

EDITOR'S WELCOME



BEXHILL joined communities across the nation on Friday, February 24 to honour Ukraine and its people as the first anniversary of Russia's invasion was marked.

It has been a traumatic 12 months for the citizens of that beleaguered country and, sadly, at present, it seems there is no end in sight as the conflict continues to rage.

Many Ukrainians who fled their country in fear of their lives have, however, been warmly welcomed in the United Kingdom with many settling in East Sussex to start a new life away from the horrors of war.

That welcome has underlined the community spirit that exists in our part of the world and is to be applauded.

Elsewhere, *Bexhill News* had a welcome opportunity to visit and tour the NHS Diagnostics Centre in Beeching Road and it is a hugely-impressive facility which will help ease pressure on both GP surgeries and local hospitals. It is certainly a major step in the right direction.

We also reflect on the chaos that ensued in Bexhill in the wake of the flooding in Bulverhythe. As a direct result convoys of tankers spent the best part of a week, operating day and night, transporting waste to be processed in our town.

Clearly, that was necessary but it is patently clear that everything possible must be done to avoid a repeat. Southern Water has always talked a good game but actions speak louder than words.

Finally, we reflect on a local resident who has been banned from contacting Rother District Council after making an endless stream of complaints.

Who is right and who is wrong? We will leave you to make up your own mind.

Once again we have really enjoyed putting together this latest issue of *Bexhill News*. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Kim Mayo, Editor



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MANOR BARN VENUE GOES INTO VOLUNTARY LIQUIDATION WITH ITS FUTURE STILL TO BE DETERMINED

A well-established Bexhill venue has gone into voluntary liquidation, dealing another massive blow to the beleaguered town.

Manor Barn, in De La Warr Road, Old Town, issued a statement on February 15, stating: "With regret, Manor Barn Limited in Bexhill has ceased trading with immediate effect.

"The directors (of the company) have instructed FRP Advisory Trading Limited (FRP) to assist with placing the company into creditors' voluntary liquidation.

"Unfortunately, as the company is insolvent and unable to continue trading, all booked weddings and functions will no longer be held.

"Customers with bookings should contact Janet Towner. Enquiries can be directed to hospitality@manorbarnbexhill.co.uk

"If you are owed money by the company, the proposed liquidators, Chris Stevens and Phil Harris, will be writing to creditors in due course."

The venue has regularly staged weddings and other high-profile events such as comedy nights, indoor markets, music, birthday parties, cabaret and other community-led events.

At present, the next move is unclear and it remains to be seen whether a rescue package to preserve its future can be organised.

Bexhill Chamber of Commerce will be doing its utmost to ensure its survival by talking to those involved such as stakeholders and potentially other interested parties.

Howard Martin, President of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce, said: "Manor Barn going into liquidation is an absolute tragedy for Bexhill.

"Bexhill Chamber of Commerce is working with stakeholders and other interested parties in the hope of putting a rescue package in place as soon as possible."

The history of the site is an intriguing one with Manor Barn itself and the ruins all that remain of the Manor of Bexhill.



It was regarded as one of the grandest establishments in the Old Town.

The original Manor House had been a predominant feature in Bexhill for more than 900 years until it was partially demolished in 1967.

Prior to that, it had been the second oldest building in the town after St Peter's Church.

Despite its long and proud history, however, for now, its future remains unclear until administrators have completed their work and decided on the best way forward.

There will no doubt be plenty of consultation with potentially interested parties and there have also been calls for a public meeting to gauge views from Bexhill residents.

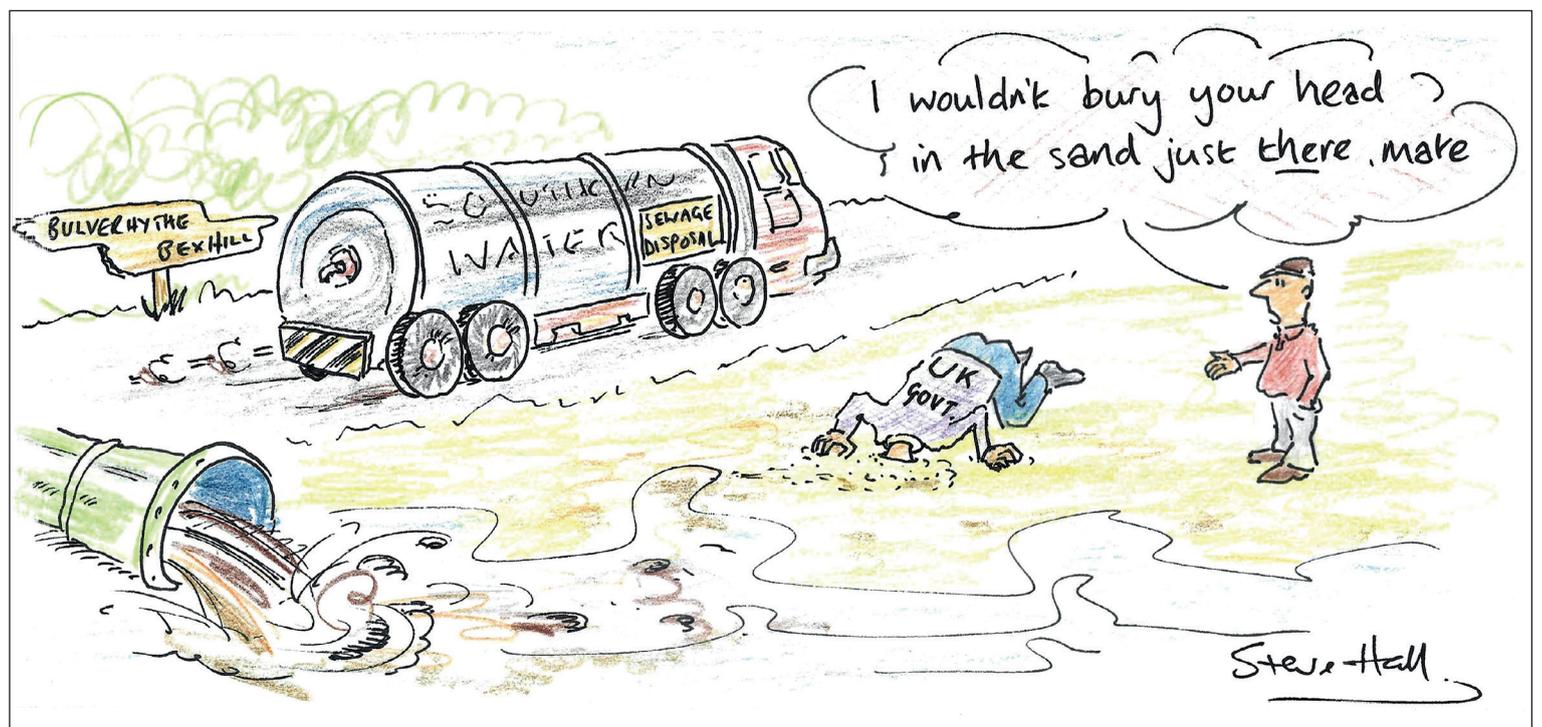
What is patently clear, though, is that an



agreeable solution must be found for the benefit of the town.

Bexhill News wants to hear your views about what can be done to secure Manor Barn's future and also reflections about any special events you attended there.

Email: editor@bexhill-news.co.uk



Steve Hall is a local cartoonist drawing inspiration from Bexhill and the sea. His cards, books and other items can be found in local independents and the Bexhill museum shop. He can be contacted at steve54.hall@gmail.com.

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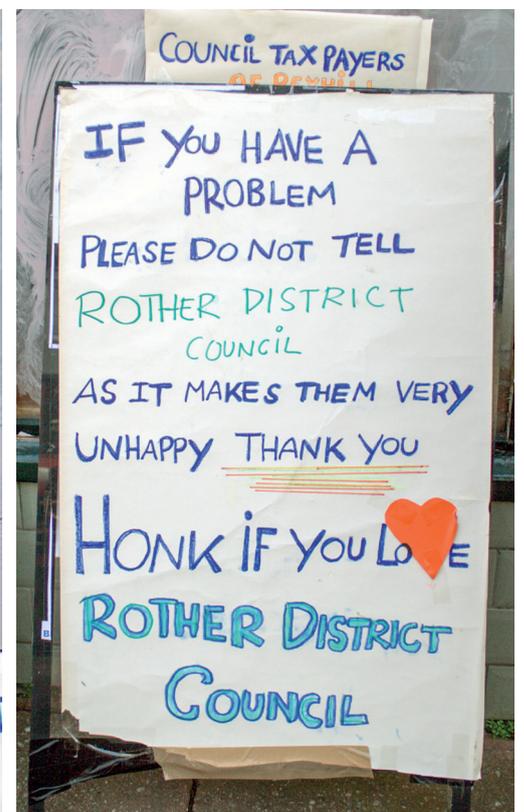


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CAMPAIGNER BANNED FROM VISITING COUNCIL PREMISES AFTER ISSUING STREAM OF COMPLAINTS

BY KIM MAYO

A TIRELESS campaigner who bombarded Rother District Council with his concerns on a number of issues he believes need tackling has been banned from its premises for a period of six months.

The ban has infuriated Bexhill resident and former professional clown Charlie Casey, who staged a colourful protest against the perceived injustice in Western Road recently.

Mr Casey, sporting eye-catching garb and a variety of placards to highlight his plight, said: "It is unbelievable really."

"All I have done is raise issues in this town which really need to be addressed but the council have clearly decided to label me a nuisance and issued a ban. So much for democracy."

However, the council has clearly had enough of

Mr Casey's ongoing complaints and he has been banned from visiting its premises.

Malcolm Johnston, chief executive of Rother District Council, sent a letter to Mr Casey outlining the authority's stance.

The letter states: "Following recent visits to the Town Hall and numerous telephone calls to officers and members of the council, I am writing to advise you that this incessant behaviour will not be tolerated.

"As a result, the council is not prepared to deal with you in person at any of our Community Help Points in Bexhill, Battle or Rye for a period of six months from the date of this letter (January 12, 2023).

"Please therefore submit any queries you may have in writing only.

"Information about you will be held on

our computerised register and in supporting departmental information systems.

"The computerised information that we have recorded includes your name, address, telephone numbers and limited details with regard to the type and nature of your most recent enquiries.

"At the end of the six-month period, this situation will be reviewed upon receipt of a written request. However, in the meantime, you are required not to contact us by any other means than in writing."

The letter is signed by Mr Johnston.

This clearly irks Mr Casey. Brandishing a copy of the letter, he said: "It is totally unfair as far as I am concerned.

"Basically, they are telling me I cannot contact them under any circumstances. Where is the justice in that?"

"Clearly the council considers me a nuisance when all I am trying to do is hold them to account when I deem it necessary.

"I am a resident of Bexhill who loves this town and wants to see it thrive, but clearly, there have been a number of issues which I fervently believe need to be highlighted by raising them with the council. Now my democratic rights have been taken away from me."

Mr Casey admits on one occasion he shouted at a receptionist at the Town Hall, but says he apologised immediately for his outburst.

He added that the incident was purely down to frustration.

"All I have ever wanted is straight answers to straight questions," he added. "Is that really too much to ask?"

Pausing to take a swig of a restorative hot drink on what was a bitterly cold day, Mr Casey added: "In December I highlighted the fact that the footbridge over the railway was slippery due to the fact it was icy and someone could fall and injure themselves.

"I thought it was a legitimate concern. In the end, the postal staff who were on strike at the time went and gritted the bridge themselves in an effort to make it safe and I commend them for that. They were brilliant.

"I also reported the fact that there was white paint splattered on the road in the town square. That was on January 3. But I got no thanks from the council. Surely it is up to the public to report these things?"

"A lack of action is like a red rag to a bull for me and I am not going to be silenced."

Mr Casey said he received plenty of support from the public as he staged his latest protest over his exclusion from council premises.

He added: "I have had a great deal of support and it has been really lovely. Basically, I have been banned for trying to help our community

"I am certainly going to continue my protests until my ban is lifted. It is simply unfair.

"All I want is an apology for the council's actions but I guess that won't be forthcoming.

"I may have been working as a professional clown before I retired but I am deadly serious when it comes to raising concerns on behalf of this town's residents. I am going to continue to highlight issues which I believe are of concern."

