



Annual Report

March 2026

www.thedealsociety.org.uk

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President

Una Stanley

Vice-President & Planning

Robin Green

Officers

Alice Goodliffe Social Events

Andrew Budd

Christopher Cook Communications

Colin Tweedy

David White Treasurer & Heritage

Ian Redding Planning

Jo Dempster Archivist

Julia Gresty. Social Events

Pam Whitehead Secretary

Ron Condon Chair & Newsletter Editor

Sub-Committees

Planning

Social Programme

A year of rapid change

Our Annual Report last year started with the headline “The end of the Deal Society?” It asked whether the Society still had a role to play in the town, and secondly whether enough volunteers could be found to run it.

A year later, prospects look much brighter. We have new people in many of the roles (although we still need someone to take over as treasurer), and the Society has found a new sense of purpose.

This began with the Town Summit last November, which attracted a huge audience at the Astor, and which highlighted many of the issues that were troubling the people of the town. As a result of this, we have built an action plan that will guide our work over the coming year.

One big worry to emerge from the Summit was the growing number of empty premises in the high street, and specifically the Old Factory Shop which was being used as a storage warehouse and had become a public eyesore.

The Society teamed up with two local arts groups and within days, the shop had been converted into a pop-up art exhibition. The effect has been transformative and has been welcomed by the public and local businesses.

It is hoped that this kind of project can be replicated in other empty spaces in the town.

Finally, I must pay tribute to our departing President Una Stanley, who served the Society for more than 40 years, and who has now moved away from Deal to live near her son.

Ron Condon, Chairman

Society events planned for this year

Details of these events, and online booking, are under 'Events' our website

Julia and Alice have stepped down as our Social Officers and Lesley Condon & Anita Lamb have come forward to organise another great selection of events for us.

Annual Meeting and Talk

Friday 10th April

Your chance to hear how the society did last year and discuss its future. We offer a drink prior to the meeting and have a guest speaker. Please see the last page of this report for details.

Trip to Down House – the home of Charles Darwin.

Thursday 21st May

The final costs are still to be confirmed but as this is an English Heritage site, EH members will be able to use their membership for free admission.

More details will be available in the monthly newsletter and on our website as plans are firmed up.

Heritage Open Days

11 to 20 September 2026

Heritage Open Days is England's biggest heritage festival. It celebrates our fantastic history, architecture and culture; offering people the chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences.

Details of local events as part of this national initiative are at www.dealheritage.org.uk.

Summer Social

Thursday 18th June 6.30pm - 8.30pm

The Wollaston family have kindly made their elegant house and garden available for us once more, with its superb views past Walmer Castle out to the sea.

The event includes canapés and wine which will be supplied by C and C Catering.

Notification when booking opens will be published in the monthly newsletter.

Booking

The best way to book is by credit/debit card or PayPal from the 'Events' section of our website at www.thedealsociety.org.uk. You will receive an acknowledgement of your booking and will be sure of a place.

If you have any questions about an event please email Anita or Lesley at events@thedealsociety.org.uk.

Details of the other events in our programme will be sent in our monthly emails and online booking will be available on our website. If you do not have access to those, please get in touch with Anita or Lesley during the month before the event to arrange an alternative way to book.

Planning Report for 2025

The last twelve months have brought interesting challenges on the planning front, but have also seen major strides forward in the Society's ability to respond to them. Whilst we have seen some inappropriate development proposals, which have required more robust responses from the Society; increasingly the concern has been about the nature and volume of changes in the town and our surrounding areas, none of which feature in the Dover District Local Plan and for which no vision exists of what the people of Deal want their places and neighbourhoods to look like in the future.

The Deal Summit

One area of major concern that built a head of steam as the year progressed, was the volume and concentration of developments affecting Deal Town Centre; some small, some larger, but none of them in the local plan, and ALL in the Middle Street conservation area. The lack of a future vision for the Town increased the anxiety beyond Society members into the wider community. This was no longer just a planning matter but one about a desire across the Town to bring about change together.

The Society's Executive agreed we needed to call an open meeting, the Deal Summit, which took place at The Astor on 14th November: not a spare seat in the house, as those who had to stand will stand testament. The event enabled the Society to highlight the problems, and some of the reasons why these problems exist, and enabled attendees to indicate what they wanted to happen in the future to try to overcome them.

Post-Summit Action Plan

An action plan has been created from the Deal Summit's issues, with 14 objectives each of which has actions targeted at delivering the objectives, staged timeframes, etc. Though the action plan is primarily to help drive the work of The Deal Society, delivery in many instances relies upon active collaboration with/between local people and organisations, and regular meetings/focus groups from across the local community to help drive the desired changes.

Those objectives are:

A/ To increase awareness of Planning Applications made that affect our area.

