

'FORWARD FOR 5' GOES INTO ACTION!



WE NEED YOU TO MAKE
THIS PLAN WORK

HAVE YOU...



SOME TIME TO GIVE TO
YOUR COMMUNITY?

ARE YOU WILLING TO SHARE YOUR...



...IN ORDER TO PLAY AN ACTIVE PART IN
BRINGING YOUR COMMUNITY CLOSER
TOGETHER?

IF SO, THEN JOIN WITH US IN BECOMING ONE OF OUR
VALUED VOLUNTEERS.

To find out more, please contact us:
01892 864557
clerk@withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk

ABOUT THE PARISH AND FUTURE VISION

Withyham Parish is a beautiful parish within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and includes Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSIs). It is within East Sussex and bordered by Kent, with its principle village of Groombridge split by the River Grom. This results in Old Groombridge being in Kent and New Groombridge in East Sussex. There are three other villages with their own identities and requirements—Blackham in the northern part of the parish which holds a produce market every month, Withyham which has records of births dating back to c1500 and St John's which was originally a scattering of foresters' cottages. In addition, there are a number of diverse settlements including Lye Green, Friars Gate and Balls Green.

In close proximity to the parish are the towns of Crowborough (East Sussex) and Tunbridge Wells (Kent). These are key destinations in terms of shopping, social activities, work and access to commuter services to London.

Our villages are mainly located in agricultural land with just a few roads making connections between them. There is a fragile transport infrastructure. Bus services are infrequent or non-existent and most residents need to drive in order to access railway stations. It is important that the more vulnerable residents do not become isolated.

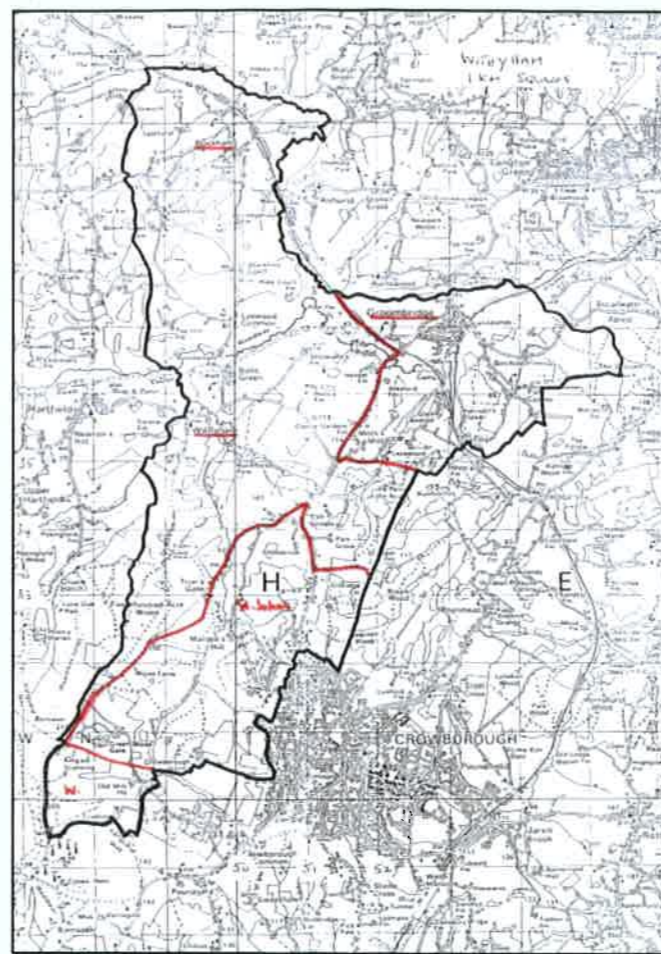
Withyham Parish has approximately 2,800 residents with 21% aged 0-15, 11% 16-29, 16% 30-44, 31% 45-64 and 21% over 65. The proportion of older people is projected to rise.

The Parish Plan survey and subsequent meetings and discussions with residents have identified the need for better housing provision for both young and older people; however, there are currently restrictions on new building developments due to nitrogen emissions impacts on the Ashdown Forest. The lack of housing stock in the parish means that people who have grown up in the area experience difficulties in finding affordable homes and have to move away.

The proportion of people who are self-employed and the numbers who work from home are well above average; therefore, the opportunity to work via Superfast Broadband is essential.

The Parish Plan Group identified that a formally constituted community workforce of volunteers would be an appropriate and sustainable way of enabling residents to feel they were personally making improvements to where they live. This will be the main target for development over the next 5 years.

WITHYHAM PARISH



A map of our parish showing ward boundaries

Withyham Parish Council would like to thank the residents of the Parish for their valued responses to the questionnaire which informed our plan.

We would also like to thank the Parish Plan Working Group for all their work in considering those responses and, in the context of Local Government changes, producing a framework of recommendations.

If you have any comments regarding this Plan, or wish to find out more about the Parish Council please contact:

The Parish Clerk
Withyham Parish Council
The Old Station
Groombridge
TN3 9RD
01892 864557

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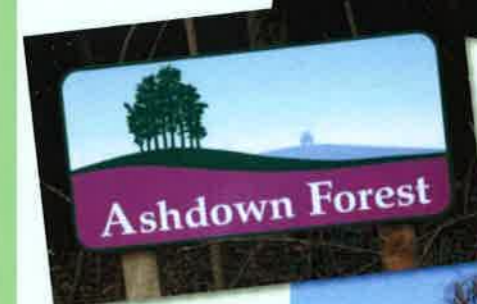


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WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

'FORWARD FOR 5' OUR PARISH PLAN



Outlined in this document are the key issues, highlighted by our residents, that will drive the work of the Parish Council for the next five years. Our work with local partners and the co-operation of Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council will be invaluable in achieving our objectives. We realise the need to become more self-sustainable in this era of change in Local Government.

