubhouse or, erm, that kind of thing, you know, so I don't even, even when I was walking, didn't really get to speak to the fifteen milers because they're a race apart if you know what I mean.

[laughter]

**Yeah, they're the elite athletes of the walking world.**

**ALK8** Walkers, yeah, that's right, yeah.

**Yeah, oh it's interesting, it is really interesting.**

**ALK8** Yeah, it is, yeah.

**But because of course, you know, for me wetlands have a particular resonance because they are, if you like of course they're all managed spaces but to some extent they're less managed, you know, and.**

**ALK8** Oh no, that's interesting about Alkborough, erm, a few years ago, erm, they made the decision to allow it to flood which wasn't, erm, well the last time I went there I don't think it was like that but we had a talk from the Lincolnshire Trust about the managed flooding of the Alkborough Flats to alleviate flooding in built-up areas, so, erm, you know, I mean that's, that's been an interesting innovation and I haven't seen it since that's been done.

**Yeah, I think that was one of the intentions behind that space was to take some of that water load off the more urban areas.**

**ALK8** Yeah, yeah.

**A bit further upstream, and of course then that will change the nature of the reed beds for however long the flooding's there for.**

**ALK8** That's right, yeah, yeah.

**Yeah, but do you think your members, so what I get a sense from when we're talking about this is that your members appreciate all different types of landscape but wetlands are definitely not a kind of standout landscape that they specially request.**

**ALK8** No, possibly not, if, if there weren't, erm, hillsides overlooking it, I shouldn't think that walk would have been set up in the first place, I'll put it like that. I think that it's the, the overview of it, you know, that has, erm, made that quite a special walk to do.

**Yeah. I mean that's, you know, as much as we would love to say that everybody feels a sense of place in wetlands, I think it depends on how you utilise the wetlands I think.**

**ALK8** Yes, yes, definitely, yeah.

**And that maybe they sit within the mosaic of other landscapes, so it's quite nice to have a mixture, so as you said, you can have your uplands and downlands with the Wolds and then seascapes.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**And then the wetlands provide something else.**

**ALK8** They do, that's right, I mean I wouldn't see it like that but whether others would, I don't know.

**Yeah, but you've not had any anecdotal evidence where people have said to you on the walks oh I much prefer, you know?**

**ALK8** Not really, no, no.

**No, that's interesting to know.**

**ALK8** I think that, erm, where we're located, erm, it wouldn't be, erm, they would like the walk but they would think oh that's a long way to drive before we do it, you know what I mean?

**Yes.**

**ALK8** You're just too far away really.

**Yeah, I mean this is the sense I'm really getting from Alkborough is that its wonderfulness is that it's so quiet and removed.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**But the others decided that it may be the thing that deters more people from using the site.**

**ALK8** Yeah, I would imagine so, yeah.

**Yeah. Well that's interesting, that's really interesting, moving on, before we talk about mosquitoes, just a quick kind of reflection on health and wellbeing.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Is that something, the world wellbeing has been around obviously for many years but is it a term that your organisation uses when you think about the activities that you undertake?**

**ALK8** Yes, I think we did, erm, mention something in that in the, erm, on a, on a piece we put on the website because it was becoming a focus for people, their health and how physically active they were and that seems to be why we're getting a steady stream of new members because walking has become the in thing hasn't it?

**Yes, yeah.**

**ALK8** So, apart from the people who jog and do marathons. [laughs]

**Yes, they're a breed apart I think.**

**ALK8** All the things …[29.20] form of physical exercise.

**Yeah, yeah, and would you say that it's not just the walking but it's actually the walking in nature that is important for your members?**

**ALK8** Yes, yes, I would, yes, I think that you're away from traffic, erm, erm, I'm sure most people are really in tune with the environment. I think if we were to walk, if we were to set a walk around the town, I don't think so many would come, I'm sure it is the, erm, the allure of the countryside that's, erm, drawing them.

**And do you undertake the walks in pretty much all weathers?**

**ALK8** Yes, we do, very few of them are cancelled, torrential rain at the start would stop it or snow or slippery conditions, if it was icy.

**But generally it's, you just get your gear on and off you go and.**

**ALK8** Yeah, yeah, I mean there are some among us who are just fair weather walkers but, erm, particularly the fifteen and the ten milers would go whatever because it's not weather it's what you're wearing apparently, [laughs] that's the thing.

**Yeah, I think there's a term in Norwegian which is something like there's no such thing as bad weather just bad clothes.**

**ALK8** That's it, yes, yes.

**And I like that one, you can't, you know, you have to just embrace whatever comes your way.**

**ALK8** Yes, that's right, yeah.

**You know, on the walks that you've undertaken.**

**ALK8** Um.

**Would you say, that it's, that the seasonality of the walks are quite important, the watching of the changing of the seasons, seeing the different types of nature that's there at different times of the year, is being able to access the countryside at all times of the year quite important?**

**ALK8** It would be for me, yes, and I would think for everyone in the club, yes, definitely. You like to see, or particularly the spring when the leaves are coming out on the trees, autumn's a lovely time to walk, you know, it seems very settled and calm and everything's starting to go to sleep, you know. Winter is the challenge, you like the physical challenge of winter, the icy wind or the, erm, or the rain, light rain, erm. [laughs] I think me personally, I would find hot summer hard to walk in, erm, you know, I would maybe have not gone on a walk if it was a really, really hot sunny day. Yeah, they do like the different seasons because I have lived in a climate were there weren't seasons and it was something I miss dreadfully.

**Yeah, it's funny isn't it when it's removed you you really do?**

**ALK8** Yes, you realise what, what you have don't you?

**Yeah, absolutely.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**And I mean this kind of now sort of seeds into thinking about mosquitoes but.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Do mosquitoes ever appear in your walks in terms of either people noting them or people not taking particular routes because of mosquitoes?**

**ALK8** Erm, no, they don't, erm, I've, I've been on a walk not with the REMOVED Club but with Wolds and Countryside service, erm, where we were absolutely attacked by midges which surprised me because I've never really come across midges before and they were awful, [laughs] absolutely awful but, erm, no, erm, mosquitoes don't appear to be something that we suffer a lot from but that might be the places we're choosing to walk.

**But it's certainly not a case that the walks that are determined by avoiding insects, it's just that it, the walking the walk.**

**ALK8** I don't think so, no, no.

**Yeah, and what about other biting insects, like horseflies, have you members talked about those or it's really just the midge clouds that are annoying?**

**ALK8** It's a midge cloud that was surprising really. Erm, no, no, I don't think, erm. If people are susceptible to being bitten which, erm, the mosquitoes do appear to choose their victims a bit don't they?

**Um.**

**ALK8** Erm, those people would put on an insect repellent I think but no, I haven't heard people saying oh I'm not going on that walk, I'll get bitten.

**Yeah, so they've pretty much got low visibility in that case.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**Yeah.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Well I mean that's positive to know, I mean of course we're thinking about mosquitoes in our project because of climate change and trying to.**

**ALK8** Of course.

**Think about how those populations may change or expand with a warming climate but from your experience of walking have you noticed any changes in other types of animal or insect or wildlife population?**

**ALK8** Erm, no, we're just, I'm, I personally look out for things like ash dieback and Himalayan balsam and all that kind of thing but, you know, the plant life kind of thing but no, I haven't noticed, there's a lack of butterflies, don't seem to be, erm, many butterflies around at times but then if you go in a woodland you'll often see lots of moths, so yeah, so yes, erm. No, no, no great difference and of course there's not many birds either I don't think and the, the song birds seem to less.

**Would you say that's in the last few years or actually just a lot of incremental change over time?**

**ALK8** I would say it's over time and I, you do realise when you've lived in a long, a place for a long time like I, we moved around constantly when we were younger and then I've been here, erm, thirty five years now and you do see like one year it'll be green finches and then there's a lot of, erm, grey tits around and I haven't seen a thrush for years but they'll probably come back again, you know, erm, they have their own cycles don't they? So, erm.

**Yes, I suppose that's it, you have to kind of put it into the ebb and flow of natural cycles.**

Yes, I mean one year might suit one type of bird because of the feed available and because the weather's different the next year, they're not here, you know, it's not as, all doom and gloom, they haven't all died and become extinct, you know, they're, they're just in different places aren't they?

**Yeah, but it's interesting just.**

**ALK8** They've got the ability to do that. [laughs]

**Yes, I mean it's interesting you say that about certain bird populations changing because in our, one of our research sites in Bedfordshire they said that they'd noticed that there were fewer swallows in the last few years.**

**ALK8** Oh yes.

**And, and of course, you know, mosquito populations and swallow populations are related because.**

**ALK8** Ah yeah.

**Mosquitoes are a food source for swallows and so you see, so when we've been talking to people asking about mosquitoes they really have very low visibility and as you said.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**The thing that seems to come up is that, actually the bird populations are quite low so there must be a relationship between the two.**

**ALK8** There must be, yes, they're going to places where there are more, more mosquitoes and part of it is also the nesting isn't it? Because we lived in Ely and we had housemartins and swallows but we had wooden, whatever you call them, soffits or fascias or whatever, they could build their nest against those and now everybody's got this uPVC, erm, and it doesn't adhere does it, the soft mud?

**No.**

**ALK8** So, erm, either it's, what they're eating or their inability to find somewhere to be able to make their nests that's, erm, hinging where they are.

**Yes and I'm sure that, as you said, it's this kind of complex mix of lots of different factors all impinging.**

**ALK8** Yes, yeah.

**So, yeah, so for us, you know, doing the research on the mosquito populations, I mean we've also got people doing work on, actual entomologists doing work on ecological surveys of mosquitoes, so we'll know what the data is in terms of where the mosquitoes are but talking to people who use wetlands, who go out in nature, mosquitoes really have a low visibility and.**

**ALK8** Right.

**It's really quite interesting actually.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**There's an unexpected outcome of the project so.**

**ALK8** Well I think with mosquitoes, you're only really aware of them when they're wanting to suck blood aren't you? [laughs]

**Yes, yes, that is true, yeah.**

**ALK8** You know, so I mean, erm, how many times a year they need that food I don't know, I mean is it just that, erm, before they want to lay eggs or? You know, I don't know enough about mosquitoes, although we lived in Singapore and mosquitoes were, erm, a real problem.

**I'm sure, yes.**

**ALK8** Yeah, but, erm, well they said they'd been a problem, they, they were spraying drains with poison which, you know, you really wouldn't want to be doing.

**No, no.**

**ALK8** And you always had a mosquito coil which was a sort of smoky thing that you burnt in your bedroom and, and that was seasonal actually thinking about it, yes, and then, erm, they, they must have had a real problem because by the time we were there, which was the late sixties they did say that Singapore was malaria free, that if you were going to Malaysia you had to take the, erm, medication. So, erm, obviously it has got an impact on humans but you don't want to poison the earth just because of that do you?

**No.**

**ALK8** You know, there must be ways round dealing with mosquitoes without putting poison everywhere.

**Exactly.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**And that's what we're really trying to work towards, which is.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**Understanding how really to sort of live in harmony with mosquitoes because they are.**

**ALK8** Yeah, exactly, everything, everything's got its place hasn't it?

**Exactly because they are very important in the ecosystem.**

**ALK8** Yeah, yeah.

**Just they are an irritant to us when, as you said, the females want to breed and they need our blood in order to do that, so.**

**ALK8** Yes, that's right, yes, I mean if you make people aware of, erm, say the week or two weeks in the year when that's likely to happen then people can avoid it then and feel safe the rest of the time, whereas a lot of people seem to think, erm, you know, you're going to get bitten at any time of the year really. Got to educate people haven't you though, right, today, there's a very bad day for mosquitoes wanting to suck blood?

**Yeah, yeah.**

**ALK8** Cover up or put somebody on or, or whatever.

**I think that's it, I think it's about getting more information and.**

**ALK8** Yes, yeah.

**That's what's also really interesting for us to talk to people who use wetland spaces to say well how do you manage it, you know, what do you do?**

**ALK8** Yeah, that's right.

**Do you avoid certain areas or do you?**

**ALK8** I mean a bird watcher would be very vulnerable wouldn't they?

**Yes, exactly.**

**ALK8** Because they go at, erm, times, like early evening in hot damp weather when they're likely to be wanting to bite.

**Exactly, exactly.**

**ALK8** Yeah, so they're, they're the ideal, because they're sitting targets aren't they?

**They are. And, you know, is it that thing of trying to rehabilitate wetlands to make them enjoyable spaces but also spaces in which you might have to tailor what you wear or what times of the day you access them.**

**ALK8** Yes, yes, no, that's right.

**No, it's perfectly, it's commonsensical isn't it but?**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**And this really leads me on to this section of the interview which is around, we call it Contemporary Social Representations which is quite a long worded way of saying.**

**ALK8** Have to explain that to me. [laughs]

**Yeah, it's basically trying to understand how people now think about wetlands, so if you use the term wetlands is it that they have no idea what that may mean, is it that they image somewhere where you have a visitor centre and a toilet, you know, what do people generally understand by wetlands?**

**ALK8** Yes.

**And of course that will probably break down into your own leisure activities and your own interests, so do you think, I mean you may just be speaking from your own perspective or from your members perspectives that people could really identify what wetlands are or would they see that the coast is different from a reservoir, is different from a marshland, even though they're all different types of wetland.**

**ALK8** Yes, I think they would be able to identify and you don't get to speak to people in depth really, erm, when you're walking but I'm sure, I can think of quite a few people who all this is very important and they would understand it intimately and others who really have just come along to walk and talk, so yeah.

