

Sompting Community in the Countryside – Round Table

Notes of Meeting by zoom 15th September 2020

DRAFT

Present:

SCIC Round Table member organizations	Attendee / Contact	Where in Sompting / Projects
Sompting Parish Council	Cathy Glynn-Davies, Steve Willeter	Malthouse Meadows, Beggars Bush
Sompting Estate	Mike Tristram, Alex Tristram	Multi-site
Sustainable Sussex	Keith Colin	Marepond Lane, Test Road Community Farm & Orchard
Sustainable Mind	Liane Webb	Sustainable Sussex sites, elsewhere
EPIC Project - Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust	Pete King	Mainly on Church Farm Sompting
Sompting Big Local	Emma Crowter, Pat Locke	Multi-site
South Downs National Park Rangers	Craig Daters	National Park ie rural north of A27
Adur District Council	Craig Ifield	Malthouse Meadows, others
Worthing Archaeological Society	Connie Shirley	Malthouse Field, Church Farm (EPIC)
Breathing Spaces	Claire Hunt, Lisa Leach	Dankton Barnyard/Farm Flowers
Community Works	Jess Allerton	Advisory/support

The Sompting Community in the Countryside (SCIC) Initiative began as a partnership working plan between Sompting Estate and Sompting Parish Council. This continues and those partners have added to it a wider Round Table group of organisations interested and engaged in Sompting’s community and countryside.

The meeting was facilitated by Mike Tristram and notes were taken by Cathy Glynn-Davies with the last part of the meeting noted by Jess Allerton. Mike had pre circulated a simple draft terms of reference, which was approved and adopted.

The aim of this Round Table group is

- To mutually inform one another’s action programs in Sompting’s countryside
- To mutually support action programs in Sompting’s countryside which increase the community’s health wellbeing and education, including by experience and enhancement of the parish’s natural and heritage resources.

Activity is by group meetings, and other communications between members, as needed. Meetings are attended by 1 or 2 from each member organisation, every 6 months, enabling members also the better to collaborate between meetings.

The organizational representatives then shared information, issues and opportunities for Sompting’s community and countryside, each from their organization, and answered questions. Main topics were projects; progress; plans; and challenges including the Covid pandemic and the climate and environment emergency. Possible actions identified are **highlighted**,

Notes of each organization's contributions, and concluding discussion, follow below.

MALTHOUSE MEADOWS PROJECT – SOMPTING PARISH COUNCIL

Cathy Glynn-Davies: Update on situation re planting of trees and challenges posed by lockdown; success and challenges of strip grazing; management and timetabling of events and raising public awareness and interest and fundraising. A forest garden is the objective although may choose a broader range of drought resistant trees and plants as watering is an issue. It has been useful to have ADC support in the form of an allocated park ranger and hope to work more closely to increase the rate of progress. Lead resident Steve Willeter has put together a timetable of tasks to enable focus at events. Wildflower seeding on grazed areas may commence in early spring. Coppicing is overdue and will be performed by park ranger and Leighton Clay, SPC's conservation officer.

Steve Willeter: Has observed an increase in use and access since the project began. Strip grazing has been successful and increased public interest. Objectives for the future include a pond/wet area and a roundhouse for local schools and visitors.

EPIC PROJECT – OUSE & ADUR RIVERS TRUST

Peter King: Epic has been running since 2018. Have worked to redirect the Broadwater Brook. This year has been a challenge. Moved much of their stuff online. Since August have been out with volunteers but in small groups. Project finishes September 2021 [MT post mtg update: December 2021]. They have 4k plug plants going in now, and trees over the winter. Have included archaeology and arts and have just over 1k people involved. River Rangers group has been formed by Linda, with volunteers managing the site into the future. They are considering how they start to transfer the scheme to the community despite Covid restrictions.

Linda Kerrison: about 20 people have become involved as river rangers. Has used Zoom to keep people involved. She has been working with children and schools: They are managing social distancing by insisting on small groups and use of PPE and scrupulous sanitising. Not providing tools. Tagging cleaned and disinfected tools.

Epic can share their risk assessments as an insight for other organisations, but not as a prescriptive tool or recommendation.

