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Newsletter of the Weald of Kent Protection Society

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## Planning Reforms 2020 The Secretary of State's Reply to WKPS

In our last edition we published the letter (view it on our website [wkps.org.uk](http://wkps.org.uk) if you missed it) we sent on your behalf to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. A reply has now been received – from the Minister for Housing – and it is only right that we set it out in full (overleaf).

It will be immediately apparent to you that the Minister's reply is an entirely proforma response which completely fails to engage with the arguments we put in our letter. It merely reconfirms the general intention of the proposed reforms to the planning system and promises that the points we have advanced will be 'included in our consideration' of the responses received. (It should be noted that there is no indication of how many of the 44,000 responses received are supportive and how many critical of the reforms.)

We remain extremely concerned that the reforms that this Secretary of State has brought forward will lead to a developer's bonanza; will do nothing to address the over-development of the south-east; will not help in 'levelling up' in other parts of the country; will not deliver genuinely 'affordable' high quality housing; will do nothing to protect historic landscapes; and will continue the inexorable march towards undermining local democracy by emasculating the local planning process and the involvement of local people in decisions most directly affecting their neighbourhoods.

*Peregrine Massey  
President of WKPS*

# Ministerial response to WKPS



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

Michael Bax



**Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP**  
*Minister of State for Housing*

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Our Ref: 9668280

25 January 2021

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 3 November to Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP about Weald of Kent Protection Society's response to *'Planning for the Future'*. I am replying as Minister of State for Housing. I appreciate how important these proposals are for many people across the country, and I am grateful to you for taking the time to write to us about them. Please accept my sincerest apologies for the delay in responding to you.

The consultation closed on 29 October. It generated enormous interest – around 44,000 replies in total – and officials are currently collating, reviewing and analysing the responses. I have asked for the matters you raise to be included in our consideration of those responses.

The White Paper proposes significant changes to both the focus and processes of planning, with important benefits in mind: to secure better outcomes in terms of land in the right places, more beautiful development and improved environmental outcomes; as well as processes which give more certainty, better engagement and swifter outcomes for communities, councils and developers.

There have been many views aired on different aspects of the reforms, which is why we have sought inputs from a wide range of interests, engaging with not only the development industry and local authorities, but also new and smaller players, and importantly, the communities in which development takes place. The White Paper represents only the start of an exciting period of reform, and we will reflect very carefully on the views received in considering how best to take its vision forward.

Environmental protection, community engagement, local decision making and the supply of housing and associated infrastructure have been of particular interest to Parliamentary colleagues and their constituents. Our plans aim to improve these by:

- creating a system with effective local engagement at its heart, with community views central to decisions about the location and design of development through the preparation of local plans and design codes, and by continuing to require consultation on the details of development proposals as they come forward;
- making plan making much more straightforward and digital, so it becomes easier for local people to influence the plan and have their say on the location and standard of new development,

- giving local authorities greater powers to determine how developer contributions are used, including through a new infrastructure levy to allow local planning authorities to drive up the provision of affordable homes,
- protecting environmental assets, with more green spaces provided, more sustainable development supported, new homes that are much more energy efficient and implementing a 10% biodiversity net gain requirement; and,
- making it easier for those who want to build beautifully through the introduction of a fast-track for beauty.

At the heart of these reforms is a need to make the planning system simpler, quicker and more accessible for all participants, including local people.

Once again, I appreciate how important planning reform is for people across the country, and I am grateful to you for writing to me.



RT HON CHRISTOPHER PINCHER MP

## Response from Helen Grant MP to WKPS email to Minister

Thank you for taking the time to copy me in on Mr Bax's recent letter to the Secretary of State on behalf of WKPS.

Mr Bax has made some thoughtful insights into the issues of planning and development across Kent and this is an issue I have very much been involved in here in Maidstone and the Weald. I absolutely appreciate and share your concern for this matter and I too am deeply worried about the impact the Government's proposed reforms to the planning system would have on our community.

With this in mind, I recently held meetings with elected representatives and senior officers from both Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council to gain a greater and more granular understanding of the impact the proposals would have on our area. Following these meetings, I have particular concerns about the damage the increased housing numbers could do to our area and the impact that changes could have both upon the completion of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan and progress with Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan Review.

In September, I gained the support of ten Kent MPs to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Robert Jenrick, expressing our serious concerns with the proposals. Thereafter, I also led a delegation of Kent MPs to meet (virtually) with the Housing Minister Christopher Pincher. He confirmed to us that the Government will be bringing forward revised plans soon, so let's hope some sense will prevail. If you are interested, you can keep up to date with this on my website here: <https://www.helengrant.org/myplan>.