**Yeah. Well I think that for me I think is really, really interesting because it, as you said it's then quite different from say the bird watchers who specifically go to wetlands for the different types of bird life you can have there.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Whereas what I'm hearing from you, from the walkers, it's that just being in nature is wonderful as it is.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**And having a variety of landscapes is important, of which wetlands are one of many different types but not necessarily the draw that's brought them there.**

**ALK8** No, no, they would be passing through I would imagine, yes, it would be on a walk where at one point you'll go through a wetland.

**And as you said before, you know, you were talking about how people, some of your members are specifically doing the walking because of really wanting to improve their health and wellbeing.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**Do you think that's something that has been influenced by say NHS reports or by television programmes or by sharing anecdotes with people of a similar age or a similar social situation? What do you think are the prompts that have brought these people to find your group?**

**ALK8** I think it would be all the talk of health and fitness and the effect of your lifestyle on your potential lifespan, erm. There's been a lot, I mean some of it's conflicting and very confusing and you get fed up of hearing about the latest super food and things like that because it's often refuted a few weeks later but, erm, it is the general awareness of health that's brought quite a lot of people to the club, erm, they might walk along the prom at Cleethorpes and think well I'm fed up of doing this, you know, they want a change of scenery but on the whole it is the actual health aspect of it or they've always been a walker. The new, the newer people coming in, I think it is something that they're doing for the sake of their health because probably they're of more mature years and they're realising that, erm, what they're doing now has an impact and so that's why they're starting to come to us.

**Yes, but do your members ever, or when you've had walks before people talk, say about things like Springwatch or Countryfile, whether that's had an impact on people seeing landscapes or seeing nature in a different way and then wanting to incorporate that in an activity?**

**ALK8** Well that's interesting because I mean to me that's exactly why I go but, erm, there are some who couldn't identify a bird or a tree or, who aren't that aware, so, erm, I think and I ask people if they watch Springwatch or Autumnwatch or Winterwatch and, erm, oh no, no, you know, they, they're all watching a police programme or something like that. [laughs]

**Oh.**

**ALK8** So, erm, it would be half and half I would say, there are some who are avid nature lovers and others who it's still just the physical activity of walking that come for.

**Yeah, oh it's really interesting. I think probably because I'm a bit biased because my husband and I, and our kids, we've always walked, you know, we've always done it.**

**ALK8** Yes, yes.

**In lots of different countries, you know, we incorporate it in our holidays.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**So the fact that somebody would also not do it just because it's good for you rather than also just the love of being in these different landscapes, I guess I'm always quite, not confused by it but I'm more surprised by it.**

**ALK8** Well I am, the lack of, erm, awareness somehow, you know, that, erm, you haven't come to look at this meadow brown butterfly or, or notice that unusual place that you've never seen anywhere else, you know, to me that's what it's all about, erm, more than the walking really and particularly now I don't walk, you know, I still do like nature and everything around me. I'm fascinated by it.

**Yeah, and what do you think, from your point of view, from being a diehard walker.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**What would you like to see sort of happening to encourage people to do more walking in nature or be involved in nature or get outside more? Would you, do you think it's something that should be led at the community level or at the national level? Is it about making public transport cheaper to get people to different places? You know, more toilet facilities, what are the key things you think that are needed?**

**ALK8** Erm, keeping the paths open and having a designated pathway signed because, erm, you could easily get lost even if you're a map reader.

**Yes, that's true, yeah.**

**ALK8** Erm, so I think. Yes, I think the main thing is designated paths where you know where you're going and it does, erm, keep direct, it doesn't just get after two miles and you think well where do I go now? You know, but it's very good in Lincolnshire, I, they're excellent, you know, they do maintain the paths and the signage is good but I've been to other areas of the country where they're absolutely appalling. We want, we had a rambling club trip to the Isle of Wight and just couldn't follow, you know. What we do with the walk round here is if it's a new walk to us someone will reccy it first, you know, a few weeks before just to see if there's any new problems or what the state of the ground is like, you can't do that if you're going on a, a trip to an area a long way away, so, erm, we couldn't reccy the Isle of Wight and it really surprised me because they, they promote their walking and they have an Isle of Wight walking festival apparently but, but the short six mile walk that, erm, our leader had chosen to do was just impossible, absolutely impossible.

**Gosh, how frustrating.**

**ALK8** So that is important because some people are better than others at map reading.

**Yes, absolutely.**

**ALK8** And even with a map, erm, it's not always easy to follow so, erm, the signage is important, the state of the path is important because if it's also used and we're not saying we're special but if it's also used by, erm, people on like motorbikes or whatever, that sort of a path is impossible in the winter because it's all ruck and mud, erm.

**Especially if you want people of all different abilities to be using these walks.**

**ALK8** Of course, yes, that's right and you want to enjoy the walk, you don't want to be thinking you're going to break your ankle at any moment.

**Yeah, no, absolutely, absolutely. Okay, so it sounds like it's actually kind of pretty practical advice really about.**

**ALK8** It is really, yeah, I mean it's useful if you've got places where you could park, you can't really advertise those because you don't want to attract people who break into cars. [laughs]

**Well this is it, yeah, you're caught in a bind aren't you really?**

**ALK8** So, erm, maybe laybys are an answer but that sounds expensive, erm, we do try, it, always a bonus if you start where there's a toilet but that's very rare really.

**Yeah, I think you come prepared for no toilets really don't you?**

**ALK8** Yes, that's right, we have what we call a comfort stop, so the men go forward, we have our comfort stop or, or we go forward and the men have a comfort stop, so yes.

**Yeah, you manage somehow.**

**ALK8** We do, yeah.

**That's been really wonderful talking to you REMOVED, it's been so helpful.**

**ALK8** Right.

**Is there any last thing you would like to share with the project and the project team at large in terms of, you know, information that you think they should know about that we should make it clear to wetland site managers which would help them managing these sites?**

**ALK8** Erm, [pause] I can't think, I can't think of anything really, erm, and we do have some, a lot of wetlands round here, you know, Crowle Marshes and …[51.23] waste and al that sort of area, erm, but no, I can't think there's anything specific to wetlands that, just tell people I suppose where you're likely to be walking in springy turf that goes over your boot, you know, where the water goes over your boots, [laughs] that kind of thing but, you know, we're not, we're not, erm, we don't get too excited about that because you take what you find really.

**Yeah. One thing I didn't ask which I've just thought of now, how many of your walkers bring dogs with them?**

**ALK8** Erm, it's not encouraged and occasionally one will ask if they can and we do say yes because you don't want to exclude them from walks but we have also had a walk, it was one Wednesday evening, where this horse took an exception to the dog and the dog was hanging round us because it was frightened and so we were frightened because the horse kept trying to get to the dog. [laughs]

**Oh I see.**

**ALK8** So, yeah, it can, erm, I mean I would have picked the dog up and, you know, we could have gone round her and then she could have got out of the field quite quickly but it can be intimidating, erm, if it causes problems with the animals that you're coming into contact with but, erm, on the whole we don't get people who bring dogs.

**Yeah, so in terms of the dogs interfacing with the rest of wildlife is kind of.**

**ALK8** Yes, that's the thing, yes.

**It's quite low visibility because it doesn't happen that often.**

**ALK8** And they do stay on the leads, you do ask that they stay on the leads, yeah, yeah, so not many people ask. I mean there was a lady a few years and her dog was perfectly okay, erm, and I think there was someone recently who asked so it really doesn't crop up very often.

**Yeah, oh it's interesting to know just because when I've talked to some wetland site managers dogs can be the biggest issue.**

**ALK8** Oh right, interesting.

**Because of them, because especially ones that aren't on leads because they just go off and obviously disturb the wildlife and birds are trying to nest and things.**

**ALK8** I mean it's bad with sheep isn't it? Very often chasing sheep who are about to lamb.

**Exactly.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**So it's that balance really about enjoying nature and also respecting different types of landscapes and activities that happen in those particular landscapes, so that's interesting to know that it's, that.**

**ALK8** Yeah, I think with dogs because we choose, erm, interesting paths and there's probably a lot of stiles to get over in certain places, erm, people don't tend to bring dogs, they might be dog owners but, erm, their focus is on the walking. And if you've got to have it on the lead, which we would insist on, erm, you're not walking in a natural way are you?

**No, no, that's it, you're slightly contained aren't you?**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Yeah, oh that's interesting. Well REMOVED, thank you again so much for your time, it's been so wonderful.**

**ALK8** Oh you're welcome.

**To talk to you and obviously.**

REMOVED's quite happy to talk to you.

**ALK8** [email discussion – not transcribed]

**And again if you think of anything later you go oh I should have said that to Mary then please just give me a call or email me.**

**ALK8** Okay, yes, I'll do that.

**And I really appreciate your input because it really does make a big difference, you know, when we end up creating these guidelines for wetland site managers to be able to say well actually, you know, these are what these groups need and these are the things that these groups really appreciate.**

**ALK8** Yes, because they've all got a very different perspective from each other haven't they?

**Exactly, and often, you know, when something's going right, we don't tell anyone that it's going right, we only say when things are going wrong.**

**ALK8** That's right, things can be too negative, you need to tell them the good things.

**Exactly, and I think especially for these wetland site managers who are doing a tremendous job of looking after these sites often with limited resources.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**I think it's really important that we're all supportive of each other.**

**ALK8** Exactly, yeah.

**And even if there is something to be said it's constructive and helpful so yeah, that's the aim really is to come up with some really positive outcome.**

**ALK8** Yes.

**So that everyone can enjoy the countryside side.**

**ALK8** And the Lincolnshire Trust by the way, is very, erm, good with volunteers, they get lots of help on these reserve, you know, cutting back reeds and planting reeds or planting trees or whatever, you know, and they are very good at motivating volunteers.

**Yeah. I had a quick word with the Conservation Officer who's called Rachel, I want to say Ballard but I don't think that's her surname, Sterling.**

**ALK8** Oh right.

**No Claire Sterling I think and she was, so I must talk to her about their volunteers because we didn't talk about that the last time we had a chat but that'd be.**

**ALK8** Yeah, yeah.

**Be helpful to talk to somebody that actually worked on the Alkborough site if they had some volunteers there, so.**

**ALK8** Ah yes, yes, yes, that'd be good.

**I'll ask her, yeah, brilliant.**

**ALK8** Yeah.

**Thank you and I'll let you know how we get on.**

**ALK8** Yes, alright then. And I'll send the form to you.

**That's wonderful, lovely.**

**ALK8** Right.

**Thanks so much REMOVED.**

**ALK8** Bye.

**Bye, bye.**

END OF INTERVIEW

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**ALK9** Okay, so if, I'm a teacher, I work for Ofsted, I do a lot of local history, so if you like my, my interest in places like Alkborough is from the background of someone who's both a historian and a geographer, who loves landscape and history and the interconnection of them.

**Yeah, wonderful.**

**ALK9** Okay. So, erm, I was, over the years I've done a lot of writing on things like Lincolnshire folk tales and that sort of thing.

**Okay, wonderful.**

**ALK9** And my current interest is sort of developed from the Gainsborough where the Pilgrim Fathers all came from, there's a lot of along the Christian heritage, history of the region is what I'm particularly focussed on in my research at the moment.

**Wonderful.**

**ALK9** Apart from the totally different book I'm doing on school inspection in Europe.

**Oh my goodness.**

**ALK9** Because that one.

**You're busy. So are you still teaching? Is the local history side of things something that you do in your spare time, are you able to incorporate that more in your day to day life?**

**ALK9** Yeah, so I, I had quite a senior position with Ofsted which I'm just retired from, I run my own consultancy for school leaders, which actually I do a lot of work in North Lincolnshire although never specifically in Alkborough but the (unclear) is the nearest of them.

**Yeah, but then you know the area and I'm presuming that the.**

**ALK9** I know the area and I obviously do a lot of work just the other side of the Trent, you know, sort of, The Carrs region generally.

**Okay, wonderful, and.**

**ALK9** So that's, that's my background, erm, I'm, I'm interested in places like Alkborough because of the stories connected with them, which often connect to the landscape and rather than because of the wetlands specifically if you see what I mean.

**Yes, well I mean as I said to you on the email I think we've got a lot of things in common really because, you know, the landscape exists without us being there but, you know, we are very dependent upon the landscapes within which we live and they feed into ourselves as humans and our common cultures and our common activities and it's really that interconnection between humans and landscape that we're really interested in in the project.**

**ALK9** Brilliant, okay. So my, if you, my earliest book on Lincolnshire, which I wrote in nineteen ninety called REMOVED, so that has two of the Carrs stories in it, erm, and there's one about the moon and the, one about sort of the one about boggart and other things that didn't believe lived in there.

**Oh how wonderful.**

**ALK9** So that's, I've long been interested in that type of thing.

**I shall look that up.**

**ALK9** You can get that for about one pence on Amazon because it's been in print for years.

**Listen, we all know that money is valueless, it doesn't mean anything.**

**ALK9** The trouble with, the trouble with being a writer in the fifties, that sort of stuff is in the old days your books used to get reprinted and you make, you could make some money of it, nowadays because of the round and round of Amazon marketplace.

**Well this is it isn't it? I mean it gets harder and harder actually for authors to make a living, that much is true.**

**ALK9** It does, so if you, if you go back, if you get hold of that book, there's a story called the REMOVED for example, and there's a story called REMOVED.