Barely pausing for breath, Mr Casey concluded: "I have been told I cannot contact the council under any circumstances unless it is in writing but I will not be silenced. It is as simple as that."

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MAJOR BOOST FOR HOSPITAL THANKS TO GENEROUS FRIENDS

THE League of Friends of Bexhill Hospital is funding more than £180,700 worth of equipment and projects for the benefit of local patients.

The charity's general committee responded to requests at its February meeting by agreeing to fund a £93,950 scheme to create a kitchen in the former mortuary and viewing room beneath the hospital's Irvine Unit.

The present kitchen is in the main hospital block where there are no longer any inpatients.

The meeting was told that in order to deliver plated meals, a contractor has to back a lorry up the hospital drive. The meals then have to be transferred to the kitchen and from there four times a day to the Irvine Unit.

The League had been offering for some years to fund the creation of a kitchen in the Irvine Unit.

The meeting also approved a £67,900 project that will transform the delivery of essential concentrates to patients in the Renal Dialysis Unit.

The meeting heard that at present lorry-loads of pallets containing five-litre plastic containers of concentrate are delivered during working hours. Staff have to carry the heavy containers from a storage area to each dialysis machine.

The project will enable the bulk out-of-hours delivery of concentrate to a storage container. Concentrate will be piped to each dialysis station. The transformation is expected to cut concentrate costs by 30 percent.

The League has funded equipment and furniture for the dialysis unit since its inception 31 years ago. The unit saves local kidney failure patients the need to travel to Brighton three times a week for treatment. The project will include a new entrance, giving renal



patients direct access to the department.

The League is providing £4,330-worth of patient chairs for Outpatient Department reception areas. The furniture will replace ageing chairs, some of which are now unusable,

The meeting also approved the purchase of £992-worth of Doppler equipment for Albert Road GP surgery plus ten blood pressure monitors.

The transfer of diagnostic services is freeing up space in Bexhill Hospital for the expansion of ophthalmic services there. Work on adapting this space will begin in April, committee members were told.

Finally, a reminder that members of the public can join the League of Friends via its bexhillhospitalfriends.org.uk website. They can take part in its weekly lottery by the same means. Fifty pence in every pound spent in the draw goes to the League.

MAN STABBED IN TOWN CENTRE INCIDENT

An area of Bexhill town centre was cordoned off as Police were called to a stabbing incident.

Officers were called to reports of disturbance outside a premises in London Road at 11.50pm on Friday, February 24.

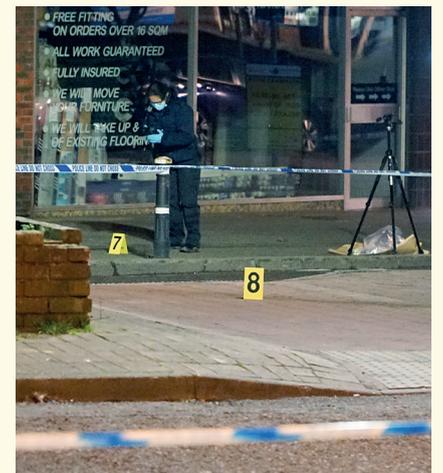
Police say a man was taken to hospital due to being stabbed.

It was said to be an isolated incident that did not pose a threat to the wider community and officers were investigating.

There were increased high-visibility patrols as part of the investigation and to reassure the general public.

In a separate incident, a Bexhill man was arrested following another stabbing in Battle early last month.

It happened at Old Ladies Court, near Battle High Street where a 21-year-old man from suffered serious leg injuries consistent with being stabbed.



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PARKING CHANGES GO OUT FOR CONSULTATION



THE latest stage of proposed changes to parking in Bexhill are set to be put out for public consultation for a 21-day period.

Affected homes and businesses will have letters delivered explaining the proposed new traffic regulation orders. They will be given the opportunity to support or object to the proposals.

These responses will then be reviewed and eventually go to East Sussex County Council's planning committee and either be withdrawn or given a reason why they should go ahead as proposed.

Councillor Ian Hollidge, member for Bexhill South, said: "There will always be winners and losers where traffic management measures are brought in.

"Highway authorities have a difficult task in making space available for everyone to move

around, especially those who find difficulty.

"Many in Bexhill have limited sight, mobility problems or other challenges and for them driving isn't always an option.

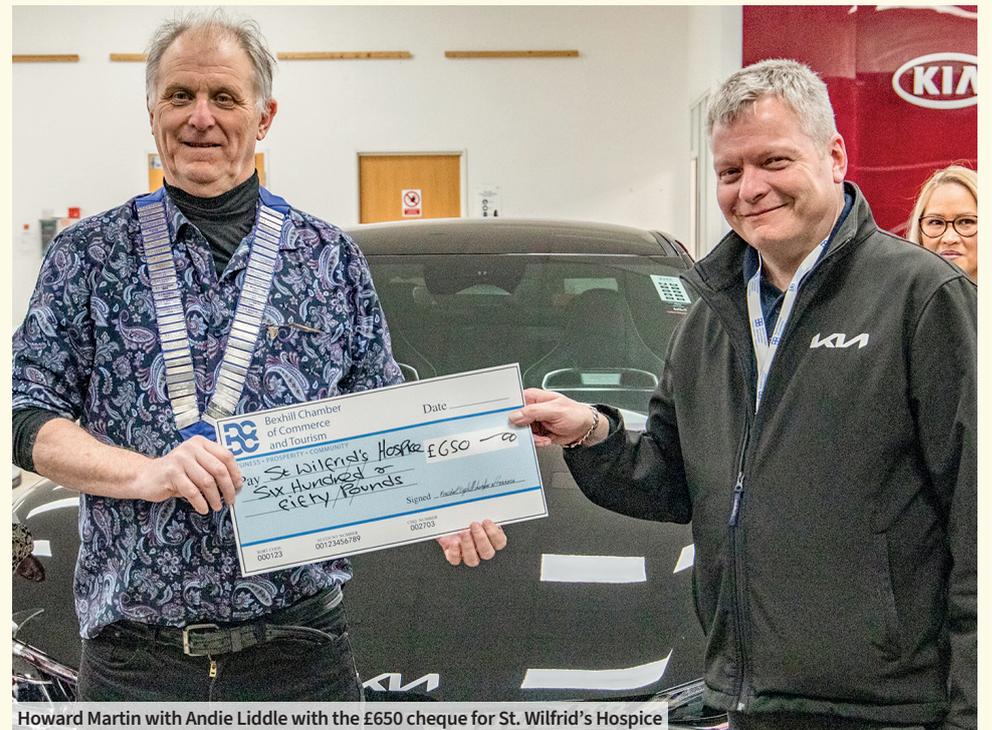
"Keeping dropped kerbs and pavements free of clutter and vehicles is one reason some of these measures are needed.

"Drivers who need to access to our town by vehicle should be able to move around with ease, find space and in certain areas pay the small appropriate fee easily.

"There is only one thing worse than not being able to find kerb space when you need it and that is receiving a parking ticket once you have parked for what you think is in a reasonable way.

"For Bexhill to function successfully you should be able to access it by whatever means you need or choose as easily and as cheaply as possible."

AUCTION EVENING RAISES MONEY FOR ST. WILFRID'S



Howard Martin with Andie Liddle with the £650 cheque for St. Wilfrid's Hospice

Local businesses came together recently to find out about the future of electric cars and raise money for charity at the same time.

Members of both the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce & Tourism and Hailsham & District Chamber of Commerce joined forces to learn how car manufacturer Kia is embracing the future with its range of EVs. It took place at Birchwood Kia in Lottbridge Drive in Eastbourne.

During the event, Business Development

Manager, Andie Liddle explained the differences between hybrid, plug-in hybrid and electric technology and showed how the company is embracing sustainable practices for future models.

To complete the evening, Howard Martin from the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce drew a raffle and an auction was held to win a weekend hire of a Kia EV6 from Birchwood Kia.

A total of £650 was raised which will be donated to St. Wilfrid's Hospice in Eastbourne.



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NEW NHS DIAGNOSTICS CENTRE IS A MAJOR STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

When *Bexhill News* was offered the opportunity to tour the new Bexhill Community Diagnostic Centre, it was one we couldn't turn down. Editor Kim Mayo takes a look around the new centre in Beeching Road...

The new whizz-bang facility boasts a glittering array of mod cons, specifically designed to put patients at ease.

Let's face it, no one likes to be sent for tests and even the most stoic individual will suffer from nerves. But, the diagnostic centre's staff could not be more friendly and boast a demeanour which swiftly puts those who have to undergo tests at ease.

The centre, which opened late last year, is impressive even before you walk through the front doors.

Having left your car in the spacious parking area, there is a welcoming waiting area and everything is spick and span.

It is easy to criticise the National Health Service and many often do, but it should also be given plenty of credit when it gets things right, which it certainly has done with the diagnostics centre, which is situated in Beeching Road.

So, what exactly is a diagnostics centre? Basically it is designed to take pressure off hospitals and GP surgeries in East Sussex.

In essence, without resorting to medical parlance, it is a testing centre for those with existing or potential ailments.

Patients can now benefit from earlier diagnostic tests closer to home with the new centre providing scans and various tests.

It has been funded by more than £2 million of investment from the Government.

In seemingly no time at all, the former Apollo car showroom had been converted into the new facility and it was all systems go.

The centre is equipped with a startling array of equipment, including a mobile CT scanner, two X-ray rooms and six clinical/ultrasound rooms, in addition to a space where blood tests can be

undertaken.

The Bexhill centre is one of 40 being opened across the country, with five being situated in Sussex.

Among the benefits are early diagnosis for patients via easier, faster and more direct access to a range of diagnostic tests to understand fully a patient's symptoms as well as reduction in hospital visits and reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

Plus there will be a reduction in waiting times by diverting patients away from hospitals, allowing them to focus on urgent patients.

This will also enable community diagnostic centres to focus on tackling the backlog.

Patients referred to East Sussex Healthcare will be booked in for their scans and tests at the centre so they can access potentially life-saving checks closer to home and be diagnosed for a range of conditions rather than having to travel to hospital.

The centre is staffed by a team of specialists, including phlebotomists, physiologists, monographers and radiographers, opening five days per week, although it is hoped to extend this to six days per week by April.

We were also given a rare opportunity to interview Doctor Joel Newman who is a consultant haematologist and specialises in the study of blood. He advised and helped to set up the new centre.

He is also chairman of the Sussex division of the British Medical Association.

Greeting *Bexhill News* with a broad smile, he is justifiably proud of the new facility.

He said: "We certainly needed more centres for diagnostic testing and now we are getting them.

"The Bexhill centre provides extra capacity,



whereas before it would have been a case of having to go to either Hastings or Eastbourne. Therefore it is now much more efficient."

He added: "In order to tackle the backlog we need to relieve the pressure on our acute sites.

"Clearly post-endemic it has been difficult but we are getting ahead of the curve and this is a big step in the right direction.

"Patients are referred to the centre via their GPs or hospitals and this provides a quick route for people in East Sussex.

Dr Newman acknowledges there have been some turbulent times for the NHS in

recent years, particularly when it comes to staff recruitment in some areas, but remains confident the new centre is just one of many steps in the right direction.

"The NHS is a great institution and one of the best in the world when it comes to providing medical care," he said.

Let's be positive. We are now moving beyond Covid, although there is always a risk of new variants in the future.

"Nevertheless, new facilities such as the Bexhill Diagnostics Centre are certainly pointing the way towards an even brighter future."

VOLUNTEERS ARE GETTING TO THE ROOT OF A LACK OF TREES IN SIDLEY

An army of green-fingered volunteers descended on Sidley Recreation Ground in an ongoing mission to plant more trees across Rother.

Bexhill is already benefiting from an influx of new saplings to make the town more green and attractive. Thus far, it is working a treat.

Organised by Trees for Cities in collaboration with East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council, the initiative is proving to be a resounding success.

Over the course of the next year, trees will be planted in parks and roadside verges to ensure coastal towns and cities in East Sussex are given an environmental makeover, in the process improving everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

Trees for Cities is behind the Urban Tree Challenge Fund which has provided match funding for the street tree project in collaboration with other interested parties such as district and local councils.

