

PARISHIONER CORRESPONDENCE REFERENCE THE SPRINGS.

I have previously sent an email asking for more and better signage for Ashwell Springs with regards to dogs and the latest parish council policy, as it is an SSSI

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are heavily protected by law in the United Kingdom under legislation such as the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#) and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. It is a criminal offense to intentionally or recklessly damage the protected wildlife or geological features of an SSS

Based on the above definition I don't believe the Parish Council is taking its responsibilities seriously. Today I checked the signage and there appears to be only one sign asking for dogs to be on leads and there are no significant signs to advise people using the springs of their responsibilities with regards to the SSSI. There are signs but I would be hard pushed to read them. As well as loose dogs there are children with shrimping nets disturbing the invertebrate life (if there is any left after the dogs have polluted it with their tick treatment) which I am sure should not be permitted.

I would be pleased if you could advise me of your plan to remediate this situation asap. I note contractors were employed to make access to the springs easier so budgets are being allocated but maybe not prioritised as well as they might be

NATURAL ENGLAND RESPONSE

From: xxxxxxxxxxxx@naturalengland.org.uk>
Sent: 20 August 2026 15:29
To: clerk@ashwell.gov.uk
Subject: Recreational disturbance at Ashwell Springs

Dear Sally,

Thank you for contacting Natural England about this problem. I will record it as a pressure on our system and we can keep an eye on it.

Unfortunately, there's not a huge amount we can do at the current time and as you note the hot weather has most likely exacerbated the issue.

Certainly, dogs in the water can be harmful, especially if they are having flea or tick treatments. This can be very damaging to aquatic life. Sun ointments getting into the water aren't great either.

I think in the first instance you should definitely erect signage. This can inform visitors about the importance of the SSSI and the need to avoid activities that will have a detrimental effect.

You can list these – ie dogs on leads taking litter home etc. Ask them to respect this important site and help to protect it.

I also think a volunteer warden might be helpful. Someone who is able to walk round and chat to people about the Springs and have a word when they spot anything amiss.

It might even be if you have statutory powers over the land, you could explore the creation of a byelaw, although this is out of my realm of expertise and you would have to get proper advice. It might also be a bit over the top.

Natural England currently has a team working on the problem of recreational pressure as it is a problem in many areas across the country. It is early days and at the moment we are collecting evidence and considering what further evidence we might need.

I hope this helps. Please let me know how you get on.

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Higher Officer Protected Sites

Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Team

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