



Planning Powers Grabbed

A new world is emerging in planning where elected councils will play a much reduced role. The City Deals favoured by George Osborne will establish new investment and planning bodies that are only remotely connected to democracy. A case in point is Oxford where the City Deal has been developed entirely without public engagement (below).

Regeneration, investment and transport funds currently directed by central government are being transferred to the local enterprise partnerships. The LEPs will also be responsible for drawing up economic development plans for their area. How these will relate to existing core strategies – and what will happen if a council refuses planning permission against with LEP's wishes – is anyone's guess.

What is clear is that, not for the first time, local councils and democracy are to be largely side-lined in strategic planning.

Wave 2 City Deals & LEPs

City deals. In October, the government launched the second wave of city deals. It invited 20 towns and cities to bid for devolved powers and funding; including Brighton and Hove, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Reading and Southampton & Portsmouth.

Oxford. CPRE Oxfordshire complained that the City Deal had been compiled with no public consultation, threatening local democracy as well as the countryside [CPRE](#). The board overseeing the project would be dominated by the city council and the university, both major green belt landowners – though the bid document itself does not mention the green belt. The promoters are proposing a new 'knowledge economy spine' based on Oxford City, Bicester, and the Science Vale Enterprise Zone.

Brighton. The City Deal will include a housing target of 11,400 homes, including the controversial development of the Toad's Hole Valley, an area of downland bordering the South Downs National Park. The town centre will be protected; King Alfred, Shoreham Harbour and the Lewes Road corridor will be regenerated; but there will be no park and ride service [L](#).

Southampton and Portsmouth councils made a joint £1.5bn bid to redevelop Royal Pier, expand Southampton port, regenerate Tipner and develop Portsmouth's Northern Quarter [BBC](#) [L.G.](#)

Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Department for Transport has published indicative funding levels for new local transport bodies spending on major transport projects. The **South East Local Transport Body**, part of the SE LEP, tops the allocations with £98.9 million for 2015-2019. The department will also provide £5 million to build capacity in the LEPs [P](#) [M](#). See also page 3: "The health of the LEPs".

The Battle for Combe Haven

Eviction. As the new year began, bailiffs moved in to evict protesters from three camps on the proposed route of the Bexhill Hastings Link Road. Peaceful protestors adopted techniques used during the 1990s road protests, including tunnelling and tree roosts, while harnessing social media to publicise their cause. Grandmothers climbed trees only to be dragged away by bailiffs and twenty-eight people were arrested [T](#) [T](#) [M](#) [T](#) [g](#) [itv](#). The Ecologist talked to two protestors, including Sarah Evans who posed for the 'granny photo-shoot' (below) [O](#). Tom Druitt gave an eye witness account from the protest camp [O](#). Peter Jones, leader of East Sussex county council said the protestors "represent a serious threat to democracy... Why don't they just shove off and leave us to get on with this scheme" [BBC](#).



Combe Haven Defenders

EVICTON ATTEMPT STARTED! At 8am this morning baliffs and security began attempts to evict the main protest camp near Adam's Farm, Crowhurst. Please do whatever you can: protest, support, publicise. More updates to follow.

Unlike · Comment · Share · [6](#) [3](#) [5](#) · 17 minutes ago · [R](#)

Combe Haven Defenders 30+ bailiffs; baliff tunneling team is attempting to deal with tunnel/s first; access to camp is still possible if you can get there quiddly. 15 minutes ago · Like · [3](#) [1](#)

Combe Haven Defenders Adam's Farm access track now blocked to protestors. Harris fencing arriving. See alternative routes to access camp. 5 minutes ago · Like

Facebook call to protest

Protest. On 27 January, senior staff from six national environment and conservation groups visited the site. Ralph Smyth for CPRE said: "How can the government still be propping up this road scheme to the tune of millions of pounds, when even their own advisors have seen straight through the county's elusive claims of economic benefits?" [O](#) [L](#). Many greens are hailing the Combe Haven protests as a return to the roads protests of the 1990s [g](#).

Funding. At the end of January, protestors discovered that the department for transport had yet to give full approval to its £56.9 million funding for the scheme [O](#). They have launched an urgent petition to get the grant cancelled [M](#).



"No grannies were harmed in the making of this picture"

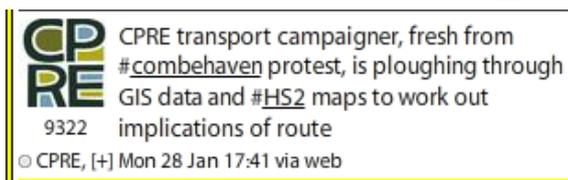


Photos courtesy of Combe Haven Defenders

High Speed 2

Going north. The department for transport announced the northern route of the high speed line      . Map: . There will be five new stations: at Manchester; Manchester Airport; a new interchange station alongside the M56; at Toton between Nottingham and Derby; at Sheffield Meadowhall; and Leeds. A decision on a spur to Heathrow has been delayed until after the Davies inquiry into Britain's airports reports in 2015  . More than four million trees are to be planted along the Phase 2 route "in an effort to help it blend with the countryside" .

