



# Sussex Planning for Nature group

## Joint statement on Center Parcs announcement

9 February 2023

**The Sussex Planning for Nature group is delighted to hear that Center Parcs has made the right decision in announcing it will not be progressing plans for a new holiday village within Oldhouse Warren and recognising that development on this special ancient woodland is simply not acceptable.**

The Sussex Planning for Nature group consists of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, CPRE Sussex, Sussex Ornithological Society and the RSPB. We have worked diligently together and alongside others in the local community, such as the Protect Oldhouse Warren group, to oppose these plans and would like to thank all our members and supporters that have helped in bringing Center Parcs to the realisation that it had chosen the wrong location.

This is a massive win for irreplaceable ancient woodland and the High Weald AONB landscape as a whole. While our group has been frustrated about the potential damage that would occur as a result of these proposals, we have to commend Center Parcs for taking the correct decision now, before it is too late. Such development would have been disastrous for wildlife, converting fantastic ancient woodland to lodges, shops, restaurants and swimming pools.

It is now imperative that this very special part of Sussex is protected from development in perpetuity. Mid Sussex District Council's current review of its district plan provides a great opportunity to achieve this. The historic Worth Forest, which Oldhouse Warren forms a part of, is a prime candidate for nature recovery protection. The threat to the precious wooded landscape here in the High Weald AONB underlines the importance of securing the strongest possible legal and planning protection for the area, and we call upon local and central Government to ensure this happens.

Like many others, our respective organisations spoke out against Government plans last year to relax planning measures in favour of 'investment zones'. However, this case only highlights the critical need for proper environmental assessment in planning without the possibility of shortcuts for development. We are thankful Center Parcs undertook the appropriate assessments and came to the right conclusion.

A huge thank you once again to those involved in opposing these harmful proposals. It's now time to push on and secure the long-term protection of this wonderfully bio-diverse landscape.