

KENT VOICE

Protecting Kent's Countryside
SPRING/SUMMER 2016



**The saga of
neonics & bees**

**The housing crisis
- a builder's view**

www.cprekent.org.uk



Hello & Goodbye



Paul Buckley and Jillian Barr



Rose Lister



Helen Whately



John Wotton



Brian Lloyd receives award from Christine Drury



Barrie Gore receives award from Christine Drury

There has been a lot of coming and going at CPRE Kent – our two new planners, **Jillian Barr** and **Paul Buckley**, are working hard on local plan examinations, responding to local and national consultations and dealing with planning queries from members and the public.

We have welcomed **Helen Whately MP** (Faversham and Mid Kent) as vice president. Helen said: "In this part of the South East there's enormous pressure to build and develop, but CPRE battles to preserve the open spaces of Kent for future generations. I look forward to working with CPRE Kent on future campaigns."

Rose Lister has worked as an intern producing a guide on "Looking after heritage through the planning system", writing for the CPRE Kent website and attending events.

John Wotton is the new chair of the Kent Historic Buildings Committee (KHBC). John said: "Kent is exceptionally rich in listed buildings and heritage assets. Many are at risk through neglect, redevelopment, or harmful alteration and, at a time of intense infrastructure and housing development, the setting of many historic buildings is under threat. We will continue to work to protect Kent's built heritage, which speaks eloquently to us of the unique history of our county."

We have said goodbye to:

Brian Lloyd, our senior planner since 2007, who leaves his parting thoughts on p16. Brian brought professional planning and expertise to a whole new level for CPRE Kent, made a huge impact on local plans, was involved in the early development of neighbourhood planning and contributed to CPRE national work on planning policy.

Barrie Gore, chairman of the Canterbury Committee since 2008. At the 2015 AGM he was awarded for "challenging the unsympathetic development around Canterbury World Heritage Site buildings and its Conservation Areas". **Alan Holmes** is the new chair.

Robert Baxter joined CPRE Kent in 1995 as conservation officer before becoming director and then chairman of the Kent Historic Buildings Committee. He was awarded "for his fantastic commitment".

Paul Smallwood was chairman of the Shepway Committee for nearly ten years. **Val Loseby** is the new chair.

CPRE Kent thanked **Alan Mepstead** for his work as treasurer over the last two years. The new treasurer is **Michael Moore**.



Robert Baxter

Director's Introduction

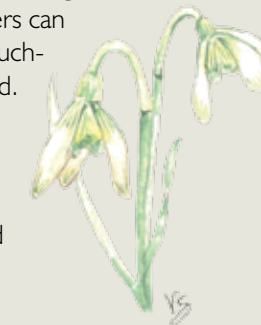


Hilary Newport

Implemented in 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework was designed to significantly boost the supply of housing and make it easier and quicker for planning authorities to generate local plans so they could direct much-needed development to the most sustainable locations. However, the economic downturn has scuppered the delivery of new homes and, step by step, extra layers of guidance and advice have sought to force planning authorities to up their game in delivering more homes.

The problem with this, of course, is that local authorities can't build homes; all that they can deliver is local plans with land allocated for housing, and then grant or deny planning applications according to those plans. But, if not enough houses are built to meet the targets, the planning authority must designate even more land. The result is that developers can cherry pick the most profitable sites, with the planning system powerless to ensure - for example - much-needed regeneration of town centres or a focus on genuinely affordable homes for those most in need.

Meanwhile proposed changes to the NPPF, such as the inclusion of starter homes within the definition of affordable housing, raise significant concerns about the availability of properly affordable homes in our rural areas. This impact will be even more pronounced if 'right to buy' is extended. It is becoming ever harder for planning authorities to say 'no' to inappropriate developments when they really should be able to. Whither localism?



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Lullingstone Park by Timelapsed



Sheep by Kol Tregaskes



Tulip by Jill Catley



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Keeping it together: Conserving Kent's Historic Environment



by Dr Andy Brown
Planning Director
Historic England South East



Waldershare Belvedere by Andy Brown

Looking out from the spirelet-festooned crown of Hadlow Tower across the patchwork quilt of green fields and tree-lined lanes, it is hard to contest the assertion that Kent's landscape and its history are inextricably entwined. This is not about the sort of heritage that you visit or that you pay to experience; this is the history all around us, in the interstices of daily life – the coppiced woods, the isolated farmsteads and, yes, the oasts that so characterise this part of Kent.

Historic England exists to champion the whole of what we refer to as the historic environment (in contrast to the natural environment). One of the ways we do this is to explain why the features of the historic environment matter to society. Sometimes they matter enough to justify statutory

Shining down on the fallen by Andy Flood Photography

protection (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>), but unlisted heritage assets also need to be taken into account in the planning process. A few of my favourite examples of heritage assets in Kent will serve to illustrate how we explain the significance of the historic environment.

On the northern edge of Waldershare Park lies an enigmatic squat brick tower – The Belvedere. What was it? Why build it there? What stories does it hold? Recent research has suggested that it is even more important than previously thought, and that it was built in the 1720s to house a stupendous memorial sculpture commissioned by a distraught widower, Sir Robert Furnese. He seems to have got over his sorrow rather more quickly than

the sculptor worked, and the memorial was instead shoe-horned into a chapel in the nearby All Saints Church and became a family monument. Without the physical survival of both the tower and the monument, neither this new explanation nor any future reinterpretations would be possible. Records simply cannot replace the real thing.

We all know that radar made a major contribution to saving the nation's bacon in 1940. Near Greatstone on the extraordinary gravelly wastes of Dungeness, the Heath Robinson predecessor to radar was being worked on in the 1920s. Huge experimental concrete sound mirrors were built to test the technology of concentrating the soundwaves of incoming aircraft, providing early warning of air attack. As aircraft increased in speed, it soon became apparent that an attack would have arrived by the time it had been pinpointed by this technology and the Air Ministry switched horses to invest in radio wave technology. The rest, as they say, is history.

Perhaps Kent's most unusual art gallery is the wonderful little All Saints Church at Tudeley, near Tonbridge. Here the Russian émigré Marc Chagall was commissioned in the 1960s to design the glass for a memorial window, but when he saw the church he was so enchanted that he wanted to complete the set. The interior of the church is now bathed in blue light from the exquisitely painful motifs in the windows.

It's hard not to be moved by the solemn dignity of the war memorials that punctuate our villages and towns. They are a potent reminder of the pervasive



Sound Mirrors Denge by Paul Kestenbaum

sorrow and understated pride felt by communities in the aftermath of terrible wars. Few are more powerful than the naval memorial high above Chatham, but each one, however modest in scale, speaks volumes.

These four examples show the four headings under which Historic England champions the value of historic environment to society: the potential for new understandings, the stories of how we became, the pleasure we take from beauty and the bringing together of people into communities through collective experience. We use these headings when we offer advice to owners on how to look after their heritage assets and when we advise local planning authorities on proposals for development. Of course, we cannot and need not give detailed advice on every case; we have to choose which cases will benefit most from our expertise and advocacy. In many instances, local conservation officers are quite able to argue the case for conserving heritage assets. As numbers of conservation officers reduce, however, we need to look for other partners with whom we can work.

