Please find attached my letter in support of the application for restricted works under Section 26 of the Commons Act 2006.

Robert Edgar

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Dear Sir

Application for the fencing of Iping and Trotton Commons, West Sussex under Section 26 of the Commons Act 2006

I write to support the application by the Sussex Wildlife Trust for restricted works (fencing) on the above Commons.

I am a Chartered Biologist and Member of the Royal Society of Biology. I worked for the Nature Conservancy Council (later English Nature and now Natural England) as a Conservation Officer for 28 years based in Sussex. As part of my duties I notified the boundary, in 1980, of the Iping Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and re-notified the SSSI in 1986 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. I worked regularly with the managers of the majority of the site, West Sussex County Council, who declared it a Local Nature Reserve.

It was considered essential to maintain the site as open heathland for its ecological interest (and also for the important scheduled archaeological monuments). The County Council strived hard to maintain open heathland conditions through scrub clearance and mowing but were unable to introduce grazing, although that was an aim. Grazing by livestock created the West Sussex heaths and was the main form of management for many centuries, only ceasing prior to World War II.

In order to attain favourable condition, a variation in vegetation height is essential. Mowing maintains a uniform height (but an open vista) which is unfavourable, and scrub clearance is inadequate to provide idea conditions. Grazing is the only option to attain this favourable conservation status. Natural Succession, particularly marked in modern conditions with increased atmospheric nutrient loads, leads to the Common becoming increasingly covered with scrub and trees and grazing is the only way to retain a largely open landscape once woody growth has been cleared.

It is now impossible to graze without fencing, due to the proximity of traffic, and small scale grazing using moved enclosures does not produce an adequate result. Arguments used against fencing, such as
interrupting open access are unconvincing when adequate gates are provided and although the fencing might not be ‘natural’ to the site nor is dog walking, horse riding or general recreation, as these commons were developed and used as an entirely working landscape.

Cattle grazing has been used (with perimeter fencing) on the adjacent Stedham Common and the results have been excellent for conservation. Public access to this common has not been compromised.

To reiterate I **support** entirely this application for fencing.

Yours faithfully

Robert D M Edgar MSc. CBiol, MRSB