



The Planning Battle gets Personal

To some, the six Didcot cooling towers are an ugly statement of the polluting power of King Coal. Others, myself included, believe the south Oxfordshire landscape will be barren without them ²⁴. English Heritage is considering whether to list these curvaceous concrete bastions of power that rise out the dampness of the Oxford Clay Vale. To demolish them would surely be an act of vandalism on parliament with bulldozing Ely Cathedral into the flat, uneventful fens?

*It would not surprise me if I am not carrying my readers with me in this enthusiasm for the Didcot Six. The subject is called to mind because Nick Boles raised the subjective nature of beauty in a speech last week, declaring an estate in Thurrock "pig ugly". For his modern ideal he rather curiously chose a Shropshire development, *The Wintles*. "In Bishops Castle I believe that the Living Village Trust created a model for our future," he told his audience. I guess he hoped that no one knew much about how the scheme has worked in practice.*

The troubled Wintles development sits awkwardly on the edge of a historic Marches town, feeling very much a separate settlement. The forty eco-houses are not yet complete after 12 years. Those that are finished sell for more than £300,000 in an area where the average wage is under £20,000. Plans for four affordable houses have been scrapped. The Wintles is nothing more than a model of unaffordability and an exemplar of how not to integrate housing with existing communities.



The Wintles
Bishop's Castle

Notions of beauty are, of course, personal. The planning debate is also getting personal. Ministers took their gloves during the NPPF battle of 2011, accusing the CPRE and National Trust of being "vested interests" run by "left wingers" peddling "deeply misleading and simply untrue" claims. Now campaigners are hitting as hard at ministers. The National Trust has accused Nick Boles of working on the back of a "fag packet", Shaun Spiers has labelled him an "intellectual gadfly", and Andrew Motion has damned him as "slightly abrasive, irksome".

The irksome gadfly is unfortunately backed by Pickles and Cameron in his mission to weaken the planning system and encourage bulldozers to roll across England's green fields.

Andy Boddington, Editor

Planning under Attack: Boles

Greenfield targeted. In an appearance on BBC Newsnight and in an address to the TCPA, planning minister Nick Boles broadened his attack against the English countryside. He declared that more than 1,500sq miles of open countryside – an area twice the size of Greater London – was needed to build homes to tackle the housing shortage. Claiming that only about 9% of land is developed; he asserted that building new homes on an additional 2-3% of the land in England "would solve the housing problem." Confronting nimbyism, he argued that if houses were better designed, they would meet with less opposition ^{BBC i T T M 24 g}. Boles later blamed Labour's immigration policy for the growing demands for housing: "43% of the new households which want a home is accounted for by immigration" ^M.

Reaction. CPRE warned that Boles' proposals would "undermine the principle of building on brownfield land first and risk the needless destruction of irreplaceable countryside" ^{CPRE 24}. It said that building more houses on greenfield sites is unnecessary because there are enough brownfield sites to build another 1.5m homes and 330,000 homes are long-term empty. Shaun Spiers commented: "When he was running a think tank, Nick Boles specialised in interesting if somewhat unrealistic ideas. He is no longer an intellectual gadfly – he is a minister with a serious job." Ben Cowell of the National Trust added: "I think these figures sound very much like 'back of the fag packet' calculations to me. Three per cent of the country is an area about the size of Cornwall and we don't think that you need to build on greenfield land to quite this extent" ^{T M FWL}. CPRE's John Hoad went head to head with West Suffolk Conservative MP Matthew Hancock on the BBC's Daily Politics ^{BBC}.

Andrew Motion, CPRE's President launched a scathing attack on Nick Boles calling him "incredibly irresponsible" for talking "blithely about these issues where so many people's lives and so much of our land is at stake... Once you develop a piece of land it is gone for ever as countryside" ^{g g}.

Media comment. The Telegraph leader condemned Boles: "For a minister charged with overseeing the planning system, Nick Boles appears to have precious little faith in the way it works... If a building boom is the route to economic growth, why is Spain in such trouble?" ^T. The Financial Times told Boles that he needs delivery to match his vision, "otherwise he will simply replicate the vicious circle of poor-quality development that has blighted Britain for years" ^{FT}. "Nick Boles has set out a housing policy that could have been written for him by the Home Builders Federation" ^T. Channel 4 conducted a fact check on the statistics behind the row ⁴. In the Independent, Tom Sutcliffe protested that Boles is "unlikely to get his way by rebooting the sensibilities of the entire nation and persuading us that a three-bedroom detached house with garage and side-return to a good sized garden is just as beautiful as a pine on Highland crag" ⁱ.

