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Local environmental politics in England

Environmental activism in South East London and East Kent compared

Christopher Rootes, Debbie Adams and Clare Saunders
Centre for the Study of Social and Political Movements
Darwin College
University of Kent at Canterbury
CT2 7NY

email: car@ukc.ac.uk

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Abstract

In order to gain an understanding of the varied character of local environmental activism in England, this paper compares the character of local environmentalism in inner south east London with that in two adjacent less-urbanised / semi-rural districts in Kent (Canterbury and Ashford). These areas have been chosen so that we may examine the ways in which the nature of local environmental activism varies according to the degree and character of urbanisation of its context. In this very preliminary presentation of the results of our research, we present descriptive accounts of each area and of the character of environmentalism therein before focusing on the local campaigns against the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. We conclude by venturing some generalisations about the reasons for the different character of environmental activism in each location.

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Local environmental politics in England

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1. Introduction

In order to gain an understanding of the varied character of local environmental action in England, this paper compares the character of local environmentalism in inner south-east London with that in two adjacent less-urbanised / semi-rural districts in Kent (Canterbury and Ashford). These areas have been chosen so that we may examine the ways in which the nature of local environmental activism varies according to the degree and character of urbanisation of its context.

Canterbury and Ashford are small towns (populations approx. 40,000 and 50,000 respectively) about 20 km (15 miles) apart. Both are the seats of local Councils which serve populations two to three times their size, including a number of villages and some of the finest agricultural land in England. Although both towns – especially Canterbury – experience serious traffic congestion and pockets of poor air quality, the general condition of the local environment is good.

Inner south east London, by contrast, is highly urbanised, predominantly poor (but with significant pockets of relative affluence), with a high proportion of ethnic minorities, and a massive concentration of the social and environmental ills of the city. Traffic congestion is severe and air quality is generally poor.

Canterbury / Ashford and south east London are some 80 km (55 miles) apart, but are linked by their proximity to the Channel Tunnel rail link (CTRL), the largest transport infrastructure project undertaken in Britain in recent years. Beginning in 1989, the rail link was the object of many protests both in Kent and in south east London, and an examination of those protests will give us the opportunity to compare the characters of local mobilisations in these very different locales. We will also present evidence on the number and character of local environmental groups and their interactions with one another, with national environmental organisations, and with local government and business.

In this very preliminary presentation of the results of our research, we present descriptive accounts of each area and of the character of environmentalism therein before focusing on the local campaigns against the CTRL. We conclude by venturing some generalisations about the reasons for the different character of environmental activism in each kind of location.

2. South East London

South east London, for these purposes, encompasses the entire London borough of Greenwich, and smaller parts of the neighbouring boroughs of Southwark, Lewisham and Bexley. The region runs for about 12 km (8 miles) along the South bank of the River Thames, from the north west border of Kent to London Bridge in the Borough of

Southwark, and extends approximately 7 km (4.5 miles) southwards from the Thames. It is home to some 500,000 people, 207,650 of them resident in the London Borough of Greenwich (1991 census).

Insert Fig.1 (map of London highlighting Greenwich) about here

South East London is marked by sharp contrasts between acute deprivation in the northern areas and considerable affluence in the south. Population density is highest in the more deprived areas where a higher percentage of people live in purpose built flats. Southwark in particular has high levels of deprivation and the region generally has comparatively low car ownership levels. Over 42% of households in Greenwich in 1991 had no car (compared with under 30% in Canterbury District). A key local environmentalist described Southwark as: 'the second most deprived borough...in the UK and we've got some of the highest air pollution rates...especially for the people who live in Peckham, a lot of people don't have cars and suffer the consequences of other people' (Storm interview, 2001).

In the Borough of Greenwich – the focal point of our study area – in 1991, 13% of the economically active population were unemployed. However, within the Borough there are sharp differences. St Marys, a deprived ward, had an unemployment rate of 27%, in contrast to 7% in the wealthier Blackheath ward. 17% of Blackheath's residents work as professionals, compared with only 0.6% in St Marys. The proportion of residents working in managerial or technical jobs is over four times higher in Blackheath than St Marys. 84% of the residents of St Marys live in housing authority rented accommodation compared with 28% in Blackheath. St Marys also has much lower car ownership (67% of households with no car, compared to 29% in Blackheath). The percentage of residents with permanent sickness in St Marys is three times that for Blackheath.

According to the LA21 Co-ordinator at Greenwich Council, Greenwich still suffers the after-effects of the recession of the 1960s and 1970s, when 80,000 men lost their jobs in the Woolwich Arsenal. Sites for potential economic development in the region have been vacant for over 20 years (Sammons, interview, 2001). Consequently, Greenwich has been awarded funding under the Single Regeneration Budget scheme to help to redevelop these areas and so to reduce unemployment rates.

2.1. Overview of environmental issues in South East London

As the region is fairly densely populated and is a major centre of trade and commerce, there are inevitably many related environmental issues. The key issues of concern to local activists are directly related either to air quality – chemical pollution, traffic and waste / incineration – or regeneration – issues surrounding the development of the Greenwich Peninsular (the Millennium Dome and Village), the building of new supermarkets and plans for new housing or office developments.

2.1.1. Air quality

Although the industrial base in south east London has generally declined since the peak in British manufacturing, there are currently 131 factories in or close to Greenwich (FOE

web-site, 2001). These include Croda Resins Ltd and Nutrfarm UK Ltd (located in Belvedere), which emit high levels of volatile organic compounds, and the latter chlorine, Daikia Utilities Services PLC, (in Charlton) which emitted 629,000 kilograms of nitrogen oxides into the air in 1999, and Seaboard PowerLink (also in Charlton) which emits high levels of carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides.

According to a committee member of Belvedere and District Campaign Against Pollution (BADCAP), the industrial pollution problem was first noticed in 1985, when a chemical leak occurred from a local factory (interview, 2001). This provoked a local campaign, and residents became increasingly aware of pollution from industrial sources. In 1992, BADCAP carried out a survey of the local population to attempt to prove that the region has a 'constant and sometimes severe pollution problem' (Livingston, 1992). In response to a questionnaire deposited at local schools and shops, residents from north west Bexley and Greenwich frequently commented that they were suffering from ill-health which they perceived to be related to pollution. In 1992 the local paper ran a campaign which highlighted the links between air pollution and poor health. The lead story publicised findings of a survey which indicated that people in Greenwich have the highest rates of respiratory problems in the south east of Britain.

In 1992, a report commissioned by BADCAP indicated that children living close to busy through-roads were particularly susceptible to asthma. A particular hot-spot was Trafalgar Road, the main trunk road through North Greenwich, where a majority of children were suffering from asthma. Traffic has since been a high profile environmental issue, especially in the early to mid-1990s with campaigns attempting to halt the three proposed major road schemes: the widening of the South Circular road through Dulwich village to improve access to and from the proposed Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) (1991); the proposals for the Greenwich Waterfront bypass (1995); and the East London River Crossing (ELRC) (1992-1996) which threatened Oxleas Wood, a popular recreational area.

Waste incinerators have also been an issue. In 1991, proposals were made for a municipal waste incinerator in Belvedere. Residents successfully campaigned against this and the application was turned down in 1994. A second incinerator proposal in 1995 was, after public opposition, withdrawn in 1996. Since 1993 an incinerator (SELCHP) has been operating at Deptford in Lewisham. Although there was a modest protest campaign before it was granted a permit in 1990, it has recently been the subject of local concern. Incinerators are likely to become an increasing issue, as the Environment Agency has recently announced that London will require a further 11 incinerators if the amount of waste produced continues to increase at the current rate.

2.1.2. Regeneration

The Millennium Dome and Village on the Greenwich Peninsular provide a spectacular example of a modern, but perhaps unsuccessful attempt at sustainable urban regeneration. Although Greenwich Council regard it as a flag-ship example of sustainable development (Sammons interview, 2001), the proposals sparked off a wave of local and national controversy. Local activists have consistently claimed that the former

British Gas works site was, and possibly still is, contaminated with toxins including cyanide, asbestos, benzene and arsenic. Greenwich and Lewisham Friends of the Earth (G&LFOE) has been urging home-buyers to demand full information on the level of clean-up measures.

In 1997, Greenpeace claimed that the Dome itself was a potential environmental disaster, because it was to be constructed using cancer-inducing PVC. They claimed that dioxins and hydrogen chloride would be released if it should catch fire. The site was also occupied by a This Land is Ours (TLIO) group, who claimed that it should be used to benefit the local community, and that the costs were far greater than the plans warranted. Earth First!ers joined in the battle claiming that the Dome was 'a celebration of rampant consumerism and corporate culture' (Elaine, in Deluce, 1997). Local groups such as Greenwich Green Party, Greenwich Action to Stop Pollution (GASP), G&LFOE and MILNET proposed that the site should instead be used for low cost eco-housing (traffic free, energy efficient and made of environmentally-friendly materials). To G&LFOE, locating a traffic-generating supermarket next to an eco-village made a complete mockery of the sustainable development ideal (Bates interview, 2001). A shopping complex (albeit partially wind-powered) has been operating in the Millennium Village since 1997, incorporating a supermarket, DIY superstore and ample car parking.

The Dome proposals included a package of Park and Ride schemes, under the auspices of an environmentally sustainable transport plan. Car parks for the scheme were located within a twenty-mile radius of the Dome site. Plans for one at Falconwood Field, a Metropolitan Urban Open Land adjacent to Oxleas Wood were strongly opposed on the grounds that it would still bring traffic into an already over-congested part of London and destroy highly valued open space.

On the fringe of the region is the 200-acre Crystal Palace Park. The Palace itself was destroyed by fire in 1936, and in 1997, a planning application was made for the 12-acre site. The plans – for a 53,000m² leisure complex with a 20-screen multiplex cinema and a 950-space car park – were approved by Bromley council in 1998 after minimal public consultation. Local people formed a campaigning group in protest at not being given a say over the future of the park. The plans are now widely opposed by various local and national environment and amenity groups. The main grounds for opposition are: the disruption the leisure complex would cause to wildlife, the fact that a multi-complex contradicts the ethos of the historic park, and that the plans would generate much unwanted non-local traffic (Lewington, 2001).

There have been a number of campaigns against proposed super-market and super-store developments. Objections are usually made on the grounds of loss of open spaces, and traffic generation. Proposals for new buildings, especially up-market housing and office developments, have also excited opposition, sometimes successful. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a series of campaigns to prevent housing developments from being built on sold-off school playing fields. In 1997, proposals to redevelop Greenwich town centre (which would have resulted in the demolition of historic buildings and their replacement with a modern precinct to accommodate the Docklands Light Railway) were widely opposed by local businesses, history groups, amenity

societies and environmental groups, with support from English Heritage.

The other main issue was the proposed Channel Tunnel Rail Link which between 1988 and 1992 threatened thousands of homes and acres of valued open spaces in places like New Eltham, Mottingham, Peckham, Dulwich, Camberwell and Waterloo and caused widespread property blight.

2.2. Groups and other important actors in the local environmental movement

There are a host of different types of residents', amenity and environment groups in the region which attempt to influence local environmental decision making. These can be differentiated in terms of their geographical influence, duration of existence, choices of issues, range of activities, and in some cases social class.

2.2.1. Small scale conservation organisations

At the most local level there are small-scale conservation organisations which carry out maintenance and conservation work in local parks, such as Friends of Greenwich Park. This group monitors activities in the park to maintain the correct balance between conservation and amenity use, has contributed to tree-planting, and transformed a derelict part of the park into a nursery. The Friends maintain a close dialogue with the council, and have prevented alterations to the park which would have been detrimental to the local ecology. Most parks in Greenwich and Southwark have a 'Friends' group which performs similar and highly valued roles (Storm interview, 2001). In Greenwich, the London Wildlife Trust has a Centre for Wildlife Gardening, which provides visitors with ideas and inspiration for making their gardens more attractive to wildlife. Plumstead Common Environment Group (PCEG) is an example of a local park conservation organisation which has extended its remit beyond conserving the wildlife on the Common. It has also been very active in promoting recycling, has co-operated with the Tidy Britain Group on large scale litter clearance, and been active in the removal of graffiti.

2.2.2. Environmental Amenity Groups

There are several local environmental amenity groups which use the local environment as a resource, rather than as a project. Groups which fall into this category are the local RSPB groups, which have the objective of viewing birds for pleasure; and Ramblers' Groups, such as Blackheath Group of the Ramblers' Association, which offers walks along the Green Chain¹ for local members, and annual walking trips abroad.

2.2.3. Tenants and Residents Associations

Tenants and Residents Associations are common-place in south east London and

¹ The Green Chain is an amalgamation of 300 open spaces throughout south east London which constitutes a 16.5 mile walk from Thamesmead to Crystal Palace. The Countryside Commission helped to set up the Chain and representatives from the four boroughs through which it passes (Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham) collaborate to conserve wildlife and protect the open spaces from development.

represent most neighbourhoods. They campaign on a very broad range of issues, ranging from tenancy agreements, to water supply, to NIMBY environmental issues. Barry Area Residents Association in Southwark, for example, consults with Southwark Traffic Management on traffic calming and bus route planning and also carries out pooper-scooping and general environmental improvement tasks. It can be argued that these Associations are common because residents are confronted with many threats to their local community, in a political climate which favours industry over people.

