

## Losing a Landscape: Havant Thicket Reservoir

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Ancient woodland and natural habitats in the United Kingdom are declining despite the urgent need to tackle critical biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. This project focuses on the current construction of the *Havant Thicket Reservoir*, a 8.7 billion litre storage reservoir spanning 160 hectares just north of Portsmouth on the south coast. The site contains rare grasslands and ancient woodlands and is home to rare species of bats, newts and skylarks.

Before construction started, Frankie Knight explored the landscape and was shocked by the natural beauty that was going to be destroyed. She responded by connecting with her local community, interviewing and photographing 11 members of the *Stop the Chop* campaign group (now known as *Havant Thicket for Nature*). Further audio recordings and photographs captured the grassland, the avenue of ancient oaks, and waterways that run through the marsh, all of which have now been lost.

The photographs were taken on medium format film, developed using seaweed collected locally and fixed with saltwater, demonstrating alternative ways of working using non-toxic, environmentally conscious, and sustainable approaches. The resulting images explore the aesthetics of imperfection, human nature and allow space for imagination. The name of each image relates to location using What3words app so that a record can be kept of what will be soon underwater.

By giving a voice to the local people that use the space rather than the developers and council leaders that make the decisions, the project allows a more democratic and truthful response to the proposed development. Although a political issue, the work steers the conversation to the emotional and spiritual elements to allow for deeper engagement and reflection whilst exploring the artist's role in fighting the destruction of natural habitats.

All images in the series and the audio piece can be accessed at: <https://frankieknight.photography/>.

**Frankie Knight**

Frankie Knight, legally known as Frankie Murdoch, is an early career creative practitioner and academic at Solent University. She is a multi-discipline artist working across experimental photographic practices, music production, and film using sustainable techniques that explore environmental themes. She studied Media Technology and recently completed a Masters in Critical Creative Practice. Frankie grew up in London but moved to the south coast to be closer to the sea and to have greater access to nature.

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