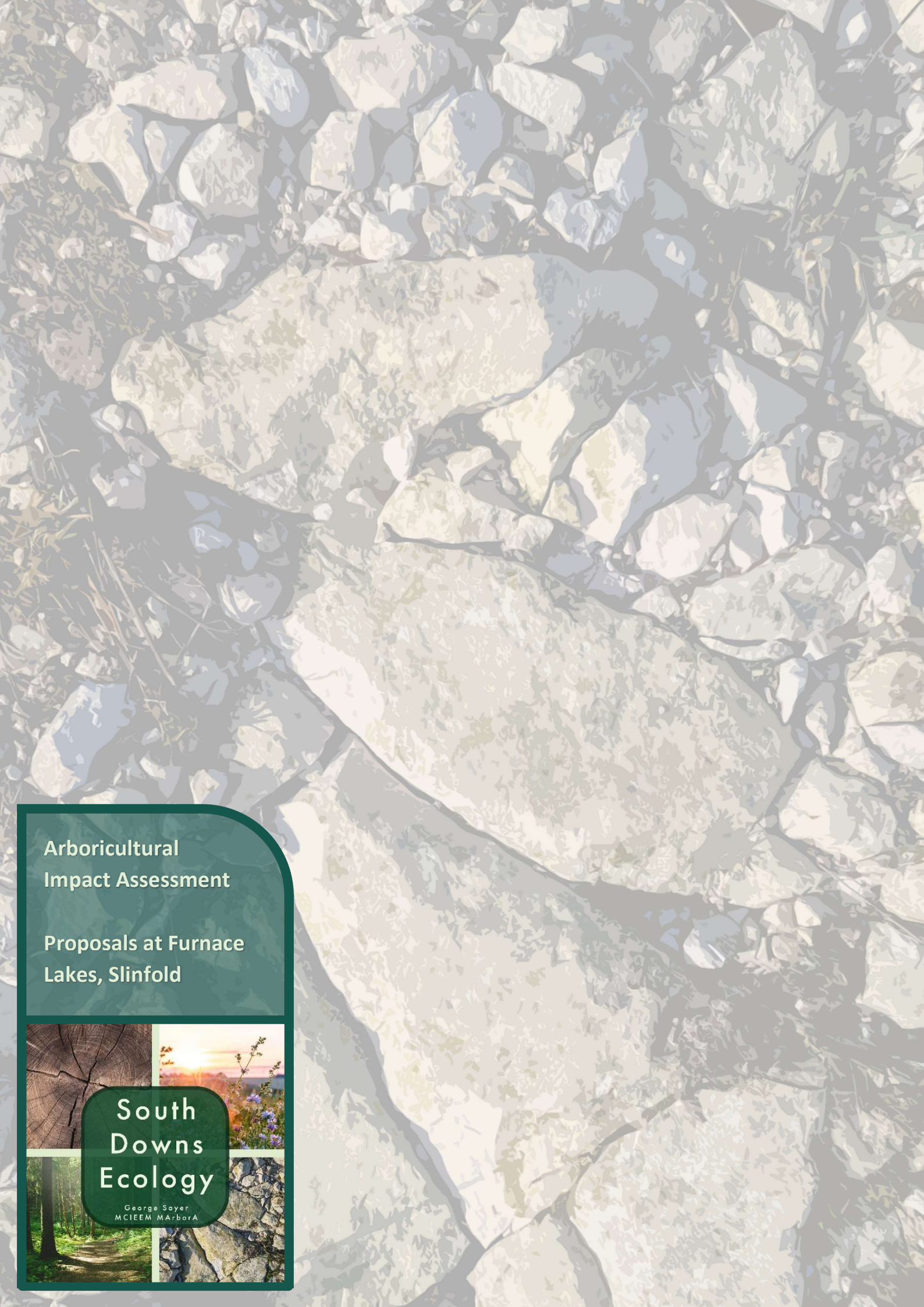
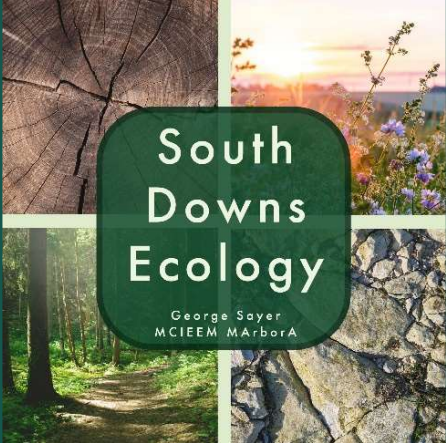




