

KENTVOICE

Protecting Kent's Heritage
Autumn/Winter 2012

**A fresh assault
on the planning
system**

www.protectkent.org.uk



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Chairman's Welcome

Localism – a threat or a promise

Before the general election the Conservative party was promising localism – a greater say by people into their local affairs. When the Coalition Government came to power this manifesto promise was agreed by both the parties. It would sweep away the Regional Plans and the top down approach and replace them with local decision making on all matters that affected the local community.

The Localism Act was passed late last year and this was followed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The consultation document for the NPPF raised many concerns. When these concerns were raised publicly, primarily by CPRE and the National Trust, they received criticism from some of the members of government as to the stance the two organisations had taken.

However, after considerable consultation and debate, when the final document was published and became statute in March 2012, it was apparent that government had listened and many of the contentious areas were amended or removed.

The government's first priority is to promote growth. It appears that there are some in government who blame the lack of growth on the planning system. But how can this be so when planning permission for nearly 400,000 houses has already been granted and yet not one brick has been laid?

Anyone with a financial background would tell you that it is not the lack of planning permission which is responsible for the lack of housing; it is the inability of people to raise the necessary mortgage in order to buy a home. Even were the planning system at fault which it is not, it would take up to three years, at least, before it would have any effect on growth.

Yet, some in government are still blaming the planning system for the lack of growth. This is borne out by some recent statements during the last few weeks.

Government is threatening that where a Local Planning Authority (LPA) has a record of consistent poor performance in the "speed and quality of its decisions" an Inspector will be appointed to determine the applications. What is the definition of "speed and quality"? Who will decide? How is this localism?

The government is also suggesting that more infrastructure proposals are to be determined nationally. They are also suggesting that commercial and business development will in future be included as infrastructure. At present we do not have any detail as to what will be included as "commercial and business". Also, what size of development will be included as infrastructure? Whatever the definition this action would lead to a further erosion of localism.

A further suggestion from government is that if there is not enough profit in a development because of a condition on the number of affordable homes included, then the developer will be able to appeal to an Inspector over the head of the LPA. The Inspector will have the power to change the original 106 agreement made with the LPA. Once again, localism would have been undermined.

Then, finally, the suggestion that has made the headlines, that a property owner will be able to build an extension to a property without needing planning permission. Many Local Planning Authorities are very concerned about this suggestion, as it will bring disputes between neighbours and encourage inappropriate extensions. It also does not detail whether it applies to graded buildings, conservation areas or dwellings in an AONB or the Green Belt.

For many, the government's vision for localism, people being able to have the power to make local decisions, was widely welcomed. At long last people would be able to make planning decisions about their local community area. It was proclaimed as the end of the "top down" approach. The consultation on the NPPF started the erosion to localism and attempted to restore the "top down" approach.

Feedback on the NPPF reversed some of the erosion. However the recent statements from government appear to reverse from localism to "top down" once again. This will result in many planning decisions and especially those most affecting the landscape and the countryside, being taken centrally. Very little weight if any will be given to those worst affected.

If we are to further erosion of the countryside, especially in Kent, these government statements need to be strenuously opposed.

Richard Knox-Johnston

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Directors Report

One step forward, two steps back...

After the intense campaigning carried out by CPRE and others, we emerged into the spring this year with a revised final version of the National Planning Policy Framework which spared us some of the worst excesses that were threatened by its previous draft. There was time to take a short breath and reflect on the how narrowly we had escaped having a national planning framework that would commit some of the worst abuses to good planning this country has seen, and would drive back the work that had been done over past years to foster sustainable communities where affordable housing and necessary infrastructure could be delivered for the benefit of all. We've said it before, and we will say it again; any planning system must have the teeth that it needs to be able to say 'no' to bad development, or else it is destined to repeat those planning mistakes of the past that have taken us a generation to put right. An effective planning system is essential to improve the standards of design and resource efficiency, and to direct development to those places where it is most needed and will do least harm. It is not a mechanism to achieve a knee-jerk response to a global financial crisis.

The newly-minted NPPF had had hardly had much of a chance to make its impact felt before new statements from the Government once again threatened to overturn the hard-won protection for good planning principles. In early September a raft of reforms were announced with the stated intention of re-starting economic growth. They include the suggestion that householders could more than double the size of permitted extensions without any need for planning permission; they also lowered the threshold for major



Dr Hilary Newport

infrastructure schemes for which planning permission could be granted at national, rather than local level; previously this was only proposed for the very largest elements of infrastructure (see page 22 for more on the proposed reforms).

Another example of conflict between good planning policies and 'quick fix' financial returns can be seen in the recent draft Water Bill, currently undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny in the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The Draft Bill has its origins in last year's White Paper "Water for Life", which sought to address – among other laudable objectives – secure, sustainable and resilient water supplies along with protection of our water environment and a secure base for future planning.

Unfortunately, the Draft Bill does very little to secure these objectives, focusing instead on the drive to open up the market to other water suppliers, driving down customer costs, while failing to recognise the need to explore the implications of demand growth in the face of pressure to deliver ever-more housing and jobs. Creating new water supply companies may be good for competition, but it does nothing to create new supplies of water. More importantly, the bill fails to give water companies – new or existing – the right to object to proposed developments for which they would be incapable of physically supplying water without incurring overwhelming financial or environmental costs.

These proposed reforms appear to show a wilful failure to understand the point of planning. There are elements of sensible, thoughtful environmental and social policy being developed by different departments of our government, which are being undermined in the desperate race to kick-start the economy.



Spotlight on Maidstone

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



Brian Lloyd

Maidstone Borough is centrally located in Kent, and Maidstone itself is the County Town and home to around 110,000 of the 150,000 people that live in the Borough.

Historically the town grew because of its location on the River Medway, which flows northwards to Rochester and then onwards to the Thames Estuary. Today, though, it is better known for its accessibility by road and rail rather than water. The town is located adjacent to the M20 Motorway, which provides links to the M25 and London (and beyond) to the west and Ashford and the port of Dover to the east. Other 'A' roads radiate out of the town providing good links to surrounding towns, and there are rail links to London, the Medway towns and Ashford. All these communications make Maidstone highly accessible, and consequently attractive to investors. As a result the town has grown as an administrative, commercial and retail centre, and with housing development. A much expanded urban area has meant that the town has subsumed a number of surrounding settlements including Allington, Barming, Bearsted, Sandling, Penenden Heath and Loose. At its narrowest, the gap between Maidstone and Medway is now just two miles wide.



Beyond the urban area the Borough contains some very attractive countryside, including part of the nationally important Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The AONB fills much of the gap between Maidstone town and Medway and Swale Borough, with its scarp slope providing the back drop to the town. Immediately to the south and east of Maidstone, a large belt of greensand supports extensive areas of ancient mixed woodland and a significant amount of fruit production and arable farming. This gives way to the Greensand Ridge, a steep landform giving panoramic views over the Low Weald further beyond. Dispersed throughout the countryside is a network of villages and hamlets. A number of larger rural settlements, most notably Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst provide local services for those living in the rural area.

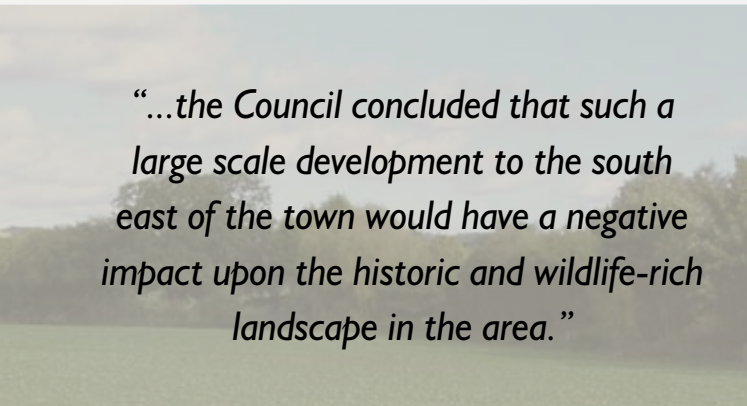
Because of its good accessibility, the South East Plan identifies Maidstone as a settlement of regional significance with potential to accommodate a high level of development. It proposes that

11,080 new dwellings should be provided by 2026. This is the third highest requirement out of the 12 Kent districts. The Plan envisages that 90% of this new development will be in or adjacent to Maidstone town. It also proposes significant new employment provision with an emphasis on higher quality jobs to enhance Maidstone's role as the County Town and as a centre for business.

The Council's own Local Plan (Core Strategy) for future development in the Borough has been slow to emerge, and has seen some significant change over time. In 2007, the Council's preferred option for development was to focus development at a single strategic development area on the south eastern side of the town. Here it was proposed that 5,000 dwellings would be provided together with a strategic link road to the M20 to serve it. The rest of the housing required would be provided within and adjacent to the town and at the larger villages, but this would have been relatively small scale. To balance the proposed housing it was proposed that land would be identified for at least 10,000 new jobs in a range of sectors and locations.

