

APRIL 2021



TENTERDEN
TOWN COUNCIL

GOING GREEN

Meeting our environmental and
climate responsibilities

COVID-19

Helping the economy to recover

MAJOR PROJECTS

The facts and figures

Spring NEWSLETTER



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ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

The importance of protecting Tenterden and its surroundings, our wider responsibilities to the environment, and a growing realisation that everyone has a part to play in ensuring that the town continues to earn its hard-won reputation as 'The Jewel in the Weald', is reflected in this edition of the Town Council's Newsletter.

This is to keep you up-to-date on what work is being done at every level, from the huge effort that has gone into framing a Neighbourhood Plan policy and the work of our climate change committee to inviting residents to come along and collect some free compost for their gardens.

Thanks to Tenterden Camera Club and Cllr Sue Ferguson for providing images



CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE GETS TO WORK

The Town Council has committed to achieving carbon-neutrality by 2030, and has set up a Climate Change Committee to set out the ways in which the town can achieve this.

Under serious consideration are plans to install solar panels on council-owned buildings, a new recycling strategy and the wider installation of electric vehicle charging points.

Its aim is to collaborate with experts and residents as widely as possible and draw on the expertise provided by our partners at Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council given the scale and urgency of this task.

The work of the town's Planning, Neighbourhood Plan and Wildlife committees are of direct relevance to achieving sustainability and environmental protection, so their involvement is key to success.

Climate Change committee chairman Cllr Roger Quinton (right) says its work "is as important as anything we can possibly do". The committee recognises that the urgency and complexity of climate challenges we all face can seem overwhelming, and it is important that projects are achievable, affordable and have the biggest local impact.

Committee member Cllr Kate Walder says: "We do not have the luxury of time, so it is critical that we are not a talking shop, producing endless papers for discussion that never produce results.

"Nor do we have all the answers, and the technology and funding picture is changing at a rapid pace. We must collaborate with others, especially residents, so they have a real voice. There are three resident members on the committee already, and we welcome everyone to come along and join in

and share their views".

Committee meetings so far have been very lively and constructive, with expert guest speakers giving presentations on recycling and sustainable transport, focusing on what can be done in Tenterden.

Items on the Agenda for 2021 include.....

- Inviting three specialist companies to tender for the installation of solar panels on council-owned properties – potentially on the roof of the planned new extension to the Town Hall; the toilet block in Station Road; the new maintenance facility at St Michael's Recreation Ground; and the former maintenance building, toilets, Bowls Club, and the new Youth Hub on Tenterden Recreation Ground.
- Currently, major events on Tenterden Recreation Ground all require electricity, and it is believed that the effect of supplying that power from solar panels could save the council thousands of pounds a year.
- Working on a plan to make an expanded area behind the Leisure Centre an important recycling centre for the town. In May, residents will be invited to come along and collect free compost for their gardens – Ashford Borough Council will be supplying 15 tonnes.
- Setting up a Youth Climate Change Panel with local schools.
- A Sustainable Transport conference, hosted by the Civil Society on February 25, with speakers from the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership, the '20 is Plenty' speeding campaign and the President of the Towards Zero Foundation.





TENTERDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



TENTERDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REPORT

The Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) has been from the outset, a community-driven initiative, supported by Tenterden Town Council (TTC). It grew from a recognition and love of Tenterden's rich unique heritage, landscape, and beauty and from a deep-felt determination from residents to have a real voice in shaping its future.

Putting together a neighbourhood plan to inform and shape planning decisions and policy in Tenterden emerged as a priority in 2018 and the work has carried on ever since.

Planning is a complex subject – the jargon is technical and sometimes, can feel incomprehensible. Decisions made by planning authorities can seem arbitrary and unfair. To create a neighbourhood plan we have had to learn this language, immerse ourselves in these technicalities and go out and gather the material needed to underpin it.

That said, we want to write a plan that will be accessible and easily understood by everybody, while also robust enough to pass independent examination. Working with our volunteers in the working groups and on the TNP Steering Committee has been a real privilege and we owe them a huge amount of thanks.

