

# KENTVOICE

Protecting Kent's Heritage  
Spring/Summer 2012



## Saving Gravesham's Green Belt

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# KENTVOICE

## Chairman's Welcome

*As you will see from this edition we have had considerable success in our campaign to stop Gravesham District Council planning to build in the Green Belt. All those who took part in the campaign deserve our thanks and congratulations.*



Richard Knox-Johnston

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Gravesham's argument was that because developers had told them it was too expensive to build on brownfield land (land that has been developed in the past) then development in the Green Belt was preferable.

Why did Gravesham think that it was able to build in the Green Belt? They stated at public meetings that the Government had made it clear during their consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that protection for the Green Belt and concentration on "Brownfield" sites (those that have been built on in the past) had been severely reduced.

The consultation NPPF was probably produced by the Treasury as it seemed to concentrate on growth at almost any cost. However, the final document appeared to have a greater imprint from the Department for Communities and Local Government. It was produced in the last week in March and was less cavalier. Protection for the Green Belt was strengthened and there was an emphasis on brownfield land being built on first.

Both nationally and locally, we had lobbied hard to ensure a more balanced policy. We had a meeting in Whitehall with a cabinet minister and also had local

meetings with two ministers from the Department of Communities and Local Government. Several local MPs took the trouble to visit our offices in Charing to discuss the NPPF. We also joined with KFAS to send in a joint response.

However we do not think that the protection of the Green Belt is as strong as it was and will be watching the policy carefully as it is put into practice. We still have concerns that the Brownfield First policy has been watered down. We are pleased to see that agricultural land has been included in the final document although there appears to be still no recognition by government of the importance of land for growing food and as you'll see in the article on page 14 this is of huge concern to us.

One of the main aspects of the final document is the emphasis it puts on sustainable development. Although an effort has been made to expand the definition, it is still not absolutely clear and will doubtless be challenged in the courts. There is still a presumption in favour of sustainable development overriding other planning factors.

Recently Caroline Spellman, Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Affairs, noted that a scarcity of water was



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a factor in sustainable development. If so, the housing figures which have been adopted by some District Councils in Kent will have to be revised. As you know, we are currently in a drought situation and the hosepipe ban has been enforced in April this year; significantly earlier than 2006 when it was only imposed in July.

Water companies have to supply water to new housing developments by law, so are apparently not being honest about the stress in their area. Some District Councils are being less than responsible about planning permission for such developments because they are not ensuring that there is enough water in spite of the warning from the Environment Agency. We shall be campaigning vigorously to make sure all these factors are taken into account on sustainability grounds.

There must be a possibility, in Kent, of us moving to the next stages of water shortage – restrictions on watering plants or even standpipes. I wonder how people in Kent would feel then about District Councils continuing with or even increasing development in Kent.



## Directors Report

### Planning Reform

*it's all been going on for a long time, it seems.*



Dr Hilary Newport

In the days before we finished editing this edition of **Kent Voice**, we finally received the last version of the revised National Planning Policy Framework. Some of the worst of our fears were assuaged, and it seems that this attempt to simplify and streamline our planning system has had some of the more damaging of the rough edges of its reforms smoothed off.

But underlying so many of these reforms it seems that there remains the unshakeable conviction that the planning system is the problem that must be solved. In their **Plan for Growth** last year, the coalition government first signalled the idea of an unprecedented shake-up of the planning system, with the specific aim of getting the economy moving again. Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for the department of Communities and Local Government, himself described the planning system as a **'drag anchor'** to economic growth.

The government claims that the delays and constraints of the planning system cost the UK economy some 30bn per year. This estimate has been challenged, however, in a recent report jointly commissioned by CPRE, RSPB and the National Trust, which has picked apart the various claims made for the costs and the **benefits** of the planning system<sup>1</sup>. Critics have pointed to the costs of the delays and constraints of the planning system which have been estimated at some 30bn per year. In their research for this report, however, the economists found that the financial benefits of the planning system have never been adequately quantified and concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that the NPPF would make any positive contribution to growth or employment in the short term. Indeed, as it currently stands, the slimming-down of around 20 individual planning policy documents into a single 50-page, still somewhat ambiguous, planning policy framework looks likely to result in more uncertainty, rather than less, over planning decisions, while the courts challenge these ambiguities.

The thing that we can be sure of is that the effects of poor planning decisions, which emphasise economic growth at the expense of all other considerations, will be with us for a long time. And it is society and the environment, not the development lobby, which pick up the long-term costs of those poor decisions.

The report, entitled *Inexpensive Progress*, was carried out by Vivid Economics and is available through the CPRE website.

## Spotlight on Gravesham

*Continuing our series on the planning issues facing Kent, **Brian Lloyd** puts the spot light on Gravesham.*



Brian Lloyd

The Borough of Gravesham is located in the north west corner of Kent on the banks of the Thames Estuary. It is situated between Dartford to the west and the Medway towns to the east. Covering an area of 40 square miles and is home to 100,000 people.

The majority of the population (80%) lives in the urban areas of Gravesend and Northfleet, which sit on the riverside. The river played an important role in the development of the two towns and the establishment of a range of industrial activities, most notably cement works. There continues to be a strong association with the river due to its deep water wharves. However, much of the former industrial activity has declined leaving large areas of derelict land.

Most of the Borough is rural and much of it falls in the Metropolitan Green Belt. This is designed to halt the outward expansion of London and to maintain the separation between the towns and villages within it. However, the rural area is divided by a number of major roads and railways giving it a fragmented feel. This is particularly so with the M2/A2 corridor which divides the Borough north-south. Despite this it is an area of enormous quality for its natural environment, including the internationally





important marshes along the estuary and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which runs along the eastern side of the Borough.

The area north of the A2/M2 falls within the Thames Gateway growth area. This extends from east London to Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey in Swale Borough. Within the Gateway, Gravesham and Dartford Boroughs have been working together for many years in the Kent Thames-side partnership to bring forward major regeneration projects, including land at Ebbsfleet, and much has already been achieved to regenerate the urban area.

The planning challenges facing Gravesham are significant. There are pressures for growth as a consequence of Thames Gateway, but there are also important constraints to development provided by the Green Belt, the AONB and a host of wildlife designations - not to mention the risk from flooding. Gravesham is also an area of high unemployment and there are areas of high deprivation. These are all issues being grappled with by the Borough Council in its emerging Core Strategy.

Progress with the Core Strategy has been extremely slow. It has been seven years now since the Council started the plan making process and undertook initial consultation on key issues. Much has changed since then, with the Country having gone from a time of boom to one of bust. The issues are very different now. The Council, though, is now pushing on at pace with the Core Strategy and propose to have it finalised by the end of the year.

After years of little progress, though, it is concerning that the Council is now pushing ahead with a strategy that is less defined than it was two years ago. In January 2010 a clear strategy was presented. In a nut shell the Council was then content to accord fully with the adopted South East Plan, which promoted a strategy for 9,300 new homes which would be provided almost entirely on the major brownfield sites within Gravesend and Northfleet. Importantly, there was no suggestion that there was need to roll back the Green Belt boundary or to impinge on any other designated areas. It was a strategy that CPRE Protect Kent was entirely content with.

However, completely unexpectedly everything changed in October last year when the Council presented a completely new strategy – or more correctly the Council took a step back in the plan making process and presented six alternative growth scenarios. These ranged from a strategy that would see the delivery of 4,600 dwellings to one where 9,900 dwellings would be delivered. Crucially, though, the Council was of the view that all the scenarios would need to involve development in the Green Belt to a lesser or greater degree. The reason for this being that the longstanding brownfield sites were deemed no longer to be as viable as previously, especially for higher density development. This was put down to the economic



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recession – notwithstanding the fact that the recession started in 2008, two years before the earlier 2010 consultation when the brownfield sites were seen as viable.

