



# Hadlow Down Parish Council Newsletter

## Chairman's Statement

**As this is the first newsletter of the New Year may I start by wishing you and your families a belated Happy New Year.**

**Another year has flown past and I am delighted that we are still making progress on our goals. The new bus shelter is now in place and is being used. More about that in this newsletter but our thanks to Wilderness Wood for their help on the project.**

**We also have achieved something which has been wanted for many years – extended yellow lines in School Lane to help alleviate the dangers at the A272 junction. Again, more about this in the newsletter.**

**Those of you that have attended a Parish Council meeting will be aware that we try to have a light-hearted approach to meetings – but I can assure you that we take our responsibilities seriously, and Councillors all undertake a great deal of work outside of the meetings. I hope more of you will come along and see what we do – even if it is just once or twice. You may find you enjoy it – and as we are still a Councillor short perhaps you will join us.**

**Sandra Richards  
Chairman**

## Precept

Every year the Parish Council has to set a precept (budget) for the following year and the deadline to do this is February. This year has been especially difficult due to the pressure of cuts from the Government filtering down to the Parish.

Approximately 50% of the precept is made up of fixed costs which are the day-to-day costs of running the Parish Council: the cost of the Clerk, insurance, subscriptions, etc which are all a legal requirement on us. During the year 2013-14, the balance of the precept was made up with items such as maintenance (for the burial ground, playing field, play area), clearing dog bins, contributions to village organisations such as the village hall, parish magazine, website, etc.

The same costs have to be allowed for 2014-15, however, there are some additional costs that we have had to consider. Up until now, East Sussex County Council have provided the services of a Village Maintenance Team which came to the village once a year and provided services such as cleaning the signs (speed signs, fingerposts, direction signs), clearing footpaths, clearing certain verges & ditches, etc. This service has now been disbanded and from 2014-15, the Parish Council will be responsible for providing this type of service. In addition, Central Government have handed down year-on-year cuts in the subsidy that they give to local Councils. Last year, Wealden District Council absorbed this cut in subsidy and did not pass it on to the Parish Council. However, this year Wealden District Council has not been able to absorb the cost of the reduction of the subsidy and this has been passed onto us.

We have looked at ways of saving further money (none of the Councillors have opted to take any expenses for the jobs that they do) however, with the pressures that we have received over these additional requirements, we have had no choice but to increase the precept by approx. 5% compared to the previous year. This equates to an actual increase of between £4.00 - £7.00 per household per annum and we hope you understand that this has been done so that we can maintain the services to the village.

## Community plan

In 2010, parishioners from the village got together to produce a Community Plan for the period 2011-2026 to give a view of how the village could move forward over this period of time. Late last year, the Parish Council carried out a review of this important document to see how much progress (if any) was being made on the core objectives. We were pleasantly surprised to find that the foresight and work put into the document by the parishioners was 'standing the test of time' and the majority of the issues and requirements that had been raised were still valid.

During this review, we decided to try to be more pro-active on some of the ideas/wishes that had been raised and to form a sub-committee to try to ensure that things did not stagnate.

It was agreed that some of the issues that had been raised could be combined together with a common objective, these included:

- Environment/Green Space – to develop a circular footpath/bridleway to take in key features of the village
- Environment/Green Space – to survey and map key environmentally important features, flora and fauna
- Transport/Access – to maintain and enhance access to local footpath and bridleway networks
- Prosperity/Employment/Economy – To protect the village pub as a going concern and its environs as a community asset
- Prosperity/Employment/Economy – to support local businesses connected to the area who create added value to the rural economy such as Wilderness Wood & Tinkers Park as tourism assets

The sub-committee met in December and agreed to try to gather information that was already in the public domain such as information already held by organisations such as Sussex Wildlife Trust (bio-diversity information), Wealden District Council (Tree Preservation Orders & details of the ancient woodland), Historical Landscape Environment Project & High Weald Project and others.

Based on the available information, it was agreed to try to put together some proposals on the feasibility of circular walks from the centre of the village for different distances (e.g. a 3 mile walk, 5 mile walk, 10 mile walk). It was felt that it may not be possible to have a circular bridlepath all around the village but a feasibility study of how certain bridlepaths could be linked together – particularly crossing the A272 as it was acknowledged that the main road is not suitable for horses.

If anyone would be interested in this work or would like to contribute to the sub-committee, please contact Sandra Richards.

## Dog Control Order

Over the years the topic of dog fouling has been raised on a number of occasions to the Parish Council and it is clear from what we have been told that even dog owners do not like to see mess left behind. At the Wealden District Council meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> November it was agreed that a Dog Control Order should be put in place and this came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. In simple terms a person in charge of a dog who allows the dog to foul a public area and does not clear it up may be fined. A public area includes virtually anywhere the public can access including highways, verges, footpaths, parks, recreation grounds, car parks, beaches etc. In view of what we have been told by residents we fully support Wealden's initiative and we hope that all dog owners will respect the environment in future.

