# National Trust coach ban at Birling Gap sparks local safety and congestion crisis



The National Trust's recent decision to prohibit tourist coaches from parking at Birling Gap and the iconic Seven Sisters has sparked significant backlash from local residents, leading to increased congestion and safety concerns in the area. The controversial ban was implemented last month as part of an effort to mitigate the damage caused by a dramatic rise in visitor numbers, which have surged from approximately 350,000 in 2018 to around 600,000 last year.

Phil Myerson, a 75-year-old local resident, expressed his frustration, stating, “The coach ban hasn’t come a moment too soon but it has completely backfired. Tourists are wrecking this place. If anything, they are causing more damage now than they were before.” He highlighted the pressing issue of coach operators disregarding safety guidelines, with passengers being dropped off on the narrow roads, creating obstructions for other vehicles and endangering lives.

Witness reports indicate that coach drivers are parking their large vehicles on verges, effectively blocking access for residents and emergency services. Myerson noted that as tourists spill out onto the roads, they contribute to environmental degradation by trampling over delicate wildflowers and grasslands during heatwaves, transforming the area into a “dustbowl.”

The National Trust's ban marks an unprecedented move in its policy toward coach access at one of its attractions. The decision was made in response to the escalating damage identified at Birling Gap and the Seven Sisters caused by the influx of visitors, a trend that correlates with the site's rising popularity as a picturesque location featured in numerous films, TV shows, and music videos.

Jon Ledham, a local walker, echoed concerns, stating, “The coach drivers are flouting safety laws by dropping their passengers directly into the road or grass verges. That needs to be stopped and steps need to be taken to ensure it stops.” Meanwhile, another resident, Lloyd Monk, 65, pointed out a notable increase in visitors from South East Asia, many of whom are primarily interested in capturing picturesque snapshots before moving on to subsequent locations.

Dot Skeaping, 80, a former National Trust worker living close to the cliff’s edge, remarked, “The National Trust wants to welcome people to Birling Gap but it wants them to see it at its best.” Skeaping also noted that the ban on large coaches is beneficial as they often arrive in significant numbers and can detract from the scenic value of the site.

In response to the outcry, a spokesperson for the National Trust urged visitors to park responsibly and consider local residents, encouraging coach operators to use designated parking facilities nearby. They emphasised that the ban is not a sweeping policy change but a targeted action to address specific problems at Birling Gap and the Seven Sisters, while still welcoming visitors arriving by various other means.

As the situation develops, residents are calling for more stringent enforcement of the ban and additional measures to ensure visitor safety in the area.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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