

News from your local Conservatives



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Web Edition

Maidstone & The Weald Matters

with **Helen Grant**

Prospective MP for Maidstone & The Weald



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MAIDSTONE & THE WEALD – ‘SAFE IN HELEN’S HANDS’

says Ann Widdecombe

In a resounding message of support for her successor as the Conservative candidate, Helen Grant, the Rt Hon Miss Ann Widdecombe MP has issued a statement in which she gives Helen her complete backing.

“Helen Grant is a person of considerable depth and ability who is clearly not afraid of hard work. She bears a wealth of life experience from her personal background, her business career and her profession as a family and community Solicitor.

Helen has already demonstrated to many constituents that she has all of

the skills necessary to safeguard the interests of the people whom I have had the pleasure of serving over the last 21 years. She also has the makings of an excellent Parliamentarian and Stateswoman, someone I think our people will be very proud of in the years to come.

I am positive that Helen will be successful at the next election and I am very comfortable in handing over this precious baton to her. Maidstone & The Weald will be safe in Helen’s hands.”



Ann Widdecombe and Helen Grant at their Maidstone offices working together for Maidstone & The Weald

Helen Grant at the M.A.S.H. meeting with (clockwise from top left) Glenn Douglas - Chief Executive of Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, Dennis Fowle - Downs Mail, Roger Hart - British Medical Association, Councillor Eric Hotson - Chairman of MASH, Helen, and Steve Phoenix - Chief Executive NHS West Kent. Other members of MASH also present were Kevin Miller, Mrs Heather Morsley, Cllr Fran Wilson and Brian Grant.



CAMPAIGN TO SAVE HOSPITAL SERVICES CONTINUES

Maidstone’s powerful new health lobby group M.A.S.H. (Maidstone Action for Services in Hospital) met formally with Chief Executives of the Local Health Trusts recently.

After the meeting Helen Grant said “Very important reassurances relating to the continuation of a consultant lead A & E department were given and it was clear that

the Trust envisaged a long term General District Hospital in Maidstone, catering for 95% of the population. I am also pleased that the Chronic Pain Unit is likely to return to Maidstone, thus preventing long and painful journeys for the people of this constituency.”

MASH is still fighting to prevent the loss of womens’ and childrens’ services and emergency surgery.

Helen Grant – Working Hard for Maidstone & The Weald



BENENDEN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NEEDS A TIMETABLE!

Benenden's Church of England Primary School has never been more popular or successful.

However OFSTED reports from as far back as 2003 have criticised the accommodation as "unsatisfactory". OFSTED also found it unacceptable that up to 20% of teaching time is lost escorting over 160 pupils to six separate sites around the village, in all weathers, for lessons, meals and sports.

The school buildings, one of which is 400 years old next year, are wholly inadequate. Staff, parents, governors and parishioners all agree that a new village school on a single site is urgently required. When the village boys' school and the parish girls' school were merged over 70 years ago plans were set afoot for new buildings. Several times since then such ideas have been revived but all previous schemes have foundered.

Parliamentary candidate Helen Grant visited Benenden to look at the current arrangements for herself and to meet teachers, parents and children.

Helen said "I am determined to help ensure that a new school is built as soon as possible. It would be a marvellous 400th birthday present for the people of Benenden. I have already had constructive meetings about how to move matters forward with KCCllr Roger Manning and Mark Dance, the KCC Cabinet member responsible for School Organisation and Operation. I look forward to progress in 2009."

School governor Robin Dalton Holmes at Benenden Church of England Primary School with Helen Grant and Headteacher Jenny Reich,



HELEN AT HEART OF CRANBROOK PROTEST



Dozens of Cranbrook protestors found Helen Grant alongside them when they lobbied Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's cabinet (TWBC) calling for decent community facilities on the redundant council office site.

Helen has taken a leading role in pressing the council to hear the voice of the town's overwhelming majority who support the ideas of the Weald



Centre Project (WCP) to get community facilities reinstated on the site. "I wanted to be with the demonstrators to show the council that the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate was right with the Cranbrook people. The demonstrators spoke for the vast majority of Cranbrook residents. I was there to add my voice to theirs."

CAMPAIGNERS STUNNED

Unfortunately, at the heavily lobbied cabinet meeting, TWBC decided to drop the WCP. The decision left campaigners stunned. Cabinet members also agreed to meet Parish Councillors, Weald Centre Group (WCG) members and County Councillors to look at alternative sites around Cranbrook.

Helen said "I hope we can get back to meaningful talking about the reinstatement of community facilities for the people of Cranbrook. I will be working hard with everyone involved; TWBC, the County Council, WCG and, crucially, the Parish Council to get what Cranbrook plainly deserves and overwhelmingly wants."

CONNECTING WITH OUR YOUNG POLITICIANS

Two school students from Maidstone and Cranbrook are set to bring the sparkle of young ideas to the next General Election in the Maidstone and the Weald constituency. Sophie Jones (17) of Cranbrook School and Blaise Matthews (16) of Maidstone Grammar School have won the competition to shadow Conservative Candidate, Helen Grant, until the general election.



