

Dover & Folkestone Combined Wastewater Treatment Works

Leo Wright and Lawrence Gage represented the Society at a meeting on 2nd April to hear about the latest plans of Southern Water Services Ltd. for sewage disposal in Dover. Together with representatives of Dover and Shepway District Councils and other interest groups, they were given the opportunity to ask questions of the engineers involved and to express comments.

Lawrence Gage reported as follows:

WE MUST ALL welcome the proposals by Southern Water services to provide wastewater treatment to correct the current appalling situation where all raw sewage, more delicately known as untreated wastewater, from both Folkestone and Dover flows directly into the sea quite close to the shore line. However, as the Investment Manager of Southern Water commented at the meeting, although we all want better sewage treatment, nobody likes the idea of a treatment works on their patch. Unfortunately there is no magic or simple solution to the problem, and it is inevitable that any scheme, however well conceived, will have some detrimental environmental effects and will certainly cost an enormous sum. The trick will be to minimise the environmental impact whilst keeping the costs within reason.

Various options for the scheme have been considered including separate systems for both towns and nearly forty sites for the treatment plant have been investigated. It seems that the best option available is to build a single treatment plant serving both town within the Farthingloe Valley, either on the site of the existing temporary Eurotunnel car park or alternatively at Broomfield Bank which is immediately opposite on the other side of the A20. In either case the plant will be in a massive 150m x 50m x 12m box, buried underground with only a relatively small vent shaft showing on the surface. There will also need to be an access road across the site for lorries to service the plant. The site area needed is about one hectare and we were assured that the site will be carefully reinstated and landscaped so that the treatment plant will have little visual impact on the valley.

The proposed plant will provide primary treatment only to the wastewater but it will be planned to allow for secondary processes on the same site at a later date. The treated effluent will be discharged into the sea via a new 2.5 km long outfall from the Western Beach, Dover. Although it would obviously be better to have secondary treatment, what is proposed will conform to E.C. regulations regarding quality of bathing water and will be a vast environmental improvement on the current situation.

In addition to the treatment plant itself, a great length of new pipework and tunnels will be required in both towns, but particularly in Folkestone, and also to and from the treatment plant. A number of new pumping stations will be needed in Folkestone and a new pumping station will be built in Dover adjacent to the existing one in Elizabeth Street. Its architecture, we are told,

will be 'appropriate' and of a high standard. There is no doubt that these new drainage runs will cause considerable disruption during construction, with Folkestone suffering more than Dover. It is to be hoped that the proposals will not require the digging up of the brand new A20!

It may seem somewhat illogical and wasteful of energy to pump the waste water up from Elizabeth Street, only for it to return down again after treatment but when the overall scheme is considered, this, we are told, is the most viable technical and cost option. It is hoped that some energy can be reclaimed from the gravity flow as the treated waste runs down to the sea.

The meeting convinced me that Southern Water are genuinely interested to hear and respond to the views of societies such as ours, and, despite the considerable difficulties involved, they are determined to reduce the environmental damage of the scheme to the minimum. They are currently undertaking a full environmental appraisal of the scheme to accompany planning applications. The first of several planning applications will be made in August this year and the Dover Society will have the opportunity to comment again as details are further developed. Construction is planned to take three years after planning consents are obtained so the earliest we can expect completion is towards the end of 1997.

The estimated cost of the combined scheme for Dover and Folkestone is a massive £124 million which represents more than 60% of the total budget for Southern Water's 'Operation Seaclean' and probably the largest single investment ever made in Dover. In this case, however, it is to be hoped that we don't see too much for our money! ♦

Monthly Report on the work of the Planning Sub-Committee

by LAWRENCE GAGE, *Chairman*

THE PLANNING WATCHDOG

The Planning Sub-Committee has been very active in the past few months., All planning applications made to the District Council have been inspected and when considered necessary, written representations have been made on behalf of the Society. Sometimes we are able fully to support an application but inevitably many of the points raised are critical of what is being proposed, but we do aim to comment in a constructive way with suggestions on how a particular application could be improved.

We are also involved with some planning matters long before formal applications are made. The current scheme for the combined waste water treatment plant is a typical example of the Society's active involvement right from the start of negotiations. The Sub-committee works closely with Dover District Council, Dover Harbour Board, Impact and other relevant organisations.

Planning applications need to be commented upon within a week or so and although the Sub-committee meets regularly to discuss applications it is not always possible to consult the full membership on every issue. However the Sub-committee does try to ensure that any planning issues, such as the current proposals for the Western Docks redevelopment are given a good airing at general meetings of the Society.