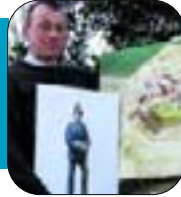




The value of smoke alarms:
See page 2



Quiz sparks telephone frenzy:
See page 4



Ensuring the past has a future:
See page 6



Gatwick - what happens now?
See page 8

You're an 'Excellent' County Council...

...BUT THERE'S BAD NEWS ON GOVERNMENT GRANT CHANGES

WEST Sussex County Council was officially declared an 'Excellent' authority by the Government last month - and at the same time, they revealed grant allocation plans which leave us at least £30 million short. That means a minimum council tax increase of 15 per cent just to protect services at current levels.

TOP RATING:

The 'Excellent' rating was scored by the County Council in a national assessment of the performance of all county councils and unitary authorities.

It puts West Sussex within the top tier of councils. Out of 150 assessments only 22 achieved the top score.

Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA) were introduced by the Government last year as a new way of measuring and rating how local authorities both govern and deliver services.

They are carried out by an independent inspection team from the Audit Commission. Local authorities can receive one of five ratings:

- ◆ Excellent ◆ Good ◆ Fair
- ◆ Poor ◆ Weak.

County Council Leader Harold Hall said: "Receiving an 'Excellent' rating is a great achievement because it is an independent endorsement of:

- ◆ The hard work, dedication to service and professionalism of our staff
- ◆ The member/officer partnership in this authority and our adaptability to take on new programmes and pilot new ways

of working, which has led us to gaining national recognition in a number of fields.

"It is important to stress that the rating does not mean our services are perfect. Part of the assessment is ensuring that we recognise our weaknesses.

"We know that there are services that need improvement and we will go on striving to deliver improvement through innovation, efficiency savings and good management

"This vote of confidence confirms we are going in the right direction and have programmes in place to improve performance further.

"It will provide the authority with more freedoms from Government controls and flexibilities to deliver what really matters locally.

"That fits with our 'Keep it Local' theme and should in time reduce our overheads and staff time involved in bureaucracy." See page five for a flavour of the achievements that helped to win the 'Excellent' rating.

MILLIONS OF POUNDS SHIFTED IN GRANTS:

The County Council has lost out in the Government's re-distribution of grants. It has one of the worst awards of any county in England.

It is part of a regional shift whereby the South East will receive much less than authorities in the Midlands and North East.

Councillor Harold Hall said: "We needed an extra £30 million just to cover inflation and unavoidable costs like increased national insurance, landfill tax and other Government imposed

Pupil posters push 'Kill your Speed' drive



EYE-CATCHING posters designed by local schoolchildren with the help of County Council road safety experts are being displayed in the village of Walberton to encourage motorists to 'Kill Your Speed'. The West Sussex-wide 'Kill Your Speed' campaign is

a key component of the County Council's Road Safety Strategy.

The posters are the result of a competition organised by Hanna Linger-Madsen, nine, a pupil at Walberton CE School.

commitments.

"In West Sussex we are

expected to meet 38 per cent of our spending from council taxpayers. Contrast that for example with Durham where it's just 25 per cent or Hull where it's 22 per cent.

Our basic needs are similar to other parts of the country

but our costs are much greater.

The Government seems to think everyone is affluent in the south east and should be willing to subsidise other parts of the country. That is patently unfair.

"The re-distribution of funding confirms that the County Council was right to launch its 'Keep It Local' campaign to

alert people to the threat. I regret that the Government has not listened.

"We do not want to reduce the level of service for residents. Our priority will be to ensure that services - particularly for children, older people and others in need - do not suffer as a consequence of this shift in taxation that the Chancellor is imposing on the residents of West Sussex."

The grant figure is scheduled to be confirmed by the Government in January.

At present the average Band D council tax for services provided by the County Council is £725 - the fifth lowest of all 34 county councils.



Harold Hall outside the Houses of Parliament before delivering thousands of 'Keep It Local' campaign coupons.

Budget Brainstorming

A BUDGET brainstorming session is being held by the County Council at County Hall later this month to discuss the Government's grant.

It will be attended by local strategic partners who worked with the County Council to develop the demanding targets set out in its Public Service Agreement (see page 8 for full story). They include:

- Local district and borough councils
- Health service providers
- Businesses
- Voluntary organisations
- Environmental groups.

Said County Council Leader Harold Hall: "Their involvement on how we tackle the budget options - the balance between local taxation and services - will be helpful. It is the precursor to full public involvement in service and taxation strategies"

Help Points make their mark

THE county's network of 18 public Help Points has scooped a second prestigious Government award.

Its commitment to excellent customer service has been rewarded with a Charter Mark. These are only awarded to organisations that can demonstrate an outstanding service to the public.

Help Point staff were particularly praised for their 'friendly, helpful attitude'.

The partnership of local authorities, including the County Council, who run the Help Points was commended for an excellent use of resources.

Each Help Point provides a point of contact for any council or health authority service.

In 2001, the network received a Beacon award from the Government-organised Beacon Council Scheme, which identifies centres of excellence in local government from which other councils can learn.

A class act

WEST Sussex primary schools are top of the form.

In this year's National Curriculum tests, the average performance of 7-year-olds was 4 per cent above the UK average. The results were:

READING: 86 per cent of West Sussex pupils achieved level 2+ (84 per cent nationally).

WRITING: 89 per cent (86 per cent)

MATHS: 92 per cent (90 per cent).

Eleven-year-olds also matched or topped the national average. The results were: **ENGLISH:** 77 per cent level 4+ (75 per cent) **SCIENCE:** 89 per cent (86 per cent) **MATHS:** Pupils matched the national average of 73 per cent.

Waste Plan give us your views

THE next phase of the County Council's public consultation on its Waste Local Plan is about to begin.

This follows the identification of 30 possible locations that may be included in the Waste Local Plan.

They include more than 20 potential areas for waste recycling and recovery and three sites that could be suitable in the future for energy from waste facilities. Following previous public consultation, 19 sites have been dropped from the plan.

Mark Hammond, Director, Environment and Development, stressed: "This is part of a long process of consultation and I would not want anyone to think we have made up our minds."

"We are required to produce a Waste Local Plan that should provide a framework for where we could have new facilities in the future to manage West Sussex's waste.

"The Plan provides sites to encourage and enable the big increase in recycling and recovery we need to cut down the amount of waste we send to landfill."

The Draft Plan was considered by County Councillors at a Select Committee and was due to be considered by the full County Council as West Sussex Connections went to press.

It will then be published, enabling everyone in the county to make their views known about the policies and the proposed sites.

