

## **Informal Meeting Notes Taken at Initial Meeting re Dark Skies Community**

Held at 3.30pm, The Barn, Burgham, Etchingham on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Attended by: David Field, Cllr John Barnes, Robert Banks, Julian Kenny, Mary Barnes & Paulette Barton

**Aim:** to learn about the plans for a Dark Skies Community, the possible involvement of Etchingham Parish Council and whether or not the aims of the Northern Parishes Etchingham Station would be better served within or without the Dark Skies Community plans.

**Robert Banks** gave a brief background to the Etchingham Station project, the difficulties in securing high level expert advice and how the new Local Plan being prepared by Rother District Council for public consultation starting in April might be best utilised to forward and support the project. This leads the Etchingham Station project group (ESPG) to ask: Should this project be handed to another group (such as Dark Skies Community) or should ESGP rely solely on the forthcoming Local Plan.

**David Field** explained that the goal for Dark Skies Community (DSC) is to achieve certification of as many Parishes as possible. The IDA framework is being used towards this aim to preserve and maintain the dark skies we still enjoy to the optimum benefit of all fauna and flora. Aiming for Certification in 2026 and by working with Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans together. The Wealden Local Plan would appear to be approximately a month in advance of RDC.

**Actions moving forward** followed general discussion. The emerging Local Plan should be the focus for ESGP (also those doing similar work regarding British Gypsum). This would not preclude maintaining links with DSC.

An invitation to attend an 'All Parishes Meeting' on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March at Wadhurst Park, registration & coffee at 9.30am, meeting to follow 10 – 12noon was made by David Field and all present said they would like to attend.

This meeting will offer more information including the steps forward for Parishes. Expected to be ESGP to concentrate on the emergent Local Plan as a tool to engage with Network Rail at sufficiently high level to bring results. Etchingham Parish Council to complete work instituting a Working Party to engage with both DSC and ESGP – one of it's first actions being to establish the top 10 light polluters in Etchingham Parish and to establish community engagement which is essential to carry any actions forward.

Paulette Barton