

# PLUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2004/5

Pluckley Parish Council has pleasure in presenting a report of its activities for the past year.

## **You are invited to...**

### **Annual Parish Assembly – Monday 4 April, 8pm**

Once a year, parishes must hold a public meeting sometime between 1 March and 1 June. All electors in the parish are entitled to speak and vote. This year the annual parish assembly is on Monday 4 April at 8pm in Pluckley Village Hall.

This year there will be a presentation from ADAS on their new website

## **www.pluckley.net**

In October 2004 the parish council received a commendation in the Website of the Year category of the Local Council Review and Co-operative Bank Communications Awards 2004. It was reported that all the entries were of a high quality and provided an enormous challenge for the judges. Pluckley has been invited to enter once again this year. The parish council express their thanks to Chrysalis Computer Solutions for hosting the site and making regular (free of charge) updates.

## **Roads**

Following last year's meeting when the village decided that they did not wish to contribute towards the cost of the speed management the proposed speed management measures are still waiting to be implemented. At the time of going to press, Pluckley was fourth on a list of seven parishes planned for 2005/6, although if those other parishes provide funding, then they will take precedence.

### **Result of the survey carried out last year with the residents at in the station area.**

All residents were contacted asking them for their views on the proposed parking restrictions. There were only 15 replies, of which only 8 were in favour of parking restrictions along Station Road between Dering Close and the station car park. As the criterion was that over 50% should be in favour, the scheme had to be dropped.

## **Broadband – it has happened!**

The parish council, having kept up the momentum in trying to get Broadband in Pluckley, was rewarded by the village 'going live' towards the end of 2004..

## **Pluckley Brickworks**

At the time of going to press, the parish was still awaiting a decision from the Environment Agency over the application for a Waste Management License at the Brickworks. The sub-committee has continued to meet throughout the year and the situation has been closely monitored.

Currently the application has been put on hold pending an assessment of traffic movements as a result of the operation of the site as a waste transfer station; a noise and dust survey for the operation of the site as a waste transfer station; and an ecological survey for the presence of protected species – all to be undertaken by the applicant.

Once these surveys have been presented, then the parish council expect to be consulted and make further representations to the Environment Agency. At that time, the parish council will be calling on all those who volunteered to help, requesting them to deliver further newsheets encouraging everyone to write once again.

The 'Darling Buds of May' Village  
Invites you to join them at the



## **PLUCKLEY HOG FAIR**

**Saturday 9 July**

Proceeds to support the new Village Sports Pavilion

The Day will Feature

*Great Grub*

Two Hog Roasts • Beer Tent • Burgers and Hotdogs • Tea Tent • Home made Cakes • Cream Teas • Ice Creams • Soft Drinks

*Cracking Competitions*

For Pets: Open Fun Dog Show • Terrier Racing

For Adults and Children: Two Mile Fun Run • Fancy Dress Competition  
• Face Painting

*Scintillating Sport*

Five a Side Football League • Netball League • Fun Run

*A Purchasing Promenade*

Including Craft Stalls • Antiques Stalls • Country Produce Stalls

*Family Fun with*

Sideshowes • a Funfair • a Children's Play Area

*A Lucky Programme Raffle*

with many fine prizes

If you would like to 'volunteer' to help by serving 'Hog' or helping on a stall then

email Alan Davies: [alan@pluckley.net](mailto:alan@pluckley.net) or phone on 01233 840514

Reserve your own stall:

email [janeemblem@lineone.net](mailto:janeemblem@lineone.net) or phone Jane on 01233 713432.

Stalls (to be booked in advance) from £20

## Wealden Wheels

### Community Transport for Pluckley

Rural villages are suffering from declining public services. Village pubs are closing every week in the UK, railway stations are threatened with service reductions often leading to closure and bus services disappear as the goal of profitability focuses on delivering premium rate transport services between major centres of population (e.g. the CTRL) rather than delivering the right level of infrastructure to a more sparsely populated rural environment. Pluckley has been threatened by all of the above in the last year.

These threats however are not new and Pluckley Parish Council, having faced these problems for many years, got together with the three neighbouring villages of Charing, Egerton, and Smarden, through their parish councils, to set up a Community Transport company which has just completed its first twelve months of operation.

What Wealden Wheels provides however is not a local bus or taxi service, that's the province of the commercial operators. It provides very affordable transport to village organisations who can join by paying a modest annual membership fee. Transport is available either on a self drive basis, or with volunteer drivers. The operation has benefited significantly through establishing at a very early stage a relationship with Kent Play Clubs, a charitable organisation which sets up and runs after school Clubs for working parents. Wealden Wheels is the affordable transport option for the parents who wish to use these Clubs.

