

CONFIDENTIAL - SENSITIVE

BEXHILL WILD DOMESDAY PROJECT – UPDATE

Introduction

The project is proceeding well, with meetings and research gathering pace. I understand you would like me to do a presentation to the Town Council in October?

Formal Meetings

I have had formal meetings with:

- **East Sussex County Council**

A detailed face-to-face meeting on grant funding was held with ESCC Grants Officer Veronique Poutrel. Please see Appendix 1.

- **The Environment Agency (online):**

Louise Parker

Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme – Senior Advisor

Partnership & Strategic Overview Team – East Sussex

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Louise explained that the Environment Agency did not intend to conserve the coastline past Cooden Beach. The rest of it in St Marks Ward and along our sea front was entirely down to Rother DC. The sea level was expected to rise between 1 and 2 feet in the next 25 years or so and by 4 feet in the next 100 years. However, figures are changing all the time due to the melting of Greenland and Himalayan glaciers. Furthermore, storm surges, and high winds and tides can combine to make Bexhill Sea Front liable to flooding. Since it will take around 25 years for the local water companies to find a way to process sewage instead of dumping it into the sea, there is a small risk that raw sewage will be thrown onto the sea front. This has been discussed with Rother (see below).

I am preparing a sea level rise PDF for the public to be put on the project website. The key aspect of coastal defence is as follows:

The only protection for Eastbourne to Pevensey is central English Channel shingle. Because Beachy Head blocks the longshore drift of stones, Eastbourne has to pay continually for dredging of shingle from mid-channel banks. This is sprayed onto the beaches. The Environment Agency strategy is to continue with shingle into the long term. All the time they do so, the longshore drift will come to Bexhill beaches free of charge. The moment they decide they cannot afford it any longer and opt for one of the hard strategies at the Appendix 3 to this update, then the shingle from Bexhill beaches will be gradually stripped out. You can see this happening at Rye Harbour. On the Pett level side, there are huge banks of shingle, but the harbour wall stops it from moving to Camber. So at Camber there is only fine sand, easily eroded. Bexhill needs to have a long-term strategy if the Environment Agency moves from shingle to concrete to save Eastbourne.

- **De La Warr Pavilion (face-to-face)**

Sally Ann Lycett – External; Affairs Manager

We talked about sea level rises and the forthcoming £15 million from Rother DC and the architects. Sally said they were not going to put in a plan for sea level rises themselves. They would rely wholly on their international architects because these architects were legally obliged to ensure that all aspects of climate change were included in the planned refurbishment and alterations.

I explained about my idea of having canvas screens with eyebolts along the front of the homes on the sea from near the De La Warr, which could have images of artworks on them. These screens would fix to the railings and keep the stones from coming onto the front, saving winter sweeping, and to a certain extent keep the sea from going in the front gardens. She was happy with the idea.

- **Rother District Council**

At the specific request of Cllr Doug Oliver, I gave a 30-minute slide presentation face-to-face in Leader's Office Town Hall, followed by one hour of detailed discussion with the following people present:

Cllr Doug Oliver
Cllr Hazel Timpe
Dr Lucie Bolton
Elize Manning
Cllr Arren Rathbone Ariel
Deborah Kenneally

Items discussed were:

Sea level rise, sewage, drought, water bowsers, tree and hedge planting (see below), volunteer wardens, state of wildlife in Combe Valley, the wildlife food chain, the hydrology of Combe Valley and the need to plan for flooding amelioration when the tide gates are shut for longer (especially for Bexhill Road homes), special protection for Galley Hill (see below), joint grant bids with ring-fenced money for Bexhill Town Council projects if approved for Year Two.

