



KENT VOICE

PROTECTING KENT'S HERITAGE

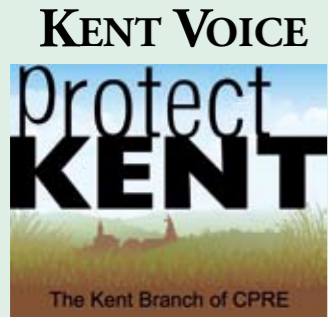
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SPRING 2010

**After
KIG, the
spectre
of BIG**

**The next
challenge to
the county's
tranquillity**





SPRING 2010

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Cover image: Pegwell Bay through a purple haze by Chris Randall See page 3

The paper used for this magazine comes from sustainable forests

Year of change has expanded our influence

It seems hard to believe that it is now more than a year since I took on the role of chairman of CPRE Kent. It has been a very busy and exhilarating year, with celebrations and challenges in equal measure.

There are, perhaps three main events during the year: rebranding our county organisation to Protect Kent; our 80th birthday celebrations; and the Kent International Gateway (KIG) inquiry at Bearsted.

Our new brand is becoming increasingly well known as we continue to raise our profile. From recent research it appears that it has had more media coverage and recognition. Our objective is to make Protect Kent known by everybody as the foremost environmental group campaigning on behalf of those who live in the county.

Our decision to rebrand was brave and, some might say, controversial. However, our membership was in decline and we could not afford to be complacent if our organisation was to survive. There is no doubt that our new brand has helped with membership but we still need many more people to join us in the challenges we face throughout the county. With all the threats facing our county, we need a strong, vibrant organisation that has a wide range of ages and backgrounds.

Our best recruiters are those who already support the organisation, our members. Please, if you have not done so already, make use of the packs that were sent out at the end of last year. If each member could recruit just one new member it would help to prepare our organisation for the challenges to our county which lie ahead.

The KIG inquiry was one of the biggest and longest planning inquiries that has ever taken place in the county. It lasted for nearly 12 weeks and involved not only Kent County Council and Maidstone Council but three voluntary groups.

Congratulations must go to the Stop KIG organisation and to the Joint Parishes Group for the way in which they presented their cases. We, too, were excellently represented by some superb witnesses.

I should like to thank all those who were involved. It was a magnificent effort and we should all be justly proud of our performance.

Following on from a successful conference

While we are celebrating the success of our rebranding as Protect Kent, this has been a time of challenges says chairman **Richard Knox-Johnston**



on climate change in 2008, we formed a Climate Change Forum in Kent which has already examined coastal erosion and river flooding. It soon became obvious from this work that we needed to look at other important areas, one of which was energy.

As a result we held a conference on renewable energy in 2009 and from this we formed an Energy Group. This group has attracted many experts in the field of energy generation and is chaired by Gary Thomas. The group has assisted in the preparation of our conference this year – see pages 6 and 7.

We have also reformed the Planning Group under the chairmanship of Christine



Drury. This new team has already made a considerable contribution to our work in the county as exemplified on their support for the KIG inquiry and a number of local planning strategies.

In January we completed on the purchase of the former Queen's Head in Charing as our new offices. We were also granted planning permission for offices and a two-bedroomed flat. We felt it was important to have a permanent home and what better place than Charing, the centre of the county.

Conversion should begin soon and we hope to move into the premises later in the year.



Across the hot sands, the cooling towers peek through a purple haze. This captivating image (right) of Pegwell Bay through the heat won Chris Randall top prize in the Hidden Thanet photographic competition run by Protect Kent's Thanet Committee.

The aim of the contest was to bring together a collection of images to celebrate – and possibly record for the last time – the landscape and character of Thanet's rural areas, which are facing many threats from devastating industrial development.

Winner Chris, from Ramsgate, said: "This startling phenomenon developed when the tide came in over hot sand, causing the cool water to evaporate. The wind direction was easterly, bringing a blanket of fog well inland that day. The tops of the towers of the former Richborough power station are visible above the haze."

The competition attracted more than 150 entries and the four winning images are featured here. Second place went to Bob Woodward who entered the stunning panoramic photograph (top) taken in July 2009 of the North Foreland lighthouse, Broadstairs, with storm clouds.

Third place went to Rachel Attwell, from Broadstairs, for highland cattle at Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve, with cooling towers in the background. A special prize to three-year-old Emily Dillon, whose grandmother Penny Dyball entered her image of Ramsgate Harbour taken through pillars, far right.



Help us recruit members

For some time now, CPRE (Kent) and its objectives and challenges have been one of the biggest secrets in this county. To raise our profile, last year we re-branded to Protect Kent. This re-branding exercise has been enacted because:

- ♦ The name is more recognisable and easier to say.
- ♦ It reflects the work and objectives of our organisation.

CPRE (Kent) by its very title precludes many parts of the county that are not considered rural. Our role is to represent the whole of Kent.

We have a major challenge if we are to continue to perform our role within the county. We need to increase our membership and to reach out to those living in the county who are sympathetic and supportive to the work that we do.

As members, you are aware of the valuable role we play in the county.



You also know how important our work is. In this edition of *Kent Voice* we have outlined the many threats affecting the county. We need many more new members if we are to continue to battle against these threats.

Therefore, we have launched a new initiative – Member Recruit Member. By now, you should have received a recruiting pack from the Protect Kent team, comprising five application forms, a copy of our membership leaflet, outlining the benefits of membership and a copy of our Threats to Kent map, launched last year.

We hope you are finding this pack useful in inviting your family, friends and contacts to join Protect Kent.

Every member who succeeds in introducing five new members or more to Protect Kent, will be rewarded with a £10 Marks & Spencer voucher! Please help us ensure that Protect Kent is able to continue to campaign for the good of our county.

The recession proves error of predictions

Nobody can have failed to notice that the building industry has all but ground to a standstill. So what, then, of the much-debated targets for 32,700 homes per year that the South East Plan exhorts the region to deliver?

Seeda and government ministers tell us that the demand for those homes is still there, and that once the economy recovers we will return to business as usual. The pent-up demand will be satisfied eventually.

But how realistic is this forecast of demand? And what are the consequences of getting those forecasts wrong?

The housing figures in the South East Plan have been debated in minute detail since 2006 – I know, because we were there for much of the debate.

Back in those days Seeda and Seera were two different organisations and they were at polar opposites of the debate: Seera said that the southeast could not accommodate more than 28,900 homes per year without suffering irreparable damage to its environment, while Seeda argued that the economy would suffer disastrously if we delivered fewer than 36,000 homes, or maybe even 42,000. As we now know, the latest target in the final version of the plan, published last year, lies somewhere in between the two.

The reality is of course that during the plan's development, the experts were focusing their attention on the trends of the preceding years, and could not have predicted the speed or the severity of the economic downturn. The economic events of the past two years have had a profound effect on the numbers of households that are being formed in the southeast.

CPRE's report, *Housing the Future*, was published in December and it artfully unpicks the assumptions behind the projections for the number of houses the UK needs. Real people making real decisions about their own lives add up to a future that may be profoundly different from the one the projections describe.

Historically, birthrates have dropped in



The CPRE's report on housing shows how the government has got its figures woefully wrong, says director **Hilary Newport**



times of recession and risen in times of prosperity; in an economic downturn more adults may willingly choose to live or stay together, and the availability and cost of mortgages will also affect the number of new households being formed. Similarly, the state of the local and national economy will have a profound effect on in- and out-migration. Taken together, these uncertainties mean that the real rate of formation of new households may be radically different from the projected rate.

Nevertheless the target figures of the South East Plan are currently being fed, district by district, into the emerging LDFs that each planning authority must prepare; the result is that they have no choice but to allocate land for housebuilding that may never actually be needed. The worrying consequence is that when housebuilding starts to pick up again, developers will be able to "cherry pick" the easiest – typically greenfield – sites and planners may be powerless to direct building to where it will do the most good and the least harm.

If we are to be able to challenge the worst excesses of development we must have a fresh approach to planning that is flexible and responsive to environmental challenges and demographic changes.



Our £150,000 award



Protect Kent chairman **Richard Knox-Johnston**, top, receives the award from the broadcaster **Glen Thompsett**, and, left, with other guests during the KoS business awards at the **Marriott Tudor Park Hotel, Bearsted**

Protect Kent has been judged as excellent in a business competition – and won a huge prize. More than 200 businesses and organisations of all sizes entered the awards and we were required to show how a share of the £1 million prize fund would benefit our organisation.

The competition was arranged by KOS Media, which held a dinner on 29 October to announce the winners of all 10 categories.

Protect Kent was declared winner of the charity award. The RSPCA, the Aspinall Foundation and the Caldecott Foundation were all highly commended in our category.

Protect Kent has been pronounced an excellent supporting voice for communities and has won a big prize. **Gemma Watts** says it's a proud moment

