

# KENT VOICE

Protecting Kent's Heritage  
Summer 2011

## Lydd Public Enquiry

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# Chairmans Welcome

## Mixed messages from Government

*In this edition of Kent Voice, Richard Knox-Johnston sets out an explanation and update on the Localism Bill and its progress through Parliament.*



Richard Knox-Johnston

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When in opposition the Conservatives set out their vision of localism and how it was aimed to give more power to local people on planning matters. Among the proposals was the right of appeal against planning decisions made by local authorities. This was welcomed by CPRE, because up until now only an applicant, often a developer, had the right to appeal if they did not receive consent. When the Localism Bill was published, this third-party right of appeal had been removed.

It is obvious that Government was not keen to encourage anyone to make appeals based on limited grounds. However, if a decision is made by the local authority, which does not fully comply with the Core Strategy, there ought to be a sanction which local people can take to challenge the decision. We shall be campaigning to have the right of appeal restored.

### Lydd Airport

After our success at the KIG Inquiry in Bearsted where we persuaded the Inspector to refuse an application for a road rail interchange on 270 acres of agricultural ground, we are heavily involved in the inquiry into London Ashford Airport at Lydd.

The owners of the airfield want to build a terminal building and lengthen the runway so that they will be able to cater for fully loaded Boeing 737s. We are opposing on grounds of

tranquillity since the Romney Marshes are the most tranquil areas in South East England.

We are also leading on evidence on the quality of life for those who live and those who visit the area. The runway when lengthened will be just 600 metres from the Greatstone Primary School with over 300 children. They also cater for 55 nursery age children. As you can imagine we have major concerns for the children especially when a fully laden 737 starts its take-off run from only 600 metres away.

### Operation Stack

As many of you will know we have set out our plans for alleviating the congestion whenever Operation Stack is implemented. KCC are planning to build a lorry park off the M20 at Sellindge. It would take up over 70 acres of agricultural land and cost between 70 - 80m.

Our solution, which was broadcast extensively on BBC Radio Kent was that the lorry park should be at Dover Harbour using the redundant land in the Western part of the docks. If that was insufficient, then land could be reclaimed from the Channel.

Operation Stack costs the ratepayers of Kent £1.8m per year in policing. Our solution would not only solve the problem of congestion in East Kent but save ratepayers' money.

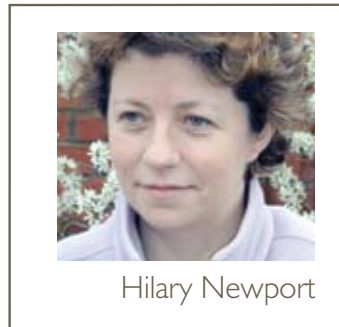
Richard Knox-Johnston





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## A Message from the Director Planning Reforms



Hilary Newport

In his article Planning Reforms – Full Steam Ahead (page 26) Brian Lloyd outlines the government's plans to overhaul the planning system in order to re-boot the nation's stalled economy. These proposals constitute an extraordinary assault on Britain's planning system. Like it or loathe it, our planning system has over the past sixty years and more delivered the remarkable benefit of allowing Britain to retain so much of its countryside's unique character and charm, directing necessary development to those places where it will do most good and least damage. The proposed changes could overturn this protection completely.

If, as announced, the presumption is to be in favour of granting planning permissions, where is the incentive for developers to raise their design standards, or to focus development on regenerating brownfield sites? A planning system that does not have the power to say 'no' to sub-standard proposals, or to development that is inappropriately sited, is no mechanism for sustainable growth.

The plans to shake up the planning system are not only fundamentally inconsistent with the professionals of sustainability; they are also in many ways highly inconsistent in themselves.



For example: The reason given for the abolition of the regional tier of planning (in the form, in our case, of the largely un-lamented South East Plan) was to remove unpopular top-down government imposition of housing targets. Unfortunately, the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development so the default answer to development and growth is yes' sounds very much like a top-down imposition, leaving local planning authorities unable to prevent development that neither they nor local communities want. The localism bill, making its way through the parliamentary process, is supposed to allow local communities a far greater say in the future of their neighbourhoods, but this engagement looks set to be swept away if the default answer to development is to be 'yes'.

The target of 60% of development to be on brownfield land has achieved considerable benefits in bringing degraded and damaged land back into constructive use over past years. The removal of this target is supposed to allow planning authorities more flexibility to set their own targets. But without a firm target, and a level playing field, where will the incentive be to regenerate damaged and degraded sites?

How will allowing the conversion of offices, warehouses and business parks to housing – without the need for permission for change of use – promote economic growth? Economic growth surely depends on having places where economic activity can take place! Also, how does it conform with the localism agenda when local communities won't be able to comment on some potentially very significant residential development in terms of location, access, traffic and transport concerns, flood risk or other normal planning considerations?

Will land auctions make financial gain by planning authorities an acceptable consideration in granting planning permission? Will financial gain override other planning considerations? Won't this make people even more suspicious of the planning system?

All in all, these proposals can at best be described as the product of some rather cloudy thinking. Opening the floodgates to poorly-planned, badly sited development is no way to re-boot the nation's stalling economy.

Hilary Newport

## The last few months have been a real time of change for Protect Kent.

We have had two long serving team members leave for exciting new posts, changed our offices, and we have also updated our website. We decided to make this change to reflect the growing number of 'hits' we receive on our website, and as part of a campaign to make the charity more accessible to a growing number of younger members. This will also mean that we are able to sell Protect Kent merchandise as well as making it easier than ever for existing members to donate to specific campaigns and keep up to date with all of our work. There is a new events section where everyone can find out about all of Margaret's outings, and our news tab where you can out about all of the goings-on in Kent's planning. We are also going to have the functionality of videos on our website so you'll be able to sit back and watch some of our interesting little snippets with ease.

**The fresh new website is now available to you all to view at the same address as before so have a look and tell us what you think!**

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## Fond farewells

**It was November 2006 when I came to give a presentation to the CPRE Kent AGM at Harrietsham Village Hall.** The catering arrangements had gone a bit awry and Hilary, Sandra and Susan Bowen were rushing around, knocking on doors of nearby houses to ask to use cookers to heat the food for the members' lunch. I had come to talk about my work at the Environment Agency, and Ashford growth area in particular and I was bombarded by tricky and challenging questions. It was great.

So when I saw the post of 'Deputy Director' advertised, I leaped at the chance and was overjoyed at being asked to start in February 2007. I had been outraged by behaviour of Imperial College, Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council over their secretive plans for a science park and vast housing estates at Wye. On joining CPRE Kent I found that these threats to our countryside happen all too often.

Kent is a fantastic county. The first English Kingdom, for centuries Kent has been the bulwark against hostile invasion and the gateway for peaceful trade. It has a strong identity and history that is written into its landscape. I grew up in Hildenborough until 1984 and when I returned in 1999 I came back to a place that, around Maidstone and West Malling at least, had largely been blighted by urbanisation, incessant traffic and sprawl. Yet elsewhere, Kent has lost none of its beauty and character and it is that we must do our utmost to protect for future generations to enjoy.

My first real campaign was against the proposed H + H Celcon block factory at Ightham Sandpit, in West Kent. KCC's decision to allow this factory in the Green Belt and AONB in exchange for the Borough Green Bypass had triggered a public inquiry. I used my knowledge and contacts to take and expose the risks to groundwater from the toxic waste that had been dumped in that quarry. I worked alongside Harry Rayner, now a Branch Trustee and Chairman of Tonbridge & Malling Committee, and the late Ron Saunders. I could not have wished for two more formidable campaigners at my side. In fact it was Ron's attention to detail and Harry's mobilisation of local opposition that brought the whole case crashing down around the ears of KCC and Celcon and won the day.

As well as the reactive campaigns, it has been exciting to run projects that put CPRE Protect Kent on the front foot – conferences, publications and



Sean Furey

steering groups on key topics like climate change and energy. It has pushed me to learn about new areas, from energy technology to aviation policy. Throughout my time with this organisation and I have never failed to be impressed by the depth of expertise, enthusiasm and commitment by our

members. It is the members that really drive this organisation forward we do our best to support those aims.

I would like to thank all the members who have been very kind to me over the last four years, in particular the branch and committee chairmen. I have been very privileged to have been part of such a fantastic staff team, so ably led by Hilary, who have put up with me. In early April, I moved with my family to the town of St Gallen in eastern Switzerland to take up a position as a Water & Sanitation Specialist working for an international development consultancy, Skat. I am now helping to run a global knowledge and support network for water, sanitation and hygiene professionals and aid agencies operating in Africa, South Asia and Latin America to improve the quality of life of some of the world's poorest people.

So it is with mixed feelings that I have left, but I have every confidence that CPRE Protect Kent will continue to do amazing things over the next 80 years as it has done so over the last 80.

Sean Furey



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## Fond farewells

**As many of you will now know, in November last year I left my position at Protect Kent to take up a new role as 'PR Officer' at Leeds Castle.**

Following the successful Monty Python Cinema Event, Leeds Castle approached me about developing my career in PR within their Marketing team. Having always loved history, I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to work in such beautiful surroundings, organising film and photo shoots on site, whilst also being able to continue working in a public relations role. Leaving CPRE was never going to be an easy decision for me, as during the last two and a half years, I have learnt so much about the organisation and been able to publicise many successes for the Kent branch – the highlight in my time here being the enormous success we celebrated in August last year when the decision to reject the KIG application was announced.