The eBulletins

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CPRE London publishes a bi-monthly eBulletin from the same stable as the South East eBulletin. The November edition is now online ^{CPRE}.

Planning under Attack: Cameron

The speech. In a provocative speech to the CBI, David Cameron rounded on what he claimed were legal and bureaucratic impediments to development 🗳️. Hitting out at “consultations, impact assessments, audits, reviews, stakeholder management...”, he condemned judicial review as “a massive growth industry in Britain”. The prime minister conspicuously failed to give support to the green economy and did not mention the environment at all. As he rounded on a Whitehall that “has become too risk-averse”, Cameron also omitted to mention his indecision over Heathrow, which he has kicked into touch until after the 2015 election.

Judicial review. The Ministry of Justice said that the time allowed for an application for judicial review will be shortened, fees increased, and appeals against refusal to hear a case limited 🗳️🗳️. In his speech, Cameron seemed unaware that planning-related cases are just 1.7% of judicial review cases 🗳️🗳️. Environmental lawyers said the changes could contravene the Aarhus convention which guarantees access to environmental justice 🗳️🗳️. Shaun Spiers said that if the government should improve the quality of legislation if it wished the use of judicial review to fall 🗳️.

Planning under Attack: Permitted Development

House and business extensions. The communities department is consulting on plans to give permitted development rights to single storey extensions of up to 8 metres behind houses 🗳️🗳️. Consultation closes: 24 December 🗳️. It claims that the relaxations will apply to up to 40,000 extensions; 20,000 of which would not otherwise be built. Shops, offices and businesses will be allowed to extend by 100 sq metres, and industrial units by 200 sq metres. These rights will not apply in protected locations such as conservation areas, National Parks, AONBs and SSSI. The government is also considering making conversion of domestic garages to family accommodation easier. The changes will initially apply for three years, though Nick Boles has suggested that they could become permanent 🗳️.

Boxes & wires. The government is planning to extend permitted development rights to broadband cabinets and overhead wires in National Parks, AONBs, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites and the Broads 🗳️. These changes will apply for five years. John Hoad for CPRE said the plans will lead to “broadband clutter” and “will seriously damage the capacity of the planning system to protect our countryside and environment” 🗳️.

Garden Cities

Nick Clegg called for a new generation of new towns and garden cities. He argued that the shortage of homes is becoming so acute, there is a need to be new developments of 15,000 to 25,000 homes 🗳️🗳️ 24. He told the National House Building Council:

“It’s time to rediscover that proud tradition of creating new places. We can either condemn ourselves to haphazard urban sprawl – the surest way to damage the countryside... Or we can build places people want to live... Which, rather than destroy the countryside, actually have a crucial role in keeping it intact.”

A communities department civil servant said that the government will not impose new towns on communities 🗳️.

Reaction. CPRE agreed that new homes and communities are needed but said Clegg had “completely ignored the potential to regenerate our existing towns and cities to meet the current and urgent housing need” 🗳️. See also: 🗳️🗳️🗳️🗳️🗳️.

Planning and Housing in the South East

Developers pressure CPRE. Lawyers for CPRE Surrey have written to Mole Valley district council announcing their intention to apply for a judicial review of the decision to develop at Cherkley Court, Leatherhead. CPRE’s John Hoad claimed the company behind the scheme has tried to get the national CPRE to stop supporting the Surrey branch. “They are putting quite a lot of pressure on the trustees. They have written a letter saying they believe both the local branch and ourselves have been campaigning against this development to an unreasonable degree in relation to our charitable objectives, which is a strange reaction, as our charitable objectives are exactly that: campaigning to protect the countryside” 🗳️.

Sussex. Wealden district council has approved its core strategy. It sets out 2,650 new homes and employment provision. A councillor said: “It has been a victory for local peoples’ wishes to keep the number of proposed new homes... to a more sustainable level than the 11,000 identified by the South East Plan” 🗳️. Surrey County Council is reconsidering plans for the Magna Carta centre in Egham after CPRE Surrey said that consideration had not been given to alternative locations 🗳️. A controversial planning application for eco-holiday lodges at Bewl Water has been turned down, after CPRE Sussex said they would damage the tranquillity of a popular site in an AONB 🗳️. Residents and Elsted and Treyford Parish Council are objecting to plans by Kate Winslet to erect oak gates and wicker fencing 🗳️🗳️.