Arboricultural Impact Assessment

Proposals at Furnace
Lakes, Slinfold



**South
Downs
Ecology**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The applicant has commissioned a tree survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment for proposals at Furnace Lakes, Slinfold. A detailed tree survey was undertaken by George Sayer MCIEEM MArbor of South Downs Ecology on 31st October 2025.
- 1.2 This document details the current condition of trees on the site, the potential historic impacts that might have occurred and what measures can be taken going forward to ensure ongoing protection of trees in accordance with best practice.
- 1.3 The proposals are restrospective and for the siting of a small number of shepherd's huts around one part of a lake, with associated changes to access and landscape.

2.0 Existing Site and Vegetation

- 2.1 The site consists of an area of land on the bank of a fishing lake. The land is designated as Ancient Woodland; aerial historic imagery suggests this was partially cleared by a previous owner between 2013-2018 to enable use of fishing swims. This has resulted in the land becoming more of an amenity area.
- 2.2 Prior to this application the site consisted of areas of grass, scattered trees and areas of compacted hardcore fishing swim stations. Much of the hardcore in these areas has been removed as have the 9 fishing swims. The proposal is to allow siting of 3no. shepherd's huts on the land, of which 2 have already been installed.
- 2.3 The eastern edge of the site is lined with a diverted public footpath, whose route originally ran through the adjacent lake footprint. The footpath has recently had vegetation cut back by local authority contractors. The footpath is separated from the site by a small number of remnant shrubs and a recently-planted pyracantha hedge.

3.0 Arboricultural Impacts - Historic

- 3.1 The site was found to be formed now of woodchip path, with grassed banks to each side. Scattered throughout are a number of semi-mature to mature oaks, and a small number of hornbeam and hazel.
- 3.2 It would appear that the site was originally part of the adjacent ancient woodland. The oaks remain as do a small number of understorey hornbeams to the east. The majority of any understorey and groundcover appear to have been removed in the past. The aerial imagery suggests this occurred between 2013-2018. By 2018, large areas of compacted hardcore had been laid and the area clearly stripped of much of the vegetation (see image 1 below). This was carried out by a previous owner of the site.
- 3.3 The historic works removed much of the understorey habitats and smaller trees. The oak trees were retained but the majority of canopy connectivity had been removed.
- 3.4 The historic surfacing works occurred within a number of tree RPAs and might have negatively impacted trees through root cutting and compaction. This is evident in the fact that many of the oak trees are retained in land higher than the surrounding paths, and display minor dieback and deadwood, suggesting some historic stress on the trees. Such impacts could not have arisen from the current works as there would be insufficient time for such impacts to become evident.
- 3.5 These historic works removed all groundcover and left the site with areas of grassland around the surfaces.

