

# REVIEW

AUTUMN/WINTER 2013

NEWS FROM THE SUSSEX BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND



## SUSSEX IN THE FRONT LINE

**Will Mayfield's new town be allowed to destroy our fields?  
Make your voice heard!**

### Nothing's Sacred

AONBs, the National Park and all unprotected countryside  
under the hammer.

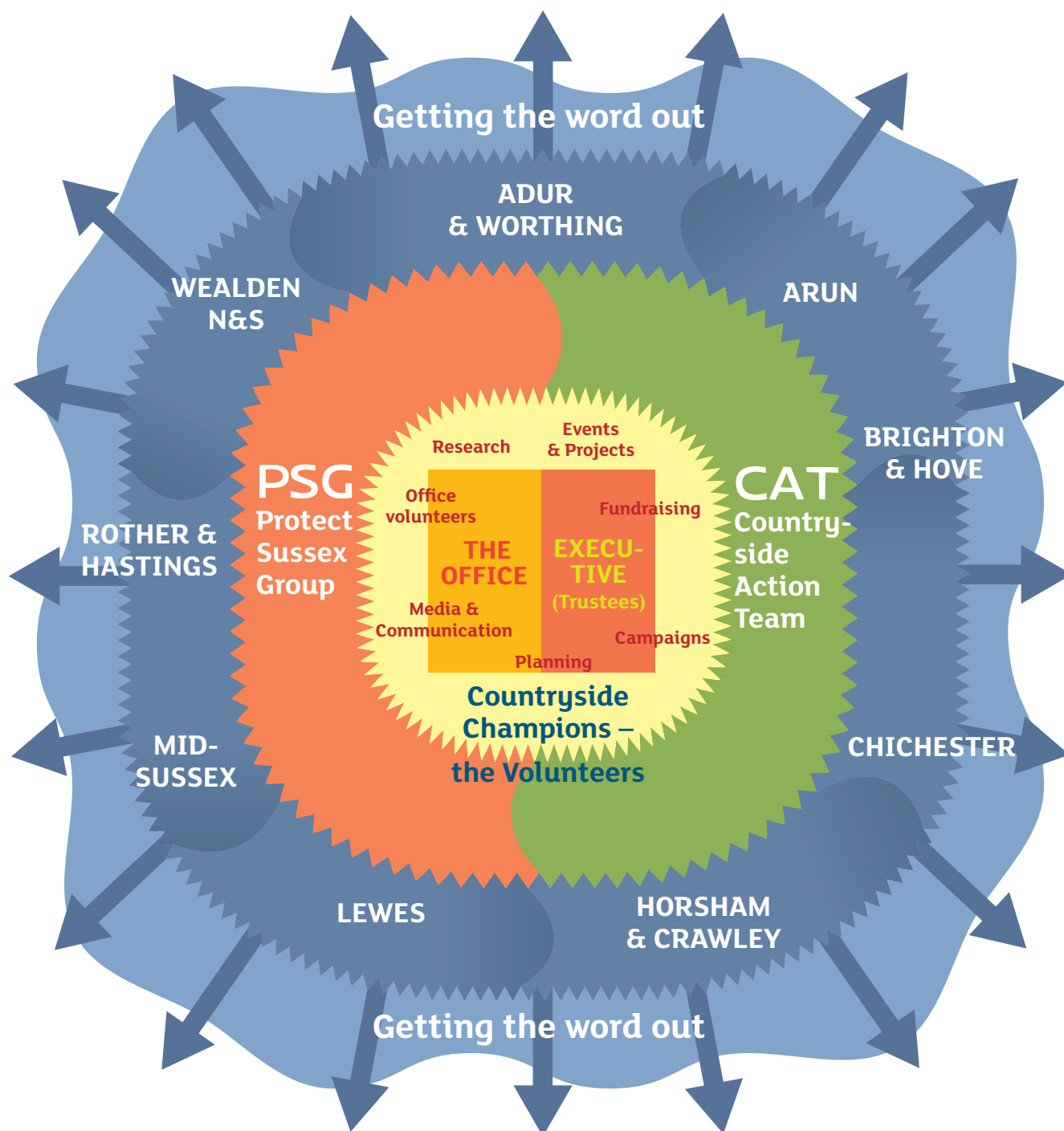
### Axing the Rules

Conversions, the name of the new game

**Proposed 'Mayfields' New Town site from the East**

Right corner - edge of Burgess Hill, left edge - part  
of Hurstpierpoint, centre - Sayers Common with  
Henfield in the distance © Stuart Meier 2013

# OUR NEW STRUCTURE



## Opportunities to get involved

We've been doing a lot of work on ourselves recently, and have developed a new structure to work on our top priorities, developing the power of our local campaigning groups and raising the profile of CPRE Sussex's work.

