

Help me stop stream in-fill plan

Last Friday I walked a four and a half mile section of Latchmore Brook, one of four streams to the east of Fordingbridge. It flows from its headwaters adjacent to the B3078 near Bramshaw Telegraph down to the Avon.

The Forestry Commission has just submitted a planning application to fill-in and redirect the stream as part of the EU funded Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

I visited this much loved part of the Forest back in 2012 after concerns were raised about tree-felling along the stream.

Since then proposals have expanded to cover the whole catchment. This now requires a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which provides an opportunity for everyone to take part in the consultation process over the next 16 weeks.

I recommend that anyone with an interest in the Forest



By **DESMOND SWAYNE**

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should "walk the stream" to see what a wonderful place it is already.

Much of Islands Thorns Inclosure is designated "ancient and ornamental woodland" with magnificent oaks and beech trees.

It includes a remarkable section of stream, a highly protected "site of special geological conservation interest" with deposits set down over 40 million years ago. Extraordinarily, it appears that this is to be infilled too.

An intervention on such a scale along miles of stream will have major impacts on the whole catchment, and many questions will need to be addressed in the EIA before

decisions are taken which will change the existing habitats for the foreseeable future.

These must include the effect of importing thousands of tonnes of hogging and clay into the ancient stream; the impact of heavy earth moving vehicles in an environment where previous interventions have been carried out with little more than men with spades (strangely, the numerous side drains that those spades fashioned, and which prevent the trees from becoming waterlogged, are to remain); how the ancient history, including the largest concentration of Roman features in the whole of the New Forest will be preserved;

and how the existing habitats for species such as Southern Damselfly and Smooth Snake (for which I am the 'species champion') will be conserved.

Islands Thorns, Amberwood and Alderhill Inclosures eventually open on to the grassland, heath and mires down to Ogdens, which are already important habitats for a variety of species.

Ponies and cattle graze by the stream and on "The Shade" – the large area of open grassland. It is an iconic scene which draws many visitors, with easy access from the nearby car parks.

This is a truly remarkable landscape that is typical of the New Forest and which needs protecting and conserving. Vandalism is the word that comes to my mind.

I support any move to stop these proposals, there are plenty of better ways to spend the money.