

# High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

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[www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org)

*Working together to care for one of England's finest landscapes*

25th November 2022

By e-mail

Dear

## **Closure of Tottingworth Abattoir and the loss of small abattoirs**

As a Member of Parliament with part of your constituency within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and an interest in rural matters, you may be concerned to learn that Tottingworth Abattoir in the heart of the High Weald is due to close in the New Year.

The closure of Tottingworth is causing heartache and distress for the 900 or so farmers across Kent, Sussex, and Surrey who rely on this abattoir for the viability and success of their livelihoods. Small abattoirs like Tottingworth are an absolute lifeline for our farmers yet they face a wide range of challenges and extra costs. The number of small abattoirs has declined dramatically in recent years and some areas, such as the High Weald, are very poorly served.

Its closure also sparks a wider anxiety within us as an organisation advising on the management of this nationally designated and much-loved landscape. Livestock grazing over many generations has produced a beautiful landscape of national importance, and it is to these farming communities and the irreplaceable role of livestock that we all should look for the on-going and future conservation and enhancement of the High Weald landscape.

Like other places in England, the High Weald is ideally suited to livestock farming as our soils grow excellent grass. Well managed livestock systems applying sustainable and regenerative farming principles improve the health of the soil and restore the natural fertility of the land. Healthy soils on livestock farms can capture and store carbon while also producing nutrient-rich food, clean and plentiful water, and support abundant above and below ground biodiversity.

The loss of small abattoirs serving a particular area threatens all of this - our farmers' livelihoods, the growing of high-quality nutrient-rich food, the conservation of our landscapes, and those many farmers that have already adopted or are moving towards sustainable farming systems.

As a Member of Parliament, you have a powerful role to play to help turn this situation round by:

- supporting our local farmers and their representatives to resolve the immediate issues caused by the closure of Tottingworth

- supporting the efforts of food, farming, and rural organisations looking to maintain and expand the numbers of small abattoirs to bring about a rebirth of small abattoirs across the country
- encouraging the Government to make a clear statement of support recognising the vital importance of smaller abattoirs, and make this a matter of practical policy across all Government departments
- asking the Government to work constructively with the interested parties to propose and implement innovative and practical solutions to ensure the survival of small abattoirs and the use of mobile and small static red meat abattoirs for on-farm slaughtering

Should you require any further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,



Jason Lavender

Co-Director

High Weald AONB Unit

*Advising on the management of a nationally important landscape*

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c.c. Members of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, Local Abattoirs R Key (LARK), High Weald Land Managers' Group, Pasture For Life, Sustainable Food Trust, All Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare, Lord Lucas