

Presentment – 18 July 2012

by

**My name is Dai Morgan I am a Chartered Engineer,
I live at Brookfield, Furze Hill, SP6 2PS**

My Presentment concerns the proposed heavy engineering works at Latchmore.

I won't dwell on the irony that a project to "*reconnect Latchmore to its flood plain*" has now been delayed because the area has been flooded virtually continuously since May; save to say that this clearly demonstrates that the project has not been studied properly, and this delay gives you: the Verderers, and the Forestry Commission ample time to rectify this serious deficiency.

My particular reason for this presentment is that I live on the bank of the Huckles Brook at Furze Hill. The first thing I see out of my window every morning is the brook which flows down from Latchmore. It is normally a gentle flowing stream, but over the last decade I have seen it in full flood a number of times each year after heavy rain, when it covers the main road, and also a feeble trickle, when it is little more than a series of stagnant pools.

I attended the Verderers' court last month, where we were all deluged with claims about the benefits these engineering works might bring. Although I don't doubt that most of these were well intentioned, several of them were clearly little more than fanciful.

The one in particular that I take issue with, is that this work will reduce the ferocity of the flooding, and will keep the flow going during periods of drought. Quite frankly I do not believe that these proposed works will deliver that claim.

I have studied the map of the whole stream – not just the small section which the FC are using to describe the works, and I have walked the actual ground.

The area in the open Forest is merely the tip of the iceberg.

Upstream in the Inclosures at Alderhill and Island Thorns, the brook runs for 6 kilometres before reaching Latchmore plain. It is fed by some 20 tributaries which provide a further 17 kilometres of waterway.

These watercourses have massive man-made interventions. There are deep, straight, man-made channels, there are 24 inch culverts under the Forestry tracks, and there are deep drains either side of the tracks. These were all put in to drain the land for trees, to allow heavy machinery in, and to allow cut wood to be brought out.

It is these extensive, man-made channels which cause the brook to flood so quickly every time it rains heavily; and it is these drains which dry out a vast area of the catchment which then causes the brook to run to a trickle when it doesn't rain.

It is this area, inside the Inclosures, which needs to be "restored" to give back the brook its natural character – not the small bit on the open forest.

The FC knows this; and to be fair they have already filled in a couple of tributaries, which are now soft boggy valleys. They do retain more water, and in time may go back to something like their original state.

On the various walks that the FC have organised in response to public demand, Kevin Penfold has indicated that they do **intend** to "restore" more of these waterways, some time over the next 10 years. However there are no specific plans for this, and he was not at all confident, that in the current financial climate, any of these plans would actually happen.

On the most recent walk, the independent expert – Professor David Sear looked at everything that is being proposed by the current works. At the end of the walk, he pointed out that it is the large area upstream in the Inclosures, with the massive man-made interventions which should be tackled before the open plain.

The Environmental Agency experts also on the walk independently gave the same view. The consensus was: "Do the upstream work first, otherwise the work at Latchmore shade will be wasted".

My own view is that if the upstream areas are not put right first, the stream will continue to flood rapidly, and will wash away any of the benefits that there may be from doing this proposed work at Latchmore.

Verderers - I put it to you that the weather has saved us from the Forestry Commission making a grave mistake with this project this summer. **Please** use the extra time wisely to insist on a proper and specific Environmental Impact Assessment which considers the hydrology of the whole catchment of the stream. Only this will clearly demonstrate the best way to proceed and show whether in fact the work on the open area of Latchmore is justified – or even needed at all.

Thank you.

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