



A new perspective

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Progress for the Friends of Latchmore

The group of local people set up to protect Latchmore Brook from a major engineering (conservation) project has recently achieved a noteworthy victory. The subject has been becoming increasingly complex, but in simple terms the Friends had asked for a detailed assessment of the proposed work to determine its potential consequences for the stream and its surroundings. Such an assessment would then be available to the planning authority when an application is made for the works. The authorities had resisted this consistently over many months, but have now agreed that it should be provided, but there remains much dispute about the mechanism for doing so. I must say that I find it rather difficult to understand how the Forestry Commission is supposed to produce an impartial report on its own proposals, even given that it employs outside consultants, but that seems to be the process required by law.

This is not the first such victory in relation to the stream. For a long time the Forestry Commission denied the necessity for a planning application and eventually that too was established by the Latchmore group. Planning applications and environmental assessments for development on this scale are expensive and time consuming, but that is only part of the reason why they have been so vigorously resisted. It is perfectly clear that if they are necessary at Latchmore, they will also be necessary for every other major development project on the common lands so that what the Friends of Latchmore have achieved has implications for all other parts of the Forest as well.

Anthony Pasmore

anthony.pasmore@advertiserandtimes.co.uk