

## Hamsey Parish Council - Annual Parish Meeting – Thursday 12 May 2022

### Annual reports of Councillors and Parish Clerk

#### Tamsyn d'Arienzo – Chair, Hamsey Parish Council

I was standing outside a planning committee hearing recently having tried to persuade LDC Planners to reject an extension on The Hamsey Brickworks Site, now Hamsey Lakes. LDC did approve the added housing but took on board our objection and included a playground in addition to the proposed community building, so all was not lost. One of the committee members stepped outside afterwards to lament with me council life, and to swap stories of difficult council members and residents. The conversation was not unusual and served to remind me of how extremely lucky I am to work at Hamsey PC. Without exception, all of our councillors and clerk are respectful, conscientious, community minded individuals in the job for all the right reasons, and they leave their personal differences at the door. This is not to say we think the same; thankfully we have a broad range of life experiences, skills and views, so we have a lot to learn from one another. I often hear about the thankless task of councils, but I must say that our residents *do* show appreciation for what we do. We hear about the highs and lows of parish life, and we are always looking for ways in which to make things better for people who live here. We are rewarded with understanding, help and support.

This year has been a year of projects, which feels a lot better than recent years of plans on hold. We have achieved much and have works in progress, largely through working with our excellent partners at Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Rangers who I thank for their support in terms of free advice, help and project funding.

We have welcomed our new and very experienced Parish Clerk, Kevin Kingston. Kevin could have chosen any number of local councils crying out for town and parish clerks so we do feel very lucky to have someone so knowledgeable and who cares so much for our parish. Kevin supports Manchester United but apart from that he's perfect.

Beechwood Hall is under the management of Kelly Penfold who is doing a sterling job of taking care of the hall and hirers as the hall goes from strength to strength. Under Kelly's watch we have benefited from the addition of the all weather path running around the perimeter, the new electric vehicle charging point (installed free of charge by Brighton Energy Coop), new benches, hedges and trees and we will soon have a public toilet which does not require us to spend a (20p) penny.

I would like to thank some volunteers who keep our community running the way it does.

- Sally Edwards, Hamsey News newsletter editor, for a brilliant job in keeping us updated and amused each quarter
- Judith Bastide and helpers of The Monday Afternoon Club for looking after our elder folk
- The Monday Group, for keeping our rights of way accessible
- Pete and the litter pickers, for cleaning up some horrible items
- Sarah Hughes, for her amazing help with wildflowers at Beechwood Hall and around the parish
- Friend of Hamsey Church, keeping our 1,000 year old church going, connecting families to lost graves, taking turns letting visitors in and locking up.
- Friends of Beechwood Hall, dedicating ideas and practical help to improving our community spaces.
- Cooksbridge Station Partnership, nurturing our station grounds and fighting for a great train service.
- Hamsey Christmas Sleigh crew for spreading delight, and for a lot of laughs along the way. Thanks also to The Armstrongs and Paul Wren for storing the sleigh all year.
- Sustainable Hamsey, giving local biodiversity a helping hand and tackling the climate emergency on a local level.
- Speedwatch volunteers, monitoring speeds and encouraging safer driving
- 20's Plenty campaigners, working to reduce the impact of a busy road through our community.
- All the residents who came out to plant the trees by the tennis court, or pick up litter, cut back trees, mow their verges, look out for neighbours, help each other out. Many hands make light work, and all feels that much more hopeful.
- My predecessors for graciously bestowing their knowledge on me when I come to call.
- Sue Rowland. Not a year goes by when I don't ask for a new map for something!
- All those who help in the most brilliant ways but wish to remain unnamed. Thank you.

All of the above people and more spend their time improving where we live. They are unpaid, mostly time-poor, yet keep up the good work because they care. Thanks a million!

We welcome the new community at Old Hamsey Lakes development where all houses are almost sold. Already a thriving and proactive community is emerging, with exciting projects on the cards. We also welcome so far 3 new Ukrainian citizens to Hamsey Parish, who we look forward to meeting when the time is right.

