Town’s footpaths are ‘like a wall of death’

THE “poor condition” of pavements in Maidstone is condemning the disabled to a life behind closed doors, says a wheelchair user from the town.

Alan Prince (79) and his wife Josie say the pavements around their home in Farleigh Lane are an obstacle course of hazards. They say they have to negotiate uneven paving, grit, cobbles, street signs, limited dropped kerbs, drain covers and “pavement parkers”. They call the path outside their home “The Rockside” and the other side of the road “The Wall of Death”.

The couple, who don’t have a car, moved to Maidstone from London seven years ago to make life easier and trading, as they put it, “the streets of London for pavements full of pot-holes”.

Josie (77), who has painful psoriasis of the spine, is finding it hard to push her husband even a short distance. As a result they avoid Maidstone and travel to Tonbridge instead.

Josie said: “The pavements there are like walking on air by comparison. Why is the county council not doing more for the disabled in Maidstone, its county town?”

They say a trip to get a rare treat of ice cream is followed by hours and that’s not healthy.”

A Kent County Council spokesman said the town centre streets are inspected each month with defects noted and pavement condition is a “high priority”.

Josie simply asks: “Please can the council do more for the disabled and let us get out. In winter you don’t expect to get out so far before it tips and I can’t call on a friend as I get older.”

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Residents’ fury as flats repairs are left undone

TENANTS at Broadway Heights in Maidstone are concerned about maintenance of the flats by landlords Golding Homes, says Labour councillor Paul Harper.

Cllr Harper says they have raised issues about the basement, drainage on the patio and electricity meter cupboards at the block of flats behind McDonalds on the Tonbridge Road, but are not satisfied with the action taken.

Cllr Harper, who represents Fant Ward, said: “The meter cupboards are in the main entrance corridor and have big doors with a sign on, which says they must be kept locked, but the doors will not close and were open to anyone to interfere with.”

There are 58 flats in the block next to Maidstone West rail station.

A spokesman for Golding Homes said they appreciated work had been delayed because of sub-contracting issues.

It now plans to cover the cupboards in the main entrance with mesh so that the meters are protected but can still be read.

Chris Francis, head of property services at Golding Homes, added: “We have experienced a number of repair problems at Broadway Heights.

“Due to the complexity of some of these issues, progress has been slower than we would have wanted, and I recognise this has been frustrating for our residents.

“To put this right, we are co-ordinating a programme of improvement work over the coming weeks. This includes communal patio drainage, upgrading the lighting to the communal areas with new LED fittings, as well as repairs to entrance doors, glazing panels and works to service areas in the basement, which we are trying to complete as quickly as possible.”

Runner Sam recovering

AN INVICTA Grammar School pupil whose body shut down 200 yards from the finish line in a 10k race is out of intensive care and back home. Sam Bartholomew (18) was rushed to hospital after falling ill during the run in Gravesend on August 5. His parents were watching the race and saw Sam give a thumbs up as he entered the final stretch of the race, but then collapsed.

They realised the seriousness of Sam’s condition as he was rushed to Darent Valley Hospital, Dartford, where his wildly beating heart and erratic body temperature forced doctors to put him into a coma.

Dad Terry, of West Malling, said: “We are pleased to say Sam is out of intensive care and progressing well at home.”

Invicta sixth-former Sam suffered multiple organ failure possibly due to dehydration.
CUTS of £4.2 million are feared in Maidstone residents’ services, as the borough council looks to plug a massive hole in its budget.

Some services will be reduced - leader

CLLR Fran Wilson, leader of the council (pictured), said: “Since 2010, we have been forced to make significant changes due to cuts in government funding.

We’ve shared services with other councils to provide value for money and achieved savings in efficiencies and changing the way we work rather than service cuts. We have worked hard to protect front-line services as much as possible.

‘This has become harder each year and it is now inevitable that some services will have to be reduced over the next four years. It is essential that residents play an active role in this process. We hope that as many people as possible will come along to the roadshows to share their views.’

New location a hit for Social

THE Social, a boutique festival dedicated to the best in electronic dance music, turned the Kent Showground, Detling, into a nostalgic re-creation of the first generation of massive rave parties.

Held on September 9-10, it headlined Carl Cox, Goldie and Roni Size.

The event catered to a young audience, but also those old enough to recall the days when massive dance events in warehouses and fields were at the cutting edge of popular culture.

The September get-together at Detling replaced the staging of the same event last year in Mote Park – a venue which attracted more complaints and allegations of drug use.

Fan Emily Bennett, pictured above with sister Megan, said: “It was really great. There were lots of different areas to cater for different music tastes.

‘For me, Magistrates and High Contrast were the highlights.’

Quick fix repairs no good, say residents

RESIDENTS forced to wait more than 60 years for their road to be resurfaced claim the county council has met their protests with little more than a ‘quick fix’.

Homeowners in Valentine Road and Hubble Drive complained bitterly when temporary patching repairs left them walking in stone chippings, while weeds were left growing through the cracks.

Residents agree county council contractor did apply weed killer and sweep the road in response to their concerns, but say both were ineffective and revealed the fragility of the temporary repairs – saying their biggest criticism for the county council’s pledge to resurface the cul de sac after April 2017 was a ‘spiderweb’ surface.

In a letter from residents, they say: “The consensus among residents is that your proposal to use micro asphalt to resurface this road in the short term is financially unviable, so that residents can be involved in some of the tough choices that will have to be made.”

MBC blames cuts in funding since 2010 and an austerity programme which will accelerate in the next five years.

The statement added: “The revenue support grant that the council receives from the government has already fallen and will be axed altogether from next year...”

The council is unable to raise council tax above a certain government-set threshold without a referendum.

MBC says potential budget cuts of £2.9 million have been identified.

The statement added: “Councilors and senior staff have been looking at ways to try to close the remaining £1.3 million gap. As part of this, each service was categorized as essential, important, useful or not essential. The standard of the service, both current and desired, was then classified as gold, silver or bronze.”

Kent county councillor Gary Cooke said: “I sympathise greatly with the situation the council is in and as a member of the county council I am well aware of the challenges they face, but I am a little surprised that MBC finds itself short.

‘You’d have to look at all those discretionary ‘nice to do’ services and at the back office and support roles. I am happy to work more closely with the borough council with them in those areas, in order to minimise any impact on frontline service users.’

A series of roadshows led by councillors will be held at venues around the borough, starting this month.

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Love’s in the air at music school

ROMANCE was in the air at this year’s Kent Music Summer School, with students providing a musical backdrop to a surprise marriage proposal and a golden wedding anniversary celebration.

Former student Matthew Rogers proposed to his girlfriend Teresa Salamonczyk in the grounds of Benenden School before the wind band concert.

Drummer from the Old School Samba added to the carnival atmosphere at the Market Hall with their infectious samba reggae music, while Maidstone Rebel Wheelchair Basketball Team showed off their skills.

Representatives from Maidstone Swimming Club for the Disabled, Crossroads, the Centre for Independent Living Kent, Maidstone United Football Club and British Guide Dogs were among those offering advice about what they offer.

The Access for All event was organised by Golding Vision, which is the community arm of Kent housing provider Golding Homes.

It aims to support the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities, their carers, family and friends.

Staffholder Jen Lane, Volunteer Services Co-ordinator for Crossroads, said: “This was a lovely opportunity to inform people about our services and a lot of people were interested in our volunteer roles.”

Pictured here are Maidstone’s mayor Cllr Derek Butler with Golding Homes’ Chief Executive Peter Stringer and the Old School Samba.

Matthew Rogers and his fiancee Teresa Salamonczyk seemed happy but I don’t think anything will quite top playing in KYWO.”

A week after the proposal, the summer school’s tutor Alan Vincent had a second romantic surprise at a sell-out concert. He announced to the audience that he was celebrating his 50th wedding anniversary that week and the choir performed the 1966 hit, God Only Knows by the Beach Boys. The piece received huge applause as flowers were presented to Alan’s wife, Carole.

Kent Music Summer School is planning celebrations of its own next summer at its 70th anniversary.

Maidstone gets into carnival mood Rio-style to celebrate Paralympics

HUNDREDS of people from Maidstone got into the carnival spirit – Rio style – to celebrate the Paralympics and sport for the disabled. Drummers from the Old School Samba added to the carnival atmosphere at the Market Hall with their infectious samba reggae music, while Maidstone Rebel Wheelchair Basketball Team showed off their skills.

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Pictured here are Maidstone’s mayor Cllr Derek Butler with Golding Homes’ Chief Executive Peter Stringer and the Old School Samba.
UKIP retained the Shepway south seat on Maidstone Borough Council, hours after a leading independent crossed the floor to the Eurosceptic party.

John Barned (73), of Lenham, swept in with a massive 45.2% of the vote, leaving the Tory candidate behind by almost 23%. The majority for Mr Barned was more than 200.

The election result on September 8 came hours after respected Downswood and Otham member Gordon Newton announced he would be joining Ukip.

Mr Barned (below), who is retired, defected from the Tories last year, and has served as a borough councillor. He has worked in local government as a housing officer and later in a community role.

He said: “I fought this campaign for six weeks and I must admit that in the last week of the campaign I felt that we could do it. There was so much positive reaction on the doorstep. I stood on local issues that I know something about as a local person – roads, housing, and the environment.

“But I was very, very pleased to have done as well as we did and it is largely down to the hard work of the 20 or so people who worked on the campaign with me.”

The by-election was sparked by the sudden death of Dave Sergeant in May this year.

Tory Bob Hinder fought on a platform calling for a Leeds-Langley relief road, which he believes is crucial to easing traffic issues at Willington Street, Senacre and Shepway.

Fellow Ukip councillor Eddie Powell said: “It was a very interesting result. Out on the doorstep we could tell which way people were intending to vote.

“In some cases, they’re voting for the person not the party, and that may have been the case here.”

AN independent borough councillor has joined Ukip.

Gordon Newton, the respected member for Downswood and Otham, said he could no longer work with the independent group on the council because of planned housing in his area.

Cllr Newton, of Downswood, said: “I have done a good job for the people of Downswood and Otham and they voted for the candidate and not the group.

“I took some time thinking about the decision and I did not rush it.”

He said that a proposed housing development at Bicknor Wood would condemn part of his Otham ward to “oblivion”.

“Ukip have stated green policies and that was one of the reasons for crossing the floor.”

