

FAIRLIGHT ACTION PLAN 2011





1. Introduction
2. A Brief History of Fairlight
3. Population
4. Employment
5. Traffic
6. Security and Policing
7. Transport
8. Community Services
9. Information
10. Housing Needs and Development
11. The Wish List
12. Acknowledgments

1. Introduction

Why carry out an Appraisal and Action Plan?

The Government now requires all District and County Councils and Public Service Providers to consider the results of public consultation before formulating policies and plans that will undoubtedly affect those consulted.

It is hoped that this process of social empowerment will stimulate interest in local affairs and result in services tailor-made to meet the requirements of local residents and possibly increase the turn-out at local elections.

Local appraisals and Action Plans are not yet compulsory at parish level but are heavily encouraged. At one time DEFRA were grant-aiding the process but these funds quickly dried up. In our case Rother Local Strategic Partnership has provided funds through Action in Rural Sussex ("AiRS") as facilitator.

What will it give us?

The feedback from our local consultation has provided two things -

- A detailed database of statistical information not previously obtained, and
- A "Wish List" of hopes and desires for the future of Fairlight.

How we did it

The Fairlight Parish Council and Residents' Association formed a partnership to oversee the process and a Steering Group was convened.

An extensive questionnaire was delivered to each household in the Parish by a band of volunteers. The completed, anonymous, questionnaires were then collected and fed into a computer programme developed by AiRS in conjunction with Sussex University. Special thanks are due to Richard Pollard who carried out this task single-handed and there were 483 responses!

The response was the highest in Sussex at 63%

The following pages of comments and proposed actions are based entirely on these results.

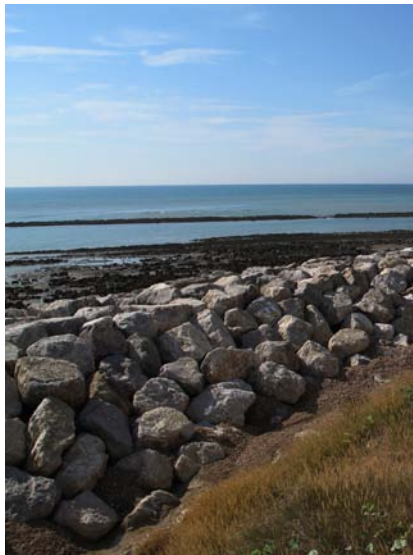
2. A Brief History of Fairlight.

The village is mentioned in record of 1220 as FARLEGH, since then, many changes have occurred in the spelling, e.g., in 1291 it was FARLEIGH; 1535, FARLEY; 1701, FAYRLIGHT; 1738, again FARLEY and in 1823 the spelling is recorded as FAIRLIGHT. There was a manor here before 1066, given by William the

Conqueror to the Countess of EU (or OW), near Caen, France, her husband was the first Constable of Hastings Castle. In the 12th century the manor belonged to the Allard (or Alard) family. Stephen and Gevase Allard went to the Crusades, and effigies may be seen in Winchelsea Church. Gervase was Admiral of the

Cinque Ports, and was the first English man to be called 'Admiral'. The manor house formed the foundation of the present farmhouse - Stonelynk Farm. The residence known today as 'Stonelynk Hall' was originally the barn, built probably in the 14th century. About 1540 a Judge and Clerk attended the local assizes, held in the manor. A well provides the farmhouse with its own water supply. In the days of smuggling contraband goods were landed at Fairlight, probably brought inland by an underground tunnel!

Marsham farm dates from 1290, built by Giles Fiennes. Waites Old Farm House (corner of Waites Lane & Meadow Way) is 16th century. Waites wood existed where Fairlight Village Hall and adjacent residences now stand.



The cliffs hereabout are subject to natural erosion, but since 1986 the village has had a very actively supported group (now known as the "Fairlight Preservation Trust"), which takes action to prevent further land loss. In 2007 a multi million pound scheme was adopted to reshape the cliffs, and lay land drains to remove the water before it eroded any more of the cliffs. Some 56 wells were drilled to seize the water before it reached the cliffs. Four years later the scheme has proved itself.

National Trust Land; 215 acres of cliff land (including Stumblets Wood, Pett Level Road) were given to the National Trust in 1945; Old Marsham farm (170 acres adjoining) in 1958.



