[redacted]

Richard Gardner

[redacted]

To Jane and Rye,

I make this statement in relation to fencing works I have carried out on behalf of the Godsell family. I wish to make clear at the outset that, unless otherwise stated, the matters set out below are based upon my own personal observations and experience while carrying out those works.

I have been carrying out fencing work on the Godsell family's fields from the end of 2017 and, during that time, I have personally witnessed repeated incidents of damage and vandalism to fences and gateways across a number of their fields. This includes the fields purchased by the family in 2013 and 2019, which I understand are currently subject to a Modification Order.

In relation specifically to Gateway B, the Godsell family erected sheep netting and barbed wire across this area in approximately 2018. This followed the removal of the original gate by Western Power while underground electricity cables were being installed.

Following this, the fencing was repeatedly cut down by unknown persons and left lying on the ground. I am aware that the Godsell family reinstated the fence on a number of occasions, only for it to be damaged again.

Ultimately, a gate was installed and welded shut in order to make the boundary secure and cattle-proof. I subsequently installed a high-tensile sheep-netting fence with two strands of barbed wire around the field, continuing up to a wooden fence post adjacent to the gate. Between that wooden fence post and the gate post there were lengths of barbed wire together with established hedge growth.

At that point, there was no pedestrian access through or alongside the gateway without climbing over the gate.

Within days of the work being completed, the barbed wire between the fence post and the gate post had been cut. The hedge, which had previously extended right up to the gate, was subsequently cut back and a gap was created alongside the gate which was large enough for pedestrians to pass through.

During the years that I have worked on the Godsell family's land, I have also personally witnessed their efforts to maintain and clear the existing public footpaths and to install kissing gates in order to make the recognised routes easier and more accessible for walkers.

Unfortunately, I have also witnessed repeated damage to fencing and gateways in and around these areas. In particular, I have had to reconstruct a considerable length of fencing alongside the public footpath adjacent to the field purchased in 2019 after fencing had been removed and thrown into the neighbouring field.

Based upon my own observations and my involvement in maintaining and repairing the fencing on these fields over approximately seven years, I am confident in stating that I have never witnessed the Godsell family encouraging or permitting walkers to leave the recognised public footpaths or to access their land by alternative routes.

On the contrary, I have witnessed repeated efforts by the family to maintain the recognised footpaths, provide suitable access along those routes and secure the remainder of their land. Those efforts have, on numerous occasions, been undermined by repeated vandalism and unauthorised removal or cutting of fencing and vegetation.

[redacted]

Richard Gardner

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