

WORKING HARD FOR THE WHITSTABLE COMMUNITY

whitstable news



PROTECTING OUR BEACH

Local residents' voice on new
'beach bar' heard

A YEAR WE WON'T FORGET

Whitstable responds to the
pandemic

WHY POLITICS MATTERS?

Whitstable needs a strong
opposition



WHITSTABLE - NO POOR RELATION

For many years Whitstable has felt itself the poor relation of Canterbury, passed over for investment but the last year has seen Canterbury City Council exploit the covid epidemic to centralise power even more.

In the last 12 months the city council has removed the right of local residents to demand a review of planning decisions, closed the Whitstable Forum where members of the public could directly raise concerns with councillors and narrowly voted for a Cabinet system, which will see a small group of councillors of the ruling party make most of the council's decisions.

This Tory council has withdrawn funding from the Oyster Festival and unknown to many siphoned off more than £200,000 from the Whitstable Harbour Board - funds which were historically built up by the board to fund wider regeneration projects like a cinema.

Local Labour councillors have been doing everything they can to stop this power grab but they need your support to not dilute their numbers further.

Afghan toy appeal a huge success



Local residents raised over £2,100 to help provide toys for Afghan refugees.

The 'Pay it Forward' initiative run by Cllr Chris Cornell & Toys 'n' Trends helped 52 kids and donated extra to local primary schools enrolling refugee children for school uniform and PE kits.

Food poverty project recommissioned

Over 20 families on the Grimshill Estate received free plants and grow bags this summer as part of a scheme to tackle food poverty.

Cllr Val Kenny, working with the Umbrella Cafe and FBG Gardening, supported families in learning how to grow their own - encouraging them to share regular photos of their progress. Funding has already been secured for next year.

Stream Walk given a 'lick of paint'



Graffiti has been painted out with a mural designed by local artist Sam Giles.

The design, by pupils at Westmeads School, reflects what life was like for them during lockdown.

Local residents contributed over £1,300 in a crowdfunder run by local councillors. Additional funds were also donated to the new mural of Somerset Maugham in Oxford Street.



PROTECTING OUR GREEN SPACES

Preserving green spaces in our town is hugely important. The scale and size of building we inherited along the Thanet Way just reminds us how doing nothing could easily see developers put our environment at risk.

However, at the moment there is much to be enthusiastic about. This month local residents launched the Cornwallis Circle Improvement Trust to fundraise £30,000 to improve the space. Local councillors have already secured £25,000 of investment .

Just down the road, over 140 local residents have joined the Friends of Westcliff Meadow to save the strip of land between West Cliff and the golf course. We are hopeful that the council will designate it a Village Green in November, protecting it from further development and improving public access to the site.

Officers have earmarked over £40,000 for Westmeads Recreation Ground, including new play equipment and football facilities.

Labour councillors working with the Kentish Stour Partnership have funded tree planting in Reservoir Road and will be planting in Bellevue Road next year.

Key to this success has been networking with environmental groups to prepare “shovel-ready” green space projects (like Duncan Downs) so the benefits that developers must legally provide go where they are needed most.

Please get in touch if you have new projects to suggest.

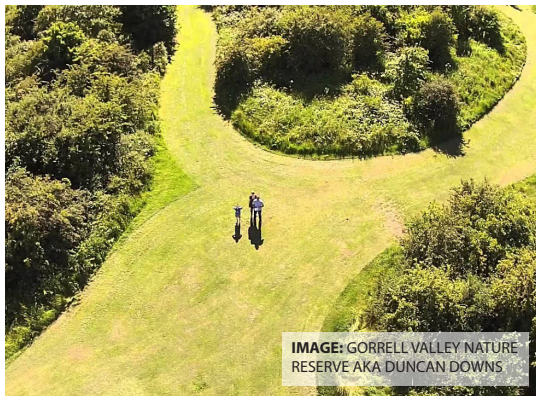


IMAGE: GORRELL VALLEY NATURE RESERVE AKA DUNCAN DOWNS

PRESERVING OUR BEACH

This summer has seen the community unite and fight against plans from the Whitstable Oyster Fishery Company (WOFC) to forever change the nature of our beach.

