

Strategic planning transferred to regional assemblies

Legislation is expected this spring that will transfer responsibility for strategic planning from county and city councils to regional assemblies. So instead of progressing the roll forward of the Hampshire Structure Plan, the strategic planning authorities are assisting the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) with preparation of the inaugural Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and sub-regional strategies.

The aim is to finalise the RSS in summer 2006, when it will supersede all the Structure Plans in South East England. In the meantime, the Hampshire plan remains in force.

Barker report recommends 120,000 new homes a year

Bank of England economist Kate Barker has suggested doubling the number of new homes, which means an extra 120,000 built each year.

Ms Barker was asked last year by the Government to review housing supply in this country. Her final report, out in March, analysed house price movements and the housing market in Britain, looked into the level of housebuilding and what it is that stops housebuilders from increasing their output when prices rise, and made recommendations of actions Government could take.

She recommended that PPG3 planning rules, which stipulate where new developments can be built, should be liberalised. In some areas, local authorities have been accused of abusing this rule to block virtually all new development beyond inner-city areas.

But housebuilders can't take more than some comfort from the report: the government is now consulting on a new windfall tax for landowners when they are granted

planning permission. After all, says the report, since the value of land rockets when permission is granted, it is only reasonable that the Exchequer should benefit.

Although the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, appeared to distance himself from the windfall tax proposal, he said that he accepted most of Ms Barker's report.

About 175,000 new properties were built in 2001, the lowest number since the second world war.

Will housebuilding at such levels harm the countryside unacceptably, without solving our housing problems? Or should the government make better use of brownfield land, move away from low housing densities, and secure a higher proportion of affordable housing as part of a planned housing provision strategy? As always, we welcome your views. Editor

Reserve housing sites

Housebuilding on brownfield sites in Hampshire is likely to remain buoyant, according to the county council recently, implying that there is no need in 2004 to release any of the reserve greenfield housing sites.

The Hampshire Structure Plan policy H4 requires reserve sites to be earmarked in nine districts, although they will not be released for development unless justified by monitoring of housing supply. Each year, a monitoring report is published which assesses housebuilding rates and land supply. Following consultation on the report, the Hampshire strategic planning authorities decide whether they need to trigger the release of any of the reserve sites.

One of these reserve sites is at Barton Farm, north of Winchester. On March 10th, members of the Save Barton Farm Group marched on Downing Street to protest against plans by Cala Homes to build 2,000 houses on 200 of the 300 acres it owns there. Cala submitted an outline planning application for the huge greenfield development in early March.

Inside this Issue

The Dever Society - a change of leadership

Page 2

Events - details of & booking form for Summer Concert

Page 3

Members Letters

Page 4

Clive Dixon steps down at AGM after three years

The Dever Society held its 14th AGM at the Community Hall, Micheldever Station, on 26th January. Richard Cowen, a member of the Society's executive committee in the early 1990s, was elected chairman. He succeeds Clive Dixon, a founder member of the Society in 1990, an executive committee member ever since, and chairman since 2001.

In appreciation of the tremendous contribution Clive had made to the Society, and to the conservation of the Dever Valley generally, Brett Gill (hon treasurer) presented him, on behalf of the executive committee, with an inscribed Italian leather box. Following his own tribute to Clive, Lord Ashburton, president, warned that major development in the downlands surrounding Micheldever Station might, in the light of the government's proposed changes to the planning structure, become a major threat again soon.

Instead of the 'traditional' address by a visiting speaker on a local issue, members enjoyed an illustrated talk on rainforest conservation in Papua New Guinea by Tessa Robertson, the Society's vice-chairman, and Head of the Forests Programme at WWF-UK. Last November, Tessa had been a member of a WWF expedition whose objective was to help local communities designate their rainforests as conservation areas to legally protect them against the threats posed by commercial logging, mining and oil exploration. As a result, she said, a total of more than 300,000 ha of forests and wetlands will now be protected.

Full minutes of the AGM can be found on our web site: www.deversociety.org.

Forthcoming Events

Summer Trailer ride, BBQ & Camp -
5th June 2004 @ 4pm, Manor Farm, West Stratton
(please see page 4 for further details)

Quiz evening -
November 2004, Northbrook Hall, Micheldever

Art Event

We regret that for logistical reasons we need to postpone the proposed Art Event from Sept 2004 to Sept 2005. Our thanks to those who expressed interest in participating.