I hope the above can provide you with some reassurance as to my position on this matter. Thank you again for taking the time to share the concerns of WKPS with me.

Very best wishes

[Signed by Helen.]

# Business in Kent

A thriving Weald needs thriving businesses. Everyone has been affected by the fall-out of the pandemic. Many people are wondering how to earn a living. Some search for PAYE jobs. Others are thinking of starting a business. Many want to recover and grow their existing businesses.

There is a raft of advice available, from both the public and private sectors. There are many sources of finance (loans and grants) with the government making cash available in order to finance national economic growth. Of course, you have to have some idea of how your business will work out... like Dragons Den but without the intimidation. Here are some of the starting points:

## **Kent and Medway Growth Hub (KMGH)**

This hub gives advice. They point you in the right direction. Any size of business – start-ups, Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SME's), any industry or occupation, IT, tourism, retail etc., £1,000 to £100,000 and above. They work with Local Authorities and Kent County Council.

Our three local authorities have teams to help with advice and funding:

**Ashford's Business Support team**

**Tunbridge Wells' Business Support team** through the West Kent Partnership

**Business in Maidstone's team**

**KCC's Business Loans and Funding** team sits behind the Local Authorities. KCC has a number of specialised funds to finance growth. They are funnelling out government money. They work closely with KMGH.

**Locate in Kent** is another good starting point. Their Future Forward programme specialises in business recovery and in expansion of SME's under 250 employees. They help with advice and business plans, even with operations.

**Visit Kent** supports anything to do with the tourist, leisure and hospitality businesses industry through their Tourism Advisory Service – for example, setting up a B&B, a café etc. They promote the Garden of England.

**Kent Community Foundation** is another specialised support organisation, this time advice and finance for charities.

**The Kent Foundation** is a long-established private sector advice and funding organisation. They support young people starting up or growing a business. Their website also lists several sources of advice and funding.

There are more sources in addition to the above. There is no shortage of both free and paid-for advice and of funding. You just have to chase. What is equally important is to find the advice/funding partner with whom you see eye-to-eye.

If you know someone who would benefit from this information, please pass on this article.

*David Northcroft*

# PLUTO and the Weald

Seventy-five years ago, a pipeline across the Weald was being taken out of service. It was 1946. This was the end of Operation PLUTO, credited as being one of the factors that helped the Allies win the war.

Ten years earlier, in 1936, and despite the peace overtures of the PM, Neville Chamberlain, the Air Ministry had decided that in a potential war, air superiority would be essential. UK stocks of aviation fuel were then extremely low. So, 78 semi-buried protected storage tanks were installed to supply aviation fuel and petrol to major airfields. In 1940 these proved both durable and crucial to the success in the Battle of Britain.

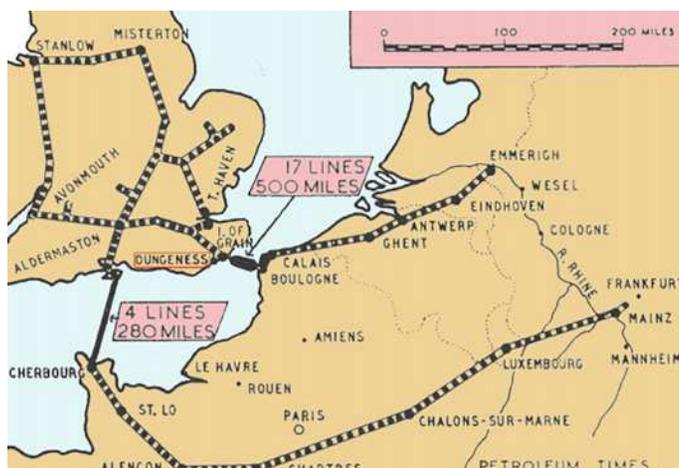
In 1941 it was decided to install secret underground pipelines from the west coast refineries in Liverpool and Avonmouth to the major airfields and distribution depots in the south and east of the country where the fuel was needed. First was Avonmouth to Aldermaston and on to Walton-on-Thames. Then Avonmouth to Liverpool. Soon a rectangular circuit was made. This could also service the Humber estuary. Spurs off this circuit were built south from Aldermaston to Hamble (Southampton) and another later to the US airfields in East Anglia. This secret 1000-mile underground network was named Government Pipelines and Storage System (GPSS).

In 1942 the Allied invasion via the French coast was being planned. The suggestion by Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, amongst others was to extend the GPSS network to the Kent coast. From here and from Hamble the idea was to install pipelines under the English Channel to supply fuel in support of the Allied troops as they advanced across France after Overlord. This would be a more reliable supply option than tankers of fuel in the Channel itself, which was congested, mined

and in range of enemy aircraft. Originally the creation of this new fuel supply pipeline was named PipeLineUnderwater Transportation of Oil or PLUTO. Later this big project was more commonly called PipeLine Under The Ocean.

