

Spring-Summer 2021

Kent

Countryside

Voice

Peninsula war

The proposed theme park that could spell disaster for wildlife and people alike

Water,
water
everywhere...
or not!

Treasure trove

Hedgerows are wonderful things but they need a helping hand



The countryside charity
Kent



Loomed over by the tallest electricity pylon in England, the Swanscombe peninsula is turned into a blaze of colour by a carpet of wildflowers (Daniel Greenwood)

Cover: The distinguished jumping spider is one of the rarest invertebrates in the country... it is threatened by proposals for a giant theme park (Roman Willi, www.endlessfields.ch)

CONTENTS

Spring - Summer 2021



4
DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

14
PLANNING: STILL NO
IMPROVEMENT IN SIGHT

20-23
WATER: A SOLUTION?

5-7
LAST RESORT

15
WHY JOIN CPRE KENT?

24-25
LOCAL PLAN OVERVIEW

8-11
HEDGEROWS

16-17
PINK WELLIES

26-29
AROUND THE DISTRICTS

12
CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

18-19
CAMPAIGNS

30
FROM THE FRONTLINE

13
TRIBUTES

31
SHOP AND LOTTERY RESULTS

contact us

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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 as a district committee member. 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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Hilary Newport

Director's Introduction

The response to last autumn's planning consultations was immense, with communities around the country signing up to the call to maintain locally accountable and democratic planning.

More than 6,000 CPRE supporters sent our suggested briefing to their MPs, supporting our calls for access to countryside for all, the delivery of genuinely affordable homes, prioritisation of recycling of previously-developed land and enabling the rapid delivery of zero-carbon homes. It is sometimes dispiriting to listen to those that would dismiss the calls of campaigners who have the protection of our countryside at their heart as those of 'nimbys' (those whose so-called battle cry is 'Not In My Back Yard').

We were privileged to work alongside community groups at the recent appeal into the refusal of permission for 440 homes in the village of Otham, outside Maidstone, bringing together powerful arguments against the damage that would be caused to the important heritage assets of the church and the difficult traffic conditions that would result (not least on the narrow country lane that would provide the access to the development site). The barrister speaking on behalf of the developers at this appeal is on record in his closing statement as saying "... Mr Knox-Johnston [on behalf of CPRE Kent] will no doubt complain that councillors and local people know best; well we know if they had their way, not a single house would be built, and generations left without an opportunity to have a home. It is this general attitude, sadly, which informs the opposition to this proposal".

Such dismissive statements are all too common and one must sometimes develop a thick skin to defend one's arguments at a planning appeal. Promoters of such sites often describe themselves as stakeholders in the community they hope to create, although all too often they are anything but, adhering to the business principle I once heard memorably described as 'the four Bs': Borrow, Buy, Build and (erm...) 'Begone' (I paraphrase).

Once profits have been realised, too many have little social interest in the communities they affect so radically and few incentives to place value on landscape, heritage, biodiversity or the countryside that people love for its own sake. This is why we must never lose sight of the importance of community voices in planning. This year, many local authorities will be holding elections, including for the very people who will sit on planning committees; we must not allow the devaluation of the democratic voices in these planning reforms and, with your support, CPRE branches across the country will continue to lobby for a planning system fit for the 21st century.

• See more of our director's thoughts on page 14

Thousands sent our suggested briefing to their MPs, supporting our calls for access to countryside for all (Julie Davies)



Last Resort

Proposals for the largest theme park in the country could spell a miserable time for the wildlife of the Swanscombe peninsula and the people who live and work in the area. **David Mairs** reports on a scheme that really is no fun for nature.

A spectacular carpet of wildflowers attracts many invertebrates... and lifts the human spirit (Buglife)

Top: Shrill carder bee and sea aster mining bee: two of the special insects that make a home at Swanscombe (Steven Falk)



The peninsula contains an array of fantastic natural habitats (Paul Buckley)



Swanscombe is a place of superlatives... this is the country's tallest electricity pylon (Paul Buckley)

It could almost be the standard definition of brownfield.

Dominated by the excesses of our urban and industrial assault on the Thames estuary, the Swanscombe peninsula is flanked on its southern and eastern fringes by warehouses, breakers' yards, deepwater docks and used-car dealerships and to the north by the river and the ugly sprawl of south Essex.

It is cut through by HS1 and glowered over by the tallest electricity pylon in the country. It has been abused through the widespread dumping of fly ash – a legacy of the cement industry that was once such a feature of this area – and targeted for landfill. In short, Swanscombe Marshes have not been loved.

However, such intricacies do not trouble the extraordinary wildlife that makes its home on the peninsula, which juts into the Thames between Greenhithe and Northfleet.

It is the numbers of invertebrates that highlight how important a site this is. More than 1,700 species have been recorded, more than 250 of them classified as of conservation concern. In total, there are 49 Red-listed species, meaning they are accorded highest conservation priority.

The star of the show is the distinguished jumping spider (surely the name alone warrants respect!), which is found at only one other site in the UK, but there is also an array of scarce bees, beetles, butterflies and moths among a wider fauna that makes this the most important brownfield site for invertebrates in the land.

Swanscombe represents an uplifting tale of nature coming back against man's abuse of our natural environment. The combination of natural features and human activity has formed what charity Buglife – “the only organisation in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates” – describes as “a remarkable mosaic of grasslands, coastal habitats, brownfield features, scrub and intricate wetlands”.

The peninsula is home to more rare and threatened species than any other brownfield site in the country. They include the endangered Duffey's bell-head spider, brown-banded carder bee, saltmarsh shortspur beetle and orange-striped water beetle.

Surveys have shown the presence of water voles, harvest mice and dormouse; cuckoos, nightingales and black redstarts breed; there are exceptional reptile populations; and scarce plants include the man orchid.

The estuary's most comparable brownfield for natural wealth lies on the other side of the river at Canvey Wick and has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

As important as its wild inhabitants, of course, the peninsula provides space for people living in a desperately overcrowded part of the country to walk, birdwatch, go fishing or simply take an increasingly precious breather from their more regular surroundings...

Cue proposals for the “UK's Disneyland” – or the London Resort theme park. Or to put it yet another way: developers intend to build the largest theme park in the country on the peninsula.

London Resort Company Holdings submitted its 28,000-page application for a Development Consent Order to the Planning Inspectorate on New Year's Eve last year – and in a letter dated Thursday, January 28, the inspectorate announced it had accepted the application, which is now proceeding towards a six-month examination.

The final verdict will lie with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, a post held at the time of writing by Robert Jenrick.

The scheme has been designated a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), the first ‘business or commercial project’ to be accepted as such by the government under the Planning Act 2008. Covering more than 1,000 acres (958 acres at Swanscombe and 63 in Essex), London Resort is anticipated by its backers to open in 2024 should work begin next year. The project is predicted to create 8,810 jobs on site by 2025, of which 3,590 will be full-time, 1,990 part-time and 3,230 seasonal.

From 2038, we are told there will be 17,000 jobs on site, of which 6,535 will be full-time, 3,690 part-time and 7,080 seasonal.

An access road to the A2 is planned, along with “easy access” from Ebbsfleet International station. On the other side of the river, in Essex, linked infrastructure would take up more than 60 acres east of Tilbury, with an “access corridor” around the A1089. This would all enable a “park-and-glide” system to ferry people across the river.

The project website states: “Sustainability is at the core of our vision. We are exploring new and innovative ways of integrating sustainable and low-carbon principles into every area of design and operation of the London Resort. Our aim is to create one of the most sustainable theme park destinations in the world.” It adds: “Our designs will integrate local public rights of way and a

green network, with improved access to the river for visitors and local communities. The London Resort will showcase the natural features of the site, seamlessly integrating them into our designs. A large proportion of the peninsula landscape will remain undeveloped and will be enhanced.”

However, such fine words have failed to convince everyone and not only are there widespread fears for the site’s wildlife but concerns have been raised for people employed on the peninsula who might see their workplaces lost. It has been estimated that some 2,000 workers could effectively be forced out by the proposed development. The concept of sustainable communities seems to have been mislaid along the way. Further, it is unclear how many of the claimed new jobs will go to local people. With the plans including “staff accommodation, which will reduce the amount of staff travel”, it is evident that a significant element of the workforce is expected to be drawn



from outside the immediate area. And would the bulk of the roles that did become available be of the calibre to really lift the north-west Kent economy? With the developer predicting up to 12.5 million visitors a year by 2038, CPRE Kent believes work needs to be done in relation to transport. Could the existing road network really cope with taking such huge numbers of people to and from the site? On top of all this, it is feared the NSIP status, usually reserved for such substantial schemes as roads, airports and power plants, might result in a largely inaccessible and not widely understood process (the 28,000 application pages come in some 450 documents!) that deters people from participating. But it is the potential loss of wildlife that has perhaps struck the loudest chord, with Buglife, the RSPB and Kent Wildlife Trust



A hobby might be seen dashing over the marshes hunting dragonflies in late spring or summer (Steve Ashton)

calling on Natural England to protect the peninsula by declaring it an SSSI. The three groups presented a ‘Rationale for the SSSI designation of the Swanscombe Peninsula’ to the government advisory body, together with a letter signed by 77 current and former senior staff from nature organisations and public bodies.

