

Autumn-Winter 2025/26

Kent

Countryside

Voice

It's AGM (and catch up with friends) time!

Forms and directions inside

Voices of the Blean

The impact of mass development
on local communities

Gaming the system

How developers play the process
to the detriment of us all



The countryside charity
Kent



Autumn glory... Knole Park (Kate Lake)
Cover: Cow eyes (Frances Crickmore)

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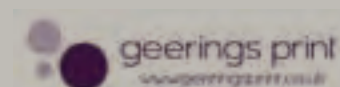
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We always love to hear from our members, so please feel free to drop us a line and tell us what's happening in your part of the county. We are especially eager to hear from anyone who would like to volunteer in any way. If you want to help us keep Kent beautiful, then get in touch with us at info@cprekent.org.uk or call 01233 714540.

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GAMING THE SYSTEM

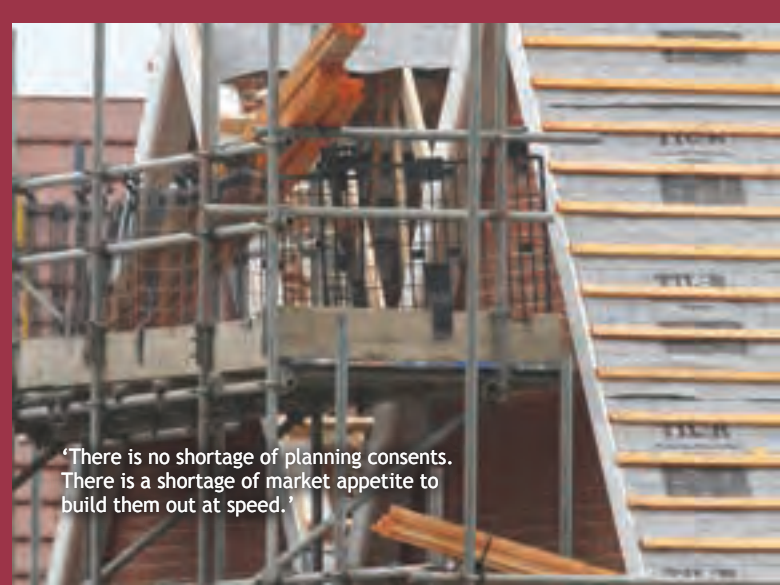
Richard Thompson, CPRE Kent planner, shows how housing developers scheme to shift power from Local Plans to themselves, enabling speculative greenfield building and weakening countryside protection



Maidstone: the county town's council delivered housing well above its targets for years (Shaun Dunmall)



Life in the delightful village of Lenham is likely to change dramatically with the building of the nearby 5,000-property Lenham Heath Garden Village (Mike Cockett)



'There is no shortage of planning consents. There is a shortage of market appetite to build them out at speed.'

In a past life, I once had the unfortunate job of being a council's expert witness on housing supply at a planning public inquiry, tasked with the job of defending that council's five-year land supply against a particularly vociferous national land-promoter applicant.

It was a steep learning curve and a thoroughly unpleasant experience for many reasons, though mainly an abject lesson in just how stacked against councils and in favour of the land promoter and housebuilding industry the system was.

A key frustration was that land promoters and housebuilders, having assured the council during the Local Plan process that their allocated sites would be built within five years, were now delaying them. With those allocations safely banked for later, it seemed they had switched to promoting more profitable, unallocated sites, again claiming they would be built within five years.

This matters because at the heart of England's planning system for housing is the government's five-year housing land-supply rule and Housing Delivery Test. Both sound simple enough in principle:

The first requires every local authority to demonstrate that it has identified enough deliverable housing sites to meet its housing need for the next five years.

The second measures whether councils are actually meeting the number of homes they are supposed to be delivering, based on an assessment of the number of homes built over a three-year period against government-set targets over that same period. These rules were designed to ensure that councils keep up a steady flow of new homes.

But there is a catch, and it is a big one.

If a council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply or fails the Housing Delivery Test, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires it to apply the so-called 'tilted balance' to planning decisions (more formally known as the presumption in favour of sustainable development). This means starting from the position that any housing application should be approved unless the harm it would cause very clearly and substantially outweighs the benefits.

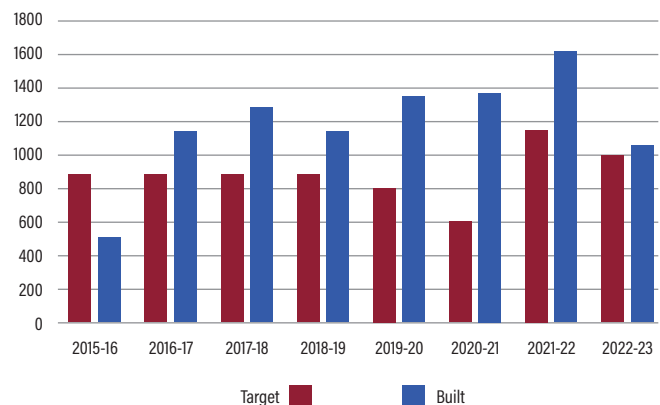
Avid readers of Kent Countryside Voice will be aware I have written before that it's my belief this flaw lies at the heart of a lot of what is what is wrong with housing policy. It lets land promoters game the system, shifting power from Local Plans to developers, enabling speculative greenfield building and weakening local protections. Councils are blamed for under-delivery even when they have adopted controversial Local Plans and granted ample permissions. As the Letwin Review confirmed, developers build only at a pace that sustains high prices, not at a pace that meets need. It is small wonder communities are increasingly hostile to development.

I was reminded of my public-inquiry experience of this flawed policy when I read that Maidstone Borough Council no longer has a five-year housing land supply and is now at risk of speculative applications. Like the council I once worked for, Maidstone also finds itself in this position despite having only recently adopted a new Local Plan.

During the Maidstone Local Plan process, land promoters and developers promised they would build quickly enough to meet the targets. I know this because I attended the relevant Maidstone Local Plan hearing sessions. Yet, as so often happens, those sites are not being built out as promised. Now the council and the communities it serves face the punishment of extra unplanned development on top of the 19,669 homes already agreed through the Local Plan.

What makes it particularly galling is the fact that Maidstone is a borough that has done everything the government has asked of it. Most significantly, it has delivered housing well above its targets for years, averaging 1,090 net completions annually against an average annual target of 888 houses since the introduction of the Housing Delivery Test (shown in the chart below). That's 131 per cent more housing than its target. It has also sped through the Local Plan process out of fear of being subject to the tilted balance if it did not. This was while many other councils consciously held back because of their own fears of how to accommodate the ever-increasing housing targets.

Maidstone: Housing Target vs Houses Built



And how has Maidstone been rewarded? Well, its recently-adopted Local Plan must now meet some of the highest targets in Kent. And despite the fact it has granted more than enough planning permissions to meet the target, with 1,479 homes already consented and 4,788 identified in its five-year housing supply, here we are with it failing the five-year Housing Delivery Test.

Part of this is because the current government removed a rule that protected councils against failing the five-year housing test for a period of five years after the adoption of a Local Plan. It also reintroduced the requirement to provide an additional 5 per cent buffer on top of agreed housing targets. Consequently, you can understand why Maidstone council itself is largely pointing to these government reforms as the reason for the failure.

Unfortunately, my view is that it is a little more complicated than that as a lot of the blame must lie in the nature of Maidstone's Local Plan allocations.

Specifically, three huge strategic sites - Lenham Heath Garden Village (5,000 homes), Lidsing Garden Village (2,000 homes) and Invicta Barracks (1,300 homes) - account for much of the planned supply. This reliance on large complex sites was always going to be a completely flawed strategy. These were never going to come forward as quickly as envisioned, leaving Maidstone at risk of being subject to speculative development. ►

Unfortunately, this is proving to be the case. The reason I was at the relevant housing-delivery sessions during the Maidstone Local Plan hearing for CPRE Kent was to point out the risk of this happening.

Regardless, however, of the specifics for Maidstone, the wider point is that it must be recognised that delays in housebuilding are far beyond councils' control and that it is wrong that they, and the communities they represent, are the ones punished for these delays.

How can it be right that we are faced with an assumption that slow delivery must be met with more permissions, more sites and more countryside lost, even if the existing permissions and democratically-agreed allocations within Local Plans already far exceed what is needed?

It is certainly the case that the Maidstone situation is far from unique. Across Kent, as of March 2024, there were 44,539 housing units with planning permission yet to be built. Of these, 72 per cent (32,182 units) had not even been started. In Maidstone's case, almost half of its 1,479 consented homes were still not under construction.

In other words, there is no shortage of planning consents. There is a shortage of market appetite to build them out at speed. Developers themselves openly acknowledge that they pace delivery to protect sales values. Persimmon has confirmed it will "continue to moderate build rates" in 2025 to avoid oversupplying local markets¹, while Taylor Wimpey has said building faster would "simply force prices down" and harm margins². Barratt Developments is taking a "sales-led" approach, only constructing at the rate homes are sold, with current reservation levels "well below pre-2022 norms"³.

This is entirely consistent with the findings of the government's own Letwin Review, which concluded that the pace of building is dictated not by planning permissions or housing targets but by market absorption rates that sustain high prices.

The government's approach of setting high housing targets and then punishing councils when the market fails to meet them is not only absurd but a policy failure that is worsening the very affordability crisis it claims to address. In Maidstone, the house price-to-income ratio is 10.79, well above the England average of 8.26, with Kent-wide prices at 9.97. New-build sales across the county have collapsed from 3,723 in 2004 to 1,138 last year, yet average prices have almost doubled to £426,356 and in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks they now exceed £500,000. In Maidstone, even an 'affordable' home at 80 per cent of market value would cost some £340,000, far beyond most local earners, showing that the five-year supply and Housing Delivery Test are failing to deliver genuinely affordable homes.

Maidstone is not alone in facing these contradictions. In Sevenoaks, 86 per cent of consented homes remain unbuilt. In Swale, the figure is 90 per cent. Across Kent and Medway, some 74 per cent of housing planning permissions granted are yet to have started construction⁴. However, and as set out in the table above right, almost all of Kent's councils are being punished via the 'tilted-balance' rule, with only Dover and Dartford just about escaping.

