

Rescue

The British Archaeological Trust

5th June 2014

Mr Winston Roddick
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner North Wales
Police Headquarters
Glan y Don
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 8AW

Dear Mr Roddick

RESCUE, The British Archaeological Trust understands from reports on the BBC website and the Daily Telegraph (4th June 2014) that, after investigating the matter for nearly a year, North Wales Police have declined to take any action against the individuals responsible for the extensive damage caused to a section of Offa's Dyke near Chirk in August 2013. RESCUE members are surprised and shocked by this decision and would like a full explanation of the reasons behind it.

Egregious though this incident is, it is not an isolated one and RESCUE is aware that heritage crime is rarely accorded the same status as other breaches of the criminal law. We are not alone in this belief. In a recent comment on a consultation connected with the Heritage Bill, CADW stated that

“Between 2006 and 2012, Cadw received reports of 119 cases of unlawful damage to scheduled ancient monuments in Wales. However, there has been only one successful prosecution under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 in the last 25 years.”

These are shocking statistics which RESCUE calculates equate to 17 reported cases of damage per year. That would amount to approximately 425 over the past 25 years assuming that the rates of reporting were constant (it should be noted that the rate of recording is likely to be low as much of this crime will have gone unreported) which would mean that over 10% of nationally important protected sites have been reported as damaged with only one successful prosecution. We are not aware of any statistics covering the numbers of unsuccessful prosecutions. We believe these figures are testament to the abject failure of

the relevant bodies when it comes to protecting our heritage sites. In addition to a full explanation for the failure to prosecute in the case of Offa's Dyke, we would like to know why the police service in Wales attaches such a low priority to the prosecution of heritage crime.

RESCUE looks forward to your reply which we may publish on our website for the benefit of our members and supporters.

Yours sincerely

Jo Caruth
Secretary,
RESCUE, The British Archaeological Trust

RESCUE is a non-political organisation dedicated to supporting archaeology and archaeologists in Britain and abroad (www.rescue-archaeology.org.uk). We do not receive any state support and are entirely dependent on the contributions of our members to support our work.