

Action Group for protection against the damage which the Channel Tunnel would inflict on the county, have again combined. Kent County Council, impressed by the quality of the Kent Action Group's petitions to the parliamentary Select Committees which considered the hybrid Channel Tunnel bill, generously contributed to its funds and this time round took the initiative in founding and funding the Kent Rail Action Group which purports to represent all objectors to the scheme.

Kent County Council employed environmental consultants who recommended rejection of all four routes proposed by British Rail which was consequently commanded to think again and has now come up with a route from King's Cross and Waterloo by tunnel to Swanley and under the North Downs, but elsewhere on the surface to Ashford and Cheriton. This is an improvement but it still threatens a great deal of beautiful Kent with disfigurement and noise and makes only an indirect contribution to getting traffic off the roads and back on to rail which is the best justification for its creation: it is for passengers only although there will (it is claimed) be more room for freight on existing lines. It may also improve commuter services and relieve air transport and congestion, not to mention attracting industrial and/or warehousing development.

An independent group has suggested an alternative which would save all Kentish towns and villages except Ashford from noise and disfigurement. From Ashford the line would tunnel under the North Downs to a point west of Sittingbourne and then proceed along the coastal marshes (cherished by some for plants and birds) to cross the Medway and the Thames into coastal and industrial Essex to a London terminus at Stratford.

There is also controversy about the parliamentary procedures to be employed. Railways are normally created by a private bill and there are those who say that this nevertheless affords proper opportunities for objectors via Select Committees. Others argue that a non-statutory public inquiry followed by Development Orders offers greater opportunity for protest and desirable amendment. It will be interesting to see how the various controversies are resolved. Unlike the caucus race in Alice's Wonderland, not everyone can win!

Jack Woolford Chairman of Kent Federation of Amenity Societies
& of The Dover Society.

PLANNING COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Planning Sub-committee is kept up-to-date on current planning applications by Dover District Council with which we have a good working relationship.

Specific areas that have concerned us recently have been the Dover Engineering Works site developments and the St Margaret's (Granville Hotel and Claringbould) schemes.

We have been in contact with the developers and agents of the various DEW schemes, in particular concerning the lack of provision for a Riverside Walk and over the size and layout of the car parks. Some concessions have been made with regard to screening and provision of footpaths but the Walk still eludes us.

We are being kept in touch with developments in St Margaret's by local residents and will be adding our weight to those seeking an amicable solution.

We should be pleased to receive any views members may have on local planning issues though we must point out that our aim is not to oppose *per se* but to try to obtain the best possible solution for all concerned.

Ken Wright