

**From eye sore to community project?** For the past four years the South Downs Farm area in Lodge Lane has steadily become more and more overgrown and neglected. The vandalism of the caravan site last August completed the dismal picture. The twenty two acres of land, much of it within the South Downs National Park, is owned by the Sussex Lantern (previously Brighton Society for the Blind), The charity planned to build their new headquarters and resource centre there, but is unable to complete the project due to financial difficulties.

Following enquiries by Hassocks Amenity Association member Bob Kenhard, the charity indicated that it would consider disposing of the site for a community-led project. But what kind of project? HAA's first thoughts were that any viable and sustainable project for community benefit should include support for disability groups, have a bias towards education and the needs of youth, promote sustainability issues and act as a gateway to the South Downs National Park. These ideas were put to a packed meeting of HAA members and supporters in the Green Room, Adastra Hall on December 6<sup>th</sup>. They received enthusiastic and overwhelming approval, whilst acknowledging the very real financial and practical difficulties which would inevitably be encountered in achieving these aims. Downlands Community School and Plumpton College had already offered their support, and now the Chairman of Hassocks Parish Council endorsed the venture. Seventeen people, representing a wide range of professions, immediately offered their services, and volunteered to form a working party.

If such a scheme goes ahead, HAA will be happy to be the 'lead body', but could not act alone. We would need to draw on every bit of local expertise and work with every organisation in the area. As a first step, the power point presentation which was used at the meeting can be borrowed by any group who would like to know more and input their ideas. Contact Bob Kenhard on 01273 844920 or email [bob.kenhard@btinternet.com](mailto:bob.kenhard@btinternet.com). It can also be viewed on the [hassocks-online.co.uk](http://hassocks-online.co.uk) website.