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News
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The UK’s Best Optician

Local KENT optician Buchanan Optometrists won Independent Practice of the Year in the 2015-2016 Optician Awards. The family run opticians by husband and wife team Alisdair & Kathryn Buchanan has always been at the top of their game having won the optician awards three times. In the 2016 Optician Awards, Buchanan Optometrists were runners-up in 3 categories - Independent Practice of the Year, Family Practice of the Year and Technology Practice of the Year. Alisdair Buchanan said “Coming as runner-up in three categories is an incredible achievement and assures you the general public that you will get the very best care at one of the most trusted opticians in the UK. These are the most respected and longest running awards in the industry, with the judging carried out by industry experts. The competition was as fierce as ever and includes the very best practices from all over the UK. The awards ceremony is always a nail-biting moment. It was a great moment for all the team who attended the awards in Birmingham. Miles Jupp (comedian) presented the awards in front of the great and good of optometry.” Buchanan Optometrists is in the quaint growing town of Snodland, which is becoming a real centre of Kent, with the new high-speed rail link and a new bridge built across from Woolwich to Maidstone. The practice is a real powerhouse of Optometry and is a great business that Kent should be proud to have.

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Ramblin’ Man ‘was too loud’

NOISE levels were exceeded during the Ramblin’ Man rock festival in Mote Park, it has been revealed.

Details acquired by Bearsted borough councillor Mike Revell show that on the first day of the July show, the council’s own monitor, at Mote House across the park, recorded breaches in the noise levels laid down in the organiser’s licence five times.

Cllr Revell says the public has a right to know, particularly those who registered complaints with the council as far afield as Downham, Vinters Park, Grave Green and Bearsted. They were told that lessons would be learned, but the results of noise testing were never yet known.

Sheila Weston, at Briar Fields, claims her complaint was met by "tough luck", with a reminder that the council as little more than a weekender, the council’s own monitoring was "keen to learn from the issues that have arisen and a full debrief will be undertaken…"

An MBC statement supplied to Downs Mail conceded “some minor breaches were recorded” but the authority awaits independent corroborative. MBC environmental enforcement manager Martyn James added: “We always welcome residents’ views on events taking place in the borough."

Letters, pages 36&37

Police fund gift

A CHARITY specialising in trauma counselling and based in Maidstone has become the latest organisation to benefit from a donation from Kent Police.

Detective Inspector Lee WHITEHEAD from the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate presented a cheque for £500 to Sandra Turner from the Rubicon Cares charity.

Rubicon Cares provides trauma counselling for victims of serious crime across Kent and Medway.

The donation has been provided through the Kent Police property fund. Money is raised through the sale of items at auction that have been seized during police operations and charities and local organisations can apply for a donation.

Two jailed for violent attack in alley

TWO thugs have been jailed after a vicious attack on a man in Maidstone which left the victim with a fractured skull.

Jonathan Sills and Oliver Bloommar both admitted inflicting grievous bodily harm and were each sentenced to 15 months in prison at Maidstone Crown Court.

The court heard that the assault happened after the victim and two offenders became involved in a verbal dispute in Gabriel’s Hill. The victim walked away, however, as he was walking in an alleyway off Palace Avenue, he was hit over the back of the head and fell to the floor where he was repeatedly kicked.

The victim was later found in the alley by a passer-by, who called on the police and found to have a fractured skull and bruising to his back.

It has also called for clarity and amendments to other resettlement programmes.

Cllr Oakford said: “We do the best we can in Kent but such high numbers place huge pressures on our services.

“The transfer scheme must be made mandatory so that the numbers are shared fairly. This will improve the level of support offered to these vulnerable young people, rather than placing unsustainable pressures on a few authorities.”
Cloudy2Clear Announce Trusted Trader Partnership

Consumer champions Which? have now joined the thousands of customers who recognise that Cloudy2Clear Windows really are a business that you can trust. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has received the coveted ‘Which? Trusted Trader’ status after going through a rigorous accreditation process entirely focused on customer service.

Group Managing Director Marcus McGee believes that Which? have endorsed Cloudy2Clear’s long standing company policy of delivering the highest standards possible at all times. “Our service is simple. If your double glazing has misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 25 year guarantee. But it’s not just about saving people money; although that obviously helps. Whilst a number of tradespeople perhaps don’t focus on customer care as much as they should do, we make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle.

Locally, Cloudy2Clear service Maidstone & surrounding areas and manager Luke Roberts agrees that this approach is a major factor in his success. The truth is that it’s not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I’ve done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated as both my customers and, obviously a body as nationally important as Which? now recognise.”

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Tom a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he’ll be happy to help!

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MAIDSTONE TOWN
Assault case
THREE men have been charged with an assault which took place in Maidstone on Tuesday, September 6.
A man reportedly sustained a broken jaw when he was assaulted by three men in Upper Stone Street.
David Adams (26), of Brewer Street, Maidstone; Samuel Glead (23), of Lucerne Street, Maidstone and Joseph Jabatie (26), of Thackeray Road, Larkfield, have been arrested and charged with assault.
Mr Jabatie was charged with assaulting a police officer. All were remanded in custody.

Traveller camps
TRAVELLERS set up camp beside the Lockmeadow complex in the third incursion of its kind in a week.
A group caused disruption when they parked at Tesco in Grove Green on September 3, and another group descended on Medway Street car park. At Lockmeadow, a number of motor homes were parked behind the building, a stone’s throw from the crown court, on September 9.

Thefts from cars
SEVEN cars were targeted by thieves in the Maidstone area over two days with satnavs, tools and an np1 player taken. Kent Police are warning car owners to take steps to guard their belongings.

A FORMER postman from Maidstone nearly missed out on a £25,000 prize after failing to provide his forwarding address.
Fortunately for 57-year-old David Stuart, when the organiser of Demelza’s monthly lotto and superdraw arrived at his old address in Vinters Park to hand over his cheque, they persevered and in six weeks tracked him down.
And for David, who took early retirement from his job as a postman in Maidstone after being seriously injured in a motorcycle accident in Grove Caen in 2011, knew just how he would spend the money: a new camper van so that he and partner Maria can tour Britain and Europe.

A former postman from Maidstone has won £25,000 after salesmen for the Post Office, so we tried contacting them, but to no avail. We also tried VDS Facebook and BT directory enquiries, but drew a blank.”

Mr Stuart paid his lottery membership by direct debit and it was a letter from Demelza forwarded by his bank that finally revealed his whereabouts. Mr Booth said: “We were so relieve. We’ve never had a situation like this before and were running out of ideas. If a prize remains unclaimed after six months, it goes back into the lottery fund.”

Mr Stuart’s mother Myrtle, who lives in Weavering Street, Maidstone, has been a member of the Demelza lottery for many years and joined David and Maria for a tour of the hospice near Sittingbourne – Kent’s only children’s hospice – when he visited to show off his new “prize”.
He now plans to spread the word about Demelza’s lottery when he is out and about in the van. He said: “I’m so thrilled by the win, I want to give something back.”

For more information please drop into our office in Mill Street, Maidstone.
Alternatively contact Gemma on 01622 736966
Or the office on 01622 753618
Spa hotel plan agreed

A PLAN for a lavish spa hotel has been approved by councillors, in spite of concerns by conservationists.

Ciaran O’Quigley (48), the owner of Mu Mu’s in Week Street and the mastermind behind the hotel concept, thanked Maidstone Council for taking the brave decision. Ahead of the meeting he said that while tourism played a big part in the future plans for Maidstone, there was no high-end accommodation in the town centre. He is pictured at the site.

However, Maidstone Council’s planning committee has agreed that the 36-bedroom, luxury spa hotel can be built at the lower end of Brewer Street, behind St Francis’ Roman Catholic Church. It will include treatment rooms, a retro cinema, Roman bath and a 100-cover restaurant, providing an estimated 20 jobs.

The work will involve the demolition of St Francis’ School building, which Historic England and the council’s conservation officer expressed concerns about. Money will be donated by St Francis’ Church for a new hall.

The proposed 1930s-style Hotel Mu Mu was recommended for approval by planning officers and was met with positive feedback from councillors and others keen to see the £6m investment in the county town.

Cllr Naghi said: “The scheme will give a ‘wow’ factor and a much-needed point of interest to visitors stepping off the train to walk into town.”

Before the proposal went to committee, parish priest Canon Luke Smith said he supported the plan, saying he believed it will be an asset to the town, with an agreement in place between Mr O’Quigley and the diocese that would be “beneficial to all concerned.”

It is understood the building will take 18 months to complete and Mr O’Quigley hopes that work will begin in early January.
Mystery over car key failure in Maidstone

A MASS failure of key fobs across Maidstone has left motorists scratching their heads in bewilderment.

No one seems to know why the devices have failed, despite having previously been in working order.

The issue was first reported earlier this month at Quarry Wood Industrial Estate in Aylesford, when motorists visiting stores such as PC World, Halfords and Sainsbury were unable to lock their cars. But there were other reports of fob failure in Romney Place, Maidstone, and Alexander Grove in Kings Hill, according to police.

A Kent Police spokesman said: “It doesn’t appear that the Aylesford Retail Park was reported to us. We received two calls on September 1 reporting issues with car keys not working in Romney Place, Maidstone, and Alexander Grove in Kings Hill, according to police.

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The key fob failure was news to Kerry Hoard, of Pat Hoard Garage Service in Bearsted, who said: “It’s a strange one and I have never come across it before.

“I wouldn’t have thought the big retailers would be very happy if their customers were using the car park and not being able to lock their cars. It’s bound to knock their business.”

In recent years, households experienced a similar problem in a residential area of Southampton. In that case, the government agency Ofcom found interference from a resident’s faulty device which transmits a TV signal to other sets in the home was to blame. The device was switched off and the key fobs worked.

Aylesford MP Tracey Crouch (below), a regular shopper at Quarry Wood, said she had not been contacted by any constituents. She added: “I shop there fairly often and it hasn’t happened to me.”

An RAC spokesman said: “Sometimes our engineers will be called to reports like this and when they tow the car a little way up the road, the fob starts working again.”

Ofcom has investigated the Maidstone incidents, but has been unable to find a direct cause of the problem.

AN EXHIBITION based on two paintings in Maidstone Museum’s collection goes on show this month.

Wartime art

Coming Home: Conflict and Care in 1916 is a First World War exhibition featuring two works by the artist Frank Hyde.

The paintings are Trenes Wood and Wounded Soldiers Arriving at Maidstone East.

They are accompanied by items, sounds and other images from the conflict.

The exhibition opens on Saturday, September 24 and runs until the new year.

Driving ban

A MAIDSTONE woman who failed to give a breath test has been banned from driving for three years and given a community service order.

