

Bexhill Town Council Wild Domesday Project

Dear Town Clerk, Communications Officer and Town Councillors

BEXHILL-ON-SEA WILD DOMESDAY PROJECT

FIRST THREE-MONTHLY REPORT

In accordance with my contract, here is the first report on the Bexhill Wild Domesday Project covering the period 1st June to 30th September 2023.

Introduction

This project began on 1st June 2023 and is due to end on 31st May 2024 unless continuance is agreed. The overall project is designed for three years of landscape and wildlife evaluation, conservation and enhancement in the nine wards of the town.

Progress has been rapid. I have worked hard to contact many national, county and local organisations to begin collecting scientific information about the 30 aspects affecting wildlife and landscape in Bexhill-on-Sea agreed before the start of the project. This list of those contacted is at Appendix 1. The opportunities for obtaining funding for Domesday project work are set out at Appendix 2. The costings for the projects determined to be necessary in the period 2023-2034 are shown at Appendix 3 and these will be discussed with councillors on 11th October. The agreement to work together with Rother District Council (RDC) is at Appendix 4.

Facing Reality

It is obvious that the Town Council is limited in its actions because RDC control many aspects of wildlife and landscape. The best course of action was to give a friendly and professional approach to RDC. I therefore arranged three hours of meetings and a slide presentation for RDC. This has been very successful indeed.

The really positive response from Rother is an agreement to work together in partnership, so that the Domesday Project can supplement and also enhance aspects of the work of RDC, but still be special to Bexhill residents, especially its volunteers.

Key Achievements in the first three months – June to September 2023

Setting up the Project Facebook page.

Setting up the project website.

Having an electronic map designed showing the detail of each ward.

Visiting and photographing the whole of the nine wards of Bexhill.

Identifying the funding opportunities detailed at Appendix 2.

Evaluating the conservation needs for Collington and Gillham Woods.

Researching, writing and publishing on the project website the guidance PDFs for:

- Pollination planting in private front gardens PDF – agreed with Sussex Wildlife Trust
- Sea Bathing and Sewage report PDF
- Sea Level Rises report PDF.

Meeting with or consulting with all those listed in Appendix 1.

Meeting face-to-face with some Town Councillors (see below).

Identifying and costing the items required to enable the projects proposed at Appendix 3.

Close liaison and developmental meetings with the Leader and principal officers of RDC.

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The Politics of the Situation

RDC control the landscape and many activities of Bexhill-on-Sea. In order for the project to be successful, team working has been established with Cllr Doug Oliver and Dr Lucie Bolton, and within the interface between RDC and the Environment Agency and Natural England, the following have been achieved:

- An agreement that Rother DC will not place any more beach huts at Galley Hill because of the rare wildlife and beach habitat located there.
- An agreement with Rother DC that the major Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for Combe Valley be extended to cover Galley Hill. This to be implemented by Natural England. Application submitted. Reply awaited.
- An agreement with the Environment Agency that the water catchment area plan for Combe Valley should be reviewed to find ways to prevent flooding of the homes on Bexhill Road. Although these homes are in the area controlled by Hastings Borough Council, the water comes from the wards of Bexhill that cover the west bank of the Combe Haven. Application submitted. Reply awaited.
- An agreement with the Pevensey to Eastbourne EV Coastal Management Service to feed into their action plan for coastal defence for 2027 onwards. Continuous contact established.
- An agreement with the Pevensey to Eastbourne EV Coastal Management Service to investigate the loss of beach protection at Waller's Haven in St Marks Ward, Norman's Bay where the sea has entered housing. Ongoing.
- An agreement to meet between 1pm and 2pm on 7th November 2023 with Ben Hook, Director, Place and Climate Change to discuss aligning data and plans for all eventualities caused by gradual sea level rise, storms and shingle movement in longshore drift.

Continuance

I confirm that I would like to continue to manage this project for the next two years if the funding for those two years is agreed. I feel that great value can be given to Bexhill-on-Sea by this project. Future phases would include obtaining teams of volunteers, funding and implementation of the plan to conserve and enhance wildlife and landscape.

