

YOUR DISTRICT

TODAY

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025



**MAJOR PROJECT
UPDATES**

pages 4-6

**COUNCIL SERVICES
AT CHRISTMAS**

pages 10-11

**LOOKING BACK
ON 2025**

page 13

**Folkestone
& Hythe**



District Council



Live your life in safety

Folkestone & Hythe District Council's Lifeline service has been helping and supporting residents, their families, friends and co-workers all over Kent for more than 35 years.



Lifeline
Alarm Unit
from £3.67 pw



Mobile GPS
Device
from £5.42 pw

Lifeline365 devices trigger alerts through home-based and global positioning systems (GPS). When you are in need of help at home or away, simply press the button on your wristband or pendant and you'll be connected within seconds to our control room 24/7.

**For further information contact
our friendly team on 03000 030 248**

Email: lifeline365@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk
Visit: lifeline365.org





Leader's foreword

Welcome to our autumn/winter issue of Your District Today.

I am absolutely delighted this magazine brings you updates on the many projects regenerating our district in terms of employment, new opportunities and housing. We live in a truly wonderful district and we should be proud of what it has to offer.

Earlier this year, councillors agreed our new corporate plan – Our District, Our World – enhancing prosperity and wellbeing for all. It sets out a blueprint for our towns, villages and communities and all we shall be considering whilst we deliver on that blueprint.

Five themes guide the plan: leadership, economy, home, community and nature. What we want to achieve is, without doubt, ambitious – we are setting the bar high, but that should not deter us from wanting the very best for our residents and businesses.

Since becoming leader of the council two years ago, I have been delighted to meet so many representatives of organisations across the district. I am very pleased that Folkestone & Hythe District Council works with so

many of you, bringing forward new projects and initiatives to help our communities, especially when times can be tough.

We continue to work with Stagecoach to try and improve the beleaguered rural bus service. Southern Water may not be quite so pleased to hear from me as often as they do. But I have made it my mission to not give up on putting pressure on the water industry to work with the community and return the level of cleanliness we expect from our coastal waters. It is not an easy campaign to wage but giving up is not in my nature and I shall continue to keep up the pressure.

In 2028 we shall be handing over to a new authority under local government reorganisation. But, in the meantime, we shall not be putting our feet up and just coasting along. We will be working hard to deliver on our pledges of the corporate plan, working to bring forward the promise of the Otterpool Park garden town and continuing to ensure that our district offers the best both now and in the future.

Enjoy your reading!

Councillor Jim Martin,
Leader of Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Your District Today is distributed to more than 54,000 households in the district. This magazine does not include loose inserts – any found inside have been placed there without the authority of Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

Your District Today is printed on recycled paper.

Editorial: Jane Walker
Katie Ainscough
Dean Kilpatrick
Alice Pritchard
Thomas Aspinall

Design: Myah Susarte Dealbert

Printed by: Cliffe Enterprises Ltd

Advertising: folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/districttoday

Contact: communications@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Folkestone & Hythe District Council:

 **01303 853000**

 Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, CT20 2QY

 Report an issue: folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/report

 Find your councillor: folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/fhdc-councillors

Cover photo:

Fireworks take centre stage at The Sandgate Sea and Food Festival in August, as captured by Andy Markwell.

In this edition

4-6 We Built This City

Check the progress made on key developments

10-11 Merry Xmas Everybody

All you need to know about council services this Christmas

12 Me and Mrs. Jones

We catch up with the Chair of the Council

15 Something In The Air

The latest about changes to local government

16 Yesterday

Test your knowledge of the district's history with our quiz

17 Bicycle Race

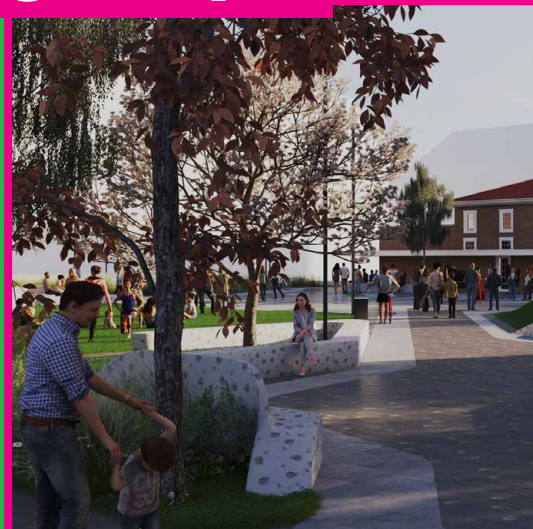
Join Cllr Jim Martin on a journey through the district

19 My Generation

District youth forum talking about today's issues

and lots more...

