

Holford Parish Council and Hunting

I have spoken with Mr. Nick Gibbons who is an officer of the Quantock Staghounds. He is prepared to co-operate with and attend with colleagues a round table "Hunt Forum" meeting if and when the Parish Council organises one in the Spring of next year when the present troubles are hopefully behind us.

Mr. Gibbons is quite clear that the Staghounds do not want to do anything unlawful in the course of their activities. He says that a large part of the problem is that some people who do not want the hunt to operate have not understood the Hunting Act and take the view that hunting is not possible, that trespass is rampant, and that it is not in any circumstances lawful to kill a stag.

Mr. Gibbons will be happy to see the map prepared on behalf of the Parish Council. I believe that he has not seen it on the Parish Council website. He said that there are informal arrangements with, for example, the National Trust, regarding access along tracks on NT land. (This might put the map the Council has prepared in a slightly different light.) (I said I would also let him see the note that was prepared for the Parish Council setting out the Council's position and hopes.)

I mentioned the idea of the Hunt accepting a responsibility to manage hunt followers. Mr. Gibbons told me that the Quantock Staghounds have recently produced a leaflet which I believe sets out what they do and how they operate within the law. He said he is happy to let the Parish Council have 100 copies of this leaflet. I accepted the offer.

Mr. Gibbons said that it is a matter of great concern when the police receive allegations which he considers are not fairly made and he and colleagues then have to respond to them. Sometimes the consequences would be serious if allegations were well founded and a lot of energy has to go into dealing with them.

I affirmed that the Parish Council position is one of neutrality. The Council is neither pro nor anti hunt but simply wants to help local people understand the position concerning hunting.

Stephen Campbell 16th November 2020