David EP Dennis BA (Hons) FCIPD AFRHS LCGI RAF
Wild Domesday Project Manager
Sea Road Creative Research

[REDACTED]

Date: 9th October 2023

[REDACTED]

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Appendix 1

In the first three months, the Domesday project manager David EP Dennis has interacted with the following people/organisations (in alphabetical order):

- Bexhill OSM - Mapping
- Bexhill-on-Sea Town Councillors
- Dark Skies
- De La Warr External Affairs Manager
- East Sussex County Council
- Environment Agency Headquarters (EV)
- Friends of Combe Valley
- Groundwork South, Combe Valley CIC Managing agent
- Hastings & East Sussex Natural History Society
- Hydrodynamics Project Manager, Channel Coastal Observatory, National Oceanography Centre
- Minister of Transport Huw Merriman MP
- National Biological Network
- Natural England
- Pevensey to Eastbourne EV Coastal Management Service
- Safe Sea Water Swimming
- Southampton University
- Southern Water
- Studio Brio Environment Consultancy
- Sussex Police
- Sussex Wildlife Trust
- United Nations Climate Committee
- Upper Wilting Farm
- Wetland Trust
- Woodland Trust

Appendix 2

ESCC Funding advice

Looking at [Community Supporters](#), it seems that as a charity they have been quite successful in securing funding, so some of the funders I mentioned, they have already tapped into. This includes Chalk Cliff, lottery, even [Rother Lottery](#). It would be useful to know what funders they've already applied to, so that I can send different ones. Funders for the Domesday project listed below are possibilities if they don't already know about these. You should start applying later on in the year, as it might be a bit too early now. However, it is worth familiarising yourself with the funders and their requirements now. If the **Town Council** were to apply it could go for:

[National Lottery Grants for Heritage – £3,000 to £10,000 | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) - nature (for example, habitats, species and geology) is one of the types of heritage they fund. They have larger grant programmes if you needed to access more.

There might also be some landfill funding, but you'll need to check that the postcode is eligible: [Our Projects | The Veolia Environmental Trust \(veoliatrust.org\)](#), [Rebuilding Biodiversity - Biffa Award \(biffa-award.org\)](#)

Should it be a **voluntary organisation**, not necessarily a charity, the following would be possible:

[Chalk Cliff Trust](#) is the one you should go for first – the form is one side of A4, and grants are up to £5,000. You should find out within days.

[Sussex Community Foundation](#) are another one that provides grants of up to £10,000, this one has deadlines, the next one is 8th September.

There would be others but as funds open/close, better to look into it again in 2/3 months' time. Other funders can also be identified through [East Sussex 4 Community](#), a free to use database.

For information on grant/funding for students for your PHD: [Student grants, bursaries and scholarships - Save the Student](#)

I also mentioned free seeds from the BBC, maybe next year? [New BBC Let It Grow gardening campaign launched - BBC Newsround](#)

Véronique Poutrel

External Funding Manager
Planning and Reporting, Finance

01273 482859 | 07786 171 418
eastsussex.gov.uk/community/funding

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Appendix 3

The submission to the Climate Committee on 11th October will asking for agreement to bid for external funds for the following projects, all of which have already been agreed during three hours of talks, with the Cllr Doug Oliver, Leader of Rother District Council and the Environment Adviser Dr Lucie Bolton for implementation within Bexhill-on-Sea in principle. There is one small delay in an acceptance but that should be resolved by 7th November 2023. (see Appendix 4).

This application for project approval **does not require any money from the Town Council.**

If agreement is given and funds are obtained for the projects below, then the implication is that the money will be spent in 2024/2025. If councillors decide not to vote in favour, then the project will end on 31st May 2024, but without having achieved its primary aim of conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

The results of the research have been presented to Rother District Council. In the three hours of formal meetings with Rother DC they have approved the project bid areas and concepts. Updates have been sent to all councillors. A slide presentation will be given for 15 minutes on 11th October 2023.

