

Friends of Latchmore

friendsoflatchmore.org

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Blissford
Fordingbridge
Hants SP6 2HY

To: Mr M. Seddon, Deputy Surveyor, Forestry Commission

10 December 2013

Latchmore Brook: Notes of meeting of 13 November 2013

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your email message of 19 November summarising our meeting of 13 November, and the revised timetable for the work now planned. I am sending herewith a copy of our notes of the meeting, which are somewhat more extensive than yours. Please let me know if there are any factual inaccuracies in these so that we can correct them if necessary.

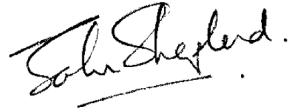
We are very pleased that you have now decided to carry out a full EIA, irrespective of any screening opinion from the NPA. However we are very surprised and somewhat alarmed, by your declared intention not to publish or release survey data or the results of studies that may be undertaken until the Environmental Statement is submitted, presumably at the same time as the Planning application. We are seriously concerned that this procedure is not only undesirable and unworkable in practice, but probably illegal, for the following reasons.

- 1) It is undesirable because it will diminish the greater level of trust and willingness to cooperate to find the best solution for the Latchmore valley, that we had begun to establish. It has already rekindled suspicions that the HLS partners may be determined to drive through this project close to its original form, and are therefore less likely to undertake the EIA in an objective, open and transparent way. It will also make it extremely difficult for any errors or problems (e.g. with respect to assumptions made) to be identified and corrected before it is too late.
- 2) It is unworkable because it will be impossible for anyone to evaluate the evidence base or the rationale that supports any restoration proposals that may emerge, or to suggest alternatives. It will simply not be possible for us (or any other stakeholders) to engage in any informed discussion of these, as you have planned in the timetable, making this stage of the consultation pointless.
- 3) It is therefore contrary to the provisions for public participation in environmental decision-making, as required by the Aarhus Convention, and the Environmental Information Regulations. Our solicitors will be writing to you about the legal position in due course.

I am afraid that your proposed plans as they stand will inevitably put us back in an adversarial position, and we shall have no option but to obtain the information that we need by repeated FoI/EIR requests. It also makes the agreement that I thought that we had reached to share our data with you unworkable, and in these circumstances we shall have no option but to withdraw that offer.

I sincerely suggest that this decision is a serious retrograde step, and I hope that you will be able to reconsider it, adopt the open and transparent process that is part of normal good practice, and enable us to resume a more collaborative approach.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Shepherd." The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Professor John Shepherd CBE FRS (Co-chair: the Friends of Latchmore)

CC

Mr. D May (Verderers)
Mr. S Avery (NF NPA)
Mr. A Wood (Natural England)
Rt Hon D Swayne, MP
Chair & Parish Clerk, Hyde Parish Council
Ms. L. Foster, Richard Buxton Solicitors