

REPORT TO BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Reduction of Flooding in Egerton Park

Executive Summary

This report requests that the Town Council:

Bexhill Wild Domesday CIC

47 Sea Road, Bexhill-on-Sea TN40 1JJ

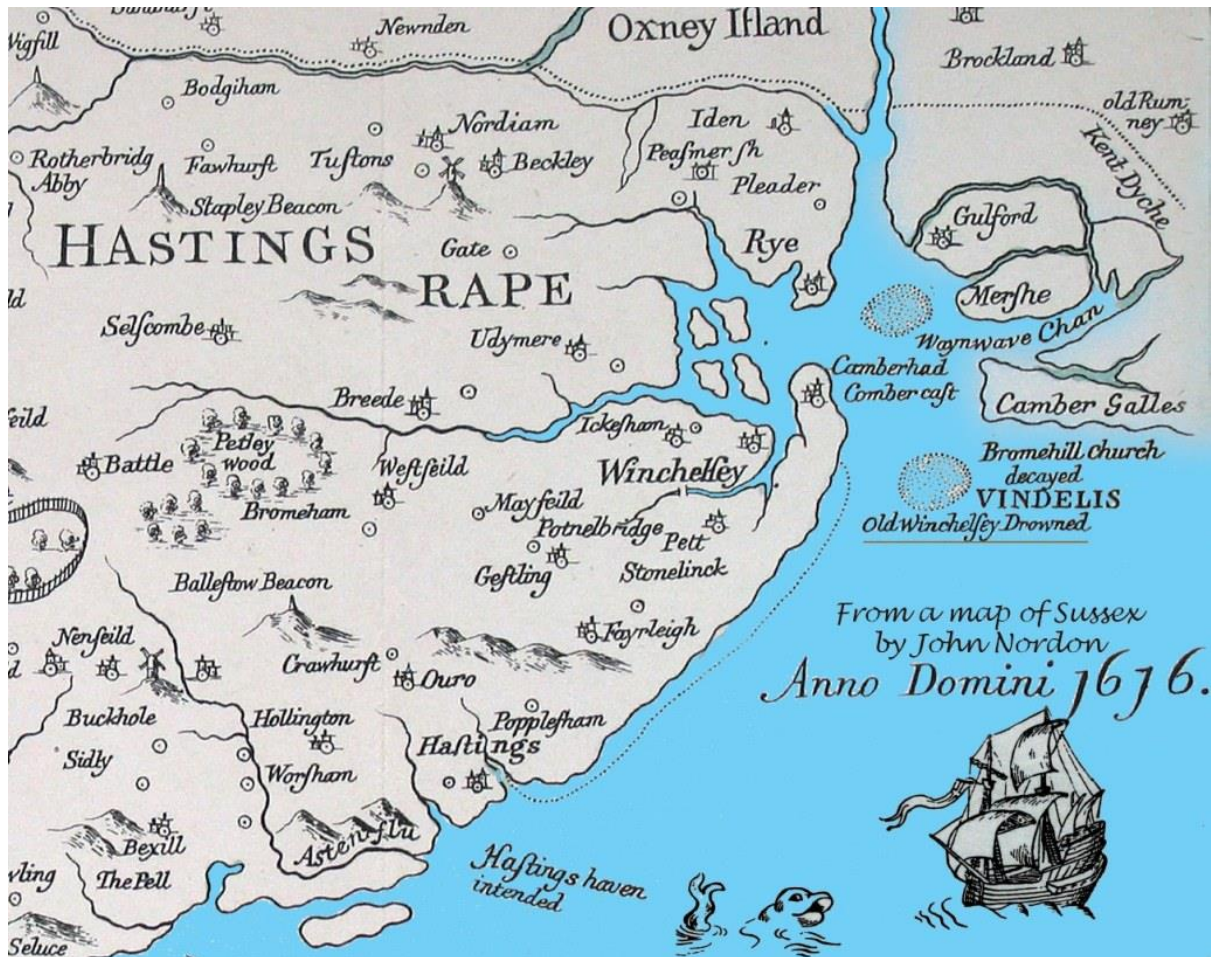
bexhillwildCIC@outlook.com

07969088186

- A. considers making a formal funding contribution to the Crowdfunder for the Sidley Woods Project (see below) and
- B. gives authority to the Town Clerk to write to Bexhill Wild CIC that the Town Council supports a grant bid to Rother District Council. This letter is required by Rother DC.

