

YOUR DISTRICT

TODAY

AUTUMN 2026



**TOP MARKS
FOR HOUSING**

page 5

**EXCITING MAJOR
PROJECT UPDATES**

pages 6-11

**WIN TICKETS
TO PORT LYMPNE**

page 16

**Folkestone
& Hythe**



District Council



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Cover photo:

Fun, fun, fun – trying out the new equipment at the Lower Leas Coastal Park play area in Folkestone.

Leader's foreword

Welcome to our autumn issue of Your District Today, which we publish just as many of our young residents start their new schools and most of us are hoping that some of the summer's warm weather continues throughout September.

As we were preparing the magazine's content, we received the eagerly awaited news about how local government is to be reorganised in Kent and Medway. You can find more about the announcement, which places our district in a Mid Kent unitary authority with Ashford and Swale on page 4.

The change will take place in April 2028 but there is still much that this council is working on before the new unitary authority comes into being. Folkestone – A Brighter Future, funded largely by central government, is well underway. I know it has been challenging at times for residents and businesses as the changes were made but I am sure many will be impressed by what is being achieved for the town.

The Lower Leas Coastal Park play area fully earns its accolade of the south east's biggest (and most fun) adventure playground with all the new equipment that the council has invested in.



If you haven't been yet, I do urge you to have a wander past. With visiting grandchildren to entertain, I can bear testimony that the new challenges presented by the equipment are very popular.

Our fantastic housing team has really done this council proud! To be one of a very few local authorities in England to have achieved the top possible rating for the way its housing service is run and delivered is truly well deserved by the team. We are not sitting back, however, and shall be continuing every day to improve the service provided.

This continuous improvement is echoed throughout the council and reinforced by gaining a substantial assurance assessment from the East Kent Audit Partnership. Enjoy your reading!

Councillor Jim Martin
Leader of Folkestone & Hythe
District Council

In this edition

and lots more...

4
District to be Mid-Kent
Local government reorganisation taking shape

5
Best in the county
Council lands housing landlord top grade

10-11
Wow – and it's on our doorstep
Lower Leas Coastal Park play area's exciting upgrade

12-13
Who represents you on the council?
A reminder of our 30 ward councillors

15
Introducing the new chair
Meet Romney Marsh resident Cllr Paul Thomas

19
Green grant boost
How special funding is helping local groups

Government ministers agree Kent and Medway council changes

Folkestone & Hythe District Council will be merging with two other Kent councils in April 2028 as local government reorganisation (LGR) in the county gets underway.

We will join Ashford Borough Council and Swale Borough Council and, together, become a mid-Kent unitary authority.

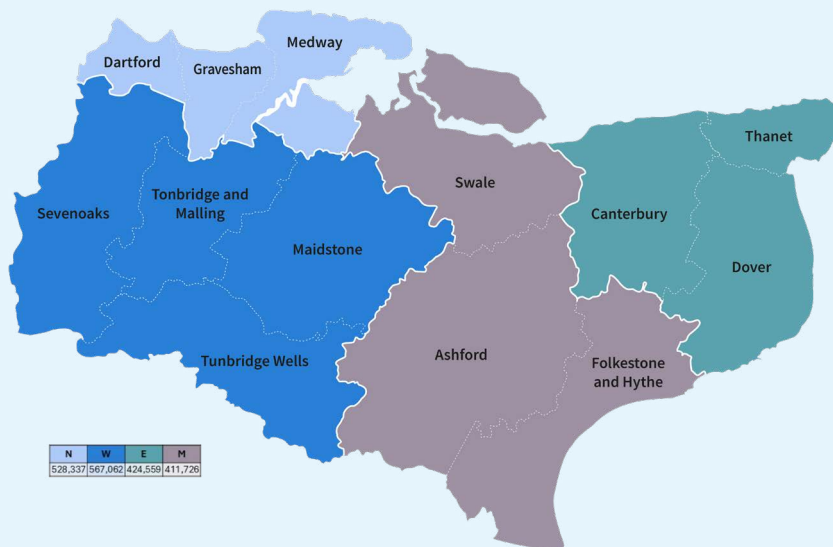
It will be one of four unitary authorities in the county – the others bringing together Medway and north Kent councils; one for the areas covered by west Kent councils and one for the current Canterbury, Thanet and Dover council areas in east Kent.

Kent County Council and Medway Council will cease to exist in 2028 and the services provided by these authorities currently – including social services, education and highways – will become the responsibility of the unitary councils.

Leader of Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Cllr Jim Martin, said: “Although this was not the option for local government in Kent that I and fellow councillors supported, we shall be endeavouring to ensure that the reorganisation is carried out so that

we continue to deliver the very best services for residents and businesses in Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh.

“There is, without doubt, a lot to get through before April 2028 and we shall be working together and keeping residents informed of the progress. I shall also be supporting the Folkestone & Hythe District Council staff as they carry out the huge amount of work necessary for the reorganisation and the change it may be bringing for them personally.”



Kent and Medway council leaders' joint statement

“We want to reassure our residents that not one of our services will change overnight – you will still be dealing with the same council staff tomorrow and the day after that.

“The new councils will not come into being until 1 April 2028.