**Ooh, REMOVED.**

**ALK9** They're, they're just two of the stories from the, from The Carrs, and basically what I do, I dig up old stories and retell them for the modern reader and that.

**Yeah, that's really interesting REMOVED because ass part of the project, because we're interdisciplinary, we have social scientists like myself, we also have entomologists doing work on the mosquito trapping and surveying and we've also got three artists working with us as well and one of the artists, we have a sound artists and we have, she wouldn't describe herself as an installation artist but she does kind of work in situ and people can then come and respond to.**

**ALK9** Um.

**And the third one, Victoria, she does creative writing, so it sounds like you and her would have some common interests, because she's really interested in folk stories and folk tales, now most of her work is in Somerset, she's not really working on the Alkborough site but would you mind if I mentioned you to her and that she might well be interested.**

**ALK9** Yeah, I mean I suppose be interested to know because do similar sorts of stories appear in similar wetlands?

**It would be really interesting to compare them across the sites wouldn't it?**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Yeah, well that's wonderful, her name's Victoria Leslie.**

**ALK9** [Victoria discussion - not transcribed]

But now just sort of filling you in on the rest of the detail, so that, that's sort of where I got interested and then a few years later I did a book called …REMOVED which had affection on Alkborough.

**Oh okay.**

**ALK9** That, that covered the, the maze and, you know, that sort of thing and the little thing in the church porch that you can see and that, do you know?

**Yeah, I've been to Julian's Bower but when I went up the church wasn't open so I wasn't able to see the labyrinth inside the church unfortunately.**

**ALK9** Okay, so but that, that sort of, the rural churches, so that was covered in that. Now more recently, erm, I've, with the sort of Pilgrim Fathers stuff, erm, I did a book called, it sounds like I'm doing an advert but I'm not, I'm not really, I'm just explaining the development of my interaction with it.

**Sure.**

**ALK9** Erm, this book, which is called REMOVED, which is basically about how people from this area, by which I would include the sort of lower Trent Valley, what we're talking about, changed the world through their, through their faith but it wasn't just the Pilgrim Fathers first Baptist work on Gainsborough, the first Quakers were around, all sorts of people like that but, erm, that, it got me really interested in the Ancho {Isle of Ancholme} side in particular.

**Yeah, about what drove them to leave this particular site and move overseas, I mean.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**I mean you think about it don't you and your life about what would you take such a huge unknown endeavour and such a difficult journey that, you know, their faith must have been just so strong and their motivation and their sense of community must have been so strong.**

**ALK9** And it's, I mean even, it took them two weeks to cross the North Sea to Holland. [laughs]

**Yes, this is such an endeavour isn't it?**

**ALK9** That's what travel was like, erm. Anyway, so particularly I think it might be related to you, erm, I, I then got interested in the, the drainage of the Carrs and the Ancho people {isle of Ancholme}. Now obviously that's not quite Alkborough but it's almost because it's essentially the same community just happens to be on the other bank of the river, erm, and some of the, some of the folk stories for example were, were playing around, they, they will make excuses that the Dutch, the Dutch drainage people disappeared at night and were found dead in the dyke and that was blamed on the boggart, you know. So there's, so there's that sort of thing, erm, and right, the, it was, I don't know how much you know about this but it was highly political because the Crown was, tried, tried to do all the drainage and that was tied in with the civil war and there was a lot of rebellion against it.

**Okay, now I didn't know, no I didn't know any of that actually.**

**ALK9** So, erm, because of the Carrs were sort of more of a common land, someone coming along and draining them was very threatening to the ordinary people so they hated the Dutch. Erm, I'll tell you an interesting little story, the, erm, the Dutch had their own community at Sandtoft and they, they even had their own church and it was, they were so hated that it was, it was destroyed during the civil war and I find the font from it in somebody's garden and not on a building site. [laughs]

**Wow.**

**ALK9** Because some, some guy collected it and it stayed in his garden for two hundred years and nobody knew what it was. [laughs] So there's a vast amount of dearth of, of those sorts of stories and then, erm, what we particularly do with our tourist side because we tried to develop tourism for our community is Wesley and the Isle of Axholme. I think Wesley is a really interesting character for you to look at, erm. For one, one thing he used to go swimming in the dykes, which is quite unusual but he had a real connection with the landscape and a lot of his journals, if you, you can read his journals online, when he came to the area he, there's stories about him getting lost crossing The Carrs to Epworth at night, erm. There's a story of a women who fell off her horse and drowned while trying to cross The Carrs that he, he got a sort of theological message out of and the, the famous story of him nearly drowning while crossing the river but he had a real connection with the landscape.

**So what I'm hearing as well is that the, you know, the watery side of things, the dykes play a massive role in terms of local stories.**

**ALK9** Yes, they do, yeah, yeah, erm, and, you know, whether it's at Ely or whatever, but it's, it's really interesting how, how you can see the landscape when, through his, his journals, when he comes back to the area, he came back every two years because he, he did love Epworth and Axholme.

**Yeah, so can I ask you? So the, you know, the.**

**ALK9** He went to Alkborough by the way.

**The tourism side of things, so your pilgrims tours.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Is, is that something that you're doing alongside a local history group, is this your own endeavour as an interested?**

**ALK9** It's a, it's a community interest partnership, so it's, it's a non-profit thing and idea, the idea is to try to bring people into the community by training up local people to be guides, get the churches organised and open, erm, and all that sort of thing and connecting with the Council and that, and that sort of thing but it's, I don't do it for money.

**No, wonderful.**

**ALK9** I'd, I'd starve.

**Yes, that's it. Well this is the thing, the most interesting things are always done for love aren't they?**

**ALK9** Yeah, and what we've managed to do out here is, is shape the story a little bit because the, erm. For a start you find that nobody realises that Wesley and the pilgrims came from the same area, quite interesting.

**No, no, yeah.**

**ALK9** And most of the stories were written by Americans and they miss out very important local women for example, so.

**Yes, that's a very good point.**

**ALK9** They changed the story a little bit.

**Yeah, so you're doing it from the ground upwards.**

**ALK9** Yes, yeah.

**And can I ask you, so as part of this, is Alkborough part of your sort of tourism overview? Is that?**

**ALK9** Well we're sort of, we're sort of centred on, I suppose Retford and Gainsborough, they're, they're the main places. Erm, and other places sort of Bawtry, Austerfield, they're, they're involved, erm. North Lincolnshire we've had no engagement with at all.

**Is that because you've decided not to go and approach them or because it's quite hard to make the contacts there?**

**ALK9** It's quite hard to get a permanent contact so for example one, one of our, our group, erm, now works the West Lindsay and Bassetlaw, erm, but there's no, there's no connection with North Lincolnshire. Even though I do a lot of schools work in North Lincolnshire and I've, I've tried to engage with people there but, but not a lot and I've never tried to engage with them at Alkborough.

**No. So, I mean, because it's interesting you saying that because as I said at the, you know, when we first started our conversation that I've been finding it quite difficult to make contact there and I wondered if you, from your own experience, if you can maybe assess why that is?**

**ALK9** Erm, I, I think a lot of this depends entirely on getting somebody, finding somebody who can see what you're on about, erm, and I, I find it really frustrating, anything to do with this sort of thing. People have preconceived conceptions and they're, they're either interested or not or they think they know about it, you know, and, and you have this sort of fixed local attitude that you have to compete with. So one of the fixed local attitudes was well Gainsborough versus Retford or Retford versus Worksop, you know, if it's in Retford it's not interesting to people in Worksop and a lot of this.

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**Yes, it's all very, very parochial isn't it?**

**ALK9** Yeah, and I think around Alkborough you've got a very specific landscape. Some people love that sort of landscape and others just don't see it and also sort of local stories are interesting but you've got to develop them. So my other favourite thing I ought to mention to you, Countess Close. Now that's not wetlands but it's right next to Julian's Bower, Julian's Bower.

**Yeah, it's called Countess Close did you say?**

**ALK9** Yes, yeah.

**That's an interesting name.**

**ALK9** Yes, well it's named after the Countess of Warwick I've discovered.

**Oh okay, so what is it exactly? You're saying it is a wetlands or it's not a wetlands?**

**ALK9** It's, it's, well it's on the upland bit, just behind where Julian's Bower is.

**Yeah, okay, and if I was to go there and look for it, what would I be seeing?**

**ALK9** You'd see a, you'd see a field of grass with a bit of, erm, bit of, an upraised bank round it but what, what's interesting is to me, erm, is there, there were, it connects to the pilgrims because there's a group of, a couple of women who were extremely rich and capable and they funded a lot of the purists and rebels and one of them became Countess of Warwick and she gave that land to fund education for bright young men to go to university and become good purists. Also quite near there there's a place called College Farm, which is the same reason, it's funding college place in Cambridge.

**Yes, ah now that explains it because someone mentioned to me that there was a farm and the land was owned by Cambridge University and I was thinking why would Cambridge University buy a piece of land all the way out there?**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**So.**

**ALK9** Well that, that's why, erm. Now what, what I like is the connecting all the different people up together you see, so that for me is really important. If you go to a church called, at Narford, they, oh you can look it up on, online but just the most fantastic tombs there and a couple of them had this women on.

**Okay, they had the Countess on.**

**ALK9** Countess of Warwick, so with her first husband and then she married the Earl of Warwick and she's up on the wall with him but the tomb with her first husband is just great.

**Oh fantastic.**

**ALK9** It's just the most amazing little church.

**And which village is that in please REMOVED?**

**ALK9** Narford.

**Wonderful, wonderful, thank you. And can I ask you, so when you've been doing your work on the Countess Close and on Julian's Bower, have you had much interaction with the church or the parish councillors in Alkborough or have you been doing the research yourself separately?**

**ALK9** I tend to do it myself, erm, occasionally you come across somebody in a church who does know of the history but a lot of the time they, they don't really.

**No, no.**

**ALK9** You know, erm, and for example, erm, there is the, this, this woman I'm talking about, she came from Glentworth and which is just inside of Gainsborough and if you go to their church, there's this fantastic tomb and the Lord Justice and his wife and the four daughters and his son on it, erm, and they are so important for, you know, the development of America and the puritans and the pilgrims, there's nothing there, nobody knew anything about it and.

**No, I mean what you're saying is very inspiring REMOVED because.**

**ALK9** And I can, I can go on for hours.

**No, it's brilliant, it's really brilliant because of course, you know, I go to the wetlands and I see the wetland and what I see is a managed site that is both riverine but also semi industrialised as well because you've got the Drax power station.**

**ALK9** Yeah, yeah.

**And inside with Julian's Bower which, you know, obviously has a little bit of mysticism around it, what's it doing there on that particular site and I hadn't really made that link with the fact that, you know, this whole area is linked to the development of America, I mean it's quite amazing.**

**ALK9** Yeah, well they actually, they actually left from Gainsborough. Gainsborough waterside is where the women and children got on the boat and then the men went over the land to more or less where the oil refinery is now at Immingham and they met, they met up there to, to travel to Holland, so they actually would have gone down past Alkborough Flats on their, on their way to their new life.

**Yeah. Can I just quickly ask you, with the work that you're doing, both in terms of your local history work and in terms of the development of the tourist side of things, do you have many connections with the Council or with schools? I mean, you know, I'm trying to understand how you're connected in with the local organisations in the area.**

**ALK9** Well we're connected, well connected with Bassetlaw and West Lindsey because some, somebody, Dr Anna Scott, she, she works for both now.

**So sorry, I didn't hear which organisation she works with.**

**ALK9** Basset, she works part-time for Bassetlaw and part-time for West Lindsey.

**Okay. These are.**

**ALK9** But they're quite useful, and also there's a sort of network the Mayflower 400 and that, that brings in people like Lincolnshire and, and Nottinghamshire but I never hear any reference to North Lincolnshire.

**Okay, alright, that's interesting to know.**

**ALK9** Erm, also, oh the Aegir, that's another one.

**What's that sorry?**

**ALK9** The Aegir, the tidal wave on the Trent.

**Okay.**

**ALK9** Erm, have you talked about that at all with anyone?

**No, I haven't, no.**

**ALK9** You know about it?

**No, I don't. [laughs]**

**ALK9** [laughs] Okay, Aegir. And which is pronounced eagier probably although people call it all other names and the E is the north dob of the sea of course. So, erm, that's a, like the Severn Bore which is much better known, that is a wave that comes up the Trent.

**Okay, on the spring tides?**

**ALK9** Er, yeah. I mean the, the Environment Agency used to have a website that told you when to see it but it seems to have disappeared. If you, if you go on Google you'll find lots of old postcards of it.

**Okay, how wonderful.**

**ALK9** Erm, and that's obviously part of it. Now my favourite story about that is you know King Canute?

**Yes.**

**ALK9** So you're, what you know about King Canute is he tried to stop the waves.

**Yes.**

**ALK9** So there is a local tradition that that was him trying to stop the Aegier at Gainsborough, he definitely stayed at Gainsborough.

**Yeah, why's it got such an unusual name?**

**ALK9** Well it's, it's a Norse name and, and the E is the Norse for water, their god of the sea was, was the same word, erm, that's why you find places that are near water like Ely, often, often have an E sound in the name.

**Oh I see, okay.**

**ALK9** And, and another one that's quite interesting, is you get on the OS map, erm, in the marshes and things in Lincolnshire, rivers are labelled EAU, yeah, and correctly that should be EA but according, according to legend when the Ordinance Survey people came round they asked people what it was called and they said the E and they thought they meant it was the, the French Eau, Oh, with a U on the end.

