

Green Party

NEWSLETTER

MARESFIELD, NUTLEY & FAIRWARP



Ian Tysh
candidate



Your local Green Party councillors

BY-ELECTION 2022 EDITION

UNANIMOUS!

GREEN PROPOSAL GETS CROSS-PARTY ASSENT

By District Councillor Rachel Millward

At Wealden's July Full Council meeting I brought my first 'motion' (that's the equivalent of bringing a bill to Parliament), which was all about sewage discharge into our rivers and seas.

I'm pleased to say my **proposals struck such a chord** with the ruling party that the council leader seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

The **horrifying truth** is that in 2021 over 17,000 hours' worth of **raw sewage was spilled directly into Wealden's rivers**. This is caused by decades of under investment by Southern Water. As I said in my speech at council:

"I have met with local angling societies,

all of whom have witnessed pollution events first hand - **fish dying, plant and insect life struggling**... I'm told that in streams like the Grom, which runs into the Medway, there should be dozens of different fish species. **Now, only small pockets of fish survive** and there's barely any weed.

"You can hardly see through the murky water, which used to always be clear. I have spoken to swimmers who have been hideously sick, and families who have paddled amongst party liners. **I have yet to speak to a single resident who thinks it is ok to turn our rivers into sewers.**"

My proposal is simple: to ensure that the Council's **planning process takes**



proper account of this grim reality when assessing the suitability of new housing developments. It makes no sense to add more houses and thus more waste onto a sewage system that can't cope. Yet until now there was no mechanism to consider this problem at Planning Committees.

Rachel (pictured above) records a video outside Wealden HQ immediately after the vote . Contact Rachel on cllr.rachel.millward@wealden.gov.uk

YOUR COUNCILLOR CONTACTS

East Sussex County Councillor:

Georgia Taylor
cllr.Georgia.Taylor@eastsussex.gov.uk
07510 074255

Wealden District Councillors:

Patricia Patterson-Vanegas
cllr.patricia.patterson-vanegas@wealden.gov.uk
07766 705272

Rachel Millward
cllr.rachel.millward@wealden.gov.uk

Keith Obbard
cllr.keith.obbard@wealden.gov.uk
07941 578427

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT: MARESFIELD PARISH COUNCIL WWW.MARESFIELDPARISH.ORG.UK **CONTACT US AT: MEDIA@WEALDEN.GREENPARTY.ORG.UK**

MORE GREENS = MORE CONSENSUS

Greens make a difference - and it didn't take long for that difference to be felt at Wealden. Soon after Hartfield ward elected Rachel Millward in December as the **third Green councillor** on Wealden District Council, the ruling party began to listen to the dissenting voices around the table.

Already, with three Greens on board to **challenge the Council's policies on development**, the council leader and portfolio holders are becoming more vocal in their opposition to the central government line - **something which we applaud**.

And with pressure coming from other opposition parties as well as independent members, Wealden's Planning Committees are at last

beginning to insist on new conditions that ensure **that developers have a plan for improved energy and water efficiency**.

More recently still, as you can read above, Green councillors have been able to **open up what will hopefully be a new era of co-operative politics in Wealden**.

In an unprecedented move, Rachel's motion on sewage pollution was seconded by the new Council leader, Ann Newton. The cross-party proposal gained unanimous support.

Greens believe strongly in building alliances and partnerships to achieve consensus in the way we run our councils. **A Green vote is a vote for engagement and for inclusive, democratic decision making**.

STANDING UP FOR WHAT MATTERS IN WEALDEN



GREENS: PUSHING TO PROTECT OUR PRECIOUS COUNTRYSIDE

Wealden planners may have been missing a trick when dealing with applications for building developments in areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB). Because of this, **some developments could have been given the go-ahead when legislation in fact says they should have been rejected.**

Research by Green Party legal specialist Ian Tysh has shown that a January 2021 Appeal Court judgment ruled that when it comes to developments on AONB land, the protective policies in the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) should be applied without reference to competing policies such as housing targets, land supply and housing shortfall.

