

Staplehurst Parish Council



Annual Report
2011 - 2012

Staplehurst Parish Council

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Chairman's Annual Report 2011-2012

This has been an active year for our Parish. The May 2011 elections resulted in a new Council being installed. This Council endorsed the policy of taking a proactive approach to issues and services affecting the well being of the community; and this is reflected in the services provided.

Current services include the provision of street lighting, ownership of Jubilee and Surrenden Fields (the latter on a long lease) and the management of the public toilets. The latter was taken over from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and is now well established. New services include the introduction of our own street cleaning service and the installation of state of the art security cameras. We feel that residents should feel secure when visiting our community and these cameras have already had a positive impact on reducing anti-social behaviour. In addition we have funded the implementation of a new drainage system at Jubilee Field. This should enable more effective usage of this important public facility.

The Council continues to make a significant contribution to borough wide issues affecting parishes. We have played an active role in the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) and have taken a leading role in promoting the Parishes' interests in the concurrent functions debate with MBC. The concurrent functions grant covers work undertaken by Parishes which in non-parished areas is undertaken by MBC. We recognise that MBC needs to find savings; but this is a major source of funding for Parishes.

In last year's report I mentioned the work of the Rural Settlement Group. This group is made up of both residents and councillors and continues to make an important contribution towards developing a Neighbourhood Plan. I should like to thank John Kelly for his work in chairing this group.

As many will know we have received applications from two major supermarkets to develop and install a new supermarket in Lodge Road/Staplehurst Station area. Staplehurst Parish Council organised and chaired two public meetings and these were very well attended. In each case Staplehurst Parish Council held Council Meetings to discuss and make recommendations in respect of these planning applications. I must emphasise that these meetings were concerned only with planning issues and the recommendations made to MBC Planning Committee were based solely on this criteria.

We have a Finance Group which makes recommendations to the Council in respect of the Council's budget and precept. The cost of maintaining services and the introduction of new services have increased costs. This has put demands on our financial reserves which will need to be increased to meet audit recommendations. The increase in the Parish Precept may seem high in

Chairman's Annual Report 2011-2012

percentage terms, but it is starting out from a relatively low base and in reality amounts to less than ten pence per week for a Band D property. In comparison with other parishes in the Maidstone Borough Staplehurst remains very much in the middle of the precept range for a Band D dwelling.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank our MP Helen Grant and County and Borough Councillor Eric Hotson and Borough Councillor Richard Lusty for their support. Joan Buller and husband Malcolm continue to do sterling work with Speed Watch which is an important tool in regulating speeding through the village; their work is much appreciated. We also very much appreciate the work of the Police and in particular the role played by our PCSO Pete Gardner. Having a PCSO dedicated to Staplehurst is vital to our community and his contribution is also much appreciated. As many will know our Community Warden Chris Lomax has moved on during the year to a new post. Chris was extremely well known in the village and I should like to take this opportunity to thank him for all his hard work. His position has been taken by Mira Martin who is very experienced in this field and we are delighted she is continuing with this important work.

We welcomed Councillor Sam Lain who was co-opted on to the Parish Council after the May election. I believe Sam is the youngest Councillor in the Borough and quite possibly in the County; this should add to the wide range of experience and expertise which the Council can call on. Councillors Jack Davidson and Steve Smith have left this year and in their place we have welcomed Adele Sharp and Anne Gosling. Sue Bassett who has been Clerk to the Council for over 16 years will be relinquishing her post shortly. Sue has been the linchpin of our operation and will be greatly missed. However, I am delighted to note that she will be returning to take up the position of Responsible Finance Officer (RFO). This is an important position and I am sure Sue's knowledge and experience will be invaluable. I should also like to thank Sue for her support during the year. In her place I am delighted to welcome Mick Westwood who will be taking over Sue's role as the Parish Clerk. Mick is very experienced and has very good knowledge of Staplehurst; we look forward to working with him during the coming year. Finally, my particular thanks go to my two Vice-Chairmen Councillor Tom Burnham and Councillor Paul Kelly for their support and advice and to Councillor Paul Butcher who has successfully taken over as Chairman of our Planning Committee.