Comment should be made during the official 'deposit period' of May 15 to June 26, 2003.

There will also be public meetings.

Mark said: "When we consulted before, we included 48 sites for consideration.

"Nearly half of those have now been dropped from the Plan, we have added six new sites and the picture will continue to change as we consult."



HELPING BUSINESSES TO TRAVEL RIGHT

AN information pack has been produced by the County Council to help businesses draw up Travel Plans, which can:

- ◆ Provide staff with more sustainable travel options, such as cycling, walking and car sharing.
- ◆ Reduce the number of commuter trips and business journeys made by car, particularly those made by lone drivers.
- ◆ Reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.
- ◆ Significantly reduce business costs and travel costs for staff.
- ◆ Help improve the health and efficiency of a company's workforce.

contains everything an organisation needs to develop a Travel Plan including:

SETTING AN EXAMPLE: The County Council has its own Staff Travel Plan, which includes:

- ◆ A computerised car share database.
- ◆ Additional cycle parking.
- ◆ Negotiating staff discounts with public transport operators and cycle retailers.
- ◆ Introducing vans and pool cars powered by 'greener' Liquid Petroleum Gas.
- ◆ Producing a booklet informing staff of the travel choices available to them.

Copies of the Business Travel Plans Info Pack and further information about Travel Plans can be obtained from the County Council's Business TravelWise Officer Andy Moulard on 01243 753667 or email

andy.moulard@westsussex.gov.uk



Public Meetings will be held at:

District	Date	Venue
Adur	Mon 3 March	Kings Manor Community College, Kingston Lane, Shoreham-by-Sea
Arun	Weds 26 Feb	Bognor Community College, Lower School Hall, Pevensey Road, Bognor Regis
Chichester	Thurs 20 Feb	The Venue, Revelation Centre, Spur Road, Quarry Lane, Chichester
Crawley	Tues 18 Feb	Longley Suite, The Arora Hotel, Southgate Avenue, Southgate, Crawley
Horsham	Mon 10 Feb	The Steyning Centre, Coombe Court, Fletchers Croft, Steyning
Horsham	Mon 17 Feb	The Drill Hall, Denne Road, Horsham
Horsham	Mon 24 Feb	Horsham Old Town Hall, Market Square, Horsham
Horsham	Friday 7 March	Rydon Community College, Rock Road, Storrington
Mid Sussex	Weds 12 Feb	Clair Hall, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath
Mid Sussex	Thurs 13 Feb	Oakmeads Community College, Station Road, Burgess Hill
Mid Sussex	Thurs 27 Feb	Clair Hall, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath
Worthing	Tues 11 Feb	Chatsworth Hotel, The Steyne, Worthing
Worthing	Tues 25 Feb	Main Hall, Durrington Comm. Ctr, Tesco Complex, New Rd, West Durrington, Worthing

All meetings will start at 7.30pm (doors open 7pm) and will last until 9pm.
 Due to the expected local interest in the Plan proposals, we have arranged alternative meetings to ensure that as many people as possible have a chance to join in the discussion. Please note however, that attendance must inevitably be limited to the capacity of the venue, and that entrance on a particular evening cannot be guaranteed. Please arrive in good time to be sure of a seat.
 For more details, or a copy of a short note of common Questions and Answers, please contact the Waste Local Plan Hotline at the County Council – 01243 777517, or use our website at: www.westsussex.gov.uk/pl/wplan



Coastal Cookies have recipe for success

SUCCESS is on the menu for Coastal Cookies, which creates work opportunities for people with learning difficulties.

Coastal Cookies is a creative new approach to work-related social services that operates from West Sussex Social and Caring Services Adult Training Centre, Worthing.

Its success has led to additional ventures being developed by Coastal Enterprises, which is a partnership project that includes the County Council, Worthing Borough Council and the public sector.

The aim of Coastal Enterprises is to provide a cost-effective way of meeting the vital need for improved employment prospects for people with learning difficulties.

Pictured are three members of Coastal Cookies, left to right, Teresa Taylor, Sonia Lang and Emma Stringer, serving up success.

Back to work project seeks volunteer mentors

THE Substance Misuse Employment Project (SMEP) is seeking volunteers to 'make a real difference' to the lives of people who have been affected by drink and drug abuse.

SMEP - a Pathways to Work project, which is backed by the County Council's Social and Caring Services - trains

volunteers to mentor ex-drink and drug abusers and help them return to education, training and work.

Alistair Morten, SMEP's Training and Development Officer, said: "Volunteer mentors make a real difference. After training, mentors help clients to:

- ◆ Take up training.
- ◆ Apply for a job.
- ◆ SMEP offers volunteers:
 - ◆ Accredited training.
 - ◆ Personal supervision.
 - ◆ On-going support.
 - ◆ Paid expenses.
- "In return, we ask volunteers, after training, to commit one to three hours a week for a

minimum six months"

For further information, contact Alistair at West Sussex Voluntary Organisations Liaison Group, River House, 34 High Street, Storrington, RH20 4DU. Telephone: 01903 746200 Fax: 01903 746100. e-mail: volg.co.uk Web: www.volg.co.uk

Firefighters torch caravan

THIS spectacular blaze was started by West Sussex firefighters to highlight the importance of smoke alarms.

Community Safety Officer Roger Wood said: "In a caravan there is a significant risk of fire.

"In the last two years, West Sussex firefighters have been called to 55 fires in caravans. We had two fatal fires in 2001 and another one last year - and in all of them, no smoke alarm was fitted.

"If a blaze begins, there is often only one way out - through the only door. We wanted to show just how easily a fire can wipe out a caravan."

The Fire Brigade is also urging people to make a Fire Action Plan so they know what to do in the event of fire at home.

- The plan should include:
- Identify all practical escape routes and keep them clear.
 - Take everyone into account when making your plan.
 - Keep door and window keys where you can all find them.
 - Know when it's safer to stay put.
 - Practise your Fire Action Plan.
 - Make sure everyone knows your Fire Action Plan.

Roger added: "By making a plan and installing a smoke alarm you can save yourself valuable time and escape before it is too late."



How you'll be a different 'me' in 2003...

By ALISON MUSK

MAKE a difference in 2003 with a New Year's resolution that's different.

A brand new year is the perfect time to take a fresh look at your life. And New Year's resolutions can be more than giving up smoking or going on a diet.

Here are some suggestions that could benefit both you and the community in 2003.

Branch out ... Become a local Tree Warden. You'll make a valuable contribution to the county's environment and ensure future generations will enjoy the beauty and variety of our landscape.

For would-be Tree Wardens, enthusiasm is the main qualification. The expertise will follow because the County Council provides free training.