There have of course been campaigns and fights lost, but somehow the Kent branch always manages to bounce back to fight that little bit harder next time!

I think this is a true reflection on dedication on Richard, Hilary, Brian, Sean and Sandra, the volunteers, district groups, members and supporters of Protect Kent. The commitment and genuine belief in what CPRE aims to achieve is really quite inspiring.

My new job is going well and everyday throws a new challenge in my direction, which I am enjoying! There is a great team at the Castle although I miss working with the team at Charing and now Sean is also now moving on to pastures new!

Sean was a great mentor to me when I started at CPRE and I am sure I am not alone in saying his enthusiasm and understanding of everything technical will be a great loss to the organisation. Sean, I'll miss you as a friend, keep in touch!

Although I am no longer a member of staff, I have been back to visit on several occasions and am pleased to be able to help build an exciting new relationship between the Castle and CPRE. With possible joint events and ventures in the pipeline, I think 2011 is going to be a great year for all of us!

As a now 'member' of CPRE, I look forward to visiting you all on the stand at this year's Kent Show and if you'd like to stay in touch I can now be contacted on my new email address: [gemmawatts@leeds-castle.co.uk](mailto:gemmawatts@leeds-castle.co.uk) or on 01622 767866.

Gemma Watts



Gemma Watts

## Leeds Castle Tickets

Thanks to the amazing connections that Gemma built with Leeds Castle, we are able to offer a single use Leeds castle ticket to the first 100 members who recruit a new member for the charity!

These can be used throughout the summer, so you'll have the perfect excuse for a wonderful day out!

## Warm Welcome



We have recently welcomed a new face into the team at Queens Head House, Charing. Andrew Ogden is our new Campaigns Manager and effectively replaces Sean Furey at Branch level. Andrew brings with him a wealth of experience in environmental and community matters gained from 11 years with the Environment Agency.

Andrew says: 'I am excited about this opportunity to really focus on protecting and enhancing the environment of Kent for present and future generations. I am looking forward to supporting the Board, our District Committees, and our members in challenging inappropriate and unsustainable development and activities'.

Andrew will be contacting the Chairmen of our Districts in the near future for a discussion on local issues and wider county-level concerns.



# Lifting the Lydd



Sean Furey

## Arguments against:

Loss of tranquillity across Romney Marsh and the Kent Downs AONB

Noise and pollution impact on Greatstone Primary School

Noise and pollution impact on residents of Greatstone and Lydd

Impact of the wildlife protected under national and international law

Carbon emissions

High flood risk area

Bird strike risk

Nuclear collision risk

Remote transport access

No interest from airlines

Manston also failing

## Arguments for:

It has been a commercial airport since the 1950s

200-300 Jobs by 2028. Maybe.



Long standing members and readers of Kent Voice are probably groaning at yet another 'Lydd' headline pun. It was December 2006, when the owners of the geographically-challenged 'London Ashford Airport', submitted a planning application to extend their runway and for a new terminal building. Little did they know the firestorm of argument and intrigue that they would unleash. The close proximity of Dungeness nuclear power stations, an RSPB reserve, Greatstone Primary School at the end of the runway and an alphabet soup of nature conservation designations brought local residents and conservation groups to the barricades.

Despite the airport's best efforts, the council planning officers recommended refusal in September 2009 and then again in March 2010. The majority of councillors decided to ignore the evidence and vote for the mirage of jobs. Now a public inquiry is underway and arrayed against the council and the airport is a formidable alliance: RSPB, Kent Wildlife Trust and Natural England are making the ecological arguments, the Lydd Airport Action Group is focusing on nuclear safety and socio-economics. We have put together a strong team of experts and local witnesses to argue that there will be an intolerable impact on the unique character and tranquillity of Romney Marsh, and on the quality of life of local residents. We are also scrutinising the arguments that say that airport will be a great boost to the local economy, which we think are deeply flawed.



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## Sellindge

## The unluckiest village in Kent?

*When it comes to long-running campaigns, spare a thought for the residents of Sellindge.*

When it comes to long-running campaigns, spare a thought for the residents of Sellindge. KCC has finally made its decision to allow the construction of the Sellindge Sludge Plant – a waste processing facility in the countryside on the edge of the village. This is a saga that has gone on for nearly four years; and now that permission has been granted, the lengthy process of application for an operating permit from the Environment Agency must begin.

While KCC's threat of a lorry park for thousands of trucks at the other end of the village seems remote, Shepway District Council (SDC) has been keen to pile up the housing numbers in what they call an 'area of opportunity'. SDC's gaze is firmly fixed on the development potential of the area because the north of their district is Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and Romney Marsh, to the south, is all high flood risk zone. Folkestone Racecourse is particularly keen to build 800 dwelling to help fund its ambitious expansion plans, though they are less than keen on having waste plant nearby. With the threats comes some opportunities and the residents of Sellindge have had success in pushing for the creation of a new village green to provide a new focus for village life as part of the plans.

The latest scheme for Sellindge is an Ecotricity wind turbine. Even if you support such technology, picking Sellindge was not a wise move given the last few years of scheme after scheme after scheme hitting residents. With all this, I can only salute the Sellindge & District Resident's Association, ably led by Ronald Lello, who have taken all of this in their stride and consistently defended their community with solid reasoning and good humour.

So what else could possibly go wrong? Well, Sellindge just so happens to be under the flight path for passenger jets that might want to land at an expanded Lydd Airport...



# KENT VOICE

*Continuing our series on the planning issues facing Kent, Brian Lloyd puts the*  
**Spotlight on Swale**



Brian Lloyd

I know Swale well, having lived in and around Faversham for almost twenty years and previously worked for the Borough Council for sixteen years. It is a Borough of great diversity and contrasts, and perhaps because of this it is a place that lacks clear definition as a place and for many residents of Kent it is a little unknown and off the beaten track. Taking its name from the narrow channel of tidal water that separates the mainland of Kent from the Isle of Sheppey, Swale was created as part of the local government re-organisation of 1974. Since then it has been characterised as comprising three parts – the Isle of Sheppey; Sittingbourne and west Swale; and Faversham and east Swale – all of which have their own unique character and identity. In strategic planning terms, over the years the Borough has been pushed and pulled between east and north Kent, never really knowing where it should belong and ending up straddling both. Most recently it has been further divided by the Thames Gateway regeneration designation, which includes Sittingbourne and Sheppey, but not Faversham. All this makes it a complex place to plan.

But despite all that it does have unity, and that is provided by its stunning countryside, which has been shaped by its geology and centuries of agricultural activity. Many will be surprised to hear that the rural part of Swale is home to 56,000 of the Borough's residents, 40% of the total.

The southern part of the Borough, essentially all the land south of the M2 Motorway, comprises the dip-slope of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) characterised by its undulating chalk grasslands, woodlands and dry valleys. The foot of the Downs gives way to a broad fertile belt of agricultural land that runs through the central part of the Borough either side of the Roman Watling Street (now the A2). Within this belt are the orchards and arable farms that are so quintessentially 'Garden of England', including Brogdale that houses the national fruit collection.

The coast and waterways are intrinsic to the character of Swale, and at over 100km it has the longest coastline of any Kent district. A particular feature of Swale's coast is the extensive marshlands bordering both sides of the Swale, which are an internationally protected habitat.

It is within the context of this highly protected, valuable and historic natural environment that the Borough Council is currently planning for the future development of Swale to 2031 and beyond. In January the Council consulted on 'spatial options' or alternative development scenarios for the future. Four options were presented for comment.

It is concerning that all the options place new road building at their heart. They all propose the completion of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road (SNRR) and additionally options 3 and 4 propose the provision of a new Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road (SSRR) between the A2 and the M2. But nobody knows how the provision of these roads will actually improve traffic conditions in and around Sittingbourne, and how they will impact on existing communities,





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especially those along the A2 to Faversham. No studies have yet been undertaken to assess this. Such is our concern with this that we have joined forces with ten local councils east of Sittingbourne to challenge these proposals.

Most people in Sittingbourne and on Sheppey will point to junction 5 on the M2 as the major traffic issue that needs to be addressed, but all the Council proposes under all the options is just to assess the capacity of junction 5. Instead of sorting out this key motorway junction, it seems that the Council is looking to divert traffic around Sittingbourne on the SNRR and then take it to a new junction on the M2 via the SSRR. This cannot be sensible and sustainable planning, and will just mean that traffic will queue on the M2 to junction 5 rather than on the A249. The solution to junction 5 is improving junction 5 itself, not the building of yet more roads across our valuable countryside.

With regard to housing, options 1, 2 and 3 propose 13,500 new homes, whilst Option 4 proposes 18,500. This means that as a minimum the Council intends to simply adopt, and roll forward, the level of housing proposed in the South East Plan. When it is enacted, the Localism Bill will abolish the South East Plan because the Coalition Government believes that decisions on the amount of new development should be decided locally rather than imposed by national Government.

