



# Vision Group for Sidmouth

for the sustainable development of town and valley

Minutes from the VGS AGM 26 June 2013 at Kennaway House

Present: Dave Bramley, Liz Bramley, Derek Chant, Graham Cooper, Robert Crick, Kerry Gibbons, Bob Miles, Mair Miles, Jean Twibell, John Twibell, Jeremy Woodward, Rita Hedley,

Apologies: Graham Elsom, Louise Woolley

1. The Chair welcomed those present and summarised the past year's events briefly.
  - Futures Forum tireless campaign on the planning matters affecting the valley
  - The continued active work by the Cycling, Market and Energy Groups
  - the Sidmouth Science Festival in October was extremely well received and this encouraged us to go ahead with organising another one this year and the Week of 14 - 20 October is well filled with interesting activities and fascinating talks. The main full days are Saturday 19 in town and Sunday 20 October at the NLO. We are especially impressed that the schools from East Devon are so enthusiastically involved and expect the Festival activities to reach at least 1500 students from Primary and Secondary schools. For more information see: [www.sidmouthsciencefestival.org](http://www.sidmouthsciencefestival.org)
  - Proposal for further discussion: to hold future AGMs at another time of the year (not June). We will include discussion on this topic for the next coordination meeting (see below for dates).
2. The treasurer's comments on the VGS finances covered
  - the Market continues to sustain VGS activities along with SVEAG
  - the biggest expense category this year has been the development of the new website
  - the Science Festival funding is covered separately from the VGS, and this year we are grateful to the Town Council, the SVA Keith Owen Fund and the Institute of Physics, which have so far contributed to the overall funding of the Festival. We will need to seek additional sponsorship from local donors and organisations further afield.
  - we would like to invite willing candidates to be nominated or to put themselves forward for the role of the treasurer, to spread the workload within VGS a bit more.
3. Press and PR
  - the new website has greatly simplified the production and sending of the monthly newsletter although we are working to provide a small edition of the simple printed newsletter - as in the past - for those who need it
  - we aim to work towards being more engaged with the Social Media activities in future (Twitter, Facebook etc) and are always looking for volunteer help in these areas
  - Jeremy's Futures Forum blog has been well filled with information and is really welcome and useful for those with a special interest in local planning matters
  - note that copies of event posters can now normally be downloaded from the website (look for the relevant calendar entry for the event). We also need help in putting

posters up in town for the various events. Please let us know if you can do this kind of thing.

#### 4. Action Groups' Reports

- Futures Forum: the eventful year started with work on Neighbourhood plans (an initiative of the Central Government), which EDDC is working on along with such plans for other parishes. The Knowle plans continue to be of concern and we will continue to offer the VGS platform for debate and discussion in our meetings and via the Futures Forum blog. The National Park idea is gaining publicity but issues need to be discussed before formal expressions of support. Plans for various local Cycle routes are being worked on. There has been positive progress and recently a funding application was put forward to make new routes a reality. Please feel free to contact Jeremy if you have more comments and suggestions to make. For more details see: <https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/cycling/sidmouth-bowd-ottery-feniton/vgs-proposal-to-stc-for-funding.aspx#>
- SVEAG: Derek summarised the busy year by mentioning just a couple of things. Firstly, the work continues towards the next big event, which is the Alternative Energy Vehicle Show organised in conjunction with the Classic Car Club. We hope to have local car dealers there exhibiting their latest energy efficient vehicles. The cost of participating in the event is £500, which we hope to recoup and which expense was approved. Secondly, the College students are working on a water-themed project, which will be evaluated and the prizes (£100 in total) will be given out during the Science Festival week by Prof Iain Stewart. Thirdly, the electric charging point which we are sponsoring will be installed in the near future at the Hunters Moon Hotel - a very forward looking development for the use of their guests, and good publicity.

#### 5. The following officers were unanimously elected for another year.

- Chair: Dave Bramley
- Treasurer: Jean Twibell
- Secretary: Rita Hedley
- Press and PR: Liz Bramley

6. The **next meeting** was scheduled to take place on Wed 28 August. However, as August is a traditional holiday month, we are proposing something different: a trip to Otter Brewery. The date has yet to be agreed as they normally prepare some food as part of the visit and they may have some of the staff on holiday as well! Please watch the website for news and check your emails during July.

7. Calendar: please keep an eye on the website for the next meetings, events, news and comment: [www.visionforsidmouth.org](http://www.visionforsidmouth.org)

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Following the AGM, the public meeting discussed and debated what Sustainable Development means to people involved in local government, business, economics, farming, voluntary local and and regional organisations, as well as local college students. The panel comprised:

Cheryl Hiles - Regen SW  
Jill Elson - Councillor, East Devon District Council. Exmouth  
Mabel Cornwell and Chris Turner - Sidmouth College Students  
Keith Bennett - Otter Brewery  
Lynette Talbot - Sidmouth in Bloom

Ruth Hancock - Fresh and Green (vegetables)  
Simon Tytherleigh, Economics - Crediton  
Chris Lorimer - Bickton

A few personal points of interest:

- Plans by Bickton - who aim to be the country's most sustainable college - to run a Fossil Fuel Free Farm at Dartington Farm (find out more during the Science Festival week)
- Ruth Hancock's Fresh n Green organic vegetable business received its planning permission on appeal recently which is great. They have now added ducks and chicken to their farm mix, to help keep the pests away. Find out more about organic vegetable farming for yourself by visiting them on their Open Day on Sunday 7 July 12 noon onwards.
- Cheryl Hiles' talk on how the community engagement efforts of RegenSW are bearing fruit was inspirational and motivational. We all think there is a need to motivate the community to do more for resilience.
- Lynette Talbot's talk on what Sidmouth in Bloom does was a revelation: so much more is now both required and done from the new Beach Garden to vegetable displays to sustainable planting and water conservation. I had no idea...
- Keith Bennett from Otter Brewery described their efforts to run a sustainable business; we think they should be proud of how they do it and how much they do to safeguard and enhance the environment while producing fantastic beer!
- Simon Tytherleigh talked about the causes of and remedies for the current economic doldrums and I think many of us wished for a whole evening to be dedicated to this kind of information and debate.
- Councillor Jill Elson's outline of housing issues was very informative and gave a good overview of how sustainability is increasingly being introduced to the legal framework for new builds. The housing needs in the area continue to be severe, however, and the prices often out of reach for local people in this area, which is a big problem.
- Last but not least, we were fortunate to have two Sidmouth College students with us who outlined what sustainability issues mattered to them. It was a shock to many of us to hear how much it costs a student from Newton Poppleford to travel by bus to Sidmouth college - £6.40 every day, return. £1280 in a school year if schools are open 5 days a week for 40 weeks in a year. Quite a hole in a family's budget!! This resulted in several pensioners expressing the opinion that they would be happy to forego their free bus travel to help young people with their transport needs!! The other major issues were the need for youngsters to move away for better job prospects as well as food miles and desire to buy and eat more locally produced food.

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