'A lot of big companies are based in the North of Southwark and the environment seems to be planned around them and not around the people who live there. So definitely in the north - probably in the north of Greenwich as well - I think the communities there are - I would describe them as environmentalists, maybe on a NIMBY level, because they're trying to protect what they've got. When they're ridden rough-shod over for road schemes or for transport schemes, or simply when their markets are closed down, or their parks are closed off, or kids play areas are closed off, they are being environmentalists because they are trying to protect things for their community.' (Storm interview, 2001).

2.2.4. Local Societies

In contrast, the more Southern areas in the region are much more affluent. Dulwich is an example of an affluent area in the region which consists mostly of large Victorian houses. It is almost antonymous to the high density social housing in the northern areas, and so attracts different types of people from the council tenants of North Greenwich. It is not coincidental that Societies, such as the Peckham Society, Dulwich Society, East Dulwich Society, Eltham Society, Camberwell Society, Blackheath Society and the Greenwich Society are located in the more affluent parts of the region. Patrick Spencer, the Secretary of the Dulwich Society, admitted that

'where you get an area that becomes quite expensive and attracts well educated people, it is more likely for a society of this nature to be founded rather than in an area which is suffering from impoverishment' (interview Spencer, 2001).

Generally they can be regarded as NIMBY organisations² :

'the issues that we are concerned with are those that affect us. I'm not for one moment suggesting that we campaign on issues that occur in another area that affect *them*, but wouldn't affect *us*.' (Spencer interview, 2001).

Yet, despite their NIMBY outlook on environmental issues, Stephanie Lodge of Southwark FOE regards them as an important part of the local environmental movement. To Jenny Bates of G&LFOE,

'the societies have been very powerful in Greenwich ... they have been traditionally important [in the local environment movement]' (interview Bates, 2001).

Societies are generally wealthy organisations, which raise their substantial funds through membership subscriptions. It is common for Societies to have a special interest fore-
mostly in local history, but they also play a key role in local environmental politics – objecting to, recommending, negotiating and / or discussing aspects such as planning applications, wildlife sites and traffic / transport with their local councils.

² Stephanie Lodge, co-ordinator of Southwark FOE, suggested that local societies were made up of 'cliques' of people.

According to a local resident, the members of the Blackheath Society are mainly concerned with protecting their own narrow interests, and have recently been forcing local traffic away from their own neighbourhood, but consequently increasing traffic levels in more densely residential areas. As a consequence, conflict has arisen between the local societies and the broader community. Conflict of this sort appears to be common, and can further be demonstrated by the example of the differing responses to the proposed Greenwich Waterfront bypass. The Greenwich Society was in favour of the bypass because it would relieve congestion in the parts of the town which affected them, whilst GASP regarded it as

'morally repugnant because it would simply be emptying traffic onto ... areas that have got notoriously bad air quality and very high mortality rates.' (Connolly interview, 2001).

Aside from the obvious middle class NIMBYism evident in the campaigns of local societies, differing perceptions of environmental issues in Greenwich can also be attributed to peoples' outlook on the local environment.

'To understand Greenwich, I think you have to understand the view you get when you look out the window ... if your view includes Queen Annes House, the Naval College and the river, then your outlook is the historical heritage of Greenwich and your concern tends to focus on the buildings. If your outlook of Greenwich is the industrial landscape ... you don't have that view. Your concerns are the people ... Members of the Greenwich Society, their members are up on the hill ... Most of our membership live in the valley around Trafalgar Road and you can actually map the changing membership of groups as you move up the hill.' (Connolly interview, 2001).

2.2.5. Issue-oriented groups

'Most groups are formed ... in *opposition* to something rather than being *for* something. And they come together when there's a sense of urgency, usually when there's a *planning application*.' (Connolly interview, 2001).

Many of the groups which have been active in South East London have indeed developed in response to planning applications. Due to the very issue specific nature of this type of campaign, these groups tend to be short-lived and very locally based. Residents Against Polytechnic Expansion (RAPE) and Defence of Our Open Spaces Heritage (DOOSH) are two such groups. They campaigned against Greenwich University's proposals for expansion and a supermarket proposal. On losing the battle, they ceased activity.

Another specifically urban short-lived single issue campaign group was TRACE (Tenants & Residents Against a Contaminated Environment), formed by a group of concerned mothers when they discovered that local children were playing on land contaminated with lead, mercury and chromium, to spur the council into taking action to clean the site up and calculate the risks posed to their children. Once the Council responded, the group ceased activity. The groups which fought the CTRL also fall into this category, although one group diverted its attention to the East London River Crossing (ELRC) issue once the Rail Link threat was removed.

The Docklands Light Railway Monitoring Group campaigned to protect the historic buildings in Greenwich in the wake of proposals to introduce a modern shopping precinct and Docklands Light Railway (DLR) terminal, staging a street pageant, presenting evidence at public inquiry and taking their challenge to the House of Lords questioning the legality of the decisions made for compulsory purchase. In July 1999, it was announced that the plans were to be modified to protect the historic buildings which were shortly after granted World Heritage status by English Heritage. On completion of the DLR, the Monitoring group folded, as planning proposals for tracks and terminals no longer impacted residents.

People Against the River Crossing (PARC) is a single issue group, formed in 1986 to campaign against the proposals for the ELRC. The group has organised a wide range of campaign events and employed a wide range of tactics, including guided walks around Oxleas Wood, tree planting sessions and cycling to see the European Commissioner to instigate proceedings against the UK Government for failing to complete a full EIA. The ELRC proposals were withdrawn in July 1993 and since then, the group has been dormant. PARC is currently on stand-by for the announcement of the Thames Gateway crossings (two road, one rail) which are being planned by the Thames Gateway London Partnership.

Not all local single-issue environment groups have a peak of activity coterminous with the length and characteristics of a single local contentious issue. Opposition to the Destruction of Open Spaces (OTDOGS) formed in 1989 with the aim of preventing construction of a super-market. Although the campaign ultimately failed, the group still exists with the aim of 'preventing food giants from building on green spaces'³ and uses its skills and experiences to help others elsewhere in Britain in campaigns against supermarket proposals.

The campaigns against air pollution in Belvedere provide an example of how some locally based campaigning groups in South East London have changed and evolved as issues have arisen. The groups BADCAP, BETTER (Bexley Erith and Thamesmead Towards Environmental Renewal) and BADAIR (Bexley and District Against Incineration Risk) have consisted of the same key activists, but changed names and focus to highlight the issue of current concern. BADCAP started campaigning in 1985, when a chemical leak from a local factory prompted the group to campaign against pollution. The group engaged in its own practical pollution monitoring, publicised its findings to rally public support and lobbied Bexley Council's Environmental Pollution department. BADCAP ceased activity in 1990, but continued to exist nominally, especially to answer queries about pollution from schools and colleges. The key activists regrouped in 1991 as BETTER when an application was made to build a municipal waste incinerator at Belvedere. BETTER ceased activity after the public inquiry when the application was turned down. In 1995, when a second application for an incinerator was made, BADCAP and BETTER joined together with other local environment and community groups to form the umbrella group BADAIR. This second application was turned down in 1996, and activity again ceased. BADAIR has been active again since a third application was

³ Questionnaire response from John Beasley, founder of OTDOGS.

lodged in 1998 and is currently preparing evidence for the third public inquiry. Campaigning against incinerators has consisted mostly of focusing public opinion for support, researching and reporting, and presenting well-researched evidence at public inquiries.

GASP is an issue-oriented local environmental group which has the main aim of bringing about improved air quality. GASP has been campaigning almost consistently since 1991, against the proposals to extend Greenwich power station, the waste incinerator at Belvedere, the Greenwich bypass and traffic generally. GASP's continuity in campaigning may be attributed to the fact that central to its campaigning is an on-going problem – traffic. Similarly, local groups of the London Cycling Campaign and general transport groups such as the south east London Transport Action Group (SELTAG) have continuity in their campaigning.

2.2.6. Local branches of Environmental Movement Organisations

Unlike issue-oriented groups, local branches of **environmental movement organisations** (EMOs) tend to campaign on a wider range of issues which are not necessarily based on local issues. In south east London, there are local FOE groups (Greenwich & Lewisham and Southwark), Greenwich Greenpeace, a local World Development Movement group and WWF groups. G&LFOE has been very active in the issues surrounding the development of the Greenwich Peninsular. SFOE has been more active in the Crystal Palace Campaign, including participating in demonstrations and marches which aimed to encourage people to boycott UCI Cinemas. As well as focusing on issues of locally based environmental contention, these FOE groups also take part in the wider campaigns of national FOE, which provides them with campaign packs containing all they need except man-power to roll out the campaigns at a local level. GFFOE has been very active in campaigning for Real Food⁴ (Bates, interview 2001), and SFOE in climate change and the Illusi Dam. FoE is currently taking part in the national FOE campaign to encourage would-be MPs to pledge to be green (Lodge interview, 2001).

Greenwich Greenpeace, on the other hand, looks to raise both funds and public awareness and encourage local people to join the group. It does not as a group play a part in campaigning on issues of local environmental contention, although the chair has taken action as an individual campaigner. Greenwich Greenpeace does not however completely disengage itself from local environmental issues; it operates a local recycling scheme, and receives funds from Greenwich Council based on the amount of recyclables collected. Most of its activity, however, supports national Greenpeace by running information stalls, fund-raising and letter-writing. On occasions, members of the local group have engaged in Greenpeace direct actions for which some local members have received training (interview Hammond 2001). Local WWF groups in the region perform the standard WWF-volunteer group role, promoting the campaigns of WWF, assisting in campaigns and fundraising.

Greenwich Green Party is currently dormant after vigorously campaigning against the

⁴ Organic food which is affordable, food which is free from pesticides and GM organisms.

Millennium Dome and losing its co-ordinator who resigned, disillusioned with politics. Storm is the Green Party representative for Peckham and Camberwell, but Southwark FOE co-ordinator Stephanie Lodge believes 'he is spreading himself too thin, and as a result he will lose focus and be unable to bring about any positive change in the borough'. Also in Greenwich, the Fellowship Party promotes peace, pacifism and green politics, but it appears to be a 'one-man band', with little influence even locally (Connolly interview, 2001).

2.2.7. Radical activists

'South east London attracts a lot of people with alternative cultural identities; people into music, there's a big squat scene, lots of free parties, lots of empty buildings, lots of environmental organisations, lots of parks and places people want to hang out in; there's lots of art groups and people doing music, and generally lots of alternative shops and things in certain areas.' (Storm interview, 2001).

Direct action protesters have been active in protests relating to housing, in particular stating and demonstrating their right to squat and resisting eviction. This is a quasi-environmental issue to protesters who assert that there is no need to develop housing estates on green fields when many urban homes lie vacant. In 1998, a group of 'eco-warriors' formed the Big Willow Eco-village on the Crystal Palace site. The eco-activists lived in benders and tree-houses throughout February and the first half of March 1999 but were removed from the site on 16th March that year by 'a huge contingent of police' (Crystal Palace Website, 2001). Generally, the eco-activists received wide support from the local community.

The campaign at Crystal Palace mobilised both NIMBY environmentalists and NOPE (Not-On-Planet-Earth) activists, motivated by the discourses of community defence and deep ecology respectively. It provides an example of the conflict which often arises from the differences in these discourses and in campaigning tactics used⁵. Conventional lobbyists such as the members of Crystal Palace Campaign disapproved of the unlawful tactics used by residents of the Big Willow Eco-village, especially their use of tunnelling. Indeed, the Crystal Palace Campaign states clearly on its web-site that: 'The Crystal Palace Campaign does not fund the eco-warriors or direct their activities ... we do not invite, incite or condone any unlawful activity.'

The two types of campaigners also conflicted over their aspirations for the future use of the site. The radical environmentalists would like to see the site preserved without any further development, whereas the conventional lobbyists are happy for the site to be developed, so long as the new buildings are in keeping with the aura of the original Palace.⁶

⁵ Peter North (1994) found similar conflict between conventional and radical environmentalists in his study of the Solsbury anti-roads protest.