Frankie Jo Schuck (29), from St Peter’s Street, denied failing to provide a breath specimen but was convicted at West Kent Magistrates’ Court.

Magistrates imposed the ban and ordered her to carry out 390 hours of unpaid work in the community. She was also ordered to pay £63 costs and a £60 victim surcharge.

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The 73-year-old had an amazing
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He was heading from Maidstone
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Mr Shaw said he slid along the
cycle, narrowly missing the col-
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The Thamesmead resident had
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Motorcyclist, 73, tells
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MINDLESS vandals are putting lives at risk on river

Since April last year Maidstone Council has had to replace more than 200 lifebuoys, throw bags and lifelines in the area, at a cost of more than £7,000.

The water aids have been a lifeline on numerous occasions – and were used in five rescues from the River Medway in 2015 alone.

Borough councillor Marion Ring (pictured) said: “Some people seem to think that these are toys or that it’s a game to mess about with them. They don’t seem to realise that they are essential pieces of lifesaving equipment. It’s vital that they are available if someone’s life is in danger.”

Her comments have been echoed by Maidstone busi- nessman Ben Lon- don, who risked his life to dive into the Medway on August 10 to save a drowning man and then went back into the river to retrieve the life ring.

He said: “These people are thoughtless. They simply don’t seem to realise that someone could lose their life if these vital pieces of equipment are not there.”

It is also a criminal offence to re- move such items.

Maidstone Council provides equipment at 55 lifebuoy stations along the banks of the River Med- way from Tovil to The Malia Inn at Allington Lock, near Aylesford, and popular stretches of water at The Lawns, Yalding, Toston Bridge, Mote Park and the lake at Mallards Way. Homes that have had to be re- placed since April last year include 46 lifebuoys, 87 throw bags and 72 lifelines.

Vandals put lives at risk on river

FINGER-lickin’ fast food chain KFC is looking for eight new sites in Maidstone, with 30-40 parking spaces. In town centres, they want units of up to 2,000 square feet. KFC was founded by business entre- preneur Harland Sanders who set up his franchise model in 1952.

COUCH potatoes are reminded that something as simple as a 30-minute walk a week will reduce your chances of getting cancer.

A local health centre says those who exercise the least have the most chances of getting cancer.

The advice comes in the wake of the government’s latest guideline of 150 minutes of moderate activity a week. There are two formats - 82 seater and 114 seater restaurant section. There are two formats - 82 seater and 114 seater restaurant with 30-40 parking spaces. In town centres, they want units of up to 2,000 square feet. KFC said it wants drive thru locations in town close to an A road.

KFC says it wants drive thru sites of almost half an acre, on re-tail parks or the roadside with paths of residential accommodation. There are two formats - 82 seater and 114 seater restaurant with 30-40 parking spaces. In town centres, they want units of up to 2,000 square feet. KFC was founded by business entre- preneur Harland Sanders who set up his franchise model in 1952.

Get fit to stay healthy

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SEEING beyond the offers

Staying focused isn’t just about keeping your eye on the ball … caring for your sight is so much more – it’s the window to your inner health.

That’s the message from the team at Kings Hill Opticians, whose two full-time optometrists pride themselves on providing a thorough investigation with a bespoke optical solution for all your visual needs.

The practice is led by Mr Satvinder Shoker, who is also the lead optometrist at Maidstone Hospital, where he works alongside ophthalmologists in glaucoma, diabetes and wet macula degeneration services. Mr Shoker also specialises in fitting complex contact lenses, helping partially sighted patients with alternative ways of seeing, and looking after young one’s visual requirements.

Now in practice for over 10 years – at purpose-built premises in Liberty Square, Kings Hill – his practice is one of just three in Kent capable of monitoring treated wet macula degeneration, which once robbed patients of their sight. This is just one of the cutting-edge, hospital-standard services offered at this practice, but not on the high street.

Mr Shoker said: “All clients are given a 40-minute examination with our optometrists who will monitor the health of their eyes and take the time to discuss an individual’s needs, ensuring they receive the best solution to correct their vision.”

As an independent – or ‘freehold’ – practice that includes access to any make of spectacle lens, frame or contact lens from around the globe. Staff are also happy to advise on the implications and benefits of refractive laser surgery and other sight solutions you may not have heard about, such as EyeDream contact lenses: these are lenses that you wear overnight and remove in the morning, leaving you free from spectacles or contacts for the whole day.

Mr Shoker said: “For many new patients it is a real eye-opener to learn that there are many more solutions than those offered on the high street, which may better fit their particular visual needs. So often, patients will say they have struggled with varifocals or don’t want to try them. Most of the time, this is because they have only been offered a limited ‘own brand’ choice of lenses, when, in fact, there are over 100 types of varifocals to choose from.

“Here, patients don’t see a different optometrist every time, but a qualified optometrist who will monitor their vision and visual health each time they visit. This continuity ensures accuracy, which can help in the early detection of conditions and treatment.”

The practice offers free sight tests to the over-60s, under-16s and those on benefits. For details visit www.kingshillopticians.co.uk, or to make an eye appointment call 01732 875544.

New hope for Macular Degeneration Sufferers

Even with reduced vision caused by glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy or RP it is possible to achieve improved vision with the E-scoop lens.

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MP tackles lorry ‘fly-parking’

MID Kent MP Helen Whately is calling on the government to act over the “annoying and dangerous” scourge of lorries parking illegally in Maidstone and surrounding villages.

Local people are fed up with inconvenience, noise, litter and mess left behind by truckers – many of them foreign – using public spaces to park up.

In a House of Commons debate she had called, Mrs Whately urged the Department of Transport to take action over HGVs parking in inappropriate places.

She also asked roads minister John Hayes to make the new lorry area planned for Stanford west available for overnight parking – not just when Operation Stack is in force.

Mr Hayes said a “fresh look” was needed at lorry parking and committed to undertake a study of the provision of lorry parking spaces across the country.

Driving ban

A DRIVER from Maidstone has been banned from the road and fined more than £1,000 for a series of driving offences.

Jason Bortham (32) admitted drink-driving, driving without insurance and using a vehicle without an MOT certificate in Maidstone.

Bortham, from Bramble Close, was stopped in his Kia Sportage on January 24. A breath test showed that he had 65mg of alcohol in 100ml of breath. The legal limit is 35.

West Kent Magistrates banned him from driving for three years and fined him £1,150. He must also pay £170 in costs and a £50 victim surcharge.

Soccer signing

CHELSEA footballer Kerry Dixon will sign copies of his autobiography, Up Front, at Lashings sports bar in Maidstone from 7pm on Wednesday, September 28.

Dixon will talk about his life on and off the pitch. The forward, who scored 191 goals in nine years at Chelsea, has previously spoken about drug and gambling problems.

Crash chaos

A CRASH between a car and a lorry caused traffic jams on the A20 Bexley Way in Maidstone on Thursday, September 8.

The road was partly blocked with heavy traffic northbound between the A20 at Broadway junction and the White Rabbith roundabout.

An incredible 997 potholes have had to be filled on the county’s roads since June, according to Kent County Council.

The highways authority says it has spent £3.2m patching potholes on Kent roads, alongside 22.4 miles of larger road repairs.

The council says it will spend an extra £3 million on pothole repairs this year, with £1.4 million coming from the Government. KCC says it has aimed to make permanent repairs by cutting a small section of the road around the hole, and filling it with tarmac, something that used to cost more than £1.2m since June.

Dismay at ducks’ death

A PARISH council chairman has appealed for information after wild birds were killed in a sickening attack at a village duck pond.

Cllr Vianne Gibbons, of Loose, described the shocking devastation at Brooks Field pond, caused by “a group of men dressed in camouflage outfits with dogs.”

In a recent edition of the parish council’s latest newsletter, Loose Views, she said that the men threw rocks and stones at the bulrushes. It said: “As the ducks and their chicks came out of the bulrushes, the men set their dogs on them, killing a vast amount. It appears there is possibly only one mallard and one moorhen with chicks left.”

She said: “I was appalled and shocked to hear this news. The ducks have always been a lovely feature in Loose. For them to be killed in this way is very shocking.”

The millpond is looked after by volunteers after being taken over with the adjacent Brooks Field in 2001 by the parish council.

Kent police said they could not trace a report of the incident.

Charity ball

A CHARITY Winter Ball is being held at the Tudor Park Hotel near Maidstone in aid of Action on Hearing Loss on November 19.

A drinks reception will be followed by a three-course meal, auction and raffle. There will be live music from Sound Casters and a disco until midnight. Tickets cost £50 per person for tables of 10. Telephone 07801 976692 or send an email to AOHLBIG3@gmail.com.

It has been called on the public to report any potholes on www.kent.gov.uk/pothole-bltz.
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MP supports new traders

MAIDSTONE and the Weald MP Helen Grant visited Harpers Gift and Coffee Shop in the Market Buildings, Maidstone.

She was invited by new owners Frank Goodhind and Serena Parker. The couple come from diverse backgrounds in the music industry and interior design, with Frank being a composer for many years.

Together they have big plans for Harpers and hope to extend their love of artisan breads and cakes to their coffee shop menu.

Mrs Grant chatted to Frank, with whom she is pictured about his plans for the business and bought one of the unique greeting cards on the shop.

The MP added: “It’s fantastic that Frank and Serena have continued to provide a platform for local artists and craftpeople, which Harpers has always been well known for. I wish them the best of luck with their future plans.”

Store and pub trouble as travellers move in

TESCO in Grove Green was forced to shut early and police were called to the Early Bird public house after a disturbance reportedly caused by members of the travelling community.

Locals reported caravans and other vehicles parked up in the car park near the staff entrance to the store on September 3 and, according to sources, flooded the toilets inside.

Residents reported mess and human waste in the area.

Police confirmed they were called to the popular Early Bird public house in the square next to Tesco and the nearby parade of shops.

A spokesman said: “We responded at 11.41pm on Saturday, September 3, to a report that a group of people entered the pub and damaged a number of glasses. Officers attended and dispersed the group. There were no injuries.”

An Early Bird staff member confirmed there had been trouble but the pub had reopened for business. The pub’s manager was approached for a comment.

A Tesco spokesman said: “The store manager informed me that travellers arrived on the site on Saturday, stayed the night and were gone by Sunday lunch time.

“The store and local pub worked with the police to encourage them to move on, and they have not returned since.”

But a member of staff said: “They made a right nuisance of themselves, flooding the toilets and stealing stock from the store. They just arrived in the car park and made a total mess of it. There was filth everywhere.

