

Lindfield Parish Council regrets to announce that there will be no Christmas lights in the High Street trees this Christmas.

Despite our best attempts to keep up the tradition of putting coloured lanterns in the High Street lime trees for Christmas, taken over when the Traders Association was dissolved approximately ten years ago, the Parish Council has had to admit defeat this year, because of objections to the solution for meeting height regulations, following pollarding of the trees.

In 2009 the trees were pollarded and without extra support the electrical cable could no longer be mounted above the minimum height stated in the regulations, allowing for the inevitable sagging. We feared the lights could not go up that Christmas, but, with his typical “can-do” approach to this sort of challenge, our Chairman, Will Blunden, came up with the solution of attaching catenary wire to the trees, with battens where needed to raise the height, and he put this up himself with the help of another member of the Council. This wire was stretched taut between the trees and the power cables were fastened to it with cable ties to stop them sagging. This worked well but it was far from being an easy job so the Council intended to leave the catenary wire in place until the trees are pollarded early next year.

However a few residents raised objections to the wire and wooden supports being left up on planning grounds as the High Street is in the Conservation Area; because they were considered to look unsightly and because the nails and metal staples used to attach them were thought to be harmful to the trees in the long term. Representations were made to Mid Sussex District Council and West Sussex County Council for the removal of these offending battens and cable. Regrettably the Parish Council was informed by WSCC that we had to remove them as soon as Christmas was over, which we reluctantly did.

The reason we are unable to put the lights back up this year is that the springy growth around the crown of the trees makes it difficult to get a ladder close enough to enable us to fix the battens firmly to the trees and also to put the cable and connection boxes up.

There may be a more tree friendly way of attaching the catenary wire, but this will only work if it is put up the first Christmas after pollarding and left in place until the next pollarding is due. In any event, we will be looking for an affordable and sustainable solution next year.

On a more positive note, the Parish Council is arranging for a Christmas tree to be put on the butcher’s roof and we are planning to put pea lights in the trees on one of the Pond islands to brighten up the approach to the High Street.

If you would like to comment please send an email to:
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