

Garden Cities

Two years ago, David Cameron spoke in favour of a new wave of garden cities and promised a government 'prospectus' on the idea. Nick Clegg promoted the idea last December. The prospectus has not materialised but many groups, including the Town and Country Planning Association, have continued to press the idea. The Financial Times suggested that communities secretary Eric Pickles "quietly retreated on the plans because of concerns that the 'top down' idea would cost the Conservatives votes in the Home Counties" [FT](#). Now the prime minister's planning adviser has stepped down to run a major competition for a new garden city.

Prize. The Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust is to award a prize of £250,000 for the best plan to deliver a new garden city [FT](#) [FT](#). Lord Simon Wolfson said: "The maths is powerful: a mere 2% of undeveloped land could increase space for homes by more than 25%. Garden cities provide a verdant alternative to endless infill, shoebox flats, urban creep and strip development" [TC](#). Miles Gibson, the Prime Minister's adviser on planning, is to transfer to the Policy Exchange to run the prize. Gibson said the prize will only go to a garden city that's wanted by local people: "Lord Wolfson is committed to the idea that if the locals don't want it, it should not happen." CPRE chief executive Shaun Spiers said: "Can you imagine the howls of outrage from developers if the Prime Minister's main adviser on housing and planning took a six month career break to work for CPRE? Instead Miles Gibson has gone to work for a think tank that has spent ten years trying to undermine support for the planning system and encourage more building in the countryside" [TC](#). According to the FT, some Lib Dems suspect the prize "is a device to keep the issue on the agenda while avoiding any practical decisions until after the next election" [FT](#). In the Guardian, Simon Jenkins said that Lord Wolfson "is only trying to help his developer friends push through volume housebuilding where it would not otherwise be allowed" [G](#).

Labour. Ed Balls committed Labour to building a wave of new towns, suggesting that a Labour government will revive development corporations. Shadow housing minister, Emma Reynolds promised to begin five new towns within the first five years of a new Labour government [G](#) [G](#) [IH](#).

Communities. The TCPA has published a guide to community involvement in garden cities. It is also launching a year-long study into the existing new towns to learn the lessons about what does and does not work in bringing forward large scale new communities [TCPA](#). In January, the TCPA will publish a good practice guide to stewardship models for new communities. In February, it will publish an amendment to the New Towns Act which will allow a greater influence for local authorities in development corporations [TCPA](#). The BBC and the Independent reviewed garden city history, principles and ideas [BBC](#) [I](#) [I](#). Feargus O'Sullivan said a better model might be Sweden's recently built urban districts [I](#).



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Green Belt

Politics. David Cameron told the Times that people opposed to building on the green belt must understand the needs of those desperate to get on to the housing ladder [T](#). Owen Paterson told the Today programme: "We want to see sustainable growth, but we are clear that we cannot freeze the country in aspic." He said tensions between economic recovery and environmental protection are "mythical." Paterson refused to confirm that the area of protected green belt would not decrease [TC](#). Melissa Kite in the Daily Mail attacked Cameron for failing to protect the green belt: "What a shocking betrayal" [M](#). Hampshire council leader Roy Perry is calling for a green belt around Southampton to halt infilling of gaps with development. A working party is being set up to look at the proposal [L](#).

Threats – South East. Council planners say that up to 7,700 homes might need to be built in the green belt around High Wycombe [BFP](#). Oxford's green belt is under threat "like never before" from a Northern Gateway planned by the city council and university plans to expand around the Bedbrooke Science Park. Helen Marshall of CPRE Oxon said: "The Kidlington Gap is under real pressure, but is vital in maintaining the village as a separate entity with its own character, rather than getting swallowed up by the creep of the city" [OM](#). An access road across green belt land has been approved in Kidlington amid fears it will lead to further housing development [OT](#). Developers are hoping to build a new secondary school and up to 500 homes on green belt land in Cobham [GS](#). Mole Valley council is to consult on its housing plans, including sites in the green belt [GS](#). Residents are opposing a new school in the green belt at Farnham Royal in South Bucks [L](#). Residents are protesting against plans to remove green belt protection from sixteen villages around Guildford [GS](#) [GS](#) [GS](#).