In 2011, and following a lengthy delay because of having to deal with the major Kent International Gateway (KIG) proposal, the Council abandoned the 2007 preferred strategy. In the light of changed economic circumstances it concluded that there were doubts about the delivery of the proposed strategic link road. Also, because of an increase in building rates between 2007 and 2010 on brownfield land within the town, the Council considered that there was no longer a need for a large scale development of 5,000 dwellings on greenfield land. Furthermore, as a result of further work it had undertaken, the Council concluded that such a large scale development to the south east of the town would have a negative impact upon the historic and wildlife-rich landscape in the

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“...the Council concluded that such a large scale development to the south east of the town would have a negative impact upon the historic and wildlife-rich landscape in the area.”

area. This turnabout was welcomed by CPRE and by local residents.

Instead, the Council decided to proceed with a new strategy in its Local Plan. This would see a housing target of 10,080 new houses (lower than in the South East Plan) in what the Council describes as a ‘dispersed pattern’. In particular, the Council explain, this would mean 80% of new housing being built within and adjacent to Maidstone, including at ‘strategic locations’ to the south east (1,000 dwellings) and north west of the town (975 dwellings). Also, a significant quantity of housing (1,130 dwellings) would be distributed between the larger villages of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst. Overall, the new strategy envisages that 60% of the proposed housing will be on brownfield land, meaning that 40% (4,000 dwellings) will be on greenfield land. To deliver ambitious employment aspirations, the Council propose to make the best use of brownfield land in the town centre, but promotes strategic locations for employment development on greenfield land at Junctions 7 and 8 of the M20, which it considers essential.

Consultation on this revised strategy was undertaken in September and October 2011, and in August 2012 further consultation was undertaken on

proposed ‘strategic’ sites at the strategic locations previously identified. The Council intend to consider the representations made on both consultations in November, and to agree the final plan. Consultation on this plan is expected to take place at the end of this year or early in 2013. The plan, together with all the representations submitted, will then be considered by an independent Planning Inspector.

From CPRE's point of view, whilst the intention to focus development on brownfield land is to be welcomed, we remain very concerned about the overall scale of development proposed, even though it is lower than in the South East Plan. The dispersed strategy now promoted will mean significant greenfield development, especially at the proposed strategic locations. We have made submissions arguing that both the housing and employment targets should be further reduced, and that economic and housing objectives can be achieved without such significant incursion into the countryside.

In particular we have made strong objections to proposed development at Junction 8 of the M20, where the Council are looking to allocate a site for mainly light industry, general industry and offices but also for some distribution/warehousing. One site being seriously considered by the Council, at Woodcut Farm, comprises 25 hectares (62 acres) of land. All the sites under consideration here, though, are greenfield and are currently farmed. They are also located in the open countryside, being some distance (between 1.2km and 2.2km) from the defined edge of Maidstone. To the north of Junction 8 is the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and land around Junction 8 itself falls in a defined Special Landscape Area. In his report on the inquiry into the Kent International Gateway (KIG) proposal, the Inspector concluded that the land in this area is “attractive open countryside” and has “a strong rural character and atmosphere”.

All this makes this an important and sensitive area of countryside, where we believe any development would be inappropriate and unsustainable. We consider that the proposed development would also undermine the Council's own economic development strategy, which seeks to ensure that economic development, especially office development, is accommodated in the town centre. In our view, to have such major office development ‘out-of-town’ will only serve to further reduce town centre viability.

We wait with interest to see how the Borough Council responds to the concerns we have raised when it publishes the final plan for consultation.

Supporting Communities & Neighbourhoods in Planning



Brian Lloyd provides an update of CPRE's involvement in the Government's Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning project.



Since March 2011 CPRE in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has been providing guidance and assistance to local communities under the Government funded 'Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning' project. Funding has now been secured to extend our involvement in the project until the end of March 2013.

In the first year the project was concerned primarily with providing general guidance to enable people to better engage in the planning system. This resulted in the production of three guide books on the planning system:

'Planning Explained'— which explains the local plan system and how to most effectively engage in it

'How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning'

'How to respond to planning applications: an 8-step guide'.

These can be viewed at www.planninghelp.org.uk/resources.

In this second year the project is now focused entirely on providing practical help and assistance to local communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans. Local communities can take advantage of two types of assistance:

'Getting Started workshops and Tailored support.'

The 'Getting Started' workshops are aimed at those local community groups who have decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan but need more information about how to go about doing it. The workshops will include presentations and activities to give communities the chance to think about the issues that may benefit from neighbourhood planning in their area. Delegates should be able to leave the workshop with the skills and confidence needed to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. We are planning to run some workshops in Kent, so for more information please contact me at brian.lloyd@protectkent.org.uk or on 01233 714543.

The tailored support comprises 10 bespoke packages that address each key stage of the Neighbourhood Plan process in detail. The support is aimed at those communities who are actively preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, and is designed to help them get through the various stages as speedily as possible. For more detail on the packages and for an application form please go to: <http://planninghelp.co.uk/what-we-are-doing/tailored-neighbourhood-planning-support>.

Both the 'Getting Started' workshops and the tailored support is offered free of charge to local communities, but certain conditions will need to be satisfied to qualify for it. We anticipate great demand for the support on offer, so you are encouraged to let us know as soon as possible if you think either will be of benefit to you.

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Let's Plough On



Andrew Ogden

During September volunteers from our Districts and staff from our Branch Office joined forces to raise the profile of Protect Kent by attending not one, but two ploughing matches at opposite ends of the county.



To begin with, our gazebo was erected and associated equipment provided for the Weald of Kent Ploughing Match, staged at August Pitts Farm, Horsmonden, on Saturday 15th September. The glorious late-summer weather encouraged a large number of people to attend, and we were fortunate to engage with and inform many of them about Protect Kent and our work.



Ten days later we repeated the exercise for the East Kent Ploughing Match, held at St. Margaret's (near Dover) on Wednesday 26th September. Unfortunately, the weather was not as benevolent as it had been for the first match, being very windy and threatening rain all morning. This obviously discouraged visitors, but we were still able to talk to many people about Protect Kent, at least up until 2 o'clock. Then the heavens opened and we, together with many other stall-holders, packed up our gear and abandoned the site.

Volunteers from the Tunbridge Wells District Committee supported our presence at the Weald of Kent Match; similarly people from our Dover and Canterbury Committees were at the East Kent Match; and members of the Historic Buildings Committee came to both.

The success of these two events can be measured by the number of people we managed to speak to, and the information we gathered in return. This was partly due to our approach, and possibly partly due to the nature of the ploughing matches.

Recognising that there is always difficulty in establishing contact with members of the public (who often believe that we're just trying to sell something), we employed the use of a questionnaire by way of introduction. This enabled us to have a reason to speak to visitors, most of whom were willing to respond, and also gave us valuable information on their knowledge and perception of Protect Kent.

Our key findings are:

- Over 50% of those interviewed have never heard of CPRE or Protect Kent, which is quite alarming; (this lack of knowledge is slightly biased towards the west of the county, at 57% having no awareness of us).
- Perhaps of more concern, two-thirds of people haven't seen any publicity about CPRE or Protect Kent, are not aware of our achievements, or don't know how we're funded.
- Only 1 in 14 have ever visited our website !
- As a result of this lack in understanding, approximately 40% consider us a weak and ineffective organisation, despite there being copious amounts of evidence to the contrary.
- Despite these facts, more than 8 in 10 people are concerned about threats to the countryside and believe that they can, and should, be challenged. The threats named were numerous, but included housing and development, traffic, retrospective planning applications, travellers sites, wind farms, solar farms, and a lack of water (to name just a few).
- Apart from all of this very useful data, one of the most successful aspects has been in gaining the contact details of 31 people who would like to know more about CPRE and Protect Kent, of which 10 may consider becoming volunteers.

A full report on the data and information gained from the questionnaires will be made available in the near future.

As mentioned, the success of these events was also due to their nature. Differing from the Kent County Show (which, in my opinion, has become far too commercial and less Kent-focussed in recent years), the ploughing matches were more of a celebration of rural life, and therefore attracted people from rural communities and the farming industry. These are just the sort of people who are likely to become supporters of Protect Kent, if only they knew more about us !

In contrast, it appears that those people we work with, for example Parish and District Councillors, do have a good



understanding of CPRE, our aims and our work. Unfortunately, they are unlikely to become members (although this is not unheard of), possibly due to perceived 'conflicts of interest'. So perhaps we need to re-think our marketing strategy and target audience: more about this in a later article "It's Time to Talk".

So in summary, the ploughing matches proved to be two very successful and useful events, well worth considering for future years as a means to engage with people and raise our profile.

Andrew Ogden
Campaigns Manager



Do we really need to provide more runway capacity if we are to not risk the UK's economic prosperity?
HILARY NEWPORT
writes...

