

## Minutes from the Havant Thicket Reservoir Strategic 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
- Joel Hufford (**JH**), Create 51
- Charlie Palmer (**CP**), Create 51

#### Other attendees:

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

#### Stakeholder attendees:

- Nat Belderson, Planning Officer, South Downs National Park Authority
- Andrew Biltcliffe, Regeneration Project Manager at Havant Borough Council
- Lewis Brown, Stakeholder Officer, Southern Water
- Jeremy Burgess, Landscape and Biodiversity Lead (Water), South Downs National Park
- Joan Clark, Land Agent, Forestry England
- Jon Dyer-Slade, Strategic Manager, Countryside Services, Hampshire County Council
- Karen Gibbs, Senior Policy Manager, Consumer Council for Water
- Caroline Gooch, Local Partnerships Advisor, Forestry Commission
- Christopher Janes, Stakeholder Officer, Southern Water
- Lakh Jemmett, Chair of Portsmouth Water Customer Challenge Group
- Nik Knight, Hampshire Bat Group
- Adrian Legg, Strategic Developments Team, Portsmouth City Council
- Lewis Oliver, Planning Officer, Havant Borough Council and East Hants District Council
- Sam Underwood, Senior Stakeholder Manager, Southern Water

#### Apologies

- Bob Taylor, CEO, Portsmouth Water
- Hampshire Ornithological Society

#### Welcome and Introductions

Ingrid Strawson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself as the Independent Chair of the Strategic Advisory Group, as well as the Havant Thicket Reservoir Community 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.

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](#)

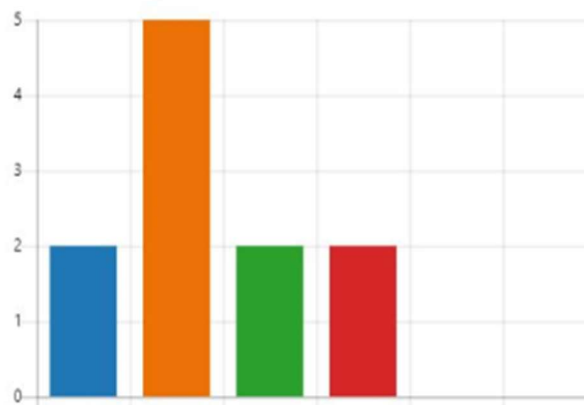
- Yes, I have attended most / all... 4
- Yes, I have attended some me... 3
- No, I have not attended before 4
- I don't know / I'm not sure 0



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

[More Details](#)

- I know everything 2
- I have a good level of knowle... 5
- I know enough 2
- I'd like to know more 2
- I don't know very much at all 0
- I'm not sure 0



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

Each of the attendees 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 10-19 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. As stakeholders, both Advisory Groups will play a vital role in shaping and supporting the smooth delivery of the reservoir scheme.

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, with plans to create or restore 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

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 and an explanation of the proposed Farlington to Nelson Pipeline.

**ACTION:  
Feedback  
on draft  
Terms of  
Reference  
by 20  
August  
2021 (All  
group  
members)**

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 requested about environmental, social and governance issues and how these will be addressed in the procurement process.**

Answer: They are all key requirements of the contracts and are built into the contractor selection process. Selection of the contractors will require analysis of their environmental and social credentials. There is a requirement for providing apprenticeship opportunities and engagement with the local community. It's an area that Portsmouth Water takes very seriously.

**Question: Can you clarify the short-term provisions for bat roosting and foraging during the construction phase?**

Answer: The Project Team are installing over 200 bat boxes on site, in the woodland and in Staunton Country Park. Boxes will also go up in Southleigh Forest. 50 trees in the surrounding areas will be used for roosting. The team will look to translocate existing features from trees in the Avenue, where possible, in terms of foraging. In addition, Portsmouth Water has already planted 6,000 new trees on the eastern and western sides of the reservoir site, which will be protected during the construction phase. This is helping to create ecological 'corridors' to the east and west of the site, along with working with Forestry England to enhance the Havant Thicket site for bats. A Woodland Management Plan has been drafted and there will be lots of activity under this to create greater foraging for bats during construction. There's a lot of work to do, but the reservoir project team are excited and firmly believe they can deliver a really good mitigation and compensation plan.

**Question: If Portsmouth Water gains final planning permission to create the northern access road through ancient woodland to the north of the reservoir site, how will it minimise the loss of ancient yew trees and woodland fauna?**

Answer: Both Havant Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council's Planning Committees have resolved to grant planning permission for the reservoir scheme, including the northern access route. This is on the basis that it uses an existing forestry track, which will reduce impact to the ancient woodland and significant trees. The plans have already been revised to reduce the size of the road from a two-way road, down to single carriageway with suitable layby locations, as passing places, to reduce the impact on the woodland.