Three key issues were talked through in great detail:

Galley Hill

After my appeal to Rother DC to preserve Galley Hill, then RDC asked me to apply for an extension to the SSSI so that the beach huts project would not go ahead. This was to me as an individual with local knowledge of Galley Hill wildlife for the last ten years, and with them as the landowner, not as the Domesday Project Manager. I have therefore applied to Natural England on behalf of Rother DC for an extension of the SSSI from Combe Valley's existing status to cover Galley Hill because of the high value landscape, rare bees and migratory birds. An initial reply from the Natural England team is expected within 40 days from now. Rother have agreed not to go ahead with beach huts. This despite being some £3 million pounds short of money and with detailed concerns about the future mentioned by Cllr Oliver. Rother DC is eating into its reserves.

Combe Valley flooding

I told Rother that the Environment Agency (EV) had asked me to write a paper on Combe Valley flooding showing how it affected the wildlife, farmers and local peoples' homes, the A259 trunk road and Bulverhythe. I have written this and sent it and it is receiving consideration by the local EV team. I recommended that pumps be installed and that a radio-controlled weir be installed. This is all outside of Bexhill's area as far as remedy is concerned but it affects all the wards next to Combe Valley, so it is a dual thing and vital to Bexhill long-term. This is because the water table will rise. I have also updated the Minister of Transport because of the threat to the A259.

Hedges

The current government and Rother Planning system did not require a developer to replant/replace hedges locally if they could find a carbon offset somewhere else in England. As a consequence, it could happen that Bexhill development sites lose all their hedges, wildlife and pollinator habitats including the hedges at Worsham building site for 1,200 homes. However, when I highlighted this as a concern, I received welcome confirmation that the Rother Environment officers were watching the developers like hawks to ensure that hedges are not stripped out unnecessarily or if they are then they are replaced with a ten percent increase in hedges at each building location overall and not carbon offset elsewhere.

A further meeting with me has been arranged at the request of Cllr Oliver and Dr Lucie Bolton for 7th September at the De la Warr.

Cllr Oliver has written to me commending my presentation.

- **Beach Garden**

I met several times with ex-Cllr Lynn Langlands to discuss and plan the Beach Garden at the Cooden end of the sea front. I wrote the specification for the planting and the project has been approved by Rother Planning. Around 50% of the funding has been obtained by the Bexhill Community Group. Lynn has a copy of Appendix 1 to this update.

- **Maritime Centre**

I discussed the progress of the Maritime Centre with the project manager Raymond Konyn. The Sovereign Light Platform lighthouse has been secured from RNLI. I am keeping Raymond up to date with science reports and he has an information feed from the United Nations.

- **Rye Harbour Discovery Centre**

I discussed with Dr Barry Yates the way that the Discovery Centre has been raised on legs to ensure that sea level rises do not flood the shop or rooms and displays. This might be taken on board by Raymond in his planning. Certainly some kind of barrier is needed here.

- **Combe Valley Community Interest Company managing agent – Groundwork South**

A meeting with Emam Ramsden is planned but she has Covid at present.

- **Friends of Combe Valley**

Peter Clarke BEM, chair of the charity, has received a full briefing on the Domesday Project from me.

- **Bexhill-OSM**

Face to face and online meetings have been held with Alexis Marwick concerning the electronic map for the website and a separate layer of the map showing the Rother DC tree preservation orders.

- **Sussex Police**

Chief Constable Jo Shiner and Chief Inspector Paul Nellis
Staff Officer to Chief Constable Jo Shiner

Because I know the Chief Constable personally, I asked her to find out what the stance was for the police if the sea level were to rise so high that homes and lives were threatened. Would the police remove people from their homes to save their lives whether they wanted to be saved or not – or would they leave it up to the Town Council and emergency services such as fire brigade?

The reply at Appendix 2 shows that the police are not completely sure where their responsibilities lie. A further discussion is to take place. However, the Environment Agency state that they will have to protect 10,000 homes currently at direct sea flood risk from Eastbourne to Cooden Beach without forcibly moving anyone from their homes. It is still not clear if Cooden Beach hotel itself is to be protected by the Environment Agency or Rother DC as it is right on the EV responsibility boundary and further info is being requested on this key issue.

The key here is planned resilience and I suggest that the Town Council enters talks with Rother DC to ensure that enough emergency measures are in place long-term.

