

## Tourism and the Motorhome in Sussex

This paper is prompted by the information that Rother council is to consider the introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order to control the on-street parking of motorhomes. My first reaction was one, almost, of disbelief. The proper tool for the control of traffic – including parking – is the Traffic Regulation Order. In my view implementation of a PSPO for this purpose is a misuse of your powers and I'd like to make my views known.

I am biased. I am a motorhome owner. So I thought it might be useful to you to know why I am not a more frequent visitor as a tourist to what is, without doubt, a very attractive part of England.

The truth is that you are opposed to me as a tourist. In fact your opposition to my visiting your borders on the one hand, and, if you implement the PSPO including the motorhome prohibition then your opposition to me doesn't border – it is vicious. Unless you have in mind a different provision.

It's my purpose to help you towards a conviction that providing permitted places for overnight parking of motorhomes is in everybody's interest. Yours and mine and the wider national British interest too.

So it occurred to me to do a little research comparing your negative attitude to tourists to the positive attitude in a similar part of our nearest continental neighbour – France.

It didn't take long to find a suitable area for comparison. I chose Calvados – almost directly opposite you across the Channel. Its attitude to tourism is almost completely the opposite of yours.

Let's look first at a map for comparison. For purposes of comparison it is useful to me to compare the whole of Sussex with the whole of Calvados but, if you wish, I could narrow it down into smaller areas. And I'd be pleased to have the opportunity to do just that.

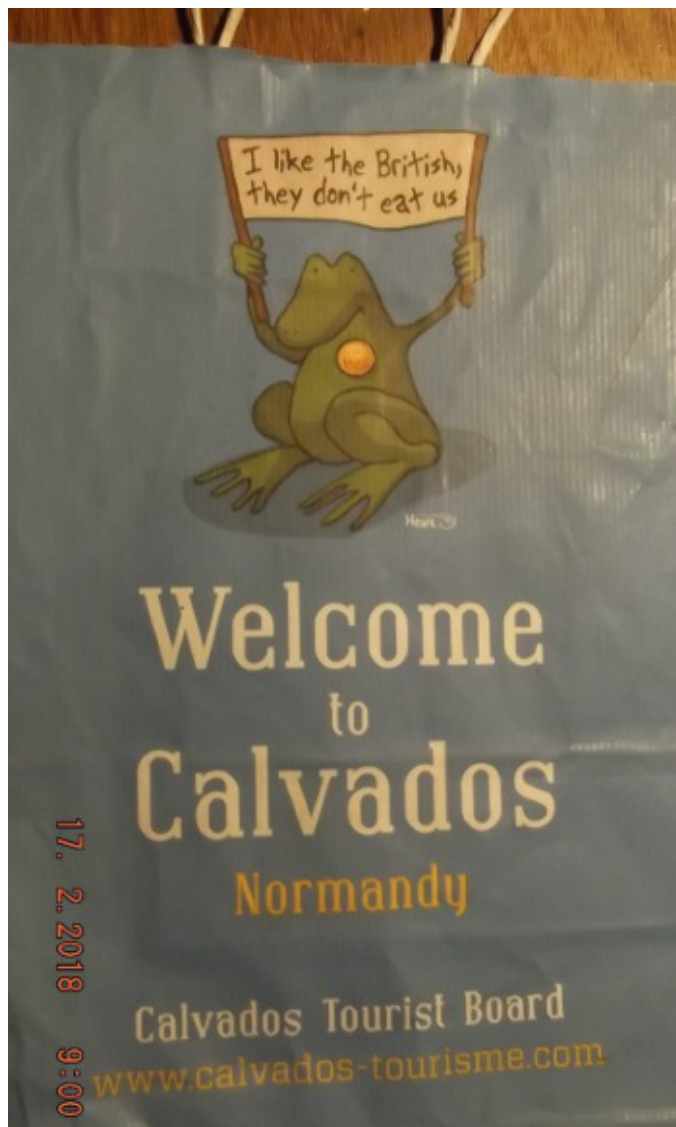
Here's the maps.



They look very similar but we need to do a little more research to see just how similar they are. Population Density, Length of Coastline and, if we have time, much more. But just these few for a little while. I've included the number of permitted places for overnight parking too but I'll come back to that later. Just that our French cousins in the area of comparison provide 88 permitted locations and you provide only one. I must wonder why this difference?

