

6 February 2018

To whom it may concern

**The Hillyfield Woodland Farm, Harbournford**

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) is the oldest and largest education charity dedicated to promoting the wise management of woods and trees across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The RFS encourages landowners to bring woodlands back into management and to manage them to the highest standards consistent with their management objectives. Managed woodland encourages biodiversity and increases the health and resilience of the trees and associated flora. As a result woodland management is vital for maintaining the beauty of landscapes and supporting recreation.

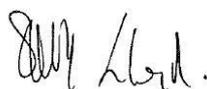
Managed woods contribute to the local economy, supporting jobs throughout the timber and woodfuel supply chain. Woodland owners will not manage woods unless there is a clear financial incentive. There is no conflict between responsibly managed activities which ensure the woodland remunerates the owner and enhancing biodiversity and conservation value. Small scale woodland operations require a creative and entrepreneurial approach to make them pay. By contrast neglected woodlands smother life, foster pests and disease and represent a lost economic opportunity.

These are reasons why government aims to increase the proportion of woodland under management in England from the current 58% to 80%, and has a range of grants and incentives to support this objective.

The RFS is not in a position to comment on the specific planning issues connected with the Hillyfield appeal. However Hillyfield's approach to sustainable restoration of a PAWS is common place and all the indications are that is being done in line with the UK Forest Standard. Investment in infrastructure to store and process timber and woodfuel is essential to secure the best markets and prices for wood products, no different from agricultural products. Ensuring the financial viability of the process by employing volunteer labour is a widespread practice. There are many examples of volunteers playing a critical role in supporting small scale woodland management. A responsible employer must safeguard the health and safety of volunteers, especially in a high risk activity such as forestry.

Hillyfield should be held up as a first class case study for other owners and managers of small scale woodland as to how to restore neglected woodland responsibly and sustainably, balance ecological and financial objectives and support the local community and economy. The RFS hopes that the Inquiry examines the wider context of forestry policy and practice in England and supports the continued management of Hillyfield as a working woodland.

For and on behalf of the Royal Forestry Society.



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