Kent Local Authorities - Five Year Supply & Housing Delivery Test (2024)

Authority	Five Year Supply (Yrs)	Current HDT	HDT Implications	Tilted Balance Applied?
Ashford	4.4	117	None	Yes
Canterbury	4.9	67	Presumption	Yes
Dartford	5.6	90	Action plan	No
Dover	6.4	106	None	No
Folkestone & Hythe	3.1	83	Buffer	Yes
Gravesham	2.9	59	Presumption	Yes
Maidstone	4.5	149	None	Yes
Sevenoaks	3.46	44	Presumption	Yes
Swale	3.98	122	None	Yes
Thanet	3.25	67	Presumption	Yes
Tonbridge & Malling	2.89	60	Presumption	Yes
Tunbridge Wells	4.89	94	Action plan	Yes
Medway	3.4	72	Presumption	Yes

The result is a steady erosion of public trust in the planning system and a growing perception that Local Plans count for little when speculative development is given the green light by appeal inspectors. This is why CPRE Kent, alongside CPRE nationally, has long called for the abolition of the five-year supply and Housing Delivery Test for market housing.

Maidstone's predicament is a warning to every other authority in Kent and beyond. Here is a borough that has over-delivered on housing, adopted an ambitious Local Plan, granted thousands of permissions and still finds itself punished because the market has not built fast enough.

The five-year supply and Housing Delivery Test were meant to ensure councils met housing needs. In reality, they undermine Plan-led development, reward speculative applications on greenfield land and punish councils for market-driven slowdowns. It is a system skewed to benefit land promoters and the volume housebuilders at the expense of communities, countryside and common sense. ■

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Director's Report



Andrea Griffiths

Before my time at CPRE Kent, the acronym 'nimby' (not in my back yard) was one I always found irritating. Now I find it downright infuriating.

The acronym of course is not a new thing. Its origin is debatable, with some stating it has been around since the 1950s, while it first appears to have been used in the print media in 1979. It became more common in the 1980s and its use has increased steadily to become a daily rhetoric. As noted in a Guardian article in February, nimby appears to be Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's favourite word, used so frequently that "he's personally breathed new life into the original acronym".

We all know that the term refers to someone who objects to development in their neighbourhood but perhaps would not object to that same thing if it were elsewhere. Today the acronym is used derogatively and as a blatant insult. But, if we can't ask people to protect their immediate surroundings, what can we ask them to do and who has the time to look beyond their 'back yard'?

In his book *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari highlighted that hunter-gatherers, even in the harshest of environments, worked fewer hours than people in modern affluent societies today, who average 40-45 hours per week. With all the demands on our time, who has the luxury of looking farther afield? Of course people concentrate on their own back yard! But defend the location where you live from obvious harm and you are slapped with the nimby title.

On the one hand the government has said that everyone should live within 15 minutes of a green space, but on the other it criticises anyone who tries to defend it. Asking people not to fight for it is analogous with asking them not to care about it and concomitant with this is people being disconnected from it. Maybe I'm stretching it too far, but perhaps this has partly resulted in the epidemic of littering, graffiti and vandalism we see across Britain today.

Can we not trace the idiom 'a man's home is his castle' back to English common law? Was it not during World War One that the phrase 'England's green and pleasant land' from William Blake's poem *Jerusalem* was used to emphasise the desire to defend the country's landscapes? With today's constant rhetoric of 'build, build, build' and criticising and insulting anyone who tries to protect the green and pleasant land that remains, I do often wonder what the men who died in the trenches would think.

It's so easy to point a finger and say 'nimby' to someone objecting to a local development and, as demonstrated in the report *Voices of the Blean* by Rachael Reilly, co-published by CPRE Kent in July (see pages 9-12), in doing so the government is stripping local people of their voices, which has clear impacts on their well-being.

Despite saying all the above, however, the nimby acronym is now often used in error. These days it seems that to demonstrate a passion for our wildlife and natural world and object to any development, anywhere, warrants the label of selfish, vexatious nimby.


CPRE Kent might be accused of nimbyism, but this would be incorrect. We are not anti-development, but we are against speculative development outside the proven planning process that is unsustainable, with demonstrable environmental, landscape, ecological or heritage impacts and/or with little gain in affordable housing. This does not make us nimbys - this makes us strong defenders of the countryside and a rural way of life, regardless of where that might be. It makes us defenders of a strong planning system, defenders of local voices, fighting speculative non-Plan-led applications that counter an effective process.

In the traditional use of the term, we are not nimbys. Today it is simply used incorrectly, lazily, as an easy insult and in poor journalism. If our work makes us nimbys, then I am proud to be one.



Voices of the Blean

Last year, CPRE Kent helped fund **Rachael Reilly** study the impacts of mass development on local communities. Focusing on a proposed scheme for 2,000 houses near Canterbury, the social researcher spent a year developing and putting together a report entitled *Voices of the Blean*. It is a monumental work and likely to prove an essential reference for years to come. Here Rachael describes what caused her to embark on the project and shares the conclusions she drew.



Who wouldn't be upset by the potential destruction of such a landscape? (Jeremy Kendall/Chaucer Fielder)

‘Back the builders, not the blockers!’

This has been the government’s rallying cry since it came into power more than a year ago with plans to build 1.5 million houses within its first term in Parliament. But what happens when those plans result in the destruction of your local environment and the loss of green space, nature and wildlife? Will your voices be listened to and will what you say make a difference?

These were the questions that preoccupied me when I heard about plans to build 2,000 houses on 100 hectares of greenfield land near Canterbury, between the villages of Tyler Hill, Blean and Rough Common, where I grew up. The land, owned by the University of Kent, was included as a site for a “free-standing, rural settlement” in Canterbury City Council’s draft Local Plan, published in March 2024.

A public consultation on the draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) was held between March and June 2024, with a further consultation in September this year. A final decision on the Plan is due in spring 2026.

The Sarre Penn stream runs through the bottom of the site - known as the Sarre Penn valley, or simply the Blean - while there are pockets of ancient woodland along its banks and ancient hedgerows skirting agricultural fields that rise up steeply on either side of the valley.

Common swifts, skylarks and yellowhammers; brown long-eared and pipistrelle bats; heath fritillary butterflies; and great crested newts all live in the woodland, hedgerows, ponds and streams on this land, which is a critical wildlife corridor between the East and West Blean woodland complexes, comprising the largest area of continuous ancient woodland in southern England.

It is almost 40 years since I lived in Tyler Hill. In those four decades, I have lived and worked in seven countries; my husband is Australian; and my children were born in Sri Lanka and Switzerland. I did not think that I had a particularly deep attachment to the land where I grew up. Yet when I heard that the woodland, streams and fields where I had played as a child could be bulldozed and destroyed, I was astounded at the strength of my feelings.

As I started to follow online postings from the campaign group that had sprung up to protest the development, Save The Blean, I realised that many local residents shared these emotions. People described their grief, sadness, constant anxiety and sleepless nights as they worried about what would happen to their local area.

This made me reflect on the so-called ‘nimbys, blockers and naysayers’ protesting developments in their local areas. Were they really selfish troublemakers hell-bent on protesting any development that could block their view or increase the traffic in their village (not in themselves illegitimate concerns)?

Or are local communities motivated to protest out of a more intrinsic attachment to their local environment, a deep connection to their local landscape and an urgent sense of responsibility to protect local nature and wildlife? I started to feel increasingly frustrated that the voices and concerns of communities were crassly dismissed by politicians and the media with disparaging labels and no one was taking the time to genuinely listen to people living next to proposed development sites.

This frustration was fuelled by a career in international humanitarian aid and development, where a key principle before starting any project is to consult with local communities and analyse the social (as well as environmental and economic) impacts of interventions. Neither meaningful local consultation nor genuine social-impact assessments seem to feature in Britain’s drive to build. Indeed, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill threatens to reduce opportunities for input from local communities into large-scale development plans and weakens existing environmental protections and standards.

Consequently, I approached CPRE Kent with a proposal to assess the social impacts of a large-scale development on the health and well-being of local residents. Using participatory social-research methods, including focus group discussions, community mapping exercises, community walks, oral histories, individual interviews and a social survey, I wanted to understand how local communities interacted and related to their local environment, how development plans impacted their sense of place and identity and how they responded to the potential loss of nature and wildlife.

I carried out two weeks of field research in the villages of Blean, Tyler Hill and Rough Common in November 2024 and the findings from the research were co-published by CPRE Kent, UCL Anthropology Department, the Community Planning Alliance and Kent Wildlife Trust in August 2025.

These are the key findings from my research:

- 1. People use the land proposed for development regularly in their daily lives.** 59 per cent of participants surveyed said



The development plans brought together the people of Tyler Hill, Blean and Rough Common in an unprecedented way (Julia Kirby-Smith)

they used the land at least once a week (and 88.5 per cent at least once a month) for walking, running, cycling, horseriding, birdwatching, being in nature and as a car-free commute to work, school and the university. Many respondents said the loss of this land would significantly impact their daily lives, health and well-being.

2. People have a deep attachment to the land and fear losing it.

Participants appreciate the land for its open countryside and beautiful views - a place of peace and tranquillity free from cars and pollution. Several participants had lived in the local area for all, or most, of their lives. They described the land as being part of their identity - who they were and where they belonged. They felt the potential loss of this land acutely - one person described it as "like having a limb cut off".

3. People have given 'unofficial' names to parts of the land.

As part of their attachment to the land, residents have given their own names to different places. For example, the field where skylarks nest every spring is aptly called Skylark Field. A corner of Tyler Hill Road where yellowhammers are heard calling has been named Yellowhammer Corner and a piece of ancient woodland is known as Bluebell Wood by many residents because of the abundant bluebells found there every spring, or as White Spinney by others because of the wood anemones that carpet the woodland floor in springtime.

4. There is a wealth of local knowledge and expertise within the community that has been overlooked and under-utilised throughout the Local Plan process.

Once the proposed development was revealed, there was a surge in 'citizen science', with residents posting sightings and photos on the local Facebook page (many of which were used to illustrate my report). One local birdwatcher recorded 72 species of bird in the area over the subsequent year.

