

Katy Bourne
Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner
Via email pcc@sussex-pcc.gov.uk

Fiona Macleod
Clerk to Findon Parish Council
clerk@findonparishcouncil.gov.uk
28 June 2024

Dear Ms Bourne,

As you are probably already aware, there has been an ongoing incursion in Findon for the second year running. The current one is greater than 2023 with nine caravans and various vehicles still on the north verge at Nepcote Green.

The area where the incursion occurred is part of the registered Village Green – fencing was broken down to gain access and subsequently the wood has been used to make bonfires. There has been clear evidence of anti-social behaviour on Nepcote Green itself.

The travellers arrived around 7pm on Monday 17 June 2024 and are still in situ, despite WSCC issuing a Notice of Direction on the morning of 24 June 2024, following a welfare assessment.

FPC reported the incursion to Sussex Police circa 7.20pm on 17 June (incident no 1271) and has also made further reports of criminal damage. As no police action had been taken to evict the travellers, despite several site visits by our PCSO and his colleague, Sussex Police has been contacted repeatedly to progress this as a matter of urgency.

Inspector Ross Wickings responded on 27 June 2024 that Sussex Police were unable to confirm or find evidence of damage to the green area, damage to fences, and ASB activities such as defecation in adjacent areas, fire damage, and motorbike riding on Nepcote Green. He was not convinced there was sufficient evidence for the immediate removal of the travellers. Perhaps you would like to visit the location to see first hand ?

Unauthorised entry onto a Village Green is a criminal offence, damage to fencing is a criminal offence (Statutory Guidance for Police on Unauthorised Encampments a summary of available powers) This location is also part of a Conservation Area in the South Downs National Park.

In addition, Inspector Wickings informed FPC that Sussex Police have to balance the needs of the local community with the needs of the GRT community. What about the rights and needs of the law-abiding residents and visitors in the beautiful village of Findon ?

The last sentence leads me to the next point. At a Public Question Time during an FPC meeting last night, around 50 residents took part regarding the ongoing incursion, wanting to know why the travellers were still there.

It goes without saying that the presence of travellers has caused immense distress and anger to the villagers wanting to access their beautiful village green. FPC also understands that the Tesco store and a pharmacy in nearby Findon Valley have been targeted, and we are fearful that local shops (including the award winning Findon Village Stores/Post Office Queens Award for Voluntary Service Oct 2022), pubs, cafes etc could be next. In addition, the iconic Green is the location for the internationally recognised Sheep Fair in early September.

To be blunt, FPC has not yet involved the press/media. However this is now getting to the stage where we, with the support of the villagers, feel we have no alternative but to highlight the lack of action.

FPC has now requested WSCC progress the issue of a Court Order to evict the travellers.

FPC and Findon residents would welcome your intervention and I look forward to your response as soon as possible.

Cc Andrew Griffith, Peter Bottomley, WSCC Cllr Urquhart, ADC Cllr Bicknell, Tim Slaney, Interim CEO SDNPA

FPC and Community web sites