

RT HON GILLIAN KEEGAN MP
Member of Parliament for Chichester



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr A. Moss
Leader
Chichester District Council
1 East Pallant
Chichester
PO19 1TY

18th January 2023

Dear Cllr Moss,

I am writing on behalf of several concerned constituents regarding the recent decision of Chichester District Council to force the Manhood Peninsular Classic Car Club's meetings to cease at East Beach in Selsey.

The Manhood Peninsular Classic Car Club has been holding informal monthly meetings at the carpark at East Beach since 2010, bringing tourism as well as an exciting spectacle to Selsey. People often travel from across the south coast to join Selsey residents in watching the cars drive through the town and admire them at the carpark, while local businesses benefit from an increase in passing trade. These popular informal meetings have undeniably become a key part of life in Selsey, and the Car Club is well-known and respected in the community.

I was therefore concerned to hear that the Club received notice from Chichester District Council (CDC) on the day of their last meeting before Christmas that they would be refused use of the carpark. This was followed by the threat of criminal prosecution should members of the club gather in the carpark again. This email, being sent the day of the Club's meeting, gave the organisers no time to either respond or alert their members in any meaningful way to call off their meeting. Organisers travelled to Selsey to try and warn members that the meeting had been cancelled, only to be greeted by a CDC official who personally delivered a hard copy of the same enforcement notice.

As you can imagine, the lack of warning and subsequent in-person enforcement of this notice implying members of the club would be criminalised for meeting was deeply distressing and intimidating for all involved. A second email was then received accusing the Club of taking charitable donations without a licence, something that they say is completely untrue.

In response to your letter, the Club's leadership assured the Council that they regularly carry out full risk assessments and have the required specialist liability insurance. They have since increased the overall policy to £10 million, the amount required by CDC for events in its car parks. The Club have also requested guidance on how to obtain the necessary permissions and licences from the CDC but have not received a reply to their emails since 18th December 2023. Instead they have only received further threatening communication from CDC's solicitor demanding they sign an agreement that the meetings cease.

I understand that the Club has never had complaints from local people, nor have there been any incidents on CDC's land since they began meeting 14 years ago. Indeed, members of the Club also volunteer as coordinators for Sussex Safer Roads partnership and are committed to the safety of the general public on our roads. Since their meetings have ceased at CDC's insistence the Club has received hundreds of messages of support from local people and businesses who are all in favour of their meetings continuing.

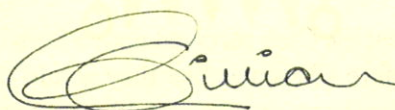
During my time as the MP for Chichester one of my biggest priorities has been to support our coastal communities. Informal meetings such as those organised by the Manhood Peninsular Classic Car Club are a key part of what make our district so special, bringing people together and generating regular economic activity in places that are otherwise reliant on the seasonal tourism trade.

It is concerning that this action against a much-loved community group comes on top of CDC's recent decision to raise parking charges, directly impacting people's freedoms to commute, shop and travel in communities across our District. Users of East Beach carpark, including those who attend the Car Club's informal meetings, will now have to pay to access the beach and the surrounding area at an exorbitant rate. This can only do further damage to rural and coastal communities and businesses.

As the District Council it is of course your duty to protect the public on your property. However, I see no reason why a licence and the appropriate permissions cannot be granted swiftly to the Manhood Peninsular Classic Car Club given the entirely responsible nature of the organisers, their willingness to engage with you and put appropriate protections in place, and the huge support they have from people in Selsey and beyond.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter soon.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gillian Keegan', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon. Gillian Keegan MP
Member of Parliament for Chichester