“All of the councils in Kent and Medway have a long history of working closely together to do the very best for the people we serve and that will not change one bit.

“This is the start of the process of bringing our different teams together with the aim of designing then delivering the best possible services for the people we serve.

“Of course, this change affects the thousands of council staff across the county who work incredibly hard day in and day out.

“Our focus will be supporting them through this change while helping them to carry on delivering our business-as-usual services seamlessly.

“There is a lot of work to do but we will make sure we take every opportunity to make our services the very best they can be.”

LGR facts

- **Biggest shake up** of local authority arrangements in 50 years.
- Kent is **one of 14 areas** in England announced in July 2026 as having local government structure changed.
- **3,000 responses** were received to central government's consultation about council reorganisation in Kent.

The Kent Council Leaders website, kentcouncilleaders.org.uk, is the collective voice for all councils and where more information can be found.

Tenants, councillors, and staff celebrate the Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards judgement.



Top rating for council's housing standards

Folkestone & Hythe District Council has been recognised as one of the country's best performing council housing landlords after being awarded the highest possible consumer standards judgement by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

We received the regulator's top rating for social housing consumer standards, known as a C1. Published in July 2026, it made us the only council in Kent to achieve this rating and among just 13% of councils nationally to hold the top grading.

The judgement follows a detailed inspection by the RSH over four months which concluded we're meeting the four consumer standards.

Safe homes and high standards

Tenant safety is a top priority, with the council receiving praise for its high levels of compliance across all health and safety areas.

It was noted there is currently a good understanding of the housing stock at an individual level due to the ongoing stock condition survey programme.

The programme also enables the council to identify where future investment will be needed, ensuring tenants' homes remain safe, comfortable and well maintained over the coming years.

Tenants at the heart of services

A key theme throughout the inspection was the council's commitment to listening to tenants and involving them in shaping the housing service.

The regulator commented on the way F&HDC focuses on tenants at an organisational level, and noted that this focus runs through everything carried out as a social housing landlord.

When they met the inspectors, tenants described the pride they felt in their engagement with the council. The engagement opportunities provided were seen to be meaningful and effective, empowering tenants to scrutinise the housing service and help drive improvements.

The regulator also commended a commitment to transparency, noting that information is shared clearly through a variety of channels, including options for residents who prefer non-digital communication.

In addition, the regulator established that not only do tenancy services meet all statutory requirements but also found the council was able to provide numerous practical examples of the extensive work to help tenants sustain their tenancies.

Complaints and anti-social behaviour

Complaints handling was identified as a particular strength in the inspection. The RSH found complaints are dealt with fairly, efficiently and promptly, with the lessons learned being shared and used to improve services throughout the housing service.

Positive feedback was also received for the approach in tackling anti-social behaviour and hate incidents. Up-to-date policies are in place, demonstrating effective partnership working and ensuring reporting was accessible. The RSH considered incidents to be escalated appropriately and found performance was continuously monitored.

Continuing to improve

While awarding the top rating, the regulator highlighted the importance of continuing to strengthen the collection and use of tenant profile data. The council had already identified this as a priority and is currently implementing an improvement plan to help ensure services continue to be tailored to meet tenants' needs.

Cllr Rebecca Shoob, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, said: "Becoming the first local authority in Kent to achieve the top rating from the Regulator of Social Housing is not only a significant achievement, but also a testament to the dedication of staff, tenants and partners."

Town centre building brought back to life

Bringing Folkestone's Folca building back into use is a step closer now the Edwardian section of Folca One and the Art Deco section of Folca Two are being formally separated.

In Folca Two, funding from the £1.44m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme has enabled contractors to carry out essential work, during the first phase of construction work, to significantly reduce carbon emissions.

Tasks completed during the first phase of work included replacing windows and the roof. Other energy-efficiency improvements will be carried out during the second phase.

Designs are being progressed for the delivery of a medical centre on the upper floors of Folca Two with the input of the local NHS Integrated Care Board. Plans are also underway to decide the final use of the lower floors of Folca Two. A mixed-use scheme remains the preference for the space with commercial uses being explored.

Cllr Connor McConville, Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation, said: "The Folca building is a central lynchpin in Folkestone's high street and bringing it back into use – alongside the Folkestone – A Brighter Future scheme – will transform the town centre."

The sale of the Edwardian section of Folca One to developers is underway and this is due to complete before the end of the year. The preferred buyer intends to transform it into 17 residential properties and commercial space on the ground floor.





A brighter future is taking shape

The changes as part of Folkestone – A Brighter Future are finally beginning to be visible with the scheme now more than 80% complete.

The ambitious £22m, largely government funded, scheme has had work ongoing at seven different locations around the town.

The civil engineering part of the scheme is due to finish shortly with the planting element of the project set to take place over autumn and winter (the best time to do this).

The project team continues to work closely with Creative Folkestone and contemporary artist Monster Chetwynd to deliver an art-inspired children's playground within the new "green heart" Bouverie Square.

The council's ambition to refurbish parts of the ground floor of the former bus station building is progressing well to enable a café or other type of concession to operate.

Cllr James Butcher – Cabinet Member for Place Plan, Heritage, Tourism and District Economy – said: "With a scheme this complex, disruption is unavoidable and I want to thank people for bearing with us as we shape a brighter future for Folkestone town centre.