Reaction. Staffordshire CPRE described HS2 as a "monster intrusion" into the countryside that "imposes itself not only on long stretches of unspoilt tranquil landscapes, but also close to or under many villages and involves the demolition of rural properties, farms and recreational areas" . CPRE nationally said: "Without strategies to regenerate northern towns and cities, drastically reduce carbon emissions from transport and extend the rural rail network, the rosy picture painted of a future with HS2 risks ending up looking like a jigsaw puzzle with many missing pieces" . "Is this really progress?" the Independent asked. It said the HS2 project could affect wildlife in an area the size of Dorset and the line "threatens 350 unique habitats, 50 irreplaceable ancient woods, 30 river corridors, 24 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and hundreds of other important areas" .



Roundup. The Independent suggested that legal challenges and endless judicial reviews could push the completion date of HS2 back by a decade . The New Economics Foundation said: "serious questions remain around the wisdom of a single investment of this magnitude." It called for more thorough appraisal of different alternative investment options . High Speed Two Ltd published its plans for being a good neighbour while building the line's first phase between London and the West Midlands  . Environmental consultancy WSP Group suggest HS2 could take 500,000 heavy goods vehicle journeys off the M1, M40, and M6 motorways each year if some of the resulting freed up capacity on the West Coast Mainline is allocated to freight trains . Green Party Leader Natalie Bennett argued the government should improve "Slow Speed 1" regional lines before throwing its cash at High Speed 2 .

Planning & Housing in the South East

Pinewood Studios has submitted fresh plans to double its production capacity by developing a £200m site set on 100 acres of greenbelt land in Buckinghamshire . The studio has dropped plans for 1,400 homes after an earlier application was rejected by the Secretary of State. Pinewood says that economic benefits of the new scheme override the harm that will be caused to the green belt. For further details see: CPRE Bucks eBulletin February 2013 .

Local plans. East Hampshire council is to rewrite its core strategy after a planning inspector questioned its plans for housing . Wokingham Borough Council complained that its neighbour Hart District Council has failed in the duty to cooperate, claiming its core strategy would increase traffic on Wokingham's roads  . Waverley Borough Council has ruled out using Dunsfold Park for housing .

Reigate. The Open Spaces Society, Save Reigate's Green Belt and the Reigate Society are among those objecting to proposals to redesignate part of the green belt outside Reigate as Sustainable Urban Extensions   . Responding in the Commons to Reigate MP Crispin Blunt, Nick Boles said: "It is an absolutely core tenet of government policy that the green belt should be protected. It is also an absolutely core tenet of government policy that housing need should be met. That is why localism is difficult and not a free lunch for anybody—we are devolving the matter to local authorities... to resolve that very difficult tension" . Afterwards Blunt said he was "disappointed that the minister could not make clear which national policy he believes trumps which: the delivery of local autonomy through meeting perceived national housing need, or the protection of the green belt?" .



Proposed urban extensions into green belt at Reigate

Oxfordshire. Eric Pickles has approved a fifteen-year local development order (LDO) for the 90-hectare Milton Park science business park. The LDO permits business, industrial, storage and distribution and other developments without planning permission  .

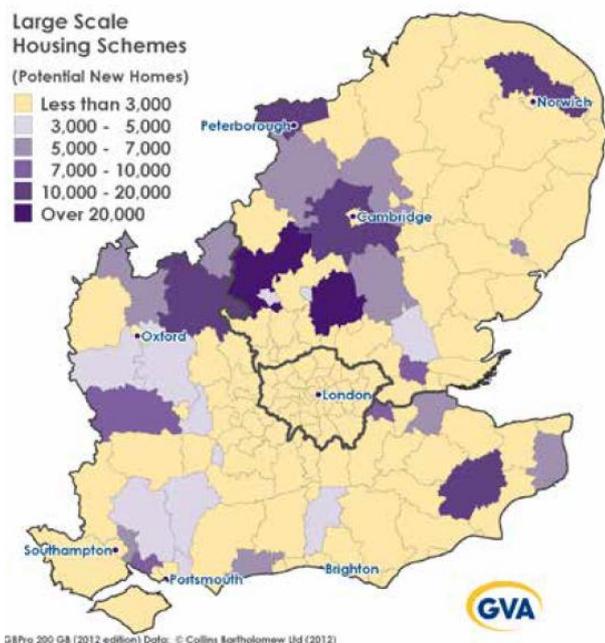
Aldershot. An outline planning application for 3,850 new home settlement (35% affordable) has been submitted for the 255-hectare former Aldershot Garrison site. Rushmoor Borough Council said the urban extension would allow the town to grow for the first time in nearly a century: "We are also particularly pleased that it will protect and build upon the area's military heritage and green open space." Consultation closes 29 March  .