Of the growth scenarios presented, the Council favoured the one that was based on zero net migration – i.e. which takes account only of the natural increase in population. This strategy would mean 5,200 additional dwellings by 2031, of which the Council considered nearly 1,000 would need to be in the Green Belt.

Needless to say, this complete change of tack was greeted with horror by the Branch Office, and by the local communities in rural Gravesham. As a consequence, Alex Hills – CPRE activist and resident of Istead Rise – co-ordinated a high profile and incredibly well supported grass roots campaign against the proposed erosion of the Green Belt. The campaign saw public meetings in the rural communities packed with 300 and 400 people at a time, and marches through Gravesend town centre. The Council was left in no doubt about the strong depth of feeling about the threat to the Green Belt from the new strategy that the Core Strategy was proposing.

The local campaigning was supported by the Branch Office, and we submitted a detailed 27 page response to the consultation highlighting why we felt the Council's favoured strategy was wrong and why it was unnecessary to build in the Green Belt. In particular we challenged the assertion made by the Council that the brownfield sites are no

longer viable, and we commissioned a report from an expert in development land economics that confirmed our view that the Council's viability assessment of brownfield sites was flawed.

The consultation closed just before Christmas, but before the end of January the Council leader issued a statement headed 'Preserving Green Belt is Key to plans for the Future'. He announced that he would be recommending a new planning blueprint which will protect the Borough's Green Belt land from new development for the next 17 years in the light of the consultation, and that he would recommend a housing target

of 4,600 dwellings by 2028 that would be met from existing planning permissions, brownfield development schemes and windfalls. He said "I am confident that our final proposals should reject development unwanted by the community." This approach was duly endorsed by a meeting of the Council's Cabinet in early February.

The hard work and campaigning has worked, and the Council has listened to and heeded both our concerns and those of the rural communities. But we cannot

be complacent – the final Core Strategy is still to be prepared, and final consultation is expected in May before it is submitted for independent examination thereafter. During these final stages of the plan process we will be continuing to ensure that the Green Belt in Gravesham – as elsewhere in the County – is given the long-term protection that Government Ministers and the Prime Minister say it will be given.

***"I am confident  
that our final  
proposals should  
reject development  
unwanted by the  
community."***



# News in Brief...

## Big Changes In National Planning

As you'll all be aware, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was released in its draft form last year and consulted on has now been put out by Government. We had feared that it would be incredibly damaging for the countryside, and our National Office, the team in Charing and many others had campaigned considerably to have the draft document changed. It seems that the Government recognised many of the flaws in the document and we have ended up with a final NPPF which recognised many of our concerns and was altered accordingly. There will be a full update available online at [www.protectkent.org.uk](http://www.protectkent.org.uk)

## Another New Face

We have added another new recruit to the team at Protect Kent HQ in Charing. **Shelley Owen** (pictured here) has been drafted in to help with office management after our long serving and ever efficient Company Secretary and Office Manager, Sandra Dunn, decided to reduce her hours in anticipation of retirement. From now on, if you call the office on a Thursday or Friday, there's a good chance you'll be speaking to Shelley, and all of the team here would like to wish her a warm welcome.



## Recycling in Kent

Recycling waste in Kent could be facing another blow after the recent Kent Household Waste Recycling Centre consultation. We submitted our response to the consultation, but are concerned that both the Richborough and Hawkinge centres are still facing threat of closure. We are extremely concerned by this as it will likely cause a rise in fly-tipping and could result in the areas around becoming a dumping ground.

## Planning for your neighbourhood

As part of the 'localism' agenda, the government have ushered in neighbourhood planning. This effectively means that you and your community will now get a much greater say in the development that happens in your area. Protect Kent have already run a series of highly successful training days on neighbourhood planning and we are now hoping that



communities will spring into action to make sure that they determine what happens where they live! If you would like any more information on neighbourhood planning, please get in touch with us at the office.

## Margaret's Outings

Have you ever wanted to go and see the Enigma machine, one of the most important weapons used to win World War 2. Or perhaps you've always wondered how your shopping gets from farm to supermarket? These are just two of the amazing trips that Margaret is planning for 2012. Get in touch with the office if you'd like to find out how you can go on one of Margaret's outings.

## Drought!

Drought is obviously a major concern to CPRE Protect Kent. We have been working hard both regionally and locally with water suppliers and other stakeholders to try and find a way forward. Even if we are now deluged with rain until the summer, drought is a big problem, and it will likely only get bigger in the future as Kent becomes more densely populated.

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## View from the other side

*Simon Norton is coordinator of Cambs Campaign for Better Transport and a member of Cambs CPRE. He writes in a purely personal capacity.*

I have long had an interest in the Kent Thameside area. When I was a teenager in north London it (and other parts of London's countryside) was well served by London Transport's "green" buses which offered attractive days out, and now that I live in Cambridge I find that if I'm buying a period return to London I can travel on the high speed train to/from Gravesend for just 10p extra.

A few years ago the Highways Agency told me that they were collecting 50m pounds per year in tolls from the Dartford Crossing, and that by law this could only be spent on transport. They then went on to give a list of road schemes they were considering. However, especially with the widespread local opposition to a new river crossing why not spend the money on more sustainable transport projects, for which there is ample scope?

Public transport links across the river are disgraceful. There's an hourly bus between Lakeside and Bluewater shopping centres, and a poorly connected Tilbury Ferry. No links further afield, and nothing at all in the evenings and on Sundays, so anyone from Thurrock wanting a day or weekend out in Paris has to detour via London on the way back.



Here are some ideas for how to spend the toll revenue in ways that will help to reduce rather than increase road traffic.

1. Open a new station ("Thurrock Parkway") where the high speed route, Dartford Crossing and Purfleet-Grays railway all meet. This would have direct trains to Ebbsfleet, Gravesend, Ashford and many other Kent stations; also to most stations in Thurrock. And bus links could be provided to the rest of Essex.
2. Provide a shuttle for foot passengers and cyclists, via the Dartford Crossing between the above station and a point near the Dartford tollgate, directly over the Fastrack bus route, which currently provides links to Dartford and Bluewater and could also serve Ebbsfleet and Gravesend, and linked to it by lift. This would replace the existing cyclists' shuttle.
3. Replace the Tilbury ferry by a waterbus service which would crisscross the river to link Erith, Purfleet, Greenhithe, Grays, Gravesend and Tilbury. A new station at Tilbury is all that's needed to bring all of these within an easy walk of a station. The waterbus would also provide easy access to the Rainham Marshes RSPB reserve.
4. Set up a coach route providing links to Stansted and Gatwick airports -- not only for air passengers, but also for rail connections throughout East Anglia and SE England. Interchanges could be provided without further ado at Harold Wood station, Lakeside and Bluewater shopping centres, Swanley station, Westerham, and Oxted station; in due course I would like to see these replaced by stations at North Weald Parkway (M11/Central Line), Brentwood Parkway (M25/A12),

Thurrock Parkway, Swanley (new road access direct from A20) and Oxted, plus Dartford Toll and Clacket Lane service station (which would require adjustments to local roads, which would need to be designed sensitively as it's an AONB)

5. Develop a high capacity railfreight link from the Channel Tunnel to eastern England. It could use the existing high speed route to Dagenham, but some investment would be needed to complete the link to the East Coast Main Line, possibly via Barking, Seven Sisters, Ware and a new link to Stevenage.

All these relate directly to cross river movements, but there's lots that could be done at a more local level, from extending the overwhelmingly successful Travelcard and Oystercard schemes to Kent and Essex Thameside (including buses) to providing new bridges to aid walkers (with crossings of the A2 and the Darent Barrier being high on my priority list). After all, walking is a form of transport too.

There's lots of opportunity to promote sustainable tourism in the area. High speed trains to Ebbsfleet link with Fastrack buses to provide easy access from 3 countries. If more double deckers were used on local bus routes in Kent Thameside then visitors could appreciate the dramatic views over the Thames and chalkpits -- and please don't allow the latter to be filled in with endless car-based suburban housing! And there are many historic buildings, country parks and designated walking routes that could provide worthwhile opportunities for visitors.