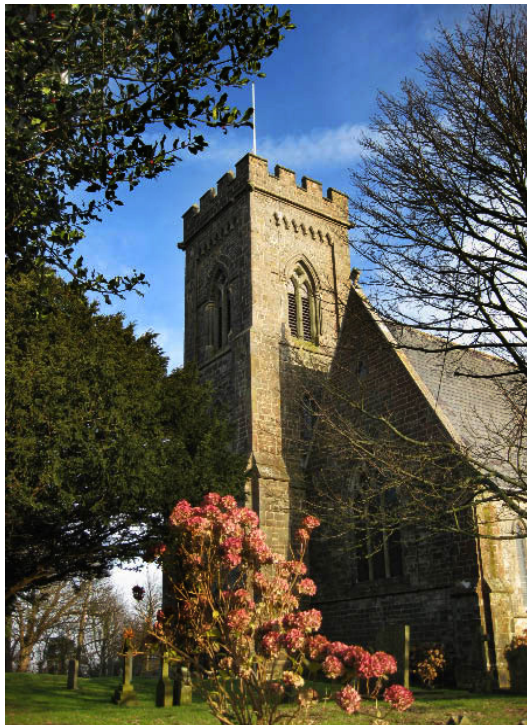
Battery Hill: at the turn of the 20th century, a local gun battery is reputed to have practiced firing regularly from 'The Mountain'. Fire was directed out to sea, this probably gives to the origin of the names: 'Firehills' and 'Battery Hill'. Fairlight Place: built around 1550 at the head of Fairlight Glen, was visited by King Louis Philippe and his Queen in 1849 after his escape from Paris.

In 1951, Hastings was presented with 211 acres of cliff and country, including Fairlight Place and Farm, the Firehills, Fairlight and Ecclesbourne Glens, the Lovers seat and the Dripping well.

The Country Park (mostly in the Hastings area) consists of some 500 acres of cliff walks and unspoilt wooded country from East Hill Hastings, to the Firehills at Fairlight, including the Ecclesbourne and Fairlight Glens. A car park and tourist information centre along with toilets are situated just off the Fairlight Road, the entrance being some 50 yards west of Coastguards Lane and the Parish Church of St Andrews.

Fairlight Hall, Martineau Lane, is imitation Tudor, built in the mid nineteenth century, it is a private residence.

The present Parish Church of St Andrews was built in 1845 on the site of the former Church dating back to (approx) 1180. It is 535 feet above sea level. Built from locally quarried stone, the tower rises 82 feet from ground level. This is open to all during the summer months. The Silver Communion



Cup and Paten cover date from 1697. A friend of Mendelssohn, Thomas Walmsley, a master of music and renowned organist, is buried in the Churchyard, also Richard D'Oyly Carte, producer of the Gilbert & Sullivan Operettas. It is a well-known fact that the Church of St Andrews and the immediate area was purposely not bombed by the Germans during the last war, as this was a very distinctive Land Mark that guided their planes towards London and back home. It was mentioned on plans drawn up by the High Command in Germany as never to be touched, which have just been released!

3. Population

Of those households responding 86% comprised one or two people and 5% had 4 or more. 99.2% said their house was their main residence and 0.8% (4 people) said it was not i.e. a second or holiday home.

When asked how long they had lived in the Parish 35.6% said over 20 years; 27.5% 10 -20 years and 37% under 10 years.

Individual responses 45.8% were from men and 54.2% women.

In respect of children's ages:

10 require a Playgroup, 9 Nursery School, 10 Holiday Play Scheme, 1 Registered Child Minder and 16 Youth Club. Total: 46 under 16 years old responses.

Other age groups were 5% under 25, 42% 26 to 64years, 53% over 65, 26% 75+ and 7.5% 85+

4. Employment

Full or Part time Employee	17.8% (172)
Self Employed, employing others	3.6% (35)
Self Employed on your own	3.7% (36)
Job Seeker	0.8% (8)
College/Training	0.8% (8)
School/Adult Education	2.5% (25)
Housewife/Husband	10.9% (106)
Retired	52.3% (526)
Disabled	5.6% (54)

42 people said they ran a business in the Parish. Of the 13 people actively seeking work 9 felt there were barriers such as no suitable jobs, lack of child care, transport and lack of experience/qualification were also factors.

