



Medway Progress

Spring/Summer 2002

Update from **Bob Marshall-Andrews** – Member of Parliament for Medway

Top Marks for Medway's Unique Uni

The recent announcement of the unique educational partnership which will create a university in Medway is the best news I have received since I first stood for Parliament in Medway around a decade ago.

It was in 1991 I first proposed a university for Medway and it has been a key campaign issue throughout my parliamentary career. From the first document I drafted more than ten years ago which outlined plans for a local university I have taken a keen personal interest in the development of the project which has now come to fruition in the most exciting and innovative way.

The coalition of Greenwich and Kent universities with Mid Kent College, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and Medway Council is the only one of its kind in the country. These organisations are investing around £20 million in the project.

It will bring around 6,000 students to the area by 2010 which in turn will give a huge boost to the local economy and skills base. Medway has fewer people in higher education than the national average and the potential increase in graduates will not only ease current skills shortages in the area but it will also support economic regeneration.

The whole 'Universities at Medway' project is a flagship example of Government commitment to education. It has been kick-started thanks to £4million worth of government money from the Higher



Meeting the Queen during her recent visit to the University campus at Chatham Maritime

Education Funding Council for England and work begins later this year at the Pembroke site at Chatham Maritime.

In the words of Margaret Hodge, Minister of Lifelong Learning and Higher Education: "I am delighted to give my support to this excellent regional collaboration. It will offer local people the broadest possible range of higher education. I am sure it will be a great success." I could not put it better myself.

Airport plan should be grounded



A recent trip to Cliffe Marshes

A leaked proposal for a new international airport at Cliffe has ruffled many feathers locally – mine included – as the area is a vital haven for bird and other wildlife.

As a longstanding conservationist (I was a founder member of the George Adamson Trust) I was proud to be a guest at the recent opening of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds sanctuary. I have consistently opposed the airport proposal which is one of a number in a consultation document to be published shortly by the Government.

Any potential economic benefits involved in the Cliffe proposal – and it is only a proposal – would be far outweighed by the environmental impact on Cliffe Marshes which is an internationally recognised wildlife site protected by the European Birds Directive.

Cliffe Marshes is a unique and beautiful area which deserves the utmost protection and I will be a consistent voice against any potential development.

Welcome

Welcome to my new style update which I hope you will find informative and interesting. This is my first newsletter since the election in June last year when I was delighted to be returned as your Member of Parliament for the second time.

I was particularly pleased to record an increased share of the vote. The period since the election has been one of intense political activity, both internationally, nationally and locally. Some issues are touched upon in this update. Should you wish to discuss these or any other matters, of general or political interest, please contact my office which is in the centre of Rochester, full details of which are on page 4.

My best wishes,

Bob Marshall-Andrews QC MP

Cracking Crime Together

It is good news for everyone that almost every type of crime has decreased in Medway over the past year and that goes for Rochester High Street too.

The latest figures I obtained from Medway police show that only criminal damage and shoplifting figures have increased with significant decreases – around 19% – for burglary. Vehicle interference figures were also down an encouraging 34%. Drug related offences were also nearly 12% fewer.

I do know that many Rochester residents who are neighbours of mine have been greatly concerned about problems in the High Street usually involving young people and alcohol on Friday and Saturday evenings. Therefore I asked specifically for numbers relating to this locality.

They did show an increase in burglaries – up 7% which is seven more crimes and criminal damage which showed a 5.9% increase – 11 more actual incidents. However all other crimes in the vicinity of the High Street went down in number.

The most significant decreases were in drug related offences which dropped by 37% and theft from cars which went down by 22%.

Other figures included:

Halling – significant decreases in assault, criminal damage, theft from and of motor vehicles and interference with cars but an increase in burglaries – eight more homes broken into during 2001.

Cuxton – drug offences increased but major decreases in other crimes including burglary and vehicle interference.



On a recent inspection of Rochester High Street with Superintendent Giles York

Hoo Peninsular – A disappointing increase in assault crimes but 35 fewer burglaries which translates to a 24% drop and far fewer crimes involving vehicles.

I have had regular constructive meetings with Superintendent Giles York, head of Medway Police, to discuss both general and particular problems.

The recent announcement that Kent Police Authority will have 76 extra officers funded by the Government through the Crime Fighting Fund and a further 113 funded through council tax, are welcome steps towards further reducing crime in future.