Matt Shardlow, Buglife chief executive, said: “Too few wildlife-rich brownfield sites like the Swanscombe peninsula are protected, and this is the last chance to protect a large Thames estuary brownfield site before it is too late. This is one of only two sites nationwide for the distinguished jumping spider. If the development is allowed at Swanscombe, it will push this special spider a step closer to national extinction.”

Richard Bloor, of KWT, added: “Swanscombe is one of the last remaining wildlife-rich brownfield sites in the Thames estuary, with habitats ranging from dry bare earth, which is vital for invertebrates, to complex wetlands, which support a great diversity of birds, reptiles and mammals.”

Swanscombe’s broader importance was emphasised by Emma Marsh, RSPB England director, who said: “In September, the Prime Minister announced the government’s ‘30 by 30 pledge’ – a commitment to protect 30 per cent of UK land for biodiversity by 2030 – calling for immediate action and avoiding dither and delay. Saving nationally important wildlife sites like Swanscombe is surely an easy win on the road to meeting that commitment.”

As part of the campaign for SSSI designation, a Save Swanscombe Marshes petition was set up by Buglife. Aimed at Mr Jenrick, it had, at the time of writing, been signed by almost 23,000 people. And in March, Natural England announced that it was indeed awarding SSSI status to the peninsula – although this was subject to a four-month consultation.

There is also the Swanscombe Marsh Protection Campaign, “run for and by local residents who are concerned about the loss of the marshes for current and future generations, for the difficulties it could bring to local residents, and the loss of habitat for the wildlife which lives there”.

The concerns are many and varied. How high will the buildings be? How many outside events are likely? Laser shows? Fireworks? What price tranquillity? How robust was the methodology employed for the ecology reports?

So many questions and so much to be done to ensure a desirable future for the Swanscombe peninsula. CPRE Kent has registered as an Interested Party for the forthcoming inquiry and submitted the necessary ‘relevant representation’.

The battle is just beginning. After nature has already fought back so strongly, surely we owe it to the Swanscombe peninsula, its wildlife and its people to not betray it now.



The site provides a precious green lung for people in a densely populated part of the country (Daniel Greenwood)

To learn more about the Save Swanscombe Marshes campaign and sign the petition, see www.buglife.org.uk

To read about the work of the Swanscombe Marsh Protection Campaign, see swanscombemarshes.co.uk

Hedgerows: how we can help protect a countryside treasure

They are one of the most familiar features of the Kent countryside. We find them lining roads, railways and footpaths. We see them bordering fields and gardens. But hedgerows are under threat from poor management practices and development pressures and many have been removed, as **Glyn Bryant** relates.

Dog-rose is a common hedgerow shrub in favourable conditions (Julie Davies)

Hedgerows originally defined ownership boundaries and provided shelter and stock-proof barriers between fields. They also helped reduce soil erosion and surface-water runoff on arable land.

Some hedgerows we see in our countryside today could be remnants of ancient woodlands that were cleared over the centuries to make way for farming. But they became an established and easily recognised part of the rural landscape during the 18th and 19th centuries, when common land was enclosed to exclude peasant farmers using it for communal open-fields agriculture.

The hedgerows from this later period tend to be straight and dominated by hawthorn, while those from medieval times include field maple, hazel, dogwood and spindle, which provide richer habitats for mammals, birds and insects.

Grants aimed at increasing agricultural efficiency resulted in many thousands of hedgerows being removed from the mid-20th century onwards. Many of those that remained have been aggressively trimmed, neglected or affected by chemicals sprayed on nearby crops.

But aren't hedgerows protected?

Strong controls exist for the protection of hedgerows in the open countryside. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 prohibit the removal of 'important' hedgerows unless at least 42 days' notice is served on the local planning authority and it has either granted such permission or failed to serve notice preventing removal.

For a hedgerow to be regarded as important, it must satisfy criteria relating to its size and age:

- It must be at least 20 metres long, or, if it is less than 20 metres, meet at each end another hedgerow (any gap of less than 20 metres is treated as part of the hedgerow)
- It must be at least 30 years old and part of a historic parish boundary or a medieval estate or manor boundary, or part of a field system that existed before 1845, or
- It must contain, or be next to, archaeological features and sites such as scheduled monuments, or
- The hedgerow contains protected wildlife or plants and associated features

However, the situation regarding hedgerows and hedges in built-up areas, or where the countryside meets the built-up area, is much less helpful in their protection. Generally speaking, a hedgerow is not protected if it is in or marks the boundary of a private garden.

There are exceptions to this:

- If a hedgerow is in a Conservation Area, removal may require permission if it includes trees
- A hedgerow may be protected if it includes trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order (although the protection only relates to the trees, not intervening shrubs)

Hedges can also be protected, to a limited extent, through conditions attached to a planning permission or through legal covenants attached to a property, though this would be dependent on enforcement in both instances.

What else can we do to protect our hedgerows?

Firstly, we could lobby for Local Plan policies that give a measure of control over the removal of hedgerows. An example of where this has been done relates to the criteria attached to Ashford Local Plan Site Policies S51 and S52 in Aldington. These require retention of a hedgerow that originally formed a field boundary as part of any edge-of-village residential development.

Secondly, in addition to lobbying for hedgerow protection on specific development sites in Local Plans, we could press for hedgerows to be covered in Supplementary Planning Guidance and in Neighbourhood Plans. An illustration of this is the Vale of Glamorgan's Supplementary Planning Guidance for Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows produced in 2017. This requires that where developments are likely to affect a hedgerow, a survey must be undertaken to ascertain whether the hedgerow should be classified as important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1987.



This hedgerow will be retained and incorporated into a development of 12 homes on the edge of Aldington thanks to a site policy in the Ashford Local Plan (Glyn Bryant)

The survey is required to cover the condition, height, spread and species content of the hedgerow. Even when the hedgerow is deemed not to meet the criteria for classification as important, consideration is to be given to its importance for biodiversity and wildlife, for example as nesting sites, migration corridors or foraging routes for bats and birds, or as habitat for dormice. The Guidance requires building layout and site infrastructure to be designed so that as many hedgerows as possible are retained.

Thirdly, we could address hedgerow protection at planning-application level. We could encourage landowners and prospective developers to incorporate established hedgerows into their landscaping schemes when sites come forward for development.

A recent example of this happening came from Chilham, near Canterbury. Situated at the entrance to the village, the application site was in a Conservation Area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The original application was for a near-two-metre-high closeboard fence behind an existing hedgerow in poor condition. After objections from the parish council and neighbours, and discussions with the applicant, it was agreed to revise the application to make it more sympathetic to its surroundings.

The revised application included a replacement palisade fence along the road frontage to match an existing fence to the west of the site, together with a replanted cherry laurel hedgerow immediately behind it to provide dense screening to a new feather-board fence set back about two metres from the road. ▶



The tangled lives of hedges... (Vicky Ellis)

A natural defence against the climate emergency

CPRE has launched an appeal asking for donations in efforts to help make hedgerows “the first line of defence against climate breakdown”.

Emma Marrington, from CPRE's national office, explains how hedges are a sustainable natural defence against the climate emergency:

“Hedges capture and store or ‘sequester’ carbon in woody growth above ground, leaf litter and other organic matter at ground level, as well as in their roots.

“This means planting and restoring hedges can take carbon out of the atmosphere and lock it safely away. On average, hedgerows in Great Britain already store up to 13 million tonnes of carbon, which is around 47 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is the equivalent of hedgerows soaking up the carbon emissions of as many as 3.28 million cars over 10 years.

“Hedges across slopes also help prevent soil erosion, increasing the organic carbon stored in soil for up to 60 metres uphill.

“The government has committed to ambitious climate targets. To help achieve these, its advisors at the Climate Change Committee have recommended extending our hedgerows by 40 per cent – that’s 120,000 miles of new and restored hedges.

“To encourage the government to act on this advice, more research is needed that demonstrates the positive impacts planting and restoring hedgerows can bring.

“And by highlighting the wider impacts of hedge-planting and restoration, such as alleviating flooding, supporting local economies and increasing biodiversity, we can persuade MPs to invest in this nature-based and cost-effective climate fix.”

Your donation could go towards:

- Building evidence of the vital role of hedgerows in stopping the climate crisis, so they can be at the frontline of the CPRE response
- Gathering case studies from communities of how they are affected and the positive solutions they are implementing, showing MPs the need to act now
- Campaigning to secure government commitments to make hedgerows part of its plan to stop climate change

To give to CPRE's hedgerows appeal, please phone 0800 163680 or go to [cpre.org.uk/hedgerowappeal](https://www.cpre.org.uk/hedgerowappeal)



A poorly-maintained hedgerow is of little use to man or beast (Glyn Bryant)

Want to really get involved?

We can get involved in volunteering projects in our own area. Lack of traditional hedgerow management such as coppicing or hedge-laying has led to hedges growing tall or becoming gappy.

Hedgerows are potentially rich habitats for much wildlife, but their decline has had a hugely negative effect on the range of species they can support.

By volunteering through organisations such as **The Conservation Volunteers (www.tcv.org.uk)** or **Kent Wildlife Trust (www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk)** we can help restore hedgerows as vital habitats, movement corridors and shelter for wildlife.

You might also be interested in the **National Hedgelaying Society (www.hedgelaying.org.uk)**.



