

ARUNDEL, WALBERTON & BARNHAM LABOUR PARTY

BRANCH CIRCULAR FEBRUARY 24

IS THERE A 'PORTILLO MOMENT' AWAITING GILLIAN KEEGAN?

Along with Arundel & South Downs, Chichester is on the list of 251 'non battleground' constituencies named by the Party on 5th December last year. Current polling, however, suggests that Labour is in with a chance of taking the seat.

Implied MP at 2019:	Gillian Keegan (CON)
County/Area:	West Sussex (South East)
Electorate:	76,286
Implied Turnout 2019:	70.8%
Predicted Turnout:	64.8%

Party			Pred Votes
CON			28.5%
LIB			17.0%
LAB			36.4%
Green			5.9%
OTH			0.2%
Reform			12.0%
			7.9% Pred Maj

Acknowledgment: Electoral Calculus

This suggests a Labour victory by a margin in excess of 3,500 votes.

We wish our Chichester comrades and their candidate the very best of luck.

HELP ELECT FIONA ON THURSDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2024

Get out the vote in the Henfield by election. Meet outside Fiona's village shop in Henfield at 10.30am Election Day

A WINTER'S TALE

Campaigning in the February special election in New York Third District

“We thought we went into Election Day with a 17,000 vote advantage” say the Democratic Party canvassers “but for lots of reasons we couldn’t be sure. However, we figured Republicans had to make up those 17,000 votes on Election Day.”

Teams of Democrat volunteers out knocking on doors started to hear about an approaching heavy snowstorm. Republicans voting in person would have difficulty getting to polling stations and there was a question about whether campaigners should relax a bit. “I know that the Republicans in the well heeled part of our district were running around like crazy on Sunday before polling day trying to drag their voters to Early Voting. We couldn’t be complacent. But here’s a little secret (and the first lesson I take from the election): ‘get out the vote’ isn’t something you just suddenly do. It’s a process and it’s a process that relies on experience.” There’s no such thing as emergency get out the vote; in the Labour Party we know that either you plan for it, train for it and practice for it — or you don’t succeed.

“Getting voters to the polls is something our volunteers have become good at” said an organiser for the Democrats. “All eight of the organisers we had in the district on the last weekend before the poll had been through at least a handful of elections and get out the vote operations. By the day before polling, our canvassers had driven their assigned circuit at least twice before Tuesday’s ultimate test. At least in the well-heeled district our volunteers and voters were helped by the Republican-funded snowploughs who were out hoping to keep their Election Day strategy on track!”

The Democrats say that their second lesson from polling day was that their candidate Suozzi (for the Third District) won because he was far superior to Pilip the Republican. They say that Suozzi hustled non-stop and the result represents the victory of the better candidate over a better funded political organisation. They knocked on 300,824 doors from the time the special election was called in the Congressional District. They talked to 39,649 Democrats and unaffiliated voters with a systematic approach that reminded them not only that Democrats care, but Democrats are determined to deliver the best government possible. They understand that volunteer to voter personal interactions are critical and that knocking on doors is the most successful tactic to get voters to cast a ballot.

Another lesson for the Democrats which was really made clear by the weather is that postal voting is increasingly important. They start to plan to get out the vote from the beginning and in two distinct and critical phases taking into account those postal voters and voters in person. Voters who like the social aspect of Election Day but who habitually vote early appreciate some personal contact.

Their fourth lesson from the campaign is that fighting back works when the polls are against you. They won the special election because both the candidate and volunteers were better and worked harder than the other side.

Acknowledgment to Kos (a daily US publication)

AN APPLICATION FOR A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ON A GREENFIELD SITE WHICH NEEDS TO BE OPPOSED

This is a restatement of earlier applications. There is still nothing to recommend it. Please express your views that this application must be rejected. It is opposed by the parish councils of Barnham & Eastergate, Aldingbourne and Walberton.

Application number: **BN/11/22/OUT**

Address: Barnham, Eastergate, Westergate and Aldingbourne

Application details: An outline application including rerouting the A29, for the demolition of existing structures and mixed use development to provide up to 1,250 residential dwellings, Care Home or Senior Living Accommodation shops and community facilities and a Primary School. The rerouting of the A29 includes connection to the existing road. The application affects the village setting of listed buildings, the character and appearance of the Eastergate Church Lane Conservation Area and a Public Right of Way.

