

Forest Journal

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Tiny river's restoration bid vetoed

CONTROVERSIAL plans to restore New Forest wetlands have been refused by the national park authority.

The scheme for Latchmore Brook near Fordingbridge aimed to recreate the meanders of a stream before it was diverted by Victorian engineers.

But campaigners claim it would cause irreparable damage and put wildlife at risk, fearing that the 96,000 tonnes of gravel needed would spell "ecological disaster".

The New Forest National Park Authority planning committee refused the application by six votes to five.

The scheme was originally set for approval by national park planners but authority deputy chairman Edward Heron asked the Forestry Commission to withdraw its plans.

Bramshaw, Godshill and Hyde parish councils objected on environmental grounds.

The Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England backed the scheme.

The Forestry Commission said the decision meant the eroding stream now risked "falling into further decline".

Deputy surveyor Bruce Rothnie said: "Many people have worked hard to develop plans to restore a threatened area.

"We remain committed to delivering our wetland restoration schemes for the protection of the forest."