



Tony Hills KCC member for the Romney Marsh Division Report February 2025

Local Democracy

As I write this, we still have no news from the government

Kent will be made to adopt a strategic mayoral authority, fast or slow, we have no choice. We are facing a complete change of how we do things in this County. I'm hoping the new system will bring more resources and funding to the County. The English devolution 'white paper' that the government produced just before Christmas talks about a new framework. As I see it, this will be the biggest set of changes that Kent will have seen in over fifty years. It will affect all levels of local government, and all residents.

Local Issues

Transport and bus services. I have been told that Kent has received a bit more funding from government as part of our 'Bus back better' scheme. I hope the Marsh will get its fair share. The Marsh Bee bus service has got off to a fast start with 223 trips completed in the first couple of months. The Romney Marsh Community Hub is to be congratulated, they are doing a great job.

Ground Water

This is the long term threat to the Marsh. I'm know I keep going on about this, but this doesn't make it less real. I'm pushing ahead at Kent to present to the Southern Region Flood and Coast Committee (which I sit on for Kent) in the spring a bid to get serious funding to research how we can protect the Marsh into the next century.

Sea water quality

I'm continuing talks with Environment Agency to see how we can improve sea water quality for the north end of Hythe Bay. The EA are presenting water quality management at the next meeting of the Kent Flood and Water Management Committee on the 5th of February (which I chair) to find out of more about the process of measuring water quality.

South Kent Energy Park

I had a meeting with 'Low Carbon' managers last week to discuss concerns including water management with the proposed solar farm. No one in his right mind would be happy to have a massive solar farm dumped in the middle of our unique Romney Marsh. But I believe after years of research the government will decide to proceed under 'National Critical Infrastructure'. My focus is to make sure that my residents (particularly Old Romney) are not left massively out of pocket. Where is the gain for the Marsh. I would like to see some benefit to our residents. For years I have been trying to get finance for a Hammonds Corner roundabout on the A259 and a spur road from there to the Mountfield industrial estate to relieve New Romney High Street and the Marsh Academy from the heavy industrial traffic. I have a plan, and they are talking to me.

Dungeness Power Station

Since the closure of 'B' station was announced, Kent has actively campaigned to build a new station alongside 'B'. The new generation of SMR's (Small Modular Nuclear Reactors) would be a solution, With the support of Folkestone & Hythe District Council. EDF have the space, we have the grid connections and highly trained work force. Who will be needing jobs once the station is defueled. The Kent working party for Dungeness, as your local member I have played a large part in this. We have had meetings with Ministers (previous government) and with the current government departments. Also, with various SMR manufacturers, all we need is the approval of Dungeness by the government to set the wheels rolling.

Climate Change

I serve on the Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) for Kent, they control our coastline from high tide to six miles out (from 6 to 12 miles is controlled by the MMO). Last week at Chelmsford (regional IFCA meeting) I had a great presentation from Dr Sarah Coulthard of Newcastle University concerning 'Securing Sustainable Inshore Fisheries in the UK. What has this to do with Climate Change, in my opinion we are seeing species change due to warming seas. How does this affect us? If Fishermen can't catch, fishermen won't go, and they will sell up. This loss of a way of life which has been a historic part of the Marsh is fading away. No boats, no, fish no tourism. In my view this way of life needs supporting.

Tony

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