Plane Crazy

While the UK's economy grumbles along at its current low levels, calls for action to re-invigorate it are becoming more and more strident. Some of the most vocal lobbying comes from the aviation sector, with various calls for increased runway capacity, particularly in the South East, in the determination to ensure that the UK does not lose out to other centres of aviation on the European mainland. Many believe that the only way forward is to create an entirely new hub airport to the east of London, and plans variously promoted by Mayor of London Boris Johnson or by Lord Foster for a multi-runway 'super airport' in the Thames Estuary are being touted as the only way forward for the industry. Unsurprisingly, we, along with many other environmental NGOs as well as local councils in Kent and Medway, are opposed to such a plan; the damage to local habitats and to irreplaceable internationally important designated areas, is widely recognised. But what is the solution? Or, to ask a more fundamental question, is there really a problem which requires a solution? The projections for the number of passengers flying in future years are notoriously variable, but over recent years, these projections have been profoundly affected by the various vicissitudes of the global economy and the increasing security requirements of air travel. While the more up-to-date forecasts still suggest that passenger numbers will continue to increase, it seems that they will increase at a much slower rate than was predicted 10 or even 5 years ago. Perhaps the shortfall in runway capacity is not as profound as some fear. Government has its role to play in supporting the UK's economy, of course, but it also has its role to play in ensuring a fair economic climate for all sectors, as well as in securing protection for the environment.

Many sources will quote the contribution made by aviation to the country's exchequer, but fewer of those who call for more runway capacity acknowledge the tax breaks enjoyed by the sector, or its negative economic impacts.

The so-called 'tourism deficit' is the difference between the amount of money that UK holidaymakers collectively spend when they travel abroad, and the amount that is spent in the UK by holidaymakers from other countries. The current figure for this deficit runs to some £13bn per year (down from a peak of over £20bn in 2008). Then there is the thorny issue of



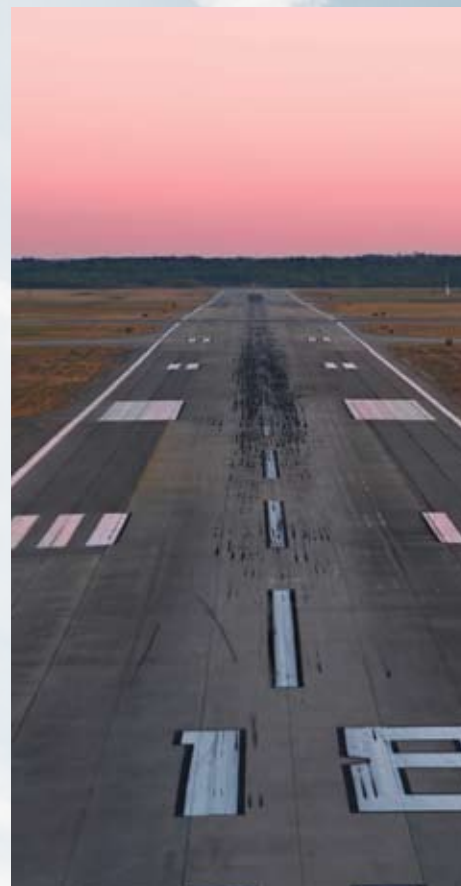


fuel duty; a further £12bn per year is lost to the UK treasury because the aviation sector does not pay fuel duty or VAT. There is, of course, the un-loved Airport Passenger Duty, but as this is levied only on a per-passenger basis, it does not provide much incentive to make sure that best use is made of the capacity of individual flights. We have advocated, for a long time, that the equivalent of Air Passenger Duty should be levied on each plane movement, rather than only on those seats which are occupied; this would encourage operators to fill as many seats as possible and perhaps allow runway slots to be freed up.

Rather than focusing on the need for more acres of England's countryside to be sacrificed to runway expansion, we could focus on promoting more environmentally benign forms of travel. A large proportion of flights from Heathrow, for example, are to locations which are well served by rail, both in the UK and in Mainland Europe. The skewed taxation system gives air travel an unfair competitive advantage, at

the additional expense of increased environmental impacts. Releasing these runway slots could free up capacity for longer haul flights without requiring more runway space.

We believe that there is much to be done to secure more efficient use of existing aviation capacity, and to provide long term environmental benefits, without harming the economy and while still providing the connectivity needed for a 21st century economy.



KENTVOICE

It's Time to Talk



Andrew Ogden

“Over 50% of those interviewed have never heard of CPRE or Protect Kent, which is quite alarming”

This is one of the key findings derived from the responses to our questionnaire used at the recent ploughing matches; (see “Let’s Plough On”). If this is applicable to the population of Kent (and there is every reason to suspect that it is), then obviously something needs to be done to lift our profile and encourage people to learn more about us.

This is where we wish to employ your* help !

Don’t be alarmed ! We are not asking you to mount a recruitment drive to gain more members (although new supporters are always welcome); we merely want you to ‘spread the word’ about CPRE and Protect Kent, i.e. assist us in raising our profile.



This can be achieved in a number of simple ways, none particularly onerous:

- Firstly, rather than throw away (or even recycle) this copy of Kent Voice once you have finished reading it, why not pass it on to a friend or neighbour, colleague or associate ? It can be used in this way (although not necessarily) to introduce Protect Kent into a conversation.
- Alternatively, Kent Voice could be left in waiting rooms, libraries, etc, (even in pubs or on the train): anywhere that it might come to the attention of members of the public. We can always provide additional copies if you wish to ‘swamp’ such venues with this publication.
- If the opportunity arises in conversation with friends and neighbours, colleagues and associates (for example, talking about charities), mention CPRE and Protect Kent.
- If someone makes a comment about a planning issue, or anything that we have an interest in, you can advise them that we have a formal view on such matters; (we have ‘positions’ on most subjects – and for those missing we can quickly produce something).

- We find that many of our supporters are also members of other charities and organisations, some of which we are often aligned to. We would really appreciate you facilitating an introduction to such groups, again to raise our profile amongst their membership; we are always willing to give a talk on CPRE if asked.
- If someone does ask about membership, then obviously encourage them. We are always interested in receiving new members, particularly anyone who wishes to contribute their expertise through District Committees or our Specialist Groups. This can be particularly appealing to 'recently retired professionals' who wish to share their knowledge and experience for the benefit of society. Rather than you having the hassle of paperwork, it is best to direct them to our website, where joining-up is easy. (If they are not 'computer-literate' then ask them to phone us). Don't forget that current membership is only £3 per month (£36 per year) for a household, not individual.

- And similarly, applicable to all of the above suggestions, if anyone wants to know more about us, supply them with the contact details given in the box below.
- Finally, ask more of us ! If there's anything about CPRE or Protect Kent that you wish to know about, do get in touch. Your membership, support and involvement is as important to us as that from any new member.

Raising our profile is very important, and your assistance will be most gratefully appreciated. The recruitment of new members will come later, hopefully made easier by your involvement and contributions. From awareness grows knowledge, from understanding will grow support, from our membership we will gain in strength.

After all, would you join an organisation that you knew very little or nothing about ?

* not just our members, and supporters, but anyone reading this publication – everyone is welcome to and can help with this !

To get in touch with us, please see page 31 for contact details.



KENTVOICE



Harriet Drage

The Geology of Kent ...

Kent is an amazingly beautiful county, with a number of fascinating features throughout the landscape. Long scale geological evolution is responsible for the varied and unique scenery of the county. This geology is important in understanding how our landscape came to be, and where many of our natural resources come from. So just how was Kent formed?



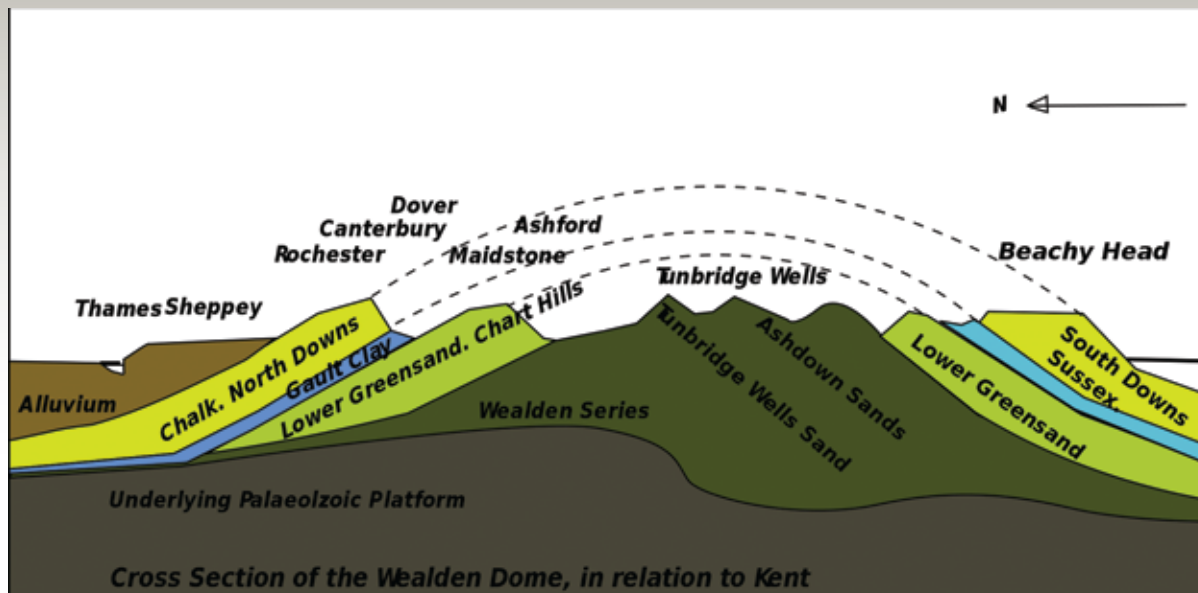
The geology of Kent is dominated by sedimentary rocks, which are formed from deposited sediments being compressed, in known layers from the Cretaceous to Tertiary periods (around 140-40 million years ago). Kent is made up of a sequence of rocks from this time, called the stratigraphy. The oldest rocks in Kent are the Hastings Beds, a group of Sandstones, followed by Clay, and then layers of Greensands (a type of Sandstone) with Clay in between (called the Gault). Above the Greensands are the upper layers of Chalk, the youngest rock beds.