The area does have one major problem: traffic noise from the A2, also the M25 and M20, and other major roads. Any ideas for how to deal with that? (Ed's Note: We're currently campaigning to get a portion of the M20 resurfaced to reduce the noise pollution, but the best way to reduce the noise is to reduce the traffic)

I would recommend the retention of tolls (except that service buses should be exempted) to help finance these improvements, as well as encouraging people to switch to the improved public transport I am proposing. However I would certainly support the upgrade of the toll collection system to reduce delays.

Let me conclude by saying that transport is a major challenge in Kent, and indeed the rest of the country, and as such we must seek both sustainable and creative new solutions for the future.



## North Kent Marshes In Danger

George Whelan

*There have been plans put forward for the creation of two separate but competing airports in the Thames Estuary. The first of these has been dubbed 'Boris Island' airport and this would be built 8 miles off the coast of Whitstable. The second proposal is Grain airport which would be built on Grain itself and would lead to the destruction of most if not all of the Isle of Grain marshes.*



One of my favourite aspects of living in Kent are the North Kent marshes, and the varied and unique wildlife that inhabits them. The Kent marsh system plays host to a huge number of constantly changing populations of birds, as species come and go with the changing of the seasons.

There is no better day out in the Kent countryside than one spent idly watching the birds fly by down on the marshes. It is truly breath taking to see these giant flocks acting naturally in this awe inspiring landscape. These marshes have found their way into my heart, not only due to their rich abundance of wildlife, but also the bleak beauty that they possess.

This opinion is shared by many in Kent, with one of its more famous proponents being none other than Charles Dickens. He famously loved the North Kent marshes to such an extent that he based Pip's house in the Grain marshes in his book Great Expectations. These beautiful, wildlife rich and age old sanctuaries for birds are now under threat.

There have been plans put forward for the creation of two separate but competing airports in the Thames Estuary. The first of these has been dubbed 'Boris Island' airport and this would be built 8 miles off the coast of Whitstable. It would be linked to the mainland by tunnels housing high speed trains. The second proposal is Grain airport which would be built on Grain itself and would lead to the destruction of most if not all of the Isle of Grain marshes. Both of these proposed airports are extremely troubling due to the huge significance of this area to birds.

The Kent Marshes are incredibly important for migratory and seasonal birds and for this reason the site has been given many levels of protection. In the past we could rely on protected areas staying protected but in last year's autumn statement it clearly

## NOTOUR IMAGE



outlined that the UK is reviewing how it currently implements the Habitats and Wild Birds Directive. This means that protection could be removed in the review. This might open up not only the North Kent marshes for development but other ecologically important areas of the UK. The North Kent marshes are a unique and vital area for birds. If they are lost to the development of an airport, it will add strain on other feeding and breeding grounds, which in turn will add stress on already declining species populations.

In a lot of cases when developments are proposed in ecologically sensitive areas, mitigation can be carried out to limit the ecological effect of the development. In the case of the airport developments it would be impossible to carry out due to the scale. Equally, there is no other area in the UK, let alone in Kent, that could be created or improved to provide the habitat that would be lost by the development of an airport in the Thames estuary. There has been very little evidence and a lot of speculation to show that there is a need for a Thames airport. Although airport capacity is nearly full at Heathrow, both Gatwick and Stansted have a

long way to go until they are at capacity. There is evidence to show that business use of aviation, which makes up a large percentage of all passengers on flights has fallen and may never recover to pre-recession highs as companies look to new technologies such as online video conferencing and high speed rail. This puts claims that the UK would suffer and fall behind in the world's economy if we do not invest in a large hub airport in the Thames estuary into serious doubt, and as such, can we really afford to think about developing this area?



## New homes bonus Who really benefits?

*Brian Lloyd, CPRE Protect  
Kent's senior planner, assesses  
the impact of the New Homes  
Bonus, and what it means for  
local authority funding and local  
communities.*



Brian Lloyd

In late 2010, the Coalition Government launched the New Homes Bonus (NHB), a major initiative designed to boost housing development. Under the NHB the Council Tax raised from every new home built will be matched by the Government for six years, whilst for every affordable home built, local authorities will receive an additional 125% of Council Tax. To fund the scheme, Central Government has allocated £946m for 2011-15. However, if payouts exceed this amount, the remainder will be top-sliced from Central Government's overall funding 'pot' for local authorities. Independent research has concluded that it is likely that payments made under the scheme will significantly exceed the allocated £946m and that some local authorities that are either unwilling or unable to build new homes will lose out to those that promote development.

Thus, the New Homes Bonus is a crude but potentially very effective incentive to ensure that local authorities promote and support new housing development. The message to local authorities is quite simple – if you do not promote new housing, then you are likely to see even more cuts in the amount of money you receive from Central Government.

For CPRE the concern is that in order to maintain funding for essential services, local authorities will promote higher levels of housing in their local plans and may find it difficult to resist housing proposals in unacceptable locations or of a lower standard than they would otherwise allow. Decisions may be unduly influenced by the financial rewards they will receive.



Indeed, the Localism Act specifically allows financial considerations to be taken into account as a material consideration when planning applications are decided.

In February 2012, the Government confirmed the second year of payouts under the scheme. Nationally this amounts to over £430m, more than double the first year's payment. In Kent, for year 2, local authorities will share £16.5m. This is not an insignificant sum, and by the time we reach year 6 the Kent local authorities could receive some £50m – and that is if house building remains at the current low level.

The following table shows how much each local authority was paid in year 1 (2011/12) and how much they have been allocated for year 2 (2012/13). The actual payment for year 2 will be the year 1 payment plus the year 2 allocation.

|                        | Year 1 payments (£)<br>(2010-2011) | Year 2 allocation (£)<br>(2012-2013) | Year 2<br>payment (£) |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ashford BC             | 621,103                            | 816,581                              | 1,437,684             |
| Canterbury CC          | 440,593                            | 469,119                              | 909,712               |
| Dartford BC            | 239,102                            | 534,198                              | 773,300               |
| Dover DC               | 294,113                            | 154,955                              | 449,068               |
| Gravesham BC           | 207,504                            | 316,185                              | 523,689               |
| Maidstone BC           | 892,316                            | 903,336                              | 1,795,652             |
| Sevenoaks DC           | 282,343                            | 363,654                              | 645,997               |
| Shepway BC             | 372,278                            | 379,570                              | 751,848               |
| Swale BC               | 749,034                            | 451,267                              | 1,200,301             |
| Thanet DC              | 508,780                            | 536,193                              | 1,044,973             |
| Tonbridge & Malling BC | 648,353                            | 576,124                              | 1,224,477             |
| Tunbridge Wells BC     | 258,932                            | 338,671                              | 597,603               |
| Medway                 | 1,040,716                          | 1,276,523                            | 2,317,239             |
| Kent CC                | 1,378,613                          | 1,459,963                            | 2,838,576             |
| <b>Total for Kent</b>  | <b>7,933,780</b>                   | <b>8,576,339</b>                     | <b>16,510,119</b>     |

In launching the NHB, the Government promoted it as a 'bonus' that would enable the consequences of housing growth to local communities to be mitigated. However, the money is not ring-fenced and will be simply seen as a new source of local government funding. The Government, though, is keen for it to be spent in accordance with local wishes and points to examples of good practice where spending priorities for the grant will be determined through consultation with local communities. For example Government has highlighted the New Homes Bonus Protocol developed by Wychavon District Council.

Given this, CPRE Protect Kent has asked each local authority in Kent how it intends to use the NHB – will it be used to substitute the cuts in funding from Government, or will it go to local communities to mitigate the impact of new development. All but three of the

local authorities responded to our enquiry.

