



Bexhill in Bloom



Shelter, Sensory Garden, Egerton Park.

Portfolio Briefing Notes

2022



Introduction:

Bexhill in Bloom started over 30 years ago with Rother District Council. Shortly after, Rother District Council contacted the Chamber of Commerce to ask if they would take it over and run it. After consultation with the committee, the Chamber agreed and Sandy Melvin, who was President of the Chamber at the time, was made Chairman and ran it until the AGM in December 2018. Sandy entered various Bloom competitions and won many awards and winners plaques can be seen in locations around Bexhill and area



Our Community Profile information has been placed in Appendix 1

Structure:

The committee agreed to look at the structure of the organisation and undertook a full review in 2018 and agreed and implemented a constitution with charitable objectives. This was agreed and implemented from December 2018, so we are now a Charitable Association in law.

We are a small committee, we love Bexhill, and we want it to be known for the beautiful place that it is. In fact, you could say we are quite passionate about it! **We aim to grow!** We are so fortunate to have had the support of Officers from Rother District Council's Neighbourhood Services, who we have involved in the process from the beginning. Rebecca Owen and Brian Griffiths have been absolutely marvellous. We can't thank them enough.

Review of the year: Bexhill in Bloom – 2021/22

It has been a challenging year with Covid restrictions eventually easing which brought more people out to enjoy green spaces. However, 2 great storms in early spring brought their own chaos! Work in the Sensory Garden has gone ahead in leaps and bounds.

✚ **Successes:** Our main successes have been the work of our wonderful volunteers including our committee members, who have allowed Bexhill in Bloom to achieve awards from:

- Rother Voluntary Action for our work in Environmental matters and
- a Civic Award from Bexhill Heritage in recognition of the work undertaken in the Sensory Garden in Egerton Park.
- We recently received The Mayors Award in recognition of the work we are doing in the town.

✚ **Finances:** We were also grateful to Rother District Council for ongoing financial support. The Core funding from Rother District Council enabled us to bring in further substantial

revenue to spend in the area. We are aiming to increase this amount year on year to assist in the growth of the organisation.

Also, to **Sussex Community Foundation** for their financial support during this year. We were able to obtain a grant to allow us to buy our older volunteers a drink from the Café in Egerton Park after their efforts in the Sensory Garden. The award also allowed us to pay our 'expert' travel expenses and some money for Admin i.e., Paper and printer ink

✚ We have recently been awarded a small grant from **Community Fund** to enable us to take on a Volunteer Coordinator post for the afternoon we garden in the park. The advertisement is in Appendix 2, we hope we can build on this achievement and further enhance the post in the near future.

✚ Our usual competitions are now underway, Youth Awards for Schools, Private gardens, Commercial Premises, Containers etc.

✚ The Bexhill in Bloom Committee are recruiting new members, we are in the process of a new Treasurer taking over, with two local councillors also on board.



We also have an application in to the Repair Shop for the plaque in the Sensory Garden shelter to be refurbished. We realise this might not happen, but at least our name is in the hat!



Bexhill in Bloom have been presented with a Platinum Jubilee commemorative bench for the Sensory Garden in Egerton Park by Sudwell Ltd. This will be a lasting legacy for the Queens Platinum Jubilee and the garden.

✚ Working with the team from Greener Futures, a project of Groundwork South.



Abby, Paola and volunteer Lindsey.

✚ We are also working with the **Bexhill Primary Care Network on Social Prescribing**

✚ Bringing in further new volunteers and joining with other voluntary organisations to make Bexhill Better!

✚ The Bexhill Observer has been our main vehicle for publicity. We also have a Facebook page and are still looking for a volunteer to update our website.

✚ **Little Common Business Community** – Annual flowers in baskets purchased and maintained by residents and businesses.

✚ **Old Town Preservation Society** working as hard as ever to keep the original heritage alive.

✚ **New Groups** come into being – **The Bridge Arts Project** which you will see on your journey through the town, has made such a difference and is enjoyed by everyone using the bridge to get from one side of the town to the other.



Spring in Manor Gardens

Manor Gardens continues to charm residents and visitors alike, here are a couple of pictures taken in early spring after the storms



Spring planting survived after the storm



Storm damage in Manor Gardens

The difference we are making: Then:



And Now -



Local artists in the Sensory Garden painting!

Horticultural Achievements:

A1: Overall Impression:

Bexhill is a lovely town which strives to look it's best. Bexhillians are very proud of their town and want to show how lovely it can be.

- ✚ **The seafront area** has now been sown with wildflowers; information boards tell the story!
- ✚ **The work achieved in the Sensory Garden** has been acknowledged by other groups and the Town Council. Local community members walking past often stop and say thank you!