A brighter future is taking shape



Folkestone – A Brighter Future is an ambitious £22m development project that will transform Folkestone town centre and create a welcoming environment for residents and visitors.

Project progress

The scheme has seen Folkestone bus station move to a linear layout. This will allow Bouverie Square to return to its former use as a garden square.

It means, once the project is completed, there will be a more green and welcoming experience for those arriving into Folkestone by bus.

Changes are being made to Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street including new semi-mature trees, flower

planters and seating to create an aesthetically pleasing, welcoming atmosphere where people want to spend time.

The road network around the town centre has also been developed with works at Radnor Park roundabout, Cheriton Road, Foresters Way and Shellons Street. This will result in a simplified and safer road network for all users once finished.

DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Coast Drive

Work to create a new, exciting coastal destination on Greatstone's wonderful coastline is nearing completion.

Changing Tides Coastal Centre provides a visitor hub, improved water sports facilities, 93 beach huts, public toilets and 120 parking spaces – including EV charging points.

Funded with the help of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, it

also has solar panels, a green roof system and suitable planting for a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Providing a major boost to the Romney Marsh economy, the development will open in early 2026.



Ship Street

An outline planning application for up to 135 new homes on the former gasworks site in Folkestone is currently being considered.

The scheme also includes a pocket park, a vehicle-free green link and the retention of the historic perimeter brick walls on the corner of Bournemouth Road and Ship Street.

We bought the brownfield land in 2021 and are committed to



Creating a green heart

More than 70 trees will be planted as part of the Folkestone – A Brighter Future project.

Aside from the new green park in Bouverie Square, semi-mature trees will be planted along Guildhall Street and Sandgate Road. A small linear park will be created alongside Foresters Way.

The new green heart of Folkestone in Bouverie Square will have planting of various different heights to provide an open environment, with different species and textures to create interest and to aid natural surveillance.

In Cheriton Road, rain gardens will collect run-off water and filter pollutants to water vegetation and provide a natural habitat for wildlife.

Working together

The Folkestone – A Brighter Future project is led by Folkestone & Hythe District Council with Kent County Council managing the highways element of the project.

The construction works are being delivered by Jackson Civil Engineering.

If you have any questions about the works please contact the dedicated Public Liaison Officer for the project by emailing folkestone@jackson-civils.co.uk or calling **07974 416435**.

bringing it back into use, having secured a £2.5m grant from central government.

A developer partner is now being sought to bring forward the vital regeneration of a site that has largely been left derelict for over 50 years.



Highview

30 new homes will be delivered on the site of the former Highview School in Folkestone.

We purchased the 2.25-acre plot in 2016 with the intention of developing a housing scheme ourselves.

Rising interest rates and construction costs made it unviable for us to bring it forward, deciding

to prepare and de-risk the site for the market instead.

Highview Development Company has now bought the land; a move which allows the homes – 22% of which will be affordable – to be delivered to the original design.



An awesome place to play



Lower Leas Coastal Park

With the remaining original equipment heading towards the end of its shelf life, the first major refurbishment of the Fun Zone since 2000 has been commissioned.

Councillors have agreed a £750,000 budget for the Lower Leas Coastal Park fun zone project – funded by development levies aimed at improving local infrastructure (CIL and s106), grants and other council budgets.

Right at the beginning of the project, Folkestone & Hythe District Council asked residents – especially families and young people – what they wanted from the district's flagship play area. More than 1,100 respondents shared their views.

There is a particular wish to have a range of equipment that caters for different age groups, while also giving children the opportunity to play alongside each other no matter their abilities.

Feedback also included the retention of the pirate ship, the incorporation of a coastal theme and for the addition of an interactive trail and educational elements.

The council would like the new equipment to replicate the stature, quality design and materials of what it replaces, while also sitting respectfully within its environment and minimising ecological impacts.

It is expected the project will be completed ready for the 2026 summer season.

Where possible, a phased approach to the installation of new equipment will be used to allow areas to remain open for use.

The existing equipment will need to be removed to enable cliff stabilisation works near The Vinery. A complex remediation strategy includes high tensile mesh, soil nailing, draped netting and a high king post wall.

DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Biggins Wood

The former brickworks site in Cheriton is being given a new lease of life thanks to council intervention.

Remediation work carried out with the support of the Brownfield Land Release Fund made the 10-acre plot more attractive to the private sector.

Wickhambreaux Developments Ltd bought the site and is in the process of delivering 5,600sqm of commercial units and employment space.

Meanwhile, Orbit Homes – partnering with Chartway – is building 77 new all-electric homes for social rent and shared ownership.

Folca

The Edwardian part of Folca was put on the market in November.