▲ The image on the left shows where the applicant in Chilham had wanted to place the 1.8-metre (6ft) fencing panels; this section is where the new wooden fencing will go. The centre picture shows how the new fencing will eventually look, with a hedge behind it. The image on the right shows a section where the hedge (behind the fence) needs to be 'thickened out'.

Imagine how dreadful some 25-35 metres (30-40 yards) of 1.8m fencing panels would have looked here. It would have been the first thing seen on entering the village.

Fourthly, we could do more to get the public on our side and to value the hedgerows in their areas. Ironically, the only specific legislation applying to urban hedgerows concerns their potential nuisance and neighbour disputes about hedgerows between property boundaries.

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 addresses how neighbour disputes over hedges should be dealt with. We should be doing more to publicise the value of hedgerows



Gabrielle Ludlow



and good management practices so that a better-informed and sympathetic public would be more prepared to accommodate them.

Hedges are good for our health. They hold particulates from traffic fumes and tyres that would otherwise end up deep in our lungs. Studies have shown that a one-metre-long hedge traps emissions from 30 diesel cars a year.

Being at street level, they are more efficient at trapping exhaust pollution than trees. The best hedges in this regard have many small leaves and are evergreen.

An ill-informed public could be doing harm to wildlife without knowing it. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, for example, it is an offence to disturb a bird's nest if it contains eggs or chicks or is being otherwise used; such a nest could of course be in a hedge.

Hedgerows are beautiful, they are beneficial in so many ways and they can be packed with wildlife – let us share and publicise their value for the benefit of future generations.



Saved in Sevington

Highfield Lane runs north-south and forms the eastern boundary of the new Sevington Inland Border Facility off junction 10a of the M20. The hedges on either side of the lane are thick, mature and species-rich and they delineate the lane clearly.

As bulldozers accelerated earth-moving and construction in August last year, the hedge defined the boundary of drainage works, the laying of tarmac and the placing of lights well away from and to the west of the hedge.

Thankfully, Highfield Lane and its hedges are still there, with the Inland Border in operation for trucks to have export documents checked and drivers' Covid-19 tests carried out.

It should be appreciated that had a previous planning application for the site – for a 1,000,000 sq ft Aviva warehouse – been followed through as approved, the lane and its hedges would have disappeared, with a new line of trees planted further east.

The subsequent purchase of the site by the government saw plans drawn up by Mott MacDonald and project-managed by the county council that constrained use of the site within its western section, leaving the Highfield Lane hedge intact.

There was an effort made to create a friendly dialogue between local groups and the developers.

The first step was to liaise with the government and discover that the western side of the Highfield Lane hedge did not need to be removed. A short discussion was enough to show an understanding of priorities; theirs was safety and security, while local people wanted the habitat and traditional sunken nature of the hedge to be retained.

Although large amounts of topsoil have been moved temporarily into the eastern section beyond the hedge, it has not been destroyed. It can be done!

Indeed, local efforts have motivated Ashford Borough Council to try to buy the neighbouring field and use the expertise of Kent Wildlife Trust to increase the net biodiversity of the whole area.



Credit goes to Mersham Parish Council and the Village Alliance for their campaigning and to the Department for Transport, the county council and Ashford borough councillors for paying attention to a hedge.



Chairman's Update

John Wotton

A time of both sadness and hope

I am writing as winter is turning rapidly to spring and our hopes for an end to social restrictions and reclaiming our cherished freedom are rising with the sap in the trees and the spring flowers from the ground.

I trust that, by the time you read this, these hopes will not have suffered any further setbacks. I certainly look forward very much to meeting CPRE colleagues face-to-face again, to visiting our district committees around the county and to joining Vicky and her loyal band of helpers at the shows and other events that we hope will take place later in the year.

It is a time of sadness, as well as a time of hope, as we mourn the loss of two outstanding and dedicated friends and colleagues, Gary Thomas and Brian Lloyd, to whom tribute is paid on the following page. I simply add my own admiration for and gratitude to them both for all that they did to support CPRE Kent.

We were also saddened by the death of Margaret, wife of our patron, Sir Robert Worcester, and will miss her support.

It is pleasing to be able to report a measure of success in CPRE's national campaign, Don't Deregulate Planning. Following intensive advocacy and lobbying activity by the CPRE network, in which we in Kent played a full part, the government withdrew the increased housing targets published in the autumn, for further consideration.

We await, however, the government's response to the consultation on the White Paper, Planning for the Future, which contained many potentially harmful measures, inimical to local democracy, on which we and national CPRE made extensive critical comments.

We were disappointed, but not altogether surprised, that the planning inspector upheld the developer's appeal against Maidstone Borough Council over a large residential development proposed for Otham.

Richard Knox-Johnston represented CPRE Kent with his customary skill and enthusiasm and coordinated evidence from several groups and individuals. I hope that the support we gave the local community will be remembered because we are desperately short of active members in Maidstone borough.



A genuine loss: Brian Lloyd (left) and Gary Thomas

We have a lot on our plate in Kent this year.

Swale District Council's Local Plan review has kicked off with the largest and ugliest of rabbits pulled from the hat, with no previous consultation, in the form of major residential development

in Teynham and a bypass around the village. We will be objecting very strongly to this irregular and undemocratic way of proceeding.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council launches in March its Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation, which includes many unwelcome proposals for major development in the Green Belt (notably 4,000 or more new homes in Capel and on the western side of Paddock Wood) and in the High Weald AONB.

One of these developments, Turnden near Cranbrook, is opposed by both Natural England and the national association of AONBs and is the subject of an active local campaign in which we are playing a full part.

We are engaged with the plans for the London Resort theme park on the Swanscombe peninsula and have supported a campaign led by Buglife, Kent Wildlife Trust and the RSPB to have the site designated as an SSSI. As I write, the signs are promising.

There are many other campaigns and programmes of work under way, as Hilary and the committee chairs report elsewhere in this edition. The challenges we face are enormous, but month by month and year by year the need to combat climate change, protect biodiversity and preserve our precious green spaces rises higher in public consciousness and in government policymaking. There is cause for hope, despite the seemingly relentless pressure to develop.

I close by thanking you all for your support over the past six months and by again paying tribute to the dedicated hard work of Hilary and the rest of CPRE Kent's staff team, who have kept the show on the road brilliantly, despite all the practical problems that Covid-19 has thrown at us.

Gary Thomas



Gary Thomas (right) with the Thurnham Heritage Award presented to CPRE Kent for its fight against development at Woodcut Farm

Gary was chairman of the Kent branch of CPRE from 2003-2005, but his involvement with the organisation began well before and continued long after.

My first memory of Gary was the leadership he exercised in bringing together communities in the North Downs Rail Concern group from across the county along the proposed route of what was then known as the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and is now High Speed 1.

With rational discussion rather than blanket opposition, the route of the high-speed line through Kent was gently improved to take more sensitive account of the landscapes through which it was passing, negotiating route alterations that meant the rail line would pass unobtrusively through tunnels rather than over viaducts along the slopes of the downs.

Gary had a keen eye for detail and an overwhelming commitment to improving the environment he would leave behind him.

He was part of the formidable team that successfully put up a spirited community response to the challenge posed by AXA to locate a highly damaging road-rail freight interchange at the foot of the Kent Downs AONB – just one of the damaging proposals to which he brought his energy, effort and campaign commitment.

A passionate environmentalist and keenly aware of the threat of climate change, he was tireless in his campaigning and for all he did to further CPRE Kent's objectives.

Farewell... and thank you

It is with great sadness that we must report on the loss of two great friends in February. The CPRE Kent family is all the stronger for its unity and the passing of two of the main players in our recent history will be felt deeply. We and many others have much for which to thank them both. **Hilary Newport** pays tribute.



Cricket was a particular passion for Brian and he received a (dedicated) ball on retiring from CPRE Kent

Brian Lloyd

Brian joined the CPRE Kent team as senior planner at the end of 2007, staying until his retirement in 2016.

He brought to the role his prodigious professional skill and passionate commitment to protecting landscapes and countryside from inappropriate development.

Brian was the principal player in our lengthy campaign to prevent the despoilation of a stretch of protected landscape at Farthingloe outside Dover, proposed for the inappropriate and damaging construction of more than 600 homes in an area of protected landscape. He saw not only the importance of defeating this application but the importance of the decision in standing up for designated landscapes everywhere.

He helped steer the challenge through the High Court, the Court of Appeal and finally the Supreme Court, where an important judgment was handed down in 2018 that agreed with Brian's initial assessment: that a planning decision that has the potential to cause substantial harm to a very special landscape must not be undertaken without very substantial reasons.

This was a hugely important judgment that has been referred to widely in subsequent planning and court decisions and has helped communities across the country protect the green spaces they love.

The importance of the Farthingloe judgment does not, of course, belie Brian's sharp wit and sense of humour. He was a genuinely gentle giant who was taken from us far too soon.

Both Brian and Gary will be fondly remembered by their CPRE Kent friends and our thoughts and condolences are with their family, friends and loved ones.



A victory . . . for now

The backtrack from a dreaded government algorithm is to be commended but there is still much to do if we are to have a housing policy fit for purpose, says Hilary Newport, CPRE Kent director

We reported in the last edition of Kent Voice on the proposed changes to the planning system contained in the draft Planning White Paper and associated consultations released last autumn.

