

Refurbishment Sub-Committee

Jeremy Cope

You may notice that this article is renamed from Regeneration, a more accurate reflection of the content and the Society's aim to make the best of Dover's existing attributes - and we do have a very great many. I was lucky to visit Charlton House and see the high standard of restoration being carried out there - it was an outstanding example of what can be done and of the enormous potential of this town.

In my last report I wrote of Pat Sherratt leading the fight to get implementation of Section 215 of the 1990 Planning Act which enables local authorities to oblige property owners to maintain the outside of their premises. I should pay tribute to Dover Town Council for putting up the money so that a start is now being made. Without that funding there would be little prospect of action.

Litter and antisocial behaviour remain a real problem and we continue to press for a zero tolerance approach by the District Council with immediate fines for any breaches. But we must also pay tribute to those who voluntarily collect rubbish off the streets. The Council do respond to complaints reported to them and I would urge members to phone with any problems.

Our aim to establish a safe walkway between the Castle, Bleriot's Memorial and Langdon Cliffs has progressed to the extent that with the support of Kent

County Council Countryside Access Team, National Trust and local ramblers' groups we hope to put in a bid for funding to Natural England. This is, of course, subject to sorting out the snags in the bidding process - governments seem determined to make things difficult for groups such as ours to have access to funding and that's just the helpful sources.

Continuing with the subject of funding, another aim was to see what we could do about the repair of Connaught Park Pond, presently in a very sad state. I had a conversation with Heritage Lottery Fund representatives to see if funds were available, but the conditions demanded and the heavy workload that would be involved for a limited number of volunteers (already very busy people) made our sub-committee very hesitant. Fortunately it sounds as if the District Council has found the money to sort out the pond, hence a large sigh of relief.

Alan Lee continues to battle with Kent Highways on street trees - so important for any urban environment. We are told that the total absence of funds prevents replanting, but as one member noted "they have the money to cut them down". If an area wants trees replanted Kent Highways will do so provided they are paid (and they are not cheap), but the areas that need trees most to soften the townscape are often those least able to raise the money. Plus ca change!