In June 2020 over 400 local people objected to plans for 120 additional seats on the beach by The Forge - local councillors rejected the move unanimously. Cllr Val Kenny gave evidence in court alongside representatives from the Whitstable Beach Campaign and Whitstable Yacht Club as part of an appeal in August.

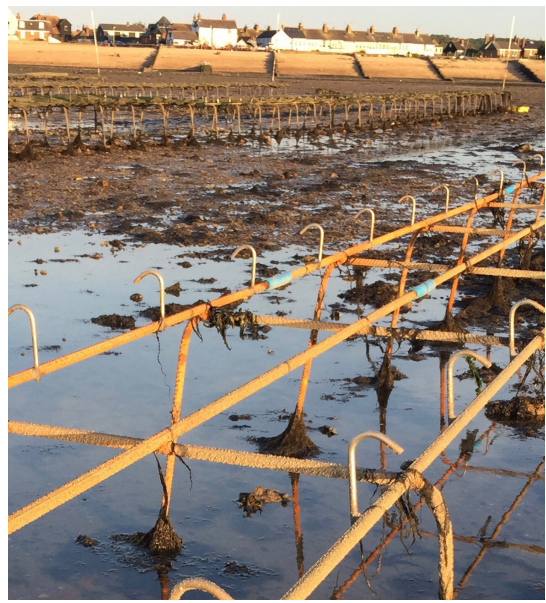
Rejecting the appeal, Judge Barron, thanked local councillors and commented “to put it bluntly, the people of Whitstable, just don’t want a licensed area on the beach”. He was concerned about development on a site of Special Scientific Interest and so close to where children play.

Local Labour councillors have also been working hand in hand with the Whitstable Beach Campaign its fight against the extension of the Oyster Racks.

In 2017 the city council rejected a retrospective planning application by the WOFC for the trestles and this summer the Planning Inspectorate heard the the appeal.

For more than four days Cllr Kenny attended the virtual hearing, submitting in excess of 10,000 words of evidence explaining how Whitstable’s economy was not entirely based on oysters and in particular this type of intensive growing which is a damage to local wildlife.

None of this could have been possible without public support for the legal fight and thousands of hours of volunteer support. We owe them a huge debt of thanks.



In July, Rosie Duffield MP held a public meeting with Southern Water on raw sewage being pumped into our sea. Southern Water have since pledged over £16m to improve the Swalecliffe pumping site.



Labour councillors have been working with SOS Whitstable since the summer. In October they forced the council to commit to working with local water users on real-time water quality signage across the length of the beach and to invite them into their meetings with Southern Water. The council will now plan to prevent signing off new housing developments without a sustainable drainage plan. This was done because Labour cares for our sea.

For many people Whitstable beach is our “happy place”, our solace. We think it needs to stay that way and its unique character be preserved as a public space.



WHITSTABLE CARES: HOW OUR COMMUNITY RALLIED

The last 18 months have been like no other - for many they have seen great hardship and uncertainty, yet throughout it all Whitstable has helped its own.

“ in the midst of suffering there was also great hope”

In the first lockdown local councillors helped launch Whitstable Cares with local charities to help focus the concerns of the community in one place. The phone line recruited over 400 volunteers, redirected surplus stock from local businesses to meals on wheels and directed support through a single foodbank in our town when supplies got low.

Throughout it all, providing good quality information was essential to combatting fear. In the first days of the pandemic that involved daily emails to faith leaders and local charities. Later it saw weekly Facebook messages to ensure the community knew how to access the vaccine and get help. These messages were distributed by local schools, churches and through our talking newspaper to the blind community.

In lockdown two the councillors organised donations of furniture to homeless families, organised over 100 TVs and DVD players for a care home in Tankerton and helped children bake for the elderly at Age UK to celebrate VE Day.

Thankfully the spirit of partnership forged in the pandemic is still alive and well. This summer councillors helped relaunched Whitstable Cares as an information service to combat holiday hunger. We are working on fuel poverty schemes this winter.

