



ST FRANCIS FIELDS

NORTHIAM

Quarterly Report to Northiam Parish Council – May 2022

Introduction

This is the third quarterly report from St Francis Fields CIC to Northiam Parish Council, required by §5.1.2 of the management agreement under which the CIC acts as the Council's managing agent for the estate. This report covers the period Feb. to May 2022.

Maintenance

Maintenance work by the volunteer team continued through the period largely following the maintenance plan produced by the CIC in Sep. 2021. Again, it should be noted that most work was carried out for the cost of materials alone with many hundreds of hours of volunteer labour continuing to be given to the project, saving significant sums in potential costs. Items of note include the following:

- **Storm Drainage around the Hub:** work to improve the drainage route for rainwater running down from the estate into the Hub was completed by the volunteer team and appears to have cured the long-standing problem of run-off into Hylands Close and much reduced damp in the blockwork building opposite the Oast. Separate to the above, following the drains survey, the detailed layout of the foul and storm drains serving the Hub, the Stables and the bungalows is now understood.
- **Storm Eunice:** on 14 February Storm Eunice caused significant damage to buildings on the estate as well as bringing down a number of trees. The trees were cleared by the volunteer team over that weekend and temporary repairs made to the Stables roof, which lost large runs of roofing felt to the wind. Quotes have been obtained and provided to NPC for a claim to its insurers in respect of the damage to the Stables and Hub roofs (complete re-felting of the former and replacement of small numbers of tiles on both) and for the repair of the roofs of the two barns opposite fields 11 & 12.
- **Hedge cutting:** this should be an annual routine carried out during late winter before birds start nesting in late Feb/early March. To restrict costs for the 2021/22 FY, cutting this winter was limited to the roadside hedges along Beales lane, which the Council as land-owner has an obligation to maintain and which were not cut in the winter of 2020/1. The machinery is not available to do this work in-house and, as in recent years, the work was carried out by Mr Pierce (Ewhurst Lane). More of the estate hedges should be included for cutting in early 2023.
- **Roadstone:** 60 tonnes of roadstone have been laid by the volunteer team to improve the estate tracks above the Hub up to the junction with the footpath and around behind the bungalows. Levelling and surfacing of the area immediately above the Hub provides additional parking for users of the Hub.
- **The Oast:** this has been cleared and decorated by the volunteer team and is now ready for use, initially as a small meeting room. Other uses will emerge alongside increased use of the Hub.

- **Field fences:** considerable work has been done to repair field fences across the estate and this is ongoing. Reinstatement of the electrical fences to the horse-grazing would reduce damage by horses grazing through the fences.

- **Spraying of fields 10-12:** as agreed, fields 10-12 have been sprayed to control creeping thistle and ragwort, which are both classed as 'injurious weeds' under the Weeds Act 1959 and which had been neglected by the previous grazing licence holder. A second spraying, originally thought likely to be necessary is not now proposed and the fields can now be brought back into use. We are responding to one complaint received.

Stables lease

Receipt of the signed copies of the new lease for the Stables is awaited although matters are now clouded by the very sad events of 15-16 May.

Hub proposals

Approval of our outline proposals for renovation and repurposing of the Hub was given at the Parish Council of 14 April. We have begun the process of preparing for planning application for change of use for the Hub, Stables and Burial Ground and as a first step will shortly have pre-application discussions with ESCC Highways Department and subsequently and in the light of those discussions, with the RDC Planning Department.

Pop-Up Pub

Plans are in-hand to open the Pop-Up Pub over eight weekends this summer, as follows starting with the Jubilee weekend:

- 3-5 June: Friday 12 noon - 9pm, Saturday 4pm - 9pm (we're running the bar at the NPC Jubilee party on the Village Hall paddock until 4pm), Sunday 12 noon - 6pm
- 17-19 June: Friday 4pm - 9pm, Saturday (12 noon - 9pm), Sunday (12 noon - 6pm)
- 1-3 July, hours as above
- 15-17 July, ditto
- 29-31 July, ditto
- 12-14 Aug, ditto
- 26-28 Aug, ditto (we may also open on the Bank Holiday Monday – tbc)
- 9-11 Sept, ditto

In respect of the operation of the pub in the Summer of 2021, the CIC would like to offer a contribution of £200 towards the water, sewage and electricity charges levied on the Parish Council. If this is acceptable, perhaps the Clerk would send the CIC an invoice.