The main geological feature of the county is the Wealden dome; formed by uplifting of the Earth during the formation of the Alps, known as an anticline. Over time the layers of rocks at the top of the dome (Chalks and upper Greensands) have been eroded, leaving hills and valleys in the Kent landscape. The erosion of the Wealden dome has created many of the landscape features in Kent; including the low London Clay marshlands along the Thames and Medway estuaries, the Chalk North Downs forming the White Cliffs of Dover where it meets the sea, and the Weald Clay valley. The North Downs are at the edge of the eroded dome, where the rock layers are intact, but older rocks, like the lower

Greensands, have been exposed within the Weald. Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Canterbury and Dover are a few sites that are built on the Chalk. Sevenoaks, Maidstone, Ashford and Folkestone are all built on the exposed Greensand.

Chalk is a white, soft and porous form of Limestone, forming from the accumulation of the skeletal remains of micro-organisms on the sea bed, which eventually consolidate. The sequence of rocks creating Kent was formed within, and on the edge of, a shallow sub-tropical sea; including the Greensands from shallow marine sediments, and deeper marine Chalk. During the Cretaceous, a rise in sea level caused a deeper sea in the area that would become Kent, leading to the Gault Clay and Greensand. Major land subsidence followed, causing production of the Chalk.





Geology plays a vital role in our ability to utilise natural resources; Kent's geology has historically played an important part in the area, and is increasingly central to modern developments. Firstly, certain beds in Kent's stratigraphy have been traditionally quarried for building materials; most notably a hard Limestone, known as Kentish Ragstone, obtained from the lower Greensand. Many historical buildings and landmarks in Kent have been constructed using the resources from these local quarries. Kent's Geology has also influenced other areas of the building trade in the past; some parts have a history of Iron mining, and cement production from mined chalk and sand has played an important role in industry. The older base of rocks underlying the Wealden dome also provide fairly good conditions for coal formation; due to this geological aspect exploration and mining of the coal measures has taken place in East Kent.

The geology of Kent is also highly important for the maintenance of high water reserves in the county, a key characteristic in recent times of drought problems. The large beds of Chalk, due to their permeability, function as an unconfined aquifer. This means the highly permeable rock contains and transmits groundwater, providing much of the county's freshwater. Kent's Chalk aquifer has therefore been of great significance as a source of water for residents during the extremely low levels of rainfall this past spring.

When walking around areas such as the north coast of the Isle of Sheppey, or the shore of Folkestone, it is easy to see the value of Kent's Geology in the number and diversity of fossils

present. Kent has several of the most esteemed fossil-collecting sites in Britain; the rock types and past environments of the area allowing this huge contribution to scientific knowledge. This notable geology is therefore highly important in producing the rural landscape we admire,

and has had significant historical and modern impacts on trade, building and resource availability. So next time you go for a wander through the countryside, look out and think about how this was produced all those years ago—it's a fascinating story for a beautiful county.

Many historical buildings and landmarks in Kent have been constructed using the resources from these local quarries.



Hazel Dormouse

Order : Rodentia

Suborder : Sciurognathi Family : wMyoxidae Subfamily :

Myoxinae Species : Muscardinus avellanarius



Vicky Ellis

The landscapes in Kent are some of the most beautiful in the country. Whenever we protect these landscapes, we are also seeking to protect the amazing species that live within them. Dormice are one of Britain's most charismatic and rarest terrestrial mammals. Known as 'the sleeper' in old English the word dormouse originates from the French word 'dormer' meaning 'to sleep,' and was made famous as a character in the children's book Alice in Wonderland.

As they are nocturnal they have large eyes, long whiskers and a very efficient sense of smell (See fig. 1). Dormice have a characteristic bushy tail and prehensile feet which aids with their predominately arboreal life up in the canopies of trees, rarely coming down except to feed or hibernate during the winter months; they then construct a nest at the base of coppice, under roots of trees or deep within hedges. This can make the dormouse extremely vulnerable to modern day forestry management where heavy plant machinery is used.

Dormice like an array of food types including flowers, especially honeysuckle, hazel catkins, fruit, nuts and insects. They sleep during the day in nests utilising tree hollows or unused bird's nest boxes. Figures 2 and 3 show nests which were built using dormouse boxes put up this year in Perry Woods, Selling. Each nest



is constructed using locally available resources such as grass, oak leaves etc. Figure 4 shows how carefully the nest is made, making a beautiful sphere where the dormouse will either bring up a family or use as a resting place during the summer months.

The dormouse is the only British rodent which hibernates, usually from around mid-October/November until April/May depending on the weather conditions at the time. The dormouse will prepare for torpor by eating as much as possible in order to build up fat reserves which will help it through the long winter months when little or no food is available. He will preserve his fat reserves further by lowering his heart rate by up to as much as 90% and helps to maintain an ambient body temperature by lining the nest with grass, leaves and other vegetation and curling up into a tight ball. In case the dormouse wakes during the winter months a small store of food would have been collected and placed inside the nest.

Dormice can have up to two litters a year usually between May and September and have a litter size of around 4 young. The young, otherwise known as pinkies, are born blind and naked; they grow grey fur before the familiar golden fur at around 4 weeks, which is when they are ready to leave the nest.

Dormice are a European Protected Species and therefore have full legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and by the Habitat Regulations 1994. They are used as an indicator species and require a licence to be held by anyone wishing to monitor or handle for conservation or scientific purposes.

The dormouse population has dropped dramatically in the last 100 years. Being mostly associated with ancient and deciduous woodlands and hazel coppice the demise of the Hazel dormouse can be primarily attributed to the dramatic loss of woodland, habitat fragmentation (as large woods have been divided up) and the removal of hedgerows.

The tradition of coppicing helps provide a suitable habitat for the dormouse as it creates a canopy used as pathways and corridors as well as providing shade. With sensitive management and the use of mixed species helping to provide nesting material and of course a continuous food supply, with a rotation of 15 to 20 years between coppicing so as to allow the fruiting of Hazels to occur.

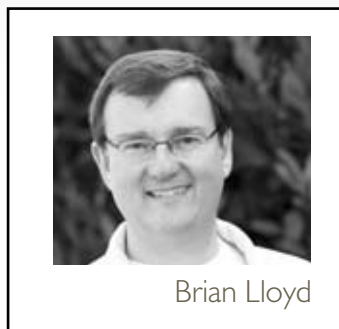
To look for field signs of dormice it is possible to seek out hazel nut shells that have been gnawed. Dormice tend to gnaw a hazel nut one end leaving a neat hole with no sharp edges, unlike squirrels which break the shell open completely and wood mice which leave sharp edges.

If you are interested in joining in and helping with the conservation of these fascinating small rodents then more information can be obtained by contacting either The Peoples Trust for Endangered Species who run the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme or The Kent Mammal Group who survey and monitor dormouse presence in over 70 woodland areas across Kent with the help of trained volunteers.



KENT VOICE

Local Plan Round-up



The following provides the latest round-up of Local Plans (including Core Strategies and Development Plan Documents (DPDs)) currently under preparation across Kent. This reflects the situation as we understand it as we went to press. For completeness, the up-date now also notes the plans that have already been adopted.



Ashford

- Core Strategy adopted July 2008.
- Town Centre DPD adopted February 2010
- Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD adopted October 2010
- The examination of the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD was held in May 2012, and following consultation in July on some proposed changes it was adopted by the Borough Council on 18th October.
- In April 2012 the Borough Council undertook final consultation on the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan DPD and in October the Council agreed that it be submitted for examination. The examination is likely to be held early in the 2013. In September an outline planning application for Chilmington Green was submitted. This includes proposals for up to 5,750 homes, employment land, retail uses, education facilities, community and leisure uses, open space, utilities and transport infrastructure, together with landscaping and ecological enhancement works.
- In August 2012 the Borough Council started a consultation on future employment and housing growth in the Borough as the first step in preparing its new Local Plan to 2030, which will replace the currently adopted Core Strategy. The consultation ran to the end of October. Further consultation on the Local Plan is expected during 2013, though dates have not been specified by the Council.