B/ To build community capacity to better protect the seven (7) Conservation Areas of Deal/Walmer.

C/ To enable Deal Town Council, as a statutory planning consultee, to more effectively respond to Planning Applications, and to engage with local communities.

D/To ensure Local Strategic Plans are more inclusive and enable residents to properly engage in shaping it

E/ To campaign for a more transparent and accountable system for communities to benefit from new developments being allowed (Community Infrastructure Levy v S106).

F/ To extend existing, and develop new, networks/relationships to the wider benefit of our area and communities.

G/ (All the above) To strengthen Deal Society's ability to maintain an overview of planning issues and themes, and reporting/acting as necessary.

H/ To reinforce adherence to the Local Strategic Plan, favouring Supplementary Plan updates if necessary, and restricting inappropriate windfall developments.

I/ To review, respond, and monitor every individual (currently wholly windfall) development affecting Deal Town Centre and wider Conservation Areas.

K/ To actively collaborate with local specialist networks to mutual advantage, and protect/promote the town's history/heritage and both built and natural environments

L/ To enable local people to contribute to the design/shaping of new developments affecting the places in which they live.

M/ To support campaigns to redress the shortfall in Local Infrastructure consequent to the extent of windfall developments.

N/ To share knowledge and expertise on key issues, including planning, especially with local campaigns that our communities have taken up.

O/ To develop and/or enable effective communication of information, knowledge, expertise, local activities; that best support those helping ensure the ambitions of the Town's communities can be most effectively achieved (including on planning issues).

Progress on these are being regularly reported upon in Deal Society Newsletters, and other media posts; but it is worth pointing out that objectives F, K and O are already plugged into the work of the Deal Partnership that the Society's Chair described earlier.

Other planning highlights of the last year:

Planning Applications – Far fewer in volume, and in scale, with the big developments we see around the fringes of Deal, Walmer, and the local villages having been approved 5 or more years back. Most applications are minor, and typically single property in nature, and of little consequence individually. The concentration of them in the Town Centre has been a concern, as already mentioned, and a small number of specific sites that I'll now outline

Proposals objected to, which have subsequently been refused or withdrawn include the former Glass Factory site, St George's Church Hall, and Fairfield at Great Mongeham.

Proposals that have proceeded or approved in principal and, despite the lack of a vision for the town, but appear to complement the conservation area; include the site of Hutchings Motor Cycle shop, the Royal Snooker Hall (now a conversion rather than demolition/rebuild), the 1st and 2nd floors of Jennings Bookmakers, above the Pharmacy/Post Office in Queen St.

Sad failures are Sandfield Farm in Northwall Road, where 50 homes will be built in a designated flood area (Environment Agency Map); and a BT hub to replace the phone box by Mountain Warehouse, with bright LED-lit adverts changing every 10/15 seconds, 24 hours.

Local Plan Mysteries! - The recently adopted DDC Local Plan anticipates a development of 75 houses in Kingsdown, which residents do not consider appropriate; and a further 75 homes at Rays Bottom in Walmer adjoining The Glen and the Walmer Airfield Special Scientific Interest site. How they got into the Local Plan is a mystery, the latter having been subject to refusals for 40 years!

Deal Town Centre – At last year's AGM it was noted there were 6 sites prospectively redeveloped, with no overarching strategy to ensure their cumulative impact on the Town Centre, and the Middle Street conservation area, was properly evaluated. Since then, 13 more have appeared, meaning potential 19 sites in the Town Centre that could collectively have negative impacts if inappropriate. That's why the Town Summit became inevitable.

Local Government reform and re-organisation – This will remove District and County councils from Kent, replacing them with Unitary authorities that are better fit-for-purpose, more efficient and more effective, removing the current complexities of who does what. DDC favours a current 3-authority combination for East Kent (with Thanet and Canterbury) but others have proposed different models (some with 3 unitary authorities and others with 4). There are some national policy factors that might come into play, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Coastal Communities raising common concerns about high levels of deprivation, health inequalities, etc. The Deal Society is working with other amenity societies through the East Kent Civic Forum, to ensure that it can continue to represent the interests of the Town with whatever Unitary Authority emerges, and whatever new arrangements for planning authorities are established.

Ian Redding & Robin Green

Report on last year

Social Event Reports

A variety of social events took place during 2025 as follows:

Two talks

Following the Annual General Meeting in April, David White delivered a very interesting and much appreciated talk about the Cinque Ports.

Later in the year, during October, Martin Hoskins gave the members an insight into the lives of some of the women associated with two of Walmer Castle's Lord Wardens - the most loathed and the most flamboyant. It was a most engaging evening.

Two Social Parties

The Spring/Summer Social was held at Glenhill during June. The weather was excellent and enjoyed by all who attended.

