

Letters to the editor

We must stop the progressive destruction of Latchmore Brook

SIR, We are writing to say how pleased we are that our MP Sir Desmond Swayne has recognised the urgent need to put a stop to the devastation being caused to New Forest streams and related ecosystems by work which is set to continue very soon at Latchmore Brook.

The progressive destruction of these highly sensitive areas of extreme biological, ecological, geological and ultimately national importance, is sanctioned by the Forestry Commission itself (endorsed by other organisations who claim to be guardians of our natural heritage), and funded by the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

Work on Forest streams (referred to as the 'Wetlands Project') to date, has already caused drastic alterations to their geology, not to mention

the residual pH and temperature of what little water is left in them, if any; this, of course, has damaged ecosystems and habitat irreparably.

A multitude of presentments have been given at the Verderers' Court over several years by a number of highly informed local people, all of whom can be regarded as experts in their field - oceanographers, ornithologists, geologists, an eminent fish veterinarian, and a highly acclaimed botanic artist have been among those to have indefatigably expressed their grave concerns about the terrible environmental consequences of this continuing "project".

Their words have repeatedly fallen upon 'deaf' ears.

The 'Wetlands Project', the results of which are hideously evident at watercourses near

to Latchmore, has proved to be an absolute disaster, several streams now resembling gravel tracks, full of massive stones and other imported materials, others with broken heather bales hanging out of their banks, in complete disarray.

No fish could possibly survive in these stagnant pools, once free-flowing streams, let alone so many other forms of life which until so recently, flourished in these streams.

It is tragically too late for some of the streams, extensive damage has already been done, but every effort must be made to prevent this type of assault occurring on our wonderful Latchmore Brook, and other Forest streams which are 'on the list'.

Sir Desmond describes it very accurately as "vandalism". We sincerely hope that Sir Desmond, having realised the gravity of the situation, may

now be in a position to bring this incredibly serious problem to the attention of the new Minister for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Andrea Leadsom, with a view to halting the ongoing destruction of New Forest streams, part of our national heritage and extremely fragile and precious ecological sites.

We ask everyone who cares about these areas to act with a degree of urgency, and formally make their opinions known to Sir Desmond, in order that this catastrophic "project" can be stopped, and Latchmore Brook, and others like it, can remain unharmed and as beautiful as they always have been, otherwise, they will be lost forever.

Jon Fryer
Kate Nissen MRAC

This anomaly needs explanation

SIR, I read with interest your article in last week's edition 'Talks to get fast broadband for Forest fail to produce results'. It stated that Mr Avery, head of planning for the NFNPA, said: "Natural England also routinely seeks confirmation that no material will be imported onto the site (to avoid the establishment of any inappropriate species within the New Forest)."

This statement is somewhat at odds with what is happening in the wetland restoration projects, where many thousands of tonnes of imported materials are brought into the New Forest by the Forestry Commission with the full knowledge and consent of Natural England and dumped in pristine streams.

Indeed, in the latest planning application for Latchmore Brook, the Forestry Commission is planning to import some 97,000 tonnes of hoggins and clay.

There seems to be a conflict of interest between faster broadband, which I'm sure your readers will agree is desperately needed, and the need to spend

the HLS/EU-funded subsidy monies on wetland 'restoration'.

Yesterday I saw a 'restoration' near Burley which had a huge amount of this material imported and deposited last autumn - you do not need to be an ecologist to see the problems it is still causing in this once lovely stream.

Perhaps the national park or the Forestry Commission would like to explain this anomaly?

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