En route to Success

The recent announcement that the Government is to put nearly £10 million towards the cost of upgrading the notorious A228 road on the Hoo Peninsular is excellent news.

I have lost count of the meetings I have attended over the years with senior council officials, government ministers, local residents, fellow MPs and representatives from Thamesport and Railtrack to push for improvements to this dreadful road.



Meeting with A228 campaigner Noreen Chambers

This latest news in the ongoing saga means a comprehensive upgrade of the A228's Ratcliffe Highway from Chattenden to the Sharnal Street bypass. Additionally the Government has indicated its continuing support for Phase Two of the A228 improvements from the Sharnal Street bypass out to Thamesport at Grain.

The plan is part of the Government's 10 year plan for transport which aims to provide safer, improved roads. Medway Council hopes to start work on the new dual carriageway in April next year.

This is a triumph for local people working together with MPs and Government to achieve this long awaited result.

It's one of those rare occasions when people will actually look forward to major roadworks and the sooner they are completed the sooner we can get going on Phase Two.

A Healthier Hospital

Praise is due to everyone at the Medway NHS Trust for the massive improvements in performance they have achieved.

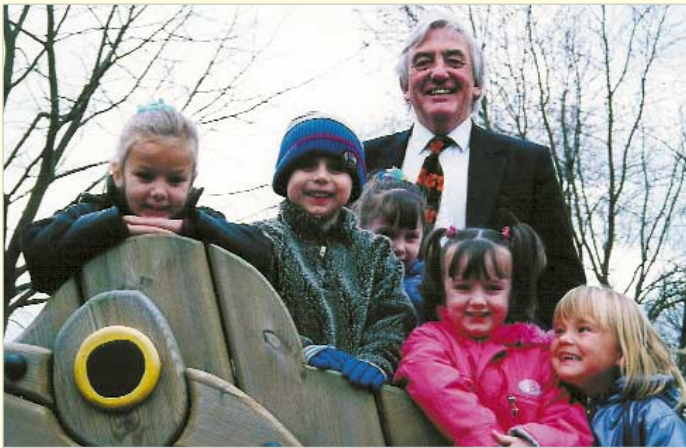
These include:

- A reduction in the number of outpatients waiting more than six months from around 2,000 to less than 100 – a fall of more than 95%. The trust believes it is on track to have NO outpatients waiting more than six months very soon.
- No patient waits more than 15 months for an operation – still a problem in many other areas of the country.
- Progress towards achieving new Government targets for cancer where all patients diagnosed begin their treatment within a month.
- A year ago the Trust was failing to meet the Government target of seeing 80% of referred suspected breast cancer patients within two weeks. Now the registered figure is 100% for ALL cancers.

Jan Filochowski, the Trust's Chief Executive also reports good performances in the Accident and Emergency department. These include achieving the Government's Gold Standards on trolley waits.

He told me: "We have done this by good management and using the excellent Government investment in casualty departments".

Backing Medway's Schools



These reception class pupils at Bligh Infants are among hundreds of local schoolchildren I have met during my programme to visit every school in the constituency.

Adding Up Investment

All schools in this constituency are receiving greater funding as part of the Government's education investment programme.

Here are just a few examples:-

	Then '97-8	Now '01-2
Allhallows Primary	£240,225	£408,428
Delce Junior	£670,441	£1,027,385
Temple	£1,120,549	£1,918,888
Bligh Infant	£381,537	£578,155

These figures show the increase in formula budget (basic funding) schools receive this year compared to 1997. They exclude direct additional payments to schools.

A* For Achievement

Nine Medway schools have just received special School Achievement Awards worth up to £27,000 from the Government's Department for Education and Skills.

These awards are based on Key Stage tests and tasks or GCSE/GNVQ results or nominations by chief education officers or heads against specified standards. Every school coming out of special measures in the 2000/2001 school year is also receiving an award. The amount of award relates to the size of school.

The local schools who have benefited are:

- Abbey Court Community Special School – £14,800
- Chapter School – £26,450
- Fort Pitt Grammar School – £25,990
- High Halstow Primary School – £4,710
- Hilltop Primary School – £7,960
- Sherwin Knight Infants School – £5,550
- Sir Joseph Williamson Mathematical School – £27,270
- St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School – £2,250
- St Margaret's at Troy Town C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School – £6,540.

