

REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL TO THE 2003 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SEDLESCOMBE PARISH MEETING

This year's report is being presented under the five aims of the Sedlescombe Parish Plan 2002 which can be seen in more detail in the Parish Plan summary document that has been delivered to you.

Aim No.1. To achieve an Informed and Participating Sedlescombe Community.

- Welcome pack delivered to people moving into the village. Expanded with bus timetables and United Reformed Church information.
- Sedlescombe Directory published in 2002 and again in 2003 listing village organisations and businesses.
- All council and committee meetings open to the public with open forum before monthly council meeting.
- Quarterly bulletin delivered with newspapers until this delivery stopped at the end of 2002. Other ways of making the bulletin available to all are being tried.
- Monthly e-mail council newsletter introduced.
- Website. New Sedlescombe community website started with an A21 update page. It is planned to extend the website to include information from the parish council, organisations and businesses in Sedlescombe. Many thanks to Jane and Dan Garner for setting up the website for us.
- Parish Plan – carried out a series of surveys. Document completed on time at the end of 2002. Only the third to be completed in East Sussex.
- New format for Parish Assembly tried in 2002 and to be repeated in 2003. Local businesses and organisations are invited to provide a table around the edges of the hall to inform those attending about what is on offer. Refreshments have also been introduced.
- Village of the Year competition entered for the first time in 2002 with assistance from, and participation of, some of the village's organisations and businesses. This was very successful and Sedlescombe was declared the winner of the East Sussex competition. In the regional competition that followed against West Sussex, Kent, Wiltshire, Surrey, Dorset and Hampshire, Sedlescombe won the Environment Award. Many thanks to all who took part in the presentations to the judges. A cheque for £375 was received.
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 – this Act requires all local authorities to allow open access to council documents. This was adopted by the Parish Council in 2002 and many documents are available if you contact the Clerk.

Aim No.2. To achieve a Safe and Healthy Sedlescombe Community

- Safer Villages Scheme. This Scheme is a pilot project under the Rother Crime & Disorder Partnership and has gone from strength to strength during the year. Many thanks are due to Ralph and Jean Dellow, Sally Martin, Reg and Pauline Glew for all their voluntary work helping to make local people feel much safer in their own homes. The Scheme has been financed to date by the Partnership with the Parish Council managing the accounts. As well as installing locks and other security equipment in houses and engraving property, some smoke alarms have been installed. In addition Rother Lifeline has been promoted and subsidised. Members of the Scheme are working with Sgt Mears of Battle Police Station to produce details of "best practice" for Neighbourhood Watch organisations regarding meter readers and bogus callers.
- Highways matters. The Parish Council has liaised with the County Council to achieve replacement of missing signs and the painting of road priority markings in Stream Lane. In response to a request from the Parish Council, the County Council installed a dropped kerb to help the elderly cross from one side of The Street to the Village Green and thence to the shop. The writing of initial letters to householders whose hedges are overgrowing footways or roads is a task that the Parish Council has taken over from East Sussex County Council. We do ask for your co-operation in this matter for everyone's safety.
- Road safety. The speed of vehicles in Sedlescombe and in the surrounding country lanes is of great concern to residents. Pressure is being placed through the Rother Association of Local Councils on MPs to introduce both lower rural speed limits and traffic calming measures.
- Mobile police stations. The idea of mobile police stations has been researched by Councillor Dellow. If the Police can find funding, a mobile police station is likely to be introduced in 2003/4.
- Crime & Disorder Act 1998, Section 17. It is now a legal requirement that all local authorities consider the implications of this act when taking any decision. This includes considering whether a development would increase the likelihood of a crime being committed.
- Rural policing. It has not been a good year for rural policing of this area with our community beat officer on long-term sick leave. From 1 April this year, however, the results of a Force

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Operational Review will be implemented and we expect a considerable improvement in Police coverage locally. The new District Commander, Chief Inspector Bruce Mathews, has visited the Parish Council twice since the beginning of the year, has attended Sedlescombe's Crime & Safety Evening on 19 March and plans to attend the Parish Assembly. He has also provided comments on relevant actions under the "Safe and Healthy" category in the Parish Plan.

- Community wardens. The possibility of employing a community warden for Sedlescombe has received support in principle from the Parish Council. Funding is being sought by the Crime & Disorder Partnership. If it goes ahead, some finance will need from local Council Taxpayers.
- Playgrounds. A new fence along the length of the river near the tennis courts and playground was completed in 2002 with help from a Rural Development Area grant. Another, much larger, grant from the East Sussex Children's Fund has given the Council the opportunity to carry out essential work at the Riverside Playground to replace the safety surfacing and some equipment. A new system for weekly inspection and maintenance of our three playgrounds, introduced by the Parish Council a year ago and shared between John F Cook and parish councillors, has been very successful.
- Responsible dog ownership. The subject of dog fouling appears regularly on the Parish Council agenda with complaints from residents and the Sports Association. Three dog waste bins have been provided and are emptied weekly on behalf of the Parish Council. Extra signs have been installed at the sportsfield to remind walkers to collect dog waste and to place it in one of the bins. Unfortunately, dog walkers have been accessing the sportsfield via the gap beside the car park gate and allowing pets to foul the sportsfield. For this reason, the gap has now been closed off.
- Risk assessment of parish council property and land. The Council has carried out a risk assessment of its property and will keep this updated along with its assets register.
- New GP arrangements. The revised surgery appointment arrangements are being monitored by the Council but, to date, appear to be successful.