"This regeneration is important to the future of our town and will have a knock-on effect on the wider district too. Folkestone town centre is a place where our community comes together and we want to make it a more welcoming space where everybody wants to spend time."

Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/fabf for the latest traffic management plans. You can also see the latest progress and sign up for email updates.

Development updates

Diving into pool improvement plans

Hythe Swimming Pool has been the focus of attention for Folkestone & Hythe district councillors.

They have been considering the best option for improving the existing facilities in South Road.

Cabinet members agreed in July for designs and costs to be worked up for two proposals. These would be either remodelling the existing building or a more ambitious scheme to create a modern reception and changing village on the ground floor and gym and community studio on the first floor.

Anyone for tennis?

Land at the Martello Lakes housing development in West Hythe could become home to racket sports and community use.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council is to go ahead with the option to use the parcel of land set aside as part of the agreement to build new homes on the site.

This will be an excellent opportunity to develop facilities for residents living in the Marsh area. Alternative sports uses are being considered including padel courts, multi-use courts, football space and a community area with changing facilities.

Members of the public will be consulted about the proposed future uses of the site.

Ship Street progress

Progress is being made towards building homes on the former gas works site in Ship Street, Folkestone.

The site had been derelict since the 1950s and unattractive to developers so the council stepped in to submit outline planning permission for the site and market it.

Following lengthy negotiations with a not-for-profit housing organisation, councillors have agreed the number of homes can be reduced from 135 to 90 and an outline planning application made. If approved, all the homes would be affordable.



Left to right: Council chair Cllr Paul Thomas, Cllr McConville, chief executive Susan Priest and Cllr Jim Martin.

Ice cream toast for new centre

There has been a real energy around the Changing Tides Coastal Centre in Greatstone since its opening earlier this year.

Residents have been settling into their beach huts and sampling delicious Reynolds Ice Cream at the new attraction on Coast Drive, which has public toilets and a remodelled car park with electric charging stations due to be installed.

A watersports centre – operational between March and October – with access to showers, changing facilities and an education/training room is also set to open soon.

Cllr Connor McConville, Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation, said: “This project provides a major boost to the local economy and will help actively support and promote the Romney Marsh for years to come.”

Solar panels, a green roof system and suitable planting all form part of the development, while information boards highlighting the importance of the area as a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest have also been installed.

The scheme was funded by Folkestone & Hythe District Council with the support of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority through Nuclear Restoration Services.

Development updates

District play areas set for upgrades

Exciting improvements are being planned for key play areas across Folkestone & Hythe as part of the council’s corporate plan commitment to invest in local communities.

Those in line for upgrades include the council-owned play areas at Cheriton Recreation Ground and at East Cliff in Folkestone; three in Lydd (Lade Fort, Queensway and The Derings), and the one in Seabrook.

Proposed works may include adding more modern equipment that appeals to a wide age range, improving surfacing, new seating, better paths and fencing, and features that support inclusive and sensory play.

The £670,000 of play area work is being partly funded by the council’s own budget for capital projects. The remainder is from payments charged by the council to developers. These are to help support the increased need for local amenities when developments, such as new housing, are built.

Coastal walkway set to reopen

The Mermaid Beach breakwater damaged by Storm Goretta is to be repaired.

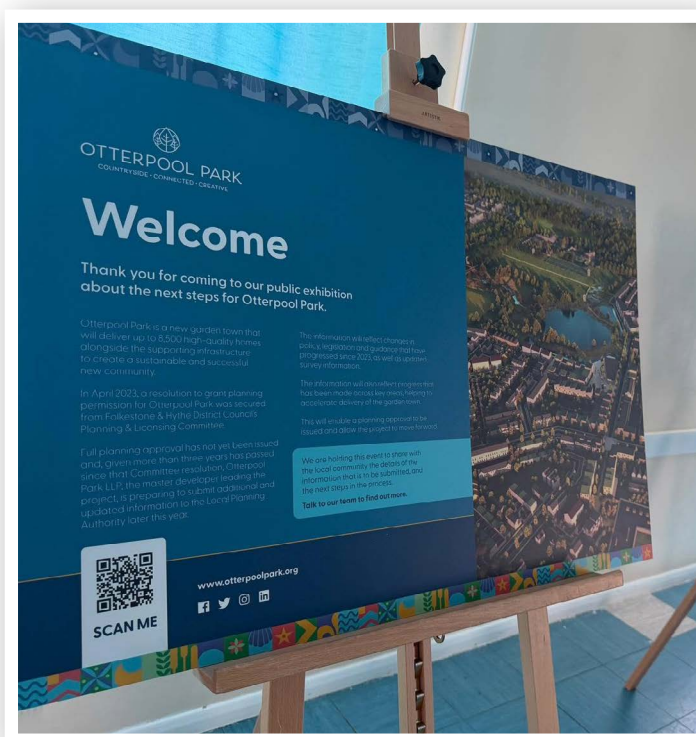
Our district’s coastline was battered by strong winds in January, causing the concrete sections at the popular Folkestone spot to be dramatically displaced.

Councillors have committed up to £200,000 to fix the issue, with work expected to be completed ahead of any future winter storms.

