



## Analysis of important local issues and Reform UK strategy proposals in Folkestone, Hythe and New Romney

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by David Turner and Bill Wright

*folkestoneandhythe@reformuk.com*

### **Preamble**

Official Reform UK policy is to debate, agree and focus on a single set of consistent national policies, but let each candidate and their supporters decide on policy with regard to local issues. This is logical and our approach here is to be very heavily influenced by local people with respect to important issues in the Folkestone, Hythe and New Romney areas. If you would like to share your own thoughts concerning issues that matter to you please do get in touch. And do not hesitate to propose your own pragmatic solutions.

*Key issues in no particular order of importance:*

### **Parking policy**

This is a cultural clash between left-leaning green councillors and those that live in the real World. The former view all motorists as easy targets for extra revenue but fail to appreciate that cars mean independence for so many people. Secondly, hard-pressed high street shop owners and workers need every customer they can find in order to keep their jobs and businesses viable. Green anti-car policies come at the expense of jobs and the independence of people for whom their car is a daily lifeline.

Against the will of local residents, we are seeing the spread of residents-only parking, charging for on-street parking, increasing car parking fees and the widespread use of parking apps that many older people find awkward and do not want to use. Cheriton is the latest area to be targeted with many shop-owners on the high street in danger of losing their livelihoods. Thankfully the local backlash has been both severe and, for now, successful.

*Reform UK policy:*

If local parking policies are to be changed at all, it should be to make it easier and cheaper for car-based shoppers to visit high streets in Folkestone, Hythe and New Romney. The alternative is more

and more depressed local shopping areas with charity shops next to closed-up retail premises. A crowd brings a crowd and vice-versa.

### **Water quality, drainage and sewage management**

Two serious issues impact the lives of local people and which definitely cross party lines i.e. everyone agrees on the problems and (mostly) they agree on solutions. The first is road quality (pot-holes) and the second is water pollution (sewage).

We have some excellent beaches in this constituency from Sunny Sands in Folkestone right around the coast to Littlestone and beyond. But if Southern Water can get away with pumping sewage directly into the sea every time it rains for a few hours (storm overflows) then the implications for public health, the maritime environment and tourism are dire. Please check out this source for the grim evidence:

<https://top-of-the-poops.org/constituency/folkestone-and-hythe>

*Reform UK policy:*

Reform UK would support the appointment of local people as independent monitors to measure the degree of sewage present at any time. When minimum levels are breached, this would trigger court action to seek punitive damages against the water companies.

### **Housing and Planning**

Whilst there is a shortage of homes those being built are not affordable locally and there is not anywhere near enough investment in local infrastructure necessary to support very significant increases in the local population. There are not enough roads, sewers/water treatment, hospitals, doctors, dentists and schools to support the expansion of housing schemes. This view is widely held across Kent.

*Reform UK policy:*

No further housing developments in this locality until there is a strategic infrastructure plan showing how services in the area would cope with an increased population.

### **Otterpool Park**

Reform UK are against this massive housing development, which reflects the enormous pressures on housing in southern England, partly as a result of uncontrolled immigration (more than two million net arrivals since the last election). Unfortunately, FHDC have several million pounds already invested in it, and the whole site has been granted planning permission for many thousands of homes.

*Reform UK policy:*

Reform UK would build just enough homes centred on the station/race course and the brown field site of the old Tarmac site opposite the Airport Cafe to get the money back. The rest of the site could then be rented out as farm land until planning lapses and then sold off as farm land.

### **Power generation at Dungeness**

Dungeness is a major success story in the region, a significant clean energy employer with a high number of relatively well-paid jobs. A recent proposal is to introduce innovative and safe SMR (small

modular reactors) to the site. FHDC (dominated by Greens) rejected the proposal to back SMRs - amending it to backing renewable energy.

*Reform UK policy:*

We are fully in favour of nuclear energy generation at Dungeness and support the development of the Rolls-Royce SMRs at Dungeness. Reliance on wind and solar sources of renewable energy in the pursuit of a futile net-zero objective is economically ruinous (especially for people on low incomes) and totally irresponsible for the countless days when the wind does not blow and the sun is nowhere to be seen. Clean and safe sources of nuclear energy, exploiting cutting-edge British technology, has to be a major component of a coherent energy strategy and Dungeness should definitely be part of that.

**Roads and pavements**

Like almost every area in the country, all the towns and villages in our constituency suffer from lack of maintenance on roads and pavements. Pot-holes can be seen everywhere. A single pot-hole can cause minor damage to multiple cars every day. Every political party promises to address this issue which is a daily blight on the lives of local residents. But the money necessary to fix this is too often diverted to creating 20mph schemes, cycle tracks and similar green anti-car initiatives.

*Reform UK policy*

Prioritise the maintenance of roads and halt spending on any other anti-car transport schemes.

**Irresponsible council spending**

Folkestone and Hythe Council are struggling to balance the books and avoid declaring bankruptcy like some other UK councils. Redundancies are expected, services are to be cut or pared back and events such as the popular air show have been cancelled. Jim Martin (Council Leader) may well find himself between a rock and a hard place trying to find the cuts necessary.

*Reform UK policy*

Allocating £4,500,000 to combat the so-called 'climate emergency' is unjustified madness in these dire financial circumstances. And spending £1,500,000 in a search for ways to reduce the council's spending is a classic political oxymoron.

**Folkestone library**

Many people are aware that Folkestone was recently voted the best place to live in the south east in the Sunday Times. So it is a disgrace that a thriving town the size and status of Folkestone does not have a functioning library for the benefit of all. The temporary 'digital' replacement building on Grace Hill is utterly inadequate. Folkestone is the only town in the country to have a central library with no books!

*Reform UK policy*

The Council should either engage assertively with local building contractors and find a way to make the roof of the original Grace Hill building waterproof. If the cost of this is proven beyond any reasonable doubt to be unjustifiable then an alternative location should be located without delay. It is not as if there is a shortage of empty viable premises – Debenhams, Wilko, Store Twenty One and the old Job Centre amongst others.