

Further great questions from our local residents

Thank you for all your support and it is great to hear that people are asking for the papers and getting involved. **Remember your individual support is so valuable.**

You may be part of an organisation which may comment but we ask and encourage you to send in your views under your own name too. It really is a case of making sure that the Planning Inspectors hears all your voices and points of view. So do email in your own comments to

CommonLandCasework@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Every email is important.

With that in mind we can answer some more of your great questions.

Q: Where could Affinity Water find the land to swap?

It's important to note that we are not talking about a large amount of land – as long as it at least the same size as the land that is 'deregistered' (that's the common land that is given up) then it should be considered. Depending on the layout of any future compound - and we are in the hands of Affinity Water here as to what they have previously said they needed or wanted - it is perhaps at most about 500m² which is 0.05 hectares.

If you want to form a mental picture then it is about the size of a US basketball court... ... or 1 / 25th of the size of Trafalgar square.

The Heath is surrounded by much open land. Affinity Water could approach our neighbours. We don't think that Affinity Water have done this; yet somehow Affinity Water (the UK's largest water only supplier) has concluded that it does not have the budget to buy any of the land that may be on offer from any of our neighbouring landowners. If negotiations failed (and there have been none to date as far as we are aware) Affinity Water has powers to compulsory purchase land. Again, this could be a fall-back option but – before any negotiations have started - it too has already been dismissed.

Q: Can't you just sell them the land?

No. Not only would it rub up against our Land owing Trustee obligations also the land would still be common land. The same problems would subsist, and the Conservators would still manage the land. Only a land swap can make common land turn into 'not common land'.

Q: Would this cost money for the Conservators / Would the Conservators make money out of this?

No : There are many way of achieving this and none would expose the Conservators to a legal burden. There would be modest costs for Affinity Water but surely there can be no price to be put upon the safety of their staff; the safety of our water; and the protection of our Heath.

Likewise, the Conservators are not proposing this in any way to make money. As volunteers and Land owing Trustees they obtain no financial gain from their voluntary involvement in managing and protecting the Heath. We have set out why we would not sell the land : We have set out why we do support a s16 land swap.

Q: If the land swap occurs will the land within the fenced area be SSSI.

Yes. So if a land swap occurred, the land would cease to be common land but it would remain SSSI as far as we are aware. It would then be for Affinity Water to manage it in accordance with the SSSI provisions but it could become quite the nature haven (being protected by a fence and left undisturbed).

Remember the deadline to email in is 7th October 2021.