Cllr Connor McConville, Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation, said: “The rock structure that actually protects the coast is perfectly intact, but I know we’ll all be pleased when we can use the concrete walkway again.”

Despite the heavy winds and big waves, there were no reports of flooding or damage to residential properties thanks to the council’s bi-annual recycling and regrading of shingle carried out since 2004.





Next steps for Otterpool Park

The Otterpool Park project is moving forward with an updated planning submission to be delivered before the end of the year.

F&HDC needs to meet government targets around house building and creating a new garden town is a way to ensure this is done sustainably.

Otterpool Park will be a new connected, vibrant community of up to 8,500 high-quality homes. More than 50% of the development will be green space – improving the biodiversity of the area.

New infrastructure is also planned to support the community with permission for a wastewater treatment works, primary substation and wetlands granted in April 2026.

Planning submission

An information event was held in June to update residents and stakeholders on the changes that will be made to the planning submission. These mostly consist of updates to align with changes in national policy and guidance over the last three years.

Details of the first homes to be built on the site was of most interest to attendees. These will be on land not far from Westenhanger railway station and initially consist of a cluster of up to 300 homes.

The local planning authority will be seeking feedback from residents once this planning information is submitted by Otterpool Park LLP later this year. Further details around the first homes – such as materials, street lighting, planting and other design elements – will be considered through a later planning application, expected in late 2027.

Please visit **otterpoolpark.org** for a rundown of changes to the planning submission and the latest information on the project.

A blossoming display of hope

A carpet bed on The Leas in Folkestone has been rejuvenated with a new floral design highlighting the ways people can access mental health help and support.

In September 2025, Folkestone played its role in carrying The Baton Of Hope as part of an initiative aimed at shining a light on suicide prevention.

The nationwide project works to raise awareness of organisations and charities supporting people in times of need, including those experiencing loneliness.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, along with local charity The Sports Trust, came together to walk and skate the Olympic torch-style symbol of hope around the town and harbour.

Folkestone's Safe Haven, which supports those experiencing a mental health crisis or in need of help, also hosted a drop-in event focusing on wellbeing and how to seek professional support.

These initiatives formed part of a warm up event ahead of the Kent leg of the baton's national tour across the UK.

The conversation around suicide prevention did not stop there. The new carpet bed has been created by the council's ground maintenance team to further recognise this important work.





Playtime has never been this good

An exciting new era for the Lower Leas Coastal Park play area is officially underway – and the young people of the district are absolutely loving it!

The £750,000 refurbishment of the south east's largest free adventure playground opened in August and includes more equipment and inclusive elements than ever before.

There is also additional seating, as well as buggy and cycle parking, for families to use.

And with the design inspired by the more than 1,100 ideas received from residents, children during the school summer holidays and beyond have given it the big thumbs up.

Cllr Connor McConville, Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation, said: "Whether it is the excitement of being at height, the adrenaline of sliding at speed or something calmer, more sensory – this space offers something for everyone."

The project was funded by development levies aimed at improving local infrastructure (CIL and s106), grants and other council budgets.



