

**HTR Phase 6. Forestry England Track Raising.
Planning Reserved Matters. APP/26/00561.**

Comments on behalf of Havant Climate Alliance and Havant Friends of the Earth.

Embankment Slopes

These appear wider than the area that was originally marked out in 2022, especially for the Eastern Embankment. At that time the southern edge of the Eastern Embankment was 15 m wide whereas it now appears to be 20 m. We wonder whether there is potential to make the slopes steeper to further reduce the number of trees that need to be removed, especially at the most southern and most northern points of the Eastern Embankment. Reducing the footprint of the embankment would require less material and be cheaper to construct.

Do the outlines of the embankments shown, include the extra area needed for excavations, foundations, drainage and construction of the embankment toe.?

Trees

We accept that Norway Spruce and Corsican Pine have to be felled, for reasons of disease and to provide commercial timber. Apart from this we think deciduous trees should remain between the FE Track and the Reservoir Wetland, to reduce disturbance to Wetland birds from people, children, dogs and FE vehicles. Natural England and the HTR Wetland Specialist Sub-group 2019/20 specifically requested that trees should be left standing in flooded valleys to create a diverse habitat above and below water.

a) Near the Western Embankment we are pleased that there has been a reduction in the number of deciduous trees previously proposed to be removed (17 instead of 50). We think that trees, especially more mature specimens, should remain in areas to be flooded, where they can decline slowly and provide standing deadwood to maximise their value to biodiversity.

b) Near the Eastern Embankment, we do not agree that there should be extensive crowning and coronet cutting of larger trees south of the Track. This should be limited to trees close to the Track where safety is an issue as they decline. Even here it may be possible to make them safe just by removing some branches. Elsewhere, large deciduous trees should be left intact to slowly decline. While a coronet cut will increase fracturing to provide habitat for insects, it would reduce the habitat value for other species such as birds, through loss of nesting, feeding and perching opportunities. Too much coronet cutting will also reduce the canopy and landscape value of the woodland.

Fencing

We accept that there will need to be 2 lines of fencing on either side of the track. 1 - timber vehicle restraint fencing, and 2 - stockproof fencing to prevent children and dogs entering the woodland and Wetland areas. We understand that wire mesh needed for the latter cannot be incorporated into the former. It is important that the stockproof fencing extends the full length of the track, and links with other fencing around the north side of the wetland.

We also agree with the suggestion that there should be 4 ft solid wooden fencing along the south side of the Track where it crosses the valleys. This would help screen noise from people, children, dogs and vehicles from the Wetlands, to avoid disturbance to wildlife. Adults would be able to see over the top and regular peep holes could allow children to

see through. Fencing would need to be included in site maintenance so that any damage is repaired quickly.

Culverts

Forestry England stated at a Stakeholders' meeting that culverts will easily get blocked by twigs, branches, leaves and other woodland detritus. The size of the culverts proposed (675 mm) does not look fit for purpose, especially as they will be of considerable length. Having screens at the ends will themselves tend to cause blockages. To reduce blockages and to enable cleaning and clearing when required, they need to be of larger diameter, enough for a person to easily enter if necessary. This will also allow for a more natural flow of water.

Planting on the embankments

Any planting should be of native seed mix or native species to enhance biodiversity.

Crossing places for small mammals

It was not thought possible to include crossings for small mammals inside the culverts which are also expected to be frequently under water. However, we think that separate smaller tubes or pipes could be installed through the embankments above the expected water line, so that small mammals could more easily cross. The ideal diameter for these would need further discussion.