

**PRESS RELEASE: 31 March 2006**

## **THE VOCAL MAJORITY**

### **Save Dreamland Campaigners submit over 350 objections to Thanet District Council's proposed policy on Dreamland**

Campaigners fighting to save Dreamland have been taking to the streets of Margate and Ramsgate as Thanet District Council's current round of public consultation on the future of Dreamland comes to a close. The Save Dreamland Campaign has been asking people whether the Council was right to reject the recommendations of the government inspector who had told the Council that Margate's biggest visitor attraction should be protected. And the message from the people of Thanet is that Dreamland must be protected and the Inspector's recommendations should be accepted in full. The Campaign has pledged to ensure that townspeople's voices are heard by the council.

Campaign Coordinator Sarah Vickery explains why campaigners felt the need to take to the streets:

"We are concerned that the Council has not been taking the public's views seriously. This is the third consultation to feature Dreamland's future and we got out there on the streets because we feared consultation fatigue had set in and we wanted to engage people in the process."

Thanet District Council changed the policy in its Local Plan from one that protects Dreamland to one that allows the site to be redeveloped. Following a public inquiry, a government inspector decided that the Council was wrong and that it should change the Thanet Local Plan to ensure the important visitor attraction is protected for future generations to enjoy. The Inspector's opinion backed up the views of the Save Dreamland Campaign and the vast majority of those who made representations on this policy to the previous Local Plan consultation exercise. Unfortunately, following a vote last month, the Council decided to partially reject the Inspector's recommendations and press ahead with a policy that allows some or all of the site to be redeveloped for other uses.

Campaigners braved often very cold weather, but the result was worth it, according to Sarah:

"I am really heartened by the response we received over the three weekends, which more than makes up for being frozen to the marrow on two of them! Of course, the Campaigners who took to the streets are all volunteers and most of us have pretty demanding full-time jobs too. The number of objections we have submitted to the council was limited by the amount of time we could spend on this exercise, certainly not by the volume of people supporting us. Of the people we spoke to, which basically represented a random selection of the Thanet public, we found almost unanimous support."

Campaigners briefly explained the Inspector's Report and the Council's proposed policy on Dreamland. Thanet District Council Comments Forms were made available for people to complete if they wished, and the Campaign offered to submit them to the Council on the respondents' behalf. Most respondents seemed quick to realise that the proposed policy would mean the end for the park, and there was very little trust that the developers would make a serious attempt at running the park on a permanent basis if this policy is pushed through.

Sarah continues: "I made it clear that we would be quite happy to tell the council that people support their policies. The crucial point was that the public made their views known, whatever they may have been.

"We found support from people ranging from Thanet District Council employees to an ex-Mayoress. And it was really interesting to find similar levels of support in Ramsgate, where lots of people feel strongly that Dreamland should not be allowed to meet the same fate as their Pleasurama site.

Sarah concludes: "Many people we spoke to are very unhappy with TDC and feel they are not being listened to on this issue. If the present administration wants to stay in a job after next summer's elections, it had better start listening soon."

The closing date to make objections to Thanet District Council was Friday 31 March.

To organise interviews or request photographs of campaigners in Margate and Ramsgate, please contact **Sarah Vickery (Campaign Coordinator)** on 01843 220008 (day) or 07990 998688 (mobile) or **Nick Laister (Campaign Leader)** on 01235 838214 (day), 07778 207036 (mobile) or 01235 762186 (evenings and weekends). Or email [press@savedreamland.co.uk](mailto:press@savedreamland.co.uk).

To find out more about the Save Dreamland Campaign visit the campaign's website at [www.savedreamland.co.uk](http://www.savedreamland.co.uk). Nick Laister's Proof of Evidence to the Public Inquiry and the Inspector's Report on Dreamland can both be downloaded from the website.

## **ENDS**

### **Information for Editors**

The Campaign's own consultation exercise took place on Saturday 11 and 18 March in Margate town centre and on 25 March in Ramsgate town centre. The survey was carried out by Sarah Vickery, Vince Maple, Dave Dunmall, Paul Freeman, Rhyannon Richardson and Alan Cooksey.

The Save Dreamland Campaign was launched in 2003 to save the Dreamland Pleasure Park, Margate, home of the UK's oldest roller coaster, the 86-year-old listed Scenic Railway. Dreamland's owner proposes to replace the park with shops and houses. The Campaign is led by planning expert Nick Laister, a planning consultant and a leading authority on the British theme park industry. The Campaign is now speaking on behalf of 13,000 people, including local residents, businesses and organisations such as the Margate Historical Society, Margate Civic Society, the Margate Hotel and Guest House Association, European Coaster Club, Roller Coaster Club of Great Britain and SAVE Britain's Heritage.

The official campaign website is [www.savedreamland.co.uk](http://www.savedreamland.co.uk). The campaign can be emailed at [campaign@savedreamland.co.uk](mailto:campaign@savedreamland.co.uk). The address for all correspondence is Save Dreamland Campaign, The Shell Grotto, Grotto Hill, Margate, Kent CT9 2BU.

The Public Inquiry into the Thanet Local Plan opened on 14 April 2004. Two Inspectors (Mr Harold Stephens and Mr Nicholas Hammans) were appointed to conduct the Inquiry. The future of Dreamland was considered on 29 June 2004 at the Council Offices, Margate.

Sarah Vickery owns and runs the Grade 1 listed Shell Grotto in Margate, a popular tourist attraction with shop, museum and cafe attached. She is on the Board of Margate arts group Limbo, is a member of Margate Town Partnership's Marketing Group, writes for the local magazine Isle and has been Vice-Chair of the Isle of Thanet Tourism Association and Chair of the Thanet Contemporary Arts Festival. She moved to Margate with her family in 2001 to take over the Grotto which she has known and loved since childhood. Before this Sarah was a journalist specialising in arts and travel, writing for a range of magazines and newspapers and editing books. [sarah@savedreamland.co.uk](mailto:sarah@savedreamland.co.uk)

Nick Laister BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI MIHT MIPI gave evidence at the Inquiry on behalf of the Campaign. He is a leading authority on the amusement park industry and editor of the web site [www.joylandbooks.com](http://www.joylandbooks.com). He is a Chartered Town Planner and Planning Director at RPS Planning, the UK's largest planning consultancy, where he specialises in planning for tourism and leisure. He has been involved in bringing forward numerous major developments across the UK, and has appeared as expert witness at several public inquiries and hearings. He has written articles for a number of newspapers and journals and has been invited to speak at conferences on the subject of planning for tourism and leisure. [nick@savedreamland.co.uk](mailto:nick@savedreamland.co.uk).

Dreamland Pleasure Park is located at Belgrave Road, Margate. The telephone number is 01843 227011. The park is now owned by Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company Ltd, the majority shareholder of which is Newbury-based Waterbridge Group.

Nick Laister's Proof of Evidence can be downloaded in full from [www.savedreamland.co.uk](http://www.savedreamland.co.uk).

The full Inspector's Report can be downloaded from the Thanet District Council website: [www.thanet.gov.uk](http://www.thanet.gov.uk).

The Tourism Chapter, in which Dreamland is considered, can be downloaded from here: [http://www.thanet.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/LocalPlan/Local%20Plan\\_Inspectors%20report\\_1105/Chapter8-Tourism-FinalVersion.pdf](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/LocalPlan/Local%20Plan_Inspectors%20report_1105/Chapter8-Tourism-FinalVersion.pdf)  
(The Inspector's conclusions are in paragraphs 59 to 107).