

Helping Hands Newsletter

Spring 2014

Edited by Stephen Hardy

This is our first newsletter which is designed to keep you informed and up to date with what is going on in the fulfilling world of Helping Hands.

History

Following the initiative of Rother Voluntary Action, and in particular the inspiring enterprise of Val Smith, people in Robertsbridge got together, as did groups in other Rother villages such as Bodiam, Netherfield, Sedlescombe, Camber, Playden and the Tilling Green estate in Rye, to set up a community friends help organisation. We called ours Helping Hands, which we think conveys the right messages both to those who want to help and those who benefit from our help.

We had a low key start in October with the launch of the phone number, but had an official launch at Christmas Capers at the beginning of December, since when we have been growing in numbers and experience. So a big thank you to everyone who is now part of this special organisation.

How are we doing?

To help fund our group we have won or been promised funds from Sussex Police, Robertsbridge Village Hall, and the Sussex Community Foundation. Since our 'soft' start in October, in each month we have seen the number of requests for help grow. This has been especially so in the area of lifts required. So if you know anyone who you think can help with lifts, please encourage them to get in touch with Stephen Hardy on 881309.

Note for drivers

The Committee feel that after a 'running-in' (remember when cars had to be run-in!) period, we needed to look again at the policy we have for giving lifts to villagers. So here are a few guidelines for drivers and phone-holders:

- 1 Please do not forget that we are not replacing the local taxi service, so regular trips for supermarket shopping are not part of our mission.
- 2 If you have put your name forward as a driver, it would assist if you would clarify the type of driving you could offer. Given that hospital visits are being requested, please let us know if you are willing to go to the Conquest Hospital – or even further. You do not have to offer to wait until the appointment is over, but if you choose to, of course, that would be appreciated.
- 3 We are getting a number of requests to help people on a regular basis, get to meetings in the village. To cope with this, we are organising a regular rota of people who feel they can help in this area. If you want to be included, please let us know.
- 4 Please remember the basis of the scheme – that you must be paid for your mileage at 45p per mile. To clarify, if you are going from Robertsbridge to the Conquest, that would be 2 x 9 miles = 18 miles @ 45p = £8.10, whether or not you stay to bring the villager back.

Extent of the scheme

Any successful organisation attracts attention and that is true of Helping Hands. We have received calls for help from other villages, but are having to turn them down. Our scope is the communities of Robertsbridge of Salehurst, and below is a map which may help. One good spin off has been that following a call from someone in Ticehurst, an organisation in Ticehurst has been set up to do there exactly what we do for Robertsbridge - so the good work is spreading.

Thank you!

A special thank you is due to Rosemary Clark and her husband Ian, who created the amazing database to cope with matching villager to volunteer and satisfying the requirements of all. So amazing is the computer progress that Ticehurst have just started their own version of Helping Hands using Rosemary's program.

We are growing

If you do know anyone who would like to join our band of volunteers, do encourage them to get in touch with Anne (880832 annecwells@gmail.com) or Sue (881309 cllr.susanprochak@gmail.com). The more, the better.

Google

