

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE (TANDRIDGE)



DATE: 23 March 2016

SUBJECT: PETITION – Closure of St Silvan's Car Park, Staffhurst wood

DIVISION: OXTED

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

To consider a petition containing 32 signatures – by Mrs Donna Carman
A further 462 signatures have been collected through the online petition site 38 degrees.

'We the undersigned ask Surrey County Council to not to close "St Silvan's" car park NOT even seasonally.

Please help keep this valuable facility open. This car park enables people with children and dogs etc to be able to disembark from their vehicles safely away from moving traffic on the highway. Staffhurst wood is a very popular woods with locals and with visitors from further afield. Offering it's natural beauty all year round (not just bluebell season) it is perfect for walkers, families, runners and dog walkers alike. The woods also have a lot of history as in the war it hid Canadian air men as there was an ammunitions factory in Hurst Green. Although there is another car park, it is the other side of the woods and feels a little bit too remote. Parking in this car park is also made more difficult by the trees growing in the middle of the parking area.

The closure of this car park according to Surrey Wildlife Trust is due to the maintenance and up keep costs. Please help keep this car park open and everyone still able to enjoy our great British woodland in safety.

RESPONSE:

Seasonal closure of car park: A closure of St Sylvan's car park at Staffhurst Wood was implemented in February 2016. The closure was proposed to be a seasonal one, and the car park was re-opened on 14 March in anticipation of the increased visitor numbers traditionally experienced at the site during the spring bluebell flowering time.

Background: Staffhurst Wood, Limpsfield is owned by Surrey County Council (SCC) and forms part of its Countryside Estate. Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) manages the Estate, including its car parks, under an Agreement for Services for which we receive a grant from SCC.

With significant reductions in that overall grant SWT agreed a savings plan with SCC in 2014. This was included as an annex to a report to SCC Cabinet on 16 December 2014.

One component of that plan has been to close some of the smaller car parks on the Estate where there are alternative car parks nearby. This is the case at Staffhurst Wood where the two car parks are approximately 700 metres apart.

The cost of managing and maintaining a small car park on the SCC Countryside Estate is typically around £1000 per annum. Costs are incurred from litter picking, periodic clearance of fly tip and repairs following vandalism. Longer term costs will be incurred from surfacing repairs, tree works and replacement of signage.

Local concerns: SWT is very aware of local concerns about the seasonal closure of the car park. On 2 March 2016 SWT met representatives of the online petition to listen to those concerns and explore potential alternative options for funding upkeep of the car park.

Following that meeting SWT has written to Limpsfield Parish Council to enquire if the Parish would be willing to contribute to upkeep costs.

SWT understands that some individuals have expressed a willingness to contribute financially to maintain the car park. We are grateful for these offers and are interested in the viability of a donation scheme that could underpin maintenance of the car park. Exploration of this option is ongoing and the car park will remain open for the time being pending identification of an alternative funding solution.

Contact Officer:

Rod Edbrooke, Countryside Partnerships Team Leader, Surrey County Council