In order further to develop our communication process we have recently set up a monthly surgery at the library. We need to hear from you.

John Perry

Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31st March 2012

INCOME	2011/2012
Parish Precept	82,500.00
MBC Concurrent Functions Grant	20,720.00
Other Project Grants	9,445.40
<i>(Public Toilets £2.5K, CCTV £4K, TRAMP £1,059.40, Bus Shelters £1,786, Photo-competition prize £100)</i>	
Donations to Uprockin 2011 & 2012	3,131.00
Sales MBC Garden sacks	61.25
Interest on investments	51.97
Christmas Lights Project donations	220.00
Village Centre Contingency	175.30
Rural Warden Winter Warmer Project	1,000.00
	<hr/>
	£117,304.92
 EXPENDITURE	
General Administration	60,075.59
<i>(Staff, Parish Office utilities, equipment, insurance, subscriptions, training, meeting & travel expenses, publicity & website costs.)</i>	
Capital Projects <i>(Polecat CCTV Cameras 11/12)</i>	13,558.46
Donations <i>(09/10 to BTCV, CAB, CCDAS Sobell, RBL, Kenward Trust, KAA, Kent Youth)</i>	1,450.00
Parish Street Lighting, Street Furniture, CCTV and repairs	6,129.88
Caretaker wages, equipment & maintenance	2,267.66
Playscheme	590.21
Jubilee Sports Field Maintenance & Field Drainage Project	16,162.69
Youth Club <i>(Maintenance of site, KCC Lease/Purchase & Youth Leader)</i>	5,468.50
Surrenden Playing Field & Trees	3,258.08
Churchyard maintenance	5,562.56
Christmas Light Project	2,556.64
Staplehurst Partnership/Rural Settlement Group	225.00
Public Convenience Maintenance	3,891.12
Street Sweeping Staplehurst	8,820.00
Skater's Festival 2011	1,720.16
	<hr/>
	£131,736.55
 Balance of Expenditure over Income	-14,431.63
Balance brought forward from previous year	114,094.04
	<hr/>
	£99,662.41

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31st March 2012

LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

CURRENT ASSETS

VAT Recoverable	1,135.94	
Cash In Hand	100,686.41	
		<hr/>
		£101,822.35

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Creditors	(2,159.94)	
		<hr/>
		(£2,159.94)
		<u>£99,662.41</u>

REPRESENTED BY:

GENERAL FUND		23,222.54
Ongoing Project Budgets:-		
Allotment land purchase fund	20,000.00	
Surrenden Playing Field pathway	14,200.00	
Youth Forum/Detached Project	6,250.00	
Staplehurst Rural Settlement	3,525.00	
Public Toilets Project	10,660.00	
Donations towards 2012 Projects	1,000.00	
		<hr/>
		£55,635.00

RESERVES

Village Centre Contingency	16,804.87	
Rural Warden Winter Fund	1,000.00	
		<hr/>
		17,804.87
		<u>£99,662.41</u>

Supporting Statement to the accounts

LONG TERM ASSETS

Assets have been treated as an expense item at the time of purchase for accounting purposes. As at 31.03.2012 the following assets were held:-

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Jubilee Field	Nil
Land north east of Bell Lane, Staplehurst	Nil
Lease purchase of Youth Club land from KCC	7,200

BUILDINGS

Jubilee Pavilion (insured replacement value)	500,000
Surrenden Pavilion (insured replacement value)	6,300

OTHER FIXED ASSETS

As listed on Fixed Asset Register 31.03.2012 held at The Parish Office	173,290
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The preceding two statements are summaries. Copies of the full Statement of Accounts are available from the Parish Office or can be downloaded from the Parish Council Website at www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk Staplehurst Parish Council accounts are audited quarterly by Iden Business Services and the Annual Audit Return is made to the Audit commission. The requisite Public Notice is given for electors to inspect the accounts annually.