**There are two new active working groups you can get involved with.** The **Protect Sussex Group** will act as a planning campaigns focus and the **Countryside Action Team** will promote enhancing and protecting the countryside. The groups have their first meetings this Winter.

If you're interested in getting involved with either group and you have particular expertise or experience to offer, we would be delighted to hear from you on [info@cpresussex.org.uk](mailto:info@cpresussex.org.uk). (Each local district group has been invited to nominate a representative to sit on each).

# FORTY YEARS ON

Our 40th AGM was held at the beautiful Meridian Hall in East Grinstead, with its stunning views across terraced gardens and the Weald.

The Hall, just within West Sussex but in easy reach of members from East Sussex proved an excellent choice. The Hall, built in 1769 for a Scottish lawyer who married a local heiress – in the long tradition of people from the rest of the country seeking the delights of Sussex and needing a new home, is now the headquarters of East Grinstead Town Council and a centre for local activities.

The formal meeting was opened by Lord Egremont who has been our President for almost half the life of the Branch. The business of the morning included reports on the impacts of the Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework, and on Sussex issues including the Hastings - Bexhill bypass, a second runway at Gatwick and the deluge of applications for test drilling in preparation for 'fracking'. We said farewell to several trustees, Edmund Critchley, Chris Lewis, now Chair of CPRE Somerset, and Roger Smith who after 8 years must now take a sabbatical.

After the formal business, Duncan Baker Brown, architect and Senior Lecturer at the University of Brighton gave a stimulating talk on environmentally friendly, sustainable, innovative architecture showing us buildings designed to be sympathetic to their location and which make use of locally sourced and recycled materials. After lunch we each chose either to take a tour of the gardens with the East Court gardener, Jenny Watson, or a talk and guided walk through Ashplats ancient woodland – both a forcible reminder of the relation of Sussex towns to the landscape and the vital importance of fighting against urban sprawl.

**Rodney Chambers**  
Chairman 2006 – 2013

## Introducing our new Chairman David Johnson



David lives beside the River Adur on Shoreham Beach, volunteers at Ropetackle Arts Centre and helped found Shoreham Wordfest. He is a school governor in Kent, a trustee for Suffolk Family Carers, and onetime chair of Pensioners' Link. He rides horses and sails.

Aghast at the Coalition's 'localism', new planning regime, and threats to the Adur flood plain, he attended the CPRE conference on 'Futureproofing' in March this year, became a member and is now chair.

David believes that unless the countryside appeals to a very diverse population, it cannot be protected; Sussex CPRE must seek to develop this mutual respect between town and country.



From the top: Rodney Chambers with Georgia Wrighton and Lesley Wilson



**CPRE Sussex Countryside Trust**  
is the Sussex Branch of the  
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# DEMOCRACY? WHAT'S THAT?

Michael Brown

Wineham village sits in the bowl of the Low Weald below the South Downs National Park, astride the upper reaches of the River Adur close to Henfield and a few quiet miles off the busy A23 thundering down to Brighton. Its village pub, the Royal Oak, has been serving its locals, farm workers and others, for 700 years. A pair of goshawks nested this year along the Wineham Road. Along with its neighbouring villages of Twineham, Albourne and Sayers Common it represents a quiet, rural community of individual hamlets removed from the bustle of city life. Many families have roots here going back through generations. Many work locally.

Now Argent, a major developer, has formed a new company Mayfield Market Towns Limited with the aim of turning this whole peaceful - and unsuspecting - backwater into a new "market" town for 10,000 dwellings and 25,000 inhabitants. No Goshawks.

Mayfield say that the new strategic plans being developed by Mid Sussex and Horsham District Councils, the two planning authorities involved, massively miscalculate the number of new homes needed within those districts over the next 20 years, and also that those two Districts should take an overspill of new housing from Brighton, Worthing and other coastal authorities. They will seek to overturn the proposed new District Plans that have been developed by the two elected local authorities by undermining the Councils' own evidence as to what their future housing needs are when the new plans are subjected to a public examination in front of a Planning Inspector.