I'm proud to say that we joined forces with many other county branches to make a spirited national CPRE response to the proposals in outlining the significantly damaging implications of these changes.

As an organisation, CPRE was not alone in challenging the proposals that were suggested last autumn. A House of Commons debate was led in October by Bob Seely, MP for the Isle of Wight, and included energetic contributions from former Prime Minister Theresa May and our own vice-president, Damian Green.

Politicians from all sides of the House spoke against the detail of the proposals. The government has a laudable determination to deliver the homes that people and communities need, but the devil – as is so often the case – was in the detail of those proposals.

A principal plank of the reforms proposed was a blanket algorithm to calculate housing targets. This calculation method would have disproportionately impacted on the rural spaces of the South and South East, cramming in expensive homes in places where property values are highest to the detriment of those areas of the country so desperately in need of investment in jobs and decent homes for all.

As a result of the widespread, immediate and negative response to these proposals, the government backtracked on its plans to impose the artificial one-size-fits-none algorithm for calculating housing need and reverted to its previous method for calculating a target figure for housing growth in each planning authority district (although this method is not without its criticisms, based as it is on out-of-date population projections that do not take into account the slowing in the growth rate of the population).

This is an important victory, taking immediate effect, while the government analyses the consultation responses to the remainder of the proposals for change.

It is heartening to know that the voice of CPRE and its members can be heard where it matters. We have also seen a very welcome commitment to the prioritisation of previously-developed and neglected land and keenly anticipate the production of proposals for planning that respect the environment, protect the climate and give communities affordable places to live...

We know, and have never denied, that there is a pressing need for good-quality, genuinely affordable homes in the places where people need to live; this is sadly at odds with the apparent intention of a development lobby that seeks to build larger houses in car-dependent homes on greenfield sites that maximise profits for shareholders.

We can, and must, do better than this if we are to have a future fit for Britons as we emerge from a pandemic into a healthy, green future.

Why?

join CPRE Kent

CPRE Kent is the only charity that fights for the wider countryside in our county. We don't just battle to protect trees, birds, wildlife or open spaces – we seek to protect the countryside itself.

Without the wider rural environment that we hold so dear, not only do we lose our nature but also what makes Kent special.

No one has fought harder for the countryside with its people, villages and wildlife than CPRE Kent. We are now into our 10th decade – we could of course not have lasted that long without our supporters, but similarly we have proved our right to be here through the passion, care and professional expertise of our staff and volunteers.

No one knows the crazy levels of pressure from urban sprawl weighing upon Kent as much as the people who live here – and suffice to say all who represent or work for this organisation live within its borders.

We want to bring people together in connecting with the nature in our downs, woods, marshes, farms and coastline with which we are blessed... we still have much to celebrate.

As you will read elsewhere in this magazine, CPRE, the countryside charity, has been engaged at the highest level in consultations on proposed changes to the planning system that could have been disastrous for our countryside.

As we write, we can report that the government retreated from the worst of the reforms. CPRE was not alone in challenging the proposals, but we played a full and important part – as ever, our charity's combination of local and national knowledge proved its strength.

While CPRE Kent is far from opposed to all development or to all change, there are cases where we believe we have a duty to challenge what is profoundly wrong.

Sometimes that duty drives us to seek protection for the countryside through court; it is an expensive option and one taken only as a last resort, but if we don't do it, who else will?

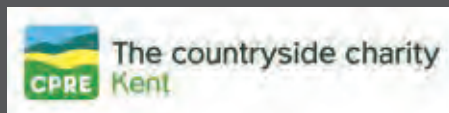
CPRE Kent leads the fight for our beautiful county in a way no one else can, holding developers and the people that represent you to account. Please join us – as together we are stronger.

Write to us at: CPRE Kent, Queen's Head House,
Ashford Road, Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD

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

Pink Wellies

When the first pandemic lockdown was announced in March last year, CPRE Kent planner **Julie Davies** took advantage of a very different way of life to explore the countryside around her home town of Faversham. Eventually she wandered further afield, covering much of the Swale, Canterbury and Ashford districts and wrote about her exploits in the blog *Pink Wellies*. With a year having passed, the blog has drawn to a close, so here are some of Julie's thoughts and images from 12 months none of us will ever forget.



I'm not new to walking. What I wasn't used to – up until this time last year – was exploring every single footpath from my front door, out into the countryside.

What lockdown has taught me is that there's a world to explore right on my doorstep. There's no need to travel to far-flung places when, with a bit of thought, you can feel like you're on holiday at home.

I've watched crops grow from barren soil to harvest and noticed more butterflies and wildflowers than ever before. I feel connected to the geography of my neighbourhood and have a pride in my bit of the Garden of England.

In all honesty, lockdown has been easy for me. I have a safe home, a tight-knit family unit and a job. I'm not juggling the needs of multiple children who are schooling at home. Getting out into the countryside couldn't be easier for us. All we need to do is literally walk to the end of our road and we have a reason to get out. There's a dog to walk and a child who needs a blast of fresh air each day.

We also have somewhere to drip-dry our wet clothes and wellies. Imagine what it would be like in a flat, with no outside space and limited storage. Now that would put a downer on getting out into the countryside.

As well as discovering new footpaths (and at times mixing things up by doing the same walks but in reverse), I've really enjoyed spending time with my daughter. Walking side by side is so conducive to talking as equals rather than being in ranty teenager and mum mode.

For me, the strangest part of our year of family walks is the realisation that my family don't share my point of



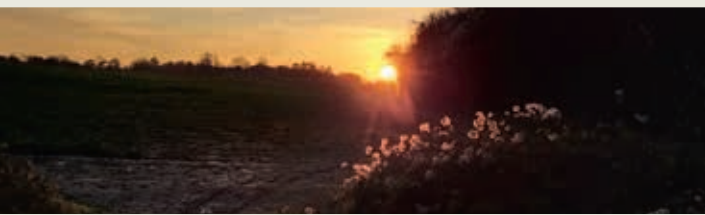
view that being out in the countryside is an excursion (hello Mrs Picnic); to my husband and daughter, it's a necessary dog-walking/daily exercise chore. And nothing more than that.

For my next year of walks I reckon it'll be a compromise of short weekday walks and one long (five-miler) at some point over the weekend. I guess, though, with lockdown restrictions being eased the notion of a weekday walk with my daughter is just going to be a happy memory.

And on a final note: dog poo and rubbish. But let's just not go there for the moment ...

• **To catch up with Julie's year of walks, visit the CPRE Kent website and search 'Pink 'Wellies'**





It is all too familiar a scenario: a local authority proposing to build thousands of houses in areas wholly unsuitable for such levels of development. When one council in north Kent targeted sites in the Green Belt, an impressive operation to challenge the potential environmental destruction was launched. Here, **Alex Hills**, chairman of CPRE Kent's Gravesham committee, gathers some of the leading players to explain how they rallied residents to the cause.

Campaigns...

and how (hopefully)
to WIN them

At the end of last year without warning, and with rising numbers of Covid-19 cases making people worry whether they were going to have a Christmas or a job, Gravesham Borough Council began a Regulation 18 Stage 2 consultation.

The proposal was for 3,790 houses within the Green Belt envelope over 21 sites, all being highly damaging to the rural area. The consultation was a perfect example of how not to run a such a process during pandemic restrictions and in the run-up to Christmas.

GBC appeared to put every possible barrier in the way of people responding – the irony of it complaining about the way Highways England carried out the Lower Thames Crossing consultation was not lost on residents.

As chairman of CPRE Kent's Gravesham committee, I am blessed to have an experienced, hard-working committee who make me look good – they of course rose to this massive challenge.

At the start of the campaign, we held a large Zoom meeting. The campaign slogan Stop the Green Belt Grab was created by local resident Peers MS Carter. Peers was a creative director at Saatchi & Saatchi, so we really have drawn on excellence from the talent in our borough.

If you can inspire people to act, it is amazing the talents you find and we were lucky to find many such people during the campaign.

I will let the committee members say in their own words what they did during the consultation process...

Pat Luxford:

We were able to bring together all our contacts and residents' groups from previous campaigns. This enabled CPRE Kent to ensure the campaigners worked together with one message. It could so easily have become various groups saying 'Not in my backyard' as the proposed sites were spread over various Green Belt areas of Gravesham.

Despite our inability to sit around a table to make decisions or to hold public meetings, the residents' response was extraordinary. By pulling together a group of dedicated volunteers whom we called foot soldiers, we were able to get door to door with updated information and easy-to-follow draft objection letters to GBC, making us so much more effective. By reaching out and working with like-minded groups and individuals, we were able to beat lockdown.



Placards were placed in prime locations and in residents' properties



Gravesham is blessed with beautiful countryside...
and people are prepared to fight for it

James Ferrin:

My input into the campaign was dealing with social media. We used two main avenues, organic posting and sharing, and then paid for advertising.

We used the CPRE Kent page as the main vehicle for this. We wrote the posts and then David Mairs posted them.

The organic side was simple. Once the posts were up, we shared them across all the community groups in the area. There are some 30 or so that cover Gravesham. Comments were monitored and those asking for more information were helped.

The paid-for element helped us reach those harder-to-reach people who were not members of groups. We set the targeting of location, interests and age and then put £50 behind the activity and set it live.