BREATHING SPACES / FARM FLOWERS

Claire Hunt: Therapeutic gardening. Growing cut flowers for sale. Using Dankton barnyard. Using wildflowers in their products. Sustainable and organic. Would like to continue to do this. Hope to manage the site more and reduce brambles and hogweed etc. Hope to increase the species they are using and also species struggling to survive at the moment. Public activities have reduced because of pandemic but hope to begin including a small group from the end of this month. Young people (asylum seekers) have been working with the organisation. CGD will share contact details with Cllr Richard Aulton who is presently initiating a therapeutic gardening project at the Harriet Johnson Centre.

SOMPTING BIG LOCAL

Emma Crowter: Events have been interrupted by the pandemic restrictions. Many events have had to be postponed. SBL part funded the fencing for the sheep strip grazing at MM. Events will be going on a calendar on their website. Feasibility study has been performed on the proposal for a hub in North Sompting. Emma explained the Sompting Big Local Funding from the National Lottery. One-

year plan has been produced which will run to next June. Money left may be allocated towards the hub at North Sompting. Consideration and planning is going into how the remaining funds are spent.

ADUR & WORTHING

Craig Ifield: Adur volunteer rangers consult and support with SPC and SBL and volunteers. There are about 60 sites over the Adur and Worthing areas. Craig has been allocated Sompting and is working with a number of groups. Guidelines are continuously being updated.

Cathy: The range of skills provided by the Park rangers is impressive. *Steve:* Q. are there volunteer rangers? A: Unfortunately Worthing and Adur do not have a budget for training volunteers. A&W rangers can do partnership working but specifically on A&W property. *Mike:* Q. 'Town and Down' synergy for Malthouse Meadows and Beggars Bush Meadow projects, so volunteers working outside the Park also have action opportunities inside the Park? A: Potentially the A&W and SDNPA rangers could work together to support this into the future.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Craig Daters: Has been working more closely with Adur and Worthing. SDNPA want to formalise that arrangement. Everything they do is in collaboration. Excited about prospect of working with others in the urban fringe. Beggars Bush: will be taking the overflow car park, which has been the subject of fly tipping, out of service and will support enhancement to the area to create a permissive park south to link in with existing rights of way. They are awaiting planning permission for this. Craig is working with Mike and farmers to improve access for the public and protect farmers from incursions from dogs etc. Countryside has seen increased use during lockdown which is welcome but needs to be managed safely. Lancing Ring: they are working to future proof this. They want to attract long term funding to support this. Activities with volunteers and members of the public are on hold as a result of the pandemic but they are hoping to manage this into the future.

WORTHING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Connie Shirley: They have had three seasons working in the Malthouse Paddocks. They have had to cancel this year, as a result of the pandemic. Hoping to increase activities into the future. They have worked closely with the Epic Project. They had a dig in July in conjunction with Worthing Museum which include social distancing, but volunteers had to sign a disclaimer. Despite this they had a very successful event discovering features from late Neolithic through to South of England Show. They would like to stream to Facebook. **Craig Daters:** Clapham Wood would like some help interpreting features.

COMMUNITY WORKS

Jess Estcourt: They provide volunteer support. They have a dedicated volunteer centre. Increased number of people wanting to volunteer. Can support and advertise roles. They have a quarterly meet up. They can answer questions re social distancing etc. Supporting SBL in the community.

Jess is also involved with other projects as a Sompting resident. Maize Maze on the Estate was successful (Jess helped to organise). Forest school experience for children was run in partnership with Sompting Estate and supported financially by SBL – hoping to return to this in the future. Working with the foodbank – have observed increased demand across Adur. They have secured a large grant for the Lancing and Sompting foodbank. Community Works can support by accessing funding. Volunteer programme are arranging to harvest the Maize and distribute to foodbanks, as Sustainable Sussex also doing with surplus produce. SSX would like to discuss the issue of risk

assessment. Food pioneers are running a project (cook one for yourself and one for someone else).

SUSTAINABLE SUSSEX & SUSTAINABLE MIND

Keith Colin and Liane Webb: Not risk averse but have paid diligent attention to the risks posed by the pandemic and locked down early. Happy to support with risk assessment. Working with mixed needs groups. They currently have one volunteer working. A glasshouse has been donated by Sompting Estate which has more than doubled their production potential at Marepond Lane.