Some of the work has already been carried out on Bexhill streets and green spaces using a wide variety of species such as the field maple, the resistant elm, the common beech and the London plane tree.

Although air quality tends to be better in coastal towns as opposed to cities, there is still plenty of work to be done.

The UK's coastal towns and cities still face several air quality issues, particularly during the summer months.

This is mainly due to increased visitor numbers as hordes of people head for the beach by car for short weekend breaks or longer vacations.

Yes, we as a nation do like to be beside the seaside, but sometimes it comes at a significant cost in terms of damage to the environment.

This is mainly due to an increase in car emissions and pollution from litter which is carelessly discarded on beaches without



transgressors even bothering to consider the short and long-term consequences of their actions.

On the plus side, there are many benefits to be had from the ongoing urban tree planting programme.

For instance, urban trees in our coastal region filter atmospheric pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide via their hairy leaves and contribute hugely to creating a greener and healthier environment for generations to come.

The reforestation of coastal areas will also significantly help to increase resilience to climate change by maintaining soil stability and reducing sediment run-off into coastal eco-systems.

Urban trees also create a cooling effect, whether it be through creating shady spots or via a process known as evapotranspiration. Therefore, when the sun's rays reach trees, it causes water to evaporate from the leaves, cooling them down and reducing the amount of energy left to warm the air.

It has also been proven that planting urban trees creates a sense of community and improves mental health and well-being for residents and visitors.

Trees for Cities says it is fully aware that many coastal towns in the UK have previously been overlooked when it comes to green recovery and it is a situation the organisation is determined to rectify.

In total, 55,000 trees are being planted in various coastal towns and cities, including, Bexhill, Brighton, Great Yarmouth, Hull, Portsmouth, Ramsgate and Stockton-on-Tees to improve tree canopy cover.

But the organisation says this is only the beginning of a "tree revolution" and are encouraging as many volunteers to sign up to the good work can continue unabated.

The Sidley tree planting day was very well attended by volunteers, united in helping to improve the environment while enhancing our green spaces.

Many more events are already being planned countrywide, but the more volunteers the merrier.

The environmental charity has been awarded a grant from the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge Fund to help continue its work.

As a result, it has been working in tandem with Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council to orchestrate the planting and a follow-up programme of watering and tree care to give them the best chance of survival.

Rother District Council and Trees for Cities has also been working together on a separate project to plant trees in other green spaces managed by the council with funding from Defra's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

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THE LEVELLING UP STARTING PISTOL HAS BEEN FIRED

GREAT NEWS — shout it from the rooftops, get our three town criers calling it out on street corners, let's write poems about this momentous occasion, let's turn every social media post from negative squabbling into cheering Bexhill on.

Bexhill has won a bid for Government "levelling up" funding. Thanks to the hard work and perseverance of the highly skilled bid team at the De La Warr Pavilion supported by Rother members and staff working alongside Huw Merriman MP and possibly helped by a recent visit by PM Rishi Sunak, we finally have a small taste of what Bexhill Chamber has been campaigning vociferously for over the past decade.

£19m of new Government money is to be invested in the De La Warr Pavilion and a new community training hub in Sidley on the site of the old rec changing rooms. There is no doubt that this is great news for our town. It will create jobs, improve access to training and completely refurbish the facilities at the iconic De La Warr Pavilion. Although this investment will require another £5m to be found from other sources there is no underestimating the impact it could have on our town.

This Government funding should put us in the race against our nearby rivals. The starting pistol has been fired for Bexhill to become really competitive with our neighbours for not only Government funding but also substantial business capital investment.

The problem is we are way behind our coastal

colleagues when it comes to attracting investment. We do not have a portfolio of projects ready to go as the next tiers of significant regeneration, all our eggs are in the De La Warr basket. Meanwhile Hastings is attracting millions more than Rother for a wider diversity of investments like flipping the former University Campus and a car park into a hotels, regenerating the empty Debenhams into a family leisure complex and turning the old Observer building into a beacon of affordable housing and social enterprise businesses.

Meanwhile Eastbourne is getting itself on the radar of international giants like Ikea and Newhaven and Lewes has been awarded £5m to renovate their high streets, funding Bexhill failed to win.

Bexhill Chamber members need the benefit of this Government funding immediately. We can't wait for the work on the De La Warr to be started let alone finished in many years time.

Our businesses are struggling against the tide of increased costs and a culture of deterring investment that we hope will immediately change. We need to see a new energy for halo visionary projects, a welcome for hotel investments, a breaking out of the silo mentality that has led to a local international tech company being refused planning permission to expand and create new high-quality jobs.

We need to see the same commitment and energy for investment that our competitors along the coast are showing. The levelling-up start gun has been fired but is Bexhill even in the race?



CALENDAR SALES MASSIVE BOOST FOR CHARITY

THE Bexhill-based Charity For Kids is celebrating the success of its 2023 calendar.

Established in 2011, the charity provides help and support for disabled, sick and terminally ill children and their families across the Rother district by providing specialised equipment that is either not available via health services or comes at a very high financial cost.

Jeff Pefold from the charity said: "We are delighted to announce that we made a net profit of £4,130 and wish to formally thank our nine sponsors who met all of our production costs.

"The sponsors are Pebbles on the Beach, London Road Butchers, D Porter Electrics, 1066 Street Bikes, Bentleys Steakhouse, Bentleys

Smokehouse, Carrolls Florist, D & H Fencing and Landscapes and Hastings Direct.

"This has been a record-breaking year despite the worrying economic times so the charity would also like to say a massive thank you to everyone who has supported us by buying the calendars.

"In addition, we would like to say a massive thank you to our latest partnering outlet, Maybugs in Devonshire Road for their fantastic support.

"We are already planning our 2024 calendars and again each one will contain an insert page with information about the charity together with a piece about one of the kids who have benefited from the sales."

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CLEANING UP OUR DISTRICT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

BY LEADER OF ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL, CLLR DOUG OLIVER

We are very lucky to live in a district with such amazing countryside and coastline and it is all of our responsibility to look after our beautiful surroundings and protect our environment.

It's been a busy time for Rother District Council's environmental health team recently who, among a host of other tasks, have worked with a property owner to clean up an area causing concern to neighbours, tidied up an area of unclaimed land that had become a dumping ground, and removed graffiti from various locations across Rother.

Unfortunately, we can't reveal the locations of much of our work for fear that it will encourage repeat offenders. It's a sad fact that for every community-minded person keeping their community clean, there is another intent on spoiling it for others.

We have come under some criticism in recent weeks for our approach to enforcement against those littering and fly-tipping in our towns and villages.

While some may feel it's unfair to receive a fixed penalty notice for dropping cigarette butts, disposing of business waste or household wastes

in litter bins, or leaving rubbish next to a bin, every single incident adds to a growing problem in our district.

And while I appreciate that not everyone receiving a fixed penalty notice had intended to fly-tip or litter, it is only by enforcing the law for everyone that we will be able to tackle the issue.

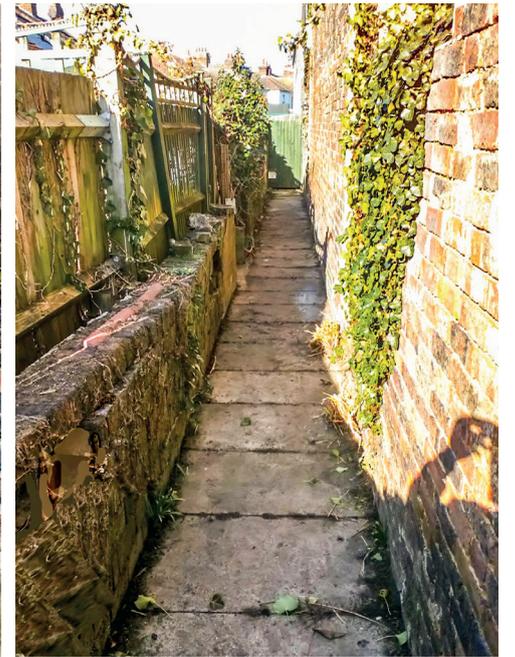
We are currently supporting Keep Britain Tidy's Bin the Butt campaign which was launched to raise awareness among smokers. According to the charity's

research, despite dropped cigarette butts being the most common form of littering, one in 10 smokers across the UK do not consider cigarette butts to be litter.

You can find more shocking statistics and more about the campaign by visiting www.KeepBritainTidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/bin-the-butt

And as in previous years, we are delighted to also be supporting the charity's Great British Spring Clean campaign which runs from March 17 to April 2.

We will be working with our waste contractor Biffa and our environmental enforcement contractor, NES, to offer equipment and advice for anyone wanting to get involved, as well as help disposing of the litter they collect.



It always amazes me how many people are keen to take part in this annual event and astounds me that they collect so much litter from our streets.

If you want to get involved, contact us by calling 01424 787000 or email springclean@rother.gov.uk. More information about the event can be found at www.KeepBritainTidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/great-british-spring-clean/

We know that littering and fly-tipping is something carried out by the minority and that the vast majority of our residents take pride in their towns and villages, doing everything they can to help keep them looking clean and tidy. By taking action against those who spoil our environment I hope we can send a message that we will not stand by and let a small number of people ruin our beautiful district.

PAID PROMOTION



THE ROTHER ALLIANCE

WHAT HAS THE ROTHER ALLIANCE EVER DONE FOR US?

Quite a lot, it turns out

The Rother Alliance is the coalition of Independent, LibDem, Green and Labour Councillors in power on Rother District Council. These community champions have a range of backgrounds including finance, law, the police, the civil service, business, teaching, psychotherapy, the arts and more. One Councillor even has an OBE. Together, they have worked tirelessly over the last four years to deliver a positive step change for the area, despite the many recent challenges local government has faced.

So, what has the Rother Alliance ACTUALLY ever done for us?

Well, they sorted Bexhill's democratic deficit by establishing a Town Council. They declared a climate emergency and

developed a strategy to reach Carbon Zero by 2030. They delivered large investment in sports and leisure facilities including the BMX and Skatepark in Sidley. They have led on an effective homelessness strategy that has reduced rough sleeping, they have sourced local temporary accommodation and supported 40 homeless people into employment. They have overseen the procurement of a £48million Mental Health Hospital and Diagnostic Unit in Bexhill, two proposed Health Centres in Wainwright Road and Little Common, a new Paediatric Unit in Egerton Park and a Creative Arts Centre in Beeching Road. The list doesn't stop there.

Through the pandemic, they kept services running with sound financial management, worked tirelessly alongside staff to ensure people had access to food and support and paid out over £48million in various grants to local businesses. During the

Cost of Living crisis, they have paid out around £4.8million in tax rebates, kept hundreds of households from homelessness through discretionary housing payments and adopted a critically acclaimed anti-poverty strategy to better support residents in hardship. They created a Community Lottery that has helped over 60 local organisations raise thousands in funding as well as giving out almost £500k directly in Community Grants. They have reformed the Planning Service, reformed infrastructure spending and reformed the Constitution to ensure transparency throughout the Council. They implemented live video streaming for public meetings and adapted quickly to hybrid working to continue through lockdown. And it doesn't stop there!

They have reduced litter on our streets, developed a forward thinking Local Plan, played a role in the international Age-friendly network, revamped the MyAlerts system and set up tailored business alerts. They have built a community presence online and in the local newspapers through regular columns and interactions. They have formed a housing company to secure more affordable homes for local people, achieving an award for the Blackfriars scheme in Battle and they have supported local house building initiatives like the Community Land Trust in Icklesham. They have made wise investments in property acquisition that has garnered over 3% in net yield. They have led the way on tree planting through partnership with the 'iTree Project' and 'Trees For Cities'. They have shown their financial competence enough for the Government to offer a £19m Levelling Up grant, well in excess of any grants Rother have had before. And there is more that will not fit in this article. The Rother Alliance has undertaken all this activity whilst keeping the Council's finances in line with pre-pandemic predictions thanks to sound financial management, strategic investment, and careful spending.

So, how much does all this cost you, the Taxpayer?

As your council tax bill will show you, Rother's portion of council tax is small, at just £3.63 a week currently for Band D residents.

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COULD YOU HELP A CHILD SHINE?



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Lighthouse fostering is a small independent organisation that was started by foster carers.

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our children and young people.