Parish Councillors

John Perry - Chairman

I was honoured to be reappointed Chairman in May 2011. As Chairman I have up to now been an ex-officio member of all committees and groups. I have been particularly involved in the planning committee and the alcohol control zone, finance, strategy and policy and rural settlement groups. I am also one of the Parish Council representatives on the Maidstone Area Committee of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). I am closely involved with a number of other Parish facilities and projects and I am a trustee of Jubilee Field, the Youth Club and the Village Centre. Staplehurst Parish Council continues to work closely with our Borough and County Councillors and our MP.



Tom Burnham - Vice Chairman

The past year has been a busy one with additional meetings over planning and other issues and the recruitment of a new Parish Clerk. I was pleased to be able to deputise for the Chairman on several occasions, including the annual Remembrance Day service and the installation of the new Rector. The Community Clean-Up in March was a great success and shows the enthusiasm of many residents for improving our local environment.

Paul Kelly - Vice Chairman

I moved to Staplehurst 15 years ago, 2 years after relocating my specialist printing business in the village at the Lodge Road industrial estate. My idea of flower tubs at Bell Lane has been successful and I hope we can soon have more around the village. I've worked hard to ensure the Bell Lane toilets remain open and well-maintained. I am in my fourth term as a Parish Councillor and a member of the Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group which considers future development.



Paul Butcher - Planning Committee Chairman

Having been a Parish Councillor for a number of years I do my best for our lovely rural village, improving facilities whenever I can. I find the role takes time and effort to help shape the future for our village and spend the funds we have available for the best projects. The Youth Club is going well and the 'Uprockin' event in June has good support and funding from our local businesses. I am proud to be part of your council.

Margaret Ashby

I choose an interesting time to be in my first year on the Parish Council and in particular the Planning Committee. I did say in my item for the web site I was looking forward to future challenges and this year has certainly provided them. In the current political climate things can only get even more interesting as functions get devolved down. I am looking forward to a further challenging year.



Parish Councillors



Joan Buller

As an experienced councillor of 29 years I am involved with the Planning Committee, Publicity and Website, Rural Settlement, Staplehurst Emergency Help Team, Playscheme, Allotment, Speed Watch and VEG groups. I edit the Annual Report and quarterly Parish Update and organise their distribution.

I represent the council on Neighbourhood Watch, Community Hub and the McCabe Day Centre. I enjoy walking, talking and listening to parishioners. I would love Staplehurst to be litter-free so I have helped run the Community Clean-Up.

Simon Green

I joined the Parish Council in May 2011 and have lived in Staplehurst for 28 years. My main interests on the Council are planning, both current applications and longer term strategy and in helping on financial and management aspects. I am Business Manager of a small national charity and have managed other charities and businesses and believe the Council should take a professional approach to its work on behalf of our community.



Anne Gosling

As a very new member, my main task has been to listen and learn, especially about the concerns of people I meet in and around the village. I have lived in Staplehurst for five years. Before that, I worked with the UN in Vienna. My interests are animal care, the countryside, drama and music. What I really hate is the litter, not just in the village, but in the

surrounding lanes – so much seems like wanton vandalism.

John Kelly

Leading the work of the Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group, I have overseen developments within the Borough's draft Core Strategy and drafted an initial Neighbourhood Plan for Staplehurst. I have worked to improve the Village Website and facilitated the Photograph of the Year Competition 2011, which proved to be a huge success. I have been an active member of the Planning Committee and Allotments. I have strived to enhance communication with residents, whilst pushing for transparency in council practice.

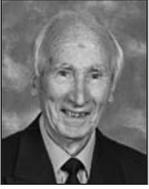


Sam Lain

I have lived in the village since I was born and am actively involved with many local groups, including Staplehurst Drama Society and Staplehurst Youth Club. I am the owner and Chief Executive of Lain and Rose Community Interest Company. I work full-time at K College in Tonbridge within the Executive Office supporting the Principal and the Senior Post

Holders. I enjoy working with my fellow councillors to ensure Staplehurst has great facilities and is a brilliant place to live for all.

Parish Councillors



Barrett Manning

I have been an active member of the Allotment Group and represent the Parish Council on the Diamond Jubilee Committee. I serve on the Transport Group that has improved the No 5 Arriva Sunday service between Staplehurst and Hawkhurst, and the Headcorn Aerodrome Committee.