Canterbury

- Herne Bay Area Action Plan DPD adopted April 2010
- Herne Bay Area Action Plan DPD adopted April 2010

Dartford

- Core Strategy adopted September 2011
- Following the adoption of the Core Strategy it remains unclear what other plans the Borough Council proposes to prepare.

Dover

- Core Strategy adopted February 2010
- As we went to press, the District Council was expected to publish for formal consultation the pre-submission Site Allocations DPD. It is expected that the plan will be submitted for examination early in 2013 and that the examination will be held in the early summer.

Gravesham

- Following some delay, the formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is now expected to start in December. The timetable beyond then is unclear.

Maidstone

- Affordable Housing DPD adopted December 2006
- Open Space DPD adopted December 2006
- Following consultation on proposed strategic allocations in the late summer, the Borough Council is expected to start formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy in December. Beyond then, the timetable is unclear.

Sevenoaks

- Core Strategy adopted February 2011
- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD is now expected in December. The plan will then be submitted for examination in the spring of 2013 with the examination following in the early summer.
- In early 2013, the District Council intends to undertake initial consultation on a Gypsy and Traveller DPD.

Shepway

- The examination of the Core Strategy was held in May 2012. The Inspector's interim report highlighted some significant concerns with the plan which resulted in the District Council agreeing some major changes to it in September. These included deleting from the plan controversial proposals for 820 homes at the Folkestone Racecourse and the idea of a 'strategic corridor' running through the central part of the district. Consultation on these changes is currently under way and comments are invited by 10th December. The examination is likely to be re-opened in early 2013 to enable the Inspector to consider the proposed changes before producing his final report.

Swale

- Following consultation on the preferred options for its Core Strategy in the spring, the Borough Council is now undertaking further background work. The final Core Strategy is not now expected to be published for consultation until the summer of 2013.

Thanet

- Cliftonville DPD adopted February 2010
- After three years since previously consulting, the District Council is proposing to undertake further consultation on its draft Core Strategy in January 2013. Precise details about this consultation, though, were unclear as we went to press.

Tonbridge and Malling

- Core Strategy adopted September 2007
- Development Land Allocations DPD adopted April 2008
- Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan DPD adopted April 2008
- Managing Development and the Environment DPD adopted

April 2010

- The Borough Council has recently decided to start a review of the adopted plans. Details of the review, though, have not yet been announced.

Tunbridge Wells

- Core Strategy adopted June 2010
- The Borough Council has decided that its proposed Allocations DPD, Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD and Development Management Policies DPD will now be combined into a single Local Plan. Consultation on a draft of the plan is expected in January 2013.

Medway

- The examination of the Medway Core Strategy was held in May 2012. In the light of new information presented about the extent of breeding nightingales on and around the proposed Lodge Hill site the examination was suspended pending further investigation of this issue. Stakeholder consultation on proposed mitigation and compensation arrangements is expected before the end of the year, and the examination will re-open in the New Year to consider these new proposals

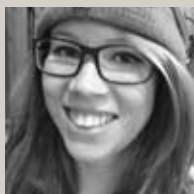
KCC

- Consultation of the pre-submission Waste and Minerals Core Strategy has been delayed until the summer of 2013.
- Consultation on the proposed sites for mineral extraction and waste facilities was undertaken in May 2012, but there will be no further consultation on these proposals until the autumn of 2014, after the Waste and Minerals Core Strategy is adopted.



KENTVOICE

PROTECT OUR TREES: THE ASIAN LONGHORN BEETLE



Harriet Drage

*The Asian Longhorn Beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*; 'ALB'), starry sky or sky beetle, is a highly destructive invasive species that lives on and within trees, and has the potential of causing serious harm to Kent's woodland.*

An invasive species is a non-native species that adversely affects the habitats they invade. The species originates from Eastern China, Japan and Korea. However it has been introduced to several countries, likely by wood packaging material. These countries include the United States, Canada, France and Germany. It was discovered in the Paddock Wood region of Kent in March 2012 by the Forestry Commission.

ALB's are large insects, with adult beetles averaging 2.5–4cm long, and antenna up to around 10cm in length. The species can be identified by its colouration, although this is very similar to the invasive Citrus Longhorn Beetle; adults are shiny black, with around twenty white spots on each wing cover, black and white banded antenna and whitish-blue upper leg sections.

The beetles infest a variety of important native tree species in the UK. Their presence has an extremely negative effect on the health of the host tree. Female adults chew 35-90 holes in the bark and wood of trees in which to lay their eggs; when the larvae emerge they tunnel within and feed on the living wood, consuming healthy bark and essential vascular tissues of the tree. While the adults themselves only feed on twigs and bark, and therefore do little damage to trees, the young of the species cause massive damage. Infestations can

disrupt required tissues, cause structural weakness and encourage infection.

Asian Longhorn Beetles therefore significantly weaken the integrity of infested trees, and can cause the death of many trees over a fairly short time. Affected trees have to be felled, chipped and incinerated to prevent further infestation. Invaded zones can be difficult to control, as the adults can fly up to 1-2km in search of new trees to inhabit. Without proper vigilance and management the invasive ALB could consequently result in huge numbers of host trees being killed, severely impacting ecosystems as food sources and habitats for native organisms are destroyed.

ALB's are considered a threat to many UK host tree species, including maple, birch, willow, beech, sycamore, poplar and horse chestnut trees, as well as some fruit trees.

Asian Longhorn Beetles have had extremely detrimental effects as





invasive species in other countries, causing massive numbers of trees to be felled at huge monetary cost. Look out for the large, patterned adults, and signs of infestation: most commonly circular exit holes around 1 cm diameter in the trunk and branches, sawdust-like droppings, feeding damage to bark and sap leaking from egg-laying sites.

So when walking through Kent, keep an eye out for Asian Longhorn Beetles or signs of infestation!



**For more information, or to
report an Asian Longhorn Beetle
sighting, please visit the
Forestry Commission or
Fera websites,
or phone the helpline on
0844 2480071**

KENT

Just when you thought the countryside was safe...

Brian Lloyd looks at the most recent proposals to change the planning system and to make it easier for development both large and small.

In March the Coalition Government completed its root and branch overhaul of national planning policy and issued the final version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This saw national planning policy reduced from over 1,300 pages to just 50. The NPPF was heralded by Government as making the planning system less complex and more accessible, and to promote sustainable growth.

But many saw its pro-growth focus as reducing important safeguards and its brevity as making it too vague and open to interpretation. Most, though, including CPRE, breathed a huge sigh of relief that it was a vast improvement on the draft document that attracted such widespread condemnation. At least some valued planning principles have been retained which (hopefully) will still see our valued landscapes and the Green Belt protected from development.

However, there has been little time to celebrate as the Government has extended its offensive on planning, which it continues to see as a barrier to growth.

On the 6th September Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, announced a new tranche of planning reforms. In a written statement he asserted that “We must create the conditions that support local economic growth and remove barriers that stop local businesses creating jobs and getting Britain building again.”

To achieve this he set out a raft of new proposed changes to the planning system, the effect of which would be to remove local decision making by extending the scope of permitted development or moving decisions to the national level.

The proposals include:

Introducing new legislation to allow planning applications to be determined by the Planning Inspectorate where the local planning authority has a track record of consistently poor performance in the speed and quality of its decisions;

Changing the thresholds for nationally important infrastructure proposals so that more schemes are determined nationally rather than locally;

Extending the definition of ‘infrastructure’ to include commercial and business development, making it possible for such schemes, where they are of sufficient significance, to be considered and determined at the national level rather than locally;

Introducing new legislation to allow the Planning Inspectorate to remove requirements for affordable housing from locally agreed Section 106 agreements where the developer thinks this would make the development viable;

Changes to permitted development rights to allow for a temporary period of three years larger extensions to homes and businesses, without the need for planning permission; and

Changes to permitted development rights to allow an automatic change of use from commercial use to residential use without the need for planning permission.

Some of these proposals are included in the Growth and Infrastructure Bill laid before Parliament in mid-October, but much of the detail is still to emerge. But the proposed changes are extremely worrying and beg the question; where does this leave localism? The Localism Act of 2011 was intended to give local communities a greater say in what happens in their neighbourhood. But with the Localism Act less than a year old, these proposals will see less planning control locally of both small and large developments. They will also see the reduction or removal of much needed, and often hard fought for, local affordable housing from large housing developments if the developer persuades a Government Inspector that the development is unviable if it is provided.

Mr Pickles has defended the proposed changes by arguing that they comprise 'muscular localism' and that they are "common-sense measures to promote house building and support locally-led economic growth". However, most critics see them as measures that are simple and straightforward centralism, and many local authorities and the Local Government Association have voiced strong concerns about them.

In response to the proposals Neil Sinden, CPRE's national Director of Policy, said; "Many of the measures being proposed call into question the Government's commitment to localism in planning. If it really wants local communities to be in control - as set out in the 2010 Coalition Programme when the coalition said they would end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils and communities - then this looks like an odd package of measures.

"There is a risk that the new Permitted Development Rights - relaxing the laws on small scale development such as

conservatories - is another challenge to local planning and potentially damaging to the character and beauty of the local environment. The fact is that good planning is not an obstacle to economic development but an essential tool for securing the best development in the places where it is most needed."