British engineers, oil companies and armed forces set to work on this risky technically complex solution. They had to invent new continuous under-sea piping and a method of laying it. Two designs of 3-inch pipe were created, one based on lead (HAIS), the other on steel (HAMEL). Both were multi-layered and extremely heavy – HAIS weighed 47 tons per mile of pipe. Vessels were adapted to lay HAIS. Six 30ft diameter 250-ton floating cylinders (Conundrums) were constructed so that the new slightly flexible HAMEL pipes could be wound on and laid by vessels towing the cylinders. Many companies and experts across the country were involved. 20% was made in the US. The task force used 34 vessels with 600 personnel. The trials of the pipes worked. Secrecy remained critical.

Two routes were decided – Isle of Wight to Cherbourg, picking up from GPSS at Hamble and named BAMBI. This had four of the pipelines, a total length of pipe of 280 miles. It was to support the troops immediately after D-Day and supply a southern pipeline following the Allied advance across France through to Germany.



The main network of the PLUTO pipelines. The 500 miles from Dungeness and Greatstone comprised 11 HAIS cables and 6 HAMEL steel pipes



Greatstone/Dungeness to Boulogne (named DUMBO) was the second route. It had 17 lines and 500 miles of pipe. On land DUMBO tapped into GPSS at Walton-on-Thames. It ran across Surrey to Nettlestead and down across the Weald through Kent. At Nettlestead it joined with a new pipeline from the Isle of Grain refinery. From Nettlestead the pipeline went around Marden, passed Biddenden, St Michaels, Appledore and then alongside the Lydd railway line to Dungeness where it divided to Greatstone. DUMBO was to supply the northern pipeline through France, Belgium and Holland.

Avoiding detection was essential. This was especially important in Greatstone and Dungeness where the pumping installations were in range of enemy guns in France. The issue was resolved in a very British way. Terminals and pumping stations in Dungeness and Greatstone were disguised as bungalows, gravel pits, garages and even an ice cream parlour. A few new buildings were created, but mostly existing dwellings were adapted, a total of 27 seaside bungalows and houses. After the war they returned to residential use. Some are still called the Pluto bungalows.



*This bungalow (former PLUTO pumping station) at Greatstone, October 2001, is hardly changed in appearance from the 1940s.*

After D-Day in June 1944 the BAMBI undersea pipelines were laid quickly when the Allies had control in Normandy, but there were problems with damage in laying, with pump pressures and with connecting up close to the beaches. BAMBI only became partially operational three months later. Soon it was shut down. Nevertheless, the troops were supplied as intended through the southern pipeline as a result of the BAMBI back-up plan. This took fuel from tankers in pipework across the Mulberry Harbours and later directly from tankers in the French harbours once these had been recommissioned.

DUMBO became operational in October 1944. It was much more successful but pressures in the undersea

pipelines had to be kept lower than trial rates. Nevertheless, throughput built up through all 17 lines to peak at the end of the war at 4000 tons, or a million gallons a day.

The north and south pipelines supported the advancing Allies eastwards as far as the Rhine, as originally planned. Fuel from Liverpool was being delivered to Germany via the Weald.

The secrecy also worked. The existence of the PLUTO fuel lines was unknown to the enemy almost to the end of the war. The original objective of supplying the advancing Allied troops was achieved. General Eisenhower, Winston Churchill and enemy officers credited the Allies with a critical strategic advantage in fuel supply.

On the other hand, official accounts of Operation PLUTO deem the cross-channel pipelines unsuccessful. BAMBI was not operational at the time of highest risk immediately after D-Day. DUMBO was only available in volume towards the end of the war when military success was close to achievement.

The undersea pipelines and some overland infrastructure were recovered in 1946. This included the BAMBI line through Kent. Some evidence of this disused line is still visible in waymarks, in stiles and in stream-crossings. The website [theromneymarsh.net/pluto](http://theromneymarsh.net/pluto) contains a lot of material. A length of the underground overland pipe is on display outside the Marden Library and History Centre which also holds much material. As ever, the internet has numerous sources of information.

But you are not likely to see the GPSS underground pipeline network, now extended to 1500 miles, and which to this day supports the fuel supply to England's principal military and civil airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester etc), and whose exact route remains clouded in secrecy.

