

SAVING TOURNERBURY WOODS

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The wedding and events venue at Tournerbury Woods has operated for many years without planning consent to authorise such use. The venue is within an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), a Special Protection Area ('SPA'), a RAMSAR site and an AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and permitted development rights have not been specifically authorised by Natural England, the government's nature conservation advisor.

After a series of unsuccessful planning applications made over many years, Havant Borough Council ('HBC') granted planning consent for the use of Tournerbury Woods as a wedding and events venue in September 2023 which included a strict condition that the venue cannot be used until a new access road has been completed, which is not within the control of the owners of Tournerbury Woods, and which has not yet been completed.

Despite this strict condition, events have continued to take place.

We have been advised by specialist legal counsel that the Planning Officer's report to the HBC Planning Committee failed to take proper consideration of the Chichester Harbour Conservancy ('CHC') official plan for the harbour as they are required to do.

The CHC Harbour plan seeks to preserve the landscape and character of the harbour by reducing development, light, and noise within the AONB which includes Tournerbury Woods.

In our view HBC's Planning Officer did not spell out to the Planning Committee the detail of a 'non-prosecution' agreement which HBC concluded in May 2022 under which HBC agreed to allow the continued unauthorised use of the venue following the service of an Enforcement Notice in January 2020 requiring the owners to cease the use of the land for weddings and commercial events and to remove the marquees, decking and other paraphernalia erected without consent.

Neither, in our view, did HBC's Planning Officer report in detail on the apparent disappearance of well over 100 trees, all of which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order and which, if they fall down, cannot be removed under the terms of an agreement with Natural England. Nor did the HBC Planning Officer state clearly that HBC were the only authorised body responsible for the enforcement of Tree Preservation Orders and were

unwilling to investigate this matter despite a breach of a Tree Preservation Order being a criminal offence.

HBC's Enforcement Team have separately stated that they are not prepared to investigate the disappearance of trees and a potential breach of a Tree Preservation Order further.

The considered failure of HBC's Planning Committee to properly consider the CHC plan and other matters gave grounds for a legal challenge to HBC's planning decision in the form of a Judicial Review. The legal advice received indicated there are good grounds for an application for a Judicial Review.

The application was made in October 2023 and is now awaiting a Court ruling on the initial arguments submitted by both sides which is expected in the new year.

'Saving Tournerbury Woods' has been set up to promote the preservation of Tournerbury Woods for future generations and to support the Judicial Review.

We invite you to support the aims of Saving Tournerbury Woods and a meeting has been convened for Saturday 13th January 2024 at 2.30pm at Mengeham Rythe Sailing Club, Marine Walk, Hayling Island PO11 9PG where the matter can be further explained, and we can answer any questions you may have about our campaign.

We would like to thank you for supporting us in our efforts to protect Chichester Harbour and its environs for future generations and we look forward to seeing you at the meeting in January.

Best wishes

John Hick (Chair)

Nigel Roper (Secretary)

John Galyer (Treasurer)

Hugh Stallard (Trustee)

Jonathan Raper (Trustee)