Please approve the following projects that cover: **Drought, Environment and Sea Level Rise.** Funding bids will be made to pay for the project through external grants.

Drought

- Purchase of water bowsers of various types:
1 x 110 litre @ £336.00 each). 9 x Hitchman roll-along water bowser 40 litre @ £40.00
Total cost: £696.00
- Free water butts for residents: 100 x £33.50 = £3,350.00
- Enhanced water catchment to Gillham Wood and Collington Wood: Clay puddled ponds.
2x £1,000.00

Environment

- Improvements to the flow and ecology of Sidley Stream.

Volunteers would clean the landscape. A leaky dam made of logs and wicker would be placed at an appropriate location. Cost – nil, Wood to be provided by Friends of Combe Valley. Planting of snowdrops, English bluebells and other flora by community volunteers.

- Hedging and larger shrubs – 1,000 metres of new hedging spread through the nine wards. Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Holly, Blackberry, Ivy, Buddleia: Woodland Trust grant for hedging of up to 250 metres – free. Otherwise around £1.08 Per plant. 4 plants per metre - So 1,000 metres of hedge plants for planting during 2024/5 = 750 x £1.08 = £810.00 x 4 = £3,240.00
- Free pollinating plants for residents as per the PDF on the project website. £1,000.00

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- Conservation of the exceptionally rare *Dolomedes plantarius* Great Raft spiders in a Bexhill ward of Combe Valley. Ditch improvements in liaison with ESC and EV. Consulting with Sussex Wildlife Trust. Cost: Nil.
- Bat boxes and bird boxes: Bat = 9 boxes @ £10.00 per box: Bird = 6 Barn Owl and large bird @ £40.00. Can be made by Friends of Combe Valley in their woodland workshop for a donation: say £500.00.
- Grants for local volunteer organisations such as Bexhill Environmental Group and Friends of Combe Valley, Gillham Wood and Collington Wood, to help with woodland and path clearance. £250.00 per organisation. Cost £1,000.00

Sea Level Rise

- Robust canvas panels for protecting the sea front from shingle and wave damage in winter.

Costs as follows:

One panel 6feet 10 inches wide and 5 feet eight inches high = £32.92

20 panels = £592.43

133 panels = £4,261.32

Project manager recommends buying 20 panels for testing of concept to be used on railing for 1 winter. If it keeps stones off sea front, then implement full set of canvas in 2025/2026. This aspect is still in discussion with RDC and will be resolved on 7th November 2023.

Total Cost of all bids to be spent in 2024/5:

Drought: £6046.00

Environment: £5,740.00

Sea Level: £592.43

Total Project Bid: £12,378.43

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Appendix 4

Response from Rother DC:

Dear David,

Thank you very much for the additional details of your proposals. For the purposes of the Town Council I understand you need some level of reassurance that RDC is supportive.

Rother District Council support the majority of your proposals as being aligned to our own climate and environmental ambitions. Where required, RDC will seek to grant access to our lands, on a case-by-case basis, subject to further details for each part of the project and necessary safety information is provided.

In relation to your Sea Level Rise project*, the lack of information provided gives me slight cause for concern as the matter of shingle movement on Bexhill beaches is one that needs to be carefully managed. I reserve judgement on this scheme pending further information regarding the actual interventions to be undertaken, understanding the proposed benefit, and consultation with the EA and residents.

I would also be interested in seeing any monitoring and evaluation that takes place during this project, as it may help feed into our own climate strategy going forward.

I thank you for your hard work on these issues and wish you all the best in attracting funding.

Kind regards

Ben

Ben Hook, Director, Place and Climate Change
Rother DC

*This reservation has been caused by Ben not being at the meetings with the other councillors. I have written to him to explain that the concept is to stop shingle from coming onto the sea front – not to remove shingle barriers. He has agreed to meet on 7th November, as he is away on a long holiday before then.