**ENVIRONMENT SUB-GROUP**

Meeting 1

Present: Sue Prochak, Amanda McIntyre, Edward Flint, Peter Davies

Apologies: Alexander Hammond, Cherry Mitchell, Emma Watkins, Martin Bates.

1. We discussed the remit for the group and the objectives. The Steering Group target is the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) within 18 months. The legal area covered is the Parish of Salehurst and Robertsbridge. The government has decreed that 150 houses have to be built here by 2028. The NP gives us some say in how that happens and what price we can extract from developers for the betterment of the Parish. The draft plan, once accepted by the Council, then goes to referendum where everyone living in the Parish has a vote. Constant consultation of onterested parties is vital; not least because every proposal will need an evidence base partly based on the views of those affected. All those with an interest (for example working in the Parish but not living here) need to be involved even though they will not legally be able to vote in the referendum. The Steering Group outline for the Environment sub-group lists “Environment including flooding, green spaces, conservation, energy”.

2. We discussed what our tasks should be and whether one could separate the natural from the built environment. We agreed there were elements of Robertsbridge as it is now that we should absolutely preserve but that this should not stand in the way of embracing modern technologies in the appropriate places. We agreed that the start point for our contribution should be an understanding of where we are now. We should accept that we would need to draw on outside expertise (including possibly consultants). We also needed to accept that there were legal and planning constraints to what we could propose. Inspectors would throw out anything which conflicted with existing policies or procedures. There were also real natural constraints in Roberstbridge’s geography. One of our guiding principles should be not to make the flood problem worse by anything we proposed.

3. The steering group meets monthly and we will aim for the same frequency but should meet again before the next steering group meeting on 8 April.

4. We identified four work streams and leaders for initial study:

a) Flooding (Peter)

b) Habitat/Green Spaces/Conservation (Edward)

c) Energy Efficiency (Amanda)

d) Energy generation (Alexander and Sue\*)

We can discuss at next meeting what other areas of work the group might need to take on.

(\*Sue is involved in bidding for money for a feasibility study for hydro generation in the Parish and this is also an area in which Alexander has done previous work.)

5. ACTIONS:

a) we need to start work now on mapping the current situation, liaising with appropriate outside bodies (eg environment agency for Peter) and with other NP sub-groups as required (work stream leads).

b) Circulate links to other NPs to stimulate thought (Peter)

c) Circulate parish map (Peter)

d) find out how we can set up a secure shared folder for our work (Peter)