

Somerset's Farm
Wootton Rivers
Marlborough
Wilts. SN8 4NQ

April 30th 2022

Dear Mr. Seddon,

I am writing to you regarding the proposals outlined in Kevin Stannard's paper "Savernake Forest – A Way Forward". I do so in my capacity as Chair of the Parish Council in Wootton Rivers. We are a small village about one mile west of the southernmost point of the Savernake and many of our residents walk or run in the forest on a regular basis. When they read of these proposals, they strongly disapproved of them and my points below summarise their expression of this disapproval at a recent, well-attended parish meeting on this issue.

It is important to make clear that our visits to the forest are almost entirely to its southern half, where visitors are few, the forest is tranquil and the ambience is in stark contrast with the area to the north, around the Postern Hill car park. We simply do not recognise the problems suggested in the paper, as the areas we visit experience no anti-social behaviour or vandalism and a minimal amount of litter (which people often pick up when they encounter it). We also see no evidence of Grand Avenue being used as a "rat run", as it is not a short-cut from anywhere to anywhere else and the road surface makes it unsafe (and highly uncomfortable) to travel at above 20mph. The one change from which this part of the forest would particularly benefit would be an increase in clear signage to enable us to use the forest even more responsibly e.g. "Please do not allow dogs into the ponds" or "Please do not park here – verge under repair". To close the Grand Avenue to traffic and to try to restrict pedestrians to specified, surfaced paths would not only dramatically reduce the pleasure we get from the forest, but would also be an attempt to solve problems which simply do not exist in its southern half.

We can understand the desire to improve your income from the Savernake, by charging for parking and introducing other paid-for services. However, we believe that the size of car park proposed is excessive and will create delays and dangers for us, as frequent users of the A346 into Marlborough. The access to the car park is already a dangerous one, just as the road reverts to one lane in each direction. The likelihood of queues up the hill and large numbers of vehicles exiting the site will significantly increase this danger. It is also likely that a charge for parking will result in a significant number of people parking elsewhere on the forest edge. This would cause hazards, litter and disruption on the main road and elsewhere in the forest, spreading the problems now experienced around Postern Hill to parts of the forest in which they do not currently exist.

The kind of changes proposed may well be suitable for some of your larger forests, but they are really not appropriate for the small but precious jewel that is the Savernake. You held a

consultation on your strategy for the forest, with which it was hard to disagree, but the real consultation needs to be on the implementation of this strategy and needs to include representatives of the local people who already use and treasure this place. We vigorously oppose the proposals made by Mr. Stannard but would be delighted to help, in any way we can, to produce a plan which more effectively delivers your objectives and protects this unique resource.

Yours sincerely

DEAN COWLEY

(Chair of Wootton Rivers Parish Council)