The sight of your silver Ford Tourneo MPV with its brightly coloured logos and comfortably outfitted 9-seat 'coach' interior driving around the area has created further interest outside the original four 'founding' villages. As a result of this the village of Challock decided to join the operation in October last year. With this increased demand, the funding bodies who contributed so much to the setting up originally have now funded a second, larger 13-seater vehicle (football team size!) which is fitted with a wheelchair lift to enable disabled people to benefit from our service.

To date some 60 organisations from the five villages have now decided to join. These include groups such as scouts, guides, youth clubs, WI, cricket clubs, church



groups, gardening groups, two local surgeries, and a nursing home.

The initial success of this venture was very much down to finding willing and supportive funding organisations as well as volunteers to help both manage the operation and provide drivers when needed. There can never be enough volunteers though so if you would like to help in some way then do contact them.

The 'funders' who enabled the acquisition the vehicle and pay for a coordinator to work with village organisations are the people Wealden Wheels would like to very gratefully acknowledge. In addition to financial support over four years from each of the villages, they are also grateful to Ashford Borough Council, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the Countryside Agency, and to Kent Rural Community Council who provided significant help in raising the funds. Last but by no means least, to the European Community through the Leader+ rural issues funding body (it's nice to know that some of our EC contribution comes back home!)

If you feel that groups in your area could benefit from using our vehicles, or if you feel you could help as a volunteer driver, then please have a look at what Wealden Wheels is doing on their website [www.wealdenwheels.org.uk](http://www.wealdenwheels.org.uk) or contact the coordinator, Kevin Parry on 01233 713613.



## Finances

The parish council raised the precept for 2005/6 to £16,000 (a £500 increase). In addition Ashford Borough Council granted £1,091 as payment towards works carried out by the parish council on behalf of the borough and £700 towards the village street sweeping.

The 2005/6 budget is therefore broken down as follows:

Income	£	Expenses	£
Estimated Balance b/f	10,255	Road Sweeper	927
Estimated Bank interest	60	Sports Pavilion	2,500
Ashford Borough Council	18,041	General Admin	12,370
Estimated Recycling credits	1,200	Village Hall	12,063
Rents	260	Recreation Ground	3,900
Village Hall	2,700	Repairs & Maintenance	327
Misc. income	75	Brickworks	500
Estimated Vat	2,000	Hog Fair	0
		S137 payments (other items)	1,180
		Wealden Wheels	500
		Contingency fund	324
<b>Total income</b>	<b>34,591</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>34,591</b>

## What does your council do?

All meetings of Pluckley Parish Council are open to the public. Everyone is welcome to come along. The full council meeting is on the second Monday of each month at 8pm in the village hall. The plans committee meets at 7:45pm on the fourth Monday of each month when there are planning applications that have to be considered before the next full council meeting.

Members regularly attend meetings of Ashford Borough Council's Parish Forum, Weald Police Forum, and Kent Association of Parish Councils.

## Freedom of information

To comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and the Disability Discrimination Act, Pluckley Parish Council has set up regular council surgeries. These take place on the third Saturday of each month in the committee room of the village hall, unless it has been pre-booked, from 9:30 to 10:30am.

The Clerk to the Council will be in attendance together with one or two parish councillors to answer any queries residents may have. The official minute book will be available for anyone to see.

Other information held by the council will be made available to any resident, provided that a request has been made in writing to the Clerk to the Council at least three working days prior to the surgery date.

Copies of documents may be made or, if photocopies are requested, there is a charge of 10p per A4 sheet, plus postage

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## Planning

In the past 12 months, there have been 34 planning applications: the council objected to 8 of them. Most of these were of a routine nature. 6 applications are still awaiting a decision by Ashford Borough Council. Of the 8 not supported by the parish council, 2 were withdrawn by the applicants, 2 were refused by Ashford Borough Council, and 1 was granted. Of the other 26 applications, all supported by the parish council, 3 were withdrawn and 3 others are still awaiting decision by Ashford. The rest were passed. It has been interesting to note that on the majority of instances, the borough council have taken the recommendations of the Pluckley Parish Design Statement into account when coming to a decision.