Kent. Boris Johnson said a new town – “aerotropolis” – of about 20,000 people could be built east of London around the Thames Estuary hub 🗳️🗳️. A planning inspector dismissed an appeal against the refusal by Gravesham council of plans for 14 affordable homes in the green belt in Lower Higham saying the proposal would harm the openness of the green belt 🗳️🗳️.

Hampshire. Winchester councillors are to set up a Barton Farm Forum to allow the public to shape the 2,000-home development. Cala Homes has signed \$106 agreements for 40% social housing 🗳️. After five years of vigorous opposition by local residents, Havant Borough Council gave the go-ahead to 92 homes in Bedhampton 🗳️🗳️🗳️.

Oxfordshire. An inspector ruled that Barton Nature Park on the outskirts of Oxford should be lost to housing, though **Ruskin Fields** in Headington has been saved 🗳️.

Ash Dieback

Maps. A Forestry Commission map of 27 November shows that ash dieback back has become established in the wider environment of Kent and East Anglia, and has been found in recent plantings across the country 🗳️.

Case file. CPRE Oxfordshire is appealing for funds after 20 ash trees planted to celebrate its 80th anniversary were destroyed 🗳️. Kent’s forests threatened 🗳️; Shropshire, Leicestershire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire confirmed 🗳️; West Sussex threatened 🗳️; East Sussex confirmed 🗳️🗳️; Hampshire escapes 🗳️; Surrey cases? 🗳️; Back gardens affected 🗳️; Letchworth case? 🗳️; Telford & Wrekin confirmed 🗳️; Worcestershire confirmed 🗳️.

Comment. Nurseryman Stephen Ashworth said the disease can be halted if everyone, including CPRE, works in harmony 🗳️. Dieback was initially thought to be squirrel damage 🗳️. Clive Anderson says forests will rise again 🗳️. “The heavy-handed, artificial planting method that creates a uniform and dull woodland has had its day” 🗳️. Ash dieback is one of ten ‘epidemic’ tree pests and diseases 🗳️.

Growth & Infrastructure Bill: Progress

Commons debate. The bill had its second reading in the Commons. Hilary Benn accused Eric Pickles of having “gone from claiming to be the friend of localism to taking a hammer and sickle to local democratic decision making.” Closing the debate, minister for business Michael Fallon provided a new definition of sustainable development: “What we mean by sustainable development is development that is there for the long term”    . Arundel MP Nick Herbert warned that the bill could undermine neighbourhood planning and the broadband provisions could damage the South Downs National Park . CPRE Sussex’s Georgia Wrighton told BBC Politics South East: “We’re concerned that if decisions are taken away from the local level then developers’ interests come first” .

Town greens. The Open Spaces Society and CPRE are lobbying to amend measures which will make it more difficult to register land as a town or village green. The campaigners say the changes are a “kick in the teeth for localism.” CPRE’s Emma Marrington said: “It is worrying that the Government chooses to portray town and village greens as a barrier to growth, rather than a key protection for spaces that are highly valued by communities”   .

Growth & Infrastructure Bill: Infrastructure

Business and commercial projects. The communities department is consulting on opening up the national infrastructure planning system to business and commercial projects “that are important to delivering growth and prosperity and boosting the economy” . The proposals are expected to bring 10 to 20 projects a year into the Planning Act regime. Developers will be able to request that their application be determined through the infrastructure planning system which ensures decisions are made within 12 months from the beginning of examination. Existing requirements to consult local communities will be retained. The consultation closes on 7 January.

Project types. There will not be a National Policy Statement for business and commercial development – the RTPI and TCPA earlier told the commons that an NPS is essential . Projects proposed for inclusion in the regime are:

- Manufacturing and office development, R&D facilities, and warehousing over 40,000 square m²
- Tourism and leisure proposals over 100 ha or 40,000 seats.
- Mixed-use developments, excluding housing or where retail is the main use, over 100,000m² floorspace.
- All coal mining, 500 tonnes per day of petroleum extraction, 500,000 cubic metres for gas extraction and over 100 hectares for other mining and quarrying.

The regime will not include developments that contain housing or developments that are primarily retail .