Hopes for the former Debenhams site include mixed-use retail, residential or leisure – subject to planning permission.

Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folca for the latest.

£1m Win Pine House project welcomed



A project to upgrade heating and lighting at an independent living scheme in Hythe has received a warm welcome from tenants.

We invested £1m in the project at Win Pine House, which involved installing new pipework throughout the building and fitting a Heat Interface Unit (HIU) in all flats.

These transfer heat from the communal boiler to each tenant's flat – allowing them to have full control of their heating.

Each HIU is fitted with a heat meter, which measures the exact amount of heating and hot water each tenant uses, and ensures they only pay for their own usage.

This is a much fairer approach than previously, where each tenant paid a fixed charge as part of their rent regardless of the amount of energy they used themselves.

This project has ensured the council will recover the true cost of energy used, and tenants are now able to see how much energy they are actually using.

Win Pine House has also benefitted from new energy efficient LED lighting in all communal areas and the installation of CCTV throughout the building.

As part of our contractor's social value commitments, a complete refurbishment of the communal lounge was also carried out – something that has been very well received by residents.

Decarbonisation project success

More than 400 council-owned homes will have been brought up to date by the end of the year with a range of energy efficient measures designed to keep homes warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

These changes not only make the homes more comfortable, they will also help reduce the cost of tenants' energy bills.

Measures such as insulation, solar panels, and air source heat pumps have been installed, where appropriate.

The work has been paid for by Folkestone & Hythe District Council, partially match-funded with a grant from the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).

The first wave of the multi-million SHDF project saw the total CO₂ emissions of 125 properties reduced by just under 295 tonnes per year.

That's the equivalent to approximately 1.3 million miles of driving or 500 people making round-trip flights to German city Munich.

Housing helpers

Our housing team recently used their annual volunteering day to improve the gardens at flats in Bradstone Road, Folkestone.

After consulting with residents, the team got to work picking up rubbish, clearing undergrowth, sweeping and tidying despite the far-from-ideal weather conditions.

Working alongside our contractors – helping as part of their own social value incentive – and our very own grounds maintenance team, the area was soon looking spick and span.



Second Star Productions and Leas Cliff Hall

Presents

Vera
Chok

Lawrence
Stubbings

David
Rumelle

James
Fletcher

Emily
Day

The High-Flying Adventures of
**PETER
PAN**

Adapted from the original play
by JM Barrie

Musical Director **Matthew Talks** Director **Stuart Morrison**
Co-Director **Lawrence Stubbings** Choreographed by **Sarah Dean**

ATG TICKETS **ATGTICKETS.COM/folkestone***

Fri 12th – Wed 31st December

**LEAS
CLIFF HALL
FOLKESTONE**
THE HOME OF LIVE ENTERTAINMENT
AN ATG ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

Leas Cliff Hall working in partnership with
EUROTUNNEL
A GENTLEMAN COMPANY

southeastern

"PETER PAN" is presented by arrangement with Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity
and Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

***Fees apply**

ATG
ENTERTAINMENT

The gift of time

Christmas is a time for giving – not just gifts, but a time for sharing love with family, friends and neighbours.

And while it is a magical time, it can also be incredibly difficult for those who may be spending time on their own.

The district is home to a fantastic network of volunteers, bringing comfort to those in our community

who need support.

Whether you need help – or want to be a friendly face to others – there is something out there for you.

“Much has changed in the voluntary sector over the last 21 years,” says Mark Connorton from Kent Coast Volunteering.

“But what hasn’t is people’s willingness to give up their own

time for others.

I believe there is an opportunity for everybody – visiting our website is a great place to start.”

Volunteering is mutually beneficial: supporting members of the community while building confidence, learning new skills and making meaningful bonds.



Projects you may want to help this Christmas

Kent Coast Volunteering

Visit kcv.org.uk and click on the ‘want to volunteer’ tab.

Email info@kcv.org.uk for details.

Community hubs

Hubs in Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh run throughout the year, with initiatives in place during the colder months.

Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community/hubs for more information about the hubs and other community projects that welcome support.

Salvation Army Folkestone

Those interested in helping provide a communal meal for the benefit of people who would otherwise be lonely on Christmas Day can email eileen.west@salvationarmy.org.uk for more information.

This project is already well supported by volunteers so opportunities for this event are extremely limited.

Rainbow Centre

The Winter Shelter project is recruiting volunteers. Email volunteering@rainbow-centre.org or call **01303 850733** for details.

Awarding local heroes

The efforts of volunteers from across the district have been recognised at a ceremony organised by Kent Coast Volunteering in partnership with Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

The Excellence in Volunteering Awards celebrated the kindness, dedication and remarkable stories of those who give up their time for others. The event took place at Hawkinge Community Centre.