5. Traffic

Traffic, particularly, speeding traffic has always been a concern to villagers. When asked about cycling there was not much enthusiasm. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents blamed steep hills, but dangerous roads (23%) and speeding cars (19%) were also named as deterrents.

To the question “If you feel more traffic control measures are required which do you think would be of most benefit?” 49% said speed limits, 21% parking restrictions on the Broadway and 29% traffic calming in Waites Lane.

The three main danger spots were named as parking at the Post Office (27%), Battery Hill (20%) and Waites Lane and Lower Waites Lane (18%).

These issues are not new and the Parish Council has been attempting to pressurise the County for several years

Action

- A 40 mph limit on Battery Hill has already been agreed by County Highways but due to changes in criteria many villages are waiting for new limits to be imposed and we are therefore on a ‘waiting list’.
- The Parish Council has requested Yellow Line restrictions in the Broadway to protect the junction with Waites Lane. Again this is a waiting list situation but the Police are supportive and on complaint will take action against obstructive vehicles.
- Waites Lane is now a designated Police Enforcement area and will be regularly ‘Speed Camera Checked’
- Parking outside the Post Office is a more difficult problem to solve; fortunately the County Accident Statistics are favourable. The obvious solution on safety grounds would be to prohibit parking but that would not be very popular with the Post Office or its clients.
- The Junction of Coastguards Lane and Battery Hill was also mentioned (1.5%) The post supporting the mirror situated opposite the lane has moved, putting the mirror out of focus, and this will be remedied by the Parish. County Highways have also erected a further ‘Junction’ sign.

6. Security and Policing

It is evident from the response that the majority of householders (98.2%) feel secure in their own homes and do not feel that they need advice on improvements (95.8%)

In terms of information sources -

40.4% of respondents received information from Neighbourhood Watch; 49.6% did not. 56.9% got their information from Notice Boards and 23.8% by email.

When asked if they were satisfied with the services provided by the police 69.7% replied “Yes” but 30.3%, “No.” 52.1% of those that had called the police for assistance felt that they were fast to respond.

Although 72.2% of responses felt that Police Community Support Officers did not offer a useful service, 92.5% were unwilling to fund additional officer cover for the Parish

The PCSO service did not command a great deal of support, and there was almost no support for increased expenditure on the service. The reasons for this are unclear.

(Editorial Note: The appraisal was carried out before the present practice of a police representative attending at least 3 Parish Council meetings each year was established. Neighbourhood Watch fell into disuse for a considerable time but is now back on line)

Action

- The Parish Council will continue to work with the police and will encourage residents to attend Parish Council Meetings especially when the police are represented.
- Residents will also be encouraged to join the revitalised Neighbourhood Watch by E Mail system. Greater use of Notice Boards must be made.
- The Police will be requested to carry out a Public Relations exercise to ensure that residents are aware of the role of PCSOs and are informed of patrol patterns to improve “visibility” and improve public confidence.

7. Transport

Fairlight is not well served by public transport so vehicle ownership is naturally high. Respondents owned 680 cars and vans, 36% of them owned two or more. About 5% owned a motorbike. Thirty per cent used their vehicle to get to work whereas only 7% used the bus service. Interestingly 2.5% took a taxi to work or study. Thirty-three per cent never use the bus.

67% used their vehicle for social and pleasure purposes but 16% used the bus service.

The questions on bicycle use produced some interesting responses with over 75 % saying they never used one; 28% because of steep hills and some because they felt "too old". However 4 brave folk went to work or study on them but 21 used them for pleasure.

Train use is very low with 40% never using them and 44% rarely: only 1.6% using the train on a daily basis.

Perhaps the most important section asked "are there any services/locations you have difficulty travelling to?" and 24.5% said the hospital, 14% the doctor, and 13% shopping.

Only one person in the village uses Dial a Ride.

In summary the Village has limited public transport facilities consisting of an hourly bus service in each direction to Hastings, Rye and Northiam. A new Sunday and Bank Holiday service started on 31 July 2011 with four buses in each direction.

Action

- The Parish Council and Residents' Association have participated in the recent consultation on bus services. Improvements have been made to the timetables.
- Parish Council to liaise with Dial-a-Ride with a view to extending the service fully to Fairlight.
- The question of a 'Volunteer Car Service' to be revitalised.