3.6 Image 1 – Google Earth Aerial Image from 2018.



4.0 Arboricultural Impacts – Current Proposal

- 4.1 The site was retained in the state described above between at least 2018 and 2024 until the actions included within this proposal were begun. The majority of the compacted hardcore was removed, and most of this replaced with woodchip. Much of this is beginning to re-vegetate and over time these areas would likely revert to a vegetated state. The main path through has been covered with woodchip.
- 4.2 The cabins are not fixed into the ground but are accompanied by a small deck, hottub and gravelled area each, facing the lake. The majority of these works occur outside of RPAs although some areas of path and gravel lie within RPAs. It is understood that this gravel replaces the existing hardcore in these areas. The decks are supported on timber posts which generally lie outside of or on the very edge of RPAs, and within areas previously laid to hardcore. The third hut has yet to be installed.
- 4.3 The grassed banks are showing regrowth of some native species; some of these are grassland species such as oxeye daisy whilst some woodland species are appearing.
- 4.4 The overall impacts of the recent works falling under this application are considered to be positive; the quantum of surfaced and compacted land has been significantly reduced, and over time much of the unused areas covered in woodchip should re-vegetate. The oak trees show some signs of historic stress but should be able to recover, and the presence of the huts and associated infrastructure would not hinder this. The number of visitors to this part of the site would be significantly reduced, and such use would be better screened from the woodland (with the noise and sight of visitors being reduced as they would spend much of their time inside the huts or out on activities etc. rather than fishing on the lake).
- 4.5 The historic works to the site would represent the loss of ancient woodland habitat at the site, but this occurred prior to 2018 and was undertaken by a previous owner. As at least 6 years elapsed between these actions and the new works, it is unlikely that the habitat would rapidly re-colonise without planting and much of the woodland soil was likely removed at the same time that hardcore was laid down. The proposal represents a significant improvement over the baseline at the site.

5.0 Potential Further Works and Arboricultural Recommendations

- 5.1 As detailed within a separate Ancient Woodland Mitigation Strategy, rather than attempting to restore this degraded area, it is propose to provide some proportionate measures on the site and the re-instatement of a larger area of historically-degraded woodland in the vicinity.
- 5.2 The third shepherd's hut lies slightly within the RPA of one tree – the location shall be adjusted as far as possible to minimise this, but the siting of the hut would be unlikely to cause any alteration to the soil, with this being a small wheeled structure resulting in minimal compaction and allowing air and water transfer to the soil below.
- 5.3 The hottub and corner of the deck of this hut appear to encroach into the tree's RPA. The hottub would not require any significant excavation, but any removal of surface layers shall be undertaken manually with due care to check no roots would be damaged or compacted. Any deck supports being installed within RPAs shall be installed by hand using hand tools, taking care to ensure no roots are present within the post holes.
- 5.4 Non-native shrubs should be removed from the site and replaced with native flowering shrubs. A hedge formed largely of pyracantha has been planted along the footpath edge. This shall be in-planted with hawthorn or hornbeam, to provide a solid screen of ecological value. Further native shrubs along this edge would help screen the footpath and provide more of a woodland-edge habitat, helping to buffer the woodland from any minor noise and light disturbance.
- 5.5 The grassed areas should be allowed to re-colonise with species from the adjacent woodland. Mulch and leaf litter could also be spread onto areas of woodchip to further enable colonisation by invertebrates and fungi.
- 5.6 Any vehicular access required must remain on the main woodchip path, which shall be topped-up regularly.
- 5.7 Trees shall be subject to only the minimum management necessary to ensure safety; larger deadwood pieces shall be shortened to safe stubs if deemed necessary and the arising wood placed in the woodland. Any tree which fails ultimately shall be retained as a monolith/large stump and a new tree planted to replace it.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The site consists of an area originally forming part of the adjacent ancient woodland. The site was denuded of much of the vegetation and soil by a previous owner prior to 2018. Such works likely had an impact on the remaining trees as well as effectively removing much of the woodland habitat.
- 6.2 The proposals would not exacerbate the above impacts and over time would help to alleviate the worst of the impacts on trees, whilst allowing some limited regeneration of woodland edge. Alongside the re-creation of ancient woodland further east proposed within the Ancient Woodland Mitigation Strategy, the proposals are considered to result in an overall significant Arboricultural gain in the long-term and would secure better ongoing management of the surroundings for the benefit of trees and ecology.