Project criteria. Size alone will not be sufficient for a project to be brought into the extended national regime. The Secretary of State will also consider:

- The physical scale of the development.
- Possible impacts, particularly if there are significant beyond the immediate locality.
- The location and whether that gives rise to substantial cross-boundary or national controversy.
- The potential impact on economic growth.
- For extraction, the rarity and importance of the mineral.
- Whether issues of national security or which involve foreign governments are involved.

Consents. The government is also consulting on reducing the need to obtain different consents for the same infrastructure project. Closes 7 January .

Growth & Infrastructure Bill: Planning Guarantee

The scheme. Where a planning authority is designated on the basis of poor performance, developers will be able to apply for planning permission directly to the Secretary of State. The Planning Inspectorate will carry out the examination, usually in writing. The Secretary of State will be able to call-in applications – a measure he proposes using ‘sparingly’. The communities department is proposing that planning authorities which determine 30% or fewer major planning applications within 13 weeks or have more than 20% of their decisions overturned at appeal will be designated as poorly performing ‘laggards’. The regime will begin in October 2013. Consultation closes 17 January .

Assessment. The government is suggesting that planning authorities should be assessed once a year and the result should be averaged over a two year period. Applications subject to planning performance agreements, which set out an agreed timetable for decision making, will be excluded from the statistics. Planning authorities that fail to submit data will be penalised and have their performance marked down.

Designation. The designation will automatically apply after the publication of the performance statistics. It will last for at least a year. The Homes and Communities Agency, Mayor of London, mayoral development corporations and urban development corporation are exempt from the new regime. Planning Magazine suggests that four London boroughs – Haringey, Kensington and Chelsea, Hounslow, and Barking and Dagenham, will be joined by Torbay and Cambridge in special measures . Haringey, usually a high performing authority, is furious as its slower performance was due to rebuilding after the 2011 riots . If the criteria are agreed, no one will be surprised if judicial reviews follow.

The Planning Inspectorate. An applicant will be able to seek pre-application advice from the Planning Inspectorate “on a cost recovery basis.” The planning fee will go to the Inspectorate, but the local authority will still be responsible for site notices, neighbour notification, supplying a site history, assessing cumulative impacts of development and S106 agreements. The Inspectorate will be subject to the Planning Guarantee but the Secretary of State will not.

Appeals. The only appeal subsequent to decision will be by judicial review.

Ending designation. The government at a loss at how to bring a planning authority out of special measures. How can it assess performance on major planning applications when the authority no longer processes them? It is proposing to assess performance on minor applications, how well the authority supports applications going to the Inspectorate and what steps it has taken to improve. These are woolly criteria, and no doubt will be lead to further judicial review.

Town Centres and Services

Margate. Eric Pickles has called in plans for a 82,000 sq ft Tesco megastore on the Margate seafront following a public inquiry    . Mary Portas said the proposal would conflict with regeneration plans for the Old Town    .

Pubs. Over 200 pubs across Britain have been converted into supermarket since January 2010 the Campaign for Real Ale said, while a further 45 are under threat .

Rural support. The Plunkett Foundation has been granted £450,000 to create a comprehensive support service for rural communities considering setting up or diversifying community-owned services, such as like shops and pubs .

Planning

Pig Ugly awards. After Nick Boles condemned a housing estate for being “pig ugly”, Kirkwells launched a competition to find the nation’s pig ugliest development [L](#) [O](#).

Regional strategies. The communities department is consulting on the environmental impact of revocation of the West Midlands and North East regional strategies, and the South West regional planning guidance. It says revocation will have little impact. Policies to protect the green belt at Morpeth and North East Somerset will be retained until local plans are in place. North East: closes 10 Jan [M](#). West Midlands: closes 24 Jan [M](#). South West: closes 1 Feb [M](#).

Appeals. The government is consulting on changes to planning appeal procedures and on setting up a fast-track eight-week Commercial Appeal Service [M](#) [PP](#). The proportion of housing appeals allowed has gone up by almost a third since the publication of the NPPF. The approval rate for schemes of at least 50 homes rose to 70%, compared to a rate of 54% for the six months before [P](#).

Building regulations. The government has set up a task force to streamline the regulations [M](#) [O](#).

