

Exhibition of proposals for engineering works at Latchmore

The LUC Public Exhibition on 6 October was disappointing in that very little new information was presented, and there was only one set of A3 maps available to view on a table. The "Experts" seemed short on knowledge of the area and couldn't answer many queries satisfactorily. The links to the maps and the limited information available so far is on the Friends of Latchmore website <http://friendsoflatchmore.org/>. Apparently we will not see any further information until the Planning Application is submitted in November although the schedule of works, starting next year, is already decided and published.

It is now an engineering project many times the size of the 2011 plan.

The area within Hyde Parish

Work on the lower reaches of Latchmore Brook (LUC map 4.6 – please use the link to our website as above), from below The Shade on the Ogdens car park side up to Alderhill Inclosure, will involve infilling the present stream – apparently the bed of the current Shade crossing will be raised by about 2-3 feet - and the winterbourne meanders will be dug out where present and newly dug where not present. The access routes for heavy plant will be up both sides of the stream (except for a stretch on the Northern bank from the Ogdens car park to just short of The Shade) and this will clearly involve much more tree felling the whole way along the stream.

The Thompson's Castle stream (breeding site of many protected species) will have its bed level raised and hoggin will be used as infill material. The access routes for vehicles working on Lay Gutter Valley (which LUC call Latchmore Mire) go right up into the bog. Both these sites are shown on LUC map 4.8.

An area that has been added to the project is Ogdens Mire, situated at the back of Ogdens – the bed will be raised and it looks as if the old lily pond will be lost. This site is on LUC map 4.9.

Upstream

Through the Inclosures the stream will be largely infilled but the herring-bone straight drainage channels are, on the whole, not to be touched (LUC Maps 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.7).

Materials

No figures were given for the infill material for work proposed for the whole catchment, but an approximate calculation is that a total of 50,000 tonnes of hoggin, washed gravel and rejects and clay as well as heather bales (none of which would be found naturally in forest streams) will be imported, involving thousands of lorry movements on the Forest roads to stockpiles distributed throughout the catchment.

The quantities going to each stockpile have not been published, but one 10m tipper lorry was required for every 20 tonnes of material transported for the Harvestslade "restoration": on this basis, it would take 2,500 lorry-loads (5,000 lorry movements) to move 50,000 tonnes.

Lorries carrying materials to the stockpile in Ogdens car park will be routed from the A338 to Ellingham Drove, Moyles Court, South Gorley and Furze Hill on their way to Ogdens. The route is not, as originally proposed in 2011, a circular one for returning vehicles, so empty lorries will be going back the same way all along these small country lanes.

The routes to the Alderhill and Sloden stockpiles approach via Broomy Plain and Broomy Inclosure (causing yet more damage and disturbance in this Inclosure) and/or through Fritham village and down the gravel track via Fritham Bridge into Hyde Parish and on to Amberwood Inclosure.

Wildlife and Recreational Use

The site abounds with wildlife including SAC species (species with the highest level of protection), yet we were told at the exhibition that “During the restoration works there will be some short-term significant effects (at the site level only) due to disturbance and potential loss on southern damselfly (which has full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act), macro-invertebrates and reptiles.” The destruction of SAC species is illegal.

The Latchmore area will lose its current biodiversity in other ways, too. Display boards at the exhibition claimed that the effects of the works on the landscape will be short term and that any vegetation cleared will re-establish, but the re-establishment of mature trees which were felled to facilitate access can hardly be described as short term, nor will the same vegetation re-establish if the land is more waterlogged after restoration.

There was no mention of stock in this exhibition, although the subsidy scheme which is funding this work - the HLS - is for farms, nor of the effects on them of raising the bed level of the stream at The Shade. It remains to be seen where the ponies and cattle that frequent the area (often over 240 head plus deer) will go for their grazing and water, this being the most significant area in the Northern Forest for the gathering of animals.

From a recreational point of view, and bearing in mind the altered appearance and nature of many of the Forest streams which have already been “restored”, it is hard to believe that – as LUC claim - all these changes “will not fundamentally affect the character of the landscape or have a negative impact on views within any of the affected areas”, quite apart from the reduced accessibility for the public in areas of waterlogging after the works. We believe that the changes are likely to be profound.

You are encouraged to comment on the exhibition and/or ask any questions using the feedback form on the HLS website

<http://www.hlsnewforest.org.uk/info/100/latchmore> ; if you live in Hyde parish, please send a copy to Hyde Parish Council by 23 October.

Friends of Latchmore

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