

# KFAS Bulletin 42

*The Federation acts in the service of its member societies to safeguard, by all practicable means, the heritage and the future of Kent's countryside and towns.*



Sir Terry Farrell's vision for Thamesgate

see page 7



Trafalgar battle flag for sale

see back page

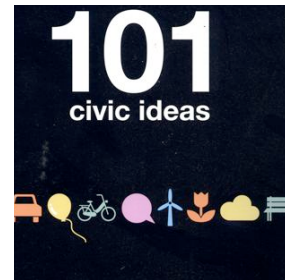


£26m Marlowe Theatre opens in Canterbury

see back page



Jack Woolford is now a KFAS Vice President



Inspirational suggestions produced by Civic Voice

## ECONOMIC AIMS DISTORT NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

*'presumption in favour of sustainable development.' - skews planning and is poorly defined*

The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has brought the amenity movement together in universal criticism of the proposals, with its economic distortion of the planning process. There was some hope that the Localism Bill would, by removing regional planning, restore greater powers to local communities. But this hope has been largely undone by the NPPF, which lacks detailed clarity, while making clear its economic purpose. Its assumption that planning is an obstruction to development is not tenable, in view of outstanding permissions to build more than 300,000 dwellings. Builders are sitting with unused land banks for lack of commercial prospects – not for planning reasons. The problem with providing more housing lies in the high cost of housing, the large initial mortgage deposit and the declining ability of first-time buyers' incomes to afford new homes. We have replaced the diktat of regional planning and its top-down edicts with central government's perverse and one-sided view of planning's purpose, coupled with bullying tactics. Particularly distasteful, and one might think, politically inept, has been the disparagement of anyone voicing dissent and especially of much respected institutions such as the National Trust and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Ministers have pronounced decisive views in the

middle of a public consultation, thereby undermining any trust in the value of putting forward alternative views. With the focus on numbers, we have lost sight of the values that planning should be better able to secure. The quality of most housing design is deplorable. The Royal Institute of British Architects says 'Our homes should be places that enhance our lives and well-being. However, as our new research confirms, thousands of cramped houses - shameful shoebox homes - are being churned out all over the country, depriving households of the space they need to live comfortably and cohesively.' This tackiness, and the fear of housing being a blot on the landscape, give rise to so much opposition. Current population density in the south east demands more care and consideration, if we are to build successful neighbourhoods and prevent urban sprawl. In these straitened times we also need much greater assurance that the supporting infrastructure will be in place. KFAS and Protect Kent will be making a joint representation on the draft proposals. KFAS Chairman, John Walker, comments on NPPF and Localism (see insert). He invites members to take part in the autumn conference which is focused on these topical issues; a booking form and details are enclosed with this Bulletin.

## MARGATE CIVIC SOCIETY

James Brazier writes:

‘... we look forward to the long-term impact that the gallery will have on our town. As we all know, much public money has been invested in this project at a time when huge spending cuts are having to be made across the country. Kent County Council, in particular, has funded the major part of this investment and their belief in the success of this project to assist the re-generation of our town deserves due recognition and support by local residents. Together, we should each contribute towards the success of the project by encouraging friends and family to visit the gallery and promote its various exhibitions. By doing so, there will be a greater chance of the gallery becoming a much heralded attraction in the town, drawing art-lovers from far afield. Margate Civic Society has played an important part in this project and members are reminded that it was John Crofts who first promoted the idea of a Turner gallery, when he was Chairman of the Society back in 1995. Since then, the Society has consistently supported the concept of a purpose-built art gallery in the town, recognising the important connection the town has with Joseph Mallord William Turner - the greatest British artist of all time! The architect for Turner Contemporary, Sir David Chipperfield, was recently awarded the Royal Gold Medal for his lifetime's work for architecture, by the Royal Institute of British Architects. This award is one of the world's oldest and most prestigious architecture prizes and follows the award of the RIBA Stirling Prize to David Chipperfield Associates in 2008. Will his design of the Turner Contemporary earn him yet another award? We will just have to wait and see. But let's hope that it does.’



The Turner Contemporary gallery beside Droit House.