Richard succeeds Clive as Society chairman

The Society's new chairman is, like his predecessor, a man with a lifetime affinity to the Dever Valley. Richard Cowen (54) was elected at the AGM in January, following a diligent search process by a small sub-group of the executive committee.

Apart from a two-year sojourn in Africa, Richard lived either in Sutton Scotney or Micheldever until 2002, when he sold Newdown Farm (on the A33 between Kings Worthy and Micheldever) and moved to Kintbury near Hungerford. Although no longer living in the Dever Valley, his office remains in Sutton Scotney where, as he says, "I guess my heart is".

Richard has travelled the lanes between Micheldever and Sutton Scotney for as long as he can remember and feels that nothing much has changed. "Houses look smarter," he says, "but essentially the character is the same, and the largely untouched downlands countryside is magnificent."



Apart from wishing to play a part in the local infrastructure, Richard is strongly opposed to Zurich/Eagle Star's proposals, although there is an ironic twist behind his feelings. As agent to the late Lord Rank, his father was largely responsible for building up the family estate into the 15,000 acres it became. Later, in 1997, he was also responsible for the sale of much of it, including the land around Micheldever Station, to Eagle Star. "He felt that they were a safe pair of hands," he says. "How wrong he was!"

Richard is married to Lulu and between them they have six children.

Membership and Area Co-ordinators

Society membership remains buoyant at 8,176.

We welcome the following new area co-ordinators – the kind people who distribute our Newsletters:

Littleton: **Mrs G Weyndling**; Kings Worthy (part): **Mrs Mary Jones**; Overton: **Mrs Pamela Dyas**

St Mary Bourne (part): **Mrs Kelly Scrase**; Twyford: **Mrs Claude Smith**

Our thanks to **Mrs Caroline Knight** - Weston Colley and **Mrs Kim Adams** - Kings Worthy (part) who have resigned.

Dever Society Summer Concert

An evening of chamber music with Helen and Douglas Paterson and friends

Following the sell-out concert in summer 2002, by popular demand Helen and Douglas Paterson will be performing a programme of varied chamber music at Winchester College on Thursday, 15th July, 2004, at 8.00 p.m. The evening will conclude with the Dvorak Piano Quintet.

By kind permission of Winchester College, the concert will be held in "School", a magnificent room in the style of Sir Christopher Wren, dating back to the late 1600's.

Helen Paterson has played with various ensembles including the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the London Chamber Orchestra, the Fibonacci Sequence and the Spice Girls. She is now the principal second violin of the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Douglas Paterson has been a member of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and was principal viola of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He now plays with the Schubert Ensemble and recently toured internationally, performing Mozart Piano Quartets with Alfred Brendel.

Performing with Helen and Douglas will be violinist Elizabeth Pigram, and cellist Alastair Blayden, both members of the London Symphony Orchestra, and Julian Milford, one of the most outstanding pianists and chamber musicians of his generation. All the musicians have connections with Hampshire and are world-class players performing on the international scene.

Demand for tickets is expected to be high and space is strictly limited – apply early to avoid disappointment

...✂.....

**The Dever Society Summer Concert
To be held at Winchester College
Thursday 15th July, 2004 – Performance starts at 8.00 p.m.**

I enclose my payment of £.....for.....tickets at £25.00 each (inc interval wine and canapés)

I am unable to come, but would like to make a donation of £.....which is enclosed. Please make cheques payable to The Dever Society (PLEASE USE CAPITALS)

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code..... Telephone.....

Tickets applications to: The Dever Society, Cowdown Farm, Micheldever, Hampshire, SO21 3DN

GIFT AID DECLARATION

Details of Donor

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

I wish The Dever Society (Reg Charity No 1003093) to treat the enclosed single donation of £.....as a Gift Aid Donation.

Signed.....Dated.....2004

(For this donation to qualify for Gift Aid the donor must have paid income tax or capital gains tax of at least the qualifying amount – currently 28p for each £1 donated – in the current tax year. Higher rate taxpayers can themselves claim relief on the higher tax band proportion of this donation.)

