



Founding Statement

National Campaign for Local Nature Reserves

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Photos are available from the website (*formats other than jpg are available on request*)

Keith Richards supports a campaign to make Natural England's Local Nature Reserves, green spaces, a statutory requirement in development plans.

His neighbour, Peter Dawson, leads the campaign which he says was triggered by efforts to protect two sites of Conservation Importance bordering Redlands Lane in the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Redlands woodland is part of only 0.34% left in the Manhood Peninsula. Owned by a developer, a campaign resulted in the Council making a statutory Woodland Order giving it, and its bats, legal protection, Keith now owns it.

Redlands Meadow, 9.5 acres, was identified as over grazed unimproved grassland, wild/lower rich and rare. Managing for Conservation isn't financially viable, 97% lost nationally through development, cultivation and chemical treatment, my other neighbour and I rented and managed it as a traditional hay meadow, the rarest type not found elsewhere in N W Europe. After 17 years restoration the number and diversity of wild/lowers increased and the County Council designated it a Site of Nature Conservation Importance {SNCI}.

SNCI is non-statutory, despite the SNCI, in the AONB and rare, no one has the powers to stop its cultivation or chemical treatment and loss of wild/lowers to people and wildlife - bees, green-winged orchids. Its only protection is an owner who can afford and is committed to conservation.

The committed owner accepted our offer to purchase and protect it but died before completion. The new owner lives remote from it, will only rent it on an annual basis. Agricultural land increased in value 200% in 10 years and is free of inheritance tax. A safe, long term investment for non- agricultural investors, most will manage the land for financial return, not conservation.

What is more English Heritage 'listed' Keith and my house as of special interest giving permanent protection. It was mandatory, no prior consultation or right of appeal.

I hazel coppice in a Site of Special Scientific Interest {SSSI} selected by Natural England. The owner is given 4 months to object, then Natural England decides whether to withdraw or confirm. If confirmed the SSSI/ is mandatory.

Natural England advised that Redlands meadow seemed to qualify for the statutory designation, Local Nature Reserve (LNR). They assist the local authority in the designation process but, firstly, the authority has to own, lease or have a reserve agreement before the LNR can be established.

Some houses and sites of special interest can, rightly, be mandatorily designated and permanently protected. SNCI's are only protected during the lifetime of a committed owner; LNR's are limited in number by land ownership.

The LNR guidelines and land ownership limitations caused me to look at the issue beyond SNCI's.

3.7 million population increase in 10 years will continue until controversial, tough controls are introduced. Housing and infrastructure will take thousands of acres of countryside, including green belt. Wildlife and visually attractive habitat will be lost to increased food and energy demand. Peoples basic needs will be met whatever it takes and whatever government. Within this unstoppable spread of tightly packed houses in towns and cities protected green spaces are a basic need.

Natural England advises government how to best ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for future generations. Their LNR guidelines, based on 1996 research, recommend that in towns and cities there should be 2.5 acres of accessible green space per thousand population, at least 50 acres within 2 km of home, 250 acres within 5 km, 1250 acres within 10 km, this the long term aim.

Recommendation will not ensure the basic level of green space required is met; it has to be specific and enforceable.

A statutory requirement that green spaces are included in the local development plan.

Provision for the compulsory purchase of land selected for LNR's funded by a levy per acre of land lost to people and wildlife for development.

We seek your support at www.witterings.co.uk and to lobby your MP to commit to LNR, green space, legislation now so that, if it is not or cannot by reason of time be made before the 2015 general election, the position of each party is known when voting.

As Natural England says, 'sustainable development for future generations'.

Peter Dawson
Redlands Lane