

Investigation opens into my concerns over Latchmoor

THE National Audit Office has written to let me know that they will investigate my concerns about the New Forest wetland restorations (of which Latchmoor is the largest and most controversial).

They will investigate my complaint that public expenditure rules have been circumvented; and that the way that this has been done has contributed to the questionable quality of the works.

There have been a number of reviews of the schemes, some have been highly critical whilst others have been fulsome in their praise, it turns out that one of the organisations that gave the Forestry Commission the "thumbs up" for the work on the wetland restorations

has on its board the managing director of the main contractor doing the restoration work.

I still await a response from the Minister to the submission I sent her including my belief that Natural England have broken their own rules and the Habitat Regulations by authorising the works without first carrying out the "appropriate" assessment.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have announced another review,

but it seems to me absolutely absurd, however, that they should proceed with the planning application for Latchmoor before this new review has concluded.

One can only assume that they have already made up their minds, and that they are determined to carry on as before irrespective of what this latest review may find.

The National Audit Office have indicated that they hope to give some indication on the



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progress of their investigation by November 30.

■ The discovery that one of the children admitted to the UK from the Calais Jungle turns out to be a 22-year-old student from Kabul University reinforces the lecture that the President of Afghanistan gave me, and about which I wrote in this column last week: Some of his people are bravely taking the fight to the Taliban, whilst others are giving up and running away. The UK has sent many of its own sons and daughters to fight the Taliban. I asked the Home Secretary in the Commons last week, if she would bear the President's words in mind, when deciding which priority cases are most deserving of our support.