

From the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

27 January 2020

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Dr Clark

We are the MPs whose constituencies include the A21 – the strategic road linking the M25 to Hastings.

Despite its importance to towns like Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Hastings, most of the length of the A21 is still a single carriageway, winding road.

Even following the highly successful upgrade of the Tonbridge to Pembury section, Transport for the South East describes the A21 corridor as being “the least developed Strategic Road Network road in the South East area”.

The A21 is the main road access to Hastings from London and, via the M25, from the rest of the country.

The position of Hastings has suffered, in transport terms, by the fact that Brighton to the West and Folkstone and Dover to the East benefit from dual carriageway virtually the whole way from the M25 to the town centres. In the case of rail links, Brighton to London takes 1 hour, and Folkestone, Dover and Ramsgate take 54 minutes, 1 hour and 1 hour 15 minutes on the HS1 railway.

This means it is imperative for the economic and social prospects of Hastings that its road connections should be improved.

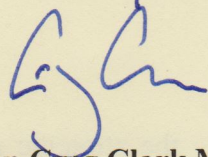
We strongly welcome the Government’s commitment to level up less affluent parts of the country, and to recognise that infrastructure investment is a vitally important catalyst for that. But it is crucial to recognise that it is not only the North and Midlands, but coastal communities in the South East like Hastings, whose needs – and potential – must be recognised.

There is an urgency to this need. We understand that £20million of new improvement in the A21 is expected in the RIS2 funding announcement.

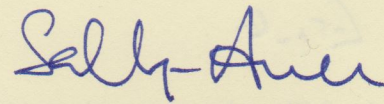
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When the Roads Minister visited the A21 recently she committed to talk to the Highways Agency to ask them to consider the case for advancing some development expenditure in this round to prepare planning for the next section of the A21 to be dualled, the heavily congested section between Kipping's Cross and Lamberhurst. This will be hugely welcome and an example of good planning. To fund it follows the approach of the dualling of the Tonbridge to Pembury section, where planning was carried out in advance of construction funding.

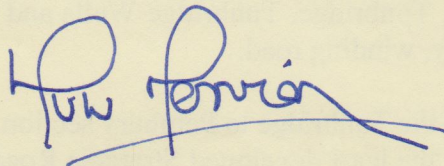
We would be grateful if you would give urgent attention to these matters and meet with us to discuss how we can bring about improvements to this notorious road, and economic opportunity to Hastings.

James CV


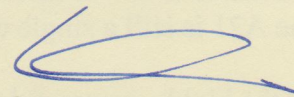
The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
MP for Tunbridge Wells



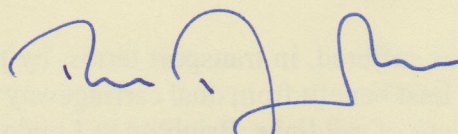
Sally-Ann Hart MP
MP for Hastings & Rye



Huw Merriman MP
MP for Bexhill & Battle



Laura Trott MBE MP
MP for Sevenoaks



Tom Tugendhat MBE MP
MP for Tonbridge & Malling

Cc: Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Minister for Roads