

I am Dr Roger Smith, I speak for the signatories of a joint letter to Mrs Paren, namely CPRE Sussex, Sussex Wildlife Trust, South Downs Society, Brighton & Hove Friends of the Earth and Save Pondtail Wood.

Subject is the destruction of Pondtail Wood.

1. We welcome the firm stance that the South Downs National Park Authority is taking over the destruction of Pondtail Wood in Poyning, West Sussex.
2. There is CONSIDERABLE public anger about this incident and the lack of speed at which the various bodies involved took action, given that concerns were first raised in March, but NO effective action to stop the landowner was taken until May.
  - 2.1. This is UNACCEPTABLE for an area of planted ANCIENT WOODLAND within the South Downs National Park.
3. Current legislation hasn't helped in the way that it splits responsibility between so many statutory bodies and we therefore urge that the Park Authority takes the lead to safeguard this site with the utmost urgency.
  - 3.1. The public is looking to the Park Authority for strong leadership and for reassurance that it cannot happen again. We ask that once the site has been safeguarded and restoration is in hand,, the Park Authority reviews how the various bodies work together and any agreements between them.
  - 3.2. The public are rightly suspicious of any silence on the matter after authorities failed to step in when the damage was first reported and have done little to keep the public informed since then.
  - 3.3. The Park Authority is in the right place to coordinate and collate this information and to keep the public regularly up to date about what is happening.
  - 3.4. We appreciate, however, that there may be times when less can be said for legal reasons, but EQUALLY this should NOT be used as a blanket excuse for not keeping the public informed. The various authorities need to recognise the CLEAR PUBLIC interest in the FATE of Pondtail Wood.

4. We trust that these concerns will be addressed at today' meeting of the Park Authority and look forward to hearing what the Authority proposes to do to ensure that the woodland is restored, and the public kept informed.
  
5. We HOPE that through taking leadership and firm action on this issue the Park Authority can restore public trust and ultimately strengthen the protection of the National Park and of the irreplaceable Ancient Woodland within its boundaries.

Thank you in anticipation..

Dr Roger F Smith  
23 June 2016