Threats – national. CPRE is objecting to loss of green belt for housing in Doncaster [L](#). Bradford council is scaling back plans to build on areas of green belt after public protests [L](#). Bath and North East Somerset council has published proposals to redefine the green belt boundary around Bath [L](#). The green belt is also under threat from housing in Warwickshire [L](#); Hexham [L](#); Sutton Coldfield [L](#); Durham [L](#). Hertfordshire council is pursuing plans to build a secondary school in the green belt at Croxley Green [L](#).

Planning in the South East

Berkshire. Proposals to build a new gypsy and traveller site with 10 pitches on land at Datchet Common, near Slough have been called in by Eric Pickles [SO](#). A public inquiry into the Ascot and the Sunnings neighbourhood plan takes place on 11 December [L](#).

Kent. Medway council has withdrawn its core strategy after Lodge Hill, which would have taken a third of its housing needs, was declared a SSSI by English Nature to protect nightingales [LG](#) [KN](#) [🌳](#). Councillors went against the advice of planning officers and rejected a proposal for 6,000 square metres of commercial space in a former quarry at Strood [KO](#). More than 120 residents marched to save threatened ancient woodland at New Allington, outside Maidstone from housing development [KN](#) [C](#) [BBC](#).



Development site at New Allington [C](#).

Oxfordshire. English Heritage has told Oxford City Council the £400m Westgate shopping centre scheme is “pushing the envelope” with the proposed height of the buildings, which exceed the height of the Carfax tower [OM](#). North Hinksey is considering drawing up a neighbourhood plan [OM](#). South Oxfordshire council has approved 175 homes at Thame, the first time that a scheme has been approved against a neighbourhood plan [C](#) [OM](#). Planners are to allow an extra 1,000 homes to be squeezed into North West Bicester eco town [OT](#). Councillors are considering using steam from the Ardley incinerator to heat the eco town [OM](#). Oxford campaigners say that new rules will make “it impossible for community groups to nominate town and village greens” [OT](#). Oxfordshire council approved a 33 hectare extension of Caversham Quarry near the village of Sonning Eye [BBC](#) [P](#) [LG](#).

Surrey. Waverley council has confirmed that it will take two years to revise its core strategy after a planning inspector insisted it was withdrawn for not allowing for enough housing [GS](#). Dunsfold Park is planning to use the opportunity to get permission for 1,000 homes [GS](#). Campaigners have asked English Heritage to raise the listing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s former home at Hindhead to Grade I [BBC](#). Eric Pickles has refused to call in a 400-home greenfield scheme near Ash approved by Guildford council in September [GS](#). CCTV poles installed in Egham for “temporary” use during the Olympics are to remain in place despite being condemned as eyesores [GS](#).

Buckinghamshire. The public inquiry into three housing schemes totalling 3,000 homes at Hampden Fields, Fleet Marston and Weedon Hill on the outskirts of Aylesbury has concluded. The inquiry into expansion of Pinewood Studios in the green belt has begun [BFP](#). Redevelopment of Daws Hill, a former RAF site, has been approved despite strong opposition from nearby residents [BFP](#).

Sussex. A planning inspector has told Mid Sussex council it should withdraw its local plan from examination because it does not meet the Localism Act’s duty to cooperate with the coastal planning authorities, which are facing a 20% shortfall in housing provision. Mid Sussex council said that councillors are “frustrated” by the inspector’s verdict [P](#) [LG](#) [LG](#) [MST](#). Mid Sussex council had accepted that it would find space for undersupply of housing in Crawley [MST](#). CPRE Sussex is asking Adur council to reconsider plans for development at Shoreham Airport, which it says will damage precious countryside and increase pressure on areas prone to flooding. David Johnson said: “The Adur local plan needs a significant rethink and we hope that the district council will dig deep to find brownfield land and unlock sites held onto by developers to demonstrate that building on greenfield land in this way is inappropriate” [WST](#). Loxwood, Nuthurst, Storrington and Sullington, Washington parish councils have commenced neighbourhood plans [WST](#) [WST](#) [WST](#). More than 100 people turned out to support RAGE2 (Residents Against Greenfield Development), which is protesting against 92 new homes in the Lavant Gap [L](#) [L](#). Combe Haven Defenders have released a film about the campaign against the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road [L](#).