8. Community Services

1. Q16 asked respondents to rate community services, which were listed, as excellent, sound, poor or not used at all.

The services listed were Doctors surgery, Doctors Out-of-Hours, district nurse, health visitor, home help, ambulance, maternity care, chiropody, borrowed medical equipment, meals on wheels, counselling services, physiotherapy, social services, insulation and home security grants, disability access and mobility.

2. With the exception of doctors' services (Village Hall and Out-of-Hours) the number of responses was quite low. It is therefore hard to draw any conclusion from the responses except to say the numbers in the "poor" list are very small.

3. Several doctors' surgeries are used by Fairlight parishioners. The questionnaire asked only about the Village Hall (run from Harold Road) and Out-of-Hours doctors' services. Of those who had used the services 95% rated them either excellent or sound. The percentage satisfaction was higher for the Village Hall surgery than for the Out-of-Hours service.

4. It is heartening to note that every respondent who had used an ambulance rated the service excellent or sound.

5. Q18 asked whether parishioners over 65 if they would attend a day centre in the village. Ninety-five replied "yes". Although this was only 17.6% of the total response it is clear that this revealed a real need as evidenced by the success of the MOPPS day centre set up after the survey was conducted.

6. MOPPS (The Marsham Older People's Project) is a service for older people which meets in the Village Hall on Friday mornings. As its name indicates it is not only for residents of Fairlight, but also those from surrounding villages. MOPPS provides advice and support to those attending. Matters covered include health issues and benefits. A reasonably priced lunch is provided. Since its inception MOPPS has been very popular. In practice most attending are from Fairlight. Funding includes a grant from the Parish Council.

7. Fairlight has two Anglican churches, St Andrew's and St Peter's. St Andrew's, at the top of the hill, is clearly visible for many miles and features on marine charts as a guide to shipping in the Channel. It is an active church with a strong musical input. St Peter's is the church presence in the Cove part of the village. It is of wooden construction and was dedicated in 1970. There are regular services and it is also used for two Women's groups, Meals Together for people living alone, and a weekly Mothers and Toddlers group. The Methodist Chapel at Pett also serves the village.

Action

- To encourage the Parish Council and others to continue to support MOPPS
- To consider whether a further survey of parishioners' experience of and need for Community Services would elicit a useful response.

9. Information

When asked “ Where do you usually get your information about Parish events and what suggestions can you offer to improve communication?” Responses were as follows:-

Residents Association News	73%
Notice Boards	55%
Local Newspapers	44%
Word of Mouth	45%
Local Pubs	9%
Village Hall	21%
Parish Church	11%
Never get information	2%

Individual responses praised the Residents Association and the E Mail System and requested Notice Boards ‘up Battery Hill’. There was a general feeling that information was available if wanted but concerns for the housebound were expressed.

261 respondents had access to the Internet

86.5% of those who replied said they were aware of the locations of Notice Boards and 13.5% did not. Only 31.4% had attended a Parish Council meeting although 70% knew they were allowed.

Actions

The Parish Council has provided a new Notice Board in a refurbished Bus Shelter at St Andrews Church to add to those at the Post Office, Channel Way, Waites Lane (adjacent to the Bus Shelter) and at the Village Hall. Further sites will be considered.

The Residents Association and Neighbourhood Watch will be asked to review their provision of Notice Boards.

An information leaflet will be prepared giving locations of all notice boards

10. Housing Needs and Development

1. Rother District Council is the Planning Authority for Fairlight. It is subject to national and regional policy and guidance. Rother District Council routinely informs Fairlight Parish Council of planning applications and other planning matters and the Parish and individuals comment on and contribute to such matters. The decisions are made at District Council level or above.

2. At Q47 of the Questionnaire parishioners were asked "Are you looking for accommodation in the village?" Remarkably under one per cent of respondents answered Yes to this question. (Six individuals).

Of the six, five were looking for sheltered accommodation, almost certainly due to old age. At present sheltered housing needs are served by Five Villages House at Icklesham, and there are age-restricted, long-lease flats (over 55) at Shepherds Court in Fairlight with emergency cords, but no warden.

There are two homes in Fairlight for people with disabilities other than old age, but these do not cater specifically for Fairlight residents.

3. At Q49 parishioners were asked *What type of housing development would be acceptable in the Parish?* Nearly half replied None. The other half was split nearly equally between accepting single dwellings in controlled locations and conversion of redundant buildings, neither of which would be likely to provide large numbers of dwellings. Other options were supported by under 5% of respondents.

