

Brook plans on hold after rains

PLANS to re-route a waterway in a Forest beauty spot have been postponed until next year.

Wet weather has been blamed for delays to stream restoration work at Latchmore, near Fordingbridge.

Proposals to restore an internationally important wildlife habitat at Latchmore have been attacked by scores of people who say the plan will wreck the area.

The project involves importing 10,000 tonnes of gravel to fill in much of the existing stream, and relocating the stream to an alternative course just a few yards away.

Members of campaign group Friends of Latchmore Brook, who have been fighting the plans, are calling for an Environmental Impact Assessment before any re-routing work is carried out.

A spokesman for group said: "The Forestry Commission has announced that they have

By **Karen Bate**

karen.bate@salisburyjournal.co.uk

decided to defer work on the main Latchmore stream until 2013.

"However, they still intend to proceed with work on the Thompson's Castle mires, and we shall continue to insist that they must first do a proper Environmental Impact Assessment and proceed only if this shows a net ecological benefit."



Latchmore Brook.

Contractors working on the New Forest wetland restoration programme were nearly halfway through the 20-week programme, but have already lost almost a month due to the wet weather.

Acting deputy surveyor for the Forestry Commission Kevin Penfold said: "The poor

weather has forced us to reschedule our programme.

"High quality and sensitive restoration to minimise adverse impacts is always a priority in the forest.

"Without a good run of decent weather, when we can be confident that ground conditions will be favourable, we have decided to postpone the restoration to the main stream at Latchmore.

"We will aim to carry out the delayed works in the summer of 2013 and will continue to liaise with interested parties before we begin."

The Forestry Commission hopes to still complete the Thompson's Castle mire part of the restoration scheme this summer, but this is also subject to favourable weather conditions.

A spokesman said: "Damage caused by past drainage means the peat is now eroding and once washed away it will take thousands of years to recover. The mire is one of the most at-risk habitats in lowland Europe, important for absorbing carbon dioxide as well as to its wildlife."