

# Campaigners fight to save brook's wildlife

By **Karen Bate**

karen.bate@salisburyjournal.co.uk

**A CAMPAIGN group has been launched to battle restoration works being carried out near Fordingbridge by the Forestry Commission.**

A new website [friendsoflatchmore.co.uk](http://friendsoflatchmore.co.uk) has been formed in a bid to save Latchmore Brook near Ogdens from the felling of trees and works planned by the commission later this year.

Organiser Meg Mulcahy said: "There are many endangered species of birds, dragonflies and plants that will be affected by the catastrophic destruction of this very important wildlife corridor which will be taking place at a critical time in June and July."

"When between 8,000 and 10,000 tons of gravel, clay, heather bales and heavy machinery are being transported into the area, it will have a huge impact on the small roads in the area and the good quality lawns it has to cross, and all of this will cost at least £250,000."

The formation of the group comes after the Forest Journal highlighted the concerns of dog walkers after they spotted the death mark, a pink spray, on several tree trunks and a landmark oak at Latchmore



**Above, left to right, Sandy Gatward and Suzanne England-Hawkins stand next to the solitary oak tree bearing the pink "death" mark at Ogdens near Fordingbridge.**

Brook last year. Mrs Mulcahy said: "It soon became clear, after the Forest Journal highlighted the issue, that a great many people were extremely shocked when they heard about the plans for Latchmore. Many of these decisions were made with little or no consultation."

"We would like to point out that there are a large number of people who have objected to the damage to this delightful stream and surrounding habitat and grazing, which is also a very popular leisure area."

"The advantages of this scheme seem very unclear. Mention has been made of improved grazing, yet this might be better achieved

by cutting the bracken between Latchmore and Hasley."

Forestry Commission ecologist Sarah Oakley said: "The latest on the SSSI habitat restoration work at Latchmore is that the restoration plans were endorsed by the HLS Board in December. The board's members are Verderers, the National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission with Natural England and the Commons Defence Association also represented."

"The main habitat restoration work will be taking place this summer."

"We have already finished the preparatory tree felling work in January and are currently part-way through completing the ordnance survey - the ground is being checked for unexploded ordnance as it was within the Second World War Ashley Walk bombing range."

"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."