

FOldS Annual Review 2025–26

Introduction

This report tells the story of Friends of Old Shoreham - local people, groups and organisations working together for the area.

This year, residents uncovered history, recorded wildlife, made art and music, restored habitats, ran events and gave their time. New projects took root; existing ones grew.



The former boundaries of Old Shoreham parish

SOME HEADLINE FIGURES

- **Over 250** active Friends
- **200–300** adults and young people directly involved in projects and activities
- **Three schools** and **200+** children participating in projects
- **More than seventy** events, workshops and task sessions
- **600+** recorded attendances across project activities
- **1000+** estimated **visitors** at our Midsummer Fair
- **2,500+** recorded volunteer hours
- At least twenty organisations involved in projects, events and partnerships
- A growing archive of maps, recordings, research, interpretation and community knowledge.



How the report is organised

We have grouped activities under the stages they often follow:

- learning about Old Shoreham
- looking after it
- bringing people together
- sharing information
- taking action.

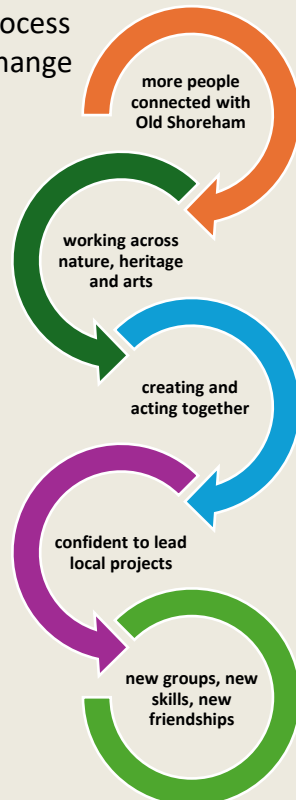
Many projects have moved through several of these stages and continue to develop, leading to new activities, new partnerships and new understanding.

This report brings together reports and stories from FOLDs newsletters, reports to funders and WhatsApp group discussions over the past year. The report does not capture everything that happened. Many contributions are informal and much of the value of community activity lies in conversations, relationships and experiences that are often unrecorded and always hard to measure.



“bringing people together,
sharing information”

A process
of change



Learning about Old Shoreham

Capturing Old Shoreham is an ongoing programme of activity that started as a project supported by the National Trust’s Changing Chalk initiative. It brings together projects exploring the history, ecology and character of the area, including:

- The Community Banners
- Echoes of Old Shoreham soundscape
- The Village Map
- Nature Map (BioMap)
- Heritage Trail

Residents, schools, artists, historians, naturalists and community groups contributed in different ways. Our current exhibition at The Marlipins Museum brings these together and provides a springboard for more.

Alongside this, historical research continued throughout the year. New information was gathered about local buildings, landscapes and people. Species records were added. Oral histories were recorded. Maps were created and updated.

Together, these activities add to the information available about Old Shoreham and create a foundation for future work.

Looking after Old Shoreham

Volunteers have increasingly taken on practical work throughout the year.

Activities included habitat management, biodiversity recording, path maintenance, nature recovery and environmental surveys.

WHAT WE CREATED IN 2025-6

ARTS and MUSIC

- Community Banner
- Village Map
- Echoes of Old Shoreham
- Tree Art Exhibition
- Regular music sessions
- Choir performances

HERITAGE

- Heritage Trail
- Historical research
- Building studies
- Interpretation panels
- Oral histories

NATURE

- Nature Map (BioMap)
- Habitat surveys
- Species records
- Chalk grassland restoration
- Path improvements
- Conservation equipment

COMMUNITY

- Newsletters
- Events and talks
- Surveys
- Forums
- Exhibitions
- Volunteer programmes
- Activities for children

PLUS

- Funding proposals
- Project reports
- Web pages, publicity and information

The largest project is currently restoration work at Mill Hill Local Nature Reserve. Working alongside South Downs National Park Rangers, Butterfly Conservation and other partners, volunteers helped clear invasive scrub, improve access and gather information to support future management.

Paths were reopened, equipment was purchased for long-term use, and additional volunteer groups became involved.

This work will continue through regular volunteer sessions, further habitat management and continued collaboration with conservation partners.

Bringing people together

Throughout the year people came together through walks, talks, workshops, exhibitions, music sessions, conservation tasks and community events.

