

Kingston Action Group submission on behalf of Kingston to Parishes in Bloom 2020

Ref: KPC Meeting 9 September 2020 Appendix 3

Section A - Community Involvement

The Parish is working towards things such as:

Being inclusive of local people, including local ownership

Kingston has a strong track record in terms of local inclusivity and local ownership. This stretches back to the post-First World War period with the building of the Parish Hall and enhancement of the parish church through individual philanthropy and the development of housing for service personnel returning from the theatres of war. The Parish Hall is managed today by a Trust with representatives from the community managing and maintaining it. It has seen a number of recent improvements to flooring, lighting and heating and is a well-used village asset. Covid-19 allowing, it hosts the pre-school playgroup every weekday morning and is used for leisure activities like Pilates and yoga as well as village events of varying type e.g. WI meetings, talks and lectures, village quiz nights etc.

In the immediate post-Second World War period, the parish saw the establishment of the Village Club and its wide range of activity areas for adults as well as children e.g. the drama club, children's events etc. Further Council housing was built for service personnel at that time. That tradition of community engagement and support continues through to today.

The Village Green was acquired by the Kingston Parish Council (KPC) in the 1950s through a planning gain deal for the village. Since then it has served as an important location for children's play, the village fete site and a range of other events and activities. Its upkeep is managed by the KPC for the local community.

St Pancras Green was similarly the result of planning gain in the 1960s when the housing estate was built. Today, it is used for tennis, football, Sussex stoolball and downland races. Its upkeep is managed by the KPC for the local community and it is also used by other villages for shared sporting events. It has played an important role in supporting villagers' exercise routines during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The village school – Iford and Kingston Primary School - opened in the mid-1960s with the expansion of the village – and plays a huge role in the wider community, for example with its annual bonfire event and May Fair. It has recently been extended to accommodate children from other villages in the area as a number of other local primary schools have closed.

St Pancras Church also plays an important role in village life and has been the centre of the community in many ways since its foundation in the twelfth/thirteenth century. Apart from its services, its members play an important role in community welfare and well-being and it hosts a wide range of musical events. The maintenance of its churchyard is supported by volunteers.

The most recent addition to the list of village facilities in local ownership is the Community Pavilion (opened 2008) and its associated planting/green roof funded through external grants. It is managed by a Committee on behalf of the KPC which is the formal owner. It hosts meetings of a number of groups in the parish e.g. Tuesday coffee mornings for older residents, one of the several Bridge clubs and the Action Group.

The KPC supports and encourages a wide range of events and activities in the village and there is a considerable list of active clubs and associations, (cultural, sport and leisure) including the tennis club, history and heritage workshop, Scrabble group, whisky tasting, WI etc.

Making a difference to local people & involving local people in decision-making, communication & implementation

Community involvement and communication are important aspects of local life in Kingston. During the Covid-19 pandemic, local help groups were set up to provide support to vulnerable and elderly people and WhatsApp groups were organised to maintain communication between households.

The KPC and the Village Action Group were responsible for the development of a Village Plan some years ago which has proved a useful basis on which progressively to consider village development. The Village Plan complements the Conservation Area Character Appraisal published in 2007 which is currently undergoing a review and revision by the South Downs National Park Authority with assistance from the KPC and the community at large. The KPC and the Action Group are also currently discussing the initial draft of a new Environmental Policy for the parish to serve as a policy basis for the future.

There are regular KPC meetings to which village residents are invited and an Annual Parish meeting that was the predecessor of the KPC itself (founded in 1948) which provides feedback to the village on work undertaken through the preceding year and invites comment for future work. The KPC has a website that enables local people to be kept up to date with the outcomes of meetings etc.

The Kingston News continues to be produced monthly by an independent editor and distributed by a network of volunteers to all homes in the parish. Content is diverse and includes news and articles from the village school, different village organisations like the WI and the Kingston History and Heritage Workshop, the KPC and Village Action Group, local businesses in the village and individual contributors. It is an important vehicle for raising environmental awareness.

Planning for the future

In terms of planning, the KPC is an important organisation for the parish and it seeks to balance both a proactive and a reactive role through its work. It responded in detail on behalf of the community to the South Downs National Park Plan (published in 2019) and regularly asks for community inputs to exercises like the SDNPA Plan and its ongoing work e.g. the SDNPA's review of the village Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

It also serves as a community voice on all planning matters for the village and liaises with the appropriate local authorities – Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council - and public agencies like Sussex Police, as required.

It has begun to consider the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish.

Working towards access for all.

The Community Pavilion was designed very much with access for all in mind and meets all access standards.

The Parish Hall Committee has recently installed new wheelchair-accessible toilets as part of its general programme of upgrading facilities.

Section B - Environmental Responsibility

The Parish is engaged in environmental activities such as:

Conserving local habitats & heritage (wildlife, natural landscapes & built environment)

The village is actively engaged in a wide variety of environmental work and research – both natural and cultural - and the relationship between both.

On the natural heritage side, the Village Action Group has continued to undertake its year-round programme of developing new habitats e.g. the hedge line and associated planting on the Village Green and has been promoting new proposals for wildflower planting areas on St Pancras Green. It has secured agreement with the KPC not to cut part of the Village Green to build up the wildflower resource there and increase biodiversity, especially pollinators. This programme will serve as a pilot over the next few years and will be monitored to assess results, with a view to extending the area at a later date.

