East Dean & Friston
Parish Council

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| **Date:** | **07 January 2021** |
| **Title:** | **Report Item 14 -– Correspondence** |
| **By:** | **K Larkin (Parish Clerk)** |
| **Purpose:** | **To report on correspondence received since the December meeting** |
| **Recommendations:** | **To note the report** |

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**Note:** more items may be added to this schedule prior to the council meeting on 7th January 2021; a copy of the final version can be obtained by emailing the Clerk: clerk@edfparishcouncil.org.uk

The following items of correspondence have been received since the December council meeting:

- **Government drive to plant trees and hedgerows** – a resident has approached the parish council, the Residents' Association and the Gilbert Estate urging all three to support this campaign (also supported by BBC Countryfile). The principle is likely to receive wide support, though for individual sites the final decision will always rest with the landowner.

- **Neighbourhood Plan** – a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has questioned the council's decision, reported to Group members in a letter from the Chair dated 10 November 2020, to put further work on the Plan on hold pending clarification of national planning policy changes which could reduce the efficacy of such plans. This was based on advice received from the parish's District Councillor *[reported in the Minutes of the parish council meeting held on 01 October 2020, Item C.279(a)],* and on earlier advice from the SDNPA received in September, which acknowledged the changes proposed at national level but did not advise that the Plan making should be stopped. The Group member has quoted advice he has recently sought from the SDNPA that the plan making could continue. This is not disputed by the council, which has not abandoned the Plan, but put it on hold. In particular, however, the Group member is concerned that the following two types of evidence base should still be collated:
  1) a digital mapping exercise of land boundaries and ownership
  2) a survey of, and management plan for, trees, shrubs and hedgerows

  The member further requests that the parish council should 'urgently review its position on neighbourhood planning and make its views fully known to both the NPSG and the parish as a whole'.

The following items were added after publication day, 31 December 2020:

- **Neighbourhood Plan** - In a subsequent email the same resident says: "the Council does not give a full description of the district councillor's advice that "The parish council would also need to monitor the effects of the proposed national planning policy changes on Neighbourhood Planning, which could be seriously compromised." This is meaningless to me and doubtless to other members of the NPSG. I'd appreciate a much fuller explanation of (a) the Council's decision to postpone the NP process in its entirety due to the possible implications of "national planning policy changes which could reduce the efficacy of such plans." and (b) why the council did/does not think that the evidence-building phase could/can still go ahead through the established working parties".

- **The Friendly Bench initiative** – a resident says: I would like to forward information about [the Friendly Bench] initiative and the funding that it attracts, to the Parish Council for consideration. Though we have many benches in the village, this is an initiative looking to combat loneliness and promote positive mental health, something every community needs to do. There would no doubt be arguments about the look, the placing of such a bench, planning issues etc. However, I feel that the benefits would be considerable if, for example, we had such a bench in the little garden behind the village hall, or on the Rec. The website is: https://www.thefriendlybench.co.uk/. I look forward to hearing from the councillors in due course."

- **East Dean Bus shelter (south)** - a resident has thanked the council for 'the beautifully restored bus shelter'

- **Footpath signage** – a resident has requested the parish council to investigate the inadequate signage for walkers, once outside the Eastbourne Downland area, and compared with other parts of the country, and other National Parks. Signs, even replacement signs, rarely give any more information than road signs, i.e. no destination, distance or timings. If people are seriously to be persuaded out of their cars and on to the less frequented paths, then they will need to be offered the assistance and information provided to drivers e.g. by SatNav, as a matter of course.