

FROM YOUR MP AND YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR

When we go east from Platt and head towards Ashford, or Folkestone, or even France, we're likely to drive on the M20. Whether you travel it on a regular basis, or just every so often, I am sure you will have experienced that frustrating feeling of sitting on the M20 surrounded by hundreds of other cars, and have no idea as to when you might start moving again. This isn't just an annoyance, the M20 is a key road connecting the United Kingdom to the rest of Europe, and it suffers heavily as a result. During normal rush hour the traffic is often heavy, but bearable, but during Operation Stack it turns into something else entirely.

That is why for a long time I was pushing Highways England to make it a 'smart motorway'. When it's completed it will mean that speed is controlled to allow for a better flow of traffic, which is both safer and more effective than current motorways. I am delighted this work is already underway.

I know that for many of us this may cause disruption and it may have an impact on local traffic around Platt, which will be frustrating, but its long-term impact will be noticeable.

This project is scheduled to last for two years, and I would encourage you to take this into consideration for your travel plans from the beginning.

If you experience any problems with the works, please do get in contact with me and let me know, either by email at tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk or by writing to 130 Vale Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1SP.

Tom Tugendhat, MBE, MP

FROM YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR

KCC is facing the start of another financial year with immense challenges in setting the budget. Savings in the order of £50 million are needed as government funding has been reduced by £45 million and service demands on the Council continue to rise. To date, and unlike many councils, KCC has avoided making significant cuts in frontline services. It continues to make savings through efficiencies and service transformation, but is fast reaching the point where frontline services are now threatened. KCC has therefore joined county councils across the country in increasing council tax by the maximum allowed at its budget meeting on 20th February.

I am personally greatly disappointed at the further delays announced by Govia Thameslink Railways in the provision of the planned new Thameslink service through Borough Green Station to London and Maidstone East. The new service is now due to start in December 2019 rather than 12 months earlier as originally intended. I will be pressing for a robust response by KCC to the Department for Transport to try to ensure that the franchisee delivers the new service timely.

At this time of year and as I write this, there is thick snow on the ground – potholes in roads become prevalent. KCC has designed a fault reporting tool so that residents can quickly and easily report problems on roads and foot ways; www.kent.gov.uk/highway-faults.

KCC is offering 0% loans between £50,000 and £500,000 to small and medium sized businesses throughout Kent. The scheme aims to deliver investment to business across the county. This is funded by loan repayments from previous Regional Growth Fund schemes. Pre-applications are now open for the Kent and Medway Business Fund. Follow the link to find out more on who can apply and how to apply to the Kent and Medway Business Fund.

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