

# *Friends of Latchmore*

## **Notes on Meeting with Forestry Commission**

Queens House, Lyndhurst, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013

### **Present:**

Mike Seddon, FC (MS)

Marianne Bergin, FC (MB)

Jane Smith, FC (JS)

Andy McDonald, NE (AM)

Jenny Thomas, NE (JT)

John Shepherd, FoL (JGS)

Fiona Macdonald, FoL (FM)

Ailsa Farrand, FoL (AF)

- 1) MS opened the meeting by stating that the FC has now decided that it will undertake a full formal EIA for the Latchmore project, whether or not the NPA now decide (in the light of legal advice recently obtained by Natural England) that this is a legal requirement for Planning purposes. This will be carried out in accordance with accepted IEMA and DEFRA standards and codes of practice, will cover the whole of the Latchmore catchment, and will include the 'Do Nothing' option as a basis for comparison of all options for restoration. They will however also submit a new application for a screening opinion on the need for an EIA for the whole catchment to the NPA.
- 2) J Smith circulated copies of a draft 'Timeline towards planning application'. This includes four key stages for consultation with interested parties, including FoL (highlighted). The first of these is a meeting scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014 for FoL to meet with the selected planning consultants. FC has pre-selected 3 preferred consultants (to be employed on a call-off basis), but has not yet determined which will be chosen for the Latchmore study. All are registered with the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA). The consultants will begin by identifying knowledge gaps and drafting a scope of work for the Assessment. FoL (and others) will be given an opportunity to comment on the draft scope of work before it is finalised.
- 3) AF asked if the southern side of the stream was included in the 'whole catchment' as so far it had not been shown in any plans and a great deal of water flowed down from Hasley and Sloden into the stream. MS said that a 'credible boundary' would be decided on for 'whole catchment area', and JS said that the south side would be considered but that it was not planned to include it in the restoration works at present. AF noted that the present transport route was between stream and the southern hillside and therefore would affect the work.
- 4) MS confirmed that the draft scope would include consideration of the 'do nothing' option. Any requirements for additional survey work to be undertaken would be identified, and the FC will take account of feedback on this. All reports and supporting information will be published. It is estimated that the whole process will take a year, as the EIA will need be completed before submission of the planning application (provisionally in December 2014)
- 5) FM asked about plans for pre and post-operational survey and monitoring and FC representatives explained that the requirements would be determined and documented in the

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scope of work. AF asked if the presence of many protected species might require the process to be stopped. This would be a judgement to be addressed within the Environmental Statement (ES). MB said that they expect to find protected species and they need to manage the habitat to support them.

- 6) JS stated that some survey work had been undertaken and that the results for damselflies may be ready in January, hopefully in time for the next HLS Board meeting. The HLS had commissioned and tendered this survey and it has been carried out by the H&IoW Wildlife Trust. MS referred us to the HLS minutes to see what other survey work is being carried out.
- 7) JGS asked if the mires would be included in the Environmental Statement as it is all part of the same catchment. FC confirmed that they will and that any remedial work for the Thomson's Castle mire may be planned for the 1<sup>st</sup> year of any restoration programme (i.e. at the same time as the work at the top of the catchment at Islands Thorns) as it is likely to be regarded as urgent
- 8) JGS explained that FoL members have been surveying birds, damselflies and the priority pond, and intended to begin work on invertebrates in the stream, and FM said that an electro-fishing survey was planned in collaboration with Sparsholt staff. JS explained that electrofishing and kick testing would need NE consents and FM said that she would confirm with Sparsholt that they had the necessary consents. FoL would liaise with NE & FC to ensure that the required procedures were observed.
- 9) MS queried whether FoL surveys were necessary, and FM explained that we had been concerned at the previous plans to proceed despite the lack of information, and had decided that we needed to get our own. John S stated that independent replication was always desirable and that verification would add credibility to the results. It was agreed (at this point in the meeting) that co-ordination of surveys and sharing of data would be helpful.
- 10) AM said that the JBA upstream modelling work was delayed and that results would not be available in time for the planned December meeting, which he suggested should be postponed. JGS agreed that FoL is particularly interested in the modelling work and would be content to postpone if necessary. JS explained that JBA were commissioned initially by NE but were now working for the FC. JGS remarked that it was important to keep track of work in progress – it would not be satisfactory to discover problems at the end of the process, and we may need to comment on the methodology and assumptions.
- 11) MS then announced that the FC did not intend to publish the results of surveys and analysis in the course of the assessment process, and would only make these available in support of the final Environmental Statement, and at the same time. JGS queried the rationale and practicability of this plan, since it would be impossible to have an informed discussion about possible options in the absence of the supporting information. MS commented that some options (like the concrete dam) might be proposed by consultants but were highly unlikely to be part of the final plan.
- 12) JGS commented that unnecessary delay in making survey data and analysis available would not assist the progress that had been made in developing a less adversarial relationship, and that it would make some people very suspicious and damage the credibility of the process. MS commented that if the scope of the work had been agreed and it had been done to recognised standards, it should be adequate to make data available at the end. FoL representatives were not satisfied that this would be sufficient or constructive.
- 13) FM pointed out we had been invited several times to comment on the JBA reports and that

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we had provided constructive criticism, that should stimulate improvements in the final product. JGS stated that in his experience of potentially controversial developments it was most valuable to expose emerging conclusions for feedback so that any problems can be identified and dealt with early on, but MS remained sceptical.

- 14) JGS mentioned debris dams as a potential option that would undoubtedly be controversial as they have historically been unacceptable to Verderers. Such issues could usefully be resolved as part of the process rather than as a major disagreement on the final plan. The disagreement on this issue was not resolved, but JS said that the FC will ask the appointed Planning Consultants for their views on the most appropriate consultation process.

AF, FM & JGS (November 2013)