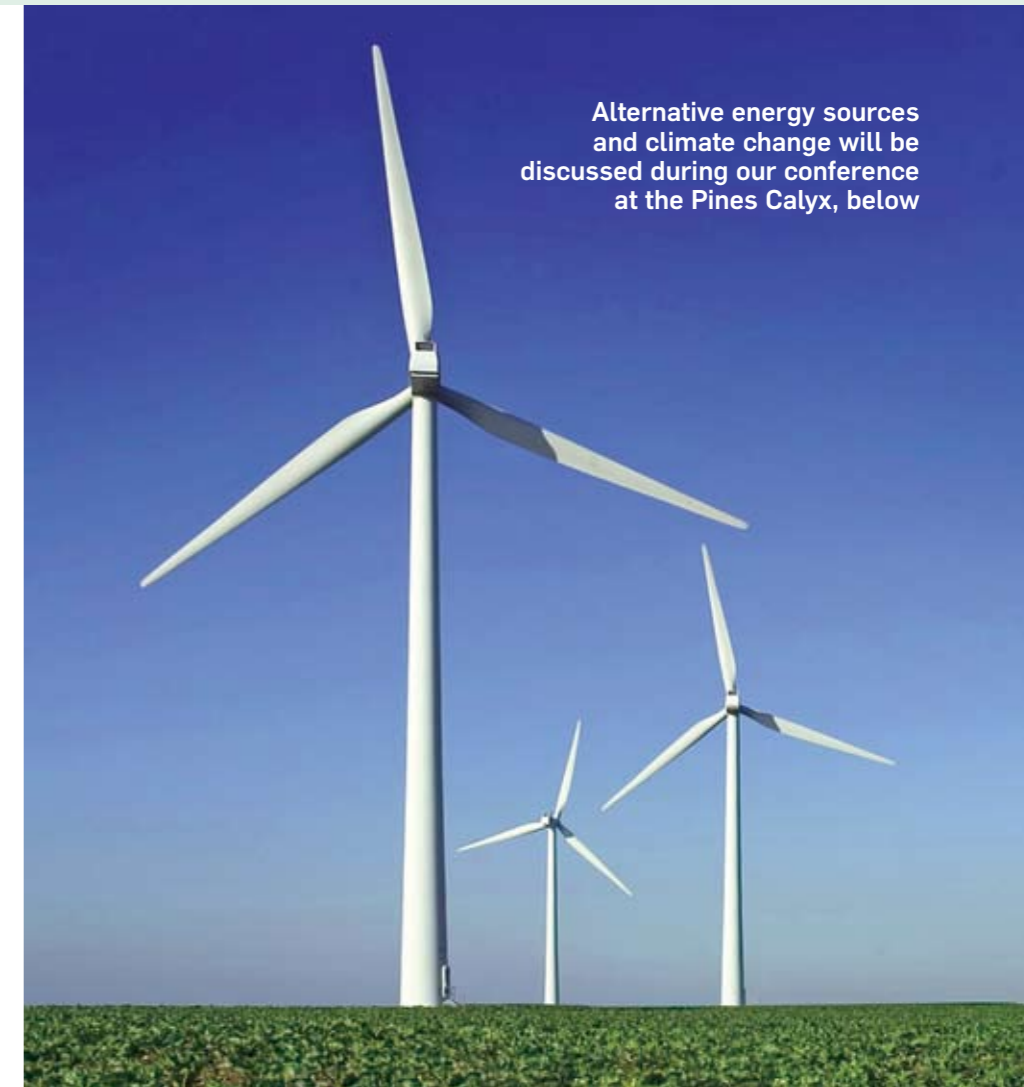


KOS Media said of Protect Kent: "It is an excellent supporting voice for communities who are facing environment and planning issues. Its aim to protect the whole of Kent for the benefit of everyone is to be commended and the judges recognised the need to help raise awareness of the work it does to protect the diversity and beauty of our county."

Our prize is more than £150,000 of rate

card advertising and PR within KOS Media's products to promote our campaigns, events and news.

As publicity officer for the branch, I feel extremely proud of what we have achieved and I look forward to being able to use this prize to increase our membership and raise our profile dramatically in Kent over this coming year.



Alternative energy sources and climate change will be discussed during our conference at the Pines Calyx, below

Yes, you too can learn to keep the lights on

Having spent the best part of 30 years commuting to London, working as an IT consultant and more recently a project manager, when the opportunity of early retirement arose a couple of years ago I had to think very carefully about it. For about 30 seconds!

So in April 2009 I said goodbye to the daily battle with Southeastern Trains and looked forward to a more leisurely, hopefully more rewarding, lifestyle.

One can only spend so many hours sailing, narrow-boating and watching cricket, so I thought it would be a good idea to look into voluntary work with local charities. Anything to put off the prospect of seeking paid employment!

A search through various volunteering websites highlighted an opportunity to help out at the Protect Kent office and following a very interesting chat with the director, Hilary Newport, I decided to give it a go.

The question then was how I could best help. Unlike many of the Protect

Richard Drage said goodbye to commuting but needed a new challenge – so what better than organising a climate change conference?



Kent volunteers and contributors, I don't have any background in environmental and conservation issues, nor any specialist knowledge in power generation, climate change or alike.

I wanted to help and get involved but felt a little out of my depth! However, Sean Furey, the deputy director, quickly came up with the idea of putting my project management experience to good use in helping to organise the 2010 annual climate change conference.

So in October last year we started to discuss and put together a project plan for the event, provisionally scheduled for March 2010.

However, we had reckoned without the significant time demands that the KIG (Kent International Gateway) inquiry would put on the Protect Kent office and so, as is often the way with projects, we had to revise it several times before we had a realistic and achievable plan.

The good news is that things are now coming together nicely and we are moving apace with organising this year's event.

The conference will be called Keeping the Lights On and held at the celebrated Pines Calyx conference centre in St Margaret's Bay, near Dover, which can comfortably accommodate up to 80 delegates.

It will be held on 20 April with Sir Crispin Tickell, the renowned environmentalist and climate change expert, as the keynote speaker.

Peter Harper of the Centre for Alternative Technology, in Wales, will be putting

forward their plan for "zero carbon Britain" powered by renewable energy.

The conference will explore the tensions around moving towards affordable, low-carbon, low impact and reliable energy sources. Equally as important, it will focus on using these energy sources efficiently and sparingly. As with the previous two annual conferences, the outputs from the day will help drive Protect Kent's campaigning and education agenda.

The aim is to make the day as informative and interactive as possible with plenty of opportunity for delegates to pose questions and discuss key issues with the panels, à la the BBC's *Question Time*.

We will be sending out conference invitations and more information to all Protect Kent members and other interested parties shortly.

While I am a little nervous – this being my first task as a Protect Kent volunteer – I'm sure that, as with previous events, the delegates and invited experts will ensure that the conference is a resounding success.

Hurry now to book your place



The Keeping the Lights On energy conference is being held at the Pines Calyx in St Margaret's Bay, near Dover, on Tuesday 20 April.

The aim of this conference is to explore the tensions around moving towards affordable, low-carbon, low-impact, reliable energy sources (and using them efficiently and sparingly).

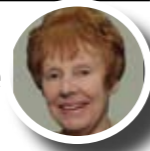
Our guest speakers on the day will be Sir Crispin Tickell GCMG KCVO and Peter Harper from the Centre for Alternative Technology.

Arrival time is 9.30am, and conference is 10am to 2pm.

Tickets are £20 for Protect Kent members and £100 for non-members. Please contact the branch office on 01303 815183 to buy your tickets now – places are limited!

To everything there is a season: now it will give us security

A revolution is taking place in the growing and buying of food in Kent – but more needs to be done to stop the world starving, writes **Pat Crawford**



Food security – who would have thought, just five or six years ago, that these two little words would achieve the significance attached to them today? And despite this familiarity – what do these words really mean?

The simplest definition is “when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life”.

Statisticians and scientists warn that we are heading for a catastrophe on a global scale. Meanwhile, we have an overabundance of food in most parts of the developed world. The famines in developing countries are not a new phenomenon and relate to crop failures associated with drought, flooding, blights and diseases. Such famines, while immensely sad, follow a pattern and are not new.

What is it that is causing so much concern for the future of food? It is the combination of various factors that present the real problem. The world's population is increasing at an alarming rate. And as incomes rise in some Third World countries, populations are changing their dietary habits and consumption of meat and other animal-related foods is increasing. This is significant because production of livestock is less efficient in terms of land usage than the crops that previously formed the staple diet. Add to this the threat to valuable agricultural land resulting from sea-level rise and the enormity of the problem becomes clearer.

How to deal with challenges of the magnitude envisaged is engaging the minds of politicians and their leaders the world over. It was brought sharply into focus at the recent Oxford Farming Conference by the environment secretary Hilary Benn: “It's only in the past few decades that we have felt able to take the supply of food for granted – but the truth is now apparent – we cannot take it for granted any more.”

Numerous suggestions are being made – but none so far has the ability to solve the problem. Inter-government consensus about action seems as far away as ever and it would be easy to turn one's back and apply the “not in my back yard” syndrome. On the other

hand, more and more individuals all round the world – and noticeably in this country – are making the decision to take positive unilateral action.

Grower groups are being set up all over the UK. “Urban agriculture” has found its way into every city and large town. Allotments are at a premium – and some applicants are unlikely to be successful in their lifetime. Children have got involved – and they add passion and vigour to growing their “five-a-day” fruit and veg.

Demand for local and regionally produced food is booming. Independent retailers, farmers' markets and other specialists are reporting good results. The supermarkets, driven by consumer demand, are by putting more UK-produced food on their shelves.

'The onus is going to be on our recovering farmers to produce substantially more'

Looked at terms of our own county, do we have any of the answers? Could our growers produce sufficient food for us to become much more self-sufficient? Kent is home to some of the best farmers in the UK. Hadlow, one of the country's leading land-based colleges, has the interest, the knowledge and commitment the sector already needs.

All this is positive – but surely there are some vital missing links? Yes – several. The onus is going to be on our farmers to produce substantially more food – but it is only recently that they began to recover from the bad times associated with unfavourable EU decisions and vast food imports.

To invest the money, time and commitment, they must be assured they have consumer backing. And this leads to another point: buying local or regional or UK-produced food can work only if we also embrace seasonality!

Supermarket battle is not over yet

In November 2009 a planning application was submitted to Swale Borough Council for a Sainsbury's foodstore on the edge of Faversham.

The store would be the third big supermarket in Faversham. The town, which only has a population of about 20,000, already has a Tesco store and a newly opened Morrisons in the town centre. It also has an Iceland store; a small Co-op; a range of independent food retailers; a twice-weekly market; and a popular weekly farmers' market.

Given this high level of local provision, Protect Kent was surprised to hear that Sainsbury claimed that a whopping 41% of the expenditure on food shopping by residents of Faversham and the surrounding villages was lost to other towns. This, Sainsbury claimed, amounted to £24m lost expenditure each year. This is in marked contrast to Swale's research, which showed that Faversham was about 90% self-sufficient in food shopping, a finding confirmed in a further study undertaken by Kent County Council in 2007.

Protect Kent made strong objections to the application. In a comprehensive submission we questioned Sainsbury's retail assessment and raised serious concerns about the impact that the store would have on the local food network.

Faversham's strength is its independent traders, and the historic relationship between Faversham and the producers in the agricultural hinterland remains strong. This has been recognised by the inclusion of Faversham as one of 12 towns in a nationwide project to better understand and map local food networks. This project, led by CPRE's national office, is being funded through the National Lottery.

Despite our objections, and many objections made by residents, the council's planners recommended the application. The planning committee agreed on 4 February, with only two councillors voting against it.