“So the decision was made to shut the store at 10pm which is a couple of hours early for a Saturday.”

Reports emerged the following day that travellers had set up camp in the Medway Street car park in the town centre. They later moved on.

About nine caravans and motor homes moved on to the short-stay site overnight on September 5. Police were called out at 6.40pm but no crimes were found to have taken place.

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Own an Apple computer? You need MCS

Many of us own some kind of Apple computer or device, whether it be an iPad, iPhone, iMac, MacBook Pro … and the list continues to grow as Apple launches one ground-breaking product after the next.

One thing you may not realise though is that there is an Apple specialist on your doorstep in Maidstone town centre, with free parking - and there has been for over 35 years! Microspot Computer Services has been repairing, selling, upgrading and maintaining Kent’s Apple products for consumers and businesses since Apple came to the market in the 70s.

Brian Stroud (pictured) has been with the company since the beginning and became Managing Director in 2008. Since taking over, Brian has moved the company to plush new offices that boast a modern workshop that Apple itself would be proud of.

Brian said: “We pride ourselves on a quality service, and we always have, as a result we have a very loyal customer base. With the popularity of Apple products growing rapidly in Maidstone and the surrounding area, we want to let people know that there’s no need to travel all the way to Bluewater or pay for parking at Fremlin Walk just for someone to help them with an Apple computer problem. We boast the fastest repair turnaround time in the area averaging just 48 hours compared to our nearest rival at one week.

We look after many local businesses with our popular ‘Maintenance Service Packages’ that offer 24/7 support from our on-call Apple Engineers. This ensures your entire Apple infrastructure is in safe hands, minimising down time when things go wrong.”

Brian and his team welcome any enquiries you may have and look forward to welcoming you to the MCS workshop for all your Apple needs.

Maidstone Town October 2016 19
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The Stone Tile Warehouse
Conman told to repay £68k

A HEARTLESS conman who intimidated people in Maidstone into paying for shoddy workmanship on their driveways has been ordered to repay £68,330.

An investigation by Kent County Council’s (KCC) Trading Standards began in 2013 and led to 12 months’ imprisonment for Owen Saunders (left) in June 2015.

The case involved four victims from Whitstable, who were conned out of £28,500 by Saunders, trading as Berkeley Driveways, for work which was so shoddy that an independent expert estimated the value to be just £271.

However, KCC Trading Standards continued its investigation into Saunders’ activities and identified other potential victims.

More than 50 were contacted and, of these, 12 more victims came forward with details of work carried out on their driveways.

A Proceeds of Crime process concluded at Canterbury Crown Court on Monday (12 September).

Victims from Whitstable, Broadstairs, Bearsted, Sevenoaks, Paddock Wood and Coxheath provided evidence of aggressive trading, shoddy workmanship and misleading actions with regards to Saunders’ companies, including Berkeley Driveways, based in Upchurch.

Saunders has 14 days to pay the compensation to his victims or face another 21 months’ imprisonment. He was also ordered to pay £563,000 in costs in 14 days.

Trading Standards operations manager Clive Phillips said: “When we can show that criminals have financially benefited from their crimes, our financial investigators will track down assets and present their findings to the court.

“The Proceeds of Crime Act gives courts powers to make compensation and confiscation orders and we will ensure we use this legislation to the full effect where criminals target the residents of Kent.

“We recommend that residents always seek at least three quotes for work that you know needs to be carried out and do not be pressured to sign a contract until you are ready and willing to do so. For a list of companies approved by KCC, you can contact checkatrade.com online or call 0333 0146 190.”

Mr Phillips described this as one of the worst cases KCC Trading Standards had investigated.

He added: “Saunders used aggressive tactics to get work, and then ignored customers’ rights by increasing charges partway through a contract, misleading customers’ rights to cancel, and carrying out poor workmanship.”

Hungry for food festival

THE county’s appetite for food was in evidence as queues formed on the roads to Leeds Castle for its fantastic British Food Festival.

Crowds were up by 2,000 for the third event of its kind at the castle, with 11,800 visitors over the three days.

They were there for the cookery demonstrations, talks, and 40 food stands selling specialty liqueurs, wine, veg boxes, cheeses, chilli jams, fudge, artisan breads, cakes, pastries, and sweets.

A castle spokesman said the event – run in conjunction with The Great British Food Festival – continued to be a success and is due to become a fixed event on the castle’s calendar.

She added: “Crowds were greatly helped by the wonderful weather on Sunday and, according to social media, people seem to have had a lovely time, with some coming more than once.”

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Hostel for the homeless plan

MAIDSTONE Residents’ Against Homeless (MRAH) is planning a major housing conference in the town, in a bid to open a hostel.

MRAH – which works alongside Making a Difference Maidstone (MADM) – was set up last year by 54-year-old Amanda Siddall (left), from Penenden Heath.

After running two charity shops in Spain, she is helping to run a charity shop for the town’s homeless at 49 Church Street – opposite the M&S car park.

She said: “People should not have to live on the streets in the 21st century. Many organisations are doing sterling work, but there is still more to be done as the numbers grow and services are stretched. There is nowhere for these people to go at night, except in the depths of winter when the Maidstone Churches’ Winter Shelter scheme opens.

“People complain about the homeless on the streets, but there is no alternative for them as accommodation is so scarce.”

Having attended the launch of the Manchester Homelessness Charter in May, MRAH hopes to bring a similar event to Maidstone in November, endorsed by Maidstone Council.

Amanda is also vocal about the need for a Maidstone hostel for the homeless, adding: “Maidstone people want to stay in Maidstone and we need to help make this happen for the 40 or so people sleeping rough on our streets, plus the hundreds in temporary accommodation or ‘sofa surfing’ with friends and family.”

Anyone able to assist, provide accommodation or storage for the shop should call Amanda on 01622 687414, 07769 268962, email mad_amanda@hotmail.com or call into the shop.

Drugs charge

A MAN who supplied class A drugs in Maidstone has been jailed for a year.

Shane James Henderson Myles, 26, from Richmond Road in Gillingham, was sentenced to 12 months behind bars at Medway Magistrates’ Court.

He was also ordered to pay an £80 victim surcharge.

Police assault

A 33-YEAR-OLD woman has appeared in court for being drunk and disorderly and assaulting a police officer in Maidstone.

Alina Korosteliova was sentenced at Mid Kent Magistrates’ Court after admitting assaulting the officer in Bishops Way on July 11 and being drunk and disorderly the following day.

She was sentenced to 90 days in prison, suspended for 18 months with a £115 victim surcharge.
Love Curry

IT IS officially the nation’s best-loved dish, and whether you favour a mild masala, a bhuna or the mighty vindaloo or if you pick a lime pickle over rhiha with your poppadoms, National Curry Week is the perfect time to enjoy your favourite meal.

National Curry Week – which runs this year from October 10 to 16 – was started in 1998 as a way to promote the cuisine and to raise funds for various charities.

Since then, forms of the cuisine have expanded and now many restaurants offer delicious regional variations on dishes, ranging from the Punjab to Kashmiri or Goan and South Indian.

Tory MP and former Secretary of State for Communities, Eric Pickles, is a big supporter of the event. He said: “Britain just wouldn’t be the same without the colour and vibrancy of Asian restaurants up and down the country. Let’s celebrate the immense contribution of the Asian cuisine industry to our country’s economy and culture. Find out more about National Curry Week – poppadum tower building and poppadum races for charity – at natiionaleatingoutweek.com

Zeran serves all of your favourite Indian. Our menu has something for everyone, from warm starters to cold desserts.

We hope you will enjoy your experience at Zeran through our efficient take out and delivery service.

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FREE DELIVERY

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“One of the best curry houses in Maidstone. We are regular customers and they never disappoint”

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“Excellent” Natasha, Maidstone

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Minimum order £12, within a 5 mile radius.

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Please mention this advert when making a booking

**Dine in only - Minimum spend £25
* Excluding Bank Holidays Terms & conditions apply

Delhispice
Fine dining Indian Restaurant serving traditional Indian food

Menu selected from various regions from all over the Indian sub continent, with specialist Indian spices, and 100% free from all artificial colourings and flavourings.

Very popular traditional bar, serving fine wines, real ales and an extensive range of teas and coffees.

All New Exciting Lunch Menu now available

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20% Discount on Monday & Wednesday evenings.

10% Discount on Takeaway until the end of October.

On presentation of this advertisement. Valid until 31.10.2016

Please mention this advert when making a booking

**Dine in only - Minimum spend £25
* Excluding Bank Holidays Terms & conditions apply

Maidsontown October 2016 23
WORKERS at Maidstone Town Post Office made their last day child’s play before moving to a new site.

Staff at the Bank Street store grabbed dummies and nappies and dressed up as under-fives to help counter clerk Jeanette Cooper raise money for the Oliver Fisher Special Care Unit at Medway Maritime Hospital.

The unit saved the life of her 17-week premature grandson, Henry Cooper, of Downswood, whose story touched Downs Mail readers’ hearts. Jeanette and her family have been fundraising for the charity and their next event will be a 5k run at Capstone Park, Medway. Jeanette will run with Henry’s mum Nicki, along with her mum, Sharon Terry.

Jeanette said: “Henry is doing fantastically well. He’s a happy little boy and we get beautiful smiles from him.” Since he was born weighing just 1lb 2oz last December, the youngster has progressed to a healthy 10lb.

The fancy dress day marked the post office’s move to new premises within the WH Smith store on Week Street, less than 250m away. Jeanette said: “It is a sad occasion, but we have decided to go out with a bang. We had a collecting tin in the post office for the baby unit and the staff suggested dressing up on the last day to raise money for it. We had a good laugh and quite a lot of people were putting money in the bucket so the fund must have done well.”

For some longer-serving colleagues, the post office move is their second as they worked at the previous site in King Street, which closed nearly 10 years ago.

The Bank Street branch closed on Wednesday, August 17 with its successor opening next day. No jobs have been lost in the transfer. The new opening hours are from 9am to 5.30pm Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; 9.30am to 5.30pm on Tuesday and 9am to 12.30pm on Saturday.

POLICE have issued a picture of a man they want to question about a raid by a gang of four at a home in Harrietsham.

The man, who was wearing a hoodie, was involved in what police described as an aggravated burglary. The computer-generated picture builds on the details already held by police of a slim man, about 5ft 11in tall, who spoke with a local accent. The residents were threatened by the suspects. No one was hurt. The gang drove off from the house in Marley Road in a silver vehicle. Two mobile phones are reported to have been stolen during the incident at about 5pm on Thursday, July 14.