This scheme is designed to celebrate success and provide an opportunity to reward the whole staff team – support staff as well as teachers – for their contribution.

Keeping Care Homes Safe

One of the major recent achievements locally has been to keep our care homes open so that senior citizens get the quality of life they deserve.

I worked alongside local Labour councillors and representatives from Unison to block plans to either close or privatise the homes and day centres at Robert Bean Lodge, in Pattens Lane, Rochester and Shaws Wood in Mill Lane, Frindsbury.

The council has now voted to keep the homes open and back plans, put forward by Labour councillors, to invest in services for older people. These plans have been drawn up with the support of staff, trade unions, relatives, day users and residents.



Campaigning to save care homes

New School

I am delighted to add a new name to the list of schools I have visited – Temple Mill Primary School in Cliff Road, Strood.

Built to serve the new and increasing communities around Frindsbury and Strood, it officially opened just before Christmas.

I understand the school has been very popular and when full – which it almost is – will boast seven classes with a maximum of 30 per class.

As a former teacher myself I am passionately committed to quality education for our children and Medway's newest school is a prime example of the government's investment in the future success of the next generation.

Both Global and Local

Since the election in June 2001, parliamentary demands have been particularly heavy on all Members of Parliament. Domestic politics have, of course, been overshadowed by the atrocities committed on the 11 September, 2001, in America. The subsequent actions which have been taken by America, Britain and other countries, have been the subject of parliamentary scrutiny and five full debates. I have attended all of these debates and have contributed to them. The Prime Minister has repeatedly, and rightly, drawn the connection between the coalition against international terrorism and the necessity for international justice, particularly in the case of the Palestinian Arabs. The solution to this terrible conflict in the Middle East must be the first and



During a recent visit to St Helen's CEP School, Cliffe.

essential priority for the democratic world and I will continue to take the most active part in this vital and continuing debate.

Within this context serious domestic issues have continued. Since the election I have spoken, debated or asked questions on the floor of the House on 17 separate occasions. The debates have included the House of Lords reform, anti-terrorism, crime and security, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, jury trial and the Auld Report on Criminal Justice. In addition, I have met with ministers on a range of issues of critical concern to the Medway area, including health provision, university and education funding, improvements to the A228 and the necessity for increases in the provision of social services. More recently I have held an urgent meeting with John Spellar, Minister of State at the DTLR, in order to make clear my opposition to any proposal to site an international airport at Cliffe Marshes.

I have continued to hold regular and well attended surgeries and, since June 2001, have been able to provide advice and assistance in more than 300 different cases involving a wide range of issues which are listed below. In turn, this has generated over 1,200 letters (and nearly as many replies!).

Whether on a national or local level, I have continued to uphold the principle that the job of a Member



In the recent free vote I voted for a total ban on hunting with dogs

of Parliament is to represent his constituency in Westminster and not the Government in his constituency. I am naturally pleased when progress is made but believe that it is important, also, constructively to criticise where progress is too slow.

In this context I have been particularly pleased that unemployment in Medway has continued to fall (by 8.1% last year) and that the Government has chosen to make significant capital investment in a new university, the Rochester and Chatham Riverside development and the road infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula. These are all solid improvements but there are many challenges to be met in the year ahead. In particular I would hope in my next report to be able to record starred status for Medway Maritime Hospital, significant progress on the development of the riverside and the real beginning of long overdue higher education on a Medway campus. These are ambitious targets but I am convinced that they can all be met.

Can I Help?

Around every two weeks I hold a surgery locally to offer help and advice to constituents on a wide range of issues.

These include:

Benefit claims, including housing and incapacity issues, Pensions and/or associated payments, Child Support Agency, Planning issues, Medical/treatment problems, Crime/Law and Order, Environmental Damage, Obtaining visas.

Don't worry if your problem does not fit into one or more of the above categories. Just ask for a surgery form and give me brief details.

Here's how to get in touch:

- **BY TELEPHONE** – 01634 814687
- **BY POST** – Bob Marshall-Andrews QC MP, Moat House, 1 Castle Hill, Rochester, Kent ME1 1QQ
- **BY EMAIL** – marshallandrewsr@parliament.uk
- **BY FAX** – 01634 831294