From the responses, there is no doubt that all local authorities are under serious financial constraints and have suffered significant cuts in funding from Government over the last two years which is set to continue. Consequently, because the NHB is not ring-fenced, local authorities have seen it as an opportunity



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to protect council services and replace some of the funding that has been lost. Most have assigned the bulk of the NHB received to general funds. This is worrying for the future. As the NHB is directly related to the number of new houses built in the area, CPRE Kent is concerned that council planners will be under pressure to allow housing development so that this source of funding is maximised.

However, some Kent local authorities have recognised the primary purpose of the NHB funding and have introduced schemes to ensure that at least some is available to local community projects.

For example, Ashford Borough Council is proposing to introduce this year a ward member grant scheme to assist local community projects.

Sevenoaks District Council has established a Big Community Fund under which community groups can bid for grants to support projects in their local area; the Council has committed £120,000 per annum to the scheme, with £10,000 available each month.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council have set aside £500,000 (£125,000 per year over 4 years) for the delivery

and support of local projects through a new fund which they have named the Community Enhancement Fund. Under the scheme local community groups and parish councils can bid for funding to support local projects.

These are all excellent initiatives and we hope that as the NHB fund grows, more local authorities will introduce similar schemes to ensure that, as originally intended, more of the funding reaches local communities. However, in the current climate of cuts to general local authority funding we fear that the NHB will be seen first and foremost as substitute funding to sustain local services, and that to maximise this – and to keep Council Tax as low as possible – housing growth will be seen as the golden goose.

## Office Contacts

**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!**



### **Director**

Dr Hilary Newport

Hilary.newport@protectkent.org.uk



### **Company Secretary & Office Manager**

Mrs Sandra Dunn

Sandra.dunn@protectkent.org.uk



### **Campaigns Officer**

Andrew Ogden

Andrew.ogden@protectkent.org.uk



### **Senior Planner**

Brian Lloyd

Brian.lloyd@protectkent.org.uk



### **PR and Events Manager**

Jamie Weir

Jamie@protectkent.org.uk



### **Secretary/Office Manager**

Shelley Owen

shelley.owen@protectkent.org.uk

## 400 CLUB



**Winners since the last Kent Voice up to the end of 2011:**

**October:** Lympne Parish Council £40 (306), RG Whitelegg £30 (314), NC Britten £25 (247), TA Hastings £25 (75), JR Hudson £20 (133), Mrs FA Vaughan £20 (369).

**November:** NW Pearson £40 (164), DC Humphreys £30 (268), P Stevens £25 (330), LW Wallace £25 (100), JC Osborne £20 (284), Miss HT Butcher £20, (172).

**December:** CF Mackinlay £200 and £25 (38 and 37), Mrs J Claburn £50 (145), M Longmore £25 (205), LG Holt £20 (35), Dr R Baxter £20 (19).

The new club started in January 2012. As just 356 numbers have been sold so far, the prizes have been adjusted accordingly.

The winners to date are:

**January:** C St. J Daniel £40 (297), Mrs GM Scales £30 (266), LG Holt £25 (37), Lympne Parish Council £25 (344), MJ Wheeler £20 (100).

**February:** LW Wallace £40 (187), Mrs M Fox £30 (107), M Loveday £25 (256), Mrs P Pollock £25 (215), R Stickland £20 (209), Dr S Pittman £20 (5).

There is still time to join this year's club. The aim of the club is to raise money for our general fund, and to return 50% of the takings to members as prize money. For the full year, shares cost £12 each and there is no limit to the number of shares you can purchase. The numbers we allocate to the shares are entered into each month's draw and either five or six numbers are picked at random. The prizes awarded range in value from £200 to £20. If you would like an application form or more information, please contact the branch office (phone 01233 714540 or [info@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:info@protectkent.org.uk)).

**Sandra Dunn**



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## LAND-THE PERSPECTIVES



Pat Crawford

*Britain is one of the most crowded countries in the world. Of the four countries making up the British Isles, England is the worst affected and makes up approximately 84% of the total population. The most crowded region is the south-east. Kent is threatened by population growth.*

Pressure on land is not new –but it is increasing. It is interesting that the concentration of landed wealth remains in relatively few hands whilst at the same time, home ownership increased during the 20th century and continues to increase this century. Despite the severe downturn in the economy, residential property transactions continue to dominate the land market.

**The UN predicts global population will reach in excess of 9 billion by 2031. The population of the UK exceeded 60 million in 2005 and is expected to exceed 70 million by 2031.**

**Ten million more people needing somewhere to live, combined with increasing numbers of people choosing to live on their own all add up to a very substantial requirement for new developments.**

**Ideas and initiatives being mooted to limit the needs for new homes include policies that allow larger extensions to existing homes and encourage conversion and possible enlargement of existing buildings, tax incentives to encourage letting part of a home, three generation households etcetera. Nevertheless, projections for new build in Kent and Medway are somewhere in the range 140,000 – 150,000 by 2026.**

New housing developments need to be serviced by a coordinated infrastructure thus putting further pressures on land usage. Planning authorities cite highway capacity as the main constraint along with congestion problems in some urban areas. Presumably workable 'solutions' must increase demand for land.

Despite research and analysis by some of the world's leading scientists and climatologists, we have no finite idea of how climate change will impact on land.

The Environment Agency has warned that, as sea levels rise, it will be impossible to protect all vulnerable areas including parts of Kent.

Some owners in vulnerable areas are already finding their properties difficult to sell and the cost of insurance, where it is available, is set to increase. Insurance companies have access to the Flood Map produced by the Environment Agency which make it easy to distinguish the 'likelihood of flooding...significant, moderate or low'. The assessment takes into account the presence and effect of flood defences.



It is apparent that people and businesses will have to be relocated thus putting additional pressure on other land. In the meantime, we continue to build on flood plains and other vulnerable land.

We are threatened with flooding on the one hand with fears of drought on the other and earlier this year the water companies were predicting the possibility of severe shortages this summer.

Up to the second half of the twentieth century, people didn't expect to take a shower every day – and privately owned swimming pools were a rarity. Less piped water was used in gardens because it was normal to capture rainfall in butts and other containers.

Increase the population and inevitably we increase the requirement for water – a commodity that is seriously under threat.

Threatened with insufficient water now, how will it be possible to provide sufficient water to fulfil the needs of an increased population?

Some scientists are suggesting that the only answer is to build more large reservoirs along the lines of Bewl and Bough Beech. If this extreme measure becomes necessary it will almost certainly involve relocation of homes and businesses.

Waste management is something else that impacts on land usage. The Kent Waste Partnership has initiated some innovative projects designed to recover materials and to produce energy from waste. This is beneficial but it has reduced – not removed – the need for landfill sites in the county.

The pressures on land usage are growing exponentially. We need very careful management if we are going to avoid irreversible mistakes that will impact long-term on the economy and the environment. We need everyone - everyone – to recognise that the rural sector is important to everyone –whether living rurally or in a town or a city. Without this recognition, it is very, very likely that bad decisions will be made that will adversely impact on every area of everyone's life.



# KENT VOICE

## CAP Reform; Green-Washing or Real Progress?

Jamie Weir

As a member of the Rural Focus Press Group, we quite often debate subjects which are of incredible importance to the Countryside, how it looks and how it will be managed in future years. At our last meeting we discussed the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the reforms which may soon come into force.

Whilst I have a reasonable knowledge of CAP, most of it was gleaned from my politics A-Level, so it is somewhat out of date. I therefore found it fascinating to hear the latest news on the proposed reforms, and how they will impact on our rural environment.

For those of you who don't know anything about CAP, it is essentially a subsidy that seeks to ensure the survival of rural farms and jobs. It does

this by subsidising the cost of production so that farmers should (if CAP works correctly) be on a level playing field, and thus competitive. You may well have heard about 'butter lakes' and 'grain mountains' (I spent many a long hour dreaming of them in the aforementioned politics classes) which were the unfortunate side effect of payments that were simply based on production. Europe tried to combat this wastage by introducing 'set aside' to stop farmers producing as much, but this too had its problems.