In the case of Mid Sussex, Mayfield is also trying to force the complete withdrawal of the Mid Sussex Draft Plan on the grounds that MSDC has failed properly to consult with neighbouring authorities about the possibility of

taking their housing overspill into Mid Sussex. That issue is due to be decided imminently. At the time of writing, the date for the public examination of the Plan has been postponed indefinitely. Mayfield's hope is that the Inspector will either require Mid Sussex Council to cancel and rewrite its Plan, or failing that, substantially to increase the housing requirement, with those extra new homes built in its "new town in the country".

To put it into context, Mid Sussex envisages a need for 10,600 new homes in the district over the next 18 years, whilst Mayfield says that number should be 19,620. Similar issues will arise with Horsham's plan when it is finalised.

At CPRE, we say that Mayfield's manoeuvring to overturn the long gestated District Plans of democratically elected authorities and to dump a 10,000 house town in the midst of the Low Weald countryside is deeply disturbing.



And we are not alone. The two District Councils in the firing line see no need for a market town. All seven parish councils between Hurstpierpoint and Henfield are opposed. So are the two MPs directly involved, Nick Herbert (Arundel & South Downs) and Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex). They have jointly written to Mayfield in no uncertain terms to say that they both find their scheme, and the manner in which Argent is going about promoting it, "entirely unacceptable", and that "our District Councils have the right and responsibility to determine the correct level of housing in their areas. You [Mayfield Market Town Ltd] are not helping this process; you are setting out to undermine it".

Campaign to Protect Rural England (Sussex) has been supporting the establishment of a local action group to fight the Mayfield plan. That action group, Locals Against Mayfield Building Sprawl (LAMBS), is now up and running with an excellent website [www.lambs.org.uk](http://www.lambs.org.uk). By the time you read this we and LAMBS will have held a joint public meeting, chaired by CPRE, to alert local

residents to the implications of Mayfield's scheme, to garner public opinion on it, and to organise future opposition to it. Both local MPs have agreed to speak at that meeting along with Anthony Watts-Williams, chairman of LAMBS.

CPRE is also working directly with the parish councils involved, and will be giving evidence in opposition to Mayfield at the public examination in November of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Roger Smith, District chair of CPRE Horsham & Crawley comments: "We are fortified by the knowledge that our opposition to this reckless scheme is so strongly and unanimously supported by our MPs, our District Councils, our Parish Councils and most importantly local people in the firing line. It will be a real test of whether localism means anything in action. This is about people power, people defending their communities from predatory speculators - who are seeking to impose a massive and inappropriate development on countryside"

This could be a long battle. But it goes to the heart of everything that CPRE stands for, and we will continue to oppose this unwanted and unnecessary plan to desecrate a huge swathe of our precious rural heritage.

To keep up to date on developments check out our website at [www.cpresussex.org](http://www.cpresussex.org) and follow the links



**Below:** local residents listen to their MPs at the Mayfield Market Town Public Meeting organised by CPRE Sussex and LAMBS on 18th October 2013



**Photo:** David Rees Davies

# FIELDS UNDER FIRE

## the onslaught will continue...

Andy Boddington



Not much is sacred these days, according to government planning minister Nick Boles. Attacking CPRE at this year's Conservative party conference, he rubbished the suggestion that most new homes could be accommodated on brownfield sites. He wants to consume eight to ten per cent of country fields to build new houses. That is not a new message from this planning minister, but Nick Boles seems to be all out of ideas. When asked at the Party Conference if we can expect further planning reforms he joked,

**"If I'm still planning minister after the next election, I want you to shoot me."**

Photo of Nick Boles by Nigel Keene

Mixed messages from government are creating shock waves in rural areas across the country, and we are feeling the full force in Sussex.

At the Labour conference, shadow ministers were even more open about their desire to build on green fields. They have demanded a "right to grow", a licence for towns and cities to sprawl across the surrounding countryside whether neighbouring councils like the idea or not. Labour wants another generation of new towns too. It's a sentiment that could equally give the green light to Mayfield new town in Mid Sussex if Labour gets into office in 2015.

