



Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 6; September 2007

Welcoming note

Welcome to the September issue of the Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter.

To unsubscribe to this newsletter, please contact us through the website 'Contact us' page with a subject line of 'unsubscribe'.

Our aim is to provide you with a monthly update on the work of the Conservative Association and your elected representatives. We would value your feedback or comments.

We hope you enjoy reading the September issue.

A word from the chair

The Bank of England's agenda



Question: "How do you buy a small American Bank?"

Answer: "You buy a large American Bank and wait a few weeks!"

The market comment above was not made in the summer of 2007. It was made in the early 1980s. It is a reminder that markets are cyclical and the recent helical movements are ultimately a reflection of confidence. The Bank of England has, to date, been sensible in its approach and 'its' earlier warning to Hedge Funds ("Hedge" being something of a misnomer) would seem to have been ignored by many.

As a result of tighter credit criteria, people may have to become more circumspect with their spending – they do not have the taxpayer to bail them out. The Government received record tax receipts in July but the borrowing requirement continues to expand – the non executive quango and echelons of non-essential state funded staff continue to cost the country dear. The fact that the state employees are not dependent upon the fortunes of the pension funds, but on the taxpayer, is their good fortune.

The recent proposals of the group led by John Redwood reminded all of us that an economy can grow without the constant infusion of government money – the reduction of taxes in a controlled manner can help to create greater wealth which, in turn, will help the tax take – particularly in V.A.T.

For the older people in our society the major movements in the wealth of pension funds can be a source of concern, but the other threat, of inflation, is high on the Bank of England agenda and 6% is still a meaningful level for later in 2007.

We all wait for any statement from Mr. Brown as to an early General Election. I was very interested that my forecast, in my June comments, that construction of two aircraft carriers would be confirmed, was correct.

To those of you attending the Conference, do enjoy and remember that a united party can still be maintained even if we may not always agree with one another – but have the major objective of a better society.

Mr Colin Crispin
Chairman, Mole Valley Conservative Association



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News from the House of Commons

Increased Immigration and Emigration



The Office for National Statistics released figures which revealed that long-term migration from the United Kingdom reached 385,000 last year. This was the highest figure since these figures started to be monitored in 1991.

I believe we are seeing another wave of the 'brain drain' which affected this country many decades ago, with high numbers of Brits choosing to start a new life Down Under in Australia and New Zealand where the standard of living is higher, the cost of living is lower and the climate is significantly warmer.

Of course there are several factors which affect these numbers, with many people moving to warmer countries, such as Spain, in their retirement and some of those included in the statistics are foreigners returning to their home countries after a short period of time working over here.

Keeping track of the number of those moving in and moving out is a notoriously difficult exercise, complicated by illegal immigrants entering our borders.

Sir Paul Beresford
Member of Parliament for Mole Valley

Report from Surrey County Council

The Foot and Mouth Outbreak



Foot and Mouth – The outbreak of Foot & Mouth disease in Surrey over the summer raised a number of issues and also showed just how good Surrey's local authorities are in dealing with crises.

My colleague Peter Martin SCC's Executive and Member for the Environment, and the County's Trading Standards team were on top of the situation very quickly, and ensured that the public, Surrey's local councils and the media were aware of what was going on as soon as any information had been verified. I for one was particularly grateful for the regular e-mail updates that enabled me to reassure anxious constituents who had concerns about the rumoured outbreak in Dorking, which luckily turned out to be a false alarm.

Both Peter and SCC's Leader, Nick Skellett, were keen to ensure that at all time the public were inconvenienced as little as possible whilst operating the highest standards of precaution and safety.

One problem that was highlighted by this outbreak was the fact that SCC were unable to close rights of way without prior permission from the Secretary of State. This slowed things up somewhat and could potentially have contributed to a spread of the disease. Nick Skellett and his Executive colleagues, myself included, will be trying to get a change in the law to enable County Council's to close rights of way without recourse to Government. In these situations speed is paramount and we hope that the Government will recognise this.



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Euro-Referendum – It is no surprise I'm sure to the people of Mole Valley that our new 'listening Prime Minister' has proved himself to be nothing of the sort. He is still refusing to hold a referendum on the proposed new EU Treaty, despite having promised to hold one on the proposed Constitution despite the 2 documents being pretty much identical. Politicians from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Trade Minister Lord Digby Jones and from Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to Danish Prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen have described the two documents as fundamentally the same.

Labour's MP were elected on a manifesto promise that their government would hold a referendum on the European Constitution, and to renege on that specific pledge shows that no matter whether the Prime Minister is Blair or Brown they will still do their utmost to ignore the wishes of the British people. Gordon Brown said that holding a referendum was an issue of trust between him and the electorate – and since his actions show that he doesn't trust the electorate it is only fair to conclude that the electorate shouldn't trust him or his colleagues.

