

Councillor Warren Morgan
Leader of the Council, and Chair of the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee
Brighton & Hove City Council
King's House

24 November 2016

Dear Councillor Morgan,

Brighton and Hove's downland estate is a unique legacy belonging to our city; the result of the selflessness and foresight of previous civic leaders. Our downland is a highly functional part of our immediate environment in its protection of our aquifer. It is of enormous importance for its landscape, biodiversity and heritage value.

Much of the downland estate is under national or international statutory designation for biodiversity and heritage. These designations include Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and Scheduled Monuments. There are also locally-designated sites in the form of nature reserves and local wildlife sites. In addition, significant areas of the estate have been opened to public access in perpetuity in the past few years, increasing its recreational value to our residents and visitors. While designations and rights of way cannot be changed other than by statute, their enforcement, protection and maintenance are a matter for increasingly cash-strapped public bodies. They are therefore at risk.

All Councillors have been made aware of the considerable disquiet about the ongoing programme of disposal of parcels of the downland estate, not only from a variety of conservation bodies but also members of the public. This programme of disposals was agreed to in committee meetings in July 2014 and in February 2016, as elements of papers seeking approval for the restoration and development of the Stanmer Park estate.

We recognise that Councillors from all our local political parties sat on the committees that passed these papers and had the opportunity then to oppose them. However we consider now that some details of the programme of land disposals would have benefitted from greater scrutiny.

This letter accompanies a Notice of Motion to this committee that requests work towards agreeing small changes to this council's policy and governance concerning land sales, with a view to raising the profile of sensitive disposals.

We welcome the suspension of the disposal of the two sites and the information that has been shared with conservation groups by the city council. A key request is made

separately in this letter namely that the disposal is halted of two large parcels of land whose sale remains to be finalised. The total area of these two parcels of land is 91.5 acres. We realise this will have implications for the capital resource available for council projects but consider this loss of resource to be relatively small when compared with the variation between projected sale value and achieved value in much of the rest of the programme of disposals, and therefore manageable.

We hope you will consider this request favourably.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Phelim Mac Cafferty



Councillor Ollie Sykes