Across England housing developments are being approved by planning inspectors and ministers regardless of what local planners and communities want. That's because councils must identify a five year pipeline of housing land. If they fail to do so, Eric Pickles or Nick Boles, or one

of their planning inspectors, will declare the local plan worthless and approve almost all housing applications. Across East Sussex, Councils are only 267 homes short of their five year supply target of 10,981. Councils in West Sussex have a long way to go, having only identified 16,059 of the 28,569 homes that government rules say are needed. A planning inspector has already approved 100 houses on green field at Westhampnett citing the lack of five year land supply.

**There is no argument that we need more housing, especially affordable rural housing. But we need locally planned housing, not speculative bids from developers that are rubber stamped by ministers in Whitehall or planning inspectors in Bristol.**

Whoever is in charge of planning after the 2015 election, the reality is that ministers and the planning inspectorate hold too much power. We are drifting away from localism and too many decisions are being made by people with only a passing acquaintance with the area. It is time for localism to be reinvented.

# FRACKING

## A summer of protest in Sussex

Jan Goodey

Fracking firm Cuadrilla is unlikely to be back in Balcombe until the Spring now that their drill rig is off site and a decision on their latest planning application isn't expected from West Sussex County Council until March 2014.

Chief executive Francis Egan said: "The well is now closed off for the coming months as we apply for planning permission to come back and test flow rates."

Their vertical exploratory drilling over the summer did reveal that oil was present, so now it's back to the drawing board for their possible horizontal fracking operations and in the meantime attention has shifted nationally to Salford where the next drill site belonging to iGas at Barton Moss has taken centre stage.

In fact Sussex enters a planning hiatus over the coming months with the ramifications of the anti-fracking campaign at Balcombe continuing to have an effect with frack-free groups (looking into

legal issues surrounding fracking) springing up country-wide.

A number of these new groups are in the south as there are other Kent and Sussex-based planning applications apart from Cuadrilla's in the pipeline.

Ben Johns of national anti-fracking coalition Frack Off which has been working with Frack Free Fernhurst and other local campaign groups, said: "Planning applications could take even longer now that it's emerged fracking companies need permission from landowners if horizontal wells which can be up to 2 to 3km long, stray onto their land. It could delay fracking by years as the industry will have to try to get the law changed."

This could have an impact on the current raft of Sussex applications. Celtique Energie's proposals are for a temporary well site to be built in a secluded spot near Wisborough Green and Kirdford.

**With nearby Fernhurst also in line for drilling, these villages are three of the 15 licensed Sussex well sites which are part of a growing list of the first of 100s countrywide sanctioned by the Government.**

This has led to bigger players entering the fray. Cuadrilla, US-based, is already partnered in its Lancashire operations by UK energy giant Centrica and now it's been revealed that controversial US energy behemoth Halliburton (implicated in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster killing 11 workers and the world's biggest ocean oil spill) is in talks to partner Celtique in its southern UK operations. Celtique, whose base is in the UK, has a New York office and is owned by two offshore funds listed in the Cayman Islands.

As we go to press Brighton Pavilion MP Caroline Lucas appeared in court on allegations of breaching a police order on public assemblies and wilful obstruction of the highway in relation to her earlier arrest at a major demonstration in Balcombe over the summer.