We offer a full support package and competitive financial allowances and rewards. Our foster carers become skilled childcare professionals through our specialist training and we use therapeutic fostering methods to underpin positive parent-child relationships.

Our commitment is to remain a small independent service where every individual is known, and where we

can provide an exclusive family feel. We value our foster carers as fellow professionals and work alongside in every aspect of the fostering role.

Interested in finding out more about fostering? Call 01227 250096 and talk to Emma today, or visit

www.lighthousefostering.co.uk

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For a **FREE LISTING**, email your details to: events@Bexhill-News.co.uk

BEXHILL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & TOURISM BI-MONTHLY NETWORKING MEETING

Last Wednesday every other month, 7.00-9.00am

Trattoria Italiana, 68-70 Devonshire Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 1AX
Tickets £13 (plus Eventbrite Fee). Register and pay at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/bexhill-chamber-of-commerce-and-tourism-55864975473>. Become a member for £90pa per business.

BEXHILL FARMERS' MARKET

Every Friday, 9am-1pm. Devonshire Square, Bexhill.

Pop by to visit and select local quality traceable produce and crafts, including freshly baked bread and sweet treats, fresh and cured meats and cheeses, fruit and vegetables, plants, honey, chutneys, plus lots more. Stalls offer quality locally produced or sourced foods and goods.

PEBSHAM INDOOR MARKET – MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL

Sunday 26 February, 10am-1pm

Pebsham Community Hub, Seabourne Road, TN40 2SW

Gifts, crafts, refreshments, cakes & savouries, local causes, local businesses.

EAST SUSSEX VISION SUPPORT BEXHILL SOCIAL GROUP

First Friday of the month. St Augustine's Church Hall, Bexhill

We provide a social atmosphere for blind and partially sighted people including the opportunity to meet and make new friends. We can provide transport to St Augustine's and the afternoon includes refreshments, entertainment and a raffle and we also arrange lunch outings. If you are interested in joining, please contact Christine on 01323 482407 or East Sussex Vision Support Head Office on 01323 832252.

RVA'S FREE TRAINING DAY

(FIRST AID, SAFEGUARDING, EQUALITIES AND H&S)

Tuesday 21 March, 8.30am-3.30pm

The Emmanuel Centre, Harrier Lane, Battle, TN33 0FL

Join us for FREE training, whether you are a volunteer, staff member or trustee! These courses will help up-skill you and your team to adopt best practice in Basic First Aid, Safeguarding for Vulnerable Adults, Equalities and Diversity and Health and Safety. Come to the Emmanuel Centre in Battle for either one (half day) or two (full day) training sessions. A light lunch and refreshments will be provided but this needs to be booked in advance during your online registration. Please arrive from 8.30 am for registration and refreshments for a prompt start at 9 am. Please note that we are running two courses in the morning and two courses in the afternoon, so you will only be able to attend a maximum of two courses. Please register each attendee separately. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/rvas-free-training-day-first-aid-safeguarding-equalities-and-hs-tickets-525620383717?aff=ebdssbdstsearch>

BEXHILL JOBS & APPRENTICESHIPS FAIR 2023

Friday 10 March, 10.30am-3.30pm

De La Warr Pavillion, Marina, Bexhill, TN40 1DP

Thinking about a new job or career? Returning to work after a break? Taking your first step on the career ladder? Visit the Bexhill Jobs & Apprenticeships Fair 2023, in association with Southeastern, Bexhill College & Southern Housing, on Friday 10 March. Over 50 businesses and organisations recruiting into live job vacancies, apprenticeships, placements, training and courses in sectors including Transport, Housing, Construction, Financial Services, Digital, Health & Social Care, Education, Manufacturing, Utilities, Hospitality and the Creative Industries. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bexhill-jobs-apprenticeships-fair-2023-tickets-517737816747?aff=ebdssbdstsearch>

GOLDEN ACTIVITIES – GENTLE CHAIR EXERCISES

Every Monday Morning, 10.30am-11.30am

The Bagnall Room, 25 Sackville Road, Bexhill, TN39 3JD

We are a friendly group and welcome everyone. £6 each (carers are free) includes refreshments. At The Bagnall Room (next to Bexhill Caring Community). For more information contact Anna 07961 349956.

KIDS STORYTELLING & CRAFT WORKSHOP

Saturday 4 February, 11am-3pm

Eco Hub, The Mall, Western Road, Bexhill, TN40 1DX

Come along and meet our storyteller and enjoy some fun and simple crafts ideas. This event is free to attend.

FREE BEXHILL MEDITATION & WELLNESS CLASSES

Every Thursday, 5.45pm-6.45pm. 11 Windmill Drive, Bexhill.

In modern times many of us are so busy trying to get through life we forget to have time for ourselves. We find it difficult to motivate ourselves, to dedicate time to our own personal development, or have no idea where to start. Maybe we feel disconnected from our local community. This impacts both physical and mental well-being. The goal is not only to provide a regular meeting space for the community to dedicate time to their own wellbeing, but also to offer tips and tricks they can take into their everyday lives to manage stress and improve well-being.

COMMUNITY WARM SPACE

Every Thursday 2pm-4.30pm (last admission 4pm)

Beulah Centre, Clifford Road Entrance

Our Warm Space is now open. Everybody is welcome especially if you are struggling with the winter blues. It is a great opportunity to come along and have a friendly chat and a hot drink. Hopefully the new times will have greater appeal for those who don't like the dark evenings.

INDOOR CAR BOOT SALE

Every Sunday, 9am-12 noon

9th Bexhill Scout Hall, Wainwright Road, Bexhill, TN39 3UR

All the usual items you would expect to find at an Indoor Car Boot Sale — but maybe find that surprising item — you never know what you may find!

SIDLEY FRIENDSHIP CLUB

Every third Monday of the month, 2pm-4pm

Freedom Church, Sidley Street entrance (behind Lidl)

A social club for ladies and gents over 50 years old. Speakers, Games, Bingo, Coach Trips etc. No Annual fees, Just £2 each meeting which includes refreshments. New Members welcomed.

BEXHILL SEASIDE LADIES' GROUP

Every 4th Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm

St Michael's Church Small Hall, Glassenbury Drive,

A social club for ladies 50+ years old with speakers, quizzes, etc

TEA AND TODDLERS

Every Thursday, 9am-10.30am. St Augustine's Church, Cooden Drive, Bexhill-on-Sea TN39 3AZ

Free friendly Toddler group. Come and join us for play, chat and refreshments. Donations are gratefully received. For more information contact Daisy at st.augustines288@outlook.com or 07544326059

BEXHILL TUESDAY FOR THE BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED

Every Tuesday afternoon. St Mark's Church, Little Common.

Are you feeling isolated and want to make new friends? Then come and join in with lunches, cream teas, quizzes and entertainment. We can even pick you up and take you home. Call Jane on 01424 729323.

BEXHILL SEAGIRLS WI

Every Third Wednesday of the month, 8pm

St Augustine's Church, Cooden Drive, Bexhill-on-Sea TN39 3AZ

Our aim is to make friends and have fun, activities include outside speakers, games, crafts, baking and dancing. We have a book group, a 'knit & natter' group and a dining club. We hold events to raise funds for local charities. Are you interested in joining? Your first visit is free. Contact our secretary jill.duckett1@hotmail.co.uk or call Jo on 0751462574 or just turn up, we look forward to seeing you!

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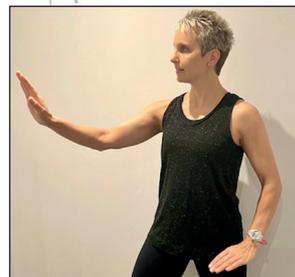
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OPINION

MODERN LONDON IS NOT A GRAND DAY OUT, IT IS AN ORWELLIAN NIGHTMARE NEVER TO BE REPEATED

BY KIM MAYO

BACK in 1777, Samuel Johnson stated that “when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life”. If he were in a position to visit in 2023 I imagine he would be profoundly depressed, which is how I felt after visiting our esteemed capital for less than 24 hours.

I was on a day trip to meet my brother and his partner, neither of whom I had seen for a while. There was the additional lure of going to see a gig by a singer-songwriter who all three of us admire. What could possibly go wrong? Well, plenty as it transpired.

Having arrived at London Bridge station, it was time to hop aboard the Tube for a relatively short trip to Leicester Square. If you wanted a seat then forget it. We were crammed in like sardines, to such an extent that there was a real danger you would be getting more intimate with a fellow passenger than with your partner through no fault of your own. There was barely enough space to breathe.

Then, finally, you arrive at your destination and your heart sinks. If you thought it couldn't get worse after the Tube journey think again.

Central London, that Mecca for tourists who flock to it like bees around a honeypot, is the closest you will get to hell on earth. It took ten minutes to move

a hundred yards with my journey rudely interrupted when I tripped over a random street artist. I didn't have the heart to tell him his caricatures were beyond awful after nearly knocking him over.

We had arranged to meet at a burger joint, rated one of the best in the city apparently. If it is, then God knows what its lesser competitors are like. Over-priced and over-hyped in a nutshell, much like everything else in London.

Keen to revisit the scene of much of my misspent youth, I suggested we walked to Soho. I had embraced its sleazy charm back in the day when I worked in London in the early 1980s, but was shocked by its transformation into yet another tourist trap.

You want to buy a teddy bear emblazoned with the Rolling Stones logo for 30 quid? Well, walk right this way guv'nor because this is rip-off central.

Dispirited, we marched on in a desperate search for a drink to lift our spirits. Eventually, we found a pub that actually had some seats available, only to be turfed out two minutes later because the table had been reserved, even though there was no visible sign that it had been.

Then, glory be, another table became free on the other side of the pub. I went for it but had a rival who

was also eyeing up the newly-available space. It was like the start of the 100 metre sprint at an Olympic Games with the added “bonus” that you had to dodge around already-seated customers en-route.

I won... just and now I know how Usain Bolt felt when he broke the world record. Seated at last and time to order our drinks. I went for my usual glass of vino, my brother had his traditional pint and his partner had a soft drink. All fine and dandy I thought, but it wasn't.

As I casually proffered a £20 note, the bartender looked at me agog. “I'm afraid that will be £23.50 sir,” he responded. On that basis, I suggest if you want a drink in London you need to make sure you haven't maxed out your credit card because if you want another round you soon will do.

Having already endured a day from hell, I didn't think it could get any worse, but it did. The trip back to Bexhill on the train was marred by a group of youths whose vocabulary was seemingly limited to that famous epithet which begins with an “f” and ends with a “k” repeated endlessly throughout the journey.

They thought they were cool. They weren't. It was beyond tedious. If they weren't uttering profanities with monotonous regularity, they were on their mobile phones, yelling at some poor sod on the

other end or texting incessantly.

English is a beautiful language with so much to offer and yet many seem happy to abuse its nuances at will by resorting to the lowest common denominator. Let's not lessen its impact by utilising Americanisms and swearing at will.

We all curse from time to time to emphasise a point, but to use it to excess not only lessens its impact but becomes incredibly boring.

I once saw a poster which said “swearing is the crutch of conversational cripples” and couldn't agree more.

The band Blur said that modern life is rubbish. They were being ironic but in fact, they were spot on, especially when it comes to visiting our capital.

London is not the city of dreams. It is an Orwellian nightmare and if you have ever wondered why those city-based civil servants want to work from home for the remainder of their careers, then you now know the answer.

I'm not tired of life. Far from it in fact. But I am sick to death of London and have already vowed never to return.

As a postscript, the gig was a massive disappointment too and I wasn't remotely surprised. It just summed up the day.



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Tankers at the sewage plant at Galley Hill

BEXHILL MP VOICES CONCERNS OVER DISRUPTION TO TOWN'S RESIDENTS



Galley Hill Sewage Plant

FOLLOWING significant disruption to the town and its residents due to work carried out by Southern Water, Bexhill MP Huw Merriman is demanding answers from the company.

Many endured a week of sleepless nights in early February as a procession of large tankers rolled through the town day and night.

The Bexhill and Battle Conservative MP said: "I was very concerned to hear about the burst sewage pipe in Bulverhythe, Hastings, which impacted some homes in that area and caused some minor pollution.

"I know that whilst the pipes were repaired, many residents in East Bexhill experienced large tankers passing their homes at all hours in order to move sewage from the damaged area to water treatment sites, including at Galley Hill.

