

ANDREW GRIFFITH MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR ARUNDEL AND SOUTH DOWNS

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Malcolm Llewellyn
Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Trinity Road
Hurstpierpoint
BN6 9UY

7th May 2024

Dear Malcolm,

I am writing to provide you with my regular update on matters which cross my desk as Member of Parliament, and which could be of relevance to Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council.

With the month of May now upon us the summer months often feature a busy calendar of local events, fayres, and village festivals. I hope to visit as many as I can this summer, so if you have a date in the diary for your local event, please let me know.

Planning – Local plans and neighbourhood plans

We are right in the midst of Local Plans with Horsham and Chichester Districts now having submitted drafts for consideration and Arun expected to propose a plan this calendar year.

The topic of planning policy is too large to do justice to here, but you may find the following points helpful:

- Following reforms I personally advocated in Parliament, so-called ‘top down’ housing number targets are no longer mandatory. A report from independent planning consultants, Lichfields, has confirmed these changes to the National Planning framework are already making a real difference. The Times reported last week that in recent months 15 local authorities have cut the number of homes they intend to build, South Staffordshire council has reduced its target by more than 40 per cent and Hertsmere Council in Hertfordshire has cut its plans for new development by 25 per cent.
- Different District Councils exhibit a different willingness to use these new freedoms – **it is important that ours do.**
- All local District Councils have passed motions in support of ‘Climate’ and ‘nature’. It is entirely at odds with this for them then to subsequently propose – as many are – large



- scale developments on green spaces and high-grade farmland which could be growing food sustainably.
- None of our local District Councils are compelled to put forward greenfield village development sites. All have very significant urban areas within their curtilage and although developers themselves will rarely put forward brownfield sites (as their margins are lower), it is a fact that all our Councils have former rail marshalling yards, industrial estates, commercial (which could be converted for residential) and simply disused land. The total land within which the Councils can make choices is as follows: Horsham (530.2 km²), Chichester (786.32 km²) and Arun (221.0 km²).

It is a fact that planning is of great concern to residents. I am happy to help Parish or Town Councils with opposition to large scale schemes which are not in a Neighbourhood Plan – for example by making representations to Councils and Planning Inspectors.

Road safety and potholes

The drier summer months usually means an increase in anti-social driving behaviours and motorbike noise. No one should be using our West Sussex A'-roads as their personal racetrack and endangering others or shattering their peace. Sussex Police have my full support as they enter another year taking on dangerous or noisy drivers. Operation Downsway is out every weekend between April and October.

The police are seeking views from communities about issues on the roads around them to help inform their operation. Please submit your parish council views by visiting www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WC7DL as it helps to ensure they do allocate resources to this important issue in the locations needed.

Potholes continue to be a problem on some of the local roads but fortunately the drier weather has seen West Sussex County Council get teams out every day, fixing the 4,000km of roads they are responsible for. It is still important to keep on reporting them. My recent transport survey revealed only 38% of respondents had actually reported potholes to the County Council so please do encourage your residents to report those that they see.

Better Broadband – fibre

I understand the importance of fast and reliable broadband connections, particularly in rural areas such as our South Downs communities. These days it is a lifeline – not a luxury – for those working from home, small businesses and to allow us all to stay connected.

Positive progress has been made since 2019 with ‘gigabit’ broadband coverage in the UK at 81%, up from 6% in 2019. Gigabit is the fastest version of broadband at around 1,000 Mbs download speed - enough to download a film in only a few seconds, for example.



Much of this has been achieved through commercial rollouts, and those programmes are continuing.

Rural areas require more effort. Many areas are being upgraded through the Community Fibre Partnership scheme, part-funded by the Government and part by Openreach.

There is a further scheme coming soon to West Sussex which will see government invest £100 million to connect the most 'hard to reach' areas across our community. This is one of my priorities and I am working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to see improvements across my constituency with construction potentially starting this summer. If you know of a particular area in your parish that is struggling please let me know so that I can find out what options are available to them.

Kings Award for Voluntary Service

I was delighted to join Amberley Museum volunteers last week for their special presentation of the Kings Award for Voluntary Services. They have an incredible 380 active volunteers who help keep the museum operating, as well as restoring and maintaining the exhibits, and were thoroughly deserving of this award.

Volunteers are the backbone of so many of our communities, from organising activity groups for children, to hosting lunch clubs for the lonely, and everything in between. If you have a wonderful group of volunteers who you think are highly deserving of an awards, you can nominate them. Please let me know so that I can consider adding a formal letter of support which is required with the nomination. <https://kavs.dcms.gov.uk> is the link.

Free trees – Trees for the Downs

It is great to see that the South Downs National Park has opened a fund for supplying trees on sites within the National Park.

You can now submit an expression of interest to apply for trees that could be planted on Parish Council land this winter. The deadline is now 31st May 2024. I think this is such a positive action to take to benefit cherished green spaces for everyone to enjoy. <https://southdownstrust.org.uk/trees-for-the-downsn-fund/>

Gatwick Northern Runway - Development Consent Order (DCO)

The plans to expand Gatwick Airport continue to be examined by the planning inspector. On Thursday 2nd May I spoke at the Open Floor Hearing to represent the concerns that residents in many of the villages in the community I represent have about flight noise – particularly that in the very early morning or late at night.



Parish Councils' concerns have been represented by the Association of Parish Councils Against Gatwick (APCAG) and others, but it is still worth making your own local representation to the planning inspector if flight noise or other related concerns impact your parish. To do so, email gatwickairport@planninginspectorate.gov.uk with your request to become an interested party, and do copy me in.

SussExport 2024

As mentioned in my last letter, the fourth annual SussExport event will be taking place on Friday 5th July at Wilton Park in Wiston (near Steyning), an event I helped to establish. It is about putting Sussex on the map as a place to do business and connects businesses to international trade specialists and representatives. Please do let me know about any businesses in your parish who you think would be interested. It is free for them to attend but they will need to register, and I can make sure they are sent an invitation from Wilton Park.

A reminder that the best email address to contact me on is andrew.griffith.mp@parliament.uk. There is no 's' at the end of my surname – this is a common mistake that stops emails reaching me.

Finally, important information about my work in both Westminster and here in the constituency is in my monthly newsletter. If for some reason you do not already receive it, please sign up here: andrewgriffithmp.com/sign-up.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Griffith".

Andrew Griffith MP