We did a couple of posts, the first giving general information and the second providing wording for a standard letter that GBC had agreed would count.

The results from the paid activity were a total reach of 18,315 people and a total of 3,029 engagements that equated to £0.016 per engagement. Pretty good-going!

Noel Clark:

The committee decided we needed a website to quickly post reactions to the changing consultation as GBC changed the consultation documentation during the process. We used a website as the central repository of information to avoid having to walk revised notes around to our supporters.

We used justgiving.com for fundraising as our costs were relatively small and several locals had expressed interest in contributing. Over the course of the campaign, we raised £570, which was used largely on printing and banners. We found the need to be local and reflect issues that affected us directly was important, but ultimately the outcome will be determined by national policy.

Jackie Luckhurst and Sue Gofton:

During the first phase, thousands of leaflets informing communities of the threat to the Green Belt were delivered. The second phase entailed the delivery of printed objection letters; these had to be distributed in the shortest time possible to meet the GBC deadline of December 31, 2020.

This was coupled with banners and placards placed in prime locations and attached to householders' properties. The volunteers had been sourced through social media and community associations and support groups. Time was of the essence as we were in lockdown and the deadline was looming. The postal service was under pressure as it was the Christmas period and Covid-19 had taken its toll, so help was given by shops that were happy to have sealed drop-boxes where people could post their objection letters for free with their personal data secured. This worked incredibly well.

Frequent updates were given on social media until the deadline was met and the letters from the drop-boxes were hand-delivered before the deadline. In terms of the Covid-19 difficulties and the deadline, it was deemed a success, based on communities pulling together and forging great camaraderie.

And back to Alex Hills for the final word...

The Gravesham committee is an equal partnership (as chairman I do not have a casting vote) of six very different individuals with different skills, but we all respect and trust each other, which means we can debate openly. This was a vital asset as we had to set up a campaign structure from scratch, working with the hard-working Higham, Shorne and Cobham parish councils.

We also had to respond quickly as the campaign developed, so weekly Zoom meetings were important.

Covid-19 prevented us from such options as public meetings, while media disinterest meant that leaflets, the website (www.cpregravesham.org) and social media were our main tools in the campaign. Seeing local groups as an asset and working with them was another key part.



My role was very much that of coordinator and making sure everyone was kept informed about what was happening – this included local councillors. The fact we were able to keep the campaign non-political and have so many saying very clearly to GBC that the Green Belt is not for building on is a great compliment to the committee.

Alex Hills ensured campaigners and councillors alike were kept informed about events

*Water, sewage,
a highly stressed
environment...*

**and a
possible
solution**



The River Stour is beautiful and rich in both history and wildlife, but the pressures being placed upon it are unsustainable. However, **Paul Bolas**, who spent much of his working career in the water industry, suggests a possible way ahead.



The tranquillity of this stretch of the Stour, near Canterbury, belies the controversy sparked by plans to build a park & ride on nearby water meadows (Sian Pettman)



The River Stour can still bring us cheer... this is the scene near Chilham (Julie Davies)

Water supply to urban populations and sewage disposal are issues we cannot ignore – both are critical to our way of life and both have environmental consequences.

A good example of this is at Ashford, which has undergone rapid expansion in recent years and now has a population of some 140,000 within the borough. Its location is such that neither water supply nor sewage disposal have been achieved without environmental harm.

The town is on the River Great Stour below the confluence of the East Stour and Great Stour tributaries. At this point the river has a high winter flow from the clay catchment of the two rivers but a very small dry-weather flow.

After Ashford, the river flows through Wye, Chilham, Canterbury and Fordwich before reaching the sea at Pegwell and Sandwich Bays.

The stretch of river between Wye and Canterbury is of particular interest because it flows through the gap in the chalk hills of the North Downs. Here its flow is greatly enhanced by pure, clear chalk water flowing from springs. This gave the river the much-valued characteristics of a chalk stream from spring to autumn. These are clear water, a clean gravel bed, a unique beautiful, diverse and much-valued flora and fauna, great clarity, brisk flow, relatively constant temperature and freedom from pollution.

The water supply to Ashford depends to a large extent on deep boreholes in the chalk at Godmersham and Chilham. Naturally, these deplete the flow of chalk water that would otherwise go to the river and enhance its resilience to pollution.

Once the water has been supplied to Ashford, it returns as sewage and is treated at Bybrook sewage works before being discharged

to the river. Sewage treatment is a largely biological process designed to speed up the natural breakdown of domestic waste by bacteria and other micro-organisms.

It is normally a multi-staged process using screening, a primary tank to settle solids to be removed as sludge and then aeration to accelerate the biological purification. After this, it is followed by further settlement and other specific treatments – for example, phosphate reduction is used at Bybrook – with filtration before discharge.

The whole process is completed within a few hours and is not designed to produce an effluent free from bacteria and viruses, nor can it be expected to wholly remove many modern contaminants such as pharmaceutical waste that has already passed through the human body and complex chemicals found in modern sewage.

These can include such components as endocrine disruptors, which affect fish and other river life. These discharges are always warmer than the water supply because of the heat input of washing, cooking and industrial activities. The basic intention of sewage treatment is to produce an effluent compatible both in quality and flow with the receiving water such that its ecology does not suffer any serious harm.

The effluent from the sewage-treatment plant is discharged to the Stour at Bybrook, where its volume greatly exceeds the dry-weather flow of the river itself. Urban run-off containing oils, rubber from tyre wear and other pollutants also enter the river from road drainage and contribute to the contamination of the river in this area.

Although self-purification of the effluent continues in the river, it is hardly surprising that it simply cannot cope with a wholly incompatible amount of sewage effluent and restore quality before the river reaches the previous 'chalk stream' area.

The result is that this area suffers in many ways, including decreased diversity of flora and a shortened season of growth.

As the effluent increases, the 'chalk stream' section retreats further and further downstream. This can only get worse as Ashford continues to expand unless some innovative solution can be found to reduce the gross overloading of the river by the sewage effluent.

This must not continue, but it is difficult to convince those in charge of sewage treatment that such solutions do exist.

One that merits research and evaluation is the surface, or shallow sub-surface, irrigation of the effluent on to an area of chalk remote from the river and a short distance downstream of Wye.

As the effluent slowly percolated through the soil and chalk, it would undergo much further natural purification and emerge after a very considerable period into the river in a clean condition compatible with a chalk stream. No river flow would be lost and the quality of the river could be improved immensely.

This suggestion is based on the long-term successful use of surface irrigation as the method of sewage treatment at Winchester, where it has been shown not to produce pollution problems.

It is urgent to tackle this problem in the Stour because the UK has signed into law the Water Framework Directive, which stipulates that by 2027 our rivers must be restored to a near-natural condition, which is impossible using the present system.



At first glance, Bewl Water in this shot looks more akin to a desert watering hole than a reservoir designed to meet the needs of people in large parts of Kent and East Sussex... drought is likely to be an increasing part of our lives

The time for talking is over

We need to wake up to the reality of changing weather patterns and increased demand on resources, says **Graham Warren**, of CPRE Kent's environment committee

Long, dry spells of weather and the resultant changing water situation can no longer be regarded as something that 'everyone talks about but does nothing about'.

It is now a reality that has consequences for almost every aspect of public supply, resource management and flood control – components of what we have come to recognise as elements of CPRE national policy.

The Environment Agency in June 2012 produced a plain man's guide under the title *The State of Water in Kent*, drawing attention to the increasing pressures on our river and groundwater resources, with its implications for the environment and security of future supplies.

It serves to remind us that even in those parts of the county with a high proportion of chalk or Lower Greensand aquifers, there are issues relating to the management of groundwater and related baseflows – an aspect that has increasing relevance in our response to the climate emergency, which has been quoted in the CPRE Strategic Plan 2020-26 as “the greatest threat facing the countryside”.

This is an appropriate opportunity to revisit the EA's findings. Its report, which followed the Kent Water Summit of June 26, 2012, drew on data from studies for the Water Framework and Habitats Directives (together with river basin management plans). It makes a clear distinction between the chemistry and flow characteristics of the 'hard-water' chalk streams feeding the River Stour and the flashier watercourses draining the clays and sands of the Rivers Beult and Rother.

When the report was published, 73 per cent of public supply was drawn from groundwater – and most of this from chalk aquifers – and this supply typically requires less treatment. Also, the chalk sands and sandstones underlying much of Kent act as natural reservoirs supporting public supplies during more severe and extended periods of drought.

The report also referred to the fact that public supply demand was already approaching the full capacity of surface and groundwater resources, with the options for

alternative sources including licence-trading, effluent re-use, desalination, water transfers and conjunctive use. There were also options for reducing demand.

Annual rainfall in Kent averages some 700 millimetres (ranging from 550-900mm), with the wetter areas on the North Downs chalk, and two-thirds of this is lost by evapotranspiration.

Climate-change models have predicted higher annual average temperatures, with corresponding increases in summer evapotranspiration losses, pointing to an increased dependence on winter rainfall recharge. About 34 per cent of rainfall reaches the water table and 23 per cent of this is abstracted for supply.

Note that this could be a probable maximum, given that the residual recharge is required to maintain groundwater levels and ensure protection against saline intrusion.

Note also the relatively high rates of surface-water abstraction in the River Medway and the potential impact on wildlife.

