

Community Energy Comes to Sussex.

HAA welcomes a new local not-for-profit group, HKD Energy, which is being formed by volunteers from Hassocks, Hurstpierpoint, Keymer and Ditchling to promote community renewable energy projects and increase energy efficiency. It is an Industrial and Provident Society for Community Benefit, being registered with the Financial Conduct Authority. The first project will put 320 solar panels (80kW) on roofs at Downlands School and Sports Centre – this will be one of the largest school solar arrays in the UK. The project is looking for investors who could earn guaranteed interest over 20 years, help Downlands School save on electricity bills and reduce their carbon footprint. Income for the community energy project comes via the government's Feed-In Tariff (FIT), the rate of which is guaranteed for 20 years. The FIT payment is based on all electricity generated from the solar panels, with additional payment for surplus electricity exported to the grid. Although the annual interest is taxable income, UK taxpayers may be eligible for substantial tax relief on their capital investment in the first year. The Downlands School project will be launched at the school on 8th November at 2.30 pm. HKD Energy warmly invites everyone to come along and find out more about the vision and the practicalities of the project. For more details, please visit www.hkdenergy.org.uk

Stop Press. On September 15th Govia took over the running of the Thameslink and Great Northern routes. In July next year both routes will be integrated and become Thameslink Southern Great Northern. Timetables will change from December 2015. By 2018 there should be up to 24 trains per hour through central London plus through trains from Brighton to Cambridge

Officers

Chairman and Editor: Margaret Ford, 40 Lodge Lane, Keymer, BN6 8LX (01273 845882)
margaret608ford@btinternet.com

Secretary: Nada Guarguaglini, 27 Ferndale Road, Burgess Hill, RH15 0HB (07890 106920)
hassocksamenity@gmail.com

Treasurer: Bob Kenhard, 7 Beaconhurst, Keymer, BN6 8RE (01273 844920)
bob.kenhard@btinternet.com

Chairman (rail group) Catherine Cassidy, 47 Wilmington Close, Hassocks BN6 8QB (01273 844041)
rccass1dy@aol.com

Membership Secretary: Judith Poncelet, 15 Clayton Avenue, Hassocks BN6 8HD (01273 844543)
Judith.poncelet@talk21.com

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2014

That was the week that was

HAA had not had a week like it since we raised £90,000 for Lag Wood and then had to shred all those cheques! On the Tuesday, we presented our case for stage 2 of the Spitalford Bridge project, and secured a community initiative grant of £5,000. On the Thursday, Catherine Cassidy, chair of our Rail Group was invited to the Dorchester Hotel and found that Hassocks had come joint second in the National Rail Awards for medium station of the year. At the weekend our new Green Group recommenced work on the raised beds in Keymer Road. Not quite so likely to grab the headlines, but an achievement no less as at one time the problems in the way seemed unsurmountable.

It's over, let it go ... so what should we grasp today? The Neighbourhood Plan springs to mind. HAA is contributing papers on footpaths, transport, planning /housing all of which will be on our website shortly. However, the Neighbourhood Plan can deal only in planning principles. HAA has no

such constraints. When we met together in January, secondary only to concern about footpaths and the countryside was anxiety about the village centre - or the lack of one. We have what has been described as 'one of the largest brownfield sites in Sussex' right in the centre of our village. It is ripe for comprehensive development which may well include the whole area behind National Tyres including the car park and Age Concern. Could we draw up our own plans - how we visualise this key area? Can we agree? Would it be a waste of time anyway? Originally the rail group came up with their own plan for a new station. It never happened, but it resulted in consultation from day one when the rail authorities produced their own design. Can history repeat itself? Would you like to be involved? Email us on hassocksamenity@aol.com or put a comment on our website.

www.hassocksamenity.org.uk

Footpaths, fields and woods

Hassocks may not be the most picturesque of villages, but we are surrounded by wonderful countryside. So it is not surprising that footpaths are a major concern of HAA members. Since our last newsletter, our unremitting pressure has resulted in footpath K12 being resurfaced. There is now a kissing gate at the entrance in Lodge Lane. HAA would like to see a dog bin there as well, and has offered to contribute to the cost. Unfortunately, MSDC's dog bin emptying capacity is at full stretch. Our District Councillor, Gordon Marples, is very aware of the problem and we have pointed out that the improved surface of K12 has resulted in a marked increase in dog-walkers. He assures us that he is 'on the job'. In addition, the Parish Council is investigating our suggestion of linking the unofficial footpath from Parklands Copse to K12, though there are many problems to be overcome before that can be achieved. They are also checking out the footpaths mentioned at our AGM.