5. The primary concern among most participants (40.3 per cent of respondents to the social study) was the impact of the proposed development on nature and wildlife.

Participants expressed concerns about how the development would impact the habitats of birds and wildlife in the area, in particular the skylarks in the field next to St Cosmus and St Damian Church. They were worried that the development would destroy an important wildlife corridor between the East and West Blean woodland complexes and the

environmental impacts it would have on ancient woodland and the Sarre Penn stream.

6. The second main concern for participants (38.5 per cent of respondents to the social survey) was how the proposed development would impact their daily lives, including the noise, light and air pollution during years of construction; increased traffic and congestion on already overcrowded and dangerous roads; pressure on strained local infrastructure and public services from an increased population; the loss of a place for recreation and to be in nature; and the potential loss of property value due to the construction.

7. Participants feared the development would permanently change the rural character and distinct identity of their villages, creating an urban sprawl that would dwarf the existing villages and have "no heart or identity". Some participants said they would be more favourable to the development if it genuinely met local housing need, while others said they would support housing if it was sensitively planned within the boundaries of the existing villages.

8. 64 per cent of respondents to the social survey said that the development proposals had already impacted their health and well-being. They described the initial shock of finding out about the development plans; constant worry and anxiety, including sleepless nights; fears that the development would impact their physical health - both through loss of outdoor recreation space and the increased air, noise and light pollution, especially for those with health conditions such as asthma; a sense of helplessness and powerlessness over decisions affecting their lives; and stress and uncertainty about the future. Several people described the development plans as "life-changing".

9. People have changed their plans because of the development proposal. 28 per cent of respondents to the social survey said the development proposals had made them change their plans and 36 per cent said they were not sure. When asked how their plans had changed, 62 out of 100 respondents said that they were considering moving away from the area, something they had never contemplated before. Several participants said they had consciously moved to the area because they wanted a more rural lifestyle and expressed dismay at the loss of control over their lives and futures.



Beauty through the seasons... this is the path from Tyler Hill to St Cosmus and St Damian Church at Blean (Jeremy Kendall/Chaucer Fielder)

10. Participants described a profound sense of disempowerment and disillusionment with the Local Plan consultation process: 64 per cent of respondents were dissatisfied with how Canterbury City Council had consulted with affected communities on the draft Local Plan. In particular, they criticised the lack of detailed information about the development site. They were disappointed in the non-participatory way in which the city council had carried out the public consultation and the failure to engage in a genuine consultation with impacted communities. Eighty-six per cent of respondents to the social survey thought they would not be listened to in the local consultation and 84 per cent believed that what they said would make no difference. Several people said this experience had eroded their faith in local and national democratic processes and institutions. Eighty-four per cent of respondents said they were dissatisfied with how the University of Kent had engaged with local communities.

11. Participants shared an existential concern about a national nature crisis. Some participants considered the loss of green space and damage to their local environment as part of an existential attack on nature and wildlife across the whole country, particularly in the south-east of England, and felt a profound sense of responsibility to protect it for future generations. They rejected the label 'nimby' and said they would protest large-scale developments wherever they resulted in the destruction of nature and wildlife, while others talked about reclaiming this derogatory term and transforming it into a more positive one, such as 'Nature in My Back Yard!'.

12. The local community came together to protest the development and put forward an alternative land-use proposal. The local community formed a highly organised and visible local campaign group Save The Blean, who have organised events and actions to inform the local community and protest the proposed development. Not only have the campaign group vociferously opposed the development but in collaboration with KWT and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have put forward an alternative vision for community management of the land, The Blean Biopark, with plans for rewilding, habitat restoration, reforestation, regenerative farming, ecotourism and some small-scale housing.

The views of the participants in this research and their emotional responses to the loss of green space and nature are not unique to The Blean. Across the country, and especially in Kent, rural communities are fighting to save their

countryside from large-scale developments. Far from restricting communities' ability to engage in planning processes and provide input into decisions that profoundly impact their lives and local environment, as the Planning and Infrastructure Bill proposes, central and local government authorities should be seeking ways to engage constructively and consult meaningfully with local people.

Participatory approaches to planning and the inclusion of social-impact indicators to measure the impact of the loss of green space and nature on people's health and social well-being can assist government authorities to understand how local communities are affected and why they protest. The deep attachment that rural communities hold to their local landscape and the grief and despair they feel when it is permanently altered or destroyed are real: their voices deserve to be heard in the complex debate about housing, development and economic growth in the UK.

Postscript

Since publishing *Voices of the Blean*, Canterbury City Council has announced that it is removing the entire Blean site from its 2040 draft Local Plan, citing insurmountable technical obstacles relating to road and infrastructure access and environmental impacts, including the loss of ancient woodland.

This is a major victory for the local community who had been resolutely fighting this development and for organisations, such as CPRE Kent, who had consistently pointed out the drawbacks of this site. It demonstrates that Canterbury City Council listened to the concerns of residents and raises hopes that the land can be used in a more ecologically sustainable way, as proposed in the Blean Biopark plan.

The new draft Local Plan includes proposals for thousands of new houses on agricultural land elsewhere in the district, including on Brooklands Farm near Whitstable, which is also part of the Blean woodland complex. The city council should take lessons from this research and start a process of meaningful engagement and genuine consultation with impacted communities, working with them to plan housing that meets local need and protects nature and wildlife.

- **The report comes in a short form and a long form, along with an executive summary. All documents are hosted on the CPRE Kent website - search 'Blean' and click on the story headlined 'How does it feel? The impact of mass development on local people'. ■**

Spring flowers on the
Crab and Winkle Way
(Wendy Stennett)



NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES... BUT THEY DO LIKE TO PLANT A HEDGE

Here's your chance to join us in a brilliant project for the countryside



The shifting seasonal colours of our hedgerows have defined rural landscapes for centuries (Julie Davies)

Hedgerows are the unsung heroes of the British countryside.

They are iconic features and an important part of our heritage. They support wildlife by providing habitat, shelter and food and by forming green corridors that reduce fragmentation.

Along with other branches, CPRE Kent are taking action to help restore and plant new hedgerows across the county this year as part of the larger Hedgerow Heroes project. Our work will help to hit CPRE's target of increasing hedgerow cover in England by 40 per cent before 2050.

Following a shout-out for sites earlier in 2025, and via working with the Countryside Management Partnership (CMP) teams, we've been able to earmark more than three and half miles of hedgerow to plant and/or restore.

That's some 28,000 hedgerow trees that we'll be involved with in planting before March 2026. With the CMPs, we'll be working on 14 sites from Dartford to Dover and everywhere in between.

Would you like to help plant a hedgerow near you? Planting dates will soon be announced, so please follow our e-newsletter (email info@cprekent.org.uk to subscribe if you do not already do so) and/or follow our social-media channels for upcoming information about planting dates and locations. Alternatively, email us to register your interest.

Get out and about, have fun, meet new people and help us plant hedgerows this autumn and winter. We'll report back on the project, the planting days and achievements in the Spring-Summer 2026 edition of Kent Countryside Voice.

Check out the hedgerow poster with this issue.

... AND TALKING OF HEROES

'Invaluable' Gravesham chairman Alex Hills receives a rather special volunteer award



Excellent every day... Alex Hills has been a powerhouse for CPRE Kent

Alex Hills has received national recognition for his volunteer work with CPRE Kent.

The news that the chairman of our Gravesham committee had been conferred the Everyday Excellence Award was announced during this year's Volunteers' Week in June.

Alex was given both a medal and a certificate, awarded in recognition of his "unending support and enthusiasm for protecting the Kent countryside".

Andrea Griffiths, CPRE Kent director, said: "Alex first got involved with CPRE during the Cliffe airport campaign and has continued to work for CPRE Kent, representing Dartford, Medway and his home area of Gravesham in many campaigns, including his extensive work on the proposed

Swanscombe peninsula theme park and Lower Thames Crossing campaigns.

"This latter campaign led Alex to join the Thames Crossing Action Group and he has also acted as the point of contact with CPRE Kent for Cycling UK and the West Kent Badger Group.

"In August last year, Alex was diagnosed with cancer, but he somehow continued to work as much as he could, continuing to attend meetings and keeping up to speed with the LTC and other campaigns, even during a 25-day stay in hospital and the initial two months' recovery!

"In short, Alex is a powerhouse and has been invaluable to CPRE Kent and other organisations. He is wholly deserving of his award and CPRE Kent are most grateful to him."

Campaigns

How CPRE Kent fights for our rural environment across the county

Turnden

On Friday, June 20, Mr Justice Mould dismissed CPRE Kent's judicial review challenge against the government decision to grant planning permission for 165 homes at Turnden, near Cranbrook, in the High Weald National Landscape.

Although the High Court verdict was frustrating, we take comfort from the important clarification provided by the court regarding the strengthened legal duty of decision-makers to actively seek to further the conservation and enhancement of England's National Landscapes (see also pages 20-21).

Hoad's Wood

The great clean-up has begun! Some four acres of the wood - a Site of Special Scientific Interest near Bethersden - were wrecked by the dumping of about 30,000 tonnes of waste and it was only a fierce campaign that brought widespread recognition of the issue and eventually some action to get it resolved.

And on Tuesday, June 24, the first load of waste left the wood for a landfill site in Essex.

CPRE Kent were heavily involved in the effort to highlight what happened here and we will be reporting on the clean-up process and indeed beyond as the wood's restoration unfolds.

Sea Link

The original closing date for consultation on National Grid's environmentally damaging Sea Link proposal to build a converter station and storage unit on Minster Marshes with concomitant damage to Pegwell Bay had been Monday, June 23, but was extended not once but twice because of errors, inconsistencies and omissions by NG. The final deadline was Thursday, September 18, before we were urging

interested parties to register for the preliminary meeting of the Development Consent Order process (see also page 27).

Highland Court

A CPRE Kent member's challenge to the High Court decision not to overturn Canterbury City Council's approval of the Chapel Down application to build a warehouse in the Kent Downs National Landscape at Highland Court was rejected in July by the Court of Appeal.