⁶ The Crystal Palace Campaign (CPC) is a particularly interesting case, as there have been numerous conflicts between parties involved, not just between the NIMBYs and the NOPEs. A group of concerned individuals split off from the main Campaign because they were dissatisfied with the way in which it was being run. They formed the Ridge Wildlife Group and have been particularly dissatisfied with what they see as the increasingly undemocratic character of the campaign. A representative from the Ridge Wildlife Group informed CS that leaders of CPC can no longer be voted out at the AGM. Missed deadlines and other misunderstandings made him wonder if CPC had become a conspiracy infiltrated by developers or those with a political motive for allowing the development to go ahead. He believed that the Campaign has

2.3.8. Monetary reformists

A network of Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS) has developed in south east London. This includes the LETS International Cafe, which provides opportunities for members of Southwark LETS to earn SLETS (the Southwark LETS currency) and learn the skills involved in running a small business. Nutritious meals and drinks can be paid for with conventional cash or SLETS. LETS Get Together is a similar scheme run by and for disabled people. There is also a LETS network in Greenwich.

Also important is the Southwark Social Investment Forum (SSIF). Its founder believes that the root of environmental and social problems is the debt and compound interest system of the modern economy (Challen, interview, 2001). SSIF is in April 2001 organising a fair for organisations interested in promoting the idea of monetary reform with the aim of discussing trading potential and the way forward in promoting local currencies and self-sufficiency. It is expected that stalls will be taken by LETS Southwark, the Council for Monetary Justice, Farmers Markets, Time Banks, the New Economics Foundation and other related bodies.

2.2.9. Regional and national organisations with a local influence

Although a national organisation, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) is also an important player in the local monetary reform movement of south east London. Its founder, Ed Mayo, is a Greenwich resident who was one of three founders of the Greenwich Sustainable Millennium Network (MILNET). NEF has been instrumental in setting up local LETS groups, and its broad indicators of sustainability have been used to inform MILNET's *Community Requirements for an Equitable Environmental Assessment Method* (CREEAM) document (1999), which set out the sustainability criteria by which the Millennium Dome and Village would be judged. NEF has also been important in the local environmental movement in south east London because it has influenced the thinking of local environmental activists.

ALARM UK (All London Against the Road Menace), which has recently folded, was co-ordinated by key activist and Lambeth resident John Stewart. He worked closely with other local groups, and was especially effective at writing reports, such as *Instead of the Bypass*, a report commissioned by GASP & G&LFOE. ALARM was very active in the campaign against the ELRC, and co-ordinated mass rallies for anti-roads protesters throughout London (ALARM Newsletter, July 1989). Communities Against Toxics has also been important in south east London, providing assistance to GASP and the Belvedere pollution campaigners in their anti-incineration campaigns.

2.2.10. Community development organisations

A number of community development organisations contribute to the environmental movement in practical ways rather than by campaigning. The Community Recycling In

effectively blocked adequate public participation, and misled those with a passion for protecting the site.

Southwark Project (CRISP), for example aims to :

- realise the environmental benefits of Sustainable Development focusing on waste management and recycling;
- realise the local employment opportunities of sustainable development; and
- generate income and support for local community projects and organisations.

CRISP offers advice to businesses on a wide range of aspects of sustainability, such as pollution control, transport and communications, and water conservation. Recyclable office furniture and equipment are collected and sold on. CRISP also facilitates community composting schemes, holds environmental education sessions, and provides advice for schools and further education establishments. CRISP is a subsidiary of Elephant Jobs, which was founded by Peter Challen (founder of SSIF) with the specific aims of reducing unemployment, educating the public in the practice of sustainable development and to protect and conserve the natural environment (Challen interview, 2001).

Allotment societies and Community orchards are other examples of community development initiatives which are increasing in popularity. Camberwell, for example, has a community orchard where local people are assigned a plot of land on which to grow fruit trees for their own sustainable use.

2.2.11. Community forums and umbrella groups

Greenwich and Southwark have Environment Forums which are used as the main channel of communication between local environmentalists and the borough Councils. Storm is sceptical of the contribution that these forums make to the environmental movement:

‘it's completely ridiculous that you can have say 50 or 60 members of an Environment Forum in Southwark. Half of them don't even attend the meetings. I can understand why because I don't go anymore, not very much. There's no shared facilities, there's no shared offices, there's no shared databases, there's no shared information, there's no shared reaction to problems.’ (Storm interview, 2001).

Activists in Greenwich might perhaps agree with this, as the Greenwich Environmental Forum (GEF) has not been mentioned as being an effective or prominent environmental organisation by the people we have interviewed. Marie Hammond of Greenwich Greenpeace stated that she believed Anna Townend (the chair of GEF) to be an outspoken environmentalist who generally worked on her own.

There are various other more general community forums in south east London which have the aim of involving local people in the development of their local environment, particularly with regard to regeneration projects. These include the Creekside Community Forum, the Thames Waterfront Community Forum (TWCF) and the Bankside Residents Forum. Like local societies, they have a range of sub-committees, often including planning, transport and tourism, and some are regionally based – TWCF encompasses groups from Kent, as well as North and South of the Thames.

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) has been working with environment

groups, businesses and local authorities throughout London to ensure that communities are fully involved in the regeneration process. CDF believes that 'the community has to look both ways: not only how the community is working at the grass roots level, but also how responsive key institutions are to the needs of local communities' (CDF Website, 2001).

MILNET is an umbrella group which formed as an outlet for community and environmental organisations to express their views on issues surrounding the Millennium Development. It consists of over 400 local environment and amenity groups, including the key activists from groups like G&LFOE, GASP, PARC and the DLR Monitoring Group.

Many local campaigning groups or environmental organisations have support from London-wide or national umbrella groups. Local FOE groups for example have a high level of back up from London FOE Groups' co-ordinator, Paul deZylva. Greenwich, Southwark and Lewisham Cycling groups work under the guidance of the London Cycling Campaign and CAPITAL Transport, and most of the local societies are affiliated to the Association of Civic and Amenity Societies. In all four boroughs there exist Associations of Voluntary Organisations which aim to tie the communities together, and to which many environment and amenity groups are affiliated.

2.2.12. Local Agenda 21

Greenwich Agenda 21 was launched in 1994 and consists of an Agenda 21 Partnership, which has a steering panel of representatives across various departments in the Council, the Agenda 21 Forum, which seeks to involve the community, and a Community Awards Scheme, which rewards businesses or local community groups which show commitment to the principles of sustainability. LA21 is housed in the Department of Strategic Planning, which has the main concerns of ensuring the redevelopment of the Thames Waterfront and protecting the new World Heritage Site of historic Greenwich. According to Sammons (Greenwich LA21 co-ordinator), Council projects are based on widespread public consultation: '[We say to people] "well what do you actually want, here's a number of options, or do you want something different?"'.

Local environmental activists, however, are very sceptical of the borough Councils, and see the LA21 process as particularly weak.

'I spent over 6 years ... on the Greenwich Council Agenda 21 Committee up until July of last year ... I put a lot of energy into LA21, and I think it's become almost the way committees are on road safety in councils. They are a way of shunting environmentalism away from the direct decision makers. When decisions are made indirectly it becomes a very anaesthetising forum and I think LA21 as it's been set up is extremely weak, and it's sucked up a lot of energy of activists .. it's been pretty unrewarding.' (Connolly interview, 2001).

Marie Hammond, chair of Greenwich Greenpeace, stopped attending the forum meetings for a similar reason, and Jenny Bates agrees that 'it has been absolutely bad the way it has been done' (interview, 2001) and finds that she is struggling to make it explicit to the council that G&LFOE is ...

'a) a valuable community resource, and b) that the environmental agenda is not at odds with issues like unemployment and job creation and things that they genuinely want to achieve in this poor borough.'

In Southwark,

'[LA21] has been a waste of time ... it hasn't had any impact .. they started off by involving the Environment Forum and those kinds of people .. and then they thought 'no, we should be inclusive of everyone' ... it's just having control groups of people who are supposed to represent the community ... but they haven't really got the grasp of it. I don't think it's had any impact at all ... they put in more money for glossy leaflets for nothing.' (Storm interview, 2001).

2.4. Networks

In Southwark, there is a fairly close-knit population and all the environmentalists appear to know one another and to be fairly well networked. Storm, for example, claimed that he would immediately ... 'know who to contact if something's going on. We've got phone trees and databases of all kinds of people we can just phone up.' (Storm interview, 2001).

When asked to state which other environmental groups they co-operate with, interviewees from Greenwich tended to mention the same key activists.

When there is a major proposal which many different local groups oppose, they usually collaborate. The Crystal Palace Campaign, for example, is supported by many groups, including the local societies (Dulwich, Peckham and Camberwell), a Crystal Palace local history group (The Crystal Palace Foundation) and the local residents group (Crystal Palace Triangle Association). In fighting the incinerators, Bexley campaigners have co-operated with GASP, local residents associations, community health officers and local schools. With multi-issue groups, it is common for the amount of collaboration with other local groups to vary depending upon the issue. For instance, G&LFOE work with the local WDM group on issues of trade, Greenwich cyclists on transport issues, MILNET on regeneration and sustainable development, GASP on air quality and PARC on road proposals. GASP has worked closely with PARC during the Trafalgar Road Court Case, Marie Hammond of Greenwich Greenpeace on the Woolwich car-park proposals, and G&LFOE on the bypass.

2.5. A case study of GASP!

GASP is a particularly interesting example of a campaigning group in an urban area. The group has received national press coverage, and deals with one of the most obvious environmental problems of highly urban areas: air quality. It also provides an insight into the politics of local environmental campaigning in the light of conflicts that have occurred between groups and within GASP. It was formed in December 1991 and, like many local campaigning groups, developed in response to the high levels of public opposition to a single local issue: Metropower's proposals to redevelop the 90-year old Greenwich Power Station. The founders were essentially middle class residents of Greenwich, including a lawyer who later took on the role of chair (Connolly interview, 2001).

The first main event of GASP was a public meeting in February 1991 to which the group invited members of the public and Metropower. GASP hoped to demonstrate the high levels of opposition to the power station, and that the developers would instantly drop

the proposals. The campaign received widespread (although by no means universal) support⁷. Two hundred people attended the meeting, and a second meeting was arranged to accommodate a further 200 who were locked out due to fire regulations. In March 1992, GASP produced a report, *The Case Against the Metropower Proposals*, which attempted to persuade Metropower to abandon their plans and save on the cost of a public inquiry. In July 1992, Metropower announced that it was abandoning the proposals as the plan was 'no longer economically viable'.

The Metropower campaign coincided with publicity on the asthma problem from the *Greenwich Mercury*. The two together had the effect of making people realise that: 'What's been proposed here ... would actually produce so many tonnes of sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxides. And then they began to realise that things were already bad ...[although] there certainly wasn't the activism around that issue [air quality] before.' (Connolly interview, 2001).

After a short lull in activity, GASP resumed campaigning for clean air by joining forces with BETTER to oppose the waste incinerator proposed for Belvedere.

'They [GASP] had a lot of information about incinerator which we [BETTER] weren't fully aware of... And we got together and pooled our information ... they would send people down to our public meetings and they were represented at the inquiry.' (Livingston interview, 2001).

GASP further collaborated with Dr Barry Grey, a respiratory consultant at Kings College Hospital and the chair of PARC, who provided evidence of the health risks to the inquiry. The inspector's report ruled against the incinerator in the summer of 1993.

At around that time (1993), Philip Connolly joined the group. He insisted that the group needed a new focus 'and that traffic ought to be the issue in Greenwich' (Connolly interview, 2001). Connolly began recording the health of people in Greenwich to show the scale of the problem. GASP organised a day of action to demonstrate high levels of public awareness of the pollution problem, and leafleted ten roads close to the Blackwall Tunnel Southern Approach, asking people to stick black bin liners in their windows if they felt that their lives were being blighted by the motorway. Over 50% of the households leafleted blacked out their windows (Connolly, 2001). Connolly went on to claim that traffic through Greenwich Park was damaging wildlife and that closing the road through the park would and should be 'one small symbolic step' towards curbing traffic, but he was unable to convince the Council that pollution was the cause of the poor condition of trees in the park.

In 1994, the Council-commissioned Buchanan Report was published. This report examined the various options for reducing traffic in Greenwich and favoured a river front bypass. GASP objected, claiming that the bypass would have no effect other than to increase overall traffic levels, especially in the more deprived parts of the borough where car-ownership was lowest (ALARM-UK *et al*, 1995). GASP was again supported by Barry Grey of PARC, and G&LFOE, and successfully argued that the bypass proposals were

⁷ Letters to the editor in June and July 1992 in the *GEM* included several from the Unemployed Residents' Forum. One denounced GASP as 'liberal do-gooders who brainwash and mislead others, are the kind of people who have created the low standards in Britain today. They would deprive Greenwich of all its industry and turn it into a backward wasteland with mass unemployment' (*GEM*, 4.6.92).

unfundable.

Despite high levels of public support for the bypass, including that of such powerful amenity societies as the Greenwich and Blackheath Societies, it was finally abandoned in 2000, after seven years of campaigning which included :

'everything from writing letters, petitions, meeting councillors, lobbying the council, talking at public meetings, market stalls, street stalls, to going and lobbying government ministers and the Office for London as it then was, and we produced that report [*Instead of the bypass*]' (Connolly interview, 2001).