Help is here

Residents needing help this Christmas can visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/help-support-cost-living to find support suitable for their needs.

Your council at Christmas



Waste service

There will be some changes to your household waste and recycling collection dates over Christmas and the new year. Please check the table for details.

Garden waste collections

Garden waste collections are taking their usual break for Christmas.

The last collection will be on **Friday 19 December 2025** and the service will resume on **Monday 5 January 2026**.

Original collection date	Revised collection date
Monday 22 December	Monday 22 December
Tuesday 23 December	Tuesday 23 December
Wednesday 24 December	Wednesday 24 December
Thursday 25 December	Saturday 27 December
Friday 26 December	Monday 29 December
Monday 29 December	Tuesday 30 December
Tuesday 30 December	Wednesday 31 December
Wednesday 31 December	Thursday 1 January
Thursday 1 January	Friday 2 January
Friday 2 January	Saturday 3 January

Free Christmas tree recycling

If you are a garden waste customer: You can leave your real Christmas tree next to your brown-lidded bin when collections resume.

If you are not a garden waste customer: visit our website in the first week of January for more details about how to request real Christmas tree collection for free.



Free Christmas parking

Our district is the perfect place to find your Christmas presents – even more so with the gift of free parking!

Charges in our car parks and on-street pay and display bays are being waived on the three Saturdays leading up to the big day.

Saturday 6 December
Saturday 13 December
Saturday 20 December



Limited waiting (free) and controlled parking zone restrictions are still in place on the days listed.

This is to ensure people can park close to their homes and allow for a sufficient turnover of spaces.

Cllr Polly Blakemore said: “We hope this festive initiative will make the season even more merry for residents and businesses alike.”

Q Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/christmas for the latest information about council services over the festive period.

Recycling at Christmas

Give a gift to the planet this Christmas by helping us raise the recycling rate in our district (we're currently the fifth best in the county!). Take a look at our handy guide about how to dispose of some common festive items:

Paper and card box

Cardboard boxes

Non-foil, glitter free wrapping paper

Glitter-free Christmas cards



Recycle bin

Sweet/chocolate tins and tubs

Mince pie foil cases

Tin foil and foil serving trays

Champagne, wine and beer bottles



Refuse bin

Foil/shiny wrapping paper

Champagne and wine corks

Polystyrene

Bubble wrap and soft plastic/cellophane packaging

Tinsel



Q Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/AZguide to check out any other items you're not sure about.

Competition time: Where's your favourite place in the district?

Did you know the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway is the world's smallest railway?

Well, we've teamed up with them to offer two FREE Romney Rover tickets!

The Romney Rover ticket is a hop-on hop-off all day ticket which covers the whole line from Hythe and Dungeness (and back!).

It also provides free access to the Model Railway Exhibition at New Romney.

Tickets will be eligible for any day in the 2026 season excluding special events.

To enter email communications@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk and let us know your favourite place in the district and why.

Simple as that!

The deadline for entry is 5pm on Sunday 19 December 2025. We'll be in contact with the lucky winner by the end of the year.

Visit folkestoneandhythe.co.uk/favourite-place-comp for the competition terms and conditions or scan the QR code below.



A snapshot of Anita

Your District Today sat down for a warm beverage and a mince pie (or two) with Cllr Anita Jones, the current Chair of Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

We wanted to find out more about the role and the person wearing the chain after being selected by fellow councillors.

Why did you stand as a councillor, and how is it being chair?

Cllr Jim Martin asked me! He knew I was a community-minded person and passionate about Hythe – particularly the green open spaces.

It has been a great honour to represent the whole district as chair. It has given me the opportunity to promote and raise money for local charities and events.

I have also pledged to plant more trees around the district – we planted around 600 tree whips last year.



What's your proudest moment in life and as a chair?

Life – it's being a mum! As chair, I have been delighted to establish our first district youth forum. It has been great to welcome young people into the council chamber to listen to their views and act on them as a council.



Do you have any funny stories as a council chair?

I was invited to last year's Venetian Fete as chair. We were put on the first float, which then zig-zagged down the canal as the rowers were still warming up – but someone had forgotten to put the towing rudder on the back. Thankfully we stayed dry and after a lengthy negotiation down the canal, made it to dry land!

What's your favourite piece of music?

I love Chopin waltzes on the piano; on the organ it's Bach. In terms of orchestral music, I am big fan of Baroque music – particularly the Brandenburg Concertos. ABBA is always a favourite for a fun night out!

Special or noteworthy skills/talents?

I trained and work as a professional musician – playing church organ, piano and double bass.

