



Dear Shedders

Many of you have been asking me what the latest is on Groombridge Men's Shed so I thought I would send out this Christmas Newsletter.

A lot has been happening which I will try to summarise as follows:

**Town Planning** - Our plans for a shed next to Village Institute have been approved by the Withyham Parish Council as our prospective landlord but we now need to get planning permission from Wealden District Council. However, the Parish Council has been unwilling to support our planning application for fear it may prejudice a planning application that it has recently submitted for an improved children's play area. We disagree with the Parish Council's assessment of the situation and discussions with the Parish Council are ongoing. In the meantime, we have submitted a Pre-Application request to Wealden for planning advice on our scheme and we are due to meet with Wealden Planning Officers next month.

**Lease** - We have now made a formal request to Withyham Parish Council to commence the necessary procedures for granting us a lease of the Men's Shed site. The Parish Council has agreed in principle to grant us a 15 year lease (the same as they have on the Recreation ground) but this needs to be legally concluded.

**Site Clearance** - We have also made a request to the Parish Council to allow us to start clearing the scrub and undergrowth on the site in February (to avoid the bird nesting season). This is so that we can make a start on construction in the Summer providing the planning consent and funding comes through.

**Petition** - To support our proposed planning application we have been raising a petition to indicate the level of local support for the project. This petition now has 180 names on it, and rising!

**Funding** - We have several applications in for funding which are looking very hopeful. These are all being progressed by Richard Hunt.

**The Garage** - Our temporary shed at No 4 The Homestead Courseley Road opened on 5 December, between the hours of 9.30 and 12.30 if its not to cold .It will be open every Thursday, If you come make sure you dress according to the weather. It is equipped with a bench and a range of power tools and hand tools as well as tea and coffee if we had a Kettle??



**Activities** - We have had stalls at the Groombridge Church Christmas Fair, Withyham School Christmas fair and Groombridge Playschool Christmas fair. Where we have sold boot jacks and bird boxes that we have made. We have orders for 6 bird boxes and 2 welly stands and an order for 5 bird boxes for Withyham School when funding is sorted. I would like to convey my special thanks to Malcolm Terry, Alan Alwin, Duncan Sanders and Ken Russell for all their effort in making the bird boxes ect.

**Marketing** - We have had a Men's Shed banner made and a number of 'business cards'. I must say that lots of people have been impressed with the banner and the business cards; they have worked wonders in getting us known.

**Finances** - Donations from members raised £1,600 towards our planning and other costs. We have spent some £360 on insurance, the banner, the business cards and other miscellaneous minor expenses plus £70 for the Planning Pre-Application fee, leaving a balance of £1,170. The Full Planning Application fee will be £400 and also we may well need to produce specialists reports, in particular a tree survey to show that the three main mature trees will not be effected by our proposals. It is likely that the balance of our funds will not cover all of this so at some point in the New Year we may need to call for additional funds.

As you can see, there has been a great deal of activity behind the scenes and I hope you are as excited by it as I am.

I would like to thank each and every fellow Shedder, particularly the Committee, for all your support and hard work in 2019. We have made a lot of progress together and with a fair wind I think 2020 could be a landmark year for Groombridge Men's Shed .

With best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Jim Litchfield  
Chairman