## WEST KENT CIVIC TRUST

The regional hospital has been opened and the old Kent and Sussex Hospital in Tunbridge Wells has been vacated and is now closed. The site is awaiting a large housing development of some 200 units, currently undergoing planning consideration. There is concern about access to the new hospital, as dualling the main A21 road is again on hold. Tonbridge Cottage hospital now houses a rehabilitation unit while the maternity facility in Maidstone will be moved to Pembury. So the need for improvements to the A21 could be critical. Relocation appears to have been efficiently achieved. The hospital offers pleasant views, but the building itself is bland, with long corridors and inadequate signage, and is as yet somewhat impersonal and not user-friendly - but that may improve in time with full use and occupation



The new £225m, 512-bed hospital for west Kent with single rooms and en-suite facilities for all patients. Built under a private finance initiative, it will cost £20m a year for the next 30 years.

## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CIVIC SOCIETY

Alastair Tod writes: ‘The great Tunbridge Wells revolution, in which the Civic Society was deeply involved last year, resulted in the then Leader of the Council being dethroned and deselected. Since then the new leadership has announced an indefinite delay in the plans to dispose of the civic complex to developers for a shopping centre. We have now met the Leader and his Planning portfolio holder and been reassured by their approach on this and other sensitive issues. They intend to produce a comprehensive plan for the town centre with public involvement, and the Leader is setting up a Panel to advise on planning matters. The Civic Society reassured the Leader that we are not against change, and will take an active part in the new Panel.’



New council leader to delay town centre plan - it will be challenging to match the elegance and charm of the Paniles.

## THE NEW FOLKESTONE SOCIETY

The Newsletter quotes Rachel Cooke, Art Critic of the Observer : ‘(The 2008 Folkestone Triennial) . . . *‘an event so joyful and clever, its memory has outlasted, in my own case, that of pretty much all the art I have seen since.’*

And Ossian Ward, Visual Arts Editor, Time out Magazine ‘*The Folkestone Triennial is perhaps the most ambitious public art project in the UK.*’

Just in case anyone was in any doubt, the second Folkestone Triennial, which opened in June, has taken on truly national dimensions in terms of its importance to the art world, attracting whole-page coverage in many of our national papers.

Members may recall my waxing lyrical over the 2008 Triennial, and we are indeed fortunate that many of the works from that festival have been left to the town in perpetuity. Cornelia Parker’s ‘Mermaid’ was unceremoniously doused in paint before the Triennial had even commenced. . . her take on Copenhagen’s Little Mermaid again benefits hugely from its setting overlooking the Sunny Sands. Sitting powerful and proud, her jaw, the Observer suggests, denotes the same patient indefatigability as that of the town she symbolises!’

## THE CITY OF ROCHESTER SOCIETY

Earlier this year a complaint was made to the Advertising Standards Association (ASA) regarding a leaflet issued by Medway Council promoting historic Rochester and Maritime Chatham, the front page of which included the words ‘City of Medway rich heritage great future’. The council argued that it was appropriate to describe Medway as a city, because although it did not hold city status from the Crown, it did constitute a large town; it was an urban area with a population of 253,000, a cathedral, extensive transport networks and four universities.

The complaint was upheld. ASA stated . . . ‘readers of the leaflet were likely to infer that the city of Medway ‘logo’ referred to the fact that Medway had been granted city status by the Crown. Because that was not the case, we concluded that the ad was misleading.’

## WEALD OF KENT PROTECTION SOCIETY

Peter Allen, WKPS Planning Secretary writes: ‘There may be a case for some simplification and reduction of planning documentation, although as the WKPS Planning Secretary who has to look at, and draft comments on, hundreds of applications per year, I do not find the quite numerous Planning and Policy Statements either confusing or incomprehensible, and I do not really believe that a competent professional will do so, either. Abridging the Planning rules and guidance as drastically as is being proposed would undoubtedly cause the loss of very important details and even principles. I offer two examples of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which the NPPF wishes to discourage in order to present less constraint upon the developers. The first is the invaluable regular Appraisal of a Conservation Area, detail of which it would be impossible to include in a Core Strategy. The second is any new initiative, brought about not by the economic changes on which the NPPF lays such emphasis, but by advances in knowledge (sometimes science) or by fresh ideas – such as the Local Heritage Assets list, which Tunbridge Wells BC is proposing to draw up in the form of an SPD.