However, the battle is not over. Protect Kent has written to the Government Office for the South East asking for the application to be called in on the basis that both Sainsbury's and the council failed properly to take into account new government policy on retail developments, and that the council gave no regard to the loss of employment land and the implications this would have for economic development in the town. If the request is successful, the proposal will be considered at a public inquiry.



The Smiths Medical site in Military Road, Hythe where the new Sainsbury's – artist's impression below – will be built

Early last summer I was shocked to read in the local newspaper that Sainsbury's had submitted a planning application to build a huge superstore in Military Road, Hythe, upon the former Seeboard, and latterly Smiths Medical site.

I deluded myself that this would never be allowed to happen, trusting that Hythe Town Council and the planners would turn the application down, and use the opportunity to replace the 1970s eyesore with something more in keeping with a town that has over 1,000 years of history and heritage (and three supermarkets). The one thing Hythe doesn't need is another, even bigger supermarket, selling everything under one roof!

With the site next to the Royal Military Canal, an ancient monument, and alongside the listed cottages of Military Terrace built in 1800, it seemed madness to even consider such a development, let alone on a site that has two very difficult junctions onto the only main road into the centre of the town.

Its presence will have a detrimental affect on the ancient monument opposite and the small traders in the High Street. It will damage the town's heritage, cause traffic chaos and pollution, while returning nothing to the town itself. The opposition and concerns of residents (who have run a strong campaign) have been ignored, along with those of official bodies such as English Heritage and Protect Kent, which I consider disgraceful. This development certainly appeared to be a “done deal” long before the public were involved.

With representation of only 14% on the development control committee, how can Hythe possibly have any control over its development? This was further underlined after concerns over the unsuitable design of the building, raised by Hythe Town Council – with the word “monstrosity” being used – fell on deaf ears, with Shepway District Council's planning department making no significant change to the mass or design of this industrial park prefab.

Incredibly, for the biggest development Hythe has ever seen, only three distant rendered views of the structure were shown.



One eyesore for another

Hythe, gateway to Romney Marsh, is an attractive place to live. Now its character and independent traders are under threat, says **Dorene McCormack**



I would wager that none of the development control committee actually knows what the building would look like from the pavement in front of the store, or the canal opposite – how could they possibly vote for a development for which they do not have all the visual facts? Is it any wonder that a resident wrote a letter to the local paper saying “more damage was done to the town of Hythe in one evening than the Nazis managed during the whole of the war”.

Several Protect Kent members, including

David Plumstead, Graham Horner and Paul Smallwood, worked with Hythe residents, on an active campaign to raise awareness of the superstore plans. This included public meetings, contacting local traders and helping a campaign website, www.devstop.org.uk

Shepway District Councillors voted 8-4 in favour of the application but the council was prevented from issuing planning permission while the Government Office of the South East (GOSE) reviewed the case. The application has now been approved.

In the second of his features looking at planning issues facing Kent, **Brian Lloyd** looks at the coastal area of Thanet



Deprived, but always open for business

Thanet Earth, near Monkton, Thanet



ADY KERRY

The coastal district of Thanet forms the northeast corner of Kent. It is home to about 130,000 people, mainly in the almost continuous urban area that stretches from Birchington around the coast via Margate and Broadstairs to Ramsgate. Altogether, the district has 23 miles of coast, which is characterised by chalk cliffs and sandy bays, much of which is protected for its nature conservation interest.

The countryside beyond the coast comprises an open, mainly flat, landscape at the centre of which is a chalk plateau commanding long distance views in all directions. It is a very fertile countryside, with a high concentration of the best agricultural land, and farming remains an important feature of the landscape and local economy.

Thanet has seen better days. Once a thriving seaside destination, the district now has the highest unemployment rate in Kent, standing at 5.9% in December 2009. It is also Kent's most deprived district, ranked the 65th most deprived of the 354 local authorities in England.

Indeed, it is the need to address these

economic and social issues that underpins the council's planning strategy – and some would say that care for the environment has taken a back seat as the council promotes itself as being “open for business”.

Historically confined to the coast, the tentacles of development are now spreading westwards at an alarming rate. In recent years we have seen the development of Westwood Cross, a new “town centre” that has pushed the extent of the urban area further inland

by consolidating development along the A254 between Margate and Ramsgate. More recently the first stage of Thanet Earth, the UK's largest greenhouse complex, has been built at Birchington. This will ultimately see seven giant greenhouses on 90 hectares (220 acres) of prime agricultural land.

In 2008, proposals were put forward for a major commercial development at Manston Business Park – the so-called China Gateway. As a first phase, permission was granted for

the development of 32 hectares (77 acres) that was already earmarked for development in the council's local plan. But the developer's aspiration is for two further phases, which would see another 40 hectares (96 acres) of Grade I farmland lost to commercial development.

Manston Airport, now called Kent International Airport, also has plans to grow. It recently published a “master plan” setting out its aspirations to handle 4.75 million

passengers a year by 2033 (currently under 50,000 a year), while freight is planned to increase to 401,000 tonnes a year by 2033. Currently, it is 31,600 a year. Not only will this mean expansion of the airport on to surrounding greenfield land, but it will mean more traffic and of course more flights and associated aircraft noise for residents, including at night.

All this development means more traffic, and work has just started on the £87 million

'It's not all bad news – Thanet Council wants to retain the important green wedges'

second phase of the East Kent Access Road. This comprises a new road across the countryside linking the A299 from the airport to the A256 at Richborough, as well as upgrading to dual carriageway standard the A299 between Minster Roundabout and the Lord of the Manor junction.

At the end of last year, the council published for consultation its core strategy, which when agreed will set out the council's development strategy for the period to 2026.

This includes accommodating 7,500 new homes, which the council thinks can be provided mostly on brownfield land in the existing towns. But about 1,500 homes will be on greenfield land; with the further expansion of Westwood Cross, the council's favoured location, transforming it from a new town centre into a fully fledged new community.

It's not all bad news, though. The council is proposing to retain the important “green wedges” that help to keep the separate identity of the towns, and it is trying to revive the fortunes of the coastal towns.

But, Thanet's valuable countryside remains under serious threat, and it is clear that the council's pro-development agenda must not be allowed to take priority at the expense of quality of life and the environment.

Local Development Frameworks: the state of play

The following provides the latest round-up of the current state of play with the production of Local Development Frameworks across Kent, which will replace local plans:

ASHFORD

■ The examination of the Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) was held between 27 October and 6 November and the AAP was adopted in February.

■ Following consultation on the final Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan Document (DPD) in June 2009, further consultation was undertaken at the end of 2009. This has delayed DPD submission and the

examination is now expected in July.

■ Consultation on the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD has been delayed. An exhibition presenting the likely sites was staged in January, and consultation on the final DPD is now due in April.

■ Area Action Plans for the major urban extensions at Cheesemans Green and Chilmington Green are also being drawn up, but consultation is unlikely until the autumn.

■ Work has also now started on a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD, with initial consultation expected as we go to press.

CANTERBURY

■ After some delay, consultation on issues and options for the core strategy was undertaken at the turn of the year. Consultation on the council's preferred option is scheduled for August.

■ The Herne Bay Area Action Plan has now passed through its examination stage and has been found sound. It will be adopted in April.

DARTFORD

■ After delays, consultation on the final core strategy is now expected in June.

DOVER

■ The Dover Core Strategy examination was held between 15 and 23 October and the high-growth strategy

was found sound. The core strategy was adopted in February.

■ In June the council will be consulting on the final Site Allocations DPD.

GRAVESHAM

■ Issues and options for the core strategy and Development Management Policies DPD were published in January with comments invited by 11 March. Consultation on the final core strategy is expected in October.

KCC

■ KCC is responsible for preparing a Waste and Minerals LDF, but it has been subject to considerable delay. At the moment, no details

of future consultations are available.

MAIDSTONE

■ Maidstone's LDF programme remains unclear, but consultation on a draft core strategy is expected in the summer.

■ Work is under way on the preparation of a Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Allocations DPD. Initial consultation on this is expected in May.

MEDWAY

■ It is expected that Medway Council will consult on their preferred option for the core strategy in July.

SEVENOAKS

■ Consultation on the final core strategy was undertaken during February and March.

The examination should be held in the summer.

■ Consultation on options for the Site Allocations DPD was also undertaken during February and March, but this DPD will not be progressed further until 2011.

SHEPWAY

■ Further informal consultation on the core strategy is proposed for June, with formal consultation on the final core strategy scheduled for October.

SWALE

■ Swale is reviewing its LDF programme, meaning that the timing of consultations is unclear. Informal consultation on the core strategy is not expected

until the end of the year.

THANET

■ Consultation on issues and options for the core strategy was undertaken at the end of 2009. Consultation on the final core strategy is expected in October.

■ In September, the council proposes to consult on options for the Site Allocations DPD.

■ The examination (by written representations only) of the Cliftonville DPD was held in December and the DPD was found sound.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING

■ The examination of the Management of Development and the Environment DPD was held between 24

November and 2 December and the DPD was found sound.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

■ The examination of the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy was held between 25 November and 15 December. Consultation was then undertaken on a proposed change to Policy CP6 relating to the provision of affordable housing. The inspector's report is expected in April.

■ In November the council proposes to undertake consultation on the final Development Control Policies DPD, Allocations DPD and Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD.

So much against it, so little in favour

The real battle of KIG, of course, was always going to be between AXA, the backers of the scheme, and Maidstone Borough Council. But planning inquiries are governed by complex and strict rules, one of which is that third parties may request the right to give evidence and to cross-examine the expert witnesses too.

So that is why on 13 October we were up at the top table along with StopKIG, the Joint Parishes Group, Natural England and other groups opposed to KIG. As "official" third parties to the inquiry, in the preceding months we had all exchanged huge amounts of documentation – proofs of evidence, background research, statements of case – and had pored minutely through the arguments in favour of KIG to help us marshal our own arguments against it. The evidence covered a huge range of topics such as noise, light pollution, traffic impacts, security issues, the business and logistics cases, and many more.

The fundamental process of an inquiry is this; each side presents its case, topic by topic, through an expert witness who has prepared

The dubious potential benefits of KIG are outweighed to such a degree by its obvious damage that the inspector must surely reject AXA's appeal, writes **Hilary Newport**

their evidence in advance. The legal experts for the opposing side will then do their level best to undermine the expert's arguments through cross-examination. The applicants' objective is to cast doubt in the inspector's mind about the legitimacy of the arguments made by those who object to their proposals, and vice versa. Third party participants, like us, can also present evidence and be cross-examined on it, and can cross-examine the applicant's witnesses.