Hard work to manage 2 smallholding sites through Covid without volunteers. Have been using strip grazing to improve biodiversity and enrich the soil. Hoping to expand the flock and have lambs in the spring. Hoping to do more work processing wool etc. with volunteers in the community, but the pandemic has made this difficult. Pigs donated provided a solution to digging challenge, sheep to grass management. Have been growing and providing food to local foodbanks.

Have also been looking at John Muir award – connecting people to nature. The pandemic provides opportunities too; setting up some video training on Covid safety. SSx have linked up with Lancing College farm and received support.

Sustainable Mind has gone onto Zoom and slowed down the groups. 2 sessions now being run weekly. Some people are being supported individually with anxiety. **Happy to take referrals, formal or informal.**

SOMPTING ESTATE

Mike Tristram: Presented progress and plans for conservation and wildlife on Sompting Estate & the future Community Farm, which includes a community farm and volunteer base, with horticulture, pasture, woodland, ponds and streams. There will be a Nature Trail with access via Hamble Recreation Ground. Volunteers based on this site will manage the activities on the Epic site and elsewhere. The Estate, with input from Sustainable Sussex, has produced a [Local Strategic Vision document](#) for consultation alongside the Sompting Parish Neighbourhood Plan, detailing many projects for the community in the countryside.

Within the National Park part of the Parish, Jess noted that permissive path between North Sompting and Dankton Lane has been well used and is being widened and hedges planted, a Craig Daters SDNPA project with the Estate. **Craig Daters and Craig Ifield both said they were interested in supporting Forest School activity. The Estate has a possible downland base in mind for a future 'Forest and Farm School' activity, need to identify provider and engage farm tenants to develop plan.**

Alex Tristram, Sompting Estate: Recently led a walk across Sompting Vineyard and the Woodland. This was successful with social distancing in place. Involved in Sompting Estate's commercial projects: vineyards, Middle Yard Barn (which will offer space to small businesses), and a holidays enterprise (subject to Covid, starting with B&B in 2021.)

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

- In response to a request from Patrick, Mike showed a rough outline of the proposed plans for **Adur&Worthing Local Plan developments** on Sompting Estate. This includes sports fields and cycle lanes and footpaths which will connect both with the EPIC project footpath and with the planned Community Farm and Orchard. Helping new residents integrate and understand, contribute to and benefit from our community and environment will be a focus for the future.
- Enhancement creation and use of **green corridors, and connectivity** for nature and people in general, were of interest to all the organizations.
- Members discussed how **Volunteering opportunities** might be enhanced or shared across the group. Training opportunities for volunteers might be opened to volunteers of more than one local organization. EPIC conservation volunteers and Sustainable Sussex volunteers plan to cooperate on SSx's Community Farm base on the Estate in the future. Policies, facilities and information about volunteering might be shared or compared. **One aim in so doing would be to help each other as organizations to improve what we are doing for and with our volunteers. Another aim could be to make it easier for volunteers to work with multiple organizations so gaining and sharing extra skills. Members will consider this further before or at next meeting.**
- Steve Willeter raised the question of what **web presence** does the group wish this Round Table to have. The objective might be to communicate our presence, projects and partnership to volunteers, colleagues, funders and the public. It was felt that a new website was not necessary but that a page or some text could be prepared which those who are in a position and wish to do so can put on to their own websites.

Post meeting notes: Steve (same day!) circulated some first thoughts on this, responses ranged from being interested in a page or para on their website to just wanting a link to someone else's page where the information can be found. Subsequently

1. Steve suggested member organizations could consider submitting their details, as groups looking after green spaces, to the Green Tides website – see especially

www.greentides.co.uk/Groups and www.greentides.co.uk/Links . Green Tides is an umbrella body in which joined-up organizations “work together to share knowledge and resources, promote the amazing work of our members and collaborate with partners” on a broader scale than, but including, Sompting.

2. Mike followed up these ideas with a web page along the lines suggested by Steve:

<https://www.somptingestate.com/scic> . Member organizations are welcome to adapt this for a page on their own websites, or to link to it, in addition to considering a Green Tides entry.