**David Northcroft**

# Early Ironmaking in the Weald

Nearly 20 years ago a gas pipeline was laid through west Kent, from Hadlow to High Halden. In preparation for this, a swathe 22 miles in length and about 50 yards wide was cleared across the countryside in which a trench to take the pipe was to be dug. Known archaeology was factored in when the route was being planned but it was by complete chance that 19 ancient sites were discovered when the topsoil was stripped away and, of those, seven were related to iron production. If that number could be found at random, how many more must lie undiscovered beneath the fields and woods of this peaceful part of the county? The sites uncovered dated from as far back as the 4th century BC to the 13th century AD with the majority pre-Roman.

We know very little about the circumstances in which these earliest sites were operated. Such evidence that has been uncovered by excavation suggests that they were probably worked as part of small farming settlements, perhaps supplying the immediate needs of those who used them. After Julius Caesar had led his incursions into Britain in 55 and 54BC he noted that iron production was small and in the coastal area, so he was probably referring to Kent and Sussex. That was to change in the ensuing century when a market for Wealden iron probably opened up across the Channel in Roman Gaul. For during the 1st century AD the number of iron sites in the South East increased, especially in the High Weald of west Kent and eastern Sussex, prompting another writer, Strabo, maybe 60 years after Caesar, to remark that iron had become one of the main exports of the Britons, in addition to hunting dogs, grain and cattle.

When the Romans returned to Britain in AD43, this time to conquer and settle, iron production in the region was one of their new province's assets that they set about developing. Major smelting sites were established in east Sussex, particularly in the hinterland of what is now Hastings and the River Rother and its tributaries, then all with access to the sea. Organisation of this is likely to have been one of the roles of the Classis Britannica - the British Fleet - with a logistical more than a military function. Evidence of their involvement, in the form of their stamped roofing tiles, has been recovered from half a dozen iron-related sites as well as from the forts at Dover and Lympne.

In addition to sea transport, the Romans built roads to connect this iron-making district with other areas of the South East. Branching off Watling Street at Rochester, a road ran south to the Hastings area, enabling iron to be transported overland to the more densely populated Medway valley and its villas. Along its route, from near Benenden, another road ran east towards the Roman centre at Canterbury, crossing the road from the fort at Lympne that also headed towards Rochester. At that junction was a road-side settlement, just south of Ashford, where small iron-making facilities probably supplied tools for local farmers and effected repairs to wagons, much as road-side services might do today. Further up the 'Hastings' road, between Benenden and Sissinghurst, tiles of the Classis Britannica have been found in association with other evidence of iron working. Perhaps this was another little road-side settlement like the one near Ashford; a 'truck-stop', so to speak, about halfway between Rochester and the big ironworks to the south.



*A large slab of early iron slag showing the characteristic flow patterns; the scale is 10cm. Photo: author.*

Although the Romans seem to have concentrated their efforts around Hastings and Battle, there were some larger sites in Kent too. One of these was at Romden near Smarden. And there are several early sites for which we have no dating evidence because there has been no excavation. An interesting example of probable Roman date lies off Crump's Lane near Ulcombe, a parish where several other early iron sites have been recorded. The tell-tale iron slag, grey and heavy and sometimes with worm-like swirled patterns on it, is often the only surface evidence we can find where such activity has taken place. I would be interested to hear if you find some.

**Jeremy Hodgkinson**  
**Wealden Iron Research Group**  
**editor@wealdeniron.org.uk**

# Lockdown Springtime at Bodiam Castle

Well, it was four months ago that I wrote about Bodiam Castle. Since then we have experienced a severe lockdown, still ongoing, Christmas, New Year, the Beast from the East and the Pests from the West. Despite the inclement weather my wife and I, together with our Cairn Terrier Henry, have visited the property four or five times a week. This is what we saw.

As Christmas approached all the trees and shrubs lost their leaves, the gardens were put to bed for the winter by the staff and the grass remained green. The river stayed in its place most of the time, but after some severe rains it did manage to invade the car park. On the worst days it was halfway across the parking area, but it always retreated after a couple of days. The local crows were always around, cawing at the top of their voices for reasons known only to them. Plenty of ducks, though, paddling around and congregating on the grass, especially when someone was feeding them. Then they would arrive from all directions eager for an easy meal. Four little moorhens were in the mix, but no geese.

The Beast from the East was forecast several days before it arrived, and as a precaution the property was closed for two days. This didn't stop us from visiting. The local snowfall was only two or three inches, and the roads were clear, so filling our flasks we drove to Bodiam, parked up and walked up to the cafe. The grounds were very pretty with the fresh white snow. It had settled on the branches of the trees, outlining them in white against the grey background. The south half of the moat had frozen over with a skim of ice. A dozen or so of the local ducks were wandering around on the ice and probably wondering what happened to the water. We sat with our backs to the sleet and were perfectly comfortable.