Our chairman, Richard Knox-Johnston, led the Protect Kent team and over two days we presented our case against the proposals, highlighting those concerns we believe to be most relevant – notably, the presence of Gault clay over much of the site, which is notoriously unstable and which we believe will make the safe construction

of the proposed structures unduly difficult and expensive. We also challenged rather successfully (though I say so myself) AXA's assertions that the development would lead to a net reduction in carbon emissions.

The inspectors who hear the inquiry are entirely independent and must be absolutely impartial, so it is impossible to guess what the outcome might be from watching their reactions to the cross examination of the evidence presented. Nevertheless, here is my own entirely non-impartial summary of the arguments:

IN FAVOUR OF KIG:

- ❖ It will create some jobs (but not the kind of jobs that are mostly needed in Maidstone, so workers will most likely commute in from places such as Medway or further afield)

- ❖ It may divert some freight off Kent's roads and on to rail, where the impact of its transport on the environment will be greatly reduced. But this is by no means guaranteed
- ❖ It will undoubtedly generate profits for AXA
- ❖ Err... that's it.

AGAINST KIG:

- ❖ The noise, dust and disturbance of its construction on communities that live very near the site
- ❖ The visual impact of huge buildings in an area recognised for its landscape quality, and at the foot of the Kent Downs AONB
- ❖ The noise, pollution and disturbance of the site once it is in operation
- ❖ The transformation of public footpaths and bridleways running between Bearsted and the Downs – no horserider would want to use routes that are overshadowed by towering buildings or moving gantries
- ❖ The huge carbon footprint of the site's construction
- ❖ The increase in congestion at junction 8 of the motorway
- ❖ The terrible exacerbation of the disruption

caused by Operation Stack when it is in operation

- ❖ The local congestion caused by freight and workers' vehicles travelling through minor roads
- ❖ The risk, during construction or afterwards, of a catastrophic land slip affecting the M20 or high-speed railway line
- ❖ ...And many more

I'm not an unbiased observer of course but it seems to me quite clear that the dubious potential benefits that KIG could deliver are outweighed to such a degree by the considerable and obvious damage that it will do that the inspectors' recommendation can only be to reject AXA's appeal.

The inspectors' report with his recommendation is expected in April, but the final decision – which may or may not follow the inspector's recommendation – will be made by the secretary of state. It seems very likely that by then the government will be in its pre-election purdah so it is still very unclear when the final decision will be made. Until then, like the people of Bearsted, we must wait and hope.

After KIG, the spectre of BIG

The KIG campaign is finally over. For the moment.

After two and half months and a field trip in January, the public inquiry into the Kent International Gateway (KIG) came to an end and the two inspectors have retreated to write their report. What will they advise the secretary of state for communities and local government? Who will be in that chair when a decision has to be made and when will that be? We just don't know.

What we do know is that the spectre of the BIG freight depot lurks in the shadows waiting for the opportunity to take their scheme to the new, unelected, Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC).

At the opening of the KIG inquiry the backers of BIG made a big media splash – taking journalists up in a helicopter to show them the ugly gashes in the land that their quarrying activities have caused over many years. What they did not tell the journalists was that the landowners, Cemex and Borough

Media splash by plan's backers cannot hide that the land's owners are legally bound to restore sandpits back to open farmland, writes **Sean Furey**



Green Sandpits, are legally required to restore those pits back to open farmland and wildlife habitat.

They recently told *Tunbridge Wells on Sunday*: "The landowners do recognise their obligations, but as has happened elsewhere in Kent, quarries have subsequently been identified as suitable for development to underpin the wider Kent economy."

"While we recognise that the site is currently identified as Metropolitan Green



An artist's impression of the BIG plan and, above, Protect Kent's campaign logo

Belt and close to the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), we believe that the proposals are of regional significance, underpinned by national planning policies, and therefore worthy of consideration in terms of future development."

We disagree and we have not been idle. We have taken the fight to Cemex: in October we held a public meeting at Wrotham School that was packed to the rafters. The

audience heard from Nick Herbert, shadow secretary for environment and rural affairs, and then both local MP Sir John Stanley and Paul Carter, leader of KCC, endorsed our campaign.

Our Tonbridge & Malling Committee has spearheaded an active campaign group that has created a solid partnership with the parish councils of Platt, Borough Green, Wrotham and further afield. This has led to a concerted door-to-door campaign to raise awareness of

the issues and recruit new members to help us defeat this scheme.

In February we launched www.stopbig.org, a website to bring together all the news, videos and documents from the campaign so far. For internet adventurers there is the opportunity to discuss the issues and let us know what you think through online forums on Facebook and Twitter, but fear not, we're still here at the end of the phone if you want to get in touch.

Justice for our scaly friends

Jo Richards

Those of us of a certain age may remember many happy idle hours spent by the side of a pond or on a sunny embankment watching the antics of our native amphibians and reptiles such as newts and lizards.

Things have changed. Fifty years ago, the first stretch of British motorway had only just been built. Since then, an extra 27 million cars have been added to the roads and an extra 10 million people have been added to the population. This has not only brought about major changes for humans but also for wildlife.

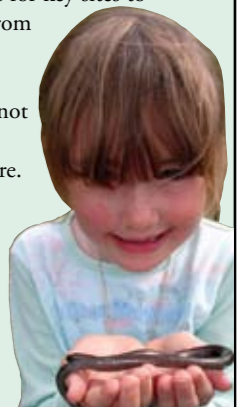
Wildlife is under pressure from habitat loss, which narrows the opportunities available to animals for shelter, foraging and reproducing.

Amphibians and reptiles are perhaps more prone to these threats than other species. Being "cold-blooded", relying on the temperature of their surroundings, amphibians rely on seasonal migration between winter hibernation areas and spring/summer breeding and feeding areas. On top of this, they rely on a variety of micro-habitats and heat absorbing materials for their daily temperature regulation as well as trying to feed, find a mate and reproduce... and all in a year that is shortened by the need for winter hibernation!

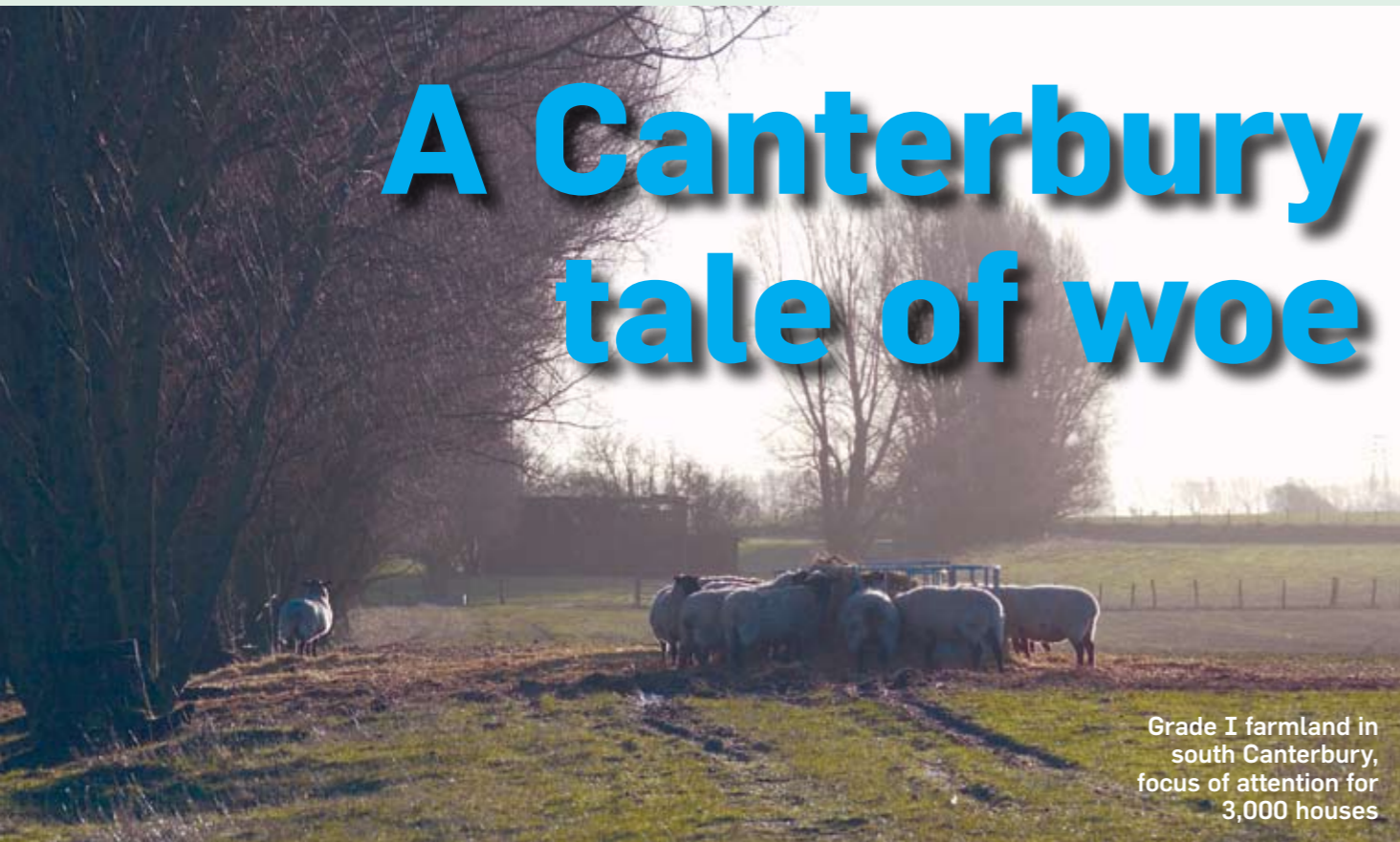
So what can you do to help? Join Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (KRAG) by browsing our website, www.kentarg.org. We endeavour to record the distribution and monitor the status of amphibians and reptiles in Kent. We want to build up long-term records for key sites to safeguard them from development or mismanagement.

However, we cannot protect what we don't know is there.

Erin, daughter of Dr Lee Brady, chairman of KRAG, with a slowworm



A Canterbury tale of woe



Grade I farmland in south Canterbury, focus of attention for 3,000 houses

It all began with park and ride. It is ironic that a transport initiative widely seen as a “green” measure can have such devastating impact. Or at least it has in Canterbury.