I'm also very good at reading maps; in my role as an Explorer Scout Leader, I train DofE teams at Silver and Bronze level.

Favourite hobby/interest?

Trekking, hillwalking and climbing mountains!



Where do you like to visit in the district?

Luna, my Liver Spotted Dalmatian, loves her walks along the Royal Military Canal in Hythe as we see all our favourite dog walkers with their dogs!

Other favourites include Castle Hill, The Warren, Lyminge Forest, St Mary's Bay, Greatstone Beach and Eaton Lands.

What's your favourite place in the district?

Hythe, of course – and the view from Tolsford Hill.

Do you have a piece of advice you'd offer your younger self?

You can achieve anything if you are determined enough. I had never considered running for election. It's been an amazing experience and it's fantastic to serve your community – I wish I had thought about it sooner.

2025

THE YEAR THAT WAS



JANUARY

The Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership Plan for 2025-2028 is approved. Priorities include local concerns, anti-social behaviour and a multi-agency approach to tackle serious and organised crime in the district.



FEBRUARY

A revamped tourism, eye-catching campaign and a series of visitor maps are launched to encourage more visitors to the district. The tourism industry in Folkestone & Hythe is worth more than £269m and supports over 5,000 local jobs.



MARCH

A wooden bench inviting people to reflect on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on communities is added to Radnor Park as part of a national day of reflection marking the fifth anniversary of those unprecedented times.



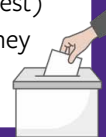
APRIL

A new agreement with Citizens Advice made – and funding maintained – to ensure residents retain access to free, independent and confidential advice. Call 01304 353861 or visit the Rainbow Centre in Folkestone on Thursdays between 10am and 3pm.



MAY

County councillors elected: Tim Prater (Cheriton, Sandgate & Hythe East), Christopher Hespe (Elham Valley), Mary Lawes (Folkestone East), John Baker (Folkestone West), Peter Osborne (Hythe West) and David Wimble (Romney Marsh).



JUNE

Ambitious corporate plan, entitled Our World, Our District, given the green light after one of the largest public consultations undertaken by the council in recent years. It is based on five themes, each of which has a list of actions with progress regularly monitored.



JULY

Kingsnorth Gardens, the Lower Leas Coastal Park, Radnor Park and the Royal Military Canal all retain prestigious Green Flag status for 2025/26. "Our staff work exceptionally hard to keep them maintained," Cllr Connor McConville said.



AUGUST

It is confirmed there will be no further activity on council-owned land at Princes Parade following extensive public engagement. "The majority wants the site left as it is," said Cllr Jim Martin. Princes Parade had dominated local conversation for 15 years.



SEPTEMBER

The upgrade of nearly 40 bus shelters on routes in the district begins. They provide improved seating, reinforced windows and digital screens. Cllr Polly Blakemore believes they will encourage more residents to use local services.



OCTOBER

Council tax, benefits and welfare team named as winner of Excellence in Social Inclusion category at a national awards ceremony. Judges praise "exemplary delivery" of policies improving the lives of those facing real financial challenges.



NOVEMBER

Our beach management programme continues following successful £2.35m Environment Agency funding bid for biannual recycling and regrading of shingle, protecting homes and businesses between Fisherman's Beach and Folkestone Harbour from flooding.



DECEMBER

Charges in F&HDC car parks and on-street pay and display bays waived on three Saturdays (6, 13, 20 December) before Christmas Day to help residents and support local businesses as we build-up to the big day.



Adult courses at EKC Folkestone College

Whether you're looking to try something new, develop your skills, explore a hobby, or retrain, find the course that's right for you at EKC Folkestone College.

Discover our range of part-time and evening courses for adult learners on our website.

folkestonecollege.ac.uk



All change for local government in Kent

Reorganisation of local government is several years away for the district, but work is already underway.

The change will bring an end to the existing two-tier local authority structure.

Kent County Council currently looks after services such as education and child and adult services. The district and borough councils run other services, including waste collection and housing.

In the biggest change in local government for more than 50 years, this two-tier structure will be replaced with a single tier.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council will cease to exist in 2028 and will join several other councils in Kent becoming a single-tier structure known as a unitary authority.

Several proposals have been put forward by councils across Kent for how many unitary authorities there should be in the county and their geographical make-up.

A decision on which proposal is supported by Folkestone & Hythe District Council for submission to central government had not been made as Your District Today went to press.

Central government will then decide its preference for Kent and begin public consultation early next year, prior to a final decision expected in summer 2026.

Keep an eye on the council's website for more information and be assured that services for residents and businesses will continue to be provided before and during the change.

