

**Press Release**

**17 September 2016**

**Review of the Wetland Restoration Programme: Update**

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have issued two statements to the press this week, that appear to be somewhat contradictory.

On Monday they said "Natural England's position on this is that neither Natural England nor the Forestry Commission are calling for, or intending to hold, an independent review of the Latchmore Brook planning proposal."

Then on Wednesday they said "Natural England and the Forestry Commission will be undertaking a joint assessment of the evidence that supports wetland restoration in the New Forest with a view to learning lessons for future projects, both locally and nationally."

Assuming that both of these are correct, one can only infer that they intend to try to push the Latchmore proposal through the planning process, before the review of the Wetland Restoration programme has been completed.

Former Blissford resident Professor John Shepherd commented

"We are delighted to have confirmation that the review will take place, but cannot understand how it can exclude the Latchmore proposal already submitted to the planning authority. It seems quite bizarre to push ahead with the Latchmore project, to which there is massive opposition, while the whole basis of the "restoration" programme is under review. We hope that the application will now be withdrawn, but if not we shall continue to campaign for the planning authorities to reject it. It is essential that the review is thorough and independent, and not just an internal whitewash by those who planned the project in the first place."