Photo (Left to right) Henry Comet, Matt Baker, Sophie Jones, Helen Grant, Blaise Matthews and Kimberley Peake

Each candidate offered something unique

Helen set up the competition to show there's more to young people today than the media, politicians and general opinion often allow. She said "Everyone on the selection panel was stunned by the qualities of all five finalists. They had to write and deliver a speech, answer political questions and engage in debate.

They were all first class and I'm sure they'll go far in whatever career paths they choose. Each candidate had something unique to offer and because they were all so good I've invited them all to join my election campaign team, to experience the journey and to bring in their own special areas of expertise."

Winners' prize

The two winners can expect to visit The House of Commons and other government buildings, meet councillors, ministers and shadow ministers, learn about fund raising, doorstep campaigning, and writing and giving speeches. They'll do political research, create leaflets, meet retiring MP Ann Widdecombe, and participate fully in the run up to the European and county council elections in June 2009 and the next General Election.

The runners up were; Matt Baker (16) of Oakwood Park Grammar School, Henry Comet (17) of Cranbrook School and Kimberley Peake (16) of Maidstone Grammar School for Girls.

CALL TO SAVE KENT'S FIRE & RESCUE CENTRE

The battle is on to keep Kent's Fire and Rescue Control Centre where it should be – in Kent

Two of the county's Conservative Parliamentary candidates have joined forces to take on Labour ministers who plan to set up a distant 'regional' control room which would mean our fire engines are run from Hampshire, more than hundred miles away from parts of Kent.

Helen Grant from Maidstone & The Weald and Tracey Crouch from Chatham & Aylesford, are warning that the scheme to move Kent's Fire & Rescue Control Centre from Tovil, Maidstone to Hampshire could cost lives.

They both visited Kent's Fire & Rescue Control



Centre in Tovil, Maidstone, to see the operation in action for themselves. A number of emergency calls were answered while they were there.

Helen said: "This plan, to replace local fire control rooms with huge regional centres, which

comes from Labour's fetish for big, top down regional government, will mean a loss of local knowledge and expertise and potentially increase the time it takes to get the fire engines out. Having operators in Hampshire without a detailed local knowledge of Kent's road network, persisting road works or infrastructure, may well result in lives being lost."

HELEN IS BATTLING FOR BUSINESS IN MAIDSTONE & THE WEALD

Gordon Brown's recession is really starting to bite and businesses in Maidstone and the Weald are showing an almost total lack of confidence in the Labour government's ability to meet their needs in increasingly tough times.

A staggering 96% of local business people, who answered a new survey by Helen Grant, said the government didn't understand how the business community ought to be helped through the downturn.

More than 1600 business leaders in Maidstone & The Weald recently

received the personally addressed survey from Helen, an entrepreneur with first hand experience of the realities of running a business in the current economic climate.

The survey also revealed growing anxiety about the recession such as large increases in energy costs, late paying account customers, aggressive banking practices, and significant falls in new business, in some cases as much as 50%.

Helen said "These results are no surprise although the scale of dissatisfaction with the Government is both remarkable and very sad. The spin doctors have shrouded Brown's mismanagement of our money and our economy in a cloak of invisibility but the veil is lifting now. The truth will out once the taxes we will all suffer as a result eventually come home to roost. Sadly the damage has already been done".

"I am, however, very encouraged by the level of engagement I have found with our business people and I will be working hard with them to fight the recession and remove some of the many obstacles to growth and profitability imposed by the Labour Government".

Some of the measures a Conservative Government would introduce if elected include:

- A cut of 2p in the small company corporation tax rates.
- A 1% cut in Employers' National Insurance for all businesses employing fewer than five people.
- Letting small and medium sized businesses defer their VAT bills for up to six months.
- Getting credit flowing and saving jobs with a £50 billion National Loan Guarantee Scheme.
- Reforming insolvency laws to give good companies a breathing space to rescue or restructure their business in the face of the credit crunch.
- Freezing council tax for two years by reducing wasteful spending on advertising and consultancy in central government.
- Reducing the number of European directives that are 'gold plated' by Westminster and creating more freedom for businesses to grow.

Mrs Grant's campaign team is launching a business club early in the new year for everyone in business in the constituency. Details will be announced shortly. The club will organise a series of seminars and networking events with leading speakers from industry and government.



Helen at Invicta Chamber of Commerce L to R: Douglas Lawson (senior business advisor), Helen, Colin Davies (Membership Representative)

FEET FOR PURPOSE! – NEW FOOT CLINIC AT AGE CONCERN

Helen Grant cuts the ribbon on a super new service for Maidstone people

We're not always kind enough to our feet and by the time you are elderly, having walked on them all your life, they can always do with some tender care. And that's what you can get at a new Age Concern clinic, which was formally opened by Helen Grant.

People over 50 from the Maidstone region can now have their feet problems looked after by a qualified nurse at the Age Concern HQ at 11 Mill Street Maidstone. And it will only cost you £5.80 a session.