The existing woodland on St Pancras Green, though privately owned, is managed on a non-intervention basis, which is good for wildlife. The same is true of the ash woodland at the top of The Street, although this is facing challenges with ash dieback.

On Kingston Ridge, a local Conservation Trust has created an (effective) nature reserve at Kingston Hill Fields, together with a new pond, now home to grass snakes, newts, etc and providing a feeding area for bats, swallows, etc. Hedge-laying along Juggs Way towards the Downs and its subsequent growth has also created new habitats.

Regular articles on species sightings, biodiversity and conservation issues appear in the monthly Kingston News.

On the cultural heritage side, the Kingston History and Heritage Workshop has been actively promoting the significance of the cultural history and heritage of the village, through its monthly meetings programme, public lectures, articles in the Kingston News and publications e.g. its village historical walking guide. The Covid-19 pandemic halted a planned exhibition on D-Day and World War 2 in May but we now expect to mount this next year.

Home or community composting, Green Recycling

The village continues to have a high percentage of people involved in recycling – both garden waste and other. The village was an early promoter of recycling and worked with the LDC in a volunteer-led capacity in developing kerbside recycling a number of years ago.

In recognition of its work, the parish received an award from the Zero Heroes Fund which was used to help fund a new village walking guide.

Creating, maintaining or improving green spaces (Village Greens, parks & pocket parks, verges, woodlands, churchyards etc.).

A huge amount of work has continued in the village with improving our green spaces and gardens.

The Village Action Group and its volunteers has continued with its major programme of planting – a river of snowdrops along The Avenue, a carpet of crocuses on Snednore Green and at the Parish Hall, daffodils along Ashcombe Lane, on the Village Green and at the end of Wellgreen Lane at the entrance to the village, and replacement heritage apple trees along The Avenue to reflect the village's earlier history in market gardening.

Ten years ago, the Group planted a new hedge along the northern edge of the Village Green. This was later under-planted with a range of different hedgerow flowers and primroses. These were bought as plug plants and then grown on by gardeners in the village before being planted out by volunteers. A new mixed planting programme along the footpath between The Street and St Pancras Green has also been undertaken with striking results. The planting of bulbs continues through the village with the support of grants through fund-raising.

The Parochial Church Council has an ongoing management regime for St Pancras churchyard, recognising it as an important central-village focus for bio-diversity.

The Village Action Group has also successfully sought to limit damage by vehicles to the verges along Wellgreen Lane by the introduction of informal wooden bollards.

In addition to this work, the Action Group regularly clears footpaths and tidies walkways around the whole of the village as required.

The Parish is engaged in addressing environmental issues such as the control of Fly-tipping, Fly-posting, Litter, Graffiti & Dog fouling.

The Village Action Group volunteers have a regular programme of litter-picking throughout the village, in particular along the approach roads and have worked with the KPC in taking action over dog-fouling. There are now bins for litter and dog waste sited throughout the village.

Graffiti, fly-tipping and fly-posting are, thankfully, not problems here.

Section C - Gardening/Horticulture/Conservation Achievement

The Parish Council is employing good gardening, horticultural and tree management practices.

The Parish Council encourages residents to care for their gardens. Residential gardens throughout the village are generally well maintained and enhance the parish's appearance. There is growing awareness of the need to create 'wilderness' habitats in garden and woodland settings to enhance biodiversity, as exemplified by the KPC/Action Group's work on the Village Green.

KPC carries out regular surveys of trees and their safety. The Village Tree Warden has planted 20+ apple trees in The Avenue to replace those which have died or been removed. All of these are old varieties exclusive to the local area. New challenges are arising with ash die-back and ash trees are being monitored for safety and disease.

KPC maintains St Pancras Green and the Village Green, and the Community Pavilion surrounds and its green roof.

The KPC has supported the work of the Village Action Group in new planting and maintenance regimes, and provided grants to buy maintenance equipment for that work.

In recent months, the Village Action Group has liaised with Lewes District Council to acquire the lease of two overgrown allotments at the east end of the Street to create a new Community Allotment. Negotiations are now completed and the Action Group is setting up a management group to oversee the use of the new community space. The Community Allotment will act as a practical focus for building awareness of climate change and conservation within the community at large.

2019/2020

Highlights

New wilding/planting programme for Village Green

Planting over the last ten years includes 10,000 crocus, 400 primroses, 4,000 snowdrops, 2,000 daffodils and a variety of wildflowers

Successful fund-raising to enable continued our planting programme – snowdrops/crocuses/daffodils - on village verges

A new Draft Environmental Policy has been developed by Village Action Group for Kingston Parish Council

Negotiated lease and management planning for a new Community Allotment

Continued regular programme of litter-picking and maintenance of public realm

Regular publication of wildlife news in the Kingston News

Tim Ambrose
July 2020

Illustrations



Figure 1 Daffodils planted at the junction of The Street and Wellgreen Lane



Figure 2 Daffodils and snowdrops at the entrance to the churchyard



Figure 3 Daffodils and primroses planted along the path between the Street and St Pancras Green



Figure 4 Daffodils planted at junction of Wellgreen Lane and Lewes to Newhaven Road



Figure 5 Daffodils planted along Ashcombe Lane



Figure 6 Snowdrops planted on Ashcombe Lane



Figure 7 Clearance along the Bumpy Lane between Ashcombe Lane and Lockett Way



Figure 8 Daffodil planting on Ashcombe Lane by Village Green



Figures 1 (above) & 10 (below). Crocus on Snednore