**Okay, so it was a kind of mishearing which has lasted the test of time.**

**ALK9** Yeah, but the lowest, for example, Bardney, you know, Whittlesey, places with an E on the end are often island or near, next to water, Mattersey near us.

**Yes, oh interesting. So I.**

**ALK9** And the sea of course.

**That makes a lot of sense. So, you know, I love the idea that they use that connectivity with water which brings me back to thinking about wetlands and.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**I wondered if you, I mean because the project really is trying to develop this idea of a sense of place, so through the work that you've done and particularly thinking about your like visits to Alkborough, do you think there is a definite sense of place that you, you gain from these particular landscapes?**

**ALK9** Well I, me, yeah, because I, I love them.

**Yeah, and what in particular is it that draws you to them?**

**ALK9** Well I, unlike a lot of people I sort of quite like the flat open sky, yeah, I think the sky is a, is a key part of the landscape.

**Yeah, it's interesting isn't it? We think it's divorced from the landscape but it's all part of it isn't it?**

**ALK9** Yeah, and what, erm, I mean my home territory is that sort of area just north of Lincoln and what you notice there is you can say there's an enormous amount of sky and the same's true of the Fens, when you actually stop and look at it, erm, and that's sort of, that sort of, and part of childhood, my parents moved to Kent and we lived on the Kent Marshes, so. [laughs] That came from there as well which is quite similar.

**Yes, so you're a marshes boy really in lots of ways then.**

**ALK9** Yeah, and I live next to the Trent now so.

**Yeah, wonderful, and I mean would you say that the work that you do that wetland landscapes are a kind of key part of it?**

**ALK9** I, I think, erm, that particularly when we take them to, take them to Epworth, we really try to explain the nature of it in, as an island in the wetlands, and, and there's a place you can go in, in Epworth round behind the parish church, where you can, where you can see the landscape very well, so we're, we would explain about that.

**We, we.**

**ALK9** And also sense of place and linking up with schools and everything, I think probably someone needs to actually go and work with some of the primary schools to help them do that. The biggest problem is most primary school teachers don't have any direct connection with where they teach and so somebody lives, who teaches in Alkborough for example may live in Grimsby and have never been to Alkborough Flats.

**Yes. Which seems quite extraordinary doesn't it given how small Alkborough is? But I wouldn't be surprised.**

**ALK9** Oh I, it would be the norm, it would be the exception to find somebody who's really aware and interested.

**Yeah, so.**

**ALK9** Well I have been in Alkborough School but if if you go to Alkborough School there isn’t anything about the turf maze at all.

**Yes, I mean I haven't been to the primary school no because partly it's because we need a different set of ethics forms to actually work with children and.**

**ALK9** Um.

**So, you know, that, it's not discounted but it's.**

**ALK9** But you could work with the staff, that's the thing.

**You could work with the staff but inevitably you'd need.**

**ALK9** To train the staff to have, to know what to do.

**Yeah, yeah, I mean in fact that may be one of the outcomes of the project, is to, you know, maybe be able to gather together some information that schools can work with but as always with these projects, you have to get the core activities done first before you can do all the other things as you well know.**

**ALK9** But that's, they all, they all love forest schools, they need wetlands schools.

**Yes, it's true and I mean do you think that Alkborough is an unusual site because of the escarpment which then gives you this view over the Flats?**

**ALK9** I, I think so, do you know about the house there, the captain's house?

**No, I didn't know about the captain's house.**

**ALK9** So there's a, there's a tall house with a sort of an extra storey, erm, and legend has it that it was built by a chap whose boat sank at the river mouth and his wife drowned, he wanted to always live somewhere where he could see the place where she died.

**Ooh gosh.**

**ALK9** So that, that sort of thing I think really connects the person and the landscape nicely.

**Yeah. So how do you find out these stories, do you go through historical records or do you talk to local?**

**ALK9** Yeah, I mean a lot of them came from, for an example in the eighteen hundreds there were, a lot of people went round collecting stories. They wrote them up in, erm, lists called Notes and Queries that they, that a lot of them would be written up into and then, erm, a woman called Ethel Ruskin wrote early folklore books so people collected them in the same way, there's a guy called Percy Grainger who collected folk songs and so it was, it was people doing that sort of thing who, who collected up what the rural tradition.

**Yes, I mean what an amazing thing to do with such foresight that they might at one time be lost.**

**ALK9** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**So one thing I'm really interested in, so you talking about getting the, maybe training up the teachers has made me think really about accessing the site and what would you say, I think encouraging local people to visit the site through, you know, through the use of, through the school, through education of the school is, I think's a really wonderful suggestion but is there anything else do you think, thinking about Alkborough that, or thinking about wetlands generally that could help improve access and? Because we're really keen on understanding how we can encourage people to use wetlands and enjoy wetlands.**

**ALK9** I think you need a sort of, a sort of starting point and I'm not really so familiar with Alkborough but further down the road there's a sort of, a car park with interpretation boards that can be used quite a lot towards, more towards Burton somewhere I think, erm, and I, I think people need a bit of interpretation and they, probably in the landscape, they need something to go to and see.

**So they need sort of orienteering points really.**

**ALK9** Yeah, and the other thing is, and I'm not, I've tried this with the tourism thing, it seems exasperating, they sort of, they need sort of something people go and take a picture of that then becomes this identity. So, you know, in fact with the pilgrims, I'm trying to get people in Gainsborough to build a memorial on the waterfront where they go on the ship and the idea then is people take a picture of it, they put it on Facebook and stuff like that and it becomes what pops up on Google when you put in Gainsborough. Erm, what comes up when you put in Alkborough is probably the maze, people take a picture of that but what do they take a picture of on the wetlands? What, what's the identifier?

**True, yes, yes. I mean and you get a lot of.**

**ALK9** And stories, like, erm, a poacher or the captain or something like that, and then you've got a picture of him down there, helps the, helps provide a way in.

**Yeah, I think that's really interesting because we normally, it's interesting because when we think about access a lot of people will actually think of something physical, you know, like a car park or a set of toilets or something but I love the idea that access can be access for your mind as well, something that will really draw you in and capture your imagination, so I think that is a really wonderful suggestion, fantastic, and.**

**ALK9** It's about, it's about image and, and something that people can identify rather than wetlands is, we sort of vaguely know what it's like but we're not quite sure what we're going to see.

**Yes. There needs to be, as you said maybe some sort of galvanising hook that will get people interested.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**And thinking about improving access could you say for you, from your perspective, what would you say are the main benefits and possible disbenefits of using wetland spaces?**

**ALK9** Er, that I would associate them with openness and, you know, being able to get the wind into your hair and that sort of thing and, and peace and tranquillity. The disbenefits I think is, erm, that lack of a real focus. So it's a nice place to go and walk with dogs if you've got a dog but what else do you go there for?

**Yeah. So maybe that's indeed what deters people because if you aren't a dog walker and you're not a bird watcher you may not be drawn to that particular landscape because.**

**ALK9** That's right and I'm trying to, I'm trying to think where the car park place was further down but I stopped there to eat my sandwiches between one school and another and all the people who, who pass and got out of their cars had dogs, erm, there was, there was nobody else at all.

**Yeah, I mean that's what I've heard a lot actually, I mean and the time when I was there, yeah, there were lots of, there were some birders and there were some dog walkers and there weren't, you know, there wasn't any other kind of activity going on, which is quite different say from some of the other sites where people may be, maybe drawing or some people are reading or some people are, yeah, you know, cycling around, there didn't seem to be anything like that so.**

**ALK9** Yeah, well it, I mean cycling it's, it's the ideal for cycling I'd have thought, erm, but you need, other people need something else.

**Yeah, yeah, so maybe a story.**

**ALK9** Where the car park, well there must be at Burton, there must be near Burton Stather isn't there, a car park?

**There's one, yeah, there's one at the bottom which has the disabled sign on it, which makes you think it's only for disabled people but it isn't and then there's one that's higher up that's higher up on the top of the escarpment, which is just a little way out of Alkborough but that's not so easy to find if you don't know to look for it, I knew to look for it but if you didn't, if you were just driving there you may not know where to park.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Thinking about, because another aspect of the project that is focussing on human health and wellbeing, so would you say that if you like the activities that you undertake, are they connected with wellbeing?**

**ALK9** Er, well our heritage stuff I suppose you could say is connected to spiritual wellbeing, erm, but I wouldn't say it was particularly about health and wellbeing, what immediately comes to my mind is that places like this would associate with marsh ague in the past because.

**Yeah. [laughs] Well that's it, I mean that's another side of the project that we're also exploring with some of our historical work about the connectivity with marshes and this idea of sort of foul gases and, you know, bad humours and things like that and I suppose that's why we're really interested to know.**

**ALK9** Willow, Willow the Wisp.

**Exactly and really interested to know whether those, that those associations are still there with people or whether people see wetlands very differently, whether they see them now as, you know, sort of leisure sites and sites to go in and as you say, walk the dog and take the air and actually they've kind of repositioned themselves, we're quite interested in that shift.**

**ALK9** Yeah, I don't think we worry about malaria so much now but as the climate warms up who knows?

**Well, you know, it's interesting you say that because of course part of the project is looking at mosquitoes.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**And the reason we're looking at mosquitoes is exactly that, if the climate, well the climate is warming we know that and so that means there is a great potential that different kinds of insect populations will move according to those, that warming climate and so we are thinking, trying to think ahead, plan ahead about mosquitoes, so I wondered when you've done, when you've been, when you've been working in your, you know, various wetland sites, have you ever had mosquitoes or biting insects as an issue?**

**ALK9** I could talk to you about going to Scotland, I don't, I don't remember it ever being a problem.

**Yeah, so it's never one of those things where you think I would like to go and sit in that wetland space and have my sandwiches but I'm not getting out the car because of biting insects?**

**ALK9** No, I'm not aware of having done that.

**No, and through the work you've done, have mosquitoes or has malaria ever been present in any of the stories that you've picked up?**

**ALK9** Erm, not that I can think of but you do get quite a lot of references in the sort of, the eighteen hundreds to marsh ague, erm, it does, it does get mentioned quite regularly.

**Yeah, and if one of my colleagues wanted to go and look at those particular records where would they go to try and find that data, would that be, I don't know, in Boston or in Lincoln or?**

**ALK9** Erm, I'd, I'd have to think about that because whether the Boards of Health in those days would have kept statistics on that, they might have done because by, by the eighteen forties you start to get Boards of Health but these areas where more the areas where you could, were least developed, they probably were last in the queue for that sort of thing but they would have collected statistics eventually.

**Yes, I'd just say that, because when my, I think that the work that my colleagues are doing are kind of looking at incidences of malaria at national level so I'm always curious to know whether there might be sort of anecdotes or stories that are connected with that in different spaces.**

**ALK9** Yeah, I mean I, what, I just remember kind of reading it in newspaper articles about sort of thing at the time, so I haven't systematically collected the information.

**Yes, got you. So if you like, well what we can say is from your own experiences that, you know, biting insects.**

**ALK9** Never been attacked. [laughs]

**Never been attacked and so it.**

**ALK9** That I recall.

**Oh that's really positive, that's really positive, you know, because I think, you know, although we're doing the work on mosquitoes and we're doing some, as I said ecological and entomological trapping, so we can work out what species there are on these sites, it's always interesting to know people's personal experiences to figure out, you know, has it changed over time or is it not a problem? Particularly when we want people to access wetland sites, we don't want to encourage them to go and then have a potential health problem of then them being bitten, so it's all very helpful.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**And thinking again about wellbeing would you say that, you know, you've talked about spiritual wellbeing and you've talked about the wonderful skies and the peace and tranquillity, would you say that improved health is a sort of a tool, a factor in you using these sites?**

**ALK9** Er, not Alkborough specifically for me because I don't live near enough, erm, but I would, you know, we've got marshes, a little bit of marshland where I live and I'll go down there walking or cycling or whatever occasion.

**Yeah, so that's good, so it's integrated into your daily life.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Yeah, wonderful. And, you know, thinking back now about climate change again, have you noticed anything since you've been doing your work and particularly when you've been in different wetland spaces, anything that's changed that you think oh that's unusual or, you know, that wasn't as it was back in the day? Or there may be nothing.**

**ALK9** Erm, I first, yeah, in the, the, small hours things come out earlier and that sort of thing but that's not specific to wetlands.

**Yeah, yeah, so yeah, so nothing dramatic in that case?**

**ALK9** Not that I, I've studied, no.

**No, wonderful. Now the last section of the interview is I think the thing that you're going to be the most interested in I would say, which we've called it Contemporary Social Representations and we've touched on it all the way through our discussion which is really about how wetlands have shifted in cultural perceptions from being places of sort of boggy barren marsh that need to be drained to now these different spaces where people will enjoy walking and bird watching and I wondered if, whether through the work that you've done, whether there are, if you could kind of identify where the shift has come, you know, if there's been any drivers that have changed this shift in attitude?**

**ALK9** Erm, I mean firstly has, has there been a shift in attitude? I'm not, I'm not sure. Erm, I, in a sense I would prefer the old wetland but, you know, all the fenland stories are about, erm, and I, I did, there's a great bit in Wesley where he goes up the tower in Boston and, and looks out over the Fens and, and laments the way the landscape has been changed, erm, yeah, and to that extent I think some of the old way of life has been lost, which is a, which is a shame.

