



**Appendix A to the Downs meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018.**

**Pages 1 – 4:** Mainly introduction and quotes from 2010 Management Plan.

**Page 5:** We agree with the analysis in para beginning *'From on site observations..'* which supports our view of future thinning and the lack of active management in the past 50 years.

Next para: *'The more open structure of the woodland would have supported greater biodiversity'* this has been commented after the telecom clearance.

**Page 6:** Mostly from Management Plan.

**Page 7:** 4<sup>th</sup> bullet point – *'middle aged trees should be thinned....'* agreed, thinning has been discussed with the Forestry Commission. Similarly, 6<sup>th</sup> bullet point – *'weak trees and those in poor condition to be removed.'* Also the last bullet point.

7<sup>th</sup> bullet point – *'deadwood ..... should be assessed based on condition..'* agreed, this happened with the recent works, works were only on those close to paths/neighbours, (mindful of Cavanagh v Witley Parish Council).

**Page 8:** Line under photographs – *'is marked for presumed felling.'* This is incorrect, the trees are marked for monitoring (see Downs Committee minutes 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017), due to their observed lack of foliage in summer 2017.

Last para is noted, this is why the trees are being monitored.

**Page 9:** *'Glade cleared for mobile phone signal'* – It is not just mobile signal. Telecom work was at Telecom request (ie not 'asset stripping' - top of page 20), Parish Council considered the reduction of the tops of the trees would leave poles without crowns that would lead to epicormic growth, so clearing of area was preferred (also avoided similar work requirement in near future). Area cleared approx. 0.1 hectares (10x100m) or 0.25 acres (0.7% of Eastern Downs). Works carried out by large national contractors (Ground Control) who were responsible for acting in accordance with relevant legislation concerning tree felling and wildlife.

The Parish Council stated that some trees thinned from Jubilee Wood would be replanted in the telecom clearing. Since the clearing it has been suggested that this has been beneficial to biodiversity, and new planting may not be necessary, but the Council feels obliged to carry out the planting as intended. 5 oak trees were planted in January, and other stumps are reshooting.

**Page 12:** *'Oak tree has been felled for no apparent reason'* It is understood that the tree was dead – contractors report to verify.

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2<sup>nd</sup> para – *‘track has become rutted....’* Works were undertaken by contractors in December, but due to the very wet weather and its effect on ground conditions (Somme reference page 15) the works had to be halted and continued in January (stopped again due to weather). Cllr Hartley was in attendance during the works to ensure they were in accord with the Downs Committee decision, although he had to spend extra time dealing with an individual ignoring the safety cordon. Cllrs Haines and Jones also attended during the works. The temporary track will be closed at each end to allow vegetation to regenerate.

*‘10 Mature hawthorn pollarded’* This tree was unfortunately damaged during the works, and was pollarded in an attempt to save it.

**Page 15:** *‘temporary buildings’* – they are effectively permanent.

*‘Stifling boundary trees and shrubs’* – there are none there, the dead hedge was created to provide security to the neighbouring property.

A few years ago some of our trees fell on to a similar building on a neighbouring property.

**Page 20:** *‘Tree survey by the author 19<sup>th</sup> January...’* The storm damage was inspected by Cllrs A Hartley and Haines on 12<sup>th</sup> January, several trees were seen to be damaged and requiring attention, although none of these were near to main paths.

Conclusions:

*‘The work carried out is not considered to be consistent with good conservation management.’* The works were carried out for telecom requirements and public safety.

2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point – We are applying for a thinning license. It is not known how practical the community sale suggestion would be.

3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point – No further work is currently scheduled, the marked trees are being monitored. This information was available online in the Downs Committee minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

4<sup>th</sup> bullet point – Subjective comments *‘serious’ ‘health and safety card’* and *‘over-zealous’* are easy comments to make for someone not having responsibility for public safety in the Downs.

6<sup>th</sup> bullet point – Parish Council website, the following details were available:

The Downs Committee meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2017 which looked at the issue of trees needing attention, minute 1 refers:

**1. Trees needing attention**

*Members inspected a tree that had fallen into a neighbouring field, and needs to be removed. Members also inspected trees that abut another neighbouring property and spoke to the landowner. It was agreed that works need to occur to fell the ash tree that had previously been pruned and had recently lost a limb, as well as an overhanging hazel.*

*The tree that had fallen across a path (reported by a member of the public at the last Parish council meeting) was identified, and work to clear the path will occur in the next few months, but it was not deemed to be urgent as both limbs are on the ground and hence safe from further falling.*

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*Members also noted a number of dead trees that need to be marked prior to the autumn. Felling of dead trees close to the main public routes will be planned in the coming months. Following a risk assessment and for our Insurance purposes it is deemed necessary that these trees be removed for safety reasons. It was observed that a number of larch trees in the former plantation area towards the south of the Downs were in a particularly bad state.*

The following meeting of the Downs Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017 received an update:

**2. Trees identified for monitoring**

*Cllr A Hartley had recently met on site with representatives from the Forestry Commission. They inspected trees on the Downs and there were concerns about the lack of foliage on some trees. Following the meeting, trees that were of particular concern were marked in order that they can be monitored in the coming months.*

*The Forestry Commission is able to provide grants to manage woodlands where there are particular problems (eg ash dieback).*

*Some of the trees that had lost foliage are near to paths, and some works may be necessary in the near future where there is considered to be a risk to members of the public.*

Councillors are aware that our website did not get the level of upgrade that had been hoped for in the months following the 2015 election. There is a capacity issue which could be overcome by increased expenditure, and Councillors are asked to give this consideration.

The other conclusion bullet points have already been considered in this response.

**Page 21:** The recommendations and the rest of the report can be considered when the Management Plan is updated.

Mike Haines  
Chairman, Downs Committee