The most recent reforms saw CAP subsidies being 'decoupled' from production. In practise this meant that farmers were paid a sum based on acreage, rather than the amount they produced. Farmers were also able to claim extra subsidies if they were willing to implement certain measures to create more environmentally friendly areas on their farms. These could be a range of things such as new ponds to encourage a more diverse range of wildlife.

We now have a new set of reforms which are proposing what could be an excellent new set of CAP rules. These reforms intend to 'green' the CAP subsidy payments. This means that unless certain environmental commitments are met by farmers, they will instantly lose a third of their 'acreage based' subsidy.

If farmers want to keep their full subsidy, they will be required to abide by three primary conditions.

### THE COST OF CAP:

CAP costs the EU £48.5 billion every year.

That equates to **£95 for every citizen** of the European Union, or **£200 for the average UK family**.

At **42% of the EU's yearly budget**, it is the largest agricultural aid programme in the world.





one

The first is that they set aside 7% of their land to be used as 'ecological focus areas'. It will be required that these areas are planted with certain types of wildlife friendly plants which are managed appropriately so as to attract the best and most diverse range of wildlife.

two

Farmers will also be required to prevent a monoculture by cultivating three or more different crops within their farm.

three

The final condition is that farmers who have permanent pasture in 2014 (when the reforms might come into practice) should maintain the area as grassland rather than ploughing it up. This is to prevent the release of greenhouse gases. One of the greatest criticisms with this particular condition is that farmers will simply plough everything covered with grass before the reforms come in, simply to keep their options open on the land that they have.

These reforms have the potential to create a really excellent new CAP system, but the devil is, as always in the detail, and the details of these CAP reforms and how they should be implemented must be hammered out with the UK government taking a firm line to ensure that they are not just an exercise in 'green-washing'.

# KENTVOICE

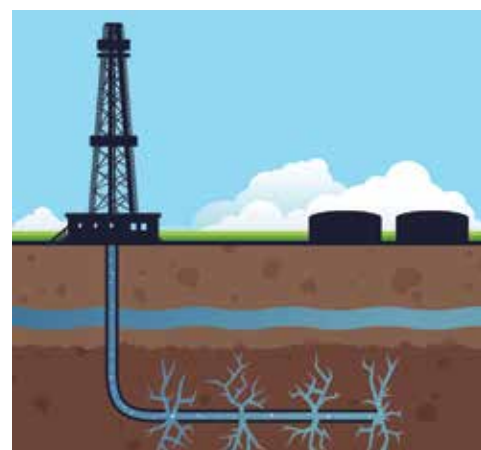
## Just what is the truth about shale gas?



Andrew Ogden

The term “**fracking**” lends itself to many obtuse comments and remarks, such as the name adopted by the opposition group “Frack Off”. But fracking (which will be explained later) is only part of the complex process of shale gas extraction, which itself is an industry in the field of “unconventional mineral gas exploitation”.

Our involvement in the issue began in June 2011, when we were notified by some concerned residents of Deal about a planning application for a change of use of some farmland at Woodnesborough near Sandwich, to enable the drilling of a borehole to search for shale gas. This was around the time of the now-famous Blackpool earthquake, which was later proven to have been caused by the fracking conducted by Cuadrilla off the Fylde coast. Communities in the East of Kent were naturally concerned about the possibilities of fracking coming to their neighbourhood, and sought our help and advice.



After a thorough investigation of the industry, as far as available information would allow, we decided not to oppose the planning application by Coastal Oil & Gas Limited, which went before Kent County Council's Planning Committee on 6th December. Instead, together with “Deal With It” (the main local environmental group), we used the opportunity to highlight the concerns of the local residents and what might happen if shale gas were to be found. Besides, there were no valid reasons to oppose the drilling of a borehole merely to take geological core samples ... which may reveal there is no shale gas available in East Kent, at least in economically viable quantities.

In dealing with this issue we have learnt that exploration for shale gas (and other mineral gases) is widespread across the country, generating major worries amongst those communities where fracking and subsequent extraction may take place. I will go on to explain why ...



Photo WyFile

The process uses millions of gallons of water. In a water-scarce country such as ours, particularly in the water stressed South East, this is difficult to accept.



## The Process

The methods used to gain access to and extract shale gas are quite dramatic, almost theatrical. To begin with, a borehole is sunk down into the gas bearing strata (in this case shale), some 2 km beneath our feet. The drill is then steered to turn horizontal and continue the borehole laterally out into the strata up to 1 km from the main shaft. The annulus between the borehole liner and the surrounding rock is then sealed with concrete.

The next part is explosive – literally! A small bomb containing ball-bearing like shrapnel is fed down to the bottom of the shaft, where it is detonated. The shrapnel pierces the borehole casing, concrete liner, and surrounding rock up to 5 metres, creating a perforated zone around the gas extraction point.

When the dust has settled, millions of gallons of water (yes – millions !) containing lubricating fluids and sand

Apart from the obvious risks of groundwater pollution, there is also a fear that the shale gas could find its way into people's homes.

are injected into the borehole under extremely high pressures (up to nine thousand pounds per square inch). This “slick water” opens up the planes in the shale for a distance of up to 50 metres, with these planes being ‘propped open’ by the sand particles when the pressure is released thereby allowing the shale gas to escape. This is the “fracking” process, or more correctly “hydraulic fracturing”, that gives rise to earth tremors as the shale strata expands under pressure.

The final work is to install the well-head to capture the released gas, which may flow under its own pressure or require positive extraction to suck it from the ground.

# KENTVOICE

## Our Concerns

The current picture is very confusing, with conflicting reports on the health and environmental impacts being issued almost daily. For example, on Monday 30th January The Guardian reported “Fracking does not need more regulation, report says”; yet on 16th February the same paper carries the story “Tighten fracking regulations, scientists urge US officials”. It is somewhat difficult to distil out what the actual risks and their magnitude are. However, here are the main considerations (as we see them).

The fracking process can cause earthquakes, although their extent and severity are usually quite small. These are often indistinguishable from naturally occurring earthquakes arising from the continual movements in the Earth’s crust, or even from the vibration caused by a heavy lorry passing by. Nevertheless, this dynamic evidence of underground activity is enough to worry some people.

A related concern is whether fracking will open pathways extending away from the well site, allowing gas and/or fracking fluids to migrate to other areas. Apart from the obvious risks of groundwater pollution, there is also a fear that the shale gas could find its way into people’s homes. The most dramatic example of such fugitive gas is shown in an anti-fracking film called “Gaslands” where tap water containing the gas is ignited.

The process uses millions of gallons of water. In a water-scarce country such as ours, particularly in the water stressed South East, this is difficult to accept. Only a small percentage can be

recycled, and requires treatment before it can be returned to the environment. The remainder – containing a range of substances, some of which are alleged to be hazardous – stays in the ground.

On the surface there are landscape impacts. A productive site might initiate the development of a “well field” covering hectares of land, which naturally will be in a rural setting. Large-scale production may even encourage the installation of generation facilities at a nearby location, leading to industrialisation of the countryside. Such power stations are unlikely to be appropriately sited for the installation of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology. There will also be a significant increase in heavy freight traffic during both the construction and extraction stages.

Looking wider, there is concern about fugitive gas emissions occurring both at the well site and further afield. In addition to possible migration into homes, escapes to atmosphere are environmentally damaging: shale gas is principally methane, a major greenhouse gas.

Even when burnt, it will still contribute to climate change. Shale gas is just another fossil fuel; it will therefore create a carbon footprint. Taking all other concerns away and leaving only this remaining, there is still cause to oppose the exploitation of shale gas reserves.

However, steadfastly opposing all of these concerns is the ‘pound in our pocket’ and the promise of having cheap home-produced gas for some years to come. This is a tremendous financial incentive that would provide a much needed boost to our economy, and is something the Government is likely to eagerly pursue.



