

Manifesto

for the **ENVIRONMENT**



Elaine Hayes, Chief Executive of the Sussex Wildlife Trust is appealing to Trust members to challenge all the political parties to place the environment at the heart of their policies.

The Trust is encouraging its membership to ask some pertinent questions about their chosen party's plans in specific areas concerning wildlife, conservation and the environment.

Please take the time to read this Manifesto so you can ask the questions that count.

Time is running out

We are still losing wildlife and our environment is under threat.

This is an issue for all of us – not just conservationists – damage to our environment is damage to ourselves.

We have not learned how to improve our standard of living while at the same time improving our environment. We still try to offset environmental damage against development and economic growth.

It has been estimated that the ecological footprint of the South East is 29 times its physical area. In other words we need an area 29 times the size of the South East to provide the resources we use and to absorb our waste.

We are simply not living within our means – we are not living sustainably.

Sustainability is failing

If we fail to live sustainably then we undermine our ability to survive in the long term. If wildlife is under threat today then we will all be under threat tomorrow.

The concept is simple: if you want to know whether something is sustainable then ask this basic question:

“Can everyone do what I am doing forever?”

If the answer is no then it is not sustainable!

This concept must be grasped by us, by politicians and by prospective parliamentary candidates. Our main problems today are environmental.

Parliamentary candidates should now be expected to come up with clear ideas on how we are to address the situation.

Yet there are many local examples of how we have not grasped the basic concept of living within our environmental means.



otter



Images © David Plummer

Time to deal with **HOUSING**



QUESTIONS

TO ASK PROSPECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES:

- X With fewer people per house, how will you ensure new and current housing achieves both high quality and high density?
- X Environmental gain from house building is poor with inadequate offerings from developers. What will you do to ensure significant gains for habitats and wildlife within new development?
- X With empty houses and derelict industrial estates how will you ensure more efficient use of housing stock?
- X Modern technology massively reduces the ecological footprint of each house. How will you encourage the environmental technology industry into Sussex to create jobs for the future?
- X How will waste be practically eliminated?

The South East Plan will set development levels for the next 20 years and is proposing up to 32,000 houses in the South East per year. This is the equivalent of a town the size of Worthing springing up every 16 months.

In Sussex we are due to get up to 5,600 new homes per year – more than two ‘Worthings’ in the 20 years of the plan.

These plans have been deemed as totally unsustainable by the Government’s own Environmental Audit Committee.

This level of development will result in huge areas of lost countryside, loss of urban greenspace and the resulting damage to wildlife and its habitats. Crowding, congestion, resource depletion, lack of

water, increased flooding risks, to name just a few current concerns, will all get worse.

There appears to be little impetus for better, more efficient, low resource housing. Energy consumption and resource use remain high and household waste continues to increase every year. At the same time we see depopulation in the north with people moving south to find jobs – a policy that produces a north-south divide to the benefit of neither.



grass snake

© Peter Stiles Photography

Time to deal with WATER



QUESTIONS

TO ASK PROSPECTIVE
PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES:

What measures will be brought in to drive more efficient water use in both new and existing buildings?

Development must be conditional on there being water resources available and on the environmental acceptability of building the infrastructure to deliver it. The current view is to build the houses first and then find the water! How will candidates reverse this approach?

Did you know that in 2003 Sussex came close to running out of water? A dry summer and autumn coupled with high demand drained our reservoirs to mud. As water companies sought drought permits and battled to maintain supply, there was little anyone could do other than hope for rain – and thankfully it arrived.

Sustainable water use

Rain at the right time and in the right place is not guaranteed and this most recent drought shows how fragile our resources are.