Folkestone Mermaid created by Cornelia Parker for the Folkestone Triennial



Government’s view is that Rochester’s city status has been extinguished. Medway Council is now making a bid for city status.



To repeat, the draft NPPF is an appalling document. WKPS will be joining the Great and the Good in opposing it, and we must use such influence as we possess to induce our local politicians to do likewise.

# Canterbury Conference Report



Ann Tyson of The Malling Society gives her report on the KFAS Conference.

The 47th Annual General Meeting of Kent Federation of Amenity Societies took place on Saturday 14th May 2011 at the Clagett Auditorium, a very modern building, within the precinct of Canterbury Cathedral. Approximately 50 delegates attended, about the same as last year's attendance. Following registration and coffee, the Chairman, John Walker, began by welcoming everyone and, since there were no comments on the minutes or matters arising on the 46th AGM, gave his annual report. Much had happened during the last year – Civic Voice, a National Body, has 295 member societies and more societies are expected to join as they see the benefit of good value and strength in numbers. Civic Voice is proactive and has a finger on the pulse of public opinion. The *101 Civic Ideas* booklet was distributed for societies to consider. The Localism Bill was discussed with many societies and with Greg Clark in Tunbridge Wells, resulting in Civic Voice working on the issues raised. The proposed high speed rail link, London-Birmingham-Manchester, presented an opportunity to show Civic Societies in that area how we in Kent developed the only existing high speed rail link in the country, and how problems connected with it were resolved. Referring again to the

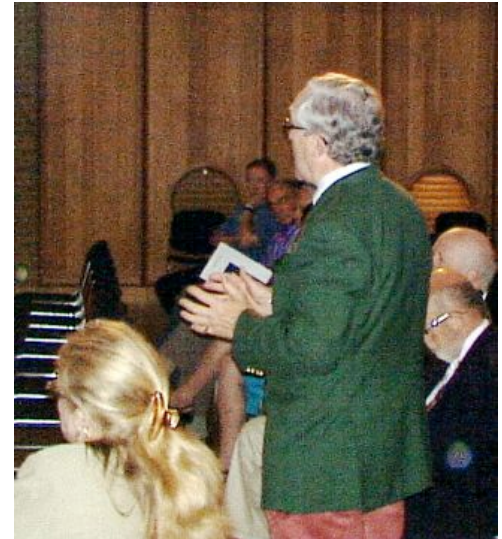
Localism Bill and the fact that it will be an instrument of change, it certainly poses a challenge to adopt the new ideas of local authorities and groups into the Bill. It is expected that the Minister, Greg Clark MP, will give a talk in November on this topic and on the Civic Society movement. The Chairman ended by saying that the effects of globalism are with us and will be explored further at a conference in the Autumn. Following the adoption of accounts, the Chairman and



KFAS Chairman welcoming Sir Terry Farrell who delivered the first annual Woolford Lecture

Executive Committee were all re-elected unanimously and thanked for giving their time and energy to this worthy cause. It would be extremely beneficial to find more volunteers willing to serve on the Committee, as there are gaps where some towns are not represented. The President, Laura Sandys MP, began her talk by saying how fortunate we are in Kent to have such a hard-working Chairman. She also mentioned that, since her early years, her interests have been the Civic Trust, Environment, Conservation, and now Politics. Referring to our fantastic heritage, she said the new Turner Contemporary in Margate is an example of providing quality architecture for the future. She also put forward a suggestion that KFAS

should mount a new membership drive, focussing on residents' associations for greater dynamism, and made an appeal for people to push their MPs to join her and her all-party group in crucial feedback to Government. Civic Voice will play a role in helping communities to engage and learn from each other, advising on neighbourhood planning and reaching out to deprived communities. Laura Sandys is keen to hear of successes and problems to take to Parliament. There followed the inaugural annual Woolford lecture named after Jack Woolford, a former chairman of KFAS and also of the Dover Society, in recognition of 40 years of selfless hard work. This year the speaker was Sir Terry Farrell, the remarkable architect, famous for many large buildings in the public realm. Sir Terry has his own practice, Terry Farrell &



Richard Knox-Johnston, Chairman Protect Kent, raises a question with Laura Sandys MP, KFAS President, seated in front.

