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### **President's Comments to the AGM, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

In some ways we have had an eventful year. And I can report progress on several issues.

NATS consultation has come and gone and we now have the Initial Feedback Report from that exercise. The good news is that the proposed routes will avoid the Dedham Vale AONB to a large extent.

The Society made strong representations about the impact of the flight-path when it comes out of the eastern Stansted hold which is routed over the western edge of the AONB and its proposed extension. In the Report, which can be accessed at **[www.nats.co.uk/TCNconsultation](http://www.nats.co.uk/TCNconsultation)**, under para 8.3.1:

*“NATS will consider a review of the route to see if there are any options for slight improvement to the track, with the particular aim of avoiding Sackers Green and Lamarsh if possible”*

The Society will continue to monitor aircraft noise once the proposals are put into effect which should be in November this year (although it is possible that there will be some slippage to this timetable). We now have a clear idea of the new routes but it is where aircraft actually fly that matters. We will need feedback from members once the new routes are in place and will take action if we find that short cuts are being taken regularly, as happened in the past.

The report into the expansion of Stansted airport has still to be published but the Government is expected to give its approval despite strong opposition which includes a representation by DVS. We are also objecting to the proposed second runway.

To the East, there is little sign of progress with the Bathgate Bay development and I am told this may be delayed in favour of projects elsewhere. A new Chairman of the Haven Gateway Partnership has been appointed to replace George Courtauld, who has recently retired. He is George Kieffer who is a businessman involved with the East of England Development Agency. I should mention that I was approached to fill this post but refused on the grounds that it would conflict with being President of this Society. We must however, understand the agenda of powerful Quangos such as this, whose objectives for our area may be very different from our own, and seek to influence them in regard to the interests of the Vale.

In this context, I have been in touch over the past year with Jeremy Pembroke, leader of Suffolk County Council and with Lord Hanningfield, who leads Essex CC and Cllr John Jowers who is the Cabinet member responsible for rural issues, about the possibility of extending the AONB upriver. Essex in particular is interested in this although it is not a priority or in prospect in the short term.

I have also mooted the idea of The Dedham Vale being made a world Heritage Site, something which might well appeal to our politicians in Olympic year 2012. Your views on these subjects would be welcome.

Every year new applications for housing and other developments keep our planning officers busy. David Eking in Suffolk and Roger Drury in Essex have done a wonderful job. Their representations on our behalf carry weight with the authorities and their succinct reports are greatly appreciated by the Committee. These are absolutely key jobs and I should like to thank them both on your behalf and say how much their work is valued.

You have heard the report from Simon Amstutz on the work of the Dedham Vale & Stour Valley Partnership. I sit on the joint advisory committee of this organisation (representing the CLA) which does so much excellent work in our area. Jeremy Cohen is also a member representing CPRE. The bulk of the membership consists of Councillors and Officers of the two county councils and five district councils covering the river valley almost from source to sea. Working together has been valuable for all concerned as each council becomes more aware of the problems and challenges and all are beginning to work together to meet them.

Simon has mentioned ***Managing a Masterpiece*** and the news that over £1million has been obtained for this work. The Society will inevitably be involved with this major project and details are available through the magazine and on our website.

The Sustainable Development fund has also been mentioned and any projects which meet the criteria and can be presented before the panel meets on 20<sup>th</sup> October will be considered. Not all this money has yet been committed and if any member would like to contact Simon or Katherine Blake, they will be able to advise them of the criteria for eligibility. I am one of those who sit on the grant making panel which tries to ensure the money goes to projects which will really benefit the Vale. Katherine can be contacted on 01473 264263 or by e-mail at [dedhamvaleproject@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk](mailto:dedhamvaleproject@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk)

Roger Drury has told us a little about the work of *CPRE* Essex to which DVS is affiliated and to which we contribute financially each year. We also contribute to the equivalent body in Suffolk, *The Suffolk Preservation Society*. CPRE is the leading countryside body in the UK and takes important initiatives on countryside matters. A campaign to clean up and improve awareness about litter is being spearheaded by the President, Bill Bryson as is a move to reduce billboards and the clutter of unnecessary signs.

CPRE's Tranquillity Maps have also attracted much attention and highlight the alarming growth of light pollution especially in South East England. When did *you* last see the Milky Way.....?

I believe we should support these campaigns in our local area and I hope members will be aware of the problems both blights can cause.

Once again, Sara and I were privileged to have the annual summer garden party at Shrubs Farm and to welcome over 200 members and friends in the Society's 70<sup>th</sup> year. It was wonderful to see so many people on one of the rare beautiful evenings of this waterlogged summer and I renew my heartfelt thanks to Sarah Carr and her splendid team of helpers who made the whole evening so enjoyable. I should also like to pay tribute to my wife Sara who worked very hard to ensure the event was a success.

I expect our next venue will be at the other end of the Vale but I am delighted to tell you that our son and daughter-in-law, Charles and Laura Erith, who live at Wiston, have volunteered to have a party for younger people in the Vale in a bid to attract a large number of new members of their own generation. Suggestions of names, addresses and contact details will be gratefully received either to Sarah Carr or direct to [laura@chazlaz.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:laura@chazlaz.fsnet.co.uk). Or 01206 262933.

Our website [www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk](http://www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk) has been completely updated and greatly expanded and is now a delight to use as well as being a mine of information. My grateful thanks to Nella Probert, Sarah Carr, Paul Gallifant and especially Lorraine Brooks. It will be of increasing importance in the years ahead and I urge members to use it.

I conclude by once again thanking Wilf Tolhurst, our Chairman, Sarah Carr our indefatigable Secretary, John Osborn our membership secretary and Michael Parker, our treasurer and all members of the Committee for their work and for the time they give willingly to the Society.

David Eking, has edited the latest edition of our journal. Paul has put on a wonderful slide show and his knowledge of the Vale and undiminished enthusiasm for keeping it beautiful deserves high praise.

Thank you, too our members for your continued support which will be greatly needed in the year ahead.