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## National Park planners 'put project in doubt'



The Hillyfield, south of Harbourneford

# Moor clash over care of woodland

A FAMILY trying to nurture an area of ancient Dartmoor woodland back to life say they are being forced out by the national park's refusal to support the small-scale business necessary to sustain the project.

Doug King-Smith bought the Hillyfield in 2009, after volun-

by **TOBY LEIGH**

teering and falling in love with the 45 acres of woodland and pasture just south of Harbourneford.

Working with volunteers who shared his dream of rejuvenating the neglected woods and

managing them sustainably into the future, Doug devoted himself to caring for the land. In 2011, following their marriage, his wife Claire joined him and the team was further bolstered by two young children.

But just after the wedding came the news that sudden oak death – had been found in some trees. Doug and his helpers were forced to begin felling five acres of conifer planted on the site of ancient woodland, doing in three years what they planned to do in 30.

Ever since, they have laboured to cut down all the larch throughout 22 acres of woodland and replant with mixed broadleaf that allows much greater biodiversity.

Now, says Doug, the future of the project is in doubt because Dartmoor National Park Authority planners, have 'forced' him into fighting an expensive appeal. A campaign has now been launched to raise the £35,000 necessary for the legal battle.

In order to make The Hillyfield financially sustainable and pay for the accelerated programme of felling and replanting, Doug and his team sell seasoned



Doug and Claire King-Smith – enjoying life on the moors with their two young sons

firewood and timber. To dry properly and within a reasonable time this needs to be stored undercover, but DNPA have refused permission for permanent sheds to be built for drying and machinery storage under permitted development –

meaning full planning permission must be sought.

When Doug appealed the decision, he says he was immediately served with enforcement notices ordering the removal of all structures at The Hillyfield –

Turn to page three



### Donkey fair joy

DONKEYS took centre stage at the annual summer fair – and it proved a popular decision

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### Friars say farewell

AN order of friars said farewell to a 'refuge' – St Austin's Priory



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# 'It is not considered the buildings are necessary for the purposes of forestry'

From page one  
down to the tiny sheds housing the land's compost toilets. His appeal now has to encompass the enforcement notices as well.

Doug said: 'For a woodland not to be able to sell dried timber is really the death knell. Dartmoor National Park is not prepared to support the business side of it.'

'We've had planning enforcement visits every year for the last six years except one and the officers have never had a problem with what is here. We're just trying to get support from the park to meet their own policy aims.'

Doug is now working himself to bring together a team of experts to support the national park in managing its woodlands. And in

another twist, his woodland advisor is Rupert Lane, who for 29 years was a senior woodland officer at DNPA.

In a feature aired on BBC Radio Devon on The Hillyfield's predicament, Rupert explained why a timber drying shed is so crucial.

He said: 'It's very difficult to make a woodland pay for itself these days, and the key is to add value to your produce on site, so you're taking away a product rather than timber in the round.'

'To do that, you really need an area where you can store your material, so here it's kind of essential to fulfilling the whole process of the woodland plan and helping to bring this woodland back into a good, healthy, strong biodiversity.'

Rupert's views are echoed by other experts whose

advice Doug has sought, including forestry consultant Guy Watt of John Clegg Consulting and Mark Prior of the Forestry Commission.

But DNPA does not agree. In a statement setting out its position, it states: 'In the authority's view, while it is desirable for timber to be stored under cover, it is not necessary... as such, it is not considered that the two buildings proposed are reasonably necessary for the purposes of forestry and that planning permission is therefore required for the buildings.'

When asked to explain why its conclusions differed so drastically from those of The Hillyfield's advisors, and which experts it had consulted in order to form a view, DNPA said it could not comment further on an

ongoing appeal. The authority was also unwilling to say how it would like to see the woodlands managed.

DNPA has now accepted the machinery barn is necessary for forestry – but not the drying shed that would go a long way to making the project financially sustainable.

Doug says supporting documents for his case, from experts, and 180 letters of support from members of the public, were not uploaded onto the authority's planning pages when the application was lodged.