Partners, with an office in London and another in Hong Kong. His projects include the TV AM HQ in Camden Lock, the redevelopment of Comyn Ching Triangle in Covent Garden, Charing Cross Station, the

# Terry Farrell: a Visionary Planner



Thames Gateway Parklands Vision publication is available free from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/parklandsvision>

MI6 HQ, and the enormous Beijing railway station – just a few of his many award-winning achievements. Having grown up in the North East, where there were many rules regarding rental accommodation, he realised that planning is seen as a limitation, whereas in Europe detailed plans give visual control from the start. He gives great importance to improving landscapes between buildings – old photographs showing railings and lanterns convinced him of the need to reinstate these. It is essential to come up with positive plans and solutions for high streets, clearly illustrating pedestrian crossings, flyovers, junctions, hospitals, and how road systems integrate. Civic Societies could get together with volunteers and find pleasure in

working in the public realm and putting forward good ideas. After lunch, Nick Blake, a local architect and member of the Canterbury Society, kindly took a small group to look at modern buildings and how they co-exist within the historic fabric of the city. We looked at the roofscape, building materials used, the old Tannery development, continuing on through the peaceful oasis of a garden tended by the Canterbury Society. There were lovely glimpses of the Cathedral round corners and through alleyways, and finally the area around the Marlowe Theatre, which will be a huge asset when it re-opens in the Autumn. Another walk was organised along the river Stour at the same time.

The vision for Parklands is holistic. Water landscapes and urban areas are included, as well as green areas that are more conventionally seen as landscapes. A continuous Parklands landscape that reaches into each Gateway community is envisaged and is about making green and open spaces part of people's everyday lives. The Parklands vision acknowledges the Estuary's industrial and functional past and its strategic importance as the engine room of the regional economy's future. The Thames Gateway has an identity that extends from the Isle of Dogs in central London to Southend in Essex and the Isle of Sheppey in Kent. It is one coherent place.

**Background**

Jack Woolford was Chairman of KFAS for many years, during which time he preserved his working records as Chairman of the Federation. In the spring of 2010 Jack moved house and passed his records to John Walker, the present Chairman. With the agreement of the KFAS committee, John asked the professional archivist, Nicola Waddington, to conduct a preliminary survey of the records and to make recommendations, with costs, as to the archive's potential historic value and its future management.

**Survey method**

The Kent Federation of Amenity Societies was formed in 1964, but the current archive covers the period 1974 to the present. The whereabouts of any previous material is unknown. The records comprised 11 large boxes, numbered 1-11. Two were examined in detail, every file being opened and the contents read. This established the nature of the records and enabled the contents of the other boxes to be established in less time. These records contain information of varying degrees of value. Some of the general correspondence, for example, had high evidential value. They laid out patterns of thought and reasoning which would have led to actions taken. Other letters in the same file covered basic administration arrangements or personal matters. These would be considered to have low historic value. Only material of high historic value needs to be kept.

**Archive context**

A list of organisational members of KFAS was taken from the website and that of Civic Voice and a few sample local names were searched for in the Kent Archives Service on-line archives catalogue. This search indicated that very few documents

relating to Kent amenity societies have been preserved in a way that makes them available for future historical reference. The only Society to have deposited its archives appears to be the Canterbury Society. This would suggest that the KFAS records could have value for the future as an information source for amenity society activity in the county.

**Recommendations**

From her preliminary assessment of the material, Nicola Waddington was able to advise the KFAS committee that the records did potentially have some current and future research value. The KFAS committee agreed to ask Nicola to examine, document and arrange all the material, to produce a basic catalogue of all the files, to dispose of any unwanted material and to prepare a future management plan for the archive.

**Conclusion**

As a result of this work, KFAS now has its archive arranged into committees, sub-committees and the AGM. A set of guidelines has been drawn up by the archivist for use by the committee so that new documents can be added in the future. Any society who wishes to consider organising and preserving their archives in a professional way for future local historians might like to contact Nicola Waddington, who is based in Canterbury, tel 07906 845872.

