

BRAMBER PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday 17th May 2023 commencing at 6:30pm at the Beeding and Bramber Hall, Upper Beeding.

MINUTES

Present: The Chair and Clerk of Bramber Parish Council and 9 residents.

The Chair of Bramber Parish Council, Cllr Rachel Burstow, opened the meeting by welcoming those present.

1. **Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting** – the minutes from the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th May 2022 were agreed by those present and signed by the Chair.
2. **Chair's welcome and Annual Report** – the Chair presented her report which is attached at Appendix A. No questions arose.
3. **COUNCIL REPORTS**
 - **West Sussex County Council** – no update
 - **Horsham District Council** – HDC Cllr Noel presented his report which is attached at Appendix B.
4. **NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS** – the Clerk advised that a new joint-parish contract had been agreed and that a new Warden, Alison Page, will replace Pasul Conroy who has retired.
5. **STEYNING AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP – Working Party 9 (The White Bridge)** – Cllr Ann Blakelock presented the report which is attached at Appendix C.
 - A member of the public asked why equestrians could not use the link. Cllr Blakelock advised that the current landowners had only given permission for cyclists and pedestrians at this time;
 - A member of the public asked if speed data adjacent to the road crossing on the A283 had been obtained. Cllr Blakelock advised that WSCC Cllr Linehan was in the process of drafting a Traffic Regulation Order in this regard;
 - A member of the public asked if the presence of cows on the link would present a danger to the public. Cllr Blakelock advised that a thorough risk assessment had been prepared;
 - A member of the public advised that the proposed 'slam-shut' gates were prone to close very quickly and could be dangerous. Cllr Blakelock advised that she would refer this matter to the Working Party;
 - A member of the public advised that the current surface on the White Bridge is very slippery in the cold weather. Cllr Blakelock advised that WSCC may fit abrasive strips to alleviate this issue;
 - The Chair advised that the local school PTA might be able to assist with fund raising. Cllr Blakelock reported that she expected a funding decision in the next few weeks.
6. **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**
 - A member of the public asked if anyone else was elected as the delegated officer for reporting PROW and footpath issues. The parish councillors in attendance thought that she was the relevant person and asked that she carry on her role. She agreed to continue but suggested that members of the public report issues relating to footpaths to WSCC directly. The Chair thanked her for her excellent reports.

The Chair thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 7:03pm.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix A

Bramber Parish Council Annual Report 2022-2023

We have had a busy year at the Parish Council, with issues ranging from very local to national, such as the late Queen's Jubilee.

MEETINGS

There have been a total of 10 Parish Council meetings, and one Annual Parish Meeting this year.

Walks For all Boards - In May 2022 the Parish Council adopted the four 'Walks for All' boards as assets. These are a colourful addition to the public footpaths and help visitors and residents an opportunity to identify the changing wildlife through the seasons.

Maudlin Lane - There was considerable disruption to residents when new cables were laid in Maudlin Lane and WSCC Highways diverted traffic through Annington Road/Botolphs. This project overran to September 2022 and there were many issues for residents during that period trying to go about their daily lives.

Virgin Media - Virgin media laid new cables in The Street and Castle Lane to increase access to high-speed internet.

Speedwatch - A new location for Bramber was approved by Sussex Police at Clay's Hill and Bramber resident Carole Powell joined the Speedwatch Team.

Warm Hub - In November the Parish Council donated £500 to support those needing a warm space during the fuel and financial crisis many face.

Queen's Canopy Project - A copper beech tree was planted on the A283 Bramber roundabout by Cllrs Day, Croker and Tilley.

Planning Applications - We considered 28 planning applications which included 6 tree surgery applications. It can be a challenge to balance the need to provide housing that meets modern life, and maintain the historic nature of the village and the Neighbourhood Plan.

Committees

Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee (Link Councillors Green and Blakelock) - A maintenance review found that repairs totalling £8,000 would be required for new gates, repairs to pavements, new signage, and a new noticeboard.

Joint Parishes Youth Committee (Link Councillor Burstow) - The Youth Service continue to offer support and activities to young people living in Bramber, Upper Beeding and Steyning. They have struggled to find premises for the older youth service and at one point trialled parking the purple bus in the car park at Steyning Community Centre. They now have more permanent premises at Steyning Leisure Centre.

