

Emilio Pimentel-Reid

Chair Friends of the High Common

Statement B&NES Cabinet Meeting

11 February 2021

STARTS

Hello I'm Emilio Pimentel-Reid . In normal times I enjoy visiting our welcoming local park up to 3x times a day for my health and well-being.

I am also the Chair of the 'Friends of the High Common' a stakeholders group started in January 2019 and ask the cabinet to reject this bid.

For those who aren't yet members, **The Friends of the High Common (RVP)** was set up to protect our welcoming and inclusive local green space for all those who use it regularly including golfers, dog owners, nordic walkers, children, the elderly, allotment holders and others in our community.

Our aim is to maintain the happy coexistence which has been in place for decades and to ensure the park is responsibly managed and not threatened by inappropriate activities which could disturb this balance.

We have been trying to engage constructively with the council for two years and for the last 18 months the council has just stopped listening to us or engaging positively with the local community.

Given that I and other residents have been trying to discuss our concerns with the council, this attempt at a fait accompli appears to be a deliberate effort by B&NES to impose a decision which they know local residents will not agree with.

- We met with Paul Crossley in July 2019 to express our concerns about the future of the park.
- We also held at least two further meetings in 2019 with Senior B&NES council officials Mandy Bishop, Marc Higgins and others to seek to explain to them how the park is actually used by residents. We offered to engage constructively with the council to ensure all stakeholders were considered in future decisions.
- The council is well aware of resident's strong attachment and love of the park which makes their current actions in refusing to consult even more extraordinary.
- It appears to me that the council have deliberately sought to not engage. This is a shocking way for any council to behave.

As a group we understand the council would like to encourage more people to use the High Common -but unlike Entry Hill they somehow don't bother to ask us how we would like to use the park. This doesn't make sense.

1. Golfers who are members of the park community are about to be chucked off the Approach golf course after 60 years. Most people would regard a golf course being replaced by something other than a golf course as a material change of use.
2. This is a very bad time to seek best value on the Approach Golf Course in the middle of a pandemic. The council is unlikely to be getting the best response when the outdoor leisure sector is so depressed. This appears to be a fire sale.
3. Even our local councillors now understand this bid must be rejected and have followed our campaign not to accept this bid.

At this Point-

1. The rational, sensitive thing to do when there is a major decision affecting so directly the lives of local residents in the middle of the pandemic is to pause.
2. As stakeholders we would like to see a delay in the decision process to allow for public consultation so that local residents' views and concerns can be properly taken into account before any final decision is made.

Thank you for your time and for voting against the bid.

ENDS