

**SEDLSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2003/4
based on the aims of Sedlescombe Parish Plan 2002**

AIM NO.1 TO ACHIEVE AN INFORMED AND PARTICIPATING SEDLSCOMBE COMMUNITY



With the launching of the www.sedlescombe.org website last year, residents can see the Parish Council Agendas, Minutes, Reports and Accounts on line at any time. Printed copies of Agenda and Minutes are still available in the village library on Tuesday afternoons and available from the Clerk. Agendas of all meetings can be seen on the noticeboard outside the Post Office.

For the first time, quarterly copies of The Bulletin have been delivered to each house in the parish thanks to volunteers. The Sedlescombe Directory was reprinted in 2003 and is included in a Welcome Pack available for every new household.

The Parish Council remains in regular contact with the Police, the Fire Authority, East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council, Orbit Housing Association and Rother Homes. Following several weeks of unauthorised camping at East View Terrace, the Parish Council and Orbit Housing Association have met with other agencies to try to find the right solutions.

Following the highlighting of various problems for people living at East View Terrace, the Parish Council arranged a series of meetings to allow concerns to be expressed. The Housing Associations are now working with residents on a new East View Residents' Forum that follows from the Council's Wine & Cheese Evening in February. Funding was generously provided by the Sedlescombe Societies Association.

Residents are always encouraged to participate in community life. As mentioned in the Chairman's letter, the Safer Villages Scheme, the revitalised Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, the Environment Advisory Committee, surveying footpaths and bridleways in preparation for maintenance and working on a Sedlescombe Traffic Plan. have all involved many village people this year. We are now looking for volunteers for occasional delivery to households, participation in the Parish Emergency Plan and running the Village library.

For two years, businesses and organisations have accepted the Council's invitation to arrange table displays at the Annual Assembly and this is to be repeated this year. This gives other villagers the opportunity to see what goes on in Sedlescombe. Assembly attendance over the last two years has averaged over 90 people.

AIM NO.2 TO ACHIEVE A SAFE AND HEALTHY SEDLSCOMBE COMMUNITY

This is an area where we can be justly proud of what has been achieved this year. Thanks to the Safer Village Group, 117 houses have had home security visits and many have had locks and memo-minders fitted or engraving carried out free of charge. Funding has been provided by the Rother Crime & Disorder Partnership and volunteers have given their time freely to make this venture so successful.

Following the withdrawal of our community beat police officer, our rural residents have felt isolated and sometimes worried about the lack of police cover. Much time has been spent over the last year, particularly by the Safer Village Group, in considering how this gap could be filled. We are delighted to be able to announce that we will very soon have our own Police Community Support Officer employed to work in Sedlescombe under our guidance. This is another great success for Sedlescombe which is the first parish in Rother to take this step. The scheme will be used as a pilot for other interested parishes who are currently being encouraged to go down the same route.

The speed and weight of traffic through all rural villages and country lanes is ever increasing, causing considerable distress and concern to pedestrians and other users. We have supported Catsfield Parish Council's speed limit campaign. The County Council is now encouraging parish councils to contribute to a package of measures for villages such as electronic speed indicators and volunteer speed gun training. A new action group has been formed this year with the aim of drawing up a Sedlescombe Traffic Plan.

We would like to see some of our country lanes designated as "quiet lanes", for instance Hurst Lane and Cottage Lane. However, the County Council has still to be persuaded to designate any lanes in East Sussex as "quiet" giving pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders priority over cars in those lanes.

The Government decision on the upgrading of parts of the A21 was postponed last July and we now expect to hear about the Flimwell to Robertsbridge preferred route sometime this year. It has also been promised that proposals on the Robertsbridge to Baldslow section will be published.



The Parish Council has encouraged the School to consider setting up walking buses for the children. The construction of a path through Red Barn Field should provide a safe alternative route to school.

