



Civic News

The official newsletter of East Grinstead Town Council

Full steam ahead for Bluebell Railway

THE historic arrival of the Bluebell Railway is one step closer with the start of work to clear thousands of tons of household waste from its planned route into East Grinstead railway station. The route runs through a former railway cutting which was rendered redundant in 1958. The site was subsequently used for landfill but with the Bluebell's two-mile extension planned to run along the old track bed, the 500 metre long by 12 metre deep site must now be cleared out.

Mayor Ginnie Waddingham joined councillors, invited guests and TV presenter Nicholas Owen for the start of trial excavations carried out by Land & Water Service with a 25 metre excavator previously used on the Channel Tunnel.

Infrastructure director Chris White said: "This is a very exciting moment for us. It has taken many years of careful negotiation and preparation to get to this stage. We have carried out a lot of test drilling to see what material is there and putting together a methodology for its safe removal. At present the estimated cost is just that - an estimate - so this pilot run will enable us to make a more accurate prediction of exactly how much waste can be removed on a daily basis, what it will cost and how long absolute clearance is likely to take."

But Bluebell chairman Roy Watts said the start of the work meant the track extension project had reached its final phase. "This really is visible proof of just how serious the Bluebell Railway's intent to achieve its goal is, and we hope it will encourage even more people to back us. We are particularly hoping for support from the residents and businesses of East Grinstead as we believe that when the Railway terminates there it will bring economic benefit to the town." Mayor Ginnie said: "The Town Council is proud to support the Northern Extension project. We know members have worked tirelessly to bring the Bluebell Railway home to East Grinstead and we wait in excited anticipation for the first steam train to return to our town. The start of excavation work marks the beginning of a very important adventure for us all."



Business backs the Bluebell

CHRIS Parker of the East Grinstead Business Association has welcomed the "historic" final phase of the Bluebell extension project.

"Our members believe the promotion of the town as an historic place to visit, and as an attractive place to shop, should be priorities in any economic agenda for the town, and this project has real potential to encourage both. It will bring the Victorian era alive again in a way which neighbouring towns will envy, and it will attract visitors from all over London and the south east in numbers which will make a real impact."

Simon says...

TOWN tourism officer Simon Kerr called the arrival of the Bluebell Railway an "unparalleled opportunity" for East Grinstead. "There aren't many towns who find themselves in the enviable position of having a restored steam railway delivered to their doorstep, and the Bluebell's arrival will take East Grinstead up the tourism league in one giant leap. Quite apart from the Bluebell's huge existing customer base this will create a direct link between London's Victoria station and Britain's premier steam railway right here in East Grinstead. The marketing opportunity that will give us, and the potential for the creation and expansion of local businesses, will be unrivalled across the south east. We have already developed strong partnership links with both the Bluebell and other neighbouring tourist attractions, and we must now remain focused on the key elements which will make all this work in terms of infrastructure, including cultivating the skills and goodwill of our Council partners at County and District level, as well as other public transport operators."

News in Brief

EGFleet needs drivers

MORE volunteer drivers are needed to man the town's transport system for the elderly and infirm.

Since its inception in 1994 EGFleet has provided around 2 million passenger miles, but with four vehicles including a nine-seater minibus and two specially adapted for wheelchair users on the road, the service needs more drivers. Anyone with a driving licence can apply and there is no upper age limit: the only restrictions are health-related. Contact the EGFleet office on 01342 305275 for more details.

It's your jute-y to bag one

THE Town Council has commissioned 1,000 environmentally friendly jute bags to cut down on the use of plastic bags by shoppers. The bags, which cost £1.99, are available from the Town Council's East Court offices, the Help Point at the Library and local retailers.



Quality Council

EAST Grinstead Town Council is one of the first ten local councils nationally to secure Quality Council reaccreditation for a further period of four years. To achieve this the Council had to satisfy the evidence panel that it has achieved specified standards in a range of financial, management and professional practice areas. These included new sections focusing on the promotion of local democracy and citizenship, and member training.

Anyone for Am Dram?

THE Town Museum in Cantelupe Road is to feature an exhibition looking at the history of East Grinstead's amateur dramatic societies.

On with the Show will run from 18 February to 31 May and entry is free.

'Greening Campaign' to cut carbon

AN initiative to cut down the town's carbon emissions will be tested on the Imberhorne estate early this year.

Householders will be given an information card with a list of ways in which they can save energy in their homes and workplaces. Suggestions include changing to energy-saving light bulbs, switching non-essential items off standby and using a water-saving device in toilets. Householders who comply with this advice will be asked to display the card prominently in a front window so that the success of the initiative can be estimated by a public survey and card count.

Cllr Heidi Brunsdon, who heads the green team behind the trial, said: "As a Council we need to provide the type of advice which makes it affordable for people to make choices which lead to a greener lifestyle.

"And in the present economic downturn we should be taking a leading role in helping people to reduce their energy bills and cut their carbon emissions."

Have your say in parking review

THE Town Council has won assurances from Mid Sussex District Council that it will be consulted when East Grinstead's parking provision comes up for review this summer.