Connolly sparked controversy in 1995 with his personal support for a Reclaim The Streets (RTS) action in Greenwich Town Centre. Rush hour traffic was brought to a standstill as protesters staged a street party. As well as deepening the rift between GASP and the local societies, and splitting the group, Connolly's support for RTS alienated GASP from the BADAIR campaigners. Mary Jacques, who resigned from the chair of GASP as a consequence, was particularly dismayed that group members had endorsed RTS-type activity as it went against a decision made at their committee meeting only two months earlier. She was principally concerned that it would affect the outcome of the High Court Ruling for the Childrens Court Case.

The Childrens Court Case was initiated by parents of children living in Trafalgar Road, where there has been an extraordinarily high incidence of respiratory illness. The campaign began in March 1995 when parents (in collaboration with GASP) called upon Greenwich Council to close Trafalgar Road to cars when pollution was severe. Although GASP compiled evidence which proved that air pollution on Trafalgar Road was a severe danger to local peoples' health, the Council declined to act, arguing that its powers under the Road Traffic Act (1984) to close roads to protect the public from danger refer to structural damage (unsafe roads and buildings) rather than dangers to health from pollution.

GASP approached campaigning solicitor Martyn Day to help challenge the Council's decision by Judicial Review and printed 4,000 posters for local people to put up in their windows. In December 1995 the court concluded that local Councils do not have the power to close roads due to pollution. Although the case ultimately failed, it was extremely successful in terms of raising public awareness of pollution. It was extensively covered in local papers and in the *Independent* and *The Guardian*.

Since 1996, with Connolly at the helm, GASP has continued to campaign for clean air by means of traffic reduction. In 1996 he organised a public meeting on the Road Traffic Reduction Bill and encouraged local people to sign a petition to pledge their support for it. This ran along-side an exhibition by the group which charted the alarming rise in cases of childhood asthma, related illnesses and ways in which individuals can reduce pollution.

In 1998, Connolly lobbied Greenwich and Lewisham Councils to work with industry to create an action plan to reduce pollution from distribution lorries and exposed the fact that the Council's own corporate fleet was responsible for emitting high levels of pollution. The Council is now committed to reducing the levels of pollutants from its

fleet. All Council vehicles run on ultra-low sulphur diesel, and the viability of other fuels such as LPG is being considered (Sammons interview, 2001). Still, the Council is a long way off meeting Connolly's 14-point plan to reduce traffic by up to 50%.

In September 1999, GASP initiated a 'Streets for People' campaign which called for four car-free Sundays in the run up to European car-free day. It published a leaflet listing the inexpensive public transport options in Greenwich and encouraged people to sign GASP's petition or write to local Councillors to endorse car free days. More recently, GASP has been campaigning to secure the designation of the entire borough as an Air Quality Management Area and to influence the Council's action plan for improving air quality (Connolly interview, 2001). Since April 2000, Connolly has been working for the London branch of the Pedestrians Association, using his skills and experience to campaign for improvements for pedestrians on a regional basis. Since then, GASP has been dormant. The issue that might fully resurrect GASP would be the Thames Gateway crossing (the ELRC in a different guise) which has support from the Mayor of London, and, according to the government's 10 Year Transport Plan, is set to be built in 2008.

The GASP case has been reported at some length because it illustrates several characteristics of local environmental activism in south east London. It demonstrates the variety of issues, the continuities and interrelationships among campaigns, campaigners' ability to draw on expertise to counter official experts, but also the diversity of conflicts among interests within the locality, as well as the extent of the dependence of groups and campaigns upon the energies and commitment of a small number of individuals.

2.6. Changes and trends in environmentalism in south east London

In the attempt to assess how local environmentalism in south east London has changed over the last ten years, we mailed questionnaires to 105 groups identified from internet searches, the local studies centres of local libraries, community databases, and conversations with informants. 37 questionnaires were returned in varying states of completion.

Of the nine amenity societies that gave information on the date of their formation, none was established later than 1975 and six date from the early 1970s. Local branches of national environmental organisations (EMOs) were rather younger: six of the nine that responded were established between 1979 and 1985, but none was established after 1991. The other local groups were younger still: of the 18 responding, only five predated the 1990s and the years 1990–6 account for ten of them. In interpreting this data, it should be remembered that ours is not a longitudinal study and we do not have independent evidence of the state of environmentalism in the region in the past. It is likely that the action groups that comprise the bulk of the 'other' category are more ephemeral than the local branches of environmental organisations, and that the latter are in turn less permanent than the amenity societies. Thus, whilst it appears that there has been an increase in the number of groups in the 1980s and early 1990s, we need to remember that other groups (such as TRACE and RAPE) have come and gone during the past decade.

The amenity societies had the largest numbers of members (nine out of ten claimed more

than 100) and the branches of EMOs had fewest (only two out of nine claimed more than 50 members). Overall, conservation and transport were the issues of most general concern. The societies were especially concerned (in order of priority) with conservation, transport and development, the branches of EMOs with conservation, food, transport and education, and the other local groups with transport, conservation, development and education. Membership subscriptions, donations and events were the most common sources of funding for all three kinds of groups, followed rather distantly by merchandising.

Not surprisingly, the kinds of groups differed in the types of activity in which they engaged. For societies, the rank order of activities currently undertaken was: writing letters, procedural complaints, practical conservation, lobbying, social events, research and public meetings. Compared with five to ten years ago, they claimed to be, on balance, more active, the increase in activity being mainly in letter-writing, research, lobbying and leafleting. Local branches of EMOs appeared considerably less active, with leafleting, letter-writing, procedural complaints and lobbying being their most frequent activities. Compared with the recent past, they too claimed to be, on balance, somewhat more active and in much the same ways as the societies. For the other local groups, letter-writing, lobbying and procedural complaints were the most frequent activities followed by research, education and leafleting, but they were distinguished by reporting that they were, on balance, less active than five to ten years earlier. Their frequency of letter-writing, research and lobbying, in particular, had all declined and only education had much increased. This, of course, is consistent with the picture we have drawn in the accounts of groups and campaigns earlier (and later) in this paper. Overall, the picture is one of a local environmental movement that is, in aggregate, no less active than five to ten years ago, but the balance of whose activity has shifted somewhat from campaigning to practical conservation and education.

3. Canterbury and Ashford

Canterbury and Ashford are only about 20 km apart and, superficially, their demographics are very similar, the biggest unambiguous difference being the higher proportion of professionals in Canterbury (20.2% of occupations compared with Ashford 16.3%), a difference attributable mainly to the concentration of educational institutions in Canterbury. However, these broad similarities of demographic profile are the product of the way in which local government boundaries aggregate quite different mixes of population groups.

Insert Fig.2 (map of Kent highlighting Canterbury and Ashford) about here

The City of Canterbury consists of the old city of Canterbury (population c. 40,000), the coastal towns of Herne Bay and Whitstable, both of which function in part as dormitories for people who work in Canterbury, and the surrounding villages and countryside. Its population (124,000 in 1991) is distributed over 31,000 hectares (4 people per hectare). Ashford Borough's population is smaller (92,331 in 1991, estimated 105,000 in 2001) and less densely settled (1.6 people per hectare), largely because, in addition to the rapidly

growing town of Ashford, it includes a large area of countryside, including a swathe of the North Downs and Weald of Kent, areas of outstanding natural beauty, and the villages therein. Ashford itself, formerly a small market town, has been a designated growth centre for over 30 years, but it is only since the opening of the Channel Tunnel that its growth has accelerated as it becomes a major warehousing, distribution and commercial centre. Ashford is now one of the few designated areas of population expansion in the south-east of England, and the population of the Borough is predicted to rise by 10% in the next decade. This growth is overwhelmingly concentrated in and around Ashford itself, where large new estates of lower and middle income housing proliferate, whilst the villages in general are protected by land-use planning restrictions that preserve their rural appearance even as they become increasingly the homes of more affluent commuting professionals and business people.

Whereas Ashford town centre is dominated by its ringroad and Ashford International rail station and has some of the soullessness commonly associated with new towns, Canterbury has a clear ancient and internationally recognised urban identity as England's premier cathedral city and site of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages. Strongly protected by avidly enforced conservation policies and with a long tradition of civic amenity groups, in recent years Canterbury has become a leading day-trip destination for tourists (2.5 million visitors in 1998) and an increasingly up-market regional shopping centre. A leading education centre – with a university, two other higher education institutions, a further education college and three well-known public schools – it is claimed to have the highest student population per head of population in Europe, and its atmosphere is quite cosmopolitan. Although the old city of Canterbury itself contains several pockets of deprivation and 'problem' council estates, inner urban property prices are relatively high and there is a substantial resident professional population. Although there are some pockets of conspicuous rural affluence, the villages are a mixture of the prosperous and the markedly less so. Apart from some intensive 'brownfield' redevelopment in central Canterbury, new housing developments are modest and mainly confined to the coastal towns.

3.1. Environmental Activism in Canterbury and Ashford

In Canterbury the key issues of concern are transport (especially relating to car use in the city), development in the city itself, and the expansion of the 'urban-concrete' boundary into the countryside. Congestion around the city at peak times is considerable, and the apparent air quality reflects this. Most local environmental protest takes the form of residents' groups campaigning for or against a particular local development. These protests may sometimes be supported by one or more of the established environmental groups, as was the case with the protests against the construction and chosen route of the Thanet Way (1994–6).

In Ashford, environmental concern is mostly with small-scale development. Recent environmental conflicts have revolved around a planned superstore development, plans for the redevelopment of a disused school building into flats, the development of a food processing factory in Rolvenden village, and a plan to use a former quarry in Little Chart village as a dump for builders' rubble. Animal rights activism is relatively frequently

reported in Ashford District. The Ashford Hunt Saboteur group is active, and clashes seasonally with the Wye Beagles Hunt and other hunts in the District as well as protesting on more general animal rights issues. There are no larger groups or umbrella organisations concerned about the general growth of Ashford. With the exception of the CTRL campaign, there has been little large scale protest in Ashford.

3. 2. Environmental Groups in Canterbury

Eight main types of groups currently exist in Canterbury:

- Multi issue campaign groups such as PACE (People Against Canterbury Expansion), Spokes (a group campaigning to encourage and improve provision for cycling), Canterbury Countryside Protection Group;
- Single issue campaign groups such as the STOP (Stand to Oppose Pollution) campaign against the proposed waste facility at Dargate;
- Conservation and Countryside groups such as the Kentish Stour Countryside Project and the Crab and Winkle Conservation Group;
- Local branches of national groups including WWF, RSPB, CPRE, Ramblers Association;
- Residents' groups such as Langton and Nackington Residents Association who are campaigning against Canterbury College's planned development, the Blean – Rough Common Residents group campaigning against a plan to build houses on land owned by Kent College (a local public school);
- Animal Rights groups such as the Herne Bay and Whistable Animal Rights group;
- Amenity Groups such as Friends of Duncan Down and Harbledown Conservation Association;
- Monetary reform groups – a LETS group and the Associative Economics Network.

Many local activists are members of or have links with national environmental organisations but use them mainly as sources of information. It has even been suggested that there is little role for these groups locally as it is more effective to campaign without those labels and to use local credentials to best effect. Local activists tend to have or be working towards a degree, and generally to be middle class. The youngest is in his early thirties and most are in their 40s and 50s. Although the levels of activity and numbers and identities of the individuals involved in these groups have changed to some extent over the last ten years, the majority of the groups seem to have survived changes of issue and in most cases the key individuals remain within them. Although some amenity societies and residents' associations and Parish Councils are quite active, they rarely adopt a campaigning role.⁸ At present the most important campaign groups appear to be PACE (People Against Canterbury Expansion), the Canterbury and District Green Party, and Spokes, the East Kent Cycling Campaign.

Perhaps surprisingly,

There's very little involvement with the university, which is quite worrying, and that's one thing we have been discussing quite a lot in our group PACE recently, that the age group that I was, 10, 12 whatever years ago when I was at university, and it wasn't that great then, there was not that much political interest then, but it seems to be

⁸ Interestingly, of those most active at present, none was listed as a member of Canterbury & District Environmental Network in 1994.

a lot less now, it's very hard for us...and that's the sad thing. You're not getting that sort of new impetus, so as we're all sort of creaking on getting older, there doesn't seem to be anybody to replace us.' (Emily Shirley 2001).

There seems to have been very little new blood in environmental activity in the area in recent years. Very few new activists have emerged and been sustainedly prominent over several years. A mere handful of people stand out as key activists in Canterbury, and several of them are or have been active in more than one group.

'It's the same people [in groups] it always is [totally hinged on them], if one or two people leave that's it, and that's what's so exhausting about it, but I think that's probably like a lot of groups really... this point out that it's still very specialised, that's what that illustrates, because if it was a group which hit upon everybody's conscience then it would always be there as there would always be people coming and going. Spokes has been the exception to this.' (Emily Shirley 2001).