**Yes. I think that was really apparent for me in the Somerset Levels when you, you know, you saw these pictures of people trapping eels and things like that.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**You know, there is a different pace of life now and things have dramatically changed haven't they? One of the, I'd been interested in.**

**ALK9** Yeah, I mean I remember people, you know, old, old couples who lived out, miles out, you know, and, and seemed to exist just on what was around them and you don't get that at all anymore.

**No, no, yeah, this idea of sort of wild fowling and trapping eels.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Is gone hasn't it?**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Yeah, although saying that, you know, I have talked to people who are very keen on trying to restore wetland spaces and I mean I hesitate to use the term rewilding because it's so political and it causes such a furore amongst people.**

**ALK9** Yeah, yeah. [laughs]

**But this idea of, yeah, letting nature back in I guess, and I wondered if for you, in the work that you've done you think that that's quite an important approach really about managing the land in a slightly different way?**

**ALK9** Yeah, there was a bit of a dispute around this area about the wetlands at Bawtry wasn't there? I don't know if you're aware of that.

**No.**

**ALK9** But the, erm, the sort of, there's a bit on the River Idle near, just downstream of Bawtry with, I think the farmer got some huge subsidy in the seventies or eighties to drain it all and, and now it's proving too costly to keep it drained, there have been, some sort of an ecological argument about that. There's a guy called Ian Rotherham who writes books about Fens and that sort of thing, have you heard of him?

**No, I haven't, no, Ian Rotherham?**

**ALK9** Yeah, he's a professor or something or other, he was professor of something or other, you know, erm, let me get hold of the book, he's got a book called the Lost Fens.

**Oh okay.**

**ALK9** England's Greatest Ecological Disaster.

**Right.**

**ALK9** And interesting in that his, his fenland includes The Carrs, so he talks about, he calls them the Northern Fens, erm, where he is now? He's professor of Environmental Geography at Sheffield Hallam.

**Oh okay, right, I shall look that up, thank you very much. Yes, so if you like for you the question is really about, I don't know, that balance between, I guess having landscapes that farmers can work on and then having landscapes which are more in tune with what fenlife used to be or water, wetlands used to be where you'd work with the ebb and flow of the river rise, the water rising and falling?**

**ALK9** Yeah, and people graze their animals at some times of year and not others and that, and that sort of, you know what, it's a sort of dried arid landscape converted to arable farming again.

**Yes, yes. Well that's it, I mean we have, the Somerset Levels wetlands space that we're looking at is arable reversion to see what happens when you don't drain and that.**

**ALK9** Well I think that's the sort of thing that's happening at Bawtry, I think, from what I understand anyway, I might not be quite right on that.

**Yeah, but do you think generally, what do you think might be the things that influence how people view landscapes? You know, because you've looked over time and you've seen that maybe faith has been something that helps shape people's relationship with landscapes. Do you think there are other factors involved now in a contemporary way that shape how people view landscapes?**

**ALK9** I think people don't view the landscape unless they know what to look for, so you know, it's like field patterns for example, if you studied field patterns you know that they tell you a great deal about the landscape but if you haven't, it's just a hedge, erm, and a wetland is just a flat bit of land unless somebody tells you actually what it is. Erm, so I think that's the challenge, is to how people can appreciate the landscape for its unique features.

**And what do you think has caused this kind of lost art of looking and what do you think would need to be done to regain it?**

**ALK9** Well most, most people live in towns, they're not really familiar with the countryside and they've not had any, I mean educating, it's the case with everything isn't it? The more you know about it, the more you can enjoy it. It's a bit like trying to explain to somebody why some people watch cricket, who's got no knowledge of it, they can't see what the point of it is. [laughs]

**You've summed me up really well there. [laughs]**

**ALK9** Erm, you know, but if, if somebody did teach you about cricket then you might start to notice things and then get more interested.

**True, very true, yes.**

**ALK9** So it's how you, how you help people, say well actually it's not just a ditch, it was dug by the Dutch in the sixteen seventies, paid by King Charles.

**Yeah. Do you think the?**

**ALK9** As a result there was a riot and five people got killed, then it becomes more than just a ditch.

**Yeah, I mean do you think for instance popular TV programmes that used to be Time Team are useful for that or do you think actually what happens is it's too spectacular and artificial?**

**ALK9** Er, they have the sort of, the short term effect. I mean the big, the big thing, it has a longer term effect because if somebody makes a popular drama based in the, in the wetlands, that, that type of thing helps because people need, people need people to connect with.

**Yeah. So what I'm hearing is it's the stories, it's making the stories of past lives, other lives real to the people that live now, to make that connectivity across time?**

**ALK9** Yeah, and I think, I mean, you want to try and understand the landscape but often the way they can understand a landscape is by thinking about the people who were there and then that helps them to understand the landscape.

**Yeah, oh that's really, really interesting REMOVED, it's a brilliant way to think about it actually because, so rather than, you know, just trying to ask people to, you know, artificially think about the landscape, the idea that it's that person to person connectivity over time, I think's really important and.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Do you think, in some ways that's why there is some success with things like Springwatch and Countryfile? Because rather than the connectivity with people, people then connect with the animal life in those landscapes.**

**ALK9** Well they know what the animals are, I mean we're, we're dealing in a day and age where most people don't even know what a sparrow is. Erm, then, or, or what type of tree it is for example.

**Yes, yes, it's very true actually isn't it is that we, we are, you know, we can be immersed in nature but, and look at it but not be able to identify, so it's almost the identification of something else as well isn't it?**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Yeah. So in terms of sort of, like for you sort of key cultural influences, I'm thinking about whether it's scientific data or whether it's types of literature or types of film, what would you say from your perspective are the, you know, the key influences? Because when you talk to people, you must surely get people going oh yes, I've read a book on, oh I've read, I've seen this, I've heard this, this documentary, do you have that quite a lot, that people, there are certain things that really galvanise people's interest?**

**ALK9** Erm, trying to, trying to think really. I mean people who come, who we take round tend to be interested in, people I'm with, the Pilgrim Fathers and know nothing about the landscape that they were connected with, erm. So if I'm on the coast I will give a little commentary about why it's called the Isle of Axholme and, and that sort of thing. I mean, a, something that I really loved years ago, although it's not quite the right area, was Graham Swift novel, Waterland. That, that's about the Norwich, the Norfolk Fens end really, it, it does capture some of the elements and that, that sort of novelisation of it, you don't really get very often, novels of people in the Fens. So Hereward the Wake by Charles Kingsley probably the previous one.

**Okay, oh that's, do you know I've got Waterland on my list to read and I'm about to go on my holiday soon, so I'm thinking that that would be the perfect summer read for me.**

**ALK9** Some of my favourite books, it's all about a history teacher, connecting with that part of my life as well.

**And he wrote Last Orders didn't he, is that right?**

**ALK9** He did, yeah, this is an earlier book but it's probably his best book in my view.

**Yeah, well you've inspired me REMOVED to go and have a little look in the library later.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Lovely.**

**ALK9** Of course, why, that's what the book's about, why?

**Yeah. Now the last thing I want to ask you before we wrap up is one of my interests is really looking at water resources management and looking at the way in which different Government policies influence how landscapes are managed and I wondered whether you had noticed over time whether, you know, this current phase of austerity politics that we're in, whether it's impacted either on the landscape itself or the way we connect to the landscape and I don't know if it's something that you have, you feel anything about or you might feel strongly about?**

**ALK9** Erm, I think it's, it's not an issue that I'm aware of, I mean our, our main issue would be flood risk and those sorts of things, erm, that would be the main thing but we've not had any major flood issues for quite a while but I live, I live, erm, up the Trent, just the other side of Gainsborough. So there are, there are a couple of houses in our village which were at risk of flooding and at one end of the village can get cut off from the other end of the village.

**Right, okay, is.**

**ALK9** And that's, that's quite interesting but it's not been an issue because there's not been a problem.

**No, is that, do you live in the area where the flood wall was only half completed?**

**ALK9** Now I'm not, I'm not aware of any problems in the flood, flood defences. We are out at a village called REMOVED don't know if you've got a map, you can see where it is and REMOVED had an internal drainage scheme built in the seventeen hundreds, erm, so, you know, as, as somebody who's interested in landscape I'm aware that the course and the village beck has changed, you know, where, where the old meanders of the Trent are and that sort of thing and, and you can see how the flood scheme works and it mostly has worked.

**That's a real positive, I mean it's amazing isn't it? Given that, you know, the whole area is quite low lying to be able to protect yourselves like that is fantastic and I think that's the great thing about Alkborough really is that, I think that's not really been celebrated about it's, you know, its wonderful ability to prevent flooding further down the river.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**So it does, it does a great job in protecting people who don't even know it's there and yet it's so close to them.**

**ALK9** Yeah.

**Now just to finish I wondered if there was anything that you would like to share with the project team that I can pass on, any comments or any requests?**

**ALK9** Erm, I mean I, I would say try and engage with local primary schools and, and, erm, I mean I know the Head at Burton and I know the Head at Ludbury and Garthorpe which is on the other side, erm, and I, you know, just, I would say ring them up and, and see if you could come in and have a chat with them or something. I think that, the, by doing that you can possibly get to the parents, erm, and that might be something that will then give you some new insight into how people think about it or even if they're really interested.

**Yeah, well even that, as I said before at the very beginning, even if people aren't interested, I'm interested to know why they're not interested.**

**ALK9** That's a finding.

**Yeah, exactly because I certainly don't want this to be just, you know, wetlands are great, you should go and visit them, we need to really find out what it is that people feel about wetlands and the reasons why they might not access particular spaces, you know, whether it's lack of access.**

**ALK9** Yes.

**Or it's a lack of knowledge or it's a lack of interest, all of that is interesting. Well thank you REMOVED so much for your time, I really appreciate your support and you've been absolutely fantastic to talk to and I hope you don't mind if I pass on your details to Victoria she may well want to drop you an email to ask you about some of these wonderful stories.**

**ALK9** Well I'm happy to help.

**That's really thoughtful of you and obviously if there's anything we can do for you please let us know and we'll try and help as much as we can.**

Yes, send us some American tourists. [laughs]

**Right, I'll see what, yeah. [laughs]**

**ALK9** With lots of money to spend.

**Oh wouldn't that be nice? Well the thing is at least by being part of the project we can flag that up, that you've been supportive and you never know do you? Yeah, someone might go oh that sounds an interesting endeavour, I'll go and look at it. Have you, I don't know if I've got all your website details.**

**ALK9** [website/social media details – not transcribed]

**Lovely, right, well we'll keep in touch and I'll let you know how we get on with the project.**

**ALK9** Brilliant, no, next time I'm over there I'll make a specific effort and go down on to the Flats.

**Oh lovely and if you can think of anybody at any time that you think okay that person would be a really good contact for the project I'd be really appreciative because as I said it's been quite troublesome getting hold of people, so yeah, any support would be.**

**ALK9** Yeah, that doesn't surprise me.

**No, no, yeah, lovely. Well thanks so much for being so understanding.**

**ALK9** Okay, then.

**Lovely, take care.**

**ALK9** By the way if you see the headteachers, if you mention my name you might get a conversation.

**Ooh, perfect, right, I will do, lovely.**

**ALK9** Because I've done support with both those schools, so.

**Fantastic, well I think, I'm definitely going to consider that now, so I'll put that into the mix. Lovely thanks so much REMOVED.**

**ALK9** Alright then.

**Bye.**

**ALK9** Bye.

END OF INTERVIEW

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**So it would be helpful in terms of me writing up later if you could just briefly say who you are, what you do, what kind of geographical area you cover and what kind of relationship you have with the wetlands in terms of how long you've lived there and how often you visit and things like that.**

**ALK10** Right, okay. I'm the vicar of four parish churches, erm, covering REMOVED, so I don't actually cover Alkborough, however REMOVED and I work quite closely with REMOVED. I've been vicar REMOVED itself is a small town but the others are villages and REMOVED Alkborough, you can walk along the coast to get there, erm, so my interest is obviously my job, my threshold job is facilitating church and serving the community and the parish parishioners with whom I work, so this. I mean unlike some jobs, you know, it's a very wide, [laughs] it's a very wide remit actually and my interest in the Flats and other nature reserves nearby is that when I'm not working I like to get out there with my camera and binoculars and look for what I find and avoid mosquitoes.

**Yeah, [laughs] that's, as much as we possibly can.**

**ALK10** Yes. [laughs]

**That's wonderful, so would you say then that visiting wetlands is, or particularly Alkborough Flats, is something that you do on a weekly basis or is it depending upon how busy your work is at?**

**ALK10** [laughs] Now I, it's a, that's a very open ended question. Erm, in an ideal world I would do, do it on my day off which is one day a week but I'm often, sometimes I don't and other times I might find that because of pressure of work or of distribution of work I end up being able to get out twice in a week and if I've got guests I can sort of juggle my diary and if they're into that sort of thing then we'd go out again, so, erm, ideally it's at least once a week but sometimes more.

**Yeah, and do you have a little sort of, you know, number of places that you like to visit which Alkborough Flats is one of them or is it mainly Alkborough Flats you like to go to?**

**ALK10** Erm, oh I've got several, there's some nature, there's a lot of competition for nature reserves up here, you've got Far Ings which is a Links Trust and what I like about, I have to say, and what I like about Far Ings and Messingham, which are both Links Trust, they are circular walks, erm. Some of the walks at Alkborough there and back but Alkborough's very good if you haven't got a lot of time because you can just nip down, get to the, one of the main hides and sit there for half an hour and get some good birds, you know, so if you're, if it's sort of like, you know, three o'clock on a winter afternoon, if you can just nip down there and get it before the day light close, finishes and you might get a barn owl if you're lucky as well, so, erm, Alkborough's one I do when I don't have an awful lot of time but also the other thing about Alkborough, there's a very, there's a very good tea shop.

