

## Annual Report 2021

This year has seen a totally different way of operating at County, District and Parish Council level regarding having virtual meetings.

Overall, it has been business as usual and much has been achieved.

However, Whitfield on the Dover West Ward has seen some government moves which have been taken without the full wide consultation with the local community regarding the Inland Border Facility (IBF) which the DfT are keen to tell us it is not a "lorry park," so I suppose Tesco supermarket should be telling us they have a "customer goods loading facility" because they do not have a car park.

This is the nonsense of semantics and I for one am not prepared to play their puerile games.

I have fought hard to protect the village of Whitfield, Pineham and Guston from having such a site on the White Cliffs Business Park, where the local shoppers experience will become a nightmare as many car drivers and cyclists will have to mix it with diesel fumed belching left hand drive HGVs all jockeying to reach the B&Q roundabout to gain access to the Inland Border Facility the south side of the roundabout.

At night this will be a highly lit ( for health and safety reasons ) noisy facility.

At certain times I can envisage traffic problems as some HGVs break down, whilst queuing to enter the site, as was evidenced on the Meridian News three weeks ago when I was interviewed giving an update of events.

I was disappointed the MP for the Dover area, who right from the start, proclaimed this is what Dover needs to create jobs, so she stated she would be in full support of the freight facility, lorry park being constructed on the proposed site at Whitfield.

When I became first aware of the project, my first concern went immediately to those whose properties will border that facility and some of the community of Whitfield, Pineham, Guston and the Buckland Estate.

Having advised those residents immediately bordering the site to obtain professional valuations of their properties last October and to then obtain a second valuation some three months later, some properties have been de-valued by £100,000, since the initial valuation.

This is not just and any politician should be considering how such government projects will impact on the wider local community who voted them into office before announcing an immediate support for the government project.

After all the DfT insistence on not referring the Whitfield project as a lorry park, when I questioned the DfT about the frequent occurrences of freight being unable to cross the seas due to poor weather or industrial disputes, would the freight facility just remain empty, the DfT did concede they had considered using the facility to park up lorries. So it came close to them accepting it could be a lorry park.

When I questioned the inordinate spend of tax payers money for a facility with a projected life span of just five years, I was told that it could still remain under HM Customs. So we are not being told the full intentions alternatively the DfT do not have an exit strategy formulated yet.

I am also critical of many of the Dover District Councillors who voted to support the government project regarding the IBF, when as I write, none of us including the DfT have any idea of the final plans for the site, nor the intentions for the site following the supposed closing down in five years time.

How on earth can any councillor vote to support a project when no one knows the final plans. I find this incredulous and a point of serious concern.

Then we had the Dover Fast Track rapid bus transport system which the government, through Homes England, is contributing just around £16 million and the balance will be paid by the tax and rate payers.

So we have a project which was considered over ten years ago to take the residents from the proposed 5750 homes planned to be built in Whitfield back in 2008 to the shops in Dover town and Dover Priory Railway station to commute to London and elsewhere for work.

The only problem is the project has not kept pace with life.

Many Rapid Bus Transport systems established in the Midlands and the North have failed due to lack of passenger commitment, due to various factors, for example the Dartford Fast Track had been popular when it offered free travel to local residents, however, when the bus company started charging fares, combined with long delays at the Dartford Tunnel feeding back into the town, this affected the bus system and the initial popularity has waned.

As we know now at Whitfield the housing development has been delayed due to flooding problems partially created by the concreting over of phase 1&2 of the White Cliffs Business park which may be exacerbated with the development of phase 3.

I spoke to one of the foreman involved in the construction of those houses a while back who predicted a good twenty five years before all the houses will be built on that site. So not the footfall the Dover Fast Track had anticipated. Then we come back to the initial remit " to take passengers to the shops in Dover Town." What shops? they are all closing down.

Then the other promotion to take commuters to Dover Priory Rail way Station. Well two points have occurred since then. The sea wall being washed away a few years back closed down the railway line from Dover Priory to Folkestone. Network rail rebuilt the line at a cost of £40 million and stated this would be a final reprieve, any further incidents such as a major cliff fall and they would close the line permanently. We have had two cliff falls recently, so the future for that line is precarious, then since the pandemic commuting has dropped off dramatically and it is considered this trend will not reverse. Since the pandemic more grocery and other shopping is carried out on line having increased three fold once more a trend predicted to remain. Stage Coach can not run their many rural busses profitably at the moment, so what can the Fast Track achieve that Stage Coach have not been able to to date? So will the Dover Fast Track be dead in the water before it has been constructed to become another white elephant to go into the Dover Zoo with its other white elephants.

There is proposed an over bridge to take the Dover Fast Track from the Archers Court Road area over the A2 towards the B&Q roundabout. However, the local MP has stated she is determined to have the dualling of the A2 at Whitfield carried out as a priority.

I look at the A2 at Whitfield and find it difficult to envisage how they can dual the area around Whitfield roundabout, due to the number of properties involved. The only solution is to construct a dual carriageway from Coldred via Eythorne, Waldershare to return to the east of Whitfield on the A256.

If that is the projected route which has been discussed, then millions of pounds of rate payers money will have been wasted on constructing an over bridge over the A2 for the Dover Fast Track to avoid traffic density which will be rendered redundant in the future due to a dramatically reduced traffic flow density.

We had further wasting of tax payers money on the Dover cycle lane, which brought Dover to a standstill causing absolute mayhem and now the Dover parklets. The Dover cycle lane cost the tax payer over a quarter of a million pounds.

So over the past year I feel the local areas have been let down by the government dictating certain projects via the County and District Council to the local communities without consulting, considering,

or contemplating how many of their projects often clearly vanity projects will impact adversely on the local community and could that money, now wasted, have been spent more wisely.

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