Park and ride, or more accurately for Canterbury, short-range park and ride, is a measure supposedly to “get people out of their cars and provide travel choices”. The trouble is that it has the reverse effect. In Canterbury it encourages car use – after all, how else does one get to a park and ride car park?

And what for? Simply a token bus ride into town. The fundamental leg of the journey is by car, and nothing is done to promote low energy alternatives for medium or longer journeys.

Park and ride car parks have to go somewhere. In Canterbury they have sprung up on the periphery. The first one was built on a former waste disposal site. The next one swallowed up some allotments.

Next in line was a park and ride site constructed on a swathe of Grade I agricultural land – the “gold dust of sustainability”. The soil to sustain potential food for future generations has been submerged under asphalt – and all this just to establish a giant car park in south Canterbury.

It hasn't stopped there. The council wishes to expand the car park further. And even a fourth out-of-town car park is planned. This one, if built, will destroy some of our remaining orchards.

Now we come to the issue of what is referred to as the “hub”. Business groups and Canterbury City Council have been keen to promote Canterbury as a place for expansion. Not that the public was particularly aware of

The city council park and ride plan projects provide merely a token bus ride into town – and ruin the countryside in the bargain, writes **Eric Parkinson**



what was afoot – or the consequences of the scale of lobbying carried out with a variety of government agencies. Despite being a world heritage venue constrained by trivial things such as classifications of surrounding land as being of “high landscape value”, there has been a push for more business land and associated housing. The classification of Canterbury as a “hub” in the South East Plan has done the trick. And of course, the council has been able to claim that it has a “green” solution to traffic congestion.

Big mistake. Hubs are growth areas. Government guidance for the growth of “hubs”, we are told, is that they are to grow at the margins. Thus in the newly emerged Local Development Framework for the city, it is the case that the projected growth in housing has been aimed at the largest single area of “available” land so that a “critical mass” of development can be gained. This will ensure that “communities can be built, not just housing estates”. This all sounds very plausible.

However, you can probably see where all this is heading. The largest area of “available”

land just happens to be in south Canterbury, near the handy, “sustainable”, and ever-expanding park and ride.

If the council has its way, then in 20 years we shall have lost several hundred acres of the best and most versatile agricultural land to roads, business parks and housing. No doubt the council will trumpet the success of gaining developer contributions for new roads. These will include the all-important additional slip roads to the A2 to facilitate what? Simply even greater car dependence. We may even see a “win-win” situation emerging, to use the planners’ rhetoric so that developers pay for a new A28 by-pass for the southern margins of the city. Will such measures reduce car dependency and reduce traffic levels? No. But they will, for a while, serve to reduce congestion, and so will be perceived to be a benefit. It is one of the perverse and counter-intuitive outcomes of road traffic management that reducing congestion actually allows an increase in traffic volumes.

Our city council planning measures are, regrettably, devoid of planning. Does the Local Development Framework take account of how and where the food for an expanding Canterbury will come from?

No doubt in the eyes of the planners and land developers, then food will always come from “somewhere else”: somewhere else that values food for the future; somewhere that has not covered the best agricultural land under car parks, roads and houses to fulfil the dreams of those enamoured with “hubs” and the other creations of regional planners and their developer friends.

Food for thought, eh?

Go and tell your masters that we have been charged with a sacred mission. Join us in our quest for the Holy Grail...



Bring a picnic for Monty Python at Leeds Castle



It's not Camelot, for sure. Some say it's more beautiful. Join us at Leeds Castle this summer for the first open-air film ever held in these delightful settings near Maidstone.

Appropriately, the film is the hugely successful 1975 comedy *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, an epic tale of a king and his knights on their quest for the most sacred of Christian relics.

Their eventful journey takes them to the fabled court of Camelot, but King Arthur rejects a visit on the grounds that it is a silly place: quite unlike Leeds Castle, where – on Saturday, 21 August – you can bring along a picnic and enjoy the film.

The evening is being put on by Protect Kent in conjunction with the open-air cinema company The Screen On The Green and the firm's owner, George Wood, said: “We are proud to be working with Protect Kent to help celebrate the branch's 80th anniversary.

“Being a Kent-based company, reliant on the county's outdoor spaces, from parks and manor houses to historic sites and castles, the cause of Protect Kent is one that we are

particularly keen to get behind. We celebrate the beauty of Kent's landscape with our open-air cinema screenings. Now this is a chance for us to help preserve and protect those green spaces.”

Protect Kent is also proud to announce that it has been named one of Leeds Castle's nominated charities for the next three years.

To celebrate, we are offering discounted

tickets to this event for our members.

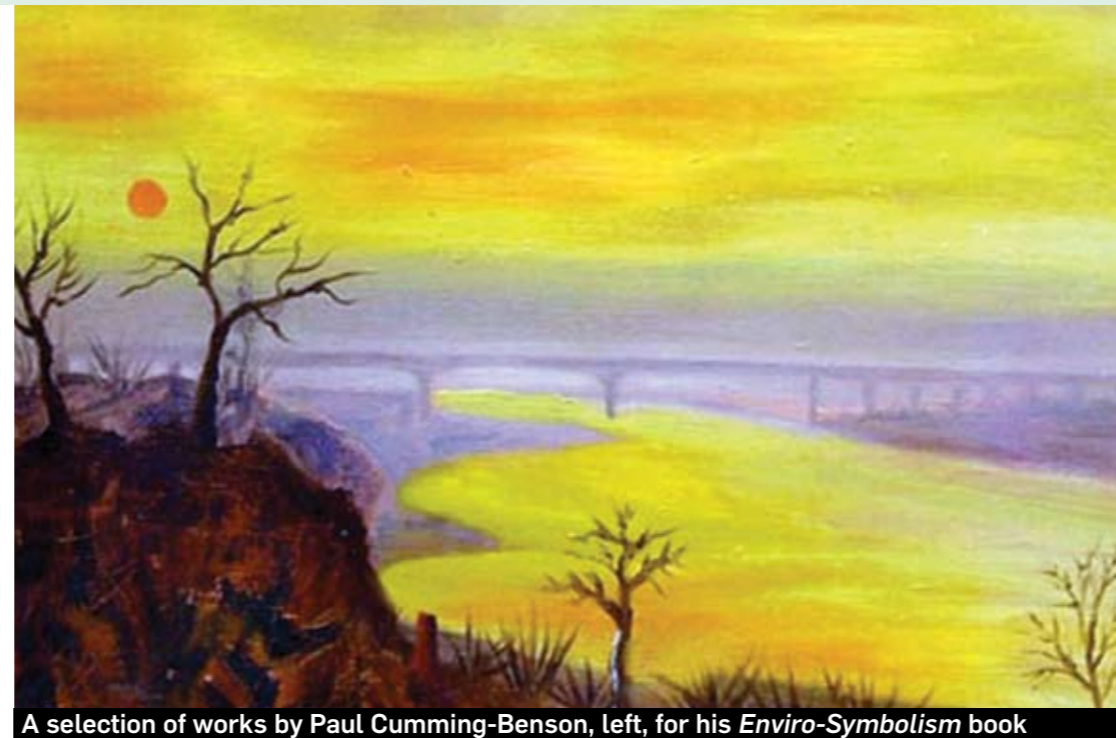
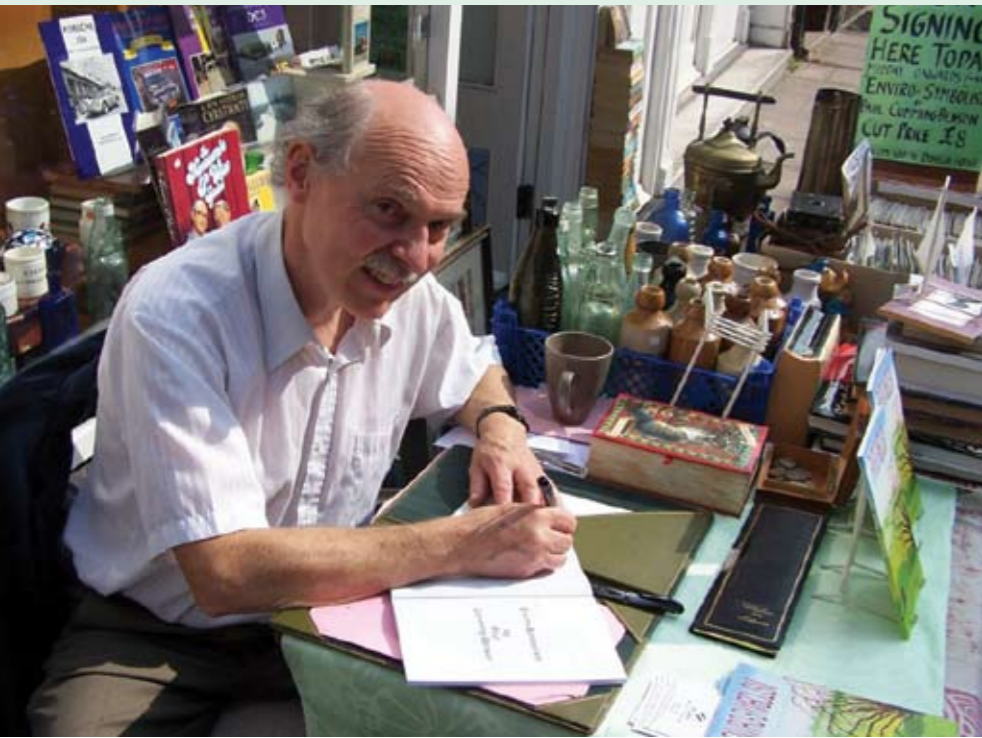
Tickets are on sale now for £10 per person but if you are a member of Protect Kent, tickets cost just £8.50.

To buy tickets, go to the events page of the Leeds Castle website: www.leeds-castle.com/shop and enter the discount code HG21PK when completing your transaction or phone the box office on 01622 765400.

The 8m x 8m travelling cinema screen in Canterbury last year



The Screen On The Green



A selection of works by Paul Cumming-Benson, left, for his *Enviro-Symbolism* book

An art movement born from tragedy and green passion

My whole approach to painting was changed by a chance remark from a Friends of the Earth officer. Geoff Hopkins, based in Kent, wanted to know why I was so concerned about what was happening on the other side of the world (Great Barrier Reef, Australia), and ignoring events on my own doorstep.