"This was necessary to avoid a wider pollution incident. However, I am very sorry for the residents who suffered this inconvenience.

"I have challenged Southern Water on their operations and asked for confirmation that the repair not only fixes the damaged pipes but has also built greater resilience into the system to avoid a repeat.

"I shall be asking for a full report into the handling of this incident. Some residents were concerned that the sewage was being disposed of into the sea at Galley Hill but Southern Water confirmed to me that this was not the case. The sewage was being moved to the site only to be treated."

In a statement Southern Water said: "The section of pipe damaged by the burst has been cut out and replaced, and additional sections of the pipe have been lined to provide additional resilience.

"We would like to thank our customers for their continued patience during the repair period and apologise for any inconvenience and disruption this has caused.

"Our tankering operation has received much discussion amongst stakeholders and customers. For information, we deployed a total of 50 tankers in the area to remove wastewater and transport it to our wastewater treatment sites for treatment.

"The volume of wastewater through the network was approximately 320 litres a second. This meant that, across the network, we were removing the equivalent of a tanker full of wastewater (18,000 litres) every minute. We know that the scale



HGV tackle tight seafront junctions

of the tankering operation caused concern, but it was a necessary step to avoid the risk of further flooding.

“We maintained contact with the Environment Agency throughout the incident, and we avoided any discharges following the initial burst.

Our customer team visited those customers affected by the flooding and has continued to offer their support.

“Again, we appreciate the patience everyone showed during this incident.”

Despite those assurances from the company, residents in Bolebrooke Road voiced their outrage after enduring sleepless nights through no fault of their own.

After the closure of the Bulverhythe pumping station due to flooding, waste was transported via the tankers to the Galley Hill pumping station on Bexhill seafront in a 24-hour daily operation to dispense with it so it could be processed.

Residents also complained the tankers badly damaged the surface of Bolebrooke Road, which is primarily a residential area.

The road is already riddled with potholes and since the influx of tankers, there are already signs of further damage, which is turning it into an obstacle course.

One resident, who asked not to be named, said: “It was beyond ridiculous.

“Initially, there was no word from Southern Water whatsoever regarding the situation we found ourselves in.

“I barely slept in three days but it seemed they couldn’t care less. No emails, no text messages, no public statements on Facebook or

Twitter. Nothing. It was simply not good enough.

“We live in an age of instant communication but instead we were greeted by a wall of silence. It is a disgrace and they need to be held to account when incidents like this happen.”

Meanwhile, Bexhill Chamber of Commerce, which looks after the commercial interests of the town, says it has established a direct line of communication with Southern Water and is in discussions about how the company can better manage its communications with the community.

Southern Water stated it understood residents’ fears and concerns and hopes to work with them on improving their communications protocols.

East Sussex County Council and Southern Water are now reportedly in direct communication with regard to the potential damage hundreds of journeys by 38-tonne tankers may have caused to the already fragile road and street infrastructure.

According to Southern Water, Bultherhythe was considered to be a significant burst event that caused damage and flooding to residences and businesses. Therefore the Bultherhythe plant was closed to prevent a raw sewage outage into the sea.

Therefore immediate action was required by the company to prevent an “ecological disaster”.

The large four-axle tankers weighing up to 38 tons took the waste that would normally be processed at Bultherhythe to be processed at Galley Hill.

Smaller three-axle tankers also transported waste from Bultherhythe to Pebsham treatment depot.

Rother District Council red-flagged the beach on Friday, February 3 as a precautionary measure. This was not due to an actual sewage outage but did add to the confusion.

Bexhill Chamber of Commerce wants to see a number of improvements implemented henceforth.

Firstly, it wants to see the introduction of a dedicated crisis management team to directly communicate and liaise with the community at a grassroots level, potentially via a public meeting.

Secondly, in future, alternative routes should be identified other than solely utilising Bolebrooke Road should another emergency occur.

Finally, it says there has to be better engagement with the Bexhill community from Southern Water so they are not left in the dark to wonder what is going on having initially been given no information whatsoever by the company.

Paul Plim, Mayor of Bexhill, added: “Bexhill Town Council is due to meet up with representatives from Southern Water on March 21, at which point we will voice our concerns.

“We certainly don’t want to see situations like the current one drag on and want to ensure there is no repeat.

“Local residents and businesses must be protected and ongoing problems rectified as swiftly as possible.

“Recent responses have not been good enough and it is vital the businesses on our seafront and in the town are protected at all costs.

“The outstanding issues simply have to be rectified and the disruption must stop. We look forward to raising our concerns when we meet up with them.”



Tankers thunder down Bolebrook Road



Traffic chaos along narrow routes

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE IS MARKED

THE UKRAINIAN flag was raised at County Hall in Lewes last month in solidarity with the people of Ukraine as the county marked the first anniversary of the Russian invasion.

At 11am a national one-minute silence to commemorate one year since the start of the war was held.

Councillor Keith Glazier, leader of East Sussex County Council said: "It is with great sadness that we raise the Ukrainian flag at County Hall to commemorate one year since Russian forces invaded Ukraine.

"Hundreds of East Sussex residents have opened their homes to those fleeing the war since the Homes for Ukraine scheme began in March last year and I thank them for their kindness and generosity.

"I would also like to thank the local volunteer groups, charities and faith organisations who have worked so hard to help those fleeing the conflict settle in East Sussex.

"Our support of, and commitment to, the people



of Ukraine will continue for as long as necessary."

East Sussex residents have shown their continuing and steadfast support for Ukrainians during the last 12 months.

More than 500 host families are currently offering shelter to those fleeing the conflict, with in excess of 1,400 Ukrainian guests now living in the

county. A further 300 guests are expected to arrive locally during the coming weeks.

Numerous local groups and organisations have provided activities and support to assist Ukrainian guests in getting to know their new communities.

As the war continues, more Ukrainians are having to leave their homeland and the council is

seeking more host families.

Councillor Glazier added: "We urgently need more host families and I would urge residents who wish to host, or would like to return to hosting, to contact us at ukraine@eastsussex.gov.uk."

Events also took place in communities across the county to mark the first anniversary of the conflict.

They included a candle-lit vigil held by the Hastings and Rother Associations of Ukrainians in Great Britain in The Stade Square, Hastings, while the Eastbourne community joined together at Eastbourne Town Hall to show their support for Ukraine.

The community in Hailsham also gathered at the memorial in Hailsham town centre.

In addition, a special service of prayer, worship and thanksgiving was held at Victoria Baptist Church in Eastbourne on February 25.

Information on hosting Ukrainian guests, the support available to those arriving in East Sussex and other ways people can help is available on the council's website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/supporting-refugees/ukraine

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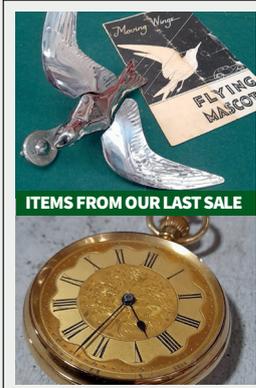


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MP'S LAPTOP 'WITH CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IS STOLEN FROM BENEATH CHAIR IN LONDON PUB'

BEXHILL and Battle Tory MP had a laptop containing confidential information about the recent rail strikes stolen from a pub in Covent Garden, according to reports.

The theft happened the day after a mass walkout by rail staff on February 2, reports the *London Evening Standard*.

The device is believed to have been taken from underneath the chair in the pub where Mr Merriman had stored it, said the newspaper.

Sources close to the MP said Mr Merriman claimed the theft from the pub in James Street was reported to police and government officials as soon as it was noticed it was missing at approximately 7.30pm.

According to *The Standard*, the Metropolitan Police confirmed the theft had been reported but there have been no arrests so far.

Government officials reportedly confirmed the laptop was wiped remotely of any potentially confidential information.

A PROJECT TO FUND ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS TO VILLAGE HALLS IN ROTHER HAS BEEN LAUNCHED

The Village Halls Energy Project will identify and address areas of energy inefficiency and high carbon emissions in local village and community halls.

The project is a key initiative for the authority and links directly to the council's objective to reduce carbon emissions Rother wide and move towards a low carbon future.

A total of 37 halls across the district will benefit from a share of a £500,000 funding pot to finance energy assessments, decarbonisation and energy efficiency improvements.

The money was awarded to the project from the council's Community Infrastructure Levy Climate Emergency Bonus Fund last June.

Energy assessments will be undertaken at each site over the coming weeks by Laser Energy with bespoke carbon net zero plans provided to halls by April.

Funds will then be distributed from the scheme to address the highest areas of concern. It is planned to carry out as many improvements as possible by May 2024.

Hall committees will also be offered assistance to apply for additional funding and grants from local and national schemes.

Councillor Kathryn Field, portfolio holder for environmental management at Rother District Council, said: "I am delighted we have launched the Village Halls Energy Project which is an important part of the council's climate action work, and an initiative which supports key elements of our Environment Strategy through providing sustainable energy and decarbonising existing buildings.

"Our village halls provide extensive economic, social and cultural benefits to our communities, and we are committed to protecting and supporting them.

"This project will identify and address energy inefficiencies found in many of our local halls, helping hall committees save money on energy bills and reduce their carbon footprints as well as securing their future in our communities."

More information on the project can be found on the council's website at www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/climate-emergency/village-halls-energy-project/

HUGE BOOST IN FUNDING FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMMES

Heads On, the official NHS charity for Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, has awarded £220,000 in grants to voluntary sector organisations to deliver suicide prevention programmes and community mental health support.

It forms part of the transformation of adult community mental health services in Sussex.

Funded by the Sussex Health and Care Partnership, the Mental Health Community Grants are part of a programme across the county to improve the lives and life expectancy of people with serious mental illness and the way they are supported in their local communities.

The work is part of a five-year national programme and brings together health and social care, local authorities, emergency services, voluntary sector organisations and people with lived experience of mental ill health across

Sussex to make change happen.

Rachael Duke, head of charity for Heads On, said "We know getting mental health care and support isn't always easy. Processes can be long and complicated and demand on services can mean people sometimes having to wait too long without the help or support they need. We want to change this.

"The voluntary sector in Sussex has a rich history of reaching diverse communities across the county that can face real barriers to accessing mental health care, supporting people in places and ways that feel right for them.

"By working in partnership, the NHS and voluntary sector together can improve the care available for people, supporting them to manage their conditions and move towards recovery on their own terms.



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BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL UPDATE



DEMENTIA SING-ALONG AT ST MARKS HALL



In February, the Community Committee trialed its first Dementia Friendly Coffee Morning with residents of Prideaux Lodge. Jamie from CJ Cars generously donated his time to drive our guests from the care home on Barnhorn Road to St Marks Hall to enjoy a fantastic entertainment set from Jade Powers and have a cuppa with councillors. Residents had a lovely time singing along with Jade, and enjoyed their trip out. The Committee is now going to look into how it can provide a much needed break from residential care for other homes in Bexhill. If you manage a care home and would like us to work with you on this project contact the Town Clerk for more information.

HAPPY TO CHAT



The Corner Café and Bakehouse in Sidley is pleased to launch the Town Council's first "Happy To Chat" table! Councillor Julie Norris, owner of the café on Ninfield Road, has agreed to test a new scheme to encourage social interaction. This is a simple way of indicating to others that you'd like a chat, without having to approach anyone. Café users can simply sit at the "Happy To Chat" table and enjoy a conversation or two with others that join them. In the UK, more than a million older people say they always or often feel lonely, according to Age UK. A review found 17% of older people talk to family, friends or neighbours less than once a week. For many, it is even more scarce than that. The Town Council hopes this scheme encourages more people to make contact with others. Cllr Norris said "there is always a very warm welcome at the Corner Cafe in Sidley. Our table is here for anyone who is lonely and would like to have a "chat" and make friends in this great community."

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Our Annual Town Meeting is taking place on Saturday 18th March at St Augustine's Hall from 4pm. We will be presenting our annual civic awards which recognise those that have made a significant contribution to the town over the past year, and we will be honouring one special Bexhillian with the Freedom of the Town. After the celebrations the formal part of the Annual Town Meeting will commence at 6pm where electors can ask any questions of the council. We were overwhelmed by the positive comments and great attendance last year, so to secure your place at this year's event please email the Town Clerk and we will reserve you a seat. As with all venues, there are limits to the number of people that can attend so we will operate a ticketing system to ensure we are prepared to seat everyone promptly and safely. We are once again welcoming the Royal British Legion Band to play some of the new music that the Town Council's recent grant funding paid for...we hope you enjoy the event.

