

Minutes from the Havant Thicket Reservoir Community Advisory Group

Meeting presentations / discussions

Actions

Attendees from Portsmouth Water:

- Helen Orton (**HO**), Portsmouth Water, Finance & Regulation Director
- Sam Donovan (**SD**), Havant Thicket Reservoir Project Director
- Gareth Russell-Hughes (**GRH**), Havant Thicket Reservoir Project Manager
- Jim Barker (**JB**), Portsmouth Water, Head of Water Resources
- Eleanor Shipton (**ES**), Portsmouth Water, Communications & Engagement Officer
- Simon Boswell (**SB**), Ecosa, Ecologist
- Joel Hufford (**JH**), Create 51
- Charlie Palmer (**CP**), Create 51

Other attendees:

- Ingrid Strawson (**IS**), Independent Chair of Havant Thicket Reservoir Community Advisory Group and Strategic Advisory Group

Stakeholder attendees:

18 people in total representing the following organisations:

- Michael Ashton, Cycling UK
- Andrew Biltcliffe, Regeneration Project Manager, Havant Borough Council
- Jackie Branson, Ward Councillor, Hampshire County Council
- Anne Briggs, Ward Councillor, Hampshire County Council
- Jim Farrell, Chairman, Friends of Staunton Country Park
- Sally Foster, Communications Team, Havant Borough Council
- Beryl Francis, Ward Councillor, Havant Borough Council
- Ron Hammerton, Horndean Protection Group
- Chris Janes, Stakeholder Officer, Southern Water
- Sue James, Havant Friends of the Earth and Havant Climate Alliance
- Malcolm Johnson, Ward Councillor, East Hampshire District Council
- Susan Parish, Business Manager, Park Community School
- Carole Samuda, Community Officer, Havant Borough Council
- Jane Smith, Project Manager, Forestry England
- Tim Speller, Manager, Staunton Country Park
- Chris Stanley, Chair, Rowlands Castle Parish Council
- Dee Tupper, Chair, Friends of Hermitage Stream
- Peter Westron, Ramblers Association

Apologies:

- Bob Taylor, CEO, Portsmouth Water

Welcome and Introductions

Ingrid Strawson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself as the Independent Chair of the Community Advisory Group, as well as the Havant Thicket Reservoir Strategic Advisory Group. She also highlighted her previous experience as a Local Consumer Advocate for the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) and a member of Portsmouth Water's Customer Challenge Group (CCG).

A pre-recorded video message from Bob Taylor, CEO, Portsmouth Water, was then shown to attendees, as he was unable to join the meeting in person as he was on leave. The video can be viewed by visiting: <https://vimeo.com/567474838>.

Following the video, Helen Orton, Finance & Regulation Director at Portsmouth Water, explained that, as a member of the company's Board and Executive team, she was attending in place of Bob Taylor and would be very happy to answer questions from attendees. She stressed the importance of the stakeholder groups (the Community Advisory Group and Strategic Advisory Group) in helping the reservoir project create a positive and lasting legacy for local communities in particular.

There were then introductions from the Portsmouth Water team, including Jim Barker, Sam Donovan, Gareth Russell-Hughes, Eleanor Shipton, Joel Hufford and Charlie Palmer.

Sam took over in the spring from Malcolm Orford as the Havant Thicket Reservoir Project Director, with Eleanor recently joining Portsmouth Water as Communications & Engagement Lead for the reservoir project. Portsmouth Water's Principal Ecologist Trevor Codlin has left his post, with a successor due to start very soon.

An opening online poll was held to find out how many attendees were new to the group and how knowledgeable people felt about the reservoir project already. The results are shown below.

1. Have you attended Havant Thicket Reservoir stakeholder meetings before?

[More Details](#)

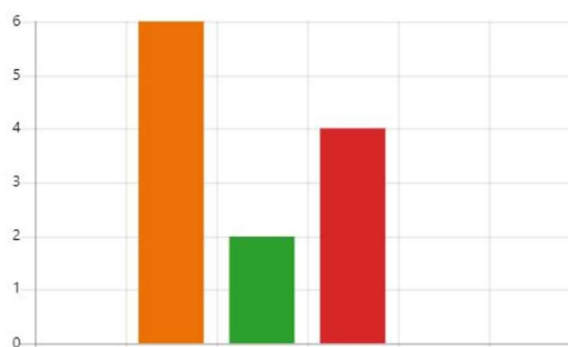
Yes, I have attended most / all...	5
Yes, I have attended some me...	2
No, I have not attended before	5
I don't know / I'm not sure	0



2. How much do you know about the Havant Thicket Reservoir scheme already?

[More Details](#)

I know everything	0
I have a good level of knowle...	6
I know enough	2
I'd like to know more	4
I don't know very much at all	0
I'm not sure	0



The meeting then reviewed the draft Terms of Reference for the Community Advisory Group and Strategic Advisory Group (as set out on slides 5-9 of the attached presentation pack from the meeting) and the groups' members were encouraged to comment on these.