Betteshanger Country Park

CPRE Kent continue to work with the Friends of Betteshanger, who are taking legal advice on protection of the park, where Dover District Council has granted Quinn Estates permission to develop a 120-bed hotel, spa and surfing lagoon. That permission is still in place, but the proposed hotel operator has walked away from the scheme. A CrowdJustice page has been set up to help fund the campaign to ensure the site's wildlife is not lost:

www.crowdjustice.com/case/save-betteshanger-wildlife

Lower Thames Crossing

We attended the crossing's inaugural LEMP (Landscape and Ecological Management Plan) meeting in London. The various sections of the crossing, mitigation and compensation were discussed. It was decided to set up subgroups to oversee each section. CPRE Kent hope to play a leading part in the development of green bridges and other environmental infrastructure.

Cleve Hill Solar Park

We have made a site visit with the ecological clerk of works. The panels are now live and producing electricity, while construction of the BESS (battery energy storage system) is under way.



Our patron Sir Robert Worcester dies aged 91

CPRE Kent were saddened to learn of the death at the age of 91 of our patron, Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL.

American-born Sir Robert was a long-time supporter of our branch, initially as a vice-president, and this included making available his magnificent home of Allington Castle on the River Medway for events to promote our work.

Perhaps most widely known as the founder of MORI polls,

the breadth and scale of Sir Robert's voluntary work was extraordinary, for example chairing the Magna Carta 2015 800th Anniversary Commemoration Committee.

He was a trustee or vice-president of many conservation organisations. CPRE Kent are immensely grateful for his practical contributions to the beauty of the county's countryside alongside his many other honorary roles, including as a deputy lieutenant, chancellor of the University of Kent and a Kent ambassador.

Sir Robert accepted the role of CPRE Kent patron in 2019.

We could not have had a more distinguished and committed patron, or a better role model for our volunteers. We will miss him and our condolences go to his two sons, Kenton and Lawrence, and his wider family and friends.



Chairman's Update

Ben Moorhead

The pressure on our county never ends, but we're in this battle for the long run

The CPRE Kent family continue to work flat out under the threat of older and new schemes promulgated by developers, in particular larger housebuilders and national and international energy companies. Solar, which can be welcomed where thought through, has become a blight on the Kent countryside and on our time.

I would like to start with some thank-yous. Most especially to Richard Thompson, Julie Davies, John Wotton and Andrea Griffiths, who, with our legal team, brilliantly prosecuted our judicial-review proceedings against the then-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Angela Rayner, in relation to Turnden in the High Weald National Landscape (see pages 20-21).

The effort and money spent was all extremely worthwhile. While the High Court did not find in our favour, the case was of genuine public importance and has clarified how the strengthened duty must now be applied in decisions affecting our National Landscape.

After the court judgment went against us, we decided not to appeal.

I mentioned last year that we wished to step into schools and colleges. This has started. I really appreciate the work Julie and Andrea have done with their presentations. These went down very well with the staff and the students.

We would not operate at all without the huge work and careful vision of Richard and Julie, who have both been kept terribly busy all year with planning issues. We must salute their efforts.

I must thank Vicky Ellis, our general manager, for not only managing the branch effectively but also for taking care of the very life and lives of the inhabitants of our beautiful county in her ecology work and campaigns.

David Mairs does a marvellous job with our comms and media. I partly put this down to the fact that he is passionate about wildlife (especially birds) and has a huge knowledge. In the modern world that we live in, he also has to manage a multitude of social media. I thank him. He is wholly responsible for producing this magazine.

I put on record my thanks to Andrea for her sustained and strong leadership.

I am delighted that we appointed her. Apart from her heavy workload, she has also successfully spearheaded a huge Hedgerow Heroes grant to us that should result in three and a half miles of new hedgerow in 2025-26. What better way to showcase a renewed Kent?

I thank our local chairs, who have all been busy protecting Kent. They are at the forefront of every issue. I should mention Peter Lorenzo, who continues to fight a rearguard action at Minster Marshes in Thanet, seeking to remove or mitigate the site from the ravages of National Grid's Sea Link scheme. I must thank all our chairs for their contributions to this magazine.

A special thank-you to our president, Jonathan Tennant, who locally took on an EDF solar scheme in Aldington, worked flat out with his local group and very deservedly won. A terrific and extraordinary result.

At the time of going to print we mourn the loss of our dear patron, Sir Robert Worcester, who gave so freely of his time and effort for Kent and often made his wonderful home at Allington Castle available to voluntary and charitable causes. He did a great deal to promote good causes in Kent and wider afield.

If you get the opportunity, be sure to get out and enjoy the countryside we all fight so hard to protect (Julie Davies)





Despite the pressures, our county is still home to a fantastic wealth of wildlife... don't be fooled by the name, common gull has one of its only regular English breeding colonies at Dungeness (David Mairs)

I met him a few times and fairly recently in connection with the Magna Carta 800 celebrations up in London, a piece of history that was terribly close to his heart. I shall remember him as someone who was filled with kindness and huge enthusiasm, perhaps a combination sometimes lacking in the modern world. He is much missed (see page 13).

We are busy, and we are busy fighting. I think if we were not fighting, we would not be in the game or complying with our objectives. Kent remains under great housing pressure, with massive schemes going through the planning system. One wonders what the precise demand is and whether the houses are being built in the right places, especially in terms of infrastructure and transport. In a sense, is government trying to hit notional targets to show activity?

Affordable housing in many areas is behind the curve. In the year ending March 2024, Kent saw only 7,107 net dwelling completions, resulting from 7,465 new dwellings and a loss of 358 existing ones. This total included 1,773 affordable homes delivered during the same period, representing about a quarter of all completions. Medway saw 1,290 net completions, of which 387 were affordable.

Maidstone district recorded the highest number of net completions at 1,039, while Sevenoaks had the lowest number with 118. Thanet delivered the highest number of affordable dwellings at 307, while Tonbridge and Malling had the highest proportion of affordable dwellings at 41 per cent.

Perhaps some of these figures challenge the actual demand, but Kent has experienced consistent housebuilding activity, with a substantial overall increase of dwellings since 2011. This raises the question of sustainability in the Garden of England.

Relevant to the quest for the real demand was an in-depth BBC news report in August that found that empty homes were on the rise and questioning why they were not being used to solve the housing crisis.

The 2010-15 coalition made funding available via two schemes: the Empty Homes programme, giving owners grants,

and the New Homes Bonus scheme, which rewarded councils that brought old properties back into use. By October last year, empty homes had crept back up to 720,000 in England. These schemes have been cancelled or reduced.

Large-scale solar-energy projects continue to be proposed across the county. Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, believes these projects will generate significant renewable energy in a slightly crazed rush to net-zero. But he seems to have made no scrutiny into their impact on the environment, on quality farmland and on local communities and ecosystems. Nor does the government seem to heed the fact that as a percentage of all energy contributors, solar only comprises roughly 4.5 per cent, whereas wind can be about 25 per cent and uses far less land.

I have visited the areas covered by the South Kent Energy Park on Romney Marsh, covering more than 1,500 acres. It is a horrendous, damaging scheme that has no regard to historic setting or the special landscape and environment of Romney Marsh and its ancient villages.

To my mind, Romney Marsh should have been designated a national park many years ago. If you drive into Newchurch or Ivychurch, there is a sense of an older England 70 years ago. There is peace and quiet and beauty. The proponents of the scheme clearly believe that by targeting an under-populated area, there will be lesser opposition. If you throw a stone from any part of Romney Marsh, it will probably land next to a sublime church.

Increasingly, Kent faces significant environmental threats primarily due to its geographical location, sunshine (attracting mega-solar) and high population density. The threats include climate-change impacts including rising sea levels, increased flooding and poorer water and air quality. Additionally, there is development pressure, habitat loss and pollution from many sources, including agriculture.

But CPRE Kent are flourishing under the pressures, so we should all hold on to our hats as we are in it for the long run. I wish everyone a good winter and a happy Christmas and New Year when they come. ■

Guy Nevill, farmer, steward of Birling Estate and creator of the Chalk to Coast initiative (in which CPRE Kent is a partner), talks about the vision for a nature corridor linking the chalk downs of north Kent with the Thames estuary... and why time is running short if we are to restore wildlife at scale

Spectacular... looking south over the North Downs escarpment (Sarah Medway Photography, Birling Estate)

Farming a future for nature



Pulling together... Guy Nevill is keen to stress the importance of a collaborative approach

Where did the idea for Chalk to Coast originate?

GN: Over a decade ago, I started Badgells Wood campsite with the hope of inspiring children to develop a deep love of the natural world. The thinking then was that if the next generation grew up with a passion for nature they would carry the baton forward and make change happen in their adult lives.

But over the past few years it has become increasingly clear we simply don't have the luxury of waiting. The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. We cannot stand by and hope the next generation will put things right - the responsibility lies with us, the current custodians of the land, along with government and the private sector, to act now. Chalk to Coast was born out of that urgency: a farmer-led effort to restore biodiversity, strengthen food security and address the climate crisis at the same time.

The idea then grew out of conversations with other north Kent farmers and land managers - including fourth-generation farmer Tom Gore of DG & JW Gore and Gareth Fulton of Elmley Nature Reserve - who were already collaborating with their farmer clusters to support wildlife on their land. We were then joined by my good friend and colleague, the landscape architect Marian Boswall, whose expertise in regenerative design and soil health brought a vital new dimension. Together, we formed the founding partnership behind Chalk to Coast. We saw the success of similar projects, such as Weald to Waves in Sussex, and began to imagine what a joined-up corridor could achieve here.

Not only is north Kent a priority area for Natural England but its geography is perfectly suited for a nature-recovery corridor: the area contains nationally important habitats such as chalk grassland, ancient woodland, wetlands and internationally significant Ramsar sites for migrating birds. But these habitats cannot thrive in isolation. They need to be connected if we are to sustain healthy, resilient populations of wildlife.

So we began pulling together a plan that would unite these different landscapes under a single shared vision: creating continuous, nature-rich habitat from the chalk escarpment all the way to the coast. That is how Chalk to Coast was born.

Is it realistic to hope for an unbroken chain of habitat?

GN: It's certainly the vision, though we must be pragmatic. We are constrained by a number of factors - Chalk to Coast relies on a large number of farmers and landholders taking part in the scheme by first pledging their land and then taking part in nature-recovery efforts. We also must consider how roads, railways and built-up areas such as the Medway Towns are immovable facts of the landscape. But connectivity is achievable.