## Three Perspectives

Sifting through the sensationalist stories and plethora of mis-information, and focussing on the main concerns, there appears to be three distinct views developing on shale gas extraction.

1  
The first is the personal, almost “nimbyistic”, view that maintaining energy security and thereby keeping gas prices down (or avoiding future dramatic hikes) is a commanding benefit, and over-rides environmental concerns. Anyway, the Government have re-assured us that the process is safe and fracking doesn't need any more regulation, so the alarm being spread by the opposition is unfounded.

2  
The second and opposing view is obviously that of the environmentalist, who is concerned about the possibilities of groundwater pollution, the consumption of vast quantities of water in the process, fugitive gas emissions, and the fact that shale gas is still a ‘fossil fuel’. At the extreme, fuelled by sensational and sometimes emotive reports from the US, there is militant opposition to any activity associated with unconventional mineral gas exploitation.

3  
The third view is the one we are currently formulating: CPRE's position. As is our common practice, we are attempting to cut through to the truth and issue an objective statement on shale gas extraction. It is not proving to be easy ! But at present our views are that shale gas is yet another fossil fuel; exploitation of this resource diverts attention away from the development of renewable energy sources, and hence the campaign against climate change; and we have serious concerns about the impacts on our countryside and landscape. In a perhaps positive way, we also believe that the risks to the environment can be mitigated against if full and proper regulation and enforcement are applied.



## Conclusions

CPRE Branches across the country are almost consistent in their views about shale gas extraction. While we believe the local environmental risks could possibly be managed, it is difficult to see how the negative contribution to climate change and anticipated landscape impacts can be accepted.

At present our National Office have decided to “maintain a watching brief” to allow further information to come forward and debate to develop, before adopting a final position on shale gas.

# KENT VOICE

## Local Plan Round-up



Brian Lloyd

*The following provides the latest round-up of the current state of play with the production of Local Plans across Kent. However, it is likely that there will be some change to the timings as time moves on, particularly in the light of the Coalition Government's on-going changes to the planning system.*



### Ashford

- The Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document was formally submitted for examination in February, and the examination is scheduled to open on 15 May.
- The formal pre-submission consultation on the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan commenced in April with representations invited by 11 June. Following this, it is likely that the plan will be submitted for examination later in the summer.
- The Borough Council continues to undertake background work to inform the First Review of the Core Strategy, and initial consultation on potential future employment and housing quantities is expected as we go to press.

### Canterbury

- The City Council now intends to produce a single Local Plan document, which will comprise the Core Strategy, site allocations and development management policies. It is anticipated that there will be consultation on a draft plan at the end of the year.

### Dartford

- Following the adoption of the Core Strategy last September it is currently unclear what other plan making proposals the council has and when these will progress. Currently work is underway on preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

### Dover

- It is expected that formal consultation on the pre-submission Land Allocations Development Plan Document will be held in the autumn.

### Gravesham

- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is expected in June, with the examination likely to follow in the autumn.

### Maidstone

- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is expected in June. Beyond then, the timetable is unclear.

### Sevenoaks

- In March the Council commenced a supplementary consultation on new and amended sites to be included in the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, with comments invited by 10 May. Formal consultation on the pre-submission DPD is expected in September.

### Shepway

- The Core Strategy was formally submitted for examination in January, and the examination opened on 2 May. If found to be sound, the Core Strategy should be adopted in the late summer.

### Swale

- Consultation on the preferred options for the Core Strategy commenced in late March, with comments invited by 18 May. Following this, formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is expected at the end of the year.
- It is now intended that proposals for the future of Faversham Creekside will be progressed as a Neighbourhood Plan by Faversham Town Council. Formal consultation on the Plan is expected in June.

### Thanet

- It is likely that there will be further consultation on the Core Strategy in September.

### 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

- The Borough Council has now resolved that it no longer intends to undertake an immediate review of the adopted Core Strategy, and that work will now be prioritised for completing the various Development Plan Documents (DPDs), i.e. an Allocations DPD; a Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD; and a Development Management Policies DPD. It is expected that consultation on all three of these will take place in June or July.

### Medway

- The Core Strategy was formally submitted for examination in February, and the examination is scheduled to open on 12 June. If found to be sound, the Core Strategy should be adopted in the late summer.

### KCC

- Formal consultation on the pre-submission Waste and Minerals Core Strategy is expected in the late summer.
- The County Council is also progressing separate Development Plan Documents for Mineral Sites and Waste Sites respectively. Consultation on the preferred options for both of these plans is expected in May.

## Planning Training

Protect Kent continues to develop the planning training that it is able to offer to Parish and Town Councils and other community groups. We are now able to offer the following four training sessions:

**An introduction to Planning – this will provide a general overview of the UK Planning system, and would be well suited for new parish and town councillors or people interested in better understanding the planning system.**

**How to be most effective in shaping the Local Plan – this will provide a detailed explanation of local plans; how they are prepared and how people can be most effective in getting their voice heard.**

**Development Management – this will explain in detail the development management system and how decisions are made on planning applications. Amongst other things it will look at material and non-material considerations, permitted development rights and the use classes order.**

**Neighbourhood Planning – this will help people to understand the new Neighbourhood Planning opportunities, and what's involved in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.**

Each session runs for about 3 hours making them suitable for an evening or half a day. They would be best suited for groups of up to 20 people to enable more informal discussion of issues and group working. They would be led by Brian Lloyd, Protect Kent's Senior Planner, who is a chartered town planner with over 27 years' experience in the profession.

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

# KENT VOICE



Andrew Ogden

## Return to the beach ...

*You may recall that in the Autumn edition of Kent Voice I made a promise to provide further information on the Revised Bathing Water Directive and what we can do, as CPRE, to protect Kent's beaches.*



You would be forgiven for forgetting this issue, since other water related concerns such as the drought has featured far more prominently lately. Nevertheless, providing we don't have torrential rain during the summer (and given the experiences of last year, who can say we won't ?), there is a good chance we will enjoy some of our summer days on Kent's golden beaches. So now is a good time for this follow-up article.

As you may remember from my previous essay on beaches, a key factor contributing to their appeal is the quality of the bathing waters themselves. Curiously, this is important even to those people who would never contemplate dipping their big toe in the briny. The mis-perception is that clean water equates to clean beaches: but in truth there is only a tangible relationship between the two if the beach has received an award, such as a Blue Flag.

Despite the very low incidence over recent years of disease being contracted by members of the public following a dip in the sea (it's far more likely to be due to contaminated food ingested while on holiday), the European Commission have introduced far more stringent quality monitoring for our bathing waters through the Revised Bathing Water Directive.



### **To an extent, this has been a reaction to various concerns and demands:**

- By environmentalists, who pointed out the many flaws in the science behind the current system of bathing water quality monitoring;
- By the public, in recognising these flaws, demanding greater accuracy and timeliness in the information being given;
- By the tourist industry, conscious that the public in being given such information, are also being given the choice to stay away from the beaches and consequently their trade.

### **So what are the details of this Revised Bathing Water Directive (r.BWD) ? Let's have a recap ...**

The r.BWD is an updated version of the 30 year old current Bathing Water Directive it replaces. It sets out more stringent water quality standards and also puts a stronger emphasis on bathing water management and public information. The r.BWD was adopted in March 2006, incorporated into UK law in April 2010 and requires all bathing waters to be classified as satisfactory by 2015. So in future, not only will there be an increasing frequency of failure, but with tighter standards a higher risk of such.

In March 2011, as part of meeting the requirements of the r.BWD, the Environment Agency published profiles for each designated bathing water in England and Wales. These profiles give information about the bathing water, including all impacts on its quality, such as run-off from land, the influence of rivers discharging to the sea nearby, and the locations of all storm overflows. This is balanced by information on any improvements made to provide better water quality for bathers. The profiles are currently available to the public via the Environment Agency's website, and will be displayed publicly from 1st May this year.