Members' Letters

In our last Newsletter we published, without comment, an English Nature report that recommended building housing estates in the countryside, since they would support more wildlife than arable agriculture. We also published the Countryside Alliance's shocked response to this 'extraordinary claim', as they called it.

This generated letters from two members:

From Peter Radburn, Chandlers Ford

By allowing such prominence in the Dever Society Newsletter to the views of the Countryside Alliance the impression is given that the Dever Society is in accord with that organisation.

By contrast Dr Porter of English Nature was dismissed in a single paragraph. His views were neither discussed nor answered, let alone refuted. If your case is so sound do you need an organisation such as the Countryside Alliance, which has its own agenda, to promote it.

Maybe future issues of the Newsletter will be fairer in its treatment of alternative points of view - but then again perhaps I am a lone voice blowing in the wind.

From Richard Ellis, Micheldever

As a supporter of the Dever Society and its aims, I was extremely disappointed to see the headline of the Autumn 2003 newsletter and the extensive and inaccurate coverage of Dr Keith Porter's speech at the UK Festival of Science. The newsletter article appears to be based on a few selective quotations and on recycled material (mainly I would guess from the Countryside Alliance's press release). It does not reflect the speech that Dr Porter actually presented.

I found Dr Porter's speech to be balanced and carefully considered. He raises many valid issues concerning the future development of the countryside. Indeed many of the issues he discusses (such as the use and control of water; the damage caused by intensive farming; the need for more sustainable farming methods; the loss of native flora and fauna) are rightly echoed in the Dever Society's own website. He speaks out against high density developments in the countryside (such as Zurich's disastrous proposed new town). I believe that there is little in Dr Porter's speech that most Dever Society members would disagree with.

(Mr Ellis then commented on a number of Dr Porter's comments in some detail. Unfortunately, space precludes us from reprinting his comments here.)

In reply, the editor writes:

I published English Nature's views for the interest of members who may not have read them. In quoting the Countryside Alliance, I set out simply to provide an opposing view from an equally high-profile organisation. Some of our 8,000-plus members do, indeed, belong to the Alliance, but I hold no editorial brief for them, or any other body apart from, of course, The Dever Society.

Micheldever Rail Users Group

One of the principal reasons why Zurich/Eagle Star wants to build a new town at Micheldever Station is because there is indeed a railway station there. Situated halfway between Basingstoke and Winchester on the main line from London Waterloo to Southampton and Bournemouth, Micheldever has not always enjoyed the best of train services. In 1993, former Dever Society executive committee member Gordon Scrase set up the Micheldever Rail Users Group (MRUG) to lobby South West Trains for improvements. Over the years since then, the group has had some success in restoring if not the best service, at least a more rounded one.

Now an Affiliate Member of The Dever Society, the MRUG represents all travellers, not just commuters, and among its 60 members are rail users from all the local communities and from as far away (relatively speaking) as Stockbridge and The Wallops. Membership is free. If you would like to join please contact Hugh Sandars on 01962 774220.

Trailer ride, BBQ and Camping Saturday 5th June 2004

We are running this popular event again this year following last year's success. Come and enjoy an informative tractor and trailer ride at Adrian Dixon's farmland followed by a barbecue close to Manor Farm, West Stratton. For those wishing to stay on, bring your tents and camp overnight with us at the same location.

Trailer rides start from Manor Farm, West Stratton at 4.00pm and will return to the same place by 5.30pm.

Barbecue commences at 5.30pm a short, sign-posted, distance from Manor Farm with camping to follow.

Tickets from Jane Hackford 774699. Adults £5 Children £2.50

The Dever Society, Cowdown Farm, Micheldever, Hampshire, S021 3DN
Tel: 01962 774040; Fax 01962 761697, Email deversociety@compuserve.com
Website: www.deversociety.org Registered Charity 1003093

President: The Lord Ashburton KG KCVO DL, Chairman: Richard Cowen
Vice Chairman: Tessa Robertson, Hon Secretary: Charles Hobbs, Hon Treasurer: Brett Gill
Membership Secretary: Kay Cole
Executive Committee: Phil Bryant (Editor, Newsletter), Simon Hughes, James Dockray, Phil Dowson
Office Manager: Jacqueline Lindsay