So how can Historic England and CPRE Kent work better together

to safeguard what matters most about the historic component of the landscape? Here are a couple of ideas. As the recent case over development at junction 8 near Leeds Castle showed, not all councils are consulting Historic England when they should be over development affecting Grade I and II* Listed Buildings, and CPRE Kent's eagle-eyed planning team was able to alert us when Maidstone Council slipped up. In return, Historic England will be sure to alert CPRE colleagues to our free training events so that, together, we can do more to ensure that Kent's wonderful historic environment will be there for others to learn from and to enjoy in the future.



Chagall window by Harry Fenton



Your feedback...

Romney Marsh by Matthew Millen

In the last Kent Voice we featured the improved flood protection at Romney Marsh. The installation of the new Appledore pumps is about to begin. Local author and Romney Marsh expert **Jill Eddison** commented on the history of this iconic area:

“The Victorian antiquaries’ idea that the Romans built the Dymchurch Wall and reclaimed Romney Marsh was due to the discovery of a rich Roman site in the 1840s and the similarity of names, Romney and Roman! Recently more Roman sites have been found, some of them indicating salt-workings. Combining evidence from geographers, archaeologists and historians, we now recognise that in Roman time the Dymchurch coastline was protected by a massive shingle bank, sheltering tidal salt marshes behind it.

“From the thirteenth century the bank broke down. Historical records and a map by Matthew Poken show that by 1617 a man-made three-mile clay wall protected by a lattice work of brushwood and timber existed. The water of the dykes was released through guts and it needed year-round maintenance by two to three thousand men with horses and carts.”



Your feedback...

Lullingstone Park by Timelapsd

#ourgreenbelt Following our feature on the 60th anniversary of the Green Belt, we received the following comments:

Charles Tassell from Rural Plc (Kent) said: “It is important that house building is allowed in areas where needed to help maintain existing communities, schools and local businesses. Some may need to be on the edge of the Green Belt, but only when more suitable brownfield sites and redundant buildings have first been exhausted.”

Howard Porter of Tonbridge and Malling Friends of the Earth said: “By building on the Green Belt, we not only increase urban sprawl, car dependency, traffic congestion and resulting air pollution, but also destroy valuable land needed for food production, wildlife habitats and recreation.”

CPRE Kent Vice President **Richard Knox-Johnston** has been elected Chair of the London Green Belt Council.

He said: “It does not matter what the land looks like or what purpose it serves, it is still Green Belt. The oldest scam in the book is developers buying Green Belt land and deliberately allowing it to go derelict in order to persuade councils to allow development ‘as an improvement’.”



Chairman's Update

Christine Drury

Our work to protect the Kent countryside continues to be dominated by housing and planning matters. Getting houses built, in the right place is now a constant theme, so Susannah has been to talk to two people who are actually getting houses built. David Cox is building in Challock where, rather than do a neighbourhood plan, the community undertook a village confines project. After much hard work this agreed the shape of the village and identified a number of small sites on which new

- homes are now being built. Martin Hart is also getting houses built in East Kent, on slightly larger sites, some of them delivering other benefits. No new building is without controversy, and we would be pleased to hear your comments on the housing crisis and plans coming forward. In the autumn Kent Voice, we plan to talk to housing associations.
- Building in the right place remains the really big challenge. Under the planning system, councils face great pressure from both land trading developers to grant permissions and government to deliver housing and services with less resource.
- When that leads to seriously wrong planning decisions which would destroy Kent countryside of national importance, CPRE Kent may have to take the ultimate action and go to court. The battle for the Farthingloe valley in the AONB continues.

- We were in the High Court in December: the judge agreed we were right to bring the case, but disagreed with the detail of our arguments. As there are nationally significant planning principles at issue in this case, CPRE Kent has applied to the Court of Appeal for a review of the judgment.
- We exist to protect the countryside of Kent and we do so by promoting good planning and plan led development. Getting a local plan agreed should provide the clarity and certainty for developers and communities. It should also guarantee respect for landscapes agreed nationally to be Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As the days draw out and spring promises to light up our wonderful countryside, we thank you, our members, as ever for your support.
- Do send me your comments: christine.drury@btopenworld.com

“no new building is without controversy”



Tulip landscape at Westerham by Jill Catley



The housing crisis – a builder’s perspective

Builder David Cox by Susannah Richter

Unrealistic housing targets are putting more pressure on the housebuilding industry than ever before. In Kent, the total 20-year figure is in the region of 158,500 new homes*, with recent objectively assessed housing need of 18,560 in Maidstone, 15,600 in Thanet, 16,000 in Canterbury and 29,500 in Medway. The industry is dominated by the big companies, so what are the barriers faced by small and medium sized builders and can they provide solutions to the housing crisis? Susannah Richter has been talking to two Kent builders to find out.

“a small company could go bankrupt on just one unlucky brownfield buy”

*source: p8 Kent & Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework

Pentland Homes was set up by landowning farmers in the 1970s and now builds around 100 homes a year, up from just 30 during the recession five years ago. Most of its development sites are brownfield (79%) – including empty schools, a disused factory, a former pub and MoD land.

But Managing Director **Martin Hart** says brownfield sites are complicated: “Firstly, they are bought at risk because we don’t know what problems we may

find. We are currently building on the site of an old potato packing plant at New Romney which was entirely concreted over – we didn’t know what to expect when we removed the concrete. If something untoward was found, a small company could go bankrupt on just one unlucky brownfield buy.

“Secondly, if a site has been brownfield for a long time it often has greater ecological value than greenfield land which has been ploughed and treated. We have to get ecologists involved and it can be costly if we need to move or provide for species or could even prevent planning permission. Either way it will cause delay – again something many small building companies cannot afford.”

This is exactly what happened at Lodge Hill, a former army camp in Medway identified for 5,000 homes. Over the last 20 years it has become home to 1.3% of the national nightingale population as well as bats, great crested newts, toads, lizards, slow worms, grass

snakes and adders. This will be the subject of an interesting planning inquiry.

Affordability issues

Pentland Homes’ site of the old Romney Marsh Potato Company will have 48 homes, 30% of them affordable. Martin said: “We always try to match the policy position on providing affordable homes as we like to be fair and equitable. However, the pressure on smaller builders is greater because it is impossible to even get housing associations to take on just a few houses. If the development is 10 homes, no housing association will take on the three affordable homes required to meet the quota. The alternative is to pay the local authority to make the provision.”

At Bluebells in Ashford, Pentland built 42 houses and 12 apartments as well as 67 affordable warden care apartments for the elderly at nearby Chamberlain House. The greenfield site was in the local plan and developed in conjunction with improvements to junction 9, a pedestrian bridge over the M20 and the John Lewis employment site. Pentland involved the local community and enhanced the proposal through an Inquiry by Design workshop.

Difficult decisions

One of Pentland’s more controversial sites is Thanington Park near Canterbury which Martin has been promoting for 10 years and has finally been granted planning permission. CPRE Kent is against this because it is a greenfield site within a designated Area of High Landscape Value; will result in the loss of productive farmland and will have a detrimental impact on local roads. It is worrying that planning permission was

granted whilst the site was out for consultation in the local plan.

Martin justifies this because of the benefits the development is promising: a primary school, health facility, walking and cycling routes into Canterbury, allotments, a brand new state-of-the-art hospice and an improved road junction which he claims will open up the 50-acre brownfield site at Wincheap. The site is close to ancient woodland and he spent a year working with ecologists and Natural England looking at ways to improve ecology and biodiversity.

The arguments can be convincing. We may not agree with the decisions made by planning authorities but accept that, faced with impossibly high housing targets, they are under pressure to agree sites which will result in large numbers of new homes.

