



To: All Councillors of Tendring District Council
From: John Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Essex Wildlife Trust

14 March 2014

Dear Councillor

I am writing on behalf of Essex Wildlife Trust, as I understand that you will deal with a petition at your full Council meeting on 25 March 2014 which is signed by people who have concerns about Tendring District Council (the Council) entering in to a lease with Essex Wildlife Trust (the Trust) for land at the Naze. The Trust of course respects the right of people to petition and respects that you have a policy in the Council for considering petitions.

The Trust is very concerned that this petition is misleading. I write to summarise some of the key points so that you have a clear picture from the Trust.

Essex Wildlife Trust has been involved at the Naze for many years and has looked after the John Weston reserve, a small part of the Naze, since 1967. The Trust is not a newcomer to the Naze and has always been concerned for its future. The fact that we have looked after the nature reserve does not mean that we want all the Naze to be only for nature – we understand it is a place to picnic, walk the dog, relax, meet friends, fly your kite and much more as well as being good for wildlife. We recognise that the Naze engenders huge civic pride. Indeed this broad approach is very much part of the Wildlife Trusts vision of Living Landscapes where nature flourishes because it is an important part of local people's lives and is not just 'preserved on the nature reserve'.

In 2006 the Trust joined with many other local organisations to form The Naze Heritage Project and together we agreed two main aims:

1. To construct the Crag Walk which provides an educational walkway and protects the future of The Naze Tower (which would otherwise fall into the sea).
2. To improve the practical management of the Naze and improve the facilities and information for local people and visitors.

Together we raised £1.2m and delivered our first aim to construct the Crag Walk. We then set about our second aim because we all believed the Naze deserved better facilities and information for its visitors.

One part of improving the facilities has always been to provide an Education and Visitor Centre which includes observation and education rooms as well as new toilets (accessible from the outside when the centre is closed and suitable for all abilities which the current facilities are not). The Trust would fundraise for the centre, construct it and then open it 363 days each year running it with staff and volunteers – similar to what we do at many other Essex locations.

To be able to deliver these facilities the Trust would need:

- Planning permission – this has been granted for a low level building which complements the Tower and has the support of English Heritage and the Naze Heritage Project.

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- Funding for the building of approx. £1.2m – which has been found thanks to the Big Lottery Coastal Communities Fund recent announcement and thanks to other donors.
- A Lease Agreement from the landowner which is the Council – the details of the lease are still being discussed between the Trust and the Council.

Improving information at the Naze involves the Trust working with the other organisations to provide good information for local people and visitors about the outstanding wildlife, fossils, geology, coastal processes and history that are so special at the Naze. The Trust's purpose is to help look after this outstanding interest of national importance and we believe this will benefit the whole of the Walton Community. The Naze is an important destination for visitors. Improved facilities, including the Education and Visitor Centre, will mean that visitors will be keen to return, not just in high summer, but in spring, autumn and winter – even when the weather is poor. The Naze can be one of the destinations which helps support Walton and the District of Tendring. It is estimated that the Centre will sustain 17 local jobs and help support many local businesses. The Trust has a lot of experience in running visitor centres and providing excellent information and activities for all ages.

The petition has raised several concerns and I and my staff have had many phone calls, letters and conversations about these and therefore, on behalf of Essex Wildlife Trust, I write to guarantee that, should a lease be provided by the Council:

- Essex Wildlife Trust will not and does not want to change public access to the Naze.
- Essex Wildlife Trust does not have any intention nor agreement to restrict people visiting the Naze with dogs, either on or off the lead. The Trust does support responsible dog ownership, as do the Naze Byelaws, and the Trust will ask dog owners to keep their dogs under control and ask dog owners to clean up after their dogs. Dogs are not normally allowed actually inside our centres but we provide dog hitch points and water immediately outside. We recognise that responsible dog owners have a great interest in the countryside and many are Trust members.
- Local people and visitors will have free access to the Education and Visitor Centre each day it is open. The Trust is a charity and does request donations and there will be items for sale but there will be no charge for entering the centre – although the Council will retain its charge for the car park.
- There will be many opportunities for local volunteers to get involved in the centre and out on the Naze. We run our centres with a small number of staff working alongside lots of volunteers – we already have volunteers wanting to get started.

I can assure you that the Trust's involvement is to assist with practical management of the Naze to help retain its special interest and to provide good information and good facilities for local people and visitors which we believe the Naze deserves. It is a unique destination and Essex Wildlife Trust and The Naze Heritage Project believe we can help sustain its special interest and add support to the local community of Walton and throughout Tendring.

Yours sincerely



John Hall
Chief Executive Officer