CPRE will be lobbying hard to make sure that its concerns with these new proposals are heard by MPs, and if you share our concerns make sure your local MP knows about them.

The Green Belt has also come under further attack by Government Ministers. At the beginning of September in a television interview with Andrew Marr, Chancellor George Osborne called for more Green Belt land to be identified for development, provided substitute land is provided. And in his first appearance in the House of Commons as the new planning minister, Nick Boles, said that; "...there are certain sites within the Green Belt that are currently brownfield, and it is important and right for local authorities to try to bring them forward for development. Not all the Green Belt is beautiful green fields. Some of it is ... a quarry or has some other brownfield use. It is important to focus on bringing those sites forward first before thinking of anything further."

These are worrying statements that seem to suggest a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Green Belt, and that land does not need to be green in order to contribute towards the openness of the Green Belt and maintaining the separation of settlements. They also, once again, open the whole debate about the Government's commitment to preserving the Green Belt; a debate that we had all thought had ended with the publication of the NPPF.



KENTVOICE

My Campaign Victory



*Earlier this year I was honoured and flattered to pick up the Marsh Christian Trust and CPRE countryside champion of the year award 2012. However, I did feel a bit of a fraud picking this award up as the campaign I was involved with, I believe any local branch could have run. I simply followed a mantra of **four steps** during a campaign against the proposed local plan. Be factual. Be bold. Be imaginative. Be victorious. Although it may sound a bit corny it was my short hand for what needed to be done. Alex Hills*

ONE

Be factual This meant doing the research, which can be made much easier by working with specialist local groups covering things like wildlife, architecture, education, transport e.t.c. By involving or exchanging information with other groups it can help the campaign build momentum. This can involve some people politics which can be tiresome and good fun simultaneously. It is important to talk to as many people as possible. This means keeping the campaign non political so you can talk with politicians from all parties in your area. Power can shift very quickly in any elected body and even the most bumbling buffoon can find them in a position of power, so it is important to talk to everyone. Within the branch do not be afraid to break up the research into smaller sections so that people can research their own areas of interest. The research is the hard part of any campaign but it is what CPRE has built its reputation upon so it is vitally important that you get this step right. Try and understand your opposition's point of view. In doing so you can work out where their arguments are strongest and weakest. Don't be afraid to talk to them; keeping your friends close and enemies' closer is never a bad thing.

TWO

Be bold If you are sure of your facts you have nothing to fear. Do not allow the campaign to get personal in anyway, only refer to individuals by name as an absolute last resort. It is better to refer to the leader of a council (or any other actor) by their title and not their name; this can stop people getting so defensive.

If you think something is wrong say so, do not be afraid of upsetting someone. We all like to think we are perfect and never do anything wrong. However, the reality is that we all make mistakes (we all find it hard to admit this at times well I know I do!) but none of us like other people pointing them out. However, hurt feelings and bruised egos only last a few days, whereas factual mistakes take a lot longer to be washed from memories!

It is possible to spend too long analysing and debating what to do and therefore end up doing nothing. Seize the moment and go for it! Do not be afraid to work with other groups. I have met some very interesting people this way. I was fortunate in the Gravesham core strategy campaign to work with a fantastic collection of action groups that worked together under an umbrella group made up of representatives from all the action groups in the area. The Gravesham Rural Residents Group is now a self-help group with real clout. CPRE is the countries leading charity on planning issues; do not be afraid to say this. We are very good at what we do and need to tell people this more. Don't be modest; be bold and proud of CPRE.



THREE

Be imaginative The media need good stories; you need coverage for your campaign. The trick is to make your press releases as eye catching and as punchy as possible. Long winded press releases covering several points in great detail without photos are only ever destined for the bin and not publication. 500 words should be the maximum length although I find that 350 words are better. Make sure you have the info to hand to support what you have said in a press release but you do not need to send it with the release. Some journalists have a very short attention span especially when they are on a tight deadline. Get a list of people who are prepared to be quoted in the media. No one wants to hear what the same person is saying week after week, just make sure you let the person you are quoting know what they have said! Although it sounds quite ad-hoc, trust me it does work. Another of my tips is having a file with photos of people involved with your campaign. I am a complete hypocrite on this issue as although I love taking photos, I hate my picture being taken.

Use electronic media and social networking sites; you want to reach as many different groups of people as possible. If you send a press release out to local radio stations make sure you have people who are available to be interviewed throughout the day. Radio stations have a habit of asking for interviews at ridiculous times of the day and night.

Staging media stunts is a good way of getting publicity. Some of the best stunts for our campaign were thought up by people with no media or campaign experience at all. If you are in a long campaign (my record is 12 years and still going) hold media 'brain storming' sessions and use them to plan your press releases weeks in advance. I would NOT advise holding these sessions in a pub, as tempting this might be. During one such session someone half overheard part of a possible idea which they then put their own interpretation on. The first I knew of this was when I had two senior police offers waiting for me as I arrived home from work. They thought that I was some sort of eco-extremist! This taught me a harsh lesson about the need to work with the police on media stunts; they have a duty to enable you to protest legally and peacefully. Simple things like always making sure there are at least two least two stewards in hi-visibility jackets on hand can make the event go so much more smoothly.

I still can not believe some of the stunts we got away with. Having the Grim Reaper outside a community centre which happened to be next to the local doctors surgery is one that springs to mind. This produced great pictures and got people talking about the campaign. Or the picnic on the village green in the middle of November; this got the whole community involved and got coverage in all media outlets. A little imagination can lead to a victorious outcome which leads me nicely to my final point.

FOUR

Be victorious.

If you do not believe in yourself who will? At the same time you must not build up people's expectations unrealistically. If you do not fight you will not win but if you fight you have a chance and if you fight very well you do have a good chance of being VICTORIOUS.

KENT VOICE

District Reports



Barrie Gore

Canterbury District Committee

There are four major items of concern in the Canterbury District. First, the Westgate Towers traffic trial appears to have increased nitrous oxide and particulate fumes in other areas which previously had far lesser concentrations of traffic, yet which has left St. Dunstan's Street with at least as much congestion and air pollution as it had before the trial - if not more. The trial has hit small traders badly, and makes a nonsense of the Canterbury West Regeneration Zone.

Second, the threat of University expansion on the Chaucer College Slopes, which is part of a Landscape Value Area. When planning consent was granted for the construction of the University, this area was subject to a condition that the site would remain as an open space for the people of Canterbury. Whilst we accept that further full-time student accommodation is needed on campus, we do not believe it is necessary to use this site. However, the major reason for development is the University's insistence on having a conference centre (hotel) on the site, served by a new campus road and intended for visitors who require deluxe accommodation on campus. This would sit in a prominent position in the heart of the site to give the visitors the view over Canterbury and the Cathedral; but this would be at the expense of the Canterbury residents, who will have their open green space ruined forever. We have responded to the University's consultation in detail, and now await a planning application. Meanwhile the very knowledgeable group of objectors have made a Village Green application. Kent County Council has decided at a preliminary hearing that there is a case to answer, so a final hearing date is now awaited.

Third, the Council's decision to appropriate an important public open space on the Kingsmead site for residential development; again, we have commented in great detail. There is also an excellent and knowledgeable objectors' group for this, and they have filed a Village Green application which awaits its first hearing. Meanwhile, the Canterbury Area Members' Panel voted to reverse the Executive's decision, and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was also compelled by the same means to require the Executive to look again at the matter. It was discussed at a meeting on 18th October, and we have already written in detail to each Executive member about green benefits in urban areas.

We have been told there are "sensitive issues" unfit for public consumption. We have asked for details of these issues, and we are also told that only nine of the ten members of the Executive will vote on the matter. They all represent rural wards with ample green spaces, but the tenth member represents a City ward and we have been told is too close to the issues to be involved in the voting process!

Fourth, a draft Vision document has been prepared after consultation with us and other amenity and residents' groups in the City. Our chairman has been on the Steering Group during the preparation of this draft. The document reflects what City residents would like to see for the City during the next Local Plan period and beyond. It was presented at a public meeting on 18th October, and at a later date goes to the Canterbury Area Members' Panel.



Alex Hills

Dartford & Gravesham District Committee

This year has been very much a waiting game. Waiting for the report on where the government thinks a new Thames crossing should be. The fact is we would not need a new crossing if better use was made of rail, Fast-track and water. We are also waiting for the report on the future of aviation in the South East. A new Thames Estuary Airport would not create any more jobs or increase capacity, as so many other airports would have to close due to its place in aviation flight paths and prevailing wind direction.

The final version of the Gravesham local plan was due out in May, but is now expected on December the 12th. This was baffling, until the news came out of plans to build a massive theme park on the border between Dartford and Gravesham. In principle it is hard to oppose a development on a brownfield site that could create 27,000 jobs. However, at this stage we have a lot of questions and concerns with very few details. Among the key issues to solve before we can support it is that the area only has two access roads, one running north to south and one east to west. Both are congested now, with more traffic expected due to other developments coming forward. So how will the area cope with an extra 3 million visitors a year? Some of the site is meant to have houses built on it, so where will these houses be built? We are trying to enter in to a dialogue with the developers as a matter of urgency. Some people are unhappy with CPRE talking to developers. We say it is foolish not to. Recently, there was a meeting with the developers behind plans to build on the greenbelt in Istead Rise, which was very productive on many levels. "Often you can achieve more from within than shouting on the side lines!"