**Below:** Protesters at Balcombe, August 2013



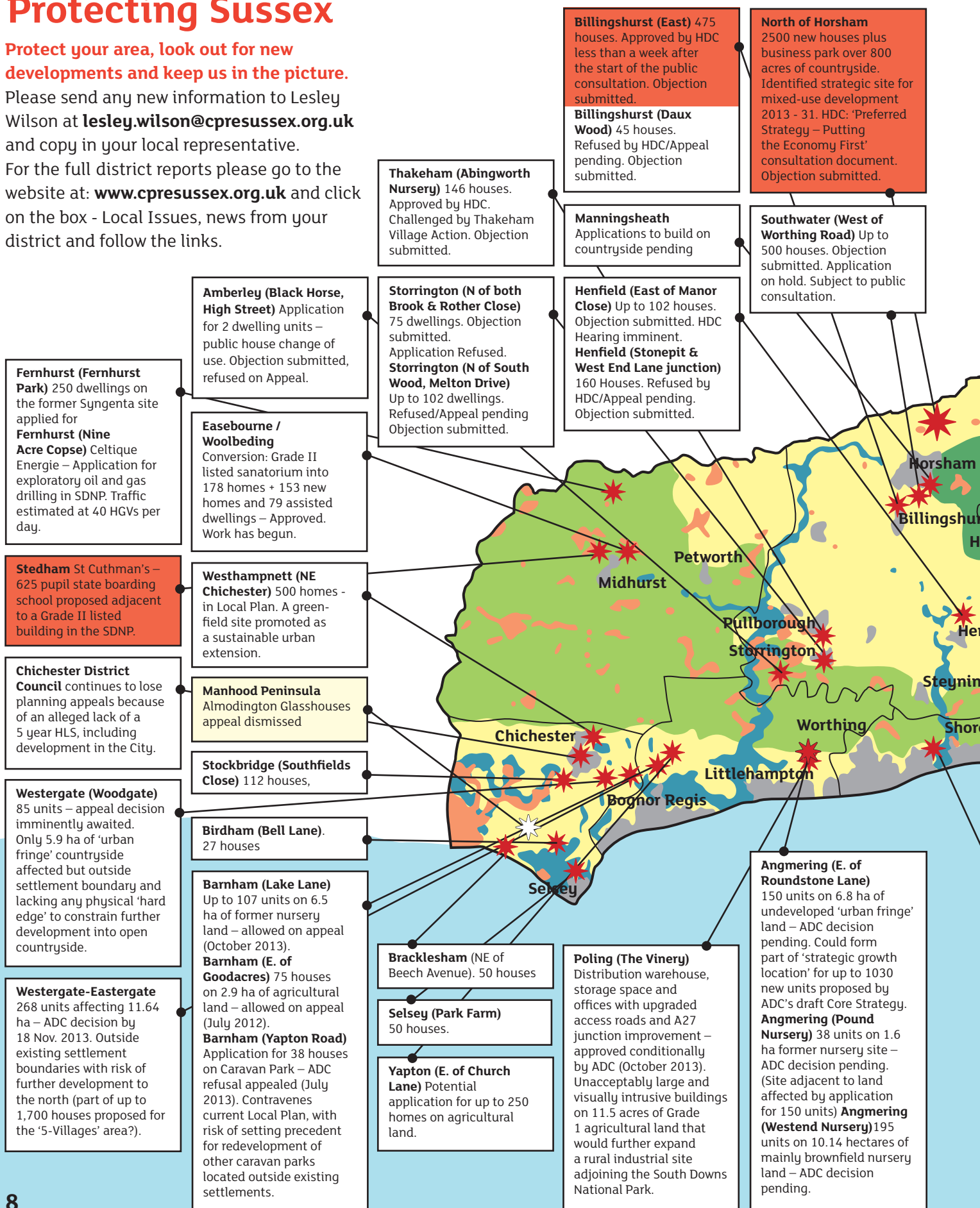
# THE BIG PICTURE

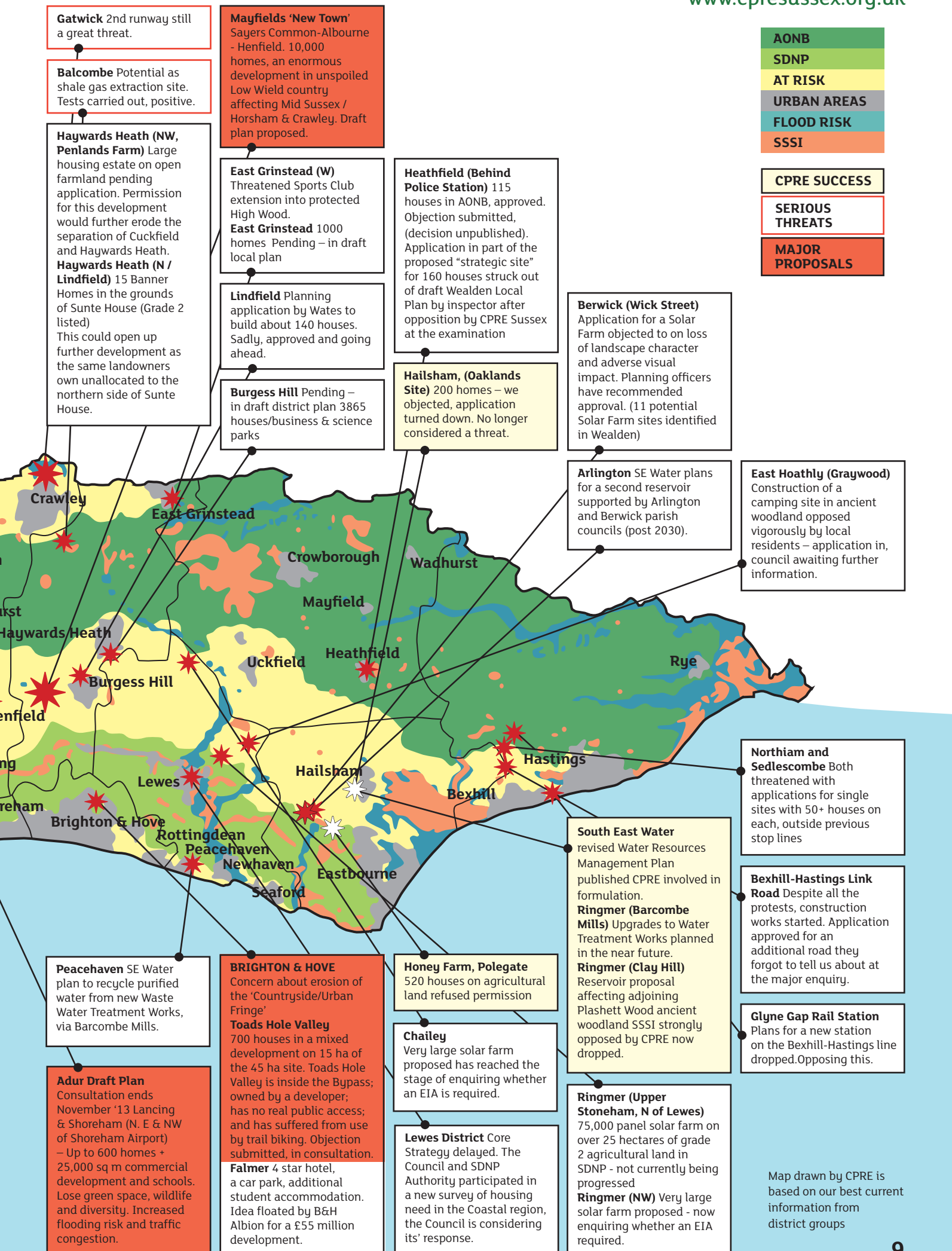
## Protecting Sussex

**Protect your area, look out for new developments and keep us in the picture.**

Please send any new information to Lesley Wilson at [lesley.wilson@cpresussex.org.uk](mailto:lesley.wilson@cpresussex.org.uk) and copy in your local representative.

For the full district reports please go to the website at: [www.cpresussex.org.uk](http://www.cpresussex.org.uk) and click on the box - Local Issues, news from your district and follow the links.





Map drawn by CPRE is based on our best current information from district groups

# PLANNING BECOMES UNPLANNED

Andy Boddington

**It's all change in the countryside and change will no longer require planning permission.**

Under the banner of cutting red tape and in the hope of boosting the economy, the government is busy axing planning rules, including on our farms and in our town centres.

First up for conversion are agricultural barns. Provided they were built before 21 March 2010, they can be converted to up to three houses or flats without planning permission. The government says that it wants to "avoid high-impact development occurring without the opportunity for local consideration" and "avoid creating the opportunity for over development." However, local

people will get no opportunity to object. Barns can even be demolished and rebuilt as housing from scratch under the new rules.

Developers will have to contact the council for prior approval, including for design, materials and traffic. But in practice few conversions will be turned down. And these new rules apply throughout the South Downs National Park or High Weald AONB.

For many farms, the conversion will be a useful injection of cash, but there is a danger that useful barns will be converted and remote locations in the rural landscape will be urbanised. Few if any of the conversions will be affordable housing.

The good news is that farmers won't be able to put up replacement barns for ten years without first applying for planning permission.

It's not just the countryside that's suffering from the government's dislike of planning. In Brighton, offices are being emptied so they can be converted into more profitable flats. Again this no longer needs planning permission. The government is also scheming to allow shops to be converted to housing without little more than a cursory glance by planners.

There is a real danger of struggling town centres being stripped of retail and office space, blocking any hopes future regeneration. With the government and some councils still approving out of town shopping centres and retail parks, our town centres are looking very fragile indeed.