In the case of *Monkhill Ltd v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government and Waverly Borough Council*, the Appeal Court justices **dismissed Monkhill's appeal**, stating that **there is an expectation that decisions will be in favour of protecting the AONB and against harming it**, although that expectation might, but only might, be overcome in an individual case.

Wealden Green Party has written to all the members of the district council's two planning committees to bring this judgment to their attention.

Our expectation is that proper application of this legal ruling will help prevent further encroachment into our precious AONB and protected areas of the countryside.

Below: the High Weald AONB (dark green shading) covers more than half the area of Wealden, and the South Downs National Park overlaps the southern end of the district



LOCAL PLAN: IT'S STILL UP IN THE AIR

Wealden District Council had been readying the first draft of its new Local Plan just before the collapse of the Westminster government and the firing of levelling up secretary Michael Gove, who had responsibility for housing.

With no fresh Local Plan in sight until the installation of the new prime minister in September provides the necessary direction, planning decisions will continue to refer back to Wealden's outdated local Plan, **giving developers a massive opportunity to push applications through.**

Green Party councillors will be doubly vigilant in scrutinising every application and ensuring full compliance with the **stricter environmental standards** they have been instrumental in enforcing.

The new plan must focus on smaller developments with the two- and three-bedroom homes that Wealden residents actually need.



“OUR MISSION IS TO PROTECT THE FOREST”

James Adler is the new Chief Executive of Ashdown Forest - and Tony Lewin puts the questions to him.

You’re the CEO of Ashdown Forest, a new role. Why does the Forest now need a CEO, and what are your responsibilities?

Ashdown Forest is one of the biggest visitor attractions in Wealden and it is the Conservators’ role to speak and care for the Forest. With so many visitors and a large area of land it is important to have a CEO role who can act as an ambassador and figurehead. My responsibilities include helping set the strategic direction of the Forest, leading the staff team and volunteers who manage the area, securing the funding needed to care for the Forest and building a wide range of relationships to support the organisation.

What is the most pressing issue facing the Forest?

In 2022 it is funding. The Forest operates on a budget that is not secure and is too small to maintain the site’s infrastructure. There is not enough funding to make improvements. Creating sustainable, long-term funding is vital.

What are the principal ecological problems on the Forest?

I am afraid that there are many. These range from those that are larger than the Forest - such as a changing climate and the biodiversity crisis - to those that are more Forest specific. These include scrub and gorse dominance, nutrient inputs from car emissions and dog mess and a lack of grazing across the Forest. Areas of the Forest have disappeared under less biodiverse secondary woodland whereas the open heath has lost many of its habitat niches with a consequent decline in biodiversity. Within the woodland itself, the extremely large fallow deer population that lives in and around the Forest is damaging tree growth, suppressing saplings and removing the interesting flowers.

How can you improve public access to the Forest but at the same time reduce the impact of visitors?

This is a challenge facing many land managers, especially since the

pandemic began. There are areas of the Forest that will always be heavily used. We can encourage people to visit those whilst keeping other areas of the Forest quieter for those who want to escape and to protect our rare, ground-dwelling species. Car park payments will provide the funding to improve tracks, bridges and parking areas to guide people to particular spaces.

Please could you summarise your mission in a single sentence.

Our mission is to protect, conserve and enhance the nature and culture of Ashdown Forest as the largest biodiverse heathland and open space in Sussex for the enjoyment, education and recreation of all.

If you would like to know more, our vision and management strategy are on our website: https://www.ashdownforest.org/home/docs/AshdownForestVision2021-31_002.pdf

FOREST CONSERVATOR FFION THOMAS - ON CAR PARKING CHARGES

The recent debate over charging for parking on Ashdown Forest threatened to alter our relationship with this beautiful space. Would people with less money have to think twice, or even stop visiting the Forest, at a time when being in nature couldn’t be more important? In the end, though, those fears were unfounded and the decision to charge seems to have been the right one.

