

## SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT #1

In the interest of promoting an honest, open and informed debate about the Sports Centre and especially the boating lake and ecology, we are starting a series of evidence-based postings to correct the large number of inaccurate, poorly researched and misleading statements which have been posted on the internet. FoSSC would have liked to respond on those forums but we are blocked from posting there and any counter statements posted by others are rapidly deleted!

We are sorry for the length of some of these postings but it is important that full and accurate information is available.

We start with a scientific and evidence-based assessment of the numbers amphibian actually living on the Outdoor Sports Centre. We do this because public claims like “*the boating lake on the Sports Centre which, as you are no doubt aware, is a famous and very successful breeding ground for toads and newts*” are being made. No, we are not aware and we ask where the evidence to support this claim is? Hearsay is not evidence!

We have found no data to support this claim, nor have the City Ecology team ever presented any. Infact, quite the opposite. When the Environment Agency proposed dumping clay from the golf course in the boating lake to create a “wild flower meadow”, The City’s Planning Ecologist’s formal response to the planning application, was as follows;

**Wed 22 May 2013** *In its current state the old boating lake is of negligible long term value to biodiversity and I therefore have no objection to its conversion into a wildflower meadow...*

**Thurs 23 May 2013:** *I have just been made aware of the fact that the boating lake is a breeding site for common toad. The tadpoles in the current puddles **are likely** to be toads. The scheme does not provide any replacement habitat and I would therefore like to lodge an objection. (note: **are likely... not are confirmed as...**)*

At planning panel the City’s Planning Ecologist stated that the boating lake **may** be a breeding site. She has subsequently confirmed that wording to us in person. The formal refusal notice for the EA’s planning application stated *it is **considered likely** that the former boating lake provided habitat for various amphibians including the common toad. (note: **may be.... not is..... and is considered likely....., not is.....)***

At no stage has The City’s ecology team ever claimed that the boating lake was an important site supporting **large** populations of amphibians. We note that several specific areas of the Sports Centre have non statutory designation as SINCs (locally designated Sites Important for Nature Conservation) – however the old boating lake site is not one of these sites. Given that the common toad is listed on Southampton’s Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), and that the City Ecology Team know enough about the Sports Centre to designate multiple SINCs within it, we cannot believe that they would not have known about “*a famous and very successful breeding ground*” for a species on their BAP!

In our next posting of this series we will present some actual data on the Sports Centre’s amphibian populations.