

Cuckmere Valley Parish Plan - 2022

Preamble: Cuckmere Valley Parish Council (CVPC) has updated the Parish Plan which was undertaken in 2009. Feedback was invited from Parishioners which was assimilated into the Parish Plan and CVPC strategy and policies were revised as appropriate. The Parish comprises the villages of Litlington, Lullington and West Dean and the outlying residences situated in some 17 square kilometres of superb chalk downland countryside and the eastern side of the Cuckmere Valley to its southern limit at Cuckmere Haven. The Parish has an unusually well balanced mix of age groups, a strong agricultural and rural craft tradition, with many other employments and skills, and a strong sense of community. There are 82 properties on the electoral roll. The 2011 Census records 191 inhabitants of which 28 were 0-14 y.o., 17 aged 15-29, 33 aged 30-44, 69 aged 45-64 and 44 aged >64 y.o.. The Parish is in South Downs National Park, and a Conservation Area. It includes the Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) for which ownership has now been transferred from ESCC to SDNPA ... with an inherent rise in tourism and the issues and opportunities that this brings. The small size of our village communities, with predominantly flint building material, and the beauty of the countryside are dominant factors in our Parish strategy to preserve a varied, locally oriented and progressive rural community.

Housing & Planning Matters	Policy
<p>The Parish consists of small villages and outlying properties, in which flint is the dominant (but not exclusive) building material. Most of the houses have spacious gardens. In recent years there has been a trend towards enlargement of existing houses and very little new build. The proportion of smaller and less expensive housing is declining, which is a common concern - especially as it limits the opportunities for local young people. There is almost universal consensus amongst Parishioners to preserve our environment and community, and the balance of houses and local employment which exists ... but not to the preclusion of selective, small scale and appropriate development which will help to enhance this. There is concern that the Planning Authorities do not take sufficient heed of CVPC opinions and that this has deteriorated further with SDNPA becoming the Planning Authority and subject to Government pressures. There is also general consensus on more specific planning details such as off-street parking, energy efficiency and sustainable construction. Also the loss of permanent housing due to the conversion of residential accommodation to holiday usage.</p>	<p>Support the right of owners to improve their homes: to be of a scale and construction which is in balance and consistent with the village environment.</p> <p>Some limited infill and fringe of village development is feasible for new houses, and conversion of appropriate redundant buildings. Strong preference for flint construction, landscape led, and smaller residences (up to 3 bedrooms) + craft workshops, which have more scope to be affordable for local people. The objective is to preserve a mix of housing as well as local employment opportunity.</p> <p>Holiday accommodation: selective support for <i>some</i> holiday accommodation, but this must not reduce the number and range of housing available for full time residential use.</p> <p>Generally negative policy towards developments outside the Parish but which might impinge upon the quiet rural environment. Organised meetings for more contentious issues.</p>

Climate Change & Resilience

Global warming and its impact on our planet is clearly a major challenge to all levels of society. The Parish Council supports the Government initiative to get to net zero GHG emissions by 2050. Housing stock is largely energy inefficient. In our somewhat remote rural setting, we rely on transport. Actions which can be individually or collectively undertaken are welcome.

Policy
<p>Encourage and support all residences to become individually and collectively more energy efficient, and to support Nature Recovery.</p> <p>Impact on climate change and resilience should be considered in all CVPC policies.</p>

Environment	Policy
<p>The dominant environmental issue in the Parish has been the poor EA maintenance of the Cuckmere River and Cuckmere Haven, and the consequent overtopping of the river at Alfriston and prolonged flooding of the valley. There is a near universal desire to maintain and protect the Parish landscape and environment in its current condition, whilst adapting proactively to the realities of climate change. No development of any nature should be allowed to compromise this. The Parish is proud and defensive of its mixed downland and river valley environment, its landscape, its flint walls and buildings, its mixed community, and grassland, hedges and trees, and its toads and other wildlife! That said this has to be a proactive community in which the variety of local employment is enhanced. This environment and business community is balanced</p>	<p>The rural and mixed agricultural environment particularly in the Cuckmere should be preserved and enhanced for future generations. This requires a balanced and cohesive umbrella policy to include the river (keeping it flowing), tourism demands, car parking, the landscape, flora and fauna, a woodland strategy to contend with Dutch Elm Disease and Ash Die Back, toad crossing, support for local recycling etc..</p> <p>All development should be considered in the light of environmental impact: including dark sky policy.</p>

as it is. Historically, there has been strong opposition to the repeated plans for tidal flooding of the lower Cuckmere to create mudflats and salt marshes (south of A259).

Maintaining an **efficient and unrestricted outflow of the Cuckmere** to the sea is essential. Also, encourage more action to **prevent flooding of higher reaches** of the Cuckmere (north of A259): but where this does occur, to act to quickly dispel flood waters from the river valley. Proactive actions to encourage **intelligent maintenance** of the sea defences and river banks in light of and adapting to climate change. We will continue to be active on the appropriate groups and push for an integrated Plan and long term solution for the river and estuary.

Safety

The District Council requested a strategy towards 'safety' - for which there have fortunately been relatively few issues in the Parish, and feedback from Parishioners overlaps somewhat with transport and communication. Traffic through the village is problematic: in terms of parking and speeding. Recurring fly-tipping along the lanes is problematic.

Policy

Self sufficiency and community awareness is the CVPC policy to general security. Maintain a relationship with Alfriston Neighbourhood Watch and other policing initiatives. Local police invited to Annual Parish Meeting, to occasional social events, and for some drive through/walkabout presence. Similar approach to fly-tipping, parking and traffic related issues.

An Emergency Plan has been formulated - and needs to be reviewed: include flood response measures, especially for access via forest track for West Dean. Continuing relations with Alfriston Emergency Group (AEG).