People are still parking without due consideration in the Village Green slip road, outside the Doctors' Surgery, near The Street's junction with Balcombe Green, opposite the car sales area and outside the Clockhouse Bistro. The other parking issue in the Village has been in the Pestalozzi drive where we are not allowed to park at any time. In an attempt to end this practice, the Parish Council has worked with the Pestalozzi International Village to install posts along the drive.



Another perpetual problem area is dog fouling. Some people are willing to go halfway by clearing up after their pets but, instead of disposing the bag in one of the three dog bins or in their own dustbin, they throw it in or over the hedge. Sometimes into someone's garden or into a field with animals. This, unbelievable as it sounds, is true.

The broken glass situation at the under-10s East View playground has improved following the Parish Council's threat to close and remove the playground altogether. However, the use of the playground by teenagers, especially at night, has caused disturbance to neighbours. One of our Police Community Support Officer's tasks will be to see that the under-10 byelaw is adhered to.

The Council is grateful to the farmer who has offered a piece of land adjacent to the kickabout area for the installation of a skateboard ramp. Sedlescombe Youth Projects Forum, working in conjunction with Rother Homes and Orbit Housing Association, has found the funding for the ramp and is working on charity registration so that it can take over the control from the Parish Council.

AIM NO.3 TO HELP PROVIDE AMENITIES AND SERVICES IN SEDLESCOMBE

Thanks to the expertise of John F Cook, the Pumphouse seats are looking resplendent again. Both litter bins next to the Pumphouse have been replaced by Rother District Council.

During the year, John F Cook has also been unstinting in his removal of graffiti as soon as it appears on the bus shelter.

Planning permission has been obtained for a new sports pavilion and extended car parking. Funding is being sought and we will be very pleased when these important amenities can be provided.

The Parish Council has continued to provide grant aid where it is needed. For example, the Sports Association was helped to pay the bill for repairing the roof of the old pavilion and the Sedlescombe

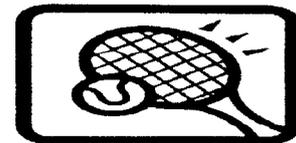
Societies Association were helped with the cost of table and chair hire for the Fete. The usual annual grant was made to the Churchyard Fund. Donations have also been made to the Sussex Playing Fields Association, the Mountfield Heritage Group, the Rother Rural Trust and the Sedlescombe Lunch Club. In turn, the Council is grateful for receipt of funding from the WARR Partnership, Rye Bay Countryside Rangers, Sacred Sussex, Rother District Council and the Sedlescombe Societies Association. We would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution made by the WARR Partnership Rural Development Area over the last ten years that has provided funding for many Village projects. This scheme has now ended and we wish our contact, Liz Downs, success in her new job.

A number of footpath bridges and stiles have been completely replaced by the County Council this year following a concerted Parish Council campaign. The lack of County Council staff to carry out footpaths work is worrying and the Parish Council has responded to its Environment Advisory Committee's suggestion that local volunteers should be trained to undertake some of the workload. A scheme is being devised.

Some youngsters would like to see the Youth Club restarted but this is unlikely to happen without volunteers and a professional youth leader. Orbit and the Youth Projects Forum are considering starting a Dreamscheme in Sedlescombe whereby youngsters can undertake work for which they earn points that can eventually be turned into trips out or other treats. The Parish Council has helped towards the training of voluntary leaders.

The Parish Council has realised the importance of Broadband and is pleased that the BT trigger level was reached at the beginning of February. Jeff Mainwood has been the Parish Council's representative where necessary.

Another success was for the Tennis Club who obtained a Lottery "Awards for All" grant so free tennis coaching can be provided for local children. The Parish Council has allowed free use of the tennis courts for this purpose and it is hoped that coaching sessions will be arranged soon.



The public made good use of the courts during the wonderful summer of 2003 resulting in an increase in income. However, at current rates, there will be insufficient money in the Fund to carry out resurfacing etc. when the time comes and it has therefore been decided to raise the public hiring fee from 1 April 2004 to £5/court/hour. We are extremely grateful to John and Jenny Mainwood and their staff in the Post Office for coping with the hire of the courts. We couldn't manage without them.