Informal Meetings

All Bexhill-on-Sea Town Councillors have been asked by email to meet with me for informal talks about their ward. Due to their commitments, only two councillors could meet together.

I have received replies from the following councillors:

Cllr Paul Plim – meeting arranged.

Cllr Lynn Brailsford – wants an overview report of Collington Ward before meeting – this is being prepared.

Cllr Bryan Clasby – not available until October.

Cllr Claire Baldry and Cllr Ell Gibson – joint meeting arranged.

Cllr Julie Norris – wants to be briefed by email.

Cllr Connor Winter – meeting arranged.

Cllr Nigel Jacklin – meeting arranged at Normans Bay to discuss Dark Skies and other issues.

No-one else has replied as yet. So the Wards that are interacting with me are:

Central, Sackville, Collington, Sidley, Kewhurst, St Marks.

There has been no reply or contact with Old Two and Worsham, Pebsham and St Michaels or St Stephens. I don't know why this is.

Conclusion

You asked me to report today:

- *Informal meetings/feedback from ward-level counsellors on people's perspectives on climate change, wildlife and landscape conservation, and anti-drought measures.*

Much has been done and the next meeting on 7th with Rother will determine the drought equipment requirements. This is because we still have not taken over Parks & Gardens, so the approach has to be joint.

- *What local groups are highly regarded by the counsellors for their contributions towards improving the ward's quality of life?*

This is ongoing with some groups known and some still to find out when I meet with each counsellor.

- *How did your meetings go with each of these groups as you introduced this project and how many potential volunteers were identified who would contribute if Year 2 of the project moves forward?*

I suggest that we have another town meeting in St Barnabas to get application from volunteers; either that or you give me permission to ask counsellors to ask their resident to volunteer. I suggest we agree a specification for volunteers and a **training programme** that includes how to use plant and bird identification apps and to enter findings on iRecord NBN. A list of groups is being prepared once the meetings have been completed.

Lastly, I would like your permission to submit a list of joint grant bids with Rother for equipment and direct projects to the Town Council. These would include:

- Purchase of water bowsters of various types
- Improvements to the flow and ecology of Sidley Stream
- Enhanced water catchment to Gillham Wood and Collington Wood
- Water butts for residents
- Pollinating plants for residents
- Canvas panels for protecting the sea front in winter.
- Hedge planting
- Conservation of the exceptionally rare *Dolomedes plantarius* Great Raft spiders in a Bexhill ward of Combe Valley.
- Bat boxes and bird boxes
- Grants for local volunteer organisations to help with woodland and path clearance.

Please come back with any questions.

Kind regards

David EP Dennis BA (Hons) FCIPD AFRHS LCGI RAF
Bexhill Wild Domesday Project Manager

NOTES

The following web information is vital to the overall project:

Age of population

We have to consider that many people expect the public gardens to be formal and so make adverse comments about the sea front Rother DC flower meadow, despite its great value as a local pollinator.

The ward with the highest percentage of total population aged 65 years is Sackville at 44.8% (the highest in East Sussex), followed by Collington (43.6%), Kewhurst (38.1%) and St Marks' (35%). This compares to the East Sussex average of 22.6%.

The Ward Map

This map link is good for an overview and the Project website map will be updated over time.

<https://rdcpublish.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2020/03/Bexhill-Wards-Map.pdf>

The Town Profile

https://rdcpublish.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2020/01/Bexhill_Town_Profile.pdf

The Comprehensive Information about trees

Tree Planting Plan

<https://www.treesforcities.org/downloads/files/Bexhill-Tree-Planting-Strategy.pdf>

Warning: False Wildlife Identification

<https://www.landscapebritain.co.uk/woodland-wildlife/east-sussex/collington-wood/>

I am investigating this site. This site should not be used as it contains pseudo-information. For example it says there are red squirrels within five miles of Collington. It does have some accurate information and not all its links work.