The Council's acceptance of at least the South East Plan level of housing as a minimum is surprising given the strong representations it made to the Government against it when it was imposed on them in 2008. But now they have embraced it as a minimum and extended it to at least 2031. We wonder what has brought about this change of mind after just 3 years.

Turning to employment, options 1 and 2 rely on existing identified sites which would create 20,800 jobs, whilst options 3 and 4 are described as providing a 'step change' in employment growth to provide 36,900 new jobs. This step change would see a further 60ha of new employment development on greenfield land and a massive 54ha expansion of the Kent Science Park.

However, the Council's own employment consultants have concluded that it is highly unlikely that the anticipated growth in jobs proposed will be achieved. Even if the Council relies on the existing identified employment sites their own consultants have concluded that Swale would have to attract 40% of the growth of the resident workforce in the whole of Kent over the plan period to take up the jobs provided. Under options 3 and 4 this would rise to 65%. This does not sound remotely realistic, and it is difficult to see the case for developing yet more countryside for employment to secure the Council's economic objectives.

In particular, under options 3 and 4 significant expansion of the Kent Science Park (KSP) is proposed. The Council sees the KSP as being unique in Kent and the only opportunity to provide high skilled and high

quality jobs in Swale. Whilst Protect Kent would not disagree that the KSP provides an existing opportunity for high skilled jobs, it is poorly located with access only possible via country lanes. It also sits on the edge of the Kent Downs AONB and is surrounded by high quality and sensitive countryside. In these circumstances expansion cannot be seen as acceptable.

It is also the case that the planned closure of the Pfizer site at Sandwich might have a significant effect on the future prospects of the KSP. The Pfizer site provides a major opportunity for a rival, probably superior, science based site, which has already received significant investment in up-grading the transport infrastructure servicing it. The Government and the County Council are resolved to find alternative occupiers of the site, and it may become an attractive alternative to companies that might have seen their future at the KSP, including existing tenants. This must place doubts over the ability of the KSP to expand as the Council and the owners would like.

For all these reasons Protect Kent has been unable to support any of the options put forward by the Council. We wait to see whether or not the Borough Council take notice of our views, but we have already had some success because on 14 March the Swale Joint Transportation Board agreed that the completion of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road is progressed no further until options for moving traffic to the M2 are brought forward. This, at least, provides the opportunity to examine in detail the highway issues in the Borough including a strategic up-grade to junction 5.



# KENT VOICE

## Local Development Framework (Local Plan) Round-up

*The following provides the latest round-up of the current state of play, as we understand it, with the production of Local Development Framework documents across Kent.*

*However, it is likely that there will be some change to the timings as time moves on. It should be noted that the Coalition Government no longer refers to LDFs but calls them Local Plans.*



### **Ashford**

- Following its examination last summer the Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan Document (DPD) was found sound and adopted in October 2010.
- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD was undertaken at the start of 2011. In response to representations made a consultation on omission sites was undertaken in May and further pre-submission consultation is expected in the summer before the plan is submitted later in the year for examination.
- In September formal consultation is expected on the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan
- In October formal consultation is expected on a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD.
- The First Review of the Core Strategy is scheduled to commence this year.

### **Canterbury**

- Consultation on the preferred options for the Core Strategy is not now expected until early 2012.

### **Dartford**

- The Dartford Core Strategy was submitted for examination in February and the examination was held in May.
- In November the Council intend to undertake initial consultation on a Development Management Development Plan Document.

### **Dover**

- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document is expected in November, prior to it being submitted for examination in early 2012.

### **Gravesham**

- Further consultation on the combined Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) is expected in September.

### **Maidstone**

- After some considerable delay as a result of last years' KIG Inquiry, an initial consultation draft of the Core Strategy is expected to be published in July.

### **Sevenoaks**

- Following its examination in October 2010 the Core Strategy was found sound and adopted by the Council in February.
- Informal consultation on a combined Site Allocations and Development Management Policies started in May with comments invited by 4 August. Formal pre-submission consultation is expected early next year.

### **Shepway**

- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is expected in July and its submission for examination is likely before the end of the year.



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### Swale

- Informal consultation on the spatial options for the Core Strategy was undertaken in January, and consultation on preferred options and supporting development options is not now expected until early 2012.
- Work is progressing of the preparation of the Faversham Creekside Development Plan Document, with informal consultation on Policy Options held in May and June. Formal pre-submission consultation is expected in early 2012.

### Thanet

- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is expected in October, with submission and the examination to follow in 2012.

### Tonbridge and Malling

- Tonbridge and Malling has completed and adopted all its Development Plan Documents, and currently has no plans to review them.

### Tunbridge Wells

- Whilst the Core Strategy was adopted by the Council in June 2010, the Council has resolved to undertake an immediate review of it. Informal consultation on the review was started in May and formal pre-submission consultation is scheduled for October.
- Also in October the Council propose to undertake concurrent consultations on three Development Plan Documents (DPDs): an Allocations DPD; a Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD; and a Development Management Policies DPD.

### Medway

- Following informal consultation on a draft of the Core Strategy at the end of 2010, it is expected that the formal pre-submission consultation will take place in July. It is likely that the Core Strategy will be submitted for examination in early 2012.

### KCC

- Initial consultation on issues to be addressed by the Waste and Minerals Core Strategy was undertaken at the end of last year. Consultation on the preferred options for the strategy is currently underway, with comments invited by 26 July. Formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is expected in November.
- The County Council is also progressing separate Development Plan Documents (DPDs) for Mineral Sites and Waste Sites respectively. Consultation on site options for both DPDs is also currently underway with comments invited by 26 July. Further informal consultation is expected in November.

## Planning Training

Do you properly understand the planning system and how to be most effective in making comments on planning applications?

Do you know what a Local Development Framework (LDF) is and how to get involved in its preparation?

Are you up-to-date with the changes to the planning system?

If not, Protect Kent is now able to offer Parish and Town Councils and other local groups training sessions on various aspects of the planning system to help them better understand the planning system and how to engage in it.

The training sessions are designed to provide an overview of the planning system together with more detailed and practical guidance on LDFs and development management as required. They would be particularly valuable for new councillors and others new to involvement in planning issues, or anybody needing a refresher on current planning matters.

The sessions would run for about 3 hours making them suitable for an evening, and they are aimed at groups of up to 20 people to enable more informal discussion of issues. They would be led by Brian Lloyd, Protect Kent's Senior Planner, who is a chartered town planner with over 25 years' experience in the profession.

For more information and details of cost please contact Brian Lloyd on 01233 714543 or e-mail him at [brian.lloyd@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:brian.lloyd@protectkent.org.uk).



# New Office

As many of you will be aware, the Protect Kent team have now left our former Evesgate base and moved into gleaming new offices in Charing. Our board made the decision to purchase a run down, old pub and refurbish it with the ground floor as our new office, whilst the top of the building provides a new revenue stream as an apartment which is privately let. This will mean that we should receive a healthy return on the investment, whilst making excellent savings with no rent to pay. The move was very efficiently carried out with all of the team working hard whilst still under the pressure of a variety of tight deadlines. I distinctly recall Sean packing a huge number of boxes one day whilst Furey-ously (I know, I know!) formulating our Lydd strategy the next. Despite moving in December, we didn't hold our official opening until March. This allowed us time to get our offices spick and span to welcome the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, the Queens own representative to the county, to officially open the building. As you can see from the pictures he very much enjoyed attending our new offices and gave us a memorable speech about our County's beauty. CPRE Protect Kent's President Graham Clarke generously gave us a plaque which was designed by him to commemorate the event. Now that the dust has settled the team are able to work harder than ever, in an absolutely fantastic new, purpose built space to deliver the greatest level of protection to Kent's landscapes. We love having visitors so if anyone is in the area and fancies seeing us hard at work, just drop in!

Jamie Weir



*Protect Kent chairman Richard Knox-Johnston shares a joke with the Lord Lieutenant.*



*Amanda Cottrell OBE and now Visit England board member chats with Sir Donald Sinden and the Lord Lieutenant.*





Our President Graham Clarke poses with the beautiful plaque he made to commemorate the opening of our new offices.

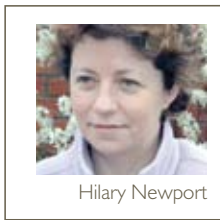


*We love having visitors so if anyone is in the area and fancies seeing us hard at work, just drop in!*

# KENTVOICE

## Transport in Kent

from problems to solutions and back again



Hilary Newport

Ask any ten people what the biggest environmental problems facing Kent are and a good few of them will say 'traffic'. Congestion, pollution, delays and frustration are suffered by many of those who live near or use the county's roads network. Increased freight transport – the current

economic downturn notwithstanding – suggests that the situation is only going to get worse. Little wonder, then, that the arteries of Kent's transport network are becoming increasingly clogged.

Kent's traffic problems are exacerbated by poor transport choices made elsewhere. Kent's motorways are the conduit between the UK and mainland Europe, and an ever-increasing number of vehicles use them to ferry goods to destinations far distant. The channel tunnel has now joined the Port of Dover as another means of crossing the short strait between Kent and the European mainland. And, of course, when there is disruption to either of the crossings (because of adverse weather, industrial disputes, fire or mechanical failure) the HGVs back up and are held on stretches of the M20 as Kent Police are forced to implement the all-too-familiar Operation Stack. The knock-on congestion caused by the closure of stretches of the M20 to accommodate the stacked HGVs causes yet more misery and delay to Kent's road users.