The Community Banner, Village Map and Echoes projects each brought together people with different interests, experience and abilities.

Regular music sessions continued.

Displays provided opportunities to share work and ideas, leading to a milestone exhibition at the Marlipins Museum.

The Midsummer Fair brought together heritage organisations, environmental groups, artists, musicians, schools, volunteers and community organisations in a single event.

A YEAR IN OLD SHOREHAM

SPRING 2025

- Community Banner workshops continue
- Village Map development begins
- Echoes of Old Shoreham launches
- Heritage research expands
- Monthly music sessions established
- Conservation volunteers fully established

SUMMER 2025

- Midsummer Fair brings together heritage, nature, arts and community groups
- Tree Art Exhibition
- Nine music performances across three venues
- Congress of Choirs
- BioMap recording expands
- Nature recovery sessions
- New partnerships

AUTUMN 2025

- Heritage Open Days
- Community exhibitions
- History and heritage research projects
- Village Map development
- Community forum

Many participants became involved in more than one activity.

Sharing information and ideas

A substantial amount of material was produced during the year, including:

- newsletters
- exhibition panels
- interpretation materials
- historical research
- Heritage Trail content
- maps and surveys
- species records
- sound recordings
- project reports
- consultation responses
- event programmes

Together, these form a growing community archive documenting different aspects of Old Shoreham and its community.

Taking action

Many of the projects described in this report began with a simple question, observation or conversation. These in turn have led to:

research

events

practical work

new partnerships

Others are still developing.

The year has shown that local people are willing to contribute time, skills and knowledge when opportunities arise.

A YEAR IN OLD SHOREHAM

WINTER 2025–26

- Music events and seasonal gatherings
- Exhibition planning
- Heritage Trail development
- Research and interpretation work
- Conservation planning for Mill Hill

SPRING 2026

- Capturing Old Shoreham completed
- Echoes of Old Shoreham premiered
- Community Banner completed
- Village Map completed
- Exhibition installed at Marlipins Museum
- Big Chalk Nature Recovery project delivered

SUMMER 2026

- Capturing Old Shoreham exhibition
- Community participation continues
- Refolding Forum

Working together

During the year Friends of Old Shoreham worked with schools, churches, galleries and museums, artists, environmental organisations, community groups, businesses, local authorities and funders.

Many projects involved several organisations working together.

The list on the following page provides an indication of the range of people and organisations involved.

Looking forward

The Refolding Forum brought the year to a close by looking at what had been achieved, what should continue, what is missing and what needs to change.

Over the last two years, more people and organisations have contributed time, knowledge, skills and resources to a growing range of projects and events. Now we must work out how this network of knowledge, care and activity can be sustained, shared more widely and turned to practical action.



The Village Map - a community project

Annex One

FOLDs Survey – June 2026

This summary brings together the main themes from 50 survey responses, alongside suggestions from the FOLDs Forum on 1 July. Some Forum participants also completed the survey. The responses are thoughtful, constructive and remarkably consistent.

1. FOLDs is valued for its breadth

The strongest interests are:

- Nature and wildlife (38)
- Heritage and local history (38)
- Community events/activities (26)
- Public footpaths and open spaces (26)
- Arts and culture (23)
- Planning and the future (23)

People seem to value the way these activities connect. Few see FOLDs as simply a history, nature or arts group.

2. Strong support for continuing what has begun

Few people suggested that existing activities should stop. Many simply answered “all of it”.

Recurring themes include nature recovery, footpaths and access, local history and heritage, arts and music, exhibitions and interpretation, volunteering and bringing people together. Several responses suggest

that these different strands strengthen one another.

3. Build on what has been achieved

Most suggestions extend existing work rather than propose a new direction. Common themes include:

- more trees, greener verges and green corridors
- walking trails and interpretation
- community meeting places
- stronger involvement in planning and the future
- better communication; wider partnership working
- more involvement of schools, young people and families

Planning and the future of Old Shoreham appears often enough to merit serious consideration as a further strand of work alongside heritage, nature and community activity.

4. Looking after Old Shoreham together

Many comments focus on community rather than individual projects: local people working together, keeping the community connected, creating opportunities to meet, involving more people and caring for Old Shoreham together.