Rother Plan

<https://www.rother.gov.uk/climate-emergency/what-were-doing-as-a-council/what-weve-achieved-so-far/our-climate-action-april-2022-march-2023/>

Appendix 1 – ESCC Funding advice

Hi David

It was lovely meeting you on Friday and hearing more about your plans and also your interest in history!

Looking at [Community Supporters](#), it seems that as a charity they have been quite successful in securing funding, so some of the funders I mentioned, they have already tapped into. This includes Chalk Cliff, lottery, even [Rother Lottery](#). It would be useful to know what funders they've already applied to, so that I can send different ones. Funders for the Domesday project listed below are possibilities if they don't already know about these.

You should start applying later on in the year, as it might be a bit too early now. However, it is worth familiarising yourself with the funders and their requirements now.

If the **Town Council** were to apply it could go for:

[National Lottery Grants for Heritage – £3,000 to £10,000 | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) - nature (for example, habitats, species and geology) is one of the types of heritage they fund. They have larger grant programmes if you needed to access more.

There might also be some landfill funding, but you'll need to check that the postcode is eligible: [Our Projects | The Veolia Environmental Trust \(veoliatrust.org\)](#), [Rebuilding Biodiversity - Biffa Award \(biffa-award.org\)](#)

Should it be a **voluntary organisation**, not necessarily a charity, the following would be possible:

[Chalk Cliff Trust](#) is the one you should go for first – the form is one side of A4 and grants are up to £5,000. You should find out within days.

[Sussex Community Foundation](#) are another one that provides grants of up to £10,000, this one has deadlines, the next one is 8th September.

There would be others but as funds open/close, better to look into it again in 2/3 months time. Other funders can also be identified through [East Sussex 4 Community](#), a free to use database.

For information on grant/funding for students for your PHD: [Student grants, bursaries and scholarships - Save the Student](#)

I also mentioned free seeds from the BBC, maybe next year? [New BBC Let It Grow gardening campaign launched - BBC Newsround](#)

I think that was it, if there is anything I have forgotten, do let me know! 😊

Kind regards.

Veronique

Véronique Poutrel

External Funding Manager

Planning and Reporting, Finance

01273 482859 | 07786 171 418

eastsussex.gov.uk/community/funding

*My External Funding working days are normally Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays,
other days I work on MBOS Engagement*



Appendix 2 – Police Response

**Response by Patrick Hepple
Environmental and Sustainability Manager
Surrey and Sussex Police
Estates & Facilities Department**

Rising sea levels and coastal erosion are unfortunate environmental impacts that will worsen as we continue to feel the effects of climate change. In the UK, various governmental bodies and local authorities are responsible for safeguarding the coastline and maintaining Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs), involving collaboration among multiple stakeholders.

Sussex has several SMPs, covering most of the populated coastal areas. The South Foreland to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan oversees the area from Eastbourne to Cooden Beach. If this is maintained it will ensure that no movement seawards or landwards should occur in this area.

Like most effects of climate change, coastal erosion is a slow process which occurs gradually over years. If Rother District Council do not have funds to upkeep the shoreline management plan, there may be a further risk of erosion in these areas which could risk communities properties. However, I don't believe there is a significant risk to life as coastal erosion is gradual, instances of sudden collapses are rare and often in areas which have been identified as being at risk for years.

The science has improved massively and now most environmental searches you purchase when buying a property, identify coastal erosion as a risk to property and its value.

In my opinion, I question if this is a police issue? The role of the police is to maintain public order, enforce laws, prevent and investigate crimes. It is to respond to emergencies not to mitigate the effects of climate change and the loss of value to certain properties.

I believe that climate change, environmental decline and competition for resources is one the major threats to policing and this is echoed by the college of policing. As a police force we should focus on increasing our resilience to climate change rather than protecting certain areas from gradual coastal erosion, this should lie with the EA and local authority.

I am more than willing to summarise this further if you believe necessary. It is a complex issue.

Appendix 3

LANDSCAPE SOLUTIONS TO SEA LEVEL RISE