Mayfield. In a Westminster Hall debate, Mid Sussex MP Nicholas Soames said the new town would destroy “beautiful countryside and valuable agricultural land” where infrastructure was poor. Soames said:

Mayfield’s proponents call the putative new settlement a “market town”. That is arrant nonsense, since there would be minimal local employment. It would, as the excellent Sussex CPRE observed, be a commuter town... Even the most zealous supporter of the scheme... would be hard pressed to describe it as sustainable.

Nicholas Herbert MP said: “Developers are setting out to undermine the normal local planning process and interfere with the sensitive consultations that local authorities are holding with our electorate.” Housing minister Kris Hopkins said new towns were the right solution in some areas but they should have local community support [BBC](#) [TA](#) [🏠](#). The Daily Mirror reported the Mayfield protest [L](#).

Planning

Politics. The Sunday Times reported that MPs are accusing David Cameron of reneging on a pledge to give ordinary people the power to block unwanted housing developments. It cites Bampton in Oxfordshire “as a perfect example of the towns threatened” [T](#). Nick Boles told the newspaper that he wanted to make it “quicker and easier” for communities to make their own decisions about the location of new housing [T](#). In a submission to Labour’s planning review, the RIBA said the planning system is “heavily skewed towards the interests of developers over those of the public” and the NPPF is leading to poor development [RIBA](#) [T](#). The Commons communities and local government committee is to undertake an inquiry into the operation of the planning system in the spring of 2014 [T](#).

More Boles. Nick Boles told the Telegraph that planning reforms have “made the world a slightly better place” [T](#). He said if developers fail to start building within an allocated time set by a local council developers will have to reapply for planning permission [T](#). He also told the Commons communities and local government committee he was determined there should be “individual benefits” for local residents from new development. “One of the things we are keen to pilot is whether people who have properties very close to a substantial development might benefit from some form of compensation for the loss of property value” [T](#). Boles said young people who cannot afford to buy somewhere to live should be handed plots of state-owned land to build homes of their own [G](#).

Countryside. Stroud council is to write to Eric Pickles, telling him that the NPPF is “inherently unsound” and is leading to the “irreversible loss of open countryside” [L](#). Eric Pickles has overturned his inspector’s advice and blocked plans for up to 200 homes and a marina on green belt land to the north of Coventry [P](#).

Local plans. Nick Boles told the BBC that local councils have “no excuse” for not having their local plans in place [BBC](#). A planning inspector has told Wiltshire that its core strategy must plan for 44,000 houses, not 37,000 [LG](#) [L](#).

Special measures. The leader of the only council to be placed in special measures, Blaby in Leicestershire, has blasted planning ministers for inhabiting “a bizarre world” and breaking promises on localism [T](#).

Neighbourhood plans. Nick Boles said that the neighbourhood plan process is “complicated” and may need to be revised [ba](#). An application for 184 homes at Winsford in Cheshire has been rejected on the grounds that it conflicts with an emerging neighbourhood plan, which is currently being examined prior to a referendum. Council officers warned that the decision could be overturned on appeal as the council does not have a five year supply of housing land [O](#) [P](#) [L](#) [L](#). More than 800 communities are now working on neighbourhood plans [T](#).

LEPs. Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership is consulting on its strategy for spending Structural Investment Funds in the county. Closes 7 January [LEP](#).

Five year land supply. In decision that bucks the trend, an inspector said that a development in rural Sussex “would be in an unsustainable location... and would encourage travel by car which would impact adversely on the use of natural resources and the need to adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.” This is despite Arun council not having a five year land supply [L](#) [T](#). Again in Arun, an inspector said that 107 homes must go ahead outside a development boundary because the council lacks a five year land supply [O](#) [T](#). An inspector said that despite Daventry council having only 4.38 years land supply, this could not overrule the housing plans being “development in the open countryside which is unacceptable in principle” [L](#) [T](#). Citing lack of housing land supply, Eric Pickles has approved: 400 greenfield homes at Humberston in North East Lincolnshire [O](#) [P](#) [L](#); 650 in Cheshire West [O](#); and 250 outside Burton-upon-Trent [P](#) [O](#) [T](#). Cotswold council lost a high court challenge against 289 homes [O](#) [T](#). After its estimate of land supply plummeted from 14 years to little more than two years, the leader of Telford & Wrekin council said using public money to fight planning appeals on decisions is like “betting on a three legged donkey” [P](#) [LG](#).