The Christmas Social in December was held in the Old Naval Operating Theatre at the home of Carol and Jeremy Grant. Jeremy gave us an overview of the history of the building and the Society gave its thanks to the couple for opening their home to us. It was very popular and sold out within three days.

The excellent catering for both events was provided by Ralph Cade.

Outing

There was a day trip to Chatham Historic Dockyard in June. We were fascinated by the Ropery talk and demonstration together with going aboard some of the ships and a submarine. Sadly, a day wasn't sufficient to allow a complete exploration of the site but everyone made the most of the time, some taking advantage of the delicious fish and chips sold at a special price for senior citizens.

Quiz

Quizmaster, John Andrews, provided a much enjoyed quiz which tested our knowledge on a number of categories including our town of Deal, Guy Fawkes and Halloween.

Alice Goodliffe and Julia Gresty

Civic Matters

We are a member of Civic Voice which raises concerns from civic societies nationally. We are also part of an emerging initiative, East Kent Civic Forum, to improve cooperation between local societies.

We continue to support Walmer Town Council with Walmer In Bloom.

Communication

A year has gone by since we last produced a printed report, we are committed to maintaining this contact for those who don't have email, but more frequent updates are available through our electronic newsletter and social media.

The electronic newsletter goes out every month all members of the Society who are on our electronic mailing list.

We can see that some people have dropped off the circulation list because their e-mail address has changed – if you don't receive a newsletter each month, please re-subscribe.

Heritage

The society continues to co-organise Heritage Open Days, England's biggest heritage festival.

The event takes place each September and all venues are free to explore, offering people the chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences.

We are also part of the Deal History Alliance, which includes local organisations and individual historians with the aim of improving the communication between them and to generate year-round interest in our history.

The alliance organised a number of drop in history sessions to introduce new people to our heritage.

The society maintains the Deal Heritage website to promote local heritage events, together with our social media and newsletter.

David White

Finances

In 2025 we had an income of £4,619 and expenditure of £5,465, giving a deficit for the year of £846. At the end of the year the funds held were £5.623.

The cost of running the society has risen very slightly due to increase in venue hire fees. Social events are budgeted to break-even but for various reasons made a loss.

The deficit does not raise any concerns as the reserves equate to 4 years running costs, which is why we did not make any appeal for donations during the year.

Detailed accounts have been externally examined and are available on our website but if you would like a copy please contact the Treasurer on 07710 124300 or treasurer@thedealsociety.org.uk.

Membership

Our membership comprises:

- Those on our mailing list who receive monthly newsletters by email;
- Those who do not use email but wish to remain members, who receive this annual report

At the end of 2025 we had 684 (558 in 2024) members on our electronic list and 7 (11 in 2024) on our postal list.

We no longer charge a membership fee but will invite donations from time to time.

Thank you to the members who have left their standing orders in place – we accept those as a donation towards our costs. If you do not wish to continue to make such a donation please cancel your standing order as we are unable to do it for you.

Annual Meeting 2026

Friday 10th April from 7pm

Deal Town Hall

You are invited to join the committee and fellow members for a drink, followed by our annual meeting and a speaker.

The evening will comprise:

1. Annual Report and Accounts

As reported on the previous pages and we invite questions on it.

2. Motion to appoint Robin Green as President

3. Elections and Resolutions

Must be submitted in advance as on the right.

4. Plans for the forthcoming year

The committee will outline forthcoming events and other plans.

5. Questions to the committee

Members are invited to ask the committee whatever questions they wish about the running of the society. It would help us prepare an answer if you notify the Secretary of your question at least a week in advance.

6. The Goodwin Sands:

The proceedings will conclude with a talk from Joanna Thomson, Chair of the Goodwin Sands Conservation Trust. She will give us a 20-minute presentation on the infamous Goodwin Sands - known as 'the great ship swallower' - the notorious sandbanks that have claimed the lives of many thousands of sailors from around the world and are the final resting place of several score of airmen from World War II (and maybe even World War I).

She will describe how the Goodwins contributed to the rise of Deal and their role in providing a sheltered anchorage and a natural sea defence. She will explain the archaeological significance of the Great Storm wrecks and how the Trust is continuing the fight to save the Goodwin Sands from sand mining (aka dredging) by The Crown Estate.

Nominations and Resolutions

If you would like to be put forward as committee member, or if you wish to submit a resolution to be voted upon, please submit them to the Secretary by Wednesday 1st April. You may either send an email containing the information below or telephone Pam Whitehead.

Nomination as an officer (committee member):

- Name of nominee
- Phone number & e-mail address
- Name of proposer
- Name of seconder

Resolution to be voted upon by the members:

- Wording of resolution
- Name of proposer
- Name of seconder

Pam Whitehead – Secretary

07881 952115

secretary@thedealsociety.org.uk