

From: John Purcell
Sent: 04 February 2021 12:47
To: Hilary Saunders
Cc: Joel Smith
Subject: Cloughton Woods

Dear Hilary

In view of the postponement of the proposed planning committee meeting, I wanted to provide some commentary as I feel that there are some misunderstandings about what we propose and we have found challenges conveying how much we care about Cloughton Woods and its surroundings, which I very much regret. To that end, I will try to respond to the concerns that have been expressed particularly by the Parish Council. I won't cover every point as this would become an overly long opus, but will try to allay concerns where I can.

Firstly, it is very important to stress that we hope to be able to invest about £3million in this part of North Yorkshire. The amount is significant to us, and we will do everything we can to preserve that investment; we are committed to investing in the site to ensure a long term successful leisure destination.

We plan to have a family orientated woodland lodge park, we want families to come and enjoy the N York Moors, using us as a base. We don't want hen and stag nights, we don't want anything that would create a bad reputation and put off our target audience. Our advertising and booking site would actively encourage a family and child friendly holiday destination and not one suitable for Hen/Stag parties

One of the reasons for the larger units is that families of more than 4 people often find it hard to find places to stay that can accommodate them. If you are 5 or 6, and want to travel with grandparents, or kid's friends, it can be hard to find larger units. These units will make that much easier for those people. There is an increasing demand for family units to spend time together beyond immediate family units.

Finally on this point, we don't plan to price the accommodation at the level that would appeal to the hen or stag party type of visitor; we plan to have a high quality location which will attract families and holiday makers that will spend in the local economy and respect the environment they are visiting. I suspect a tented destination would prove more appealing to the stag and hen market.

As a general point, which I will go into in greater depth, I feel that one of the concerns of the Parish Council is that we aren't taking their concerns seriously; nothing could be further from the truth, but I accept that we haven't been able to have a two-way dialogue, which might have alleviated many concerns. However, we have answered queries with the NYMNP as they have arisen and worked proactively to ensure we meet any planning requirements and future conditions.

We want to create a genuinely wonderful place for people to visit. The previous planning consents on the site for wood/canvas safari tents and potash workers accommodation both had conditions attached which had to be met before the project could start. We fully expect the same level of appropriate conditions to be applied to any consent we might receive, and we will engage fully in meeting those conditions, and I would hope in exceeding them. Unless we create something memorable, our venture will fail.

We have taken the view, perhaps erroneously, that where this sort of detail needs to be agreed prior to commencement of works, that is the correct forum to agree those sorts of detail, not at the planning application stage. With hindsight I accept this may have been a mistake it is not our intention to cause concern and we are eager to work proactively.

We are very conscious of light pollution, and also that some visitors will come for the beauty of the night skies. We fully intend to have the lowest level lighting possible to protect the environment and help people enjoy that experience. Similarly on wildlife, trees, wildflowers, bio-diversity we fully embrace the beauty of Cloughton Woods. We

are discussing with Tillhill what will grow (and what will thrive) and we are very aware of the value of husbandry and working with nature, not fighting it. Moreover, Tillhill work with Mark Antcliff on a weekly basis and we are confident that we will agree to a very attractive and sustainable solution with him and Elspeth Ingleby. Our intention is to go above and beyond, we aren't aiming "to get away" with the "minimum possible" as feared, we are trying to tread as lightly as we can and will work hard to achieve that.

There seems to be some confusion over what we own. With regard to the highways, we are only suggesting solutions that use land that we own, and these solutions have been agreed in principle with the Highways department. The legal framework for the works will have to be finalised, as a condition of any planning consent in the usual way. With regard to footpaths, Mark Fenwick, our local representative, spoke informally to Alan Morley who we believe owns the Bryherstones Country Inn and the Holiday Cottages; the idea being that to link our lodges with the Inn, the cottages and the Farm shop would be a good thing. This would improve the pedestrian route to Cloughton Newlands over land which we believe they own. We thought this initiative had been agreed in principle, and at no stage did we mean to make false representations. We are now not clear if this has been agreed. We would never purport to make use of anyone else's land without their clear agreement and will not do so.

If it can be agreed we think that would be a good thing and would benefit the Bryherstones Country Inn and the local economy. If it can't be agreed, the footpath to Cloughton itself, will enable visitors to walk into Cloughton, which will reduce the options for pedestrian access, but not extinguish them. We do not propose that cyclists should use footpaths ever; footpaths are for walkers only. We do not intend to do any levelling or resurfacing of farm tracks. Like every other visitor to North Yorkshire our visitors will be able to drive to all the attractions in the area.

Similarly, there is no intention to give access to our guests to other landowner's land. If one of the arrows crossed over a boundary, this was not the intention. Nobody will be encouraged, or pointed in the direction of trespassing in any way. We own additional land to the North of the planning application and the design and access statement showed that visitors might want to walk north. In view of the Heritage concerns, we will not open up any footpaths that run north. There are forestry tracks which will remain for forestry purposes but they will not be improved to make them appealing to walkers.

We have been very conscious of the heritage issue from the beginning and had taken the view that the best thing to do was to leave well alone, undisturbed and buried. In the light of the concerns raised, we have engaged a heritage consultant who have produced their report and we are happy to follow their recommendations and to work with the NYMNP's Mr Mason to ensure that no damage is caused to any remains during the proposed works. We embrace our responsibilities in this regard, and still maintain that the best solution is to leave well alone.

I have a field of wildflowers at home, which people have very flatteringly tried to copy; again whilst SS&A's picture of a wildflowers might have been generic, we will only aim to encourage local flora that will naturally thrive in the soil and climatic conditions. Anything else would be a fool's errand and a complete waste of money. I don't believe that a specific "wild flowers condition" would be necessary, local wild plants will take hold and be encouraged and will be agreed with Mr Antcliff and Elspeth Ingleby as appropriate.

There seems to be some confusion about staffing at night. We propose that there will be one member of staff present at night, which is why there is accommodation for that member to overnight in the reception building. This is not a permanent residential unit, it is operational and we assume it would be conditioned accordingly. They will be there to deal with any issue that might arise; in the usual way.

Disabled access. Yes there will be disabled provision, but we have to find the most accessible units and will then design them accordingly. The previous location was ideal, but as a result of the reduced number of units, we removed these cabins as they all shared the same drainage run, and it is better to remove a whole run, rather than keep 4 drainage runs serving fewer units, as that would mean more ground disturbance than is necessary and would also mean one less septic tank.

In conclusion, I think there has been some misunderstanding of what we are proposing. This is a beautiful wood which has extant planning consent for leisure purposes. The Parish council's objection to the consented scheme was on highways grounds. We have engaged Arup, one of the pre-eminent consulting engineers in the country, to provide a compliant and safe proposal, which has now been agreed with the Highways department, and only needs formalising into a legal document. I hope I have laid to rest the concerns I could deal with today; I genuinely believe that we will be excellent custodians of the woods, I also believe our proposal will be much better for the woods and the local

community and better than safari tents which will attract a different clientele. Finally, we are not ignoring the Parish Council, I hope we have responded through the NYMNP to those concerns and we will continue to engage where possible.

Yours sincerely

John Purcell