

Presentment to the Verderers Court 16 March 2016

Pondhead HLS Wetland Restoration project: 15/00294 - Park Hill Lawn stream (SSSI Unit 386)

1. This request concerns not only the Pondhead application, but all HLS "Wetland Restoration".
2. Between September 2015 and January 2016 there was a "Heritage Mapping" exhibition in the Lyndhurst Visitors Centre, sponsored by HLS and the National Park. It explained that detailed Lidar surveys have been mapped across the forest. The Matley / Pondhead area was one of 5 areas that had been done in detail.
3. The exhibition explained that Lidar survey images show the

"...old winding courses of the streams before they were straightened in the 19th and 20th centuries. This combined with historic maps help to ensure the wetland restorations are undertaken in the right place."

(See photo attached of one of the exhibition panels)
4. The Pondhead application is of course one such project. Its Planning Statement claims that it is undoing "*artificial drainage*" from "*150 years ago*" as their impacts are damaging the SSSI Units on the site.
5. Given my property's proximity to the site, I visited the Christopher Tower Reference Library in Lyndhurst in order to research myself exactly what the 1850's "*artificial drainage works*" were. One of the maps I viewed was the original, colour "Drivers" Survey map (the definitive map used to inform all HLS wetland restoration schemes). I was amazed to see that the Parkhill Lawn stream was already clearly present in 1789, **on the same line that it exists today.**
6. The NPA's archaeologist, Frank Green, joined me to view the 1789 map and confirmed that the Parkhill Lawn stream has been in existence, on the same line as it is today since long before the 19th century. It may have been maintained, but has never been "*straightened*" or moved as the application states. (I attach the first page of the application Planning Statement).
7. The Pondhead application proposes to completely infill part of the Parkhill Lawn stream and "*restore*" and its bridge "*to its original line*", about 10m to the south. My basic research shows this to be completely wrong. The Parkhill Lawn SSSI Unit 386 may be in "unfavourable" condition, but it demonstrably cannot be suffering due to the line of the stream having being moved – the 1789 Driver survey map proves that the stream is, and always has been there, on its natural line!
8. It is possible that infilling and moving the stream from its natural line will actually damage the SSSI unit. This is NOT "*turning the clock back*"; it is a damaging and unqualified intervention in the open Forest.
9. In preparing this application it is clear that the Forestry Commission have not followed the publically stated HLS process outlined by the Heritage Mapping exhibition (see para 3 above). They have not used the best and most valuable resources in the Christopher Tower Library, made available to all by

the Verderers, and which can be seen only 5 minutes walk from Queens House.

10. It also transpires that the applicant's consultants have used outdated Environment Agency Lidar data rather than the new HLS New Forest Lidar survey which you have paid for!
11. Given the fact that they ignore the claimed methodology and the wealth of local data available, (supported by HLS) is it any wonder that the HLS Pondhead applications have been such a shambles?
12. My request is that you require that the Forestry Commission employ the New Forest specific Lidar data and Drivers survey evidence for each of the HLS schemes whether large enough to justify a planning application or not. There will be no public confidence in these schemes unless or until the correct information is used properly to inform these proposals.
13. As far as the specific inaccuracy of the Pondhead application is concerned, the NPA have asked the applicant for their feedback, but as yet they have provided none, neither on this subject, nor flooding.
14. If generated with compliance these could be fabulous projects. We support the principle of improving SSSI Units, but from the outset this application has lacked appropriate preparation. Its justification requires to be reviewed in the light of the facts as they are now known.

Sally Hayward