And for the fields adjoining:

Application number: **AL/11/24/OUT**

Address: Land East of Westergate

Application details: Hybrid application consisting of: 1) Outline permission for up to 400 dwellings and associated works and 2) Full planning permission for alterations to site access off Westergate Street and through Pine Close and east-west link road including a bridge over the Lidsey Rife. This application also lies within the parish of Barnham and falls within Strategic Site affecting the setting of listed buildings, the character and appearance of the Eastergate Church Lane Conservation Area and affects public rights of way.

These applications are for a large scale development between the ancient villages of Eastergate and Barnham which would have the effect of joining the two together into a substantial town. There has been a considerable amount of poorly planned speculative building in and around the local villages leading to an excessive supply of more expensive houses with three or more bedrooms.

There is a particular shortage of affordable housing in Arun District. A local housing needs survey highlights the requirement for smaller 1- and 2-bedroom homes for local families and homeless people who are excluded from available housing by high prices and rents. Increasing numbers of second homes and holiday lets have added to this difficult problem. Requirements of these single people and families include easy access to town centres, to schools, shops, youth and recreational activities. The application doesn't address these needs. There is no commitment to plan for affordable accommodation either for purchase or rent.

An area in need of close interest and protection

St George's, Eastergate is the ancient parish church. There is historic and structural evidence of a Saxon place of worship on the site and some 11th-century work survives in the chancel, but the present appearance of the church is mostly 13th-century. It was heavily restored in the 19th century. The cluster of domestic and farm buildings around the church at the centre of the conservation area form an attractive setting with a village green. Several pre-20th-century buildings are grouped north and north-west of the church, including Manor Farmhouse and its outbuildings. The Old House is 17th-century, timber-framed with

moulded brick and flint. Eastergate House is late 18th- or early 19th-century is a fine building with a three-bayed front of flint with brick dressings.

Another attractive group of older houses is 400 metres to the north at the junction of Church Lane and Barnham roads. Flint House was apparently a timber-framed building of late medieval origin. Malthouse cottages nearby were originally a single house of the early 17th century. The building was converted to cottages c. 1800. Shelley House and its adjacent shop at the top of Church Lane were settled by 1596. This house and the White House to the east of it now appear externally as 18th-century. The proposed development will alter the character of this village setting.

Archaeology

With evidence of ancient human activity at Boxgrove only three and a half miles to the north west, there is potential for discoveries dating back 480,000 years. The brick earth underlying the area may yield flint tools and other finds as in similar sites elsewhere. The area of proposed development is close to the place where the Bronze Age Barnham Hoard was discovered and the fields hold evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation. There is some evidence of a Roman villa in the area of the church and the road from Roman Chichester ran through the area. There is an industrial landscape of the past: the line of the Portsmouth canal cuts through the site and there is evidence of centuries of brick making and other manufacture. It is certain that there is a wealth of archeological treasures beneath the fields which must be left for future inquiry: evidence of our past which will be lost forever with this development.

Special area of conservation of habitat

Arun district and the parishes of Barnham, Eastergate, Aldingbourne and Walberton are rich in diverse species occupying an interlocking network of habitats. Part of the area subject to this planning application lies within a protected SAC.

The valuable arable fields which form part of these habitats have been used for agriculture since the Neolithic. They were enclosed only in the 17th century. Although the Barnham and Aldingbourne Rifes have been polluted by sewage discharges in recent years, along their banks and in the hedgerows there is a profusion of wildlife. The rifes are a unique habitat with some small localised peat deposits. Such situations are rare in West Sussex. They require careful conservation because they support specialised plant and insect communities; several cranefly species are restricted to such locations.

Flora

Along the rifes, at the margins of the fields and along footpaths, tracks and roads there are many varieties of plants and shrubs including such joys as southern marsh, early purple and common spotted orchids.

Butterflies and moths and other insects

Fifty two species of butterfly and nearly 500 species of moth have been identified in the Arun area. Our fields and hedges are home to many different beetles, spiders and flying insects. Some of our rarer and more interesting bees are to be found. The *Melitta Europaea* is an

unusual bee which nests in damp places and fields which are flooded in winter and is found locally. These insects are pollinators or form part of food chains on which we all depend.