Ashdown Forest struggles with even basic maintenance because **government cutbacks**, reduced council budgets and removal of EU

funding have led to a loss of income.

This threatens the Forest’s special protected status. The protection is linked to the presence of species such as nightjars and Dartford warblers, who need heathland to survive. Losing habitats and these birds through lack of maintenance threatens this protected status – and **developers would then be circling like vultures.**

Some silver linings have already emerged. **The new money could support better public transport** for those less able to visit the Forest,

we could create safe cycle spaces, and even work towards reducing car visits on the Forest overall. **Charging for parking will help ensure the Ashdown Forest is there for generations to come.**



GREEN PARTY EVENT PULLS IN THE CROWDS

Hartfield played host to the latest in our series of public events being organised by Wealden Green Party. Against the background of rampant housing development across the District, Housing, Planning and People aims to **give residents an insight into the planning process and how decisions are made.**

The July event, which attracted some 75 local residents, was led by **Cllr Rachel Millward, who represents the Hartfield ward on Wealden District Council.**

Local Green Party activist **Christina Coleman debunked many of the common myths about the housing sector,** with East Sussex County Councillor Georgia Taylor presenting an example of a **successful challenge to a planning application,** and Cllr Patricia Vanegas-Patterson giving a District Councillor's insight into the planning process.

Green Party campaigner and Maresfield candidate Ian Tysh, a career lawyer, explained the patchwork of laws that govern planning and the role of local plans. Award-winning architect and Hartfield Parish Councillor Duncan



Gunn provided the parish council planning perspective.

There were questions from the audience throughout the session, which was followed by **an animated Q&A session with the panel of speakers.**

The event was well received, and a number of attendees have been in touch with **positive feedback.** One of them was the chair of a nearby parish

council, who wrote and said: *“Just a quick note to say I found it very interesting and, as with all parishes in Wealden, it reinforced the problems which we all face.*

“One thing that really jumped out at me was how engaged you and your fellow district and county councillors are, to your electorate and their concerns. It was refreshing to see and hear at such a difficult time.”

MARESFIELD CANDIDATE IAN TYSH: FAMILY HOMES, NOT MANSIONS



Ian Tysh: The new Local Plan must focus on smaller developments with the two-and three-bedroom homes that Wealden residents actually need

I have lived in Nutley for over nine years. I'm very happy I moved to East Sussex from Kent. My one-year-old grandson lives here too. It's a shame that we or his parents have to drive every time we meet. I live within walking distance of bus stops, but the service barely exists. **If elected, I would press for improved bus services.**

Large parts of Wealden are beautiful to live and be in. Sadly, their **beauty is increasingly only skin-deep.** Rivers and streams are polluted; water supply is uncertain and air quality is deteriorating. Biodiversity is much diminished; infrastructure is under pressure and its provision uncoordinated.

Dealing with these issues would create local jobs. Yet Wealden's planning and development policies have for far too

long failed to provide homes for ordinary people to buy or rent.

This failure to provide **forces** many people, especially younger people, **to move away.** Meanwhile, new large houses stand empty and developers manipulate the market.

If you elect me, I will use my knowledge of planning law to persuade Wealden to do much better - and to persuade central government to do better too.

Contact me at: elections@wealden.greenparty.org.uk

If you want Ian to win in Maresfield, help us to make it happen by donating a few pounds. Go to this GoFundMe site: <https://gofund.me/59fad65a>



Promoted by Ian Tysh on behalf of Wealden Green Party, c/o Cherry Gardens Farm, Groombridge, Kent, TN3 9NY.

Printed using environmentally friendly inks and paper by People For Print, Unit 10, Riverside Park, Sheaf Gardens, Sheffield, S2 4BB.

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