By-election success – As some of you may know and other may not, the Conservative Party in Surrey kept up its impressive electoral performance over recent years by winning a by-election for the Walton Ambleside seat on Elmbridge Borough Council. Despite it being held in the middle of the British summer (such as it has been) the Conservative candidate Christopher John Elmer achieved more than double the votes of the Labour, Lib-Dem and UKIP candidates combined, and had a healthy lead over his nearest challenger.

SCC Contact Centre – There was more good news for our staff this month as it was announced that the contact centre has been nominated and short-listed in the forthcoming 2007 Call Centre Focus (CCF) European Call Centre Awards under the category best centre for customer service. Surrey made the final 8 out of over more than 350 nominations, and it is a tribute to our staff that they have been shortlisted for this award.

Death of Bill Deedes – Finally, some sad news. Last month Lord Deedes, the only man to have been both a Cabinet minister and the editor of a national newspaper, passed away at the age of 94. Although best known for his editorship of the Daily Telegraph, he also created a fund to give Christmas presents to underprivileged children as well as helping found the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence. He was a true gentleman and he will be greatly missed.

Helyn Clack
Member for Dorking Rural
Executive Member for Policy and Performance, Surrey County Council

Report from Guildford Borough Council

Recycling and Housing



Now that the summer holidays have ended, there is plenty of activity at the council. The two key areas for us at present are recycling and housing.

Recycling is high on agenda as we are now looking at how we can deliver our 2010 pledge to recycle 60% of the Borough's waste. We are now piloting a trial of a weekly food waste collection and, for a limited number of households, we will reduce residual rubbish collection to fortnightly to see what impact it will have on the recycling rate. If



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this proves successful then the council will consider whether it should introduce a weekly food waste collection across the borough, whilst reducing the residual refuse collection to fortnightly. Collecting food waste (and other recyclables) weekly, which we have pledged that we will continue to do, would avoid the problems that Waverley Borough Council's fortnightly non-recyclables collection experienced with maggots and flies.

We have reacted with dismay to the new housing targets that have been proposed following the public examination of the South East Plan. If the Government accepts the recommendations, it is likely that Guildford would be required make provision for the allocation of land for planning to accommodate 422 homes a year until 2026, an increase of almost 25% compared to the original proposal. Our concern is that the green belt around the town may well be under threat if these proposals are accepted. However, we are not optimistic that the Government will reject these proposals as they have repeatedly expressed their desire for more housing in the overcrowded South East of England. Nevertheless, the fight continues to ensure that we balance the demands for more housing with the strain on the existing infrastructure of the Borough.

Cllr Andrew French
Deputy Leader, Guildford Borough Council

Report from Conservative MEP

Getting our money back



I am campaigning, along with other South East MEPs, for the EU to release part of its "Solidarity Fund" to defray the cost of cleaning up after last month's floods.

As with most things in Brussels, the process is cumbersome and bureaucratic, and it may well take 12 months before any money is in fact received. No help will be available for improved flood defences, since this would have to come out of structural funds, and would thus offset what's left of the British rebate. Nor may anything be spent on new infrastructure, as opposed to repairing existing infrastructure. Still, having visited some of the afflicted villages of Oxfordshire and Berkshire when filth was at its height, I am in no doubt that we need every penny we can get.

There is, of course, an argument to the effect that we'd be better off without a "Solidarity Fund", and that each country should look after its own citizens. This would certainly be cheaper: we would no longer have to fund the standing bureaucracy that administers and allocates the fund; Britain, which remains the second highest net contributor to the EU budget, would be better off than most.

Still, while the money is there, we ought surely to claim our share. After all, we are currently contributing £12 billion a year to the EU — enough to scrap inheritance tax and capital gains tax, and still have enough left over to abolish stamp duty. Think of it, if you like, as reducing our net contribution.

I am happy to say that all four of the South East's Conservatives — Nirj Deva, James Elles, Richard Ashworth and me — are working together on this, as are the Euro-MPs from the other parties. Those of our constituents who lived through the misery of the inundations, who saw their possessions and memories wrecked and who, in many cases, are even now barred from their houses by the terms of their insurance contracts, would expect nothing less.

Daniel Hannan MEP
Conservative MEP, South East England



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News in brief

Mole Valley NHS Survey



Paul Beresford recently conducted a survey to find out what Mole Valley constituents had to say on local health services. The results show that well over half are either 'very' or 'quite' satisfied with local doctors, in-patient and out-patient services, NHS direct, A & E services and walk-in centres. However, 86% don't think they have adequate information about the range of NHS services available, over nine in ten think access to the NHS is deteriorating, while 85% don't think we are getting value for money from the NHS here in Mole Valley. Like many of you, Paul Beresford is very concerned about the changes in the NHS which are threatening our local services, most notably at Epsom Hospital.

