

Report to The Stours Parish Council – 14 March 2013

From David Little, Village Action Plan Coordinator and Parish Councillor

EAST STOUR VILLAGE ACTION PLAN

1. Introduction.

The Parish/Village Plan booklet was delivered to every household in early December 2012. At the end of the document was the Village Action Plan (VAP), which consisted of the 40 Actions receiving most support from villagers. In fact 13 of these did not require further action as a solution arose (e.g Waste and Recycling: Extension of Materials Collected from the Kerbside – Dorset Waste Partnership will do this from June 2013), or I considered the Action as not feasible (e.g. Mains Gas - Bring Supply to the Village), or self help activity was the only practical solution (e.g. Littering/Fly Tipping – villagers pick up the litter or report any specific problem to NDDC).

2. Analysis of remaining 27 Actions:

- 9 Underway
- 11 Action likely but not yet started
- 7 No interest yet so Action may not happen

3. Analysis of Actions Underway

1	List of Volunteers	Ongoing
9	Provide Allotments	Current Parish Council topic (independent of VAP)
10	Village Website and Facebook	Just released
12	Open Village Shop	Being researched
13	Delivery Service from an Existing Village Shop	Being researched
16	Yoga Class for Older People	Started February 2013 (independent of VAP)
19	Fuel Buying Groups	Some research done
29	Village Planting	Phase 1 underway; Phases 2 and 3 partly planned
40	Map of Village Footpaths	Being planned by Martin Hibbert

4. Village Planting Project

This Action is in three phases: i) Replace Village Hall Hedge, ii) Plant Trees and Shrubs in Playing Field, and iii) Planting Around The Village.

My report of 16 February to the East Stour Parish Councillors and East Stour Village Hall Committee sought urgent approval for **Phase 1 Replacing the Village Hall Hedge**. The project leaders (Penny Brentnall and John Gould) and I wanted this phase because the hedge was a mess, a new one would improve the village hall and, as it would be easily visible to villagers, it would help to promote that the Village Action Plan was underway - things CAN happen given the will and the support!

The councillors' responses (as owners of the hedge) was unanimously in favour of the hedge replacement, and this was echoed at a meeting of the Village Hall Committee (who maintain it). We then found we needed to act very quickly to remove the hedge, as the normal deadline was 28 February (before birds started nesting). I checked with the Tree and Landscape Manager at NDDC, then the Senior Ecologist at DCC's Natural Environment Team. The latter visited the site on 1 March and reported to me via email:

Thank you for meeting me this afternoon to look at the hedge by the Village Hall. I surveyed the hedge for evidence of current bird nesting activity and confirm that there was nothing to suggest that there are any active nests at the moment. However, I would advise that work to cut back the hedge should be undertaken within the next seven days. This is because the likelihood of nesting significantly increases as spring progresses and particularly if the weather becomes milder. I would suggest that you may wish to concentrate on removing as much of the dense cover as soon as possible as this will deter birds from nesting. The hedge was mainly comprised of non-native trees and shrubs which were in a generally poor condition and I can understand why the village is keen to re-establish a new hedgerow. It was of limited ecological value in its current state. D Alder, Senior Ecologist, Natural Environment Team, DCC. 1 March 13.

On Saturday 2 March, the hedge was mechanically trimmed, and on 4 and 5 March a working party cut down the remaining growth above ground and removed the old chainlink fence. The waste will be removed on 8 March and a digger is needed to dig out the hedge roots. It is hoped to erect the two rail wooden fence and plant the new hedge before 31 March.

We now seek funding towards the cost of hedge trimming, wooden fence and plants. Expenditure is estimated at £80, £400 and £300 (respectively) with all the fencing and planting work being done by the working group. We hope to avoid any charge for the digger. The Council would have otherwise paid directly for the February hedge trim. Our first fundraising event will be Souper Saturday on 9 March.

The hedge belongs to the Parish Council and had become dilapidated. It's replacement under the Action Plan means the Council does not have to do any of the maintenance work now due. The hedge will certainly enhance both the village hall - and the village generally. Further, the Action has generated a lot of interest in village life that should help with further plans to improve our village environment.

Any contribution from the Council would be much appreciated to supplement our own fundraising. Please encourage us to follow this phase 1 with more works that will require funds to be raised before spending can be incurred.

5. Banker Function

I am pleased to report that TESS has agreed to act as the VAP's independent banker. TESS has also generously funded the costs of our new village website – www.east-stour.org.uk and Facebook page.

David Little
Village Action Plan Coordinator, East Stour
The Stours Parish Councillor
5 March 2013