ACTION:
Feedback
on draft
Terms of

Each of the attendees then introduced themselves and outlined their role and organisation, as well as their key interests in the Havant Thicket Reservoir scheme.

Agenda Item 1: Havant Thicket Reservoir project update

Please also see slides 9-20 in the attached presentation pack from the meeting.

Project Director Sam Donovan introduced himself and spoke about his career to date, including working on a range of large infrastructure projects and having a clear understanding of the need for any scheme to have highly effective community engagement. He explained that the reservoir project is very outward facing and will provide many benefits to communities.

He also reiterated why the scheme is necessary, to secure future water resources for the South East and protect rare chalk streams, by enabling Portsmouth Water to share more water with its neighbour Southern Water.

At the same time, the project will create a new green leisure hub, benefitting people and wildlife, particularly locally to the reservoir site. There will be a visitor centre with a café, a playground and picnic area, with good opportunities for including education facilities. Furthermore, the project, especially during its construction phase, will provide apprenticeships and job opportunities.

Sam stressed that the contractors appointed to build the reservoir and its associated pipeline will be engaging extensively with local communities, so residents and community representatives are fully aware of what will be happening and can raise ideas / suggestions, issues and queries to be responded to promptly. The Community Advisory Group will play a vital role in shaping and supporting the smooth delivery of the reservoir scheme.

Next, local concerns were acknowledged about about the health and safety aspects of having a large body of water near to residential areas. This will be a key issue that members of the Community Advisory Group can input on, to make sure the reservoir is a safe and welcoming place for all to enjoy. Education and awareness raising will be key for children and young people, so they are discouraged from swimming in the reservoir.

Sam expressed regret that 12 hectares of ancient woodland will need to be removed during the reservoir's construction and explained that an extensive environmental mitigation and compensation package has been developed, including creating or restoring 200 hectares of woodland and grassland – including, 52 hectares of restoration at Havant Thicket and 72 hectares of woodland enhancement at Southleigh Forest. A new wetland will also be created on the reservoir's northern shore, providing a haven for a variety of birds, insects and other species. Portsmouth Water's environmental plan is based on a detailed understanding of the reservoir site's wildlife and wider biodiversity, with monitoring of the site and surrounding areas carried out since 2005.

Sam also discussed the challenge of building the reservoir's pipeline (to transport water to and from the reservoir from Bedhampton Springs) through a residential area. He made it clear that Portsmouth Water and its contractors will work closely with local communities to install the pipeline as smoothly as possible, with a focus on minimising any environmental impact, as well as any disruption and inconvenience. The project is also very keen to continue working with the Friends of the Hermitage Stream, to build on their work through the stream improvement work that is part of the pipeline plan.

It was then on to an overview of the high-level timeline for the reservoir scheme, through to its scheduled completion in 2029. Sam advised that three potential contractors have been shortlisted for construction of the reservoir and four for the construction of the pipeline. Contracts are due to be awarded in Spring 2022. Next came a more detailed update on the project's timetable, including pre-construction preparation work on the reservoir site getting underway in the Autumn.

Reference by 20 August 2021 (All group members)

ACTION: Develop further governance detail and include in updated Terms of Reference (Ingrid Strawson)

There were then a number of questions from meeting attendees, with the queries and a summary of the responses provided set out below.

Question: More information needed about cycle routes and access onto the site for cyclists. The route at the north of Staunton Country Park is going to need to be improved if people are going to be able to cycle from central Havant. From the north of Havant Thicket, there is no real route into the site because of the traffic on the B2149. There's got to be a sensible cycle route through Staunton Country Park.