The new arrangements will be implemented from April 2010, but in the meantime anyone concerned about parking issues, whether from a commercial or residential stand point, is urged to make their views known to Mid Sussex as soon as possible. Cllr Bob Mainstone said it was "particularly important" that the District Council should take account of the views of the business community and other stakeholders before coming to any conclusions.

Meridian on the Web

MERIDIAN FM, East Grinstead's very own radio station, is still broadcasting over the internet, despite going off-air before Christmas. The station, which has its HQ at East Court, has been granted trial month-long licences at intervals over the past three years. But its application for a full-time licence is still only 24th out of 48 on Ofcom's list, and it will be next summer before any further decision is made.

In the meantime, said Meridian's manager Cllr Lee Quinn, it remains vital to keep the broadcasting team together and a loyal town audience listening. Web site "hits" show they already have a regular computer following and Lee hopes that using the internet will bring East Grinstead to a wider audience.

"Do more people have computers than radios? We just don't know," he admitted. "But we have come a long way. We need our community radio to be a hub of communication for the town - and this is one way of doing it."

Accreditation for the Town Museum

THE Town Museum in Cantelupe Road has joined more than 1800



UK institutions in gaining accreditation from the national Museums, Libraries and Archive Council. Accredited museums must demonstrate they reach minimum standards in how they care for and document their collections, in their management and in the information and services they offer users.

The Town Museum has not only proved that it is being run professionally, but will now qualify for funding from sources which can see it is serious in what it does, and does it well, said Cllr Bob Mainstone. "This is a very welcome acknowledgment of what we have already achieved at the museum and will mean we can further develop our collection and the skills of our many volunteers," said Bob.

Bypass plans abandoned

PLANS for an East Grinstead relief road have fallen victim to the economic slowdown and the falling house market. Mid Sussex District Council has been informed by the developers' consortium that its plan to build 2,500 homes plus a relief road is no longer financially viable. The town bypass and other infrastructure improvements were planned as part of an overall package which included the strategic allocation of 2,500 new homes in East Grinstead, and were to have been funded from their sale.

But the recession means the scheme is now unlikely to be delivered: and while there are alternative sources of funding available for a relief road, the likelihood of securing it is small and alternatives will now have to be considered in the 2009 review of the Core Strategy said MSDC leader Gordon Marples.

"This news will come as little surprise and reflects what we are seeing elsewhere, as the economy heads for a recession which could be prolonged," he said.

"We will work with our key partners at the Town and County Councils and the developers' consortium, as well as stakeholder groups and neighbouring authorities to progress an alternative approach to development if one is required.

"Most importantly, we will seek to ensure that any proposal for future development in the town delivers the infrastructure needed to create a sustainable and prosperous future for the residents of East Grinstead, including essential road and junction improvements to help address the present serious traffic problems in and around the town."

Town's 'best present'

TOWN Council leader James Baldwin called news that Mid Sussex District Council's Area Action Plan is now financially undeliverable "the best possible present" for East Grinstead.

The announcement means it is "highly unlikely" that the 2500 house strategic development and relief road will now go ahead, leaving the town in a much stronger position to decide its own future without "external agendas", he said.

"The Town Council has already committed itself, as part of its opposition to the Area Action Plan and related Core Strategy to producing its own Plan for the town. This Plan will be designed to meet local needs, reflect local views and meet local priorities.

"It will draw on community input and must earn community support."

And while some new houses will still be built, these will reflect the local need for new homes and jobs, and not be imposed by Government quotas.

"Let's be clear. There will still be some growth in the town's housing. We still need to ensure a thriving town centre and an increase in local jobs: we still need to sort out the town's chronic traffic congestion.

"So now that a relief road is off the agenda the County Council must come up with alternative remedies based on junction improvements and road system redesign.

"There is much for us to do but we now have the chance as a community to be in the driving seat.

"The Area Action Plan is dead, so together let's create a Better Way."

High Weald's Settlement

THE fifth and last story of the High Weald is about its settlement.

The first permanent settlers in your parish were probably pig drovers from the Downs! The High Weald has many small, isolated farmsteads, hamlets and dwellings dotted across the countryside. This characteristic, dispersed settlement pattern supports the highest population of any protected landscape in the UK.

The ancient woodland pig pastures of the High Weald - used by farmers from the Downs and coastal plains - were known as *dens*. These can still be identified and are the key to understanding how the High Weald first became colonized by human settlers - and why it has such a dispersed pattern of settlement today. As dens were mostly used during the late summer and early autumn, the farmers would have built temporary shelters in which to keep warm while watching their pigs. Over time, the dens became more permanent places of settlement. From them, the first pioneer High Weald farmers began slowly clearing the surrounding woods for animal pastures. Eventually the dens became settlements in their own right - separate from their 'parent' villages. The isolated, scattered nature of the original dens developed into a pattern of isolated, individual farmsteads dotted across the countryside. This pattern of settlement is very different from that of Central England, which was settled and communally farmed by large village communities, using shared open-field systems.