Horsham Association of Local Councils (HALC) (Link Councillor A Blakelock) - The local association is formed from all the local councils across the Horsham District (HDC). They meet with Horsham District Council and the main topic of concern this year has been the lack of a five-year housing supply and the delays to the HDC Local Plan. These two issues have had a significant impact on planning applications and development.

Village Hall Committee (Link Councillor Tilley) - The Village Hall hosted a Queen's Jubilee Cream Tea on the 4th June and was attended by over 100 people. Sixteen solar panels have been installed to continue our commitment to energy efficient and sustainable public buildings, and a launch event took place in the 13th August 2022. New front doors are on order and noticeboards have also been installed.

Neighbourhood Wardens Steering Committee (Link Councillor D Goodall with Clerk) - We met the new HDC Warden Coordinator Carol Boniface and were given the opportunity to ask questions about the service provided and challenges faced.

Climate Emergency and Steyning Greening 2030 (Link Councillors A Blakelock and Goodall)

- The Climate Café was launched on 21st May 2022 and is now meets regularly at The Castle Inn.
- The White Bridge Link is an exciting new development that will change the footpath that runs from the end of Kings Barn Lane to The Saltings in Upper Beeding into a shared path. This will involve upgrading the path to an all-weather surface, replacing stiles with wider ones that could accommodate buggies, wheelchairs, and bicycles. The Parish Council has donated £300 to support this project.
- A green Day was held in Steyning with a cavalcade of electric vehicles and bicycles and stalls
- The Repair Café continues to meet regularly in the Village Hall

- A community kitchen based in Steyning (Community Fridge) has proven to be a much needed resource in these difficult times.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Green Tourism - We did look into the development of a landing platform for the many canoeists and paddle boarders who use the river but this proved to be too challenging a project.

Road Safety - The reduction in traffic speed on the A283 to ensure the crossing to Clay's Field is safe and usable merits continued support and focus from the Parish Council. Thanks to Cllr Ann Blakelock for continuing to liaise with Cllr Paul Linehan and ensuring we remain informed and engaged.

Audits - External and Internal Audits have been completed this year with thanks to Paul our Clerk for a successful outcome.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Many thanks to Mike Croker and Roger Noel our District Councillors for all they have done this year and for their regular and comprehensive updates on District Matters at our Council meetings.

The Horsham Draft Local Plan consultation process has been affected by wider political issues and the water neutrality issue which has currently halted all new building.

WSSC COUNCILLOR

Paul Linehan was again voted in as our new County Councillor.

PARISH COUNCILLOR

Councillor Tom Day is leaving the Parish Council and we would like to thank him for his contribution whilst in office. He continues to support the community through the Speedwatch Scheme.

CLERK

Paul continues to do a fantastic job in ensuring we follow due process and make decisions that are correct and could withstand challenge. He continues to support us and offer sound advice.

FINANCES

Rising costs continue to challenge our reserves, so we again raised our Precept to address this issue. The ideal is that we operate with a reserve of around 50% of our costs and we are currently around 36% (a slight increase from 33% last year).

Bramber PC has set a balanced budget for the next financial year. The impact for an average Band D council taxpayer is that the precept amount will increase by 3p per week to £80.30 (£72.08 last year).

CHAIR ROLE

I have been the current Chair since May 2021 and am standing down this year. I would like to thank the Vice Chair, Clerk and fellow councillors for their support and contributions during my term in Office.

I wish whoever steps into the Chair role my very best wishes and they are assured of a strong team to support them.

Thank you to all of you again for your support and commitment. The giving of your time on a voluntary basis for the residents of Bramber deserves thanks and recognition.

Rachel Burstow
Chair

Appendix B

HDC COUNCILLOR REPORT

I'm presenting an overall report for the past year to summarise a few of HDC's achievements and also its significant failure, and maybe a promise of what a new administration, of whatever hue, can hope to achieve over the next municipal year. I have to acknowledge my debt to my council colleague for providing the framework of this report at the recent Woodmancote PC meeting!

So, without any electioneering, bearing in mind that under pre-election rules we are prohibited any self-promotion at a public meeting, both Mike and I are standing again to be your District Councillors at HDC. You will have seen the published candidate lists, so you will know we both hope to be sitting here this time next year.