This point was also illustrated by the collapse of the Canterbury FoE group:

'By then I was burnt out - by '98. And I started my degree then, and I asked Kerry to take over. ... Kerry had come along to a couple of the last Greenpeace meetings and then she came over to Friends of the Earth with me..... and ... she was in her final year of her PhD at UKC. So both the leading lights of that group, their focuses were elsewhere..... We had a membership of about 100, which we were sort of furnishing with newsletters and information. But they were - by then things were moving away from getting involved into local groups. Instead they were wanting to be passive receivers of information. They were happy to have their newsletter and they felt they were doing something.' (Rogers 2000).

Because groups tend to be heavily dependent on a few key active individuals, they are not always able to respond to local campaigners when issues of acute local concern arise. Thus one of the organisers of the very effective STOP campaign against the waste facility planned for Dargate (a village near Canterbury) expressed his disappointment at FoE's inability to offer help when he approached them at an early stage of STOP's campaign. The STOP campaign involved no-one who had previously been an environmental activist in Canterbury but, in classic NIMBY fashion, relied instead on the contacts and resources of local residents and on the opportunities provided by formal political structures (see Rootes 1997a, 1997b for an account).

3.2.1. Attrition and innovation

In 1994, 104 groups or organisations were listed as members of the Canterbury and District Environmental Network (CDEN) (David 1997). Some of these appear to have been contacts rather than local groups and, even employing a fairly inclusive definition, close inspection suggests that there were no more than 55 local environmental groups among CDEN's members, together with six animal welfare groups. It is, nevertheless, an impressive list for a city of 125,000 people. However, inclusion on a list is not evidence of activity, and some of those listed were probably already inactive by 1994, if indeed they had ever been active. In 2001, there is evidence of the continued existence of only 28 of those 55 groups (and none of the six animal welfare groups) and few of those are groups

that might be considered part of the core of the local environmental movement.⁹ It is difficult to interpret this discrepancy, but part of the explanation may be that the 1994 list was a legacy of the early 1990s peak of environmental concern. Nevertheless, we do know that a number of groups more or less active in 1994 have since disbanded – including the local groups of both FoE and Greenpeace – and it is reasonable to interpret this as evidence of a fairly high rate of organisational attrition. Not surprisingly, the rate of attrition seems to have been especially high among the action groups set up to campaign on very specific and usually very local issues.

One feature of environmentalism in Canterbury is the relative quiescence of some of the older amenity societies – some of which had their origins in local campaigns of resistance to unwanted development – and of the branches of national EMOs. During the past five years, the oldest general amenity society, the Canterbury Society, folded because none of its increasingly aged members was prepared to take on the work of running it. Canterbury FoE, despite a substantial nominal membership, lacked effective leadership, was seldom visible in local action, and has now disbanded.

The fortunes of Greenpeace in Canterbury illustrate some of the dynamics that determine the fortunes of local groups. A Canterbury Greenpeace Local Support Group existed in the late 1980s but had dissolved before being revived in 1993 by a new core group of national and international supporters living or working in the Canterbury area. More than twenty members met twice a month, once formally and once socially. An active and multi-skilled group, between September 1993 and July 1994 it raised £ 3000 (three times the minimum required by Greenpeace UK), and participated energetically in several campaigns at the behest of Greenpeace UK. Some of the group's activists participated in a Greenpeace International protest at the European Court in Brussels, and in a protest outside the High Court in London, about the THORP nuclear reprocessing facility. In line with Greenpeace UK's focus on nuclear issues, the group was active locally in the campaign to raise awareness of the transport of nuclear waste from Dover through Canterbury en route to Sellafield, and under the banner of KARE (Kent Against a Radioactive Environment), members also organised a wildcat protest which briefly blocked access to the nuclear power stations at Dungeness on the Kent coast.

Within the constraints of Greenpeace's prohibition of the use of its name in autonomous campaigns, the local group sought to use its energies to good effect and to highlight local issues with the capacity to raise awareness. However, the major issue chosen – the burning of orimulsion at Richborough power station – failed to excite local interest or support from Greenpeace UK, and the group's inability to make progress on the issue contributed to increasing disillusionment (Rootes 1999). The group's Chair, a local teacher, resigned from the group because of overwork, and it quickly collapsed after his successor became committed to an anti-roads protest, doomed because its object – the upgraded Thanet Way – was already under construction.

But if some groups have declined or disappeared, others have emerged or become more active. In 2001, we identified from among those registered with the Canterbury

⁹ Other groups may continue to exist but, if they do, they live so quietly that we have found no trace of them.

Environment Centre and from our own local knowledge, 31 groups that appeared to be local environmental groups actually or possibly active in Canterbury. Of these, only 17 were members of CDEN in 1994.¹⁰ This suggests that there continues to be a fairly high level of organisational innovation.

Early in 2001, we mailed questionnaires to 31 local groups. Of the eleven groups that returned questionnaires, only one (PACE) was formed after 1990. Funding came mainly from subscriptions, donations, local authority grants and events in that order. Conservation was clearly the leading area of concern, followed by energy, countryside management and education. The focus on conservation is especially striking because, being focused upon activist groups, we did not attempt to survey the numerous local amenity societies. On balance, the groups surveyed claimed to be slightly more active now than five to ten years ago, the increases being mainly in letter-writing and leafleting.

3.2.2. Networks

Although there are undoubtedly some important individuals who have an impact beyond their own group or organisation, environmental groups in Canterbury are only very loosely networked. 'There's not a movement... dislocated groups.....[but] PACE has actually brought a lot of resident movements and associations together...' (Phil Rogers, long-term local activist, interview 2000).

The Canterbury and District Environmental Network(CDEN) was more a list than an effective network. Consisting of more than 100 organisations and groups, many of which had little in common and probably would not have considered themselves to be part of the environmental movement, CDEN produced a newsletter but was otherwise little visible beyond its base in the Canterbury Environment Centre. CDEN dissolved through lack of interest, but the Environment Centre continues to play a role as a place where local groups can hold meetings and events, and it circulates its own newsletter widely in the community.

The weakness of formal networks did not, however, prevent collaboration in 1994, initiated by members of Greenpeace, then the strongest and most active local group, to make a joint response to the proposed local transport strategy for Canterbury. FoE, Spokes and the Green Party were among the groups represented but the amount of work and the very tight deadlines limited effectiveness. The small size of Canterbury means that activists generally know one another, and informal contacts sometimes compensate for the weakness of formal links, but it has usually been the stimulus of new developments that has brought activists together.

In this respect, PACE is particularly interesting. A membership organisation (annual membership £ 5 for an individual, £ 10 for a group), PACE produces a newsletter which

¹⁰ Because our interest was especially in activist groups, we did not attempt to survey groups which we knew to be inactive or not to consider themselves part of the environmental movement. Only eleven questionnaires were returned after one reminder. It is probable that there is a large measure of self-selection in the response rate: groups which were inactive or which do not consider themselves to be environmental activists are unlikely to have completed and returned a questionnaire focused on changes in levels of activism.

is free and available on line. Most importantly, it is a coalition of local community and environment groups in Canterbury District. Reflecting concern about the rapid loss of countryside and the ever increasing expansion of the 'urban – concrete' boundary, and initially called the Environmental Transport Alliance, it was set up in 1996 to campaign against the Park and Ride schemes proposed for the peripheries of the city. The present constituents of the coalition are Canterbury and District Green Party, Canterbury Countryside Protection Group (a group set up as a way of strengthening PACE [Shirley interview 2001]), Canterbury Light Rail Development Group, Chislet Parish Council, and five local amenity societies / residents' associations representing various areas of the city (Barton Association, The Oaten Hill and District Society, The St Stephens Road and Close Association, Langton and Nackington Residents Association, The Wincheap Society).

PACE's remit is to consider development in and around Canterbury in its widest sense, with an emphasis on the value of community. PACE opposes expansion of Canterbury's urban area into the countryside, advocates creative re-development of brownfield sites and intensification of development in urban areas as the normal response to development pressures, and opposes new housing developments in villages except with the consent of the Parish Council and the community concerned. It opposes new park-and-ride initiatives, and advocates that urban public parking spaces should be reduced and that pedestrian and cycling routes, bus and train services should be improved.

PACE was brought together mainly as the initiative of local activist, Emily Shirley, who invited a variety of key local activists to a meeting with the aim of forming a group that could incorporate all the single issue campaign groups which sporadically arise in response to a particular development, and which then die away once the issue is resolved. In her words, '... we felt at that point that we were just getting nowhere, we thought we were quite weak with all of our little individual groups. Obviously, joined together we could really tackle ... and get lots of residents on board, try and get people involved.' (Shirley interview 2001).

PACE's most successful campaign to date has been that for a public inquiry into Canterbury College's proposed move to a greenfield site on the periphery of the city. Tactics involved public meetings, lobbying, leafleting, research, procedural complaint and social events. Through its campaign, PACE worked with Bridge Parish Council and other individuals not affiliated to any organisation. The outcome of the planning inquiry is pending. The key issues now for PACE are the local plan, 'trying to ensure that the local plan reflects a sustainable approach to planning in the Canterbury District' (Emily Shirley 2001), and to try to get more people involved to ensure PACE's long term survival.

3. 2. 3. LA21 in Canterbury and District

The advent of LA21 might have been expected to bring new opportunities for environmentalists in Canterbury. As part of the process of drafting its LA21 strategy, Canterbury City Council (CCC) held a meeting in October 1996 with an invited audience of Council representatives, environment groups and around 200 local people, the aim of which was to ensure that CCC's LA21 vision was one widely shared with the community. From the ensuing discussion, led by a professional facilitator, six categories for action emerged: transport; the local economy; resources, waste, energy and food; local

environmental quality; rural issues; social issues. Six discussion groups drawn from representatives of the community were then formed to agree objectives and actions for each of these areas. The resulting document was edited by Dr Peter Gray from Canterbury FoE, who was co-opted onto CCC's Environment sub-committee and the LA21 steering group. The document was launched for wider public consultation in May 1997.

The Canterbury Community Forum was established in December 1997 as an independent body representative of the different sectors, interests and localities in the District. Composed of members or representatives of environment groups, amenity societies, residents' organisations, key community representatives and interested individuals, its base was the Canterbury Environment Centre, and its intended role was as an independent monitoring group, measuring progress toward implementing the actions and meeting the objectives contained in the LA21 action plan. Many meetings and a year later, the final LA21 strategy document, in essence a summary of the first, appeared. The Forum is no longer active, and broad community participation in LA21 has ceased.

The main reason given for the demise of the Forum is its failure to involve 'activists'. When the Forum first met to edit the strategy document, it was considered too big to manage, with certain activists or people with specific interests tending to dominate discussions. In particular, PACE, Green Party activists and the Wincheap Society insistently criticised the amendment of sections of the document relating to transport. As a result, CCC re-launched the Forum and tried to restrict participation by inviting individuals to cover all the issues and areas of the district but with sub-groups on particular subjects, with the aim of making discussions more manageable and productive. The Forum declined to accept the proposals and many of the original activists withdrew, disillusioned.¹¹

Penny Sharp, the CCC officer currently with principal responsibility for LA21 concedes 'Now looking back it seems there was a lot of disillusionment... I didn't have time to co-ordinate it...' In her view, the Forum didn't work because people were so strongly aligned in their own groups and to their objectives that the Forum itself never functioned as a group, but was 'just a collection of groups which didn't gel' (Sharp 2001).¹²

The transformation of Sharp's role in the four and a half years she has worked for CCC is indicative of the changing character of LA21 and the relationship of local environmental groups to the process. Originally appointed as temporary Environmental Action Co-ordinator, she is now Corporate Policy Officer with some responsibilities for

¹¹ Amongst other factors contributing to their disillusionment was the fact that the Forum was chaired by an employee of Bretts, a local company whose businesses include the extraction of gravel from river beds and waste management and which was especially controversial for its sale of a strategic parcel of land on the approaches of Canterbury for commercial development. Another grievance was the location of the Forum in the Canterbury Environment Centre whose new director was seen as unsympathetic to activism.

¹² Other factors which might explain the variation in the success of LA21 in mobilising community groups include the personality, ideas and ambitions of the coordinator and the dispositions of the local Council. It is interesting that CCC's first LA21 coordinator, Fay Blair, complained of her difficulties in getting access to senior officers at CCC and left to take on a similar role with Maidstone BC, whose LA21 Forum is said now to be very successful. Whatever CCC's attitude, it cannot have helped that the battle lines were firmly drawn between its officers and vocal environmental activists.

sustainability. When Sharp was appointed, at the time of the launch event for LA21, the focus was on getting LA21 moving, which involved working with many different organisations external to CCC. Later, the Environmental Action Co-ordinator post was deleted and a Corporate Policy Unit was set up and responsibilities for LA21 assigned to it. LA21, now located in Policy and Communications in the Chief Executive's Department, has a budget of £ 4,000 to promote LA21 projects. In the past, some of this money has gone to the Canterbury Environment Centre for co-ordinating the Community Forum, some to a Kent and the Wider World project, and some for events. It has not been used to fund activist groups or their projects.