For further information, contact Julie Bolton - 01243 756888.

Say hi to hi-tech ... Embrace the 21st century and get to grips with computers. All 35 libraries in West Sussex now have computers - with free access to the internet.

Go green ... It's vital we recycle in West Sussex. So use your local County Council recycling site as often as possible. To find out your nearest one phone 01243 777595. Bargain-priced composters are available from 0800 085 80 88.

Get homework help ... If you have children of school age the West Sussex Grid for Learning is the website to visit!



Packed full of homework help and handy educational hints and tips, it



really makes learning fun - for you and your children! Go to www.westsussex.gov.uk, click on Education and Libraries, and then on West Sussex Grid for Learning.

Shop locally ... Try the delicious local produce of West Sussex and rediscover the meaning of taste by visiting one of the many Farmers Markets held around the county.

For further information visit www.farmersmarket.co.uk
Discover the delights on your doorstep ... West Sussex has many beautiful places and exciting venues, plus 2500 miles of footpaths criss-cross some of the most stunning scenery in England.

For details about the wonders of West Sussex visit www.westsussex.gov.uk and click on Tourism.

For a leaflet detailing walks, including a selection mapped out for people with disabilities, phone 01243 777544.

You can also use the County Council's interactive maps to plan your route - go to the County Council website, click on Tourism then on Walking in West Sussex.



Make a break ... Help the carers of children with disabilities. You can give them a short break by looking after a disabled child in your home - from a couple of hours a week to a week in the

holidays (for further information, phone 01243 852700 or 01403 225918).

There's also a sitting service, which involves looking after a child in his or her family home for a couple of hours a fortnight (Mid Sussex - 01444 415499, Chichester, Arun - 01243 852940, Worthing and Adur - 01243 852940).

Home from home ... Help young people to develop the life skills needed for independent living and adulthood by offering them lodgings. You'll be receiving on-going support, training and payment (01403 246417).

MORE FUNDING FOR MAJOR ROAD PROJECTS

TWO major County Council highways projects have been given more Government money to pay for a series of road improvements and safety schemes.

They are:
◆ The A24 Horsham-Capel improvement scheme estimated at £38.5 million.

◆ Improvements to the A24 junctions at Buck Barn, Partridge Green and Dial Post estimated at £20 million

At the same time, the good progress being made on the £30 million Crawley Fastway scheme has been recognised by continued financial support for the network of high-tech bus routes serving the town centre, business parks and Gatwick.

West Sussex has also been told that its funding for road maintenance is to increase by 25 per cent to £8.5 million.

For a range of other important projects, the County Council's funding goes up by 7.5 per cent to £5.8 million.

This will pay for schemes, including:

- ◆ Road casualty reduction.
- ◆ Cycling.

- ◆ Town centre improvements.
- ◆ Speed reduction.
- ◆ Safer routes to schools.
- ◆ Road crossings.

Mark Hammond, Director, Environment and Development, said: "We can continue our efforts to improve road safety and also implement a much needed programme of highways and transport improvements across the county."

"One of our priorities over the last two years has been to reduce the risk of road casualties, particularly on the A24 where we have implemented crash barriers and measures to reduce speed."

"Although the major schemes which the Government is supporting will take several years of planning and design, they will lead to a dramatic reduction in road casualties."

It's not all good news for highways. There's a reduction of £2.3 million (allowing for inflation) from Government for the maintenance of our roads and £2.1 million is purely permission for us to borrow the money.

Take a short cut to the past

FAMILY historians can take a shortcut to the past with the latest edition of the popular Genealogists' Guide to the West Sussex Record Office.

It is available from the Record Office, Orchard Street, Chichester, price £5.50 (post & packing £1.00 extra), or can be bought from the County Council's e-shop: www.westsussex.gov.uk/acatalog/index.html

The Guide's author, Peter Wilkinson, Deputy County Archivist, said: "There are so many sources to dig into at the Record Office that it can become really confusing - you don't know where to start."

"The Guide helps people tracing their family tree to get the very best out of the time they spend in the Record Office and save them from going down too many blind alleys."

"Since the last edition of the guide was published seven years ago, the hi-tech of today has become a valuable aid to people wanting to travel back to the past."



Jigsaw gives youngsters food for thought

PRIMARY schoolchildren throughout West Sussex are literally piecing together the message about what's good and what's bad when it comes to healthy eating.

They are learning a balanced approach to nutrition and food with the help of Nutri-Jig, an eye-catching new jigsaw puzzle that features a large plate showing various good-for-you foods.

The puzzle has been issued to all primary schools along with an activity pack, which includes some practical ways to get children involved in cooking.

It also raises awareness of other educational issues such as geography, spelling and foods eaten in different cultures.



Pupils from Seymour First and Middle School, Crawley, find out about healthy food with the Nutri-Jig

\$ Book now for big deals £

LOCAL businesses are advised to register now for this year's 'Meet the Buyers' event, which generated orders worth an estimated £4.3 million in 2002.

The event, which was staged over two days at Crawley's Aurora International Hotel, brought together purchasing professionals from 38 national and international organisations and suppliers from 110 companies.

The County Council has been a leading sponsor of these events since 1993, so demonstrating its commitment to supporting and promoting enterprise and an economy that is strong, diverse and sustainable.

The events continue to be one of the most cost effective means of helping local companies expand their markets and they illustrate how partnership working can help the economy of West Sussex and employment opportunities for the county.

This year's event is likely to be held in June.

For more information, contact Business to Business Exhibitions Ltd on 020 7700 0008 or visit www.meetthebuyers.co.uk.

Youth Cabinet

- a powerful voice for young people



MEMBERS of the first West Sussex Youth Cabinet, which has developed into a powerful voice for young people in the county, will step down next month after a successful year of tackling high profile issues.

They will be succeeded by another Youth Cabinet, which will be elected by young people from throughout the West Sussex.

Pandora Ellis, Youth Cabinet Coordinator, said: "The West Sussex Youth Cabinet plays a key role because it works directly with the adult Cabinet of West Sussex County Council.

"This ensures the views of young people throughout West Sussex are included in policy and decision making".

Among the issues it tackled last year were:

- Anti-bullying.
- Transport.
- Young people's rights.
- Education.
- Europe.
- Consumer rights.

For further information, contact Pandora by phone 01323 815713, fax 01323 815203 or e-mail pandora.ellis@westsussex.gov.uk or visit the Youth Cabinet's website: www.westsussex.gov.uk/youth_cabinet

Video help for carers

A **COMPREHENSIVE** video guide has been produced for carers of people who have mental health problems and live at home.