Only 12 respondents selected “volunteering and community stewardship” as a priority, yet many

describe the same idea in their own words: local people understanding, caring for and improving the place where they live.

5. Sustainability is a central question

Several respondents recognise that the current activity depends on a small number of people. Suggestions include sharing responsibility, spreading skills and knowledge, involving more members, attracting new expertise and strengthening fundraising and support.

The Forum reinforced this directly: a few people should not carry all the load.

The question is therefore not only what FOldS should do next, but what can be sustained and by whom.

6. Bring more people into the conversation

People would like wider involvement from schools and young people, families, older and less mobile residents, Buckingham Park residents, people from a wider range of backgrounds, and more local organisations.

Practical barriers also appear: access, mobility, transport, lack of meeting space and the risk of appearing too closely identified with one institution or part of the community.

7. A stronger voice for Old Shoreham

Planning, green infrastructure and the future of Old Shoreham recur throughout the responses. People want practical action as well as plans: greener streets, better public spaces, stronger community influence, more visible delivery and closer working with public bodies and local organisations.

Overall

The survey and Forum together paint a positive but challenging picture.

Members value what has been achieved and want much of it to continue. There is little demand for a wholesale change of direction. **Three themes stand out:**

- **A place to gather.** A hub, noticeboard or regular meeting place beyond pubs and churches.
- **A wider community.** More active involvement from people beyond the current circles.
- **A more sustainable way of working.** Sharing skills and responsibility, using existing community resources and working with other groups.

Perhaps the clearest message is that people value FOldS for bringing together nature, heritage, arts, community and practical action in ways that help people care for Old Shoreham.

Annex Two - Ideas from the Survey and Forum

This annex groups the main constructive suggestions. It excludes “nothing”, “don’t know” and general praise without a specific proposal.

Nature, wildlife and access

- Continue Mill Hill habitat recovery and practical conservation.
- Maintain footpaths and approaches.
- Improve biodiversity in St Nicolas churchyard.
- Plant more street trees and manage verges for wildlife.
- Create green corridors and wild areas.
- Reduce unnecessary mowing and strengthen wildlife-friendly management.
- Make practical greening more visible through public activity.

Heritage and interpretation

- Continue research into local people, places and lesser-known histories.
- Develop military, churchyard and film-making history.
- Maintain and interpret the Dovecote.

- Create walking trails, signs and QR-linked information.
- Develop an accessible, coordinated record of local history.
- Continue exhibitions and make wider use of maps, banners and creative work.

Arts, music and creativity

- Continue music and community arts activity.
- Develop writing, poetry and prose groups.
- Offer outdoor sketching and informal teaching.
- Run monthly creative “taster” sessions.
- Support small stitching, craft and making circles.
- Use creative activity for charities and fundraising.
- Develop an online gallery or writing presence.

The Forum added practical possibilities: facilitators, local creatives and venues are available.

Community life

- Find a regular hub or larger meeting space.
- Create opportunities to meet beyond pubs and churches.

- Establish a community noticeboard.
- Continue walks, talks and drop-in events.
- Develop regular gatherings and possibly a walking group.
- Use existing community venues where possible.

Planning and public space

- Give Old Shoreham a stronger voice in future planning and local government.
- Turn plans and strategies into practical action.
- Improve streets and public spaces for people and nature.
- Address verge parking, traffic speed and obstructed pavements.
- Improve walking, cycling and transport links.
- Strengthen green infrastructure.

Wider participation

- Build stronger links with schools, especially secondary schools.
- Involve more young people, families and young adults.
- Reach older and less mobile residents.
- Engage Buckingham Park and social housing residents.

- Improve access for disabled people and those with hearing or mobility needs.
- Reach people from a wider range of social/cultural backgrounds.
- Work with farmers, community groups, sports users, walkers and river users.

Partnerships, communication and sustainability

- Work more closely with councils, public bodies and local organisations.
- Strengthen links with the Shoreham Society and other established groups.
- Work with existing venues, teachers and practitioners rather than duplicate them.
- Make achievements and opportunities more visible.
- Improve publicity, social media and communication between groups.
- Share leadership and responsibility more widely.
- Spread skills and knowledge so they do not sit with a few people.
- Attract new communications, technology and fundraising skills.
- Use small, lightly supported groups rather than central organisation for every activity.