

23 January 2020

Brighton & Hove City Council

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of depositions from members of the public. Each deposition may be heard for a maximum of five minutes.

1. Hollingbury Park Golf Course



EXTINCTION REBELLION BRIGHTON



My name is Paul Wiseman. I'm in the interesting position of being a golfer who plays regularly at Hollingbury, a member of Extinction Rebellion Brighton and a Brighton Council tax payee. I come here today wearing all three hats. As part of the golfing community I understand the physical, social and mental health benefits of a round of golf. As a member of XR, I've all too good an understanding of the threat posed to our planet by the disregard with which humans have treated it over the past 200 years. With a million species worldwide at risk of extinction and temperatures predicted to reach 3-5⁰C by the end of the century, our children face a bleak future.ⁱ **And as a resident of this city, I urge my hard-pressed Council to do the right thing – for all our sakes.**

Climate disaster isn't just far away in distant lands, but here, right now – on our Brighton and Hove doorsteps, quite literally! With polar ice caps melting at an alarming rate and the sea levels rising, it's likely that, if temperatures are allowed to rise more than 1.5⁰C above pre-industrial levels, parts of Brighton and Hove will be permanently under water, in only a few decades.ⁱⁱ

Extinction Rebellion's petition, which closed last week with over 5,000 signatures, along with the two golf course petitions, total nearly 9,000 people who care about the deeply about the future of our precious Downland, the future of our children and the future of our planet. We've no doubt that this Council cares too. But things are too rushed. The timescales do not make sense. And following this council's unanimous Climate and Biodiversity declaration in 2018, there's still no Climate Plan in place. We understand this is in hand, but surely it's crazy for decisions, which span a quarter of a century, to be made before such a plan is in place? We ask that the Climate Plan's contents be applied retrospectively to any business decisions made now, that the Green Councillors' amendments 1 (passed) & 2 (rejected) regarding the Waterhall site, be applied to Hollingbury Golf Courseⁱⁱⁱ and that the Council's legal 'Biodiversity Duty' be addressed.^{iv} Our detailed demands and further explanations are included in supplementary comments to this speech.

In addition, we have the following concerns:

1. No ecologist has been formally giving advice to the council, and the councillors voting on its future are lay people. Why is BHCC not seeking appropriate and ongoing expert advice?
2. Mary Mears' comments at last week's TECC committee were spot on – there has been too much of a rush to get these desperately important deals done;
3. From what we can gather, a 25-year lease is being proposed with no in-built checking process to ensure that Climate and Biodiversity goals are set and maintained, and

4. There's no proposed 'trial period' of say 1-3 years to allow the ending of a tenancy which turns out to be unsuitable in achieving Climate and Biodiversity Emergency targets.

Though golf is a key activity, we feel that evaluation process should be broadened to address the ecological issues and the Climate Crisis, and the community activities that take place on and around the golf course. Let's break out of 'business as usual' and seize an opportunity to improve recreational opportunities in this part of the National Park. Let's save the last remaining vestiges of ancient chalk grassland, on and around the hill fort, from extinction, and let's be mindful of any activity on this significant archaeological site. With all my three hats on, I know everyone agrees that 'mothballing' the site ***must not*** happen – this will lead to a costly dereliction of the golf club infrastructure, degradation of the already-threatened features of ecological value, and will contribute little or nothing to climate action. *Please be clear, XR Brighton are not in any way opposed to golf continuing on the site.* We believe that some reconfiguration of the golf course could allow it to continue functioning, whilst addressing the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, and while better serving the needs of the local community (e.g. through community orchards/ food growing projects). This scenario would help create a 'win-win' situation, securing the future of the site for golf, while creating a large enough area around the hill fort for appropriate management of the local chalk ecosystem (and safeguarding the rare chalk habitat), promoting public access to the site, and supporting local community projects. *Our forward-thinking city must be at the forefront, taking brave steps to create positive change. If we don't who will?*

We hope that this committee can unite, as we have, to go beyond politics - to do the right thing for our golfers, our environment, the future of our city and the future of our planet.

Thank you.

Paul Wiseman - Representing Extinction Rebellion Brighton (Brighton resident and a father of two)



EXTINCTION REBELLION BRIGHTON

ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO WANT TO ENSURE A WORLD FIT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME



Further considerations supporting our deputation, and references as endnotes

With regard to the plans for the proposed lease at Hollingbury Golf Course, Extinction Rebellion Brighton urge BHCC to consider:

- FIRST - A 'trial period' of 1-3 years for any tenancy, whilst continuing with golf usage, to permit a 'pause' to consult properly on the future of the site in the light of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and to protect its sensitive features and community value.
- SECOND - Consult fully and publicly with the Brighton and Downs community in the context of a 'Whole BHCC Estate Plan';
- THIRD - Assess with an open and transparent audit;
- FOURTH - Relevant two parts of the Green councillors' amendments proposed at the TECC meeting 16.01.20 in relation to the Waterhall site (see below for supporting information) must be applied to HPGC as well.^v
- FIFTH - If current bidders cannot provide an acceptable plan to take over the site on the 1 April 2020, then clearly this must go out to tender again, but BHCC find some way to prevent a costly dereliction of the site through mothballing through some form of continuing/ temporary usage. Please consult with the golf club, its members, Extinction Rebellion Brighton and other stakeholders and to how we can help avoid this.
- SIXTH – Build in regular monitoring of new tenants against accepted and agreed ecological standards, and;
- SEVENTH – Oversee with eco-progress supervised regularly by an independent trustee board.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ World Meteorological Organization. (2020). *WMO climate statement: past 4 years warmest on record.*; <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/wmo-climate-statement-past-4-years-warmest-record> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2020].

ⁱⁱ Castle, V. (2020). *Terrifying new climate forecast shows parts of Sussex will be underwater by 2050.*; <https://www.kentlive.news/news/sussex-news/terrifying-new-climate-forecast-shows-3528159> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2020].

ⁱⁱⁱ Green councillors' amendments proposed at meeting TECC committee on 16.01.20:

1. Requests a report on the progress of the rewilding is brought to the TECC committee once a year, and asks the officers engaged with such a tenant to request detail on the following:
 - Use of pesticides and herbicides
 - Public access plans
 - Any increase in diverse habitats and species
 - Engagement with local communities
 - Any environmental audit or similar.
2. Recommends to the tenant that they use sustainable materials for any renovation of the buildings and implement environmentally friendly solutions such as solar panels, air-to-air heating and rain-water harvesting.

Present.brighton-hove.gov.uk. (2020).; <https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/g9876/Decisions%2016th-Jan-2020%2016.00%20Tourism%20Equalities%20Communities%20Culture%20Committee.pdf?T=2> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2020].

^{iv} According to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006:

'As a public authority in England you have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your policy or decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.'

This is a formal requirement.

GOV.UK. (2020). *Biodiversity duty: public authority duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity.*

[online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2020].; GOV.UK. (2020). *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services;*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2020].

^v Ibid.

Spokesperson – Paul Wiseman

Members of the deputation:

Claudia Fisher

Ben Benatt

Claire Debenham

Leanne Casey

Caroline Gorton

