

APPENDIX Dvi

**ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL – EXTERNAL
CONSULTATIONS**

Rother District Council External Consultations

A number of external organisations have been contacted with regards to the current and potential future needs of open space and indoor sports provision in Rother District.

The report below summarises feedback from these organisations.

Freedom Leisure – Matt Hunt, Area Manager

- Freedom Leisure runs three centres in Rother District; Bexhill Leisure Centre, Bexhill Leisure Pool and Rye Sports Centre which is a dual use centre.
- There has been a large refurbishment programme over the past year or so which has resulted in the sports centres' two gyms being updated and improved changing at the pool.
- The level of provision seems about right although the location of the centres along the coast, proximity to Hastings will mean than residents may choose to go out of Rother for their sports centre and swimming pool requirements.
- The centres are fairly old in design which makes disabled access difficult in places. Storage and office space is also limited.
- Parking is good at all sites although Rye, as a dual use centre, has less available spaces during school term time.
- The leisure pool plant room will need upgrading in the next 3-4 years.
- Usage is good during peak times but quieter during the daytime.
- Freedom Leisure is a large organisation with a willingness to look at long term investment opportunities.

Hastings and Rother Disability Forum – Kevin Towner, Vice Chair

- Aims of forum to achieve more social equality and access to facilities and activities.
- There are fewer Rother residents as members which have meant that input to the disability requirements in Rother District is not as good as they would like. They have been consulted on schemes such as Egerton Park and would like to continue to be involved to ensure disability issues continue to be addressed. Very keen to see consultations put into action.
- Transport links very poor across the district.
- Access to beaches at Camber, Bexhill and Rye could be improved.
- Difficulties in ensuring integration of young people with a disability in open space activities, it needs more specific targeting.

Action in Rural Sussex/Rother Youth Forum – Mark McTaggart and Colin Anderson

- Scheme to get Parish Action Plans written, 8 parishes completed to date which have an open space element and also often desires for improved community hall use. (awaiting details of parish action plans completed from ARS).
- Transport difficulties identified as a major issue.
- Potential for school facilities to be used more but schools are not particularly welcoming.
- Requirements to improve young people's provision across the district, zoning helps to identify what a particular site is designed for.
- Welcome provision of goalposts, could be improved still further with nets.
- Girls are a harder market to satisfy as generally not so interested in sports, youth shelters provide a good base.

- Northiam project for an indoor sports hall to include a facility specifically for young people.
- Raising funds to replace worn out or outdated play equipment can be hard.

Hastings and Rother Primary Care Trust (PCT) – Hayley Martin

- The Local Exercise Action Pilot (LEAP) was a year long project originally started in Hastings Borough which has now been extended beyond the pilot phase to include Rother District.
- Involves targeting inactive people through national priority groups and local PCT goals to encourage physical activity to improve health and well-being. Focus on Sidley and Camber as two more deprived area of Rother District.
- Initial phases in Rother District involve raising awareness of physical activity opportunities through development of a website and offering small grants to schools/youth groups for a girl's getting active scheme.
- Schemes aim to utilise current facilities although some facilities could be improved. For example signage (calorie mapped walks, signage showing approximate times rather than distances), additional equipment to supplement walks, trim trails. People need to feel safe to encourage participation, for example clear pathways, good lighting.
- Using sports activities to increase physical activity in the rural part of the district is hard due to facilities, numbers of people in target groups, transport issues.

Sussex Police – Martin Mann (Bexhill), Alan Hanson(Battle and Rye)

- In general levels of crime are low, most problems with groups of young people gathering, underage drinking and occasional drug use. One of the difficulties is that much of it gets reported in the local press so the problem is perceived as bigger than it actually is.
- Camber Sands is very busy in the summer, officer based on site working with the coastal team. The proposed new developments are seen as positive to help manage the area better.
- Egerton Park in Bexhill can have problems in summer months so new plans must include security improvements through better lighting, enforced closing at dusk, CCTV.
- Polegrove Recreation Ground can also be a trouble spot as young people gather in the stadium area; better security planning would help this.
- Introduction of football goalposts has had a positive impact in general; Sidley Recreation Ground posts could be better sited.
- Officers work closely with community to try and avoid nuisances while still allowing people to enjoy themselves, currently trying to find venues for mini motos.
- Officers set their own Patrol Plans which include educational visits to schools and checks on open spaces. Solutions to stop antisocial behaviour are worked on together, for example youths were discouraged from hanging out in a churchyard by the removal of benches.
- Beachfront at Bexhill can be hard to manage; the promenade at South Cliff has a stretch only visible from the beach itself. Sometimes groups of youths do gather on the promenade itself which can be threatening to the elderly population.