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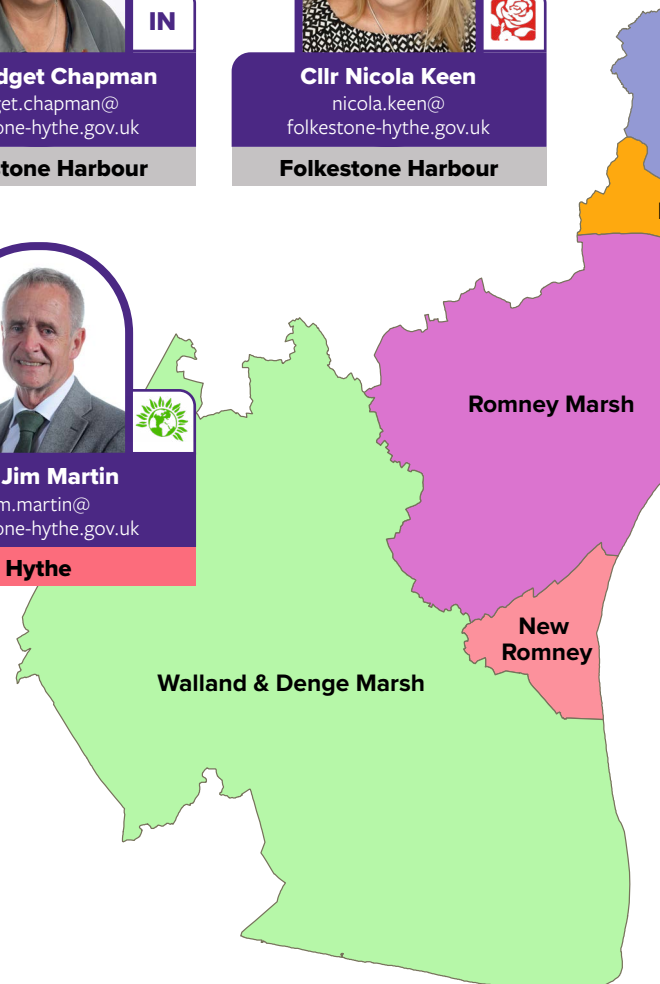
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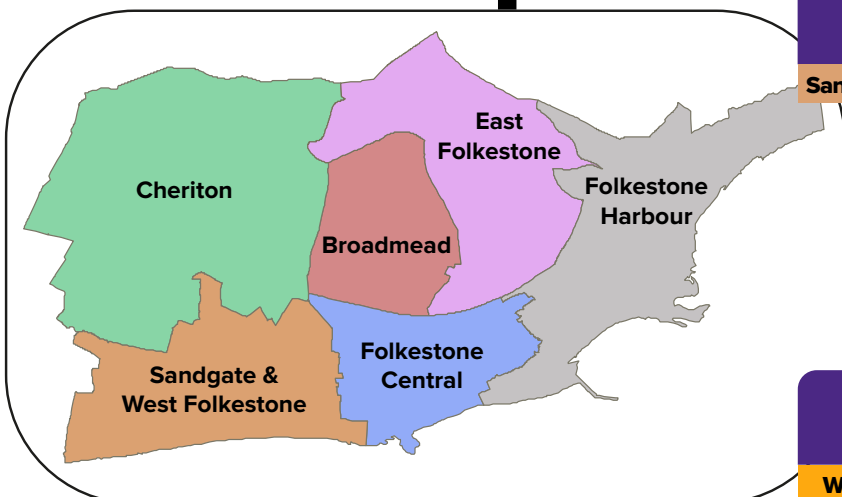
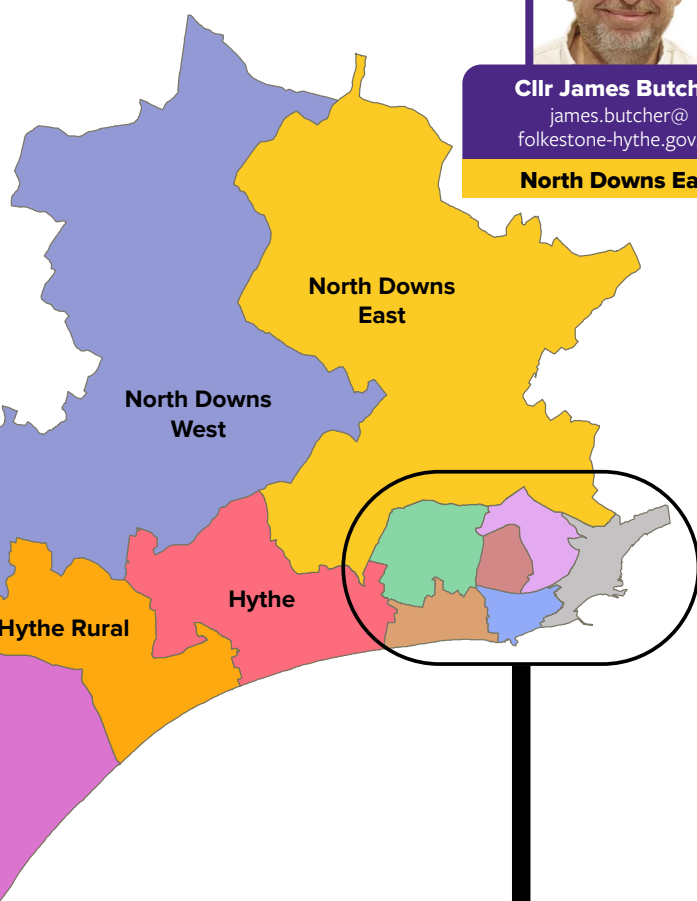
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Walland & Denge Marsh



District projects reap ward budget funding

Each of the district's 30 councillors have a ward budget of up to £5,000 to support community projects in their respective areas.

Grants are available to eligible local charities, schools, community groups, organisations and town and parish councils across Folkestone, Hythe and the Romney Marsh. Here are just a few of the local projects to have been funded:

Charivari Day

*Funded by
Cllr Laura Davison*

The annual carnival celebrated its 30th anniversary this year and was again supported by councillor ward grants.



The musical march through Folkestone is a local favourite that brings together the colour, creativity and community spirit that truly represents the town.

Cllr Laura Davison, who has regularly used her ward grant to support the event, said: "We are very lucky to have the amazing Strange Cargo in our town running projects which connect our community. Every summer Charivari brings our streets alive with music and costumes. It's always creative and great fun."

Royal British Legion Choir

*Funded by
Cllr Rebecca Shoob*

Supported from a previous allocation, and again into this year, the RBL Choir has truly taken off! Now relocated to the Folkestone Nepalese Centre (which has also been supported by ward grants in the past), the group is running weekly sessions for the members of the Nepalese community as well.



Debbie Lawrence, recipient of the grant and manager of the choir, said: "We are ever grateful, and mindful, that financial support from Rebecca and other councillors when we first formed, has been pivotal in paving the way for us to fulfil our aims by going out into the community to sing to raise awareness and funds for the Cheriton & Morehall Branch and the Poppy Appeal.

"On behalf of Friends of the Royal British Legion Community Choir, thank you for demonstrating faith in our choir."

East Kent Mencap's Folkestone Hub

*Funded by
Cllr Mike Blakemore*

With support from the ward grants scheme, a brand new day service has opened at Marigold House in Cheriton for adults living with learning disabilities.

