

KENT FEDERATION OF AMENITY SOCIETIES 17

35th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & SPRING CONFERENCE

JACK WOOLFORD

A well-attended meeting (70 participants) on Saturday May 20 at Cliffsend was handsomely hosted by Pegwell and District Association - to which we are indebted for the conservation (so far) of Pegwell Bay from the commercial exploitation of Pegwell Bay's disused hoverport. In addition to excellent accommodation and refreshment, the Association, brilliantly chaired by Eileen Randall, offered a choice of walks, each led by an expert: a geologist for the caves and fossils, a Ramblers Association Secretary for the clifftop ramble, and a Warden of the Kent Wildlife Trust for the Pegwell Bay Country Park and Saxon Shoreline. This last was my own choice and I strongly commend it to our Social Committee.

The AGM will be reported in the 14th issue of the KFAS Bulletin (copies on request to Jack Woolford). The Spring Conference concentrated on a most urgent local issue in which, like it or not, DOVER IS DEEPLY INVOLVED. IF (OR WHEN) THERE IS STACKING AT MANSTON AIRPORT. DOVER IS IN THE FLIGHT PATH.

AIRPORTS IN GENERAL

Simon McRae of Friends of the Earth, said that aviation generated not only traffic congestion, atmospheric and water pollution, loss of countryside and threat to wildlife, (including food resources like fish) but also climatic change. Increasing air travel was increasingly the greatest source of greenhouse gases and therefore of global warming. A jumbo-jet from London to Singapore burned 57,000 gallons of fuel. Flying was popular because it was cheap. Airlines paid no fuel taxes nor VAT on tickets or new aircraft. Duty-free shopping was a subsidy paid by non-fliers.

Demand should be reduced by taxes on fuel and/or emissions which would promote better design and fuel efficiency. VAT exemptions should end. There should also be investment in less damaging alternatives: high speed trains for short haul flights and video-conferencing for business travellers. Each Eurostar train, generating only a third of greenhouse gases,

carried the equivalent of two jumbo-jets. Former military air bases were flogged off without planning permission, environmental impact assessment or prior consultation with the local community. Local authorities should have control over airport noise.

MANSTON IN PARTICULAR

Peter Binding, of the Manston Airport Group, said that Thanet District Council's "Vision" forecast, that Manston would handle 10 million passengers a year within 10 years, would make Manston busier than Stansted, with its 200,000 take-offs or landings each year: one every three minutes, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This scale of expansion was not consistent with the Kent Structure Plan. Property would be blighted by a 10 - 20% drop in value, schools would be unable to teach properly, health would be damaged and people would be deprived of sleep. All these affects would be revealed if an Environmental Impact Assessment were commissioned.

Manston Airport Group had consistently supported the airport concept and had been falsely accused of being against development. It accepted the Option A1 in the Council's Local Plan Review ("Vision") for a "general" aviation centre including training flights, small business flights and limited charter operations. Option A2 referred to 10 million passengers per year and Option A3 to even more. MAG was implacably opposed to night flights.

Consequently MAG was to pursue a judicial review into the planning of the airport arguing that Thanet Council acted unlawfully. Queen's Council advised that the airport did not benefit from permitted development rights against the advice of council officers. Legally an Environmental Impact Assessment was required before the authorisation of any development which was against the advice of council officers. The legal costs were already formidable but the fight would go on.

Donations to:

Manston Airport Group,
PO. Box 11, RAMSGATE, Kent CT1 1 3XL.