

## Dover Harbour Board - Proposed Lorry Park

*Reported by Mike Weston*

At the Society's November indoor meeting, members were asked for their opinions on four subjects currently of interest to people living in and around Dover. The subject which led to the liveliest debate was the issue of the Harbour Board's proposal for a lorry park on the A20 on the outskirts of the town.

As I said at the above meeting, Dover, whether we like it or not, is dependant on the port. Dover is the Port and the Port is Dover. Without the port Dover would die. At present there is no other industry within the area that comes anywhere near providing the jobs which the port does. So it is in the interests of all the people of this town to see the port prosper. To this end decisions have to be made at times, which are going to be controversial; I believe that the lorry park is one of these decisions.

There is no doubt the town suffers heavily when freight vehicles are stacked up along Townwall Street in times of heavy usage of the port, delays due to weather, delays due to industrial action and mechanical failures of ships or plant. In such times it is manifestly obvious that an answer to the congestion in this area outside the port has to be sought. In my opinion the Dover Harbour Board does a splendid job under normal conditions in accepting vehicles into the port as they arrive and marshalling them into lanes for almost immediate transhipment. But the area they have to work from is tiny compared with areas in the continental ports and the area which the Channel Tunnel operators have at their disposal. When one considers that the modern ferry lifts 100 + heavy vehicles and that one of these vessels are arriving or leaving the port around every eight minutes in busy times it is not surprising that a build up of traffic occurs quickly if delays occur in the normally smooth running of the port operation. Delays, which are usually

beyond the control of the Port Authorities, soon see the available waiting areas within the port become congested and this congestion then feeds back into Townwall Street and beyond to the detriment of the town and its inhabitants.

The answer in my opinion has to be the construction of a lorry park which must be near to the port so that as vessels become available the requisite freight can be called forward to the port in as short a time as possible. It also has to be constructed alongside the main traffic route into Dover which as we all know is the A20. If not it will not be used. Facilities for freight drivers (lacking at the present time when "operation stack" is in operation) such as refreshments, toilets and washing facilities should be included in this area for humanitarian reasons.

At our November meeting a show of hands taken at the conclusion of this discussion indicated that virtually everyone present realized the need for the lorry park. The question for debate, however, was where this park should be situated. With a fairly even number of people happy with the proposed site against those wishing for further investigation into possible sites the argument is set to continue. But for the sake of Dover and its residents, especially those bordering Townwall Street, let us hope that a speedy and amicable decision can be reached so that Dover sees the end of queuing freight vehicles through the town and the port is able to attract more business and become even more successful.

After a very lively discussion the vote was as follows:

Support on the proposed site near Aycliffe	19 votes
Investigate other sites and possibilities	29 votes
Do nothing	0 votes