

The work of the **PLANNING** Sub-Committee

Reported by JACK WOOLFORD, Chairman

WAG - Whitfield Action Group - has come into existence to fight the proposal to quadruple the size of the village. Following their successful launch in Nov 2005 at a public meeting which we were invited to address, they now have a Steering Group (on which we have an advisory member), a joint committee with the Parish Council, funding from the Parish Precept, a website and an action plan. They will have noticed the Environment Agency's current advice that East Kent's water supplies will not accommodate the projected thousands of houses and need no reminding that their enemy is the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

As to regionalization, the latest rumour is that Kent County Council will disappear and so will existing District Councils. Dover, Thanet, Shepway and Canterbury will together become a unitary authority under unelected SEERA

(South East England Regional Assembly) and SEEDA (South East Economic Development Association), together constituting GOSE (Government of the South East) in Guildford. We shall only retain our Town Council... perhaps with a little more power at its elbow.

The good news is that after a year's delay by Kent Highways, the Town Centre trees for which he have worked so long and to which our members have so generously contributed, will be soon be planted in containers (supplied by Dover District Council) in Biggin St, subject to the consent of CCTV. Consequently it is unlikely that we shall need the £800 we sought from the Regeneration Unit, which in any case ceases to exist on March 31st 2006.

We continue to await action by DTIZ, ASDA, Buckland Paper Mill, WCCB Phase II, Netto, etc etc. Most of all we await the impending decision about Dover's link to Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Given that, many other good things could follow.

Dover Harbour Board has turned down our suggestion that their 400th anniversary be commemorated with a bandstand on Granville Gardens. We are locked in dispute with Dover Museum as whether or not there is a Green Man on the doorway of 10 Biggin St, the old Labour Exchange. Continue to watch this space!

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The Integrated Kent Rail Franchise

Kent Federation of Amenity Societies Bulletin 30

Bob Ratcliffe, City of Rochester Society

January's edition of the *Railway Magazine* reports on the award of the franchise to *Govia*, as the preferred bidder for the Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) to begin on April 1st 2006. This covers all Kent's present services, as well as the domestic service on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) due to start in 2009. *Govia* is a partnership with the *Go-Ahead Group* and *Keolis*, and already owns the franchise for the 'central' section of the old Southern Region in Surrey and Sussex. The South East will again be held by one franchise as it was with *Connex*. *Govia*, who will trade in Kent as *London and South Eastern Railway*, is committed to building two new maintenance depots - at Ashford and Ramsgate. It is also to invest £76m in passenger and staff facilities, refurbish trains, remove graffiti within 24 hours (!), and improve performance and reliability. On the down side, fares will rise by 3% above inflation from January 2007. The franchise term is for eight years, the last two being dependent upon performance, and the government subsidy will be £585m over this period. For the past two years Kent's railways have been run by *South Eastern Trains*, a *Strategic Rail Authority* company who took over the network on the sacking of *Connex* for poor performance.