

**Newington and Peene Annual Parish Meeting
Held on 13th May 2024m at 7pm held in Georges Barn**

Present: John Neale – Chairman
Sarah Wright
Bob Laslett
David Godfrey – Folkestone & Hythe District Council
James Butcher – Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Parishioners: Mrs S Coleman – Newington & District Gardening Association
Mr V Coleman – Newington & District Gardening Association
Greta Rajadhyaksha – Friends of St. Nicholas Church Newington
Samual Cox

Clerk: Mrs Jean Gilham

Apologies: None received

Reports were received from:

**Parish Council Chairman:
Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024**

We have had a few changes this year, Jean replaced Jonathan as Clerk and both Cleo and Kevin resigned. Bob has joined us as a Parish Councillor.

Kevin has been part of the Parish Council for many years and has devoted much of his time to projects to improve Newington Village. He has now moved from the village and I would personally like to put it on record how much he will be missed.

The Kissing Gates were installed around Newington Village as planned along with the planting of new trees on the playing field. We have a new maintenance contract awarded to Envisage for three years ending June 2027.

Our telephone box library in Newington Village goes from strength to strength with much interest and book donations. Thank you, Bob and Jill, for looking after this, it is much appreciated by all. We hope to paint the exterior this year funds permitting.

We have finally received funds from Elek Link. We will consider projects to use this money on, in the future.

Work on the new houses and apartments in Peene have now been completed and all are occupied. I have spoken to some residents. They are pleased to be part of the community and very happy with their accommodation. I understand a local family has purchased the plot for a self-build and I will hope to welcome them to the village community.

The Parish Council bought a poppy wreath which was laid during the remembrance ceremony at the War Memorial in Newington Village which was very well attended. I laid a wreath on behalf of all the residents at Bargrove.

Pot holes continue to be a problem and the roads are in a terrible state in our Parish.

At Bargrove/Blackhouse Hill to Hythe, the road is in a terrible state. It is a busy road with a 40 mile per hour speed limit and it is very difficult to avoid the deep potholes which is causing damage to vehicles. Some of the pot holes have been marked for

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repair a few weeks ago and have not yet been repaired. The same thing happened last year but temporary repairs are not the answer and the whole road needs looking at and relayed properly to meet the traffic demand.

In the village pot holes have got worse because of the continual tankers removing the waste from overflowing drains. Whilst they have taken responsibility to repair the potholes, they will not be in a position to do this until the problems are rectified with the drains. Our Parish Council along with KCC are trying to get this rectified.

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT POTHoles CONTINUE TO BE REPORTED ON THE
KCC COUNCIL WEBSITE.**

In March I attended the Folkestone & Hythe District Council meeting on the EU Entry and Exit System (ESS) which is due to start in October 2024. This will require all non-EU passengers to give biometrics (facial and fingerprints) at the Euro Tunnel border which will be held for 3 years. Euro Tunnel assured the meeting that they had put mitigations in place to counter any delays.

As Chairman, I would like to thank David Godfrey Folkestone & Hythe District Councillor and Susan Carey Kent County Councillor for their continued support. I would also like to thank Gary Harrison our Community Warden. However, I fear that a number of Community Warden jobs will be cut soon and we may lose Gary in the near future in a round of redundancies. We do not have a police presence and this would mean we do not have community warden coverage either.

I would also like to thank fellow Parish Councillors for all their help and support over the last year and look forward to continuing as Chairman.

Councillor John Neale MBE

Kent County Council Report

Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024

Your County Council continues to offer over 300 services ranging from the recycling and disposal of waste collected by the district councils in Kent, to care for the elderly, the disabled, child protection, fostering and adoption, lifelong care for those with Learning Disability, Trading Standards, the Coroners' Service, registration of births and deaths, libraries, streetlights, roads, public rights of way, provision of school transport and more.