Speaking of ducks, one of their endearing qualities is flying in formation of two, three or even four birds, swooping around the castle,

climbing, diving, and finally landing together on the moat, much like the Red Arrows, though not quite as fast. There seems to be an imbalance in the sexes as there are maybe three males to every female. This leads naturally to some aggression between two males. A dominant male will chase the subordinate one through the water, neck outstretched, much splashing, until the loser decides to fly off. Love is in the air.

Weeds and flowers are starting to poke their leaves above the forest floor. Tiny green shoots grow to six inches in a few days. The buds on the hawthorns are fat and shiny, and the catkins are long and green. The trees so far have been slow to acknowledge the warmer days. No green flush of new leaves.

And now for the most important part. The staff at Bodiam Castle have been magnificent in keeping the property open. They have been there in all sorts of weather. There is very

little rubbish around, and that is picked up rather quickly. It seems that most visitors are very tidy and use the bins. We are always greeted with a smile, or at least we believe they are smiling. We can't see beyond the masks that have to be worn because of the pandemic regulations, but we can tell by their eyes. I guess the problem is the same for them when they meet us.

Finally! The daylight hours are lengthening, the south winds are warming us up, and covid vaccinations are proceeding apace, so by the summer solstice (21st of June) all will be green, no restrictions, and Bodiam Castle and the staff will be there to welcome us. The children will be ecstatic to be able to rush around and skip and yell. That, anyway, is the hope. In any event Bodiam Castle and its trees and flowers and animals and birds and river will be the same as it has been for a long, long time.

*Walter Herbert Renwick*

## Joan Clark-Hall

It is with very real sadness that we have to announce the death on 27th March of our colleague, Joan Clark-Hall, shortly after her 95th birthday.

Joan was a founder member of the WKPS and played an active role from the start becoming Society Secretary while John Hotchkis was our charismatic chairman. She fulfilled this role for about 10 years and then became a member of the Administrative Committee, subsequently taking over the chair, helping to organise many of the events from summer parties to ploughman's lunches and working with the Village Representatives. She was also a member of the Society's governing Council for many years. In later years she hosted the Policy Committee meetings at her cottage in Bethersden and was always able to give sensible advice and refer back to past events and strategies. Joan also represented the Society on the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies which took a wider look at Kent affairs.

Joan loved the Weald and was keen to save its iconic oasts and barns and see it protected from the ever-increasing housing developments. She lived for most of her life in Bethersden where she was a respected member of the community and supporter of the church. Her warm personality meant she made many friends and was good company to all of us working for the WKPS.

We are happy to think that Joan was able to spend the last few months with her daughter in Scotland which meant that she was not locked down in isolation. Her family is hoping to hold a Service of Remembrance in Bethersden later this summer.

# Beckley Woods

It feels like a lot of the past year has been spent carrying out recces for the years to come, filing away places and experiences which, when normality returns, we will revisit and return to with friends. The waterfall in Beckley Woods is just such a magical spot. You reach it by heading off into the imaginatively named Waterfall Wood just where the main Beckley Wood bridleway turns back on itself. There, depending on the season, you'll find the waterfall either trickling or gushing through a gully out of The Lost World. Hart's tongue ferns climb the rocks either side of the gully, while in the streambed are moss-grown green boulders. You can climb up through the ferns, spleenwort and bracken to the head of the falls, looking back down the green V of the gully. We've come to stand here often over the past year, perhaps feeling that it was a landscape from somewhere else, a very un-Sussex vista, a reminder of the wider world.

Beckley Woods is 145 hectares of mixed chestnut, beech and conifers – mainly western hemlock – with a number of beautifully gnarled oaks that rise out above the surrounding woodland. It's a wonderful place for butterflies and moths in summer, one of the few places left in the south where it's worth going out on summer nights with a torch just to see the clouds of moths that will come your way. It is also the best place I know to spot two of my favourite butterflies – the White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary – both of which are readily visible in July and August along the well-managed rides that cut through the woods. It's the openness of these rides, which are cut well back and throng with foxgloves and orchids, that makes Beckley so perfect for butterflies.

Beckley is also host to one of the largest concentrations of wild boar in the country – about 250-300 in number – although I have to say we've never seen them, only heard the occasional grunting kerfuffle and spotted roughed-up areas around the base of chestnut trees where they had been rooting for bulbs and grubs. While boar were hunted to extinction in England some 800 years ago, colonies such as the one at Beckley are the result of accidental escapes and have thrived, foraging the forest floor, mainly nocturnal, and known to the locals as a hazard on the local lanes. Boars can reach almost two metres in length and weigh up to 20 stone.