It may be feasible to further reduce the impact with a 'dig down' construction approach, rather than a 'build-up' approach - this is under evaluation. The views of our local ecologist have been taken into account and it is set within the contractor's scope to minimise the impact as much as possible.

Where possible, woodland soils will be translocated as part of the embankment. At this stage, the project team have what they think is a good route, but we will be optimising the route and working with the contractor to take this forward. We will ensure traffic is minimised during construction where possible. There is still work to be done here, but the aim is to cause as small an impact as possible.

**Question: How is the identification of the (woodland) compensation site progressing? (For 80 hectares of woodland creation / restoration, in addition to the work that will be delivered at Forestry England's Havant Thicket land and at Southleigh Forest)**

Answer: The initial plan was to be working with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. Currently, the project team haven't found any locations which meet their requirements. However, they have identified some potential alternative exciting opportunities for the 80

hectares. Proximity to the reservoir site is really important, particularly for bats, so the site has strong connectivity to the surrounding area. Any site also needs to be deliverable. To get the most optimum site, it's going to take a little more time. It's progressing really well and Portsmouth Water should be able to give more of an update when the Advisory Groups meet up next (in late September 2021).

### **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.

#### **Group 1:**

##### **Topics to be covered at future meetings**

- Further work is needed to include additional meeting / group governance in the draft Terms of Reference
- In addition, a formal risk map for the Stakeholder Groups is needed, clearly setting out a list of risks and issues (raised by group members), with mitigating actions, ownership and timeline for resolution
- Also wish for sustainability matrix for reservoir project, setting out a holistic view of the environmental and social benefits / value that will be delivered – with need for clearly defined and quantifiable benefits and how these will be realised. Benefits need to include positive impact of people's health and wellbeing
- Need for SAG to focus on strategic issues, with specific issues (that may be of interest to individual or small number of group members) dealt with outside the SAG meetings
- Need to ensure that good range of environmental stakeholders are actively involved in the group / are being proactively engaged with.

##### **Format for meetings**

- Most people happy to continue with online meetings as more flexible for those not based in Havant area
- Some concern expressed that having interim group meetings (only involving group members and independent Chair Ingrid Strawson and taking place between the main group sessions) is not in spirit of collaboration
- Others viewed interim meetings as useful and helpful in enabling all members to have their say, by offering a forum for more open and free discussions. This would help raise issues and shape the agenda of the main meetings
- People happy with minutes of main group meetings being public, such as via the reservoir scheme web pages, but with comments not attributed to individuals.

##### **Communications to communities / stakeholders**

- Discussion on importance of using as many channels as possible to reach as wide an audience as possible
- For example, use of 'mail outs' / 'door drops' for an older demographic, as well as use of social media for younger audience
- Opportunity to tap into Havant Borough Council demographic information on local population, such as high proportion of young people living in Leigh Park area
- Also desire for increased engagement with local schools and colleges, focused around activities on reservoir site, to really reach and inspire young people about reservoir project.

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

**ACTION:**  
Table proposed Risks & Issues log at next Advisory Groups meetings (Eleanor Shipton)

## **Group 2:**

### **Topics to be covered at future meetings**

- Environmental mitigation
- Site clearance and access
- Addressing anti-social behaviour at the site
- Neighbouring landowners and stakeholders will need to be involved with these discussions about site security as well
- Discussions around the visitor centre would be useful.

### **Format for meetings**

- Many felt face-to-face meetings would be beneficial, but September might be too soon.
- Some suggested hybrid meetings (a mixture of online and face-to-face) could work well
- Some discussions around holding meetings without Portsmouth Water present to discuss potential issues
- Suggestions that there could be more opportunities for stakeholders to provide updates. At the moment, it is very much PW presenting.

### **Communications to communities / stakeholders**

- General feeling that minutes from the meetings should be shared and made public
- People felt that the PW call centre is good at handling enquiries, but that they will need to be prepared for potential increase as project progresses
- Project Director Sam Donovan explained that videos will be created as part of the communications plan and that these could be shared with stakeholders.