John Reardon

I have, in the last year, become the chair of the Publicity & Web Site Group. I am continuing to be liaison for Highways and Staplehurst School. Whilst my shift work stops me attending some council meetings I do have more time to spend on day to day issues that come up. More recently I have been managing the tree surgery works within Surrenden Playing Field and will continue to manage similar projects.

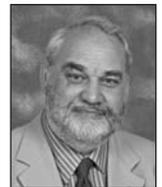


Adele Sharp

I was born in Staplehurst and work at the local Secondary School, Angley, teaching English and Media Studies. I have been involved with the committees that look at the maintenance of Surrenden Playing Field as well as meetings with the Jubilee committee that are organising events for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. I believe that it is important to ensure that our community's best interests are kept in mind when facing the future, whether about public toilets or education and housing plans.

Rory Silkin

I work on the Strategy & Policy Group and represent the Council on the Patients' Participation Group at the Health Centre. I am associated with the Kent Association of Local Authorities Area Committee and I have the honour of chairing the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team which this year achieved recognition by MBC and KCC as a partner in emergency.



Peter Spearink

I am a member of the Planning Committee, the Policy Group and Staplehurst Emergency Help Team. I have attended and reported on numerous conferences and meetings on behalf of the Parish. I continue to represent the parish at the Local Transport Forum in Hawkhurst for better transport facilities in rural areas, recently successful in re-introducing the full Sunday service on route 5. I represent SPC in contacts with Kent Fire and Rescue Service. I am Chairman of the popular Maidstone Borough Older Persons' Forum.

Parish Clerk's Annual Report 2011-2012

The past year has been as busy as ever in the Parish Office to support the continuing progress, new activities and responsibilities undertaken by the Council. A large amount of work has been achieved by the Rural Settlement Group, which is monitoring closely the MBC Core Strategy and potential future development in the parish. Pre-application and public meetings were held with potential developers who were left in no doubt regarding the infrastructure needs of the parish. Well-attended public meetings in December 2011 and March 2012 raised many issues around either or both Sainsbury and Tesco building a large supermarket in the parish.

Close partnership-working with the police resulted in the purchase by the Parish of mobile CCTV cameras. These were monitored initially by MBC (but now by Medway) and have already provided the police with useful data to enable arrests. A new street sweeping contract enhances the service provided by MBC. Tiling work at the Bell Lane Toilets has improved the ambience of this building. The Publicity & Website group has continued to upgrade the website and ran the first, and successful, photographic competition. Four editions of the Village Update were drawn up by Councillor Joan Buller as Editor and distributed by volunteers.

Financial support for the employment of a professional Youth Worker has ensured the Youth Club has been opened regularly on Tuesday evenings. The first Staplehurst Skateboard Competition was unfortunately rained off, but will hopefully be bigger, better and drier on 23rd June 2012 in partnership with MBC. Summer Playscheme 2011 was a great success, hopefully to be repeated in 2012. Christmas Light motifs were displayed during December along the High Street and Station Road. Parish salt bin provision has been welcomed, as has the addition of sides to four bus passenger shelters. Much work has also gone into planning the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Parish Celebration by Councillors and local residents. A village clean up was undertaken in March under the auspices of MBC, spearheaded by Councillors Tom Burnham and Joan Buller.

The Staplehurst Emergency Help Team, supported by the Parish Council and local residents has now published the Staplehurst Emergency Plan. Training and practice sessions mean that a community shelter could now be set up very quickly if needed in an emergency. The Caretaker's regular litter-picking around the parish and maintenance of Surrenden and Jubilee Playing Fields were undertaken. This work (and more!) was organised and documented in the Parish Office, by Councillors, the Assistant Clerk, Deborah Jenkins and myself.

After having been in post for over 16 years, I took the decision in January to tender my resignation as Parish Clerk. This was a difficult decision but the need for a better work/life balance took precedence over all other issues. That said, I will remain employed for 2 days per week from May 2012 as the Council's Responsible Finance Officer. Mick Westwood has been appointed as the new Clerk and will work 4 days per week. I am happy to support him in his new role and hope he will gain as much satisfaction as I have, in helping the Council to be active and well-respected for what it achieves. Working closely with a number of wonderful Councillors is quite humbling. Councillors give selflessly of their time and experience for the benefit of the parish, without payment. I just wish a greater number of residents who moan about the Parish Council would take a closer interest in the issues and appreciate Councillors who do such good work for the benefit of Staplehurst.