Beckley is a place of deep history, a history that's written in its names. There's Furnace Lane, which tells of the local iron works, built in 1578, at the small settlement still called Beckley Furnace where a watermill powered the bellows. Production ceased in 1770. There's Starvecrow Lane, named for the fields leading down to the Tillingham, which were apparently of such poor soil that they didn't produce enough even to feed the birds. I can't give you an explanation for the naming of Eggshole Brook, the stream that runs through the woods, or Flatroper's Wood, just to the north of Beckley Woods, but they're both lovely.

I can tell you, though, that when you walk in these woods, you're likely to be walking in the footsteps of perhaps Beckley's most famous resident (certain pop stars aside) – Maria Ann Smith, who was one of 165 Beckley residents to emigrate to Australia during the 1830s. She went on to cultivate an apple that was named after her – Granny Smith.



*Alex Preston*

# What does Spring mean to you?

This year, probably more than any other, the coming of spring means much more to all of us. Through a bleak winter, from a weather, and global pandemic viewpoint we are all waiting for the green shoots of recovery in all areas - economically, socially, in our wellbeing and, of course, naturally in our countryside. We have all witnessed first-hand the soothing power of the natural world. I want to share with you my personal feel-good and uplifting nature inspired spring moments.



I welcomed 2021 with January's New Year resolutions, followed by February, which is my least favourite month, so it is good to move into March and meteorological spring. If you look carefully there are signs of a world awakening all around us. Hazel trees are still showing their pollen rich catkins waiting for that breeze to blow so they can create next years' squirrel larder of hazelnuts. Snowdrops and spring snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*) have been flowering — even under a blanket of snow. The first primroses are performing as their name demands — being the first (prima) rose of glow like neon lights in the still bare hedge banks across our Wealden landscape. Celandines, with their sunshine clock face burst with a positivity from the ground and

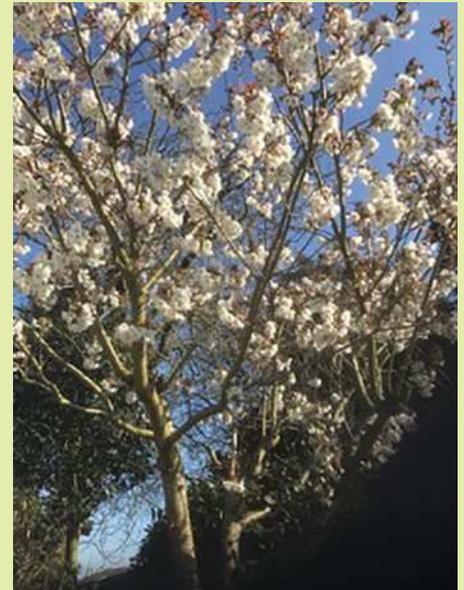
and demand a reciprocal thought process from me, the long winter is ended, we now know we will see friends and family again soon and we will get through this if we work together.

Birds are beginning to sing. The robin has changed to his spring song, dunnocks, great tits, blue tits and goldfinches are tuning up and beginning to claim their territories. Blackbirds are pairing up and their noisy garden squabbles show the males with their gold-dipped yellow beaks running frantically through the leaf litter staking their claim to the most worm rich garden corners. To me, bird song, above all else, lifts the soul. Whether it is the 'teacher teacher' call of the great tit, the tinkling glass sound of the goldfinch or the rich and fruity notes of the blackbird, if I close my eyes and breathe deeply, I can feel the calming impact of that annual orchestral ritual bringing me to the right place in the world. It is really worthwhile to take a few minutes sitting still and just listening (I do this with my eyes closed) to what is around you. I have even learned to appreciate the persistent chirruping of sparrows during the last few weeks. They seem to have an irrepressible positive spirit that makes you smile.

A lot has been written about the impact of nature on well-being. I can only give my personal perspective on how it makes me feel. The landscape around us has created that perfect antidote to those creeping feelings of frustration and the less positive thoughts that sometimes crowd into our 'here and now'. What we all wish for is, to be once again in control of what we do and where we go. I want to decide if I stay in or go out, eat in or eat out.

However, patience is a virtue as they say. A deep breath of the

countryside is available, for many of us on our own doorsteps, whether in our own garden space or on our daily exercise, is my recipe for perseverance, calm and patience. Spring is here, the sun will shine, and we are emerging



from this pandemic. The world might look a little different, but the slices of nature on our doorstep will be there to help us through if we pause and take the time to look and listen.

*Caroline Brent*

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Another fantastic way you can help support the work the Weald of Kent Protection Society does. Please go to [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk), the first tab is supporting, go into this and enter the name of your chosen charity as Weald of Kent Protection Society. Then every time you shop with Amazon please ensure you go to the Amazon Smile page and 0.5% of all your purchases will go to WKPS. Thank you!