It is a great centre that provides structured activities, social opportunities and supports to the promotion of independence and helps reduce the feeling of isolation locally.

Funding from local councillors went towards funding a small kitchenette, chairs and equipment for inclusive karaoke sessions.



Hythe Electrical Recycling

*Funded by
Cllr Anita Jones*

Some projects need more than just electricity to get it powered!

A new trolley purchased with the support of ward grants will help this electrical recycling store in Hythe High Street collect those harder-to-carry items residents are looking to recycle.



Acrise Environment Group

*Funded by
Cllr Stephen Scoffham*

There used to be hundreds of ponds in the North Downs for livestock but over time, due to the advent of modern farming, these have now been lost. To help rectify this, a local group was formed to support in pond restoration work across the historic landscape.

The community grant has funded sampling equipment for the locals undertaking ecological surveys in their role as 'citizen scientists'.

It's a great project among the many that we support across the entire district.



Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community/ward-budget for details of how to apply for ward grant funding.

Taking a seat with the new council Chair

Chair of Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Cllr Paul Thomas, is a difficult man to get hold of... not because he doesn't want to chat, but precisely because he does!

Held in such high regard is he that at every turn when he is out and about, someone wants to stop and chew the fat with him.

Relatively new to local government, he has been a New Romney town councillor since 2017 and a district councillor representing the town since 2023, elected as an independent to both authorities. He became the council's Chair on 6 May this year.

Highlights so far?

The day after I became Chair, I was up at 4.30am to catch the first train to Brussels for a Dunkirk Appeal event, a project ensuring younger generations understand what remembrance is about, especially as we are rapidly losing the voices of those who experienced the Second World War first-hand now.

The day after that I was at Buckingham Palace for a garden party, representing our district.

I was the Speaker of the Cinque Ports from 2021 to 2022 as Mayor of New Romney and I went to King Charles' Coronation in Westminster Abbey in 2023. When I talk about it, it makes the hairs stand up on the back of my neck. I think of where I came from, this little boy growing up in Cardiff and then finding my way down here for the power station.

So you've lived on Romney Marsh for 43 years?

When I first came down here, I was told Romney Marsh is 'a bit Marmite', you'll either love it or you'll hate it. For some people, who like me moved down here for work at the power station, the Marsh is so flat, it drove them bananas and they couldn't take it!

But I just love the place, I really do. I'm lucky enough to have lived in Littlestone now for 27 years. We're 120 yards from the wonderful beach in one direction and not that much further the other way from the glorious countryside.



It's such a beautiful place. My boys both grew up here.

We understand you have professional expertise that is in global demand?

I worked in the nuclear industry for 37 years, mainly at Dungeness B, but I lived and worked in America for a time and conducted safety and performance reviews at nuclear plants across the US and Canada.

I've worked with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Association of Nuclear Operators, overseeing reviews in France, Spain and Romania.

I am officially retired, but you wouldn't know it to look at it! Right now, I'm really pleased to be the vice-chair of the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum, an independent body which is the voice of local government on radioactive waste management. With that hat on, I spoke for three minutes to the United Nations, where I petitioned for new nuclear at Dungeness.

What keeps you up at night?

We still have a lot to do to make sure we meet the needs of younger people on the Marsh. We do attract a lot of people down who are retiring, and that's great because it means it's a place where people want to live. But we've got to give young people employment and something to do when they come out

of one of the biggest schools in Kent here, The Marsh Academy. We are focused on what we can do, and we will continue to push as hard as possible for improvements to transport links, for example, which are not good enough. That is so important to unlock opportunity.

What does success look like for you in local government?

You have to be approachable and most importantly do what you say you are going to do, and I think that's what people really appreciate. Every time somebody comes to me, whether they see me in the street, phone me up, come to my front door or email me, it doesn't matter, they need your help. And you have to do whatever you can to help them.

What else are you up to in your 'retirement'?

I like playing golf, but I don't do that much these days. We've got a lovely little sausage dog called Sergio and we go for long walks. It's funny because some people know me because of Sergio, and they'll talk to the dog before they talk to me.

I like reading and I'm a history buff and from time to time I actually do talks. I'm a member of the New Romney History Society.

And finally...

I'm very lucky at the district council – we've got a great group of people working there. We've got fantastic officers, and they'll be going through an awful lot in the next couple of years with local government reorganisation.



Enforcement team takes to two wheels

Four new e-bikes have been introduced to strengthen enforcement across the district.

They provide council officers with a quick and effective way to patrol areas, tackle environmental crime and respond to resident reports such as anti-social behaviour, dog fouling and littering.

As well as environmental protection, the electric bicycles will also be used by the council's licensing team for compliance inspections, enforcement visits and investigations at licensed premises in all four corners of Folkestone & Hythe.

Cllr Polly Blakemore – Cabinet Member for Transport, Regulatory Services and Building Control – said: “The e-bikes will support our teams in promoting public safety, preventing crime and disorder, and protecting local communities.

“They will enable officers to get to areas inaccessible or unsuitable for vehicles – and the fact they are zero emission is an added bonus.”



Win tickets to Port Lympne Safari Park!