Note: The KFAS archive is now stored at the Fleur de Lis Centre in Faversham, by kind permission of the Faversham Society.

John Walker



**KFAS Founder Member Societies**

Arthur Percival writes: 'this is a photograph I took of the KFAS Committee at a meeting at Ashford Library on 6 April 1974. I can't remember all the names but (from left to right) ... Margaret Peckham (Tonbridge CS), Gerald Stibbs (City of Rochester S), don't know, Dr Werner Pleuger (Margate CS), don't know, (peeping) Hilary Alpin (Canterbury S), don't know, Elizabeth Melling (archivist at KCC, can't remember which society), don't know. The Federation was founded jointly by the Faversham and Whitstable Civic Societies at a meeting in Faversham in 1964, so it'll be 50 years old in three years' time.'

If you can identify the missing names, please let Peter York know, tel 01732 355695.



*The Kent History and Library Centre is due for completion in spring 2012. It will house around 14 kilometres of historic material relating to Kent dating back to 699 AD and will be the place to visit for anyone interested in local history.*

# Jan Pahl, Chair of The Canterbury Society

Jan Pahl is Professor Emeritus of Social Policy at the University of Kent.

She was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2011 Queen's Birthday Honours, for services to social science.

Professor Pahl has been unusually innovative, original and productive in her academic research. She pioneered research on domestic violence and on the control and allocation of money within the family, and has represented the UK at the United Nations and at the World Health Organisation. She has been responsible for research grants totalling nearly £4 million, and has published seven books and over fifty articles and other publications.

The Canterbury Society was originally founded in 1946, but by the late 1990s had all but ceased to function. In 2008/9 Jan felt that the time was right to try to form a new civic society in Canterbury. It was felt by many that the city had an unusual set of problems as well as a unique history. The city is home to Canterbury Cathedral and four universities, the city centre population of 45,000 is swollen by 32,000 students during the academic year and attracted 6.4 million tourists in 2006. It has the highest student to resident proportion in Europe. It is severely restrained by its geography, has major traffic and pollution issues and is suffering from huge pressure for development, as the economic hub of East Kent.

Initially Jan formed a strong steering committee to guide the process of forming and launching the new civic

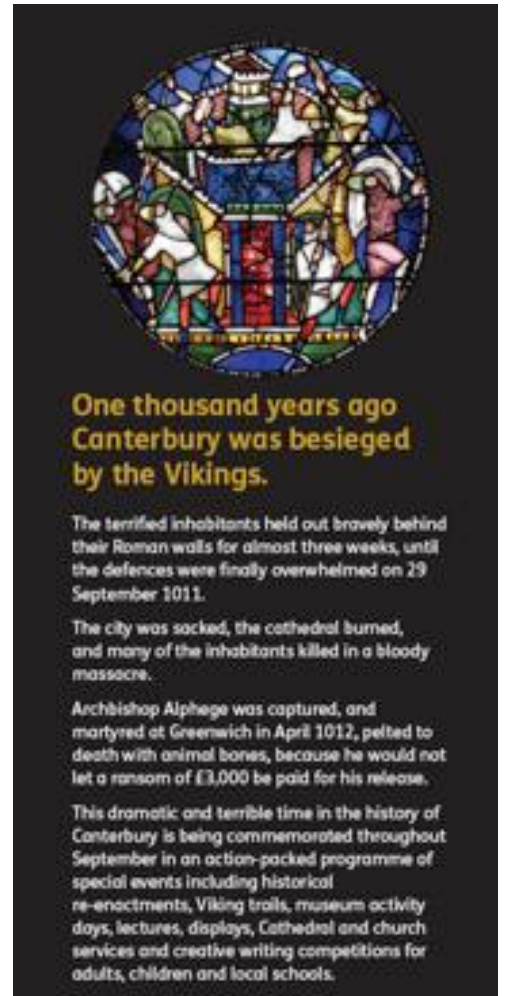
society. The Canterbury Society was soon recognised by the City Council as a positive development and it has partnered the Society in a number of initiatives over the last two years, whilst at the same time accepting constructive criticism from the society when appropriate. The Canterbury Society is a member of the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies and was one of the first to join and support Civic Voice when it was launched in April 2009.