Evidence has been gathered on Local Green Spaces; Biodiversity and Wildlife; Landscape; Heritage; Routeways; the Local Economy and Sports

and Recreational Spaces. We are also focusing on providing guidelines for the housing site off Smallhythe Road already allocated for housing development so that it fits in well with this part of Tenterden.

This work is summarised in our presentation to TTC's Planning Committee and full Town Council, available on our website.

We are now reaching a very important milestone – we will be shortly taking the draft plan out for formal public consultation, asking residents, businesses, statutory bodies and other interested parties for their comments and views. This is called the Pre-Submission Consultation also known as the "Regulation 14" consultation.

There are some more steps first– Ashford Borough Council's planning team are reviewing the emerging draft plan to ensure it meets the necessary environmental screening requirements and TTC will be asked to formally approve taking out the draft plan to public consultation.

And inevitably, Covid-19 has had a big impact. Our previous, well-attended public meetings will have to be replaced by Zoom meetings and presentations, hosted by TTC and available on social media and our website. But we will also be using the more 'traditional' methods to reach you all such as leaflet drops so everyone can take part.

For more information:

Website <https://tenterdenneighbourhoodplan.org/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/keepingtenterdengreen/>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/TenterdenGreen>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/tenterdengreenspace/>

PRAISE FOR LIMES LAND FOOTPATH CAMPAIGNERS

The Town Council has paid tribute to local residents whose 18-month campaign to secure recognition of a much-used walking route on Limes Land has resulted in Kent County Council implementing its formal adoption as an official public footpath.

The campaign, started by local resident Samantha Reed, meant proving that the one-and-a-half kilometre path had been regularly used for at least 20 years; securing written testimonies from 19 supporters; liaising regularly with KCC; and earning endorsement from the Town Council and the Limes Land Protection Group.

The path is on a site which has been the subject of a planning application for 250 homes by Wates builders, which has been turned down by both Tenterden Town Council and Ashford Borough Council.

Says Sam: "People feel strongly that if this path was lost due to development, then it would be gone forever, along with its precious flora and fauna. Without the important evidence provided by residents, which was challenged unsuccessfully by Wates, the application would not have reached this stage.

"A survey was also conducted which proved that during lockdown this footpath was used by up to 300 people a day. It is a priceless, long-term asset to the town, particularly valuable for mental health and wellbeing during lockdown".

Says Cllr John Crawford, chairman of the council's planning committee: "This has been a terrific effort by Sam and her colleagues, which has taken months of hard work to come to fruition.

"For generations, Limes Land has been used by families, walkers, joggers and ramblers enjoying the tranquility and beauty of the countryside."

• *As this Newsletter was going to press, an objection to the adoption of the footpath had been lodged, meaning the matter will now be reviewed by the Secretary of State.*

BRINGING OUR TOWN HALL INTO THE 'GREEN' ERA

Built into the plans for refurbishing and improving the Town Hall are some key features to make the 18th century building as environmentally friendly as possible.

An air source heat-pump system, vastly more efficient in both energy and cost terms, will replace the ancient boiler; modern standards of insulation are being installed throughout the building; and LED lighting will replace old-style bulbs and strip-lights.

One of the most significant measures was introduced 18 months ago, when the Town Council went paperless.

In common with other local authorities, the council generated thousands of pages of agendas, minutes and reports, not to mention the ink used to print them.

All councillors and Town Hall staff were issued with iPads, meaning they can now access every document they need for meetings through the council's Modern.gov system.



'WILDLIFE WATCH' & POND-DIPPING PLATFORM FOR KILN FIELD NATURE RESERVE

Two cameras to track and record wild animal activity and a pond-dipping platform are among the latest developments at Kiln Field, which is being funded by the council as a nature reserve and wildlife habitat for the town.

It marks a further investment of more than £6,500 in Kiln Field, and includes buying bat boxes, owl boxes and 10 new alder trees.