PARISH WIDE ASSETS AND SERVICES

The parish encompasses a wealth of groups who hold resources, both tangible (objects) and intangible (skills and interests). These resources exist within the parish- schools, village halls, churches, organisations and associations. They have buildings, equipment, open spaces and associated flora and fauna which could be shared to avoid duplication. The Parish Council will:

- Identify existing resources in the parish and their location
- Work proactively with other groups who hold assets to identify opportunities to share
- Develop and publish a list of these assets
- Establish an Asset group in each ward linked to Neighbourhood Watch and part of Withyham Parish Volunteers
- Identify how we protect assets, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Assets of Community Value e.g. pubs, Post Office, open spaces and playgrounds.

The establishment of a community workforce of volunteers is essential to underpin this mapping and use of tangible and intangible assets.



LEISURE AND TOURISM

People live in the parish because it is such a beautiful place offering a wide variety of opportunities to explore the area. Visitors bring economic benefits to local businesses which the Parish Council wishes to encourage. It will:

- Seek to better signpost attractions and provide information about them
- Create a directory of facilities and local businesses that are of interest to visitors
- Seek solutions to providing access to facilities e.g. local pubs to join the Wealden District Council W.C. scheme
- Work with a variety of Tourist Information providers to publicise local B & Bs and other tourist facilities and attractions in the parish
- Publicise and encourage the use of our 40 miles of footpaths
- Work with ESCC's Rights of Way team to keep footpaths passable and enjoyable
- Create Tourist Information Points at appropriate places in the parish
- Better utilise technologies such as wifi and QR codes in order to access information about attractions.

CRIME AND POLICING

Neighbourhood policing is changing and the community is likely to experience a less visible police presence. To ensure the parish is resilient to crime the Parish Council will:

- Build the Neighbourhood Watch network across the parish
- Monitor parking issues and encourage reporting via Operation Crackdown
- Monitor effectiveness of existing speed limit boundaries
- Promote Speed Watch
- Proactively engage with Sussex Police.



WITHYHAM PARISH VOLUNTEERS THE GOLDEN THREAD

Withyham Parish Council feels strongly that in the context of a period of austerity and cost cutting by central government, District and County Councils, residents should not experience reduced services or lower their expectations about the quantity and quality of services. A community volunteer model is one which can clearly address some issues by engaging the community to work for itself on things that matter most to them. The Parish Council will continue to ensure that Wealden District Council (WDC) and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) meet their responsibilities, different options will also be explored with them to deliver services at a competitive rate under the Parish Council's control.

Tasks undertaken by this volunteer workforce might take the form of:

- Creating and maintaining community spaces
- Litter picking
- Footway clearance and improvements
- Newsletter folding and delivery
- Community activities such as running a café, film club, computer club, youth club and sporting activities
- Transportation for isolated and vulnerable people
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Highway projects where ESCC does not consider the tasks to be a priority.

WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL UNDERTAKES TO ESTABLISH WITHYHAM PARISH VOLUNTEERS



HOUSING AND PLANNING

The Parish Plan survey and subsequent discussions with the public have indicated that residents appreciate that if the parish is to develop as a vibrant area with social and economic growth, then there must be some small scale development of truly affordable smaller houses for families and older people. Withyham Parish Council intends to undertake a **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**:

- To be in control of local development in the parish within the context of any changes of policy by Wealden District Council in relation to the Ashdown Forest 15km zone of influence
- Provide greater protection for local green spaces and community assets
- Give the community a significant say in the future development of the parish.

LOCAL BUSINESSES

The proportion of self-employed people living in the parish and working from home is higher than the national average. To better support our local businesses the Parish Council undertakes to:

- Continue to lobby ESCC to see faster broadband delivered to all the parish
- Build a Directory of Local Businesses
- Encourage better networking opportunities
- Support opportunities for regular showcasing of local products e.g. Blackham Produce market, Groombridge Spring market etc.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

The Parish Council will continue to work with ESCC and other partners to achieve a better service. In doing so it will:

- Explore cost effective solutions for highway related projects
- Map the safety records of our roads and work with communities on road safety projects that matter to them
- Seek to decrease speed limits outside schools and within villages
- Work with schools on safe travel to school projects for parents and children
- Encourage better use of Wealdlink, our community bus service
- Work with villages to extend a Neighbours transport scheme across the parish
- Work with bus and train operators to protect services and provide better information.
- Work with the Rights of Way Committee to keep footpaths in the parish clear and walkable.

YOUNG AND ELDERLY

The proportion of young and older people living in the parish is above the national average. Both groups are affected by social isolation due to distance between villages within the parish and poor transport infrastructure. The Parish Council, through Withyham Parish Volunteers will:

- Promote existing initiatives and develop new ideas, working with other partners in the parish
- Work with the community in Withyham to rejuvenate Balls Green play area into a community space
- Work with Groombridge residents to rejuvenate Groombridge play area
- Set up a youth council to inform work on the provision of facilities for young people
- Explore better provision of youth club facilities across the parish
- Set up a community café in Groombridge to be used by the whole parish
- Explore village film clubs
- Help promote a computer club for all parishioners
- Work with local sports groups to identify and publicise sporting activities that can be undertaken by those of varying abilities, ages and in all weathers.