And finally ... if you know someone in the affected area, why not give them a CPRE membership for Christmas?

Dover District Committee

Since the last report, proposals for development at Western Heights and Farthingloe have gone quiet. Dover District Council are due to consult on their "Site Allocations DPD" in the near future; Western Heights and Farthingloe do not feature, indicating that the planning application is likely to be refused.

There is no further information on Hadlow College going into Bettshanger Business Park; and nothing further on Dover Port.

Attendance at the St. Margaret's Ploughing match on 26th September went off fairly well, although weather-wise it could have been better. Visitors appeared to have been put off due to the wind and rain, which lasted through-out that week. It was most appreciated that Branch Office staff attended, with assistance from the Canterbury District Committee in the afternoon. These functions do need good weather.

The Dover Committee AGM was held on the 20th October, at The Jury Room, Sandwich Town Hall. A talk on "Fracking Issues" was delivered by Andrew Ogden, Campaigns Manager for Protect Kent, following the routine business of the AGM; 24 people attended, including the Mayor of Sandwich and two other Councillors.



Derek Wanstall

Shepway District Committee

The application for 820 houses at Folkestone Racecourse, originally included within the Shepway Core Strategy, has been turned down by both Officers and Councillors of Shepway DC. We had previously submitted our objections to this development. It is possible that a subsequent application for a substantially less number of houses may be made.

An application was submitted in May for the erection of six 125 metre high wind turbines at Otterpool Lane, Sellindge. The proposals include access tracks, crane pad areas, an electricity sub-station, temporary construction compound and amended vehicular access. The local opposition group has submitted an excellent letter proposing rejection of this scheme. So far, 308 submissions have been made, most of which are in opposition.

Similarly, the very recent application for the establishment of a 'solar farm' across 120 acres of prime farming land at Sycamore Farm, Old Romney has caused serious local concern. This will be a substantial development, visible across the Marsh, and may set a precedent for other such installations in the area. As a result an opposition group has been formed.

And finally ... we are still awaiting the final decision on the Lydd Airport Inquiry from the Planning Inspectorate. This has been further delayed while the issue of nuclear safety is re-considered.



Paul Smallwood

Swale District Committee

The consultation period for the current phase of the Local Development Framework in Swale finished some time ago. On 20th September, there was a meeting of the Swale LDF Panel in which the responses to the consultation were on the agenda. We had submitted a 61 -page response, a large part of which was given over to a detailed statistical analysis of Swale's claims that up to 18,500 houses would be required if past trends continued. This was based on figures from the Office of National Statistics.

The first item on the agenda of the meeting was therefore of interest. It was a report entitled "Local Development Framework Core Strategy - Initial Appraisal Of Housing And Employment Targets" by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners. This showed the consultants' view on housing trends, etc. It would have been of interest to see how their analysis differed from CPRE's, but unfortunately this part of the meeting was held in private session with the public excluded from the Council Chamber.

Subsequently there was a 30-minute discussion on the results of the consultation. These results had been summarised in a 222-page document by the planning officers. The CPRE gained 63 mentions in this document, although none specifically mentioned our analysis of housing and employment. In fact, apart from one or two questions that covered minor points of detail, no mention was made of housing or employment at all.

All the recommendations presented to the Members were agreed en bloc. Two were:

- to note the initial findings from the consultants' research on the balancing of the housing and employment development targets, and agree to a further phase of work which will inform the final level of development targets and approach to allocation of sites.
- to note the representations received on "Bearing Fruits"; and the areas of outstanding research which are detailed in this report.

The first bullet point remains mysterious. The findings that balanced housing and employment were heard in closed session and so we do not know whether this implies an increase or decrease in planned housing numbers.



Peter Blandon



Andrew Ogden

Thanet District Committee

The Committee last met on Monday 1st October, attended by three members plus two Thanet Councillors. While there were few of us, it turned out to be a very productive meeting. The main issues discussed were:

Development around Richborough: There is still some confusion regarding the various proposals for the Richborough area, many of them involving waste treatment and energy from waste plant. It was believed that planning permission had already been given for some installations. While we have no major objections to developments at Richborough, we do have a number of concerns. These relate to noise during construction; emissions (dust and odour, etc) during both construction and operation; and light pollution post-construction. Given the lack of clarity, it was suggested that a public meeting be held to explain all of the options and developments proposed for the Richborough area.

Manston Airport: To date, regular night flights do not appear to have started. It was recognised that Thanet DC never had any control over these anyway, they were merely a consultee in the process. The sale of the airport has not progressed either, and there appears to be little interest. It has been reported that KLM have shown interest in operating flights from Manston to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, as a 'ferry service'. However, it was also suggested that this might be just an exercise to generate interest in the airport. The China Gateway development has still not received full planning permission, as the Section 106 Agreement has not yet been submitted and signed off. The proposal for a Manston Parkway rail station has little local support. Development of Ramsgate Station would be a far better option.

Thanet Earth: The further extensions are now being constructed; these have already been granted planning permission as part of the original application. Some people have complained about the impact this development has had on the view across Thanet, and the lack of trees in that area.

Westwood Cross: Traffic congestion at Westwood Cross remains a major concern and source of frustration across Thanet. It was also noted that the new road layout at Lord of the Manor is confusing and prone to serious congestion (which it was designed to relieve).

Additional issues: Concern was voiced about the spread of development across the countryside of Thanet and the need to protect it before planning applications threaten. A meeting with Thanet DC Planning Officers prior to the release of the Core Strategy is still being sought. Ensuring that the countryside is considered and protected in the Local Plan is very important. Thanet's "Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessment" (SHLAA) needs to be included in the discussions.



Liz Akenhead

Tunbridge Wells District Committee

Our committee manned a stand at the Weald of Kent Ploughing Match, held on 15th September. It was noticeable how few of the people attending the show had much, if any idea about what CPRE does. Whether any new members were recruited, and whether the time and money expended were justified, is indeterminate.

Our AGM was held at Bewl Water on Saturday 6th October, with very interesting talks by Howard MacKenzie, the manager of the Bewl estate, and by our very own Graham Warren. The few who attended greatly enjoyed it; we are very pleased that Ed Bates has now been elected as Vice Chairman.

Our committee has commented on a retrospective application to Kent County Council for the re-use of a breaker's yard in the Green Belt, as a site for the crushing and storage of road spoil. We recommended that conditions should be imposed to protect the landscape and environment, and we are disappointed at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's unconditional recommendation for approval.

Members of our committee have visited various exhibitions about major developments in Tunbridge Wells and by the time you read this we will have commented, largely favourably, on the plans by Berkeley Homes for the redevelopment of the Kent and Sussex Hospital site. This has been amended to include a Free School, albeit with insufficient recreation space. The funds provided by the Department for Education for the establishment of Free Schools will not provide enough land for the school to have a playground large enough for a netball court.

Our committee also contributed to CPRE Sussex's objection to an application, submitted to Wealden District Council, for 24 'eco-lodges' to be built at Bewl Water.

We understand that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will shortly be producing a number of Development Plan Documents, setting out the areas to be developed. While we will do our best to scrutinise and comment on these, it would also be helpful if members could bring any concerns they have about them to our attention. Please contact the District Chairman by emailing liz@akenhead.plus.com.

We look forward to the debate on "Planning for the Future" on 30th November in Tunbridge Wells, featuring Greg Clark MP and Shaun Spiers.

SPECIALIST GROUP REPORTS

Environment Group Report

1. FOOD SECURITY AND LAND USE

The meeting of 12th September received Jeff Powell's report on the John Beddington lecture, which included a review of global food wastage. The Land Use Sub-Group have now been requested to prepare a position statement. KCC are assembling a data base on habitat change and land use which should be available by the end of the year. It was agreed that there was also a need for a facility for reviewing / updating brownfield availability and the Land Use Sub-Group will take this up for discussion at their next meeting.

2. WATER RESOURCES

2.1 DRAFT WATER BILL Comments for the Government's Select Committee were returned before the 14th September deadline. There was a view that the November Conference should be taken as an opportunity to discuss the key proposals, some of which could compromise the efficient management of water resources in Kent.

2.2 SOUTH EAST WATER ENVIRONMENT FOCUS GROUP Graham Warren attended the meeting of 29th September, which included discussion of the refined list of approx. 300 feasible supply options. The Kent contribution on this occasion related mainly to the development of an integrated supply and environmental sustainability strategy for the Stour catchment. The next stage will take the form of comments by members on the remaining feasibility list and Kent's contribution will comprise a review of the project dossiers for 50 schemes including groundwater, surface storage, effluent re-use, desalination and transfer options.

2.3 TUNBRIDGE WELLS DISTRICT AGM 6TH OCTOBER Andrew Ogden and Graham Warren attended with a presentation on lessons from the drought and implications for the future management of water resources in Kent.

