

'No' to Latchmore Brook approved by Whitehall

THE government has confirmed rejection of the controversial Latchmore Brook wetland restoration scheme.

The Forestry Commission's £1.5m project to turn the clock back on the watercourse between Hyde and Fritham had been referred to Whitehall by the national park authority's planning committee last Tuesday.

Members said they were minded to refuse it and within days the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) wrote back to give them the all clear to throw it out.

The refusal notice issued a few days later said: "The construction of the proposed development, in particular the large scale importation of materials and the associated traffic movements, would have an adverse and harmful impact on the residential amenities of local people as well as the wider New Forest landscape.

"These impacts, whilst relatively short term in nature, are consid-

ered to be severe enough to outweigh any longer term benefits that may accrue from the restoration of Latchmore Brook."

It added: "There is a wide divergence of views on the claimed ecological benefits of the proposed development.

"In the absence of any overriding or compelling evidence, the authority is unable to demonstrate that the proposed development would not have a harmful impact on the protected species and habitats of the New Forest SPA, SAC, SSSI and Ramsar Site."

The Latchmore Brook plan aimed to protect important habitats by raising five miles of river bed, reinstate meanders and clear vegetation with four years of works scheduled for two to three months each summer.

The Forestry Commission has six months to lodge an appeal and this week a spokesperson said it was still considering its options.