Parish Council Activity Reports

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee plays a very important role within our council, discussing every application for building within the parish. We try to be very even-handed, looking at the facts before us and using our local knowledge, debating within the planning guidelines. Our considered recommendations are forwarded with comments to Maidstone Borough Council which makes the final decisions. As these decisions can be life-changing for residents it is very important to be fair and to get it right.

Two major supermarkets have submitted plans this year to build near Station Approach which have been a major challenge to the council and our community. A whole evening was dedicated to each application, giving the applicants and the public time to have their say and ask questions before the whole council considered the supermarket schemes because of the importance of these developments to our rural parish.

Between April 1st 2011 and March 31st 2012 the Planning Committee has considered:

- 106 Planning Applications
- 6 Tree works
- 3 Appeals

Planning Committee members read all the necessary paperwork and visit the sites whenever possible.

Alcohol Control Zone

A group was set up to review the consumption of alcohol in public places in the Parish, particularly by under-age drinkers and associated anti-social behaviour. A number of meetings have been held with MBC, Trading Standards, the Police Community Support Officer and the Community Warden. We came to a conclusion that the most effective solution would be to install state of the art security cameras in key areas of the parish. As a starting point we selected the Parade and Jubilee Field. The latter requires planning permission and as a temporary measure we have installed one of the cameras in Market Street. This has been so successful that we are considering acquiring a third camera.

Allotments Group

The group has been continually exploring possible sites for a community allotment, and has been in negotiation with three landowners over the past ten months without a positive outcome. In the meantime the search continues. If you know of possible areas please contact the Parish Clerk.

Parish Council Activity Reports

Finance Group

The Finance Group makes recommendations to Council on expenditure and prepares the annual budget and precept requirement. It reviews the Asset Register, Risk Management and Financial Regulations, together with other reviews, to ensure best practice and careful control of public money. Regular reports are received from the Internal Auditor as part of the internal control process. A review of the internal audit function and its effectiveness takes place annually.

Hawkhurst Transport Forum

The local transport forum which meets in Hawkhurst has been running for about four years achieving several successes in improving bus services from Maidstone to Hastings. Due to the lobbying by the group Arriva has reinstated a full Sunday service from Maidstone to Sandhurst for a six month trial so it is a case of use it or lose it.

Jubilee Field

This is owned by the Parish Council and is an important community facility. It has a number of football pitches, a skate park, a modern sports pavilion and a separate pavilion for the Girl Guides. The Jubilee Field Management Group (JFMG) manages these facilities and the SPC is represented on this Group. In conjunction with the JFMG the SPC has funded the improvements to the drainage of Jubilee Field. It has also contributed to the funding of the UpRockin skateboarding festival to be held at the skatepark.

Playscheme

Play Place, working with MBC and Staplehurst PC, again ran our summer playscheme. Gail and her team successfully organised this using the excellent school facilities. Councillors visited and saw for themselves happy children safely having fun. Play Place will be working with us again in summer 2012.

Publicity & Website Group

This group continues to manage and improve the website in order to make local information more accessible to the public. The Forum has been particularly active in the last twelve months thanks to planning applications. This Group is also responsible for producing four Village Updates and the Annual Report.

Parish Council Activity Reports

Queen's Jubilee Celebrations

Parish Councillors have been working with the Jubilee Group to organise a range of activities for the Queen's Jubilee. Several successful fund-raising events have taken place, enabling a full programme for all members of our community. We look forward to a brilliant and memorable few days.

Rural Settlement Group

This active group of residents and councillors has met throughout the year on a monthly basis. We have attended conferences to obtain a wider perspective on Localism. The Group has continued to monitor developments within the Borough's draft Core Strategy and key policies. The Group has responded to important consultations on the draft Core Strategy and the draft National Planning Policy Framework. The Group prepared a Development Contributions Document which was forwarded to MBC. We have worked on drafting a Neighbourhood Plan for Staplehurst which is aimed at shaping the future of the Village.