Introduction

Although Bexhill’s original town is on a hill next to the old manor site, the area of Bexhill’s coast was once marshland used by rich clients to hunt wildfowl. In medieval times the area now called Egerton Park and The Polegrove, was called ‘The Pell’, a large lake fed by a torrent (hence the term ‘pell-mell’ for rushing water.)



Map showing the Pell and Sidley Stream at bottom left. To the right is the Asten – now the Combe Haven. A large shingle island existed off the coast of Bexhill.

When Bexhill’s urban infrastructure was being designed, no regard was given to the long-term effects of natural drainage of the Pell headstream, especially in winter. The strategy has been to constrain the natural flow into rapid transit channels pinned by housing estates and a formal park with lakes.

SIDLEY WOODS PROJECT

Woodland has been removed and drainage slopes have been concreted over making water run-off even more rapid. Since then, Rother District Council has not made any effective move to prevent the almost annual flooding of Egerton Park by the Egerton Stream.

Images of the extensive and almost regular flooding of Egerton Park when the tide gate is shut.

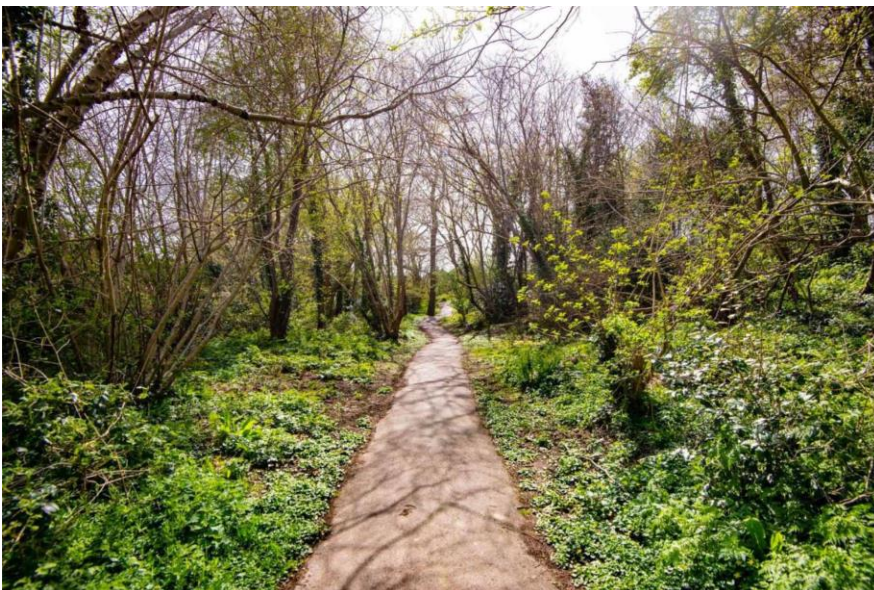


SIDLEY WOODS PROJECT



Solution

Bexhill Wild Domesday Project has identified that the Pell torrent, now named the Egerton Park Stream flows through Sidley Woods into Egerton Park. The efflux of rainwater to the sea is enabled by a currently damaged and rusting tide gate onto the beach. The tide gate shuts when the tide is coming in and stays shut to prevent saltwater coming inland. This has the effect of damming the Egerton Stream during high tides. If high levels of rainfall occur, the stream overflows and floods the park.



The Egerton Stream in Sidley Woods is located to the left of this path.

SIDLEY WOODS PROJECT

During the Year One phase of the Bexhill Wild Domesday Project, the Sidley Woods section of the Egerton Stream has been closely examined. A visit has been paid to the area by an expert officer of the South East Rivers Trust who has confirmed that the provision of leaky dams, pools and scrapes would slow the flow of water. This slowing may be sufficient to stop the flooding while the high tide gate is shut, by reducing the rate of water reaching Egerton Park.

The South East Rivers Trust have confirmed that they are willing to design the scheme and obtain a licence from the Environment Agency to implement it. No work can start until the end of the bird nesting season. The Sidley Woods stream bank edge areas are marshy, and this is an ideal location for the planting of Black Poplar saplings. This tree species has suffered great losses at present and is on the way to extinction in England. It requires the planting of male and female trees next to each other to ensure furtherance of the species. Bexhill Town Council could help in this.

