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1st June 2023

Report to Parish Councils – June 2023

This report is written is for Parish Councils meeting in June. It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother.

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

Flexibus

You may have seen adverts on Facebook for Flexibus. I have mentioned this before under the name DDRT (Digital Demand Responsive Transport). This ESCC service is essentially somewhere between a taxi which takes one customer from one chosen place to another at a chosen time, and a scheduled bus service which runs at scheduled times from between bus stops. Flexibus runs from a meeting point, which is likely to be close to your home or other start location, to another but often picking up other passengers on the way. The rollout has recently been extended to include villages in Northern Rother and early feedback has been excellent.

Details can be seen at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roads-transport/public/flexibus>,

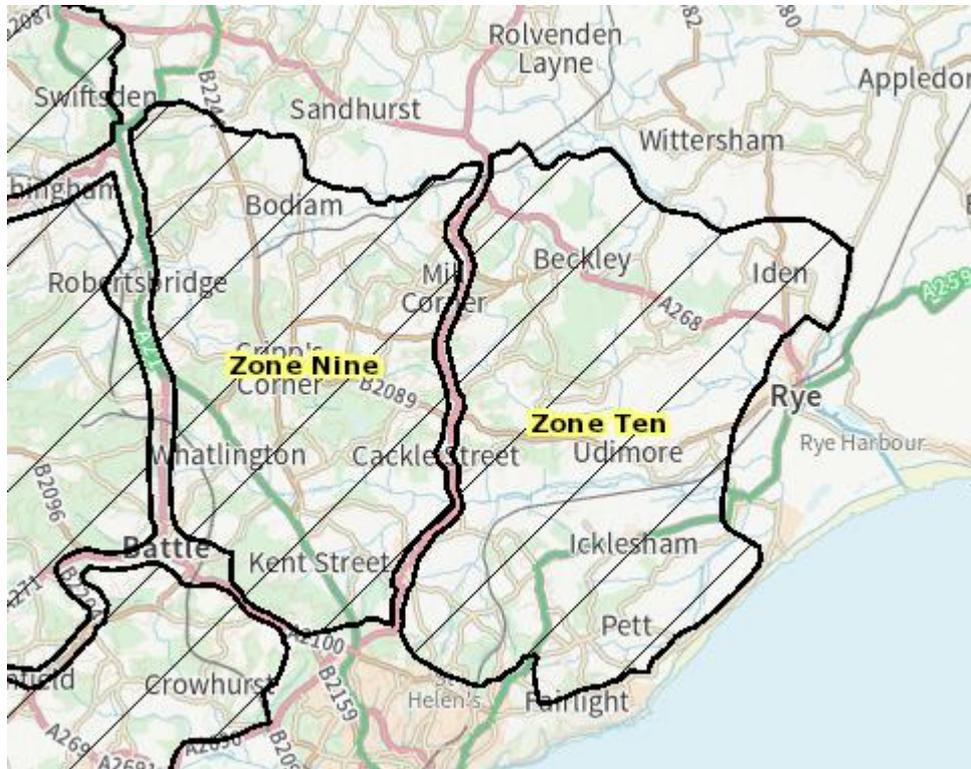
You can book with the Ride Pingo App or call 01273 078203 between 630am and 730pm Monday to Saturday. It currently runs from 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, excluding Sundays and bank holidays).

Fares are £2 maximum for a single, £4 return during the price cap period. A day pass for an adult is £5, Children's and young person's fares are less and concessionary pass holders are

free with some timing restrictions.

Flexibus has been made possible as part of BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) for which ESCC submitted a successful bid to central government.

Travel is within zones. In Northern Rother there are two as shown on the map below:



I am planning to get some posters with this information which can be displayed on parish noticeboards, particularly for those who do not use social media.

Burst Mains

We had a series of burst mains, starting with one in Stream Lane (aka Beckley Road) which stopped water to much of Beckley, Peasmarsch, Rye Foreign and Iden. Soon after it was fixed there were further bursts by the reservoir in Cripps Corner and in Sedlescombe, possibly caused by extra stress when the mains were refilled.

SEW (South East Water) has seemed to be overoptimistic on repair times in the past which also delays them taking a decision on providing water bottles. This seemed to be the case but after communications to them from Natasha Vadorin (the new chair of Beckley Parish Council) and then myself, they seemed to step up their game, with water bottles at Beckley, Peasmarsch, Iden and Sedlescombe village halls. I also pushed for bottles at Staplecross village hall but without success.

I have been gathering location data with photos for bottle stations in each parish with the intention of meeting with SEW and streamlining the process of getting water bottles supplied in the event of further issues. A few locations need revision, but I will now push for such a meeting, ideally to use our area as a pilot for them.

During the problems SEW did seem to step up to deliver bottles to vulnerable people and a bowser to a hospital, though in one or two cases this was patchy. I would be keen to receive feedback on this which I would discuss with SEW.

Of course, ideally we would like no burst mains but it seems like the age of the water network means that this is inevitable. As many of us know SEW have closed Beckley Road/Stream Lane from Horns Cross to Beckley to replace the water mains. There are apparently others which need replacing.

Potholes and Roads

The new contractor Balfour Beatty took over on 1st May and as I reported previously in mid-May, the early signs are good. They are keen to make a difference, to fix potholes to a higher standard and to be more responsive.

The worst potholes in Northern Rother were of course in Station Road, Robertsbridge. I am pleased to say that following an on-site meeting with a senior official at ESCC who said he was 'shocked' by the road condition, the potholes were jetted and filled in the following week with a promise to do patching (partial resurfacing) later this year. However, Highways then reviewed this and decided to do a full resurfacing later this year for which I have been pushing for a long time.

This is good for the many road users in Robertsbridge but is of course only one road when we have a broader issue across the county. The major underlying challenge is a lack of sufficient funding for road maintenance, given our budgets are dominated by statutory needs such as adult and social care, children's services and schools. We are urgently looking at this at ESCC and I hope to have more news on this in the next few months.

In the meantime please keep reporting all potholes at <https://live.eastsussexhighways.com/report-problem>.