Tweaking' of existing services to include better road repair, clearance of sightlines on verges etc, and removal of unnecessary signs.

Transport, Access and Communications

The main transport issues concern the speed and volume of traffic through Litlington and Lullington, and inconsiderate visitor car parking in Litlington, Lullington and West Dean especially on public holidays. This has been exacerbated through the Covid pandemic, including the expansion of 'lay-byes' on what had been verges. Traffic often becomes blocked by the number of parked cars. Broadband is much better due to fibre optic connection, except Lullington. Mobile phone reception throughout the Parish has improved, but can still be fragile, which has serious social and commercial implications.

Policy

Parking and speed control: Support of Cuckmere Community Bus. Better and expanded use of the existing car park facilities, with more Friston Forest and Country Park parking capacity and management. Few if any opportunities for provision of new parking for tourists within the villages. Encourage Friston Forest and SSCP to increase their car park capacities and better manage the parking and traffic, especially at peak times. Flexible use of our own cones to limit parking at peak events. No demand for double yellow lines or street lighting. Review of measures to slow down the traffic through the Hams and Litlington especially. Action to prevent verges being converted to lay-byes. Better promotion of annual car park pass.

Access: Limit through traffic (especially large vehicles) using the road through Litlington other than for access. Improved maintenance of roads and verges, but no demand for road improvement - other than 2-way traffic over the Exceat bridge of the A259.

Communication: Fibre optic connection to Lullington. Support for a sensitively sited mobile telecom mast to improve mobile phone reception throughout the valley.

Leisure & Tourism

The landscape, footpaths and bridleways are the main attraction to the Parish, and a draw for visitors. The emphasis has been on quiet and somewhat traditional enjoyment by locals and visitors alike of the varied landscape and resources. The Pub, Tea Gardens and Nursery, and Village Hall are the principal leisure facilities in the villages. The condition of the Tea Gardens & Nursery, and the manner of development around the the Long Man Brewery, are

Policy

Support the existing leisure facilities (pub, tea gardens, brewery, country park etc.) without any dramatic expansion. The sense is that current facilities and visitor numbers are 'in balance' with the overall strategy of 'quiet enjoyment' of landscape. Sustainable tourism is encouraged.

issues which will affect the community in terms of visitor numbers and local employment. The Country Park and its facilities is a major 'honeypot' for visitors, with little historic engagement with the rest of the Parish. SDNPA is the new owner and will re-energise management, which will likely increase visitor numbers but try to spread them better over the year. There are mounting pressures of rising tourist demand and real questions as to how we can respond in a manner to grasp opportunities without compromising our community. Historically there was little desire to encourage more tourists through provision of more car parks, better access or more facilities.

Regular updates and dialogue with SDNPA and Forestry England on all matters, and especially those concerning SSCP and Friston Forest will be welcome and continue to be represented on the Seven Sisters Advisory Group.

Prosperity	Policy
<p>Agriculture and landscape services were the main Parish employment and are still important. There are also a broad range of service sector specialists, craft businesses & artists largely working from home in the Parish. The mix of skills, interests, and revenue sources is robust in the face of economic volatility and positive for the community in terms of social mix and self-sufficiency. Visitor numbers to the valley are growing: bringing with it a mix of opportunities (for income from tourism) but also challenges (from the increase in all traffic (cars, cycles, walkers), and conversion of residential accommodation to holiday usage.</p>	<p>Encourage the mix of employment, and networking within the community - especially as this is consistent with self-sufficiency and sustainable developments.</p> <p>Conversion of selected buildings for small-scale commercial development is encouraged to facilitate our local businesses.</p> <p>Tourism opportunities: policies which embrace these opportunities ... but with balance, so that this community is not swamped by the needs and short term spikes in tourist demand, and also that the focus is on tourism focused on quiet enjoyment of our landscape.</p> <p>Support Litlington Village Hall (LVH), for its use by this community, mainly.</p>

Learning and community	Policy
<p>The local village school and pre-school are in the neighbouring Parish of Alfriston. There are no other formal educational establishments in the Parish. The Village Hall and Churches are resources for learning, which combined with the Pub and an annual programme of Parish events are strong features of our Parish community which are well supported. The Country Park has enormous educational potential, but this is largely directed at visitors.</p>	<p>Support all of the community resources including the Hall, Churches, magazine, LVH website, etc. Encourage further use (and attendance) of the Hall as a hub for Parish events such as a nursery, youth club, coffee morning, evening events (e.g. transition), CVPC meetings, music, yoga etc.</p> <p>Promote contact with the Country Park and the School - which are somewhat distant but still relevant to the village heart of the Parish.</p>

Health and Social Care	Policy
<p>The Parish is a modest user of District Health Services and Social Care, but has no facilities within the Parish - apart from the Churches. The local GP Surgery and Dispensary is in Alfriston, but during Covid only the dispensary was open. Selective fund raising is undertaken for the District Hospital. St Wilfred's Hospice and St Stephen's Night Shelter amongst other local charities.</p>	<p>Support the re-opening of Alfriston as a surgery and pharmacy. Encourage maintenance of other District services, and avoid further centralisation of NHS facilities.</p> <p>Local networking for community care.</p> <p>Review feasibility of Cuckmere Community bus to add the Alfriston surgery on some of its 'routes'.</p>

Other	Policy
<p>The villages have their own strong identity and community spirit, but are also cohesive in being a part of one Parish.</p>	<p>Discourage further Parish mergers, but if unavoidable then promote affiliation with Milton Street and/or Wilmington, or Alfriston - rather than East Dean, which is an even more separate community. More communication with Long Man and Alfriston: especially between the Clerks.</p>