Other benefits of the Sidley Woods Project include the planting of berry-bearing blackthorn and hawthorn shrubs and the provision of a picnic table area for the purpose of social enhancement for the people of Sidley. Path improvements to enable people with mobility disabilities to use wheelchairs safely in the woodland could also be achieved in a second enhancement phase.

Funding

To fund the project, a target total was set of £10,000.00 to cover the costs of equipment, including timber, stakes, a small mechanical digger, jackets and gloves for volunteers, insurance for volunteers to be obtained from Zurich TGV, shrubs, trees and picnic area tables and benches.

A Crowdfunder was launched, and this immediately gained the attention of East Sussex County Council who emailed Bexhill Wild CIC to say they liked the project so much that they have confirmed in writing that they will pay £5,000.00 in match funding into the Crowdfunder, if the Crowdfunder reaches half its aimed total, namely £5,000.00.

Although the Chief Constable of Sussex has granted £1,000.00 to the project, this cannot be used as part of the Crowdfunder total because the rules state that money received before the Crowdfunder began cannot be counted towards the £5,000.00.

At the same time, 100 leaflets were distributed around Sidley by former town councillor Julie Norris, and this has resulted in a few donations to the Crowdfunder. However, many people in Sidley do not have extensive spare cash and so organisations are needed to help the Crowdfunder reach its mid-aim thus generating the match funding from ESCC. Bexhill Town Council's Assistant Clerk also helped by arranging ten copies of the Crowdfunder to be placed on the town council's notice boards.

Talks are ongoing with Sidley Rotary Club, Heart of Sidley, Bexhill Lions, Rother Voluntary Action and other organisations about contributions.

A formal request was made to the Chair of RDC, Cllr Doug Oliver, asking for help, but due to the rules pertaining to RDC, the only way he could help was to offer the possibility of a £1,000.00 grant.

However, due to those rules, this grant cannot even be applied for unless the Bexhill Town Clerk writes a letter to Bexhill Wild CIC confirming that the town council backs the project. There seems to be some backing already, because as mentioned above, the town council's notice boards bear the posters asking for funds. Having gone this far it does make sense for the town council to guide the Town Clerk to issue the letter of support.

SIDLEY WOODS PROJECT

Deadline

For this project to be properly funded, it is request that the town council gives permission to the Town Clerk to write to Bexhill Wild CIC as explained above – but more than that, to also contribute to the Crowdfunder of an amount to be described below.

Please agree to pay into the Crowdfunder the difference between the total showing on 21st of July and £5,000.00. So, for example, if the total shows £1,150.00 then please pay in £3,850.00. If the total shows £2,450.00, then please pay in 2,550.00. In this way the Crowdfunder will be guaranteed to reach its match funding requirement and ESCC will pay in the other £5,000.00. The project can then go ahead.

Workflow

As I am sure you are fully aware, this sort of project needs careful evaluation and planning permission from Rother. If Rother do grant the £1,000.00 it will seem to be a tacit agreement that planning permission will likely be granted because they know that South East Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency are likely to sign off the project as feasible and sensible. As you can see from the above, Cllr Oliver has already given support by asking the RDC grants manager to suggest a bid of £1,000.00 from RDC.

Therefore, to ensure the reduction or removal of all flooding from Egerton Park, it is vital that we have both the letter from the Town Clerk and the town council funds in place to get match funding from ESCC.

Urgency

At the time of writing this (23rd June 2024), there are 38 days left to get the £10,000.00. Please therefore consider this report as soon as you can thus giving Bexhill CIC the time to make a bid for £1,000.00 to Rother DC and for the Town Clerk to set up a payment difference to tip the total to £5,000.00.

The Crowdfunder for this project can be found here:

[Bexhill Wild - a Environment crowdfunding project in Bexhill-on-Sea by David EP Dennis \(crowdfunder.co.uk\)](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/Bexhill-Wild-a-Environment-crowdfunding-project-in-Bexhill-on-Sea-by-David-EP-Dennis)

Thank you

David EP Dennis BA (Hons) FCIPD AFRHS LCGI RAF

Managing Director Bexhill Wild Domesday CIC - Company Number **15352284**

Bexhill Wild Domesday Project Manager

Attributions: Map of the Pell courtesy of the Court Hall Museum of Winchelsea. All other images copyright David EP Dennis.