Under Jan's pro-active chairmanship, the Canterbury Society is very much involved in local planning issues, including the emerging Local Plan, major planning applications, heritage protection, relations between students and residents in the city, litter pick-ups (including wading into the River Stour as part of Civic Day 2011), tree planting, a graffiti campaign, a project to photograph the city 365 days of the year, public talks and the planning of the celebrations to mark the 1000th anniversary of the siege of Canterbury by the Vikings.

In 2008, Jan's distinguished contribution to social policy was recognised through her admission to the position of Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences and in 2010 Jan was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Social Policy Association. Jan said, 'Sometimes I see my work with the Canterbury Society as an extension of my professional life - both are concerned with social policy, though at different levels, and both aim to do something, however modest, to try to make the world a better place'.



*Professor Jan Pahl CBE, Chair of The Canterbury Society*



The Society has many local involvements including public talks and planning of events to mark the 1000th anniversary of the siege of Canterbury by the Vikings.

# News in brief

## £26M MARLOWE THEATRE OPENED



*The Guardian reports:* The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has been in for an approving look – the uncompromisingly modern theatre, surrounded by medieval listed buildings, is clearly visible from the tower of the cathedral, and the view of the cathedral spectacularly fills an entire window in the theatre – but very few of the townspeople

have had a chance to see what their taxes were spent on. At a time when every local authority in the country is slashing culture and other budgets to the bone, the council raised most of the money for the new theatre, and will also own and operate it – and predicts firmly that it will generate more money spent in the area in the first year than they have invested, along with hundreds of jobs. The new theatre, designed by Keith Williams, is actually smaller in volume than the old Marlowe, a 1930s converted Odeon, but has 1,200 bright

## KFAS Autumn CONFERENCE In Margate on Saturday 12th November 2011

With the Localism Bill proceeding through Parliament, and the current consultation on the draft National Planning Policy Framework, this is a challenging time for amenity societies. Both these topics form the focus for the Autumn Conference to be held in the new Turner Contemporary building. Details and a booking form are enclosed with this Bulletin and can also be obtained from the website at [www.kfas.org.uk](http://www.kfas.org.uk)



orange leather-covered seats, 250 more than the old building, and a big enough orchestra pit, backstage space and fly tower to take in major touring musicals, opera and ballet.

### Port of Dover Sale



Residents in the town have already voted in favour of a 'People's Port' bid by Dover People's Port Trust

(DPPT), which has the backing of the Dover Society and local MP Charlie Elphicke. Under the 'People's Port' plan, Dover residents would buy the port.

### St Mary's Church, Selling

Britain's last Union flag flown by a ship at the Battle of Trafalgar is at risk. The church of St Mary the Virgin, Selling, in Kent, wants to dispose of HMS Minotaur's Union flag, brought home by Stephen Hilton, the master's mate, after the battle.

If this flag goes up for auction, it could be lost to an overseas private buyer.



The Hilton family have long lived at Selling, and they gave or loaned the flags to the parish church. Either way, the intention was for the flags to remain on display in the church in the Hilton chapel.

*Daily Telegraph letter.*

KFAS secretary, Crispin Davies, gives a brief summary of a recent membership Survey: 13 societies from all corners of Kent demonstrated how active they are but also how different they are in their responses. The average size was 575 members but some had over 1000 members! About 10% of members were thought to be under 50 years old, the majority were classified as 'retired' and, perhaps surprisingly, only one society had a falling membership.



Crispin Davies,  
KFAS Secretary.

Some societies had a single membership rate whilst one society had different rates for individuals, couples, full time students, senior citizens, under 16s and life members. Another society had corporate rates and rates for affiliated societies. Rates for individual members varied from £3 to £12.50; families from £5 to £18; senior citizens from £3 to £7; and junior members from £2 to £5.

Two thirds of societies undertook the following activities (in priority order): commenting on planning applications, protecting conservation areas, publishing a newsletter, hosting a website, organising lectures, exhibitions or public events, organising local walks and visits, and participating in local partnerships. In the future, more societies want to participate in regional planning and policy issues; work with local businesses; run membership campaigns; and, refurbish public facilities, than currently do so. Other societies clearly are entrepreneurial in their outlook and run facilities on behalf of other organisations (English Heritage and the Borough Council, for example) and publish local interest DVDs and CDs.