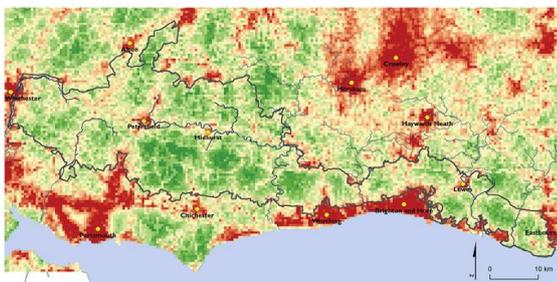
Pickles watch. Eric Pickles has given final approval to the University of Reading’s 1,350-home development plan by the River Loddon, Wokingham. Councillors say they are “tremendously disappointed” [O](#) [L](#). He approved 1,200 homes at Harlow blaming a short fall in housing supply [O](#). Stratford-on-Avon district council is to launch a judicial review against his decision last month to grant permission for an 800-home development adjacent to Anne Hathaway’s cottage [O](#) [M](#) [BBC](#). Stratford MP Nadhim Zahawi accused him of destroying “in a single stroke” belief in the government’s localism agenda [L](#).

Neighbourhood plans. The government is tendering for a single support body for neighbourhood planning [O](#).

Landscapes, Food and Farming

Outdoors. Allowing children freedom to explore a natural environment offers a wealth of opportunity to develop creative self-directed play, a study in Wales concluded [M](#). Natural Wight, which helps people on the Isle of Wight enjoy outdoor activities, has been awarded £65,000 [L](#).

South Downs National Park. The state of the park report says the economy is estimated at around £2.23 billion annually, employing up to 84,000 people. The exemplary report has a wealth of detail on landscape characterisation, tranquillity, water and more [O](#) [L](#).



Tranquillity in the South Downs National Park area

AONBs. Protesters turned out in force in Maidstone, Kent to mark the start of the public inquiry into a plan to quarry 81 acres of Oaken Wood [L](#). The case is seen as a test of protection for ancient woodland in the NPPF [M](#) [O](#). CPRE Yorkshire and Humber has launched a campaign to get the Yorkshire Wolds designated as an AONB [L](#). Slad Valley in Gloucestershire, the future of which featured in the 2011 NPPF campaign, is once again under threat from housing [M](#).

Green belt. Green belt land in England fell by 130 hectares over the past year due to three authorities, Chelmsford, Hyndburn and Thurrock, adopting plans that change their green belt boundaries [M](#). The Telegraph said that more than 9,000 acres of land – an area the size of Gloucester – is set to be removed from the green belt by local authorities under the NPPF [M](#) [M](#). The newspaper published an interactive map of the green belt [M](#). CPRE Surrey is objecting to plans to retain CCTV cameras in the green belt at Egham that were installed to protect Olympic athletes [L](#). Residents fear that plans for a school in the green belt at Merstham, Surrey are a ‘done deal’ [L](#). St Albans is to conduct a green belt boundary review after protesters petitioned and forced a council debate [P](#). Bradford’s green belt is under threat, despite 13,000 homes having planning permission, while 270 derelict sites await regeneration [I](#).

Light pollution. CPRE’s next Star Count Week will take place Friday 8 - Friday 15 February 2013 [CPRE](#). Light pollution can have positive effects on some wildlife by helping migratory birds find more food at night [g](#).

Heritage

Motoring. English Heritage has listed 13 car-related historic buildings [g](#). Jack Watkins explored the architectural influence of the motor car: “By the early 1920s, CPRE was excoriating the proliferation of what it called ‘wayside eyesores’” [I](#).

Heritage at Risk. English Heritage published its latest Heritage at Risk register [M](#). It is seeking people to take part in pilot projects to expand the register to grade II listed buildings [M](#). English Heritage is also considering listing the towers at Didcot power station but RWE npower has applied for a certificate of immunity to block the listing [I](#).

Heritage in the South East. The appeal court has upheld a high court ruling that the former home of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Surrey should not be redeveloped [BBC](#). Fire-wrecked Hastings pier is to be restored after being awarded a £11.4m grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund [g](#).

High Speed 2

CPRE. In a speech to CPRE, transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin pledged that HS2 will “respect” rural areas and announced a design panel to ensure the line is sensitive to its setting. CPRE welcomed the panel and praised HS2’s new emphasis on city centre rather than greenfield parkway stations. It said the proposals could result in far less damaging impacts to the landscape and pledged: “We look forward to working with the government as it develops its proposals” [O](#) [CPRE](#). CPRE Bucks has updated its statement of opposition to the line. It says the consultation was flawed, the route is not value for money and is environmentally damaging [CPRE](#).

Judicial reviews. Five legal challenges are currently being heard in the High Court [L](#) [O](#). The chairman of High Speed 2 Ltd admitted that it had lacked the resources to properly consult with the communities [O](#). He also warned that politicians opposing the scheme tend to use the issue “for their own advantage” [O](#).