Titled Do You Care, the video aims to:

- ◆ Demonstrate the experiences of carers.
- ◆ Inform carers about their rights and the rights of people they care for.
- ◆ Tell carers about the Mental Health Act and medication.
- ◆ Identify ways in which people can access assistance.

The video, which was produced by a multi agency group, including local carers and the County Council, is available from: **01903 528611**.

Tale of two counties prompts phone frenzy



IT really was a case of fastest finger first when *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* quizmaster Chris Tarrant asked a contestant: "In which decade was the county of Sussex divided into West and East Sussex?"

The choice of answers was: 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s.

The contestant phoned a friend who immediately said the 1970s, which promptly helped his pal to double his money. But it also led to a flurry of calls to County Hall from viewers who knew West Sussex County Council has been in business for more than 100 years.

The programme makers said: "The Ordnance Survey maps may be showing the administrative divisions but the county divisions, according to our sources, came into being in 1974."

So, West Sussex Connections also decided to phone a friend - Caroline Adams, Senior Archivist at the West Sussex County Record Office, who told us: "Because of its abnormal length Sussex was divided into eastern and western divisions for administrative purposes in 1189.

"In 1865, the County of Sussex Act made the two divisions separate counties in matters concerning treasurers, rates, constabulary gaols and houses of correction.

"But when it came to the militia, coroners' salaries and judges' lodgings, they were to be treated as one county.

"The 1888 Local Government Act divided Sussex into two administrative counties with new boundaries. However, the Act stated that Sussex should still be considered one county for the Sheriff, Lieutenant, militia, justices and coroner.

"Under Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, West Sussex was enlarged to include Mid Sussex. At the same time, the present borough and district councils were created.

"West Sussex also got its own Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff and Coroner."

However, records show that already by 1585 the Justices of East and West were transacting their business independently - an arrangement described as having existed 'time out of mind'.

So make of that what you want!

And that, Chris, is, indeed, our 'final answer'.

Say scam to spam scams!

SAY scam to spam scams by registering your mobile phone and e-mail address, advise County Council Trading Standards watchdogs.

Spam is the term for those irritating unwanted messages sent to mobile phones, e-mail addresses and fax machines.

The County Council's Trading Standards Service warns the unsolicited messages can be expensive if the recipient is duped into calling a premium rate telephone number.

Patrick Bligh-Cheeseman, Head of Trading Standards, said: "There are two favourite methods.

ONE: A recipient is asked to call a premium rate number - prefixed 090 or 091 - which is then charged at up to £1.50 per minute.

TWO: A fax message is received asking the recipient to call a 'short call' number that has five digits beginning with 8. Afterwards return calls are received at a premium rate.

Consumers can register their mobile phone number with the Telephone Preference Service by visiting its website at:

<http://www.tpsonline.org.uk/tps/html/default.asp>

e-mail addresses can be registered with the Direct Marketing Association global e-mail preference service at:

<http://www.dmaconsumers.org/emp.html>

Local transport - you tell us

AS part of its Local Transport Plan (LTP) consultation process, the County Council is seeking views on the longer-term schemes.

You can submit your views via www.westsussex.gov.uk/ltp_apr.

Internet access is now available at all West Sussex libraries.

Comments can be submitted until the end of February 2003.

Further details of these schemes are available from Duncan Barrett **01243 777559**.



Success for SASS

A **PROJECT** to help young refugees settle into local schools scooped nationwide recognition by being shortlisted in a competition run by a national magazine.

Called Support Asylum Seekers in School (SASS), the project has two aims: **ONE:** To arrange for mentors to give young refugees personal one-to-one support to help them understand how schools in the UK work.

TWO: To raise awareness of school staff to the particular needs of young refugees.

SASS is a working partnership commissioned by the County Council's Looked After Children's Education Team.

The project was pipped at the post after reaching the final three - out of hundreds of entries - in the Inter Agency category of the annual awards held by *Community Care* magazine to recognise achievement in social care.

Award winning wedding venue

COUPLES can now get married in the award winning 17th century Grade 1 listed Edes House, which fronts County Hall, in West Street, Chichester, and is renowned for its elegance.

The cost is £570 for a Saturday and £650 for a

Sunday or Bank Holiday.

The restoration of Edes House by the County Council in 1992 has won many awards and it is also available for hire for artistic and cultural events in the evenings and at weekends.

For further information about the weddings contact the House Manager on 01243 777024.



The Richmond Room in Edes House

Transport improvements for Worthing

PUBLIC transport is being enhanced in Worthing following the formation of a new quality partnership that includes the County Council.

- ◆ Among the improvements are:
 - ◆ Worthing Station - improved public transport access, including better taxi facilities, improved lighting, a lift to the platforms and pedestrian enhancements.
 - ◆ Bus priority being introduced

at all traffic lights junctions. This means when a bus approaches red traffic lights, they change to green to allow the vehicle through.

- ◆ Bus routes will be revamped to meet the changing needs of Worthing's residents, businesses and visitors.
- ◆ Enhanced bus stops with computer technology telling passengers when buses are due.

About Connections

WEST Sussex Connections is produced by the Communications Unit of West Sussex County Council at a cost of approximately 13p per copy.

It is printed on environmentally-friendly paper. This newspaper is available on audio tape. If you would like to receive the newspaper in this format please call 01243 777408.

If you would like to advertise in West Sussex Connections, please contact Simon Eden on 01243 777116.

The accuracy or content of any advertisement is not warranted by this Council, nor does this Council endorse or guarantee any of the products or services advertised. The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the Council

Excellent!



THE Comprehensive Performance Assessment 'Excellent' rating follows an intense scrutiny of the County Council earlier this year. Here is some of the evidence that was presented to the independent inspectors from the Audit Commission:

BYTES sized attraction

BYTES, the first town-centre café for young people in West Sussex, has opened at The Broadway, Haywards Heath.

The café, which was launched by the County Council in

partnership with a number of other agencies, operates both daytime and evenings and offers a range of projects for 11 to 25 year olds.

- They include:
- 'Cyber' café facilities where young people can surf the internet on five computers.
 - A base for the Haywards Heath

Youth Forum and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

- A group for young parents. In conjunction with Haywards Heath College, opportunities for young people to develop their business skills through running their own café business are being explored.

...and that's official!

In a class of their own: The County Council's Education Service is one of the most outstanding in the UK, said Ofsted after its last inspection. Ofsted also awarded the Youth Service top marks, giving it the best set of grades ever to be achieved by a youth service.

Star turn: Social and Caring Services maintained the two star rating it was awarded earlier this year by the Government's Social Services Inspectorate.

