

Update and News

Summer 2026

Water supply and planning

Many of us in Wealden have had the dubious pleasure of being without water for many days, at various times over the past few years. I remember one of these outages happening within a few days of my election in 2023. As we are now in the middle of our third record breaking heatwave this year, we can all see the impact that climate change is having. It's also clear that our provider – South East Water – along with many other water companies, have not invested sufficiently in making our supplies resilient and able to cope with these changes.

This is perfectly illustrated by the fact that their successive Water Resource Management Plans are not fit for purpose. For example, the expected delivery date for the proposed Arlington Reservoir has been pushed back repeatedly from an anticipated date of 2036, to a broader 2025–2045 window, and most recently to a 2041–2075 window with a target date of 2057!

Yet under the Government's National Planning reforms councils like Wealden are expected to deliver planning permissions for more and more housing. There is a clear gap between meeting housing needs and the timely delivery by SEW of the infrastructure needed to supply them.

In a recent letter to the Government, (see <https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Full-SEW-later-sent-from-WDC.pdf>) Wealden Council emphasises that the planning system should not be expected to compensate for shortcomings in the regulation of the water industry. Instead, it calls for closer alignment between housing growth requirements, water company investment plans and regulatory oversight of the water companies. The letter also calls on the Government to set stricter water efficiency targets for new housing.

Buxted environmental data

I recently received a report from Friends of the Earth about key environmental data for Buxted. They have undertaken to provide data for every ward in England.

Some key results for Buxted include:

- 56 homes are at high risk of flooding,
- in the 2022 heatwave the temperature reached 37.1°C – perhaps we have also reached this over the past few weeks!,
- 676 homes are poorly insulated (below the EPC C level),
- Buxted ranks 30 out of 41 in Wealden for pollution levels,
- there are 3 sewage outfalls in Buxted that spilled pollution into waterways 33 times for 214.2 hours in 2025,
- there are 166 EV chargers in the area.

Finally, using polling data the report suggests that:

- 81% of you are worried about climate change,
- 67% think climate change should be a top government priority,
- and 82% support the use of renewable energy.

Whilst undertaking work to tackle climate change is a key priority for Wealden (see www.wealden.gov.uk/climate-change/) there is clearly more to do.

I'd be happy to receive any comments about the data or the work we are doing.

Please don't hesitate to **contact me** to discuss these or any other issues important to you.

Contact me on cllr.graham.shaw@wealden.gov.uk Tel. 07770 571828

Wealden's website is www.wealden.gov.uk

Councillor Ward Budget Scheme

Just a further reminder that I still have some funds within my ward budget scheme. Under this year's scheme I have already funded High Hurstwood School for their activity week and Buxted Allotments to upgrade their parking area. I hope to also be helping the Buxted Horticultural Society. Please contact me if you want to discuss this funding.

Council opens sustainable business units



Eight state-of-the-art industrial units have officially been opened at the Wealden Business Park in Crowborough.

The new industrial units, funded by Wealden District Council, located at western end of Farningham Road, have been developed to support local economic growth and meet business demand.

The sustainable, modern and adaptable units provide high-quality commercial space for manufacturing, storage and distribution, and general business use.

....and finally

I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to two sets of people within our ward.

The long-term underfunding of our public services is no better illustrated than in the issues faced by our primary schools, highlighted by the dilemmas faced from the impact of the heatwaves we are experiencing. Lack of investment in air conditioning leaves children and staff working in unbearably hot situations, with staff having to do their best, throwing together fans and blinds in buildings not adapted to the conditions we face. Heads are then facing a "Catch 22" situation, with decisions or not to close their schools, balancing the impact of the heat on the children with the impact of closure on working parents. From my recent conversations I am so impressed by the commitment of school staff to make the best of a difficult situation.

In their own way Buxted Together are also dealing with the consequences of underfunding of the clearance of footpaths in the ward, ostensibly the responsibility of East Sussex Highways. This group of committed volunteers are using their own resources to dig out and reinstate usable footpaths, trim hedges & uncover roadside signs. With the help of our county councillor, Christina Coleman, Buxted Together were able to meet with the Head of Highways to discuss the financial constraints they face and to explore how voluntary groups such as BT could make a contribution to keeping our footpaths clear and how ESH could provide additional training. An important step in the right direction.