Opinion. An Ipsos Mori survey for the HS Action Alliance found that just 4% of the British public think a new high speed rail line is the best way of boosting the economy through infrastructure investment. There was greater support for building more homes (40%); improving existing roads (20%); improving existing rail infrastructure (14%); improving high speed broadband (8%); and increasing airport capacity 5% [O](#) [O](#) (next page).

The Energy Bill

The Energy Bill seems to have found little favour outside carbon intensive industries [BC](#) [BC](#). The Treasury blocked moves to set a binding target to decarbonise the electricity sector by 2030. The target will not now be considered until 2016, giving scope for expansion of the gas industry [BG](#). Energy intensive industries including the power sector are to be exempt from measures to reduce carbon use [G](#).

Reaction. Green groups were dismayed and warned that the UK risks becoming locked into high carbon gas. The World Wildlife Fund called the postponement of a decision until 2016 “seriously disappointing”, describing it as “a failure of leadership”. Friends of the Earth said the bill “will lock the nation into increasingly expensive gas, condemn cash-strapped households to rising fuel bills and threatens the nation’s targets for tackling climate change” [O](#) [O](#). Fracking company Cuadrilla welcomed the bill [O](#). MPs, including Tim Yeo, have pledged to push for a “decarbonisation target on the face of the Bill” that would impose a carbon reduction target on the power sector for 2030 [BG](#).

Fracking in the UK

England’s 64%. An investigation by Greenpeace revealed that 64% of England’s land area is either currently licensed to a fracking operator, up for license or included in the current 14th licensing round [G](#) [i](#). DECC called the figure “nonsense” [BBC](#). Energy secretary Ed Davey predicted that shale gas would not lead to an era of cheap gas [BG](#). Cuadrilla Resources said it is ready to press on quickly with production if a UK ban on the technique is lifted, but would “walk away” if a decision is not made soon [T](#) [T](#) [BBC](#). Protestors organised a national day of action against fracking [g](#) [LES](#).

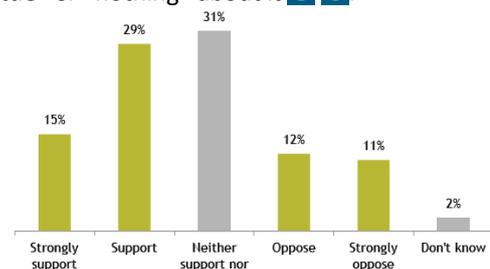
Water contamination. This topic is of particular concern at Balcombe in Sussex where a study by Durham University suggested that fractures from the fracking could pierce an aquifer [O](#). Emails obtained by Greenpeace [G](#), partly concerning fracking at Balcombe, showed that initial guidance from the Environment Agency read:

“The agency would not allow hydraulic fracking to take place in an area where there are aquifers used to supply drinking water... we would object during the company’s planning application and refuse to grant an environmental permit.”

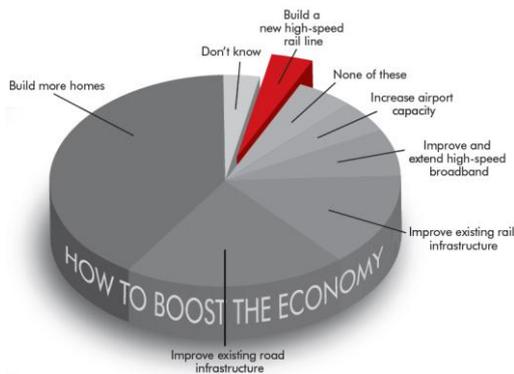
However, the EA’s head of climate change asked for the wording to be changed:

“I am a bit concerned that these two sentences provide too stark view of our position of where we would or would not be happy with shale gas developments in relation to potable ground water aquifers... Can I ask that you do not use [them].”

Public support – or not. A survey of 1,000 people living near drilling sites in Lancashire for Cuadrilla Resources found that, of those people who expressed an opinion, 65% backed gas exploration, while 35% opposed it [BBC](#). NB: the survey only asked about exploration for gas, not fracking (graph below). Nearly half of those surveyed saying they knew “very little” or “nothing” about it [O](#) [O](#).



How much do you support continuing exploration, in your area, to understand the potential for natural gas from shale in the UK?



Speed. The Independent reports the government is looking to slice 100km per hour off the top speed of the trains [i](#).