Housing. More than 44,000 planning permissions were granted in England in the third quarter of 2013, up 31% on last year. Permissions for social homes were up 15% [T](#) [T](#). Just one social home is being built for every seven being sold under the Right to Buy [T](#). The environmental audit committee has told the communities department to reconsider axing the Code for Sustainable Homes [B&G](#). *Planning* reviewed ten large housing schemes that have recently been approved against local council wishes [P](#). Cooperative UK said developers that reap windfalls from projects such as HS2 should donate land for a new generation of garden cities or suburbs [i](#) [T](#). The House of Commons Library has published a useful guide to planning for housing [T](#).

Design. Eric Pickles rejected 203 homes in Lancashire saying there was “little evidence” of a design led approach to the scheme and “little attempt to connect the housing into its countryside setting” [O](#) [ba](#) [T](#).

Flooding. The Environment Agency said that flooding in England in 2012 cost close to £600 million [T](#).

Town centres. A high court challenge is underway from a coalition of London councils against the new permitted development rights that allow offices to be converted to homes without planning permission [P](#) [LG](#) [T](#). Nick Boles told Ladbrokes that new permitted development rights would help them establish more betting shops on the high street [G](#). Eric Pickles declared that the era of large retail developments on the edge of towns is over. Talking to the Telegraph, he said he did want more powers to block new supermarkets, saying such issues should be “decided locally” [T](#). In the real world, out of town supermarkets still account for most new grocery space: 39.5m sq ft of space will be out of town compared to just 8.5m sq ft proposed, approved or being built in town centres [T](#). The House of Commons Library has published a guide to changes in permitted development rights [T](#).

Landscapes and Biodiversity

Biodiversity offsetting. MPs on the environmental audit committee gave a cautious welcome to biodiversity offsetting but said the government's proposals must be improved to properly protect wildlife and woodlands. The report criticises the twenty minute site assessment for calculating biodiversity losses as "overly simplistic". MPs favour a mandatory offsetting system and call on the government to delay its decision on biodiversity offsetting until after the current pilots have run their course   . Responding to the report, Friends of the Earth said: "Nature cannot just be shifted around the country at the whim of a developer. The government should pull the plug on these madcap off-setting plans" . Three-quarters of planners admit to only having a basic knowledge of the "mitigation hierarchy" at the heart of offsetting plans . More than 140 environmental groups have signed an international statement opposing biodiversity offsetting  . The Open Spaces Society opposes the scheme . In a speech to the Policy Exchange, Owen Paterson asked: "Improving the environment and growing the economy. Can we have it all?" His answer? You guessed it .

Woodland. Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committees have replaced the Forestry Commission England's Regional Advisory Committees . The Forestry Commission said that the St Jude's Day storm caused no long term damage to the woodlands in the south of England . Dukeshouse Wood near Hexham has been registered as an Asset of Community Value .

Marine and coast. Defra has announced the designation of 27 marine conservation zones (MCZs) around the English coast, far short of the 127 reserves recommended by scientists. They include Beachy Head West, Folkestone Pomerania, Medway Estuary and the Thanet Coast    . The government has published a coastal concordat promising a single point of contact for developers along the coast . Natural England is consulting on final proposals for the coastal path between Folkestone and Ramsgate. Closes 22 December .

Indicators. Green umbrella group Wildlife and Countryside Link said the government has only made good progress in four of 25 environmental areas. *Nature Check 2013* said that the government has fallen short in protection of the green belt, farm animal welfare, marine conservation zones and reversing wildlife decline. It also reports a survey of 2,000 British adults, 91% of whom believe: "the countryside is a national treasure and that we should improve the condition of the natural environment for future generations"   . Owen Paterson dismissed the Link report as unfair "opinions" from "active campaigning groups" . Defra has published its annual *Biodiversity indicators in your pocket* .

Costly standards. A new British Standard, *Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development* (BS 42020) has been issued. It replaces a 2010 advisory note, *Planning to halt the loss of biodiversity*. That note was free, but the new standard will set you back £100   .