AIM NO.4 TO SUPPORT APPROPRIATE LOCAL BUSINESS AND SUITABLE RURAL EMPLOYMENT IN SEDLESCOMBE

The Parish Council's main opportunity to support local business is through its comments on planning applications. This year the Sedlescombe Vineyard has been supported in its application for a certificate of lawful use for caravans and also Swift-Lite Charcoal Company for extension to its factory. The loss of a possible employment area in the heart of the Village was one of the reasons the Parish Council supported a refusal of the proposed residential building at the rear of Pumphouse Yard. The Parish Council has also taken every opportunity to support the Village Shop and to let everyone know how important its future is to us all.

One businessman that the Parish Council did not support, however, was the person who sought to gain permission to fly his helicopter from Spilstead Airstrip and Highfield Plantation. Both the first and second applications were refused by Rother.



AIM NO.5 TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE SEDLESCOMBE'S BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

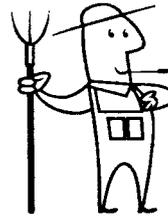
The Parish Council's Planning Committee has continued to meet to discuss all Sedlescombe planning applications. A member visits each site where necessary and makes a report to the Committee. An application that has caused interest in the Village is one to build seven properties on the site of Park View, The Street. As the site is within the Sedlescombe development boundary, the Parish Council supported approval. However, as the proposed access road would cross part of a Site of Conservation Interest, the application was not supported by Rother planners.

The Parish Council has considered and commented on the Draft Planning Strategy and the Draft Local Plan. Although the majority of objections that it has made in the past have been answered satisfactorily, two remain outstanding. These concern Sedlescombe's suggestion that there is a need for a "strategic gap" between Hastings and Sedlescombe and the Parish Council's view that building affordable housing outside the normal development boundaries should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where people need to live in these areas because of their employment, or last employment. It is also considered that affordable housing should have access to public transport.

Rother Planners have also consulted the Parish Council on the introduction of a Conservation Area in the centre of Sedlescombe. Once established,

this area will receive added protection. The closing date for comments has been extended to allow discussion, if necessary, at the Parish Assembly.

The flower meadow at Red Barn Field Nature Park



was a lovely sight last summer with a good number of butterflies, grasshoppers, crickets, dragonflies and the beautiful day-flying moth, the Six-Spot Burnet. Although to some the meadow looks as if the weeds are just left to

fend for themselves, quite a lot of work has to be done to remove those that would take over if left to their own devices. Work was also undertaken early in the year to clear the pond of weed and we were rewarded by its use by a brood of Mallard ducklings. More work will be needed this year. We are grateful to the East Sussex County Council Rangers who have spent several weeks laying the tall hedge between the Field and Balcombe Green. The Parish Council used this event to remind householders of the importance of hedges in providing valuable habitat for wildlife and useful wildlife corridors as birds and animals move from one place to another.

Dr Patrick Roper, who is part of the Council's Advisory Environment Committee, has written a wildlife management plan for the churchyard and its environs designed to preserve what is there and to improve the habitat for the future. It has been accepted by the Church PCC and some ideas have already been turned into actions with the design of an interpretation board and the clearance of a large amount of rhododendrons. The next project is a leaflet to let visitors know what is there.

Grass verges throughout the Village are being damaged by cars parking on them. This is not only unsightly but also makes the verges difficult for our mowing contractor to deal with. We would ask that, for everyone's benefit, parking on verges is avoided.

Dr Roper has given a talk on the value of composting using two compost bins purchased by the Parish Council. The Advisory Environment Committee has been trying to find ways of recycling cardboard and has been discussing with the School how its waste can be recycled. We are grateful for the large number of "litter wardens" in the Village and to John Roberts for organising them.

On several occasions during the year, the recycling bins at Brede Lane car park have been overflowing for several days. The Parish Council has passed complaints to Rother, the responsible body. From mid-January, a new contractor has been managing the recycling and we are assured that these problems should not arise again.