Aviation Capacity

The Davies Commission. The membership of the Airports Commission headed by Sir Howard Davies was announced [G](#) [G](#). He commented: “I aim it to be a really expert piece of work looking at how you think about airport capacity which I hope internationally will be leading edge” [S](#). Davies admits that he “can’t be convinced” that when he reports in 2015 the politicians will actually listen. The government has only said that it “probably would accept” his findings [g](#) [O](#).

One hub or none. Colin Matthews, the chief executive of Heathrow Ltd has sent a report, *One Hub Or None*, to the Airports Commission [O](#). The analysis by Frontier Economics argues that splitting a hub between Heathrow and Gatwick is not practical and building up other airports as major hubs will not work either. The government could either: do nothing and “let the UK fall behind competitors”; add additional capacity at Heathrow; or close Heathrow and replace it with a new larger hub airport [BBC](#). Willie Walsh, the head of the International Airlines Group has predicted a third runway will not be built at Heathrow [T](#).

Heathrow. A MORI survey of 93 MPs found that 46% support a third Heathrow runway and 16% a Thames Estuary hub [O](#). The 2M Group of 24 local authorities, which fought to get previous expansion plans scrapped, has been re-activated because of fears of a third runway u-turn [LES](#). The group said that lifting the ban on alternating runways and limits on night flights would destroy the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of people [LES](#).

Other options. The head of Gatwick said that London should follow New York by allowing its secondary airports to add new runways to compete with Heathrow [R](#). Ryanair’s Michael O’Leary dismissed a Thames Estuary airport as “insane, stupid and hare-brained” [L](#). The IPPR called for Manchester airport to be considered as a new hub to aid northern regeneration [i](#). An economist claimed that an airport built off the Kent coast is the only practical way to meet rising demand for air travel [BBC](#).

Rural Transport

CPRE. Giving the CPRE 2012 Annual Lecture, transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin focused on High Speed 2 and rural transport issues. He claimed: “We have moved on from the days when Swampy was headline news. We’ve learnt from massive advances in green technologies and construction techniques. We’ve learnt that it’s neither environmentally or morally acceptable to build new infrastructure without careful consideration of the surrounding landscape” [RE](#) [RE](#). He said the government is working on new guidance and revised traffic signs regulations to be issued by autumn next year [T](#) [A](#).

Energy in the South East

Oil. Egdon Resources and Europa Oil & Gas are to appeal a decision by Surrey county council to blocking drilling of test wells at near Dorking. An extended well test at their Markwells Wood oil project in West Sussex “has cast doubt on the commercial viability” of the project, which lies in the South Downs National Park [FT](#) [BBC](#). Leith Hill Action Group said: “We can’t count our chickens before they’ve hatched, but we are more optimistic at this stage than we were when we heard there was a public inquiry. If they lose again, it will be the third time” [L](#).

Navitus Bay. Dorset’s head of planning warned that the wind farm could put the Jurassic Coast’s World Heritage status at risk [L](#) [O](#). Hengistbury Head residents rejected the proposals at a meeting, saying the scheme should either be much reduced in size or put further out to sea [L](#).

Wind. EDF Energy Renewables says it will apply for 14 turbines instead of the 17 originally planned near Bullington Cross, north of Winchester [L](#) [L](#). Milton Keynes council is to challenge a judicial review brought by RenewableUK, which is seeking to get a policy that limits wind farm development thrown out [O](#). Peter Bedford, chairman of Hampshire CPRE, condemned plans for wind farms near Whitchurch. He told councillors: “We don’t believe this is green energy... The principle reason is it squanders one renewable source and that’s our landscape” [L](#). Friends of the Earth has condemned Hampshire County Council’s proposal to ban wind farms on its land [L](#).

Renewables. Hive Energy announced it wants to build nine new solar parks including a 10MW development in Steventon, Oxfordshire [BC](#). Plans to build a waste wood biomass plant in the green belt at Cobham, Surrey have been unanimously rejected by councillors [L](#) [L](#).

Wind Energy

Infighting within the Coalition over wind farms continued, with John Hayes maintaining his anti-turbine stance, Ed Davey taking legal advice on whether Hayes’ opinions could put DECC decisions in jeopardy of judicial review, and David Cameron blocking the appointment of a green permanent secretary to DECC [g](#) [T](#) [BG](#) [g](#) [T](#) [T](#) [g](#)

Community wind. The Guardian looked at the arguments for and against windfarms, including the community turbine at St Briavels, Gloucestershire and communities “under siege” in Montgomeryshire [g](#). Good Energy are offering homes within 2km of Delabole wind farm in Cornwall a £100 discount if they sign up for its power [T](#) [BBC](#).