KINGS CORONATION



As we experience another historic milestone in our lifetime, the Coronation of King Charles III, the Town Council is encouraging residents to hold their own street parties to mark the occasion. Whilst 6th May 2023 presents some challenges for the current town councillors, as this is immediately after the elections and they will have had to step down from office, the office of Mayor remains in place until the next Annual General Meeting of the Town Council later on that month. This means that Cllr Paul Plim can pay a visit to your street party as the Mayor of Bexhill, in the same way he did for the Queen's Jubilee. If you would like the Mayor to pop in and say "hello" on 6th May please email the Town Clerk and we will book you in!

WELCOME TO OUR NEW HOME!

Thank you to all the residents that have already visited us at our new premises on Western Road. Our initial plan is to operate a help desk three days a week, where residents can "drop in" and seek assistance in any matters they have regarding living or working in Bexhill. We have trained staff on hand to help direct visitors to the right service to help with any enquiry. Part of the building is being used as offices for Town Council staff to perform their day-to-day duties, the rest of the premises will be developed to incorporate community groups and local services as the Town Council grows. Councillors can hold surgeries and drop-ins



Alexis Markwick and the Bexhill Open Street Map

at the premises, so look out for news of these from your local representatives. One fantastic attraction we have in the reception area at Western Road is the Bexhill Open Street Map, created by Town Freeman Alexis Markwick. Please do stop by to admire his fantastic work, the map clearly marks out the wards within Bexhill and helps us identify specific areas when discussing issues that are being raised with us. We look forward to seeing you there.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

At the time of writing, the Town Council is still in the process of negotiating the terms of the lease for maintaining the fourteen public toilet sites across Bexhill. Rother District Council is offering the toilet facilities to the Town Council as part of the devolution of discretionary services. Councillors have been out and about across the wards speaking to residents to ensure that their views are taken into consideration when it comes to voting on the lease. A vote is expected to take place at the March Full Council meeting.

MEETINGS

You can find the details of our meetings, with agendas and reports, on our website www.bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Wed. 8th March** 6pm Planning Committee
6:45pm Extra-Ordinary Meeting for Freedom of the Town Award
7pm Full Council
- Wed. 15th March** 6pm Asset Transfer Committee
7pm Climate, Nature, and Environment Committee
- Wed. 22nd March** 6pm Planning Committee
7pm Finance and General Purposes Committee

Please check our website for more details as venues and meetings are subject to change.

Contact us at town.clerk@bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk

BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

35 Western Road, Bexhill-on-Sea TN40 1DU

Open: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 10am-12pm, and 12:30pm-2:30pm

Contact: town.clerk@bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk • www.bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk



POPULAR HOTEL GOES ON THE MARKET FOR CAMPERVAN DREAM TRIP

A successful business and cherished home has gone up for sale as a local couple head off around the world by camper van.

Rachel and Andy Keevil have played a key part in the Bexhill Community over the past twelve years, but have always dreamt of driving a campervan around the world as their retirement present to themselves.

Now, they feel the time is right to fulfil that dream and head off into the sunset leaving behind an incredible opportunity for an investor to snap up their very successful traditional B&B business in the heart of Bexhill.

The Buenos Aires Guest House in Albany Road, Bexhill-on-Sea is a unique opportunity to take on not only a flourishing business, currently operating at 90% capacity across the year, but to also acquire the tremendous goodwill and repeat visitor custom that Andy and Rachel have built up over the past twelve years.

The Buenos Aires has five well-appointed guest rooms including a premier suite with four poster bed and a large family room. On the ground floor is the owner's self-contained accommodation consisting of; one bedroom, lounge, kitchen, shower room and lean-to leading out to a private rear garden.

The property also includes a guest dining room and plenty of storage space including the loft and utility laundry room. The deceptively modest frontage of the Buenos Aires belies the almost Tardis-like depth and size of the building's interior. When guests are welcomed into the Buenos Aires, they always get a warm family welcome and have the option to delight in one of Andy's almost legendary Full English Breakfasts – very popular with Japanese visitors apparently!

The Buenos Aires is in a prime position within one hundred yards of Bexhill's stunning seafront promenade and directly opposite the iconic De La Warr Pavilion that hosts major concerts, comedy gigs and international art exhibitions all year round.

Rachel and Andy have built their business as a regular home from home for many of the technical crews that service the De La Warr and touring coach drivers who return year after year.

Howard Martin, president of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce & Tourism says; "Rachel and Andy have made The Buenos Aires into a significant accommodation asset for Bexhill that meets the needs of guests who really appreciate a friendly personal level of service that many hotels just can't compete with."

The great thing about the Buenos Aires is that investors have the choice of either carrying on with the established success of the current business adopting it as their home by the sea or utilise the size and scale of the building to bring their own distinctive identity and visitor business model to Bexhill. There is ample scope within the building to alter and adapt the spaces to develop a contemporary boutique hotel feel and vibe if that's what the buyer is looking for.

Rachel and Andy will be greatly missed in Bexhill as they tour the World. They are really community-spirited people who enjoy charity fundraising, taking part in events, and even a bit of Karaoke when the mood takes them.

But they are sure their legacy will be in good hands as they have appointed Maltbys to handle the sale for them.

Priced to sell at £525k-£550k if you would like to register interest contact Gemma Duffield on 01424 730678 or visit their website: www.maltbys.uk If you would like business support when investing in Bexhill you can contact: www.bexhillchamber.org

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Zagare Zermentino - An expressive Vermentino from Sicily's west coast, named after the delicate white flower of the lemon tree. The wine is fermented in stainless steel tanks but spends a short period on fine lees, lending a pleasing texture.

Pork Schnitzel, Citrus Squid & Crackling Salad, Heritage Tomatoes
Lieux Perdus Pinot Noir Rose - Light, pretty bright pink and packed full of creamy red fruit flavours.

Pulled Lamb Croquette & Bag Na Cauda (Anchovy Aioli) & Sea Herbs
Ventopuro Pinot Noir - Deep and intensely red in colour with aromas of strawberries, raspberries, and a touch of blueberries along with subtle spice notes characteristic of this variety.

Rhubarb & Custard. Set Vanilla Custard with Textures of Rhubarb
Fragola Strawberry Liqueur - Made from fruity, sweet, and mildly tart strawberries that give a tang and sweet burst to our strawberry liqueur. The strawberry has a unique and aromatic flavour that is a favourite time and time again.

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- Gas central heating
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Bexhill Road, St Leonards on Sea **£850 PCM**

- Ground floor garden flat
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Wickham Ave, Bexhill on Sea **£6,000 PA**

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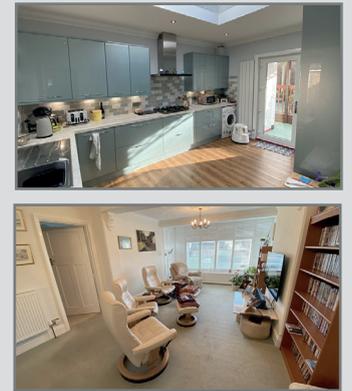
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PAGES AVENUE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA £950,000 (offers invited)

As you make your way to the beach, you'll come across this lovely, detached home with its striking feature, an eyebrow window. This wonderful home has two floors of spacious living space. The house has recently undergone remodelling, with the installation of a new boiler, modifications to the kitchen, shower room, toilet, and carpeting, making it a cosy retreat. The town centre at the end of the promenade, offers a variety of independent shops, main-line train station and a beachfront which is easily accessible from this wonderful home.



Grange Road, Hastings £575,000

Nestled in a small close of interesting properties is Cloverlea a three bedroomed detached bungalow with a double garage and an excellent Pine chalet workshop & mower room. A property which has been restored by the owners. Most recently they have had new windows fitted, a new kitchen, new bathroom and a new boiler and fitted plantation blinds to the windows on the front of the property. The hub of the bungalow is the large lounge/ dining room and the excellent kitchen fitted with Neff cooking appliances.



DRAYTON RISE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £550,000

This property provides the family with adaptable accommodation with two bedrooms downstairs & two bedrooms upstairs. Added to this you have two reception rooms, a modern kitchen and two bathrooms. The usual features include gas central heating, double glazing and attractive and neatly laid gardens with an excellent workshop to one side.



COODEN DRIVE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £700,000

As you drive West along Cooden Drive you will find this lovely five bedroom detached house which is set back from the road, with a tandem garage and gardens. Inside there are two reception rooms, a large conservatory, two bathrooms (1 en-Suite), good sized kitchen and lots of character that give this property its homely feeling.



PARK ROAD, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £220,000

A well presented 2nd floor flat with a lift service in the building. The flat comes double glazed, has gas central heating, a kitchen with appliances fitted including fridge/freezer and cooker, walk in shower cubicle, the 2 bedrooms, then the lounge with sliding doors to a balcony which offers the views out over the seafront and the English Channel.

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BIRKDALE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £1,100PCM

A ground floor 2 bedroom flat with a good sized lounge/ dining room, enclosed terrace area, a modern kitchen, bathroom, separate WC and a garage which is situated in a nearby block. The flat comes double glazed, and has gas central heating. The landlord is seeking a more mature tenant.



BIRKDALE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £950PCM

This lovely, bright and airy home comes with double glazing, gas heating, a modern kitchen with oven, washing machine and Fridge/Freezer, as well as the shower room, 2 double bedrooms and good size lounge with sun terrace which overlooks the communal lawn & gardens.

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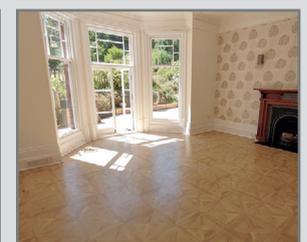
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COLLINGTON LANE EAST, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £900PCM

This good size home with a lovely bright lounge with balcony which enjoys a southerly aspect, the two bedrooms, with the bigger bedroom also having access to a balcony at the front, the kitchen and a bathroom. This property is not suitable for a family with younger children.



SILVERDALE ROAD, EASTBOURNE - £1600PCM

The property comes with the 2 double bedrooms, a large lounge with French Doors to the gardens, large kitchen with appliances, bathroom, separate WC, large entrance hall/reception hall, garage and private use patio garden, as well as the communal use garden.

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STAR LETTER: MERRIMAN'S UNANSWERED QUESTIONS



Mr Merriman spent 90 minutes bantering with words, phrases and political rhetoric in his interview with Bexhill News Editor, Kim Mayo, and sadly — he missed the free PR opportunity to tell readers how he will use his position as MP for Bexhill and Battle to improve the 'actions' he says matters to people and that he is 'determined' to deliver on them.

Mr Merriman's use of rhetorical language in his 90 minute interview, may seem persuasive to him and his attempt to influence his constituents, but he offered no solutions of how he would or will go about ensuring what exactly are the 'actions' he alluded to, how they would be achieved and timescale?

Mr Merriman tells us in the interview that he has been MP for Bexhill and Battle since 2015, but he did not list one positive action that he has been instrumental in making a reality and that has improved the lives of people in Bexhill and Battle?

After analysing Mr Merriman's quotes and promises in the interview, not a single action plan, timescale, expected outcomes or benefits were listed for the people in Bexhill and Battle.

