

## WETLAND RESTORATION PROGRAMME

The Planning Application in respect of the **Wootton Riverine Woodland, Avon Water** project (both sides of Wootton Bridge) received special attention from councillors in the Planning section of the meeting. The full details (when finally received) showed the extraordinary scale of this latest stage of the Forestry Commission/NF Verderers/Park Authority's Wetland Restoration programme. It will involve turning 3 kilometres of watercourse that was straightened to improve drainage around the time the railway line was being constructed (c.1850) back to what is said to be its original meandering course in order to upgrade the condition & biodiversity of the adjoining bogs & mires. These stream engineering works will cover over 120 acres of this popular corner of the Forest. The massive scale of excavation and infilling will require about 19,000 tonnes of hoggins, gravel & clay etc. thus making it at least 4 times bigger in scope than the recent **Harvestslade Bottom** project in Burley.

After due consideration of a lot of detailed plans and specifications, councillors agreed to recommend 'Refusal' of the application at this stage, having particular regard to the unsatisfactory outcome of the Harvestslade works and lack (again) of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Our detailed observations and reasons for this recommendation may shortly be seen on either the NFNPA's website planning pages or on BPC's own website.

Meanwhile, with further regard to the Harvestslade project, Cllr. Clarke confirmed that the Forestry Commission's response to BPC's letter of enquiry dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2016 under the "**Freedom of Information Act / Environmental Information Regulations**" was eventually received on 4th April. Unfortunately, the answers provided were generally unsatisfactory. After detailed consideration and further research, more and better information has been requested in another letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> April. You can also see this letter on the BPC website. It contains the original questions and the FC's replies to those as well as our latest observations and further questions. The correspondence should, therefore, be relatively easy to follow. Much of what now seems to be coming to light is of considerable interest - if not also probably rather worrying.