‘No wind farm zones.’ Staffordshire county council has agreed that wind farms should not be located in areas where they would “damage the Staffordshire landscape or its economy”. Stratford on Avon is considering a 1.5km separation distance from houses [L](#). Regen SW said ‘buffer zones’ for turbines are inappropriate. It suggested that only if a property becomes “widely regarded as an unattractive and unsatisfactory place to live” should a scheme be rejected. CPRE’s Bob Barfoot countered: “The bigger the turbine the further away they should be” [L](#) [O](#). Huntingdonshire is reviewing its supplementary planning document on wind farms [L](#).

Noise. The Institute of Acoustics is to issue new guidance for planners and developers on assessing noise levels around wind farms [T](#). Residents have called on North Devon district council to shut down Fullabrook wind farm after a report it commissioned said all 22 turbines could be exceeding noise limits [L](#) [LG](#).

Energy, Waste and Water

Efficiency and low carbon. The Green Deal, which aims to ramp up the energy efficiency of houses, has got off to a slow start [E](#). The National Trust said there is a danger that the scheme will not make the savings claimed because it focuses on technology and not on people’s behaviour [E](#). DECC launched the UK’s first national Energy Efficiency Strategy [BG](#) [O](#) [BG](#) [E](#). It is consulting on how to encourage permanent reductions in energy use across homes and businesses. Closes 31 January 2013 [O](#) [O](#). The UK’s £3bn Green Investment Bank was officially opened [O](#) [BG](#) [O](#).

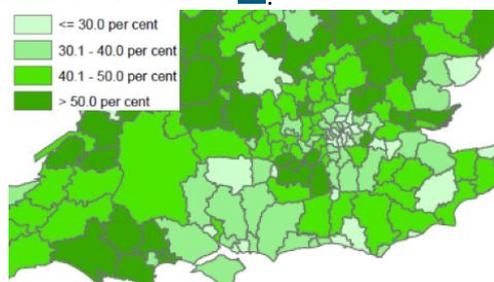
Climate change. Greenhouse gas emissions levels are 14% above where they need to be in 2020 [O](#). Research by the Global Carbon Project says emissions grew 3.1% in 2011, placing the world on a near-certain path towards dangerous climate change [g](#). Burning wood in power stations is worse for the climate than burning coal, green groups said [E](#).

Pylons. National Grid is considering building pylons across the Norfolk Broads. David Hook of CPRE Norfolk said: “Where you’ve got big horizons... tall structures are far more intrusive” [T](#) [L](#). The Somerset levels are also under threat [T](#). A five-mile section of the 37-mile cable connecting Hinkley Point to Avonmouth in Bristol will be undergrounded in the Mendip Hills AONB [BBC](#) [L](#).

Severn Barrage. The commons energy and climate change committee is to investigate the feasibility of generating tidal power from the barrier [BC](#). The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership is objecting to the project claiming it would restrict access of large ships to the Port of Bristol [L](#). A report claimed that lower impact tidal fences and turbines deployed with wave and wind power systems would generate more electricity than the barrage scheme [BC](#).

Incineration. Plans for an incinerator that upset Grant Shapps have been put on hold indefinitely while communities secretary Eric Pickles decides whether to call them in [P](#). Veolia has withdrawn its judicial review over refusal of a Nottinghamshire incinerator [L](#). The company is having to import waste from neighbouring areas to keep its Sheffield incinerator viable [L](#).

Recycling rates across England are beginning to level off as more waste is recycled than landfilled for the first time: 44% was recycled; 19% incinerated; 37% landfilled [O](#) (map below). Hampshire is set to become the first UK county council to achieve near zero waste to landfill following the opening of a solid recovery fuel (SRF) facility. Yet it recycles just 37% of waste; 53% is incinerated for energy; 4% will go to the SRF and 6% to landfill [O](#).



Recycling rates in the south

Water. The European Environment Agency said pollution and excessive water use are harming ecosystems [O](#) [O](#). UK consumers use five times more water than they realise [E](#).

Flooding. The recent floods across Britain have forced David Cameron to reverse some of the cuts in flood defence spending, with the provision of an extra £120m for 50 schemes [g](#) [T](#).