



A statement regarding Willow Wood.

In 2018 we purchased fields and woodland in the Saltwood area, including Willow Wood. We were keen to make sure that all woodland and other land is managed to the best of our abilities so, we decided to contact the Forestry Commission for advice on how best to do so. Following a visit from a Forestry Commission representative, they gave us the advice that the woodland had previously been coppiced but, had not been done so for several decades. They advised that the best course of action, in the interests of the future health of the woodland, would be to resume the practice of coppicing. On 21st May 2019 they issued a licence to do so.

While it would have been quicker to have used forestry clearing machinery, we decided that in the best interests of the woodland we would try to minimise the amount of people and machinery used for the coppicing process.

In November 2019, a qualified and experienced professional began coppicing the woodland. Due to the extreme wet weather that occurred at the beginning of the year, the coppiced wood was not able to begin being stacked and cleared until March 2020.

On 14th May 2020, Folkestone & Hythe Council issued a stop notice on the basis that it was believed the coppicing licence had been breached. An emergency Tree Preservation Order had been placed on the entire woodland, to be maintained only until the Forestry Commission had completed an investigation. On 20th May 2020, a Woodland Officer from the Forestry Commission arrived at Willow Wood to investigate the claim of the licence being breached. The result of his investigation can be viewed in the picture attached.

In the meantime, it has come to our attention that there have been a number of comments about Willow Wood on Social Media platforms, inciting wrongdoing on our part. While we appreciate that the coppicing can look extreme and that some members of the community have genuine concern for the woodland, there appear to be individuals who are both spreading misinformation and making unfounded accusations. It is disappointing to read such comments, which have caused upset to family members. It has never been our intention to develop on Willow Wood, not any flats, houses, or any other form of development. We are a family business based in the area and we only wish to enhance the area, not spoil it.

Regarding the future of Willow Wood, we have decided that in the best interests of the health of the woodland, the area will be fenced off from the public footpath. This is mainly due to the alarming amount of glass and other litter that has been found in the woodland, which has both negative effects on the wildlife and has the potential to cause harm to members of the public. Decreasing the footfall through the woodland will also allow the regeneration to take place undisturbed.

John Jones

Managing Director