For example: Mr Merriman stated:

1. "His vision is to ensure a bright future for Bexhill both as a 'go-to' destination for tourists and interest of local residents and businesses." **Question Mr Merriman** — how will this 'vision' be achieved, what are the plans currently in place or been planned and what do you mean by a 'go-to' destination?
2. "Being an MP is a role a take seriously. Voters have put their faith in me." **Question Mr Merriman** — why do you need o remind us you take your role 'seriously' and what do you believe voters expect by putting their 'faith' in you as MP?
3. "As Conservatives, we know people have been suffering during the cost-of-living crisis. I'm sure a brighter future lies ahead." **Question Mr Merriman** — What sufferings are you aware of that the people of Bexhill and Battle are experiencing and what do you mean by a 'brighter future lies ahead'?
4. "Everyone wants to see an efficient and punctual rail service which can be relied upon." **Questions Mr Merriman** — What has given rise to the deterioration in the rail service, how long has this deterioration been happening and what reasons do you have for the unreliability you alluded to- how will you help to fix the 'issues' you said exist?
5. "I want to see opportunities and skills created for people who live in Bexhill." **Question Mr Merriman** — What 'opportunities and skills' are you referring to and what plans have you got or instigating to bring such 'opportunities/skills to reality. What about the people in Battle?
6. "Nobody likes to see empty premises in a town centre. We need to do everything possible to encourage investment in new business to create an infrastructure to make Bexhill a 'go-to' destination." **Question Mr Merriman** — Who are the 'we' that you are referring to? What have you done since 2015 to prevent the severe inconvenience caused by the closures of banks and other businesses in Bexhill and Battle and some moving to Eastbourne and Hastings?
7. "In the De La Warr Pavilion, we have Bexhill jewel in the crown and we must capitalise on that." **Question Mr Merriman** — What do you mean by the 'jewel in the crown' and how do you intend to ensure the 'jewel' stop its gradual infrastructure decay and minority appeal in performance events for example?
8. "Yes we need homes, but new homes need to be built in the right places and faster." **Question Mr Merriman** — How many new homes do we need in Bexhill and Battle? Where will these new homes be built, what impact assessment have you undertaken regarding essential infrastructure to accommodate increasing diverse population- such as medical and health services, affordable

leisure, clean environment/streets, more schools and affordable nursery places, adequate sewage and clean reliable water supply and beaches, affordable transport services, proactive policing and improvements in roads like London Road; including the A21 you promised a few years ago that money was earmarked for its imminent widening?

9. You said — "people in Bexhill and Battle want to see 'action' and that you are determined to deliver." **Question Mr Merriman** — What are the actions, how will you ensure they are delivered, timescale, impact and outcomes measurement?

Bernard Burrell, Bexhill-On Sea

PUBLIC TOILET CONFUSION?



Dear Editor. Congratulations on producing a paper which is not afraid of raising controversial topics.

In the February edition there was an article, presumably written by Rother District Council, regarding the BTC take over of the toilets which they are promoting. This quoted 'There have been some comments that passing services to the Town Council would result in 'double taxation'. This isn't the case as once the services are transferred we will stop paying, and also stop collecting council tax to run them'.

This is RDC using semantics. They will still collect the full council tax, the precept from Bexhill residents will not reduce. It is just that they will no longer be spending the tax on the toilets, it will be 'used for other things'. They may not call it 'double taxation' but the costs to Bexhill residents will still increase as they will pay BTC to run the toilets in addition to no reduction in the RDC tax.

This has been admitted by RDC councillors now in other social media. They are using 'smoke and mirrors' to try and hide it. I would suggest our Town Council should reject the transfer and make RDC do what they have been charging for (and not doing) for years and improve the toilets, using the £200k CiL payment offered (which probably came from Bexhill developments) themselves to do the job as it is unlikely to be enough to do it properly.

More residents should attend the BTC Council meetings to see how they handle (or not) these things. Note the increase in BTC precept was pushed through in the January meeting despite a number of councillors objecting that the Asset Transfer Committee had not produce a report and they had no information to vote on.

The improvements are badly needed after years of neglect but residents should be under no illusions about who is paying for it. Talk to your Councillors — if you can find them.

Best regards, Alan Goss.

DO WE REALLY HAVE BLOOD ON OUR HANDS?

Dear Editor. As one of those to whom Josephine Crowe (Letters February) has hurled her outrageous slings and arrows, I feel the need to defend myself and my fellow Bexhillians as well as alerting her to some of the many facts which have escaped her notice.

Firstly, her assertion that no-one complained about the lockdown parties at No. 10 is just wrong; there was a formal enquiry as a result of many complaints, which led, in part, to the fall of Boris Johnson. Secondly, it is unclear what connection Ms Crowe is making between Brexit and Covid but her assertion that 'millions and millions died' is somewhat at variance to the global death figure of 6.8m stated by the WHO. However, what is clear, is that the UK, acting more nimbly and unfettered by EU regulations, was able to secure stocks of vaccine well before our European neighbours, with their cumbersome procurements procedures.

As a result, vaccines were available here sooner and directly as a result of Brexit, no doubt saving many lives. Lastly, the claim that the Government is deliberately allowing prices to rise when it has the ability to prevent this, is clearly risible. It operates within a global economy and is subject to the vagaries of economic forces over which it has no direct control. Perhaps Ms Crowe would be more at home in Russia or North Korea where the economy and thus prices are controlled by dictators.

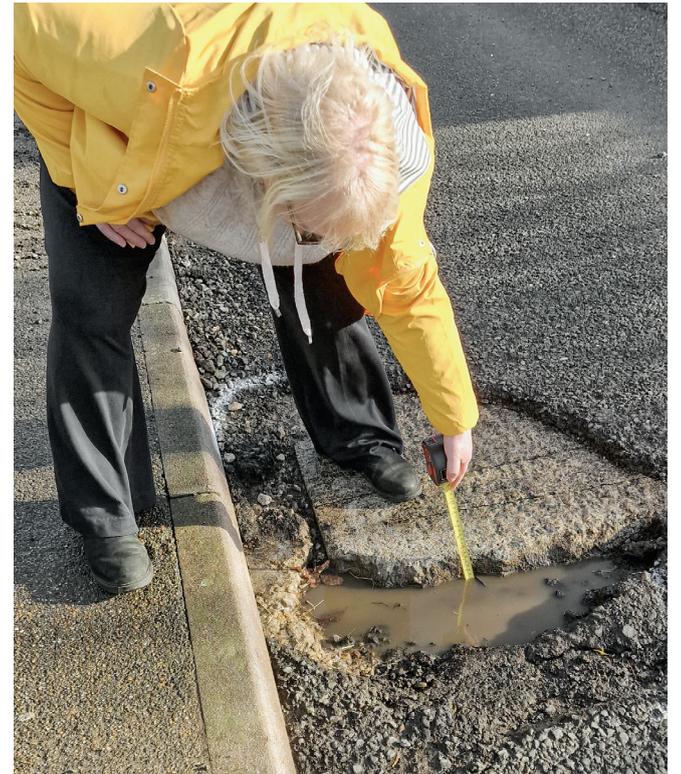
However, my greatest complaint is that Ms Crowe accuses me, and presumably all readers of Bexhill News, of 'having blood on your hands',

of Brexiteers 'being mass murderers', and 'not blinking an eyelid at hundreds of suicides'. Personally, I find these comments offensive. Despite Ms Crowe asking 'how any of you can sleep at night', I would like to assure her that I and most of the people I know, sleep very well. Of course, we are concerned at recent events but we are doing our best in a messy world. Do we care about our fellow man? Of course we do!

Just look at the considerable and extensive voluntary work that is done in Bexhill, ask our new Ukrainian friends that we have welcomed and housed, and those working in our public services to make sure that our daily lives work as well as they can. Ms Crowe, do you not owe us all an apology?

Tessa Osborne

POTHOLE CHAOS



Dear Editor. Further to your excellent article in issue 08 *Bexhill News*, regarding the pothole problem in Bexhill.

This is the second time I have lost two tyres to pothole damage during the last two years.

This time was on a brand new Peugeot 308 GT Premium, the tyres had done less than 2,000 miles each.

I did contact East Sussex Highways (as I indeed did last time) but again like last time I don't hold out much hope of getting any recompense.

This time the road was North Trade Road Bexhill, please see the attached letter, report from the RAC, invoices for the tyres and photos all of which have been submitted to the Highways Department as requested by them. I also reported the potholes to them, again which they request that you do.

Any help your newspaper can be of highlighting this massive problem in Bexhill would be welcome I am sure by all the residents

Keep up the good work with the newspaper and it looks like it is going from strength to strength.

Keith Evans

OUR ROAD IS LIKE A CATTLE GRID

Dear Editor. Reference to your article in February edition, I suggest you examine Grange Court Drive.

I have been in contact with local authority for 10+ years pointing out problems and basically been ignored. Apart from junction with Buxton Drive and small area repeatedly bodged, there are many raised drains and surrounds, large areas with no tarmac, many holes and 81 ridges in road where not laid correctly.

This is like driving on a cattle grid and our only access. Just because we are not considered a major road nothing has been done. Even now the regularly bodged area is barricaded over awaiting more shoddy workmanship.

Tyres and suspensions are always needing replacement/repair. Our council tax is as important as the rest of the borough. Many other local roads have been repeatedly done in small areas, Grange Court Drive needs resurfacing completely.

I have also sent copy to local MP.

Brian Wyles

KNOW YOUR GARDEN



Emma Reece

In a brand new regular monthly feature, Emma Reece, Head Gardener at Bates Green Garden in Arlington explains how you can get the most from your garden and will write about the jobs you should be doing each month.

Emma first entered the world of horticulture in 2002 when she joined The WRAGS (Work and Retrain As a Gardener) Scheme as a student at Bates Green Garden. The scheme enabled Emma to work under the guidance of Carolyn McCutchan, an acclaimed plantswoman who had designed and planted the garden since 1968.

Carolyn, sadly, died in 2019 and since then, Emma has been leading the small team restoring and developing the unique, bird and plant-filled garden.

JOBS FOR MARCH



Photo: John Glover

Our spirits are currently being lifted by the jewel-like colours of bulbs such as crocus, aconites and *Iris reticulata*. The snowdrops too have been gloriously abundant, their bell-shaped flowers standing out against the beautifully mulched earth.

One of the joys of being a gardener is that the activity encourages forward thinking and a positive attitude and so, when you admire your snowdrops shining forth, you must look closely for groups that appear congested, with more leaves than

flowers. If these are lifted and divided now whilst still green and visible, the display will be even better next year. Think carpets of snowdrops, their luminosity brightened by the low winter sun.

Take a sharp border spade or a long hand trowel and gently dig around the group to ease them out of the ground. Dig deeper than you think necessary in order not to separate the leaves from the bulbs. Lift the entire clump from the ground and place it on a tarpaulin/ bench or tray. Using your hands, the best tool invented, separate them out into groups of 3-5 bulbs.

Replant these in your chosen area at the same depth as they were previously or at 10cm deep. Water them in and continue to do so if the weather conditions are dry before the leaves eventually turn yellow and begin to shrivel up.



Weeding is a task that I personally adore. Here at Bates Green Garden, we positively encourage self-seeding plants such as *Nigella*, annual poppies, *Calendula* and honesty to name but a few. These will grow where they choose and often look charming and add to the naturalistic look we are aiming for. It is important to learn how to

recognise these desirables in their seedling form so that they are not plucked out by accident.

Traditionals such as arum, nettle and dock should come out of an ornamental border with relative ease, it is much better to remove them now than attempting to do so later on in the year when the plants will have set seed and there will be a great deal of other foliage for them to hide behind.

Seed Sowing. March is a good month to get your colourful hardy annual plants going. Growing annuals from seed is a very economical way to get colour into your beds and borders and I am particularly fond of the tough varieties that do not require too much cossetting. Think of bees as well as colour and focus on honeywort (*Cerintho major* 'Purpurascens') which has glaucous leaves and bell-shaped purple flowers, *Ammi majus* with its lacy white flowers and vibrant calendula, a particular favourite of mine is a cultivar called 'Indian Prince'. The flowers are a deep rich orange, and the edible petals will impart a peppery flavour to your summer salads.

March is the month of expectation, do not ditch the thermals yet but do get out and enjoy all this month has to offer.



Bates Green Garden, an RHS Partner Garden, is open every Wednesday until 25th October 2023. For details please go to the website www.batesgreengarden.co.uk and follow the garden on Instagram @batesgreengarden

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DEATH NOTICES

PEGGY PAMELA BEARD

Born in in Peckham on 19 March 1929 , passed away on, 20 November 2022 at St Nectan's Residential Home. A service was held at Eastbourne Crematorium for friends and family on 28 December 2022.

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CAMARADERIE IS KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF FLOURISHING SAILING CLUB



BY SPORTS REPORTER, MIKE LEGG

ANYONE who joins Bexhill Sailing Club is promised a 'beach party'. But if you're thinking beers, barbecue and a bonfire, then you could be in for a rude awakening.