Looking to the future, societies want to make their mark and have identified the need for more advice on planning issues, on learning from other societies through case studies, on wanting to have greater influence over local authorities and better and more timely information.

## The following were elected to the Executive Committee at the Annual General Meeting on 14th May 2011

### Officers

John Walker (Canterbury Society)  
Chairman

Robert Ratcliffe (City of Rochester Society)  
Vice Chairman

Crispin Davies (Associate Member)  
Hon Secretary

Philip Robinson (Associate Member)  
Hon Treasurer

### Committee Members

Roy Adsett (Ramsgate Society)

Joan Clark-Hall (Weald of Kent Protection Society)

Jocelyn McCarthy (Ramsgate Society)

Bill Richardson (Associate Member)

Alastair Tod (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society)

Peter York co-opted, Tonbridge Civic Society)

President: Laura Sandys MP

Vice Presidents: Bernard Gambrill,  
Cllr Richard King, Dr Arthur Percival MBE, Dr Philip Whitbourn OBE, Jack Woolford.

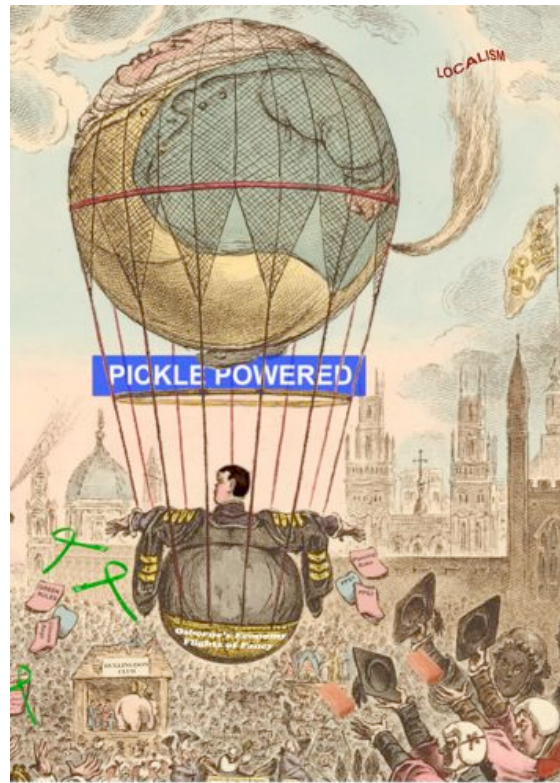
# Exploiting planning for growth

*John Walker, KFA's Chairman, outlines concerns about the draft National Planning Policy Framework.*

Earlier this year, civic societies were just starting to address their responses to the Localism Bill. On the whole most people welcomed the intention behind the bill to 'shift power to local communities' but couldn't see in the bill how this could be achieved without the financial resources necessary to convert the idea into reality on the ground.

Others were very sceptical from the start, pointing out that the government, whilst reducing local authority support on the one hand, were replacing this with an incentive to bridge the funding gap by building more houses wherever possible and collecting the 'new homes bonus'. Then George Osborne, like the Wizard of Oz, unveiled the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at the time of the budget, and scepticism turned to disbelief, and by degrees to dismay, irritation, anger and finally outrage. The National Trust, CPRE and many others were shocked at the extent of the swing away from protecting the environment to promoting development wherever possible. The national press mounted a huge campaign against the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and the idea that 'the default answer to planning applications was to be 'yes'.

The government said that those who put the environment before the dash for growth must be "a bunch of left-



*The planning Pickle powered economy. By George!*

wingers.' The National Trust responded by saying the NPPF was a 'dud document'. The war of words escalated until the rhetoric from both sides was starting to sound rather shrill and not a little silly.

All arguments are ongoing and at the time of writing look no nearer to being resolved. The government seem determined to press ahead with their approach of making the pursuit of growth the main consideration in planning matters and their opponents are threatening to make them pay at the next election if they do!

