

Helen and Ann Widdecombe open the new wheelchair friendly Rail Crossing Bridge at Staplehurst

Kent Messenger Weald edition 20/11/09



From left are Jon May-Campbell, from South East Customer Service, Helen Grant, prospective conservative candidate, Ann Widdecombe and Murray Motley from Network Rail

**Bridge work
is finished**

A £2.8m project to improve Staplehurst railway station has been unveiled.

Ann Widdecombe, MP for Maidstone and the Weald, cut a ribbon to mark the end of the work to provide rail users at Staplehurst station with a new bridge across the lines.

Now passengers can cross over sheltered from the rain, and a lift on each platform enables wheelchair users to access both sides. Previously wheelchair users returning from London to Staplehurst had to travel on to Headcorn and then back to avoid encountering a flight of steps.

Centre of excellence



Front from left; Darren Baxter, Ian Thomas and Trev Cross. Back from left; Prospective Parliamentary candidate Helen Grant, Tracy Haith, Rosemarie Mitchell, managing director of operations for England and Sam Clubb head of operations

Picture: Matthew Reading PD164469

Helen visits Staplehurst's Sobell Lodge to meet staff and residents at the unveiling of their 'Centre of Excellence' award

Kent Messenger Weald edition 22/1/10

SOBELL Lodge, the Leonard Cheshire Disability home in Staplehurst, has been formally declared a centre of excellence.

The home was assessed by the Centre for the Development of Healthcare Policy and Practice at Leeds University and was successful in achieving stage 2 accreditation.

Services manager at Sobell Lodge Tracy Haith, described it as "a truly tremendous achievement".

FARMERS QUESTION TIME

Helen engages members of Maidstone & Staplehurst NFU with a talk and a Q & A session

Marden Cricket & Hockey Club, December 2009





Convoy lining up to support the pram push

BY ANNA WHITE



Supporter Darren Goldup of Staplehurst Transit with Helen and her trusty pram

Your Maidstone, September 16th 2009

TORY hopeful Helen Grant will be joined by a convoy of lorries when she pushes a buggy 17 miles to protest about full maternity services being moved from Maidstone Hospital.

Yourmaidstone last week revealed that Mrs Grant is to push a pram from Maidstone Hospital to Pembury Hospital – where the unit is to be relocated in 2011 – on Sunday, September 27.

Mrs Grant, the prospective parliamentary candidate for Maidstone and Weald, hopes her walk will highlight the risks pregnant women could face if they have to travel that extra distance. She has received offers of support from people wanting to join her on the route, including drivers of vans, trucks, tractors and a convoy of lorries.

Marden Business Forum is backing her and some members, including hauliers Staplehurst Transit and Claygate Distribution, have offered lorries to join the convoy which will travel along the A26 and A228.

ENGAGING YOUNGER PEOPLE

"Helen is a great asset to Maidstone & The Weald, she has supported me personally as well as my charity show – Kent's Got Talent. I wish her every success in the general election"

Samuel Lain, aged 17 – Founder of 'Kent's Got Talent', Staplehurst



HELEN NEEDS YOUR HELP

Please help Helen and the Conservatives to win

- I will be voting for Helen Grant and the Conservatives
- I would like a postal vote
- I am willing to deliver a few leaflets in my area
- I can display a poster
- I would like to make a donation or send in a few stamps

YOUR DETAILS

Name

Address

Postcode

E-Mail

Tel/Mobile

PLEASE POST BACK TO:

**Maldstone & The Weald Conservative Association,
 3 Albion Place, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5DY**

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Forum to state case for farming's future

FARMERS and the rural community will have an opportunity to state their case for the future of the countryside to a powerful line-up of decision-makers, writes Mike Bennett.

Shadow agriculture minister Richard Benyon MP, Hadlow College director of resources Mark Lumsden Taylor, and Kent County Council leader Cllr Paul Carter will outline their vision on the future of farming at a public meeting of the Weald Business Forum this month.

Mr Lumsden Taylor has been passionate about the industry and the promotion of UK-produced food during his seven years at Hadlow College. He is a board member of the Kent County Agricultural Society and the Rural Innovation Unit.

His mission is to educate people about the opportunities available in the rural industries and dispel the perception that farming has little to offer, especially after many years of massive food imports from nations with lower production costs.

He said: "Now we are seeing a reversal of the industry's fortunes. Concerns about future food security aligned to burgeoning population and climate change issues are resulting in greater public interest in where



COUNTRY WAYS: The Garden of England will benefit from agriculture's revival

and how food is produced."

He believes farming is in line to return to its former position as one of the most important industries and there is the need for bright, motivated people to take up the challenge.

"We don't have a choice – we have to produce more food," he said. "This is an exciting, rewarding, stimulating and challenging time for a career in agriculture."

"Demand for local, regional and UK produced food is growing on a daily basis."

The forum will be hosted by prospective parliamentary candidate Helen Grant, who will be contesting retiring MP Ann Widdecombe's Maidstone and the Weald seat at the general election this year.

She said: "The agricultural economy and our farming communities are a vital and natural part of this county. I want to bring something tangible to engage the rural business sector and am delighted we have such excellent speakers to head the event. I am sure people will not hold back in the question and answer session."

Brought up in a farming family in Cumbria, Ms Grant retains strong links with the land.

She said: "Country life is close to my heart and I feel an affinity with farmers and the rural aspects of this constituency."

Shadow minister Mr Benyon's family runs a 3,500 acre estate in Berkshire and he is a member of the Conservative team that formulates rural policy.

The meeting will be at the Weald of Kent Golf Hotel, Headcorn, starting at 9.30am on Tuesday, January 26. To book a place, contact claire@nowireless.com or write to Helen Grant's Rural Business Forum, c/o Gail Jessel, Little Pagehurst Oast, Pagehurst Road, Staplehurst, TN12 0JD.

Helen presents her third Business Forum event in 12 months, this time focussing specifically on the rural economy of Maidstone & The Weald

Kent on Sunday, 9th January 2010