To achieve connectivity, we need to utilise both nature-based solutions and also engineered solutions. For example, one of the most effective - and often overlooked - tools of connectivity is the humble hedgerow. Properly managed, hedgerows form vital corridors that allow species to move safely between isolated habitats, linking grassland, woodland and wetland in a living network.

We're also looking at how we can work with, rather than against, existing infrastructure. Habitats that are cut off by

motorways or the rail network don't need to remain isolated. There are excellent examples elsewhere of wildlife bridges and underpasses enabling safe movement across major roads and we will be assessing where similar interventions might work here.

Equally, there are projects where nature itself helps protect critical infrastructure. For instance, creating wetlands and restoring floodplains not only provides habitat for wildlife but also stores carbon and retains floodwater that could otherwise put homes, communities and even key infrastructure like schools, hospitals and business parks at risk.

And we mustn't forget the role of urban spaces in this. Greening towns and cities brings nature closer to people, improving mental health, well-being and air quality and cooling our increasingly hot urban environments. People should feel connected to nature even where they live and work - it's not just a rural project. For Chalk to Coast to succeed we need nature recovery to be woven into every part of the landscape, from farmland to villages, towns and cities.

Which species are likely to benefit?

GN: A wonderful variety. From pollinators like bees and butterflies, to farmland birds such as skylarks and yellowhammers, through to dormice in our woodlands, and wetland and coastal birds that are reliant on the estuary and coastal habitats on their great migratory journeys.

We want to build on the strong priorities already set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). That strategy identifies certain species as especially vulnerable or important indicators of environmental health - including the dwarf (Kentish) milkwort, heath fritillary butterfly, common swift, European eel, Adonis blue butterfly, nightingale, turtle dove and shrill carder bee. It also highlights the importance of supporting the recovery of keystone species such as beavers.

And we shouldn't forget the marine environment. Seagrass meadows are extraordinary blue carbon stores as well as vital nurseries for fish - and boosting their extent and health along the coast is another part of the bigger picture.

How have farmers and partners responded?

GN: We're still in the early stages. A small number of farmers have already signed up as land partners and we're now reinvigorating the farm-cluster networks to bring more on board.

Ultimately, this project can only really succeed if it's farmer- and landholder-led, working together with conservationists, local authorities and investors. It is a collaborative approach, working together on a collective endeavour. Food security matters and farming and nature must work hand in hand. Regenerative farming - with a focus on improving soil health, minimising chemical inputs and building biodiversity - is not only better for wildlife but also for food quality, water security and long-term resilience.

We focused initially on conservation bodies and are working closely with Natural England, as well as counting the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Kent Downs National Landscape and now CPRE Kent as partners. ►



The wader roosts of the North Kent Marshes comprise one of southern England's greatest wildlife spectacles (Robert Canis Photography, Elmley Nature Reserve)

We're also starting to get interest from corporate partners and local businesses; this will really suit those thinking seriously about ESG [environmental, social and governance] and the role they can play in funding nature recovery.

Funding such an ambitious initiative must be challenging. How are you going about it?

GN: We've been fortunate to receive early public funding - Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant via Kent National Landscapes - to support the set-up phase. That gives us a platform from which to grow the Chalk to Coast delivery team.

But for restoration at scale, we'll need significant private investment and long-term corporate partnerships. A recent report by the Green Finance Institute estimates a £21 billion-£53 billion finance gap for UK nature recovery over the next 10 years that public and philanthropic funding alone will not be able to meet. In response to this, the UK government has set a target to raise at least £300 million in private finance by 2027, rising to £1bn per year by 2030.

More than half of global GDP [Gross Domestic Product] depends on nature and its services - whether that's pollination, clean water or flood regulation. The Office for National Statistics has valued England's natural capital stock at £1.4 trillion, with annual benefits from those assets exceeding £35 billion - greater than any single manufacturing sector.

So the economic case is every bit as strong as the ecological one. That's why we're keen to work with businesses not just as funders but as co-designers of projects. By getting involved early, they can shape long-term programmes that deliver measurable returns for nature and society. Geographically, we're ideally placed to draw on the capital's investment community.

How does Chalk to Coast complement the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve?

GN: The new NNR is a fantastic achievement, working with Natural England and the NNR partners to safeguard some of Kent's most important habitats.

This summer at Birling Estate we kicked off the NNR by hosting 50 Natural England staff and partners who undertook a two-day bioblitz in our chalk grassland and ancient woodland. They recorded the nationally scarce rufous grasshopper and the brown-banded carder bee, one of our rarest bumblebees and a Species of Principal Importance for Conservation. They also recorded more than 270 species of moth in a single night. At neighbouring Silverhand Estate, an incredibly rare Maidstone mining bee was identified. These finds remind us that even in our depleted landscapes life clings on - and with the right care it can still flourish.

As part of the NNR, we're also working on projects for hazel dormice and veteran trees and expanding our conservation grazing.

Chalk to Coast builds on this NNR work by extending the vision into the wider farmed and managed landscape, making sure those protected areas don't stand as isolated islands but are stitched into a connected, living network.

And what do you hope for the future?

GN: My family have been looking after Birling Estate for almost 600 years. I'm acutely aware that my time as steward is brief. My hope is to hand the land on in a healthier, more vibrant state than I found it - to see wildlife return to the levels my grandfather knew, when the farm teemed with life.

For me, Chalk to Coast is about balance: farming and nature working together. If, during my tenure, I can help towards that balance and pass it on I'll feel I've done my bit. That's the legacy I hope to leave - a landscape resilient enough to sustain both people and wildlife for generations to come.

- To learn more about Chalk to Coast, come to our AGM, where Guy Nevill will be giving our keynote speech. ■

GRAVETT AWARD: IT'S THE BEST CROP OF ENTRIES IN YEARS

Young architecture students draw the plaudits in CPRE Kent-sponsored event



Raquel Williams's impression of Canterbury Cathedral nave (Clive Bowley)



View from the Marlowe Theatre bridge, by Josiah Barker (Clive Bowley)

Ptolemy Dean, one of the country's finest architects, described this year's entries to the Gravett Architectural Drawing Award as the best in recent years.

The CPRE Kent-sponsored award is given for the best observational drawings of buildings or structures produced over the past year by an undergraduate at Kent School of Architecture and Planning.

Mr Dean, who chaired the judging panel and is a former Kent College pupil, said he was pleased to see the school, part of the University of Kent at Canterbury, stressing the importance of hand-drawing as a means of understanding historic buildings, which is the objective of the award.

Two awards were made - one to first-year students and the other to second- and third-years. Raquel Williams took the honours in the first group and Josiah Barker in the second.

Looking through the candidates' sketchbooks and presentation work, the judges at the presentation said: "Raquel's work showed increasing boldness and innovative use of colour, which we found compelling. She also showed a refreshing versatility in her choice of subject.

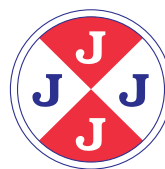
"Josiah's sketches were meticulously prepared with great attention to detail and with style. He had chosen a range of subjects, from a historic townscape to well-observed architectural details of individual buildings."

Raquel and Josiah shared the £300 prize given for the award, which is sponsored by CPRE Kent's Historic Buildings Committee and named after Kent historic-buildings enthusiast Kenneth Gravett, who died in 1999. It both rewards excellence among students and encourages the recording of existing buildings through hand-drawing.

John Wotton, HBC chairman, was present at the June event to present certificates and cheques, while two other first-year students, Patryk Olbryk and Alexandra Marinova, were highly commended for their submissions.



Judges join winner Josiah Barker... Ptolemy Dean is holding a self-portrait of Raquel Williams (pic Graham Horner)



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STANDING TALL

A depressing verdict in the High Court as we battled for our National Landscapes has not dimmed CPRE Kent's resolve to do the right thing for the countryside, writes **Richard Thompson**

As the countryside charity, CPRE has always stood for the belief that England's landscapes are a national asset, too valuable, too vulnerable and too precious to be sacrificed for short-term gain.

Since CPRE's founding in 1926, the national charity never shied away from the difficult fights when they mattered most. This was never clearer than in the 1940s, when CPRE played a leading role in securing the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

That landmark legislation, the result of more than two decades of campaigning, created England's first National Parks, gave formal recognition and protection to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and expanded public access through the rights-of-way network. From that moment on, CPRE has worked to ensure that our countryside is valued, protected and shaped by the communities who care for it.

Yet today, those same Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now termed National Landscapes) face growing and unprecedented pressure. As CPRE's 2021 report *Beauty Still Betrayed* showed, development within and around these protected areas is rising, particularly in the South East, with speculative housing schemes allowed increasingly on greenfield sites. These landscapes, recognised for their natural beauty and cultural significance, are being steadily eroded, while design quality, affordability and genuine local housing need are all too often sidelined.

Against this backdrop, we here at CPRE Kent took the difficult decision to challenge the government's approval of 165 houses at Turnden, near Cranbrook, in the heart of the High Weald National Landscape.

This was already a high-profile and controversial scheme, previously refused by then-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Michael Gove.

That refusal was grounded in clear planning principle: the development would cause significant harm to a nationally protected landscape, was poorly designed and lacked compelling justification. Crucially, it was deemed to fail the strict national policy tests set out within the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires that major development in National Landscapes be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances and a clear demonstration of public interest.

So when the new government - and specifically Mr Gove's successor Angela Rayner - overturned that refusal after a legal

challenge by the developer and granted consent in late 2024, the decision was not just disappointing, to us it was baffling.

The scheme had already been found to fail the clear tests in national policy that protected our most valued landscapes, and in the time since that refusal the planning and legal position had in fact been strengthened further. A new statutory duty, introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, now required decision-makers to actively seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

Yet the harm to the High Weald was acknowledged, the duty was mentioned, and still permission was granted. In making the decision, Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook, acting for Ms Rayner, gave no explanation of how permitting a development that harmed a protected landscape could be consistent with national policy or the strengthened legal test.


That, in a nutshell, was why we brought the claim. We did not do so lightly. But when a legal change as significant as this was being seemingly disregarded in practice, we believed a clear message was needed: that our National Landscapes must mean something. That their protections must be applied meaningfully. That the law must be more than a formality.