Anyone with information is asked to call Kent Police on 01622 604100 quoting YY/015480/16 or Kent Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555111.

THE Pepusch Consort is to perform an evening of baroque chamber music in aid of the Baptist church in Harrietsham.

Tickets for the concert at the church, which starts at 7.30pm on Saturday, September 24, are £8. To reserve yours call Pat King on 01622 851843 or Stephen Morris on 850948 or send an email to stephen.morris69@btinternet.com.

Hunt for suspect after burglary

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A FORMER Ukip official to one of Kent’s most controversial MEPs has been spared jail after admitting her involvement in an expenses scam.

Christine Hewitt (55), of Townsend Square, King’s Hill, paid £950 for a meal in The Hoy pub in Thanet in March 2015. But Hewitt, who was the chief of staff to south east MEP Janice Atkinson – infamous for describing a British Thai woman as a “ting tong” – asked the restaurant to give her a £3,150 bill.

The scam was uncovered in an expose in a national newspaper. Hewitt appeared in front of a judge at Canterbury Crown Court, where it was heard that the inflated bill would have been passed to an organisation to reimburse the money, which would have ultimately been paid for by the British taxpayer.

The tearful defendant put her head in her hands when Judge William Kennedy told her that she would not be sent to prison during a 20-minute hearing earlier this month.

The court was told how the Marigate restaurant was furious at the rip-off and tipped off reporters at the Sun newspaper, who filmed Hewitt and sent the tape to police. The chief of staff was then arrested and charged with fraud.

Mrs Atkinson, who sits as an MEP but has developed political links with the far right French National Front party led by Marine Le Pen, was sacked by Ukip bosses.

She denied involvement in the scam and faced no charges. Hewitt was given a suspended jail sentence of four months, 40 hours on community service and ordered to pay £500 in costs. Her defence claimed Mrs Atkinson had “hung her out to dry”. Mrs Atkinson, who was approached for a comment but did not respond, was tipped to cause an upset in the Folkestone and Hythe parliamentary constituency but was dropped when the fraud probe started.

Ukip officer is guilty of scam

Minibus will benefit elderly

MAIDSTONE group Involve Kent has taken delivery of a new minibus to help the elderly in the town, courtesy of the Department of Transport.

But the vehicle, which will be used to take older people shopping, for days out and other transport needs, presented just one problem – where to park it in Maidstone?

Fortunately, construction firm Gallagher stepped up and made space for the 17-seat Peugeot Boxer, which is wheelchair accessible. It will operate out of Involve’s new hub in The Mall shopping centre.

Involve’s Older People’s service is now looking for extra drivers and volunteers to help in their office – call 01622 677337. To find out how the service can help you, visit involvekent.org.uk, email iop@involvekent.org.uk, or call 01622 235833.

Crash woman is cut from car

A WOMAN was cut from her car after a crash close to a Maidstone railway station.

The incident on Station Approach at Maidstone West just before 4pm on September 6 also involved a van and a third vehicle.

Firefighters had to free the woman, said to be aged in her 40s. She is thought to have neck injuries which were not life-threatening. Police closed the road and diverted traffic into the Broadway.

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WITH changes to the age at which youngsters can leave education, “staying on” into the sixth form is an increasingly popular choice among the 18,000 or so youngsters in Kent who earned their GCSEs this August.

The government’s decision to raise the education participation age to 18 may not have gone down well with all of you, but it does offer more time to figure out exactly what it is you want from the world of work and an opportunity to get more qualifications. Indeed, evidence shows that people with more qualifications, such as two or more A levels, are likely to move on to university, the new rules contain when you do leave or go on to employment, training or education. You can even apply to more than one sixth form or college on this site if you fancy changing schools or finding another that offers just what you want, be that academic courses or more vocational opportunities.

Look out for school open days, which will give you a chance to check out first-hand what’s on offer at schools in your area and at Kent’s seven FE Colleges, many offering academic and vocational courses at all levels, with particular specialisms. It’s worth doing your homework now to ensure all that effort doesn’t go to waste.

As well as providing more opportunity to cram your CV without. Earn around 14% more than those who earned their GCSEs this August.

Carry on in education at school or a further education (FE) college. As well as providing more opportunity to earn a living, this is a great way to keep presenting a CV to employers.

Take on voluntary work, employment or self-employment for more than 20 hours a week alongside part-time education or training.

Roger Gough, KCC Cabinet member for Education, said: “It’s great news that thousands of young people have already accepted offers to go to college, stay on at a school sixth-form, take up an apprenticeship or start some other kind of employment with training. For those who haven’t got that far yet, it’s important that young people take their GCSE results and think about what they can do with what they have got.”

It’s also worth speaking with your careers teacher, friends and family, but remember, this is about you and what you want to do and it’s a decision that will determine just how much you get from your job – not only money, but satisfaction.

Class notes – in brief!

Up until the age of 18:

You can get a job - but you will need to carry on learning or complete accredited training alongside it (be aware, not all employers are familiar with the government’s new rules)

Apprenticeships offer the chance to earn and learn at the same time and pay about £100 a week. There are more than 280 different types of apprenticeships available and more than 500,000 students have opted for this career path since 2010.

You could start your own business - and train at the same time.

You can get a job - but you will need to carry on learning or complete accredited training alongside it (be aware, not all employers are familiar with the government’s new rules)

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Useful contacts

Check out your options and apply for sixth form and FE places at Kentchoices4u.com

Make an appointment with your career’s advisor or contact the National Careers Service Hotline on 0800 100 900

Take advantage of the dozens of other websites offering you a chance to get a clearer idea of your career path, such as:


St Helens Montessori School
East Farleigh
Nursery and Primary School for children aged 2 - 11
Beautiful Rural Setting

Outstanding in all areas

Established 1989
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www.sthelensmontessori.co.uk
You are warmly invited to take a closer look at the broad curriculum and inspiring facilities we have to offer at New Line Learning Academy, in Boughton Lane, Loose. Our upcoming open events include our open mornings, which will be held between 9am and 12pm on:

- September 21st, 22nd and 23rd
- October 17th, 18th and 19th
- October 25th - 27th

Please contact the main office to book a place on an open morning tour.

www.futureschoolstrust.com/NLLAcademy

E: nll@futureschoolstrust.com

T: 01622 743286

Open Evening: Tuesday, 20th September
4.30pm - 8pm

St Simon Stock Catholic School

“Outstanding”
(January 2015 Section 48 Ofsted Inspection)

You are warmly invited to our

Open Evening:
Tuesday 4th October 18:00-20:00
Principal’s address at 18:00 and 19:30

Open Mornings:
Wednesday 5th & Thursday 20th October
Commencing at 09:00

Sixth Form Open Evening:
Thursday 3rd November 18:00-20:00
Principal’s address at 18:00

A Christian learning community with high academic standards and excellent pastoral care.

Oakwood Park, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 0JF www.ssscs.co.uk 01622 754540
THE Prime Minister’s recent announcement of an expansion in grammar school provision has caused ripple across the country. County councillor Jenny Whittle argues why Kent has got it right...

As Chairman of Kent County Council’s select committee on grammar schools and social mobility, I was delighted to hear the Prime Minister’s vision for new grammar schools that would seek to benefit, in particular children from less well-off families across the country. The select committee’s recently-published report outlined 16 recommendations, calling for a targeted approach to ensure that bright children from less affluent families were encouraged and supported by KCC and primary head teachers, following the example of Emma Hickling, the outstanding head teacher of Kingswood, Leeds and Ulcombe Primary Schools, to take the Kent Test and through the appeals process if they missed the pass mark. We also called on all grammar schools in Kent to prioritise children eligible for ‘pupil premium’ (most now already do) in their admissions arrangements, to widen outreach programmes in English and Maths for children in feeder primary schools, and to ensure that assistance was provided for uniform, schools trips and transport for these children. The Chief Inspector of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, was quick to criticise the PM’s policy on grammar schools, declaring their reintroduction to be a “severely retrograde step” and comparing the performance of Kent’s children on free school meals unfavourably with their London counterparts. Sir Michael, who himself benefited from a grammar school education, did not say that the top 10 funded areas for education are all in London – and Kent’s schools receive 50% less funding than those schools.

Attacking grammar schools, parental choice and the pursuit of academic excellence is totally misguided. If Sir Michael came to Maidstone, he would see the excellent work of the Valley Invicta Academies’ Trust, and the outstanding education that both schools provide for the pupils they serve. The proportion of good and outstanding schools in Kent is higher than the national average.

That is not to say that significant barriers remain for children from poorer families to access grammar schools, but these start well in advance of 11. Educational disadvantage can be entrenched for these children from as early as 22 months, and parties across the political spectrum have focussed efforts on reducing the gap. Measures include introduction of the Pupil Premium in 2010, which gives primary schools over £1300 per pupil per year for each child who is currently registered for free school meals or has been at some point within the previous six years. The pupil premium is starting to have an impact, with an increased number of children from poorer families attending grammar schools across the county. Admittedly from a small base, but an improvement and one that we need to build on. The solution, in my view, is not to abolish our most successful academic schools, but to enable every child of high academic ability, whatever their background, to access a place in one.

I also believe that our education system needs to prioritise the roll-out of vocational education and apprenticeships that enables young people to enrol on courses from the age of 14. The government must enable schools to provide options that meet the preferences and talents of our young people whilst meeting the needs of the UK economy.

Jenny Whittle - County Councillor, Maidstone Rural East
Chair, Select Committee, Grammar Schools and Social Mobility, KCC

Archbishop Courtenay Primary School, Eccleston Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6QN
Telephone: 01622 754666

OPEN AFTERNOON
THURSDAY 3RD NOVEMBER 2016
1.45 pm until 3.00 pm
For parents of children for September 2017 intake
Archbishop Courtenay Primary School provides a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all children. The ‘State of the Art’ building and extensive school grounds allows for exciting and real life learning experiences to take place to enable all pupils to reach their potential. In June 2015 the SIAMS Inspection Report concluded that Archbishop Courtenay Primary School was a “good” school and Ofsted in March 2014 reported that “Senior Leaders have improved teaching and accelerated pupils’ progress at an impressive rate.”
New Confidence Building Classes Coming To Maidstone

Funtrain classes were started 15 years ago when the founder Peggy Heron worked alongside a behaviour specialist to help her young learning disabled daughter overcome some serious behaviour issues.