These profiles are not merely a map of the relative beach, although they do include such maps, but a multi-page document providing a wealth of information, from a summary of the catchment to whether or not seaweed has been a local nuisance. All of this material in the hands of the public could prove that too much information is not a good thing ...

Importantly, the r.BWD will not mean that our bathing waters are cleaner, just that we will be able to estimate their quality more accurately. Improvements will only come about as a result of investment and physical enhancements to the causes of bathing water pollution, such as better design and control of storm overflows; better treatment or the removal of coastal discharges; and a decrease in diffuse pollution from the land (which can be direct, or indirect via watercourses discharging into the sea).

**So do CPRE Members have a part to play in improving and maintaining the quality of our bathing waters, and through these the attraction of our beaches ? I believe we do ...**

- To begin with, our beaches are a part of our countryside, our environment, and our heritage, and deserve as much protection as the rolling Kent Downs or picturesque Weald.
- As stated, the quality of the bathing waters can only be improved by doing something tangible. Legislation such as the r.BWD only provides the evidence.
- Quite obviously, preventing deterioration of existing bathing water quality is the other side of the coin.
- Our beaches are under threat from a 'triple whammy' (highlighted in my last article) coming from: more frequent summer storms (due to climate change); plus higher sewage flows (from increased development); plus more stringent monitoring (from the r.BWD, giving the appearance that the situation is getting worse).

On this basis, our first task is to spread an understanding of the value of our beaches. We can then build on this by lobbying for improvements in those installations and systems which are a source of marine pollution. Clearly the main targets are the numerous storm overflows in coastal areas, which due to the



higher frequency of summer storms are operating within the bathing season instead of during the Winter months (as designed for).

We need to share our constant message that infrastructure, in this case sewerage networks in coastal areas, should be improved before development is allowed to progress and thereby overloading old systems that are well past their 'sell by date'.

With a wider perspective, we all need to work through the Water Framework Directive to reduce diffuse pollution of all waters, surface and ground, inland and marine, all of which ends up in the sea eventually. This is a 'big ask', and there are so many sources as to make success in this area seem impossible, but must be tackled nonetheless.

We can ensure that people do understand the r.BWD and most importantly that it has no impact on bathing water quality, just the accuracy by which we monitor it. Improvements to and protection of our beaches will only happen if positive action is taken.



General information on bathing water quality: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/37841.aspx](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/37841.aspx)  
Bathing Water Profiles, for the Kent and South London Area: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/128099.aspx](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/128099.aspx)

# KENT VOICE District Reports



Andrew Ogden

## The Re-birth of the Thanet District Committee

By the time you read this we anticipate that the Thanet District Committee, which had been enjoying a recess of 'indeterminate duration', will have been re-awakened and re-juvenated. This re-birth arose out of a "special general meeting" for Thanet members and supporters held on Saturday 4th February in Margate.

Despite the cold, some 25 people (including staff) turned out to hear what we had to say. Amongst these were three town Mayors and a Mayoress – quite a coup! It must have been reasonably interesting and enthralling, as everyone stayed to the end and even then were in no rush to get away. Presentations were given by our Director, Hilary Newport; Barrie Gore, Chairman of the Canterbury District Committee and myself. We covered the full spectrum of CPRE activities, from the national picture down to on-going issues in Thanet. Barrie gave an encouraging talk on the role and work of the District Committees.

We would be pleased to provide you with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation delivered on the day if you are interested.

We believe the event made a tremendous advance in raising the profile of Protect Kent in Thanet. We now need to build on that success. We are pleased to say that enough people have indicated an interest to enable us to form a skeleton Committee. It would however benefit from the inclusion of a few more volunteers, so support from other CPRE members in Thanet would be most welcome.

If you are interested in providing further assistance to the new Committee, perhaps as a member or in other ways, please contact Andrew Ogden our Campaigns Manager at the Branch Office (Tel: 01233 714542 ; e-mail: [andrew.ogden@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:andrew.ogden@protectkent.org.uk))



Barrie Gore

## Canterbury District Committee

There is a concerted effort by 35 amenity bodies in the City of Canterbury, including ourselves and the Canterbury Society, to prepare a "Residents' Vision for Canterbury" for the next Local Plan period. Preliminary plans are under way, and leaflets plus questionnaires are to be circulated to as many members of the public in Canterbury as possible. The object is to let the Council know of residents' aspirations for the City in the future, and it will of course be completely non-political. We are to have a stand at the Climate Fair in Canterbury on 12th May, and it will probably be used also by the Canterbury Society.

We all hope that enough publicity will be generated for a public meeting which will probably take place at the end of May. Meanwhile, the "Vision Group", as it is loosely named, will be speaking informally to the Council Chief Executive and to the Leader of the Council to see if there is any common ground on which we can agree.

On the planning side, recently there have been applications for two large ground level PV panels on a sensitive site in a City Conservation Area, and an illuminated two-sided totem advertising sign outside the St. Lawrence Cricket Ground, also in a Conservation Area, and yet further planning consents for student/sixth form accommodation on prime, previously developed, sites in the City. Such consents are completely contrary to the Local Plan policy which proposed to utilise such sites for residential development, and mentioned such matters as "quality housing that is sustainable and accessible, etc." As a direct result of the Council's failure to do what the Local Plan promised, we will no doubt be told in due course that large greenfield sites will be needed to meet housing demand.

Finally, the Council has embarked on a 12 month traffic diversion trial to stop traffic going through the Westgate Towers - though traffic will still pass to the side of the Towers nearest to the Westgate Gardens. Air pollution by traffic is one of the alleged reasons, but no-one I have spoken to thinks that the existing pollution problem will be alleviated. It is generally thought that the pollution will merely increase in other roads which are now being increasingly used. We will, as a committee be looking carefully at this trial period as one of Canterbury's greatest problems is the huge volume of traffic which runs through the City daily.



Graham Warren

## ENVIRONMENT GROUP REPORT

Not surprisingly, water, or the lack of it, has been receiving most of the Group's attention; some of it prompted by the release of the Defra White Paper "Water for Life" promising a new green deal with less red tape; supporting economic growth but maintaining high quality stewardship of the water environment. Did I hear you say "just in time for the drought" well not exactly; more like 10 years too late. Falling water tables and depleted reservoirs are very much issues

for today, with two of Kent's supply companies seeking emergency permits to relax low-flow restrictions on extraction of water from the Eden and Medway in order to improve storage levels in Bough Beech and Bewl Water reservoirs. But failing exceptionally wet conditions for the next few months, this will not be enough to cover the anticipated spring and summer supply deficit, with the almost inevitable hose pipe bans and other restrictions on non essential uses.

The Companies have sought our views, and our response has been that we fully appreciate the need for prompt action to conserve supplies. But we are also taking this as an opportunity to remind them that this will be the 2nd occasion in 6 years when the water industry in Kent has faced drought conditions requiring emergency measures; and this tells us something about their capacity to deal with an event which although undeniably severe, cannot be described as extreme. We have therefore sent back a message, one that CPRE has repeated many times in recent years, that if the companies fail to invest in a more robust and sustainable long term water resource management strategy, Kent will face increasing need for emergency supply measures with consequences for rural communities and the environmental sustainability of our rivers and wetlands.

But it's not all about water shortages. We now have a sub Group dealing with the equally challenging questions of food security and land use; and preparing a discussion document addressing some of the key issues for Kent.

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## Sevenoaks District Committee

It was a nasty shock to find that the opening round of KCC's consultation on their Minerals and Waste Plan listed four sites in the district: three of them in Shoreham Parish, one on the Surrey side of Westerham. Badgers Mount has sites at either end of the settlement. The proposed uses range from gravel extraction to rock crushing, waste-to-energy and landfill, and the prospects have naturally caused local people considerable anxiety and a great deal of work. We have submitted strong objections in all cases. At this early stage the key objective is to have them excluded from further consideration. The 'preferred options' will be announced at the end of May but unofficially we hear that the three Shoreham Parish sites have not been selected.