Hamsey Parish Council continues to reduce precepts (local council tax) in order to help keep costs low for our residents whilst other bills are rising. Local groups may apply for small grants towards projects or activities which will benefit the whole community. Contact [clerk@hamsey.net](mailto:clerk@hamsey.net) with any ideas.

Wishing all our residents a safe and sound 2022-2023.

### **Councillor Kate McBrown**

This year has been a little smoother than the last couple of years with the ongoing pandemic. We have seen a change around losing two of our Councillors but welcoming two replacements... Councillor Pearson and Councillor McKendrick.

Throughout the last year my role has changed quite significantly with taking on responsibilities for Highways within the Parish. This is reporting concerns and liaising with colleagues at East Sussex Highways and attending the recent Strengthening Local Relations Meeting in February. I have recently taken over on a temporary basis the Rail/Bus issues within the Parish and I am closely working with Cooksbridge Station Partnership.

I have thoroughly enjoyed joining in with the volunteers for the Christmas Sleigh Ride and the Parish Children's Christmas Party - both were a great success.

My most recent project has been consulting with playground organisations to see if we can get a replacement play park at Malthouse Way and a lot of my time is taken up with applying for CIL money and other grants to help fund the play park replacement... fingers crossed we are successful - watch this space!

I liaise on a regular basis with our local PCSO, Rose Stainer and we are currently in the process of arranging a meeting with Rose and one of her colleagues to attend Beechwood Hall with the Community van to discuss and concerns and carry out bike marking (anti-theft deterrent).

I look forward to working with Chair on more accessible projects such as the addition of accessible play equipment at Beechwood Hall and also the possibility of a Changing Spaces inside the hall

### **Councillor Jim Redwood**

This year has felt like a relentless struggle against the odds. My main engagement has been with planning issues, and while we expect to be holding developers to account, this year we have felt embattled by Lewes District Council and the Government as well, particularly on housing. The government has set devastatingly high housing targets for our area and seem intent on making it as easy as possible for developers to impose massive and alien housing commitments on us. This council has always taken a positive approach to our obligations, and our Neighbourhood Plan is a model of positive policies. We readily accepted the housing need Lewes District Council required of us previously as an 'organic' extension

consistent with the scale of the existing community, and similar in nature to earlier extensions to the community. Chatfield Close is the result and its residents are now welcome members of our community. Two Chatfield Close residents are now Parish Councillors.

However, the new proposals by the Conyboro estate, for 1,100 houses along peaceful rural Hamsey Lane are of a different order entirely, and would brutally turn a large area of green fields into a characterless urban enclave. Many promises will be made about the development being of the highest quality, the lowest possible environmental impact, and meeting local needs, but we reliably expect all such promises to be broken the minute permission is given. We have ample experience of this process with the Old Hamsey Lakes development, which was given permission with many commitments and promises which have steadily been eroded. What has been built bears scant resemblance to what was promised at outline stage. The process continues, and as I draft this, Lewes District Council has just approved a further 13 houses there, without any increase in the communal open space or the accessibility of the site which is cut off from the rest of the parish for pedestrians and cyclists.

If we're looking for good news on the planning front, I'd say that pretty much without exception, local small-scale applications by residents for house extensions, tree work and improvements to listed buildings have been supported by the Parish Council. This shows that local people care about where they live and want to look after it and improve it – in contrast to those from outside the area who seem to want to destroy it.

Back to the bad news though - we have also been very disappointed by the resources and commitment of Lewes District Council in enforcing planning control in the parish. Enquiries about unauthorised development in the parish within the South Downs National Park went unanswered for a number of months before being addressed, and there are other instances of tardiness and inaction. These pale into insignificance compared to the damage major development could wreak on the parish, but it is not unreasonable to expect our planning authorities to make sure that planning law is followed, and that unauthorised development is challenged and brought under control.