In our case before the High Court, we argued that granting permission for a scheme that caused harm to a National Landscape could not be squared with the strengthened duty. Or, at the very least, a decision-maker must explain in clear and reasoned terms how their decision met that test.

Sadly, the court disagreed. While acknowledging that the new duty was indeed strengthened, the judge held that it did not displace the subjective planning judgment at the heart of planning decisions. In other words, a development that causes harm to a National Landscape can still be approved despite the strengthened duty, so long as the harm is weighed carefully and balanced against other material considerations, such as housing delivery.

Obviously, it was not the outcome we had hoped for. But we do not regret taking the decision to act. Our challenge has brought much-needed clarity to how the new duty is to operate. Decision-makers now know they must engage with the enhanced legal obligation. They must apply it substantively, not simply refer to it. And they must be able to demonstrate, through their reasoning, how they have sought to further the purposes of the National Landscape.

The importance of that clarification should not be



Turnden: we make no apology for battling to protect our National Landscapes

underestimated. Mr Justice Mould's decision to grant permission to proceed recognised that the proper interpretation and application of the new statutory duty was a matter of genuine public importance. As the court confirmed, if decision-makers ignore or fail to apply the strengthened duty properly, they risk falling foul of the law. The landscape protections Parliament intended are not optional.

CPRE Kent's ability to bring this challenge was, in part, made possible by the safeguards provided under the Aarhus Convention, which ensures that environmental decisions can be scrutinised in the public interest without prohibitive financial risk.

Therefore, subsequent commentary questioning the value of Aarhus, and portraying it as a barrier to progress, is concerning to us. The ability to hold decision-makers to account is a vital part of a healthy democracy, particularly when decisions affect our most cherished and sensitive landscapes.

Charities, communities and local residents must be able to raise legitimate concerns without fear of being priced out of justice. Legal challenges such as ours are never taken lightly, but they remain an essential safeguard when the stakes are high and the protections set by Parliament must be properly upheld.

If organisations like CPRE and our allies will not stand up for our National Landscapes, who will? CPRE Kent are proud to have taken a stand, grateful for the support of the Campaign for National Parks and others and, while we did not win, we are glad to have tested the law and helped clarify the duties now placed on those who make the decisions.

We do, however, recognise the limits of litigation. Judicial review is not a default tool. It is costly, uncertain and often inaccessible for the communities most affected. That is why we reserve its use for only the most serious or precedent-setting cases, as Turnden clearly was. Going forward, we will continue to monitor how this duty is applied and will remain vigilant for future cases that raise significant legal or policy concerns. But we will never take legal action for its own sake.

At Turnden, CPRE Kent took a stand and we make no apology for that. We are proud to have acted, proud to have tested the law and grateful for the support of those who stood with us. This is because we see our job as to protect England's countryside, not just in press releases but in practice as well. ■



CPRE Kent planner Richard Thompson and director Andrea Griffiths outside London's High Court

Local Plans: an overview

Our list gives the latest situation on Local Plans throughout Kent. In addition, many local authorities have an old-style Local Plan that has 'saved' policies still relevant when considering planning applications. These will gradually be replaced as new Plans are adopted. Details of currently 'saved' policies are provided on local authority websites.



Ashford:

- Regulation 18 consultation took place from August 18-October 13. The next round of consultation is planned for spring 2026.

Canterbury:

- Focused Regulation 18 consultation took place from September 9-October 21. The previously-proposed new settlement at Blean has been deleted and new site allocations proposed. The next round of consultation is planned for spring 2026.

Dartford:

- Local Plan adopted April 22, 2024.

Dover:

- Local Plan adopted October 16, 2024.

Folkestone & Hythe:

- Places and Policies Local Plan was adopted in September 2020. The Core Strategy Review was adopted in March 2022. Regulation 18 consultation on a new Local Plan is expected early in 2026.

Gravesham:

- The next round of consultation is awaiting resolution of issues surrounding traffic modelling in connection with the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

Maidstone:

- Local Plan adopted March 20, 2024. Work has started on Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for Lidsing, Lenham Heath and Invicta Barracks, Maidstone.

Medway:

- Regulation 19 consultation took place from June 30-August 11. The next stage is submission and examination.

Sevenoaks:

- Regulation 18 consultation completed at the end of last year. Regulation 19 consultation is expected to take place from October 23-December 11, 2025.

Swale:

- Local Plan preparation is on hold awaiting the Secretary of State's call-in of two planning applications at Highsted Park. Regulation 18 consultation is expected to take place at the beginning of next year.

Thanet:

- A revised Local Development Scheme was published in February. Regulation 18 consultation is expected to take place in autumn 2026.

Tonbridge and Malling:

- A revised Local Development Scheme was published in February. Regulation 18 consultation is expected to take place before the end of the year.

Tunbridge Wells:

- Following receipt of the inspector's final report, it is expected that the Local Plan will be adopted by the end of the year.

District	Plan	Oct-Dec 2025	Jan-Mar 2026	Apr-Jun 2026	Jul-Sep 2026	Oct-Dec 2026	Jan-Mar 2027	Apr-Jun 2027	Notes
Ashford	Local Plan 2042	Consultation	Consultation			Examination			Adopted 2019
Canterbury	Local Plan 2040	Consultation		Consultation		Examination			Adopted 2017
Dartford	Local Plan 2037								Adopted 22.4.24
Dover	Local Plan 2020-2040								Adopted 16.10.24
Folkestone & Hythe	Local Plan		Consultation				Consultation		Adopted 2020
Gravesham	Core Strategy Review and Allocations DPD 2036	Consultation			Examination	Adoption			Adopted 2014
Maidstone	Local Plan 2022-2037								Adopted 20.3.24
Medway	Local Plan 2041		Examination			Adoption			Adopted 2003
Sevenoaks	Local Plan 2025- 2038	Consultation		Consultation		Examination			Adopted 2011
Swale	Local Plan 2022-2038		Consultation		Consultation	Examination		Examination	Adopted 2017
Thanet	Local Plan 2020-2040				Consultation			Consultation	Adopted 2020
Tonbridge & Malling	Local Plan 2031	Consultation		Consultation			Examination		Adopted 2007
Tunbridge Wells	Local Plan 2033								

Regulation 18 consultation: early stage consultation often with open questions and a wider remit for consultation input.

Regulation 19 consultation: views sought on whether the Local Plan is legally compliant and meets the tests of soundness set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Examination in Public (EIP): hearings held by a planning inspector to assess whether the Local Plan has been prepared in line with relevant legal requirements and meets the tests of soundness.

- For guidance on Local Plans, see FAQs at www.cprekent.org.uk

KEY

- Regulation 18
- Regulation 19
- Examination
- Adoption



Around the districts

A quick catch-up with our committees. Don't forget, if you would like to become more involved with CPRE Kent in your local area please contact us in the office and we will put you in touch with your district chairman.

Ashford - Christine Drury

- We now have the first formal version of the next Ashford Local Plan. It is very much a direction-of-travel document as so much is still pending from government - particularly on national versions of development management policies and rules for Plan-making. But it is good to have an emerging formal draft to help the borough council retain planning powers in the face of less than five years' housing-land supply. The focus continues on Ashford and Tenterden as the most sustainable places to provide the required sites additional to those already in progress or awaiting a green light on nutrient neutrality in the Stour catchment.
- The residents of Aldington and Mersham are still working hard to fight and brace for the tsunami of solar in their area; there is relief that the EDF scheme that would have appeared southwards over the top of Bested Hill and encroached on the setting of St Martin's Church Aldington and Court Lodge was dismissed at appeal, but we await the decision of Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, on Stonestreet Green Solar. Every effort is being made to influence the outcome, including a letter from environmental-law solicitor Richard Buxton drawing attention to the relevance of the EDF dismissal.
- Sadly, yet more inappropriately-sited energy infrastructure is being proposed, this time for a battery-storage installation just beyond the walls of St Mary the Virgin Church, Brabourne, in the fields of Parsonage Farm - the name gives away the setting. Thanks to the residents of Brabourne, Smeeth and Stowting, who marched in protest as well as writing clearly about the known risk of a runaway fire in the lithium battery units. There are also the issues of its unsightliness from the North Downs Way along the escarpment and the rural road access, which has correctly been described as "madness". It was good to see the local MP joined the protest.
- The Hoad's Woods waste scandal has triggered some progress - in addition to the high-profile and very expensive removal of 30,000 tonnes of illegal waste, it is front and centre at hearings on waste crime being held by the House of Lords environment committee. Further, the police, Environment Agency and local authorities are working together to take quicker action. A little progress on a big problem.

Canterbury - Sarah Cassidy

- The committee were extremely saddened to learn of the death of our former chairman Nick Blake in June. He stepped down from the committee in November last year because of ill-health. Nick, a local architect and passionate member of the Canterbury committee, became our reluctant chairman when Barrie Gore resigned. He had a huge amount of knowledge that he always wanted to impart with an energy and passion that caused him to examine detailed planning applications then explain in minute detail to whoever would listen what was wrong with them.
He spent hours examining the Sturry and Broad Oak housing developments and Sturry relief road, shocked at the cost of the sites compared with others in the district. He wrote to planning committees, officers and local newspapers, telling them all they had got it wrong, with an addendum of what he would do. He had a lot to say about the draft 2040 Local Plan, which I think was one of the last applications he worked on before he became too ill to work.
Nick was a very generous man; he would make time for anyone, while meetings at his house offered endless refreshments. A dedicated family man, Nick was a leading light on the Canterbury civic scene and a friend to many. He is much missed at CPRE Kent, as within other circles in which he moved.
- The city council announced on Friday, August 29, that a new draft Local Plan was going to cabinet on Tuesday, September 9. The council leader had already publicly called on his cabinet colleagues to approve it as the basis for a further Regulation 18 public consultation during the autumn. The new draft is already available for review on the council website.
The prospective consultation purports to focus only on parts of the draft Plan that have changed since the last version, consulted on in 2024. However, very large parts have changed, so it is hard to see how only a piecemeal consultation can be justified. Most notably, a greenfield strategic site allocation in and around the villages of Blean, Tyler Hill and Rough Common has been removed in its entirety, while another strategic allocation between the A2 and the south-west side of the city has been reduced by almost 50 per cent. The council claims to have exhausted brownfield allocation possibilities, yet almost no new brownfield sites of any magnitude have been added, while anticipated densities of development even on sites near the city centre remain modest.
To make up the numbers, the council proposes a revived large greenfield allocation to the east of Canterbury along Littlebourne Road. It has done so without any prior soundings from affected communities and despite enormous environmental harm, not to mention the incapacity of the road network to sustain ensuing additional vehicle movements.
The Brooklands Farm development, which would put 1,350 homes on farmland near Chestfield, remains in the draft Plan despite local

opposition. The developers have already submitted an outline planning application even though the Plan has yet to be adopted. We submitted an objection to this application on grounds including loss of BMV (best and most versatile) farmland, damage to the Blean Woods Area of High Landscape Value, flooding and ecological damage.