**Ah ha. [laughs]**

**ALK10** In the, in the village, erm, which, a standing joke among my associates that I won't go to a nature reserve unless I can get a cup of tea, that's not strictly true but it does, it seems to colour people's perception. [laughs]

**Yeah, well it makes for a very relaxing visit doesn't it?**

**ALK10** It does.

**Yeah. Oh that's wonderful, so in your leisure time then, without your reverend hat on, it sounds like that birding is quite an important part of your kind of relaxation away to destress?**

**ALK10** Yes, I call it birding etcetera because I'm not, I wouldn't call myself a totally dedicated hardcore birder. mean if I don't see birds I'm very happy if I see butterflies or dragonflies or interesting flower, plants, you know, so I'm fairly generalist but I suppose birds is the sort of first thing I think of.

**Yeah, so would you say it's the birds that draw you to Alkborough or is it more that as you've said already, it's more that it's convenience if you like, that it's easy to access?**

**ALK10** I think Alkborough is probably mainly birds but that said I've had my best ever encounter with hares there, you know, we were just, just walking along and they were charging along and we've just coincided, erm, so, you know, that's the best ever view I've had of hares, erm, so, you know, you get what you get and you, I think I try to go with an open mind because then I don't get disappointed because I always see something.

**I like that, so it's a kind of, you have no expectations about what you're going to find in that particular space it's just that you know that whenever you go it might be slightly different maybe?**

**ALK10** Yeah, I have hopes. [laughs]

**Yeah. And do you like to go on your own or do you go with an expectation that you might meet somebody in one of the hides and have a chat with somebody?**

**ALK10** Erm, I very often go on my own simply because I sometimes need a bit of downtime without too many people around because of my, the nature of my job, you know, I've got people making demands on me morning, noon and night sometimes and I just, sometimes I just think I want to get off and not see anyone for a bit, so I don't always, you know. I do go with friends sometimes, so, you know, I, but more I, I probably go on my own more than go with friends.

**Yeah. So in some ways because of course, you know, the work that you do professionally is very interesting in terms of, you know that idea of maybe outreach in different sites because of course depending on whether you've got your professional hat on your own, you know, personal hat on, I guess you could see that they're kind of, you know, embracing the community would involve embracing sites outside of a church environment.**

**ALK10** Yeah, but I do seek to challenge, erm, you know, I mean with harvest coming up, they're going to get, you know, they very often get a pretty deep green sermon, [laughs] erm, and particularly in the light of my, the return from my trip, you know, which is absolutely astonishing.

**I'm sure.**

**ALK10** Galapagos and the Amazon Basin, you know, two totally amazing places but totally contrasting and, you know, they're challenging us.

**Yeah. So would you say that that love of nature and that embracing of nature is part of your spiritual sharing with the community as well, thinking about?**

**ALK10** Oh it's very much kind of my individual spirituality and I do believe that I need to share it, I mean obviously it's not the only thing because I've, you know, you've got issues like poverty, injustice and all sorts of other things which have, I believe are strong challenges of anybody trying to be Christian but, you know, I mean from a, environmentally, you know, it's right there at the beginning of the Jewish scriptures, which of course we've hijacked, so, you know, it's right there and so I do believe yes, very, it's, it is a very much part of my spirituality, if you took that away I'd, I'd be looking for something else, I don't know what quite but.

**Yes, an intrinsic part of who you are.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**Yeah, and would you say, you know, because one of the things we're really interested in the project is a sense of place and trying to understand whether people are drawn to wetland spaces because they love them as particular types of landscape or whether they're actually drawn for, in some ways kind of quite pragmatic reasons, you know, that as you said it's easy to access, you can get a kind of dose of nature, in part of your every day and you're drawn by birds as well, so it's.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**So it's how those connect together really to really try and value wetlands.**

**ALK10** Um.

**As particular types of places.**

**ALK10** Erm, it's an interesting one because, erm, I mean my, my first, don't know, the first time I ever took Alkborough seriously was, well we knew they were going to breach the wall, erm, for the flood of the, you know, for flood alignment, realignment and I happened to be at my colleague Alison's, the day after they breached it, but the funny is we were in, shortly, we get together and she said I want to show you something, so she took me upstairs to her spare bedroom which I thought was a little strange, [laughs] odd, but she said look out of the window, so I did and there you could see, from her upstairs bedroom window the breach and the fields were completely flooded and she said it was a bit noisy last night, [laughs] because I think that's when they blew it up.

**Wow.**

**ALK10** Whatever they did, so, and then I thought hey this is interesting and then of course over the years it's kind of settled down and changed. As a landscape I have to say, you know, it's a sort of, not, it's not exactly pretty, erm, it's actually rather, I mean some people would look at it and say oh just dull, just boring, just a load of old water and nothing much and then, then there's that cliff which goes up and that's where REMOVED's house is, erm, where, and it's her back, her bedrooms face, I mean her bedrooms face the Flats, I mean I'm jealous as hell of her because she's got, you know, you can be sitting in her sitting room and the marsh harriers fly over.

**Wow, how beautiful.**

**ALK10** Yeah, [laughs] I mean so she's, you know, she's got, she's in a very good site and I think people up there and I used, often bump in, I often bump into people in the hide who I, people I know by sight and they're very often people who live up, up on the cliff and they're, they're quite, I don't know, they're quite proprietorial about it. I mean I think there are some people who are maybe people who, you know, this is good farmland being wasted but on the other hand there are people who now, I think, I think there is a sort of sense of ownership and affection from the place, even though it's not sort of pretty in the conventional sense. I like it in the depths of winter actually because there's always nice, because it's just so austere actually.

**Yeah, it's a very, yeah, the light changes.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**Your relationship with temperature changes actually doesn't it, you know?**

**ALK10** Yes, usually gets colder when I'm there. [laughs] And there's no mosquitoes.

**No mosquitoes, no. I'll be asking you about those in a few moments.**

**ALK10** Okay. [laughs]

**But when, because it's so interesting that you've been there before and after and that whole issue around, especially now when we're thinking about possible Brexit, you know, post-Brexit strategies.**

**ALK10** [laughs]

**Around food security and then flood alleviation and then also space for wildlife, do you feel that most of your parishioners are sort of, do they feel strongly about Alkborough Flats, do they feel that, you know, well it was an underutilised piece of farmland, do they have strong opinions about it?**

**ALK10** I think my parishioners, erm, the age demographic is, they're quite old actually a lot of them, erm, I think some of them, I mean certainly parishioners in the general sense of the word, as opposed to people who just come to church on Sundays, erm, I think those who like being outdoors and like walking and things will go to the Flats, I think some of the older people probably think it's a good thing because, but Winterton, now Winterton's interesting because it's, a lot of Winterton is not in danger of flooding, by, whereas Winteringham, you know, during that tidal surge three years ago was, some of the lower houses in Winteringham were quite badly affected where, you know, where it didn't do the houses in South Ferriby any good either, erm, so although I think some of my Winteringham, actually some of my Winteringham people are very, very keen members of the Trust and will be down there and they'll probably be down there more often than me.

**[laughs] So for them I guess then it's a double-sided thing in that they can see the utility of it because presumably, have they seen an improvement since the breach has been put in, have they seen water levels not as high in their homes?**

**ALK10** Erm, I don't know to be honest, I don't, I'm not very sure about that.

**Yeah, but in terms of your parishioners, they also like, would use that, would access Alkborough Flats as well?**

**ALK10** Oh yes, I mean yes, there's three, four of them they, they would all, you know, they will go down with bins and tell me what they've seen or.

**Yeah, so.**

**ALK10** You know, usually the spoon bills or something like that.

**Yes, how lovely, and because the other side of it is that, you know, we've talked about wildlife reserves and there is a, you know, there are different types of wildlife reserves and Alkborough Flats is quite clearly a wetlands reserve.**

**ALK10** Oh yes.

**So how would you define a wet, this seems almost an obvious question but it's interesting for me to know how people understand wetlands, so how would you describe a wetland?**

**ALK10** Ah, erm, there's so many different sorts aren't there?

**Um.**

**ALK10** And this is one that's affected by the tide and of course, that's another thing, you, it's a good idea to look at timetables before you go but.

**Ah yeah.**

**ALK10** Often I don't, I just go [laughs] but, erm, sort of the main, you would expect, I mean for me a wetland is where, well wet land, but it's actually where you're going to get wetland type of birds, erm, you know, the waders and the ducks, erm, and of course the birds that prey on them, erm, so I would expect, particularly in the winter, if I visited a specifically wetland reserve, I would hope to see a fair number of waders, often things that, you know, lapwings and various, erm, godwits, usually the black-tailed godwits, and curlew, obviously curlew, if you're lucky you see curlew on the fields because they, there are fields, well as you know, on the landwood side, if there wasn't there's Trent falls, erm, you've got, on the landwood side you've got the fields which sometimes get damp but, erm, there you often see, you often see, well not often because you don't see so many curlews around now as you used to but you do see curlews there and.

**Yeah. And do you think for you that's changed over time, the types of birds you see on the wetland because of course, you know, when it first was breached then that's a new space and then weren't breeding groups.**

**ALK10** Um.

**And of course now there are, it's curious.**

**ALK10** Um, and interesting because they're not breeding there are they? They're, they're coming in to over winter a lot of the time or they're coming in to feed as a, you know, you know, in response to the tide, to the tide.

**But have you noticed changes over time in terms of the types of birds?**

**ALK10** Oh yeah, erm, now that's an interesting one. Erm, I think you're getting more egrets and, erm, spoon bill, erm, because I mean I can't ever remember seeing any egrets there at first or spoon bills, used to, saw grey heron but not, erm, yeah, I mean, I'm trying to think how it's changed because I think it, because the actual nature of the wetlands changed, erm, then you get these rather intriguing footprints that in my wilder moments I think are otter.

**Ah.**

**ALK10** But I'm not sure, I mean somebody brought me down to earth and said no, it's probably mink but I don't know, erm, otter, we do have otter, so I don't know but, erm.

**And they are very discrete creatures.**

**ALK10** Yeah, yes, I mean I've seen them in Scotland because they see, you know, they're much, they're much less discrete up there for some reason.

**I mean do you think that Alkborough Flats is, compared to all the other sites you also visit, would you say it's a very popular site or do you think it's really for people who are drawn by the particular birds, drawn by the location?**

**ALK10** Erm, I think there is two kind of users, there are what I call very serious hardcore birders who have, you know, three foot long lenses and people like REMOVED who take a lot of photographs and writes a report and you can, you know, it's often pinned up in the hides. Then you've got people like me who are, you know, not quite where, not where they are quite but still interested, then you've got other people who will just go out on to the Flats to have a walk because it's there and they live there, they will sometimes have dogs on a lead, erm, and then, they I think just like being out of doors and they, it's a nice bit of outdoors for them to stretch their legs on, so I think there's two distinct users, there's the local people who take their dogs or themselves for a constitutional or walk and there's other people who range from, you know, serious people like REMOVED to people like me who are serious but in a different league, erm, so I think they, so there, of course there is overlap, erm, so difficult really to say but I think, I don't think this is as popular as some sites, erm, but then it depends on the weather.

**Okay. So you'd say that's the main reason why people might select that site just?**

**ALK10** Yeah, I mean one of the things, there is a perception around that in the winter it's always freezing cold, erm, but that's because there's no shelter, erm, you know, there's very little cover, I mean there's some hedges, for some reason they seem to have thinned out, I'm not quite sure why they did that because, erm, you know, the hedges were good for hiding you as you went to the hide and also quite good for, you know, little patterines [unclear] and things, it also meant you couldn't see the, you couldn't see the wetland until you got into the hide, so I'm not quite sure, they, to me I'm a little bit, I don't quite understand why they've done that but, erm, there's probably a reason.

**Is that a recent thing? Is that quite recent that they've changed the?**

**ALK10** Erm, over the last two or three years, three years perhaps, yeah, and then, because there's a ditch, you know, as you know, when you, when you walk towards the hide on the way to the Trent Falls there used to be quite thick hedgerow there and then there was a ditch and then there was the track and that's something I, I've noticed that's sad, rather sad actually, that ditch was somewhere where, insofar as you can say, you know, you're in with a very good chance of seeing a kingfisher, I used to say that about that ditch, approaching that hide and that, and beyond. Now, I haven't seen a kingfisher there for yonks, I don't know, that, that's not a specific timescale but it's just my perception is I haven't seen one in that place recently, erm, and I don't know whether it's something to do with the, what they've done with the hedgerow or what and you don't see so many reed, I mean you used to see stacks of reed buntings and finches there and you don't seem to see quite so many there but I think there are some on the other, you know, when you go the other way to Tool Hide because there's a lot more, there's a lot more hedgerow and stuff and that's where you get dragonflies and things.

**Okay, so they're quite distinct then, the personalities of the two hides?**

**ALK10** Yeah, and then you've got, see, and somewhere like Messingham is what I would call a walk, a pretty, you know, quite a pretty walk actually over varied vegetation, it's circular and I don't, quite a lot of local people in Messingham just use it for a leg stretching but of course they don't take dogs on because it's Links Trust and they're not allowed to, or not supposed to.