Birds and bees. The RSPB warned that there has been a dramatic decline in numbers of some of the most common countryside birds including the cuckoo, starling, willow tit, lapwing, whinchat and wood warbler. It said funds should be moved from direct subsidies to encourage wildlife-friendly farming – else the countryside will fall silent   . UK environmental organisations called on the government to fully enforce the ban on neonicotinoid pesticides, which began this month . Greenpeace said the ban, which aims to protect bee populations, will not be effective without ecological farming practices and the conservation of natural and semi-natural habitats . The NFU said the ban could lead to use of harmful pesticides which will harm bees and other wildlife .

Green infrastructure. The Commons Library has issued a note summarising the social, health economic and environmental benefits of green infrastructure .

AONBs. A plan to build 31 houses, 21 affordable, at Mevagissey in the Cornwall AONB has been blocked by a high court judge. The judge said it was not clear that the council had correctly applied planning policies designed to protect areas of outstanding natural beauty  . Natural England is examining whether the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB boundary should be extended to cover the south side of the Stour estuary in Essex .

Dark skies. The International Dark Skies Association has granted dark sky park status to combined area of the Northumberland National Park and the Kielder Water and Forest Park  . The Hebridean island of Coll has also been awarded dark sky status  .

Rights of way. The CLA is calling for a change in legislation to make the process of diverting rights of way easier for landowners . A code of conduct has been published for users of the Epsom Downs, where public access is legally secondary to racehorse training  .

Heritage. Culture Secretary Maria Miller is consulting on plans to overhaul English Heritage. A new charity, retaining the name English Heritage, will manage historic sites, which will remain in public ownership from 2015. The charity will be expected to raise "a further £83 million from third parties" to match the government's £85 million dowry. A new unit, Historic England will act as the statutory adviser to on heritage matters. Consultation closes 7 February   . Shadow culture minister Helen Goodman said: "There must be no watering down of English Heritage's role in planning. That is huge." The National Trust said splitting English Heritage "raises some fundamental issues"; the question is whether it will remain the custodian of last resort to save heritage sites that are at risk or hugely unprofitable . The Historic Environment Forum published *Heritage Counts 2013*, which reports a 33% drop in conservation officers in local authorities since 2006  . The Association of Chief Police Officers has set up a working group to spearhead policing of heritage and cultural property crime in the UK . West Berkshire Council has agreed to sell the Greenham Common control tower to Greenham parish council to be converted into a visitor centre  .

Farming and Food

CAP. CPRE urged the government to allocate 15% (£3.8bn), the maximum allowed, of Common Agricultural Policy modulation funds to green farming schemes and rural development measures. It said the area of farmland under green farming schemes is otherwise likely to fall from 70% to 40% [F&UK](#) [E](#). The environment, food and rural affairs committee backed the farming industry's wish to retain the existing modulation of 9%, moving to the 15% rate, only if necessary, in 2017 [F&UK](#) [E](#). The NFU said cash flow on many farms is in "terrible shape" and taking an extra 6% off farmers to fund green schemes "must be wrong" [FWI](#). As we go to press, reports suggest that Owen Paterson has plumped for 15% modulation, to the fury of the NFU [FG](#). The rate has been set at 9.5% in Scotland to the anger of the RSPB [E](#) [FWI](#).

Badgers. The pilot badger cull in Gloucestershire ended three weeks early after officials conceded they would not hit even the significantly reduced target of 55%. Defra ministers Owen Paterson and George Eustice insisted the cull, which killed 39% of badgers in the area, had been worthwhile. Scientists say that the aborted cull may have increased the risk of bovine TB [E](#) [G](#) [C](#). Eustice said the government intends to cull badgers in more areas next year [FWI](#) [FWI](#). Defra is introducing measures to address "long-standing-weaknesses" in TB cattle controls [FG](#).

High Speed 2

High Speed 2. A Telegraph/ICM survey showed only 21% of people agree with David Cameron's claim that HS2 is "essential" for Britain. Just 3% said they believed the line will be delivered on time and on budget, while more than two-thirds said they wanted the government to scrap or halt the plans while other options are considered [E](#). David Cameron invited China to invest in the rail line [FT](#) [E](#). In the Telegraph, Andrew Gilligan looked at the 21 ancient woodlands that will be damaged or destroyed by HS2 [E](#). The NFU said: "Given the major impacts of the project along its route, including to many farming families and their businesses, it is vital that there is a clear and widely accepted business case before the project is given the green light" [F&UK](#). The government is considering whether to block release of a report from November 2011, which warns the project is in danger of failing [E](#).

