

The Old Cottage  
Furze Hill  
Fordingbridge  
Hants  
SP6 2PX

Attn. Bruce Rothnie

Deputy Surveyor,  
Forestry Commission,  
The Queens House  
Lyndhurst  
Hants  
SO43 7NH

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2016

Dear Bruce

### 1. Tree-felling - Latchmore

**1.1** I am astonished to find that there are "Forest Operations" taking place along the north-western headwater tributary of the Latchmore catchment within Islands Thorn, specifically, down from Picket Corner to the Forest track close to its confluence with the headwater from Claypits Bottom. Most trees along the stream have been marked and a significant number already felled. Examples of these activities are illustrated in the attached file.

I understand that Jane Smith has responded to an enquiry from Bramshaw Parish Council that *"I can confirm that the felling that is currently taking place in Island Thorns Inclosure is standard silvi-cultural thinning that takes places every 5 years in this Inclosure in accordance with the New Forest Inclosure Forest Design Plan. Although some of the upper tributaries that feed into the Latchmore Brook run through this Inclosure the work is not related to the proposed stream restoration."*

This answer may be correct in terms of the situation for Islands Thorns as a whole, but cannot be directly applicable in this particular area based on the extensive area of broadleaf trees felled, or when it is currently subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment.

**In order to clarify Jane Smith's response, I would appreciate a copy of the Forest Design Plan for this specific area, including the detailed "Habitat restoration and felling", "Design Concept", and "Long term structure (20 years)" maps produced in 2000.**

### 1.2 "New Forest Crown Lands Management Plan - 2008 - b3 - Inclosures "

Other strategic documents for the New Forest SSSI / SAC covering working practices also point away from justifying this tree-felling at this time, irrespective of the impending EIA.

- The "New Forest Crown Lands Management Plan - 2008 - b3 - Inclosures " **Map B 3.10** shows that the valley slopes in this area of Islands Thorns are classed as "**Ancient semi-natural woodland**" with the constraints that this imposes.
- That Plan does go on to state that the Inclosures are worked on a 5 year rotation, and that **conifers and younger** broadleaf stands are generally thinned on a five year cycle whilst **mature** broadleaves are generally thinned on a ten year cycle. However, this must be as a means to achieving "**The Minister's Mandate for the Inclosures**" to restore Ancient and

Semi-Natural woodland by changing the balance between broadleaves and conifers in favour of broadleaves. ( This particular stream section of Islands Thorns is a relatively mature broadleaf area except for "one" single conifer, with an already open canopy allowing plenty of light to reach the ground. )

- Natural England's New Forest SSSI "**Conservation objectives and definitions of favourable condition for designated features of interest**" for "Broadleaf Woodland" habitat set out the targets to achieve favourable condition. This reach is already an "open" broadleaf woodland and the current felling cannot be in line with appropriate management to achieve these broadleaf woodland targets.
- The latest NE assessment (2014) for this SSSI Unit concludes that one of the reasons it remains unfavourable is due to the proportion of conifers. However, this does not apply to this section of the stream and removing all these mature beech and oak in this reach provides no contribution towards reducing the proportion of conifers.

### **1.3 Previous relevant communications to NFNPA and FC**

As has occurred on other sites, it appears to pre-judge the outcome of the putative Planning Application, but I also draw your attention to the earlier e-mail of 26 May 2015 between Lisa Foster (Richard Buxton Solicitors) and Steve Avery (copied to Julie Lunt (NE)) regarding the Studley Wood Restoration Proposal 2014 which had been approved by the Verderers' Court at its meeting on 18 February 2015.

That e-mail sought reassurance that "[.. the Council will undertake whatever steps are necessary to ensure that no works will take place before the planning consent is determined, including of course consultation on the ES, which is still is being prepared and not expected until July 2015.](#)"

In the absence of Steve Avery, Paul Hocking replied on 27 May 2015 that "[...Having spoken with Bruce Rothnie at the FC I am able to allay your concerns about works taking place at this time.](#)"

### **1.4 Summary**

The tree-felling is taking place in such a way that whole sections of trees are being felled, or marked for felling. Virtually every single tree along the stream has either been felled or is marked for felling. This extent of clearing can only be as preparation for the proposed works as has happened on other HLS restoration sites ahead of any permission for extensive engineering works. It is not related to opening up shaded areas or removing non-native species. Mature trees are being marked up for extraction, when they should not have been felled in the first place. The concern in this case is increased by the fact that this area is subject to an EIA, where these felling activities must have an impact on the environmental and hydrological status of the catchment and thereby invalidate an EIA that would support the planning application.

**This recent tree-felling cannot be justified prior to the EIA, and your assurance that no further work will take place before any planning decision is taken is required.**

**In order to clarify the situation, I would appreciate a copy of the Forest Design Plan for this specific area, including the detailed "Habitat restoration and felling", "Design Concept", and "Long term structure (20 years) maps produced in 2000.**

## **2. Studley Wood SSSI geological interest feature**

I also take this opportunity to refer you to the Geckoella report commissioned by the Forestry Commission and carried out in June 2010 which relates to the Studley Wood GCR site which is recognised as being of national and international importance for its geological and geomorphological features, and therefore protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as a component interest feature of the New Forest SSSI.

The Report states that the geological SSSI features at Studley Wood are in favourable condition as a result of the exposures within the existing stream channel, and it is clear that any plans to partially infill the stream, as proposed on the Maps displayed at the recent LUC / FC Exhibition, would have a serious negative effect on its condition. The Report goes on to state that water levels and flow rates along the Latchmore Brook are key to the maintenance of the "geological features within this site.

**3.** Finally I hope that there will still be an opportunity for you to answer previous correspondence I have sent to you, before the EIA is submitted as part of any Planning Application relating to Latchmore.

Yours sincerely

Ailsa Farrand

For Friends of Latchmore

### **Copies to:**

Steve Avery - NFNPA, Director Planning

Dominic May - Official Verderer, Chair New Forest HLS Board

Alison Barnes - NFNPA, CEO; New Forest HLS Board

Bramshaw Parish Council

Hyde Parish Council

Godshill Parish Council

James Cross - CEO Natural England

Julie Lunt - Natural England

Lisa Foster, Richard Buxton, Environmental Solicitors