A2: maintenance of planted areas; ongoing and getting better as volunteers take the strain and help with work.

- ✚ Further shrub and perennial planting by RDC in the Sensory Garden and wider Egerton Park.

A3: Plant Selection



Pictorial Meadows Sundance seed mix as an alternative to bedding plants at Egerton Park. No plastic, no road transport, no use of resources in production

A4: Plant quality

- ✚ **Plants are selected** to be suitable for their growing environment so that they grow well with minimum intervention. E.g., West Parade planting and now new planting in Egerton Park Sensory Garden.



- ✚ Wisteria at Manor Gardens Spring 2021
- ✚ Bedding plants are grown to order for Rother DC in peat free compost.

Environment

B1: Local identity and pride of place:

- ✚ Renovation of listed Shelters on Promenade by Bexhill Heritage volunteers. This is ongoing with further shelters being refurbished.



- ✚ Celebrating the installation of shelters in the 1900's

- ✚ Further shrub and perennial planting by RDC in the Sensory Garden and wider Egerton Park.
- ✚ Weeding and planting at Glyne Gap by Bexhill Environmental Group (BEG)
- ✚ Beach Cleans also undertaken by BEG.

B2: Natural environment



Tree planting and wildflower seed sowing on Downs by BEG and Bexhill Friends of the Down in conjunction with RDC, over the last year they have planted over 1000 trees on Bexhill Down, donated by The Woodland Trust, all native species. 850 have been planted at the top Eastern end of the Down, underplanted with wildflowers, now named King Offa Wood. Tree care and mulching is done regularly by BFoTD fortnightly throughout the year and will continue until the trees are fully established.

Introduction of more uncut grass areas in various public parks and green spaces throughout Bexhill in order to provide habitat and a food source for insects. This can also have aesthetic benefits breaking up expanses of mown grass.



Orchids at Bexhill Cemetery Spring 2021

- ✚ Piloting of longer grass on verges by ESCC in order to contribute to biodiversity targets.
- ✚ ESCC, Bexhill Wildlife verge sites / year of designation
- ✚ The Fairway – new 2021
- ✚ Tanglewood Coppice – 2021
- ✚ HASTINGS ROAD 90m length - 1999
- ✚ HUNTING CLOSE, BELLE HILL 90m length – 1999
- ✚ WRESTWOOD ROAD TBC.

RDC initiated and successfully ran the Bexhill i-tree project – RDC initiated the i-tree project last year and recruited volunteers from local environmental groups to complete the survey. We are awaiting the results of the survey to inform future tree planting in Bexhill. See:

<https://www.rother.gov.uk/news/bexhill-i-tree-study-and-a-tree-planting-strategy>

B3: Environmental quality and resources

Recycling:

- ✚ RDC continue to require the grounds maintenance contractor to hand weed at specific sites rather than managing weeds through the use of herbicides.
- ✚ All of the green waste from RDC's grounds maintenance contract is composted through FGS Organics based in Kent.

Volunteers, particularly BEG support RDC in litter management both in public green spaces such as Bexhill Down and Sidley Recreation Ground and on the beach.

<https://www.bexhillenvironmentalgroup.org.uk/>

✚ **Waste Contract, Waste & Recycling Summary**

The overall number of missed bins for waste collections has continued to reduce in quarter 3 and, other than a slight increase in early January 2021 following the Christmas and New Year rescheduling period, the number per 100,000 remains lower than the target of 120

- ✚ **Contractor waste reused**, composted and recycled overall for Q3 is 47.4%, against 50.8% for Q2. This is the expected drop in percentage due to the seasonal reduction in garden waste. The recycling rate is heavily influenced by garden waste volumes, which in turn is subject to seasonal variations, weather patterns and numbers of garden waste subscribers. Officers have focused on increasing the number of garden waste subscribers to achieve a minimum of 20,000 households registered as of 31 March 2021.

- ✚ Full details of what can be recycled can be found at <https://www.rother.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/>

- ✚ **In September 2019, Rother District Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030.** Since then work has been underway to

develop a draft Environment Strategy and action plan, which sets out how we will deliver on our commitment to reach this target and reduce our impact on the environment.

See more at <https://www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/environment-strategy/>

- ✚ **Rother DC have had a trial of Foamstream** as an alternative to Glyphosate for weed control and will continue to evaluate other options. Foamstream is a mixture of hot water insulated by a biodegradable foam made from natural, sustainable plant oils and sugars which can be precisely applied to weeds using the Weedingtech machinery.