In the High Weald, villages developed relatively late - not until medieval times - and as centres for trade, not agriculture. Many sprang up around trading points on the high, dry ridge top routes.

Look at a detailed, modern map of the High Weald and - particularly in Kent - you will see what remains of the dens: many villages, farms, fields and woodland with names ending in '-den'. Most dens have remained small, but a few have expanded to become larger settlements. Tenterden, for example, means "The den of the men of Thanet". **To find out more, please visit www.highweald.org**



DIARY OF FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS 2009

09 Feb	(M)	Planning
23 Feb	(M)	Planning
09 March	(M)	Planning
12 March	(Th)	Public Services
19 March	(Th)	Amenities & Tourism
19 March	(Th)	Charities
23 March	(T)	Planning
26 March	(Th)	Finance & General Purposes
06 April	(M)	Council
07 April	(T)	Planning
08 April	(W)	Annual Town Meeting
20 April	(M)	Planning
11 May	(M)	Annual Town Council
12 May	(T)	Planning
01 June	(M)	Planning
11 June	(Th)	Public Services
15 June	(M)	Planning
18 June	(Th)	Amenities & Tourism
18 June	(Th)	Charities
25 June	(Th)	Finance & General Purposes
29 June	(M)	Planning
06 July	(M)	Council
13 July	(M)	Planning
27 July	(M)	Planning

Notes: All meetings are held in the Council Chamber, East Court Mansion, at 7.45 p.m. and are open to the public and press. All full Council meetings include a maximum of 30 minutes set aside at the beginning for public question time. All committee meetings begin with a maximum of 15 minutes for public questions.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

East Grinstead Town Council, East Court	01342 323636
West Sussex County Council Area Highways	01243 642105
East Grinstead Learning Centre	01342 321874
Citizens' Advice Bureau, Cantelupe Road	01342 321638
Library, West Street	01342 410050
Help Point at the Library	01342 300780
Queen Victoria Hospital, Holtye Road	01342 414000
Downland Housing Association	0845 6887717
Kings Leisure Centre, Moat Road	01342 328616
Police Station, East Court	0845 6070999
Mid Sussex District Council	01444 458166
East Grinstead Visitor Information	01342 410121
Samaritans	0845 7909090
Chequer Mead	01342 302000
Museum	01342 302233

HELP!

Services provided by West Sussex County Council, Mid Sussex District Council or East Grinstead Town Council can all be accessed from the Help Point in East Grinstead Library. So if you have a query, or if you are not sure whom to contact, then please drop into the Help Point during opening hours:

Monday to Friday	9.30 - 5.30
Saturday	9.30 - 12.30

Telephone enquiries are welcome on
01342 300780 or by fax on 01342 410262
e mail: east.grinstead.help.point@westsussex.gov.uk



IT'S YOUR COUNCIL.

TELL COUNCILLORS WHAT YOU THINK!

Contact any of the Town Councillors shown in the listing with your views on the items in this edition of *Civic News* or on local issues bothering you, or write to the Council at
East Court Mansion, College Lane, East Grinstead, RH19 3LT.
For up-to-date information and news about the Town Council visit our website at www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk
e mail: towncouncil@eastgrinstead.gov.uk

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR COUNCILLOR

Herontye

Stephen Barnett 10 Woods Hill Close 326001
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Baldwins

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Paul Johnson Kingsmere Cottage 311359
[LD] Pl*, PS, F&GP Stoneleigh Close East Grinstead RH19 3DY

Lee Quinn 6 Dallaway Gardens 317817
[C] Pl, PS East Grinstead, RH19 1AZ

Peter Reed 38 Fulmar Drive 311926
[C] Pl, F&GP East Grinstead, RH19 3NN

Imberhorne

David Banks 29 St Johns Road 312258
[LD] Pl, A&T East Grinstead RH19 3LG

Heidi Brunson 83 Blount Avenue 327200
[LD] Pl, F&GP# East Grinstead, RH19 1JN

Bob Mainstone Mallaig, Windmill Lane 326454
[LD] PS *, A&T, F&GP East Grinstead RH19 2DY

Barry Starmer Kimberley, Pine Grove 300534
[LD] Pl #, A&T East Grinstead RH19 2BB

Indication of Committee: Pl - Planning, PS - Public Services, A&T - Amenities & Tourism, F&GP - Finance & General Purposes *Chairman, # Vice Chairman.

All phone numbers are 01342 and are Councillors' private numbers.
C - Conservative LD - Liberal Democrat

The Musical History Company presents Castles in Spain by Roger Hind and John Baldwin at Chequer Mead Theatre on Wednesday 13 – Saturday 16 May 7.30pm each night & 2.30pm on Saturday

THROUGH wonderfully melodic songs and stirring narrative, this entertaining and inspiring show for all ages, brings history to life in 2009, the 150th Anniversary of Brunel's death. Brunel called his engineering projects his "Chateaux d'Espagne" – Castles in Spain. The show, presented in aid of St Catherine's Hospice, recounts the life and achievements of this amazing man and his unique projects that included the Clifton Bridge, the Great Western Railway, his three great steamships and what happened when he swallowed a golden half sovereign!