



Hampshire
County Council

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Via email to all Stakeholders

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Date 29/05/2026

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Dear Stakeholder

Watersplash at Mill Lane, Droxford

I am writing to provide an update on the work being undertaken by Hampshire County Council in relation to the Watersplash at Mill Lane, Droxford, and its interaction with the River Meon. This letter sets out the work completed to date, the further work that has been and will be commissioned, indicative timescales for the next stages, and our commitment to ongoing engagement with you, partner organisations, community representatives and other interested parties.

The Watersplash is an historic ford, linked to the former activities at Droxford Corn Mill. It is legally designated as a publicly maintained highway, meaning there is a long-standing right of access. In recent years, motor vehicle use of the watersplash has raised concerns about potential impacts on the river environment and the special features of this location. Hampshire County Council recognises the importance of its chalk rivers and is committed to managing them carefully and responsibly. However, any change to how the Watersplash route is used must follow a formal legal process, supported by robust evidence and informed by public consultation.

Work completed to date

To date, the County Council has undertaken initial ecological surveys and has also taken legal advice on its responsibilities as both the highway authority and traffic management authority in relation to the Watersplash. Alongside this, we are working closely with the South Downs National Park Authority and Natural England to carefully identify what further survey work, including traffic and ecological assessments, will be required to build a strong and credible evidence base. The surveys themselves represent a substantial commitment in terms of both time and

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cost, and it is important that they are properly scoped and that risks are fully considered before commissioning them. This collaborative work is essential to ensure that any future decisions are informed, proportionate and capable of withstanding public and legal scrutiny.

At this stage, no final decision has been made about the long-term management of the Watersplash. One option that may be considered, if supported by the evidence, is a Traffic Regulation Order. However, further work is required before any such decision could properly be taken. Our current approach is therefore to proceed carefully, gather the right information, and make sure that any future proposals are based on clear, objective evidence about the use of the route and the condition of the river environment.

Work commissioned and planned

Traffic surveys at the Watersplash are due to begin in June 2026. These surveys will provide up-to-date information on levels of use, including the type and frequency of vehicles using the crossing. Subject to funding and final agreement on scope, specialist ecological monitoring is also expected to begin in summer 2026 once the methodology has been agreed with Natural England. This work will help establish a robust baseline of the river's condition, including comparison with other similar sections of the River Meon.

The ecological monitoring is expected to run for around 12 months so that the condition of the river can be understood across the seasons. Once the evidence from this work has been gathered and reviewed, the County Council will consider the findings with relevant partners and determine the most appropriate next steps. Taking the time to complete this work now is important if we are to avoid ineffective solutions and support the long-term protection of the River Meon while also properly considering the legal status and use of the route.

Indicative timescales and next steps

At this stage, timescales are indicative and may need to change depending on funding, technical requirements, weather conditions, survey findings and the completion of supporting legal and ecological advice. However, completion of the ecological monitoring is expected at the end of Spring 2027 and, following this, the evidence will need to be assessed, and conclusions drawn on whether intervention is justified, what form any intervention should take, and whether the statutory tests for proceeding with a traffic order can be met.

If, after reviewing the evidence, the County Council concludes that a trial intervention is appropriate, one potential option would be an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. This would allow changes to be introduced on a temporary basis so that their effect can be tested before any final decision is made. The preparatory stage before introducing such a trial would typically take around four to eight weeks, although this may vary depending on the complexity of the proposal and the steps needed to put arrangements in place.

Engagement and communication

We recognise the strong local interest in this matter and are committed to maintaining open and constructive communication as evidence is gathered and the project develops. This engagement will not replace any formal statutory consultation that may be required at a later stage, but it will help ensure that interested parties are kept informed about progress, process and emerging next steps.

To support this, the County Council has created a dedicated webpage for the project here <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/transportschemes/droxford-watersplash>. This page will be available from Monday 1 June and will be used to provide background information about the Watersplash and the River Meon, explain the legal and technical processes involved, set out the purpose of surveys and monitoring, and publish updates as work progresses. It will provide a single, accessible point of reference for those wishing to understand the project, follow its development and access the latest public information. You can also find out on the webpage how the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order process would work, if this were to be taken forward.

We hope this update is helpful in setting out the work undertaken so far and the approach being taken over the coming months. We will continue to keep interested parties informed through the project webpage as further information becomes available and as the project moves forward.

Yours faithfully



Tim Lawton
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