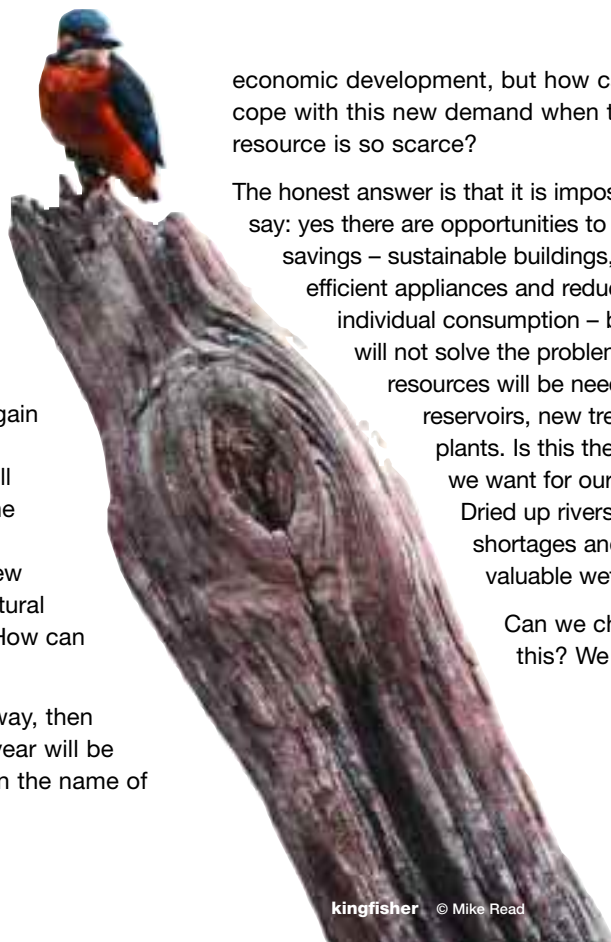
A dry winter in 2004 has again raised the spectre of water shortages and all of this will only become worse with the increasing pressure from consumers. Demand for new housing will stretch this natural resource beyond its limit. How can this be sustainable?

If the government has its way, then 32,000 new houses each year will be forced on the South East in the name of

economic development, but how can we cope with this new demand when the water resource is so scarce?

The honest answer is that it is impossible to say: yes there are opportunities to make savings – sustainable buildings, water efficient appliances and reducing our individual consumption – but this will not solve the problem. New resources will be needed; new reservoirs, new treatment plants. Is this the future we want for our county? Dried up rivers, water shortages and loss of valuable wetlands.