Slow and expensive

Pentland aims to build 750 homes here over the next six to seven years. The planning process alone is reckoned to have cost £1m – another problem for smaller builders, the planning process is slow and expensive. “You have to be patient and work with planning authorities,” said Martin.



Martin Hart



Pentland Builders

Developments too are slow and expensive. Pentland was behind the transformation of Hawkinge from an old airfield to a community of two thousand homes. It has taken 20 years - starting with bringing in the army to sweep for explosives and including spending £7m on a new bypass.

That’s why developments like Connaught Barracks in Dover are so important. Here, the Government is undertaking to clean

cont’d over



Bluebells Street Scene, Pentland Homes

“the market could suddenly stop dead and the homes may not sell”



Church Mews Primary School Conversion, Pentland



Cox Restoration by Susannah Richter



Chamberlain Manor Construction, Pentland



Cox Restoration by Susannah Richter



Old Clockhouse Green impression, Jarvis Design

up the site, provide infrastructure and then sell off manageable parcels of land to small builders to really give them a chance to deliver some of the houses we so badly need.

Village living

David Cox, owner of Cox Restoration, has built 20 houses in Kent villages over the last 20 years and is currently completing six houses at Old Clockhouse Green in Challock. He was born and grew up in Challock and cares passionately about the village.

The site was agricultural land owned by his family, an orchard since 1951 but no longer productive. It took David 26 years to get through the planning process! This was because it was outside the existing built area of Challock in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; but with villagers on his side - they wanted additional homes to support the school, post office and shops - he finally won planning permission. The community had by then undertaken an innovative project to define the village confines.

David said: “Planning has had a difficult job to do and by and large over the last 50 years has protected the countryside very well. I believe moderate building in the right place in village locations in the

countryside should be allowed but should be a little here, a little there, not huge allocations.”

However, he said it is a big risk for small builders – they have to acquire the land, go through the lengthy and costly planning process and borrow to fund the build. “Then, with our pattern of recession followed by recovery, the market could suddenly stop dead and the homes may not sell,” said David.

David prides himself on offering something different - he builds to a very high specification, using Kent timber, specialist brickwork and local handmade tiles. They are modern houses but with traditional English touches and fit in very well to the villages he loves.

Despite the frustrations of the planning system, the cost and delay of working with evolving and ever changing local plans, some small builders seem to really care about the homes they create and the communities they affect. Let’s hope government policy helps give them the opportunity to play a growing role in solving our housing crisis.

What do you think?

Please email Susannah.richter@cprekent.org.uk and we will include comments in the next Kent Voice.

The great airport debate



The Plane by Santi Villamarin

by Hilary Newport

Late last year, the government again deferred the decision on whether and where to build an additional south east runway until at least summer 2016.

This followed the Airports Commission recommendation in early 2015 that a third runway at Heathrow should be the preferred option. However, it is for the government to make the final decision. A new runway at

Heathrow or Gatwick would badly affect many thousands of people, not least by the increased air pollution caused by a massive increase in flights. The Environmental Audit Commission has demanded that strict conditions on air and noise pollution must be met before there can be any thought of expansion at Heathrow; meanwhile Gatwick Airport is still campaigning vigorously to stay in the running; and business lobbyists are arguing that the longer a decision is deferred, the harder it is for Britain to remain competitive. The repeated delays suggest that none of the answers will be politically easy: no one wants to be holding this parcel when the music stops.



Photo by Chris Sampson



Planes at Heathrow by David Jones

But is there really such a pressing need for a new runway? Studies collated by the highly worthy Aviation Environment Federation suggest that the case is seriously overstated.

- The industry enjoys exemption from fuel duty and VAT, so ticket prices are artificially low in comparison with other forms of transport. Air Passenger Duty makes some contribution to the treasury, but nowhere near as much as the fuel and VAT concessions. Passenger growth would slow if airlines had to charge a fair price for fuel and, by extension, for tickets.
- The trends in passenger growth are for more passengers per plane (with larger planes and fewer vacant seats), rather than for more runway slots.
- The Commission’s own forecasts suggest that passenger growth in the south east’s airports (which handle two-thirds of UK flights) would be at the expense of regional airports elsewhere. This will do little to ease congestion in an already crowded region, and even less to support the concept of a well-connected ‘Northern Powerhouse’.
- Aviation is one of the fastest growing contributors to climate change.



Hay Bales by Darren Shilson

Water shortages

Interesting times - could we one day run out of water and food?

The unrealistic housing targets detailed on p8 lead to increasing pressure on Kent's land and water resources and have severe implications for food security and public water supply. As Graham Warren argues this level of building threatens an irrevocable loss of the county's key natural assets at a time of increasing global demand.

CPRE has a commitment to encourage the sustainable use of land and other natural resources. But for Kent at least, the erratic fluctuation of wet and dry seasons, coupled with the pressure of population growth on a diminishing stock of water resources and agricultural land (and who knows what shale gas extraction holds for us) creates the feeling that we are living in one of those "interesting times" promised in the Chinese Curse.

Wet winters, dry summers

A winter's rainfall is normally calculated for the six months Oct-Mar; so far this year the record for Oct-Jan is already 10-15% above average. In the east, the Chalk aquifer in the North Downs

(supplying 70% of domestic demand) has water table levels recorded by the Environment Agency as "notably high". Seven of the last eight winters had above average rainfall, a trend consistent with climate change toward "wetter winters". In East Kent elevated groundwater levels in the Nailbourne/Little Stour Valley have left households flooded by surcharged sewers; necessitating emergency pumping and wastewater treatment – an expensive remedial operation that threatens to become an annual event. If Feb-Mar 2016 produce at least average rainfall, we can expect another spring season of localised groundwater flooding.



Flooding along the Nailbourne photo KCC

But we need to keep in mind that climate change forecasts also anticipate drier summers - this for a county where demand continues to increase, despite metering and efficiency measures, due to population growth and provisions to protect vulnerable habitats. In July 2013 the Environment Agency assessed Kent's water supply as "seriously stressed".

A resource we cannot waste

South East Water has forecast Kent's long term supply demand balance, envisaging a deficit of more than 50 Ml/d by 2040 (equivalent to another Bewl Water). Given the uncertainty in future inward migration, this should be treated as a minimum. SEW recognises the need for continued water efficiency measures and costly investment in new sources of supply such as inter-regional capital schemes with lead in times of 10-15 years. But the industry regulator (OFWAT) has said it will challenge capital schemes likely to incur excessive increases in customer charges and this could significantly reduce the range and effectiveness of supply options.

So why can't we use more of that "excess" winter rainfall on the



Fruit Market by Christian

North Downs to meet the summer deficits? As well as reducing groundwater flooding in the Little Stour valley, increased pumping could be a cost-effective substitute for expensive transfers from supply zones in West Kent; reducing demand on Bewl Water. It must be one resource we cannot afford to waste.

Disappearing farmland

A review by our Food Security Group in 2014 reminded us that we are not immune from the pressure on the world's food production capacity. Britain has become heavily dependent on imports to fill the gap in our own agricultural output which is decreasing as we lose productive farmland to house building. Seventy percent of UK land is used for agriculture but we import 60% of our food (85% of fresh fruit and vegetables).

Much of this is from countries experiencing substantial economic growth, so more of their exported produce will be diverted to home consumption. Some have become major importers, competing with Britain for produce and pushing up prices. The acceleration of global food demand has increased the use of water for irrigation in tropical regions, resulting in the depletion of river and groundwater resources, with corresponding



Bewl Water by Michael Rumboll

stress on rural communities; a process exacerbated by desertification and forest clearance. World food production cannot keep pace with demand and we must expect commensurate increases in global prices.