**Right, okay, ah, because that seemed to be the big thing about Alkborough actually was that people would come out and walk their dogs.**

**ALK10** Yeah, erm, and I, maybe, I think that possibly the way it's set out, the dogs don't seem to, you know, if they're on a lead they're not going to disrupt the, they're not going to disrupt the birds on the wetlands unless they're totally out of control and they shouldn't be there anyway, erm, so actually I think it's, it is one site that possibly dogs and reserve seem to work together fairly well, I don't know, I don't know whether that's other people's perception but I've never found the presence of dogs worrying or a nuisance, yeah.

**Right, yeah. So in terms of, because that's, you know, in terms of thinking about who's accessing these sites and using these sites, from your experiences or maybe even talking to your parishioners, are there any key things that you think could be done to improve access to the site and that might mean not just something that's on the site but maybe something that's external to the site, like advertising the site or making it easier to signpost the site when you're away from the site.**

**ALK10** Erm, um.

**Or maybe you might think that's a benefit that not many, so many people go.**

**ALK10** There's signage in the village. An awful lot of us still use the, where the water processing station is, erm, the, quite a lot of, some of the parking area there is designated disabled parking, erm, and the rest I think is still, well I mean they, they tried to send you to the other car park but an awful lot of us actually go to that, the old pumping station car park and avoid the disabled slots, erm, that hill to me is pretty, pretty bad shape, I think that's probably why they want to discourage people from parking there but if they're using it for disabled parking then they ought to have a, the road ought to be attended to. It's pretty grotty actually, you've probably been, I don't know whether you've been to that one or whether to, you go to the other car park.

**I went to both car parks so the one down below, the disabled one and the one up on the hill.**

**ALK10** Yes.

**And I, when you say it's grotty do you, I mean I got the feeling that if it was an icy day I may not be able to get back up the hill that's one of the, because I went in February, the first time.**

**ALK10** Yes.

**And I did feel that oh, you know, if I park down there I'm not sure I'll be able to get back up again.**

**ALK10** Yeah, oh because there's often like standing ice on the road, yes, I, before they opened the other car park I went down there on quite a frosty day and I, I got up alright but I, it was a bit, erm, um, I'm not sure about this. [laughs]

**Yeah that's it, but then that can have an impact on whether you think you might go a second time, you know.**

**ALK10** I think it could have, I think it could have an impact on people, yeah.

**Yeah and in terms of, you know, you talk about using that space on your own, do you feel quite safe there as a woman walking on your own? Is safety whether, personal safety or car safety in terms of people breaking into your car, is that ever an issue that you feel when you're using the site?**

**ALK10** It's not an issue that worries me but it could worry people, erm. Yeah, I, I know how to look after myself but I've never actually had, I've never met anyone who's nasty or creepy or a bit iffy, erm, there and I, in fact I don't think you do, I, I don't, I think, yeah, if you're not looking for people like that or if you're not expecting to see people like that you don't but I've, I don't feel at risk there at all and of course I have a mobile with me but, but I don't use it.

**Yeah, well no, that's great that you feel comfortable using that space, you know, like you said even when the light's about to fall that that's not a thing that you think well it's a good time to capture some of the birds but I don't want to go because them I'm on my own so that's really, you know, that's good to hear.**

**ALK10** Yeah. When the light's going you tend, quite a lot of people have moved off by then, though you tend to get a few people hanging around in hopes for the owls.

**Yes, that's it. Now I wonder, so, you know, that was thinking about use and access of the site but I wondered if you could briefly sum up what for you what you think the main benefits of the site are and if there may be any disbenefits about the site that impacts on your use of the site or your enjoyment of your daily life?**

**ALK10** Erm, I just find it a life enhancing place to visit and you don't, you know, you never quite know what you're going to see, erm. I like, I like the sort of, I was going to say serendipity really, not quite knowing what I'm going to see, erm, and I, you know, it's a good place to stretch your legs when you, when you want to get a few cobwebs away.

**Yeah, I think that's so important isn't it? As you said before, the idea of the constitutional, the way of just being able to destress for a few moments and clear you mind of all those things that clutter our minds during the day, just to kind of let a little bit of, I guess peace back in.**

**ALK10** Yeah, very much so.

**Yeah. So one of the things that we look at on the project as you might have seen on the information sheet is trying to understand wetlands as part of ecosystems, so they have their own ecosystem but they're part of a, what you call a mosaic of ecosystems.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**And part of that is all the different benefits we get, or can get that humans can get from natural spaces and I wondered if you could think about the benefits in terms of being able to categorise them it may feel like it's a difficult thing to answer but say for instance we have things like, we have the cultural benefits of ecosystems where people learn to connect with nature or they understand birdlife a bit more.**

**ALK10** Um.

**But also things like regulating so for instance, you know, the wetlands are really great for flood water storage and for storing carbon, so.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**If you were thinking about that what would you say from your perspective in terms of if you've got your reverend hat on, what would you say were the main benefits of those ecosystems for the community that can access them?**

**ALK10** I think for the good of the Humber and the, the towns, the villages and towns on the Humber side, both sides, erm, need some mitigation measures and the fact, I mean in a sense it's great as far as I'm concerned that you have flood mitigation measures that also are good for wildlife, erm, because you've got, really you've got an extension from Blacktfoft Sands which, you know, as the marsh harrier flies is, is very, very close, erm, so I suppose the, the actual non-nature, the non-natural history benefit of it is flood prevention and, and you've got to think about, you know, locking up carbon these days, erm, and that I think you, is very much one of the goods of the wetlands. Of course, I mean Humber, I mean Humber head you've got a lot of moorland and, erm, low bog, lowland bog and things like that, all of which, you know, and the peat things which of course act as well, so I mean probably the Humber Estuary has got a massive lock up, you know, capacity to lock up carbon and I can't, you know, thinking about it it must be enormous.

**Yeah, and that's it, it's kind of looking at the wider perspective isn't it of what these wetlands can do for us I guess?**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**You know, they've got all these different multiple kind of functions which is a wonderful thing and kind of skipping back a little bit now, you know, I talked earlier about the idea of what you get personally from that space and a sense of place so when you're there do you feel that you are both sort of on a very specific site, would you also feel connected to the wider Humber Estuary as well?**

**ALK10** Yes, I think I do, particularly when you get out to the Humber head, to the, to the Trent Falls and you can walk along the banks, well exactly the Trent there isn't it? You walk along the Trent for a bit and you can see Whitton Sands where the, which is a bird refuge as well isn't it?

**Um.**

**ALK10** Erm, so you've got all that and you do, you suddenly realise and then you see, you know, on a rising tide you see the, those enormous ships sailing into Goole, you know, same as you do at Blacktoft, and I always is a bit, I always sort of slightly amusing actually, slightly incongruous but.

**I do know what you mean because you're walking along the footpath and there's this just absolutely ginormous ships aren't there?**

**ALK10** Yes, I mean you always see, you think oh yeah, you're bound to see them but it always makes, you know, sort of brings you up, you think ooh, because it's on the largest, you know, biggest inland port.

**And do you? It's really quite remarkable isn't it? And also with the.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**With the Humber Bridge overhead, you know, that's always quite an amazing site, an amazing piece of architecture.**

**ALK10** Yeah, yeah, it's a grade one structure now.

**Well I'm not surprised, I mean it's.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**I love the way it changes as the light changes as well.**

**ALK10** Yeah, yeah. People are very proprietorial about that as well.

**I'm sure. And, you know when you look out over the escarpment and you look over to the two different rivers and you see the Drax power station, do you sort of feel that that is actually just part of this industrial landscape that we're all part of? Do you kind of think oh I wish we could just get rid of those power stations, you know, just have the natural view?**

**ALK10** I must admit I've never really thought that, I just sort of look, I mean half the time you can't see them, when you go look by the maze on the top of the cliff at the viewpoint, yeah, it's something I've never really, I've never really engaged with it, I just think oh they're there and, you know, I know it's a coal side power station and, you know, we really ought to be phasing it out but I must admit I've never really sort of engaged with that to be honest.

**Well that says something in itself doesn't it, that that is seen as part of just the fabric of the environment that you're in?**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**So they don't stand out because they're just part of, you know, this particular area. I wondered before I move on to asking you a little bit about health and wellbeing, just to quickly think about whether you can see wetlands as also spaces for education, whether that's ever something that's ever come up in your mind of, you know, the different ways that we can use these sites and, yeah, whether you think there's a learning process that goes on when you're in the wetlands?**

**ALK10** I think there should be, if there isn't. Erm, I think. Do you mean learning for everybody or me personally?

**It, well it, I think you can either have your own personal position on it or from, yeah, from a community perspective.**

**ALK10** Um. I mean I don't know, erm, Alison maybe would know more than I do about how the local school in Alkborough, there is a primary school there I think, erm, relates to it and I, and I don't think REMOVED schools do particularly and I do think it's important, I mean certainly they're, you know, they get the message to look after wildlife and, you know, and to grow things and all sorts of things like that but whether wetlands particularly are part of the education process I'm not sure, I think it should be because, you know, it's what lives, you know, in your backyard really.

**Yeah. One of the things we are, and this is actually connected to this idea of learning in different spaces and different types of learning, a lifelong learning, is we have a great interest in the project in trying to understand how wetlands connect with human health and wellbeing, so I guess my first question is do you think there is a connection with the wetlands, particularly Alkborough Flats and human health and wellbeing?**

**ALK10** Erm, I think there is, yes, I personally think there is, erm, whether other people's perception is, that is an open question, maybe that could be sort of, I don't know, put up the agenda a bit, you know, because all these people, walking for health and things like that, they go to places like Normanby Park and they do a circular walk, erm, but I don't think they do places. I mean I can see, maybe it's something, you know, maybe not walking for health because the idea of that is to walk, you know, step out and get your heart rate going a bit faster and, you know, if you're in a wildlife reserve, if you're in a reserve you maybe don't want to be walking that fast, so you might not be getting, you might, you'll be making yourself fitter in the head, emotionally, spiritually but you won't necessarily be sort of, you know, getting, helping. You know, you won't necessarily be helping your blood pressure or your mobility. On the other hand if you didn't get out there, if you didn't get out there you'd be in a worse state.

**Yeah. So what I'm understanding from what you're saying, because that's a really nice way of thinking about it, is there are different types of wellbeing that you can access and that if you like the spiritual and the mental refreshment you get from being on wetlands is a counter point to that physical wellbeing that you can get from other spaces.**

**ALK10** Yes, I think it's, when I, they can be, they can be one and the same but they're not always, that's I think how I'd put it.

**I mean do you, you know, we talked before about you sometimes give green sermons, do you encourage your congregation, your community to be in nature and take time in nature, is that something that you see as something?**

**ALK10** Yes, I mean for some of them, I say just sit looking at your garden, see what birds come in, you know, because for some people that's, that's all where they are but obviously with children, I'm talking of children who are at the school or something I'll encourage them to get out there and drag their mums and dads with them, you know. [laughs]

**Yeah, to make it a family thing, yeah.**

**ALK10** Yeah, or go and have a picnic and see how many birds you can see or something, you know, that's.

**Yeah, I mean would you say that for your own personal, I guess, you know, in academia you'd call it practice, you'd say it's your own, you know, spiritual engagement with the world, that Alkborough Flats is something that really does play a big factor in that in enabling you to not just refresh yourself as a human but also do the job that you do that involves so much care for others?**

**ALK10** Yes, yes, it does because I, you know, if I'm, if I'm, you know, I can't pretend I don't ever get stressed out, I'm not a particularly stressed person but I can do and very often it's just a day that, a day or few hours spent somewhere, either like Alkborough or somewhere else, you know, I just feel I have a different perspective on things, I'm a bit more calm and chilled, if you know what I mean.

**Yeah, but I think that's it. I mean, you know, personally for me, I can't imagine not having, not being, spending at least some of the week in nature, whether that's a walk around where I am or going to my allotment or wherever it may be, I think it's really important to have that close connection with green spaces.**

**ALK10** Yes. Yes, I feel that is important and I must admit because I was, I, my, my home is my office and where everyone knows they can get me, I tend on, I tend to go out on my day off, I don't stay around the house because, you know, it doesn't prevent people from calling on me or ringing me up or something, so I tend to get out.

**But do you not find then that when you're sometimes in Alkborough that people will talk to you in your professional capacity or do you find that actually it's not so far away but it's far enough away that you have a bit of anonymity?**

**ALK10** If what sorry?

**Would you say that Alkborough from where you are is close so you can access it quickly at the end of the day or when you've got some time but that you still have a bit of anonymity because it's, you may not bump into your parishioners so much?**

**ALK10** Yeah, it is slightly out of my, you know, because it isn't actually on my patch and I don't know how REMOVED would feel about that, I mean I've been there with REMOVED actually, erm, because I've, I've got far better eyesight than her and she's got better hearing than me, so together we do quite well.