His remarks made me think of the trees I'd so often included in my landscapes of Devon, where I spent my teenage years. So I returned to my old sketching haunts and found to my astonishment that many of those trees and plants had disappeared.

At about this time, in 1996, press stories about the eco-warriors at Newbury gave me a jolt. Here were people putting their lives at risk to protect the trees in a wood. The atmosphere at Newbury fluctuated: sometimes there was violent confrontation, with the police wrestling protesters to the ground and taking them away in vans; at other times officers seemed more sympathetic, allowing peaceful protest. A Channel 4 documentary showed some eco-warriors

An environmentalist suggested **Paul Cumming-Benson** might think more about concerns on his own doorstep – so he set out with his sketching pad

playing the flute, while others danced and the police seemed almost at the point of joining in. The latter scenario formed the basis of several pictures.

Later in 1996 (August), I visited Paris with my family, and we went to the house of Gustave Moreau, a French 19th-century symbolist. This visit had a profound effect on my work. Moreau's imagery was something I could develop in my "eco-art". For example, *The Apparition* (1876) shows Salome pointing to John the Baptist's head (symbolising a threat). I used similar imagery in *Girl with the Red Dress* where the girl is pointing to an earth-mover, which is threatening to knock down a tree (a reference to Newbury). In this way, I developed my own set of symbols

for eco-messages, and I called it *Enviro-Symbolism*, the name of my new book.

Like most people, I suffered personal tragedies, and these intervened into my artistic life: the deaths of my parents and my wife. I feel sure all three would have supported me in this venture, and would have enjoyed looking at my pictures. Moreover, my wife's illness led to a new phase in my work: While my wife was in hospital, a friend gave me an orchid that became the symbol of the fragility in our family life. I collected other orchids, painted them and developed an acute awareness of the need to conserve plants of all kinds. This theme can be seen in my most recent pictures.

A new desire for conservation has become an important part of the message of *Enviro-Symbolist* art. The aim is to shake us out of our complacent attitude to the environment.

As the leading environmentalist Jonathan Porritt wrote: "We all contribute various skills, resources and experience with which to work away at the defences of our industrial society..."

This book is my contribution.



Fruit farms have a role far beyond agriculture

It is sad and ironic that while Simon Evans attacks modern fruit farming in last spring's issue of *Kent Voice*, two out of five "Icons of Kent" chosen by the Protect Kent team reflected the horticultural heritage of Kent – Faversham, the brewing town, and the Kentish oast house, a farm building once used to dry hops, now usually redundant.

Hop gardens, once a feature of the landscape, are now few and far between as the production economics of the crop are poor, and the hop growers find it difficult to compete against other areas of production elsewhere in the world.

Soft fruit from Kent – the Garden of England – has always been in demand throughout the country but the majority is consumed in the southeast, where population is concentrated. Proximity to the London market is one of the main reasons why the fruit has historically been grown here, but equally important are our climate, sunny slopes, poor but free-draining soils, and skills.

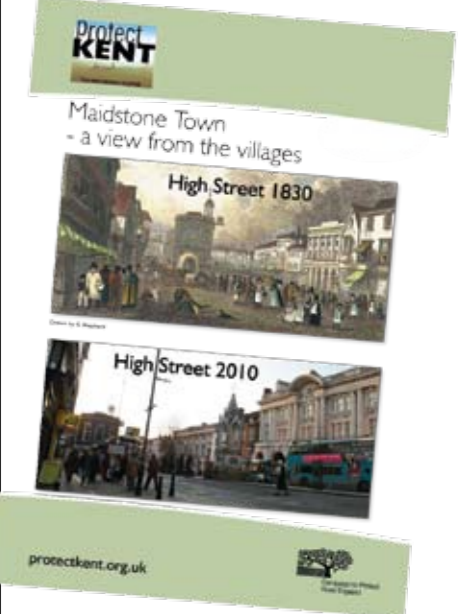
Tunnels provide a favourable growing environment for plants and a kind working environment for beneficial insects, and indeed for pickers. Soft fruit farms promote biodiversity with their overwintering crops, uncropped areas and plentiful field margins. Highly skilled growers – many trained in our excellent agricultural colleges – work in strong and vibrant farming communities to produce fruit that is fresh, flavoursome, better able to fight off pests and diseases, and with yields which ensure efficient use is made of every unit of carbon and litre of water.

While the economic contribution of fruit farming is significant to the Kent rural economy, this is not the only reason to encourage and be proud of Kent's world class soft fruit farms. Fruit farmers protect the horticultural heritage and the unbuilt landscape of Kent, preserving rural skills, the soil, our field boundaries and our dark night skies.

Protecting Kent must be about more than house values in the countryside, and ensuring Kent remains the Garden of England requires more understanding of the gardeners.

Marion Regan, member of the CPRE and managing director, Hugh Lowe Farms, Mereworth

County town is given a rural view



The Maidstone Committee of Protect Kent focuses on issues throughout the whole borough of Maidstone and is concerned with the county town, particularly the town centre.

Committee members from the rural area have now published a report entitled *Maidstone Town – A View From the Villages*.

The report presents a perspective from outside the town and includes proposals that could enhance the town centre, making it a more pleasant and enjoyable environment for everyone.

Copies of this new Maidstone report will shortly be sent to all of our Maidstone members and we will be adding the report to our website www.protectkent.org.uk as a downloadable file. If you wish to be sent a copy of the report by post, please email gemma.watts@cprekent.org.uk or phone 01303 815183.

Charles Oliver

Protect Kent would like to apologise to Charles Oliver. An item in our previous issue might have given the impression, in expressing our thanks to Charles, that he was resigning from CPRE completely after 39 years of dedicated service. This is not the case and although Charles has stepped down from the Ashford Committee, he continues to be regularly involved in our work and is a valued life member.

Events and outings

6 & 7 March

Hellebore guided tours, Hadlow College, 11am and 2pm.

8 April & 10 June

Seasonal walk & tea, conducted by head gardener Alex Rennie, Hadlow College, 2pm.

13 & 14 March

Lambing Weekend, Hadlow College, 11am-4pm. More than 800 lambs are expected this year, including 54 sets of triplets!

31 March

Travels in China – A Plantsman's Paradise, a talk by Roy Lancaster, Hadlow College, 6.30pm.

20 April

Keeping the Lights On energy conference, Pines Calyx, St Margaret's Bay, 9.30am. Speakers will discuss affordable, low-carbon, low impact, reliable energy sources. Tickets, at £100, or £20 for Protect Kent members, are available by calling 01303 815183.

10-13 June

Floral art in the garden, Hadlow College, depicting a number of artworks around Broadview Gardens.

11 June

In Celebration of Kent – an evening of poetry, prose and music, Hadlow College, 7pm. For further information call 01622 817319.

21 August

An open-air presentation of the comedy film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, Leeds Castle, 8pm. Tickets £10, or £8.50 for members of Protect Kent. See page 15 for booking details.

Tickets for all Hadlow College events are available by calling 01732 853211

Protect Kent Crossword



ACROSS

- 4 A senior clergy stick in the mud, in the Medway Estuary (6, 4)
 5. South of the Greensand Ridge is a lewd mess (5)
 7 Seaside town is from the mixed-up tram age (7)
 11 Village has got twins messed up (8)
 13 A crossing to paradise? (10)
 14 This river is North with disrupted trade (6)
 19 Raptors can be found on this wooded hill, famous for smuggling (9)
 20 If I want to go to this village do I go to Sheppey or Thanet? (7)
 22 A new power station planned on the Hoo Peninsula (7, 5)
 24 Kent's most easterly point (5, 8)
 25 Livestock path in Maidstone, also a district (7)
 26 Nasty high place in the Medway Estuary (6, 4)
 27 A watery place, on the marsh; sounds like the first motor-racing circuit (10)
 28 Another revolting peasant, in 1450 (4, 4)

DOWN

- 1 A revolting peasant in 1381 (3, 6)
 2 Warriors free to stay, Absolutely Fabulous (7)
 3 The sun shines on this technology (10)
 4 We blew tar mix for this reservoir (4, 5)
 6 Local authority in a muddy ditch (5)
 8 A tasty town (8)
 9 Members Of The Empire initially can enjoy this open space (4, 4)
 10 From the Old English for "landing place" (5)
 12 West Kent lass (7, 4)
 15 East Kent bloke (3, 2, 4)
 16 That place is eye-watering, bury it quick! (12)
 17 A place for warbling? (8)
 18 Not a place for the living, opposite Queenborough (8, 6)
 21 Animal friend with pork can be found at this village (6)
 23 A place of worship on high ground led us to victory (9)

See www.protectkent.org.uk for the solution

There are plenty of places to visit says
Margaret Micklewright



Butterflies, jam, horse-drawn barges, a nuclear bunker and a village tour ... Protect Kent's 2010 programme of outings is packed with variety.

Before I elaborate on the outings, I should like to mention deposits. Several trips will include coach hire, so a £10 deposit per person should be sent with your completed booking form.

My thanks go to the large number of you who filled in my "possibles" form. If you are still interested, please fill in the booking form.

The response for some trips has been so large that there will be a waiting list for some outings.

Here's what is planned:

27 March, Globe Theatre tour The complete tour, including two exhibitions, takes about 2½ hours. I suggest, for those who want to have lunch, that we go to the crypt at St Paul's just over the "wobbly" bridge.

15 April, jam factory and nuclear bunker The famed Wilkins Jams factory in Colchester, Essex, is no longer allowed to take people around the factory floor but I am told the firm has an excellent museum that is worth visiting. After this (and lunch) the coach will be taking us to the secret nuclear bunker at Braintree – the biggest and deepest cold war bunker now open to the public in southeast England. Hilary Newport, Protect Kent's director, has already been round it and says it is well worth a visit.

25 May, horse-drawn barge trip Although I originally mentioned a barge trip starting at Newbury, I have found a better proposition, starting and returning to Godalming: a two-hour trip down the River Wey. Nearby is Winkworth Arboretum, now owned by the National Trust, so I am arranging to visit this beautiful place. April is the best time to see an abundance of different trees of all colours. I intend to book lunch at the Premier Inn at Godalming, where you can choose and pay for your own lunches. After lunch, we will go on the barge trip.

