

“ Dover 2000

Report of the public meeting held at Dover Town Hall on Thursday, 12th May, 1994 to discuss the Millennium Project.

This open public meeting was called by The Dover Society and was organised by the Chairman of the Society's Planning Sub-Committee, Lawrence Gage.

The meeting opened with a presentation by Mr. Gage. He began by describing the set-up of the Millennium Commission by the government to promote major national projects to celebrate the year 2000. The commission, consisting of a team of 9 people, will operate totally independently of the government. Projects will be funded from money from the National Lottery and from 1994 to the year 2000, one-fifth of the proceeds from the lottery will be given to the Millennium Fund. The expected figure is in the region of £1,200,000,000. Initially the government has suggested that larger projects would be given preference, thus, if six projects nation-wide were funded, each would receive £200,000,000. However, the method of allocating the fund has not yet been decided and it remains to be seen how the money will be used to fund projects nation-wide.

Mr. Gage went on to discuss reasons why Dover should qualify as an applicant. Its geographical position, closest to Europe and traditionally the Gateway to England, should be exploited as one of the strongest claims. Visitors approaching our country from the sea have always, from time immemorial, seen the White Cliffs of Dover as a welcoming symbol.

The aims of the Dover project should be as follows:

- To be the focus of National celebrations

- Record and celebrate the achievements of the last 2000 years

- Look forward to and promote positive achievements in the next 2000 years

- Provide a landmark- a welcoming and memorable first impression of Britain

- Something that will last into the third millennium

- Something to interact with Europe

- Something of value and use for the people of Dover

Various possibilities were put forward, under the following headings:

WELCOME TO BRITAIN CENTRE

This idea might include a Liner Terminal, a Best of Britain Exhibition, European conference facilities, a concert hall or theatre, an open air arena, a Leisuredrome for activities like ice-skating, bowling, etc.

80 EUROCENTRE

This idea might include Eurodome with permanent and changing exhibitions, Eurocentre conference facilities, European Studies Centre, Open air arena and possibly a government centre for European affairs.

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE

This idea would centre around a stadium and provide international sports facilities, indoor and out, a conference centre and national training programme but also, alongside these, the possibilities of a monument of some kind, an ecological project and an aerial connection were also to be considered.

Various sites in Dover should be examined. Western Docks, Western Heights, the Castle, Russell Street Car Park, Connaught Park, Old Park Barracks and the Shakespeare Platform were all suggestions.

Mr. Gage then threw the discussion open to the floor and invited opinions and suggestions. Over eighty people attended this meeting and seventeen speakers contributed their views. These included members of the Dover Society, prominent figures in the town including the town Mayor, representatives of Dover District Council, including the new chairman of the Council, the development manager of Dover Harbour Board, a representative of Dover's Member of Parliament and several members of the public who had not previously known of the existence of the Dover Society but were interested in the subject of the Millennium project and had responded to the poster advertising the public meeting.

Many of the speakers welcomed the initiative of the Dover Society in calling the meeting. Several people supported the idea of some project which visualised Dover as the Gateway to Europe and to the UK. Most speakers were in favour of a project which will benefit Dover for a long time, something which will attract visitors and get local support. John Clayton (DDC) thought it should be something unique to Dover, which can only be done here. "It must be the right project". The Town Mayor agreed, saying, "It must be a centre of excellence which no one else has". Others were concerned about the status of the members of the steering committee and any subsequent body which might be set up, stressing that the panel should consist of leading representatives of the community. Adrian Galley (DS member) suggested that professional advice should be sought from the early stages of the project and that experts should comment on the practicability of the project.

Other speakers suggested specific ideas. Several of them supported the idea of transport as a main theme, Bill Fawcus (DHB), commenting that the focus of traffic to the continent is here in Dover, suggested a celebration of travel focus, which might include all kinds of transport, a funicular railway to the Castle, train and steamer trips and a liner terminal at Western Docks. Joe Harman (DS member) suggested a funicular to the Castle and a cable car on the Western Heights. Both these speakers linked these ideas with a monument on the Western Heights. Margaret Robson (DS member) spoke of her vision of some kind of transport

linking up the whole of East Kent and running constantly between certain key 81
tourist attractions like the Castle, town and Western Heights.