I expect the next year to be another year of challenge and frustration, and that it will get increasingly difficult to defend our area from predatory threats. Parish Councils in the area are working together to face these challenges as effectively as possible, but without policy changes at government level developers will continue to have the upper hand. The government needs to recognise the value of our countryside and local communities as intrinsically worthwhile and worthy of defending. This is within their power if they chose to do so and to prioritise local communities rather than developers. We also need better resourced planning authorities (Lewes DC and the SDNPA) to make sure planning control is more effective, and to protect our communities from wrong doing.

In closing I would like to say how much I appreciate all the work my fellow parish councillors do for the community. I would particularly single out our chair, Tamsyn, for so tirelessly doing pretty much everything! How she does so while raising a young family and still keeping cheery and positive is a testament to her spirit and enthusiasm. Thank you Tamsyn!

## **Councillor Caroline Croft**

### **Hamsey Parish Environment Working Group - Sustainable Hamsey**

Sustainable Hamsey now has 42 members and we were pleased to meet in person for the first time in the autumn of 2021 and again in February 2022. We have a beautiful new logo kindly designed for us by local graphic designer Suzie Johanson. Some of our current projects are:

- Working with Old Hamsey Church to support biodiversity in the churchyard
- Wildflower and tree planting
- Looking into further promoting an amphibian and reptile hotspot in Offham
- Holding biodiversity events – a bat walk and house martin survey.
- Exploring possibilities for cycle paths and more sustainable travel
- Pushing for high-speed internet access to several households in the parish to facilitate home working, business opportunities and improved contact.

### **Habitat protection and creation at Hamsey churchyard**

Members of Sustainable Hamsey have volunteered at the churchyard to help support biodiversity. Several new and rare species have already established in the churchyard, which is an excellent biodiversity improvement. The original plan could not be entirely followed due to difficulties faced by the contractors combined with unusually strong growing conditions, which caused some difficulties and issues around accessibility. A new management plan was drawn up by the church which involves the grass in front of the church and in most of the new churchyard being cut on a regular basis. The areas at the back of the church, in the old churchyard and two discrete areas of the new churchyard will be allowed to grow through the summer months for habitat creation for invertebrates and mammals in response to the biodiversity crisis.

Cllr Croft and members of Sustainable Hamsey helped clear grave decoration waste and collect grass cuttings on various occasions.

On a separate occasion, representatives of Sussex Wildlife Trust visited to see the project and offered help with volunteers, notice board information and removal of cuttings. In a subsequent visit, SWT were delighted to find a very rare fungus Mousepee Pinkgill at Offham Church.

### **Traffic and Air quality in Cooksbridge**

Residents organised an excellent campaign to reduce traffic speed through Cooksbridge to 20 mph. Cllr Croft and Cllr Fleming invited Hamsey Primary pupils to create posters to ask drivers to switch off and these have been displayed at the Depot in Lewes at their COP 26 events to try to raise awareness amongst Lewes residents.

## **Tree planting**

Hedge planting took place at Beechwood Hall on 21 November and further tree planting near Deadmanstree is planned in time.

## **Lewes Climate Festival**

Cllrs Sue Fleming and Caroline Croft represented Sustainable Hamsey at the Lewes festival in September 2021.

## **Wildflower planting**

A group of volunteers has planted wildflower seed and the plugs will be planted in areas around the parish shortly. Particular thanks to Sarah Hughes and Suzie Johannson for leading on this. Hamsey Primary children are being invited to join this work at Beechwood Hall. We have also worked at Beechwood Hall to increase planting for biodiversity in March, digging up existing beds, moving plants to a much larger wildflower area, old wildflower beds will then have lavender planted in it for pollinators and visitors to enjoy.

We are working to establish roadside areas that won't be strimmed so that wildflowers are left to grow.

## **Offham South East Water conservation site**

Caroline met South East Water Biodiversity Manager Richard Dyer to discuss how we can help encourage further native flora and fauna diversity and provide further habitat possibilities at their site. An event is being planned in May, for people interested in the South East Water project and possibilities for assisting the biodiversity work there, including removal of Himalayan Balsam, creating further hibernaculars in particular for amphibians and reptiles, butterfly surveys etc.