15 June, French gardens I have received enough interest to enable another trip to a French garden. A friend who has lived in France for 40 years has suggested we visit a garden they know well about an hour's journey from Boulogne, and he has offered to be our guide.

10 July, Charing tours So many have expressed an interest in this outing that I am finding out if anyone else in the village (apart from my husband) can help to lead conducted tours. The ones arranged in the past by Charing History Society usually limited the



Out and about on Margaret's branch tours



This year's outings will take us on a horse-drawn barge, to the cider orchards and to the newly opened Butterfly World

numbers to 20 people per guide, and so, as 70 of you have put your names down, I might have to arrange tours on another day. I intend to organise a buffet lunch in our ancient barn.

12 August, Butterfly World, St Albans I await more information about this new venue and will contact those who put their names down as still being interested.

23 September, cider orchards Chegworths, who sell several varieties of apple and pear juice, have huge orchards near

Harrietsham. If a enough people want to go on this trip, I can arrange for a coach to pick up in Harrietsham. I shall be sending out more details later in the year.

For further information and to book tickets please contact Margaret Micklewright (on Wednesdays only) or Sandra Dunn, at Protect Kent, 3 Evegat Park Barn, Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford TN25 6SX. Telephone: 01303 815180, fax 01303 815189, email info@protectkent.org.uk

Round-up from the county's committees

Ashford

HILARY MOORBY



I never seem to have anything to report but yet more documents for the local development framework (LDF).

We are now waiting for the inspectors' report on the Town Centre development plan document (DPD). We made representations to the inquiry in October 2009. The report was due early 2010. See update on page 10.

We are also responding to yet another version of Tenterden and Rural sites DPD.

In addition, development briefs for two major urban extensions are also being prepared, Cheesman's Green and Chillingington Green. Each will eventually contain 6,000-7,000 houses, both are south of Ashford on greenfield sites. We have to try to make sure the best possible design, layouts and environmental solutions are obtained.

Canterbury

BARRIE GORE



The new Marlowe Theatre has had a knock-on effect on the rest of the city. The council wishes to pull down Westgate Hall to provide a car park to serve the theatre, in contrast to its policy to reduce car parking in the city centre! This hall provides a valuable facility for public and private functions, and is owned by the council, which will therefore be deprived of a valuable building.

To lessen this deprivation, it has applied for consent to substantial alterations and a large modern extension to Tower House in Westgate Gardens (both of which it owns) to enlarge it for private and public functions. Westgate Gardens and Tower House can be regarded as a jewel in Canterbury's crown, and have, until now, been very well cared for by the council, to which it was donated by the Williamson family in 1936. Tower House is listed Grade II, and incorporates an ancient monument, being a medieval bastion that formed part of the city wall. We believe this application should be withdrawn or refused.

The new theatre will provide facilities for private and public use, and the new Beaney Library, which is due for completion at the same time, will also provide much useable space – so why not wait and see before acting rashly over Tower House and Westgate Hall?

From one planning consent, many unfortunate developments can result. Can we really treat our historic and useful buildings in this way?

Dover

GLYN THOMAS



The most important and most distressing news this time is that the planning inspector has found the core strategy of the Dover LDF to be sound. This means that the building of 14,000 houses over the next 20-30 years is authorised.

This includes nearly 6,000 in and around Whitfield. This decision was reached in spite of strong arguments against it by Protect Kent, the Dover District Committee and a well-organised campaign by the Whitfield Action Group.

The full privatisation of the Port of Dover, if it goes ahead, will raise a number of issues of concern CPRE. Reports in a local newspaper suggest that privatisation is the only way that the funds needed to realise the ambitious plans for the Western Docks can be raised. The Dover committee supports the plans generally because of their possible benefits to the town, but would be anxious and vigilant if, for example, the port were to fall into foreign ownership whose emphasis might be on purely commercial considerations.

The quality of life of the population, both in the town and surrounding countryside, must not suffer. There are also wider issues. Any expansion of the freight-carrying business in Dover would exacerbate the problems of lorry traffic on Kent's roads. There is we fear a tendency on the part of Dover Harbour Board even now to regard that as someone else's problem – and we are afraid that a more remote ownership body would be even less worried about it.

Environment

GRAHAM WARREN



Bernard Woods and Paul Bolas attended the Westminster food and nutrition seminar *21st-century Farming in the UK: Climate Change, Food Security and Sustainability*. Its aim was to examine the challenges facing the industry, and to develop sustainable systems of production and distribution. The key issues include:

- ❖ Lack of public awareness of the pressures on the food chain and the implications of climate change;
- ❖ Neglect of training and recruitment to the industry and failure in government leadership in supporting research and development;
- ❖ A continuing lack of investment in local

Our seeds go wild

Geoff Roberts is a valued member of the Dover Committee and of the Transport Group.

He also excels in other fields including breeding cocker spaniels. One spaniel came along to a Kent County Show and helped to attract many to our stand.

At this particular show, another idea to attract new members was to give away wild flower seeds.

Many of those on the stand took a seed packet for their gardens – including Geoff. Many of those seeds are probably either still in their packets or blown away by the wind – but not Geoff's!

Oh no – he decided to put them in the ground in his garden, choosing a particularly unpromising spot up against a fence and expecting nothing. But that was to underestimate both the fecundity of the CPRE seeds and his own genius. The result exceeded all expectations! Here is the proof! Glyn Thomas



food production and the rural economy in general.

The situation calls for the creation of an independent body with the remit to co-ordinate activity throughout the food chain; deploying resources and expertise as appropriate and overseeing training and development, raising public awareness and advising government on technical strategies and policy development. In the latter case there would seem to be an urgent need to address the rising trend in the cost of imported foods by supporting and promoting local produce.

The question arises as to a role for Protect Kent and environment group members have been asked to put forward proposals for consideration by the board. There have already been some initiatives for raising public awareness of the need to support local food production; Sean Furey, for example, has been involved in launching initiatives and would welcome further support from members. Meanwhile, he and Bernard Woods are gathering information.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has now confirmed the programmes for the public inquiries into water resource management plans for South East Water and Thames Water.

The inquiry for South East Water will start at Ashford on 11 May; the Thames inquiry at Oxford on 15 June.

KHBC

PETER MARSH



The Kent Historic Buildings Committee was formed some years ago under the wing of Kent Archaeological Society and CPRE to undertake the commenting on listed building applications in Kent for the Council of British Archaeology.

Subsequently, for administrative reasons, we became a solely specialist CPRE committee. Apart from working with CBA, we are interested in all listed buildings and conservation areas in the County. We are available for advice and assistance to local CPRE district committees. If we can be of help, I suggest that the district committee contact me at marshtos@talktalk.net.

Maidstone

FELICITY SIMPSON



Last year was for the Maidstone committee the year of KIG and the public inquiry lasted from 13 October to 23 December.

I attended only sporadically and spoke briefly twice but the attendance of CPRE Protect Kent was very high with Richard Knox-Johnston taking the lead backed up

by the superb professionalism of officers and other witnesses who gave time and mental energy to seeking to protect the countryside and the quality of life of the people of Maidstone from the ravages of KIG.

Other planning applications were dealt with. I support the idea of inviting the KCC gypsy officer to a meeting to discuss the situation in Kent. While acknowledging the wish of many members of the gypsy community to settle and provide opportunities for their children to attend the same school on a regular basis, there is resentment about their ability to set up static caravans in the countryside where other dwellings are not permitted.

Developments at the Kent Showground – in the Kent Downs AONB – are awaited with interest. The concentration on farming matters for the Kent Show is welcomed.

This is likely to be, for Maidstone planning, the year of the revised local development framework core strategy and the notes from the presentation given by Brian Lloyd at our AGM in July have been circulated to all members in Maidstone borough and will prove very useful in helping us determine our approach to the proposals.

Just how the planning system will be affected by the result of the general election is obviously unknowable. Perhaps the emphasis on food production especially as near as possible to the consumer will help to protect the English countryside. CPRE generally does seem to be recognising that farmers have a very important role to play in keeping the countryside green and productive for agriculture.

Medway

DAVID MURR



We now learn that the local development framework core strategy for Medway will be delayed until November 2010, to be submitted in March 2011, and not adopted until October 2011.

There will be more consultation before that time. Area action plans no longer exist, leaving a core strategy with detail shown in the master plan. In the meantime, plans for the 5,000-home development at Chattenden and Lodge Hill are progressing, and further consultative meetings have been arranged by the sponsors, Land Securities. At this stage we are concerned that some of the building could be in areas of local landscape importance and other areas sensitive to wildlife. The nearby woodland fringes are important breeding areas for nightingales.

Medway Council's Green Grid Forum, which meets under the chairmanship of the council's rural strategy officer, is working with partners on a coastal access strategy that will be part of a national scheme. Stretches of the Thames and Medway estuary coast, which are not readily accessible, or are little known, could experience much greater numbers of visitors, primarily for walking, but also with more "facilities" – which would bring increased pressure on some sensitive areas.

I believe that this should be approached with caution. The charm of the remoter parts of the North Kent Marshes is just that – the rare sense of remoteness and tranquillity which can still be experienced.

Sevenoaks

NIGEL BRITTEN



It is a full year since the Sevenoaks LDF core strategy went out for informal consultation. Before that, under Brian Lloyd's guidance, we organised briefing sessions for parish councils. The final core strategy was published in February, with representations invited by 25 March. The examination in public is expected in July.

It will be interesting to see how much of the extensive commentary on the first draft – essentially Brian's work – has influenced the final version. Even more interesting will be the simultaneous publication of the allocations DPD, revealing the sites on which Sevenoaks District Council plans to fulfil its quota under the South East Plan.

Last year Sevenoaks Council issued a press release to assure the public that there was more than enough land to accommodate the allocation without encroaching on the Green Belt. That, however, will not apply to gypsy and traveller sites. A recent appeal decision said: "Without a strong local commitment to find new gypsy sites in built-up areas... then the scale of need identified in the gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment is inevitably going to require additional provision in the Green Belt..."

Shepway

PAUL SMALLWOOD



One of our main proposed developments, Sainsbury's in Military Road, Hythe was approved by Shepway district councillors. A legal technicality was noticed by a sharp-eyed

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Round-up from Kent's committees

From page 21

lawyer, which will at least shorten stay of execution with an article 14 direction being issued by Government Office of the South East (GOSE). It has since been approved.