2.4 CPRE SURREY SEMINAR "RELIABLE WATER, HEALTHY RIVERS", 9TH OCTOBER A well-attended meeting with Kent represented by Christine Drury and Graham Warren as speakers and panel members, the topics covering a wide range of water supply and environmental sustainability issues. The panel also included Mike Norton (Chairman of the Institution of Civil Engineers Water Panel) and Jeremy Early (author of several works on river wildlife).

3. AVIATION AND TRANSPORT GROUP

Met on 3rd October, to discuss the implications of any new ministerial appointments and the establishment of a new independent commission. The review of the Habitats Directive Article 6 (4), promoted as an 'attack on red tape' also threatens the provisions relating to compensation for and mitigation of impacts on Natura 2000 sites, and in this regard would have a direct bearing on Lydd and any Thames Estuary airports.

4. MINERALS, WASTE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Group have been asked to consider a preliminary review of Local Authority environmental strategies and recycling policies. For this we would need to draw extensively on the views and experience of Chairmen's Group membership.



Graham Warren

Kent Historic Buildings Committee (HBC)

In June, Dover District Council published a Draft Heritage Strategy for consultation. The final document was aimed to be a model for other authorities across the county, so it was important for CPRE Protect Kent to have its say. The HBC provided comments, as did the Dover Committee, for the combined response from the Branch. We remain concerned about the woolliness of the draft Strategy, its potential usefulness 'on the ground', and its legal status.

Vestas, the wind turbine manufacturing company, pulled its plan to construct units at the ex-Royal Naval Dockyard at Sheerness. The good news for the HBC though, was that the Grade II* listed working Mast House had a stay of execution. Swale Borough Council immediately sought a partner to replace Vestas, claiming that planning permission had been granted for the site. The HBC wrote in to make the point that demolition of the Mast House should not automatically be part of the permission. The outcome was that the application has been amended - with the proviso that the Mast House, and the nearby Georgian pump house, are not to be demolished.

The news is not so good on the matter of the Victorian ex-magistrate's court house and police station in Sittingbourne. Swale BC has publicly stated that it will not buy the building to lease to community groups. It is feared that this fine building will be demolished by the purchasing developer.

The HBC continues to keep a close eye on 'streamlining' changes to the planning system that may affect historic buildings. Changes of use to farm buildings are to be made easier. Where this involves conversion to residential use, the threats to historic structures usually increase. The Committee is closely monitoring the progress of the evolving Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill that aims to 'make provision for the reduction of legislative burdens'. The recent slackening of controls over the building of extensions is also meriting a careful watch.

We decided to have a 'presence' at the CPRE Protect Kent stands at the Weald of Kent Ploughing Match at Horsmonden on 15th September, and at the East Kent Ploughing Match at St Margaret's-at-Cliff on 26th September. Graham's informative panel attracted some attention and our profile was no doubt raised. Committee members and spouses thoroughly enjoyed a visit, organised by member Michael Peters, to Westwell Court Lodge on 23rd August. Here, owner Arthur Hollis kindly threw open his fascinating four-period home to our party of scrambling investigators. Our member Peter Lambert provided an expert commentary on the various structures and the owner interjected historical information. The visit was most educational, and ended with delicious tea and cake. The Committee is most grateful to Air-Vice-Marshal Hollis for his warm hospitality and enthusiastic interest.



Bob Baxter

KENT

WHY TALK ABOUT WATER?



Andrew Ogden

Summer rainfall and effective rainfall

Summer totals for the period 1 April to the 1 August 2012

Area	Rainfall (mm)	LTA rainfall (mm)	% Of LTA	Effective rainfall (mm)	LTA effective rainfall (mm)	% Of LTA
North Downs – South London	498	355	140	97	55	176
Upper Mole	573	351	163	140	36	385
South London	453	306	148	21	16	127
Darent	475	321	148	53	39	136
North Kent Chalk	471	327	144	66	53	125
Stour	414	319	130	37	46	81
Dover Chalk	451	354	127	51	53	95
Thanet Chalk	332	274	121	27	28	94
Medway	464	330	141	53	27	198
Eastern Rother	475	329	144	85	31	270
Romney Marsh	388	306	127	26	21	124
North West Grain	424	273	155	0	8	0
Sheppey	426	280	152	0	12	0
Kent and South London average	450	317	142	50	33	154

Forget about drought ... or flooding – everything has returned to normal !

At least, that's the picture provided by the Environment Agency's Water Situation Report for September. Rainfall was above average for the month, but only slightly, at 105% of the long-term average (LTA). River flows were generally 'normal' for the time of year. Even the groundwater levels have returned to 'normal'. Only our reservoirs are above normal, an artificial situation created through the use of drought permits and excessive pumping when the fear of a summer drought was still rife.

Of course, it's never that simple ! But unfortunately, others may see it as such.

As you will know, over the past 12 months and possibly much longer we have endured wildly varying weather patterns, which has seen rain coming at the wrong time of year; (yes, that old excuse of "the wrong type of rain" really does have some substance). This is in part evidenced by the EA's report, which gives the summer rainfall for the period 1 April to 1 August. In general, we have received too much (154% LTA) for the time of year, certainly too much for it to be of any use. This would be ideal in the winter, for the recharge of reservoirs, groundwater, and ecosystems, but in summer it's just a little too late, and therefore wasted.

This is further supported by the national picture, which shows the widely varying rainfall across England and Wales over the past 12 months. Again, the wrong amounts at the right time of year (or vice-versa).

So, if averaged over the year, we are receiving 'normal' levels of rainfall, how are we going to capture, store, and make best use of it ? This is the subject of our November Conference "Planning for Drought – is Kent in Crisis ?" (26th November at the Kent County Showground). Rather than dwelling on the current situation, we are hoping to encourage the development of pro-active partnerships and solutions that will better prepare Kent for water-related emergencies in the future.

Please do your best to advertise this important event as widely as possible, especially with and through your various contacts. We would be grateful to have your presence and input too.

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!



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400 CLUB



Here are the winners since the Spring edition of Kent Voice:

March: Mrs H Bosence £40 (325), Miss HT Butcher £30 (17), Miss J Lushington £25 (245), Miss M Butcher £25 (15), Mr RG Whitelegg £20 (195).

April: Mrs PA Darby £40 (237), Miss J Lushington £30 (245), Mr RG Whitelegg £45 (199 & 201), Mr B Blacklock £25 (106), Mr C Daniel £20 (298).

May: Mr LW Wallace £65 (192 & 175), Mr J Baxter £30 (56), Mr M Loveday £25 (257), Dr F Simpson £20 (120).

June: Mr LW Wallace £200 (188), Miss J Lushington £50 (245), Mr RD Hale £25 (356), Mr RG Whitelegg £25 (195), Mr CD Hayman £25 (145).

July: Mr CJ Catt £40 (309), Mr RD Hale £30 (355), Mr R Stickland £25 (209), Mr RG Whitelegg £45 (194 & 195).

August: Mr CG Dyer £40 (109), Mr & Mrs DJ Clary £30 (29), Mr RG Whitelegg £25 (199), Mr PF Harvey £25 (156), Mr P Pollock £20 (211), Mr P Stevens £20 (247).

September: Mr MF Cole £40 (159), Miss AM Farley £30 (70), Mr LR Horscroft £25 (136), Miss HT Butcher £25 (17), Dr R Baxter £20 (251).

October: Miss ME Tout £40 (132), Mrs S Filmer £30 (44), Mrs J Roberson £25 (327), Mr C Daniel £25 (305), Ms JA Barton £20 (140).

The aim of the club is to raise money for our general fund. It returns 50% of the takings to members as prize money. A new Club starts in January and welcomes new members. Each share costs £12, and there is no limit to the number of shares you may purchase. The initial share allocation is 400. We will write to existing members nearer the time but if you don't already subscribe and you would like to join please contact the office and we will send you an application form.



KENT VOICE

It's time to talk...



Jamie Weir

CPRE Protect Kent has always been absolutely committed to protecting the landscape so that Kent remains as beautiful as it has always been.

However, through the diligent work we do to save the countryside, there are a number of important and positive side effects.

One of the most important of these is that as a direct result of our work a huge amount of wildlife is also saved. These animals, who would have lost their natural habitats had development been given the green light, are able to remain in their usual surroundings unmolested.

The dormouse which you will have read about on page 16 is one of these animals, but there are many others who rely on CPRE Protect Kent to ensure that their main habitats remain undeveloped so that they are able to continue to exist.

A number of these species are endangered because of the uninhibited growth of human development, and as our towns and cities expand exponentially, the support that we get from you becomes ever more valuable in preserving not only the landscapes that are part of our heritage, but also the wildlife that live within them.

Andrew Ogden's article on page 12 makes the important point that we need YOU to go out and talk about CPRE to your friends and colleagues, because without your support they may never hear about us.

We believe that the countryside is worth standing up for and by telling your friends, relatives and acquaintances about CPRE Protect Kent, you will be helping to save not only our precious landscapes, but all of the creatures that live within them.



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

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