# Development on Hold

In those parts of the Ashford, Maidstone, Canterbury and Shepway Districts which fall within the water catchment of the River Stour, new housing development is on hold. We are well aware that we have little or no influence on housing numbers or broad locations, which are set by Central Government. The Government sets housing targets using a formula (Objectively Assessed Need) which ignores local environmental considerations, and once these are set the local planning authorities are duty-bound to deliver them. Achieving housing targets dominates the deliberations of Planning Inspectors and if local planning authorities fail to meet their housing targets Inspectors will often allow development to go ahead even if the site is not allocated in the Local Plan, and there are cases where fines have been issued for non-delivery.

Environmental legislation such as the EU Habitats Directive provide important safeguards to ensure that any damage to the environment is avoided, mitigated or compensated, but even these strict rules do not prevent the overall scale of development driven by Central Government. The WKPS view generally is that this is a major failure of the planning system and is one reason we continue to campaign for better planning laws.

However, the Habitats Directive is the reason that housebuilding in the Stour catchment is currently on hold. There are high input levels of nitrogen and particularly phosphorus in the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve downstream of Canterbury and these nutrients are causing eutrophication. That arises when a body of water becomes over-enriched with excessive nutrients, causing dense growth of algae, depleting oxygen levels and impacting other forms of wildlife.

These inputs are caused mostly by wastewater from sewage works as well as partly from agricultural run-off. Natural England has advised the planning authorities that further development will probably have a significant affect on the protected site at Stodmarsh, and therefore mitigation must be in place before it can be allowed.

Not surprisingly, the delay to development is impacting on the local authorities concerned who are currently required to deliver thousands of new houses by 2030. The Great Stour rises at Lenham, running to Ashford, then Canterbury and onward through Stodmarsh to Sandwich. The East Stour rises just north of Hythe running westwards to its confluence with the Great Stour close to the Old Flour Mill in Ashford. The catchment area of these watercourses is extensive. In the case of the Ashford Borough the only area virtually unaffected is Tenterden and its hinterland.

Mitigation measures include taking agricultural land out of intensive use, improvements to wastewater treatment works and on-site wetland construction. There is pressure on Natural England to allow some sort of moratorium during which development can proceed while mitigation schemes and strategy are drawn up, but the implications are far-reaching.

Improvements to sewage works would enable a substantial amount of phosphate to be removed before discharge to the watercourses, but the water companies say there is no budget for such work before 2025. Development sites on sufficient scale are able to install their own package treatment plants but in many cases there is insufficient space for such innovations, particularly on brownfield sites with restricted areas inside the urban boundaries.

Current circumstances fuel the demand for economic growth which may force the situation to be resolved. Boris Johnson's 'Build, Build, Build' speech in 2020, included the prospect of diluting wildlife and environmental protection to accelerate housebuilding and the Government is frustrated with this issue which has also arisen in the Solent area as a result of nitrate pollution.

Tenterden is within the catchment of the River Rother and these problems have not reared their head as yet, although it is anticipated that the same difficulties may well arise shortly in other catchment areas.

Tenterden must be on guard against any consequential pressure that might arise from the Ashford situation.

**Mike Bax**  
**Chairman**

# Diary of Events for 2021

## Wednesday 28th April

### Boldshaves Garden Tour at 2pm

The garden at Boldshaves has been substantially redeveloped over the last 25 years and new features continue to evolve. The garden is part terraced, south-facing, with a walled garden containing a variety of semi-hardy and southern hemisphere plants; a Camellia dell; herbaceous borders, including the well-known Red Borders; a Flame Bed; an Italian Garden; a garden planted up in 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee; a vegetable garden; a wide variety of old-fashioned English roses; and a herb garden given over to both culinary and medicinal herbs.

**£10 per person**



### Talk by Marian Boswall at 4pm

A leading landscape architect and horticulturalist with a reputation for creating beautiful places often in historic places, Marian is known for her thoughtful and contextual design approach. She works with the setting, the people and local materials to discover and develop the special and the important in each landscape. Respect for the ecology, the history and the future inform her thinking and the studio's designs, which have won many awards and regularly feature in magazines. She specialises in historic landscapes, and was lecturer in Historic Garden Conservation at Greenwich University. She is historic gardens' advisor to several important estates and gardens. A former Director of the British Association of Landscape Industries and Trustee of the Blackthorn Trust biodynamic healing garden, she is a Fellow of the Landscape Institute and co-founder of the nascent Sustainable Landscape Trust.



