

Friends of Latchmore

friendsoflatchmore.org

Postbox Cottage
Blissford
Fordingbridge
Hants SP6 2HY

To: Mr S. Avery, New Forest NPA

14 September 2014

Latchmore Brook Restoration Project: EIA scoping report

Dear Steve

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft scoping document for the Latchmore EIA. Much of this is of course standard material and not exceptionable. However, based on long experience of chairing independent peer reviews of EIAs for major offshore projects, I do find it sadly deficient in a number of respects. Our major comments are listed below, and there are a large number of further detailed comments prepared by several members of our group in the attached annotated copy of the report. The major points requiring attention are as follows:

- 1) **The report exhibits excessive and uncritical reliance on material provided by the client.** Much of section 2 reports matters that are actually in doubt as though they were facts, without evidence to support the statements made. Independent assessors should have formed their own view, or at least clearly identified the client's views as such, where these are reported.
- 2) **The proposed structure of the ES (Box 1.1) is inadequate.** It is essential that the ES includes major sections on
 - a) the purpose and objectives of the project, as clearly and quantitatively as possible
 - b) how the options proposed may be expected to contribute to these objectives
 - c) how the options to be assessed will be compared (see item 5, below)

Item 2(a) is not normally required, because the objective of a project is usually obvious (to build a road or a supermarket, say), but for an ecological restoration project such as this it is vital that this be clearly identified, since the assessment is almost entirely about the balance of positive and negative environmental impacts (i.e. the ecological winners and losers).

- 3) **The proposed baseline survey work is inadequate.** Much of the proposed work has apparently been completed before the scope of the EIA has even been finally drafted, let alone approved. This is wholly unacceptable, as the scope, methodology, & timing of these surveys & observations may be inappropriate or inadequate. The monitoring "clock" must start when the scope has been approved. Even one year of monitoring is in any case insufficient to establish a reliable baseline for quantities that vary greatly from one year to the next such as hydrological parameters and the abundances of animal species.
- 4) **The options to be considered are inadequately described and unsatisfactory**
 - a) The description of the options to be considered is essentially incomprehensible. It is not at all clear what the various options actually involve, and there is little clear differentiation between them. They should clearly span a range of possible interventions, from (1) Do

Nothing, through (2) Minor (the minimum that may be expected to have a beneficial effect), to (3) Moderate, and (4) Major, and the differences between them must be explained clearly.

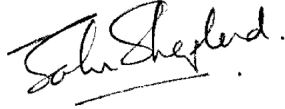
b) We also strongly recommend that a further option should be included, i.e. Sequential Restoration. This would involve rectifying the excessive drainage in the inclosures upstream first (since it is recognized that it is this that causes the excessive peak flows and consequent erosion downstream), and then monitoring the consequences for the flow regime for (say) 3 years, before deciding what further work (if any) would be desirable downstream.

5) **The procedure to be used for the Comparative Assessment of the options is unstated.** The criteria to be evaluated and the methodology (e.g. multi-criterion decision analysis) to be used to evaluate and balance the performance of the options against the multiple criteria of concern must be specified in advance. It is extremely poor practice to leave this to be determined at the end of the process, as this can allow it to be “tweaked” by the analysts in order to select a previously favoured option.

Finally, we would re-iterate that **the precautionary principle must be applied** to any substantial development or intervention in protected and ecologically sensitive areas. This means that no intervention should be permitted unless an EIA demonstrates convincingly, on the basis of the evidence presented, that the overall net effect is likely to be beneficial.

We hope that you and the other parties involved will find these and our more detailed comments to be useful, in order to ensure that the EIA is well-founded and can provide a credible basis for an informed decision about the most appropriate intervention required (if any).

Yours sincerely,



Professor John Shepherd CBE FRS

CC

Mr. D May (Verderers)
Mr. M. Seddon (Forestry Commission)
Mr. A Wood (Natural England)
Ms S Young (Land Use Consultants Ltd)
Rt Hon D Swayne, MP
Chair & Parish Clerk, Hyde Parish Council
Ms. L. Foster, Richard Buxton Solicitors

See also detailed comments (attached)