Surface-water abstraction accounts for about one-third of all water taken (mainly for industrial cooling) and there are special conditions applied for wildlife protection.

Abstractions are controlled by EA licences, plus CAMS (catchment abstraction management strategy) and RSA (restoring sustainable abstraction).

Based on returns between 2005 and 2011, 85 per cent of water is abstracted for public supply (average 630ml/d), the remaining 15 per cent being taken for agriculture, industry, energy and the environment.

Summary

Water resources in Kent are finely balanced between population needs and the environment. The prospect of hotter, drier summers, bringing reduced river flows and groundwater levels – and a corresponding increase in demand – requires a more integrated approach to the management of water resources, with more attention to security of supply.

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

- Local Plan adopted in February 2019.

Canterbury

- Local Plan adopted in July 2017. Regulation 18 consultation on new Local Plan (2040) issues and options took place in the summer last year. There will be a period of Regulation 19 consultation on a pre-submission version of the Plan from April-September this year. It is anticipated that the examination hearings will commence in October 2021, with adoption by July 2022.

Dartford

- Regulation 18 consultation on strategic issues for the new Local Plan (Core Strategy Review) took place in summer 2018. A further preferred options Regulation 18 consultation took place at the beginning of 2020. The next round of consultation (Regulation 19) started on February 26 (closing date April 9, 2021).

Dover

- Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Dover District Local Plan ended on March 17, 2021. It is expected that Regulation 19 consultation will take place in the autumn, with examination hearings commencing June 2022 and adoption by February 2023.

Folkestone & Hythe

- Places and Policies Local Plan was adopted on September 16, 2020. The Core Strategy Review (2020) examination hearings have been taking place online, starting December 15, 2020, recommencing in the new year. Further hearing dates are to be scheduled regarding transport matters.

Gravesham

- A partial review of the Local Plan Core Strategy, Site Allocations and a Development Management Policies Document is being undertaken. Initial Regulation 18 consultation took place in summer 2018. A further round of Regulation 18 consultation ran from October 23-December 31, 2020.

Maidstone

- Local Plan adopted in 2017. Regulation 18 Scoping, Themes & Issues public consultation took place in summer 2019. A further Regulation 18 consultation on the preferred approaches took place from December 1, 2020-January 8, 2021. It is expected that Regulation 19 consultation will take place in December this year, with examination hearings in summer 2022 and adoption by October that year.

Medway

- The Medway Local Plan (2037) has been subject to three rounds of Regulation 18 consultation, the most recent taking place in June 2018. Regulation 19 consultation will take place this spring, with adoption expected by December 2022.

Sevenoaks

- Examination of the Local Plan commenced in October 2019. The inspector suspended the hearings and advised the council to withdraw its Plan as it was considered unsound (failure to comply with Duty to Cooperate). The council advised the Planning Inspectorate it would not voluntarily withdraw its Local Plan. In December 2020, the council lodged an application to appeal against an unsuccessful judicial review of its draft Local Plan and is waiting for this to be considered by the High Court.

Swale

- Local Plan adopted in July 2017. Regulation 18 consultation (scoping issues) for the Swale Local Plan Review 2022-2038 took place in 2018. The anticipated issues and options (Regulation 18) consultation in 2020 did not take place. Regulation 19 consultation is under way (February 8-April 30, 2021). It is expected that examination hearings will commence in November 2021, with adoption by spring 2023.

Thanet

- The Thanet Local Plan (2020) was adopted in July 2020. A Local Plan review is expected to start this spring.

Tonbridge and Malling

- Examination hearings were started (online) in October 2020. The second set of hearings to be held in November 2020 was cancelled because of the inspectors' serious concerns in relation to legal compliance of the Local Plan and in particular the Duty to Cooperate (and therefore the Plan being at risk of being found unsound). The council is in correspondence with the Planning Inspectorate.

Tunbridge Wells

- Regulation 18 consultation on a draft preferred Local Plan took place in autumn 2019. The next round of public consultation (Regulation 19) will take place this spring (2021). Examination hearings are expected to take place in November this year, with adoption in June 2022.

District	Plan	Jan-Mar 2021	Apr-Jun 2021	Jul-Sep 2021	Oct-Dec 2021	Jan-Mar 2022	Apr-Jun 2022	Jul-Sep 2022	Adoption
Ashford	Local Plan 2030								Adopted February 2019
Canterbury	Local Plan 2040		Consultation		Examination			Adoption	Adopted 13.7.17
Dartford	Local Plan 2036	Consultation							
Dover	Local Plan 2020-2040	Consultation			Consultation		Examination		
Folkestone & Hythe	Places and Policies Local Plan								Adopted 16.9.20
	Core Strategy Review 2020	Examination							
Gravesham	Site Allocations & Development Management Policies Document								
Maidstone	Local Plan 2022-2037			Consultation				Examination	Adopted 25.10.17
Medway	Local Plan 2019-2037	Consultation							
Sevenoaks	Local Plan 2015-2035								High Court appeal
Swale	Local Plan 2022-2038	Consultation			Examination				Adopted 26.7.17
Thanet	Local Plan 2020-2031								Adopted 9.7.20
Tonbridge & Malling	Local Plan 2031								Legal compliance issues
Tunbridge Wells	Local Plan 2033	Consultation			Examination		Adoption		

KEY

- Regulation 18
- Regulation 19
- EIP
- Adoption

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): hearing 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.

Around the districts.

A quick catch-up with our committees – more extensive reports from our chairmen are on the website. 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

- Our most important planning event recently has been the Wye College sites inquiry. Three separate inquiries were heard together but will each have separate decisions. When they are known, the next stage will begin – we hope with much greater respect for communal importance and the outstanding heritage importance of the college buildings. Wye Parish Council's witnesses and Wye CRAG put up an impressive performance against Telereal Trillium's QC at the inquiry. We can never assume, but we can hope the planning inspector produces a workable decision. On the day of his planned site visit he would have needed a toboggan to approach the village from the Wye Crown, as recommended by the developer's QC.
- Ashford's planning department has been going through a transformation under the interim leadership of Gilian McInnes. Its performance is already improving and decisions speeded up; Simon Cole takes over as head of planning in April in addition to his existing strategic planning responsibilities. We shall see whether enforcement also improves. The transformation is just in time because Ashford Borough Council is down to 4.8 years in its five-year housing-land supply due to under-delivery not of its making. New development is on hold, including existing large permissions, until effluent and run-off can be managed in ways acceptable to Natural England because of constraints downstream at Stodmarsh. The pragmatic way forward is to continue processing applications but with permissions including a condition that can only be discharged when experts contracted by the council find a solution with the developer that is acceptable to NE. Package sewage-treatment plants are not generally acceptable to NE because of poor maintenance.
- This edition has an article about hedges that is an outcome of work we have been doing at Ashford CPRE (see pages 8-11). It so easy to take hedges for granted or think they are too large and then regret any exposures when they are gone. Working on hedges has also got us thinking more about trees – veteran trees that are part of the landscape and ecology and often not acknowledged. Do write to the editor (david.mairs@cprekent.org.uk) if this is your interest, too.
- By the time you read this, the Sevington Inland Border Facility will be in use for Customs control of goods imported or exported through Dover and Folkestone. Complex filtration drainage and holding ponds have been necessary to manage the run-off from many acres of tarmac and permeable surfaces to meet requirements from the Environment Agency and NE to not exacerbate the Stour eutrophication problems at Stodmarsh. No wonder it has taken seven months to build! The large field east of Highfield Lane might become part of the Stodmarsh solution for development in Ashford. Land management there that reduces nitrates and phosphates may produce a eutrophication 'credit' similar to the farm solution worked out in south Hampshire. More news on this next time.

Canterbury – Nick Blake

- At the last CPRE Kent chairmen's meeting I was allowed enough time to present the long list of potentially bad practice by Canterbury City Council regarding an application for 630 houses and a relief road at Sturry. Members of the planning committee had refused consent on seven grounds by 10 votes to three, but the head of planning went to South East Local Enterprise Partnership saying the refusal had been down to only a few minor matters and that he could "persuade" members to change their minds if the application was resubmitted. The leader of the council, a political post, announced in the local press that he would write to the members of the ruling group again to "persuade" them not to vote against the plans when they were resubmitted, which they were in December. As district chairman, I have been working with another CPRE local committee member and people in Sturry to oppose the application. We consider the intervention of the leader contrary to guidance from the Local Government Association, which forbids any party-political interference with the planning process. If it does occur, it can bring into question any planning decisions made by a local authority. The council has refused to make public this letter as it is not a council document. We can understand that, but by his actions we believe the leader has distorted the boundary between the council and a particular party. The Sturry plans went back to committee on February 9 and, on party lines, no members of that group voted against them, so they were approved. Coincidentally, they all realised their earlier 'mistake'. However, we fight on; due to the muddled processes of both county and city councils, proposals for part of the relief road were due to be heard at committee in March. These involve tripling the traffic on an existing narrow A-road and not allowing people to turn in to their own village. Residents don't like that, but it has all been through a 'democratic process' so is absolutely fine.