In lockdown three we organised “Top Up To Teach”, collecting, cleaning and delivering over 400 old laptops to families struggling with home schooling.

You can now find out where to get help online at www.whitstablecares.co.uk



LEARNING THE LESSONS

Images like that above were common in Summer 2020 but thankfully rare this year thanks to the work of Labour councillors. In Summer 2020 local councillors and Rosie Duffield MP supported a petition by over 4,000 residents calling on the council to put in bigger bins and improve collections along the sea front.

This pressure forced the council to publish a dedicated coastal action plan. Bigger bins and new signage went up in early May this year. After sustained pressure, the council stripped SERCO of responsibility for cleaning the seafront and used town centre marshalls to regularly check on how full bins were getting.

After a spike in anti-social behaviour in 2020 Kent Police launched Operation Dolphin giving Whitstable an extra two additional uniformed officers on patrol from May to September.

Local councillors are not complacent though, the council have agreed to carry out a review of on-street recycling and larger capacity bins but not in time for summer 2023. We are lobbying to see collection of bins later into the evening over the summer months.

Flying the flag



Local community organisations answered the call to 'fly the flag' this year as part

efforts to celebrate Pride Month in Whitstable. Twelve public venues took part including the council who flew a flag over Tankerton Slopes.

Councillors launched the scheme following reports on transphobic graffiti.

Helping our high street recover

Over £40,000 will be spent welcoming residents back to the high street as part of suggestions by councillors.

The funds will pay for projects in our town including brackets for hanging baskets and Christmas lights.

Plans also underway for a deep clean, repaint and mural on the side of the pumping station in Gorrell Tank.

Making our town safer for pedestrians



Local councillors supported the CT5 Forum to run a Whitstable Walking Day this

September - encouraging people ditch the car and walk instead.

We have persuaded Kent County Council to consider a new zebra crossing outside the Umbrella Centre. A local Speedwatch group has started working on Borstall Hill.



REDUCING TRAFFIC IN OUR TOWN

In February 2020 councillors were planning on carrying out a widespread consultation on the issue of residents' parking. Post-pandemic they are returning to the question.

Residents' parking is one of the most successful tools the city council have in controlling where and how cars flow through our town.

Restrictions prevent visitorstown parking in residential streets and crawling up and down small roads looking for a parking space.

The scheme isn't perfect, the permit costs around £70 a year and zones can only be designated if a substantial majority of residents are in favour.

Roads are predominantly the responsibility of Kent County Council and they haven't produced a systematic review of the traffic options in Whitstable since the late 1990s. Labour councillors were elected in 2019 to try and explore the issue and have carried out a door-to-door survey to deliver on that promise. The survey is available to complete online at www.parkinginwhitstable.com.

Emails relating to transport, roads and highways make up 1 in 5 messages we receive. In fact, over the last 12 months we have opened over 675 separate bits of casework in our area.

Parking survey:



Public meeting:

Tuesday 23rd November
7.30 - 9.00
Whitstable Umbrella Centre

INTRODUCING:

DANE BUCKMAN

LABOUR'S CANDIDATE FOR
GORRELL

"I've seen first hand just how hard Labour councillors graft for for people in our town. I will work for a fairer, more prosperous Whitstable"

Whitstable



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KEEP IT LOCAL KEEP IT LABOUR

Dane is a self-employed landscape gardener and father of two who lives on Cromwell Road. He's lived in the area for ten years and loves how his job allows him to speak and listen to lots of different people everyday.

Having trained as an apprentice, he understands just how important it is to give young people the chance to learn new skills. He has volunteered to run forest school activities at Westmeads School, led a community growing initiative on the Grimshill estate and mentored 20 vulnerable young people through the Stream Walk Community Garden. He now proudly employs his own apprentice.

In his spare time Dane is a keen footballer and cook. He wants to be a strong voice for Whitstable - a town equally proud of its heritage and buzzing with ideas for our future.

He wants to show his daughters that they can achieve anything and nothing can hold them back.