These are the latest improvements to Kiln Field, which has been created to provide a beautiful, sustainable and accessible natural resource for the whole community.

The council's maintenance team are working with volunteers on an action plan which has been provided by Kent Wildlife Trust. The scheme features 'bug hotels', a pond, and areas for wildflowers and grasses.

- Have you visited Kiln Field yet? From the town centre, just head for Shrubcote, take the first turning right, marked 'Leading to Southgate Road, Kiln Field and Abbott Way'. At the bottom of the road, turn right into Abbott Way, and follow it to Kiln Field.

BID TO PROTECT ANCIENT OAK

The Town Council has moved to protect an oak tree, believed to be more than 300 years old, on the buffer zone between the Kiln Field nature reserve and the 100-home estate being built by developers Redrow.

As the issue is being contested, the Town Council has met with Redrow and Ashford Borough Council, although no agreement has yet been reached.

The council has commissioned a report from Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) to report on the flora and fauna in the buffer zone, which supports a variety of wildlife including dormice, harvest mice and reptiles.

In their report, the KWT surveyor concludes: 'This tree is of sufficient interest to be brought to the attention of the Local Authority tree officer, as due to its potential age and local cultural significance, it may merit the issuing of a Tree Protection Order.'

WATCH OUT – THERE'S A HEDGEHOG ABOUT!

Spring is on the way, and it's time for some of our much-loved spiky friends to emerge from hibernation – hedgehogs.

The Kiln Field and Wildlife sub-committee have noted that the Millennium Gardens are a favourite habitat for hedgehogs, and some have even been spotted in the High Street on the hunt for food.

Nationally, these much-loved mammals are in trouble, with the UK population possibly falling by two-thirds in the last 25 years alone.

Kent Wildlife Trust would like to know more about the town's hedgehog population, while committee member Jean Sugden says that there are ways to protect our prickly friends.

She suggests that residents cut holes the size of tea plates in the bottom of their garden fences to create Hedgehog Highways, encouraging the creatures to roam from garden to garden without venturing onto roads.

It's also important to put down the right food for them – the Woodland Trust, which says that hedgehogs now fare better in towns rather than the countryside, suggests meat-based cat or dog food, cat biscuits or specially-made hedgehog food. And don't forget a saucer of water.





SUMMER FLOWER DISPLAYS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN EVER

Plans have been announced to make Tenterden High Street more beautiful than ever this summer.

Flower-filled, three-tier planters will be sited near the corner of Recreation Ground Road, at the road junction outside the William Caxton pub, and at Ox Green at St Michael's, in addition to 20 hanging baskets and troughs the length and breadth of the High Street.

Says Deputy Town Clerk Claire Gilbert: "We're looking forward to creating a lovely display which hopefully will lift everyone's spirits after an incredibly tough time".

RAISING THE ROOF

Tenterden Leisure Centre will see some improvements this year, with a new roof and pool air-handling unit planned.

The new roof will be clad in composite aluminium panels, and offer a much-improved level of insulation, reducing the building's carbon footprint and associated running costs. The works also include the renewal of guttering, flashing, fascias and soffits.

The old roof covering will be removed externally, leaving the timber deck in place beneath. This will enable the centre and its facilities to remain open throughout, with only minimal impact to members.

Work is likely to begin late March and last four to five months. In order to maintain the safety of pedestrians it will be necessary to close the footpath to the left of the main entrance for part of the works.

The roofing renewal will be carried out by Walker Construction (UK) Ltd, who were awarded the contract by Ashford Borough Council following a procurement process.

ORDER, ORDER!

ROGER THE BODGER PRESENTS MAYOR WITH HANDCRAFTED GAVEL

The Mayor of Tenterden, Cllr Jean Curteis, has been presented with a new means of keeping order at Town Council meetings – a handcrafted wooden gavel.

It was made for the Mayor by Roger Finnis, one of the town's maintenance team, in particular recognition of Jean's work on protecting the Kiln Field nature reserve, building on the efforts of many residents and councillors over the years to secure and transform the site.

