

Date: 31 March 2012 17:02

Subject: Latchmore

To: enquiries.southern@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Cc: Friend Latchmore <friends.latchmore@gmail.com>

Dear Sir,

I am attaching our response to your External Q&A for your consideration.

[Mike Parslow](#)

[Fair View Cottage, Pentons Hill, Hyde, FORDINGBRIDGE, Hants, SP6 2HL](#)

Comments on “Latchmore Restoration Project”

I believe that the drainage work on Latchmore Brook pre-dates the statutory designation of the New Forest (1959 NNR status, 1981 SSSI – (Tubbs)), therefore the condition of this stream was not sufficiently significant to preclude inclusion in the designated area. 19th century photos show that Latchmore Shade was extant and of similar appearance to that today.

Water is a powerful force and will normally find its own course which changes with time, meanders are cut off and become ox-bows. At Latchmore Shade the main stream has shifted in the past 15 years and is now gradually eroding a route to rejoin an old meander. Recreating the meanders above the Shade will slow the flow as long as the stream chooses to stay with the new chosen route. However the work I have observed elsewhere in the New Forest appears to have adopted an unvarying width, removed riffles and shading vegetation; all of which do not improve the stream for wildlife or its scenic value. The work at Ditchend Brook has removed a well used fording place and the riffles near to it.

There is a need to retain shrubs and trees near the stream for the sake of the wildlife and for visual amenity. Prior to these works starting we had frequent sightings of Kingfisher, and the scrub adjacent to the stream was alive with bird life.

In the vicinity of Latchmore Brook there is an extensive area of lawn to the South which offers grazing for stock, therefore the need to create more grazing is unnecessary.

The proposed massive input of materials, machinery and money is taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut, when the work could be done by a team with spades; although obviously some impermeable material would be needed to block the current route of the stream. This leads to the choice of material. It has been said that 8-10,000 tonnes of clay and gravel will be brought in, clay is normally on the alkaline side of neutral and the Avon gravels have been washed for sometime in water originating from the limestone plain to the North. Locally Hoggin is a mildly alkaline material in order to achieve the binding of the gravels by the alkaline clay on compaction.

The British Geological Society maps show that the gravels of the Forest are different from those of the Avon valley. The former having been laid down long before the wash down gravels filled the valley floor. The underlying gravels of the Forest are

acidic, and this importation of less acid, potentially alkaline materials will greatly alter the flora of the area.

The roads likely to be used in this massive import are just forest tracks which have been tarmacked over, and were never designed to take traffic of this weight or density. Indeed in order to protect this Conservation area HCC has designated the area as a no throughway for HGV's.

The mire to the North of the brook has not dried out in the past 15 + years that I have been observing it, always having some standing water even in drought years. Blocking it off would reduce the water flow in dry periods into the brook. Most watercourses in the Forest originate in bogs rather than springs from rocks, and it is essential that these wet areas continue to feed the streams.

The FC claim to have much knowledge and experience in such 'restoration' work, but seem to be unaware of their own notices regarding nesting birds, until it has been brought to their attention. The shallows around Latchmore shade are an important area for young fish and I am not aware of any comparable areas further downstream which will not already have a full quota of young fish stocking them.

The geography of the land bordering the stream makes the claim that these works will cause the floodplain to be more active upstream of the Shade very unlikely, as the often flooded area below the shade will still flood. However if it is true then the floodwaters inundating the large ant colonies upstream of the shade will imperil these rare creatures. You also say that you intend to take an excavator across some of the anthills whilst digging out the old channel. Have you ascertained that these particular anthills are not active?

The archaeology of this area was described by Heywood Sumner in the 19th Century, and subsequent military use and restoration took place without any further study. Your response to the Friends of Latchmore question on this indicates that an archaeological consultation will take place prior to the work taking place. Time is getting short for this.

My final point concerns consultation

The true stakeholders in an area are the locals. The statutory bodies and NGO's have a part to play in the consultation, but the locals should never be ignored.

The meeting in April 2011 only happened after work had already started and had caused local public concern and objection. Please learn from this and plan future consultation and work accordingly.