This could be the spur for the UK to increase home production; but our options will be limited by the encroachment of housing development onto farmland and grazing. Kent is particularly vulnerable with development targets of 158,500 households; equivalent to a land-take of 6,100 ha; a considerable sacrifice, given the Government Chief Scientific Advisor's recommendation that UK food production should double by 2040.

A new strategy

The combined challenges facing the sustainable use of our land and water resources call for a radical shift in the principles underpinning planning strategy. As a start, we need to secure protection of sufficient land for all grazing, arable and food production requirements, including fruit and vegetables suited to our temperate climate. In the meantime, we will campaign for housing developments to be high density, in sustainable locations and built on brownfield sites.



Sheep by Kol Tregaskes

headlines

from the campaigns frontline

Some good news and bad news on the campaigns front - an update from Director Hilary Newport.



Artist's impression of the bored tunnels

Lower Thames Crossing

Highways England, charged with choosing a route for a new Thames crossing, announced in January its preference for a bored tunnel east of Gravesend which will emerge near Tilbury. We believe this to be the most environmentally damaging option and are calling for HE to consider the options available for demand management and freight policies which do not require the continuing expansion of road-based traffic through the inevitable bottleneck which is the Garden of England.

HGV 'Fly Parking'

On a related point, amidst all the heated debate about occasional Operation Stack lorry parks and the new Thames crossing this winter, we have endeavoured not to let national government overlook the permanent and chronic problem of inappropriate and often illegal parking of HGVs on and around Kent's highways. We think a network of serviced lorry parks, in Kent and beyond, with some provision for 'overflow' in the event of Operation Stack, would go a long way towards resolving both issues. In an ideal world, this would be supported by a national freight strategy that took the heat off the channel crossings, allowing them to focus on the goods that need fastest transit, and to incentivise the use of other ports, and modes, of transport.



Western Heights & Farthingloe

We were sadly unsuccessful in our attempt to secure a quashing of Dover District Council's decision to grant planning permission for over 600 homes in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at Farthingloe.

It's a serious indictment of the planning system that expensive court action is the only course of action left to us to try to uphold the protection that should be automatic for beautiful designated landscapes.

Building in an AONB is permissible only when three tests have been met: the project is indisputably in the national interest, no alternative sites are available, and every measure has been taken to minimise the harm to the landscape. We don't believe that any of those three conditions were adequately discharged in this case.

Waterside Park

At appeal last year, the inspector upheld Maidstone Borough Council's refusal to allow construction of a major warehousing complex at the foot of the Kent Downs, citing unacceptable impacts on nearby landscape and heritage assets. It is difficult to understand why MBC is now proposing to allocate for commercial development a site very close by – where all the same landscape and heritage constraints apply – in its draft local plan.



Ancient Woodland by Stephen Sutherland



Operation Stack

In the same way as we are exasperated at the 'build it and they will come' strategy put forward for the Lower Thames Crossing, we consider that an expensive, damaging and (probably) rarely-used lorry park at the foot of the Kent Downs is the wrong solution to the wrong problem. The free flow of traffic through the channel crossings is something very much to be desired; however, the continued unconstrained expansion of road based traffic – especially freight – without thought for the consequences of that growth, is not such a clever idea. And a single dedicated lorry park that will either be (a) underused or (b) overwhelmed if traffic continues to increase, is not the solution.

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Range fuel consumption in mpg (ltrs/100km): Urban 26.9 – 54.3 (10.5 – 5.2), Extra Urban 32.8 – 67.3 (8.6 – 4.2), Combined 30.4 – 61.4 (9.3 – 4.6). CO₂ emission figures range from 245-119 g/km. Outlander PHEV range fuel consumption in mpg (ltrs/100km): Full Battery Charge: no fuel used, Depleted Battery Charge: 51.4mpg (5.5), Weighted Average: 156.9mpg (1.8), CO₂ emissions: 42 g/km.



Brian Lloyd

A time of change and challenge in planning

Retiring Senior Planner, Brian Lloyd, takes a personal look back over the last eight years at the challenges of a changing planning system

It has been a time of great change in the planning world. Gone are the days when local planning authorities were in the driving seat and it was for developers to argue why their proposals should be allowed. Now, with the presumption in favour of 'sustainable' development, developers are firmly in charge. Back in 2007 big decisions on matters such as housing numbers were made at a strategic level. Regional plans were ultimately agreed by the Secretary of State and

were thus seen as imposed from on high and universally disliked. In reality though, planning authorities worked together to build plans from the bottom-up having regard to environmental and infrastructure capacity. Then, with the clamour to abolish regional plans in the run-up to the 2010 general election, we saw the emergence of 'localism' and the promise that local people would decide their own fate. The 2011 Localism Act and 2012 National Planning

Policy Framework (NPPF) followed, turning the planning system upside down and returning decision making to local level.

Now, local planning authorities draw up local plans for their area pretty much in isolation. The presumption in favour of sustainable development means they have no choice but to accommodate ever increasing amounts of development irrespective of environmental or infrastructure constraints. If they don't, government planning inspectors will reject the plans. Plus, housing targets are much higher - on average districts face a 20-25% increase in the number of houses over the next 20 years. This means more and more greenfield land is being earmarked for development.

In addition, more and more development is now allowed without planning permission. Such 'permitted development' means that a wide range of building is automatically allowed under blanket rules without people having the opportunity to comment.

With government planning inspectors now determining local plans and major changes to

permitted development rights, it is difficult to see localism in action and it is increasingly difficult for people to stop environmentally damaging development.

So what is my legacy? The one thing I would highlight is that CPRE Kent having a professional planner, speaking in a language that planners understand, has definitely made us more effective. Since 2008, working with our district committees, I have participated in nearly 100 local plan consultations and fourteen local plan examinations. We have secured the removal of controversial and damaging sites from plans, moderated development targets and secured policy changes to help protect our landscapes and to recognise tranquillity.

We also have better links with community groups and parish/town councils. To help people engage in the complex planning system and argue effectively against inappropriate development, I have provided training for local councillors and CPRE members. I also worked with CPRE nationally in a government funded project to help communities prepare neighbourhood plans, pioneering work which is continuing and will provide a real opportunity for local communities to plan their future.

In conclusion, the last eight years have been challenging but also rewarding. My thanks go out to the many committed volunteers who made my job so much easier. It has been a privilege to work

“having a professional planner, speaking in a language that planners understand, has definitely made us more effective”

with so many good people who are passionate about the Kent countryside. I hope that I have played my small part in ensuring that CPRE's objectives are secured.



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The Saga of Neonicotinoids & Bees

Mention neonicotinoids or neonics and it's likely to evoke a fierce emotional response in defence of our much loved bees worldwide, but what exactly are neonics and why are they so controversial? Vicky Ellis explores the arguments.

Neonics are a group of seven (five authorised in the UK) systemic insecticides which affect the central nervous system, similar chemically to nicotine. They were first available in the 1990s, the most widely used being imidacloprid. Their use has increased exponentially as it's claimed they have fewer toxic impacts on birds and mammals than organophosphates and carbamates. They are used on 140 crop varieties globally, including cereals, cotton, legumes, top fruit, rice and turf, and can be applied in the soil as a seed

coating or topically on turf, timber and foliage. They are even used as a veterinary treatment for fleas and ticks.

