

Dear Mr. Stride

### **Forest Design Plan response from Brockenhurst Parish Council**

Following the Consultation meeting at the Balmer Lawn Hotel on 22nd March 2016, Brockenhurst Parish Council welcomes the call for responses to the proposed FDP.

We have considered the issues raised and the consensus view of the Councillors is that the long-term plan to eliminate conifers from the Forest is short-sighted and not in the best interest of the New Forest. The balance of the present multi-purpose objectives of conservation, recreation and mixed conifer and hardwood timber production should be continued. In coming to this view we have taken the following points in mind:-

1. One of the features of the New Forest is that it is a working and productive environment. The existing balance of conifers and broadleaves in the timber Inclosures ensures an attractive and productive element which is much valued by visitors and local businesses. The conifers contribute 90% of the income from timber sales which supply local sawmills. This sustainable timber programme and the income it produces make a strong contribution to the expenditure budget of the New Forest.

Timber production from the Forest is part of our local culture, tradition and heritage. There has always been a strong link between the Commoners and the work undertaken on the Forest. This link is weaker nowadays but we hope that it can be restored in the future to uphold the land-based skills that support the Commoning system. Furthermore, use of local timber as local fuel is a desirable sustainable use.

2. We fully acknowledge that the Forest has the highest conservation designations and is of international importance but the 15% of the land under conifer crops adds diversity to the landscape and biodiversity.
3. The effects of climate change and tree diseases are not predictable and it is prudent to retain a rich mixture and variety of tree species within the timber Inclosures.
4. Our country currently imports nearly 90% of the timber that we need and timber is a material of the future. Some conifer species are ideally suited to the conditions here in the Forest and we consider it appropriate to make a contribution to our country's timber requirements.

If the sustainable income from the current conifer production is lost to the future it has been suggested that this financial shortfall will be made up from an increase in recreational activities and the possible effects of this statement have already caused concern.

In discussions with other Parish Councils in the Forest it has become apparent that not all Forest Parishes were made aware of this revision of the Forest Design Plan and concerns have been raised that they will miss out on the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely

Mary Pattison  
Brockenhurst Parish Clerk.