Roger, who also sits on the Kiln Field committee, made the gavel on his lathe at home, using pieces of oak and ash cut from trees at the reserve.

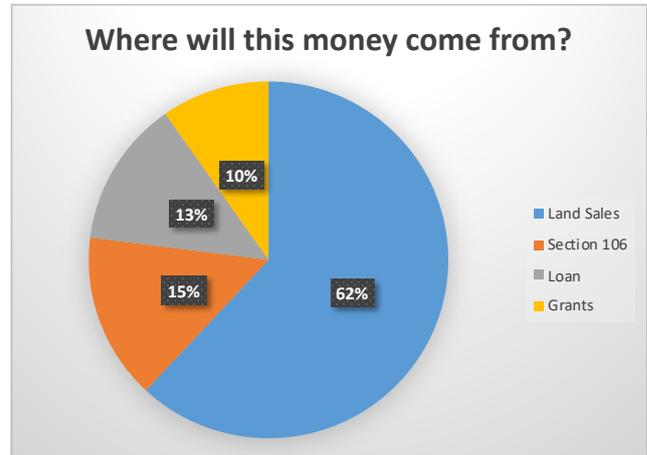
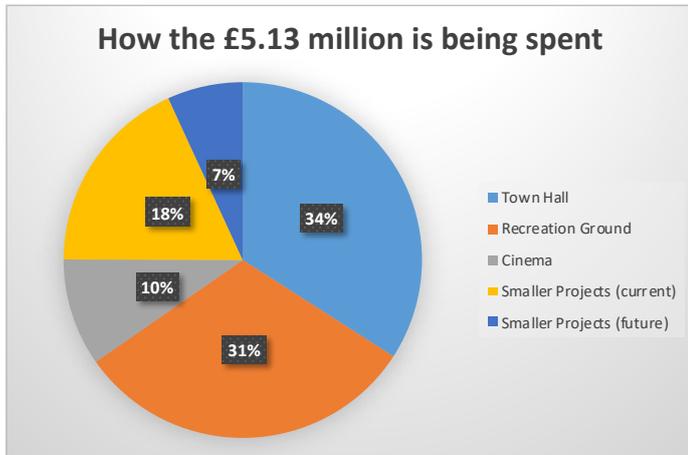
Says Roger: "I've always enjoyed working with wood, and I thought that the gavel would be a nice gift for Jean, who has been such a vital part of the Kiln Field team".

- Editor's note: Roger is quite happy to be called a 'bodger' – it's the ancient term for a craftsman working with unseasoned wood!



MAJOR PROJECTS – THE FACTS AND FIGURES

These are the projects being funded by £3.5 million of land sales, plus additional contributions from developers as houses are sold (known as Section 106 money) and income from grants and loans.



1. Town Hall - £1.75m
2. Recreation Ground, Phase 1 - £1.6m
3. Cinema - £500,000 *The Pebbles was the favoured option for the cinema prior to the pandemic. Other venues are now under consideration, but The Pebbles will require renovation irrespective of its future use.*
4. Smaller projects, current - £930,000 (e.g. Football pitches, Station Road toilets development, Coombe Lane cemetery purchase, assistance with Bowls Clubhouse)
5. Reserved for future projects - £350,000

TOTAL - £5.13 Million

1. Land sales from Tent1a (*Dandara/Taylor Wimpey*) - £3.5m (£3,284,000 remaining after completion of the waste and maintenance facilities)
2. Section 106 funds - £850,000 (Recreation Ground only)
3. Loan - £750,000
4. Grants (potential) - £550,000

Total - £5.434 Million*

**Allowance made for contingencies and in the event of some grants not being available.*

PICNIC TABLES AND AN EXTENSION TO FREE PARKING AS PANDEMIC EASES

The purchase of large picnic tables for the High Street and Recreation Ground and an extension to the free parking scheme are among the initiatives highlighted by the Town Council's Covid 19 sub-committee as the pandemic eases.

