District Councillor Alison Wilson report 22nd July 2026

Water Stress

Wealden has written to the government (https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Full-SEW-later-sent-from-WDC.pdf) to highlight the urgent and increasing problem of severe water stress in the District. It is unacceptable that the government's excessive and unrealistic housing targets for Wealden do not account for the drought conditions that we face for the majority of the year. Local businesses, the farming sector, and residents are facing increasingly frequent water outages. The environment is also suffering from over-abstraction of water. This summer, we have endured our third extended heatwave, with temperatures reaching highs of 36 degrees. The met office says that we will face increasingly hot, dry summers, with highs of 45 degrees expected in the next couple of decades. The government's housing targets are blind to this reality.

It is also clear that our provider, South East Water, has not invested sufficiently in making our supplies resilient and able to cope with these changes. Their successive Water Resource Management Plans are not fit for purpose. For example, the expected delivery date for the proposed Arlington Reservoir has been repeatedly delayed from an anticipated date of 2036, to a new target date of 2057.

Wealden Council emphasises that the planning system should not be expected to compensate for shortcomings in water industry regulation. There must be future thinking and realistic housing targets that align with water company investment plans. We also need effective regulatory oversight of the water companies.

Ward data - Friends of the Earth

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

- 162 homes are at high risk of flooding,
- in the 2022 heatwave the temperature reached 36.9°C (perhaps we have also reached this over the past few weeks!),
- 1,300 homes are poorly insulated (below the EPC C level), with Arlington ranking 3 out of 41 wards in Wealden for the number of homes needing an upgrade;
- Arlington ranks 33 out of 41 in Wealden for air pollution levels (the report states that 100% of neighbourhoods in Wealden have polluted air) -particulate pollution in Arlington is 5.9 $\mu g/m^3$, compared to the WHO recommended maximum level of 5 $\mu g/m^3$,
- there are 6 sewage outfalls in the Arlington ward that spilled pollution into waterways 135 times for 1,021.2 hours in 2025,
- tree cover in Arlington is 10%, against a recommended minimum of 20%

Using polling data the report suggests that, across Wealden
- 81% of you are worried about climate change,
- 67% think climate change should be a top government priority,
- 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 would be happy to receive any comments about the data or the work we are doing.

Ward councillor budget scheme

I have made one award so far in this second year of the scheme, a grant of £3,000 to Berwick Village Hall towards the renovation of its kitchen. Please get in touch if you know of any other locally focussed community projects and initiatives that aim to improve outcomes for residents as well as contributing to the three strategic priorities of the council (namely climate change and the environment, community resilience and wellbeing and the local economy). Organisations can apply for a grant from £250 to a maximum of £5,000. If an organisation applied to the fund last year, they can still apply again this year, subject to the maximum award amount of £5,000 and provided the organisation has not received more than £10,000 in the last 2 financial years from this or any other scheme operated by Wealden.

Reporting noise nuisance

A few residents have mentioned to me that they are concerned about noisy events, often with loud music going on into the early hours, held in the summer months in previous years in Laughton woods. Such events may well not be limited to Laughton, and it is sometimes difficult to work out exactly where the noise is coming from, but if the council is to help in future to prevent these disturbances, then it is vital that the noise is reported by residents. To report a noisy event, please follow this link: Contact Community Protection - Type of Issue - My Wealden

If you have any issues or questions, about the above or anything else, please don't hesitate to contact me and I will do my best to help - cllr.alison.wilson@wealden.gov.uk