The past year has undoubtedly been dominated by our significant failure on planning issues, specifically the Local Plan. In 2022, Mike's end of year report said that he expected that there would be a resolution to the water neutrality issue by last September. In fact, a true resolution, in my view, has not yet been reached, but, in the meantime, the Sussex North Water Neutrality study, part C, was released in December as a 'mitigation strategy', and was endorsed by Natural England. The objective was to allow Local Plans to proceed towards adoption and therefore set out that:

Firstly, that the Government would recommend water efficiency targets in new builds,

Secondly, Southern Water would publish a Water Reduction Management Plan to achieve significant water savings,

And finally, any further increase in water demand by planners would need to be offset by recommended methods. Although we have received these mandatory offset rules for minor applications, there is yet to be an agreement on how offsetting can be achieved for any large-scale projects.

As a result of this, HDC decided to wait until after Christmas whilst our planning and legal officers worked out what this would mean for the local plan. It was decided that a new version of the Local Plan would be published in January ready for Council approval the same month. Now Mike and I disagree on the reasons for an internal argument at Cabinet level in early January as to why the Conservatives refused to accept the Leader's new version of the plan, but for what was felt to be good reasons, Cabinet could not agree, and the plan never made it to Council and therefore never came to a vote. The Leader refused to change his plan and subsequently resigned. By the time a new Leader was elected, it was too late to take it through Council before the Election. This now means that newly elected Councillors will have to understand the implications of the Local Plan, with Water Neutrality, and all its associated problems, and will therefore require new Councillor training, realistically delaying it until the end of this year. In the meantime, the council continues to assess planning applications using Water Neutrality as a reason to refuse some schemes, but of course many refusals will go to appeal. This is far from ideal, but we can only hope that the appeal process takes longer than the adoption of the next Local Plan, or at least the regulation 19 stage. I understand that there are some thirty Planning Authorities such as ours who have suspended their Local Plans whilst our Government decides on new housing allocations to each planning area, and the various departments involved come to a unilateral decision on how much housing Horsham should provide - to alleviate this pressing problem of how to build more homes for those who so desperately need them.

All is not bad news however, and I can report that there are plenty of good news stories to balance out our planning problems.

Firstly the HDC Draft Climate Action Strategy has now been published and adopted by the Council. This will rely heavily on community engagement and a Community Climate Fund has been approved to support local initiatives. The Council has been proud to announce that it has already reached a 60% reduction in its own direct emissions, - which should be 100% by 2030,- but it also should be recognised that the low hanging fruit of vehicle emission reduction accounts for a large proportion of this. What's left is the management of our own building retrofits, which will take up much of our reserves over the next few years and is certainly a challenge, not only for us, but all the countries involved in the net zero agreement.

Secondly, another success story from HDC this year is the continuation of the Wilder Horsham District scheme, with a significant number of landowners signing up to become part of this initiative, as well as the continued push towards the Adur Restoration scheme, which for many is the lifeblood of the communities along the side of one of Sussex's great three rivers. I'm hoping that the next administration will continue with the suggestion that both the Arun and Adur receive the same protection that Lewes District Council is planning for the Ouse. Of course, part of the battle for water neutrality also involves the clean up of our natural resources and HDC has to hold Southern Water to account for any increase in our river contamination and commercial bodies such as SW must share responsibility for this. Horsham's ongoing partnership with Sussex Wildlife Trust has also led to the Weald to Waves initiative and again I'm hoping that next year will see the fruition of these wonderful ideas. I'm hoping also that our next administration will produce more results in our nascent rewilding schemes and provide all of our communities with hope for our future and the futures of the next generations.