Beacon double: Two pace setting services scooped Beacon awards, which identify centres of excellence from which other councils can learn - the Drug Action Team and the network of 18 Help Points.

Pathfinder status: A key County Council led communications project gained two prestigious Government Pathfinder awards worth some £1 million in funding for proposals to harness the opportunities offered by hi tech.

Libraries book praise: An Audit Commission review of the Library Service praised the quality of service provided.

"It has a strong record of sound financial management" - CPA report.

Web feat: The County Council's website was voted one of the top 20 local authority websites in a nationwide survey by the Society of IT Management.

Driving forward: "very good" was the government verdict on our transport plans which have won more money for vital road schemes.

Making its mark: The Fire Brigade is one of the few public service providers in the UK to have scooped a third successive Charter Mark.

"It is developing strong relationships with partners across the county" - CPA report.

"It has a clear understanding of the needs of its community and has a clear sense of direction and its priorities" - CPA report.

Top for bottoms: The County Council's Real Nappy scheme, which has so far saved eight million disposable nappies from landfill, has won three major awards.

On the record: The Record Office scored highly in a poll of visitors to British archives.

On line ahead of time: The People's Network, the biggest ever Information Technology project to be undertaken by the Library Service, was completed five months ahead of schedule.

"Loyal and experienced staff at all levels" - CPA report.

On the move - bringing services to you

YOUR Library Service is on the move ... developing a wide range of mobile services to ensure it reaches as many people as possible.

"This reflects the County Council's social inclusion policies and positively endorses its stated aim of 'caring for the most in need in the community'," said Sue Houghton, Acting County Librarian.

On the move are:
Mobile Libraries - the Library Service's three vehicles provide a weekly or fortnightly service to the rural and outer urban areas of West Sussex. Each vehicle carries some 2000 books and is staffed by a Driver and Library Assistant.
Homes Mobile - a mobile with special access for disabled people carrying a range of material books and story cassettes
Homes Delivery - a small vehicle which delivers pre-selected stock.

Together these two vehicles visit over 300 homes.
Bookbus - for three years, Bookbus visited early years groups in the Chichester area. The Library Service has now secured a grant of £94,500 from the Single Regeneration Budget to fund a new vehicle and additional stock. It will be targeted more closely at areas of social deprivation.

Open Door - placing stock that has reached the end of its shelf life in a variety of locations including hostels, drop in centres, church halls.

- Services are also provided to a variety of special groups, including:
- Housebound people.
 - Her Majesty's Prison, Ford.
 - Residential homes.
 - Hospitals.
 - Sheltered housing.
 - People from ethnic minorities.
 - People seeking basic literacy and numeracy skills.



Searching the past with the hi-tech of today

THE hi tech of today is helping West Sussex history fans travel back in time at their local library.

All staff are trained to handle local studies and the Library Service has developed strong links with the West Sussex Record Office, museums and other providers of heritage information.

Martin Hayes, Head of Local Studies, said:

"Despite its link with the past, we are responding to the opportunities of new technology. For example:

- Overseas researchers now prefer e-mail to postal enquiries.
- An online Local Studies research enquiry service is now available via the Library Service website, which has over 40 pages of information about local history sources in West Sussex.
- Photographic collections will be digitised to make them available over the Internet.



"Votes for Women" rally in Cuckfield in 1913.

terms following their use of the service," said Judy Young, Business Information Officer. Most of the business is referred from smaller libraries. However, the service is also advertised through the economic partnerships in the County.



● Newsplan 2000 is preserving local newspapers from London and the South East on microfilm.

"These innovations underline the importance the Library Service places on meeting the growing interest in Local Studies."

Information service is the business

COMPANIES throughout the county are benefiting from InfoTrace, the Library Service's Business Information Service, which is based at Crawley, the principal reference library specialising in business information.

"This is a premium service, which is complementary to the free service provided by all libraries. The benefit to users is that more information can be provided locally and at

reasonable rates. "Market research with customers has shown that businesses in West Sussex have benefited in real

"This service contributes significantly to the County Strategy by supporting the information needs of businesses within the County and it co-operates whenever possible with other relevant organisations throughout the county," said Judy.

For further information, Judy can be contacted on 01293 895179.

You're the tops, say customers

LIBRARY staff in West Sussex are the tops. That's the opinion of their customers.

A customer satisfaction survey published in the annual Library Service Plan shows:

- Adults rating the knowledge of staff as 'good' or 'very good' - 96 per cent.
- Children rating the knowledge of staff as 'good' - 99 per cent.
- Adult customers rating the helpfulness of staff as 'good' or very good' - 95 per cent.
- Children rating the helpfulness of staff as 'good' or 'very good' - 95 per cent.

Said Sue Houghton: "The Library Service places a high emphasis on excellent customer care - and this is borne out by the findings of the customer satisfaction poll.

"The findings of the poll reflect the expertise, professionalism and commitment of Library Service staff throughout West Sussex."

Homework help

HOMEWORK support is provided in all libraries in the form of:

- Homework collections,
- Space to work.
- Library staff to help.

Lancing Library has a Homework Club, which offers more structured support. A club is planned for Bognor Regis Library and it is hoped to open similar clubs elsewhere in the county.

Making sure our past has a future

By NIGEL GALLOWAY

FROM an office appropriately overlooking the Roman Walls of Chichester, Mark Taylor, the County Council's Senior Archaeologist, is ensuring the rich past of West Sussex has a sound future.

Mark and colleague John Mills maintain the County Sites and Monument Record, a database listing more than 7000 sites of archaeological importance in West Sussex. They include 300 that are major and significant ancient monuments, such as The Trundle, near Goodwood, and Cissbury Ring, near Worthing.

The work also involves checking planning applications to decide what advice or guidance needs to be given before work can start on a particular project and whether any conditions need to be imposed to make sure the future does not destroy the past.

In some cases the possibility of archaeological remains are known thanks to the database and mapping system. However, many important discoveries have been due to what Mark describes as "professional judgement, instinct and training."

The importance of archaeology in the planning system was fully recognised 12 years ago when Government planning guidance was introduced.

"This has helped eliminate the possibility of coming in at the last moment to rescue archaeological remains or people lying in front of bulldozers," said Mark.

Recent work by the department, brought about by a major development scheme, has also started to shed new light on Crawley.

Mark said: "Development west of the High Street is helping to reinforce the point that it had important origins long before the post-war years and was a large medieval town."

"There is some interesting evidence of the ironworking activity that took place during medieval times. As an archaeologist, I can almost picture a Crawley resounding to the tinkling of hammers on anvils."