- A housing scheme targeted for farmland between Littlebourne and Bekesbourne was rejected by the city council in July - we had objected to the Gladman plans for 300 houses, a children's play area and community hub. Officers had recommended the proposal for approval, but councillors voted unanimously to reject it due to pollution risks, poor transport links and harm to the rural character of Littlebourne.
- Plans for a 140-acre solar farm and battery energy storage system (BESS) on farmland next to Blean Woods were approved by city council planning officers under delegated powers. We had objected to the Britton Court Solar Farm, near Tyler Hill, because of the loss of BMV farmland and adverse impact on the local landscape and setting of West Blean and Thornden Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Dartford and Gravesham - Alex Hills

- There have been a number of possible planning applications surfacing in Istead Rise and Meopham, with two pre-consultation events being held. The one in Istead Rise was very annoying due to the amount of false information given out to members of the public. The developers claimed the site was 'grey belt' when it is 100 per cent Green Belt. There are two teams of people - one in Meopham and one in Istead Rise - preparing to fight the applications and respond to the Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation when it happens. The two groups will work in partnership under one campaign banner.
- From conversations with the borough council, it is clear Gravesham has been set a totally unsustainable housing target, with the hospital already 25 per cent over capacity and many doctors' surgeries also over capacity. The uncomfortable truth, looking at Office of National Statistics data, is that the Green Belt is under threat due to a failure by successive governments to deal with the issue of immigration and population growth - this will need careful handling.
- I was invited by the KenEx tram team to support them at a meeting with Reform county councillors on the transport committee at County Hall. It was good to support KenEx and at the same time explain the CPRE Kent position on transport. The Lower Thames Crossing was talked about: I think the councillors were shocked to learn that the Dartford-crossing toll could rise to at least £8 because, under the terms of the LTC Development Consent Order, both sets of tolls must be equal. Indeed, with the way costs are rising, £8 could prove a very optimistic figure. It is not too late for the government to scrap this insane project and follow the Roberts report on rail alternatives that, unlike the LTC, would reduce congestion at the Dartford crossing at a fraction of the cost.

Dover - Derek Wanstall

- With many roads in the area being upgraded for gas pipes, fibre optics and now a water pipe, the last three months have had roads closed, with diversions in all directions and many misleading signs.
- All this is being followed by new developments coming on stream at Walmer, Betteshanger and Sholden. Through the number of properties approved, there could be an increase in traffic of up to a thousand vehicles around these areas. With limited work in the Deal and Walmer area, hold-ups on the A258 at peak times are happening regularly. Again, no consideration is being given to infrastructure or residents' health regarding dentists' and doctors' appointments. Youth services in conjunction with the developments are almost non-existent.
- The potential operator of the proposed hotel at Betteshanger Country Park has walked away from the scheme. However, both the water park at Sandwich and the fishing lakes at Ash seem to be thriving.
- May I now advise Dover area members of the AGM, when I shall be retiring after many years as chairman. It will be held at 10.30am on Tuesday, November 4, at the North Deal Community Centre, Golf Road, Deal CT14 6PY. If you wish to attend, it will be most helpful if you email me at d.wanstall22@btinternet.com.

Maidstone - vacant

- No committee is in place. If you have some time to spare and would like to help in our work, please do let us know.

Medway - Anna Simmonds

- The initial priorities of the Medway group for the next 18 months are:
 - To promote and raise awareness of the role of CPRE Kent
 - Get to know the Medway landscape
 - Involve the younger people of Medway
- Medway Council has released its Local Plan. Simon Curry, portfolio holder for climate change and strategic regeneration, has engaged with us proactively and positively. He is an ecologist by profession and encourages our input. Planner Julie Davies prepared a briefing note and presented CPRE Kent's views on the Local Plan in person. This was followed by a formal submission.
- The meeting with Cllr Curry was also positive about the Dark Skies project, from which the Hoo peninsula will benefit. CPRE Kent director Andrea Griffiths is progressing this.
- Andrea has also been in contact with Medway secondary schools offering to present to pupils on what CPRE Kent do and the benefits of protecting the countryside. This will be followed up with a CPRE Medway group encouraging young people to volunteer with us (noting they must be at least 18 years old due to safeguarding policy).

Sevenoaks

Consultation on the district council's next Local Plan Regulation 18 was due to start in mid-October... with a staggering 63 per cent hike on its housing target. This would entail the building of 1,145 homes a year over the next 15 years - a vast increase on the 704-per-year target previously proposed. The contentious new settlement of 2,500 homes at Pedham Place near Swanley is still included as an 'additional option', while a new site north of Sevenoaks and west of Otford Road is potentially targeted for 1,500 properties. Smaller sites are proposed in and around Edenbridge, New Ash Green, Hextable and Swanley. As 93 per cent of the district is Green Belt, the council is relying on the so-called 'grey belt' parts for most of the sites.

Shepway - Graham Horner

- The big story is still the massive amount of solar-power infrastructure that developers are bringing forward. Proposals for Shepway Energy Park have been revealed since the last issue of this magazine. This is proposed as a patchwork of fields covered in solar panels, the total area of which is less than the South Kent Energy Park but impacting a much wider area, with six parcels of land spread out between Newchurch and Dymchurch.
- We were cheered by the planning inspector's rejection of one of the solar proposals near Aldington, but there were special circumstances there that will not apply on Romney Marsh. Also, these are NSIPs (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects), which are more difficult to oppose. The campaign group Hands off our Marsh are doing an excellent job - please go to their website handsoffourmarsh.org for details. We are keeping in touch with them, while CPRE's National Office expert on solar visited to give advice.
- For those wondering what's happened to Otterpool Park, Folkestone and Hythe District Council and Homes England still seem to be huddled trying to work out how to proceed. The six-month period to come to an agreement has ended and we assume the optional three-month extension has been invoked. The only obvious progress is the planning application for the sewage-treatment plant behind Sellindge and an agreement with a company to supply energy. Finance is still the sticking point.

Swale - Nigel Kay

- The position in Swale continues to be precarious because of the out-of-date Local Plan and lack of a five-year housing supply. The borough council has now decided, despite representations from CPRE Kent, to postpone further work on its Local Plan pending the outcome of the Highsted Park inquiry (see below). However, three further development proposals have been lodged and will have to be decided on their individual merits, which may mean (should the inspector rule in favour of Highsted Park) a higher overall number of approvals than if the council had moved more expeditiously on its Plan and it was now in force. The Highsted Park inquiry had been planned to end in mid-June, but hearings overran and are recommencing in October.
- Swale's revised Local Plan timetable is:
 - January-February 2026: Regulation 18 consultation - vision, objectives and development management policies
 - July-September 2026: Regulation 19 consultation on submission draft of Local Plan
 - October-December 2026: Examination
 - December 2027: Adoption
- Quinn Estates has applied for the development of more than 9,000 properties at Highsted Park, near Sittingbourne. This includes 7,150 homes stretching from west of Teynham south to the M2, where there would be new junction, and a separate but linked scheme for 1,250 homes north of the A2 at Teynham, which would enable the completion of the eastern section of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road to Bapchild. The scheme was called in by Angela Rayner, then-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. A public enquiry has sat for many weeks and is recommencing after a summer break in October. We have been supporting the objectors both in terms of evidence to the inquiry and supporting a local community action group. The key issue emerging appears to be the costs of the new road required and whether the overall development will be financially viable.



Collection boxes

Huge thanks to the following establishments for kindly hosting one of our donation boxes. If you would like your shop or store to help protect the countryside by having our donation box on the counter, please let us know at info@cprekent.org.uk

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Perry Court Farm Shop

Canterbury Road,
Wye TN25 4ES

Chilham Farm Shop

Canterbury Road,
Chilham CT4 8DX

Lower Hardres Farm Shop

Lower Hardres,
Canterbury CT4 5NU

Mole Country Stores

Broad Oak Road,
Canterbury CT2 7SN

Sturry Post Office

9 High Street, Sturry,
Canterbury CT2 0BD

Premier

258 Sturry Road,
Canterbury CT1 1HQ

Loddington Farm Shop

Loddington Lane, Linton,
Maidstone ME17 4AG



Don't forget to keep up with our campaigns news on our website and via Facebook, X and Bluesky @cprekent

- A hybrid planning application for 2,500 homes has been submitted on Duchy of Cornwall land south-east of Faversham. CPRE Kent has objected on the grounds that the development is not Plan-led. National Highways lodged a holding objection necessitating the applicant to provide additional information relating to the impact on the safety, reliability and/or operational efficiency of the strategic road network. NH extended this objection only to the end of September and has indicated that its concerns are in the process of being resolved. This means the application may be on course to go to the borough council's planning committee for determination.
- There is a scheme to build at least 1,740 dwellings at Winterbourne Farm, Dunkirk, also in the east of the borough. This so-called Winterbourne Fields proposal has yet to progress to a full planning application.
- Another planning application raising concerns, originally submitted in 2022, is the Foxchurch scheme for 2,500 properties near Bobbing. It has had lots of additional updated documentation submitted, suggesting the application may be reaching a stage where it could be submitted to Swale's planning committee. The timing is of concern in view of the out-of-date Local Plan.
- There is an application to site a 250-acre solar farm near Elmley and Great Bells nature reserves on the Isle of Sheppey, which host important numbers of breeding wading birds, notably lapwings and redshanks, both of which are in decline in this country. The proposed solar farm would clearly limit their breeding area.