How do they work?

Neonics work by overstimulating the central nervous system of insects causing paralysis and death. This neural pathway exists in both insects and mammals but insects are far more susceptible. Bees are especially vulnerable due to having more of the receptors targeted by these insecticides, including a



Buff Tailed Bumblebee photo by John Hoyes

highly evolved system of social communication and organisation. The effects are further compounded by the bee's inability to detoxify injurious compounds, due to having fewer detoxification genes.

Because neonics are absorbed through the plant's vascular system, they are also present on pollen and nectar making them toxic to the pollinators that visit the flowers. Neonics are long lasting and remain harmful outside of the bloom period. Imidacloprid has been found to last for years, contaminating soil with the possibility of leaching into groundwater.

Bees could be affected in several different ways: directly, if farmers ignore warnings and use during the flowering season; sub-lethally by constant exposure to affected pollen and nectar on crops; toxic breakdown of neonics taken inside the hive affecting the larvae; contaminated soil or dust; and mechanically if there is a problem with seed treatment and sowing.

What is the risk?

So, with all this negativity surrounding neonics, why did the UK relax its position contrary to EU restrictions? Defra states that, whilst it can't rule out the 'rare' effects of neonics on bees in the field, the laboratory studies were unreliable with much higher doses given to bees than under normal exposure. Defra concluded that negative effects 'do not occur under normal circumstances' and therefore 'supports the view that the risk to bee populations from neonicotinoids, as they are currently used, is low'.

"organic farming does not seem to be unduly affected by the 'pests' that are targeted by neonics"

The NFU feels there are 'still significant question marks over the science and evidence around bees and neonicotinoids'. It says that more field studies are required to understand the full effects of neonics on bees, but that the EU's decision to ban the use of neonics was 'neither proportionate nor justified by the current evidence'.

The arguments for and against the use of neonicotinoids is complex.



Photo by Vicky Ellis

There is no doubt that neonics do have a negative impact on bees, be it directly or indirectly, through human error or otherwise. If the use of neonics grows significantly, bees could find it impossible to avoid exposure to neonics. Furthermore, no study actually shows that neonics do not have a negative effect, including Defra's latest field study.

Food for thought

Both sides agree we cannot afford to lose our valuable pollinators economically or ecologically. Therefore, it is vital that research continues, especially in the field. Alternatively we need to find a method to control pests that does not affect pollinators - difficult as insecticides affect insects and bees are insects. However, it's interesting that the yield from organic farming does not seem to be unduly affected by the 'pests' that are targeted by neonics, maybe this area could be explored more - it's definitely food for thought!

Facts:

- Before neonics were restricted in the UK, imidacloprid use increased from 346,813 hectares in 2000 to 770,053 in 2006 with the amount applied tripling to 82,254 kg.
- In 2008 in south west Germany certain seed companies failed to apply the sticking agent properly during maize seed treatment. When the seed was sowed the drilling machines released clothianidin laden dust causing the death of millions of bees.
- During the spring sowing of maize treated with clothianidin and thiamethoxam in parts of the US Mid-West, the talc used to allow treated seed to flow easily through the air-assisted planter equipment killed significant bee populations. The bees had been inadvertently exposed to the talc dispelled behind the tractor.



Photo by Vicky Ellis

Local Plan round-up



The CPRE Kent planning team, Jillian Barr and Paul Buckley, review the latest situation with local plans and look ahead to 2016.



Greensand Way by Matthew Millen

The major local plan events have been the examinations in public into the Swale Borough Local Plan and the Tunbridge Wells Site Allocations Development Plan. Both took place in December, so it was a busy run up to Christmas! Local authorities have been told to produce their local plans by 2017, so we expect 2016 to be a challenging year.

Disappointing news for the Swale Local Plan

At the examination into the Swale Local Plan we were generally supportive of the housing target proposed in the plan. The plan correctly argued that meeting the full Objectively Assessed Need would not be deliverable at the current time, and that a lower target would allow the council to prefer land of lower environmental value and better respond to the social and economic issues facing communities.

Unfortunately, the inspector did not agree and has said that the council should allocate sites to meet a revised target of 776 dwellings per year (increased from 540). Inspector Sue Turner stated in her interim findings that the council is in a position to *“sensitively nudge the housing target upwards across the borough so that growth continues to be focused on the Thames Gateway area (Sittingbourne and Sheppey), but with proportional boost to allocations in Faversham and the rural areas”*.

We are concerned about what this will mean for communities and the sensitive environments and landscapes in the borough. The inspector did recognise the need to consider the impact of new allocations and stated that “the individual and cumulative impact of any new allocations on important local countryside gaps and locally sensitive landscapes should be assessed, whilst any loss of the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land will need to be taken into account ...”.

We will carefully look at proposed additional new sites when amendments are published and give our views on whether the impacts of development (both on individual sites and cumulatively) have been properly considered, and

whether the site selection process has been robust and successful in delivering sustainable development. At the time of writing, the Interim Findings relating to infrastructure, environmental and site specific considerations had not been received.

The consultation on amendments to the plan, including new proposed sites is expected to take place during the summer. We hope that the council really makes extra efforts to bring the new sites to the attention of the Swale community.

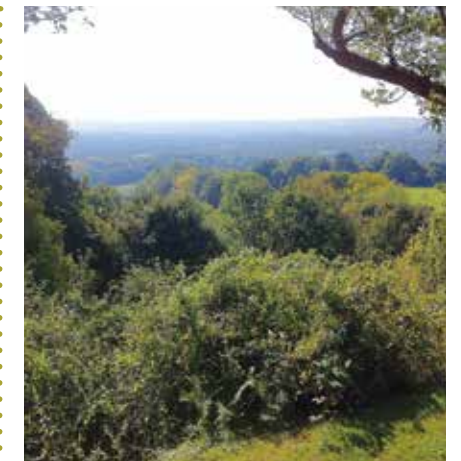
Tunbridge Wells Examination

The examination into the Tunbridge Wells Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) also took place in November and December 2015. CPRE Tunbridge Wells Committee has worked hard to ensure that only enough sites should be identified to meet the housing requirement in the existing Core Strategy. So much of the borough is AONB, Green Belt or at risk of flooding that it is essential that additional housing provision should be considered as part of a new local plan and not rushed into the site allocations DPD at this late stage. Since the examination, the council has consulted on some more amendments to the plan. The inspector will issue his report after this consultation is completed and the council hopes that the site allocations DPD will become fully operational in the summer.

More consultations on the Canterbury and Maidstone plans

In November 2015 Canterbury City Council published Draft Proposed Amendments for public consultation in response to the inspector’s overall conclusions and actions. This included increasing housing numbers at land north of Hersden and land south of Ridgeway, the inclusion of land at Thanington for 1150 homes (the council recently granted permission for up to 750 homes on part of this site), as well as the inclusion of a number of other smaller sites. The Kent and Canterbury Hospital has been deleted as a housing allocation (a reduction of 500 dwellings) as have most of the small sites in Whitstable and Herne Bay. The result of these changes is that the plan and the five- year land supply is even more dependent on large sites. A date for the Stage 2 hearings has still to be set.

Maidstone borough submitted its Regulation 19 Plan on February 5th 2016. This provides for 18,560 new homes of which 84% are on greenfield land. It also identifies Woodcock Farm at Junction 8 close to Waterside Park for significant employment uses. We have made representations on the plan, including the sites. The examination is expected to be held later this year.