The archaeologists also made sure that there was a search of the land now being used for the County Council's new bypass under construction at Angmering, which has produced evidence of a Bronze Age settlement.

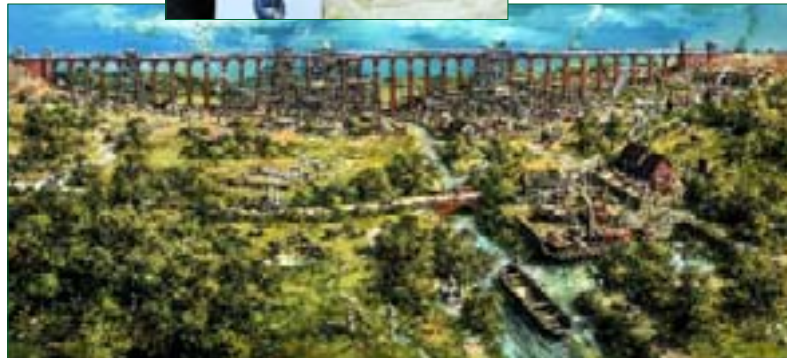
Another recent project has also brought history graphically to life thanks to a partnership with artist Mike Codd who has used information from the archaeological unit to produce paintings showing what many historic sites may have looked like at the time.

The list includes the castle at Church Norton (top right), near Selsey, and a view of what was likely to have been involved in the construction of the Balcombe Viaduct in the 1840s (below).

For further information, Mark (pictured right) can be contacted on 01243 756858.



Phareham Fort as it might have looked in the 19th century.



School Term Dates
SPRING TERM: ends on Friday, April 11.
 Half term is Monday, Feb 24 to Friday, Feb 28.
SUMMER TERM: Monday, April 28 to Wednesday, July 23.
 All schools will be closed on Monday, May 5 for Bank Holiday.
 Half term is Monday, May 26 to Friday, May 30.

A SPORTING CHANCE FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

CLUBS throughout West Sussex are being urged to help fight crime by giving young offenders a sporting chance.

The West Sussex Youth Offending Team (YOT) wants amateur and professional sports clubs to harness and develop the sporting talents of young offenders.

Probation Officer Mark Burden said: "Government research suggests that one of the most effective ways to divert young people from offending is through participation in sports.

"Many of the young people we deal with have considerable sporting potential but have not had the opportunity or guidance to make best use of this potential.

"As sports clubs are at the centre of our community, we want them to play a part in reducing youth crime while also identifying and nurturing the sporting potential of many young people.

"Already local clubs have responded positively to this challenge. However, we're still looking for more to get involved in this important initiative.

"The aim is to refer on to clubs young people who are interested in participating, but who might need a little more support and guidance in developing their confidence and maximising their potential.

"We hope this will benefit not only young people and the community, but also the county's clubs, which will be finding and releasing sporting potential in young people who, for whatever reason, are not accessing sport and leisure opportunities."

For further information, contact Mark or Terry Bishop, Head of Youth Offending Services, on 01903 718739.

The wildlife on your doorstep

THE huge variety of natural habitats and wildlife in West Sussex is chronicled in a comprehensive new County Council leaflet.

Illustrated with colour photographs, *Biodiversity in West Sussex* highlights:

- ◆ What lies on your doorstep.
- ◆ How it is being conserved by the County Council in partnership with many organisations
- ◆ Ways you can help.

It also points out that nature conservation does not have to be confined to the countryside and provides tips on turning town centre gardens into wildlife havens.

Joy Eccleston, of Environment and Development, said: "Biodiversity means quite simply the variety of life - and nowhere is this more evident than in West Sussex.

"This publication will help you to find and enjoy the remarkable flora and fauna that is on our doorstep."

The leaflet is available from libraries, Help Points, tourist information centres and the County Council's Countryside Publications Unit - 01243 777610.

Safety camera boost for slow down drive

MORE safety cameras are being installed throughout the county to reduce the number of victims in road crash hotspots.

This follows the Sussex Safety Camera Partnership, which includes the County Council, being given the go-ahead to launch a cash-for-cameras scheme, which means money from fines will go towards more cameras.

The cameras have enhanced visibility and signs are evident on their approach.

Rob Salmon, Group Manager, Road Safety, said: "The aim is to save lives - not fill local authority coffers. Any fines will be spent on additional road safety campaigns.

"Ultimately, we would like to see this project running at a loss - that would mean drivers were travelling at appropriate speeds and not being fined for breaking the limits."

"The Sussex Partnership," said Rob, "aims to reduce the number of people who are killed or seriously injured on roads in East and West Sussex by at least 30 in the first three years.

"The key message is: if you don't break the law, you have nothing to fear. We want to make everywhere in Sussex a safe haven for road users."

SPEED COSTS...

MORE THAN MONEY

SUSSEX SAFETY CAMERA PARTNERSHIP



We're the in-crowd when school's out

HUNDREDS of children around the county are having a whale of a time at County Council-backed Breakfast and After-school clubs, which are partnerships operated by the private and voluntary sector.

The clubs - which are a lifeline for working mums and dads - have been launched by start-up funding from the lottery supported New Opportunities Fund.

The out-of-hours childcare initiatives have been developed in line with the National Childcare Strategy.

The West Sussex Early Years and Childcare Unit has attracted over £1 million pounds in three years in start-up funding for the clubs and holiday play schemes.

Two typical clubs are Kidzone, which is based at Worthing 6th Form College, and the one run by First Steps Childcare at Chichester College.

They have secure play areas, which offer a wide range of activities from computers, crafts and traditional board games. There's also a quiet area for youngsters with homework.

However, after a long school day, the accent is heavily based around play and activities.

When the weather is good, there's outdoor play, which is always highly supervised.

The Chichester College Club is supervised by Clare Carey, who said: "I think these clubs have a tremendous role to play because parents know their children are having fun in a safe and secure environment."

At Kidzone, Eleanor, seven, who has been at the club for three years, said: "I like coming here, because it's fun and I like playing with my friends best."

Jordan, nine, has been going to the club for four months. He said: "I like playing with Beyblades - they're high speed spinning tops - but sometimes I like to chat with the Kidzone ladies."

Gabby, ten, who has been attending for two years, said: "I've made lots of friends here and I enjoy the computer and craftwork."

PROTECTING VULNERABLE ADULTS

A WEST Sussex Adult Protection Committee has been set up by the County Council and partnership agencies to protect vulnerable men and women from abuse.

John Dixon, Director, West Sussex Social and Caring Services, said: "Although statistical data is minimal both nationally and locally, we do know that the abuse of vulnerable adults is very real.

