

Letters to the Editor



Public opinion

SIR, — I have been following with interest your recent correspondence in this column including Mike Beggs' letter last week.

It is clear that much of the local concern about EU schemes arises from the fact that government organisations such as the NFNPA, Forestry Commission, and Natural England (who are all unelected bodies) clearly feel they do not have to listen to the views of local people and can bulldoze through their plans, regardless of public opinion. In this they are all alike, and they support one another without question.

The proposed Navitus Bay development in a World Heritage Site has evoked much opposition from environmentalists, sailors and residents alike, as reported on your front page last week. And yet, the New Forest District Council is not going to make any objection to the plans.

Similarly, there is very considerable local opposition to the despoiling of New Forest streams. The same organisations are running these expensive EU-funded engineering works under the HLS scheme and are still not listening. Instead, they are totally ignoring the environmental losses while they are busy congratulating themselves on what they have done.

There has been inadequate pre or post-project monitoring, and the appalling loss of habitat and of many highly-protected species in these areas is disregarded. Many people have observed the obliteration of sea trout, bullhead, newts, lampreys, dragonflies, snakes and varied rare flora. But no one appears to be accountable; indeed Natural England continues to support this destruction.

Moreover, there is a lack of consistency in planning regulations. Some of these stream works need planning permission, others appear not to. Only one has been deemed to require an environmental impact assessment, the others have not. Surely all similar projects should require both?

Isn't it time that the partners in this scheme and Natural England, all of them government organisations, took the strong views and feelings of public opinion into account? Is it not time that they became more professional themselves, and did the monitoring, environmental assessments and applications for planning permission that they would require from the rest of us?

Name and address supplied