

MP leads campaign for £50m new royal yacht

But Labour accuse the Conservatives of neglecting needy

Sandwich MP Craig Mackinlay is leading a campaign to commission a new royal yacht.

Conservative MPs argue that, as the UK leaves the European Union, now is the time for a new Royal Yacht Britannia as a new symbol of Global Britain, designed and built domestically to showcase the best of UK shipbuilding and industry and as a platform for promoting trade.

Some disagree including local Labour district councillors Mike Eddy and Nathaniel Richards, who set up the district's first social supermarket for people on low wages.

They think money would be better invested on the country's less fortunate.

Mr Mackinlay said: "Our country needs and deserves a floating Royal Palace that can be used to host meetings and exhibitions to showcase the best of British business and project our humanitarian role across the globe."

Paid for by a new lottery, along with other complementary sources of funding, there will be no call upon departmental budgets to pay for the vessel, he has said.

The previous royal yacht - HMV Britannia - was controversially decommissioned by Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1997 after more than 40 years in service.

The campaign has been backed by about 50 MPs including Sir Roger Gale, Tom Tugendhat, Gordon Henderson and Adam Holloway and Dover and Deal's representa-



MPs in Westminster Hall with Craig Mackinlay, centre, with the plans for a new yacht



The Royal Yacht Britannia

ive Charlie Elphicke who said: "I totally support Craig's excellent campaign."

"We need to showcase our nation abroad and what better way than this?"

"It's time to be proud of our nation, our royal family and the Brexit Britain we can build together."

"A new royal yacht would be a major boost." The South Thanet MP envisages that both government ministers and the Royal Family alike could host diplomatic and commercial events on the vessel.

Mr Mackinlay said: "As we leave the European Union, there has never been a better time to consider how Britain projects herself on the world stage."

"The government should commission a new Royal Yacht Britannia designed and built domestically showcasing post-Brexit Britain and bringing trade to our shores."

"To be achievable, we need to generate the money to build a new Royal Yacht - an estimated £120m."

"One way of doing this might be to establish a new national lottery to help pay for the new vessel and that is what I am urging the government to introduce."

Labour district councillor Mike Eddy thinks now is the

wrong time to be discussing a new Royal yacht. He said: "We have just spent vast quantities of money on a new aircraft carrier, which leaks and which is awaiting suitable aircraft, if the country can afford them."

"In the meantime, more and more decent, hard-working people are being made homeless or having their living standards cut by the Conservative government's policies like universal credit."

"This is hardly the time to start talking about a new Royal Yacht, when the last one was got rid of as it wasn't cost effective."

Labour district councillor Nathaniel Richards agreed.

He said: "I think there's more important things to spend money on."

"People on universal credit who have to wait six to eight weeks is one fine example."

"There's other ways to promote the country."

"I think the Tories have got their priorities wrong."

Ex-vicar loses home in split with husband

The New Year brings fresh heartache for retired gay vicar Philip Clements whose estranged husband has admitted on Romanian television that he has moved on.

The 79-year-old from Eastry married male model Florin Marin, 24, in a low-key ceremony at Ramsgate Register Office in April.

The pair made a stance against Church of England rules that bar clergymen from same-sex marriage.

Last week, the Mercury reported how the pair had split after less than five months.

Mr Clements who sold his £214,000 Eastry home to buy a flat in Mr Marin's native city Bucharest said he became isolated, with no friends and unable to speak the language. After an argument with his young husband he returned to the UK on September 24.

But having signed the flat over to Mr Marin, he found himself homeless and relying on friends to put him up.



Retired clergyman Philip Clements with his former partner Florin Marin

Picture: Paul Amos FM4731308

Now, in a sad turn of events, Mr Clements has discovered his ex-lover is dating a new boyfriend called Jesus.

Mr Marin told the media in Romania this week how he met up with his new boyfriend after being bought plane tickets to Alicante.

Speaking on Fashionista TV he said: "He wrote me on Facebook after learning that I had separated from Philip and

told me he wanted to know me. I told him to buy the plane tickets, that I was not just going to get my money (sic). He waited at the airport with white roses, I was pleasantly surprised."

"After that, we went to a gay club in Alicante, drank tonic and went to his home."

While they weren't living together, Mr Clements and Mr Marin were still in touch and

had discussed living together again in the future.

The clergyman, who returned to the UK practically penniless in September, said: "I wasn't aware of it."

"Unless it's the Spanish man who works with him on TV. I will ask Florin if he has gone behind my back."

Speaking to the MailOnline, he added: "When things were going well between us I assigned the flat to him legally in order to give him security when I die."

"I'm 79 and can't go on forever and I wanted him to have that security."

"So he has the flat and there is no way I can get it back, even if I wanted it back."

Mr Clements admits he was "foolish" to sacrifice his home.

He said: "It was of course foolish, it was heart over head, it really was a silly thing to do and giving him the property was a silly thing to do in retrospect."

"But it did not seem silly at the time. If it did I wouldn't have done it."

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