



Fareham Borough Council
Executive Leader of the Council
Councillor Seán D T Woodward

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Debbie Tann
Chief Executive
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22 October 2020

Dear Debbie

I write with the support of Gosport Councillor Stephen Philpott, Chairman of Gosport Borough Council's Economic Development Board (following recent announcements of potential funding to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in response to the issue of nitrate neutrality that we have been facing in south Hampshire since early 2019). We were pleased to read last month of DEFRA's commitment to unlocking housing growth in south Hampshire through the establishment of a £3.9million project to set up an online 'nitrate trading' auction platform. We were also interested to note the reference to further loans to your Wildlife Trust, one bid for by the Partnership for South Hampshire via the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, and another from DEFRA for further land acquisition following on from the successful pilot at Little Duxmore farm on the Isle of Wight. I know from officers and earlier conversations with you how a cross-organisation team has worked hard to deliver this innovative solution of nitrate mitigation and rewilding of extremely poor quality farmland.

With the above context we are writing to suggest to you an area of land which would have significant environmental benefits on the 'mainland', not just for Fareham but for the wider sub-region of south Hampshire. We would put it to you that securing land between Fareham and Stubbington and Fareham and Gosport, in what is commonly referred to as the 'Fareham-Stubbington Strategic Gap', would be an ideal location to deliver a rewilding project that would meet many of your organisational aspirations such as bringing people closer to nature, alongside multiple environmental benefits that are being driven through the planning system; biodiversity net gain, Solent Wader mitigation land, green infrastructure, nature recovery networks as well as nitrate mitigation. In fact, the PfSH Statement of Common Ground work is actively investigating the possibility of a South Hampshire Green Belt of which this area could certainly form a part.

There are a number of reasons why this area is a strong contender for a strategic nature-based solution focusing first on nitrate mitigation, but also delivering on the many other land-based environmental mitigation and enhancement requirements of national guidance and law. Land in this area already has several environmental assets such as ancient woodland, a supporting network of sites for internationally protected bird species and many watercourses including the River Alver; which would only be enhanced by a strategic rewilding project, the kind that the Partnership for South Hampshire has been working to deliver for many months. A large proportion of the area is recognised as an opportunity area in the Hampshire Local Ecological Network map which demonstrates the wider green infrastructure and biodiversity benefits of a project in this area. Southern Water's Peel Common wastewater treatment works is also located here further supporting the area as a natural choice for a strategic project focusing first on addressing important water quality concerns. In addition, the area's environmental assets are recognised and supported by local residents and given its proximity to existing populations, as well as its proximity to widely-known environmental destinations such as Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve and the Alver Valley Country Park, would serve as an important environmental asset for the whole population of south Hampshire. Such a project would demonstrate what can be delivered with significant government investment and the collaboration of organisations within the public service. The geographical and physical links to the Meon and Alver valleys would allow greater connections for both people and nature to benefit from different land management arrangements and a 'wilder' landscape.

The scale of the area, at over 300 hectares focused principally in three ownerships, would give the Wildlife Trust a focus for rewilding on the mainland which could deliver a substantial amount of nitrate mitigation alongside biodiversity improvements, nature recovery and supporting the population of internationally protected bird species in the sub-region.

We therefore commend this area to you as a significant opportunity to build on the success of Little Duxmore and deliver an aspirational nature-based strategic-scale solution which helps unlock housebuilding in the sub-region but brings benefits to the environment and people of south Hampshire. We trust that you will be convinced of the merits of such a project in the Fareham-Stubbington Strategic Gap; we would be happy to further discuss this opportunity with you.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Seán Woodward
Executive Leader of the Council
Fareham Borough Council



Councillor Stephen Philpott
Chairman-Economic Development Board
Gosport Borough Council