Dartford and Gravesham – Alex Hills

- With the Meopham vineyard and Lower Thames Crossing consultations closed, I had hoped the committee could have a well-earned break in January. But that did not happen as issues concerning the vineyard application kept coming. The application is for a wedding venue, catering facilities and some industrial use. The land is on the edge of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but should be included within it, which is why we are fighting so hard to protect it.
- Highways England has withdrawn its application for a Lower Thames Crossing Development Consent Order. Our appreciation extends to Transport Action Network lawyers, who are in talks with the Department for Transport legal team over the legality of the government's roadbuilding programme. To put it in perspective, six billion tons of carbon dioxide are being discharged into the atmosphere every year, meaning the crossing would breach government policy on combating climate change. The legal challenge has the potential to block the LTC, so we are supportive of this approach. Our view is that it is time to stop the LTC plans and do what HE should have done in the first place, which is solve the problems at the Dartford crossing. This means replacing the outdated tunnels with a crossing fit for purpose. Congestion and delays are caused by HGVs having to be escorted in the tunnel, with traffic stopped to facilitate this. By upgrading the tunnels at the existing crossing, the highly engineered road network south of the crossing in Kent will carry vehicles as effectively as the roads approaching the bridge on the north side. The road structure proposed for Kent's A2 entrance to the proposed LTC is wholly inadequate. The introduction of free-flow tolls (a CPRE Kent idea) has proven effective at reducing congestion on the bridge. Surely this should also apply to northbound traffic. Free-flowing traffic generates less pollution than stop-start traffic. Spending money to increase traffic congestion is incomprehensible, whereas investing in new efficient and effective tunnels at the Dartford crossing is the solution.

Dover – Derek Wanstall

- Our condolences go to the families of the two CPRE Kent stalwarts we lost in February (see page 13).
- The Dover Local Plan Regulation 18 draft is out to consultation. There is concern as to the make-up of the Plan and sites recommended by internal officers. Several developments already have planning permission. Recently, the planning committee has approved planning applications on the chairman's deciding vote, against objections based on sound planning reasons from residents and parish councils. The latest example was at Betteshanger, which has been earmarked for 210 new properties. After 10 years of rewilding, there is great concern for wildlife on the site.
- Sadly, Kent Highways will not discuss traffic issues with communities before putting in its representations. This gives district planners the advantage as it minimises scrutiny of traffic issues, allowing further support for approval of cases.
- Before the pandemic, hold-ups on the A258 and A256 at peak times caused drivers to leave home early to reach their places of work, due to limited work in Deal and Walmer. There are also issues in town caused by not enough parking for shoppers. We are becoming increasingly worried that infrastructure is not being considered in decisions.
- Another concern is the proposed Customs holding and checking facility at Guston. This is totally detrimental to village residents whose houses are so close to the proposed parking area for HGVs. Again, there has been a lack of discussion with the local community, although the scheme seems to be supported by the district council.

Maidstone – Henny Shotter

- In the run-up to Christmas, we had a three-week window to comment on the review of the Maidstone Local Plan. We complained to the borough council about the little time given and in the end it extended the consultation period almost to the day of the original deadline! No good for us, though, as we, with the help of CPRE Kent planner Richard Thompson, had already put together a response, restricted by time limit but hopefully complete enough to reflect the most important aspects of the review. One overarching observation was that climate emergency was just an afterthought for the council. We have sympathy for the enormous pressure Maidstone Borough Council is under to deliver its housing target of 18,210 residential units, which central government thinks can be delivered by giving more and more planning permissions. However, these permissions are not necessarily taken up by developers and instead give them the opportunity to cherry-pick the sites that promise the highest profits... too often, as in the case of Maidstone, at the expense of sustainability and the countryside.
- We objected to a planning application for an isolated equestrian development on a large field on the downs at Harrietsham that conflicted with the landscape designations of the Kent Downs AONB.
- As you will have read elsewhere in this magazine, we mourn the loss of our chairman Gary Thomas (see page 13). Gary was dedicated to the work of CPRE Kent and on January 3, just a few weeks before his death, he sent our objections to a planning application for a free-range chicken farm that would house 192,000 hens (and their droppings) on a site close to the River Beult. There are several issues, but our main concern is the well-being of the Beult, an SSSI, and the danger of nutrient-rich surface- and groundwater being washed into the river.
- Once we have come to terms with Gary's passing, we will have to build a new team for Maidstone CPRE. If you want to be part of it, please get in touch with me at hennyshotter.cpre@gmail.com

Sevenoaks – Nigel Britten

- Chevening House, the Foreign Secretary's country residence, is located below the North Downs just north of Sevenoaks. The Chevening Estate has applied for permission to build four 'mounds' to screen the Grade 1 house from views of the M25. The mounds, up to 12 metres high, would require the importation of 750,000 cubic metres of material over at least five years. The proposals also involve the creation of parkland in arable farmland south of Chevening Church. We have taken the view, shared by many local residents and three parish councils, that the harm to the natural landform of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the impact and pollution caused by the estimated 150,000 lorry movements to deliver the material far outweigh any benefit there might be to views from the house.
- The stalled Local Plan contained a proposal to allocate 25 hectares of Green Belt for 340 houses and infrastructure including a school in Edenbridge, which we opposed strongly. This has come forward as a planning application, without Local Plan approval, and from formal comments made by Sevenoaks District Council's own officers it is clear the scheme fails to satisfy policy requirements. The only justification for releasing such a large area of Green Belt for housing would be that it provides an identified need for infrastructure – in this case a school – but the county council now says there is simply not the need for a school big enough to win Department for Education funding. There are

many other reasons to object to the plans, including the impact on wildlife and a badly-flawed representation of the land's Green Belt status.

- On Hubbards Hill, just south of Sevenoaks, on a small area of land looking towards Weald above the A21 bypass, there is a group of silver birch trees and a memorial plaque set in a stone slab that reads: "These trees were planted by the Committee for the Preservation of Rural Kent in memory of their late Chairman (1946-1963) Cyril Stapley Chettoe who did so much for the preservation of the countryside". He was the founder of what is now CPRE Kent. The site is very overgrown and the stone on the ground is sometimes invisible, so the Sevenoaks committee is working on a new memorial to be installed this year.

Shepway (Folkestone & Hythe) – Graham Horner

- Most of our available time has been spent on making our voice heard at the Examination in Public of the Local Plan Core Strategy Review. The review must be 'found sound' by the Planning Inspectorate for the council to go ahead with its 10,000-home flagship Otterpool Park new town. The examination has been held entirely online. This is probably a good thing as it meant three of us (Graham Horner with Julie Davies and Paul Buckley from the Charing office, to whom many thanks) could take part. It is never easy to work out which way the inspectors are leaning, but we were pleased they brought up a lot of the points we had made in our written submissions. Our position is that if Otterpool Park is going to be built, it had better be done in the best possible way and not be a dormitory town. We are also concerned that if the project drags its feet, developers will find opportunities to bring forward sites not in the Local Plan. Sellindge in particular is in the firing line in that regard, with Quinn Estates and Gladman sharpening their pens. We were pleased the inspectors had some searching questions of the council on deliverability. As we go to press, there are still some discussions to be had on transport issues, so the inspectors' report is not expected until midsummer. A more detailed masterplan for Phase 1 of Otterpool Park (next to Westenhanger) was due to go out for consultation in March. Please contact us with your views.
- Meanwhile, on the weekly lists of planning applications, the steady stream of barn conversions has been swelled by projects involving tents, yurts, shepherd's huts and the like. This is probably a good thing if it will help people come and enjoy our countryside as somewhere to visit rather than somewhere to build houses.
- We were of course disappointed that contracts have been let for the Princes Parade development in Hythe. Our only hope now is that remediation work to the former dump will be so expensive the project won't be viable (as campaigners have been saying for years).

Thanet – David Morrish

- In November, we lodged an objection to the Shottendane Road planning application. This development, near Salmestone, is the first of a string of major proposals emerging from the draft Local Plan and comprises a strategic allocation of 550 houses. This is the first major application in Thanet from land agent Gladman, which, shortly after lodging the application, pronounced that "the 30% allocation for affordable housing was not economic for a prospective developer". It subsequently submitted more 'supporting' reports to back up that dubious assertion. It beggars belief that such an experienced operator as Gladman could have failed so comprehensively to carry out due-diligence examination before submitting its application. It is almost as if it has a different business model, relying on the targeting of weak planning authorities...
- Millwood Designer Homes and Ptarmigan Land have submitted proposals for a total of 3,600 houses at Birchington and Westgate/Garlinge. All three sites lie on the northern tangent of the county council's much-loved 'inner circuit' (or 'Thanetburgering'), which it apparently believes will be financed by developer contributions as in 2019 it stated "there is no financial commitment placed on KCC". In these parlous times, that position is, we believe, unlikely to change.
- Central government has published revised population forecasts based on 2018 Census data. The projections for Thanet indicate natural growth and migration likely to generate demand for 600-700 houses a year. The government's algorithmic approach to housing is the root cause of the planning problem in Thanet – the notion of a need for 20,000 new houses here has always been, in our view, totally inconsistent with historical demand.
- In January, the district council cabinet decided to launch a six-week consultation in reviewing its Statement of Community Involvement (unchanged since 2012 despite the statutory requirement for five-yearly reviews!). As part of the consultation, a proposal to enable council officers to "require objectors to pay for officers' time to analyse long, detailed objections to planning proposals" was nodded through by the four-person cabinet under the watchful eye of our chief executive. A rousing example of a unique local democracy during election year!
- We have objected to all three housing proposals noted above – at Shottendane, Birchington and Westgate/Garlinge – and have formally requested that all three be formally deferred until completion of the Consultation Policy Review.