Marian writes and lectures on sustainable design and has a Masters in Landscape Architecture from Greenwich University and a Masters in Modern Languages from Oxford University. She was awarded the Garden Columnist of the Year Award for her writing on wellness and sustainable design in 2019 and is currently writing a book on harnessing the healing power of nature.

**£10 per person**

*Both these events will be socially distanced. The talk will be in an airy open barn.*



## Wednesday 5th May at 6.30pm Nightingale Evening at Moat Farm, Shadoxhurst

Drinks and nibbles followed by talk about conservation, then a trip around the farm to see some rare plants and go and listen to the Nightingales sing.

**£15 per individual, £25 per couple**



## 26th - 27th June Wealden Literary Festival Boldshaves, Woodchurch, Kent

Wealden Literary Festival - an annual celebration of books, the arts and the outdoors on the edge of the Kentish Weald - has confirmed that it will be returning to Boldshaves Garden, near Woodchurch over the weekend of 26 and 27 June 2021.

After a fallow year in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, the Festival will be welcoming a remarkable cast of writers that includes former poet laureate Dame Carol Ann Duffy and will feature a range of nature-inspired workshops. Families will be able to enjoy an expanded programme of events and outdoor adventures for children.

Tickets for the event will go on sale from late April. Visit the Festival website - [www.wealdenliteraryfestival.co.uk](http://www.wealdenliteraryfestival.co.uk) - for more information.

\*Please ensure that you bring a face mask if you are attending the festival.

## June 2021 WKPS AGM

Instead of holding a physical AGM, WKPS will be issuing their annual reports to members and will ask you to vote on the resolutions. These will be sent out in May via email or post as appropriate.

## Thursday 15th July at 12 noon Tour of Woodchurch Vineyard

An explanation of the various vineyard activities that occur throughout the year, followed by a tasting of wines with sharing platters. Not too much walking, the tasting room and terrace is right by the vineyard so if anyone wants to stay behind while the others do the tour, or you can do a partial tour and meander back.

**£22.50 per person**



## Wednesday 15th September WKPS 2<sup>nd</sup> Bridge Afternoon Tea

Full details will be in the next edition of Watch on the Weald.



## Date TBC Mushroom Foraging & Lunch at Fish Cafe, Rye

WKPS will try to reinstate this popular event later in the year.

**Any queries or to book an event please contact [secretary@wkps.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wkps.org.uk)  
or call 01580 861246**

**Payment can be made by bank transfer to Sort code 30-90-28 account 01754514 or PayPal through our website stating event and surname, or send cheque to 5 Castle Hurst, Bodiam, East Sussex TN32 5UW.**

**Volunteers to run a raffle for WKPS funds at any of these events would be gratefully received!**

In these troubled times WKPS have been unable to hold any fundraising events, but thanks to generous legacies from members we have financially managed to weather the storm. WKPS now has a link on its website to make it easier to accept donations directly. We also hope that you consider a charitable bequest to WKPS when you plan your estate.

**WEALD OF KENT PROTECTION SOCIETY  
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP – CHARITY NO 261992  
Membership runs from 1st April – 31st March**

Personal details: (Please use block capitals)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I/we enclose a cheque in favour of Weald of Kent Protection Society for £15 Single/£20 joint subscription or I/we have paid by bank transfer to A/c 01754514, sort code 30-90-28 (please clearly state your full name as reference)

Please send to WKPS Secretary, 5 Castle Hurst, Bodiam, East Sussex TN32 5UW  
Email: Secretary@wkps.org.uk

**GIFT AID**

I would like the Weald of Kent Protection Society to recover the tax on my annual subscription or any donation that I have made since the date below, or may make in the future. I confirm that the income tax/capital gains tax I pay in the appropriate tax year will be at least equal to the tax reclaimed on my subscription/donation(s).

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**STANDING ORDER INSTRUCTION TO \_\_\_\_\_ Bank Plc**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

I authorise you to pay Lloyds Bank, Tenterden 30-90-28 now and on 1st April each year The Weald of Kent Protection Society Charity 261992 (A/c No 01754514) the sum of £ \_\_\_\_\_  
Until further notice my A/c No \_\_\_\_\_ Sort code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Tunbridge Wells Borough Council - Local Plan

TWBC is publishing the Pre-Submission version of its Local Plan (also known as Regulation 19 version) for consultation.

The Local Plan sets out the proposed planning policies to guide development in the borough up to 2038.

All relevant documents will be available to view on [tunbridgewells.gov.uk](http://tunbridgewells.gov.uk) under the planning policy pages.

Consultation is over an eight-week period from 26 March to 21 May 2021.

### Disclaimer

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**wkps**

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