

Alkham Valley Society Update (Dated April 17, 2023)

Harlan Webber, Treasurer at the Annual Alkham Parish Annual Meeting

The AVS was formed in back in 1977 to “support the preservation of the natural environment and unique character of the Alkham Valley.” At last November's AGM, with 54% of members in attendance, we set out steps to evolve for the future. I have only been involved for the last two years, but with committee changes and a boost in membership.... you may already have noticed via the Alkham Newsletter: We have a new web site, more social gatherings, volunteer clean-up events, and so on.... And in most cases, extra community spirit and some fun.

Looking forward we have **the new community led parish plan** which pulls together the views of the local community and their priorities, the AVS sees a real opportunity in assisting with the conservationist portions of the vision and priorities detailed in this plan. Along with the new initiative from Dover District Council detailed in their heritage strategy (in which they stress the importance of local community involvement in the protection of the historic environment), there are significant parallels to the objectives of the Alkham Valley Society as well as a formal framework for many of the topics covered already in the community led parish plan.

The vision therefore of the Alkham Valley Society is to not only maintain its mission but also take the opportunity as “conservationist” ally to:

- **Reuse** (the existing frameworks),
- **Refocus** (its approach to today's reality),
- **Relaunch** and **Reinvigorate** the society based on the community led parish plan, the Highways Improvement Plan, etc.

And all of this effort done within the framework of the Dover District Heritage strategy while evolving the AVS for the future.

To help us do this, we have a model, created by the St Margaret's Bay Conservation Association, a community group put together in March 2021, with the aim of safeguarding and preserving their conservation area. It worked with Dover District Council to actually produce a formal character appraisal and management plan for the area which was officially launched in November 2022.

Just some of the recent milestones for the Alkham Valley Society are:

- launch of its first website, AlkhamVS.org, as portal to communicate and share,
- commissioned a review of its foundation documents including a re-write of its charter,
- AVS formally submitted detailed comments relating to the area for the Dover District Local Plan 2040
- compiled a 15 year on-line library of Alkham Newsletters (now migrated to Alkham.org)

And we continue to act to help the community, with either "just for fun" or "work party" social events:

- organising an AVS Social & Ideas Sharing Event run monthly at the Marquis
- recruiting volunteers for things like Village Hall Carpark Clean-Up
- being creative with the Spring Snow Drop Walk (& Litter-Grab)
- and enjoying the Annual Alkham Valley Christmas Walk.

And as I said, we are really enjoying the diversity of our new members, so all are welcome...