Thanet - Peter Lorenzo

- The Save Minster Marshes group, which I chair, met the leader and deputy leader of Thanet District Council and it was made clear that the council was against National Grid's proposed Sea Link development of a converter station with battery storage on Minster Marshes and cabling through Sandwich and Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve.

The original closing date for consultation was Monday, June 23, but it was extended not once but twice because of errors, inconsistencies and omissions by NG. The final deadline was Thursday, September 18. The Development Consent Order process has now begun. The Examining Authority has received more than 6,500 representations objecting to the Sea Link proposal, including from CPRE Kent, RSPB, Kent Wildlife Trust, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the county council, Thanet, Dover and Canterbury councils and several parish councils.

The National Energy System Operator (NESO) is consulting on a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan that will decide where national infrastructure should be placed, yet with its Sea Link scheme NG is pushing ahead of that plan.

Furthermore, Ofgem (Office of Gas and Electricity Markets) has been consulting on the funding of 48 per cent of project costs up front (increased from a 20 per cent cap), potentially passing the risk to taxpayers in advance of a DCO such as Sea Link being consented. Save Minster Marshes, CPRE Kent and Kent Wildlife Trust have all objected to the proposal.

- Thanet CPRE are regularly represented at the Westgate and Garlinge campaign group, who have widened their remit to general planning issues affecting their area, and we are sharing the CPRE Kent perspective.
- An East Kent Civic Forum of civic and amenity societies has been set up in response to the government's proposed changes to the planning system, including local government reform. The county council has identified its preference for Kent to be split into three unitary areas and the issues were discussed at the last meeting. I also gave a brief history of CPRE - members from each society there expressed a desire to join CPRE and I will do my best to ensure they do!
- A rather desultory meeting (only four turned up) of the group was held in July - David Mairs, Craig Solly and I have since met to devise ways of getting more people along.

Tonbridge & Malling - vacant

- No committee is in place. If you have some time to spare and are interested in keeping an eye on planning applications and commenting on the council's emerging Local Plan, please do let us know.

Tunbridge Wells - John Wotton

- We were disappointed at the outcome of the statutory planning review of the Secretary of State's decision to permit a housing development by Berkeley Homes at Turnden, a greenfield site in the High Weald National Landscape. Although CPRE Kent's challenge failed, the judgment of Mould J in the High Court in June clarified the interpretation of the duty of decision-makers to seek to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of National Landscapes (and National Parks). Following the judgment, we were interviewed on the Turnden site by Sky News, explaining why we brought the challenge (see also pages 20-21).
- We have commented on aspects of the Tunbridge Wells draft Local Plan in the recent Main Modifications consultation and expect the Plan to go before the council again in October.
- We have been liaising with CPRE Sussex over supporting Green Weald Alliance, whose focus is on certain proposed developments in an area on the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells that straddles Tunbridge Wells and Wealden districts.
- We have commented on an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) scoping report for a proposed development of 520 homes at Badsell Farm near Five Oak Green. Many other applications have been reviewed by the committee and comments submitted where appropriate.

Historic Buildings - John Wotton

- The committee met in July.
- Judging of the Gravett Architectural Drawing Award was chaired by Ptolemy Dean. Two undergraduates, Raquel Williams and Josiah Barker, received the award and a presentation was made at the University of Kent's School of Architecture and Design on Friday, June 6, as part of the school's end-of-year show (see also page 19).
- The committee joined the Swale committee in objecting to an application to build five homes at Cedar Hill, Lynsted, because of harm that the proposed development would inflict on the conservation area and the nearby listed buildings.
- The committee is concerned about the proliferation of applications for solar arrays that would harm heritage assets. Objections on wider grounds, including heritage issues, have been made by district committees to applications at Rodmersham and Aldington. Now, three solar-array proposals are emerging on Romney Marsh, which would harm listed churches. The committee will be following these proposals closely and commenting as necessary.

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Christmas cards

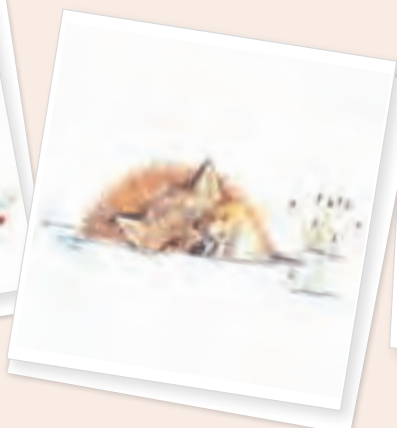
Help to raise funds by buying CPRE Kent's Christmas cards. We have six designs: fox, blackbird, barn owl, robin, long-tailed tit and blue tit.

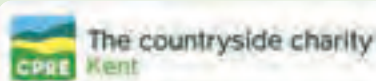
They cost just £4.00 for a pack of 10... which is excellent value for money.

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And why not give the gift of the countryside and buy a gift membership for a loved one this year? Also available online or from the office.

If you tell us it's for a gift we will even throw in a few goodies to make it extra-special.





The Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England

invites members and supporters to its
Annual General Meeting and Lunch
Friday, 21st November, 2025

The AGM will start at 10.30am and be followed by a sandwich lunch at 12.30pm

Lenham Community Centre, 12 Groom Way, Lenham, Maidstone ME17 2QT

Please join us

If you are unable to attend and would like to appoint another member to vote on your behalf, please see the proxy form below.
Further details of the Agenda and Nominations will be available on the cprekent.org.uk website.

**Following the AGM, the Keynote Speaker will be
Guy Nevill on the Chalk to Coast project**

From 12.30pm there will also be gifts and Christmas cards for sale.

If you wish to join us for a buffet lunch after the AGM, please complete and return
the form overleaf by **Thursday, 6th November, 2025**, together with payment, to:
CPRE Kent, Queen's Head House, Ashford Road, Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD

PROXY VOTE

Any member entitled to attend and vote at the meeting is entitled to appoint another member of CPRE Kent as proxy to attend and vote on a poll in his or her place. A form of proxy is below and must be lodged at CPRE Kent's registered office at least 48 hours before the meeting.

I (name) _____ a member of CPRE Kent

of (address) _____

am entitled to one vote and hereby appoint the Chairman of the Meeting or

(name) _____

of (address) _____

another member of CPRE Kent, to vote for me and on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of CPRE Kent to be held on Friday, 21st November, 2025, and at any adjournment thereof. If no name is entered above, the Chairman of the Meeting shall be my proxy.

As witness my hand this (date) _____ 2025

Signed _____ Name (printed) _____

Please return this form to:
CPRE Kent, Queen's Head House, Ashford Road, Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD
by Thursday, 6th November, 2025

**DIRECTIONS TO LENHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE,
GROOM WAY, LENHAM ME17 2QT**

Lenham is on the A20 between Maidstone and Ashford, about five miles coastbound from M20 junction 8 and about eight miles London-bound from M20 junction 9. Lenham also has a railway station, which is about one mile from the Community Centre, and regular bus services from Maidstone and Ashford.

If driving from the Maidstone direction, leave the M20 at junction 8. Follow signs for A20 Ashford. After about five miles, turn right on to Faversham Road, entering Lenham. Bear right on to The Square and turn left on to the Old Ashford Road, then left on to Groom Way.

From Ashford, leave the M20 at junction 9. Follow signs for A20 Maidstone. After about eight miles, bear left on to the Old Ashford Road. Turn right on to Groom Way.



**CPRE Kent Annual General Meeting Lunch
Friday, 21st November, 2025**

Please reserve _____ places @ £10 per person for lunch. Total Enc: £ _____

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ made payable to CPRE Kent

Or by BACS: sort code 40-52-40, Acc. No. 00013594, quoting 'AGM lunch';
email this form with any dietary requirements to vicky.ellis@cprekent.org.uk
You can also book and pay via Eventbrite – to do so, scan the QR code:



Name/s _____

Address _____

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Dietary requirements *eg* vegetarian, allergies *etc* _____

Please return this form to:
CPRE Kent, Queen's Head House, Ashford Road, Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD
by Thursday, 6th November, 2025

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Please join us to help protect the countryside we all love. CPRE membership starts at just £5 per month.



The countryside charity

Please consider giving a CPRE Kent membership when making a gift to a friend or family member.

Let us know it is a gift and we will send a card and small present to make it special.

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CPRE Kent, Queen's Head House,
Ashford Road, Charing, Ashford,
Kent TN27 0AD

**email info@cprekent.org.uk
or phone us on 01233 714540**

It's a date!



John and 14-year-old Harry Gray from Martin, near Deal, were the lucky winners of a bumblebee home in the CPRE Kent

raffle at the county show held in July. They are putting the home in a special place in their garden. The raffle at the event in Detling raised £44 for our charity. CPRE Kent gets around the county as much as possible to let people know what we do, while it also gives us the opportunity to engage with our members.

There are just two more events for 2025:

**AGM, Lenham Community Centre
Friday, November 21**

**Christmas lunch, The George, Molash
Friday, December 5**

To join us, email vicky.ellis@cprekent.org.uk or see the flyer with this magazine

Lottery results



Here are the Lottery winners since the last edition of Kent Countryside Voice:

April 25

Mr L Wallace £50
Mr D Gardner £30
Mrs M Palmer £20

July 25

Miss A Taylor £50
Mr S Winn £30
Mr N Britten £20

May 25

Mr & Mrs M Williams £50
Rev & Mrs D Morris £30
Mrs S Dunn £20

August 25

Mr B Lightfoot £50
Ms V Lawrence £30
Mr C Catt £20

June 25

Mrs S O'Neill £50
Ms J Barton £30
Mr T Mansfield £20

September 25

Mrs P Pollock £50
Mr K Dare £30
Dr S Pittman £20

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CPRE Kent,

Queen's Head House, Ashford Road, Charing,
Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD.

T: 01233 714540 E: info@cprekent.org.uk



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If you would like your partner and/or family to also enjoy CPRE membership, please add their details:

Title	Full name

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To: The Manager

Bank/building society name

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Bank/building society account number

Branch sort code

Service user number

7 2 4 2 4 5

Reference (for office use only)

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Signature(s)

Date

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