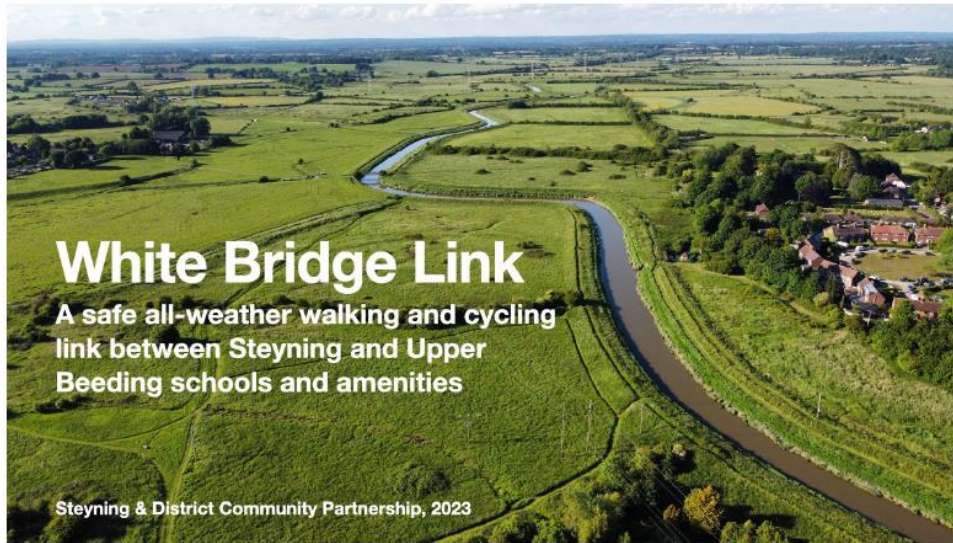
Back to earth, much of this ambition requires local funding and we have to be mindful that the Cost of Living crisis will not be going away quickly. We have had to raise Council tax by 3% this year, which is the lowest we could get away with, without reducing the level of our services. We have a broad range of social services that continue to serve our communities, and we are providing over £1.5 million for those most in need. A food waste collection service may well also dig into our reserves, but we have delayed delivery of this until it becomes mandatory, in the hope that Government grants will also help to ease the pain of delivering this service. Other good news stories include winning a national vote through Rightmove last year, that made Horsham one of the Best Places to Live, as well as

having the best recycling rates in the whole of Sussex. There are many other achievements that HDC have delivered in the last year, but I'm in danger of making it sound like an election address, so I'll stop there.

However, as a final note, as this may be our last time sitting in front of you as District Councillors, I would like to thank this Parish for having both myself and Mike as your HDC representatives for the last four years and hope that we can both continue to serve our respective communities as Parish Councillors if we don't continue as your Ward representatives.

Appendix C

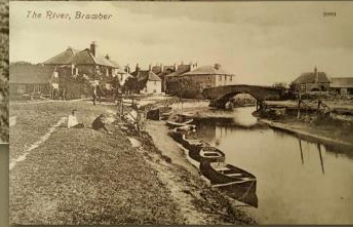
STEYNING AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP – Working Party 9 (The White Bridge)



"To encourage and enhance sustainable, safe, active travel connecting the communities within the Adur Valley area of Bramber, Steyning and Upper Beeding. To advance community connectivity, encourage healthy lifestyles and help improve physical and mental health for all ages and abilities."



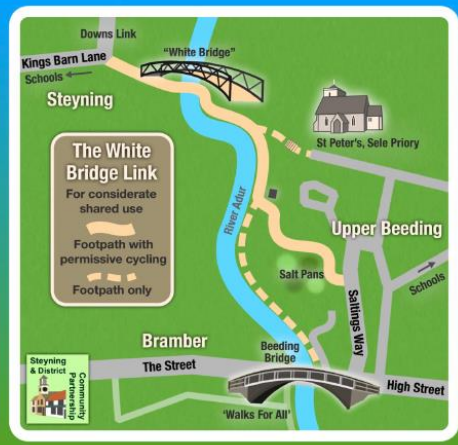
The White Bridge & River Adur



A bit of history...

Proposal

An attractive route with inclusive access providing opportunities for active travel



Currently...



the surface is inconsistent, uneven, and very muddy in wet weather

Space for a Shared Path

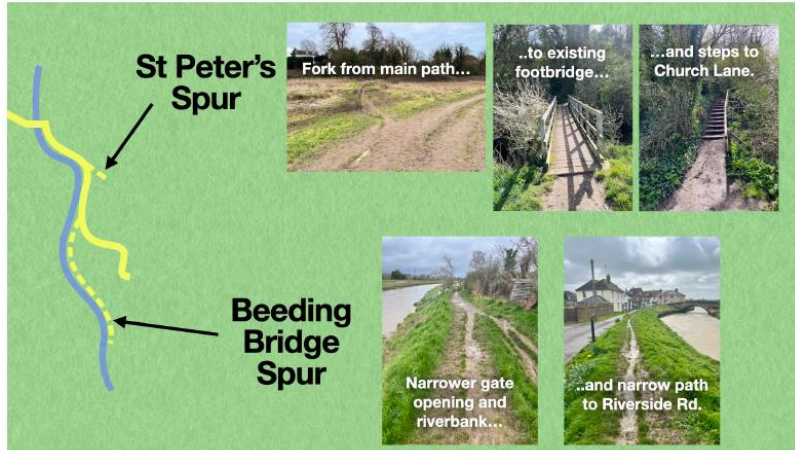


open fields, a wide riverbank, and wide gate openings

The White Bridge



good width for a shared path



Sustainable Transport Committee Working Party 9



All Landowners
 Andrew Cato (KBL gate)
 Keith Striven (KBL gate to White Bridge)
 WSCC (White Bridge)
 Seb Baker (Bridge to pumping station)
 HDC (pumping station to Saltings Way)