Demand for social care continues to rise and costs for some types of care particularly for children have risen well above inflation. Savings have been needed across all areas of the council's work and services redesigned to minimise cost. We are reducing the number of buildings we use especially those that are particularly costly to run such as County Hall in Maidstone and more services are being delivered online or through outreach. Whilst there is a mandatory system for sharing the care of adult asylum seekers with other local authorities, there is no such scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (under 18-year-olds). UASC are increasingly trafficked across the Channel from France to Kent and the numbers are greater than any one council can reasonably be expected to absorb. Other local authorities are understandably reluctant to take on care for more young people and after years of wrangling about introducing a mandatory scheme to share the burden, KCC has taken the Government

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to court. The courts have so far ruled that KCC is responsible for all UASC arriving in Kent and that we must give the same level of care to them as to children already resident here. The courts have also ruled that the voluntary transfer scheme to other local authorities is not working and that the Government must take action. This is a serious situation and further court rulings are expected.

Support continues for Housing for Ukraine scheme and should you have a spare room or home you can offer for at least 6 months and you would like to help then please register via the KCC website. Work also continues with refugees who have come to Kent on Government schemes from Syria, Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

The Government has continued to fund various schemes to help the most vulnerable with financial assistance such as the Household Support Fund administered by KCC. We have also devolved some of our government funding to the district to distribute. KCC is also offering hardware, social tariffs and training in IT for those on low incomes.

Video equipment, sensors, alarms, memory aids, smart speakers and GPS devices as well as adaptations to people's homes are being used to help the disabled and frail elderly live more independent lives. Helping people live independently in their own homes not only reduces the cost of care but also offers a better quality of life. In 2020 the number of people aged 85 and over in the UK was 1.7 million (2.5% of our population) and this is projected to rise to 3.1 million (4.3% of the population) by 2045. Much effort is being directed at helping people live healthier lives so that they do not spend their final years in poor health. More walking, less obesity and ceasing smoking are all key to this and KCC's Public Health team has many initiatives with the NHS to promote healthy choices.

This year has seen a rise in the number of applicants allocated their first preference primary school for their child. 15,198 (91.26%) received their first-choice school and 16,436 (98.7%) received one of their three named schools. For secondary schools there was also an increase in the percentage of pupils offered a place at their first preference school to 78.6% (14,571). With 96% (17,790) offered one of their four preferences.

KCC's award winning NO Use Empty scheme is now supported by all 12 district councils in Kent and is the longest running empty property initiative in the country. To date it has returned 8,815 empty homes into use through loans to bring the properties back into a habitable condition. The Loan Fund operates on a recyclable basis with rapid loans funding more renovations. The loans go to renovate houses that banks and building societies think too risky to fund but NUE has a good repayment record. Empty homes blight a street so returning them to use benefits both the families who move in but the whole area. On average there are 60-70 NUE schemes under way at any one time in Kent.

KCC has launched a fourth round of Solar Together. This is a collective buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. The scheme is open to Kent homeowners and small businesses and several hundred households have already registered their interest. When we know how many people have registered their interest a reverse price auction (lowest bidder wins) is held with pre-vetted installers. Individual quotes are then sent to those who have registered. Individuals benefit from the 'bulk buying'

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price and the installers have a guaranteed pipeline of work which benefits them. There's a link for registration via the KCC website and the district councils in Kent are promoting the scheme.

KCC is taking the lead role in the creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway. Called 'Making Space for Nature' the strategy will identify the areas that are important for nature and how they can be made bigger, more biodiverse and linked with other areas. The identified areas will have status in the planning system and help direct where development does and doesn't happen. The strategy will also seek to identify how best to compensate landowners to make space for nature over the long term. There's a dedicated website and opportunities to be involved over the next 18 months in shaping the strategy.

KCC has launched a Biodiversity Net Gain Site Register for Kent. Since 12th February all developments with over ten houses are required to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity. The aim is for this improvement to be delivered on the site itself but if this is impractical then the site register will provide a pipeline of suitable land to deliver this commitment.