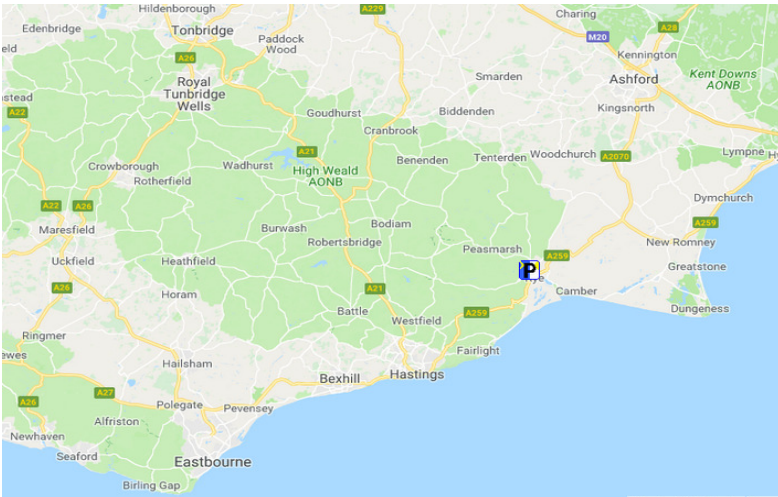
|                                     | <u>Calvados</u> | Sussex |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Population                          | 689945          | 602255 |
| Area in Square Kilometres           | 5548            | 3783   |
| Population Density                  | 320             | 425    |
| Length of Coastline                 | 120 km          | 220 km |
| Number of Permitted Overnight Stops | 88              | 1      |

When you get off the ferry with your motorhome – I've chosen Ouistreham in Calvados – there is very often, depending on the season perhaps, a welcome. Calvados welcomes motorhomes. At the immigration post there will likely be a tourist official with a welcome pack. A little carrier bag filled with little bits of advertising literature – including where motorhomers may park. Like this one I've kept. It's welcoming, eye catching and I like the presentation as well as I like the thought behind it.



Let's assume we're now within Calvados, outside the ferry port and our first problem is – where are we going to get our heads down for the night? If we're in Sussex then we've a real problem because the local councils want to keep Sussex free of tourists – at least tourists in motorhomes

The people of Calvados know better. The people of Calvados are well aware of the income to be brought into Calvados by motorhomers and so we are well catered for. In the whole of Sussex, so far as I know there is only one officially permitted overnight stopping place. It's in Rye and I'm very far from certain that the information is accurate. But, nevertheless, here is the map.



One. (Maybe)

By comparison here is the map for Calvados



Eighty-eight.

(maps provided by <http://www.campingcar-infos.com/Francais/recherche.php>)

There is at least one tourist attraction you share with Calvados. The difference is that Calvados celebrates it; makes something of it; makes some money from motorhomers out of it, you do not.

William the Conqueror, of course. Every Englishman knows where his task force landed but where did he leave from? The local people will tell you, with enjoyment, that he left from Dives sur Mer in Calvados. The port there is called Port Guillaume – the Harbour Master's office is decorated with illustrations taken from the Bayeux Tapestry and there is permitted overnight parking (free) within two or three minutes walk of the port. The local council sees the local tourist attraction and attracts motorhomes by providing overnight parking space for them. Four overnight parking places in one town.

In that and nearby towns, not only can motorhomers overnight at Guillaume's port but you can wander on Avenue Guillaume le Conquerant or stop off for a drink in La Hastings pub.

And if you don't like that immediate area you can stay at one of the other 87 permitted stopovers. You could stay at a different place every night for three months.

The people of Calvados must be coining income from motorhome tourism. The people of Sussex are missing out. Not only missing out on domestic tourists but why ever would continental tourists bring their money here when they can spend it so much more easily in Calvados.

