



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

7 July 2021

Cllr Roger Gough
Leader, Kent County Council
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XQ

Dear Roger,

Thank you very much for your e-mail yesterday following our call at the end of last week regarding Princess Christian's Farm in Hildenborough. As you know I have been contacted by a number of residents who have raised their concerns about the potential closure of Princess Christian's Farm. It is no surprise to me that this is the case considering the exceptional support that has been provided here for many years.

People have rightly highlighted the importance of this facility and the significant loss to the community if it should close in September 2021. Princess Christian's Farm is a vital setting which provides not only land-based education but also life skills and personal development to young people with learning disabilities. This specialist post-16 provision is crucial to the students, and their families, as they grow into young adults and aim to become more independent in their lives. From contact with parents of those who are dependent on Princess Christian's Farm, I understand that they have been given very little notice on this closure and have not been provided with an alternative place to continue in a suitable learning environment.

As you rightly mentioned, Hadlow College became the very first in the whole country to enter educational administration a couple of years ago. In that time I have been working very hard and closely with the Department for Education to ensure that education provision remained. We were pleased that North Kent College were able to take over the running of it because this allowed students to continue learning. However, the scale of the financial challenge which caused the administration remains under investigation and I do recognise that this means very difficult decisions are having to be taken, as you do. Sadly previous services by Hadlow College and community facilities in and around the village itself are not all continuing. Yet the difference with Princess Christian's Farm is that it is owned and contracted by Kent County Council, and therefore your involvement and support will be necessary. I am pleased that you are exploring all possible opportunities and would be keen to meet further with you and your officers to discuss this matter. Delivering the current services at the farm by another provider would, I hope, be seen as beneficial to all parties.

The site has historically supported the community after it was endowed by the daughter of Queen Victoria for educational purposes and was then subsequently passed to Kent County

Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

130 Vale Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1SP

01732 441 563 - tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk - www.tomtugendhat.org.uk



Council to continue the service. The partnership with Hadlow College had supported the continued success of land-based facilities and I am disappointed that this important contribution to our community will finish.

I have been speaking with people in the community and I know that there are local groups willing to contribute and work together to find a solution, as it is important that all steps are taken to save Princess Christian's Farm. I look forward to discussing this with you further and urge you to work with me to find a solution to keep this vital facility open.

Best wishes,

Tom Tugendhat

TOM TUGENDHAT

CC:

Cllr Harry Rayner, Malling West Division, Kent County Council