It would be pointless to set out all the arguments here. There have been acres of newsprint, radio interviews and television appearances from both sides of the debate, that has become almost a new cottage industry, but it might be worth restating a few simple but very important points.

First there is a housing problem in this country. Houses are too expensive to rent and to buy and the

causes of this need to be addressed. The planning system is only one aspect of the problem, which on its own cannot provide the solution. The real causes are much deeper rooted.

Secondly, not many people would argue that the planning system as it currently stands is perfect. It has evolved, since 1947, into a system of Byzantine complexity, which has become the sole domain of experts and specialists and excludes the ordinary citizen, who not only pays for it, but is also most affected by its outcomes. This has to change. The system needs to be simplified and from that point of view most reasonable people think something should be done.

The problem is that the consequences of the changes proposed in the NPPF, as it is currently drafted, will be with us in 50 years' time, long after the current economic downturn is forgotten. We are headed for the same mistakes we made in the 1960s, when development was allowed which we would now dearly like to blow up if only we could. Surely we must have learnt something since then! Civic Society members are the largest participants in the planning system in England. Since the late 50s they have worked constructively with local planning authorities to secure the best outcomes for their local areas. They are reasonable people who are not easily deflected from their long-term vision for the built and natural environment. Without this vision our villages, towns, cities and countryside would be a mess and not worth living in. It is vital that we engage constructively in this debate.



# LOCALISM AND THE BIG SOCIETY

The conference venue is at the Turner Contemporary: this new, exciting and controversial building carries the hopes of many in East Kent as a catalyst for a revival of the local economy and of the way people perceive our Kent coastal resorts. It is therefore a fitting venue for the KFAS conference, as we enter the new age of Localism and The Big Society.

We welcomed the fundamental intention behind the Localism Bill to 'shift power' to local communities, in which Civic Societies have played an active role since the 1950s. Earlier this year some of the most active KFAS society members in Kent met with Localism Minister, Greg Clark MP, in Tunbridge Wells and had a very positive and interesting discussion about the role of civic societies in the new era of Localism: it seemed that the government were listening to what ordinary people at the grass roots level had to say. Then out of the blue we had George

Programme	
9.30 am	Registration and coffee
10.00 am	Welcome Address, John Walker - KFAS Chairman, and Ralph Hanscombe, President, Margate Society
10.15 am	<i>Localism in Town &amp; Country</i> . Keynote address by Clive Aslet, award-winning journalist and writer. Country Life editor at large.
11.00 am	<i>Bringing Localism to Life</i> Tony Burton, Director of Civic Voice.
11.45 am	<i>Fundraising in a Changing World</i> Cllr Chris Wells, KCC & Thanet District Council.
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00 pm	<i>Citizenship and the Big Society</i> Dr Andrew Peterson, Christchurch University, Canterbury.
2.45pm	<i>Two films about the Weald of Kent</i> Cllr Richard King, Chairman KCC & Vice President KFAS.
4.00pm	<i>Conference summary &amp; closing address</i> Laura Sandys MP, President KFAS.
4.30pm	Tea & biscuits - close of conference

Osborne's bombshell announcement at the time of the Budget. The planning system had failed the nation and was holding up the economic recovery. The housing shortage was all down to nimbies who had hijacked the system. The default answer to development from now on was going to be 'yes'. Those who didn't agree, such the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the the National Trust, must be a bunch of left-wing activists. There has been a huge outcry in the national press about the possible consequences of the National Planning Policy Framework in its current form. Any successful policy will require some balance. Complete localism is probably impossible and might prove to be as disastrous as complete centralisation. Some kind of balance is required, but any such balance still demands the possibility of challenge from below, and this is where, as a movement, we have to play our part.

## KFAS Autumn Conference Booking Form - Saturday 12th November 2011

Name(s) .....

Address .....

Postcode.....Telephone.....

Email.....Your society.....

Please reserve.....(number) tickets for the conference @ £16.00 each (includes coffee on arrival, sandwich lunch & afternoon tea & biscuits)

I enclose a cheque made payable to KFAS to the value of £.....

Please return this form, with payment, to Hon Secretary Crispin Davies 7, Ormonde Road, Hythe Kent CT21 6DN.