Development. Department for Transport officials said "land around the East Midlands hub station [at Toton in Cheshire] will be a highly attractive investment proposition for developers" [S](#).

Chilterns. A report commissioned by the Conserve the Chilterns & Countryside Group said that putting HS2 in a tunnel under the whole of the Chilterns AONB would save the country at least £500 million by avoiding negative impacts on landscape, wildlife, heritage assets and people's health and well-being [AONB](#) [E](#); Report: [AONB](#).

Transport

London Britannia Airport is the current name for Boris Island. The Thames Estuary Research and Development Company (**Testrad**) published plans for the six runway hub. It said it will cost £48 billion, to be raised by closing Heathrow and building a new borough, and will take seven years to build. The airport will be a seed for "significant development" of the Thames Gateway [E](#) [E](#). The London Borough of Heathrow would provide 300,000 new homes and 200,000 jobs, and be "a technopolis centre for regional high technology enterprise" [L](#).



London Britannia Airport

Airport access. The Airports Commission has recommended a £2 billion package of measures for improving surface access to key airports [C](#). The National Infrastructure Plan commits the government to taking the measures forward [C](#).

Airports Commission. The commission is due to publish its interim report on 17 December. Campaign group Stop Stansted Expansion failed in its high court bid to get the Commission's review delayed. It had argued that one member of the commission had a conflict of interest [BBC](#).

Airspace. NATS is consulting on changes to air corridors over London and the South East. Closes 21 February [E](#). Farnborough Airport is expected to consult on changes to its airspace shortly [E](#).

Rail. Campaigners held a protest against a bid by Rother District Council to remove a proposal for a new station at Glyne Gap from its local plan [C](#).

Roads. A second link road is planned at Bexhill. The developer chose to hide in the toilets rather than answer questions about the scheme at a recent exhibition [CHD](#) [CHD](#). The Highways Agency has ruled out turning the hard shoulder on part of the M60 Manchester Ring into an active lane because of the negative impact on air quality. The Campaign for Better Transport said the decision could have repercussions on other road schemes such as the A14 in Cambridgeshire [S](#). The appeal court has rejected a challenge to the Heysham M6 relief road [P](#).

Cycling. Hampshire County Council is threatening to regulate mass cycle events in the New Forest unless organisers draw up a code of conduct [L](#).

Energy, Water and Waste: South East

Pylons. National Grid has chosen the North Route for pylons between Richborough and Canterbury [KO](#) [A](#) [A](#) [L](#).

Fracking in Sussex. Celtique Energie Weald has submitted a planning application to drill for shale gas at Fernhurst in the South Downs National Park [P](#) [Q](#) [NF](#). MP Andrew Tyrie, who has previously expressed support for fracking, has said he is “very unlikely” to support the Fernhurst application [T](#) [C](#). Lord Cowdray has refused the company permission to drill under his land in the National Park [BBC](#). As the last of the Balcombe protestors were evicted, demonstrators pitched tents outside County Hall in Chichester [TA](#) [BBC](#) [Q](#). The leader of West Sussex council has called for a national debate on fracking [WST](#).

Fracking in Kent. East Kent Against Fracking and the No Fracking in Balcombe Society delivered letters to the prime minister challenging “government myths” on fracking [KO](#) [WST](#). More than 300 people turned out to a fracking meeting organised by CPRE Protect Kent [KO](#). After hearing from Graham Warren of CPRE Protect Kent and others, Dover council has voted to oppose fracking [A](#). Plans to drill for gas at old coalfield sites in east Kent have been temporarily withdrawn. CPRE Protect Kent said the move showed how little research the firm had done [BBC](#) [KO](#).

More fracking. Hampshire Council, which has adopted a policy supporting fracking, has been accused of towing the government line and failing to protect the environment. [L](#) [L](#) [L](#). A campaign has been launched to stop fracking coming to Bucks [BFP](#).

