

Dedham Vale Society

President's Comments to the AGM, 14th September 2009

My sad first task is to say how much we miss our late Chairman, Wilf Tolhurst. I have paid tribute to him in last winter's edition of the DVS magazine and I can only repeat that he was an outstanding Chairman. The Committee has invited Ann Tolhurst to be Hon Vice President and I am very glad to report that she has accepted. The link with the Tolhurst family has been further strengthened as Wilf's son Julian and his daughter Katherine have also become members of the Society. Members will recall that the Society is contributing a memorial to Wilf in the form of a flagpole on Langham Church. This has now been agreed by the family and work has begun on strengthening the tower. Once this has been completed a faculty to erect the flagpole will be obtained from the Church authorities. We will ensure that members are kept informed of progress.

We are fortunate that the distinguished journalist and author, Charles Clover has agreed to become our Chairman in place of Wilf. Charles sends his most sincere apologies for not being with us tonight but has a long-standing family engagement. He has already spent much time on DVS matters despite the very great demands on his life resulting from the success of the film made from his book *The End of the Line* about over-fishing and the crisis this is causing worldwide. It has already had substantial media coverage and is having a massive impact on opinion on a subject vitally important to us all.

Returning to matters affecting the Vale, there are several items to report:

As mentioned in the magazine, the position regarding aircraft noise is most unsatisfactory. There have been many more complaints about noise from all parts of the Vale this summer and this problem seems to be worse than for a long time. New flight path proposals are promised for later this year or possibly early in 2010 and a further consultation has been promised. It will be important that as many members as possible respond to this and we will be issuing guidance when the time comes. Tom Hill (whom we should congratulate on being made a QC) and I will be writing to NATS urging swift progress in this matter.

To confuse matters, BAA has, under the Environmental Noise Directive, produced a Noise Action Plan 2010-2015 on which consultation has been invited by 2nd October. Much of the document concerns the airport itself but flight paths into and out of Stansted are also a subject for discussion. The Society will make a response and anyone wanting further information can find it on www.stanstedairport.com/noise. This is NOT the same as the NATS TC North airspace consultation which is our main concern.

Buntings produced new proposals for Horkesley Park earlier year and these met with a furious response from a wide range of organisations and individuals which included a long running battle in the local media. Buntings have now required sight of all correspondence and memoranda from local authorities in the area relating to their application under the Freedom of Information Act, which will result in much work for local officials but is unlikely to reveal any meaningful information not already in the public domain.

The need for further consultation with Colchester Borough Council about their traffic proposals means that there is a temporary lull in the proceedings. We will keep members informed.

A new threat has emerged in the shape of a proposal by National Grid to install a new 400kV overhead power line between Brantham and Twinstead. Four routes have been suggested, one of which, alongside the existing pylons, runs through the Vale. We are told that undergrounding costs seventeen times more than overhead wires but even so, this has to be the sensible long term option. A meeting with National Grid has been scheduled for 21st September and the Society will be represented.

Last June, I was elected Chairman of the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project whose acting manager, Simon Amstutz is with us this evening. The project has now been running 25 years and has made a real difference in the whole Stour valley.

Last week we had a visit from Dr Helen Phillips Chief Executive of Natural England, the official body responsible for countryside agencies and AONB's. The director responsible for National Parks and AONB's, Tony Hams was also present with two other colleagues. We had an opportunity to tell our guests about the many opportunities and threats currently facing the Dedham Vale. We also told her that in our view, the AONB is far too small and should be extended upstream to cover the whole area serviced by the Project. Natural England is the body which makes the decisions on AONB boundaries and we were told to make our case for an extension. We came away feeling that NE can be a powerful ally in protecting the AONB.

Although there was no cocktail party for members this year, my son and daughter-in-law, Charlie & Laura Erith hosted a party for their friends and contacts in the area which resulted in 15 new members being enrolled. Sarah Carr and her helpers were once again superb at organising a very successful event despite a heavy shower which stopped only moments before guests arrived. I should like to thank Laura and Charlie and all involved for their efforts which have helped to reduce the average age of our membership. However, as John Osborn has said, we have to run to stand still and it is of concern that despite all our efforts, we are no nearer our target of 1000 members. If anyone has any suggestions on how our membership can be increased or comments on what we may be doing wrong, I should like to hear from them. It is our

intention to have a party for the membership in 2010 and any suggestions as to a venue would be welcome.

Our website www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk is now very well used and I should like to thank Lorraine Brooks for keeping it up to date and making it very attractive to use

I conclude by thanking our Chairman, Charles Clover once again, for taking on this demanding role, Sarah Carr our indefatigable Secretary for the huge amount of work she does every year, John Osborn our membership secretary and Michael Parker, our treasurer and all members of the Committee for their work and for the time they give willingly to the Society. I would also like to welcome Rosemary Turner to the Committee. Rosemary is co-opted from CPRE Colchester branch committee and as I have often remarked before, close co-operation and liaison with CPRE, as with The Colne Stour Countryside Association, is very important to have maximum impact when dealing with the authorities.

I want to single out three exceptionally hard working and effective members Roger Drury, David Eking and Adam Sedgwick who have formed a Standing Sub-committee to monitor and make input into the local plans which govern Planning Authorities' decisions now known as Local Development Frameworks which replace Development Plans.

David Eking, has edited the latest edition of our journal and Paul has contributed some stunning photographs. We intend to produce the magazine in colour from now on despite the extra cost and I hope this meets with the approval of members

Thank you, too our members for your continued support which will be greatly needed in the year ahead.