

The Comet (Stevenage, Hitchin and Hetchworth)

Jobs24 (<https://www.jobs24.co.uk/jobs/england/jobs/hertfordshire>) second-auction-1-6748015?action=login)
Register (<https://www.thecomet.net/news/box-wood-stevenage-concern-over-second-auction-1-6748015?action=register>)
Drive24 (<https://www.drive24.co.uk/used/cars/hertfordshire>)
Search...
MyDate24 (<https://thecomet.mydate24.co.uk>)

Useful Links

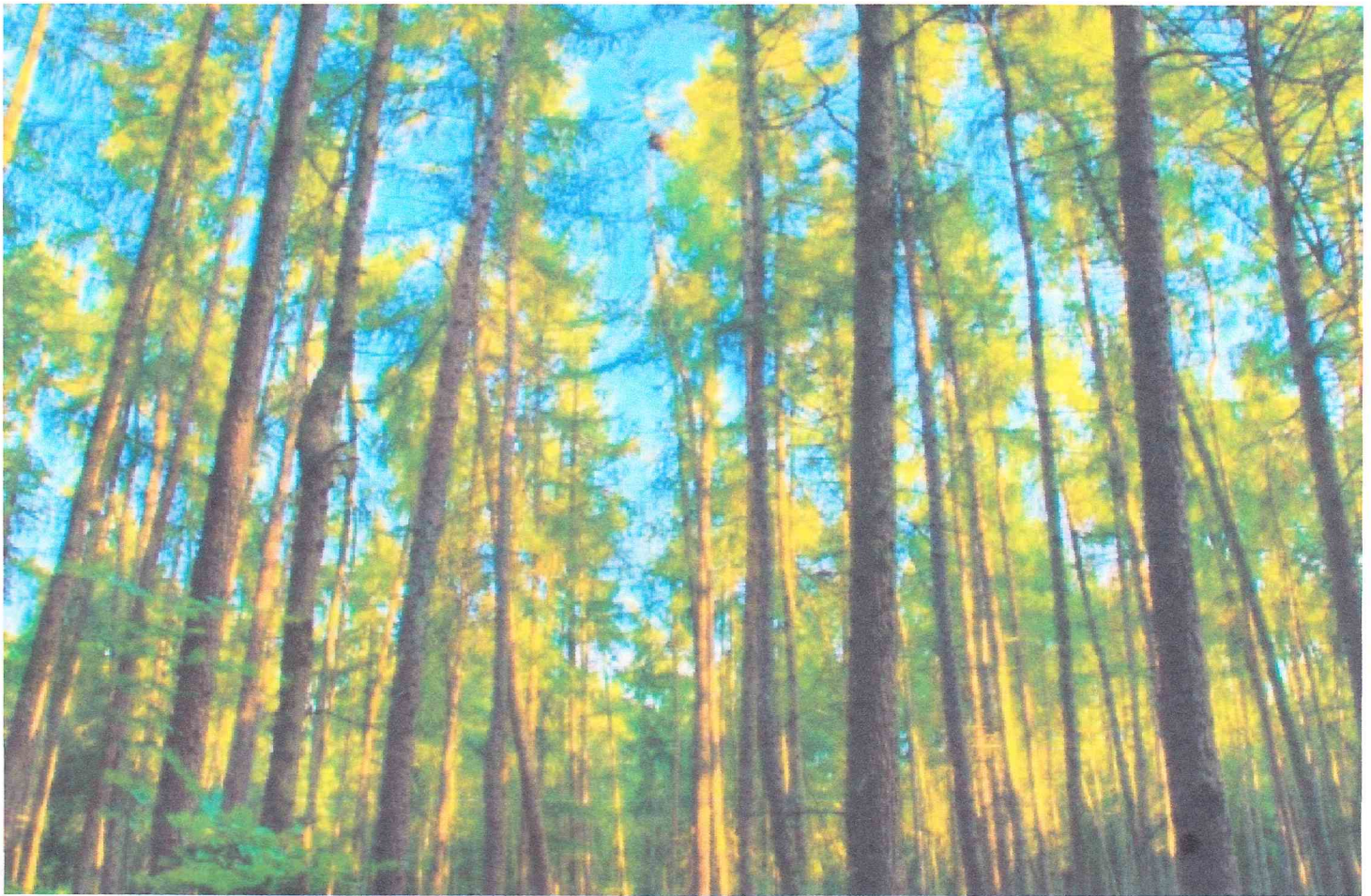
Search

MyPhotos24 (http://3276.e-printphoto.co.uk/herts24/index.cfm?z=z&action=cat&c_id=84531)
Hot Topics: HERTFORDSHIRE BUSINESS AWARDS (<https://www.hertsbusinessawards.co.uk/>) | COMMUNITY AWARDS 2020 (<https://www.hertscommunityawards.co.uk/>) | SIGN UP TO IN BRIEF (<http://www.thecomet.net/InBriefEmail>) | SUPPORT US (<https://www.thecomet.net/news/business/the-comet-needs-your-support-1-6608696>) | CORONAVIRUS (<https://www.thecomet.net/topic/Tag/Coronavirus>) | NHS HEROES (<https://www.thecomet.net/topic/Tag/Heroes>) | ()