Kent benefits very little from the constant stream of freight to which it plays host. Only some 20% of those HGVs crossing the channel are registered in the UK, and many of those vehicles registered overseas carry huge reserves of fuel in so-called 'belly tanks' which mean that during their visit to the UK they will pay no fuel duty. Foreign-registered HGVs currently contribute nothing toward the cost of maintaining Britain's roads, but nevertheless make a significant contribution to the wear and tear they suffer. They also contribute significantly to congestion elsewhere, most notably on the M25, already one of the busiest parts of the national transport system.

In December 2010 Kent County Council reacted to these challenges with its new transport strategy. Called Growth without Gridlock, it sets out the council's priorities for investment. These include a new Lower Thames crossing to supplement the capacity of the existing Dartford crossings, and a scheme to act as an alternative to Operation Stack: a lorry park which is planned to take the burden of HGVs off the motorway and on to a greenfield site near Aldington. Meanwhile the preferred route (preferred, at least, by KCC) for the proposed Lower

*Ask any ten people what the biggest environmental problems facing Kent are and a good few of them will say 'traffic'.*



Thames crossing would stretch from Chadwell in Essex to the east of Gravesend, affecting land which has important wildlife designations. All of these so-called solutions to these challenges would have tremendous and immediate impacts on the environment and on the amenity of residents; they would also have the longer term effect of nurturing and facilitating the damaging growth of road freight through the county.

Unsurprisingly, Protect Kent remains opposed to these proposals. Those who argue that the unhindered movement of freight through our county is vital to economic development are missing the point that this is an inherently unsustainable practice. Better transport choices, which limit the growth of road-based freight and concentrate on more sustainable solutions, are essential.





## Facts on operation stack

- Has been in use for over 20 years.
- The longest Operation Stack was between 28th February 2008 and 21st March 2008.
- A huge cost is associated with Operation Stack which is estimated at £1 Million per day to P&O ferries alone.

This results in an extrapolated estimate of £2 Billion per annum in congestion costs to British business.

## Facts on freight

- 80% of HGV's at Dover are foreign registered.
- Many of these HGV's use 'belly tanks' which negate the need for refuelling in this Country.
- This has resulted in very little gain for our County's economy.



## Operation Stack

– our alternative

In a series of public meetings early in 2011, Chairman Richard Knox-Johnston outlined a radical alternative solution to a permanent lorry park on greenfield land. Reclaimed land at Dover harbour itself could be constructed to house those lorries delayed in their transport across the channel, subject of course to detailed investigations of the marine environment to establish that harm would be minimised. As part of the proposed expansion of the port which is currently under consideration, we believe that the additional cost could be minimal.

## Lower Thames Crossing

– our alternative

We believe a far more sustainable solution would be to make the best possible use of the use of the existing infrastructure at Dartford. We have long advocated the use of high-speed tolls at Dartford to ease the 'pinch point' caused by the toll barriers, and we welcome recent announcements that these are to be adopted. Meanwhile far greater use could be made of alternative landing points for ferries loaded with freight vehicles, such as at Dartford itself (particularly at night, when the existing Dartford crossings are quiet)

Hilary Newport

# 400 Club

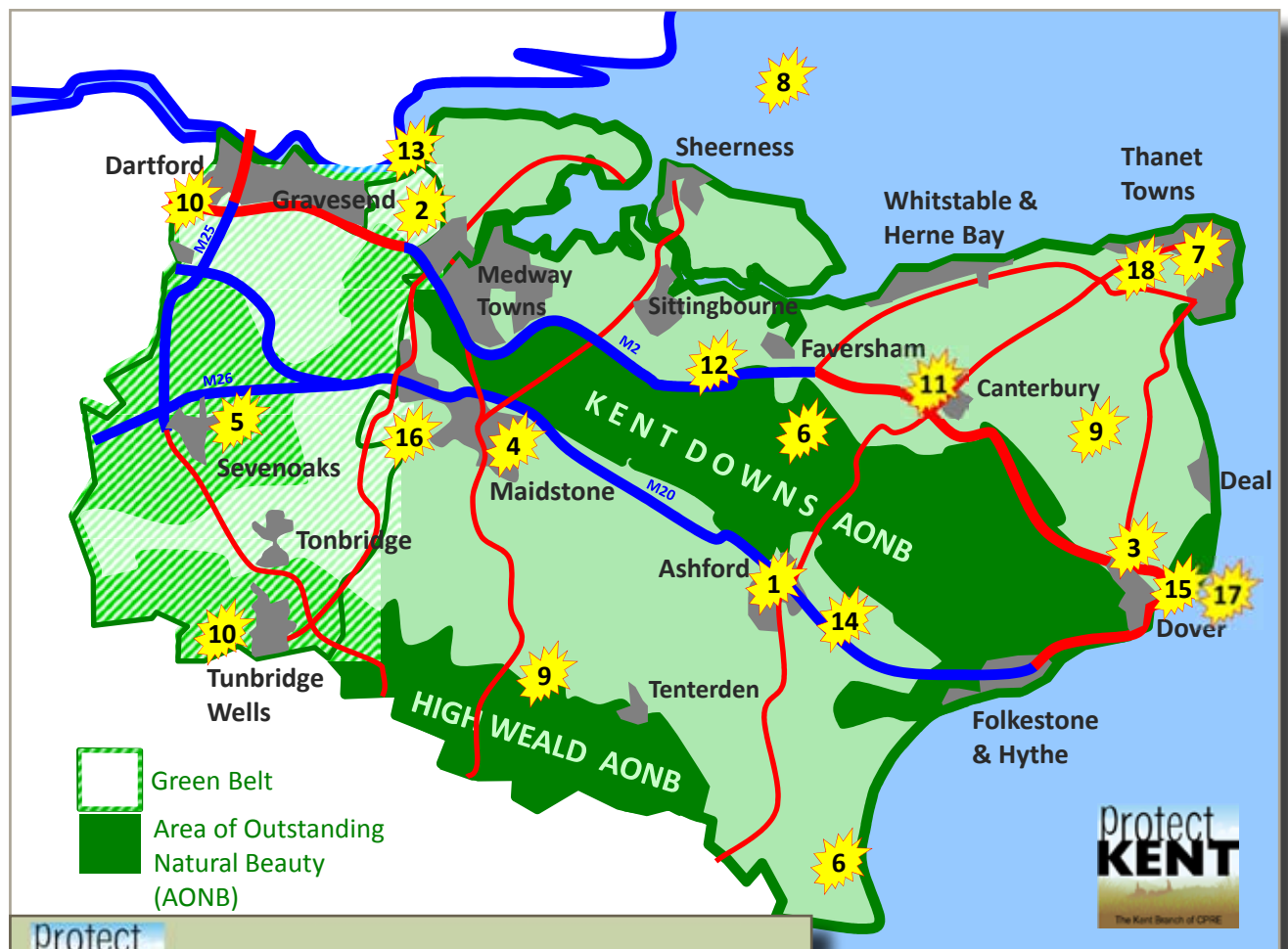
Here are the prizes awarded since the last edition of Kent Voice. September 2010:

£40 Miss AN Bates (217), £30 Mrs S Filmer (276), £25 LG Holt (26) and TA Hasting (118), £20 Mrs B Moss (90) and JR Hudson (114).

October: £40 Mrs P Pollock (183), £30 Mrs P Pollock (186), £25 Mrs MC Beach (64) and LW Wallace (358), £20 CS Martin (365) and AK Harden (218). November: £40 Miss J Lushington (283), £30 Dr R Baxter (15), £25 Mrs PA Darby (343) and LR Horscroft (75), £20 RG Whitelegg (236) and Mrs AM Hone (107). December: £200 AW Topping (10), £50.00 Mrs S Pittman (298), £25 Mrs MO Brignall (127) and GF Addicott (86), £20 Miss MF James (225) and AE Church (92).

A new Club started in January. As just 374 shares have been sold the prizes have been adjusted accordingly. Here are the prizes awarded so far:

January 2011: £40 C St. JH Daniel (356), £30 Mrs MO Brignall (158), £25 AW Topping (114) and JS Owlett (4), £20 JH Turpenny (40) and Mrs JER Hilton (266). February: £40 LW Wallace (101), £30 Mrs S Corral (334), £25 Miss M Butcher (363) and Miss ME Tout (171), £20 Miss JE Fadden (77) and Dr F Simpson (156). March: £40 J Mercy (279), £30 Mrs AM Hone (25), £25 Mrs L Dowding (184) and Mrs EC Jessup (193), £20 RG Whitelegg (312) and Dr F Simpson (157).