Answer: The project will ensure the site is the best it can be for cyclists. As part of the planning applications, Portsmouth Water worked really closely with Hampshire County Council to consider wider access to the site for non-motorists, particularly cyclists. As part of that, Portsmouth Water is going to be contributing a significant amount of money to Hampshire County Council to improve the wider cycling network and ensure there is the correct level of access for cyclists. The project team will take away other more specific points and come back with more detail.

Question: Concerns about parking along the B2149. There are areas all along the road into the Havant Thicket area where people could park. Access could be uncontrolled. This needs to be looked at and fencing needs to be put along these areas. We don't know how many more people are going to come into the area and people could start parking in residential areas, if parking charges on site are too expensive.

Answer: In terms of the site management, this will be part of discussions with Hampshire County Council (as the local highways authority and owner / operator of Staunton Country Park) and Forestry England. The reservoir scheme is looking to work together to make sure that the reservoir and other sites are managed in an integrated and co-ordinated way – for example, making sure parking charges are aligned.

Question: There have been many complaints about motorbike noise from illegal riding in the vicinity of the reservoir site. How will you police the use of motorbikes on cycle paths?

Answer: Yes, this is clearly a big concern for local residents and Portsmouth Water is already focused on addressing it, both in the immediate and longer term. It has amended its plans to put some early thoughts and potential mitigations down. As it drafts the more detailed design for the reservoir, it will consider all of these and ask for people's feedback, including, of course, this group. Obviously, there will be 'natural' mitigations as the site becomes more active – i.e. with more people around, the illegal motorbike riders will be put off, due to the risk of being reported to the police etc. Portsmouth Water will be working with all stakeholders and landowners to come up with the best solution for the site.

Question: There is a problem with anti-social behaviour and many years ago it was agreed with the water company that controls would be in place at night-time to prevent rat-running (via the reservoir site's northern and southern access routes). How will we minimise rat-running and other anti-social behaviour, especially at night?

Answer: Portsmouth Water amended its plans to resolve this issue by putting up a physical barrier to stop rat-running (via the reservoir site's northern and southern access routes and car park). There is a planning condition in place to make sure safety around the site is looked at in detail, including preventing anti-social behaviour. Portsmouth Water will look at this further and provide a more detailed response.

Breakout Session 1

Attendees were divided into two breakout groups and asked to separately discuss the format of future meetings and the topics they would like covered at these sessions. The key outputs from each breakout group are listed below.

ACTION:
Provide more detailed answers to queries (Gareth Russell-Hughes)

ACTION:
Provide more detailed answer to query (Gareth Russell-Hughes)

Group 1:

Topics to be covered at future meetings

- Importance of engagement with young people and how to achieve this successfully
- Night-time security on site
- Impact of construction traffic in Leigh Park / Warren Park area
- Ensuring safety during construction and post construction, especially water safety.

Format for meetings

- Overall, strong desire for return to face-to-face meetings
- Recognition some people will want to carry on with online, so people OK with hybrid meetings
- Call for shorter, more focused meetings
- Desire for discussions with other stakeholders on issues of shared interest e.g. reducing carbon impact of scheme
- Idea of sub-groups on particular topics that could meet separately and report back
- Interim meetings with Chair and group members only felt to be helpful
- Support for meeting minutes being published, with comments not attributed to individuals.

Communications to communities / stakeholders

- Call for regular (monthly) flow of information and updates to group members, which they could then distribute on via their own networks to provide people with current and factual updates on latest progress / issues
- Suggestion for email, website and social media as key channels to be used
- Desire for similar rolling publicity campaign to keep local residents informed directly also.

Group 2:

Topics to be covered at future meetings

- Plans for the visitor centre and whether there is still flexibility on design
- Can apprenticeships be incorporated into the procurement process so local people are given opportunities
- Importance of community engagement
- More detail about the management structure of the project
- More information about which aspects of the site will be left to nature.

Format for meetings

- Face-to-face meetings were the preferred option in future.
- Some felt the current meetings were too long.

Communications to communities / stakeholders

- Need to put information up on a shared area.
- We need to be able to share documents easily with stakeholders
- Questions raised around how we're engaging with the Stop the Chop campaign group.

Agenda Item 2: Update on preparation of reservoir site

Please also see slides 23-25 in the attached presentation pack from the meeting.

