

# Friends of Latchmore

[friendsoflatchmore.org](http://friendsoflatchmore.org)

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To: Mr Dominic May, Official Verderer & Chair of NF HLS Board

28 November 2012

Dear Mr May

## **Latchmore Brook restoration project**

We have noted with interest the recently posted minutes of the HLS Board meeting on 3 October 2012, and we welcome the announcement that the Latchmore project (Serial 23) has now been postponed until at least 2015/16.

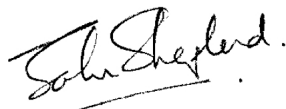
However we are concerned by the statement at Item 5 para 4 that a request was made by Jenny Thomas (Natural England) that "Thompson's Castle mire is restored ASAP. There is chronic erosion and a high risk of a slump." We had understood that the HLS Scheme was moving towards a more rigorous and evidence-based approach to support its proposals, and are concerned that the evidence to support this statement appears at present to be conflicting and inadequate.

We note that Jenny Thomas herself was responsible for the SSSI Unit 43 assessment dated 27 June 2012, which upgraded this unit of the SSSI from "Unfavourable recovering" (in 2008) to "Favourable" with no mention of such a high risk. In addition a report from Iain Diack (Natural England) based on a site visit on 15 May 2012 stated that "This is a high quality valley mire which appears to have been little studied in the past... Thompson's Castle mire needs a more detailed vegetation survey to assess its full range value, and an eco-hydrological characterisation is also necessary to fully understand the development and function of the mire...". Such a survey has now been commissioned by Natural England so an early attempt at remediation of the mire would be premature.

We are also aware that an earlier attempt was made about 13 years ago to use heather bales to support the mire, and was unsuccessful: the remnants of this scheme are now clearly visible on site. It will be necessary for the Forestry Commission and its partners to provide clear scientific evidence of a successful restoration of a similar mire elsewhere, before it would be reasonable to attempt further restoration using this technique (or any other that may be proposed)

We would therefore appreciate your assurance that no further work will take place at Thompson's Castle until a full Environmental Impact Assessment has been made of the effect of any work on the relevant key features of the New Forest SAC, in particular the EU Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats *Transition Mire and Quaking Bog* and *Depressions on Peat Substrates* (as referred to by Iain Diack), coupled with the effects of the proposed works in the upstream Inclosures and the Latchmore catchment and stream.

Yours sincerely,



Professor John Shepherd CBE FRS (Chair: the Friends of Latchmore)

CC

M Seddon (Forestry Commission)  
A Barnes & S Avery (NF NPA)  
A Wood, R Bailey & J Thomas (Natural England)  
Councillors & Parish Clerk, Hyde Parish Council  
Ms. L. Foster, Richard Buxton Solicitors