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Public Hearing Report

The outcome from the Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan (HM&WP) Public Hearing, which was adjourned on 15th June 2012 pending further sessions, will be a disappointment to many.

The fate of the Purple Haze site has not been resolved, and is unlikely to be for a further few months, while Hampshire's Plan is refined so that the Planning Inspector can write his report.

There will be, in the meantime, more influencing work for the Friends of Ringwood Forest (FoRF) campaign team to undertake by getting involved directly with discussions on further proposed changes to the Plan.

One really positive outcome from the Hearing is that even though the team does not ever presume to be "experts" we can tell you that the campaign is definitely regarded as credible:

- our Soundness research was commended publicly during the Hearing by the Planning Inspector - we noted no similar comments for other representatives (although we weren't at every session)
- our Hearing evidence presentation was praised by other attendees
- the Hampshire Authorities also made a point of complimenting the campaign's progress throughout the Consultation

We are now a mature & respected campaign - and it's entirely due to you, all our loyal sponsors & supporters who have generously given both their time & money, those who spread the word amongst family & friends, and those who rolled their sleeves up to get involved practically and often quietly & behind the scenes, in all the many aspects of the campaign which has got us to the envied position we are in today.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS HELPED & WHO HAS STAYED WITH US – you know who you are!

... now, please do read on to find out more about the Hearing sessions FoRF attended, what we will be doing

next and the likely future timetable of events.

About The Hearing Sessions

The full Hearing Programme for 6th to 15th June 2012 is available [online](#). FoRF either took part as "invited participants" in the sessions listed below because we had made Soundness Responses with supporting evidence to be explored by the Planning Inspector (PI) on the Policies to be discussed (P) or observed because of the interest area (O)

- Day 1: Introductory Session (P)
- Day 1: Procedural & Conformity Matters (O)
- Day 1: Introduction, Vision & Spatial Strategy (O)
- Day 5: Land-won Sand & Gravel (P)
- Day 5: Site Allocations – the Purple Haze evidence (P)
- Day 6: Hazardous Waste & Liquid Waste (O)
- Day 6: Non-hazardous Landfill & London's Waste (O)
- Day 6: Locating Waste Management Development (O)
- Day 8: Implementation & Monitoring (O)
- Day 8: Proposed Modifications (Plan changes) (P)
- Day 8: Inspector's Concluding Comments (P)

We did not attend sessions on the days when discussions did not appear likely to cover material relevant directly to either Blue Haze or to Purple Haze.

Rather than take up column inches here with individual session details, if there is an area you are interested in particularly, please email your questions to us at info@forf.org.uk and we will get back to you.

So, what was it like to participate?

The hearing took place in a large hall with the Planning Inspector & his support, the Hampshire Authorities & their support and Invited Participants seated at tables in their groups around a "U" shape formation with rows of chairs set a little apart for the Public & Press.

The PI, who is a Chartered Town Planner, led the sessions, setting out at the start of each the ground he intended to cover and using the Questions he had raised on the Plan prior to the Hearing and the Hampshire Authorities' responses as the agenda (see ED036 to ED050 [online](#)).



It soon became clear the PI had a thorough knowledge of the Plan, understood the requirements of the government's NPPF (the new Planning framework) and had reviewed the Soundness Responses in some depth.

His questions were searching, often challenging, and both the Hampshire Authorities and participants were given every opportunity to present their evidence which they needed to know in detail.

FoRF acquitted itself well in our evidence sessions, one of which lasted over an hour, and answered the PI's questions knowledgeably and with no need to refer back to our Soundness Response which was examined in detail. The FoRF Response is available [online](#).

It was, however, extremely frustrating that the only responses offered to the PI by the Hampshire Authorities seemed to be either that the serious issues we had raised would be dealt at the Planning Application stage or by as yet undefined mitigation – one of our many reasons for having stated we consider the Hampshire Plan to be Unsound.

If the PI did not feel that a response was clear enough, or covered enough ground, he did not let an item go until he was ready to. The Hampshire Authorities and participants were treated alike. We saw no evidence of bias either way.

Will the Plan change?

Prior to the Hearing a number of proposed changes (modifications) to the Plan had been suggested by Hampshire in response to the PI's pre-Hearing questions – see ED034a & ED035a [online](#). These were discussed during the relevant session – some changes proposed by Hampshire were accepted, others were not.

The PI also directed further changes to be made to the Plan during the Hearing sessions in response to the clarification of evidence presented to him on the day.

It is these 50+ Hearing changes which will need to be

drafted, agreed with interested parties and then consulted on before the PI can write his report.

FoRF has asked for a list of the Hearing changes so that we can decide on the areas where we must get involved in further discussions. These will be published on the Hampshire Portal when they become available for discussion.

Finally, because of the above uncertainties, and because other actions need to be completed to refine the Plan, the PI could not reach a conclusion by the Hearing's last day. The Hearing was therefore adjourned and will re-open on 18th September 2012.

What's the impact of adjourning the Hearing?

Only after all the changes are agreed when the Hearing re-opens, and any resultant consultation completed, will the PI then be able to write and publish his report.

It is only when his report is published, possibly within 2 months or even possibly later, after the final Hearing sessions close that we will finally know if the Hampshire Plan is considered Sound and whether or not Purple Haze remains in the Plan. The PI will advise a publication date as soon as he is able to.

The ongoing delay will be frustrating for all of us . . . it's unfortunately the cost of an open and democratic process at work, albeit a frustratingly complex one, and one in which we have been participating together, and successfully, so far.

We therefore MUST continue to share the view at every opportunity that including Purple Haze in the HM&WP is just plain WRONG.

Good Luck to us all!

Your feedback, comments and/or questions will be welcomed by the campaign team – please email us at info@forf.org.uk