Timeline



Green Grant Scheme

Schools, community groups and parish councils have taken up the offer of funding to help bring about sustainability and carbon reduction projects in the district.

The Green Grant Scheme was launched earlier in the year and there were nearly 60 applications for support.

These were whittled down to 38 projects by a panel of councillors and include:

- 18 organisations, including six schools, to receive micro grants of amounts up to £1,000 for a range of environmental improvement projects

- 5 groups to receive grants of up to £10,000 for rewilding, tree planting and creating wildflower meadows
- 8 grants to improve the heating and insulation of community buildings and installation of solar panels and battery storage
- A grant was also agreed for a community repair and skills hub at the Romney Marsh Community Hub

A full list of the organisations receiving funding from the green grants scheme can be found on the council's website.

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW YOUR DISTRICT?

Folkestone & Hythe District Council has approved a new heritage strategy, which outlines objectives for the protection and enhancement of our amazing historic environment.

So why not test out the knowledge of your friends or family over the Christmas dinner table with this fun quiz exploring the fascinating past of the place we call home?

1. The Folkestone Mermaid is a local interpretation of a world-famous statue in which European city?
2. The arrival of the Romans led to the emergence of Portus Lemanis – by what name is it better known today?
3. Which monarch's programme of building new forts along the coast led to the construction of Sandgate Castle?
4. The Leas Lift – a grade II* funicular railway – is currently being restored. In which decade was it originally installed?
5. New Romney and Hythe were two of the original Cinque Ports; a confederation formed for military and trade purposes. It was referred to as the what of the Royal Navy?
6. Horse-powered stagecoach routes running between Folkestone and Canterbury in the 18th and 19th centuries would typically stop in which locations?
7. The Royal Military Canal, built between 1804 and 1809, stretches from Hythe – and across the Romney Marsh – to Cliff End in East Sussex. This equates to how many miles?
8. The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway opened in 1927 – but in which year did mainline railway services first come to Folkestone?

🔍 Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/planning-policy to find the answers within the heritage strategy. Alternatively, you can also find them on page 19!

Micro adventures ahoy!

🔍 For more inspiration visit folkestoneandhythe.co.uk

St Thomas Becket Church, Romney Marsh

You'll have seen the epic pictures – but have you ever actually been to St Thomas Becket Church in the Romney Marsh?

It's a special place where it seems impossible to take a bad photo. Why not dust off the bike and cycle there too?



Royal Military Canal, Hythe

Locals know the canal exists, but there's a whole world outside the Hythe section. There are some nifty sound mirrors either side of the canal at Palmarsh, where you can whisper to friends across the water and learn some military history. How's that for multi-tasking?



The North Downs Way

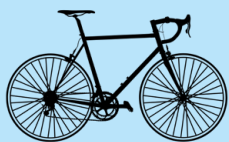
The last nine miles of this epic trek meanders through seriously epic scenery starting from Folkestone Harbour and finishing in Dover. The whole route should take around four hours, and you can relax on the train home. This is the perfect way to get some fresh air after the indulgence of Christmas.



Folkestone Artworks

The Folkestone Triennial may be over, but 82 pieces of permanent thought provoking and striking artwork from previous editions remain dotted around town. A true reminder that you don't always need a gallery – the open-air exhibition is just one example of the rich culture that makes our district unique.





Jim's cycling adventure



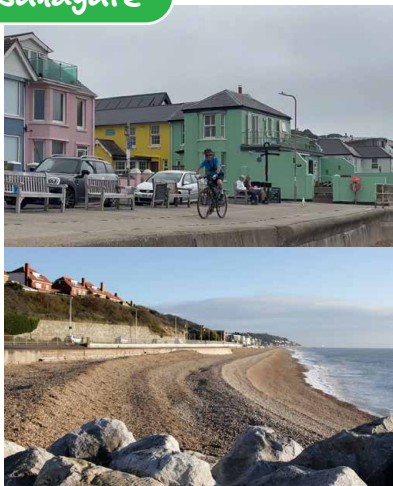
"Michael Palin gets to go around the world in 80 days – for me, it's Dungeness in about two hours." Council leader Cllr Jim Martin loves to cycle – so much so he took a bike ride along our gorgeous coastline. And he sent us some postcards along the way!