**Protect KENT**  
 The Kent Branch of CPRE

1929  
 2009

- 1 Ashford Growth Area
- 2 Thames Gateway Growth Area
- 3 Dover Growth Point - Whitfield expansion
- 4 Maidstone Growth Point
- 5 The BIG Rail Freight Depot (StopBIG)
- 6 Lydd Airport Expansion - Public Inquiry
- 7 Manston Airport night flights
- 8 Thames Estuary Airport
- 9 More Pylons across Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 10 Greenbelt boundary reviews
- 11 Harbledown Park & Ride
- 12 Kent Science Park Expansion
- 13 Lower Thames Crossing
- 14 Operation Stack Lorry Park
- 15 Road-based Freight Growth - Dover Port Expansion
- 16 Oaken Wood - quarry extension into woodland
- 17 Dover Port Expansion
- 18 China Gateway

## Threats to Kent

updated April 2011





*“There are no easy answers, no magic bullets.”*

Richard Knox-Johnston,  
Chairman of CPRE

*Everyone has been hit over the winter by spiralling heating, electricity and transport costs.*

Many of the problems surrounding energy that groups like CPRE Protect Kent have been warning about for some time are coming true now, not just in the distant future. Should we just be resigned to tightening our belts and getting used to energy shortages as the new norm? CPRE Protect Kent does not think so. Sean Furey, our former Deputy Director at CPRE Protect Kent has written the blueprint

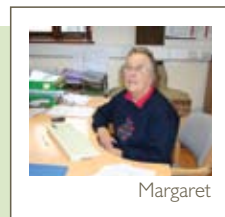
to Kent’s future energy needs, explaining in layman’s terms everything required to make sure Kents energy needs can be sustainably and ecologically attained. This book focuses on the biggest issue Kent will face in its future, and distils it into an easy to read, informative and interesting report. Sean says: “Kent and Medway currently has oil, coal, gas and nuclear power stations, but many of these are coming to the end of their lives. However, Kent also boasts examples of the most cutting edge renewable energy technologies in Europe and exploiting these can boost Kent jobs and business, as well as meeting everyone’s energy needs for the future.” Richard Knox-Johnston, Chairman of CPRE Protect Kent says “There are no easy answers, no magic bullets. Energy efficiency has to be our top priority. Large scale energy storage is critical to managing intermittent energy sources. These are the challenges we face.”

*Call the office on 01233 714540 to purchase your copy*

## Projected Trips for 2011

A full description of the various outings can be found in the attached **Margaret’s Update.**

Chilham Castle tours	Friday 8th June and Wednesday 27th July.
Hampton Court Flower Show	Thursday 7th July.
Coach Tour of the Olympic Site and boat trip through the Lee Valley River Park from Broxbourne	Tuesday 9th August or Thursday 18th August.
Tour of 5 Romney Marsh Churches	Tuesday 6th September.
Visit to EU Parliament in Brussels	Thursday 13th October. Waiting List Places Only.
Visit to College of Arms, City of London	Thursday 17th November. Waiting List Places Only.
Christmas Lunch	To be confirmed.



Margaret



# District Reports

*It's been a really busy year for our district committees, with a massive shake up in the planning system, some controversial applications and a wide range of different developments happening in the county. This has put significant strains on our various committees, but as usual, the quality of their work has remained remarkably robust, and they've done some fantastic work! Here's a short summary of what the 'eyes and ears' of your county have been up to!*



**David Murr**

## Medway

Many of the local issues which have occupied countryside campaigners in Medway have been eclipsed by the staggering and contradictory messages coming from the government, and their attitude to planning. To me the localism agenda itself seems calculated to bring confusion and a lack of clarity to the process and to pose new dangers to the countryside. After all, there is no certainty that plans decided at local level will take more account of the environmental considerations and threats to the countryside, especially as these 'local' structures will have to comply with a new national planning framework. Even as people and organisations try to make sense of this, the more recent budget statements seem to show that government has already decided that economic factors and the pursuit of growth will take precedence over everything else. There are fears that developers will not only have a strong influence over local decisions, but will take the messages coming from the government as a green light for more building in the countryside and open spaces. I believe that CPRE Protect Kent should express its opposition to these policies in the strongest terms.



**Barrie Gore**

## Canterbury

We are developing strong links with the re-formed Canterbury Society, and have matters which are of mutual interest, upon which we shall be acting in concert. Of particular interest to us both is the Localism Bill with its promise of Neighbourhood Forum and Parish Council involvement. When more detail about the Bill is known, we shall both be contacting residents' and other amenity organisations in areas where there is no Parish Council coverage, e.g. in urban areas, to offer our support and assistance with action they may wish to take under the Bill.



One particular matter which has aroused much comment is an application by Kent University to erect an hotel (150 rooms) and three new student blocks (800 rooms) on a new site which is part of an Area of High Landscape Value in the Local Plan, and adjoins a large urban residential area. We are concerned about commercial development on any part of the campus that does not directly relate to the students, and Canterbury is already well served with hotels which can offer facilities for those attending conferences and seminars at the University. As to the student blocks, we are assured that these are to reduce a shortfall of campus accommodation for first year students, and as such they are welcomed, as it may lessen student reliance on housing in the City which then becomes unavailable for private residents. However, we believe that the proposed blocks should be spread among the other developed areas of the campus rather than taking a prime piece of designated (and good quality agricultural) land which forms part of the setting of Canterbury and the World Heritage sites.



**Glyn Thomas**

## Dover

We have over the past few months been engaged in trying to ensure our survival as a committee. You will know that Sean produced an excellent paper which formed the basis of a very healthy discussion at our meeting on 17th February. Although the decisions made were less dramatic than Sean had suggested I think that we have turned the corner in that we now have secretary and another younger person on the committee and we are waiting to see if a newsletter and a set of A5 flyers, sent to all members of Protect Kent in our district will produce further results.



**Nigel Britten**

## Sevenoaks

Following the Examination, the Sevenoaks Core Strategy has been found 'sound', so the LDF foundations are now in place. However, to focus on one particular point, in spite of Brian's considerable efforts we were not able to persuade the Council that inclusion of a landscape policy would make a necessary improvement, and the Inspector could not come down on our side since it was not an issue of soundness.



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The blinkered Sevenoaks response showed a disappointing failure to understand the context. This District happens to be two-thirds AONB but we think CPRE should press strongly for such policies everywhere, regardless of the perceived landscape quality. To quote the European Landscape Convention: "landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas."

On more everyday matters, we have dealt with two planning applications where a balance had to be found between strict and pragmatic. The first was for the listed Farningham Mill and the associated land and buildings, raising the ever-challenging question of the legitimate scope of enabling development. Briefly, the mill is in a poor condition; restoration depends on redevelopment to fund it. While accepting the general argument we drew the line at excessive commercial development and converting a folly (which had never been anything more than an ice-house vent) into a large house, of a very modern design, requiring an access road to be laid across green belt land.

The other application involved legitimising (or confirming the existing use, if you prefer) of a hotchpotch of activities based in what used to be farm buildings, the whole lot adding up to an ugly mess. Here, the 'greater good' suggested that the right course would be to regularise the site in order to give the planning authority powers to manage the future use. This was the view of the Parish Council which we supported.

Having held our first AGM only last October, we have decided not to wait the full year for the second but to bring it forward to the warm month of June. We did not have to look far for a speaker: it will be our secretary, Susan Pittman – soon to be Dr Susan when she is awarded her doctorate for her research and PhD thesis on The Medieval Deer Parks of Kent. Fittingly, we shall meet in Penshurst, right next to the deer park, on Saturday 25 June.

## Swale

The public consultation on Swale's four proposed "Spatial Options" has recently closed and a chosen option should be made public by August. CPRE Protect Kent and the Swale Committee, almost entirely through the efforts of Brian Lloyd at Charing, put together a 23-page response to Swale's suggestions.

All four of Swale's options were predicated on the completion of the Northern Relief Road (NRR) with a junction on the A2 in Bapchild. Two of them included work on a Southern Relief Road forming a continuation of the NRR to the M2, creating a new junction. CPRE's response puts forwards a fifth spatial option arguing that the completion of the NRR should be 'put on hold' until the effect on traffic flow of the completion of the Milton Creek crossing (part of the relief road presently under construction) can be assessed. With the completion of the crossing the objective of the relief road, to relieve Sittingbourne town centre from heavy traffic, might be achieved, although some of the Swale Committee believe that this will not be the case. But, in today's financial climate, there is bound to be a lag between the completion of the Milton Creek crossing and the start of construction of the final part of the NRR. It would seem a good idea to use this time to re-assess the need for what would be a very environmentally damaging piece of road building.

Another feature of CPRE's fifth option is the return to the housing target agreed by Swale three years ago of 11,625 units (over the new planning period) compared to the 13,500 - 18,500 in Swale's current proposals. In our case almost all of the provision would be on brownfield sites. For employment, we are advocating a lower area of employment land provision but a far greater focus on provision of jobs with a low transport impact with the target labour market being Swale's citizens. If this should seem unambitious it should be pointed out that KCC's demographic study showed that for Swale's high growth spatial options would need to attract 40% of the growth of the resident workforce in the whole of Kent to take up the jobs provided. The feeling was that Swale was attempting to "solve" the area's problems by importing workers, thereby improving the headline figures on employment etc., to no real benefit of those presently in Swale. Finally, and most importantly, the problems of Junction 5 of the M2 must be addressed. This bottleneck limits development in Sittingbourne and on the Isle of Sheppey. Any work there would relieve the pressure for yet another link road through what is already a very crowded borough.

