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David Young
Natural England
Director of Strategy and Performance
1 East Parade
Sheffield
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Our ref: NPS 372

22 December 2006

Dear Mr Young

RESTRICTED: PROPOSED SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

1. I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State to ask Natural England to produce a proposed alternative line for a section of the Designation Order boundary for the proposed South Downs National Park.
2. The Inquiry Inspector is of the opinion that “the proposed South Downs National Park contains extensive tracts of land that by virtue of their natural beauty and the opportunities they provide for open-air recreation merit National Park status and deserve the additional resources, focus and integrated management that a National Park Authority could provide.”
3. However, he has proposed a major variation to the boundary, recommending that a portion of the northern boundary (referred to in his report as ‘sections E – H’) be reviewed “to exclude lower quality landscapes and non-chalk landscapes other than where the latter have a strong visual link or other association with the core chalk Downs.” As he was not presented at the inquiry with a precise alternative boundary to endorse, he has provided an indicative line in the affected area and advised that a definitive boundary needs to be identified. It is this line, shown in dark blue on the attached map, that we now ask you to use as the basis for a proposed definitive line. We ask you to submit a formal, detailed proposal for the boundary in sections E – H in the light of the Inspector’s reasoning and findings in his Report. I would appreciate your early advice as to how long you envisage this work will take so that we can build the detail into our programme schedule.
4. To undertake this work you will clearly need to see the Inspector’s Report and a copy is enclosed. I must stress that this Report is provided ‘in confidence’; none of the content has yet been made public and that must remain strictly observed until it is

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published by the Secretary of State. I ask you, therefore, to ensure that it is made available only to those within Natural England who need to see it as part of this work. Likewise I ask that you do not make public the content of this letter or the revised boundary work that we are asking you to undertake.

5. Once we have received the Court of Appeal decision on the Meyrick Judgment, and assuming neither Defra nor Meyrick decides to take the matter further, we shall write again to ask Natural England for a statement on the impacts, if any, of the legislative changes in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERCA) 2006 and of the Meyrick Judgments on the Designation Order. We intend then to invite public comment on both the proposed revised boundary and your statement on any NERCA and/or Meyrick impacts. At that point we will make the Inspector's Report and this letter public. In the light of responses received, consideration will then be given to the question of whether it will be appropriate for the inquiry to be re-opened.

6. Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Lewisohn

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