## Contact us

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*Community Plan*

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*Emergency Planning, Youth, Playing Field*

## Heating oil thefts

Do you heat your house using oil? In Hadlow Down the answer is probably "yes" since we have no gas supply and electricity is pretty expensive. Although we have not yet heard of one in Hadlow Down, thefts of oil in the area do take place.

Whilst it is impossible to deter the determined thief even so precautions can be taken. A simple padlock in the filler cover is a pretty simple means of deterrence as is siting the tank as far away from the road as practical. Tankers in rural areas have fairly long filler hoses and can be at least 30 feet away from the tank when filling. Plainly, the cost of moving a tank can be high but a tank contains about 1400 litres of oil and at 65p per litre that is about £900 of oil from a full tank. If oil reaches 75p as it did 2 years ago your tank is worth over £1,000.00! Take precautions, please!

## School Lane

We are delighted with what we have been able to achieve in School Lane. Speeding remains an issue through the Village and in the morning and afternoon when the school children are going to and from school we have been particularly concerned. Vehicles drive into School Lane from the A272 far too quickly and many drive down School Lane well in excess of the speed limit. We know – we are all drivers ourselves – how difficult it can be to keep your speed to the limits but the statistics are plain. If you hit a pedestrian at 40mph they are FOUR times more likely to be killed than if you hit them at 30mph. Add to this the fact that rural roads have 4 times the fatality rate of urban roads and you can see our concern.

Following the reduction in the speed limit to 30mph in the centre of the Village traffic has slowed down but School Lane and the A272 have still seen significant speeding taking place. To reinforce the limit roundels have now been painted on the road in School Lane and additional 30mph signs installed.

To improve safety at the School Lane/A272 junction the double yellow lines have been extended making it much safer. Of course, making it safer has meant that some people have increased their speed round the corner but on the whole it has been successful.

To improve even further the safety of children the zig zag lines outside the school have been extended to try and provide a clear visual area where the greatest risk is involved.

However, please remember that you also have a personal responsibility to ensure that your children are safe.

## Bus shelter

Many years ago there was a bus shelter on the A272 which fell into disrepair and was removed. As you know, bus services through Hadlow Down are infrequent and, in order to be certain of catching a bus, passengers tend to arrive early at the stop. In addition, many school children wait there in the mornings and this can be for some while at times. Everyone has had to stand in the open which has not always been pleasant. With help from Wilderness Wood we now have a new, wooden bus shelter with a bench.

This shelter has gained interest from outside Hadlow Down. One local village have apparently complained to their Council that we have a nice wooden shelter and they have an ugly metal one! Councillor Wellman has been responsible for the project, which has required planning approval from Wealden District Council, and our thanks to him.

## Emergency Plan

In 2004 we developed an Emergency Plan which was based on a major emergency. This plan was drawn up with the assistance of the Emergency Plan Officer at Wealden District Council. The concept was that we, as a Village, would work together in a major emergency which was sufficiently serious that outside help was not available to us. It was not designed for day-to-day situations like heavy snowfall, flooding or power cuts.

Since that time, views on what should constitute an Emergency Plan and when it should be used have significantly changed. The times we have used elements of the plan have been exactly those situations for which it was not designed!

We have therefore decided to re-visit the plan with a view to making it more usable for the things we are most likely to need it for whilst retaining the ability to cope with the major emergency. We are very lucky that we have in the village the sort of expertise that can both help us develop a new plan and carry out the plan when needed.

## Highways

If you have failed to notice the state of the roads in Hadlow Down then you must live in a different Hadlow Down! We know the weather has been exceptional but we also know that the work being done – or in some cases not being done – is making the position ever worse. It is not just the potholes, it also the lack of clearing the gulleys leading to a massive amount of water on our roads; the rapidly deteriorating condition of the road surfaces because of a lack of preventative maintenance; the very poor repairs being done which frequently last days at most; and the large timescales to do needed work. Just two simple examples are that firstly, the 30mph sign coming into the Village from the east was knocked down in an accident nearly 12 months ago. It has not been replaced despite many reminders to Highways. Secondly, the gulleys at Curtains Hill have been blocked almost continuously and it has taken 2 accidents at the spot to get any action. We are constantly in touch with Highways about the many issues and by the time you read this we will have met with the Head of Highways to discuss them. If you have any issues please let us know via the Parish Clerk and if you raise any issue direct with Highways it will help us enormously if you copy the Clerk with the details.