Tonbridge and Malling – Mike Taylor

- Our Local Plan is still struggling after inspectors suspended public examination due to concerns Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council had failed in its 'duty to co-operate' with Sevenoaks District Council. TMBC is understandably miffed and has written to the Secretary of State asking him to intervene and instruct the inspectors to continue.
- TMBC's Plan is hugely divisive, relying on a few very large developments in areas seen as less politically sensitive. It does create problems for our committee because to support one group automatically sets us against another area, so we must walk a delicate path. The major failing of the current Plan is its reliance on the use of Green Belt land, despite having ample supplies of land across the borough that are not constrained. The reliance on a few major sites makes the Plan extremely vulnerable, and not just because big sites generate big opposition. A Plan that proposed multiple sites across the borough, with even the smallest village being allocated a few houses, would be far more acceptable and sustainable. Every community needs some housing, and while this approach would generate ripples of protest, it would be nothing like the tsunami heading for TMBC.
- I meet local sandpit and landfill operators regularly and back in 2015, when the idea of Borough Green Garden City was first floated by developers, I met landowner Roger Body. He tried to convince me of the soundness of his scheme for 3,000 houses and I said the Metropolitan Green Belt would kill it. He bet me £50 he would be digging footings within five years. Five years came and went, and I have just collected a cheque, which he graciously made out to CPRE. A bit of delicious irony to make you smile in these bleak times...

Tunbridge Wells – Liz Akenhead

- Consultation on the pre-submission draft of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2020-2038 is running from the end of March to the beginning of May. This is the version that will go to the Planning Inspectorate, which will hold an inquiry. **I cannot stress too strongly that this is the moment when, if you object to any elements of the Plan, you must send in your objections. Objections can only be made to the Plan's 'soundness'.** Too often, instead of objecting to the draft Plan at this stage, people only object when a planning application is made,

but by then it is too late if the site has been allocated in the Plan for development (see below). Comments made on the earlier Regulation 18 draft will not be forwarded to the inspectorate, so if you want your views to be considered, you need to respond again now.

- At the time of writing, the draft Plan can be seen on the council's website, though some important supporting documents are still not available. Our committee's preliminary reaction is that although we are pleased to see some sites in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are no longer proposed for development, there is still too much damaging development proposed for the AONB and the Green Belt. We believe that to avoid needless waste of countryside the council has to work harder to find development sites on brownfield land and to ensure a much higher density on all of them. Every hectare of land developed at, say, 20 dwellings per hectare (dph) instead of 40 dph will cause a further hectare of greenfield land to be sacrificed unnecessarily.
- We were sorry to see the council give permission on the reserved matters for the 180 dwellings planned at Brick Kiln Farm in the lovely Crane Valley in the AONB at Cranbrook. We had opposed this development in principle from the start, but once the inspector had allowed it in the Site Allocations Plan in 2016 its fate was effectively sealed. The details of the reserved matters could also have been much better, but despite strenuous local objections councillors were persuaded to approve them.
- At the same meeting the council approved a further development we had strongly objected to in the Crane Valley – an application by Berkeley Homes for 165 dwellings, barely 15 metres from ancient woodland, with spoil from the project to be spread over some of the remaining agricultural land held by the applicant. Natural England, which objected to the proposal, has asked the Secretary of State to call in the decision. We have supported it in this and are waiting to hear whether he will do so.

Historic Buildings – John Wotton

- The committee met online in October and January. We were sorry to say farewell to Paul Smallwood, who has retired after many years of service to the committee. Paul brought to our discussions not only his love of old buildings but also his unique network of contacts throughout the county.
- Plans are going forward for judging submissions made in electronic format by undergraduates at Kent School of Architecture and Planning for a delayed 2020 Gravett Award for Architectural Drawing. If all goes well, we shall be able to proceed later in the year to paper-based submissions and face-to-face judging for the real 2021 Gravett Award.
- During the past six months we have objected to plans for a substantial housing development at Perry Court, Faversham, in the setting of listed buildings and have corresponded with residents and council officers about threats to historic buildings around the county.
- We are very concerned about the potential heritage implications of the designation of a Teynham Area of Opportunity in the Swale Local Plan Review Regulation 19 consultation, launched in February, and will be submitting comments alongside those of the Swale district committee.
- We have worked closely with residents in formulating objections on heritage grounds to a proposed housing development at Turnden, near Cranbrook, which is in the setting of the conservation area and several listed buildings and will destroy the well-preserved medieval farming landscape that is one of the most characteristic aspects of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Help protect the future of Kent's countryside with a legacy gift

By remembering CPRE Kent when considering your will, you can help ensure we will be here protecting the Kent countryside well into the future.



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To find out more, contact
Vicky Ellis 01233 714540
vicky.ellis@cprekent.org.uk

From the Frontline



Hilary Newport with the campaigns update

Manston airport

The granting of a Development Consent Order allowing developer RiverOak Strategic Partners to reopen Manston as a freight hub has been quashed.

The Department for Transport had already accepted that the DCO approval letter from Andrew Stephenson, Minister of State for Transport, did not contain enough detail on why the conclusion of the four-man Planning Inspectorate's Examining Authority – that the DCO should not be granted – was effectively dismissed.

And on Tuesday, February 15, the department agreed to a High Court Consent Order stating the minister had indeed not laid out adequate reasons explaining his actions.

The DCO revocation meant a judicial review of Mr Stephenson's decision scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, February 16-17, at the High Court did not proceed. The review had been launched by Jenny Dawes, chair of Ramsgate Coastal Community Team.

• We have referred elsewhere to the loss of our former planner Brian Lloyd. Without Brian's efforts, the case of Western Heights and Farthingloe, in which CPRE Kent challenged planning permission for a development in the Kent Downs AONB, would never have got to court. Ultimately, legal history was made as a Supreme Court judgment clarified the importance of adequate reasons being given in planning decisions. So many have much for which to thank Brian.

Lower Thames Crossing

Plans to build the crossing were delayed with Highways England's withdrawal of its application for a Development Consent Order.

"We've withdrawn the Development Consent Order application for the Lower Thames Crossing based on early feedback we've had from the Planning Inspectorate," said a spokesman for HE.

"We will take time to collate the information required for the specific points raised and will be resubmitting the application early in the new year."

Alex Hills, chairman of CPRE Kent's Gravesham committee, said: "We would be happier if the application was completely withdrawn as it is an ill-thought-out scheme that will be massively damaging for Kent without solving the problems at the Dartford Crossing."

For the scheme to progress, HE needs to be granted a DCO by the Planning Inspectorate, the government's planning agency.

Wincheap Water Meadows

Following our legal challenge, Canterbury City Council confirmed it would not be proceeding with its plans to build a park & ride extension on Wincheap Water Meadows.

As always, there are financial implications to resolve between CPRE Kent, the council and the fundraisers who supported the challenge, and these remain under discussion.

Campaigners are applying for a judicial review of the DCO decision.



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

Gift of Membership

Have you considered the gift of CPRE Kent membership?

CPRE Kent's membership is in serious decline.

Without our members we would not be able to protect the countryside from inappropriate planning decisions or campaign on litter issues and biodiversity at a time when there is unprecedented pressure on green spaces and protected areas. Nature is under serious threat.

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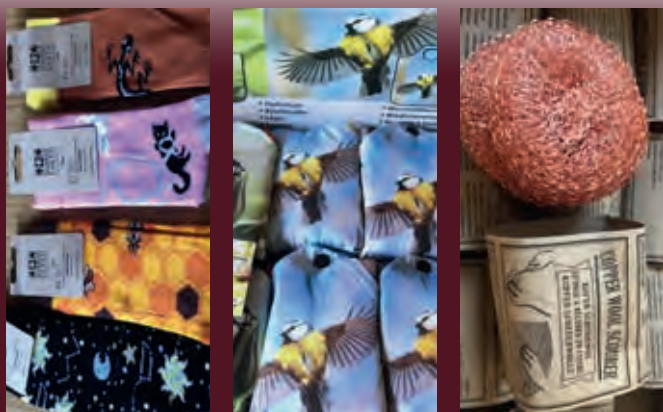
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Lottery results



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

October 20

Miss J Lushington £50
Ms B Potter £30
Mr A Terry £20
Miss A Taylor £20

November 20

Miss H Butcher £50
Mr N Pearson £30
Mr G Thomas £20
Rev & Mrs Morris £20

December 20

Dr F Simpson £150
Mr A White £50
Mr M Loveday £50
Ms G Heywood £20
& Mr S Osborn

January 21

Mr R Stickland £50
Mr N Pearson £30
Mrs M McFarlane £20
Mr J Preston £10

February 21

Ms J Fadden £50
Mr L Wallace £30
SM Hollins £20
Mrs P Pollock £10

March 21

Mr S Winn £50
Mrs M Fox £30
Mr L Wallace £20
Mr M Loveday £10

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CPRE Kent,

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

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Title	Full name	Age (under-18s)

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To: The Manager	Bank/building society name
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Name(s) of account holder(s)

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Bank/building society account number

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Branch sort code

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Service user number

7	2	4	2	4	5
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Reference (for office use only)

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