Peggy attended every course and seminar she could to help her daughter’s development and gained a real insight into how young minds work and the best ways to develop confidence and positive behaviours. When she started attending pre-school classes with her son a few years later, she felt really disappointed with what was available. Many of the classes had very high expectations of pre-school children or were just a free for all where the children weren’t given the opportunity to learn.

“I saw that the behaviour methods and techniques used to help my daughter worked with all young children” With the input from the behaviour specialist, Funtrain classes were created.

New Confidence Building Classes Coming To Maidstone

Unable to keep up demand for places, Peggy decided to offer franchise packages.

Developing confidence whilst having fun!

“We are delighted to welcome Kerria to Funtrain. Kerria has attended other pre-school classes with her own children and knows that what we offer at Funtrain is unique.”

www.funtrain.co.uk

NEW classes starting. FREE trial from age one to pre-school.
Monday 7th November at The Forteighs WI Hall, Forge Lane, East Farleigh, Monday from 9.30 am
Tuesday 1st November at Langley Village Hall, Horseshoes Lane, Langley, Tuesdays 9.30 and 10.30

To book your free trial email kerria@funtrain.co.uk

Franchises - NEW. Our Funtrain Franchise packages will give you the opportunity to run your own business that really works around your family.

To find out more please see our website www.funtrain.co.uk 01580 895326

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A-level success for Kent pupils

STUDENTS from across the area have been celebrating the fruits of their labours after taking delivery of their A-level results.

They compare well with the national picture, which shows a small decline (0.1%) in those achieving the highest A/A* grades (25.9%) but a record 400,000 accepted for university (up 7%).

The number of A-levels taken this year rose to more than 450,000, with 3.14 million entries. Also in creasing was the number sitting core subjects, with maths entries up 20% since 2010 and English and biology equally popular. While there was a sharp rise in students studying computing, fewer sat music, German, design and technology and French.

Every student passed at Invicta Grammar School for Girls, earning some 180 A/A* grades – 10.5% at the highest level.

Head Julie Derrick noted the rising number (25.4%) achieving an A/A* grade, providing more with access to university. Lara Healdon, Felicity Marth and Anastasia Nicholls-Parron are off to Cambridge, Plymouth and Leeds to study medicine, dentistry and veterinary science.

Head girl Georgia Wells gained five A*/A grades and will study physics/therapy at Birminghum.

Other notable achievers were Catherine Lincolin, Hamet Turner and Georgia Wells (five A* and an A); Lara Healdon (four A*); Grace Card and Sophie Aquerd (four A* and an A) and Armanda Louise Lotz and Tom Weit (three A* and an A).

Invicta's extended project qualification saw 36 pupils earn A*/As.

Mrs Derrick said: “Our students have yet again risen to the challenge of combining their own academic achievement and raising nearly £48,000 for charity.”

At Maplesead Noakes, students achieved a 100% pass rate in both A-level and BTEC exams, with 45% in the top A/A-grade and 70% A-C.

Head Jane Prider said the results reflected the dedication of staff and students to achieve the best, with particular praise to: Dan Williams (three A*, two B); Kim Bhayalas (two A*, B, two C); Megan Bicknell (BTEC sport double distinction); two Cs and a B; and Sharenj Hayne (two A*, B and C). All are going to university.

One in five sixth-formers achieved straight A/A* grades at Sutton Valence School.

Over the last few years, the school has shown consistent improvement, with 42% of entries this year taking the top mark (A/A*) and 13% A*/A.

Across the cohort, 67% received A/A* grades, producing a pass rate of 99%, with high achievers including: Emil Evans (three A* and a place at Cambridge to read history) and Saskia Roestenburg (three A*, reading theatre in Bristol) and Freddie Parker (three A*, reading psychology at Bath).

Head Bruce Grindlay praised the school’s ability to improve the outcomes of all students, placing it in the top 10% of schools nationally this year for “adding academic value”.

Future Schools’ Trust, which has sites at Corsham and New Line Learning Academies, had 131 sixth-formers taking A-levels, and 62% achieved an A/A* grade. Corsham topped up 34 A/A*-B grades, while at New Line Learning the 76% of students achieved distinction* in BTEC qualifications.

Students leading the celebrations included deputy head girl Zoe Herrington and deputy head boy Ben Hartwell. Zoe achieved a double distinction* in business, a distinction* in travel, an A/A* in psychology, a B in English, and C in government and politics, while Ben is heading to Oxford Brookes University to study law.

Stan Killington got A/A*s in sociology and her extended project, as well as B in media and psychology. BTEC successes went to: Abdul Khan, with both receiving two distinction* grades and a B; Tamara Hasani also received two distinction* grades; Holly Pimley, a distinction* in performing arts, business and travel, and Bradley Clayton a place at the University for the Creative Arts after getting three A*/A’s.

Will Pemberton, who entered the sixth form, said: “Our students, staff and parents have worked incredibly hard, and these results illustrate our dedication and commitment.”

Simon Stock Catholic School, 95% of Year 13 students achieved at least two A levels and more than half were A/A*.

Notable successes were: Eva Malpass (three A*); Jack Barnes, Thomas Boume, Martin Burnett, Abigail Clarke, Andrew Coatsworth, George Craven, Holly Davy, Amy Dowell, Louise Gowell, Anna Harris, Helina Sampayo, Ethan Wheeler and Clare Woodward (A/A* or better).

“Principal Benedict Wall said: “These results are exceptional for a comprehensive school.”

Invicta Grammar School for Girls witnessed an increase in students achieving the top grades. Of the 174 students taking the exam, 50 got A/A*, with 66% A*-B, and an overall pass rate of 98%.

Lucy V earned straight A/A* grades and is planning to go to Easter University to study economics. Nine students achieved at least two A’s, including Madeline B and Chloe F (three A* and an A). Madeleine will read maths and Code computer science.

At Oakwood Park Grammar, a third of all students achieved A/A* grades. Thirteen gained three or four A/A*/A’s. Thomas Ward (two A’s and an A) will study maths at St Peter’s College, Oxford, and head boy Christopher Johnson (A* and two A’s) will go to St Edmund’s Hall, Oxford, to study politics, philosophy and economics. Robert Crawford (A and two A’s) will read history at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Studying maths at St Andrew’s will be Glynis Old (A and three A’s), Mitchell Sheppard, Joseph Hilder and Daniel Harris (two A’s and an A) will study at Bath, biomedical sciences at York and computer science at Southampton; and Ack Royal (A* and two A’s) at Exeter University. Thomas Collins (three A’s) is hoping to study chemical engineering.

Success in the arts and humanities subjects also figured strongly. Head girl Alice Churchill (three A’s) will study theology at Easter. James Dummer, Stanley Draper and Charlie Catterall (three A’s) will take up places at Russell Group universities for history, geography and digital production.

A record 57% of Valley Park School students earned AA/A* grades, with 52% an A/A* pass.

Notable performances came from: Daniel Greenhead (three A’s), Lucy Keatway (two A’s and a B), Matthew Porter (an A* and two A’s). Buchan Barden (three A’s and two A’s), Al- isha Bell (three A* and an A), Isla Bibol O’Nions (two A’s and a B), Amy Reed (two A’s and C), Lain- son Appleyard, Shanon Rupacha and Jack Cider (two A’s and an A). Elle Harton-Russell and Katie Hattrick (three A’s) and Natalie Haftill (three A’s and an A)
GCSE students make the grade

GCSE students across the district are celebrating after going for gold and matching the national rise in A*-C grades this year.

Exam officials confirm that 68.8% of entries scored A*-C (up 0.7%), while those achieving a C or above in English dipped, as did the overall pass rate (98.5%).

However, across the country pupils fared better in maths, with 62.4% getting a grade C or above (up 4.8%).

The dip in English has been put down to recent reforms, which have included a move to linear, non-modular courses and less coursework and the removal of the “speaking and listening” element of the subject.

The gender gap also continued, with 75.1% of girls gaining five A*-C grades or more and 67.9% of boys doing the same, with 64.3% for boys. Exam officials also highlighted a fall in the numbers of entries for biology, chemistry and physics – the first decline for a decade.

This is how youngsters fared in our region:

At Invicta Grammar, 100% of students achieved five A*-C grades and 75% of all grades were at A*/A. More than three-quarters of all 181 students gained five or more A* or A grades and, over half eight A* or A grades.

Head Julie Derrick said: “We are exceptionally proud of our students and staff. If learning was an Olympic sport, our students and staff would have won gold.”

Notable achievers included Muskan Ali, Manjot Gumber, Bryony Jenner, Emily Lloyd, Shona Mitchellmore, Michalina Michalska, Yasmin Pinnock and Sophie Scott, who achieved straight A*s.

At St Simon Stock Catholic School, one in three pupils achieved five A grades or better, with 69% of passes at A*-B grades. Top performers included Ellie Agra-Benam, who achieved 11 A*s; Olivia Ferris (nine A*s) and Francesca Ash (seven A*s).

Head Bruce Greenall said: “I am delighted with this outstanding set of results that students, parents and staff can be rightly proud of.”

At Sutton Valence School, one in three pupils achieved five A grades or better, with 69% of passes at A*-B grades. Top performers included Ellie Agra-Benam, who achieved 11 A*s; Olivia Ferris (nine A*s) and Francesca Ash (seven A*s).

Head Bruce Greenall said: “Our teaching staff and students have demonstrated how much one can improve, given the right environment, focus and support. We are delighted with this year’s results and despite the large year group and a more diverse cohort, the pupils’ hard work has paid dividends.”

At Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, students notched up another “pleasing set of results”, with 63% of achieving five or more A* / A grades, and 37% at least eight at these grades. Congratulations go to Lauren O’Grady and Grace S who both earned 11 A*-A grades.

Head Deborah Stanley said: “These results reflect the huge amount of work by our students, together with the support and encouragement of the teaching staff.”

At Maidstone Grammar School for Boys, students achieved an average of more than one whole grade higher than their target in all their subjects, with exceptional results for William Meech, Zachary Jones and Ellie Hodgetts.

Principal Brendan Wall said: “For the last five years our students have made significantly greater progress than students across the country, and this includes selective schools in our region.”

Out of 232 students at Cornwallis School, 88% achieved the gold standard of five A*-C passes, including English and maths – an 11% increase on last year’s results.

Overall, 68% achieved A*-C grades, with high achievers including Chloe Sinclair, Elanas Lacey and Megan Bradley (eight A*-A grades) and Mason Eades, Reece Winter and George Watts, who all received at least eight A*-C grades.