4. Q61 asked *Please note three issues that concern you most.* Eighty-three of 610 responses (about 200 respondents) raised concerns about development issues in Fairlight. They were against infilling or further building, or believed recent building had been on an inappropriate scale. This response, unprompted by a specific question or controversial proposal, is significant and shows that the infilling of gardens (specifically mentioned by 24 respondents and implicit in many others) has been very unpopular.

5. Two specific sites are noted in the following paragraphs. For such larger sites Rother's Local Plan requires that 40% of dwellings be "affordable" Para 6.5 of Rother's Local Plan states - "Affordable housing is regarded as that which is provided for local people (or key workers) who are unable to meet their housing needs in the housing market without a level of subsidy because to do so would require more than 25-30% of their net household income".

10. Housing Needs and Development - Continued

Due to its poor public transport and location within a low-paid part of the South East with limited job opportunities it might be thought that Fairlight is not a suitable location for those seeking work unless they have their own transport. Care needs to be taken in the provision of the affordable quota to ensure that it is sustainable and suitable for those who can benefit from the location.

6. Land at the Market Garden site (between Fairlight Gardens and the top of Lower Waites Lane) is allocated for housing in Rother District Council's Local Plan. That would be a minimum of 15 dwellings of which 40% would be "affordable". It must be assumed that those dwellings will be built.

7. In April 2010 Rother District Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identified a field lying behind existing houses in Waites Lane and Pett Level Road within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as suitable and developable for housing. This is not a statement of policy by the Council, but a technical assessment. However, the assessment is of a possible 30 dwellings, 12 to be affordable.

8. Fairlight is a watershed in that water flows down to it from higher ground. The clay soil holds water rather than letting it drain away causing waterlogging. Not only is this a considerable inconvenience, it has been a major cause of the landslip at Rockmead Road, where remedial work in 2007 included the provision of over 50 pumps to remove groundwater. Additional housing will exacerbate the problem unless proper provision is made for the disposal of surface water.



Action

- On the basis of the survey there is no case to be made for significant housing development to meet local demand or needs. (para 2 and 3 above). Parish Council to communicate this to Rother and to use this to inform its response on planning issues.
- Provision within the village of some sheltered accommodation would be consistent with the survey results and known age profile of villagers. This would meet local needs and also free larger houses for younger people moving to the area. (para 2 above)
- The Parish, Fairlight Residents' Association and Fairlight Preservation Trust to note national and regional housing needs and to work constructively with Rother to secure the best housing provision across Rother, and particularly for Fairlight, noting the views expressed in the survey.
- In the case of the Market Garden site in particular and any other large development to work with Rother and any developer to secure the best possible outcome for the village.
- To note the limited public transport identified elsewhere, limited employment opportunities and relative low pay in the area and to seek to avoid development which traps the disadvantaged into low pay and limited opportunities.
- To note that since the May 2010 general Election the new Government has announced that gardens of residential properties are no longer brownfield sites.
- The Parish and FPT to continue to argue for proper prevention and cure of groundwater and foulwater problems in Fairlight. This includes the piping away of surface water and the provision of attenuation tanks to prevent flooding downstream, for example at Pett Level. This is especially true of any large development.
- To assess any proposed development for its impact on unstable land, especially the Rockmead Road landslip.



11. The Wish List

The Questionnaire asked “Name three things that concern you most”. Whilst it is not possible to list them all a selection is included.

They range from “Perfectly content with life in Fairlight” to several concerns about traffic and speeding mentioned elsewhere in this report. Two individuals complained about the management of the Village Hall. Two wanted improved bus services, several wanted to see improvements in the Children’s Playground.

The general impression gained by the Steering Group is that the majority of residents is fairly content with their environment and would not like to see major change.





12. Acknowledgements

- The Steering Group
- George Hensher (Chair)
- Joyce Grant
- Andrew Mier
- Richard Pollard (2010)
- Maggie Sullivan (2008/9)
- Ron Childs (2008)
- Hugh Gallagher

- Rother Voluntary Action
- Ian Coleman

- Action in Rural Sussex
- Patricia Marston

- Funding
- Rother District Council



Cover picture - Strayed Sheep or Our English Coasts - William Holman Hunt - Painted at Fairlight Glen 1852 - Courtesy the Trustees of the Tate Gallery

This Action Plan was compiled from the results of a 2008 questionnaire survey