Box Wood: Campaigners plot next move amid concerns over second auction of Stevenage woodland

PUBLISHED: 17:23 15 July 2020 | UPDATED: 15:03 16 July 2020

Jacob Savill (mailto:Jacob.Savill@archant.co.uk)



Box Wood in Stevenage is facing a fight for its future. Picture: BJPF Photography

Anxiety over the sale of Box Wood in Stevenage has come to a head this week as it has emerged the entire woodland is now up for auction via a new agent.

In recent weeks, the leasehold sale of the private land has caused consternation among residents in part due to misleading adverts placed online by former agent Exclusive Property Sales.

Initially, the southern section of the 59.75 acre land was parcelled off into eight 1.5 acre plots, however this sale has allegedly been withdrawn after two plots went unsold at auction – and the entire wood has now been advertised online via a different agent.

New agent Barnard Marcus has confirmed the 999-year leasehold is now up for sale in two plots – 29.8 acres and 28.9 acres respectively, at £300,000 a piece – though a source confirmed that relevant legal documentation has not yet been received from the seller.

READ MORE: Fears for Stevenage woodland as plots go up for sale

(<https://www.thecomet.net/news/box-wood-stevenage-auctioned-off-in-parcels-1-6725404>)The advert placed by Barnard Marcus mirrors the original advert posted by Exclusive, saying: "There may be other future development prospects, especially given the proximity of housing on the opposite side of Gresley Way. But as with all unconditional sales, buyers are deemed to rely on their own enquiries."

A source at Barnard Marcus has confirmed that the seller – listed at auction as Sipp Investments Limited – would explore the possibility of a planning pre-app on the land if the two plots go unsold at auction.

In a near-identical sale at Digswell, in Welwyn Garden City, the seller is understood to be fraudulent company Country Land Conservation.

In an apparent scam, Country Land Conservation falsely advertises itself as a guardian of rural landscapes, duping private landowners into selling their land – before attempting to resell to developers, taking advantage of overage clauses.

Numerous links between CLC and Exclusive Property Sales have been made, including the presence of a David Malcolm Kaye who is listed as a director of Exclusive's former trading name, and is the current director of Country Land Conservation's sole investor.

YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO WATCH:

Stevenage FC Women



Watch more great local videos



Stevenage FC Women

Give Back to Stevenage

Fire in Stevenage Old Town

Exclusive Property Sales have repeatedly refused to comment, and on one occasion hung up the phone.

There is also concern from Box Wood campaigners that the travelling community may seek to acquire the land and build mobile homes via their own planning application, in a situation similar to what transpired in Little Hadham earlier this year.

However, community Facebook group Friends of Boxwood – which now has nearly 1,500 members – has achieved considerable success in its attempts to prevent the land from falling into the wrong hands.

READ MORE: Major victory for campaigners as Tree Preservation Order made for Box Wood

(<https://www.thecomet.net/news/box-wood-tree-preservation-order-east-herts-district-council-1-6743855>)Significantly, the site has been nominated as an 'Asset of Community Value' by Stevenage-based heritage group Friends of Fairlands Farm CIC.

If approved by East Herts Council, an ACV designation would mean the community has up to six months to raise their own funds to bid for the land. Legally, the seller would be barred from selling to another bidder in that time.

David Martin, director of Friends of Fairlands, said: "I can say that following an emergency meeting on Sunday evening, we agreed to nominate the site as an Asset of Community Value, as in our view – and in the view of public opinion on social media – it aligns with the three pillars of the CIC: heritage, horticulture and health."

County Cllr Robin Parker has also addressed a second way Box Wood can be protected, by converting footpaths through Box Wood into legal Right of Ways.

Cllr Parker said: "Initial discussions have taken place with the county council, who are the relevant authority on this matter. It seems that in order to do this we need to gather evidence that the footpaths have been used regularly and unrestricted for a period of at least 20 years. If you can supply such evidence then please contact Tom Wren at tom.wren@stevenage.gov.uk."

Cllr Parker believes the creation of public RoWs is the "only realistic route" for campaigners, adding: "Registering an asset of community value does not overcome the problem of who would actually find the large sum of money needed to purchase it.

"Doing this, by crowdfunding or similar, is a huge task, full of legal problems, and that is why I stressed that, having considered the options, we are of the opinion that protecting the RoWs is the only realistic way forward right now."

East Herts Council has been approached for comment.