Expecting an unfavourable reaction, I mentioned that CPRE was working on its own option that did not include the completion of the NRR at a meeting of the Swale Rural Forum. Somewhat to my surprise, the suggestion seemed to meet with some approval. Then, a few days later at a meeting of the Swale Transportation Board, councillors voted 11 to 2 to "recommend that the (completion of the NRR) is progressed no further until KCC comes forward with options to move traffic to the M2."

It remains to be seen what will become of Swale's four options in the light of this motion. Maybe the CPRE's fifth option will be chosen by default. For a copy of CPRE Protect Kent's response to the consultation either contact the office in Charing or email [blandon@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:blandon@tiscali.co.uk).



**Peter Blandon**



Bob Baxter

## Historic Buildings Committee

There have been further instances of historic buildings that have not been Listed being placed under threat. One is Chelsea House in Westerham. This has been sold, and our Sevenoaks representative is planning to assess it with view to applying for it to be Listed. Another is Pett Dane, an early mediaeval house set in woodland near Eastling, Swale. This remote building had slipped everyone's attention until local outcry followed a successful planning application for total demolition and replacement. Subsequent pressure from historic building preservation bodies has now had it Listed. It remains to be seen if this measure results in a stay of execution! Cases such as these show the need for constant vigilance and sound local knowledge.

'Sun rooms' tend to be an increasing problem in parts of the county. It is perhaps inevitable that, in these days of economic constraint, owners are tending to expand rather than move. The proposed 'conservatories' are coming in all shapes and sizes, and often sit awkwardly with the small-windowed antiquity of a parent historic building. We may need to draw up a set of guidelines to help with the assessment of these cases.

A challenge of a different kind is presented at Standard Quay, Faversham. Here a dispute between the landowner and the creekside barge repair and refitting companies threatens the future of such activities. It is not at present a planning control matter. But, with Swale's Core Strategy at the formative stage, the Committee is considering pressing for a strategic framework to be in place for the whole creek, so that not only the historic buildings are protected, but also the traditional skills that they harbour.

At the Farningham Mill site in Sevenoaks district, the Sevenoaks Committee was minded to oppose the general scheme. Our KHBC representative, however, after due consideration, and discussion, felt unable to object to the proposals for the mill building itself. This was an example of the need for close liaison between KHBC and the local CPRE committee. It illustrated the fact that, on occasion, Protect Kent units can have differing terms of reference, and cannot always sing with one voice.

The Hon. Secretary continues to do excellent work in updating and reprinting copies of the district-based, Kent Historic Building Index. These handy booklets of Listed buildings, compiled originally by Ken Gravett, are a valuable aid to volunteers in the field. Their contents are also proving of considerable interest in the preparation of KCC's Historic Environment Record.

With respect to the Gravett Prize, we were pleased to present it to a young architecture student from UCA who has shown himself to have exceptional talent as a draughtsman.

Elections were held at the time of the last meeting on 28th January. The writer was elected, unopposed, as Chairman. Happily, Graham Horner was unanimously elected for a further term as Honorary Secretary. Unfortunately there were no candidates for the post of Vice-chairman, so the position remains vacant for the time being.

Bob Baxter



Graham Warren

## ENVIRONMENT GROUP REPORT

At our last meeting, chaired by Paul Bolas, the agenda covered a range of topics including Waste Recycling and Land Use / Food Security. Under the latter heading members discussed the question of anticipated increases in the demand for irrigation water in the South East. This could be a possible subject for the Kent Rural Partnership for Food and Agriculture, if not already included in their programme.

With regard to the Secretary of State's Thames water management resource plan, the decision was made known to the Water Company by letter of 1st March, enclosing the Inspector's report. It fully supports the Inspector's conclusions and recommendations under all headings, including those relating to the appraisal of supply-side options (e.g. reservoirs, river abstractions effluent re-use); this being the aspect which received most attention in the CPRE Kent representation.

In summary, the SOS concludes that the Company have not met the statutory requirements under the Water Industry Act 1991 with respect to the efficient and economic supply of water during the plan period 2010 – 35; and that they had furthermore failed to comply with the WRMP Directive of 2007 (Para 3b) insofar as the methodology used in the options appraisals was not sufficiently robust to support the proposed programme.

We feel that the Company must abandon the premise of long term risk associated with "unknown" sustainability reductions. These are, for the most part, major reductions in public supply abstractions from rivers and boreholes identified by EA in their CAMS (Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy) programme as likely to be required in compliance with the European Water Framework and Habitats Directives; the objective being to restore the designated waters to good environmental status (initially deadlined for 2015). The Company will therefore have to delete the 100 MI/d resource loss included in the Plan as a nominal contingency item. The real figure is likely to be





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considerably greater but the Company cannot make any speculative provision for this component at any stage in the plan period. Instead, the Inspector has recommended a more comprehensive sensitivity analysis of the impact of different SR initiatives under a range of dry year scenarios.

The Plan must include a wider range of feasible options; examples identified by the Inspector including additional effluent re-use schemes and aquifer storage and recovery.

The SOS has also directed that the advice of the EA be sought with respect to the additional work (and time) required to deliver the final amended Plan for addressing the remaining deficiencies.

The next steps would be to discuss the SOS decision with CPRE Oxfordshire and formulate a joint position as the basis for further representation, given that the Inspector has estimated (Para 15.1.9) that it should be possible to complete the additional work in 6 months and that this should be in collaboration with EA and with appropriate public consultation.

The Environment Agency report for February gives zero Soil Moisture Deficits, with river flows and ground water levels holding at above normal Storage in Bewl Water reservoir also recorded storage as above the February average. The rainfall distribution for Kent shows a contrast between the East (effectively the Stour basin and Thanet) with totals exceeding the average for February, and the north and west which received between 70% and 130% of the monthly average. March however has been relatively dry and there are already indications of local concern with respect to the capacity of Bewl Water to meet demand in the west of the county should dry conditions persist through the spring and summer months.

## Tonbridge & Malling

The last twelve months have seen very significant changes to the make-up of the Tonbridge and Malling District Committee with the sad loss of the much respected, very experienced and hardworking Ron Saunders. We have recruited Stuart Olsen from the North Larkfield Environmental Protection Group and Pat Crawford from Hadlow College to the Tonbridge & Malling Committee.

Much of our work recently has been in connection with, what we are advised, is the largest by area, planning application in the country for polytunnels (much of it retrospective) by Hugh Lowe Farms to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. This application, (TM /08/03739/ FL) first made in 2008, has yet to be considered by the Area Planning Committee. It covers a very large area (of sensitive landscape) just outside the Kent Downs AONB, both on and to the south of the Greensand Ridge taking in the parishes of West Peckham, Mereworth, Hadlow, Watlington, East Peckham and King Hill. The District Committee resolved to oppose the application on six grounds and is grateful for the prompt assistance of Graham Warren, Chairman of the Branch Environment Group, who drafted a detailed critique of the flood risk put forward by the Environment Agency.

The T&M Committee also successfully opposed an application on the edge of Metropolitan Green Belt in Leybourne for a Showman's Ground.

Careful consideration has also been given to an application by the Gallagher Group to extend their Hermitage Farm ragstone quarrying activity, into the adjacent Oaken Wood, an area of ancient woodland. It was felt that given the detailed conditioning built into the application, together with the applicant's agreement to leave the current processing machinery in situ at Hermitage Farm, that the best course of action was not to oppose this application. KCC's Planning Application Committee has yet to decide this matter.

Members of the Committee have recently attended an exhibition held at Larkfield and Ditton, in respect of a proposed application by Biossence for a gas driven waste to energy plant proposed to be erected at the former (now demolished) SCA Containerboard site at New Hythe. The promoters intend to extract gas from cardboard, timber and other used forest products and burn it, to produce electricity for the grid. Those members who have seen the exhibition have expressed concerns that the promoters have yet to demonstrate the commercial viability of such gas extraction techniques in this country. In addition, the prospective applicant currently intends that the proposed site shall be served wholly by road transport, through residential roads. This is most unfortunate, as the site is one of only two in Tonbridge and Malling, that has both an excellent and unused rail siding and large commercial wharfage, affronting the River Medway. Arrangements are in hand for a meeting with the promoter's project team, together with the Chief Executive and Committee members, once outline transport plans have been prepared.



**Harry Rayner**





Hilary Moorby

## Ashford

In the last report I brought to the attention of the committee 3 applications which have caused the committee some thought as to how to respond to them. Firstly an application for an incinerator for fallen farm animals. This caused such an outrage in the village Charing that the applicant withdrew the application and is now going to put 150pigs on the site. This in itself may result in other issues.

The second was for a biogas generator using fodder material for fuel. This was recommended for acceptance by the officers, however, the committee, taking the views of us and the residents into consideration refused it. This threw the officers into confusion and they asked for the decision to be deferred while they thought of some reasons for the refusal!

The third was a potential application for a photovoltaic "field". We do have a large one on the horizon, so far only a request that an EIA should not be necessary. But a small one in a field near to a house has been given permission, we didn't object to this.

We are finding that less and less time is taken up with letters about applications and more and more time taken up by the ridiculous planning statements put out by the Government. Ashford is committed to review the core strategy as soon as possible but this will inevitably be several years work. The whole of the present Core strategy has been distorted by the scrapping of J10a of the M20, with the consequence that development will have to shift to the Maidstone side of the town.