The committee agreed to spend £2,000 on large picnic tables, each accommodating up to eight people. Five tables will be located on the Recreation Ground and pending approval from Kent County Council, five will be sited along the High Street between the Montalbano restaurant and the war memorial.

It is anticipated they will be in place by 12 April, when outdoor hospitality is allowed under the government's Covid Roadmap, and was one of the ideas supported by local businesses when they were canvassed by Keli Nolan-Lyons, Tenterden's Town Centre and Tourism Co-ordinator.

The committee also applauded Ashford Borough Council's agreement to continue with free parking until 21 June at the Leisure Centre and Station Road coach park..

For safety reasons, barriers will remain in place for the time being, given that visitor numbers are expected to increase.

NEW HEALTH CENTRE OFFERS 'FANTASTIC SUPPORT TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY'

Outstanding collaborative work between Tenterden Social Hub, the local NHS Primary Care network and NHS Property Services will soon come to fruition.

Now that Ivy Court surgery has moved into their new premises, the adjacent East Cross Clinic building is being reconfigured to provide a front-facing and welcoming Community Café and the TSH charity shop.

Behind this, the centre will offer a wide range of other services and many other activities which will support mental and physical health as well as education.

Spencer Goddard, CEO of Tenterden Social Hub says; "We are absolutely delighted-it is fantastic support for services which have been highlighted as essential throughout the pandemic and will continue to be in high demand for many years to come."

CRIME FALLS, BUT COVID CRIMINALS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PANDEMIC

While crime in Tenterden has dropped during the pandemic, Kent Police are warning of scams committed by criminals taking advantage of lockdown.

Scams include criminals contacting people by text, phone or email offering a vaccine against Covid for a fee; bogus callers claiming to be from the tax office or posing as officials of Age UK; and fake penalty charges purporting to come from HM Courts and Tribunal Service.

In her crime update to the Town Council, local PCSO Kate Richards reported that the police are seeking information following the theft of several gold items from a house in Rothley Close in October, and have issued CCTV pictures of a man suspected of stealing £500-worth of cosmetics from a High Street shop in August.

PCSO Kate Richards has also reminded residents that incidents and crimes must be reported to the Police either by calling 999, 101 or report it online. PCSO Richards has also stressed again that social media is not checked by the police for offences and these must be reported as above.

TENTERDEN RANKED NUMBER THREE IN MAJOR SURVEY OF 1,000 SHOPPING DESTINATIONS ACROSS THE UK

Throughout the pandemic, Tenterden has been particularly active in supporting its local retailers – and now a major survey of 1,000 shopping locations across the UK, has ranked the town at number three, ahead of all other destinations in Kent, Sussex and Surrey.

The HDH Vitality Ranking survey, compiled by leading retail experts and analysts Harper Dennis Hobbs, researches the health of high streets and shopping centres, including vacancy rates and suitability to local consumers' demands.

The report notes that commuter-belt towns such as Tenterden "have outperformed city centre destinations as consumers' shopping habits have become very localised as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic".

Says Keli Nolan-Lyons, who was appointed Tenterden Town Centre and Tourism Co-ordinator by the Town Council last September: "This is absolutely fantastic news, and is a tribute to everyone in our community who has worked so hard to support our local retailers.

"We understand that the pandemic has radically

changed people's shopping habits. But this is such a positive outlook as we emerge into brighter times, and reinforces the message that Tenterden is a destination like no other.

"Our local traders, Tenterden Town Council and Ashford Borough Council have all worked incredibly hard to help our High Street stay vibrant and alive, and it is noteworthy that, despite all the challenges, we actually have new businesses opening up in the town."

In his commentary on the HDH Vitality Ranking survey, head of retail consultancy Andy Metherell said: "The most vital retail centres currently provide services which are essential to people's lives, such as grocers and pharmacies.

"These essential retailers have been able to trade throughout the strictest lockdowns, and consumers have not been willing or able to travel far to visit these stores. Shopping patterns have therefore changed significantly since the start of the pandemic, and consumers' local high streets are benefitting at the expense of the major destinations."