Aim No.3. To help provide Amenities and Services in Sedlescombe

- Public footpaths and bridleways. Although the Parish Council has not been quite as active this year regarding rights of way, it has been necessary to complain strongly to East Sussex County Council about maintenance of bridges on our paths, some of which have badly fallen into disrepair. The lack of maintenance by the County Council is blamed on the lack of funding. The Parish Council would like to have a small group of people willing to be trained by the County Council to carry out minor maintenance work such as clearance. The Council welcomes the new permissive path created in the summer of 2002 on the Pestalozzi Estate.
- East View Terrace kickabout area. The refurbishment of the kickabout area was completed this year and, for the most part, the area has withstood attempts to damage it, apart from the lighting of frequent fires which is not only tiresome but also could be very dangerous. The voluntary contribution of several residents, particularly in building and painting the shelter, is much appreciated.
- Skateboard area. Since this subject received support at last year's Parish Assembly, several sites have been considered for erection of a ramp. The Council is grateful to Mr David Blowey for agreeing to allocate a piece of land near to the kickabout area for this purpose. The Youth Projects Forum is undertaking fund-raising for supply and long-term maintenance of the project.
- Pumphouse repairs. Maintenance of the pumphouse is considered very important by local people according to one of this year's surveys and no-one nowadays suggests it should be pulled down as they did at the Parish Assembly exactly forty years ago. It does, however, cost a lot of money to maintain. This year, the stone pillars have been refurbished by an expert at the cost of just over £1500.
- ICT suite support. The Parish Council has donated £750 towards this community asset.
- Street nameplates. The Council has liaised with Rother District Council to replace a few more nameplates and provide some new ones.
- Tennis courts. The courts continue to play well and we would like to see more use made of them. We have had two new boards made for the courts to give details of hiring.
- Sportsfield. A major clearance of the ditch has been undertaken. The sportsfield kissing gate has been stolen.
- Broadband internet access. BT will consider provision of broadband only if enough interest is registered. If you are interested, register on www.btopenworld.com/votebroadband.

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- Dumping of rubbish near garages at East View Terrace. The Council has pressed for action following several complaints to the Housing Associations about the unsatisfactory situation near the garages and will continue to do so until the problem ceases.
- Clearance of path between old and new East View. After a little persuasion, Orbit Housing Association cleared the path enabling residents to use it again.
- Financial support for Jubilee Fete. The Council paid for the hire of tables and chairs for the Jubilee Fete and plans to do the same for 2003.
- Support for community bus. The Council has agreed in principle to join a group of parishes in applying for grant aid to help purchase a replacement community bus.
- Mobile library. The mobile library which calls in Sedlescombe every other Friday from 10:15 to 10:50 am at Park Shaw is under threat because of lack of use.
- Village sign. The sign was repainted in 2002 by Julia Chapman and the prizewinning plaques by John F Cook.

Aim No.4. To support Business and Rural Employment in Sedlescombe

- Tourist information board in car park. The board, which was the final item purchased through the Rural Tourism Initiative, was installed in the car park in 2002.
- Advertising of local businesses in Directory. We are grateful to those businesses who contributed towards the printing of the Directory making it possible to issue this useful booklet to everyone's benefit.

Aim No.5. To protect and enhance Sedlescombe's Built and Natural Environment

- Appointment of Council's Environmental Officer. The Council appointed Councillor Ralph Dellow as its first Environmental Officer in 2002. He has been working with Rother officers to encourage the recycling of waste and saving of energy locally. This has included a visit from the eco trailer where free low energy light bulbs were given out and the production of a Sedlescombe waste and energy leaflet. Another project Councillor Dellow has been involved with is safeguarding the nesting sites in Hurst Lane of the now nationally rare bird, the skylark.
- New Environmental Group. Councillor Dellow is Chairman of a new parish council advisory environmental committee with members from the village. One of this committee's first achievements was the drawing up of a litter collection schedule covering most of the parish.
- Objection to Hurst Green Parish in Action's alternative proposal to bring the A21 along the B2244, skirting Sedlescombe. There is no doubt that the village hall has never been so full since it was built when, at very short notice, many objectors came together to protest about Hurst Green's proposal. The Parish Council unanimously resolved to oppose this alternative route.
- Use of e-technology. The Council has welcomed Rother District Council's use of e-technology, particularly the introduction of the planning website. However, there is still room for improvement and the Parish Council has tried to encourage this approach to save paper and postage.
- Dogs in Red Barn Field Nature Park. It has been decided that, in order to safeguard the wildlife, dogs will not be allowed into the Nature Park

Plans for the future

Aim No.2 Provision of a new dog bin; Encouraging School to set up walking bus and produce a School Transport Plan.

Aim No.3 Refurbishment of pumphouse seats; Extension of sportsfield car park; Contribution towards new sports pavilion; Repairs to bus shelter.

Aim No.5 Red Barn Field Nature Park hedge laying; Roadstone-surfaced path at Red Barn Field Nature Park; "Wildlife" day in village hall; Booklet on Sedlescombe's wildlife and trees; Wildlife Management Plan for Churchyard; Encouraging children to take part in environmental activities; Replacement of two litter bins; Quiet lanes introduction and new footway for Sandrock Hill (neither appear likely at present),