Folkestone



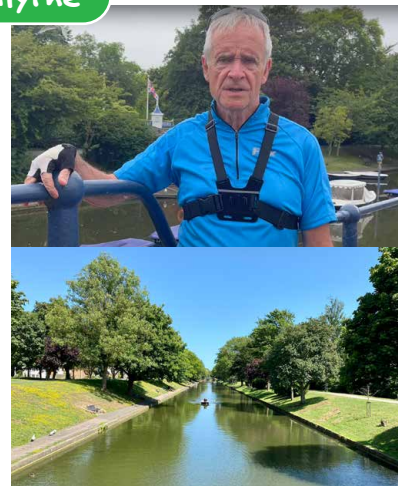
I'm at Folkestone Harbour Arm – I can see our fantastic lighthouse and the world-famous White Cliffs. It's a terrific place to fish, swim and ride your bike. So, what's stopping you?

Sandgate



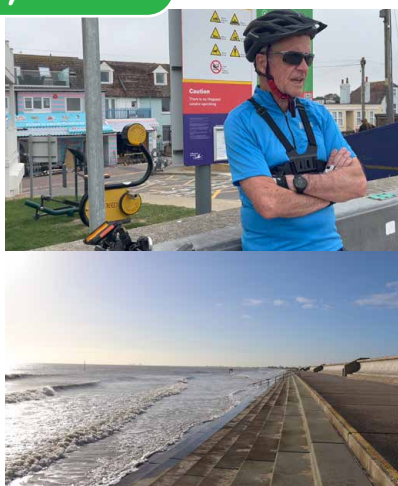
The people of Sandgate have a very firm view: it is the greatest place in the world. They will accept no argument to the alternative and, you know what, they might be onto something.

Hythe



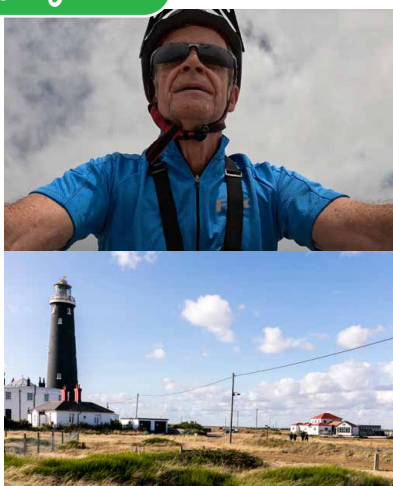
Looking at the fantastic Royal Military Canal – built to protect us against Napoleonic invasion back in the day. Was never used for its original purpose, but it created a green lung and an avenue for wildlife to move along.

Dymchurch



This is the go-to place for my grandchildren. They love the beach, the sea, the amusements – Dymchurch has got everything for a family day out. It truly is a terrific place.

Dungeness



Our very own desert – there are things that grow and happen here that don't happen anywhere else and that's what makes Dungeness very, very special. A lot of people can't get enough of this place.

Heading back



I've decided to rest up and let the miniature train take the strain for the journey home. I hope these messages inspire you to get yourself out there and explore the district on two wheels – believe me, you'll thank me.

District joins bid for global recognition

What makes our district so wonderful? For many, it's the 26 miles of fascinating coastline drawing walkers, beachcombers, kite surfers and others to enjoy.

The section around Folkestone has an especially rich and fascinating backstory that's now part of a bid to gain global recognition for Kent's unique landscape.

The ambition is to secure cross-Channel UNESCO Global Geopark status.

The bid is being made jointly by the Kent Downs National Landscape with neighbouring protected landscape in France; the Parc Naturel Regional des Caps et Marais d'Opale. It is supported by organisations including Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

The Geopark will include both the protected landscapes and the Channel connecting them, recognising and celebrating the geological connection between us.

It will be the only cross-border UNESCO Global geopark not connected by a land boundary if successful.

It is hoped that gaining the recognition will bring sustainable tourism benefits, as well as developing local pride and interest within communities in the unique areas either side of the Dover Strait.

As many know, they were once connected until a huge megaflood half a million years ago swept away a chalk ridge, carving out plunge pools up to 100-metres deep.



More about the megaflood can be found on an information panel installed by Kent Downs National Landscape next to East Cliff Sports in Folkestone.

Another information panel can be found at Farthing Common giving a fascinating history of the land that can be seen from the viewpoint.

Q Visit kentdowns.org.uk/geopark and geoparktransmanche.org/en to find out more.



Our Nepalese community play a significant role in our district, with many who have served our country – predominantly in The Royal Gurkha Rifles – settling with their families here in the district.

They bring real colour at Holi, an event where people celebrate the arrival of spring and end of winter by throwing a festival of powders. It is always open to all those who wish to participate.

And even more culture can be found at the Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre, tucked away on Baker Road in Cheriton. It offers local support, events, cultural expression, education sessions, food and so much more.

This includes tai chi classes, digital support drop-ins for those struggling with access, English and Maths lessons, traditional Nepalese handicrafts, litter picks and dance evenings for young and old.

