

# 'I am upset. I was planning my first Christmas here but this is ruining it'

# Shopkeepers claim trade hit by 'horrendous' scaffolding

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A businesswoman says scaffolding outside her premises is ruining her Christmas trade.

The planks and poles went up at The Fairings, Tenterden, without warning, for the windows to be painted.

Shops and businesses have been unable to put Christmas trees on their buildings.

Blerina Shehaj, who was looking forward to her first Christmas at Bella's Boutique, said: "This is ruining my trade.

"The scaffolding partly hides my shop name and people have said they have had trouble finding me.

"I am very upset about this. I was planning my first Christmas in Tenterden but this is ruining it."

Caroline Giles, manager of the Sophie Louise card shop, said: "It is not a good time of year to do this.

## Spinners

"It is hard to say if it is affecting trade, but people will not want to walk under scaffolding to get to us.

"We cannot get Christmas decorations up and normally have two card spinners outside to attract customers, but only have room for one because of the scaffolding."

Businesses in The Fairings received letters from Martin Slowe Property Services in May, saying the landlord wanted to paint the windows and hoped to do the work in July.

Nothing more was heard until scaffolding went up last Wednesday and painters started work. "We had no warning," said Mrs



Scaffolding around the businesses at The Fairings

Picture: Gary Browne FM291943



Blerina Shehaj outside her boutique; right, Cllr Sue Ferguson, who has taken up the issue



Shehaj. "It looks horrendous and I am losing trade.

"I have only been in business here since April and was looking forward to my first Christmas.

"We have been told the scaffolding will only be up for a week, but the painters told me they would be here for four weeks, or longer if the weather is bad.

"We were supposed to have Christmas trees put up on our shops on Friday, but that could

not happen." David Heath, of Advantec Computing, said the scaffolding had partly obscured their name.

"It is not ideal," he said. "We were expecting the work to be done sooner and did not get any notice of the scaffolding.

"The first we knew was when it went up."

A spokesman for Martin Slowe said: "We are not going to make any comment."

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## NO INFORMATION

The scaffolding and lack of liaison with Tenterden Town Council was raised on Monday night.

Cllr Sue Ferguson asked at a town council meeting if anything could be done.

"I appreciate it is essential for work to be done, but I would like to see some indication given to the council of scaffolding going up," she said.

"Kent County Council [which gave consent for the work] says it does not have to inform the town council.

"The scaffolding went up two days before the Christmas lights started going up. Some shops rely on their Christmas trade - to have scaffolding and no lights is disappointing for them."

Cllr Roger Finniss, chairman of the council's highways and amenities committee, said he would look into getting better notification from KCC.

Cllr Ferguson has also written to county councillor Mike Hill asking him to investigate.

Tenterden Chamber of Commerce events officer Jonathan Medes said it was a shame the scaffolding had gone up at this time of year. "This is the most important time for businesses," he said. "We have had a lovely dry summer, so why could the work not be done then?"

"The scaffolding has blocked the brackets for Christmas trees on the shops, so we could not put them up. It is not very welcoming for visitors."