

# Bepton Parish Council

## Summer 2026 Newsletter



### **Annual Parish Assembly**

The Annual Parish Assembly on 7<sup>th</sup> May at Park House Hotel was very well attended, parishioners enjoying time to chat over a glass of wine after the meeting and presentation. We heard a detailed report from our enthusiastic and energetic young District Councillor, Dominic Merritt, who gave us news that the hold ups over decisions on the fire damaged, Angel Hotel site should be resolved soon and that he is working hard on negotiations to have Midhurst police station remain open with a staffed front desk among the many other tasks and commitments he oversees for our wider community.

Chris Stiebelt, from The Friends of Rother Valley Way gave an informative presentation on the progress and plans for the Midhurst to Petersfield route for this rural highway. The Friends of the Rother Valley Way, a local community group are working to create a safe, accessible, and traffic-free pathway that follows, where possible, the route of the former railway. Open to walkers, runners, cyclists, pushchairs, and disabled users making travel and recreation safer, healthier, and more sustainable for all, their vision is to reconnect the communities and businesses of the Rother Valley.

### **Bepton Parish Council new website**

This new website address [www.bep-ton-pc.gov.uk](http://www.bep-ton-pc.gov.uk) is due to go “live” shortly. We would welcome more photos of Bepton and if you have any, please send them to Councillor Mike Salmon on [mike.salmon@bep-ton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:mike.salmon@bep-ton-pc.gov.uk)

### **Coffee Shop at the Country Inn on Severals Road**

As was reported at our Annual Parish Meeting in May, Ben Bilsland of Park & Co. will be taking over the coffee shop once the electric power is reconnected. The Cowdray Estate are supportive of this tenancy.

### **Have your say on the future of Sussex and the South Downs**

Residents are being invited to provide their comments on two proposals that will have a significant influence on the future of our part of the world – Westminster’s latest proposals for local government in West Sussex, and the South Down National Park’s (SDNP) draft Local Plan. Westminster plans to create two new unitary authorities for our county, combining Chichester district with Horsham, Mid Sussex and Crawley, including Gatwick, in one and Arun, Adur and Worthing in the other, rather than accept either of the recommendations put forward by the current county or district councils. You can see the proposal in full and give your views by 15 June at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modified-proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-west-sussex/modified-proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-west-sussex](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modified-proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-west-sussex/modified-proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-west-sussex) The consultation on SDNP’s proposed runs until 23 June. To see the draft and make a comment, go to [www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/new-south-downs-local-plan/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/new-south-downs-local-plan/)

## Access Land

The access land on Bepton Down has been covered with cowslips earlier in the spring. Now moving into summer there are possibly 20,000 pale mauve Spotted Orchids in flower and over 100 Butterfly Orchids. The darker pink Pyramid Orchids are just out in flower and more elusive and less prolific Bee Orchids are there if you look closely. Tree Pipits are singing happily and are hopefully nesting in the surrounding hedgerows. The Cowdray Estate manages this precious chalk downland, cutting back the Brambles and invasive Dogwood in the autumn enabling this habitat to flourish. Do walk up to see the wild flower display on our doorstep and enjoy the panoramic view over Bepton and across the beautiful Rother Valley.

## News from St Mary's Church

### Looking back

#### Father Jonathan returns to Oxford

Father Jonathan Lewis-Jong has left the parish to take up a new appointment as vicar of St Mary Magdalen in central Oxford, where he previously served as a curate and associate priest. He had served as Rector of the benefice of the Churches Under the Downs, which includes Cocking with West Lavington, Bepton and Heyshott, since 2021.

Andrew Griffith MP attended St Mary's Church in Bepton on Sunday, April 26, for a special Rededication Service led by Reverend Jonathan Lewis-Jong, his last service in the parish before moving. The ceremony celebrated the completion of significant restoration work on the ancient church's Grade I listed bell tower and the newly hung bells. Fundraising for the works was made possible by The Friends of St Mary's Church Bepton Trust who came together in early 2024 to begin fundraising and supported by donations from a number Charitable Trusts and organisations, the PCC of Cocking and West Lavington. 'The Friends' are also very grateful to all of the private individuals who regularly donate to 'The Friends' and have been pivotal in getting this project to fruition.

Andrew Griffith said: "It was a wonderful celebration of the work carried out to protect and maintain this ancient church and I was hugely honoured to be a part of the Rededication Service. The Friends of St Mary's have worked very hard to make this happen in a relatively short period of time. This special church is well worth a visit to discover its rich history and enjoy its wonderful setting."



### Looking forward

#### Gift Day on Bepton Village Green

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August 10am -1pm**

Bring and buy produce, cakes, flowers, win prizes on the raffle and catch up with your neighbours and the Bepton community. All funds go to St Mary's Church Bepton

#### Bepton, Cocking, Heyshott and West Lavington Fete, Cocking Rectory 2pm-4.30pm

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September**

Save the date. All contributions of gifts, vintage or retro items or books would be much appreciated as well as cakes, produce and willing volunteers on the day. If you would like to help of have items to donate please contact Linda Sadler 07766494007

#### Bepton Parish Councillors:

Chairman: Rosalind Hart 01730 815473  
Vice-Chairman: John Beckett (Planning)  
Clerk: Lorraine Grocott 01428 741393  
Ben Tyrrell-Evans

Paul McCulloch:(Winter Resilience Plan)  
Mike Salmon (Finance)  
Sarah Port: (Footpaths & Byways & Newsletter)  
[sarah.port@bepton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.port@bepton-pc.gov.uk)