

Note of Meeting with the Friends of Latchmore on Tuesday 28 May 2013 at Natural England, 2nd Floor Cromwell House, 15 Andover Road, Winchester

Present:

Professor John Shepherd	Friends of Latchmore
Fiona McDonald	Friends of Latchmore
Ailsa Farrand	Friends of Latchmore
Andy McDonald	Natural England
Adam Wallace	Natural England
Jinti Gifford	Natural England
George Heritage	JBA Consulting

George Heritage gave a presentation setting out the results of the JFlow analysis that JBA Consulting has carried out for Natural England on the Latchmore Brook within unit 48 of the New Forest SSSI. This set the geographical and historical context of the brook and showed the results of modelling the current situation, the Forestry Commission's current restoration proposal and JBA Consulting's recommended restoration proposal.

Various questions were asked throughout the presentation about the modelling and implications. Those requiring action are set out below:

- Professor Shepherd requested that George Heritage confirm the various flow rates used within the model.
- Once the report on the JFlow analysis is finalised, the Friends of Latchmore requested that a copy of both the report and the presentation be sent to them.

The discussion then moved on to the finalised reports that the Friends of Latchmore have had sight of.

Fiona McDonald asked what should happen with the comments that the Friends of Latchmore have. These should be sent to Jinti Gifford. A response to the comments will be provided by Natural England in conjunction with JBA Consulting, where appropriate.

The Friends of Latchmore felt that although JBA Consulting had produced an impressive amount of work to a high standard in a short space of time, there was a connection lacking in the reports between the current situation described and the restoration measures proposed. They were particularly concerned about the recommendation to repair the incised channel leading from Thompsons Castle Bog with a concrete dam and plastic piling.

The Friends of Latchmore wanted to know what the next steps were, and how the reports would be used in the wetland restoration programme. Jinti Gifford explained that the Forestry Commission were commissioning further JFlow analysis of the upstream units of the Latchmore Brook and that these reports would be taken into consideration in the future design of restoration plans, but would not necessarily be followed to the letter as there were many factors to take into consideration on each site.

John Shepherd emphasised that the Friends of Latchmore felt that it was unclear what the overall aim of the wetland restoration programme was and what the restoration proposals at Latchmore were intended to achieve as an end result. George Heritage explained that the JBA Consulting recommendations aimed to restore an anastomosed stream with improved floodplain connection, which would better support the valuable floodplain habitats surrounding Latchmore Brook. (Anastomosed streams are rare within the UK, and in many places in the New Forest are the natural stream type.)

This led on to a discussion about the impacts of the proposed restoration on the existing habitats and species within the vicinity of Latchmore Brook and the Friends of Latchmore reiterated that they felt that an ecological assessment was essential. The Friends of Latchmore then queried progress with a response to the letter sent by Richard Buxton solicitors in January. Adam Wallace explained that the letter had raised issues that need to be carefully considered which is why Natural England have taken Counsel's advice and that Julie Lunt will be meeting with DEFRA in June to discuss the issues raised. John Shepherd wanted to know who within DEFRA would be at the meeting and Andy McDonald replied that that question should be raised through the solicitors.

The meeting concluded with the Friends of Latchmore stating that if no ecological assessment of the restoration scheme was undertaken, they would take legal action and had the time and resources to challenge the scheme in a number of ways.