### **Agenda Item 2: Update on preparation of reservoir site**

**Please also see slides 22-24 in the attached presentation pack from the meeting.**

Project Director Sam Donovan gave an update on 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 (for example, around bats and dormice). 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

- Need for further detail on plan to be shared with group members – e.g. detail of plans around protecting and supporting bat species
- Suggestion for HTR team to share key documents from reservoir planning applications with group members to provide additional information on key issues and provide assurance over how the site preparation and wider plans have been developed and shaped by key stakeholders, such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and others
- Above information will enable group members to make an informed judgement
- Desire for project to set high bar for what can be achieved in terms of environmental and social benefits – going beyond what’s required
- Concerns expressed over impact of timetable for site preparation slipping and knock-on impact this would have on the overall reservoir timetable
- Desire expressed for reservoir team and key regulators to work closely together to ensure there are no hold ups in the regulatory scrutiny / approval process for the project as it progresses. Importance of adequate resourcing for regulators, funded by project, stressed to make this happen.

**ACTION:**  
Key planning application documents to be shared with Advisory Groups members (Gareth Russell-Hughes)

### Group 2:

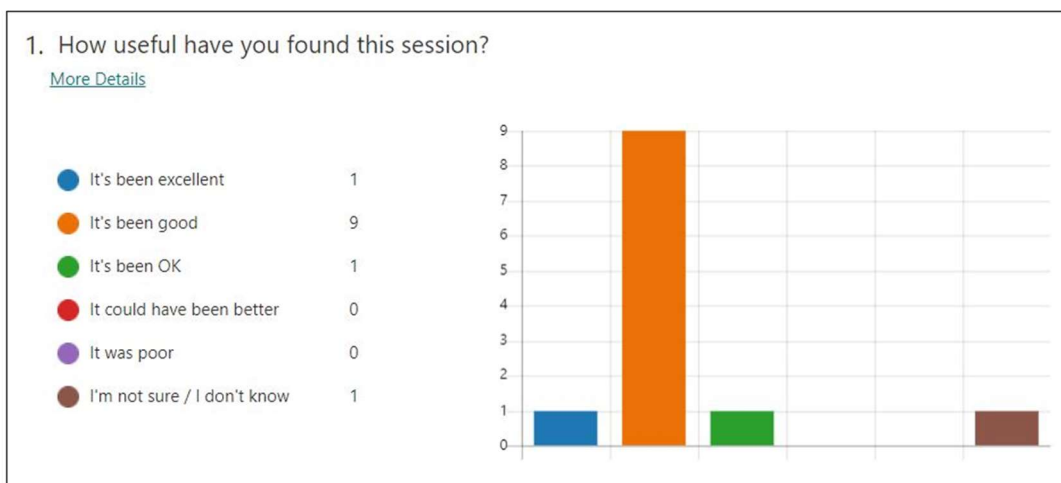
### Feedback on site preparation plan

- Project Director Sam Donovan explained that local protest group, Stop the Chop, made good representations at the planning meetings and that we are open to dialogue with them
- The reservoir project team is encouraging Stop the Chop to talk to us
- Sharing things like minutes of meetings should help.
- Some discussion around the level of protests expected during the tree clearance
- Discussion around communications plans.
- Ingrid Strawson (Advisory Groups Chair) felt it was important to offer alternatives to online communications e.g. giving out a phone number etc.

### 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.

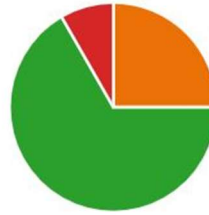
The poll results are set out in the charts on the page below.



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

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> I'd like to meet face to face	0
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> I'd like to meet online	3
<span style="color: green;">●</span> I'd like the option of both	8
<span style="color: red;">●</span> I'm not sure / I don't know	1

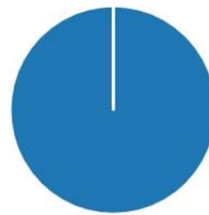


5. Do you feel that the minutes from these meetings should be made public, such as by publishing them on the Portsmouth Water website?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Yes	12
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> No	0
<span style="color: green;">●</span> I'm not sure / I don't know	0

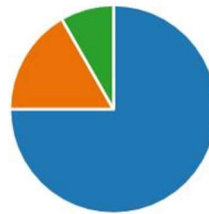


7. Would you be interested in attending interim meetings of this group (circa 6 weeks after each main meeting). These would be chaired by Ingrid Strawson, the reservoir stakeholder groups' Independent chair, but without Portsmouth Water or reservoir project team staff being involved. The meetings would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

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Yes I would	9
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> No wouldn't	2
<span style="color: green;">●</span> 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.

There was also a reminder that tours of the reservoir site and pipeline route would be held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August and Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> 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**

<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Owner</u></b>	<b><u>Date to be completed</u></b>
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)
Table proposed Risks & Issues log at next Advisory Groups meetings	Eleanor Shipton	28 September 2021 (for next main Advisory Groups meetings)
Key planning applications documents to be shared with Advisory Groups members	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