Since its introduction in Canterbury, LA21 has changed significantly, partly because of the workload in the unit now responsible for delivering LA21, and partly because CCC is now focusing on what it can deliver on LA21. The shift in LA21 nationally has had an impact locally; it is now sustainable development rather than LA21 that is the 'buzzing issue'.

'In Canterbury when it arose the LA21 process was seen as being located within the environmental green movement, and was seen as being about environment mainly and social and economic stuff was in the background, so the trend to focus more on the social and economic issues is now encompassed within sustainable development... So in a sense we've gone a full circle as we're now focusing on the social and economic issues and possibly to the detriment of looking at global environmental change..... Under the banner of LA21 it has died a death. But sustainability will be subsumed under the community planning process. The review process of LA21 will be fed into the community planning process.' (Sharp 2001)

It would appear that as LA21 has developed, been better integrated into the work of local authorities, become networked both among local authorities and with national EMOs, so the role of local environmental activists in LA21 has been diminished. Indeed, in Canterbury it appears that activists were included only in the early stages when the LA21 coordinator was very marginal to the Council, was looking for allies as well as ideas, and was in any case personally committed to the participation of environmental groups in the process. As LA21 became better institutionalised, so the perceived value of local activists to the process diminished.

Sharp is no longer in regular contact with activists, but she believes that, for a time, LA21 increased networking between groups. In the production of the strategy document, links were strengthened both among groups in the community and between those groups and policy makers so that the final strategy document could be seen as validated in some way by the community. Although those responsible for delivering on LA21 are no longer working with those groups in the community, groups have been absorbed into the policy process in other ways, partially as a result of LA21 activities. Thus, 'There is a transport forum, which includes relevant groups, which is better resourced, focused and managed. The community services department has close links with community organisations.' (Sharp 2001).

From an activist's perspective, LA21

'was a really good idea and a number of us kept on going to various groups to the different sections, but the end document.....was just nothing that was ever really agreed on, its a strange document, sort of like tissue papera very simplistic document which didn't really reflect what went into it.....we felt that Canterbury Council had

somehow railroaded the whole project and what we got in the end was not what we really set out to achieve and it didn't seem to really have any goal....it seemed like a time wasting exercise for every body involved, everybody was very insulted afterwards...I do know that when they had these meeting afterwards to follow up, most people weren't invited ... which we thought was very strange.....which annoyed a lot of people.....so cynicism set into the whole project at that point' (Emily Shirley 2001).

Other activists were no less disillusioned.

'Friends of the Earth was co-opted onto the Canterbury City Council Environmental Services Committee ... That didn't work out. We had to give that inLocal politics is horrendously bad. Oh God! And I think that's where I get my distaste of local politics now. It's just so small and egocentric and people think just getting - servicing their voters and thinking they're clearing up some little problem, when there's more issues in the world.' (Rogers 2000).

3.3. Environmental Groups in Ashford and District

In Ashford there are no traditional campaign groups that stand out, and in general there is a much lower level of environmental activity compared to Canterbury.¹³ The categories of groups which exist are broadly the same, although generally there is much less evidence of groups in Ashford and in some cases only one or two groups can be identified as fitting the category:

- Multi-issue campaign groups, e.g. Earth Action UK, Spokes;
- Single-issue campaign groups, e.g. against the animal waste rendering plant at Thruxted (see Rootes 1999 for a brief account);
- Conservation and Countryside Protection Groups, e.g. Kentish Stour Countryside Project;
- Local branches of national groups e.g. Ramblers Association, CPRE;
- Residents Groups, e.g. Rolvenden villagers protest against plans to build a food processing factory in Rolvenden; Willesborough residents against redevelopment;
- Animal Rights Group, e.g. Ashford Hunt Saboteurs;
- Amenity Groups, e.g. Friends of the Warren;
- Community Development organisations, e.g. Wycycle.

Because of the proximity of Ashford to Canterbury, the activities of some groups (e.g. Kentish Stour Countryside Project, Spokes) extend into both local authority areas.

The most interesting group active in Ashford, and the only organisation of a kind not better represented in Canterbury, is Wycycle. Identified by the local Council and some activists as an important group locally, Wycycle is both a community business and a campaign organisation. Its aims are to promote environmental protection and to create employment by running practical projects in the rural villages of Wye and Brook, and to use these projects as campaign tools to achieve change at a wider level.

In practice, Wycycle operates at a very local level, although as the initiator and

¹³ Of the eight Ashford local environmental groups we identified and mailed questionnaires to in 2001, only three responded.

coordinator of KROWN (Kent Reduction of Waste Network) and because of its involvement in the national Community Composting Network, as well as its links with Ashford Borough Council, its impact is vastly disproportionate to its size. One of Wyecycle's Directors, Richard Boden, plays an important role as an activist in Ashford. 'Richard Boden is the main activist. He now works more in partnership with the Council and works directly through the Council now rather than through the press as he used to.' (Festing [Ashford LA21 coordinator], interview 2001).

Wyecycle is not a membership organisation. Although its primary focus is on waste, it also runs a farmers market and a 'swap day'. In its campaigning, Wyecycle carries out all the activities expected of a campaign group including lobbying, letter writing, researching and reporting. Occasionally it has organised petitions and public meetings as part of a campaign strategy, and has resorted to litigation. Significantly, Wyecycle is located in a village (Wye) rather than in Ashford town. Wye is distinctive because it is the site of the only institution of higher education in Ashford District: Wye College, an internationally well-known agricultural college with a small but cosmopolitan student population, now part of the University of London's Imperial College, arguably the UK's leading science university. Probably because of the presence of the college, Wye is the base of several countryside lobby groups, including CPRE (Kent). Otherwise, as the experience of LA21 demonstrates, the environment network in Ashford is very weak indeed.

3.3.1. LA21 in Ashford and District

According to its present LA21 coordinator, Ashford has 'an active (ha ha) forum and we used to have a load of round tables on areas such as waste, energy, green transport etc. All the round tables have now collapsed - I could give you the details of the forum. They have more of a "steering" role. It's fairly lethargic... The problem is always one of poorly defined roles - they sit around not knowing what they're supposed to be doing.' (Festing 2001)

The LA21 process began in Ashford in 1996, but it was three years before a designated officer was appointed and an open conference involving representatives of the community was held. This conference spawned a Community Forum on which it was initially envisaged that there would be eight Councillors and eight other representatives. It meets four times a year. Community / environmental organisations represented are the Transport Round Table, Wyecycle, Friends of the Earth (Shepway - there is no FoE group in Ashford), Kent Association of Parish Councils, Churches Together in Ashford, and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Other organisations less regularly represented are Ashford Womens' Institutes, Ashford Chamber of Commerce, WEDG and the National Farmers Union. The Forum set up a number of roundtables on specific areas such as waste and transport, in the hope that they would allow and encourage the involvement of local activists and issue specialists, but, since the initial launch, 'in fact there hasn't been much new blood at all since which has been a big problem, and the roundtables have all really dropped off now...' (Festing 2001).

With the exception of Richard Boden of Wyecycle, few of the people initially involved in the Forum are still working in the community. The Forum is essentially run by the

Council; it meets inside Council buildings and Councillors comprise a majority of the Committee, 'so it agrees to go in line with the Council. ... what we really need is a group outside who are actually saying, well hang on... We've not ever really known what to do with the Forum as it sort of sits unhappily ... it's not really Council and it's not really community and it's lost its life, which is why it needs new blood and new activists.' (Festing 2001).

The position of LA 21 Officer arose out of internal re-structuring, involving extensive staff consultation, at the same time as a Community Development Officer and a Fundraising Officer were appointed with the aim of reaching out more to the community. Current restructuring is designed to bring these officers together in one team, but LA21 is at present still a 'bolt on' activity with a small budget (£ 5,000).

Ashford Borough Council's LA21 Strategy document, unlike Canterbury's, was developed by the Council without community consultation or participation. The LA 21 Officer justifies this by saying that she knew community consultation would be a waste of time, but one consequence is a low level of public awareness of the LA21 Strategy. There has been little involvement in the LA21 process by community activists or groups. The explanation – and the justification of the LA21 Officer's lack of enthusiasm for public consultation at the outset – is the evident dearth of activists and pressure groups working in Ashford. So low is the level of local environmental activity that there is almost nobody to take advantage of opportunities that exist and the networking potential of LA21 that, at least briefly, proved useful in Canterbury.

It is a considerable irony that, in Canterbury, where there is a moderate amount of environmental activism, the institutionalisation of LA21 has marginalised activists, whereas in Ashford the LA21 process is faltering for want of the community activism that Council officers would welcome. Clearly the structure of opportunities does not simply dictate the level of local environmental activism.

4. The campaigns against the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL)

4.1. The campaign against CTRL in south east London

In July 1988 British Rail (BR) announced four possible routes for the CTRL, all of which would have had an impact upon property or open spaces in south east London. This announcement worried many residents but did galvanise public opinion in opposition to BR (Kinrade interview, 2001). People in south east London were motivated to campaign against the Rail Link for several reasons. The starting point, which provided energy and momentum in many local anti-Link campaigns, was BR's apparent incompetence. BR carried out minimal consultation and was vague about the exact course of the Link. At a consultation meeting in Peckham, a BR official found himself threatened with a bucket of whitewash, which was supposed to be symbolic of the consultation process. A decision on the choice of route was made only after 'two and a half years of indecision, blight and inadequate consultation' (Peckham and Environs Against the Rail Link - PEARL, 1995) and even then, the decision was not final but was overruled by the government.

The indecision generated insecurity in the housing market and widespread blight along all four designated potential routes. In May 1991, in an action organised by the London Channel Tunnel Group and led by Southwark Council and groups from Dulwich, Nunhead, Walworth and Peckham, many Anti-Rail Link groups collaborated to lobby BR and the government to persuade them to publish their decision in order to reduce blight along at least three of the four possible routes.

Like many contentious planning applications, the proposals mobilised a number of different types of groups, including residents' associations, local societies, nature conservation groups and single issue ACTION (Anti-Channel-Tunnel-In-Our-Neighbourhood) groups. The campaign was unusual in that it was also widely supported by borough councils, including Bexley, Greenwich, Southwark, Lewisham and Bromley.

Local people were also concerned about their homes in terms of potential loss, or structural damage as well as blight. Residents in the vicinity of Loughborough Junction, for example, campaigned against the proposed freight route and viaduct which would have resulted in their homes being demolished. A short-lived group called South East London Tunnel Examination (SETTLE) formed in 1989 with the specific aims of :

- securing written guarantees from BR for home owners whose properties were blighted to allow them to move; and
- to propose adjustments to the alignment and re-siting of ventilation shafts further away from housing to prevent them from demolition.

SETTLE collected the signatures of people whose homes were above the proposed tunnel, and recommended the realignment of ventilation shafts to cemeteries. It was however, regarded with reservations by a more community-based group, Nunhead Action on Road and Rail (NARRL), whose members claimed that SETTLE was giving preferential treatment to those with homes directly above the line. NARRL advocated a community-wide approach, to ensure the best deal for all local residents. SETTLE's approach also upset the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, as the cemetery is carefully managed and important for local wildlife.

PEARL commissioned engineers to consider the likelihood of structural damage to buildings where BR had planned a shallow tunnel under homes in Peckham. The engineers concluded that the buildings would be susceptible to vibrations and structural damage, and this prompted local people to lobby BR to ensure the future safety of their homes (PEARL Technical Committee Report, 1989).

Another major issue was the effect of BR's voluntary purchase zones upon housing. Once BR had decided against the route through Peckham, the route originally preferred among the four options, it was left with a large amount of property it had acquired from potentially affected owners. As urban degeneration occurs rapidly, PEARL negotiated with BR to ensure that vacant homes were let as soon as possible. They then engaged BR in close dialogue over the policy for resale of the properties.

'British Rail acquired a large amount of property in this area - I think it was about 170 houses - and one of our concerns was that the character of the neighbourhood would be destroyed unless some houses were sold sensitively ... many of the houses which were bought by British Rail were large, family houses and we were keen that they should, if possible, be restored to that sort of ownership, and not broken up into flats.' (Kinrade,

chair of PEARL, interview, 2001).¹⁴

4.1.1. Concern for the Environment

Open spaces are highly valued in densely populated urban areas. One such open area, Warwick Gardens, was planned to be turned into a sub-surface junction on Route 2, which was temporarily selected as the chosen route in 1991.

'There was ... a great feeling of antagonism for the idea of Warwick Gardens being despoiled. There isn't a lot of green around here. Warwick Gardens, to some extent, became the symbol of the resistance. And a lot of feeling focused upon that' (Kinrade interview, 2001).