Top of Toys Hill by Ben Terrett



Highland cow, Oare Marshes by Smudge

Local Plan Overview

Our list gives the latest situation on local plans throughout Kent. In addition, each local authority has an old-style local plan which 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.



Charing Church by Vicky Ellis

Ashford

- Core Strategy adopted July 2008
- Town Centre Plan adopted February 2010
- Tenterden and Rural Sites Plan adopted October 2010
- Urban Sites and Infrastructure Plan adopted October 2012
- Chilmington Green Area Action Plan adopted July 2013
- The council is reviewing the core strategy which will be presented as a local plan covering the period to 2030. A Regulation 19 publication version of the plan is expected in late spring 2016.

Canterbury

- Herne Bay Area Action Plan adopted April 2010
- The Canterbury Local Plan was submitted for examination in November 2014. Stage 1 of the examination took place in July 2015 and Stage 2 has been postponed while some modifications are made. These included more housing sites and were the subject of consultation in November 2015. Stage 2 is likely to take place in spring 2016.

Dartford

- Core Strategy adopted September 2011
- A Regulation 19 publication version of the Dartford Development Policies Local Plan was published for consultation in January 2016. An examination of the plan is expected later in 2016.

Dover

- Core Strategy adopted February 2010
- Land Allocations Plan adopted January 2015
- A draft of the Gypsy & Traveller Local Plan is expected to be published in June 2016.

Gravesham

- Core Strategy adopted September 2014
- Work on the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan is underway, involving a review of the Green Belt. Initial consultation scheduled for spring 2016.

Maidstone

- Affordable Housing Plan adopted December 2006
- Open Space Plan adopted December 2006
- A draft new local plan was published for consultation March 2014. There was further consultation on new sites and changes to policies in October 2015. The Regulation 19 Publication Plan was published on 5th February 2016 and is expected to be submitted in the summer for examination in the autumn.

Sevenoaks

- Core Strategy adopted February 2011
- Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan adopted February 2015

- The gypsy and traveller policy and sites will be included in the new local plan
- A local plan, which will eventually replace the core strategy and Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD, is currently at early stages of preparation. Informal Regulation 18 consultation is expected at the end of 2016.

Shepway

- Core Strategy adopted September 2013
- Consultation on the 'issues and options' stage of the Places and Policies Plan was undertaken January–March 2015. Regulation 19 pre-submission plan is expected to be published in early summer 2016.

Swale

- The new Swale Local Plan was submitted for examination in April 2015. A first round of examinations hearings completed in December 2015. It is anticipated that the council will consult on proposed modifications in the summer, with the examination reconvened at the end of 2016.
- The interim findings on the local plan examination are expected to assist the council to determine whether it can incorporate progress on the Gypsy and Traveller Site Plan into the local plan, or if it needs to continue to progress a Local Plan Part 2.

Thanet

- Cliftonville Plan adopted February 2010
- Consultation on a draft local plan was undertaken in January–March 2015. The Regulation 19 pre-submission plan is likely to be published for consultation in summer 2016.

Tonbridge and Malling

- Core Strategy adopted September 2007
- Development Land Allocations Plan adopted April 2008
- Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan adopted April 2008
- Managing Development and the Environment Plan adopted April 2010
- The council has started a review of the adopted plans and initial consultation on issues and options is expected in September 2016.

Tunbridge Wells

- Core Strategy adopted June 2010
- Consultation on the pre-submission draft of the Site Allocations Plan commenced February 2015. The plan was examined at the end of 2015 and a consultation on proposed modifications ended in March 2016. The inspector is likely to report in spring 2016.
- The council will start work on a new local plan in 2016 and this will incorporate work on the travellers plan, which will no longer be a separate DPD.

Medway

- An issues and options consultation on a new local plan was completed in February 2016. The council has an agreed interim housing needs target of 1,000 dwellings per year, and will review whether this needs to be increased when it has considered the result of the issues and options consultation.

Kent County Council

- The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which sets out strategy for mineral provision and waste management in Kent, was published for formal consultation in July 2014 and submitted for examination in November 2014. The examination hearings ran for nine days in April and May 2015. Further changes to the plan have been made to address potential unsoundness and legal compliance issues and the consultation on these finished in March 2016.
- The preparation of Mineral and Waste Sites Plans will re-commence after the strategy is adopted, probably this year.



Graveney Church gate by Vicky Ellis



Sunset over Oare Marshes by Smudge

Around *the districts*

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

Spring in lanes at Snargate by Brenda Hedley

Ashford

- The large AXA site at Sevington, next to M20 J10a, has been sold to Aviva. A new application repositions Kent Wool Growers to the top of the site with direct access to the new J10a slip road.
- The committee is considering the plans for J10a which are out for consultation now.
- Chilmington Green – hopefully this development (due to start spring) will begin before the local plan inquiry begins.
- The Jarvis Homes application in Kingsnorth is still not determined, with Ashford Borough Council given until 31st March to make a decision.
- Other developers are now submitting plans hoping to win planning permission before the local plan examination, including Gladman with plans in for Smeeth and Brabourne and more in the pipeline.
- Extensive plans for retail, recreational and housing development at the Elwick Road site in Ashford have been submitted. We want homes built in the urban area to save the countryside from development.

Canterbury

- There are a number of planning applications for housing. Some appear to reflect the local plan and others do not. Most are on good agricultural land. They will increase traffic on New Dover Road, Wincheap and over the Sturry level crossing which already stretches for miles.
- Some of the applications propose “benefits” that are not necessarily related to the needs of the development such as a new hospice, hospital or new link onto the A2. There does not appear to be any regard to actual housing needs.
- There is a proposal for housing development on a colliery site at Hersden which appears to meet our criteria but we are still concerned about traffic.
- There is pressure for brownfield sites within Canterbury to be used for student accommodation. The latest application is for 233 places on a disused milk depot.

Dartford & Gravesham

- We are fully engaged with the Ebbsfleet garden city consultations. Transport, health and sewage treatment provision are the biggest challenges to overcome in building 15000 homes in a heavily developed part of Kent. Residents are concerned about traffic, water supply and air quality.
- We are currently waiting information on the following: Paramount London Leisure Resort; Gravesham Green Belt review; improvements to the A227/A2 interchange.
- There is growing support for Crossrail extension from Abby Wood to Gravesend. If this can be funded, it will be good for the whole of North Kent and the environment. The Dartford and Gravesham core strategies safeguard the route.

- Much progress has been made towards re-opening Northfleet harbour due to the efforts of the Northfleet Harbour restoration trust and many others. We hope that the tide has turned in this project's favour which will be great for the area.

Maidstone

- Our three major concerns with the Maidstone Local Plan are the total housing target of 18,560 dwellings by 2031, the inclusion of a significant employment site at M20 junction 8, and the failure to take account of the lack of infrastructure, especially transport. The council appeared to take no notice of consultation responses. We will put our case at the inquiry.
- One major concern is the Integrated Transport Strategy. This is hopelessly inadequate, will do nothing to alleviate congestion in Maidstone and has not been accepted by KCC or the Joint Transport Board.
- There are questionable traveller sites in the plan, but the council appears to have taken no notice of government policies.
- Good news - a solar farm application at Headcorn was refused on the grounds of impact on the landscape and heritage.

Medway

- The public inquiry over Lodge Hill has been delayed for further ecological studies and while alternative habitats for nightingales are pursued.
- Medway Council is consulting on its Issues and Options Local Plan, looking at up to 29,463 new homes by 2035.

