

CT5 People's Forum Annual Report from Trustees, 2025/6

This has been another busy year for the Forum, with a range of events and activities. We continue to focus on our purpose and priorities, based around our mission to “provide a platform for local people and organisations to exchange information, have a voice, discuss ideas, and work together to improve our town.”

During the year we held four public meetings, reduced from previous years, to allow us the time and energy to be more involved with other events and activities around the town. The meetings we held focused on a broad range of topics, including waste and how to avoid it; local government reorganisation and how to ensure Whitstable has a voice and that our assets by way of community buildings and open spaces are protected; the proposed Council Strategy for Whitstable Town Centre; the commissioning and development of the Estuarine Moth Mural at Tankerton; the Canterbury District Local Plan; regular reports from our three sub-groups; and our involvement in the range of local activities and events. Each meeting also featured questions to and reports from our local Councillors, with active participation and engagement. Our meetings were held in town centre Whitstable, as well as Seasalter and Swalecliffe.

In July we held our Community Day at Whitstable Castle; a successful event which involved a host of local community groups, voluntary organisations and charities, and attracted a large number of attendees and visitors. The event was self funding thanks to donations received on the gate, plus a tombola which helped us raise much needed funds for our activities. We are most grateful to Whitstable Castle, and especially general manager Kirsty Harris, for all the assistance offered.

We've also been involved in a number of other events around the town, either as organisers, co-organisers, volunteers or simply running stalls or promoting what we do. These events include the Eco Fair (see report below from the Eco Group), Whitstable Harbour Day and Maritime Show, and Whitstable Carnival.

We were pleased to work with Canterbury District Biodiversity Network to commission a mural of the extremely rare Fisher's Estuarine moth on the toilet block on Tankerton slopes. Painted by acclaimed street artist Mark Anthony, the mural's development was assisted by a grant from local KCC Councillor Adrian Kibble.

This year, we've created a new website called Whitstable Community - <https://whitstablecommunity.org> - an online directory for community organisations, clubs, societies, community venues and annual events to help people discover the wide-ranging and numerous activities within our thriving town, and connect with groups that meet their interests. Whitstable Community went live at the beginning of September with a small number of listings. It's free to join and we are now hoping that as many community groups as possible sign up in order to maximise its usefulness to CT5 residents.

We remain active in our work on Local Democracy, the focus always being on Whitstable having a voice, local people having a say, and being actively engaged. As at time of writing, Canterbury City Council is shortly to launch a further consultation on its Community Governance Review (CGR) into local town and parish council arrangements; whilst the Government has paused its proposed implementation of local government reorganisation, the abolition of Canterbury City and Kent County Councils, and establishment of a new Unitary Authority for East Kent. Both the Forum and its Local Democracy group will continue to monitor the changing situation and promote active participation.

Finally, although we have a busy and active Trustee body, we would welcome new Trustees, so if you feel you might be interested feel free to contact any of us!

Trustees – Bernadette Fisher, Edwina Neal, Geraldine Deas, Maureen Smith, Michael Bax, Tony Ullman

Reports from subgroups

Local Democracy – Bernadette Fisher

Our main focus this year has been on reform of local government.

Conscious that our two local councils, Canterbury City and Kent County, would disappear in May 2028, we wanted to ensure the unparished areas of the district had a say.

At the start of the year, Canterbury City Council was reluctant to carry out a review, known as a Community Governance Review. This was even though all other districts in a potential east Kent unitary authority were doing so.

Working with the cross-district Campaign for Democracy in Canterbury District we were eventually successful and the review commenced this spring. We now await phase two which will definitively ask residents of the non parished areas if they want a town or parish council. We are calling for action by local residents to ensure that no ‘islands of nothing’ are left in the local council map of the new East Kent unitary.

Eco Group – Don Sibley and Cllr Clare Turnbull

The group’s strapline continues to be ‘Our natural world- see it, celebrate it, save it’ and this has very much underpinned our actions again this year; there is felt to be increasing urgency in the light of local heat waves and drought this summer.

These have been our main activities this year:

- We held another very successful EcoFair, with well over 20 community and retail stalls providing networking and outreach opportunities
- We published a guide to reduce carbon emissions, enhance biodiversity and go more circular locally which can be viewed here [A How-To Guide for the CT5 community](#)
- We published an activity booklet to introduce children to local ecology
- We organised a varied programme of monthly events through the year, including making excellent use of the new Coastal Classroom in the South Quay Shed; see the programme for autumn/winter here <https://www.ct5peoplesforum.org/post/wild-about-whitstable-august-december-2026>
- We have continued to link up with many local environmental groups locally and across the region to enhance what we are capable of achieving.

Traffic and Active Travel Group – David Hayward

We focus on traffic issues in general and continuing concerns over speeding in particular. In all of this we work closely with local CCC and KCC Councillors, and with Kent Police.

Traffic speeds – we continue to monitor busier local roads to raise awareness. Our evidence shows that the number of speeding drivers passing us is reducing and that ‘top speeds’ of those who still feel the need to speed are also reducing – helping to make safer roads for everyone.

Sustainable Transport – we have co-founded a Canterbury District Bus Focus Group with the Canterbury Alliance for Sustainable Transport (CAST) to share user issues with Stagecoach.

Active Travel: “pedestrians first” – supporting the need for safer road crossings for pedestrians, ‘wheelers’ and cyclists to put their needs first. Examples include crossings at the Long Reach roundabout as well as within Whitstable town centre per the Council’s Local Plan.

Active Travel: “accessibility” – a town centre walkabout has resulted in KCC installing additional dropped kerbs in the town centre. We have also engaged with CCC Officers to enforce licence compliances to keep such kerbs clear of pavement clutter especially in Harbour Street.

New members of the Group and also volunteers to the Speedwatch Team most welcome.