

19 June 2021

Dear Cllr Clewer

### **Mass incursion on the Ridgeway in advance of the Summer Solstice 2021**

We want to express our concern that at the time of writing (18h00 on 19 June) more than 270 vehicles are trespassing on land adjacent to the right of way on the Ridgeway. We expect attendance to grow. A poster has been found at Stonehenge advertising a 'Summer Solstice Free Festival' on the Ridgeway featuring Cam Cole and other performers. This suggests that the celebration of solstice by pagans, druids, and others at Avebury is morphing into a 'rave' for all and sundry on the Ridgeway.

Events on the Ridgeway annually cause a considerable noise nuisance, create a health hazard in the absence of sanitation, and result in complaints from parishioners.

You will know that a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order is in force on the Ridgeway northwards from close to its junction with AVE5 where there is a locked gate. This protects that part of the Ridgeway. By contrast the gate onto the Ridgeway from Overton Hill car park is open. Thus there is free access to AVE5 and to the scheduled monuments alongside. Minimal signage advising only that the byway is closed "except for access" must certainly encourage would-be campers to proceed. Tents have been pitched on the Ridgeway and AVE5 and there are signs that camp fires have been lit. Some vehicles have been present for over a week. Their presence discourages or prevents walkers who regularly use the Ridgeway for their daily exercise. In places the surface of the land has been churned up, thereby exacerbating the annual destruction of buried archaeology in this richly rewarding part of the World Heritage Site. Frankly it is unacceptable that a World Heritage Site is managed in this way.

We understand that Wiltshire police are prepared to use their legal powers to move campers away from the site after the solstice has passed. Understandably it is difficult for residents in our parishes to understand why these powers cannot be used to prevent access by those clearly intending to trespass and to cause a disturbance. Finally: our reading of the Covid regulations in force would in any case make an encampment of this size illegal.

We urge Wiltshire Council to take action, with the police if needs be, to enable the World Heritage Site to be given the protection its status requires protected.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Drew

Chair, Kennet Valley Parish Council

Stephen Stacey

Chair, Avebury Parish Council

cc Police and Crime Commissioner, Wiltshire  
Cllr Jane Lewis  
Jess Gibbons