Sevenoaks

- Belt-tightening by local authorities means publicly owned land is now seen as less of a public good and more of a cost burden or an asset. Both Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council have recently made moves in connection with their holdings.
- KCC owns nine country parks and announced it was 'willing to consider outright disposal' of one or more of them, causing great concern for Lullingstone Park's future. The threat has now gone away but KCC has 'identified for disposal' other parks including Preston Hill in Shoreham, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and Dryhill Park in Sundridge, a Local Nature Reserve. The public response caused the process to be halted, even if temporarily.
- Meanwhile SDC is in the process of selling farmland in the Darent Valley to an unidentified buyer, including fields around the Shoreham Cross. The new owner will then seek permission to convert farm buildings for mixed uses including residential.



View from Ide Hill by Jules Joseph

- We await news of the local plan review and the all-important housing target. This will include an 'assessment of Green Belt options' - could this be a hint that there is not enough brownfield land to meet the need?

Shepway

- We believe the proposed huge lorry park on grade 2 farmland at Stanford, on the edge of the Kent Downs AONB, is neither necessary nor appropriate. The proposals seem to have been cobbled together in a month, and take little, if any, account of extensive studies on lorry parking. As such, they are poorly thought out and do not provide the best answer to Kent's twin miseries: day-by-day parking of freight vehicles in inappropriate and often illegal locations all over the county and the less frequent but highly disruptive Operation Stack.
- We have responded to the Highways England consultation stressing that a more strategic approach is needed addressing both problems. Plus, we have submitted evidence to the Transport Select Committee which seems to be sceptical of the whole idea.
- There is no further news on the date for an appeal into four wind turbines at Lower Agney Farm near Lydd.
- The application for Lydd Biomass Plant has been called in.
- Work to lengthen the runway at Lydd Airport is expected to be completed by early summer 2016.



Swanstreet Avenue site by Paul Buckley



Parkwood Picnic Site, KCC

Swale

- Following the local plan examination, the inspector is requiring Swale to increase its housing target from 540 dwellings per annum to 776. Some developers were arguing for figures in excess of 1,000!
- Swale is about to undertake another call for sites. We are worried about the coalescence of villages in Swale because those south of the A2 are seen as desirable for development.
- The history of housebuilding in Swale shows that, on average, 537 dwellings per annum have been completed since 1981. Without an enormous increase in capacity, the development industry will not be able to build to the targets being required.
- At Swanstreet Avenue, Sittingbourne (which was not determined and then withdrawn) Gladman has put in a new application for 540 houses, as opposed to the original 580.
- At Pond Farm, land south of the A2 at Newington (refused after an appeal against non-determination), Gladman has now applied to build 140 houses instead of the original 330. Both sites are productive agricultural land, impinge on important countryside gaps and we have concerns about infrastructure.

Thanet

- Last year's consultation on the Thanet Local Plan, proposing 12,000 new homes by 2031, drew unprecedented public response. Many of the major strategic housing sites are on the highest grade agricultural land, abundant in Thanet but scarcer elsewhere. We argue that this should be factored in to arrive at more realistic targets. Nonetheless we expect the next draft to set an even higher target. Meanwhile, the future of the Manston Airport site is still unclear, leaving uncertainty over the whole local plan.

Tonbridge & Malling

- We await the Issues and Options report from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and will then scrutinise potential development sites. We are working with local parish councils to ensure development plans are appropriate.
- The 95 acre Aylesford Newsprint site looks set to be sold soon for residential, commercial and retail development. As this is brownfield we support it.
- We are objecting strongly to a proposed development in Wrotham village which seeks to demolish existing sheltered accommodation and replace it with 60 dwellings in three-storey blocks of flats, completely out of keeping with a rural village within the Kent AONB.
- We seem to have halted KCC's proposed sell-off of Bluebell Hill country park. It was satisfying to see how much protest could be made quickly through email and social media.

Tunbridge Wells

- We helped secure amendments to the Site Allocations Plan which are currently being consulted on.
- However, the borough council has been forced to accept its housing supply policies are out of date after an inspector allowed a major housing development at Hawkhurst and a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment of 648 houses per year 2013-2033 (over twice as many as under the Local Plan 2006-2026). Now, under government planning rules, the council will find

it hard to refuse housing applications except where there are significant adverse impacts or specific NPPF or adopted policies (such as Green Belt or AONB).

- We attended a public inquiry after objecting to a 65 house proposal at Sissinghurst outside the Limits to Built Development. Gladman argued that the housing need should be even higher than 648 per year, but even on that figure they argued the development should be allowed. We are concerned that, until a new local plan is adopted (2017 at the earliest), the council may find it more difficult to win appeals against the refusal of housing on greenfield sites.
- Preparing for its new local plan, the council has invited people to propose locations for housing and economic development in its Call for Sites. The deadline for responses is 1st August.
- The new anaerobic digester at Conghurst Farm, Hawkhurst, is in operation, leading to complaints about the number of large tractor movements on rural lanes (sometimes every 10 minutes until 9pm), causing disturbance and damage to the verges, as well as its appearance in the AONB. We shall monitor it to inform our response to proposals for future AD plants in Kent.

Kent Historic Buildings Committee

We have been active in cases affecting listed and undesignated heritage assets including:

- input on heritage matters to the campaign against a solar farm in Headcorn; supporting the successful campaign against the Waterside Park development;
- a comprehensive, and successful, submission to the appeal inspector to save the 1920s hospital building in Ashford;
- continuing the fight against further desecration of Blue Boys Inn at Brenchley.

We are keen to get the message out to district committees that heritage can be a major consideration in planning. We can help and are currently working with the branch office to publish guidance on this.

Environment Group

- The South East Water Environmental Focus Group re-convened in January to discuss the company's new 25-year Water Resource Management Plan. The first 5 years (2019-23) will deal with water efficiency measures and capital schemes to improve deployable drought output.
- Shale Gas/Oil Development: Graham Warren has been advising the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Task and Finish Group on aspects of fracking in the Weald and the West Sussex anti-fracking group on geology, water resources and environmental implications of the proposed exploratory drilling at Broadford Bridge, Pulborough.



Anaerobic digester, Conghurst Farm, Hawkhurst by Elizabeth Aikenhead



Social Scene

We have a lovely programme of outings for CPRE Kent members, organised by Margaret Micklewright.

Coming up next:

Thursday 15th September.

Denbies Wine Estate and **Painshill Gardens** in Surrey.

This is an ideal time to see the grapes on the vines and the gardens in the early autumn sunshine. Cost approximately £44.

Future outings will also be advertised on Facebook and the events section of our website.



Dates for your diary

Tunbridge Wells AGM

8pm Tuesday 18th October

Matfield Village Hall, Maidstone Road, Matfield (off the Maidstone Road (B2160) just south of the village green and the Wheelwrights pub)

Kent Branch AGM

Friday 18th November

Details to follow in the autumn Kent Voice.

Historic Gardens

In the latest in our series on Kent attractions which CPRE members can visit two-for-one, we find out about the fascinating history and plants of Riverhill Himalayan Gardens near Sevenoaks.

The historic gardens at Riverhill have been home to the Rogers family for over 150 years. Riverhill House was acquired by the current owner's great-great-great-grandfather in 1840. John Rogers had made his money in the woollen cloth trade and wanted to leave the cut and thrust of commerce and settle as a landowner.