The expert opinions are now available as part of the appeal documents, but the large number of letters have vanished. Again, DNPA said it was unable to comment.

Doug and Claire are now asking people to get behind their campaign, to help them

'stand up and fight for our right to set up a small sustainable woodland project on Dartmoor, and to engage the community in the process'.

The Hillyfield has become an important part of the community, welcoming students as well as volunteers eager to learn and help the couple achieve their vision.

Doug's commitment has won him the support of forestry professionals and recognition in the area: in 2014 The Hillyfield won silver at Devon County Show for the best managed mixed objective woodland, second only to the National Trust.

For more information, visit the website [www.thehillyfield.co.uk](http://www.thehillyfield.co.uk) which contains a link to the crowd funding page for the campaign, and other ways to support The Hillyfield.



Doug at work in the woods

Becky Strong

## Blaze destroys forager

A LARGE piece of farm machinery was completely destroyed after catching fire in a field last week.

The forager, a machine used to chop and collect silage went up in flames near Fardel, close to Lee Mill.

The fire service sent two appliances from Plympton and Greenbank to attend the incident, with fire fighters getting to work with breathing apparatuses and compressed air foam.

They used one fire engine to shuttle water to the scene.

Just after 5pm, fire-fighters confirmed the forager to have been completely destroyed by fire.

The cause of the blaze is believed to be accidental.

# Check your own ticket

## Car parking company hits back over fine complaints

by TOBY LEIGH

THE company that manages Ivybridge's controversial Keaton Road car park has gone on the offensive in response to complaints over unfair charging.

The car park is managed by Newton Abbot company Premier Parking Solutions, and uses automatic number plate recognition technology to record details of cars that enter and leave.

Drivers have to enter their registration number into the ticket machine when they pay, so PPS knows the time they have spent in the car park, and how much they have paid for.

If drivers overstay, or

fail to enter the registration number correctly, they are sent a letter asking for a £100 fine, reduced to £60 if they pay up quickly.

But many drivers complain they have received the penalties unfairly, with more than one noting that the first letter of their registration has not been printed on the ticket.

In these cases, even though drivers may not have overstayed, some have been sent penalty charge notices.

County councillor for Ivybridge Roger Croad recently told an

Ivybridge Town Council meeting that Trading Standards were looking into the case, adding he had received at least 70 complaints relating to the car park.

But PPS said it had had a 'cordial meeting' with Trading Standards and said the pay and display system in the car park was 'not at all controversial, and used without issue by hundreds of drivers each week'.

Carl Mills' wife Elisabeth was one caught out following a visit to Ivybridge in March.

Her ticket did not include the first letter of her number plate, and

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One of the signs that greet drivers as they enter Keaton Road car park

Contributed

she duly received the letter informing her of the fine. The couple appealed, but their case was rejected by the Independent Appeals Service.

Carl said: 'We just can't understand it – she purchased a ticket, but still got fined. We could understand if she hadn't bought a ticket, but she thought she'd done everything right.'

'We live in Plympton but we come to Ivybridge regularly as we like to use the shops. This has put us off a bit.'

Serrita Hill from Ivybridge was also penalised in the same way. She said: 'It's so unfair. Lot's of people are complaining about it, and of course lots of people haven't kept their tickets.'

But a spokesman for PPS was clear that the

fault lies squarely with drivers who are 'unable to enter their registration number correctly'.

They said: 'Given the many hundreds of sites that we lease, own or manage nationwide this issue is wholly out of context with any of our other sites, and is clearly being driven by other events in Ivybridge.'

'The system in the car park is provided by Parkeon, one of the largest pay and display machine manufacturers in the world. Its equipment and systems are used across the globe by hundreds of thousands of drivers each week without any issue.'

These machines and systems are also used in this country by many different councils including Devon County Council.

'The instructions for use and the operation of the pay and display machine at our site are not at all controversial and are used without issue by hundreds of drivers each week.'

'At the top of the machine there are instructions for use stating that to correctly validate parking you Turn to page five

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