Speed Watch

Major reorganisation now means that every motorist speeding in Staplehurst will have their details recorded on the countywide police database, amalgamating records from every scheme throughout Kent. Staplehurst volunteers work hard and more training is available for new recruits to make our roads safer.

Staplehurst Emergency Help Team (SEHT)

This year the SEHT volunteers completed their initial training with a realistic exercise last October. The Team is now fully operational and has been accepted as part of the Kent and Maidstone Areas Emergency teams, by both Maidstone Borough Council and KCC; the first to do so in the Maidstone area! We welcome all new volunteers.



Strategy and Policy Group

This was established to review current Council policies, practices and procedures and where appropriate instigate new ones. In addition it reviews and makes recommendations to the Council in respect of medium and long term strategies.

Parish Council Activity Reports

Surrenden Field

A small group of Councillors are working on options for improving the Surrenden Field for all users. The first steps are likely to be better drainage on the south side, near the school, and an all-weather footpath linking Surrenden Road and Bower Walk to Nicholson Walk. Suggestions for further improvements will be gratefully received.

Village Enhancement Group (VEG)



Two more bus shelters have new sides which are much appreciated by local residents. We have also fitted notice boards in two more and these are well used to give local information.

The Bell Lane toilets have been further upgraded by retiling them and they will be repainted soon.

Eight salt bins have been located around the parish, proving invaluable in the winter's snow and ice. This is an ongoing project.

Four more planters will soon be installed in A229 locations and in the Marden Road following the colourful displays of the two already in Bell Lane.



We now employ a local mini-scarab sweeper. We hope you have seen it in action and appreciate the improvements to our streets.

The Staplehurst Community Clean-up of the built-up area was very well supported and over one hundred bags of rubbish were removed from our streets. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped. It was a great community effort!

Youth Club

The council is still funding the employment of our Youth Worker, Mike King, and the club continues to thrive under his leadership. There have been many improvements to the Youth Club facilities this year.

Council Members

at 31st March 2012

This report is a review of the Council year 2011 - 2012. Details of current Councillors at the time this Report is issued can be found on the Staplehurst Parish Council website, in the Summer 2012 Village Update or from the Parish Office.

Parish Council Chairman – John Perry
Parish Council Vice Chairman – Tom Burnham
Parish Council Vice Chairman – Paul Kelly
Margaret Ashby
Joan Buller
Paul Butcher
Anne Gosling
Simon Green
John Kelly
Sam Lain
Barrett Manning
John Reardon
Adele Sharp
Rory Silkin
Peter Spearink

Parish Clerk SUSAN BASSETT 01580 891761
Parish Clerk mobile for council emergency contact 07539 692588
Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Assistant to Parish Clerk DEBORAH JENKINS 01580 891761
Email: assistantclerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Police Community Support Officer PETE GARDNER 101
Email: peter.gardner@kent.pnn.police.uk

KCC Community Warden MIRA MARTIN 07969584179
E-mail: mira.martin@kent.gov.uk

Member of Parliament HELEN GRANT 01622 769898
Email: helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk

Kent County Councillor and
Maidstone Borough Councillor ERIC HOTSON 01580 892312
Email: erichotson@maidstone.gov.uk

Maidstone Borough Councillor RICHARD LUSTY 01580 891353
Email: richardlusty@maidstone.gov.uk

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Staplehurst, Tonbridge, Kent. TN12 0BJ
Parish Office Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk
Parish Website: www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Staplehurst Parish Office is open to the public from
0900-1300 Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays
and on Thursdays by appointment

Parish Councillors now hold a (second Saturday) monthly
surgery at the Library when local residents can come and
speak to them about parish affairs. This is in addition to the
last Saturday surgeries held by Borough Councillor Lusty.

Planning application papers and other Council documents can be
viewed at the Parish Office on request; most are also now
available online.

Front cover photograph - 'Staplehurst Sign and Cottages'
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www.kentscape.co.uk

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