"Last year, for example, West Sussex Social and Caring Services dealt with at least 150 adult protection investigations in the county.

"They included allegations of financial, physical and sexual abuse and ranged from minor assaults through to rape.

"The agencies in West Sussex see the protection of vulnerable adults as being as important as the protection of children."

Further information about adult abuse can be obtained in a leaflet, 'Adults can be abused as well', which is available from Libraries, Help Points and Citizen Advice Bureaux.

Hear all about us

A NEW service - believed to be one of the first by a county council - means you can now use your computer to hear what leading County Council members and officers have to say.

Using the latest technology, a special Radio Page has been created and added to the County Council Website:

www.westsussex.gov.uk/

The Page, which can be found by going to the A to Z Index and clicking 'R' for Radio Page, contains a selection of interviews used by the nine radio stations that serve West Sussex.

Making parking easier

LATEST car park signing technology has been introduced in Crawley by the County Council in partnership with the Borough Council, NCP and County Mail.

Twelve electronic information panels show the actual number of parking spaces available at five town centre car parks.

This is the second such scheme to be successfully implemented by the County Council. The first was in Worthing in July 2002.

Littlehampton Citizens Advice Bureau - correct phone number

THE current issue of the Arun A-Z Residents Guide gives an incorrect phone number for Littlehampton Citizen's Advice Bureau. The correct number is: 01903 724010.

Getting in on the Act

THE County Council was one of seven local authorities to volunteer to draw up pilot schemes to smooth the introduction of the new Freedom of Information Act.

Here, West Sussex Connections talks about the Act to Richard Childs, who is leading the County Council team behind the pilot scheme.

WEST Sussex Connections: What is the Act about?

Richard Childs: It's a golden opportunity for local government to make itself more open and accessible. It will help show people more about the decision making process and the often difficult issues County Councillors have to tackle.

WSC: When is the Act being introduced?

RC: It's being introduced in two stages: From the end of February, local authorities will have to operate a 'Publication Scheme' showing people what information is already available and how to access it.

From January 2005, it will become far more wide ranging with people able to demand access to any information held by local authorities subject to certain conditions and exemptions.

WSC: What type of information will

be available in the Publication Scheme?

RC: Any information we currently publish or put in the public domain. The first stage will include a comprehensive guide to:

- What information we have.
- Where it can be found.
- How to see it.

WSC: Does it just apply to local authorities?

RC: It will also include Parliament, Government departments, health trusts and thousands of other organisations.

WSC: Will it take long to get what I need?

RC: No. A lot of information is already available from our:

- Website - www.westsussex.gov.uk
- Offices.
- Help Points.
- Libraries.

WSC: Will there be a charge?

RC: In most cases, no.

WSC: What about people who do not have internet access at home?

RC: All of our libraries now offer free internet access.

WSC: Who can people ask for help to find information?

RC: There will be a dedicated officer to help and advise people.

New guide for asbestos changes

A SHORT guide covering the safe disposal of asbestos cement is available from the County Council following the introduction of new safety rules at its five licensed sites:

- ◆ Burgess Hill Waste Transfer Station (01444 243041).
- ◆ Crawley Civic Amenity Site (01293 545861).
- ◆ Sompting Waste Transfer Station (01903 752318).
- ◆ Shoreham Civic Amenity Site (01273 454081).
- ◆ Westhampnett Civic Amenity Site (01243 787300).

These sites do NOT accept asbestos cement products unless it is wrapped in suitable 1000 gauge polythene or double bagged in rubble bags. They are available from builders' merchants and must be sealed with tape when the items are taken to the sites.

The new rules have been introduced in line Health and Safety Executive guidance.

The guide is available from the County Council Wastes Management Services Unit on 01243 777595.

99 tops 5000

ROUTE 99, the Petworth-Chichester bus service launched in July by the County Council, has already celebrated its 5000th passenger.

Terry Macken, Route 99 project co-ordinator, said: "This service has been a resounding success and demonstrates what can be achieved when you combine knowledge and experience within the County Council with suitable funding."

The service operates a 'commuter express' 35-minute run at 7.45am into Chichester and a 4.10pm and 5.40pm return to

Petworth.

A number of other daytime journeys have the ability to detour from the main route enabling outlying villages and hamlets to use the service. These detours have proved a great success and plans are in place to extend the number of journeys that can do this.

Telephone the County Council's Travel Centre at Midhurst for more information or to book on 01730 815518. Details are also available on the County Council's website at: www.westsussex.gov.uk/passengertransport

USEFUL NUMBERS

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

For more information about West Sussex County Council services, write to County Hall, Tower Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1RQ, or call 01243 777100.

You could also visit or call your local Help Point where staff can help with any enquiry about any local government service:

HELP LINES:

WSC 24-hour Helpline: 0845 7581232

Police: Single switchboard number for all non-emergency calls: 0845 60 70 999

Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111

In an emergency always dial 999

ICIS: (free independent information for people in West Sussex with disabilities or care needs and their carers) Freephone 0800 859929 (voice and text).

RSPCA 24-hour service: 08705 555 999

Traveline: (local bus and rail information service) 0870 6082608

West Sussex Children's Information Service (CIS): (info on childcare and pre-school education) 01243 777807

Ethnic Minority Helpline: 0845 7581649

Street lighting faults: 0845 7581622

Highway defects: Western Area - 01243 836900.

Southern Area - 01903 878500 Northern Area - 01403 223900



Ecology team looks down on West Sussex

A HIGH-FLYING project has left County Council Ecologist Don Baker and his team looking down on West Sussex.

They are currently ensuring that the habitat shown on aerial photographs that were taken over the county in 2001 are now being studied and interpreted.

This work, which began in 1971 and is carried out every 10 years, is a highly effective way of assessing habitat and land use change in West Sussex.

Don's findings will eventually be presented in the form of a Geographical Information System layer, which is a hi-tech way of displaying all the

major natural habitat found in West Sussex, such as dry heath, broadleaf woodland, unimproved neutral grassland, hedgerow and streams.

Cracking down on cowboys

COWBOY builders and bogus callers will find it even harder to rip-off homeowners following a new initiative by West Sussex Trading Standards.

Its Special Operations Teams is briefing police on how Trading Standards can assist them and ensure that they work in partnership to protect those vulnerable to 'bogus caller' crimes. Trading Standards is also providing Police officers with easy to check reference cards explaining how consumer laws can apply to 'cowboys' who call on homeowners. Patrick Blyth-Cheesman, Head of Trading Standards, said: "Protecting vulnerable people is a high priority in West Sussex."