Amphibians

The habitats around Barnham and Aldingbourne Rifes are home to numbers of animals to be found in West Sussex. Local gardeners will attest to the presence of slow worms, common newts, common toads and grass snakes all of which over winter in our compost heaps. Great crested newts can be found locally, protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and a priority species of the Biodiversity Framework.

Bats

Also protected and priority species are Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats. Of fourteen species of bat identified locally at least three can be seen hunting over the open fields.

Mammals

A success story of local conservation has been the recovery of the water vole population in the two rifes. They are fond of sweetcorn seed and gardeners are wary of them digging in seedbeds in spring to uncover the kernels. Hedgehogs are visitors from these fields having spent their winters in the hedgerows and moles burrow their way into neatly trimmed lawns.

Birds

Many of our favourite song birds nest in the trees and hedges in the area. In spring we have the call of the Cuckoo. A murmuration of starlings can sometimes be seen in the evening before diving down to their roosts; rooks and crows hunt for their food in the open arable fields; falcons raised on the Chichester cathedral roof, Red Kites more frequently seen over downland may circle above and White Tailed eagles sailing on their huge wings from the Isle of Wight, even a rare Hen Harrier has been seen. At dusk Barn Owls hunt over the area and Little Owls call from the trees.

Flooding

Before the coastal marsh was drained, Barnham and Aldingbourne rifes were tidal and as at Binstead they were probably navigable for small boats. Major drainage engineering followed the seizure of local estates by the Normans in 1066 although mediaeval records show that some of these fields were abandoned for extensive periods due to flooding. Current floods show how vulnerable is the land. Climate scientists warn that we must expect global temperature records to be broken each year and there will be increases in severe weather events. Taking into account that the whole area is sinking and there will be a rise in sea level, action to protect what we already have will be necessary. These fields are an area which can be allowed to flood to protect Bognor Regis and the neighbouring settlements. Building in this area will not only put new houses at risk but will increase the problems for homeowners and businesses nearby. The long history of flooding in the area must preclude building on this vulnerable area of the coastal flood plain.

Southern Water

The water company doesn't have the capacity to deal with extra sewage in Barnham and Eastergate. Currently the rifes and our beaches are polluted by sewage. The network of

pipes serving these villages has been neglected for decades resulting in the sewer collapses being experienced in Barnham. Southern Water doesn't have a current coherent plan to deal with today's situation. Apart from immediate emergency repairs it is unlikely that a strategic plan of replacement and renewal will begin within the next two years. It may be more than a decade before we have a properly functioning system. Raw sewage from the proposed scheme would flow directly into the sea.

The A29

The current route follows Lidsey Road, Westergate Street, Nyton Road and Fontwell Avenue from Shripney to the Fontwell roundabout. It retains much of the character of a country lane. The road is crossed by the Chichester to Littlehampton and Arundel railway at Woodgate level crossing. There is congestion outside Aldingbourne school when parents deliver and collect schoolchildren.

An appropriate area for pupils to be put down and picked up needs to be set aside. With the provision of a cycle path and footpaths where they are absent, the A29 can be left to wind its way through the villages. Adding a new route for the road will increase traffic and add to congestion, particularly in the centre of Barnham.

These fields are part of the valuable open countryside, crossed by footpaths, which is used for enjoyment and exercise by villagers and visitors alike. The proposed development will detract from these activities and add considerably to local infrastructure problems without meeting local needs. Apart from flooding and sewage, extra demands on the railway and road network cannot be met. There will be a future financial burden unfairly imposed on local people. It is a proposal at odds with current policy and planning, the nature of which was rejected by voters at the last district election. Please express your views that this proposal must be rejected.

Will Ashton, secretary AWB branch

URGENT OBJECTION AND PROTESTS NEEDED TO ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT ON PRIME COUNTRYSIDE

Planning application **BN/147/22/RES** which refers to the Barrett proposal for 200 houses south of Barnham Station has been given provisional approval by Arun council and Barnham Parish Council after the Planning Inspector overturned the decision to refuse the application by the District Council. The application has a major impact on Church Lane and the Barnham conservation area.