Camberwell Action on the Rail-Link was also concerned about the damage to the environment. Camberwell has four conservation areas and many buildings of archaeological merit, and was threatened with destruction of hundreds of homes. London Wildlife Trust took a more regional approach and announced that the Eastern route would threaten Rainham Marshes, an important wildlife site which it was already campaigning to protect from other infrastructural developments. Walworth Against the Channel Tunnel Link Line (WATCH) was concerned that the proposed route would split the local community, and reduce access to local shops. Local traders displayed posters with the slogan 'Keep Walworth in One Piece'.

4.1.2. Traffic and Transport Issues

A group, ABC (Avoid the Bottle Neck Campaign), was formed specifically to campaign against the routing of Channel Tunnel freight through already congested London. Plans for new roads to accommodate Channel Tunnel traffic were also contested by members of New Eltham and Mottingham Association, and on this PEARL worked closely with ALARM-UK. Also of concern was the likelihood of disruption to commuter services through Peckham and Denmark Hill and the noise which freight would cause. Organised by PEARL., a large number of protesters marched from Peckham to the Imperial War Museum and, taking their cue from Kent protesters, played back a recording of French TGV trains, which Kinrade admits was significantly exaggerated but which assisted in intensifying the strength of feeling against the Link.

4.1.3. Collaborative events

To some extent, groups fought against one another to ensure that the Link would not affect their neighbourhood. Yet most groups, like PEARL, agreed with the principle of a link with Europe : 'which may seem like NIMBYism, and that to an extent is true. But there were feelings that the three options were fairly inappropriate and that they [BR] hadn't really thought it through. There were other options which were much less damaging. But the concept of a rail link to Europe, no, I don't think there was any real opposition to that' (Kinrade interview, 2001).

Despite these competing interests, there was nevertheless a general sense that there was a possible solution which would cause far less disruption to properties and the

¹⁴ BR was very responsive and was largely successful in restoring the community.

environment. The Ove Arup route was one such route which received support. This route planned to avoid inner south east London altogether and to enter London from the East via Stratford to an international terminal at King Cross. PEARL lobbied for that route to be considered as it would have directly affected just 115 homes, compared to the 3,800 homes on Route 2. CPRE also approved of this route as it was more in line with countryside protection than the others proposed, and lobbied the government for a Link which would provide an overall net environmental improvement, with clear and binding requirements to prevent unwanted development along the route.

Groups in opposition to particular routes also collaborated. There was, for example, a high level of opposition against Route 1 all the way down the line. In February 1989, over 1,000 demonstrators from South London and Kent made their opposition known by rallying outside the House of Commons (*Guardian*, 9.2.89). In November 1989, protesters from Kent and London joined together again, this time from areas affected by all the potential routes. A joint petition was organised by CHARGE, calling on the government to ensure that the chosen route would do minimal damage to the environment, be well integrated into the national rail network, and that it would solve rather than contribute to commuter over-crowding at Kings Cross.

4.1.4. Umbrella groups

CHARGE consisted of twelve action groups between New Eltham and Wilmington representing the opposition to Routes 1 and 2. It staged mass rallies, organised a mass petition to the transport secretary, leafleted the local community and hired vans to spread the 'No Link' message. CHARGE also brandished BR's pro-rail link advertising as propaganda, encouraging campaign supporters to write 'Not Wanted' across it and post it to the Secretary of State. In League was another all-London anti-Link umbrella group which met three-weekly to facilitate the exchange of information, which was particularly useful for the technical group.

The campaigns against the Link were largely successful. The current route through London is the most acceptable route for many campaigning groups. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration reported in 1995 that one of the reasons for abandoning the route through Peckham, originally selected out of the four original proposals and abandoned in 1993, was the high levels of public opposition it aroused and which would have made it almost impossible for BR to secure planning permission. The success of the PEARL campaign can be attributed to the persistence of the campaigning group and the professional skills which it deployed:

'I think the success of the organisation was that there were a lot of people round here of considerable acumen. It was not difficult to find lawyers, barristers and architects and professional people, all of whom were very able both to organise and to make themselves heard ... Many people regard it as one of the most effective campaigns, ever really. I've heard it said many times that it was a model of how a campaign should be organised.'
(Kinrade interview, 2001).

PEARL capitalised on the strength of local feeling, and upon the skills and talents of professional people in the local community. The campaign was organised into a main committee, and had events, legal, technical and publicity sub-committees. The group

held many successful events, including public meetings, fetes and fairs. On one occasion, Kinrade dressed as Father Christmas and presented Trafalgar House (the building contractors) with a huge Christmas card signed by thousands of opponents of the Link through Warwick Gardens.

'Everything was done with great vigour. Lots of stunts. Lots of things which embarrassed British Rail, and made them feel very uncomfortable. Because they were, after all, really only officials doing a job. And I think they had not anticipated that there would be very much protest. I think that they thought they'd got a soft option really in south London. Old property. I think it came as a great shock that they met this level of resistance' (Kinrade interview, 2001).

PEARL still exists nominally today, and many of the people who were involved in the campaign remain residents of the area. The committee still hold meetings, although these are now very infrequent and have mainly been to discuss how its funds will be disbursed. Kinrade is unwilling to let PEARL disband completely :

'PEARL is still here because we never quite got rid of the idea that something might go wrong, and they might change their minds and so part of the continuity of PEARL has simply been 'we never know'. Perhaps it would be as well to stay at least in moribund, so we can resurrect it if we have to.' (Kinrade interview, 2001).

The campaign against the CTRL can, in retrospect be seen as a turning point in the recovery of the identity of south east London as an urban environment worth saving and a series of communities worth preserving, rather than simply a run-down area with concentrated social deprivation, the poor relation in London's renaissance. We cannot confidently compare local environmentalism before and after the CTRL campaign, but our examination of the later period shows that south east London is now home to a rich and diverse range of environmental activism and defies the generalisation that environmentalism does not flourish in socially deprived urban areas.

4.2. The Campaign against the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in Kent

If Londoners generally accepted the desirability of a fast rail link to Europe and were spurred to protest only when they realised the damage particular proposed routes threatened to their local environments, many people in Kent recognised from the first that the building of the Channel Tunnel itself was the critical issue, as all Tunnel traffic would inevitably have to traverse Kent en route to London. A record 4,845 petitions were lodged against the Channel Tunnel Hybrid Bill, many of them citing concerns about the threats to Kent's flora, fauna and landscape aesthetics (Darian Smith 1999: 123).

Protests began in Kent a full three years before they were raised in London. As early as January 1986, organisations concerned about the impact of a CTRL in Kent were organising with the aim of focusing on the environmental impacts and mitigation measures. As a result, a new pressure group which adopted a strongly preservationist stance was formed, led by CPRE and including Kent Trust for Nature Conservation, Kent Association Local Councils, Kent Federation of Amenity Societies, The Weald of Kent Preservation Society, and the Kent Branch of the National Farmers Union. CPRE compared BR's environmental standards unfavourably with those of other European networks (e.g. in France where there was extensive covering of TGV lines, and the Swiss who took great care with cutting and covering tunnels), and launched an emergency

national appeal for £ 10,000 on behalf of the Kent Action Group. The public transport lobby group, Transport 2000, despite being generally regarded as part of the environmental movement, was not part of the new pressure group and, because it was broadly in favour of the CTRL, it came into conflict with local community groups.

As a then active member of Transport 2000 observed, 'Some groups like the CPRE who are actually nationally affiliated to Transport 2000 were opposed to the CTRL *per se* on the grounds that this was yet another bit of concrete. A lot of these people would see the CTRL at least as another piece of destruction of the countryside. What Transport 2000 would say to them is that we'd be happy if you closed the M20 and turned that into a railway instead so that you wouldn't have any more concrete. However that was probably a concept that never crossed their minds. They would be as equally opposed to the M20 construction, in our view rightly so, as they would to the construction of a high speed railway.' (McDonald 2001).

Although CPRE supported Transport 2000's general stance in favour of public transport, they could not countenance further development in the rural areas of Kent. For Transport 2000, however, the issue was mainly a matter of *where* the CTRL was situated, and it 'commented exhaustively' to government and Union Railways on all aspects of the route.

4.2.1. Local Protest

Local protest against the CTRL began in February 1986 when the Channel Tunnel Treaty was signed by Margaret Thatcher and François Mitterrand in Canterbury. They were greeted by around three thousand noisy protesters, eggs were thrown and, when one hit Mitterrand's car, the crowd shouted 'Froggy Froggy, Froggy, Out Out Out' (*The Times*, 13.2.1986). Others chanted 'Maggie Out'. Among the groups present was ACTS (Against Channel Tunnel Schemes) whose key activist rode her horse adorned with 'No Fixed Link' stickers around Canterbury's Northgate roundabout. The local paper, *The Kentish Gazette*, ran a sporadic 'Tunnel Topics' column which was generally supportive of groups opposed to the construction of the CTRL. Opposition appeared to be cross-party and centred around the fact that local people were not consulted and had no chance to express their views prior to the decision being made: 'We won't forgive Mrs Thatcher for the contempt she has shown towards local democracy by riding roughshod over the opinion of the people of Kent' (*Kentish Gazette*, letters 21.1.1986) (cf Darian-Smith 1999:125).

The view that increased links to Europe were not necessarily beneficial to Kent was articulated by some of the opposition. At the inauguration of the Tunnel on 6th May 1994, the 'Campaign for Independent Britain' burned an EU flag outside Eurotunnel's visitor centre in Folkestone (Darian-Smith 1999: 104). At the same time, *The Sun* invited its 12 million readers to travel to Dover for the inauguration, to stand on Shakespeare Cliff beneath which the Channel Tunnel is built, and 'curl their fists in a rude gesture to France shouting in unison "Up Yours Delors"', an event to which there was reportedly a high turn out (Darian-Smith 1999:101).

As the alternative routes for the CTRL were proposed and local protest continued, four broad categories of concern were articulated by opposition groups: noise, property blight, links with Europe, and impact on countryside.

4.2.1.1. Concern about noise

A number of local residents' groups and the Country Landowners Association were concerned about the 'thundering trains' which would destroy the calm of quiet country lanes. Health officer Stephen Cochrane of Ashford Borough Council wrote to BR pointing out that their proposals for noise reduction along the route of the rail link were based on the technology of the 1960s. At one rally in Maidstone, demonstrators played an amplified recording of a French TGV, a tactic later adopted by London protesters. Sellindge against British Rail Excesses (SABRE), a participant on the London mass marches, campaigned against the route on the basis of the noise that would be generated by trains passing the village every six or seven minutes. SABRE proposed an alternative route which would alleviate noise pollution, but this was rejected by BR on the grounds of cost and environmental impact. The noise problem was also linked to compensation claims, many residents believing that those suffering from noise would be compensated only with double glazing.

4.2.1.2. Concern about property blight

There was a great deal of anger among local residents about property blight, and this was exacerbated by the protracted delay in reaching a decision on the final route, and the lack of clear guidelines about compensation to those affected. Residents believed that BR would not purchase houses unless they were directly on the route and in the way of track, cuttings or walls.

'The papers were full of items about "I wanted to sell my house and then somebody said the link was going to come through here, and I phoned the estate agent and he said my house was unsellable and that's been the situation ever since" ... it was NIMBY protest which appeared in the paper as though it was the scheme itself, "We don't want closer links with Europe", people were saying silly things like this. "Why should we worry about going faster by train, if you cured all the potholes on the motorway we'd have a much better journey." I think it just shows that if the planning process is quicker and efficient and effective, and property owners are compensated adequately, then some of the red herrings introduced as opposition techniques disappear.' (McDonald 2001).

Transport 2000 was one of several groups supporting increased compensation packages on French lines (the value of the property plus 20%) in order that the arguments might move away from people's concerns about the effects on their own property values, and focus instead on consideration without prejudice of the best practicable route. The whole issue of compensation was 'handled very badly by Government' and was at the root of much of the anger around the route. The Government allowed the process to 'drag on and on and on' (McDonald 2001).

4.2.1.3. Environmental Impact on Countryside

Residents groups in rural villages were particularly concerned about the overall impact of the construction upon their surroundings. For example, residents involved in the Istead Rise Rail Action Group feared that the tunnelling of the section of the route through Istead Rise would spoil their picturesque views of the countryside. They were also concerned about the environmental impact of a construction site lasting five years. This concern was extended to include concerns about the impact on buildings and areas

of historical and archaeological significance. Many residents' groups also highlighted the increased traffic and development pressures which they believed would undoubtedly ensue in areas like Dartford upon the completion of the CTRL.

Unlike in London, where there was a larger measure of solidarity amongst protesters opposed to the various alternative routes, in Kent the effect of having four proposed routes to London was to create divisions. Kent residents' groups all campaigned in the hope that the line would be routed elsewhere. Some saw this as the product of a deliberate strategy:

'How clever of the government and British Rail to conspire to propose four possible routes for the high-speed rail link through Kent, so that, when the chosen route is eventually announced, the cries of protest will be drowned out by the more numerous sighs of relief.' (Marianne Oliver of Pluckley, near Ashford). Opposition split into two main groups: those opposing routes 1 and 2, and those opposing route 3 who broke away from the first group, refusing to join them in a protest march at Maidstone. The belief of a local resident was that 'People are reacting against each other. When a route is ruled out there will be no solidarity at all' (Johnson *Sunday Times* 31.1.89).