Wind. More than 200 people protested against a proposed six-turbine windfarm at Woodmancott Down, Hampshire [L](#) [L](#) [L](#) [L](#). Winchester council gave planning permission for an 80-metre high test mast on the site of the proposed Bullingdon windfarm [HC](#). In a Westminster Hall debate on the Navitus windfarm, MPs spoke of their concerns about the consultation process, the impact on tourism, visual impact, sailing issues and bird life [L](#) [BBC](#) [A](#). E.ON says it remains committed to the project [TA](#).

Solar. Eric Pickles and Oxford West and Abingdon MP Nicola Blackwood will visit the site of the proposed solar farm in Besselsleigh, Vale of White Horse [OT](#) [C](#).

Water. Thames Water is to hike prices by 11% above inflation from 2015 and 2020 to pay for infrastructure investment, including the controversial Thames Tideway Tunnel, which is currently being examined at a public inquiry in London [g](#). The company may however be stripped of control of the project. The Secretary of State is considering forcing Thames Water to obtain competitive bids for a new independent company that will finance and construct the Tunnel rather than delivering the project itself [A](#). South East Water is rolling out its compulsory customer metering programme with another 50,000 meters due to be installed. including in Maidstone [Q](#).

Energy, Water and Waste: National

Climate change. Global warming has slid down the agenda since Owen Paterson took charge of Defra [i](#). Delegates at climate change talks in Warsaw agreed that all countries would make unspecified “contributions” towards international efforts to cut emissions [CB](#) [A](#). The Committee on Climate Change said there is “no legal or economic basis” for loosening the UK’s commitment to halving UK emissions by 2027 [CB](#). The levels of gases in the atmosphere that drive global warming reached record levels in 2012 [BBC](#). The Green Deal, which aims to insulate homes, is proceeding at glacial pace with only 219 properties having installed measures by the end of October [Q](#). The Australians are to capture CO2 in house bricks [A](#).

Fracking. CPRE gave a cautious welcome to fracking, acknowledging that could reduce reliance on burning coal. “Fracking is not a permanent fixture on the landscape so there could also be less damaging visual impacts than some other forms of extraction” [RE](#) [FT](#). Energy minister Michael Fallon said households “right across the South” should prepare for fracking. He said that an unpublished water industry report has concluded that fracking poses no contamination threat [C](#) [BBC](#). Frack Free Fernhurst said the report is “narrow” and “tentative” [WST](#). Lord Deben, chair of the Committee on Climate Change said that ministers should press ahead with fracking: “It just isn’t true that fracking is going to destroy the environment and the world is going to come to an end if you frack” [T](#) [BBC](#).

Solar. In a letter to local authorities, energy minister Greg Barker pledged to “crack down” on solar farms sited in inappropriate parts of the countryside. The views of communities must be “properly heard” and local amenity protected. Proposals in national parks and AONBs will need “careful consideration” and “the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections” [A](#). An analysis by *Planning* revealed that in the first nine months of this year, there were 278 planning applications for solar farms, the largest of which is a 41MW project in the Vale of White Horse, Oxfordshire. Approval rates have dropped from 100% to 82% [P](#). A 175-acre solar farm has been approved by Dorset council despite stiff opposition from CPRE Dorset, which said the solar park would instantly become a “large, artificial intrusion into beautiful, sensitive countryside.” [Q](#).

Offshore wind. RWE Innogy has withdrawn its plans for a 240-turbine Atlantic Array offshore wind farm in the Bristol Channel. It said technical difficulties had pushed the price up so far that it could not be justified under the current subsidy regime. The Crown Estate suggested the scheme might be revived with floating turbines and RWE said it might revive it when “next-generation technology” was developed [A](#) [BBC](#) [T](#) [L](#) [BBC](#). Ministers have rejected a bid for investment subsidy for the 200-turbine Race Bank windfarm off Humberside [C](#) [L](#).

Onshore wind. Eric Pickles said onshore wind turbine developers will be instructed to consult the public before putting in planning applications, though communities will not be allowed a veto. The instruction applies to two or more turbines over 15 metres in height [T](#) [P](#) [C](#). RenewableUK is reported to have lobbied to influence government guidance on windfarm noise [T](#). On 29 November, wind power generated 6 gigawatt of power for the grid for the first time, 13.5% of the UK's total electricity demand at that time [T](#). Eric Pickles upheld Copeland council's rejection of a six-turbine onshore wind farm at Frizington in Cumbria, ruling that the scheme conflicted with local planning policies and would cause "significant adverse harm" to the local landscape [P](#) [C](#). Planning inspector Paul Griffiths has been nicknamed "Inspector Blight" after approving 19 of 22 windfarm appeals. His decision to approve turbines at Lyveden New Bield was recently thrown out by the high court [T](#).