See: <https://www.weedingtech.com/distributors/distributors-resources/foamstream/>

Community

C1: Year-round activity and future commitment:

- ✚ Working on plans with RDC to bid for funding next year for further funding for new project areas.
- ✚ Working with community partners to enhance our environment.

C2: Communication, Education and Awareness:

- ✚ Improving our on-line presence to make our messages accessible to a wider audience.
- ✚ BiB 2022/3 plan to work on growing plants with young children who are using the park. This had been enhanced by our ability to recruit a suitable candidate with educational experience.

C3: Support and Funding

- ✚ Building and strengthening links with other organisations, individuals and elected Members involved in related community initiatives including Bexhill Environmental Group (BEG) and Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardeners. Exploring ways of working together including sharing volunteers.
- ✚ Successfully linking up with Bexhill Rotary Club whose members have supported our volunteer work. The Club has links with local businesses and influential members of the community which we hope will help our cause.
- ✚ Maintaining a good working relationship with the new Town Council who will be taking over the grants now given by RDC. Successfully applying to Sussex Community Foundation and Community Fund to enhance our work in the town.

In Your Neighbourhood



St Mary's Wood was a neglected piece of woodland at the corner of Turkey Road. A group of residents got together to take over the area, making it a great area for visitors and residents to enjoy. Bird nesting boxes have been erected as well as dog bins sited. The Committee is working hard to enhance the wood for local people and put on events for all the community.

Sponsors, Supporters and Groups we are working with:

Bexhill Environmental Group

Bexhill Heritage

Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society

Bexhill Town Council

Little Common Business Community

St Marys Wood

Sudwell Ltd.

Rother District Council

Bexhill Rotary

Bexhill Museum

Greener Futures, Groundwork South

APPENDIX 1 – COMMUNITY PROFILE

We are waiting for the statistical outcomes from the 2021 Census. Our Community Profile is as follows: Characteristically a small seaside town, Bexhill has a significant portion (**43,478**) of the Rother population (**92,908**) within its boundary; the remaining 49,430 are scattered across the rural areas of the district. Once considered an affluent area, deprivation has increased in Bexhill and Rother since 2007.

- ✚ Rother has seen a significant fall in the IMD ranking since 2007 when it was in 163rd place. The downward trend continued from the 2010 score of 132 with the overall 2017 rank for Rother of 91st of 326¹ English local authorities, with the most deprived local authority ranked as 1. Of particular concern are the wards of Bexhill Sidley; which is ranked in the worst 5% in the country: Bexhill Central and Rye in the worst 20% nationally. Sidley ward in particular has a significant proportion of Social Housing and Rented accommodation contained in this ward.
- ✚ The economy is weak relative to the region as a whole and average local incomes correspondingly low with the district ranking in the bottom 20% of districts nationally. Average gross weekly earnings in Rother are low in comparison to the rest of the county.
- ✚ Rother has the oldest age profile of East Sussex districts/boroughs with significantly lower percentages of the population aged under 65 years and significantly higher for older people. It is the district/borough with the highest percentages of residents aged 65 years and over and 85 years and over. Bexhill Sidley has one of the highest percentages of its population aged under 20 years of all East Sussex wards. Bexhill Central has a significantly higher working age population (20-64 years) compared to East Sussex. Bexhill Sackville, Collington, Kewhurst and St Marks are amongst the wards in East Sussex with the oldest age profiles. In Collington (48%) almost half of residents are aged 65 years and over and in Sackville more than 1 in 10 (12%) are aged 85 years and over, the highest ward values in East Sussex.²
- ✚ Other changes to take into consideration introduction of Universal Credit, other benefit changes and increased use of the Food Bank.

¹ Source Wikipedia 2017

² Area Summary for Rother District, March 2016

- ✚ Mental Health is becoming a real issue for those people living in Central Bexhill and older people in general. This has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Appendix 2 – Advertisement for Volunteer Coordinator

Bexhill in Bloom

Gardening in the Park

Bexhill in Bloom have a vacancy for a Volunteer Coordinator to work 3 hours on Thursday afternoons in the Sensory Garden in Egerton Park, Bexhill. The person will work with a group of volunteers in the Sensory Garden. The successful candidate will be Self-Employed, have at least a Level 2 RHS qualification, have volunteers support experience and can teach aspects of gardening to all age groups. There will also be opportunities to build on existing planning and design. The salary is £20 per hour, with the initial timeframe of 48 weeks.

If you are interested in this post, please send CV with covering letter by email to: bexhillinbloom@gmail.com by 12pm Sunday 3rd July 2022. The post commences on Thursday, 21st July 2022.

This post is funded by the Community Fund.