Do please keep reporting potholes preferably on the KCC website or to 03000 41 81 81. Nearly 60,000 potholes were repaired on Kent's roads between April and December 2023 and the work continues. The Government has allocated Kent £135m of additional funding to Kent over the next 11 years for road repairs. £8.6m of this will be spent between March and October of this year. This is on top of the £50m in KCC's own road and footway maintenance budget. We need more but the extra funding is welcome.

KCC is concerned at the potential impact of the Entry Exit System (ESS) which, after several postponements, may be introduced by the EU from 6th October 2024. There are concerns that the biometric checks involved may cause delays. It should be possible for much of these checks to be done remotely but current regulations do not allow for this. KCC has been leading a campaign to get the Government to make the necessary changes and also provide more facilities for freight vehicles. Both the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel have been making investments to help speed the process but there is more that the Government can do to help and KCC continues to make this case.

Another campaign KCC is involved in is to get Eurostar to reinstate stops at Ebbsfleet and Ashford. A survey of Kent businesses saw overwhelming support for this and there is an online petition which now has over 53,000 signatures. Do please add your name if you too want our Kent services resumed.

Susan Carey Member, Elham Valley

**North Downs East District Ward
Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024**

In May 2023 the District Council administration changed with a new coalition of Green Party and Liberal Democrat taking control

During the past year work has continued on several significant projects already underway under the previous Conservative Administration including but not limited to

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the Otterpool Garden Town, Folkestone Regeneration plans, Ship Street and Highview housing projects.

A Consultation is planned on the future use of Princes Parade in Hythe and the Corporate Plan to 2030 will be reviewed and updated during 2024.

I am honoured to have served the Community as a District Councillor for the past 17 years and will have served 20 years at the end of the current term. Until the changes of Administration in May 2023 I held the Portfolio for housing and oversaw the successful bringing back in house of the Councils housing stock.

The new administration has appointed new Portfolio holders under the existing Cabinet system but has committed to change to a Committee System in 2025. I personally do not feel the expense incurred in bringing this change will be beneficial to the residents of the district and feel that it may hamper decision making, however this is the democratic wish of the majority of Councillors therefore I will endeavour to play my part under the new arrangements.

I continue to support the Romney Marsh area as vice chair of the Dungeness Site Stakeholder group as having grown up on the Marsh I fully understand the significant positive impact that the Nuclear Industry has had for the Marsh and indeed the wider District. Decommissioning and dismantling of the A station is well underway as is defueling of the B station. Although no longer generating the Site will provide employment for a number of years whilst decommissioning. But we must look to the future and I 100 % support our local MPs in lobbying for the future use of the site for New Nuclear in the form of Small Modular Reactors as Nuclear is without doubt a sustainable low carbon solution for electricity generation.

At a recent meeting of the FHDC overview and Scrutiny meeting Members were able to express concerns about the effects of the new EU entry exit port controls due to come into effect later this year. John Neale, chair of Newington and Chris Johnson Mayor of Hawkinge TC made the concerns of local residents abundantly clear. The Port of Dover and Channel Tunnel described the considerable work they have done and to mitigate delays however there remain serious reservations about the readiness of other stakeholders.

I wish to add my congratulations to Mathew Scott having been re-elected as Kent Crime and Police Commissioner for a further term.

I'll finish with a reminder that District Councillors have a Ward Budget allowance of £3,000 each for support local projects. The 24/25 budget will be made available later in May with application forms

[Ward budget scheme | Folkestone & Hythe District Council \(folkestone-hythe.gov.uk\)](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)
Cllr David Godfrey – FHDC and Hawkinge Town

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Newington Village Hall

Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024

The Village Hall is still suffering from the loss of lettings revenue following the adverse effect of the Covid episode.

With expenditure for year 2023 at £21,078 and lettings income at £14,983 there is a significant shortfall. This deficit is presently covered from the hall's limited reserves.

The biggest cost for the hall is electricity which is mainly the heating. An expenditure during the year of £4,350 was made for the installation of new remote controllable electric heaters to try to reduce the electricity costs.

