

Campaign to halt restoration plans

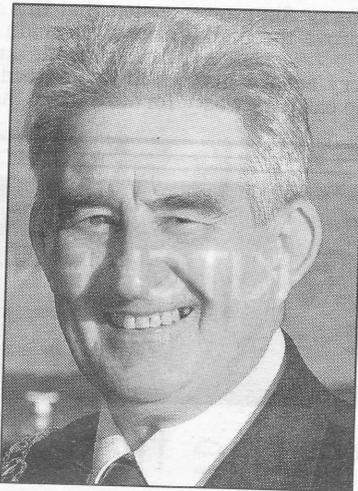
HYDE Parish Council is backing a campaign to suspend the restoration works at Latchmore Brook near Fordingbridge until an Environmental Impact Assessment is carried out.

The Friends of Latchmore Brook is fighting to stop the Forestry Commission's felling of trees and works planned for later this year, fearing for wildlife and the habitat.

Members of Hyde Parish Council support the restoration scheme, saying the project has secured the backing from conservation organisations including Natural England, the New Forest National Park Authority, the Commons Defence Association and the Verderers.

But, in light of the differences of opinion in the village, they are backing the call for an assessment.

Council chairman Bill Dow said: "Hyde Parish Council recognises the diversity of opinion in the community concerning this project. In the light of new information arising from discussions between concerned residents and the partners in the Latchmore Brook project and taking account of the



Bill Dow, chairman of Hyde Parish Council.

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number of questions raised that are still awaiting responses from the Forestry Commission, Hyde Parish Council recognises that the Friends of Latchmore have made a case that an appropriate site specific Environmental Impact Assessment is needed for this project.

Hyde Parish Council confirms

that its continued support for the project would be dependent on the outcome of such an assessment."

Chairman of the Friends of Latchmore Professor John Shepherd said: "This is just a first step in the right direction. In effect the council has withdrawn its unconditional support for these major restoration works, which would be very damaging and have little or no benefit.

"We are continuing our action to get the project suspended until a proper Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out, and until our many questions have been adequately answered by the Forestry Commission."

Forestry Commission ecologist Sarah Oakley said: "The main habitat restoration work will be taking place this summer.

"The aim of the work is to restore the hydrological balance of the area by restoring the original meandering course of the stream, followed by the subsequent infill of the deep, eroding drain.

"The mire catchments that have been damaged by artificial drainage will be restored to prevent further erosion and loss of this vital habitat."