## **Kiln Wood**

Cllr Tamsyn D'Arienzo, Cllr Lindy McKendrick and Cllr Caroline Croft attended a meeting with the Woodland Trust at Kiln Wood by the Old Hamsey Brickworks to discuss the wood's inclusion in the Lost Woods of the Low Weald project.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/england/lost-woods/>

Cllr Croft also attended a Lost Woods training and networking event near Henfield in February.

## **Cycle path**

Active transport options are a priority for Sustainable Hamsey to help reduce car use in the face of the climate crisis and connect isolated communities to rail. The group is delighted to hear that there is now a plan to connect South Chailey to Cooksbridge, then from Cooksbridge to Lewes, overland rather than along the road. Some land has already been given the greenlight for development. We can put in a plan to add the cycle path when

development plans are put in. Cllr D'Orienza has spoken to Sustrans who can work on a feasibility study to identify routes for cycle path.

Sustainable Hamsey volunteers had stalls, activities and information about our activities at the parish get together in autumn 2021 at Beechwood Hall.

There is so much to do to address and reverse the biodiversity and climate crises. We are enormously grateful to all the volunteers who are so active in helping ensure we can do all we can in Hamsey to conserve and promote biodiversity and clean air and water in our parish.

### **Hamsey Parish Biodiversity events have been planned:**

Wednesday 22 June - **Bat Walk**, getting to know the bat species that live in and around old Hamsey and the habitat they need to thrive. We will confirm the time and meeting place nearer the date.

Tuesday 12 July - **House martins ID and habitat talk** with the Sussex Wildlife Trust. House martins are frequent residents of Hamsey but are now on the endangered red list, so we want to know what we can do to support them.

### **Councillor Carolyn Henry**

Cllr Henry is taking some time out to have her baby, and hopefully *not* checking emails too regularly.

As always, Carolyn has managed a full workload with the council on top of her own professional work, whilst also volunteering on the Covid-19 vaccination team. Cllr Henry has been taking an active lead on group Friends of Beechwood Hall (see Cllr Kate McBrown's report), recruitment (Hall manager and Parish Clerk) and policies, in particular. Cllr Henry has invested a great deal of time and energy into liaising to good effect for a fair resolution for Chatfield Close and Wellington Cottage/Fourwinds residents over the carpark which was so badly provided for by the developers and planning department. Cllr Henry has participated in Rail Committee meetings to help the parish council assist the excellent work of the Cooksbridge Station Partnership. As Treasurer for the trustees of Beechwood Hall, Cllr Henry has been pivotal in structuring our business planning, forecasting and budgeting, as well as assisting Parish Clerk Kevin Kingston with authorising payments. Cllr Henry helps with projects and events, generously offering her time and expertise without a second thought. As for the year ahead, we are looking forward to welcoming Carolyn back at the right time.

### **Councillor Daniel Pearson**

Since I joined the council in August last year I've been trying to absorb as much as possible about the parish, its needs and the functions of the council. Although I initially thought I might be most able to help with communications, I've tried to be useful across the board, particularly with environmental issues. That said, my time is fairly limited - I work odd hours and nearly all of my evenings are busy, so I haven't been able to contribute as much as I hoped I would. Still, I hope I have been able to help with some of our decision making and efforts to bring the community together.

In the coming year I'd like to change my focus slightly. What I've found makes me most passionate about my role in the council is the possibility of helping us to grow together as a community, overcoming the social and geographical distance between the various settlements in our parish. As such, I'd like to focus most of my efforts on social arrangements and community events: things which can help us to get to know our neighbours and begin to grow connections.

Currently, the plans for this are fairly simple - getting regular events at Beechwood hall and the local pubs on the calendar. We'd like to start with a small-scale community BBQ during summer - with a small budget to provide some food and drinks for anyone who wants to join us. I also want to arrange an event in the Autumn with a similar focus - a low commitment way to get to know each other with some simple food and (possibly) a warm fire. Long term, I want to try and facilitate ways to build community links for all members of our parish, from the young to the elderly.

## **Councillor Lindy McKendrick**

This is my first 'annual' report for the Hamsey Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting.