Age Concern's Client Services Manager, Lynda Rootes, kicked off the scheme making plans, seeking funding and working weekends. An important source of cash was Kent County Councillor Jeff Curwood's 'County Councillor's Community Grant' which helped fund the scheme.

Helen said "This is such a valuable service for Maidstone. I know older people who have frustrating and sometimes upsetting difficulties in caring for their own feet. No matter how active you are in youth, when you are older your body becomes less flexible. That can seriously restrict a person's ability to reach their feet and keep themselves in good shape. I hope people will use this service because it has a great deal to offer them"

For further information about the clinic contact Age Concern, Maidstone on 01622 753618.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Age Concern CEO Paul Coles, Nurse Liz Porter, PPC Helen Grant, KCllr Jeff Curwood

SAY NO TO KENT INTERNATIONAL GATEWAY
www.STOPKIG.org

STOP KIG

Helen Grant, a committed campaigner against the Kent International Gateway says NO to KIG.

"We do not want Kent turned into a glorified transport corridor. We must also protect our beautiful Kent Countryside from the grasp of predatory developers".

Download a 'Say No' poster at www.stopkig.org

AUSTRALIAN TALKABOUT WALKABOUT

NEW FAMILY POLICY IDEAS FROM THE LAND DOWN UNDER

A 20,000 mile round trip, with 18 meetings in five days across two states! That's what Helen managed to pack in during her recent policy research trip to Australia.

In addition to her busy schedule in Maidstone & The Weald, Helen is a member of the Conservative Party's policy formation teams relating to Family Law reform and Social Mobility. She was one of the authors of the award winning Breakthrough Britain report, published by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) in July 2007. Subsequently the CSJ asked Helen to develop some of her ideas for dealing with Family Breakdown by visiting Australia to check out reports of successful changes they have achieved there in the last four years. Among Helen's interviewees were a Federal Government Cabinet Minister, the Deputy Chief Justice, senior civil servants and staff and management of the country's leading providers of family support and counselling services.



"It was a valuable, if tiring trip. A talkabout rather than a walkabout", Helen said. "But I learned a lot about changes the Australian government has made in the Family Justice System, which has seen an 18% drop in court applications involving children. They've opened 65 Family Relationship Centres across the country over the last three years. They work to get people to resolve their differences through a new system of Family Dispute Resolution which mostly cuts out any significant involvement (if any) with lawyers and courts".

Helen believes the success is due to helping people to avoid conflict and adversity. She said, "A system that seeks to preserve children's relationships with both parents, and keeps them out of court has to be a good thing in my book. We have nothing like it in the UK and I'm working with the Committee to see how we could use some of these ideas in a future Conservative government."

JOIN US TODAY

There are two ways to join the Maidstone & The Weald Conservatives; as a Member or as a Friend. Both are great ways to show your support, so choose the one that's right for you.

Join as a Member

Members play an active role in the Party, and receive important voting rights in Party elections.

Becoming a Member costs £25 a year – or £5 a year if you're under 23 years old.

Join as a friend

If you're keen to show your support but don't want to be a full Member, becoming a Friend is the perfect way to join.

To become a Friend, all you need to do is make a donation of any amount (from a minimum of £1).

To find out more about the benefits of becoming a Member or a Friend log onto:

http://www.conservatives.com/Get_involved/Join.aspx

MAIDSTONE & THE WEALD CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARY CHANGES

The Boundaries of the Maidstone & The Weald Constituency are changing at the next general election.

Broadly speaking, Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton will become part of Faversham & Mid Kent, where the current MP is Hugh Roberston, and Hawkstun and Sandhurst in the Wealden South will become part of Tunbridge Wells where Greg Clark is the current MP.

If you have internet access, to find out if your home, business or school will be within the new boundaries have a look at my website **www.helengrant.org** which guides you to the Ordnance Survey Election Maps site.

Alternatively follow these instructions:-

1 GO TO:

<http://www.election-maps.co.uk/electmaps.jsf>

2 CLICK ON THE POSTCODE SEARCH LINK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE

3 TYPE IN YOUR POSTCODE AND CLICK GO

The search results will indicate your proposed constituency (after the next general election) as well as the current one.

Special thanks to Sean Holden (Borough Councillor for Benenden & Cranbrook) and my husband Simon for their kind assistance in the production of this edition of 'Maidstone & The Weald Matters.'



Sean Holden



Simon Grant



Helen Grant

Helen Grant will be the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Maidstone & The Weald at the next election.

You can contact Helen at:



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3 Albion Place,
Maidstone, Kent
ME14 5DY



07703 202002



www.helengrant.org



helengrant@helengrant.org

The Rt. Hon. Ann Widdecombe MP is still your Member of Parliament and will remain so until the next General Election. If you need her help, please call 01622 752463.

Can we help you?

Please let us know of any issues you would like us to deal with locally or nationally...

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Can you help us?

If you would like to help your local Conservatives please tick a box(s) below...

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