We're lucky to have so much wonderful variety in our district – 26 miles of beautiful coastline, stunning North Downs countryside and a safari experience right on our doorstep too!

Our friends at Port Lympne Hotel and Reserve are offering a family ticket (for up to five people) for a day out at the park.

A great day out

Port Lympne offers an unforgettable safari experience against the backdrop of beautiful Kentish savannah – the perfect recipe for a wild family day out.

Visits help fund the conservation work of The Howletts Wild Animal Trust both here and abroad. The Reserve is a breeding sanctuary for rare and endangered species and an impressive number of animals born at Port Lympne have been released into protected areas of their natural habitat.

How to enter

Just email your name and address to **communications@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk** with the subject line COMPETITION to enter.

For an additional chance to win follow **@portlympnepark** and **@FHextraordinary** on **Instagram** and comment on the pinned competition post.

@FHextraordinary

celebrates the extraordinary place that is Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh and shares local views, news, events and inspiration for visitors and residents alike.

The competition will close at 11.59pm on **Sunday 18 October 2026**.

A winner will be selected at random shortly after the closing date and contacted with details of how to receive their prize.

Visit **folkestoneandhythe.co.uk/competitions** for full terms and conditions.

Find out more about Port Lympne Hotel and Reserve at **portlympne.com**.



Supporting, helping, celebrating!

Welfare of residents is at the heart of what we do. It takes the form of financial support, housing and health – to wellbeing initiatives within the community organised together with partner organisations and volunteer groups.

This year we have supported a range of different projects, each tackling the ways we can make residents' lives more fulfilled and help them get better access to those every day services they need.

Here are just a few of the great local schemes we've supported recently.

Good Food Retail Project

Local convenience stores in Folkestone have taken part in the 'Good Food Retail Project' to champion affordable healthy eating. Shops have been stocking healthier food choices and displaying helpful leaflets about eating well on a budget.

Details included how to register for vouchers to spend on milk, formula, fruit and veg – as well as free vitamins for mums and children.

Backed by Kent County Council, supported by us through the District Food Network (now South Kent Coast Food Partnership) and delivered by Rice Marketing, the scheme formed part of ongoing efforts to promote low-cost, nutritious meals for families across the county.

Visit kent.gov.uk/healthystart and kent.gov.uk/healthyeating to find out more about the Healthy Start and 'Eat Well on a Budget' initiatives.



Money boosts work of local groups

A £500,000 package to help residents facing hardship, to support the voluntary sector and to allow more people across the district to improve their health through physical activity has been agreed.

As central government's UK Shared Prosperity funding ended in March, district councillors stepped in with funds to share between key community spaces including the community hubs in Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh – as well as Sunflower House, Folkestone Rainbow Centre and Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre.

These organisations will use the funding to continue providing low-cost meals, food and fuel vouchers, digital support, warm spaces and to signpost relevant services.

The council's existing grant to Citizens Advice – which helps with debt and benefits, housing, consumer rights, legal matters, immigration and employment queries – is also being continued.

Hythe Youth Club

Reopened with new improvements, a fresh team and big plans for the future! Cllr Mike Blakemore checked out the refurbished kitchen area as well the art, music and leisure facilities available – plus its outdoor community allotment programme.

Found at Hythe Bay School in Cinque Ports Avenue, young (and older) residents can attend the club throughout the week for its social activities, autism-friendly sessions and its home-ed club. Check out @HytheYouthClub on Facebook for details.



Excellence in Volunteering Awards

Our third annual awards evening celebrated those who donate their time across the district while changing lives and bringing communities together.

Organised by Kent Coast Volunteering on our behalf, we heard the remarkable stories from the youth projects taking place at schools like Brockhill Park School and Lyminge Church of England Primary School – to organisations such as the Romney Marsh Community Hub and Folkestone, Hythe and District Mencap, and many more.

For full details on the winners, to find support near you or if you're inspired to start your volunteering journey, visit kcv.org.uk to take that first step.



Spot the Scam event

Our first ever scam awareness event took place at Age UK Hythe and Lyminge earlier in the summer to help residents stay informed, spot the signs of fraud, and know where to get support.

We discussed numerous types of scams residents could encounter from cyber crime, doorstep criminals, email, postal and telephone scams, to financial abuse online shopping, finance and dating scams.

Another event is being held on Friday 6 November between 10.30am and 3pm at Age UK, Sandford House, Stade Street, Hythe, CT21 6BD.

Visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community for further details about the range of community support available.

A sunny and chalky district visit

Folkestone & Hythe District Council Leader Cllr Jim Martin was very happy to welcome UNESCO representatives to a sunny East Cliff in Folkestone.

They were visiting as part of the application to be the only cross-border UNESCO Global Geopark not connected by a land boundary.

The geopark has been proposed by Kent Downs National Landscape working in partnership with the neighbouring French protected landscape Parc Naturel Régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale.

The application centres around the coastal and inland chalk – exemplified by the white cliffs of both coastlines.

An information board at the sports area end of East Cliff details information about the huge megaflood 450,000 years ago that swept away the chalk ridge once connecting Kent to northern France.

The council supports the UNESCO application and its aim for boosting international recognition of the coastline and the county of Kent and the potential for developing the area as a destination for sustainable tourism.