K12 leads to Downlands Community Field which we are pleased to see is now being used by more youth organisations. Cross the bridge, and you arrive at the Turner's wild bird field. The larger section has come to the end of its cycle and has been cut. It will be resown with a fresh wild bird mix in the Spring. The smaller section is still in full flower, with bright

yellow mustard, spring barley, kale, triticale and quinoa in the mix to provide plenty of seeds over the coming winter. RSPB is doing a bird count and we look forward to hearing more of this. Flocks of gold finches have been seen recently, and one day in June there were nine buzzards circling above Lodge Farm.

Further on, alongside Woodbine Cottage, a stile leads you to Pheasant Field and Lag Wood. Paul Roberts and Sue Milnthorpe can often be found there, in the shepherd's hut that, thanks to E-Bay, they sourced in Kettering. They have both learned to scythe and Paul writes 'There is nothing quite like standing in a meadow wielding a large scythe. Apart from the job satisfaction, there is the pleasure of watching the reactions of passers-by ranging from alarm and incredulity to curiosity and appreciation.'

They have good reasons for using these ancient rustic implements. Paul explained: 'We're clearing brambles, nettles and saplings from the central part of the meadow

Rail News

1,200 staff from right across the rail industry packed into the Grosvenor Hotel on the 18th September for the National Rail Awards evening - and amongst them was our own Catherine Cassidy, the guest of Southern Rail. The exciting reason was soon revealed: Hassocks had been entered in the medium station class, and had been named joint runner up, alongside Loughborough. The winner was Liverpool South Parkway, Merseyrail's flagship station. However, the judges must have thought that good things can come in small packages for Hassocks was described as 'attractive and well thought out'. It had been 'tastefully modernised to create an attractive and welcoming outer suburban station. ... Friendly staff and high standards of accessibility make Hassocks a pleasure to use'. The new building had been 'designed with great sensitivity, with the brickwork blending in successfully with its surroundings'. The rail group helped choose the brickwork and the recommendations of one of its members,

Trevor Humber, who had spent days researching nearby draughty modular stations, provided the key input which ensured the 'attractive waiting areas' that the judges liked.

We are certainly lucky to have friendly staff, if only we could see more of them! Despite various assurances, staff shortages mean that the ticket office is often closed. Travellers who want to buy their tickets in advance and are not happy using the on-line option, and want to be sure of finding the ticket office open, need to visit before 12.15 p.m. when shifts change. The good news is that when the new franchise starts in July 2015 there must be a member of staff on duty from the first to the last trains each day. Unfortunately, that does not mean the staff member will be in the ticket office - but it is a step in the right direction.

We are pleased to see that despite the heavy rain over the August bank holiday the subway did not flood. The replacement pump must be up to the job! The rail group always had doubts about possible flooding, but no-one could have anticipated that the lifts and the subway would be closed for two days because an eye liner pencil had jammed the pump, causing it to burn out.

The bad news is that buses will replace trains to Brighton on October 4/5, 11/12, 18/19 and on November 15/16 due to worn-out track being replaced

Spitalford Bridge



With the restoration of the south side of the bridge virtually finished, we are now moving on to the north side. As the artist's impression shows, the aim is to remove the badly cracked wall and to provide a seat and bus shelter whilst opening up the area so that the Herring stream can be clearly seen. The whole project is estimated to cost about £17,000. Our successful bid for £5,000 through Community Initiative Funding opens the way, we hope, to additional funding through WSCC and the Parish Council. At present we have £2,500 of HAA funds allocated, £500 of which is part of our share of the lottery money. A shortfall is still likely, so any donation earmarked for Spitalford Bridge will be gratefully received by our treasurer, Bob Kenhard.

That short paragraph disguises an immense amount of time and effort being put into this project by Bob, using all his engineering and business skills. The form filling alone is horrendous, and the co-ordination of all the agencies involved is one that will become increasingly complex in the coming months. *If* everything goes smoothly to plan, *if* the finances are in place, then there is hope that by the end of the year work will have at least begun.

As many of our older residents will confirm, Spitalford Bridge is a very cold and damp place to wait for a bus. We hope this project will make a major difference.

But if you are one of the people who regularly waits there, can we have your views? At this stage constructive criticism is more welcome than congratulations.

The Village Lottery - where everyone is a winner - one way or another!!

The first year of the Hassocks Village Lottery has almost come to an end. It has raised just over £3,000 for the community, shared equally between Light up Hassocks, 1st Hassocks Scouts and ourselves.

We have had a happy time allocating our share in three ways: improved floral displays in the village (£300), a contribution (£500) towards providing a seat and bus shelter at Spitalford Bridge and £200 to Jack and Jill Nursery for a large 'gathering drum' which will be used for therapy and for sheer fun. Light up Hassocks will be using their share to help meet the cost of the Christmas decorations and 1st Hassocks Scouts will be able to send three of their members to attend the Scout Jamboree in Japan. So older people, younger people and everyone in between will benefit!