Otherwise, Sellindge is embattled by four large planning challenges. KCC held a public meeting in Lympne Village Hall on 8 February, to discuss the subject of a proposed anaerobic digester and recycling facility by Countrystyle Recycling Ltd.

More than 200 people attended this meeting, including representatives of Protect Kent. It is expected that a decision will be made by the council by May.

It has recently been announced that Shepway District Council has been awarded £50,000 by the government to prepare a master plan for housing-led development at Sellindge, which it is claimed is a community-led initiative. It seems that nobody locally was aware of this initiative, and we are seeking clarification on its origins.

Swale

PETER BLANDON



I took up the position of chairman after the annual meeting in November 2009 when Malcolm Moore stood down.

A presentation about the Port of Sheerness Master Plan was made by Peel Holdings in Sheerness in November.

The main concern of CPRE Swale is that any increase in traffic would create extra pressure on junction five of the M2. The proposals are at a very early stage and the aspects that are outside CPRE's remit do not seem to be causes for concern. The transport issues will be kept under review.

An exhibition of proposals for the Evonik biomass plant, which would generate heat and power using wood waste at Ridham Dock,

Kemsley, was held in December. Protect Kent is generally in favour of the proposal but the Swale branch's concerns are over traffic flows increasing the pressure on junction five of the M2, causing increased demand for another link.

The exhibition seemed to allay most of these fears:

- ❖ The wood to be used is largely already being transported to the site for shipping to Germany
- ❖ Most extra transport would probably be by boat

- ❖ The economies of scale suggest that increasing size of the power plant above the present proposal would be unlikely.

Swale, in conjunction with the Canterbury committee, objected to changes of land use to horse-keeping at Dunkirk. However, the application was approved. This is quite a common situation and it is our intention to look at forms of hedging etc that will ameliorate the deleterious landscape effects of horse-keeping. The intention is to suggest superior hedging is made a condition if CPRE's objections are ignored.

A proposal was received about development of Bapchild village. This has been opposed by the Swale committee in the past.

A plan to change of use of barn at Yew Tree House, Throwley to accommodation and movement of footpath will be discussed at our next meeting and an objection is likely.

Sainsbury's planned development in Faversham has been opposed by CPRE Kent but the Swale committee has not commented on the proposal. This application has now been approved.

Thanet

Thanet is highlighted in detail on pages 10 and 11 but as we went to press, Thanet was in the national headlines. Margate topped the list of English towns with the highest

number of empty shops in its town centre – well over 25%.

Thanet District Council is piloting measures to help local companies inject life back into these shops but one is forced to wonder whether this would be necessary if they had not supported the development of the out-of-town Westwood Cross shopping centre which has pulled so much trade from the heart of Thanet's historic town centres...

Transport group

GARY THOMAS



The transport group has been tackling a wide range of issues, which tend to progress rather slowly.

The KIG Inquiry is now over and we all await the inspectors' report, which we think is unlikely to be ready until after the general election. That will determine the future of the proposed BIG freight depot and its associated involvement with the Borough Green bypass. This latter is now in the KCC planning system, on the original route, although held up for the moment while waiting for the decision on KIG.

The county council has produced in draft a document, *Growth without Gridlock*, which outlines its proposed policies and objectives, and describes a large number of possible transport projects. We have a considerable number of concerns and will be responding.

We continue to object to the proposal by KCC to build a huge lorry park at Sellindge to try to deal with Operation Stack. A "quick moveable barrier" has been installed between junctions 11 and 12, which should provide a contraflow on the London-bound carriageway while lorries are parked coastbound.

Installed at a cost of some £12 million, it has been used only once, when the management performance was clearly questionable. Recent information from the

Highways Agency suggests that there is also some signage work still to be done to complete the installation. We believe that the problems might be used to bolster the case for the lorry park.

We are concerned at the enthusiasm for a second bridge over the Thames being shown by the Department for Transport, KCC and, we believe, Essex County Council. This is to avoid the congestion at the current bridge, which appears to be mainly due to the tolls. We keep promoting the idea of installing high-speed tolls to reduce this congestion, so far without result. Should a second crossing be built, it would have to be tolled as well to avoid significant traffic diversion away from the current crossing, or all tolls removed.

Other road issues of perhaps lower significance include objecting to advertising signs on roundabouts and investigating responsibilities for signs obscured by vegetation.

Objections have been made to Manston Business Park (China Gateway) and the manner in which it was handled by Thanet Council, with little regard to the wider traffic implications.

Dover Harbour Board is putting forward plans for a massive increase in the size of the Western Docks, which among other objectives seeks to increase their throughput of lorry traffic, which would have effects on Operation Stack in the future if improvements are not pursued.

Several aviation issues resulted in us putting in objections, particularly Manston night flights, the Manston Master Plan, which envisages growth of the airport up to six million passengers a year and the expansion of Lydd airport to cater for more passengers and bigger aeroplanes.

Tunbridge Wells

ELIZABETH AKENHEAD

The Tunbridge Wells committee has been struggling somewhat because of its small membership, and we continue to try to recruit new members.

We have been extremely grateful for Brian Lloyd's extremely professional help and his appearances on our behalf at the Examination in Public (EIP) on the draft Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy.

We had been reassured, both at a meeting with council officers and by the wording of the draft core strategy, that the borough council thought it could largely accommodate the number of houses required by the South East Plan without needing to build on

greenfield sites. However, during the course of the EIP some rather alarming assertions concerning the strategic housing land availability assessment (SHLAA) were made by the developers' representatives:

- ❖ That the SHLAA proposed to build on more than 2,600 town centre car parking spaces, including the 1,000 space multi-storey long-term car park. This appeared to prejudice the outcome of the proposed review of the need for a park and ride scheme. We believe that the population of Tunbridge Wells, and especially its businesses and traders, are as completely unaware of this proposal to build on the car parks as we were

- ❖ That sites included in the SHLAA also included allotments and playing fields (whose development would presumably be fiercely resisted, and if permission were given, these uses would presumably have to be displaced to greenfield land)

- ❖ That the rural fringe land includes three schools (at least two of which are most unlikely to become available for development), and that this rural fringe land cannot therefore be viewed as a strategic reserve

- ❖ That in consequence a Green Belt review could become necessary during the period covered by the core strategy

- ❖ Moreover, it was not until the EIP had closed that the local newspapers alerted people to the fact that 600 houses are proposed for greenfield land on the southern or southeastern side of Paddock Wood. It also emerged during the EIP that these houses at Paddock Wood are expected to provide the affordable housing required by the villages near Paddock Wood. Providing housing in the nearest town seems a curious way of providing affordable rural housing.

There was much questioning by the inspector on whether the core strategy sufficiently implemented the regional hub role given to Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling by the South East Plan. This is an example of something in the South East Plan which originally seemed fairly unimportant and unobjectionable turning into a major concern.

A small section of the wording concerning the Green Belt is to be readvertised, but it is unlikely to mean much to the uninitiated.

We are left with a sense that as a committee we should have examined the draft core strategy and the SHLAA more carefully, but it is clear that the developers' professional planners also had great difficulty extracting information from the council and understanding what they were planning. We offer our rather unsatisfactory experience in the hope that other districts may learn by it.

Kent Voice

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400 Club

Here are the prizes awarded since the last edition of Kent Voice:

October: £40 to Mrs H Bosence (267), £30 to M Crux (72), £25 to M Soder (74) and JJ Bunton (239), £20 to Mrs D Waite (324) and Mrs P Pollock (313).

November: £40 to Mrs ME Price (211), £30 to AK Harden (3), £25 to W Meadows (354) and PR Rogers (51) and £20 to Mrs S Humphrey (329) and P Stevens (134).

December: £200 to Miss J Lushington

(96), £50 to LW Wallace (5) and £20 to Mrs S Pittman (55) and DW Eddison (40).

A new club started in January. Fewer than 400 shares have been sold, so the prizes have been slightly reduced from those shown on the application form. If new members come forward then the prize fund will be increased accordingly.

Prizes awarded to date are: **January:** £40 to Mrs RB Wood (280), £30 to CD Hayman (60), £25 to Miss

MB Butcher (227) and Miss S Jacobs (156), £20 to M Crux (21) and JH Turnpenny (176).

February: £40 to AP Kooman (291), £30 to PF Harvey (55), £25 to Mrs MC Beach (65) and DW Eddison (363), £20 to Mr & Mrs J Mercy (158) and M Loveday (300).

Shares are available. If you would like to join this year's club please contact the branch office.



THREATS TO KENT

Our county is a conduit – some say a bottleneck – between Britain and mainland Europe. And that puts us in a dangerous position, says **Hilary Newport**

Our Threats to Kent map has been a talking point ever since we launched it in the last edition of *Kent Voice*, so we plan to keep it as a regular feature to chart the comings and goings of the challenges that Kent's countryside faces.

Kent remains under pressure from its location as the conduit – some would say the bottleneck – between the UK and mainland Europe and many of the challenges we face are the direct result of the huge amounts of freight that are transported through the county.

The inquiry into the Kent International Gateway is over (9), but the outcome remains uncertain and will probably remain until well

into the summer. Until then, the prospect of a planning application for the freight interchange at Borough Green (2) remains in the balance. Meanwhile aviation matters are still in the forefront with the introduction of regular scheduled services to Scotland from Manston Airport (15) this summer, and the prospect of “Boris Island” (the mayor of London’s idea of moving Heathrow Airport to a man-made island in the Thames Estuary) (19). Watch this space.

- 1 Ashford growth area
- 2 Borough Green freight interchange
- 3 China Gateway
- 4 Combating drought – Bewl Water
- 5 Dover growth point

- 6 Erosion of tranquillity of Kent Downs AONB
- 7 Greenbelt boundary reviews
- 8 Harbledown park and ride
- 9 Kent International Gateway
- 10 Kent Science Park expansion
- 11 Kingsnorth coal-fired power station
- 12 Lower Thames Crossing
- 13 Lydd Airport expansion
- 14 Maidstone growth point
- 15 Manston Airport
- 16 Operation Stack lorry park
- 17 Road-based freight growth – Dover port expansion
- 18 Sludge Recycling Plant
- 19 Thames Estuary Airport
- 20 Thames Gateway Growth Area