As I am both new to Sussex and to the role of a Parish Councillor and having been co-opted on to HPC in January 2022, time has been initially taken to get to know Hamsey Parish, the role of a Councillor, the Hamsey Neighbourhood Plan, the wider HPC agenda and matters focussing particularly upon Bevernbridge and Old Hamsey Lakes (BB&OHL).

This is a particularly interesting and formative time at BB&OHL, as the main part of the new development is now being completed, the new residents at OHL are settling in and the established BB residents are seeing an end to the uncertainty and disruption caused by the transformation of this 'brown field' site.

So, the 'hamlet' of Bevernbridge, with its well-established history and just a dozen or so homes, is radically transforming into a 'village' with potentially 70+ new houses, in its midst.

The immediate and pressing priorities have been:

- The recent consideration by Lewes District Council of planning amendments requested by Antler Homes and approved with some adjustment
- The delivery of the established Woodland Management Plan by Antler Homes and the potential interest, guidance and hopeful engagement of The Woodland Trust in Kiln Woods as part of their project 'Lost Woods of the Low Weald'. This would



increase knowledge in supporting the flora and fauna, so that it can be enjoyed by all and protected for the future.

- Developing a communication infrastructure for BB&OHL to support the development of a cohesive, thriving, active and enjoyable community.

If a Parish Councillor's role is to represent the views and concerns of the residents of the Parish to the Parish Council itself and, through it, to the district and beyond and also to report back to residents on issues affecting the Parish, creating good channels of communication are essential and this has been moved forward by:

- Cllr d'Arienzo facilitating a meeting with Antler Homes which refreshes access to the answers to FAQ's received from residents at BB&OHL, alongside a potentially better understanding by the Parish of Antler Homes' undertakings before completion of their site
- A new Residents Association forming, encompassing all residents of BB&OHL, with the aim of bringing this growing community together. This will give everyone a voice and for informed discussion to take place.

It is very clear that HPC has represented BB&OHL with determination and foresight over many years and has laid excellent foundations for this significant change in Bevernbridge to be supported.

There will be progress to report over the coming year.

### **Kevin Kingston – Parish Clerk**

I became the Parish Clerk in August 2021 it has been any enjoyable few months working with some lovely Parish Councillors who clearly have the best interests of the Hamsey Community at heart.

Residents of the Parish are extremely lucky to have such as dedicated, clever and very supportive team of Councillors who are expertly led by the 'whirlwind' that is Tamsyn d'Arienzo. Having worked in Local Government for over 40 years she is one in a million and the Council and Community are very lucky to have her.

My first 6 months have been eventful and enjoyable and I would just like to thank the previous Parish Clerk – Natalie Kinch for her fantastic support and the brilliant handover that she provided which without doubt helped me settle in quickly ...even now if I have question or query I know Natalie will be there to help.

My work has been helped by the purchase of a new financial management package (called Scribe) which has replaced a series of spreadsheets and has really helped me to manage, in my view, the worst part of job and its introduction has made the end of year processes much simpler and easier.

I look forward to the coming year and the new noticeboard that we have purchased to replace the old and leaking noticeboard at Beechwood Hall & Rural Park and its hoped that,

subject to a successful CIL bid, that the new play equipment can be installed at Malthouse Way play area.

<b>2021/22 end of year financial summary</b>
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#### EXPENDITURE

Cost centre	£	Notes
Audit	465.00	
Grants	1005.00	
Grounds maintenance	21973.79	Including pathway
Office expenses/administration	8430.61	Incl Clerks salary, Tax & NI
Other expenses	2153.23	
Premises	1995.63	Incl insurance premium
Subscriptions	796.76	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,820.02</b>	

#### INCOME

	£	Notes
Precept	18,213.00	Precept
VAT reclaim	5505.29	2 x VAT reclaims April 21 – March 22
CIL payment	16,650.00	CIL payment for pathway
Other payments	583.30	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40,951.59</b>	

Balance per bank statement as at 31 March 2022	£
Unity Trust - current account	39,044.91
Un-represented cheques	NIL
Unity Trust - savings account	12,000.00