

Fears over plan to fill in stream

A TOP veterinary surgeon and an archaeologist have raised more concerns about the Forestry Commission's restoration work near Fordingbridge.

Honorary life member and secretary of the Fish Veterinary Society, Fiona Macdonald, warned the Verderers that filling in the stream bed with 10,000 tons of gravel at Latchmore Brook could have a devastating effect on the sea trout population.

"Sea trout are genetically pre-programmed to return to spawn where they were originally hatched," Ms Macdonald said.

"If they are prevented from doing this either by a marked change in their previous habitat, obstructions or poor water quality, such as excessively high temperatures in open shallow meanders, they will either try somewhere else, or they will give up and, in time, die.

"The net effect will be the long-term loss of this unique genetic material to this particular stream.

"Once this genetic material has been lost from this stream, it's gone for good."

Ogdens resident, Commoner and archaeologist Margaret Bunyard said: "Latchmore is rich in archaeological sites, dating from the Bronze Age to the Second World War.

"The archaeological report carried out was appallingly weak.

"Of the 15 known sites only one was correctly recorded, and ten were missed altogether.

"At Latchmore the aim is 'to restore

By Karen Bate

karen.bate@salisburyjournal.co.uk

the stream to its natural meandering course'. But a study of Ordnance Survey maps, and others dating back 200 years, show little change in the course of the stream."

Ms Macdonald and Ms Bunyard told members of the Verderers Court that evidence to support plans to fill in the stream bed with 10,000 tons of gravel had not been produced and an impact assessment was needed before the works took place.

Ms Bunyard added: "A proper environmental impact assessment must be done to see whether any possible benefits would outweigh the potentially disastrous effect of these works."

A Verderers spokesman said: "Having given very careful consideration to all the presentments heard today, together with those which were heard at the last court in May, the court decided that it would not withdraw its support for the scheme.

"Prior to arriving at its decision, the court sought and obtained the assurance of the Forestry Commission that the archaeology on the site will be protected and that if additional surveys, advice and guidance is required in order to satisfy that objective, they will be obtained before work starts."

The Official Verderer has asked leading member of the New Forest History & Archaeology Group (NFHAG) Anthony Pasmore to suggest a contractor to enable full and accurate surveys to be achieved, if needed.

And the court stipulated that the legislation governing the protection of fish, birds and odonata must also be complied with in full.