Principal Isabelle Linney-Dinsart said: “I am delighted with this outstanding set of results that students, parents and staff can be rightly proud of.”

At Mapledon Academy, 56% of students achieved five or more A*-C – 82% including English and 65% maths.

Those earning special mention included: Sammi Ta (10 A*s, two As); Zak Allan (seven As, two Bs and three Cs); Bukrya Choudhury (five A*s, five As, and three Bs); Brooke Ellis (two A*s, eight As and two Bs); and Charlie May Loft (two A*s, six As, and three Bs).

Head Jane Prinane said: “This year group worked extremely hard and we are all very proud of their outstanding achievements.”

Of 115 students who sat GCSEs at New Line Learning Academy, 56% achieved A*-C grades. Notable successes included Vicky Harris, who secured As in English language and literature, as well as an Bs; Angel Limburg (An in PE and an A in Maths); Bobby Lister (An in Art and a B in PE); and Craig Limett (A grades in Mandarin and maths, as well as six Bs).

Principal David Elliott said: “Well done to all our students, but in particular to those who worked exceptionally hard to achieve excellent results, which are testament to their dedication and efforts.”
Churches join to increase congregation

THE creation of a new Team Ministry, serving a dozen churches along the Pilgrims Way, looks set to win favour.

The re-organisation – merging the parishes of Hollingbourne, Hucking, Boxley, Thames Ditton, Leeds, Brompton, Grove, Green, Kingswood, Langley and Oham – has won the backing of all the Fareham Church Council (PCC) affected.

The new “super benefice” on Team Ministry, would operate under a Team Rector – currently Rev John Corrhy, at Holy Cross. Bounded – with a Team Vicar, Rev Steve Hughes, in Oham; a new Mission post reaching out to families on new estates and a second Team Vicar at Hollingbourne vicarage.

The official name of the Team Ministry, the Hollingbourne vacancy and the Mission post will be progressed now the public consultation has closed.

It follows discussions that began nearly two years ago in light of vacancies and how the church should respond to falling and aging congregations – a decision described by Rural Dean Rev Dick Veere as an “inspiration from God”.

He said: “It hasn’t been an easy decision. Every PCC has had to look quite carefully and hard about the way forward and this is what we want to do.”

“It is important for the Church to look at its mission work and to strike the balance between catering for our existing congregations and reaching out to new people, or the Church will cease to exist.”

Rev Veere, who retires as vicar of the Len Valley Benefice in September, has urged the church to start advertising his post now, to ensure the congregation isn’t left without a vicar for any length of time and to ensure his success in increasing attendance can be built on.

Exam results pride for new head

RICHARD Owen (47) is the new head teacher at Maidstone’s Maplesden Noakes School.

He was thrust into the driver’s seat just days after taking up the post, as students received their exam results.

Mr Owen was previously deputy head at the CanatUCK land school for the last 11 years.

The parish church in Detling and his wife is a deputy head teacher at a primary school.

He added: “Maplesden Noakes has always been about giving our students the confidence to be the best. Our exam results are the best high school results in the area and I want students and parents to know that they can trust us to give their children a fantastic start in life.”

Richard Owen

He was previously head teacher at the Great Buckland School for the last 11 years.

As head teacher of Maplesden Noakes School, my message is simple - I know that every individual can aspire to be the best if they are motivated by self-belief.

“Support systems at Maplesden have an outstanding reputation because our expertise lies in building self-confidence and never giving up on our students. We believe in every individual and we believe in our community.”

“Every year, the success of our students, whatever their background, shows that at Maplesden Noakes, everything is possible.”

Report praises Age UK for ‘first class’ service

AGE UK Maidstone was given a glowing report on its staff and care but has been told by a health watchdog that it must improve its admin.

The charity’s Mill Street branch, which provides bathing and foot care services for more than 400 older people, received an unannounced two-day inspection in June from Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspectors.

Their report praised the service for being effective, caring and responsive, but made recommendations following issues on safety and leadership.

Recruitment files did not contain required information and there had not been regular criminal record checks. Some staff had worked for the charity for more than 10 years without being re-assessed.

The CQC also said individual’s care needs should be reviewed more regularly, and reviews sought on the service. Fire risk assessments were overdue and the new manager had taken up the post earlier this year, but had not yet registered.

If any of our clients are worried, they can ring and talk to us!”

Transport festival a hit with visitors

HUNDREDS turned out to enjoy the sun and the displays at Laddingford Transport Festival.

It is the sixth year the event has been staged at The Chequers pub, and landlady Tracey Leaver said it was the best yet.

“We had a model T Ford, tractors, racing minis and some really popular exhibits.”

Children were able to sail boats on a make-shift lake, created by Captain Model Boat Club; Laddingford local Roger Manklow brought along his engines and organiser Terry Hentz had the kids amused with his model trains.

Plan withdrawn

LOOSE Parish Council has withdrawn its proposal for a long-awaited community centre.

The council sought approval for the £1m scheme from Maidstone Council but after some residents objected, it decided to drop it pending further discussions.

Designs for the two-storey extension to the King George V Pavilion include additional holiday sports facilities, meeting rooms and a lounge.

However, residents in Walnut Tree Lane complained about increased noise, pollution, traffic problems, the scale of the new building and the loss of green space.
DOUGLAS "Doug" Grist (86) lived his final years of his life in Sittingbourne but had lived in the Medway and Medway areas since he was a small boy.

Born in Ramsgate to parents in Kent, he returned locally and remained in the area apart from a spell on national service with the RAF in Norfolk.

Doug’s local homes included Ringlesmere, Langley, Sutton Valence, and Bearsted. He was known from his years running the family business E H Grist and Sons, a wholesale fruit and vegetable business based in Hedley Street near Maidstone Prison. Doug and his brother took the business over from their father. When it closed Doug worked for Trevor Sharps in Maidstone.

Doug was married twice. He and first wife June had children, Judith and Martin and with second wife Dee he had children Tracey and Stuart. Judith said: “My father loved the outdoors and could take pleasure in a lot of life’s simple things.”

“While he retired he bought land near Ulcombe and grew plums and Christmas trees, as well as keeping sheep and chickens.”

“He told his produce at market in Ashford and kept this business going for 13 years. He also toured the south east of England and Wales in a camper van with my stepmother. He even took her to the place in Wales where he was evacuated as a boy.

“In later years they had a caravan at a site in Dover and spent their新疆 stay there.”

Doug leaves his wife, four children – daughter Lesley died in 2011 – 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

DAVID Sladden

DAVID William Charles Sladden (58) lived in Bearsted for around 20 years and lived locally throughout his life.

Born in Sutton Valence and brought up in Hollingbourne, David attended Swalebards School and worked as a mechanic with his father-in-law. His passion for cars remained with him throughout his life.

Married for 35 years to Julie, David was father to Katie and Grace. Katie said: “Our father’s passion for cars was a massive part of his life and he owned a number of vintage and classic cars; he loved taking us to car shows.

“Our father was outgoing, sociable and the kind of person who is loved by everyone.”

David leaves his wife, daughter, grandchildren Jack and sisters Rosmary and Patricia.

Marshall Vine

THE death of Maidstone’s Marshall Vine (73) made local headlines because of his personal quest to save and restore the passenger ferry The Medway Queen. Marshall was born and brought up in Maidstone. Born with cerebral palsy, he completed teacher training and taught woodworking, metalwork and history at St John Fisher’s School in Chatham.

Marshall was also known for his involvement in Scouting and his passion for steam railways. He was also a great admirer of the cutting back of the Medway Queen and the campaign to restore the vessel that brought him the most local attention and he served as chairman to the society working to bring the Medway Queen back to full working order.

A collection at Marshall’s funeral will go to the Medway Queen Society. Marshall leaves his sister Diana and her family.

Obituaries

Joan Bennett

DOROTHY Bennett (88) lived for 54 years in Coombe Hill and had previously lived in Beanley and Staplehurst.

Born Joan Horaliborg on Guernsey she was evacuated to Dover and Lancashire during the war. Joan met Roy, her husband of almost 65 years, when she worked in a canteen in Coombe Hill, and the couple moved to Bearsted to live with his parents.

Joan was mother to Paul, Alan, Peter and Neil and worked as an orderly at Linton Hospital for 22 years.

Roy said: “Joan dedicated her life to her family. We travelled all over the world, and we loved to go dancing with my father. My mother lived independently for many years after he died and was a loving mother and grandmother.”

Eileen – who was widowed about 20 years ago – leaves her children, grandchildren Martin, Carl and Karen and great-grandchildren Luke, Bethany, Nicole and Isabel.

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**Bite the bullet on local plan**

**MailMarks**

DENNIS FOWLE President dfowle2011@aol.com

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**Benefits of event unclear**

FOLLOWING the recent Ramblin’ Man Fair event in Mote Park, I have listened to those complaining about the noise, to those reporting no nuisance to the community and to those who enjoy the music.

Unfortunately, there are conflicting responses and clearly there needs to be a balanced look at the outcomes of this event and, if needed, to look for changes.

I went to the event on the Saturday and clearly there was a large audience enjoying the music and this aspect was very well organised.

Then I walked across the park to the Bearsted Green Business Park where, at my request, the Council had installed a noise detection recording instrument.

This instrument recorded five occasions, on that day when the sound levels went above the agreed limit. However, it quickly became very clear to me that the problem was not just the music, but the setup. The sound of four groups playing at the same time arrived at Mote House as a cacophonous, grating, jarring and disturbing noise. The music was lost, with just the relentless sound of the bass notes undercutting the noise.

It is not just my own experience and I can understand why residents have complained.

Unfortunately, these residents have been left with the answer that the event raises money, and really there is nothing that can be done about it. If a lower more acceptable limit was set in the contract, much of this problem would be solved.

The contract signed by Maidstone Borough Council was not made with the Ramblin’ Man but the Spirit of Rock Ltd. The company is registered with Companies House with two directors, but further information is sparse.

In 2015, something did go wrong. The organising company, then called UK Rock Festival Ltd, did go under. How was the Ramblin Man affected? Did they lose money? Did the council make the money it anticipated?

I have been told that this year, local businesses made £3,000,000, but with no backing evidence. I am very happy for local private businesses to profit, but what about our taxpayers, who invested in this event? It is essential that clear and full details of the financial outcome of this investment should be made readily available for public inspection.

Mote Park is not a rural spot. It is in the centre of Maidstone, surrounded by homes and residents. Clearly there is a great need to fund the upkeep of the park, but I do see a real need to consider more closely and sympathetically the outcomes to our residents.