'We [Transport 2000] tried to explain to some of them what our view was, that it was no good them saying that I don't want it at the end of my garden, I want it at someone else's, that in itself when you think about it is not a good campaigning mechanism, and we tried to persuade them that having the railway was a better alternative than having more roads, and if they opposed the railway and were successful the result might very well be more roads. I think these arguments were lost on a lot of people.' (McDonald 2001).

A number of organisations, including the local Green Party and Brabourne, Smeeth and District Action Committee, campaigned unsuccessfully for the use of existing railway lines. Many individual protest groups certainly had an important influence on plans for the link in their particular locality, which arguably may have had some influence on costings for individual routes. For example, Charing Rail Link, backed by the Weald of Kent Preservation Society, campaigned successfully after a number of years for the height of the line to be lowered at Charing. Mersham and Sevington Action group made seven demands for the CTRL route, one of them being that BR should protect Mersham's 13th Century church. Transport 2000 and the Railway Development Society arranged meetings with Ashford Borough Council, and succeeded in persuading Councillors that the route should go through Ashford town centre.

4.2.2. The role of Kent County Council

Kent County Council (KCC) played an important role in the protests (which needs further exploration). County Hall at Maidstone was the focal point of mass demonstrations and KCC led the petitioning process against the CTRL Bill. KCC Cllr Tony Hart realised the need for villagers across Kent to present a united front and was instrumental in setting up the Kent Rail Action Group (KRAG) as a forum for discussion, exchange of information and co-ordination of activity. It consisted of representatives of KCC, Bourne Valley Action Group, Churches Channel Tunnel Co-ordinating Group, CPRE (Kent), Country Landowners Association, Kent Association of Parish Councils, Kent Federation of Amenity Societies, Kent Trust for Nature Conservation, London Regional Passengers Committee, Mid Weald Action Group, National Farmers Union,

North Down Rail Concern, Transport Users Consultative Committee for Southern England, and West Weald Action Group.

KCC had an important influence on the passage of the CTRL Bill, having vowed to oppose any bill which did not, in their view, take into account:

- satisfactory noise reduction
- modification of existing lines where possible
- improved services and facilities for Kent's commuters
- environmental safeguards acceptable to the people of Kent
- a comprehensive scheme of compensation.

By identifying four possible routes, the original proposals maximised anxieties, and protests could shelter under the unifying frame of BR's incompetence and the government's insensitivity. But as objections removed one after another of the alternatives from contention, so the opposition became more fragmented and localised. Nevertheless, the objections did have the effect of significantly modifying and greatly reducing the environmental impact of the CTRL. The link now under construction is mostly confined to the existing M20 and M2 transport corridors and so, although construction cuts a conspicuous swathe through attractive landscapes visible from existing motorways and railway lines, it no longer evokes much protest.

As in south east London, the campaign against the CTRL was unusual in the extent to which it brought together a very diverse coalition of local action groups, amenity societies, environmental groups, local councils and politicians. No one group can claim credit for the outcome, but the role of KCC was almost certainly crucial: as a Conservative-dominated authority broadly sympathetic to the government's agenda, it was able to extract important environmental safeguards as the price of accepting the inevitability of a transport infrastructure development central to the government's economic development strategy. The role of Transport 2000 is more ambiguous since it seems to have accepted unquestioningly the value of a high-speed rail link and effectively to have lobbied for the project whilst still considering itself part of the environmental movement because of its preference for rail over road transport. Clearly this was not a very popular message in a County most of whose residents would benefit little from the CTRL but who, because of the continuing poor state of public transport, will remain largely dependent on private cars.

4.3. The campaigns against the CTRL compared

The CTRL was unusual among local environmental issues in that it was not a local project which it was within the power of local government to determine, but a commercial project promoted by the national government as being essential to the national interest. From the beginning, local councillors and MPs were placed in a defensive position almost invariably sympathetic to the grievances raised by local protesters. Although a few groups objected to the whole project on principle, such was the presumption in favour of the project that, especially in London, the campaign was focused almost exclusively upon the routing of the rail link and the compensation of those adversely affected rather than upon the merits of the scheme as a whole. After the

initial protests against the potential routes, opposition waned. By February 6th 1995, the deadline for all petitions against the CTRL Bill, 993 petitions were received. This was, however, a significant reduction on the 4,835 that were deposited in respect of the Channel Tunnel Bill in 1986. The clear difference is that, once the general principle embodied in the Channel Tunnel itself had been cast in concrete, the remaining battles were the particular ones over the route the rail link should take rather than the general one about whether it should be constructed at all.

Insert Fig. 3 (map of the proposed CTRL routes) about here

We expected that one important difference between the Kent campaign against the CTRL and that in London would derive from the character of the localities through which the link would pass. In both cases there was resistance from communities that feared disruption and the loss of amenity, but whereas the worst fears in London centred around the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of houses the loss of which would change the character of whole communities, in Kent the concerns were principally about the intrusion of a high speed railway upon rural landscapes that had iconic value. Battles for compensation consequently took a different form. In both London and Kent the loudest complaints came from people whose properties were blighted (and their value drastically reduced) by their proximity to the route but which fell just outside the limits of areas in which houses were acquired by BR at their full pre-blight valuations. However, in Kent, the areas affected were less precisely definable and their rural character and landscape value meant that monetary compensation was seldom considered adequate or sufficient in relation to the anticipated loss of amenity. Londoners might be obliged to vacate a particular house but their compensation would generally be sufficient to enable them to purchase a very similar house in a similar street even in the same neighbourhood, but a Kentish villager, cottage-dweller or farmer whose amenity was blighted would often, even if offered compensation, suffer an irremediable loss different in kind from that suffered by a Londoner.

In the event, the differences between the campaigns against the CTRL in London and in Kent appear more muted than we had expected. Partly because BR always knew that the route of a high speed railway line traversing the 'Garden of England' would be contentious, in the most sensitive areas all the alternative routes proposed followed the existing transport corridor as closely as possible. By contrast, BR appears to have regarded south east London as an urban wasteland in which environmental objections and public opposition would be modest, and it took little care to minimise the impact of the various routes through London that it proposed. As a result, the sheer number of London residents directly and adversely affected inspired a wholly unanticipated breadth and depth of resistance, matching or even exceeding the entirely predictable and anticipated opposition in Kent.

Some similarities were expected. In both London and in Kent, the issue of compensation to the residents and property-owners affected was prominent and protracted, not least because of the length of time before a final route was determined and the extent of the planning blight could be defined. The alleged arrogance, insensitivity and incompetence of the planners and developers was a common theme of protests. Moreover, because the

rail link was linear, in all but a few places the protests formed a loosely linked chain along the several possible routes. More surprising, however, was the extent of other similarities. The defence of urban green space in London proved no less fierce than that of the rolling green downs of Kent, and the negative impact of the CTRL upon local community was at least as often raised in London as in Kent. In Peckham, for example, an urban community was galvanised by the prospect of losing its only open space and many houses listed as being of architectural or historical significance. The community would not only have been cut in two by the rail link, but it would have suffered such loss of amenity as would fundamentally have changed its character. Indeed, the threat of their loss awakened an enhanced appreciation of the Georgian and Victorian streetscapes so characteristic of south east London.¹⁵

There were, however, some important differences. In Kent, although the campaign included *ad hoc* local action groups, it relied heavily upon the mobilisation of the established interest groups of the country-side lobby and, especially, upon the conventional institutionalised political structures and influence of Conservative-dominated Kent County Council and local Conservative Members of Parliament. Probably for this reason, the campaign in Kent has had no discernible long-term effect. South east London, by contrast, lacked a single over-arching local authority or a well-established and concerted interest lobby and so campaigners there, even though they had the support and sympathy of local borough Councils and their (mostly Labour) MPs, were obliged to forge new links and to rely more upon their own resources, including the expertise of resident professionals. The result in south east London, but not in Kent, has been the invigoration of local civil society.

5. Comparisons and implications

The overall picture that seems to emerge from the research so far is the fragility of local environmental activism in less urbanised east and mid Kent by comparison with highly urbanised south-east London. This was contrary to what we had been led to expect by previous investigations.¹⁶

It might have been expected that the stronger sense of place and relatively favourable demographics would have made Canterbury a relatively active centre of environmental activism by comparison not only with Ashford but also with an area of south-east London much of which is relatively socially deprived. However, it appears to be south-east London where there is most environmental activism. This may simply be a function of critical mass; the larger population of south-east London and its greater density make it more likely that there will be a sufficiently large group of environmentally concerned people to support one another, their organisations and their activities. The large student population in Canterbury appears not to be an asset at all; student environmental

¹⁵ Since the removal of the CTRL threat, Southwark Council has included the houses of Blenheim Grove – which was within BR's voluntary purchase zone – in the architectural conservation area of Peckham.

¹⁶ Notably research into the contention surrounding the siting of the SELCHP incinerator at Deptford in the Borough of Southwark.

societies tend to have a very high rate of attrition and have rarely even been visible in two successive years, whilst local activists report that there is rarely any input to local campaigns from the universities and colleges.

Environmental groups in Canterbury tend to rely on a relatively small number of active individuals, and merely maintaining nominal local organisations seems to absorb most of their energies. As a result, local campaigns are often rather low-energy and, on occasions, when campaigners seek the support and advice of established environmental groups they are disappointed by the very limited ability of the latter groups to respond. Perhaps as a result, it appears that too public an identification with a national group may be considered a disability in local campaigns in Canterbury, and a loose network of individuals affiliated to a variety of groups has developed, most evidently in the PACE coalition. But this local networking – which has in part been stimulated by the City Council's LA21 activities and the earlier invitations to comment on the draft local transport strategy – is a collaboration born of weakness rather than maturity and strength. Unable to make any impact separately, local groups are compelled to work in alliance with others.

As expected, the intensity and degree of organisation of environmental activism in Ashford was weaker still. There were fewer environmental groups than in Canterbury and most were entirely nominal, often depending on the activity of a single individual. Even the critical mass for more or less vital networks was apparently lacking. This did not surprise us because Ashford, as a designated growth centre, has a relatively large number of incomers and does not have a strong sense of place or of amenities worth preserving against new development. It is noteworthy that although there was widespread opposition to the CTRL in the more rural parts of the Ashford District, Ashford itself agreed to have the line pass through the town centre, the benefits of an international station being accepted as compensation for the environmental disadvantages of the CTRL. Although we do not have the detailed breakdown of demographic data that would prove it, it appears that the new estates of Ashford town, with their large numbers of young working-class and lower-middle class families, are infertile ground for environmental activism, whereas the more resourceful populations of the villages have fewer environmental complaints.

This, indeed, may be one reason why environmental activism is stronger in south-east London. Although conservation topped the list of local groups' concerns in both south east London and in Canterbury, in London it was followed closely by transport, development and pollution, issues that in Canterbury ranked significantly lower even among the more activist groups to whom our survey was confined. In south east London, the high degree of urbanisation and the accumulation of environmental disadvantages means that there is never any shortage of environmental issues worth campaigning about. Nevertheless, the vigour of campaigns against waste facilities in rural and semi-rural communities in Kent and the various successful local mobilisations against new building and transport developments in towns and villages demonstrate that, even in areas where environmental movement organisations are only weakly present or are absent altogether, suddenly imposed grievances may stimulate effective local responses.

The story is similar in the more affluent parts of south-east London, but in the poorer areas (such as most of Greenwich) many of the grievances are chronic. What is surprising is that even in these relatively deprived areas there is a sufficient number of resourceful individuals to sustain environmental campaigns. One of our respondents even suggests that the high rate of unemployment may be an asset, since there is no shortage of people with time on their hands (Storm interview, 2001). More likely it is that in such areas of relatively low rent and property prices, there is a complex social mix which includes many well-educated younger people who are unable to afford housing in more salubrious parts of London and who have the resources to defend the communities they have adopted. Moreover, even Greenwich, which has a notable concentration of social disadvantage, has its more affluent streets and neighbourhoods whose more resourceful residents have a strong interest in defending the quality of their environment. As the London campaign against the CTRL demonstrated, the array of locally-based professional expertise that can be deployed sometimes makes even the efforts of large corporations look amateurish by comparison.

The proximity of south-east London to the amenities and distractions of the capital might be supposed to be an obstacle to sustained environmental activism, but in fact it appears to be an asset. Groups may relatively easily draw inspiration, advice and support from their precursors and counterparts in other parts of London and may collaborate with them in campaigns, and individuals may relatively easily be active in national campaigns as well as local ones and import to the latter the inspiration of the former in a way that is more difficult for activists living even 80 km (50 miles) away in Kent. Even the greater population turnover in inner London may have its advantages since, although it results in the attrition of group membership, it brings with it a constant influx of new people with new experience and new energies.

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