We are often reminded that some see the countryside just as undeveloped land with potential for making money. So, for example, Green Belt farmland in Dunton Green is worth vastly more than its agricultural land value if it is sold off in little plots to gullible investors, hoping they can build on it. Similarly, the parkland next to Combe Bank School would have been worth millions as a commercial burial ground of 10,000 plots if the appeal held in January had gone in the developer's favour. Thanks to huge opposition, led by the School and Sundridge Parish Council, it didn't. No prizes for guessing that the same entrepreneur owns both the Dunton Green and Combe Bank sites.

'Water, water everywhere...?' is the timely topic for the talk following our district AGM on Saturday 9 June in Farningham Village Hall. Members are most welcome to bring guests. Our speakers will focus on water resources in Kent and the state of the River Darent in particular. After the meeting there will be a walk along the river.



**Nigel Britten**

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## Historic Buildings Committee

One of the county's current 'hotspots', from a historic buildings viewpoint, is the ex HM Naval Dockyard at Sheerness. First established in the 17th century, the dockyard underwent a major post-Napoleonic rebuild in the 1820s to a design by Sir John Rennie. The royal dockyard closed in 1960 and some of the original structures have been demolished over the years. Many buildings remain, however, twenty of them Listed. The weather has taken its relentless toll and many structures are now in a poor state of repair. Spirits rose recently when the Spitalfields Trust arrived on the scene to acquire and sensitively to restore Dockyard Terrace, Regency Terrace and Dockyard House among others. This highly regarded conservation group we understand would also like to acquire the fire-damaged Dockyard/Garrison Church of St Paul. Swale Borough Council recently refused the current owner permission to extend the time period for his allowed application for modern housing. The HBC supported this refusal. The developer appealed, and the outcome of an Informal Hearing is awaited.

Away from the Isle Sheppey, concern has been expressed locally about the fate of the Sittingbourne building that until last year housed the Magistrates' Court. A series of these characteristic purpose-built complexes were constructed in towns across Kent in the 19th century. Few now survive intact. HBC has therefore formally requested that the Sittingbourne building be Listed. If successful, this would give it more protection against the demolition that was the unfortunate fate of the fine Victorian administration block of Sittingbourne Paper Mill.

The effectiveness of surveillance of Applications for Listed Building Consent cases has been enhanced by an informative website and electronic monitoring system devised by Graham Horner, our Hon. Secretary. With an increasing pressure on planning authorities to determine cases rapidly, the need for early awareness and speedy action is increasing. Happily, we have also recruited two new volunteer district representatives, Paul Rowe and Richard Filmer, both building surveyors. They have kindly agreed to monitor the Ashford district between them, thus strengthening our overall 'coverage'.

The word from the School of Architecture at the University for the Creative Arts at Canterbury is that there is a talented set of students this year. Working with the School we have further refined the criteria for the Gravett Award for architectural excellence. We look forward to presenting the second annual award to a deserving student later in the year. This 'positive' act will serve to offset our case-work: the latter needs to involve 'objecting', and on the surface at least, appears 'negative' to some.



**Bob Baxter**

## Supporting Communities & Neighbourhoods in Planning

*Brian Lloyd, Protect Kent's Senior Planner, provides an overview of CPRE's involvement in the government's Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning project.*

At the beginning of last year the government announced its Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning initiative. This is a two year project aimed at raising awareness of the importance of planning and to provide guidance on the new opportunities for people to get involved in planning at the local level, especially through the new neighbourhood planning proposals. For the first year of the project bids were invited for a share of £3.2m from those who could provide planning advice to local people and communities.

Given our vast experience and knowledge of the planning system, CPRE in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) submitted a bid. In April the government revealed that CPRE and NALC was one of four successful bids to take the project forward. We were awarded £620,000 to be spent by the end of March 2012.



To co-ordinate the work to be undertaken over the ensuing year, a project manager was employed and a steering group was established. The CPRE/NALC bid had specified six key proposals, and it is pleasing to say that all have been successfully delivered, as follows:

### The publication of three guide books on the planning system:

- 'Planning Explained' – which explains the local plan system and how to get involved in it
- 'How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning'
- 'How to respond to planning applications: an 8-step guide'

A copy of each of guide has been sent to every parish and town council in England and supplies are held by all CPRE branches and NALC County Associations.

A **planning help website** has been setup which provides more guidance on the planning system, and where electronic copies of the three guides can be found – see [www.planninghelp.org.uk](http://www.planninghelp.org.uk).

**On-line training modules** have been developed to complement the three guides, which will enable people to learn more about the planning system. These can be accessed at [www.ntselearning.co.uk](http://www.ntselearning.co.uk). In addition, 'face to face' training modules have been prepared which will be available to local CPRE Branches and the NALC County Associations to roll out for more targeted training.

A **planning help line** has been set up, where people can get advice on general planning matters - 020 7981 2868.

Throughout England, over **100 'planning awareness' events** have been held reaching in excess of 6,000 people. In Kent we have held five of these events, with over 350 people attending in total.

A **network of some 20 'Planning Champions'** has been set up – people who care passionately about planning and are willing to share their experience on various aspects of planning with others – see the planning help web site for more details.

At the time of writing this, the government had not decided on how to progress the project in year 2, but in recognition of the work already undertaken they have decided to extend funding to the year 1 groups for a further four months. So, CPRE and NALC will be continuing to contribute to the project until at least the end of July – keep an eye on [www.planninghelp.org.uk](http://www.planninghelp.org.uk) for the latest developments.

# Charity feedback Questionnaire:

We love to hear from our members and are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so here is a chance for you to tell us what you like about the charity, and let us know if you have any particular skills that you feel we would benefit from! Please cut out and send the completed form to: CPRE Protect Kent, Queen's Head House, Ashford Road, Charing, Kent TN27 0AD



1 What first attracted you to support CPRE Protect Kent?

2 Do you think we do a good job at protecting Kent and keeping its countryside beautiful?

3 Can you list your top three concerns for the future of our Countryside.

A  
B  
C

4 Are there any conservation issues in your area that concern you? If so please give details.

5 As a member, is there anything you feel could be better?

6 Would you be willing to join your local committee?

7 Could you use your training or work skills to help us with any of the following:

planning, civil engineering, bio-diversity, transport issue's, publicity/marketing, public speaking, photography, fundraising, law, lobbying.

8 Are you ever able to help with the following membership activities and events

fundraising eg coffee mornings, manning displays at events, one off projects, giving talks about CPRE to local organisations, writing letters to your MP etc.

9 Are there any campaigns we are currently running that you would like to be updated on?

10 Do you use our website, and if so, is there anything you would like to see changed?

# KENT VOICE

## feedback...



Jamie Weir



As the Editor of Kent Voice quite often I'm lucky enough to receive positive comments about it.

However it's very rare that I hear anything negative about the magazine!

I'm always looking for feedback and it would be wonderful if you would let me know what you think of Kent Voice and its contents!

Do you enjoy the stories and feel that they're appropriate?

Would you prefer more in-depth analysis, or a more bite size overview of the issues that affect Kent?

This is your chance to help play a part in making Kent Voice even better so that you, the member, can get more from it!

Let me know at **[jamie@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:jamie@protectkent.org.uk)** or send a letter with your comments to our office address below.

### Updating your contact details:

If you use e-mail, it would really help us to know your address so that we can keep you up to date on all of our campaigns.

Just send us an email to **[info@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:info@protectkent.org.uk)** and we will make sure that your details are updated!



Protect Kent (the Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England, number 04335730, registered charity number 1092012. CPRE Protect Kent, Queens Head House, Ashford Rd., Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD. T: 01233 714540 F: 01233 714549 E: **[info@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:info@protectkent.org.uk)**

Design by Oak Creative Advertising and Design, Newingreen, Hythe, Kent CT21 4JF. T: 01303 812848 [www.oakcreative.net](http://www.oakcreative.net)

**Edited by Jamie Weir.**