Elle Mike Revell, Maidstone Borough Council, Bearsted ward

Park is the wrong venue

IN RESPONSE to the points raised by Chris Ingham, the positive feedback he received about Ramblin’ Man undoubtedly came from the attendees, not the surrounding residents.

An event like this can do very little to showcase Maidstone and Kent. Attendees can only stay or camp on site, then go home, with little benefit to the local economy.

I would love to look at the park and the damage that heavy vehicles have done to the grass.

The main point which Mr Ingham does not appear to understand are the words “too loud”.

Mote Park is absolutely wrong as a venue for this event. It is in the middle of housing, so a great many Maidstone residents will be subject to unwanted noise. Too many residents use adjacent streets as long-term car parks, causing traffic problems.

I also take issue with Mr Ingham’s claim about just about every MP supports the county’s housing stock must grow massively.

Locally we may not all agree with the outcomes of this inquiry and dislike decisions about to be made, but this inspector will be very conscious of Government demands and we must expect most of his decisions will meet them.

Pay up for NHS

THE top health authorities across Kent currently look very hard at the NHS and say they want it to become better and more cost effective. We all wish them well – but fear now they face an impossible task.

There will be steps they can take. We are likely to see much more work performed outside expensive hospital environments and closer to our homes by NHS staff and social services.

The danger is these professionals (such as our GPs) are often working under great pressure.

We are also likely to see more hospital departments centralised – the old reorganisation which caused so much anger in Maidstone when we lost women’s and children’s services (including maternity) and major trauma and orthopaedic work to Tunbridge Wells.

We do not now yet what is in the minds of the NHS budget-holders, but it seems the strike is not over and this must be a major factor. It could be that an extra 30 minutes of journey time makes sense if the specialist equipment and expertise is immediately available to all patients. That is a debate ahead of us.

After many years working closely as a journalist with local health authorities, I have come to the sad conclusion that the Government must now make some very brave (and unpopular) political decisions.

We all value our NHS. We expect it will meet our growing demands and support us in a grand and healthy old age. But these expectations come at an increasingly great cost at a time when the national budget is under immense pressures.

There are those who will say we must pour our national funds into the NHS at almost any cost. But there are so many demands on the national exchequer this just cannot go on.

One way or another, a Government will have to raise from us financial contributions of our demands are to be met. The NHS is NOT totally free now. We pay for dentistry, opticians, prescriptions. We are going to have to pay more or the NHS will continue to face massive problems which impact seriously on patients. We all have to understand this unpalatable truth.
that it is a highlight in the Maidstone calendar. I do say that there are some people who like this sort of ear-shattering experience, but I would think that for most people is it something to be avoided.

I doubt very much that, unless forced so to do, Mr Ingham will make any changes to the level of noise. It has never been reduced in Maidstone in recent years to the problems with the Radio 1 Roadshow, where those monitoring noise levels proved impossible to ensure the limits. The limits are far too generous. If noise could be heard as far away as Huckling, it must have been intolerable outside the path.

The county showground has excellent parking and toilet facilities, is easily accessible and well away from residential areas. It is the obvious place for occasions like this, if Mr Ingham is unable to refrain from bringing his noisy event to the area.

David Hackett, Park Way

Road repairs such a waste

Road repairs on the A20 at Valentine Road and Hubble Drive in Maidstone today and went up and down quite a few times to make sure that everybody had been done. Since the holes in the road had been filled with the wrong method for a lightly-used domestic road to start with, all be achieved was to swamp up many of the small stones that were actually left in the road.

All the holes that had been filled with small tarry stones instead of tarmac and then rolled over by the stones had been rolled on to the footpath, so the sweeper lorry missed them. These small tar-covered stones walk indoors, however much one missed them. These small tar-covered stones walk indoors, however much one

Road planning a disaster Regrettably, it would be a bad idea to comment on this road planning a disaster. The new retail development has traffic lights across a little way from other lights and the resulting queues are unbearable.

No respect to its situation and effect on traffic volume could ever have been undertaken, it’s a total nightmare for people using it.

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No respect to its situation and effect on traffic volume could ever have been undertaken, it’s a total nightmare for people using it.

Mr Thornewell I would like to comment on the A20 repairs appear to have been put on top of them and many are already growing through the repairs.

Only some of the holes were filled with the tarry stones. What about the rest of the stones, some of which are more of a problem than the ones which were supposedly mended?

The whole exercise has been rather a waste of rate-payers’ money. The organisation and supervision which went into the project seems to be not to exist.

Perhaps the ratepayers would benefit by having fewer chief officers, with the towns re-employing a direct team of men that could go round and mend any holes that they saw, instead of having to get quotes to do half the job because quotes cost money to produce and contractors companies need to make profits all of which is added to the bill.

There may also be enough money left over to employ a few more road sweepers who can manage to sweep paths besides the machines that sweep the road gutters.

Margaret Basham, Maidstone

Calais wall not a solution

The decision to build a wall in Calais as the latest in a long line of wrong moves made in the ongoing scandal of the British public’s handling of the plight of refugees in Northern France.

The chaotic situation in Calais is a symptom of a problem; rather than dismantling the camps and removing the last scraps of dignity and security from their residents, a wall will not solve that problem. Only through cross-border political co-operation can we hope to alleviate this global humanitarian crisis.

We need to realise that those seeking sanctuary in the UK are not desperate to come here, they are simply desperate. Successive governments have utterly failed to fulfill their responsibilities towards the vulnerable people in the camps – especially unaccompanied children. Many of those in Calais have no legal right to live in the UK. The slow speed at which their asylum claims are being dealt is unacceptable.

History will judge our nations kindly if French and British governments refuse to work together constructively on this issue. Attacking the situation will never solve the problem.

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Maidstone Town October 2016

45
THE county council has unveiled its transport strategy – Delivering Growth without Gridlock.

It identifies Kent County Council’s infrastructure priorities for the next 15 years and offers the public a chance to comment.

In Maidstone, the strategy highlights the issues of town centre congestion, poor rail links and restricted rural bus services.

Other areas identified include the need to create smaller overnight HGV parks to relieve illegal and uncontrolled parking and to improve road safety. A separate report on Operation Stack still remains a priority and is identified in the report.

On the congestion issue the strategy document notes: “A scheme to relieve congestion at the Bridges Gateway is currently being implemented, although continued traffic growth on other parts of the network is expected to result in worsening delays for road users.

“These pressures are most evident on the congested A229 and A274 corridors in south and south-eastern Maidstone and on the A20 corridor.

A BURGLAR who stole from a shop in Fremlin Walk, Maidstone, has been jailed.

Rochester, damaged four coffee machines at a McDonald’s restaurant and was racially aggravated, at a shop in Fremlin Walk, Maidstone.

On buses, the report notes: “We have to take a pragmatic approach so that we can achieve the same aims, such as community bus services. However, we welcome the potential for KCC to have bus franchising powers to enhance services and create an integrated public transport network.”

Overall, it concludes that there remains a “significant funding gap” for its wish list, which it says “highlights the need to lobby and explore other sources of funding.”

The 5k run is recommended for over 16s, although younger entrants will be permitted if accompanied by an adult. A more family-friendly event called the Monster Dash takes place at the same venue from 5pm to 7pm. Child tickets for this are £5 each.

Have your say

MEMBERS of the public have until October 30 to comment by visiting www.kent.gov.uk/localtransplan.

If you would like a printed copy, or the information in any other format or language, email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call 01622 762 153 (Text relay service number: 18001 03000 421553).

Some areas of the strategy include:

- Increasing links and reduce the cost of train travel.
- Keep the county moving.
- Cutting deaths and serious injury on our roads.
- Supporting businesses and creating an integrated public transport network.

The county council has unveiled its transport strategy – Delivering Growth without Gridlock.

Stones boost cancer charity

NATIONAL League clubs, including Maidstone United, have raised more than £15,000 for the Bobby Moore Fund for Cancer Research.

Every club across the three divisions took part in and a cheque was presented to Stephanie Moore, Bobby’s widow (left). The charity hopes to raise an additional £50,000 this year, the 50th anniversary of England’s World Cup win.

Maidstone United, have raised more than £100 can have headband on arrival. All sponsors are encouraged to wear Halloween costumes and will see a surprise along the way.

Monsters, vampires and goblins will keep out of the shadows to give entrants a fright night experience.

Events co-ordinator Gemma Murray said: “We are looking for groups of amateur actors who are willing to put on their scariest outfits and make-up, as well as dance groups who can put on a “Thriller” style routine or something equally spine-tingling.”

Applicants should call Gemma on 01795 946 405 or email gemma.murray@demelza.org.uk. Tickets, priced £20, are already on sale. Entrants are encouraged to wear Halloween costumes and will receive a special glow-in-the-dark headband on arrival. All sponsor-ship will go to Demelza and runners who raise more than £100 can have their entry fee refunded.

The 3k run is recommended for over 16s, although younger entrants will be permitted if accompanied by an adult. More family-friendly event will take place at the same venue from 5pm to 7pm. Child tickets for this are £7.50 each.

Details at www.demelza.org.uk.
Street Mela hits town centre

MAIDSTONE'S cultural diversity was celebrated with acts from Nepal, Ireland and India.

Food from around the world, creative art workshops, together with displays of dance and music formed this year's Maidstone Street Mela in Fremlin Walk.

The event, which attracts funding from Arts Council England, was organised by Cohesion Plus and Maidstone Council and opened by the town's deputy mayor, Cllr Malcolm Greer.

Performances were provided by the Four by Four Bhangra Dancers, Reel Eire Irish Dancers, Phase 5 Steel Band, Wolf's Head Morris, Kitka Bulgarian Folk Dance Group, Ronak Mela Bollywood Brass Band and the Maidstone Nepalese Community Group.

There were also performances by street mime artists, stilts-walkers and human statues, which proved popular with the crowds.

The borough council is currently looking at the future evolution of the Mela, which was scaled down this year, and carried out a consultation on the day, asking for feedback on the Mela and other community events.

The consultation continues through to mid-October, and will form the basis of a report to its heritage, culture and leisure committee later this year.

Gurvinder Sandher, from Cohesion Plus, who helped to organise this year's event, said: "I've been involved with the Mela since its inception in 2003 and have watched it grow over the years."

"I hope that next year we will be able to return to Mote Park but understand and appreciate there is a process that we need to go through."

Clockwise from top left: Kitka Bulgarian folk dance group, street mime artists and Four by Four Bhangra Dancers on parade at Maidstone's Street Mela in Jubilee Square.
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