A sister city relationship between Folkestone and Mechinagar has been formed, while Harka Raj Rai – the mayor of Nepalese city Dharan – visited the Civic Centre last year.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council continues to support the Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre and the work it is doing to support residents.



Young people have their say

Pupils from the district's secondary schools have been helping to make sure that Folkestone & Hythe District Council is listening to its younger residents.

The youth forum, set up earlier this year, met for a second time in September and discussed their chosen topics of mental health, leisure, housing waiting lists and government housing targets.

They shared their views and experiences with council chair Cllr Anita Jones and cabinet members Cllr Mike Blakemore (Communities) and Cllr Rebecca Shoob (Housing). The 14- to 19-year-olds at the meeting also provided some very useful insight into which areas outside the district they travel to.

Canterbury is the most visited place outside the district, mainly for meeting friends, shopping and leisure activities. Ashford is also popular for shopping, leisure and meeting friends.

Members of the youth forum also attended to watch the counting of votes for the county council elections in May. They were able to learn about the process and watch district council officers carry out the various responsibilities of running the count.

The youth forum is due to meet again in December and then in March next year.

Students enjoy getting involved

EKC Folkestone College takes pride in its community and plays an active role in supporting positive social-action projects.

Over the years, its students have supported historic renovation projects, played a leading role in charity fundraising, and supported local communities including elderly care home residents.

This year is set to be no different as EKC Folkestone College students continue to immerse themselves in locally led projects. Shining a light on just some of the inspiring work they have taken part in, construction students played a key role in the renovation project of the historic Radnor Park Lodge.

The newly appointed Principal of EKC Folkestone College, Clare Brown, said: "It makes me immensely proud to see our students taking a leading role in supporting the community and engaging in social action.

"This is something we actively encourage as often as possible, so do keep an eye out for our students getting involved and making a positive difference in your area."

Setting the agenda

Suggestions for topics to be discussed by the council's overview and scrutiny committee in 2026/27 are now being welcomed.

Ideas must be relevant across the district and within the council's remit or influence – they cannot have been reviewed in the past 12 months or include planning applications, licensing issues and individual complaints.

The Levelling Up Fund, Folkestone – A Brighter Future, the council's corporate plan and local government reorganisation are among those considered in the chamber in recent years.

Visit [folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/democracy/council-scrutiny](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/democracy/council-scrutiny) and complete the online form or write to Committee Services, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY before 3pm on Monday 26 January 2026.

Nest hatches

A familiar landmark has been given a new lease of life, as the former Romney Marsh Visitor Centre reopened its doors with a fresh identity and a renewed sense of purpose.

Now called The Nest, this much-loved space opened in August and is once again welcoming residents, walkers, families and visitors to enjoy everything the area has to offer.

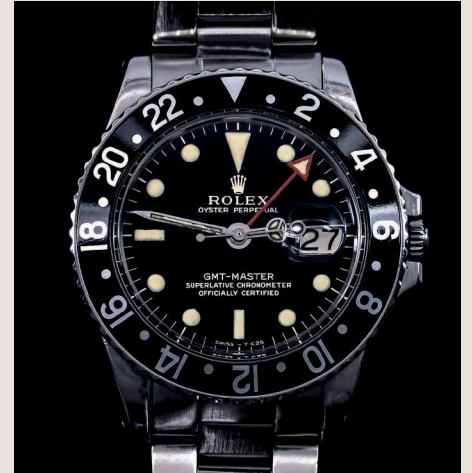
It offers a vibrant café, shop and learning space at the gateway to Romney Warren, which is managed by Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership on behalf of Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

ANSWERS from quiz on page 16

1. Copenhagen 2. Lympne 3. Henry VIII 4. 1880s 5. Cradle
6. Etchinghill, Lyminge, Elham and Barham 7. 28 8. 1843

The Canterbury Auction Galleries

Auctioneers of the rare, the collectible and the exceptional



THE CANTERBURY AUCTION GALLERIES

Situated in the centre of historic Canterbury, we have a proven track record of achieving international prices while providing a personal local service.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SELL?

From watches, jewellery, fine art and antiques to 20th Century collectibles, our team of friendly specialists are on hand to accurately value your items. Our trusted service will ensure that selling your item, whether personal or for Probate reasons, is sensitive and straightforward.



CONTACT US TODAY FOR A FREE VALUATION

Telephone 01227 763337 Email general@tcag.co.uk Visit www.thecanterburyauctiongalleries.com

BUYING?

Our app allows you to both browse the current catalogue and follow an auction in real time, wherever you are. Our auctions are online only and there are many easy ways to bid - see our comprehensive website.



[thecanterburyauctiongalleries](http://thecanterburyauctiongalleries.com)