Letting bookings are relatively stable but not increasing quickly enough to cover the deficit. Booking rates have been increased and a close watch is being kept on the financials to see if the deficit can be reduced, otherwise the hall would have to close as it cannot continue to run at a deficit.

The main issues for the hall at the moment are the roof and toilets which are in need of repair (roof) and renewal (toilets), both these items will require funding this year.

The committee is actively looking at potential fund-raising events in order to cover the deficit but this is only a short-term solution as regular lettings really need to be at a level in order to provide sufficient income so the hall can operate on a financially sustainable basis.

It should be noted that the annual village fete used to contribute circa £5,000 annually to the hall's finances. This was stopped because of the new power cable from the channel tunnel to Sellindge (Nat Grid Substation) crossed the playing field which meant the fete could not be held, although this was only meant to be for one year because of delays it ended up being two years and the fete has not since resumed.

The committee are also looking at other ways to increase lettings revenue including the installation of internet at the village hall which has proved successful in attracting businesses to use village halls for meetings at other village halls locally.

The village hall has some distinct advantages over other local village halls in that it has excellent parking facilities and is remote enough from housing not to cause disturbances. This was an advantage previously for parties, celebrations, weddings, wake's, etc. and is something that needs to be promoted again through local media.

It may only be a relatively small amount but moving the Parish Council meetings to the village hall would provide extra letting revenue, "every little helps".

Miranda Hayes – Treasurer, Newington Village Hall

Friends of St. Nicholas Church Newington

Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024

As some of the Parish Committee have changed it is nice to be able to explain again what the Friends of the Church are about.

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We are a secular organisation concerned with the maintenance of our lovely Grade 11* listed Norman Church and its bells, organ etc. We are not concerned with the running of the services although most of our committee are also members of the PCC. Our very small congregation of mostly elderly people cannot possibly fund the maintenance of the church themselves.

We have now been operating since 2007 and in that time have managed to keep the church in good order. We have carried out many repairs, built a toilet and kitchen facility, repaired the boundary walls, and repainted the inside of the church. We have just been able to upgrade the sound system in the church. With the improvements we have made we had hoped our church would be used more by the local people to meet up. This really hasn't happened although several local people support us not wanting our lovely church to go.

The work we have done to the church has been funded by our events we run every year, our membership scheme, some generous donations and may grants. As you will know applying for grants is a very time-consuming business.

We have the same problems as I know you do with the Village Hall Committee. We are getting long in the tooth and there are no younger people willing to come forward to take on any responsibility. I think this is a problem all round.

If anyone who doesn't already belong and would like to join our Membership scheme, I have some membership forms here. A single membership is £10 per year or £15 for a joint membership. We send out our programme of events to all the members each year. I have some copies of this year's events list here if you would like one.

On a different subject, you are kind enough to let us use the Parish noticeboards to publicise our fund-raising events. Your minutes take up a lot of space and it is difficult to find room for other notices, particularly in the Peene notice board. Would it be possible to print your Minutes on A5 size paper for the noticeboards?

Thanks for listening. Would anybody like to ask any questions?

**Greta Rajadhyaksha – Trustee and Treasurer
The Friends of St. Nicholas Church Newington**

**Newington & District Gardeners Association
Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024**

I am very pleased to report that Newington & District Gardeners Association remains strong today in 2024.

During 2023 we had a full set of Monthly meetings mainly on a gardening theme. We thought we had made an error in October when our speaker started his talk with a murder mystery for us to try and solve. However, all ended on a Garden Theme when he matched his findings with gardeners feed Blood Fish and Bonemeal! We had 3 successful shows and a garden visit all keeping the members interested.

One of the forgotten details for NDGA is our Charity work, I was pleased at the end of 2023 to present Kent Surry Sussex Air Ambulance with a very respectable cheque.

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We started 2024 in February with our AGM, I unfortunately had to advise the members I would be standing down as Chairman, we wait for a new volunteer but with a strong committee, things will be ok.