It has been a fine start, and now the challenge is to do even better. Last year just over 500 numbers were 'sold' at £12 each and every month there were two winners who between them collected over £200 in prize money. Can we 'sell' 750 numbers, or even 1000 this year? That could raise up to £6,000 for the community! HAA could then divide their share between a much wider range of local good causes.

We could achieve this if every group and society in Hassocks distributed the lottery application forms to its members and spread the news about how the village could benefit. Can you take some leaflets along to a meeting you attend? Our secretary would be very pleased to hear from you.

Numbers for the new lottery can be purchased now and forms will be found in local shops, including Orion News and QD. They can also be downloaded from our website where you can join online. We will be

We welcome Nada Guarguaglini as our new secretary. She comes to us with a wealth of experience both as a volunteer and leading groups of volunteers. She is looking forward to getting to know us all, and we are certainly looking forward to working with her

distributing them at the Village Market in October. A form is also enclosed with this newsletter.

The Green Group

At last we have a small group of HAA members intent on making Hassocks 'greener'. Aably led by Georgia Cheshire, they are keen to supplement the planting and the hanging baskets provided by the Parish Council. You can't have too many flowers in Hassocks. A floral display can hide a multitude of sins! That is why they are planning an eye-catching display of hedging and mixed planting in the large raised bed in front of *Deux Amies*. The design enables the autumn flowering ladies tresses orchid to be preserved but will also help to make the dreadful state of the brickwork less obvious. That is the responsibility of the landlords. They have not yet been persuaded to do any repairs - but as it has taken three years for them to allow us to do the planting we must not be too impatient.

In Keymer, the group are planting spring bulbs around the new signpost. Outside the Hassocks Sorting Office the square container has been planted up, and more containers are planned. At our suggestion, and thanks to Amanda Kenhard's persistent persuasion, Mansell McTaggart have provided magnificent hanging baskets at the western entrance to Grand Avenue. It was just unfortunate that their counterparts, HSBC, fled the area before Amanda had time to tackle them - or did they see her coming? Instead we are hoping to persuade the Parish Council to provide a similar display on the east side. Grand Avenue would then have an entrance worthy of its name. Funding for all this work has come through a Community Grant from the Parish Council for the raised beds, plus HAA's share

of the lottery money as well as our own funds. Our small but enthusiastic 'green group' give freely of their labour which sometimes has been achingly back-breaking, whilst Georgia regards the many hours she has spent on design and chatting-up suppliers as her chance to 'give something back' to the village where her family have lived for many years. Planting, though, is only half the story - will we be able to maintain our new schemes? Some more volunteers would be very welcome. Just doing a bit of weeding whilst on the way to the shops could help. Contact Georgia on iangeorgia@hotmail.com (01273 845332)

which is too rough and full of large tussocks (?hassocks) for mechanical mowers to be effective. We also wish to preserve the anthills, for the green woodpeckers depend on them.

However, to scythe the whole meadow would be too labour intensive even for Paul and Sue. Therefore, says Paul, 'we will be making a second attempt to introduce sheep in October or November. We have a temporary electric fence with specially made gates to allow access to public rights of way and to Lag wood. Would any volunteers like to help us speak to dog-walkers about keeping dogs on leads while the sheep are in place? We have seen over a hundred dogs being walked here in a single day. That is a lot of dogs! So, dog walkers, please bag it up and take it away. You know it makes sense! And a big thank you for those who do.'

What should you look out for in the meadow? In September, Paul reported that 'the meadow is literally jumping with crickets, grasshoppers and leaf-hoppers. And of course there are many butterfly caterpillars. Our clovers, trefoils, vetches, cardamines and many of our grass species play a big part in the life cycle of butterflies. So far we have recorded 23 species. Commas have made a particularly strong

comeback here and red admirals, small coppers and silver washed fritillaries have all made an appearance in recent weeks.'

A lot has also been going on in Lag Wood. Resident mammals include bank voles, pygmy shrews, wood mice and moles and several of their predators, including weasels. In the Lag stream, says Paul, 'we have seen a healthy rise in insects whose life-cycles are partly aquatic, especially the aptly named Beautiful Demoiselles. These striking, iridescent blue-green damselflies prefer a fast flowing stream with a stony bottom in which to breed. We know of no other such stream nearby.'

The scrub on the meadow margins is an important habitat for birds. Wrens and migrant visitors such as whitethroats were spotted in May and June. Today in the wood you may hear a gentle tapping sound. That, says Paul, 'belongs to the nuthatches feasting on the hazel nuts. And our raucous gang of great tits is still having fun among the willows. It has been a great year for us, and what a great place this is. Let's all look after it.'