

Addendum One: The Hydrology Report

On 27th April 2004 Christchurch Borough Council received a hydrology report commissioned by The Herpetological Conservation Trust. These are our observations upon that report.

In our objection dated 18th April 2004 we called for an independent, professional hydrological report. Mr Armour-Chelu, who is one of their employees, is the author of the report submitted by The Herpetological Conservation Trust. It is normal business practice for a specialist consultant to include curriculum vitae with a report. In this way he establishes his credentials as somebody who is qualified by examination and practice to make professional judgements. Mr Armour-Chelu fails to state his pertinent qualifications, either academic or practical. From these two factors we conclude that:

- The report is not independent. One has to wonder why that is. Could it be that The Herpetological Conservation Trust are only too aware that an independent source would not take quite the rosy view of what they are proposing as that put forward by their own employee?
- The report is not professional. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, that he should know he would be expected to produce, Mr Armour-Chelu apparently lacks the formal and practical qualifications that would be necessary before this could be deemed a report produced by a qualified professional hydrologist.

On these grounds alone the report presented by The Herpetological Conservation Trust does not meet the requirements of either the residents who are affected by this plan or, one would think, Christchurch Borough Council.

The report cites work done on similar sites in East Dorset but unfortunately fails to name them. Again, it is standard business practice to name one's references. An anonymous endorsement is no endorsement at all. We stand to be corrected but we know of no other Dorset site that is a steep sandy hill between two large rivers, that borders a major trunk road (the A338), has large conurbations around and close to it, and which is exposed to the gales that come off the sea.

The report claims that experience gained from previous work on St Catherine's Hill can be taken as a good guide to what will happen if this project is given permission to proceed. We know of no other project or event that has ever come close to felling 15,000 trees on St Catherine's Hill in the course of a single winter. What is being proposed here is in a different league and **we believe this to be a false, naïve assumption.**

The report confirms that the soil is sand and gravel on clay. That is to say it is NOT chalk. From our main report you may recall that our expert indicated that chalk was the only soil on which The Herpetological Conservation Trust might get away with what they propose without causing a major upset to the whole eco-system.

The report tells us that average rainfall in our area is 32 inches (805 millimetres) a year. It further tells us that the area to be completely cleared

of trees measures some 59 acres (24 hectares). That means that some 42 million gallons of water fall on that area each year. We further learn that these trees remove 33% of that water by intercepting it before it hits the ground and by transpiration. Thus the trees to be completely removed account for 14 million gallons of water each year. To this must be added a further increase in excess water that will result from thinned areas of woodland. We have no means of quantifying this additional factor.

This sudden extra burden upon the land, The Stour floodplain and particularly The Avon floodplain will, we are told, have no significant effect either in terms of flooding or erosion. We humbly beg to differ.



The picture shows the junction of Sandy Lane and Hurn Road after rain last year, 2003.

The community of Burton, who are only too aware of the flooding that is caused now by The Avon, are not mentioned in the report. Nor is the trunk road (A338), which could flood with disastrous results if excess water runs down towards it from the back (north) of the hill. The fact that they are not mentioned suggests they have not been considered. **These matters must be independently investigated and professionally resolved before any work is allowed to start.**

We are told that if The Herpetological Conservation Trust finds itself out of its depth half way through the project they will call upon unnamed technical experts. We suggest that the time to consult these people is now, not when the fire brigade are busy pumping out houses.

Finally we are told that over ten years shallow rooting ferns, bracken and slow growing heather will replace the lost trees. Even after ten years these plants will not be removing as much water as the trees did, a shortfall

estimated by The Herpetological Conservation Trust to be some 3 million gallons of water each year. This does not concern them, however, because they only predict an increase in surface water flow where the hill is steep. We are not quite sure where the hill is **not** steep.

The word subsidence does not appear in the report and this issue is not addressed. Again the implication is that it has not been considered. It is of course a matter of some importance to local residents.

Jim Biggin
General Secretary
5th May 2004

Addendum Two: The Timber Extraction Summary

On 27th April 2004 Christchurch Borough Council received a timber extraction report commissioned by The Herpetological Conservation Trust. Mr Armour-Chelu, who is one of their employees, is the author of the report, which is thus not independent. These are our observations upon that report.

The report on this most important topic comprises a map with lines drawn along Dudmoor Lane, St Catherine's Hill Lane and Sandy Lane plus just two paragraphs of text.

We are told that 100 to 120 lorry loads of timber will be removed. There are no supporting assumptions or calculations so this hypothesis cannot be tested. As the report is not independent, it is not clear to us why we should believe it.

However, based upon these figures, to remove 15,000 trees in 100 lorry loads would require each lorry to carry 150 trees. From this we deduce that either these are very big lorries or most of the timber is going to be burnt with all that implies for the local environment, asthmatics and bronchitics or (as The Herpetological Conservation Trust has done on other sites such as Parley Common) left in unsightly heaps that children will clamber upon with the consequent potential dangers that brings.

We are not told how a large lorry is going to make its way up Sandy Lane, with all the cars and vans that park there because of the double yellow lines on Hurn Road, Fairmile and The Grove. Nor are we told how it intends to turn around to make the return journey. We conclude that the lorry will be backed off Hurn Road and travel in reverse up Sandy Lane where it will block access to the residents and the emergency services for many hours as it is loaded up by tractors pulling logs down the gravel path from the gun club. The noise will be horrendous. Let us hope nobody has a heart attack.

Much the same can be said of St Catherine's Hill Lane and Dudmore Lane. The lorry will have to back off Fairmile and will then block both lanes as tractors pulling logs down the side of the hill load it up. The damage to the surface of the lanes will be considerable, the inconvenience to residents monumental.

We believe that The Herpetological Conservation Trust has largely ignored the whole question of professional project management.

Jim Biggin
General Secretary
5th May 2004