The plan is a disaster and the Inspector's controversial decision needs to be appealed urgently. The decision could be legally flawed. Unfortunately, the council has failed to lodge an appeal within the normal 6 week period normally required for a judicial review. There are many legal hurdles to jump before we could ask the court to send the application back to the Inspector to reconsider. Anyone who could face this task, please be in contact

It seems that planning officers at Arun council failed to emphasise a number of vital points relating to environmental damage, loss of amenity and the effects on the lives of village residents and visitors. Decisions have been taken in the past using powers delegated to them by disinterested councillors. We now have an active and involved group of Labour councillors. Please raise this with your Arun councillor immediately. Contact Will Ashton for more information.

ARUN COUNCIL SETS A BALANCED BUDGET

Arun Council, now controlled by a coalition of Labour, Green and Liberal councillors is caught between belt-tightening and a duty to spend more on key areas such as homelessness. The Labour group had proposals for the 2024/25 budget, but in order to reach agreement within the coalition, there had to be concessions. As a result of the earlier Tories' mismanagement and current government policy, some cuts have had to be made in essential services in the 2024/25 budget.

Coalition councillors passed a balanced budget on 21st February with a detailed schedule to deal with the £6 million deficit left by the Tories. A similar approach to sound fiscal policy has been taken by Labour administrations in Brighton & Hove and Worthing.

REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

Political decisions taken by successive Tory and joint Liberal administrations to impose cuts since 2010 have fallen more heavily on disadvantaged local authorities such as Arun. The most deprived local authorities have experienced the largest falls in spending power because of the way that central government allocated funding cuts. Grant funding was cut by a uniform percentage across all local authorities but because such funding made up a greater proportion of more deprived local authorities' funding, this approach has meant that our local spending power has fallen by more. Whilst it is true that this has changed in recent years as central government has directed more funding towards some deprived authorities Council funding is well below a sustainable level.

The current funding arrangement with tight central government control over the ability of councils to raise finance for vital local services is unsustainable. Money for the police and other services as well as the various layers of local government come from the same pot. Business rates are collected by central government and redistributed according to Westminster priorities rather than public need.

Local income tax would be the best option for fiscal devolution returning power to local government. It is appropriate that some taxation based on property values be retained and businesses must be taxed proportionately. However, a devolved local income tax requires a system to redistribute revenue between councils to avoid large disparities. This is achievable only by a government keen to restore power to the councils.

There has not been a comprehensive, independent review of local government finance since the Layfield Report in the 1970s. Layfield stated that there was a basic choice to be made – between raising funds locally, and national control.

Successive governments have not explicitly made that choice - but in practice have opted for national control. This leaves councils increasingly dependent on Whitehall.

Layfield proposed a local supplement to income tax alongside the property tax. Today it would be harder to make this work – regional inequalities, of both property values and incomes, have got worse.

This makes it increasingly difficult to fund redistributive services – services for which the poorer the area, the higher the need – from any available tax base.

Services like social care probably need to become the responsibility of central government.

We need a new consensus on what local government should be responsible for and for what it should not be responsible. Only then can we decide on future financial arrangements.

Accordingly, this branch calls on the next Labour government to:

- Initiate a wide ranging, independent review of local government and local taxation, in order to arrive at a national consensus on what local government should do.
- Enact freedoms that lead to greater local financial autonomy with a view to achieving local control over both council tax and business rates.
- Introduce improvements to business rates to help tackle business rates avoidance and develop proposals to improve the system, including valuation and the appeals process.
- Legislate to allow councils to raise more funds locally including new local income tax.
- Authorise local authorities to set fees and charges which fully recover from businesses specific outlays by local authorities on their behalf.

Will Ashton

Acknowledgements to Local Government Association

THE RIGHT TO DEMONSTRATE AND PROTEST

There has been a flurry of government legislative measures relating to protest in recent years in large part in response to the activism over the climate emergency. These laws are of concern to anyone who wants their voice heard on issues ranging from the cost of living crisis and job security to racial and climate injustice. They threaten democratic rights.

There is no specific right in law for peaceful protest but it is enshrined in the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly which are protected respectively under articles 10 and 11 of the European convention on human rights, incorporated into domestic British law by the 1998 Human Rights Act. Limitations to the right to protest in England and Wales are set out in the Public Order Act 1986 including conditions that could be imposed on any protest in the interests of avoiding serious public disorder.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (PCSC) was passed in 2022, enabling the police to impose new conditions on a protest beyond its location, timing and the numbers involved, as laid out in the 1986 Public Order Act. For example:

- Any noisy protest that the police deem causes harm to others may now be shut down.
- People taking part in a protest no longer have the defence of being ignorant of the conditions that have been imposed upon a protest.
- The maximum prison sentence for someone who has damaged a statue has been raised to 10 years.

