

Eurotunnel Consultative Meeting T.M.L. Exhibition Centre

22 March

The meeting was chaired by TONY GUETERBOCK, REGIONAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER FOR KENT, and ELIZABETH CULBARD, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGER, and attended by representatives of various local community groups, including Jack Woolford, Kent Wraight and me.

Tony Gueterbock gave details of the general progress of the project - the service tunnel is now over six kilometres long. The huge boring machine has now arrived and will take three months to erect and we expect to meet the French somewhere in the middle of the Channel, somewhere in the middle of next year! The shuttle design will be announced later this year.

The work-force was discussed, TML reporting that 50% of the workforce is now Kent-based. (I took this to mean that 50% are now living in Kent - not necessarily that they originated from Kent!). Problems seem to have arisen from married men bringing their families into the area, local doctors being unable to take on extra patients and even school places being unavailable for their children. Tony Gueterbock expressed concern and admitted that they had not foreseen this problem but would welcome talks with the local authorities.

Liz Culbard spent a great deal of time answering questions on important environmental issues. Construction noise is one of the biggest problems and T.M.L. have noise-insulated 140 homes in the Cheriton area. The visual appearance of the site from A.20 is appalling and the Department of Transport and the Secretary of State are involved in decisions on this issue. A tree planting scheme begins soon. Fishing for lobster and crab has been affected around the platform and local fishermen have been compensated. The grassland on the cliff-tops that has been affected will eventually be re-planted with local plants transported from the area.

A discussion followed on the High Speed Rail-Link, and although this will not affect Dover directly the consequences for our County are enormous. T.M.L. felt that an International station at Ashford was essential. The K.C.C. have employed German consultants on the problems of noise pollution and it was felt that major investment was needed by B.R. in new technology. The T.A.L.I.S. route was discussed (the Thames Alternative Link International System), put forward by an environmentally-concerned independent group as causing the least damage to Kent. The conclusion of this lengthy section of the meeting was that there was a lack of information from B.R., and that the K.C.C. and people of Kent had a long way to go to resolve the problems.

These meetings, and the open days at the exhibition centre, are for local people to find out about the progress of the project and discuss things that are directly affecting them. It was an interesting and enlightening meeting and I felt that T.M.L.'s Public Relations department was doing a very good job. We can only hope that the rest of T.M.L. are achieving as much!

Lin Clackett