

Letters to the Editor...

Latchmore Brook

SIR, — I am writing to thank your correspondent Andrew Pasmore for his excellent and balanced article on Latchmore and the Forestry Commission.

If anyone doubts the inadvisability of these EU funded schemes, I would propose that they visit those sites in the Forest that the FC have already 'improved' and note that the diversions from the cut channels have by and large failed to withstand this season's rains, so the effect has simply been to wash large quantities of mud and shingle down these fish breeding streams.

The effect on the success rate of these fish, their insect prey and the kingfishers that feed on them is probably large; but we will never know as the Forestry Commission and Natural England did not properly survey the areas before the works, nor apparently have plans to do so afterwards.

For Latchmore itself there are several other factors which make the situation worse.

The head waters will remain deep cut for rapid wash down, so it will not just be the rainfall but inundation from the artificial channels in the enclosures above.

The large scale clearance of the bank side trees and bushes in last year's breeding season has already disturbed the ecology of the area, and the detonation of the suspect bomb casing further disturbed the ground nesting birds to the north of the site. This led to the ludicrous anomaly that the access gates bore both a 'do not disturb the birds' sign and a 'danger men at work'!

The proposal is magnitudes larger in the scale of infill movement than previous stream schemes and the source of the gravel from outside the Forest is a cause for concern, and is inconsistent with the view of Natural England in previous cases where they have been insistent that no materials are brought into the Forest which may disturb the geochemistry of a site.

The Friends of Latchmore have approached the Forestry Commission openly and with courtesy, but have been by and large ignored.

Mike Parslow

Pentons Hill
Hyde

SIR, — How pleased I was to see from Anthony Pasmore's New Forest Notes for September that someone has finally persuaded the Forestry Commission to act openly and honestly and to accept that there are people who love and care about the Forest other than themselves...and some that might even know what they are talking about.

Well done Friends of Latchmore. I hope other local groups will be encouraged to fight to at least get their views heard and not be ridden roughshod over.

Pat Hudson

Whiteparish,
Salisbury.

SIR, — I am writing in support of the well informed and balanced article written by Mr Pasmore appearing in the September issue of 'New Forest Notes'. He analyses the situation regarding Latchmore area with great precision.

The article deserves the widest possible circulation.

David Crane

Friend of Latchmore,
(Address supplied).

SIR, — Thank goodness for Anthony Pasmore. He seems to be the only one of the verderers expressing any sensitivity and understanding for the beauty of the Latchmore valley.

It is to be hoped that the FC now carries out the full environmental impact assessment that the Friends of Latchmore have been requesting since the meeting in February at which 99% of those present expressed their concern and dismay at what had happened and the proposed further decimation of this protected SSSI site (will it retain its SSSI status after it has been altered, one has to ask?).

It seems that the re-routing of the Latchmore Brook over 60 years ago has now been proven to have been wrong and the FC has decided to put it back to where it originally was. Who is to say that they will get it right this time if they got it wrong before? The brook has recently thrived and was one of the most beautiful areas in the New Forest until the start of its destruction last year.

The FC has been given millions of pounds in an EU grant to turn the New Forest into a bog. (They can euphemistically call it a "mire" but "bog" is what they will achieve!). To do this, they have felled literally hundreds of trees, mainly along the stream bank, so destroying the shaded pools favoured by the fish for shelter and also destroyed the kingfishers' nest sites and their ability to perch over the water to catch their food. The kingfisher is a schedule 1 protected bird and yet still the FC got away with this action without penalty.

Ironically, the proposed work this year has been put on hold because the area is too boggy! The F.C. should have refused the grant on the grounds that the area was already a "mire" or maybe it is unaware of the ground conditions as it claimed to be unaware of the existence of the kingfisher? Those of us who have enjoyed walking along the stream banks for years know the whereabouts of rare birds and plants and the areas of bog to be avoided on foot.

How come the Forestry Commission /New Forest National Park Authority are so dogged in their determination to continue to destroy the beautiful Latchmore valley despite so many protestations and evidence from professionals?

Sandra Gatward

(Address supplied).

SIR, — How gratifying to read 'New Forest Notes' this month.

Anthony Pasmore's comments on the Latchmore situation show there is someone who has life-long knowledge, service and dedication to the Forest who is able to get straight to the heart of the matter in a well considered and accurate account of the sad state of affairs regarding this iconic area much loved by all.

It has been hoped that the partners in this ill-conceived scheme finally listen to his wise counsel.

Ailsa Farrand

Furze Hill,
Fordingbridge.