

Latchmore Brook 'Restoration'

To Whom It May Concern

I heard about the Forestry Commission 'restoration' plans for the area around Latchmore Brook from a member of the dragonflies-uk group.

Having delved deeper into the proposals, several concerns come to mind:-

Point 1

Anything imported, ie the gravel, cannot be guaranteed 'clean' & could bring in contamination & other life forms which are not already in situ in the Forest area. These would have a knock on effect because they would upset the natural order of things in that area. eg other larvae/eggs could be in the gravel & they could predate the larvae of the Southern & Scarce Blue-Tailed damsels and totally disrupt the eco system there

Point 2

Any disturbance to a fragile environment like this could be catastrophic. The truth is, no matter what the 'experts' say, they just don't know how the stream will be affected in the long term. They can only predict what the final outcome will be.

Point 3

There is a suggestion that the Southern Damselfly larvae could 'be removed before work begins'. Whilst on the face of it, this is a very noble suggestion, where would they be put?? That is, of course if there's an expert on hand to ID them in the first place. It is extremely difficult, and time consuming, to ID damselfly larvae & there will be other species in the brook as well to add to the difficulty.

There are only THREE sites in the New Forest where the Southern & Scarce Blue-Tailed damsels are *known* to breed. Also, one in Devon & 2 in Wales & there is a very real possibility that they could be wiped out at Latchmore. Once they're gone, they're gone forever.... It has taken many years for the current populations to become established and, even now, they don't occur in great numbers. With natural predators and unpredictable weather to deal with, the last thing they need is habitat disturbance/loss as well.

The Southern Damsel has full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and that includes the taking of individuals (and their larvae) AND habitat disturbance and/or destruction.

The Southern Damsel is also listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Insects list as 'SAP' which means Species Action Plan. This means that they are seriously endangered and all efforts must be made to protect them. Interestingly, the Southern Damsel originates from the Mediterranean region and is already extinct in 7 countries there so the South of England could be its last chance of survival as a species.

I am surprised that Natural England is in favour of the Forestry Commissions plans for the 'restoration'. This begs the question, 'has it been fully informed?' It sounds as though the NE

representative needs updating urgently on what has already taken place re the tree felling & the ongoing work...

In the wider picture, other species are also 'at risk'. The proposed route of the work includes traversing ancient ant hills which have taken decades to establish. The ants are an important part of the breeding cycle of the Silver Studded Blue butterfly - another nationally scarce species. They have a symbiotic relationship with the black ants whereby the ants carry the butterfly caterpillar into the anthill for protection and, in return, receive a sugary secretion from the caterpillar. The ants have even been observed carrying the caterpillar to its food plants in return for the free food supply. Because of habitat loss elsewhere in the country, the Forest is an important breeding site for this butterfly. But it *needs* the black ant in order to survive.. It is already extinct in Kent, Norfolk and probably Dartmoor too where its food plants of heather, gorse & broom have been cleared. There are a few other colonies in the south of England but the Forest is its stronghold. The proposed work 'starting in June/July' will be right in the middle of this butterfly's breeding season.

Then we have the Dartford Warbler. Another national rarity and one which is highly sensitive to disturbance. All the comings and goings of the plant and machinery during the proposed 'restoration' could seriously affect the population of this rare bird.

I have already mentioned my concerns over the import of gravel from other parts of the country but, as important, is the way it is proposed to get it to the site. It is estimated that up to 1000 trips by HGV's, over a six week period, will be needed to bring the gravel in. The likely route will include transporting the heavy loads on narrow roads and through areas where there is a heavy population of ponies, donkeys and cattle as well as a designated 'family cycle route'. The impact on this environment could be very costly in terms of livestock, damage to the fragile roads and verges and, god forbid, human life.

A Transport Assessment, as part of a Risk Assessment, **MUST** be carried out before work begins.

In Conclusion

There is much at stake here and it is vital that the local people are heard. Their concerns are real and are backed up by scientific evidence.

The undue haste on the part of the Forestry Commission to get this work approved is also of great concern due, mainly I'm sure, to the funding from the EU which involves a substantial sum.

This isn't a case of 'not in my back yard'. It's a case of environmental protection in a place of outstanding natural beauty.

The whole picture needs to be carefully analysed; not just the brook and the site of the proposed work but the total impact on the whole eco system.

At the very least, this work should be suspended until the local people have been heard, their concerns addressed and a way forward agreed. To date this has not happened.

Personally, I feel that the cost to the environment far outweighs any proposed benefits.

Rosie Ray
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