

Official Verderer, Verderers, good morning.

I am Margaret Bunyard, I live at Ogdens and am a turning out Commoner.

Last week a group of us followed the Latchmore stream from Claypits Bottom through Islands Thorns, Amberwood and Alderhill, down to Latchmore Shade. We took with us the Lidar maps for the area which mark the proposed infilling and stream diversions.

Lidar is only reliable if it is used in conjunction with observation which is why archaeologists routinely ground-truth the results, as they did in the recent Lidar survey of the Forest. It is obvious that desk-based analysis has been deemed sufficient and neither ground-truthing nor levelling has been done for the proposed 'restoration' of Latchmore Stream. In some crucial sections this mapping is quite clearly wrong, and in one case, 9 metres out, so if the work were to follow the Lidar, the stream would need to flow uphill. This is surreal: a beautiful stream is to be infilled, and a new one dug uphill? It's as nonsensical as something out of Alice in Wonderland, but worryingly this is real life and the HLSS Partnership is driving it.

The natural topography makes the plans impossible in places, not only because of the levels, but because of the underlying geology, which forces water to flow the way it does. And then there are the drainage ditches. Looking at the stream and the way tree roots are exposed, it is easy to see that the side drains that are necessary for commercial tree growing caused the erosion in the first place and are still carrying a lot of water. There are 76 ditches entering the stream along one short section, but while there are plans to fell the trees and fill in the stream, there are no plans to infill the ditches. Thousands of tons of imported material will be needed to fill in the ancient stream, whose beds, rich in fossils, pre-date the English Channel. This infill will then be washed downstream, the area destroyed and money wasted for nothing.

We noted various protected species on our walk, watched a fly-catcher and saw a large area of Pillwort growing near the stream, both of these, of course, carrying the highest protection, and we thought of the 16 other red-listed species that will be threatened if the work goes ahead to say nothing of the otter, sea trout, eel and lamprey.

Natural England's advice was that an EIA was necessary for the Latchmore Catchment "and for sites such as this". For Wootton, which is a RAMSAR, SPA, SAC and SSSI site, there is nothing and its 'restoration' scheme goes to planning on 21st of this month, with no EIA to highlight the high number of SAC species already to be found there.

The EIA Screening Direction for Pondhead says in the Written Statement that for Schedule 2 Development under 1b), permanent changes to the character of more than 5 hectares of land "are more likely to indicate that EIA is required" (according to the Planning Regulations Schedule 2 it's only 1 hectare), the area of the development at Wootton is at least 30 hectares, and the affected area significantly more. In fact if there is to be "significant effect" there is no threshold, and who could claim that infilling a stream that already has an abundance of the rarest flora and fauna and moving will not have a "significant effect"?

I have stated in the past that my concern has been only for Latchmore with its special character, and not anxiety about wetland restoration as a whole. However the ever growing catalogue of destruction at other places has changed that. Broomy/ Amberslade has been completely re-landscaped and infilled after only 1 year, following a previous attempt to 'restore' the stream in 2007; it has now been eliminated altogether.

Harvestslade is disintegrating, the infill has caused large beaches to form and banks to collapse, the clay and hoggin have created nick points.

The estimated cost for the Harvestslade work was £65,000; it was in fact £374,000 without the Forestry Commission charges. The cost of wetland restoration, as it is carried out by HLSS is just too high.

To quote from Richard Buxton, Environmental and Public Law Solicitor, "lack of consistency undermines the local community's confidence in the planning system in relation to regulation of matters affecting biodiversity interests of the highest importance".

This must be of concern to the Verderers whose aims include "to conserve the traditional landscape, wildlife and aesthetic character (*of the New Forest*) including its flora and fauna, peacefulness, natural beauty and cultural heritage".

Thank you for listening.