Parish Councils
 Upper Beeding
 Steyning
 Bramber

Schools
 Steyning Grammar
 Upper Beeding Primary
 Steyning CoFE Primary

Supported by

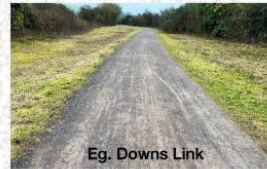
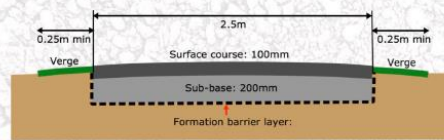
WSCC Public Rights of Way
 advised on permissive cycling status, surface specification and qualification for maintenance

Environment Agency
 consulted on riverbank and bespoke permit requirements

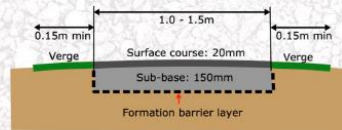
South Downs National Park, Natural England, Southern Water, Southern Gas
 all consulted

Surface Specifications

Main route (cycling permitted)



Footpath only sections



Replacement Gates on Main Path

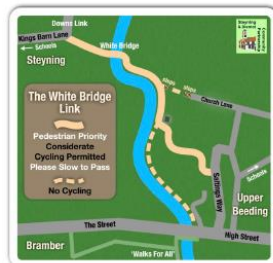


Existing kissing gates...



...replaced with 2-way self-closing galvanised metal gates.

Clear Signage to encourage correct and respectful use



Shared path

Footpath only



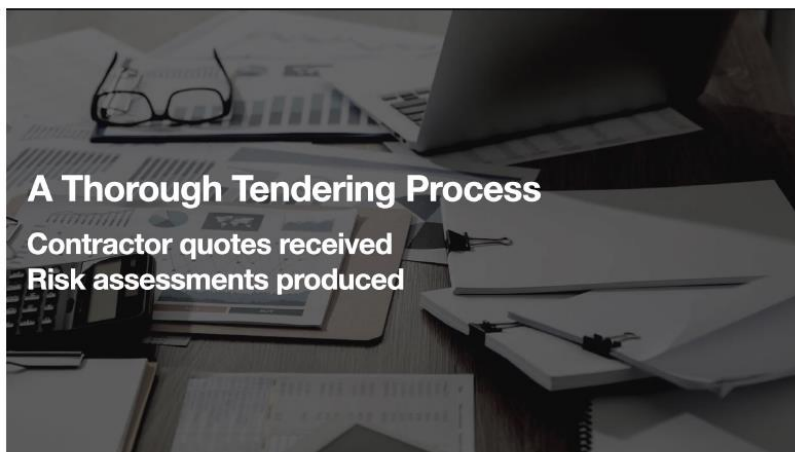
Upper Beeding

Towers School

Steyning

A Thorough Tendering Process

Contractor quotes received
Risk assessments produced



West Sussex
County Council?

Local Charities
& Businesses?

Crowd
Funding?

Funding

South Downs
National Park

Rampion
Community
Benefit Fund

Small contributions possible

Parish Councils

Administrative and publicity
costs

Why is this project important to our communities?



Health Benefits



Environmental Benefits



less of this...



...more of this






Engaging the Public

- Posters on local notice boards & in local magazines
- S&DCP website, social media & email list
- Via Parish Councils

THE WHITE BRIDGE LINK

An exciting new plan to link up Steyning, Bramber & Beeding




The aim is to create a safe, sustainable, all-weather walking & cycling route between the three communities that is:

- Suitable for bikes, pushchairs & mobility scooters
- Great for school children & users of all ages
- Encourages healthy lifestyles & active travel

COME ALONG TO FIND OUT MORE

Beeding Village Hall, Sat 8 April, 10-12am
Steyning Centre, Sat 29 April, 10-12am





The kind of sustainable community link which has benefits for us all