So why would you wish to use a PSPO? Council employees will tell you it is because of a large number of complaints from residents. Information provided under the Freedom Information Act does not support this. In the past three years – indisputably true figures – there have been only four complaints about motorhomes in Rother. The only one for 2017 was about an abandoned motor vehicle which just happened to be a camper van. There were no complaints in 2016 and three in 2015. In my view there were only three for the entire three years and none at all during the past two.

| Created On       | Access Ch | Tag         | Enquiry Note   |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|--|
| 17/03/2015 15:00 | Email     | Camper vans | ...advised info from last year-  |
| 16/04/2015 10:55 | Telephone | Camper vans | Re camper van staying overnight where not allowed - referred to police |
| 17/04/2015 10:06 | Telephone | Camper vans | re camper van overnight - details forwarded to police                  |
| 02/03/2017 16:00 | Email     | Camper vans | Abandoned camper van reported  |

There have been no significant number of complaints. If we look at the four complaints in the last three years the true situation is not reflected in that number. The abandoned vehicle must not be counted. You don't use draconian measures if a Ford Escort has been abandoned – it is no more than coincidence that the abandoned vehicle happened to be a camper van. The two complaints – on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April must relate to the same camper van overnighing and may even be the same complainant.

In the past three years there have been only **two** incidents complained of.

We can go back further – say, five years. There were no complaints in 2014. There were eleven complaints (many, perhaps, from the same complainant) in 2013 – all related to the same incident in August that year. So, only one incident complained of. **2013 – 1, 2014 – 0, 2015 – 2, 2016 – 0, 2017 – 0.** No complaints since April 2015 – three years ago.

**There have been Three incidents in Five years.** These are figures provided by the council under the Freedom of Information Act and are true beyond argument.

Yet the council seek to use a PSPO to restrict the parking privileges of 250,000 British motorhomes



to satisfy these rare occurrences. Madness! In the absence of justification the PSPO can only be a matter of blind prejudice against motorhome users – some of whom are part of protected groups regarding unfair discrimination. Quite possibly the proposed PSPO is illegal. There are proper measures for treating anti-social behaviour which target only the guilty – the PSPO assumes everyone who uses a motorhome is guilty and punishes all to catch the few.

That's the thinking that says it's ok to hang ten so long as two are guilty.

I'd like to see Rother abandon that part of the PSPO relating to motorhomer and, instead, look for ways of attracting this lucrative source of income. It may be that I can provide an assessment of what the income might be. Is the council prepared to consider such information?

And permit overnight parking in selected locations?

Like this. Dives/Cabourg.



Four different locations in the same small area. Is this town any less crowded than any in Sussex?

One of the four, the one by the Port, labelled “1”, seems to be permitted by virtue of long usage and there is no signage permitting it but equally no signage denying. There is parking only and no services are provided.

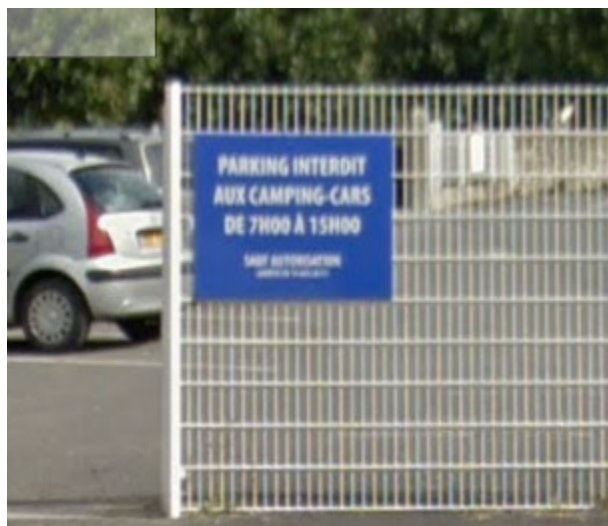
The one numbered “2” is interesting. It is a very ordinary car park in pretty well town centre and is well used. Motorhomes are permitted to overnight but are prevented from parking between 7 am and 3 pm. Yes – the direct opposite of councils in England. Daytime for normal town centre usage, night-time for motorhomes. Parking only – no services are provided.

The two labelled “3” and “4” provide services for motorhomes, that is, fresh water and waste disposal facilities are provided.

One (or two – Dives and Cabourg – divided by a river). A town knowing its tourist potential and making the most of it. Unlike you.



Number Two is left out but it is interesting. In Britain we might expect (maybe) council toleration for us to park through the day but with restrictions like no parking from 8pm to 8 am or something like that. A place with true tourist ambitions turns that silliness on its head. Here in the car park numbered 2 we have the council saying “No motorhomes between 7am and 3pm” Sorry about the reproduction – I took it from Google Street View.



Can I ask you to consider carefully the advantages of providing permitted overnight parking? We see here a council truly providing a public service with advantages to residents and motorhome visitors alike. Can I ask you to do the same?