Stockley Wetland Creation
Planning Design & Access Statement

Proposal: Works to create a wetland habitat for biodiversity and environmental benefit.

Introduction:

This statement is prepared in support of a Planning Application to enable works to create and enhance a waterscape within a pasture valley west of the village of Chilmark.

The valley (known colloquially as 'Stockley') is in the private ownership of the Fonthill Estate. The Fonthill Estate extends to approximately 8,500 acres lying between Tisbury and north of Great Ridge Woods. The land holding incorporates a range of landscape characteristics from rolling open fields to enclosed pasture and ancient woodland.

The Estate is proud of the investments and initiatives that it has taken over several generations to improve rural sustainability and safeguard and enhance its Natural Capital (including habitat creation, soil health and water quality).

The proposal made within this application, forms part of The Fonthill Estate's wish to continue to invest in the environment. The aim of the proposal is to achieve the following outcomes:

- Create a naturalised wetland habitat.
- Enhance biodiversity (flora, insects, birdlife, bats).
- Intercept nutrients; defuse phosphates, nitrates and other chemical compounds.
- Carbon retention.
- Impound water to mitigate downstream flood and drought risks.

Surveys and calculations shall be undertaken to measure and record the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), together with the nutrient interception.

In accordance with Governmental policy supporting the development of ecosystem services, it is proposed that the BNG and nutrient interception, will be recorded as an asset which potentially could be sold or traded.

The Fonthill Estate was a founding member of the Wylye Valley Farmers (Cluster Group) promoting coordinated farm led conservation. The Estate is also a member of Environmental Farmers Group (which aims to link Farmer Cluster Groups for enhanced environmental improvements).

Description of site (existing):

The site area extends to 12.09 ha (29.87 acres) being the waterscape along the valley bottom. The valley itself, including is approximately 36 ha (90 acres) and is currently extensive grassland used for sheep grazing.

The valley has a ditch (1m wide) that runs along the centre line of the valley (west to east). This ditch flows in the winter months and some standing water occurs in the eastern end of the site.

Overview of proposed works:

The topographic features of the valley floor suggests that water flow has been regulated in the distant past and water ponded in certain sections of the valley. Leat channels are evident in the current landform and appeared to have been formed to push water to the north and south of the valley floor.

As described in the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and Ecological Report, the intention is to rewet the valley floor by repairing the shallow cross valley bunds that have historically impounded water in the valley, in order to form shallow ponds and associated wetlands. The rehydration of the valley floor and the creation of extensive seepage wetlands will change the vegetation and enhance habitat.

Like the current ditch, flow into the valley will be seasonal and ephemeral in nature, but the ponding of water within the valley will enhance the overall wetness of the valley and by implication maintain the proposed wetland habitat areas.

The Proposed Site Plans include and overall plan for the full scheme. In total it is proposed that six individual ponds are created in a ribbon pattern over a total length of 1,270 m.

In addition to the contextual Site Plan a set of individual site plans has been provided for each of the six ponds. The methodology being to create the ponds and wet areas by means of:

- Excavation to create shallow areas.
- Creation of downstream bunds.
- Infilling of the existing straightened channel.
- Creation of ‘u’ shaped and ‘v’ shaped ditches cutting across the valley bottom.

The purpose of the new ditches is to intercept the water and distribute it both north and south in the valley bottom. These ditches then overtop to form a broader wet area.

All spoil and soil arisings will be used on site.

Design:

The design / works proposals detailed on the attached plans have been prepared by consultant hydrologist Nick Haycock (Haycock Environmental Consultants). Mr Haycock has also prepared the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment.

Close coordination and planning has been held with consultant ecologist Helen Pengelly (Canopy Landuse). Mrs Pengelly has provided the accompanying ecology report.

Heritage and archaeological consultation has been provided by Peter Cox of AC Archaeology. Please see attached archaeological statement.

Planning Policy:

Policy 52	**Green Infrastructure:**
	The Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015, provides that the definition of Green Infrastructure includes *'woodland, downland and meadows, wetlands, open and running water'.* Whilst the policy is written principally in the context of retaining or including such green space in development applications, it does also state: "Green infrastructure projects and initiatives that contribute to the delivery of a high quality and highly valued multi-functional green infrastructure network in accordance with the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will be supported".
	Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2022 -2030:
	Goal 2 of the Strategy is the halting the loss of & improving biodiversity. The stated objective is that by 2030, we will have gained a more biodiverse and resilient ecological network in Wiltshire... That strategy further states that working in partnership, we will do this by: • Supporting the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to help build resilience to climate change and provide opportunities for species and ecosystem recovery. • Helping to restore our terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term. • Creating or restoring wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network, focusing on priority habitats as part of a wider set of land management changes providing extensive benefits. • Taking action to recover threatened, iconic or economically important species of animals, plants and fungi, and where possible to prevent human induced extinction or loss of known threatened species. • Increasing carbon storage capacity of woodlands in England in line with the Government's 25-year Environment Plan aspiration of 12% woodland cover by 2060 in England involving planting 180,000 hectares by end of 2042.
	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
	We understand that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is currently being developed but that a major theme will be partnership and working with farmers and landowners to promote positive change.

Designations and Constraints:

In addition to searches undertaken as part of the accompanying archaeological, ecological and hydrology reports a search has been conducted on DEFRA's Magic Maps.

AONB	**Cranbourne Chase.**
	The AONB primary purposes is stated as being: **"to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, now and for future generations".** This application seeks to enhance naturalistic beauty. We therefore believe that the proposals are entirely consistent with this aim.
SSSI	There is no SSSI (or part thereof) within the site. However, there is proximity to Chilmark Quarry SSSI (SAC) and Impact Zone. Given the objectives of the proposals, we see the application as being complementary to the nearby SSSI.
Public Rights of Way	There are no public rights of way that cross or in the vicinity of the site.

Access:

Road Access is via a farm gateway on the north western edge of the site in the hamlet of Ridge. Construction traffic will be limited to an excavator (with supporting tractor & trailers). Minimal movements to and from the site will be required during the construction period.

Conclusions:

The aims of the proposals are to deliver benefits for nature and the environment. In doing so it will also aid carbon sequestration and help to alleviate localised issues with flooding. Overall, the project will help build resilience against climate change.

The proposals are fully supported by local and national planning policy as well as being aligned with the objectives of the AONB. We respectfully ask that this application be approved as soon as possible.

Patrick Durnford MRICS.
On behalf of Fonthill Farms.