The "party", though, is an essential part of the club's activities as sailors need a shingle-minded approach to getting in and out of the water on the pebbles at Bexhill beach.

Commodore John Stebbing explained: "The club has been here since 1947 and celebrated its 75th anniversary last year.

"It is a beautiful vista here that comes with its challenges but that only seems to create a great camaraderie.

"The shingle changes shape here because of the storms and the only way to get the boats out of the water requires power. And you need people waiting to help get the boat out — and we call that a beach party.

"They really pull the boat straight out of the surf as soon as they hit the beach before the next wave comes in and knocks the whole thing over. It's unique to the club."

The day I caught up with newly-installed commodore Stebbing the sea was like a millpond but the retreating tide revealed the rocks and reef that means launching and racing a few hours either side of high tide.

The Tuesday crew were also hard at work doing jobs in preparation for the season that runs until November.

The season was due to begin with the Ice Bucket Race on March 11. The sea is still rather chilly at this time of year hence the name — and continues with racing scheduled every weekend.

Approximately 160 members sail each year, from cadets to seniors, with prizes handed out for championship winners at the club's big bash each November.

But there is a gap in the membership which Stebbing would like to see closed.

He said: "Because we're in Bexhill we're really keen to try to encourage new members.

"Our cadets are always oversubscribed and the only reason we can't provide more scope is that we need so many instructors per student to comply with our RYA (Royal Yachting Association) requirements.

"But then these kids go off to university and, like many sports clubs, it's gaining those members again when they are back in our territory.

"After people go to university, and are often spread around the countryside, they're not going to join Bexhill if they're living in London. So, we have this sort of gap in age between the mid-20s and the mid-40s, which we want to try and fill.

"We feel, as a club, we can offer people great sailing experience.

"Why we don't gain more members is, I think, because there are so many activities that compete with us. For example, a lot of people are cycling. What's the difference? Well, they could just get on a bike and cycle and don't have to pay to join a club.

"What we offer, though, is a social environment as well as sporting environment.

"The skills we say you need here are really good skills and they teach people discipline about how you have to operate to remain safe and effective as a sailor.

"We have a lot to offer but just because we are in Bexhill, and the age group of the people in the town, we just need to try to spread our wings a little bit and draw people in from further afield."

The club runs courses for those getting back into sailing and for those starting out as complete novices, who finish with their own regatta.

It is a pathway to learn the ropes and gain a RYA qualification.

Stebbing said: "What we do offer those who do the tuition is a style of membership that enables them to use our club boats without any charges. They can use the social side of the club and they are effectively trainee members and get to contribute and become engaged in the club."

The Federation Cup pits Bexhill sailors against their counterparts in Rye, Hastings, Pevensey Bay and the two clubs in Eastbourne., while cadets Logan Adams, Grace Harwood, Eve Fifield, Daisy Gavin-Marr and Charlie Youngman all competed at the Regional Championships in 2021.

Members have enjoyed national exposure, too, with the club's chief instructor Richard Eagleton competing with success in the Europe dinghies class.

Ian and Stephanie Spriggings got a taste for sailing at the club and have gone on to sail big yachts around the world.

Stebbing added: "Sailing is often for individuals, and we have had members who have become national champions.

"Past commodore and president, Mike Adams, was a national champion. I've mentioned Richard Eagleton and there are others who have moved on to greater things."

But enjoyment is the name of the game and there is also a fun-orientated Sea Week, too.

"The races might be a bit crazy," admits Stebbing. "In the past, for instance, we've had Le Mans starts. So, you put your boat on the edge of the sea, but you must be up at the clubhouse and then run to it with everybody trying to launch at the same time. It's pandemonium. It's family fun. That's what it's about."

MILESTONES GALORE FOR BEXHILL RUNNERS AND TRIATHLETES MEMBERS

BY JACKIE KNIGHT

PARKRUN milestones were celebrated by several Bexhill Runners and Triathletes members in a busy February.

Many Parkrunners like to spread their wings and "tour" different venues as they get their regular fitness kick.

Alison Brooker travelled to Netley Abbey Parkrun held in the Royal Victoria Country Park, Hampshire to bring up her century of Parkruns.

Ellie Docksey (100) and Jackie Knight (50) both triumphed at Hastings, with Knight securing a personal best. A real conquest was made by John Brooker, who smashed a total of 50 Hastings Parkruns.

Amanda and Geoff Tondeur toured to Margate to record terrific finishing positions, while Cathy Bate ventured up North to Northallerton in Hambleton.

Outstanding goals were accomplished by BRT athletes who were out in force running the Tunbridge Wells 40th Anniversary Half Marathon.

The run is famed for its hilly, challenging, but beautiful scenic Kent countryside. Ellie Docksey, Grant Docksey and Matt Smith stormed home to earn medals with fantastic, timed performances.

Throughout the month of January, Andy Croft, BRT coach for Juniors ran a mile a day for 31 days. Croft has been on a mission admirably raising a grand total of £440 for the Air Ambulance Service.

Red January 2023 inspired many club members to keep moving every day to promote mental health wellbeing and unite to beat the winter blues away.

Bexhill Running and Triathlon Club is also pleased to announce its 2023 Couch to 5K group starting on Wednesday, April 19th at 6-7pm for ten weeks.

Taking part will take you from not running at all, to being able to run 5K. If you have ever thought about running with a friendly group of like-minded people, please go to the BRT webpage for more information: www.bexhillrunnerstriathletes.co.uk



Ellie Docksey



Alison Docksey



Matt Smith

Would you like your sports club or team to appear in these pages? If so, simply email: editor@Bexhill-News.co.uk



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SPORT



BOSS LIGHT AIMING TO FINISH THE SEASON WITH A CONSIDERABLE FLOURISH

BY SPORTS REPORTER, MIKE LEGG

IMAGES BY JOE KNIGHT/SEASIDE PHOTOGRAPHY.

RYAN Light has targeted equalling last season's tally of wins as Bexhill United approach the final part of their league campaign.

The Pirates ended up an impressive fourth last season but hopes of replicating that finish were dented by a 2-0 home defeat to high-flying Steyning in their penultimate Southern Combination League premier division game of the month on February 18.

But manager Light believes United's closing run of fixtures gives them the opportunity to push for a big finish.

United face AFC Varndeanians (home, March 4), Lingfield (away, March 11), Loxwood (home, March 18) and then Broadbridge Heath (away, March 25).

Talking to the *Bexhill News* before Saturday's (February 25) visit of title-chasers Crawley Down, Light said: "Our run-in is quite favourable as we only have Broadbridge Heath in the top ten and everybody else is lower to mid-table. I think it is a good run-in for us. "The top three or four is probably out of our reach but there are 30 points up for grabs and we shall try to get as many as we can.

"If we could get seven wins out of the ten games, that will mean we shall finish on as many wins as we did last season. We had a lot of draws last year that this year we have turned into defeats rather than wins.

"The target is probably around the 70-point mark and finish as high up as we can."

Light reckons there is little to choose between many of the sides scrapping it out in the top half of the table.

He added: "The league is just so tight now. If we had won against Steyning we could have gone fourth, but we dropped down to ninth after that result. There are literally a few points covering about seven teams.

"It's a hell of a lot tighter than last season. We finished fourth last season and we finished ten points clear of the rest of the league.

"The top four really broke away last year whereas nobody has really done that this season.

"The leaders Crawley Down lost 5-0 to Broadbridge Heath on Saturday (February 18), who are third, so it has been a year where, just a little bit like the Premier League, that everybody is beating everybody.

"When you look at the top half of the table, I don't think there is all that much between the sides.

"Newhaven, who were second, won 11-0 on Saturday but two weeks beforehand we had beaten them 2-0 at the Polegrove, so it's really a season where there is just not much in it. It really can come down to fine margins in games."

Those fine margins were demonstrated against Steyning, a defeat which halted a three-game winning streak.

A 1-0 loss to Crowborough (February 1) was followed by a 2-0 home win over Saltdean (February 4) in which James Stone and Evan Archibald netted.

A Stephen Okoh double and Archibald effort then saw off Midhurst and Easebourne (February 8) 3-1 at the Polegrove before Jamie Thoroughgood and Archibald, with a delightful 20-yard chip, sealed a victory at Uckfield (February 11).

Steyning, though, ended the run as they were sent on their way by "a freak goal" from Ryan Hallett.

Light explained: "Just before half-time our goalie kicked it out of his hands from the edge of his box and the lad literally hit it from the halfway line, it caught the wind and sailed right over his head.

"It was a freak goal but without the wind he either would not have attempted it, or if he did, anywhere else it would have dropped to



Stephen Okoh on the ball against AFC Uckfield

the goalie. It put us on the back foot for the second half."

United were without Jack Shonk, whose partner had a baby, illness-hit skipper Tom Vickers and the unavailable Harvey Mapstone for that fixture.

Mapstone, who scored both goals when United beat Newhaven at the end of January, has been in fine form since joining on loan from Isthmian League Hastings United.

Hastings could recall him but Light said: "Hastings don't concede a lot of goals so I don't think there is a lot of scope there for a young defender to break through at his age – but he will do it one day because he is an exceptional talent.

"He a centre-back but, to be fair, he could play anywhere on the pitch – forward, central midfield or right or left-back. He's a really good player."

United were due to play Isthmian League Bognor at Nyewood Lane on February 28 in the Sussex Senior Cup quarter-final after Eastbourne Town were thrown out of the competition.

Town were kicked out after failing to raise a side for the previous round.



Evan Archibald in action against Steyning

COMMON AIM TO PROFIT FROM A GRUELLING RUN-IN TO END OF SEASON

BY SPORTS REPORTER, MIKE LEGG

MANAGER Russell Eldridge wants Little Common to get on another run as they plough through a gruelling end to the season.

The Commoners picked up a perfect nine points in the space of a week in mid-February with victories over Crowborough, Loxwood and Hassocks.

That sequence ended with a 5-1 loss at title-chasing Broadbridge Heath on February 21.

Eldridge's side are playing catch-up after the weather played havoc with their fixtures in the SCFL premier but topping last season's tenth-place finish is still possible if they can turn games in hand into points.

But Eldridge admits it is easier said than done as they prepared to close out the month with Lingfield home and away before games against Saltdean (away, March 4), Eastbourne United (home, March 7), Crawley Down (home, March 11), Peacehaven (away, March 14), Alfold (away, March 18) and finally Midhurst & Easebourne at home on March 25.

He told *Bexhill News*: "It's all right having the games in hand, but you have to win those games.

"Sometimes the points on the board are better depending what type of run you're on. Last season we finished tenth, which was our highest finish, and we want to better that. That will be down to us and if we can get on a run, then we can get the points to climb the table.

"Realistically, bettering what we did last year would be the target and getting into that top half. We're not thinking we are going to win all the games and end up in the top six, although that would be nice.

"It's a cliché but we want to finish as high as we can with as many points as we can. It's just a case of getting the consistency, which we had before Broadbridge Heath, in performances or results.

"We have quite a few games to go and we are in the middle of this Saturday-Tuesday run which does take its toll.

"No excuses, we have had some tough games but also some good results. We picked up nine points out of nine – which was really good.

"We had some difficult games but showed some different qualities within us to get the wins. Now we have to hit the reset button and go again on another run."

Common opened the month with a 6-1 victory over AFC Varndeanians (February 4) which was their first win since November. The goals came from Sam Cruttwell (two), James Miriam-Batchelor, Lewis Parsons, Jamie Bunn and Lewis Hole.

A 1-0 defeat to Eastbourne Town (February 7) followed before in-form Crowborough were sunk 3-2 on the following Saturday. Adam Smith struck after 12 seconds while Hole and Miriam-Batchelor added the other goals.

Common hit back from 2-0 down at the break at Loxwood (February 14) thanks to goals from Freddie Warren, Alvin Scott and Miriam-Batchelor to pinch a 3-2 win.

And Hassocks were sunk 2-1 at the Beacon thanks to a Sam Ellis volley and Sam Cruttwell's stoppage-time free-kick.

Injured Miriam-Batchelor missed the defeat to Broadbridge Heath, as did regular keeper Matt Cruttwell and boss Eldridge.

Miriam-Batchelor has been impressive and Eldridge said: "He's done really well. He takes up the position behind the striker and makes some good runs in behind to stretch the opposition.

"He's scored some good goals and important goals."