Longer ambulance journeys cost lives



The government's plans to close more local hospitals and A&E departments have come under fire once again after research revealed that more patients will die because they face longer ambulance journeys. According to the study of more than 10,000 patients over 5 years showed that the risk of death rose by 1% for every 6.2 miles it took to reach an A&E department. These statistics are particularly worrying for Surrey residents whose hospitals are under threat. With the M25 and other major A roads in around Mole Valley it is vital that those involved in serious road traffic accidents can reach emergency departments as quickly as possible.

Stun Guns Question

Following an inquiry from a constituent about the use of Taser or 'stun' guns in the UK, Sir Paul Beresford decided to ask a written question to the appropriate Minister. He asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Jacqui Smith, if she will increase the number of police forces in the UK which are trained and equipped to use Taser stun guns; and if she will make a statement. Tony McNulty, Minister of State for Security, Counter-terrorism, Crime and Policing, replied, "Taser has been available to all Authorised Firearms Officers in England and Wales since September 2004 as a less lethal alternative for use in situations where a firearms authority has been granted in accordance with criteria laid down in the Association of Chief Police Officers Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms. From 20 July 2007 Chief Officers throughout England and Wales have been able to deploy Taser for use by Authorised Firearms Officers in operations or incidents where the criteria for the authorisation to issue firearms does not apply, but where officers are facing violence or threats of violence of such severity that they would need to use force to protect the public, themselves and/or the subject(s) of their action. In addition, a 12 month trial of the deployment of Taser by specially trained units who are not firearms officers in similarly violent circumstances requiring conflict management will commence on 1 September 2007 in the following 10 forces in England and Wales: Avon and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Gwent, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Metropolitan Police Service, Northamptonshire, Northumbria, North Wales and West Yorkshire."





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Feature Article

Foot and Mouth – Lessons to be learnt

Surrey MPs were quick to act together and coordinate with the farmers and DEFRA from the very beginning of the outbreak. Those MPs who had farmers within the restricted areas had personal contact. Others met with or were in contact with farmers' representatives throughout this Surrey emergency. It enabled close contact between government ministers and senior staff at DEFRA to some considerable benefit during the emergency and will be so at the review when lessons must be learnt.

While it is fairly certain that the source of the virus was from the Pirbright centre it is highly desirable that its means of escape is established for future prevention. Government involvement, directly and indirectly, with Pirbright increases government responsibility for the damage. Full marks must be given to DEFRA ministers for their extremely prompt action in setting up protection zones as the two outbreaks came to light. In contrast to the 2001 outbreak, this action appeared to stem the spread very quickly.



Farming is probably the most regulated UK industry. Farmers regularly send reports on their stock, make up of their fields and so on to DEFRA. All of this disappears into the huge Government computer system. It was very apparent from the patchy communication between DEFRA and farmers on the ground that this information could not easily and readily be made available. Some farmers in the zone had little or no notice of DEFRA requirements of them. This point has been made to the Secretary of State at DEFRA. With some 17 dairy farmers in the area it took MP pressure at a meeting with ministers to force a speedy reaction to relieve these farmers of a dilemma. An immediate imposition of movement of supplies to and from farms meant that the dairy farmers had to store and hold their milk. It is self-evident that one could not tell cows to stop producing and that the farmers still had to continue the milking twice-daily. Inevitably farmers' storage became full and there was no legal means of disposal. Fortunately reaction under Paul Beresford's insistence brought a speedy clearance from Government enabling access to transportation of the stored milk from the farms.

Paul Beresford and other MPs stressed to Ministers that the government was slow to close foot paths in the initial protection zone and should have shut paths in the second protection zone. This was requested by the farmers through their MPs. Although such a decision was marginal on scientific grounds Sir Paul believes it would have further reduced the risk of spread and brought home to visitors who probably should not have been within the area the risk that they added to an already difficult situation. He felt that closures of these paths for a few weeks under these circumstances would have been understood by even the most ardent Rambler. Sadly a few self appointed individuals rushed to the scene and attempted to ingratiate themselves persistently on the media.

Sir Paul raised concerns over the current compensation rules as applied to framers meat in cool store, and the loss of work to stock trucking firms and abattoirs. Again Ministers agreed to look at these questions and to meet Surrey MPs again when requested. Surrey NFU and the MPs are to meet to discuss the whole foot and mouth episode after some semblance of normality returns. Meanwhile, the new outbreak in Egham continues to be a concern for Surrey farmers.