Project Director Sam Donovan gave an update on the preparation of the reservoir site, which begins in the Autumn, ahead of the main construction work starting in in 2023. He stated that this is going

to be one of the most challenging aspects of the project, particularly in terms of completing the necessary tree felling on the site in as sensitive a manner as possible

Sam discussed the planned approach to removing trees, with the aim of minimising the impact on the environment and wildlife via a range of protection and mitigation measures. Specialist contractors are being appointed to carry out the work and each tree will be checked before it is felled to make sure there are no animals there. Safety is also key, so that everyone (contractors and the public) remains safe throughout the work, with access to the site maintained as much as possible.

Breakout Session 2

Attendees were divided into two breakout groups and asked to separately discuss their thoughts on the information shared about the plan for preparation of the reservoir site, ahead of main construction work. The main points from each breakout group are listed below.

Group 1:

Feedback on site preparation plan

- Importance of understanding more about environmental mitigation plans and being kept up to date on progress with these
- Strong interest in and support for making best use of felled trees, such as HMS Victory restoration
- Above felt to be a positive story to promote / celebrate
- Call for proactive publicity campaign to help assure people over key issues, such as environmental impact / benefits of scheme, safety etc
- Suggestion to make full use of on-site display boards to provide site visitors with latest key information
- Also, idea to use regularly updated posters in schools, churches and other local venues to raise awareness locally.

Group 2:

Feedback on site preparation plan

- Consideration of different uses of the wood once it's removed. Questions around what will happen to it, whether it will be burnt, what will happen to the low-grade material
- Sam Donovan was able to explain that more than 90 trees will be used in the restoration of HMS Victory and that other high grade wood will be used as a building material
- Questions around whether the site will remain open during tree felling. The working area will be fenced off but the rest of the site will be open. There was some concern over dogs accessing the dangerous areas
- Some concerns raised around the security of the site overnight and what will happen to construction equipment e.g. chainsaws. Will they be locked up?
- Information given about upcoming communications and how residents will be kept up to date.
- Some stakeholders offered to help spread the message to local Facebook groups.

Group Chair Ingrid Strawson thanked everyone for their participation and for the points raised.

Q&A

There were further questions from meeting attendees, with the queries and a summary of the responses provided set out below.

ACTION:
Provide further detail on what will happen with low grade wood material (Gareth Russell-Hughes)

Question: Queries from Horndean Protection Group about the project’s CO2 emissions, air pollution, lines of communication with other projects, cycle routes.

Full questions from the Horndean Protection Group and answers are available in the attached separate document.

Question: Please could someone explain how much the (water) level of the reservoir is expected to go up and down over the year as water is added and removed?

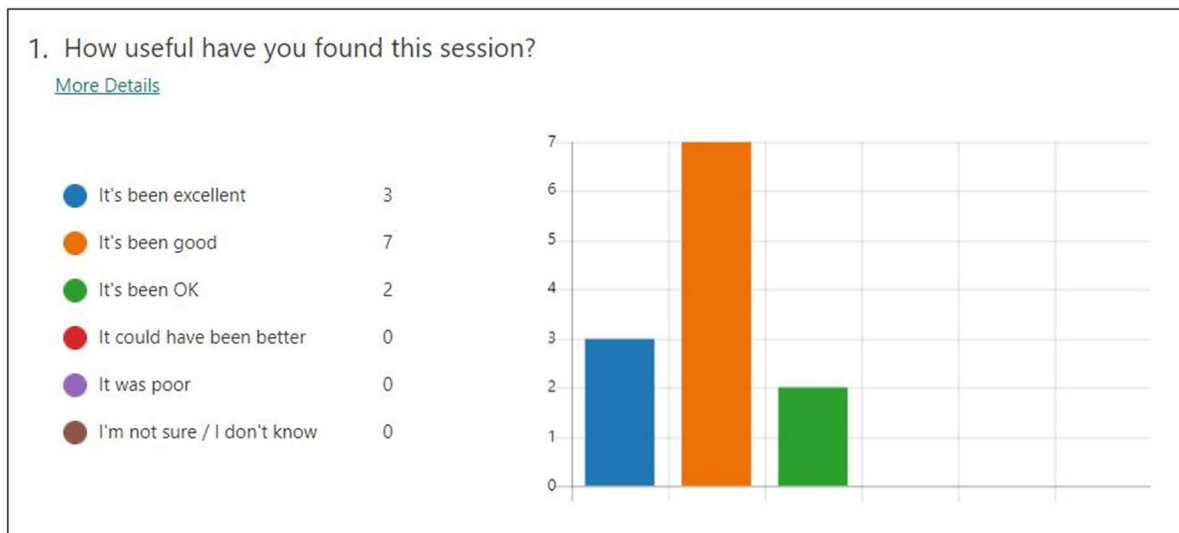
Question: Why do we need the reservoir if it’s always going to remain full? If the level goes down two metres, what area will be exposed?