Copies of the Design Statement are on sale for £5 a copy at the Annual Parish Assembly or from the Clerk to the Council

Pluckley Parish Council  
Surgery  
Pluckley Village Hall  
3rd Saturday of each month  
(unless hall has been pre-booked)  
9:30am to 10:30pm

### Your Parish Councillors and other Contacts:

Janet Gwillim (Chairman)	840203
Trevor Oliver (Vice Chairman)	820516
James Ashby	840519
Andrew Buchanan	840353
Peter Campbell	840412
Alan Davies	840514
Russell Keep	840798
Ann Murray	840166
<b>Borough Cllr:</b> Andrew Wickham	01580 879601
<b>County Cllr:</b> Richard King	756592
<b>MP:</b> Damian Green	820911

# Pluckley Station Action Group

Pluckley Station Action Group (PSAG), set up following a public meeting last year, is now formally constituted and has been extremely active over the last 12 months. PSAG committee members Andrew Buchanan, Wendy Toms, Jo Morton, Jack Reason and Alan Davies have been working hard on two fronts:

- First, to try to save Pluckley from the decimation of services (including potentially all direct Cannon Street trains) as proposed in the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) original proposals for the Integrated Kent Rail Franchise published last year.
- Secondly to preserve the Pluckley stops on the 06:37 train from Ashford to Cannon Street and on the 17:22 train back to Pluckley, which South Eastern Trains have stated are to be removed as of June 2005, when the suburban Networker trains will replace some of the old slam-door trains. Networker trains of 10 carriages are too long for the short platform at Pluckley and are not fitted with any means of preventing the doors from automatically opening where the train overhangs the platform. Hence the decision to remove the Pluckley stops.

## **Highlights of the past year include:**

- TV and local radio coverage including interviews with PSAG committee members when the car park ticket costs rose by between 40% and 60% (depending on the type of ticket bought.).
- TV coverage when PSAG members distributed fliers along the length of all rush hour Cannon Street trains urging people to write in to oppose the SRA proposals.
- PSAG attended and members spoke a number of times at the Rail Passengers Committee (Southern England) October 2005 meeting in Tonbridge. Committee members were interviewed by BBC radio at this time.
- PSAG attended and spoke at both the Staplehurst Rail Users forum public meeting in January and at a meeting at Charing for parish councillors in February. At each meeting, they drew attention to the fact that the SRA's final proposals for the new Kent rail franchise carry the risk that Kent passengers will end up paying not only premium rates for new fast domestic trains on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link from 2009, but also fares higher than anywhere else in the country for existing train services from 2006 – even though in many ways, these services may well be worse than they are now.
- Their own public meeting was held in the village hall last year to formally constitute the committee.
- Numerous articles have appeared in the local press following press releases.
- Passenger counts by volunteers have shown that the figures provided by SE trains do not reflect true passenger numbers.
- PSAG committee members have met with three of the four prospective bidders for the franchise in order to try and persuade them of the merits of improving services to Pluckley and a meeting with the fourth is fixed for March 31. Among other things, they are stressing the

need for more car parking at the station – reasonably priced.

- In order that they can speak with authority to both the bidders and the SRA about the concerns of the people who use Pluckley Station, committee volunteers have conducted a survey of passengers travelling between 5.21 and 9.59 am (when the heaviest use of the station takes place).

At the time of writing, the response has been a remarkable 70%, with 94 completed questionnaires returned. The results illustrate the importance of the station not only to Pluckley residents but to people from a very wide catchment area. Passengers come from miles away – including Ashford.

When the SRA's revised proposals for the Kent rail franchise were published in January, following thousands of protests against their original suggestions from all over Kent, it showed that Pluckley was not to lose all its Cannon Street services after all from 2009 and that, overall, the station would have more train services than it does now. However, the proposals are not perfect. Pluckley still stands to lose one third of its services to and from Cannon Street, despite the fact that passenger counts show that 60% of peak hour passengers from Pluckley use Cannon Street trains. Instead, the SRA proposes to replace one third of the Cannon Street trains from 2009 with Charing Cross trains stopping at London Bridge – a poor second best, but better than nothing. The other extra trains will all be Charing Cross ones, running in the off-peak for most of the day, every half hour.

However, because savage cuts to Cannon Street train services further up the Tonbridge line are proposed from 2009, it is feared that the result will be severe overcrowding on the remaining Cannon Street trains, with Pluckley passengers probably finding themselves standing all the way home. PSAG are therefore vigorously opposing these proposals in all their discussions with the franchise bidders, as well as calling for no cuts in existing Cannon Street services, and deploring the possibility that a new franchisee may be permitted to charge peak hour fares based on RPI+3% for the first five years of the new franchise. They have written to the Strategic Rail Authority expressing concerns and to all relevant local authorities, urging them to back us, and have urged Damian Green MP to seek a meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport to take our views right to the top.

PSAG does however need as much help and support as possible. In particular, they wish everyone to write to Damian Green MP at the House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA to protest against the withdrawal of the 06:43 and 17:22 Cannon St services in June, the proposed reduction in Cannon Street services from 2009, and the possibility of peak hour fares based from 2006 on RPI+3% for the first five years of the Kent rail franchise, dropping back to RPI+1% after that.

To register for free membership of PSAG, please email [trains@pluckley.net](mailto:trains@pluckley.net)