Felicity Simpson

## Maidstone Committee

The focus of much of the Committee's attention for the rest of 2011 will be on Maidstone Borough Council's Core Strategy as a major part of the Local Development Framework. The process was begun in 2007 when a large number of rather rambling proposals were issued for public consultation, but these were withdrawn when the AXA/KIG planning application was submitted. The first official Draft of the new Core Strategy proposals has yet to be issued but from the MBC Cabinet meeting open to the public there was agreement to retain as open green rural countryside the land north of Bearsted between Thurnham and Hollingbourne in the North Downs SLA (the former AXA/KIG site), and an officer proposal for a "business park" on 11 hectares of countryside south of Junction 8 of the M20 was rejected by members. CPRE Maidstone had written to the local MP and to others pointing out the amount of land with planning permission for office development within urban Maidstone but not yet occupied. Although "offices" have been excluded in 2011 from the search for "business employment" land, the futility of such a separation is shown by the experience of development at Eclipse Park at M20 Junction 7, supposedly in the 2000 Maidstone Borough Local Plan for "high tech" employment but actually occupied by law, accountancy, insurance and planning firms. MBC has adopted for additional dwellings the 10,080 of the SE Plan but as a considerable number have planning permission the original proposal for a new "village" of 5,000 dwellings on green land south of the M20 in the Leeds-Langley area has been dropped. However there is an expected proposal that 3,320 dwellings will be built on green land within urban/suburban Maidstone and the Village Rural Service Centres. The expertise of Brian Lloyd will be sought in responding to the Core Strategy once the Draft has been issued for public consultation a week before the Council Elections.

It seems as though MBC will concentrate on the regeneration of the urban and suburban areas of Maidstone at least in the first part of the 2006 (now 2011) to 2026 period, that is providing the Council is permitted to do so given the potentially horrendous planning proposals produced by George Osborne in his Budget for Economic Development. It must be hoped that the concept of "localism" will continue to be advanced by the Government, and that the statement about protection of certain areas of countryside defined as "greenbelt" and will extend to locally valued green rural countryside and green spaces in the built areas of towns and large villages.

Assuming local councils and indeed local people will have some influence on planning policies and proposals; of particular interest to CPRE Maidstone is the follow-up to the booklet "Maidstone Town - a view from the villages". A meeting was sought with the MB Council Leader who brought the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and two officers. There was an interesting discussion at which CPRE Maidstone confirmed that the intention was to encourage measures to enhance urban Maidstone so that more people will wish to visit. A walkabout was arranged around part of the heritage area, starting close to the Old Palace, which had been enhanced recently by clearing and planting and some minor building, (mainly old walls) and restoration work. That work also emphasized that the River Medway can be an asset to the town. CPRE Maidstone expressed support for the work done and planned, and for the proposals to enhance the High Street, especially the provision of a plaza/square at the top end around the Town Hall, which will serve as a focal point for Maidstone. The requirement now is to improve the publicity and the signage, so that the Maidstone will attract more visitors who will be able more easily to find the interesting features.

Various planning applications are also being examined; gypsy/traveller settlements in the countryside remain a significant issue as do polytunnels on some farms, but the great worry is the Planning Policies emanating from Central Government, especially with regard to the protection (or lack of it) of green space, in the rural countryside and in towns and cities.



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## Shepway report

To pep up our monthly meetings the Shepway Enforcement Officer attended a recent meeting.

Some 550 enforcements are carried out annually. How gypsies use the Human Rights Act to their advantage was also of great interest. Many questions arose from his fascinating talk.

The application for an aerobic digester, the area of two football pitches on a small quarry site at Sellindge, was duly passed by the KCC Planning Committee. The opposition of three local parish councils, plus Shepway District Council together with a petition signed by 97.5% of the village was not considered relevant – so much for localism! Much thought is being put into the conditions and how to monitor them. We will discuss the Lydd Airport inquiry in our next report.



Paul Smallwood

## Tunbridge Wells

Our small and friendly committee continues to seek new members. We currently meet in Brenchley approximately every eight to twelve weeks for about two hours, and we communicate by email if there are urgent planning applications which we need to respond to. If you think you could find time to help us, either with expertise or skills (for example in planning, transport, environmental issues, architecture, history, fundraising) or with local knowledge of a particular a parish or ward, please don't hesitate to contact me (contact details below). We particularly need a membership secretary.

This has been a reasonably quiet time for planning applications, but Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is now consulting on a revision to its Core Strategy, which will keep our committee busy. Issues such as whether Hawkhurst should be a town, the Green Belt, the number of new houses to be built, "garden grabbing" and housing density, will all be under review. The consultation, which may be seen on [www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/csr](http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/csr) will close on 26 June. Our AGM will be held on Tuesday 20th September at Goudhurst Village Hall. We aim to start at 8pm, so invite any Protect Kent members from Tunbridge Wells to arrive from 7:45pm.



## Transport Group

The Group have considered and members have provided briefings in connection with Kent County Council's proposed third Thames Crossing at Shorne, for the Branch Chairman in preparation for his debate with Kent County Council's Leader, Cllr Paul Carter. The Group is opposed to the Third Crossing proposal, as it is completely unjustified and unnecessary. It was very clear from the debate, held at Shorne on 2nd February 2011, that KCC are having difficulty in obtaining hard evidence to justify such a proposal, especially since Essex County Council have announced that they are opposed to a new road linking the north side of the Third Crossing to the M11.

The promoters of the Borough Green International Gateway proposal for a Strategic Road Rail Interchange announced that they planned to proceed with their plan to build the facility between the villages of Borough Green, Platt and Wrotham on land entirely in the Metropolitan Green Belt and partially in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Given that the promoters of the Kent International Gateway, manifestly struggled to justify a slightly smaller scheme at Bearsted, for which the Group provided witnesses to the successful KIG Inquiry, the Group have significant reservations regarding the justification for the BIG proposal, so close to the site of KIG, especially on land with a considerably higher degree of planning policy protection.

Operation Stack, the name used for the process of closing the M20 Motorway and thereafter using it as a lorry park, controlled by Kent Police, during times when either the cross channel ferry services and or the channel tunnel rail service is disrupted, has been a serious source of concern both to Mid and East Kent based business and the public alike. The Group came forward with outline proposals to build a lorry park on reclaimed land to the south and west of the Admiralty Pier at Dover, thus demonstrating a more environmentally acceptable alternative to the discredited Kent County Council proposal for a lorry park at Sellindge.

KCC now propose to bring forward an alternative 'no frills lorry park' at an unspecified location said to be adjacent to the M20.

The Department for Transport is considering proposals for the reorganisation of the Port of Dover. Proposals have been made by Dover Harbour Board for a major expansion of ferry terminals adjacent to the Western Docks and Dover People's Port have put forward proposals to the Secretary of State for a Management buyout, which are currently being considered.

The Transport Group has gone through a very difficult time in recent months. A substantial number of Members has been lost through retirement or resignation and considerable difficulty has been encountered in finding suitable replacements with a good knowledge and experience of transport in all its forms. Members with appropriate knowledge or experience are invited to contact Sandra Dunn at [info@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:info@protectkent.org.uk)



Harry Rayner







Alex Hills

## Dartford and Gravesham

Over-whelming support of local residents, the Parish council and planning law on your side should be enough to stop inappropriate development in the Greenbelt. Unfortunately in Gravesham this proved not to be the case over an extra care sheltered housing development proposal. Instead the council voted to ignore everyone except the developer and voted for it. A development of this type is needed in Gravesham but it needed to be in a better location- which was available. To everyone who helped in the fight I would like to say a big thank you. To the councillors who defied logic and voted for it I say SHAME ON YOU. We have complained to the council over the way the application was handled. The reply we got was not satisfactory so we are now looking at our options. It was a bitter battle that we should not have lost but we have had to move on as there are many more fights to come this year.

Like all campaigns you will read about in this issue Dartford and Gravesham has one key problem and that is the population of this small island is nearly twice its sustainable level. It is a difficult issue but it is one the CPRE must face if it is to remain credible.

The lower Thames crossing campaign has now stepped up a gear with an ever increasing number of organisations joining the fight. There have been two meetings organised by Parish councils at which Richard Knox-Johnson spoke on behalf of Protect Kent. Both were extremely well attended resulting in many new members joining CPRE, so welcome to you if you are one of those people. The local MP has been supportive of the campaign and we have had some good media coverage. One difficult issue for us is there is a fine line between making people aware of the very real threat this crossing poses and unnecessarily blighting people homes. If you have not logged on to the dedicated web site <http://www.no2ltc.co.uk/home> please have a look at it now as it shows we are just not saying no. Instead Protect Kent has demonstrated you can relieve congestion at the Dartford crossing in a much better way, making it the most positive campaign I have ever been involved in. This outrageous proposal is in Gravesham but it will affect everyone in Kent so please help if you can. I have been fighting the Thames crossing proposals since 2003 and fear this campaign has a long way to go. Our aim is not just to stop this proposal but to get it removed from structure plans; this will have the effect of removing one of the key the drivers for proposals such as K.I.G.