Answer: The reservoir will be kept full and the water reserved for use during droughts. Each year, some water will evaporate and so levels will drop by around 0.5m during summer (with the maximum water depth being 18m when the reservoir is full). In a drought (1 in 5 probability in any year), the water level is likely to fall by around 0.7m during the summer. In a prolonged drought (1 in 10 probability), the water level would be drawn down by 4m to 5m. In an extreme drought (1 in 200 probability), which will be an extremely rare occurrence, the water level would be as low as 10m below normal over a number of seasons. Reductions in water level are likely to be in the summer/autumn and the reservoir would be topped up during the winter.

The sloping reservoir embankment will be constructed from soil and clay, not concrete, with grass covering the outer slope. A rocky or stony surface will line the top 6.5m of the embankment to protect it from erosion by waves – brushed with topsoil allowing planting with aquatic / marginal species such as reeds and sedge grasses. Only in an extreme drought would the muddy slope below the stone and planting be visible. The wetland area will be separated from the main water by a smaller earth embankment so it will remain full of water during droughts to protect the habitats.

Meeting close

A final poll was taken to find out what people thought of the session and how they felt the meetings should be run in the future. The poll results are set out in the charts below.



3. In future, would you prefer to have these meetings face to face or online, subject to the latest Government Coronavirus guidance?

[More Details](#)

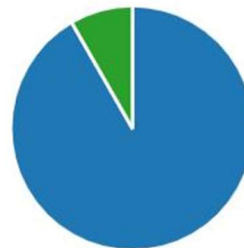
● I'd like to meet face to face	4
● I'd like to meet online	0
● I'd like the option of both	8
● I'm not sure / I don't know	0



5. Do you feel that the minutes from these meetings should be made public, such as by publishing them on the Portsmouth Water website?

[More Details](#)

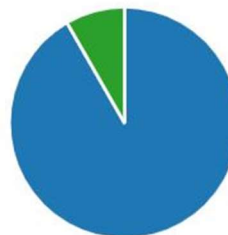
● Yes	11
● No	0
● I'm not sure / I don't know	1



7. Would you be interested in attending interim meetings of this group (circa 6 weeks after each main meeting). These would be chaired by Ingrid Strawson, the reservoir stakeholder groups' Independent chair, but without Portsmouth Water or reservoir project team staff being involved. The meetings would discuss any issues and set the agenda for the formal main groups meetings with Portsmouth Water / project team staff members?

[More Details](#)

● Yes I would	11
● No wouldn't	0
● I don't know / I'm not sure	1



Group members were asked to share any updates on local activities and projects that they felt were relevant to the group, as potential agenda items for future meetings. A representative from Hampshire County Council's Countryside Service announced that there will be a celebration for the completion of the Coach House refurbishment project at Staunton Country Park in July.

There was also a reminder that tours of the reservoir site and pipeline route would be held on Tuesday 3rd August and Tuesday 10th August with details to be circulated following the meeting.

Ingrid Strawson closed the session by thanking everyone for attending and for their contributions.

ACTION:
Share updates on local activities / projects for discussion at next group meeting (All group members)

ACTION:
Sign up for
site visits /
tours (All
group
members)

Summary

Actions

<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Date to be completed</u>
Feedback on draft Terms of Reference	All group members	20 August 2021
Develop further governance detail and include in updated Terms of Reference	Ingrid Strawson	9 September 2021 (for interim Advisory Groups meeting)
Provide more detail on queries about cycling access	Gareth Russell-Hughes	20 August 2021
Provide more detail on query about preventing rat running	Gareth Russell-Hughes	20 August 2021
Provide more detail on plans to address anti-social behaviour	Gareth Russell-Hughes	28 September 2021 (for next main Advisory Groups meetings)
Provide further detail on what will happen with low grade wood material	Gareth Russell-Hughes	20 August 2021
Share updates on local activities / projects for discussion at next group meeting	All group members	By 24 September 2021
Sign up for site visits / tours	All group members	By 2 August 2021