**Photo:** Colin Leeves





# ROADS GOING NOWHERE

**Andy Boddington**

The protests at Balcombe over fracking eventually overshadowed those at Combe Haven. But it would be wrong to underestimate the importance of the protests against the Bexhill Hastings Link Road.

The roads protest movement has been pretty quiet since the heady days of the 1990s, when thousands of people raged at the horrific scar of the M3 and tens of thousands marched against the Newbury Bypass. Both roads were eventually built but the government of the day recoiled at the scale of the protests. It drastically cut back road construction and many felt the battle against destructive roads had been won.

Now road building is back in vogue and attention is turning to the A27. Everyone knows of the congestion at Arundel, Worthing and Lancing. West Sussex County Council claims that: "The A27 is the most unreliable all-purpose trunk road in England." Cabinet member Pieter Montyn has called

for a "brand new bypass from end to end" of West Sussex. Many want this route to pass through the green fields of the Downs. The MP for Worthing West Sir Peter Bottomley, a former transport minister, has suggested tunnelling under the Downs or running the road across the sea. But he knows that neither of these options will get funded in cash-strapped times.

A government study is planned look at what is needed, though this will not begin until 2015 at the earliest. And the Highways Agency is already saying that it has no interest in funding a full-scale bypass.

This is good news for countryside, but the question of congestion needs to be tackled. Small scale improvements to ease congestion points are certainly needed and this is planned for Chichester. But more must be done.

Ramped-up train and bus services, and reintroduction of trams has improved services in many towns and cities. They are not cheap options, but across

England public transport use is growing and car driving is falling. That has to be the right way forward.

Unlike the A27, the Bexhill Hastings link road is not a strategic road. The business case for the link barely stands up and its main aim is to accelerate housing growth. Truly, it is a road to nowhere.

**The protestors may have failed to stop this road in its tracks. Many got arrested for trying to do so. But their protest has injected new energy into the roads protest movement. For this they should be thanked.**

Sussex needs a forward looking transport strategy, not one wedded to roads to nowhere.



# BRINSBURY & PLUMPTON

## Agricultural Colleges – helping the local rural economy thrive?

We asked **Steve Millam at Brinsbury** and **Des Lambert at Plumpton** for their views. Both Steve and Des are proud of their colleges history, but stress that they teach and train for the modern world.

**Steve:** Our agricultural colleges have a long track record in teaching farmers and growers in Sussex. After the Second World War, the colleges retrained ex-military personnel who went on to establish the smallholdings and horticultural businesses that form the backbone of today's agricultural industry. In recent years, we have concentrated on developing wider employability and entrepreneurship skills.

**Des:** Plumpton College has been on its current site since 1926. It was initially an agriculture and horticultural college. It now also teaches degree students about the wine, viticulture and the wine business but it's not just wine that's taught at a modern agricultural college. It's also kayaking. In recent years, we have added landscape gardening machinery, countryside management, blacksmithing and metalsmithing, equine studies, and much more. There is also a growing demand for students with qualifications in outdoor adventure activities, including mountain biking, climbing and kayaking.

**Steve:** At Brinsbury, all full-time courses are based on a farm and students run agricultural activities. Strong links with local industry and employers are used to design and modify courses to ensure they are up-to-date. The South Downs National Park has also influenced what the colleges teach.

**Des:** The designation of the national park has put a focus on countryside management. Students leave us to work with the National Trust, on large estates, or within the national park. They also find employment in forestry and the arboriculture industry, and many are setting up their own businesses.

**Steve:** The rural economy of Sussex, including in the national park, is very diverse. Agriculture spin-offs like tourist or food enterprises are a significant, growing part of the local economy. Projects like our Centre of Excellence for Regional Food and Drink at Brinsbury are helping people in local businesses share experiences.

Is there a future for agricultural training in Sussex?

**Des:** The demand for agriculture courses has increased in recent years, possibly due to media programmes on the need for increased food production.

**Steve:** West Sussex's vibrant horticultural, agricultural and food-based industries are thriving. The colleges are working hard to meet the current and future demands of the rural economy. Sussex's agricultural colleges are changing with the times and are set to continue to help our rural economy thrive far into the future.



Des Lambert is Principal of Plumpton College and Dr Steve Millam is Head of Learning for Horticulture, Arboriculture, Agriculture, Floristry & Creative Crafts at Brinsbury, University of Chichester