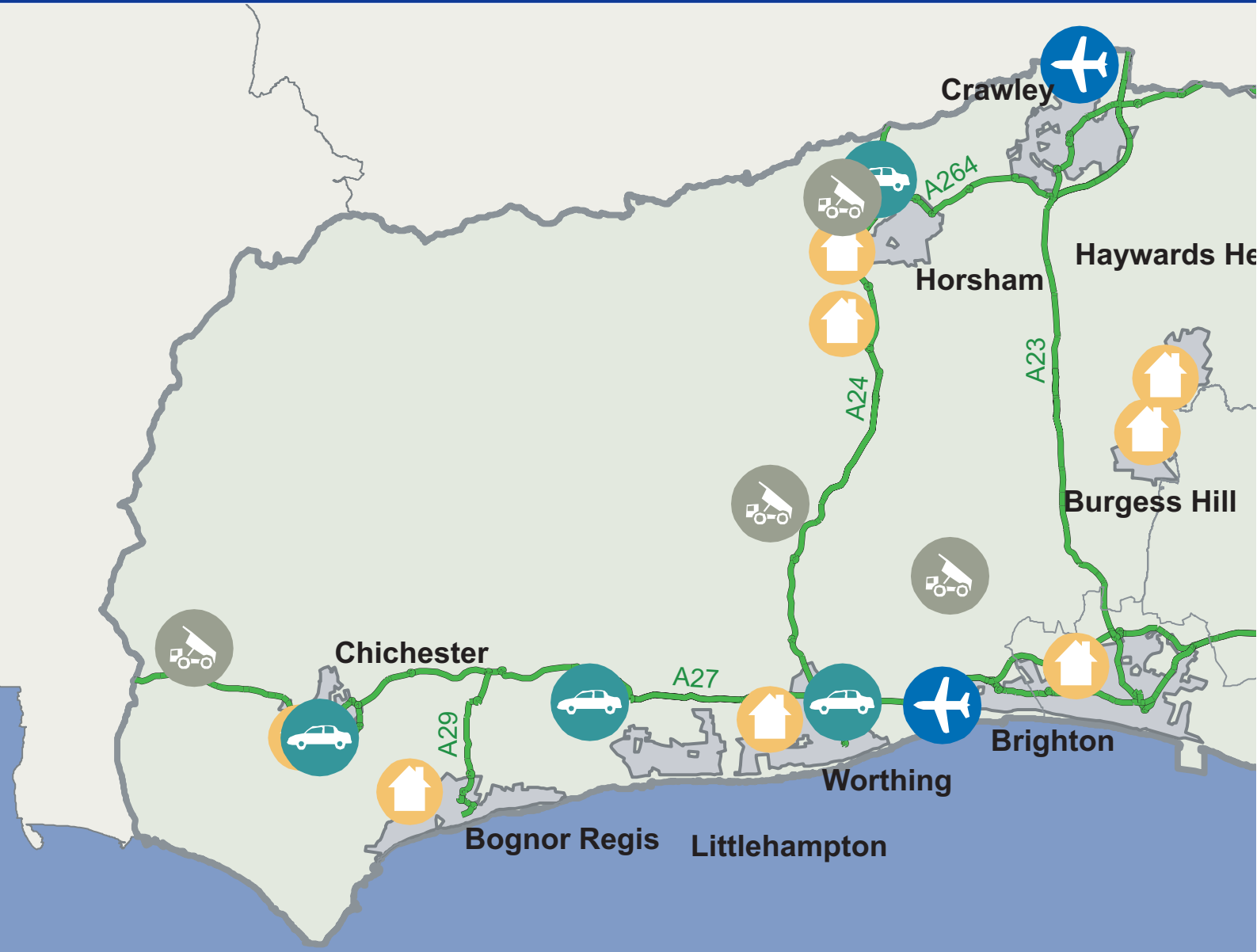
Can we change this? We can try.



water vole © Darin Smith



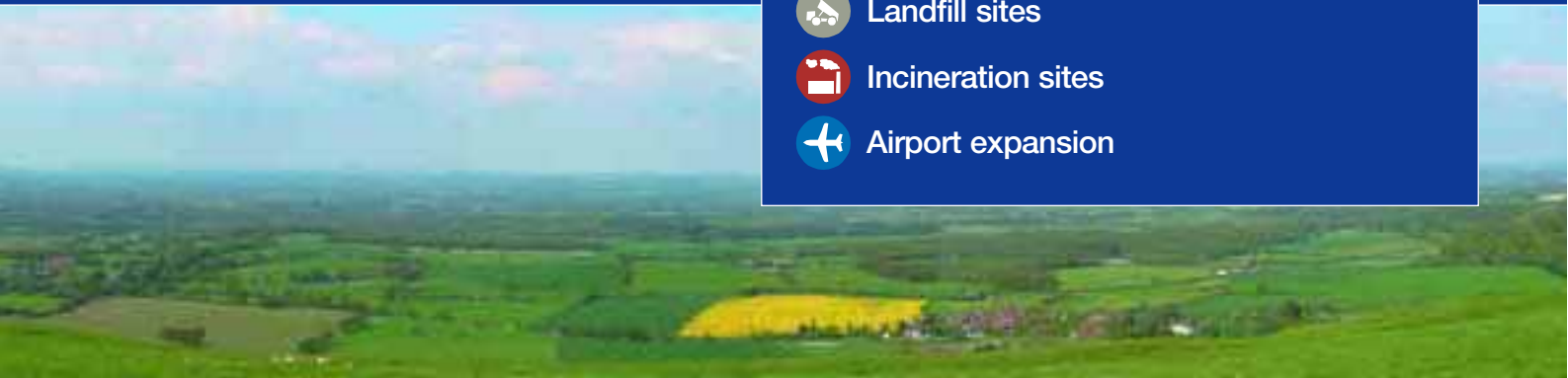
SUSSEX under threat





Proposals for...