Visit geoparktransmanche.org for more information.



The 'master butchers' of the pollinator kingdom

A prime cut of thorax is their signature dish. It's created by ambushing a poor pollinator and decapitating it before slicing off its abdomen, wings and limbs.

Asian Hornets are brutal and damaging, and all pollinators, including honeybees (their particular favourite), moths, butterflies, flies and beetles who find themselves on the menu, need our help.

Leading this charge in the district is Chris Farrell from Seabrook. Ill health meant she had to retire early from a career in the military, which is when she found a passion for beekeeping and took up a new fight, protecting her hives from the yellow-legged brutes.

She raises awareness and is recruiting an army of volunteers, who are placing traps at one-kilometre intervals on the front line against this non-native species.

They are setting up bait stations and traps that spare other buzzy beings, including hornets' close relatives the wasps, but allow them to be reported to the National Bee Unit who can investigate, remarkably checking on stomach contents and DNA to gather a picture of where an individual has come from and what it has been up to.

Chris explained: "They are very vibrant, very beautiful in their own way. They can be confused with other insects, but you are looking for the yellow socks and the carrot-coloured faces and the orange strip on the abdomen."

As you read this, Asian hornets are still at large. Their year runs from the first three days of temperatures above 12 or 13 degrees to their winter hibernation, where they'll cosy up in our sheds, porches and conservatories, in-breeding if necessary and producing up to 300 new queens to go again the following year.

Let's do our bit

Create an open feeding bait station – water, sugar, jam and a pinch of yeast added just before putting out.

Watch out for them and take photographs and upload those and the location sighting to the Asian Hornet Watch app, by visiting nonnativespecies.org/asianhornet or emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with details.

Do not disturb an active hornets' nest as their sting is nasty.



Community projects bloom with green grant success

The council is now into its third year of a Green Grants Programme.

This year, a £250,000 package of support for organisations delivering sustainable and carbon reducing projects has been agreed by councillors.

And as the successful 2026 applicants were being decided, Your District Today caught up with those who ran events this summer following their grant from the 2025 programme.

Seeds of change sown at Big Green Fair

The inaugural Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe Big Green Fair, supported with a £2,000 green grant, is unlikely to be the last. With a great deal of energy and commitment, organisers and community volunteers, Sandgate Environmental Action (SEA) assembled nearly 60 different groups for the fair.

And by doing so they showcased the phenomenal environmental protection and sustainability work currently going on right across the district. It was a family day that also celebrated nature and all it brings.

Saga gifted Enbrook Park for the free event on 7 June, and hundreds of people toured the stalls and enjoyed the talks and walks, going home with a directory to reference afterwards with plenty of seeds sown for how they can start making some changes.

Everything was thought-provoking – from eco skincare to preserves from back garden produce, swift boxes to an intriguing vegan taxidermist, ponds in a bucket to organic vegetable taste tests, talks on trees and bumblebees to Q&As on air source pumps and solar panels.

Food businesses specialising in vegetarian and vegan dishes sold out before the end of the afternoon. There were opportunities to try tai chi and electric bikes, learn how to create a beautiful garden from cuttings and plant exchanges and how and why to upcycle clothing.

Gemma Adams from SEA said: “We went for it and we’ve had such positive feedback.

“Why did we do it? To give people a boost and encourage those who are not always engaged in sustainability to start thinking about it. Even small swaps and changes can make a big difference. Our loyal band of volunteers were simply amazing and the council deserves a lot of recognition. Councillors and officers are really lovely to work with, and they are doing so much for the community.”

The day marked the launch of the Wild About Sandgate community nature project, which has also got off the ground with a green grant. It is looking to link up public green spaces around the village and is asking residents to consider creating micro nature reserves in their own gardens, balconies and windowsills.



Green grant makes big numbers

If you look at the Turner Schools' community green action campaign in numbers, it makes for pretty spectacular reading.

In total, more than 4,600 pupils and 400 staff members were involved across the eight schools in Folkestone, Dover and Canterbury during a busy school year thanks to one green grant.

That equates to 13,400 hours of activity involving more than 50 partners and 40 community groups, while heading for net zero by 2030 with a commitment across every part of the trust's operation.

It went way beyond litter picks on beaches and in parks, as seriously as the pupils took those. The eco warriors made 'Air Bee and Bees' for insect guests and delivered water saving packs and playground-grown potatoes and herbs to homes across their schools.

They rustled up delicious meals for homeless people with food that could very easily have ended up in landfill and created multimedia public art installations featuring their favourite wildlife from their green school spaces.

Youngsters planted meadow flowers, designed wildlife signage for heritage sites and put together ingenious insulated blankets from old crisp packets.

Pupils then turned into filmmakers in order to spread their messages far and wide, demonstrating their dedication to the cause and that they clearly understand their responsibilities.

These videos, plus captivating dance and musical performances formed part of a special day on the Harbour Arm in July, showcased the impact of all the work.

It has provoked conversations, inspired change, and there is a momentum with the pupils leading the way that will continue as the new school year begins this month.



FOLKESTONE RESTAURANT WEEK



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[FOLKESTONEANDHYTHE.CO.UK/RESTAURANTWEEK](https://folkestoneandhythe.co.uk/restaurantweek)