



Tony Hills
KCC Member for
Romney Marsh
Division
Report for March 2025

Local Democracy

My update, as I understand it... the government decided not to put Kent in the fast lane as far as a 'Strategic Mayoral Authority' is concerned...but the drive towards 'Unitary authorities' is going full speed ahead. Our leader at Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Jim Martin has by the 21st of March to respond to government with his views on the make up of a unitary council from Folkestone & Hythe DC, with fully worked up and agreed proposals by the 28th of November this year going to government. I believe this is going to have major ramifications for Town and Parish Councils. The gap between a large unitary council and local communities will be to great. We are going to need something set up to work locally with the councils of Romney Marsh and the proposed unitary.

Local bus services

Kent has received a bit more funding from government as part of our 'Bus back better' scheme. This has under pinned our current Stagecoach services. As I said 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, Marsh Bee dial-a-ride service is to be congratulated, they are doing a great job, and I'm trying my best at County to get them more support. In these challenging times we have to fight for our divisions, more than ever the Romney Marsh needs a strong voice at County charity starts at home.



Sea water quality

I have a meeting planned next week with the Environment Agency to discuss water quality, how it is measured and when tested, I'm not satisfied with the answers I have had to date. As I understand the process only 'bathing beaches' are tested and only in the summer season (March to October). So how about other beaches. Fresh water, rivers, lakes, canals, how do we build a picture of the health of our waters in our County. As the chairman of Kent's Flood & water management committee I want to have answers. If a beach is recommended 'no bathing' what is the real risk to public health?

Locally we have three beaches in my division that have had problems with water quality. We need to get a grip on what's happening in the southern end of Hythe Bay. Find the problems where they exist and be transparent about the health risks as well as what needs to be done to fix them.

South Kent Energy Park

As I said last month. 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 we are where we are, it is fundamentally unfair to have solar park after solar park covering the Marsh.

Our unique environment won from the sea is unique and deserves some level of protection. I will be meeting with 'Lo Carbon' the company planning this solar farm to discuss water management. Residents of Old Romney must be supported; the Marsh has to gain some benefit from this plan.

Dungeness Power Station

I have seen the impressive amount of shingle that EDF have been piling up to defend the nuclear stations. Kent is still pushing hard to bring in 'Small Modular Nuclear Reactors'. I believe we have the support of our local MPs to protect local jobs. We are setting up more site meetings with the government in the late spring.



Roads and Potholes

With the sheer number of salting runs being undertaken by Kent due to the very cold nights this has not helped with the increasing number of potholes on the Marsh. I'm hoping we get more funding to sought them out as the weather improves. I'm pushing for a speed reduction on the A259, 60 to 40mph to help with the 'Visitor Centre' with the plans to reopen late spring. Kent needs to do its bit to make that entrance less of a challenge.

Some good news

As spring starts, and plenty of bad news on the airways I saw this press release sent out by Folkestone & Hythe District Council asking for applications. Let's see what we can get for the Romney Marsh.

APPLY NOW FOR A GREEN GRANT

Applications are invited for a share of new funding to support sustainability and carbon reducing projects in the Folkestone & Hythe district.

The Green Grant Scheme aims to help community groups, charities, town and parish councils, schools and small businesses to bring forward ways of increasing climate resilience, reduce carbon footprints and enhance green spaces and local wildlife.

There are four categories offering grants of up to £1,000, £10,000, £15,000 and £20,000 and the closing date for applications is 21 April 2025. Applications can be made through the Folkestone Works website where there is more information about the categories and examples of the type of projects that may be eligible for funding.

On Tuesday 11 March at 7pm there will be an online session to help potential applicants who have questions about the scheme. This can be joined via Zoom.

There is no need to book a place and, if required, the meeting ID is 876 6273 4963 and passcode 360625.

On Tuesday 1 April from 6pm there will be an in-person forum at The Workshop in Tontine Street, Folkestone. Information about the application process will be available and there will be the opportunity to talk to those who have received funding in a previous business focussed scheme.

Cllr Stephen Scoffham, Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Biodiversity, said: "We know there are already organisations very keen to get involved in this £250,000 scheme and I am delighted we're now ready to go.

"Events have been organised for anyone who is interested to ask questions, and I very much hope we will soon be receiving applications for a wide range of innovative projects which will all help protect the environment in different ways."

Those unable to attend the information events can send questions about the grant scheme to Green.Grants@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Tony

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