**Yes, sound like a perfect pair.**

**ALK10** [laughs]

**[laughs] Oh. Well now is the time that I need to move on to ask you about mosquitoes because you had alluded before that the mosquitoes seem to like you.**

**ALK10** If I have what, sorry?

**That you alluded before that the mosquitoes seem to like you.**

**ALK10** Oh yes, well funnily enough you mentioned mosquitoes I thought this is quite interesting when I read the stuff you sent but I don't think I've ever been encountered or being bitten by a mosquito at Alkborough. Now Messingham I've been chewed to bits by them. Potteric Carr which is another wet, an inland wetland in Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, near Donny, Doncaster, I've been absolutely murdered by them. Far Ings I don't get, seem to get bitten terribly often, so actually I don't know whether, I, I can offer no explanation but I'm wondering whether it's possibly because it's quite tidal and so you haven't got as much sitting water there because Messingham you've got sitting water because it's, it's inland, it's fresh water wetland and I don't know, I mean I can offer no explanation apart from the fact that for some reason I don't seem to get chewed up at, at Alkborough.

**Would you say then that that might also be a factor in why you choose Alkborough say over an other space such as Messingham? Like, you know, have you ever thought oh I'd like to go to Messingham, ah but I don't want to go at this time of day or year because?**

**ALK10** I usually go and then get bitten and think oh bother. [laughs]

**Yeah. [laughs]**

**ALK10** Why didn't I take the midge repellent.

**That's it, why do I keep forgetting about the mosquitoes? Oh it's interesting isn't it?**

**ALK10** Yes, I, I must admit they're quite low on my level of consciousness until they bite me then it really bugs me shall we say? But.

**But for instance when you do your wetlands walks whether it's Alkborough or Messingham or wherever you wouldn't say necessarily think about it ahead and make sure you've got insect repellent on or long sleeves on, it's not something that would necessarily deter you then?**

**ALK10** Not necessarily, no, no, I mean I think oh I, I do get irritated myself where I forget the repellent but, you know, I don't think oh I'm going home now because they're biting me. [laughs]

**Yes, no, well that's good to know, that's good to know.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**Because I've spoken to some people who've said well, you know, if you're interested in birds, you're interested in bats or you love wetland spaces and then that, you know, not necessarily mosquitoes, it might be different forms of biting insects, so I suppose that's the other question is, are you being bitten by mosquitoes or are you being bitten by something else do you think?**

**ALK10** Oh horseflies. Now I've never met horseflies there, erm, I've met them in Winterton and I've met them in, in Chambers Farm Wood down, you know, down by Bardney, south of Lincoln but that was quite, photographing dragonflies and these beasties, beasties arrived on me and chewed me up so I ended up going to the pharmacy nearby on the way home.

**Gosh.**

**ALK10** To get antihistamine pills because I knew I was out of them so I just went and bought some but, yeah, I mean they're, they're the worse, they're worse than mossies.

**Yes, I mean a lot of people do say that that is the thing that deters them more actually is the horsefly because the, you know, the bite afterwards is so painful and lasts such a long time.**

**ALK10** Yes.

**But of course for us mosquitoes are really fascinating because they are so intrinsic to wetland ecosystems because they're such an important food source.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**So one of the things we're trying to do is trying to maybe rehabilitate the image of the mosquito as well but have you ever met anyone who walks on the wet, on Alkborough Flats or other wetlands who have said oh these mosquitoes are a pain or would you say they're fairly low visibility?**

**ALK10** I've never heard anyone say that. The, part of it is it might be the absence of mosquitoes from my point of view is that it tends to me to be a, a spring or autumn or winter walk, I tend not to go there in high summer so much because you're to going to get so many waders. So it could be simply the time of year I got there and the time of year I tend not to go there, erm.

**Yes, so you very much.**

**ALK10** That's another factor that I thought, you know, could well be, erm. I, but I would never not go somewhere because of the insects, I'd just try to remember what happened last time I went and whether it would be a good idea to take some insect repellent with you.

**Yeah, and your parishioners have never talked, they don't have any local stories about mosquitoes or biting insects on? I mean I know it's a relatively new sight I guess, so.**

**ALK10** No, erm, no I don't think they have.

**No, it's interesting, they're kind of quite low visibility then is what I'm feeling.**

**ALK10** Yeah, I mean you might be, you're possibly getting, get a completely different story from somebody else.

**Well but that's the interesting thing, is the different perspectives, you know, but.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**I mean do you, and we talked a little bit before about, you know, your interest in all things green, I mean do you have a perspective from either a personal professional perspective on climate change and how that might impact on local wetlands? Because of course we're trying to consider whether mosquito populations may expand because of warmer wetter climates.**

**ALK10** Well this is a worry and also bringing possibility of malaria if it was extreme. Erm, so I don't, I think it, people, it is something people need to be concerned about, erm, but what they do about it I don't know, I mean, I mean I, you know, they, because they, you know, I think because there is, you know, I mean malaria did exist in the British Isles historically didn't it?

**Yes.**

**ALK10** So I mean I suppose that would be somebody's, I mean that would be a public health worry, I think for people, erm. I mean interestingly enough when I was in the Amazon, erm, the website and the web, the website and the doctors, you know, the nurses they're, the travel nurses all said no, it's not a mos, it's not a, it's not a malarial area so I didn't take any malaria pills, I did get bitten by some nasty black things which are a bit itchy but not, no worse than, or less bad than horseflies, so.

**Yes, which is interesting considering where you went to.**

**ALK10** Yeah, right on the Napo River which is a tributary of the Amazon so, and there were mos, I mean they said the mossies come out at night and all the huts we stayed in, rather lodges we stayed in, were, they didn't have glass, they had mosquito netting and so I mean immediately, they said when you're going or leave open the door, get in quick, get out quick, shut the door and I had, there was no, no bother from mosquitoes at all but.

**Yeah. So I think it's interesting isn't it that we're just?**

**ALK10** So maybe they're a bit joined up about mosquitoes and a bit, think about it a bit more than we do.

**Yeah, that it's just actually common practice and so that's maybe something that maybe coming for us, we, you know, that that's one thing that hopefully will be able to gather some evidence on the project about actual mosquito populations in the area.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**So we've got ecological surveying going on right now over the course of the three years to map what species of mosquitoes are found on which website, so, you know, once we know we'll let you know but.**

**ALK10** Yes, bitey ones. [laughs]

**Yes, exactly. Now this is the very last section of the interview now, which is about something that we call Contemporary Social Representation of wetlands and what it basically means is trying to find out where wetlands fit into the national psyche so are wetlands seen as something that are wonderful for wildlife or are they seen as barren mosquito ridden places? So from your perspective how do you think, you know, Alkborough Flats fits into a general perspective of landscape and more importantly, what things do you think might have changed how people feel about wetlands, whether that's positive or negative? What sorts of things might influence? And what I mean by that is are people influenced by the media, are they influenced by other people? Are they influenced by art and books, you know, what are the sorts of influences that change how people?**

**ALK10** Yeah, ah, that's an interesting one. I think there is quite a lot of cultural baggage around art and books and sort of, you know, sort of things that happen in the marshes and by the water, in the lonely places where the reed beds are and the birds call, you know what I mean?

**Yeah.**

**ALK10** Those, I think, and there is I think quite a negative perception about wetlands in our psyche, you know. We love, you know, the Brits on the whole, they love woods and, you know, fine British oaks and lovely green places and they love the coastland and lovely cliffs and I like pretty places with flowers and meadows but I think there's a perception wetlands don't altogether fit[?] that bill and they, I think there's something essentially a bit untidy about wetlands, you know, the mud and the dead reeds and the, you know, the old thistles and stuff, erm, and I think there is a perception that it's, it's not well utilised land, you know, it's not farmed, it's not pretty, it's not bosky, do you know what I mean?

**Yeah.**

**ALK10** I don't, I disagree with that point of view entirely but, erm, but I think there is a perception.

**So what do you think has fed into that perception, where has that come from then? Is that from?**

**ALK10** I think some of it comes from, I blame literature, erm, and, you know, you think of some of the Dickens writings about, erm, you know, people in the marshes near London where there's desolate places, and things like, erm, George Crabb's poetry and Benjamin Britten's Curly River and things like that, they're all sort of rather, Willow the Wisps and folklore, there's a lot of, you know, and if you step off the path you'll be sucked in and you'll never come out alive and your horse will be sucked in and drowned under you and, you know, there's always sort of perception of, that they're places of danger and dodginess and of course, I mean the criminals hang out there, [laughs] and I think literature does, hasn't, erm, done wetlands any favour at all.

**No, not over the past few hundred years but.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**Do you think that's changed, you don't think that's changed at all with kind of new, there's new nature writing around and there's?**

**ALK10** It depends how well read people are [laughs] because if you haven't read these books or haven't read sort of, tapped into the things on TV dramas and things, then you might come to it with a completely open mind, it might be different but I mean, you know, I'm thinking of like the East End of London and the, the marshes there, the River Lea, all round there, you've got, you know, they're always saying all dodgy people hang out.

**[laughs] Yeah, so you, it's like a mix then you feel between sort of, kind of really embedded cultural perspectives from literature and the sort of, I don't know, the glamour of the underworld maybe.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**Yeah. You know, for instance do you, you know, if you were to think about the types of cultural things that you enjoy, whether that's going to maybe to listen to book readings or poetry readings or artwork or.**

**ALK10** I enjoy that, yes.

**Or lectures and things like that, you know, do you think that all of those things feed into how people perceive spaces and places? Or as you say do you think people actually have got quite a monochrome view of, you know, they believe what they believe in newspapers and watch on TV and?**

**ALK10** Yes.

**Maybe there's sort of en masse there isn't so much willingness to engage with wetlands.**

**ALK10** Yeah, I think people, I think yes, I think people are a bit edgy about them.

**And what do you think could be done to rehabilitate then the perspective of them?**

**ALK10** No, no, wonderful things live there and also I think in this pragmatic age, you know, where everything has a price and everything has to be worth so much, you know, the positive impact on flood prevention and carbon things and what have you, I think and the fact that, you know, most people who visit wetland are perfectly open upfront legit people.

**Yeah. So if you like the way to do it is to be quite pragmatic and say this is how much is saved in the local economy by not being flooded for instance?**

**ALK10** I think so, yeah, um.

**And just moving on to the very last bits of the interview, do you have any sort of anecdotal stories that are connected with Alkborough Flats? I mean I know they haven't been around for very long but any funny things that have happened there or associations with local places?**

**ALK10** Erm, yeah, no, not really, I mean I think the one, go back to that, my encounter with the hare, that was just absolutely mindboggling, erm, it was just wonderful because I was just walking along approaching a bend and unknown to me and unknown to the hare we were on a collision course because they were round the, hare was round the bend and he just charged out and it saw me, put his brakes on and then charged off again, you know, and I've never seen anything like it, it was, you know, three foot away from me, so close I couldn't even get the camera on him but it was, you know, astonishing.

**I mean I've had one close up with a hare and that was when I was in Connemara in Ireland.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**And oh it was just so magical.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**There's something about them which really is, I can see why they have a place in lots of different types of folklore.**

**ALK10** Oh yes.

**Because they're just these wonderful creatures of the wild aren't they?**

**ALK10** Yeah, they're laden with mythology.

**Yes. Now just to sort of wrap things up because I know I've taken a lot of your time up already, is there anything that you would like to share with the projects are ask of the project as we begin to work through our findings? Is there something you would like to encourage us?**

**ALK10** I would love to find out, I would love to know how you do actually, and if you get, get to any conclusions, and also, you know, I know you, you can't personalise it but generally I'd be very interested in other people's thoughts are, you know, because obviously been talking about it from, you know, very much my perception.

**Yes. Well that would be the really interesting thing is sort of showing what different communities and all the different case study sites have been saying. Now the work that I've been doing, also a colleague of mine who works at Greenwich who's called Adriana Ford.**

**ALK10** Oh yes, you mentioned her in the, your original email I think.

**That's right, so she's doing some work …**

**ALK10** [work/film making discussion – not transcribed]

**Tell people what I've found because it's so interesting.**

**ALK10** Yeah, I think it would be quite interesting, obviously if there's anything that, you know, if there's anything in any form I can, you know, refer people to it or, you know, give them any, you know, if there's anything fairly compact I could give it to, you know, we can dish them out.

**Yeah, absolutely. I mean and I will, you know, I'll keep you briefed because the project doesn't finish until next July, so this is the time now that we're going to start assimilating the data that we've got and beginning to look through and see connectivities and patterns …**

**ALK10** [project discussion – not transcribed]

**ALK10** Thank you very much, it's been nice talking to you.

**Yeah, it's been really lovely, thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it.**

**ALK10** Oh I hope you're, you know, I really hope the project goes well because I think, you know, they're in, wetlands are in need of a bit of.

**I think so too.**

**ALK10** Encouragement.

**Exactly, we need to really value them and look after them.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**And understand their different functions for humans and animals.**

**ALK10** Well they're not conventionally pretty. That, people like pretty in nature.

**That's it.**

**ALK10** And they don't appreciate beauty and function necessarily.

**Exactly and that things can have their own unique beauty can't they?**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**So yeah, no, I'm absolutely on a sort of, you know, mission to rehabilitate the wetlands that's for sure.**

**ALK10** Yes.

**But, so this won't be the last time we speak, hopefully, you know, I'll call you again when we get closer towards giving some outputs.**

**ALK10** Yes, any more questions I'll see what I can do. [laughs]

**Aww, that's really thoughtful of you, thanks so much.**

**ALK10** Yeah.

**Okay, lovely.**

**ALK10** It's been nice to talk to you Mary.

**And you REMOVED, and you too and have a wonderful rest of your day.**

**ALK10** Oh right, thank you.

**Brilliant. Take care now.**

**ALK10** Thanks, bye.

**Bye.**

**ALK10** Bye.

END OF INTERVIEW