While the majority of speakers were in favour of some kind of grand monument which could be seen from afar and distinguish the project as a whole, there were some speakers who strongly opposed the idea of a monument as a feeling that such a monument might disfigure the natural beauty of the cliffs. By far the most ambitious idea (supported by drawings and plans) was that of Mr. Hargrave (new DS member) who visualised a gigantic pharos on the Western Heights, topped with a laser dome, with a revolving restaurant on the top floor, with other levels devoted to theatre in the round, conference centre, cinema, exhibition galleries, etc; the whole to be powered by solar energy and reached by a water-operated sliding railway from Snargate Street.

Many speakers supported the idea of a leisuredome with sporting facilities, especially Carole Barrett (Dover teacher) who stressed the need for providing activities for young people in Dover.

Several speakers were in favour of environmentally-based projects, especially the idea of a forest of 2000 oaks. Mike Bowers (prospective DS member) suggested an observatory and put forward the idea of utilising sun, wind or wave power to provide energy for the town

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS.

Over eighty people attended the meeting and most of these completed questionnaires at the time. Others wrote letters to Lawrence Gage with more detailed answers which could not be included in the space afforded on the questionnaires. Altogether there were about one hundred responses.

Collation of the questionnaire results revealed the following information. On the question of a general theme 23 people opted for a Eurocentre, 20 for a Welcome to Britain Centre and 15 for a National Sports Centre. Other suggestions were for a Transport Centre/Museum, a University and an observatory. Not everyone answered this question.

In answer to the question on siting, the two most popular sites were the Western Heights (30 votes) and the Western Docks (23 votes). Russell Street site came next with 17 votes and all other sites had 7 or less supporters.

The largest section of the questionnaire invited respondents to choose 4 items from a list of 17, to add other suggestions if the idea did not appear on the list, and to place their choices in order from 1 to 4. In scoring this section marks were given, 4 for 1st choice, 3 for 2nd, 2 for 3rd and 1 for 4th. By this method the following data was obtained.

The 5 most popular ideas were as follows:

Cruise Liner Terminal (93), Concert Hall/Theatre (79), Conference Centre (75), Leisuredome (72) and European Study Centre (70)

In order of 1st choices the same 5 ideas occurred but in this order:- European Study Centre, Conference Centre, Cruise Liner Terminal and Leisuredrome (equal points) and Concert Hall/Theatre.

These 5 were way ahead of all other ideas on the list, the next, more than 20 points lower, being a Department of European Affairs, followed by a Transport Museum, an aerial connection between Castle, town and Western Heights, National Sports facilities, a Monument on the cliffs and a Millennium Forest.

New ideas added to the original list included a University and Language School, a Museum of the History of Marine Transport, a European Twinned-Towns Association and a project to utilise Wave and Tidal energy.

A copy of this report will be sent to all who attended the meeting and/or completed the questionnaire. Meanwhile plans are in progress to set up a Steering Committee to consider the next step in preparing an application for funding from the Millennium Fund ☺☺

Since the distribution of this Report the following developments have been made known

1. The Millennium Commission, under the chairmanship of Peter Brook, has announced that the money to be spent on the Millennium Project is £1.6 billion and that half of this will be allocated to be divided among twelve major national projects, thus giving approximately £66,600,000 to each project, less than originally visualised.
 2. Guidelines are to be issued in November 1994 and applications will need to be ready for submission by the middle of 1995 (date to be announced).
 3. The first meeting of the Dover Steering Committee is to be held in late July or early August. It has been difficult to set up this initial meeting because of the problem of finding a date to suit all the members of the committee
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Membership Notes *continued from page 66*

Our new policy is to welcome new members by publishing their names.

We are happy to welcome Mrs Carol Baker, Mrs Barbara Aylen, Mrs F.L. Todd, Mr Paul Wrigley, Mrs J.M. Marsh, Mr & Mrs W.E. Greenwood, Dr George Wright, Mr W. R. Norris, Mr P. J. Hargrave, Mr A. H. Ashman, Mr Julian Chambers, Mrs Snezana & Mr Sava Lawrence, Ms Jill Wilson, Mr & Mrs Bernard Coates, Mr M. Groombridge, Mr A. Groombridge, Mr R. Wilson, Mrs E. Bostock, Mrs J. Whibley, Mr D. Eagles, Mrs Joyce Stilgoe, and Mrs Helen Williams.

New members are asked to state if they do not wish their names to be published.