

Save Bewl Water from hoteliers



Photo: SuxxexsPhoto

Bewl Water: A sanctuary for animals and an important recreational site for visitors is in danger

Bewl Water is under attack.

1. The Friends of Bewl Water was founded last year to protect this internationally important ecological site, where animals, particularly birds, need a noise and light pollution free nighttime. Many of the birds are on the critically endangered red list for birds. The Friends of Bewl Water also want to encourage daytime outdoor leisure activities at Bewl Water. The managers are hoteliers, with a hotel in Tunbridge Wells and a wedding venue in Southborough.
2. Bewl Water's management is well aware of the Friends of Bewl Water and have met the group. The managers then set up a group with an identical name. It wasn't a typical 'Friends of' group, it was just a company discount scheme. The Friends of Bewl Water believe the managers are seeking to dislodge the Friends of Bewl Water website from Google searches so that their website dominates searches, to mislead and to confuse our supporters.
3. In 2022, the managers of Bewl Water released plans (called options). The options include:
 - 'a cluster of purpose-built self-catering cottages,
 - a bunkhouse,
 - self-catering lodges,
 - a cluster of chalet style self-catering units, and
 - a waterfront hotel with 60 to 80 bedrooms.'

The work so far to convert a nature reserve to a site for overnight accommodation

4. The managers have so far:
 - Attempted to build 58 earth lodges in 2017
 - Obtained planning permission to convert the old Fishing Lodge to tourist accommodation, in 2021,
 - Tried to convert the sailing hut to tourist accommodation, in 2021.
 - Tried to convert the former clubhouse, now named 'Boat House bistro', to tourist accommodation, in 2022,
 - Asked for an 80-pitch campsite and four Yurts, in 2023, (Refused and granted on appeal)
 - Applied for a permanent, claimed, Christmas event from September to the third week in January each year. This application was in 2025 and it, is proposed to run from 9 am to 9 pm.

'The masterplan'

5. A 'Masterplan' for the site was unveiled by the operators on 9 May 2025.
 - More plans for overnight development were proposed
 - The masterplan consultation was not promoted; most residents were not made aware of the consultation and two of the three neighbouring parish councils were not invited.
6. All the developments are near the internationally important gull roost at Bewl Water.
7. Wadhurst Parish Council is challenging the Yurts and Campsite appeal decision in the High Court. The Court has granted permission for their appeal. The hearing is on 18 and 19 June 2025. The High Court has decided the case will determine the degree of protection National Landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) receive under recent legislation. The Friends of Bewl Water wants to give Wadhurst Parish Council all the financial help it can.

Our Campaigns

The group is currently working on the following campaigns.



Working with Wadhurst Parish Council to stop a campsite and Yurts being placed next to the gull roost at Bewl Water.



Trying to reduce light pollution over Bewl Water (the light above is a few metres from the water's edge).



Working with Southern Water to prevent raw sewage being discharged into Bewl Water from the Tinkers Lane sewage works. In 2024, there were 68 discharges there over 777 hours.



Trying to increase the protection afforded to Bewl Water by Natural England.



Trying to stop the conversion of the waterfront 'Bistro' Sailing Club House into apartments with outdoor hot tubs on their glass balconies .



Working to prevent overnight accommodation at Bewl Water and so protect the animals. There are other sites for campers nearby.



Working with other Bewl Water groups to enable daytime leisure activities, like sailing, to thrive at Bewl Water.



Working with the two MPs, the three district councils, the three parish councils and others to protect and enhance Bewl Water.



Lobbying to prevent light pollution at the managers' events.



Lobbying to prevent a holiday village being created next to Bewl Water.

The Friends of Bewl Water need volunteers to help us function and conduct research and raise money to protect the site.

Please join ☐ Minimum fee £5 a year (£50 for corporate members)

Please donate ☐

There will be a meeting for new members.

Without a significant membership and more volunteers, the Friends of Bewl Water will not reach its potential.

Please forward this to those who might support us.

Claire Moore

Chairman

The Friends of Bewl Water

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