

# Friends of Ringwood Forest

## Press Release

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**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

### NATURAL ENGLAND SEES PURPLE HAZE

Friends of Ringwood Forest (FoRF) - the umbrella group with over 2,600 members which runs the No to Purple Haze campaign - are reviewing the responses to HCC's Mineral & Waste Plan Soundness Consultation delivered to the Secretary of State on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and now available on line.

Purple Haze is a 70 Hectare site linked with Moors Valley Country Park in terms of bike trails, orienteering courses and footpaths. The land is owned by the Somerley Estate and leased to the Forestry Commission. Hampshire County Council's proposal remains to turn this site into a quarry and landfill site.

Plans and projects which have the potential to affect European sites of nature conservation importance have to be assessed against the requirements of the Habitat Regulations. The Habitats Regulations Assessment has been carried out alongside the development of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste plan to determine whether the Strategy will have any likely significant effects on the integrity of any European designated sites, such as Ebblake Bog SSSI and RAMSAR.

A letter from Natural England dated 21 December 2011 to Hampshire CC says *"Natural England have remaining concerns about the choice of mineral sites within and adjacent to internationally designated sites without a transparent rationale as to how they came to be selected over sites without connectivity to designated interest features"*.

Natural England's concern is further supported by what might be seen *"as a lack of regard to the spirit of the Habitat Regulations, in that the draft plan went to the Cabinet prior to the full assessment of the sites and policies being published."*

Natural England say that hydrology monitoring should be undertaken before a planning application is *"submitted as it will allow for a more detailed and accurate draw down zone to be calculated and an appropriate exclusion zone to be agreed at that time"* to protect Ebblake Bog. Currently there are no buffer zones in HCC's plan to protect Ebblake Bog which is adjacent to the proposed Purple Haze and the amenity of the users of Moors Valley Country Park.

Additionally, Natural England expects to be consulted in a study to consider the recreational use of the site and the need for alternative provision at pre-application stage for Purple Haze.

Natural England concluded that they consider the plan to be legally compliant and sound, though *"the process could have been improved by a greater evidence base and discussion and clarification of the weight given to different objectives ..."* which resulted in the choice of site allocations.

FoRF are currently reviewing the responses to the soundness consultation and reviewing HCC's comments on them. HCC have yet to advise the timetable for the Public Examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

FoRF are building relationships with key bodies relating to activities in Ringwood Forest. We have been invited by Tarmac to have a tour of Plumley Wood which is a large extraction site only a few miles from Purple Haze. We have also met and been shown around the Blue Haze Landfill site (one of the South's

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biggest landfill sites, opposite Purple Haze) by Veolia to discuss concerns of local residents. FoRF is also looking forward to a tour of a restored area of landfill in Wareham to be hosted by Nature After Minerals. In addition we have recently met with a representative from the Somerley Estate to establish a new and hopefully positive relationship.

FoRF has support from the Open Spaces Society and The Woodlands Trust and remain committed to the removal of HCC's proposals for Purple Haze from their Minerals and Waste plan.

### Additional information for editors:

- For more information about the campaign please visit [www.no2purplehaze.co.uk](http://www.no2purplehaze.co.uk)
- Any pictures available directly from the above website may be used in press publications
- Any queries regarding this press release can be made to the Campaign Office at [notoph@btinternet.com](mailto:notoph@btinternet.com)
- HCC's submission to the Secretary of State/Planning Inspectorate is located at <http://consult.hants.gov.uk/portal>
- The letter from Natural England (December 2012) referred to above may be found on page 67 at <http://consult.hants.gov.uk/file/2114787>
- FoRF's formal response to HCC's Soundness Consultation is located at <http://www.no2purplehaze.co.uk/Documents/HCCSoundnessConsultationFoRFResponseFINAL16DEC11.pdf>
- HCC's summary of Soundness Consultation comments and their responses submitted to the Secretary of State/Planning Inspectorate on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012 is located at <http://consult.hants.gov.uk/file/2115092>

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