SEEDA – Paul Adams, Sea Space

- A project launched in 2003 to focus on the regeneration of the coastline along Rother and Hastings sea fronts.
- One key area is Pebsham Countryside Park, which lies between Hastings and Bexhill. There is an SSSI to the north of the area and former tip in the southern part. Plans include maintaining a wildlife area in the north while opening up the southern part for recreational use especially sports activities. This is seen as about a ten year project which launched in 2006.
- Significant importance of Rye Harbour, this area gets many visitors.

Sussex Wildlife Trust – Tony Whitbread, Chief Executive

- Concerned with linking conservation with education and encouraging people to view and experience wildlife. The People and Wildlife Strategy aims to encourage access to the public and the organisation tries to be proactive providing interpretative materials and guide leaflets. Access to sites is free often with parking and information is provided on public transport access.
- There are a number of sites in Rother District and although all are used there is scope for greater visitor numbers on all sites. Need to get over the myth, nature reserve – keep out.
- SWT do not actively seek out new sites but look to expand existing reserves which is ecologically sounder and gives opportunities for better access.
- Castle Water and Flatopers Wood in the Rye area are particularly good sites with a board walk at the former.

The Bedgebury Project Forestry Commission – David Hiscock, Partnership Manager

- Only a tiny part of the Bedgebury Project falls into Rother District, the remaining part being in Kent. This is a new scheme which has been open for a year. It has significant Sport England funding to develop the forest into a series of dedicated tracks suitable for cycling, horse riding and walking.
- There is also a focus on disability opportunities for archery, walking cycling.
- Included on the site are a visitors centre and an outdoor adventurous children's play area.
- In the first year it is anticipated that visitor numbers will have tripled from 56,000 visitors two years ago.
- Impact on the forest management has been negligible as people tend to stick to the cycle tracks and so avoid any sensitive areas.
- There is currently a plan for recreational and sporting use but no overall strategy for the development of the centre in terms of future visitors, physical or commercial developments.
- One of the aims for 2007 is to forge greater links with the sports development officer at Rother.

Beautiful Battle Group – Margaret Emeleus

- Born out of the Battle in Bloom committee which now looks at wider issues of the presentation of the town. Their tag line is Pride in the Community.
- Tend to be reactive to projects and have supported youth groups and bulb planting, a pond being reclaimed with work by the probation service and the Battle in Bloom entry.

- Strengths lie with the Armonary Gardens by the Town Hall, allotment provision and access into open countryside for dog walkers.
- Battle Recreation Ground is an area that could be improved as currently it is underused although the opening of the guide hut may increase people coming to the area. Kingsmead open space could also be looked at.
- In general felt there was sufficient open space for the needs of the population.
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Consultation notes – Gullivers Action Group

- Group is opposed to the part development of the site in Bexhill. Site has two bowling greens (4/5 rinks each) and indoor facility with two rinks. Site has been around for yonks.
- Churchills retirement living want to build on a third of the site with a new clubhouse. Plan was originally rejected in October but company has appealed.
- there are two other bowling facilities in Bexhill – Polgrove and Edgington Park. One is outdoor, one is indoor.
- Approximately 70 to 90 members at Gullivers.
- Site originally bought in the 1960's for £10k over 10 years.
- Club is financial difficulties, hence scheme.

Consultation with Susan Fraser (May) regarding MUGA at Ticehurst Rec Ground.

- MUGA/skate park is too close to her property with resulting noise population. Unsatisfactory answers from DC regarding this.
- Part of facilities were built without planning permissions. No consultation regarding proposed facilities before they were built. Site is just 5 meters from boundary.
- Site never closes, officially 10.30pm the gates to car park and locked at MUGA closes at 8.30 but no one to enforce this.

Consultation with Richard Comottoi.

- Big issue in lack of anything for young boys to do. Playareas are ok but a lack of older children facilities. They have invested in a kick-about area but more is needed.
- The Winchelsea area is on top of a hill with poor pedestrian access out of the village, particularly to the north. There are archaeological areas surrounding the village preventing development.
- A tennis court facility is wanted on a disused piece of land behind the village hall, next to the cricket field. Land is owned by National Trust but leased to cricket club who no longer seem in favour of the idea. Only one court would be possible here but a 2nd location has also been identified in a nearby field. Court would not be floodlit.
- £10k raised from national lottery, £5k from RDC. £10k internally also but funding gap of £5k to £10k.
- Have established links with school (who also lack open space) and they are keen to use it.
- Open space issues are of quantity and accessibility, not quality. There are 3 allotment sites, C&C and lots of agricultural land. Cricket field too. Footpath needed to the north of the village – out of the village.
- Windmill area is a well-used open space.