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Report to Parish Councils – June 2025

This report is written is for Parish Councils meeting in June.

Some of the items here are from information circulated by ESCC but which may not have been drawn to the attention of parish councillors and others.

My Activities

I've decided to include a separate section each month with bullet-point summaries of *some* of the meetings I have had, or actions carried out. As elections were originally expected to be held in May the current meeting load is fairly light.

- I attended the AGM of the Robertsbridge Arts Partnership
- I am one of three councillors on the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel which considers cases where a child, or occasionally young adult, with special needs is not granted free transport to their school. We last met in early May. The substantive meeting papers and minutes are not published as these concern individuals.
- I attended the opening of the Robertsbridge Community Orchard – an excellent initiative and a credit to the local volunteers and businesses who have done the work and supported it.
- I attended the VE day service at the Staplecross war memorial. I also attended VE remembrance events at St Michael's Playden and Peasmarsh CE schools, but in my role as a governor.
- I attended a briefing on ESCC Equality Impact Assessments, which are a legal requirement for most county policy changes
- I have become a member of the Devolution Member Reference Group which is a joint reference group of Place and People Scrutiny Committees. This is tasked with scrutinising all aspects of devolution and local government reorganisation. The inaugural meeting was held in May
- I attended the Flood Awareness event in Robertsbridge with the Environment Agency and East Sussex fire and Rescue Service. Robertsbridge has in the past had serious

flooding but now has a series of barriers, berms etc to prevent serious issues

- I was at the Full Council held on 20th May. This was also the annual meeting when the chairman and vice-chairman were (re)elected. The web cast and also draft minutes are available on the ESCC web site
- I had two calls with the highways steward to discuss the state of current road repairs, potholes etc.
- As a member of the Fire Authority, I attended a member's seminar where the topics were the recent inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS!), Wildfires and a budget update. I am also leader of the Conservative Group on this body.
- Each month I normally attend 6 out of the 7 parish councils in Northern Rother (2 councils meet every two months). I do not normally report on these but this month I also attended and spoke at 5 Annual Parish Meetings.

Queensway Gateway

Last month I stated that the single line working and traffic lights would be reintroduced after the bank holidays.

I believe that the single line working is now in place but with a reduced length and manual monitoring at peak times. A large amount of earth is now being removed and the Westfield water main moved. The permanent traffic lights will then be put in place and the road fully opened!

Newenden Bridge/ Bodiam Bridge/ Hawkhurst Crossroads

As reported verbally Kent highways are now saying that the most likely period for this closure is in Spring 2026.

I have had discussions with highways and the police about the enforcement of the 18 tonne limit on Bodiam bridge. Apparently police enforcement would require that they escort offending vehicles to the weighbridge at Johns Cross. I am pushing for camera enforcement which is apparently feasible.

Grants for Parishes

This section will occur each month and is a list of possible sources of funding for parish level projects. I have had a number of enquiries as to whether any of these could help with areas such as allotments. Sadly the answer is no – these are all intended for community/parish council projects.

- Dungeness Power Stations. I sit on the Site Stakeholder Group which liaises between the massive project to decommission these and the local community. They often provide grants for local activities including some in East Sussex even though the power stations are in Kent. For example, this Christmas Rye food bank is their designated charity.
- Veolia Green and Food Waste Composting Facility. As a member of Place Scrutiny I recently visited this site near Lewes. Their 'output' is compost and they deliver 'one tonne bags' at no cost to local community gardens and similar. I put Peasmarsh parish council in contact with them and they have already received two bags for the community gardens.

- Southeast Water do make grants to local communities, for example to support playgrounds
- Gatwick Airport are keen on funding local projects, at least partly driven by their desire to open a second runway which would have some impact on East Sussex, though less in the Eastern part

If you have a project which might benefit, please let me know and I will put you in contact and try to help get it approved. It seems that the best will be for those seeking funds to send me an email which I will then forward.

Please let me know if you come across any new sources of funding and I will add them to the list.