John Rogers was a great botanist and a friend of Charles Darwin. Above all, he was passionate about the new plants being discovered, particularly the Rhododendron and Azaleas from the Himalayas. He and subsequent generations of the family sponsored plant hunters such as George Forrest, to collect specimens and the gardens flourished and expanded across the hillside.

Before the Second World War there were eight gardeners and many other estate workers. The years following the war proved to be tough and, with limited funds, areas of the garden were allowed to decline as the number of staff diminished. The most devastating event was The Great Storm of 1987 when three-quarters of the trees and shrubs were lost or mutilated.

The key turning point for modern day Riverhill came in 2009 when the producers of Channel 4's 'Country House Rescue' approached the family to participate in their television programme. The advice given through the filming gave the current owners the confidence to re-open the gardens, using the income to embark on an ambitious restoration plan to regenerate lost areas. The gardens are now visited by approximately 25,000 visitors each season. Learning from the lessons of the past, there is a clear need to ensure that the estate is sustainable in the 21st century. Significant steps have been taken to achieve this; an army of volunteers assist in all areas of the business and a PV Solar Array and a wood-fired boiler have recently been installed.

Riverhill gardens are open Wed-Sun from 19th March to 11th September. CPRE members admitted two-for-one.



All photos Riverhill Gardens



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Vicky Ellis

News round-up

There's a lot coming up this year



Events

We kicked off our events season by participating in Agri Expo and the Penshurst and Charing Point to Points in March.

EVENTS 2016

Please consider helping out at any of these events - entry fees will be reimbursed - even if you can only do a couple of hours your support is appreciated. Or you may know of an event that you would like to represent CPRE Kent at.

The Kent Show, Detling	8th, 9th, 10th July
Weald of Kent Steam Rally, Woodchurch	6th & 7th August
Tractor Fest, Biddenden	20th & 21st August
West Kent Ploughing Match, Cranbrook	17th September
East Kent Ploughing Match, Nonington	28th September
Green Christmas Fair, Faversham	date TBC

Membership

Our membership is vitally important to give CPRE Kent a voice and a purpose - without you we would quite simply not be able to fight for the heritage and landscape that is so unique to Kent and now under unprecedented pressure. Sadly, CPRE's membership nationally is in decline, therefore we need your help to recruit more members. If every member recruited just one other member this would double our strength. Please consider buying a gift membership - the many benefits include reduced entry to many of England's wonderful gardens and stately homes.

Advertisers

Placing an advert in Kent Voice not only reaches an audience across Kent but also helps CPRE Kent fund our campaigns, so please mention CPRE Kent when contacting one of our advertisers. Or you may like to place an advert.

For more information: please contact Vicky Ellis on 01233 714540.



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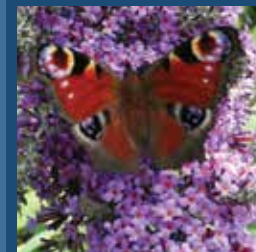
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Because we all care about causes that are important in our life many people leave a gift to charity in their will, or a charitable legacy in honour of a family member or close friend. Please give the gift of the countryside and remember CPRE Kent when making your will.



Help protect the future of Kent's countryside by helping us today

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

If you are thinking of writing a will or have already had a will written, please think about leaving a gift to CPRE Kent.

Whitehead Monckton Solicitors is delighted to support CPRE Kent by donating £50 for every will made by CPRE Kent supporters.

You can find out more about CPRE Kent and how you can support us by visiting www.cprekent.org.uk



To talk to someone about leaving a gift to CPRE Kent please contact Vicky Ellis 01233 714540 or email info@cprekent.org.uk

contact us



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 to keep Kent beautiful, then get in touch with us at info@cprekent.org.uk or call 01233 714540.

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400 CLUB



Here are the winners since the Autumn/Winter edition of Kent Voice:

Oct 15

Mr N Smith	£40.00
Mr M Loveday	£30.00
Mr S E Jones	£25.00
Mr C Daniel	£15.00
Mr J Watson	£15.00
Mrs S Dunn	£15.00

Nov 15

Mr & Mrs M Williams	£40.00
Ms A Nickolls	£30.00
Mr J Osbourne	£25.00
Mr C Daniel	£15.00
Dr S Pittman	£15.00
Mrs M Moore	£15.00

Dec 15

Miss M Butcher	£150.00
Ms J Fadden	£150.00
Ms McFarlane	£30.00
Mrs P Pollock	£25.00
Mr J Preston	£25.00

Jan 16

Mrs A Reader	£40.00
Mr R Hoare	£30.00
Mr D Winn	£30.00
Rev'd Fenton	£25.00
Mr C Daniel	£15.00
Mr H Fox	£15.00

Feb 16

Mrs A Hone	£40.00
Mr M Loveday	£30.00
Mr & Mrs M Williams	£25.00
Mr & Mrs Wise	£15.00
Rev'd Fenton	£15.00
Mr C Daniel	£15.00

Mar 16

Mrs J Claburn	£40.00
Mr Mrs T Guy	£30.00
Mr M Loveday	£25.00
Mr J Bunton	£15.00
Mrs G Collins	£15.00
Mrs P Pollock	£15.00

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Developing Homes & Heritage

By Rose Lister



Fort Burgoyne, Wevsky



Fort Burgoyne, Wevsky



Fort Burgoyne, Wevsky



Crownhill Fort, The Landmark Trust



Crownhill Fort, The Landmark Trust

Heritage can mainly be seen in our built environment, however it is all that is green and growing and all that flurries and scuttles too. England's green and pleasant land is rarely found in our towns and cities and, as the pressure to build expands ever outwards and threatens our environmental heritage, it is important to realise that what we have is precious and worth fighting for.

That is not to say that we cannot develop our heritage. Rather we would see that it is done right. A golden example of this is the prospective development of the Connaught Barracks in Dover. The brownfield site is the perfect place for a local planning authority to regenerate.

Blending the old with the new

That said it is home to Fort Burgoyne. This presents an opportunity to blend the old with the new and breathe new life into the derelict fort. But there are obstacles to overcome; the fort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, in the setting of Dover Castle and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any impact on these historic environments must be taken into account.

Understandably, in the ten years since the army moved out wildlife has moved in and the Fort is now home to some of England's protected species. To mitigate the effects on our diverse wildlife, simple measures can be put in place that will help both the ecology of the area and the regeneration. What better way to develop a community than to educate them about the area they live in through its ecological and historic heritage?

If regenerated sympathetically, the closest part of the fort to the housing, the west wing, could encourage the local economy and develop the community. In Portsmouth, Crownhill Fort was in a similar boat to Fort Burgoyne. The dilapidating buildings were transformed into holiday lets, a wedding venue, business and education centre.

Fort Burgoyne is currently in the hands of The Landmark Trust with plans to bring the fort on to the public stage. It will be interesting to see what the charity does to breathe new life into this piece of Dover history that has so much promise.

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Did you know our Facebook site now has 542 likes – up more than 25% on 2015. In some weeks, more than 2,500 people check out our campaigns and stories. Not only that, but on Twitter we have 3,195 followers and our tweets are sometimes seen by tens of thousands when they get re-tweeted across the country – follow us **@CPREKent**

Our website, **cprekent.org.uk**, has been praised for its up-to-date, informative content – it is often the go-to site for the media in researching stories.

Do have a look, post your comments and likes, share our campaign news or consider writing something (contact me with any ideas). But be warned

social media, especially Twitter, can be addictive!

Susannah Richter, Campaigns & PR Manager