Nuclear. The EU is reported to be about to block the £10 billion government loan guarantee for Hinkley Point [T](#).

Coal. Emissions of sulphur oxides from coal-fired power stations increased by 19% in 2012 compared to 2011 and 27% since 2010 [T](#).

Recycling. Consultancy Eunomia said that recycling across England will not be able to exceed 60% because the number of planned or built incinerators [T](#). A majority of people (91%) think that their local council should tell them where their carefully sorted waste is sent [T](#).

Communities and Campaigning

Roundup. Defra has published a report on alternative service delivery models in rural areas [C](#). Data gathered by Copernicus, Europe's Earth observation system is to be made freely available [T](#).

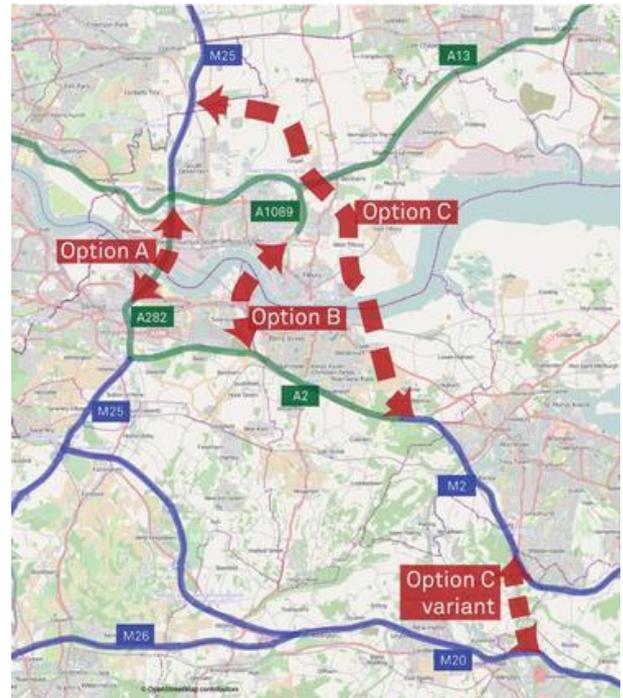
Obituaries. Mavis Batey, Bletchley Park codebreaker, former CPRE Oxfordshire executive member and president of the Garden History Society, has died. She was the driving force behind moves by CPRE, English Heritage and the Garden History Society to preserve historical gardens [T](#) [i](#).

English Nature. Venture capitalist Andrew Sells has been selected by Owen Paterson as the new chair of Natural England [g](#) [C](#). George Monbiot said the government wants a chairman who can flog nature [g](#).

CPRE. Writing in the *Ecologist*, CPRE President Andrew Motion drew on the memory of Macmillan, praised CPRE campaigners' resilience and said: "Those green fields that Nick Boles argues have less value to society than the houses he would build on them are the bedrock of everything. If we lose green fields, we lose something essential to our selves" [T](#).

Lower Thames Crossing

Final decision delayed. As we go to press, the government has ruled out Option B for the Lower Thames Crossing, which crossed the Swanscombe peninsular, but it has not decided between options A and C, and the C variant [C](#) [KN](#) [KN](#) [BBC](#). Option A would entail an additional crossing next to the current Dartford crossing. Option C would join the M2 with the A13 and the M25. The C variant would also link the M2 and M25.



Consultation. 30% of respondents agreed that there was a strong case for a new crossing and 29% disagreed. Response to the three options was very mixed, with no clear overall favourite. However, the government has ruled that Option B has the "weakest case".

Next step. The government will now "continue to carefully consider important points raised during consultation in reaching a decision or whether to select Options A, C or the C variant in 2014."

The CPRE eBulletins

CPRE South East eBulletin is independently written and edited by Andy Boddington: cprenews@andyboddington.co.uk. Views expressed in the eBulletin and its editorial approach are those of its editor and not any part of CPRE.

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