

Announcement by the Official Verderer at the Verderers' Court on 18 January 2017

LATCHMORE CATCHMENT RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT

In our November Court, I informed you that we had not been successful in gaining planning permission for our river restoration at Latchmore. At our recent HLS board meeting, we decided that we will not pursue the Latchmore project further, withdrawing from the planning process, allocating our money and staff time to less controversial projects over our 50,000 acres, the largest HLS scheme in the UK. This is a pragmatic decision which gives us the opportunity to press on with other very good HLS projects, without committing staff to a further round of the planning process and stakeholder discussions at this time.

The purpose of our HLS funding is to maintain and enhance the forest, and we will therefore now be able to increase our financial support for an even wider range of work that will improve our priceless environment and fragile ecology.

We still firmly believe that the Latchmore restoration would have greatly benefited the condition of the Forest, and we will therefore continue to monitor the erosion of the mires and deterioration of the ecology of the catchment; it would be irresponsible of us not to do so. I am much in favour of river restorations in general, and the Latchmore project in particular, and I am disappointed that it will not go ahead. However, as I have said previously, there is more to unite both sides of the argument, than to divide us: we all clearly love the New Forest, cherishing its landscape and beauty. This common ground should bind us together in the future, and I advocate that we all work together from now on to protect and improve the New Forest for future generations.