-  Major new house building development
-  Road improvements
-  Reservoirs
-  Desalination plant
-  Landfill sites
-  Incineration sites
-  Airport expansion





Images © David Plummer

Time to deal with **ROADS**



Road use continues to grow. This causes direct environmental damage, increasing pollution, increasing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and global warming.

The result is demand for more road building, which drives more car use, more car-dependency, more congestion and so more demands for new roads.

To compound the problem, items have often travelled thousands of miles before reaching the shelf – items such as food for example that used to be produced locally.

The Bexhill-Hastings Link Road is an example. It will increase car dependency and simply move congestion from one place to another. It does not address the basic problem – an overly heavy reliance on car travel in order to deliver our basic needs.

This is happening at a time when space for roads is running out, oil reserves are running low and even the link between roads and the economy has been shown to be dubious. We also worry about the health effects of pollution from roads (e.g. asthma). We know that road travel contributes to CO₂ emissions and global warming that will be devastating for our own and future generations.

For example, if you go shopping you need to go by car – often to an out of town super-market because local shops have closed.

QUESTIONS

TO ASK PROSPECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES:

How do you plan to...

- Reduce our dependency on transport?
- Encourage the provision of goods and services locally?
- Encourage measures to promote walking, cycling, bus and train travel?
- Oppose transport strategies that build car-dependency, add to congestion and add to global warming?



© Simon Booth

hedgehog

Time to deal with AIRPORTS



Travelling by air is one of the most unsustainable things we do. Flying to New York produces about one tonne of CO₂ per passenger and a return trip to Miami produces more CO₂ than a whole year of motoring. Furthermore, taking our tourist spend abroad results in a net loss of around £14bn to the UK economy.

Gatwick Airport is a prime target for expansion, with vast amounts of associated development and house building.

There are also demands to extend the runway at Shoreham Airport to accommodate



jets. Airports, especially those taking jets, sterilise a huge area around them, preventing environmental improvement because of fears about birds and planes colliding.

The expansion of Shoreham Airport will prevent any sustainable management of the lower Adur Valley which is of national importance for the bird life it supports.

If Shoreham needs to expand to survive, and this means the prevention of good environmental management of the Adur Valley, then an airport is no longer appropriate in this part of Sussex. The airport should remain as it is or close, allowing more sustainable businesses to set up on the same footprint as the current airport buildings.

QUESTIONS

TO ASK PROSPECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES:

How will you address the fact that oil, the key resource on which our entire economy rests, is running low?

How do you propose to reduce rising CO₂ production of which air travel is a major contributor?

How will you reduce the demand for air travel?











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Time to **ACT**

IF MY PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE OR MP KNOCKS ON MY DOOR WHAT SHOULD I ASK?

-  How will they satisfy the needs of all people for a decent, high quality environment?
-  How do they plan to develop policies to satisfy energy use while reducing CO₂ emissions and reduce our dependency on oil and other fossil fuels?
-  How will their policies reduce our dependency on cars?
-  How will they reconcile needs for housing whilst protecting and enhancing our natural assets?
-  How will their policies achieve economic growth while improving the environment and steadily reducing the need for natural resources such as water?
-  Will they support a marine bill that aims to protect our over-exploited marine environment?

We can all do 'our bit' in many small ways

-  Take the healthy option and walk or cycle rather than use your car
-  Buy local products from local shops
-  Holiday in the UK
-  Re-use or recycle everything you can
-  Consider using sustainable energy sources such as wood-fuel and solar power
-  Create a wildlife habitat in your garden – gardens cover a larger area in Sussex than nature reserves and small changes will have a massive effect

Fundamentally, we must ensure that we work towards a healthy, habitable and wildlife rich environment.

So far we have failed to turn the corner: economic growth is still 'bought' at a high cost to the environment. This cannot continue. We need a society where our standard of living, quality of life and sense of well being are all in harmony with a long-term sustainable environment.



stag beetle