Penny Moyes

**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!**

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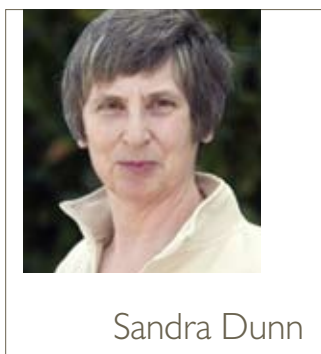
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# AGM

[www.protectkent.org.uk](http://www.protectkent.org.uk)



Sandra Dunn

Over 100 people attended our AGM at Lenham Community Centre in November. After the usual business we were treated to an entertaining talk by Tom Hart Dyke who is the creator of the World Garden of Plants at Lullingstone Castle.

Tom said that the family had owned the estate at Lullingstone since 1361. The present castle and gatehouse was built in 1497 and he was the 20th generation to live there.

He enthusiastically described how his plant hunting ten years ago in Bolivia, Peru and Chile was interrupted when he and his friend were kidnapped. Even though he was in captivity he managed to carry on plant hunting, even getting his captors to help. After being held for three months they were told to prepare for their execution. While his friend prayed Tom started planning his world garden. They were not executed and six months later they were released. He does not know why they were released but has a theory that the captors were pleased to see the back of such a talkative individual, or maybe they just become bored with plant hunting!

He has now created his World Garden at Lullingstone. The beds are set out as a world map and contain plants from their respective countries of origin. Established in 2005, the World Garden of Plants is open to the public and continues to grow and build year on year, adding rare and important plants to its collection.

Tom said that many garden plants have come from abroad, for instance our national plants: roses from China, leaks from Portugal, thistles from Norway. There are many plants still to be discovered, even in the UK.

He was asked about how to stop disastrous plants from coming into the country. He said that his approach was to keep plants containerised and just bring in tender plants that would not survive in the wild.



# KENT VOICE

## Planning Reforms

### Full Steam Ahead



Brian Lloyd

The last issue of Kent Voice examined the likely scope of the Coalition Government's reforms to the planning system. Seven months on the Government has made clear how it sees the planning system operating and the changes it wants to make to it. Brian Lloyd, Protect Kent's Senior Planner outlines the changes now underway.

On 13 December 2010 Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, introduced to Parliament the Localism Bill. The Government sees its proposals as a 'radical reboot of the planning system' which Eric Pickles said "will shift power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils."

Then, on 23 March 2011, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne presented his Budget and alongside it the Treasury published 'The Plan for Growth'. In his Budget speech the Chancellor highlighted planning as a "chronic obstacle to economic growth" and proceeded to set out a raft of 'reforms' that would remove these barriers and to make economic growth the Government's top priority in planning. Interestingly, the word 'localism' was not mentioned at all by the Chancellor and it is not included in the 'Plan for Growth'.

So what are the proposed changes?

## Localism Bill

The Localism Bill is a hefty tome, comprising two volumes and running to 431 pages with 207 Sections and 24 schedules. Part 5 is dedicated to changes to the planning system. Whilst it retains the 'plan-led' system based on Local Development Frameworks (though these are now to be called Local Plans) and the Development Management system, there are some significant and fundamental changes.

As promised by the Government, the Bill proposes to abolish Regional Strategies – the upper tier part of development plan which the Coalition partners have much criticised for imposing development targets on local communities. The removal of the Regional Strategies will mean that there will be just one level of development plan in future which will be the local plan.

Although the abolition of the Regional Strategies has been generally welcomed, concerns have been raised about how matters of more than local significance will be address – matters such as transport planning, climate change and affordable housing. Whilst the Government points to the new Local Enterprise Partnerships having a role to play in this regard, the Localism Bill proposes to introduce a new Duty to Co-operate. This is intended to ensure that 'strategic planning' will be secured by local authorities and other agencies being required to work together.

Perhaps the most significant change that the Government heralds as a shift in planning to the local level is the proposed Neighbourhood Plans. It is intended that Neighbourhood Plans will be prepared by Parish or Town Councils in parished areas, but elsewhere a Neighbourhood Forum can be established (by as few as three people) to prepare a Plan. A forum, though, can only be established with the express purpose of furthering the social, economic and environmental well-being of the individuals living in the area.

There will be a defined process for making the Neighbourhood Plan, which will involve a draft plan being accepted by the local planning authority. This is intended to ensure that the plan is consistent with the council's Local Plan/LDF because when agreed the plan will form part of the Local Plan, and thus will have development plan status. Importantly, though, any development proposed in a Neighbourhood Plan will be in addition to that proposed in the Local Plan/LDF – so the plan is not a device for changing the local authority's planning policies and proposals.

The draft plan, if endorsed by the local planning authority, will then be subject to an independent examination. And finally, if it passes the examination it will be subject to a local referendum where if a majority of those voting vote in favour of the plan the local planning authority must accept it.

Under the Bill, local communities will also be able to apply to the local planning authority for a Neighbourhood Development Order and/or a Community Right to Build Order. The effect of a Neighbourhood Development Order will be to grant planning permission in relation to a particular defined neighbourhood area for specific development or any class of development specified in the Order. In similar fashion, a Community Right to Build Order will enable a local community to deliver a development that the local community wants – whether this be



One of the leading lights of localism, MP Greg Clarke.





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housing (market or affordable), a playground, community hall or even a shop.

The Bill also introduces a requirement for developers to undertake compulsory pre-application consultations. However, this would apply only to major applications – i.e. for residential developments of 200 or more homes (or 4ha or more if numbers are not specified) or non-residential proposals that comprise 10,000 sq.m or more floorspace (or 2ha or more).

Finally, again as promised prior to the publication of the Bill, it is proposed to abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission. This was the body set up under the 2008 Planning Act to decide on infrastructure proposals of national significance. Instead, under the Bill an Infrastructure Planning Unit will be established within the Planning Inspectorate and decisions will be made by the appropriate Secretary of State rather than an un-elected commissioner. The process for considering such proposals, though, is not changed.

It is expected that the Bill will be enacted in June or July.

## Budget 2011 and the Plan for Growth

With the Localism Bill still continuing its passage through Parliament, the March Budget and 'The Plan for Growth' set out further Government changes to the planning system – this time presented by the Chancellor and the Treasury respectively.

It was announced that to underpin the planning system there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means that the default answer to development and growth will be 'yes' except where this would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in national planning policy. Specifically, where local authorities do not have plans for development (local plans), or they are silent, out of date or indeterminate, this policy will mean that local authorities should start from the presumption that applications for development will be accepted.

To bring clarity to the planning system Government intends to combine all national planning policies into one concise document, which was described by the Chancellor as a 'pro-growth national planning policy statement'. It will contain the Government's key economic, social and environmental objectives and planning policies to deliver them. At the heart of the framework will be the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Elaborating on this, Greg Clark, Minister for Decentralisation, stated on Budget day that "the Government's top priority in reforming the planning system is to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs". He explained that this objective will take immediate effect, both in making planning decisions locally and in determining planning appeals.

In order to help deliver new housing, another key objective, it was announced that the Government will make changes to permitted development rights by allowing the change of use of empty office blocks, warehouses and business parks into new housing without the need to apply for planning permission. The Government also announced its intention to launch a review of the Use Classes Order, to examine how it can better support growth by allowing more changes between uses without permission.

The Government wants local authorities to prioritise growth and jobs by pressing ahead without delay in preparing up-to-date local plans which set out the opportunities for growth in their areas. Councils are also to ensure they are not imposing any unnecessary burdens in the way of development. Where development has stalled, councils should be open to reviewing section 106 agreements at the request of developers, and look at making possible amendments to get growth underway.

A scheme that has found favour with the Government is that of land auctions. Under this, local authorities will be able to buy land offered to them by landowners, grant themselves planning permission for development and then sell it to a developer but retain the up-lift in value. The Government proposes to pilot this scheme on public sector land in the first instance.

The Chancellor also announced the Government's intention to resurrect the 1980's Enterprise Zone concept. It proposes to create 21 new Enterprise Zones within which planning requirements will be removed and/or simplified, together with other measures designed to support businesses. The locations of eleven new Enterprise Zones were announced in the budget - 10 in the Midlands and North of England and one in London. The further ten will be the subject of bids to Government by the Local Enterprise Partnerships and will be announced in the summer.

Other changes proposed include extending neighbourhood planning to allow businesses to initiate Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders; the removal of the 60% target for development on previously developed land; and providing a 12-month guarantee for the processing of all planning applications, including appeals.

(Is the Plan for Growth compatible with Localism? see page 3 for CPRE's reaction to the changes).



George Osborne would like the 'default answer to development to be yes'.

Photography kindly supplied by HM Treasury



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Every year we get better at what we do, and every year we learn how to do it better still. Every day we try to go to bed knowing just a little more than when we woke. We know we are lucky and privileged to do this in a beautiful environment in The Garden of England and that we have a responsibility to protect and improve this inspiring area.

We believe that England remains one of the most tolerant, enterprising, ingenious, creative, stylish, energizing and occasionally eccentric places on Earth. They are English values. They are Chapel Down's values.

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To complete the experience, all tours include a tasting of a selection of our award winning-wines. (Apple Juice is offered to children under 18 and drivers). '

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