

Friends of Latchmore

Press Release

SUNDAY 18th MARCH

HYDE RESIDENTS CALL FOR LOCAL REFERENDUM ON LATCHMORE WORKS

At the monthly Hyde Parish Council meeting on 14 March, local residents voiced their concerns at the proposed Latchmore Brook development. Professor John Shepherd requested a halt to any further work until a full site specific Environmental Impact Study is implemented and published. In the meantime, he suggested that the Parish Council should withdraw their support for the works, in order to take into account the widespread concern in the Parish, as demonstrated by the public meeting of the Friends of the Latchmore on February 22nd.

One resident said that the proposed movement of 10,000 tons of imported gravel through the Parish in 20 ton trucks, would cause major damage not only to roads, which are single track for much of the possible route, but also to verges and old dwellings, many of them cob cottages without foundations. There is the additional hazard of the impact on these truck movements on the many commoners' ponies and cattle on these roads. The Parish Council expressed serious concern about this and said that the issue needed to be addressed after consultation with residents and especially those who were likely to be most affected.

Another resident expressed concern about the Parish Council having given permission for extensive tree felling on the Latchmore, which occurred before most people realised the extent of the project and the considerable impact it would have on a beautiful local landscape. Councillors agreed that with hindsight they could have responded differently.

Residents also felt that this was probably one of the most important issues to have arisen in the Parish for some time, and that there had been insufficient attention to the many concerns expressed at previous meetings and during and after the Forestry Commission Walk in November.

It was suggested that a referendum should be held to establish residents' views on the scheme. The Parish Clerk explained that it was possible to hold a parish poll, and that the Council could investigate the procedure.

The Parish Council agreed that they would ask the partners in the scheme (the Forestry Commission, acting on behalf of the Verderers and the National Park Authority) for detailed answers to the questions raised under 15 points in the Friends of Latchmore letter, which summarised the concerns expressed at their meeting of 22nd February.

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{for background see next page}

Background

The Latchmore stream restoration project is one of a number of wetland restoration projects being undertaken as part of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, see <http://www.hlsnewforest.org.uk/> and <http://www.hlsnewforest.org.uk/index/projects/wetland-restoration/latchmore>

The **Friends of Latchmore** is an action group of residents formed to protect the Latchmore Valley from undesirable interference, see <http://sites.google.com/site/friendsoflatchmore/>