A new statutory offence of 'intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance, which previously existed in common law, was introduced. It also carries a sentence up to 10 years in prison.

The government introduced a new Public Order Act as well as other new offences related to making and being in a tunnel over concerns relating to protests around the construction works of HS2. The act also included new powers for a secretary of state to impose an injunction to stop protesters from protesting in a particular area.

The new lower threshold for intervention in protests was introduced via a statutory instrument giving the police almost unlimited powers to shut down protests due to the vagueness of the new language.

What's coming next?

Downing Street has briefed that the government will stop people from climbing on statues, scaffolding and bus stops during protests and will tighten the law around fireworks, smoke bombs and flares. Much of this is already covered by current legislation.

The threshold at which the home secretary can ban marches and protests due to safety concerns will also be lowered.

The most controversial of these measures would be lowering the threshold for banning a march that poses an existential risk to the right of assembly and prohibiting the glorification of terrorism, which could lead to the unintended consequence of criminalising "supporters of the suffragettes, Nelson Mandela, or even the crowd at Murrayfield belting out *Flower of Scotland*", according to former independent reviewer of terror legislation.

This resolution demands

1. The repeal of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act and the Public Order Act 2023 and the associated Public Protests statutory instruments.
2. The next Labour Government enacts legislation specifically incorporating the right to protest and demonstrate and enshrining a public interest defence.

Will Ashton

Acknowledgements to The Guardian

ARUNDEL, WALBERTON & BARNHAM LABOUR PARTY

Chair: Michael Ward

Joint Sec: Will Ashton

Joint Sec: Emma Tristram

Arundel 21st of May 7.30 pm

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Correspondence
3. Appointment of officers
4. CLP report
5. LGC report
6. Elections reports: Henfield, PCC
7. Labour manifesto

Member's presentation: Debbie Lyall. The right to work and disadvantaged people.

Resolutions:

1. Local Authority Funding
2. The right to protest
3. Restoring the welfare safety net

Speaker: Arundel and South Downs Parliamentary Candidate

General Election programme

AOB

Next meeting. Slindon Coronation Hall, Reynolds Lane, BN18 0QT

Tuesday, August 13th 7.30pm

ARUNDEL LITERARY FESTIVAL

3:00-4:00 pm, Saturday 9th of March 2024 at the Victoria Institute, 10 Tarrant Street, Arundel, BN18 9DG

Michael Ward will be interviewed about his latest book, *Unceasing war on poverty: Beatrice and Sidney Webb and their world*, which is being published March 2024. Place your advance book orders with the branch.

ARUNDEL AND SOUTH DOWNS CONSTITUENCY LABOUR PARTY EVENT

Don't forget: **Meeting with Alf Dubs**
11.00 am, Saturday 2 March 2024
Arundel Museum
BN18 9PA

Members of Arundel South Downs CLP, other Sussex CLPs and Labour friends and supporters are invited.

Alf arrived in Britain as a child refugee, aged 6, in 1939, on a Kindertransport train from Prague. He was Labour MP for Battersea from 1979 to 1987, and later became Chief Executive of the Refugee Council. He was appointed a Labour member of the House of Lords in 1994. As a peer, Alf served as a Northern Ireland Minister, and has played a leading part in debates on refugee policy.

After Alf's talk and questions, there will be a sandwich lunch from about 12.00. There will be a collection to cover the cost of refreshments, as well as a collection for refugee organisations.

Transport: Arundel Museum is about 10 minutes' walk from Arundel Railway Station.

Parking: The Museum is next to the main Arundel car park on Mill Road. As an alternative, the Lido car park on Queen Street is slightly cheaper.

Please let us know if you are planning to attend, so that we can get the numbers right for the catering. RSVP to sinead.abric@hotmail.com

LABOUR PARTY TARRING ROAD WEST WORTHING

Volunteers are needed to renovate the new campaign office opposite West Worthing Station. If you can offer any help, please contact Colin at cjcoops@outlook.com

We need people with floor cleaning, sanding and sealing, interior and exterior painting, door fitting, kitchen installation, electrical, plumbing and plastering skills.