We held our Annual Spring show in April and we are looking forward to the return of our Annual Summer show in July and Annual Autumn show in September. We have a garden visit to Postling and a coach trip RHS Hyde Hall booked along with another full monthly programme of meetings.

Should anyone have interest in learning more about NDGA just contact our secretary, Denise. Thank you.

Vic Coleman for Newington & District Gardeners Association

**A new Chair for the District Council
Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024**

At the F&HDC AGM, Councillor Anita Jones was elected as the new Chair for the District Council. Anita as just had a very successful term as Mayor of Hythe, so brings some great experience to being the public face of the Council and overseeing our meetings. In her opening speech Anita set out the priorities she wants to focus on:

- The Council has voted to explore options for a youth council or forum, and Anita wants to make sure this gets off the ground in her term as Chair, and she will be working with young people to plant over 400 tree whips across the district.
- Although Council meetings are open to the public (and are webcast) Anita wants to make it asier for everyone to get along and see the Council in action, and has asked staff to look at the feasibility of meetings being held in locations around the district.
- Anita is going to be fundraising for the Rainbow Centre which supports people across the district through food banks, the mobile pantry, and the winter shelter, and she's asked councillors to make a food donation each time they come to a Full Council meeting.

Spotlight on Waste

Each year F&HDC collects over 40,000 tonnes of waste from across the district – about the same weight as a cross-channel ferry. That means each of us is throwing away just under a kilogram of stuff every day – the weight of a bag of sugar. The Council has a target of recycling 50% (by weight) of the waste that's been collected, and the most recent figure is 47% - the rest is incinerated to generate energy.

Collecting all that rubbish is a major operation: Veolia staff empty about 200,000 household bins and about 1,100 litter and dog poo bins. And they're out and about 6am to 10pm seven days a week to keep on top of the litter accumulating in bins around the district. In popular places at peak times (like The Leas in Folkestone during the summer) that can mean emptying bins every two to three hours.

The Council tracks missed bin collections, to make sure they're meeting the target of missing no more than 50 collections in every 100,000. Over the last financial year that target has been met, with the number of missed collections reducing each quarter.

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Unfortunately, not all rubbish ends up in bins, and Veolia teams have a regular programme of litter picks and street sweeping – and many communities join in with volunteer litter picks. F&HDC are responsible for cleaning 880km of roads, footpaths and bridleways – about the distance from Folkestone to Dundee.

The Council regularly checks a sample of streets across the district – in the most recent survey 378 checks were carried out (including in Peene). The aim is that 95% of street surveyed should be clear of litter, and F&HDC are currently meeting or exceeding that target.

North Down Forum

Report for the Newington Annual Parish Meeting 2024

The aim of the North Downs Forum is to connect individuals and organisations across the North Downs wards, and to give a stronger voice to rural and farming communities at the District Council. At our last meeting we had good conversations with Jim Martin, Leader of F&HDC about Otterpool and planning more generally, and with people from Folkestone Music Town about music workshops they plan to run in various North Downs locations.

At our next meeting we will be focusing on biodiversity and land use, and will be getting updates on:

- The biodiversity motion that Stephen Scoffham will be taking to the F&HDC Full Council meeting in June.
- A new partnership project bringing the communities that live along the Nailbourne together to protect, restore and celebrate this pure chalk stream, one of the rarest natural habitats in the world.
- A farmer's perspective on food production and land use policy.
- The new Kent School of Food at Bodsham.

James Butcher North Downs East Ward

Reports were also sought from:

Kent Community Warden – no report received

Kent Police (Local Policing North Downs East Wards) – no report received

Elham Valley Line Trust – no report received.

Matters of interest or concern to the Parish of Newington

Vic Coleman asked if the Parish Council could help with the condition of the roads some of which appear to be subsiding in particular Danton Lane was mentioned.

Date of the next Newington Annual Parish Meeting will be 12th May 2025

Time and venue to be decided.