For more information about how to deal with bogus callers, a booklet, 'Think Twice' is available free from the Trading Standards Advice Service by phoning 01903 839749 or by logging on to their website at: <http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/trading.htm>

Carers information service on-line

A FACT-packed website for local carers has been launched by West Sussex Social and Caring Services.

Called Carers Online, the site operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can be accessed at home or at any one of the County Council's local libraries via:

- www.westsussexcarers.org.uk
- The site, which is a partnership project, is designed to:
- Help put carers in touch with local support and services.
 - Direct them to useful national information.
 - Give carers support.

Said Don: "The new data will provide important strategic information on the county as a whole. Not just for the County Council, but also for Government agencies, district and borough councils and parish councils."

"It will also:

- Provide background data for policies, management plans, development plans, state of the environment reporting, and monitoring.
- Record the extent of the loss of habitat and the extent of the enhancement needed in relation to major land-use allocations.
- Provide valuable data for the West Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan, the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan and the wider West Sussex Character Study project.

"We plan to make this information available to the e-community and to education establishments over the internet and the intranet, so underlining the County Council's commitment to e-government."

The project is being funded by the County Council, English Nature, which has contributed £10,000, and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, which has donated £500.

Pictured above are Don Baker (centre) with ecologist Graham Roberts (left) and Peter Ross, Senior Planner.

Step out for the West Sussex walking festival

PLANS are afoot to encourage hundreds of walkers to visit West Sussex next year when the county hosts a prestigious Walking Festival.

More than 30 full and half-day guided walks will take place throughout the county's stunning countryside between September 6-14.

Alison Taylor, the County Council's Tourism and Business Support Officer, said: "Whether you want a gentle stroll through some leafy woods or a brisk march over the Downs, there is bound to be a walk to suit.

"They will range from a few miles up to 15 miles, with different grades of difficulty. There will also be longer Weekend Challenge Walks over more demanding terrain."

The Walking Festival will be publicised nationwide and a brochure will be issued in April listing all the walks.

"These measures will encourage people from throughout the UK to come to West Sussex and discover the diverse nature of the county," she added.

Webpages dedicated to the Walking Festival can be found at <http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/Tourism>

GROUNDBREAKING TARGETS TO MARK SERVICE AGREEMENT

A SERIES of groundbreaking targets that could lead to the County Council scooping an additional £13 million are contained in its proposed Public Service Agreement (PSA). The proposals have been submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

PSAs are a new way for local and central Government to work together to deliver better public service and bring about the improvements people want.

In return for setting the targets, the County Council will:

- ◆ Seek a relaxation of Government red tape.
- ◆ Receive a grant of £1.5 million. And if all the targets are met, the County Council will receive an additional £13 million.

The PSA contains a total of 13 targets. They include:

- HOUSING** - 30 per cent of all new housing should be for sale or rent at less than market value and 'key worker' housing be made available.
- EDUCATION** - increasing the number of 19-year-olds with a Level 2 qualification.
- DRUGS** - increasing the number of drug users who complete treatment programmes.
- CRIME** - reducing violent crime in public places.
- SMOKING** - increasing the number of pregnant women who attend 'quit smoking' clinics.

DISABLED PEOPLE -

increasing the number of disabled people who use dial-a-ride services.

GOOD CITIZENS -

increasing the number of people, including school children, who become active citizens through volunteering.

Other targets cover:

- ◆ Improving pupil attendance and reducing truancy.
- ◆ Assisting older people to live as independently as possible in West Sussex.
- ◆ Continuous improvements across the whole range of services.

Gatwick - what happens now?

AFTER the recent court case about the Government's consultation on airports, you would be forgiven for wondering what was going on.

So, West Sussex Connections quizzed Tex Pemberton, the County Council Cabinet Member who deals with airports, about the issue.

West Sussex Connections: What was the court case all about?

TP: The Government said at first that it would not include Gatwick as a possible place for a new runway because of the legal agreement we have for no runway before 2019.

However, the judge has said the Government should have included Gatwick so people had a chance to say what they thought about it.

WCS: So, what happens now?

TP: The Government has said it is going to ask people in January whether a new runway at Gatwick is a good idea. We will all have until mid-May to respond.

WCS: What will the County Council be doing about this new consultation?

TP: We will be talking to people and businesses, particularly around Crawley, to see what they think.



We are also working with the forum set up by the West Sussex Economic Partnership to plan for the future prosperity of Gatwick and the Crawley area.

WCS: What would a new runway at Gatwick mean?

TP: A new runway would certainly bring more jobs to the Gatwick and Crawley areas, but it would also mean:

- A big increase in housing being built, in the region of 25,000 more.
- A lot more congestion.
- A lot more traffic on our roads.
- More noise and pollution from aircraft.

There would be a lot of pressure on our services and roads in West Sussex and we would be very concerned about building thousands more houses on greenfield sites.

We are not sure if it is sensible for the Crawley area to be entirely dependent on one industry. We would like to see more investment in diverse business in the area.

WCS: What would happen to Gatwick without a second runway?

TP: Gatwick now has 30 million passengers a year. With just one runway being used fully, this could rise to 46 million passengers, a 50 per cent increase.

This will mean a lot more investment and jobs in Crawley whatever happens with this consultation.

WCS: Will you be listening to business and others who support a second runway?

TP: We will listen to all sections of the community and will review the economic, social and environmental impacts across the board.

We will also be listening to people who are worried about the traffic, the noise and pollution, and loss of more of our countryside for housing.

WCS: What will the Government do after the consultation?

TP: They have said they will produce a White Paper on airports by the end of 2004. Then we will see what the plans for the next 30 years will hold, but I would be very concerned for public confidence if there was any suggestion of overturning the present legal agreement on which many people have taken major decisions affecting their life and livelihood.

At the cutting hedge

JULIE Bolton, County Council Trees and Woodlands Officer, didn't hedge her bets when the annual Hurstpierpoint Ploughing Match and Show, one of the oldest and most popular events in the county's rural calendar, ran into difficulties.

She came to the rescue to make sure a hedge laying competition went ahead.

Northlands Farm, Hickstead, where the event is held, did not have a suitable hedge for this year's competition to find a hedge layer.

However, the farm's owners, John and Jill Otter, identified a suitable hedge in nearby Job's Lane as being ideal and approached Julie for help.

She said: "The hedge in Job's Lane was ideal for the competition because it had a reasonably uniform growth of the right height and plenty of stems to create the cut and bent stems which are laid on one another.

"After e-mails and exchanges of plans with Property Services, I was able to find out that we owned the hedge and the adjacent field."

"It was at an ideal location because it is very visible and much admired by everyone that passes by."