Aldershot Urban Extension

Roundup. The Coast Hill Environment Group and local residents are objecting to an anaerobic digestion plant in the green belt and AONB in Mole Valley . A garden centre near Wokingham is appealing against an enforcement notice after illegally expanding on to green belt land . A 39-home development in a strategic gap will go ahead after a high court action by Arun Council failed . Rushmoor Borough Council has joined residents in objecting to plans for 400 houses between Ash and Tongham .

Growth corridors. Consultancy GVA identified two corridors for large scale growth: along the M11/A14 from the East of London to Cambridge (87,250 new homes); and from Cambridge to Oxford (84,430 new homes). The report says the largest single cause for delay is the cost of infrastructure (stalling around 80,000 homes), followed by the local housing market (30,000), the planning process (10,000) and political opposition (7,000) [O](#) [O](#). The report dismissed the future role of the LEPs in housebuilding. The “government expects LEPs to have a role to play here, but most do not have anywhere near the consensus, organisational structures, skills nor funding to even start to tackle schemes of this complexity.”



Potential growth corridors in the south and east Planning

Nick Boles on greenfield building. Speaking to the Policy Exchange, planning minister Nick Boles renewed his call to build on greenfield land to solve the housing crisis. He said that while CPRE claims that there’s room for 1.5 million homes on brownfield, only 450,000 would be in London, South East and South West where the demand is, and reaching that figure would require building on every single scrap of wasteland going [T](#). Speech: [T](#). Robert Colville commented that the minister’s “calculations conveniently ignore the fact that vast swathes of the undistinguished land he mentions are in places nobody wants to move to... To meet demand, it’s bye-bye to large parts of the countryside in the South-East... The localist in Boles wants to leave communities to make their own decisions, but the pragmatist knows that those decisions will have to be fixed, by tilting the incentives firmly towards development” [T](#) [T](#). See also [S](#).

Garden cities. Nick Clegg clashed with CPRE when he called for garden cities to be created in Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire [O](#) [T](#). The Country Land and Business Association said the government should not overlook allowing incremental growth of rural settlements across England to ease the housing shortage [24](#).

Regional and local plans. The regional strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber has been revoked. Green belt policies for York will be retained [O](#) [T](#). A dispute over housing between East Herts, Welwyn Hatfield and other councils suggests that the duty to cooperate is not working [L](#) [G](#).

Special measures. Almost 40 planning authorities in England decided fewer than 30% of major planning applications within 13 weeks in the third quarter of 2012, suggesting they may fall victim to the planned special measures regime [P](#) [T](#). Lord Taylor told the House of Lords that the special measures regime was unnecessary and was a “big stick to wave around and threaten councils” [T](#).

Neighbourhood cash. Communities that approve a neighbourhood plan by referendum will receive 25% of the local community infrastructure levy (CIL) income, Nick Boles announced. Parishes that do not have an approved neighbourhood plan will receive 15% of the CIL income up to a limit of £100 a household [24](#) [T](#).

Neighbourhood plans. Planning Minister Nick Boles said that at least 169 neighbourhood planning areas have so far been designated by 53 local planning authorities [T](#). Consultancy Parsons Brinckerhoff has been commissioned by the communities department to carry out a study of neighbourhood planning in rural areas [O](#). Daws Hill Neighbourhood Forum has been granted a judicial review of Wycombe District Council’s decision to exclude two development sites from the proposed neighbourhood plan area [O](#). Henley and Harpsden in South Oxfordshire are disagreeing over their joint neighbourhood plan, with Harpsden complaining it is participating under “duress” [L](#). The country’s first neighbourhood plan referendum will be held in Upper Eden, Cumbria on 7 March [LG](#). Much Wenlock has published its neighbourhood plan, which sets affordable housing at 20%, well above Shropshire’s target of 13% [O](#).

Permitted development. The government announced rules that will allow office space to be converted to housing without planning permission [T](#) [4](#). A survey of 30 councils by Planning magazine showed that half intend to apply for an Article 4 exemption from the rights [P](#). Nick Boles told the communities select committee: “We are open to good arguments about particular places that might have a good case for exemption” [bd](#). New permitted development rights will allow free schools to open in almost any building for a year without needing planning permission [PP](#) [T](#). CPRE raised concerns that plans to allow agricultural buildings to be converted to homes and offices without planning permission could lead to barns being erected with a view to being converted at a later date [24](#).

Planning administration. The communities department is consulting on removing the requirement to provide design and access statements with most minor applications. Closes 4 March [T](#) [PP](#). Planning administration is to become the next focus of the Government’s Red Tape Challenge. It will review planning procedure, planning infrastructure and major projects, planning authorities and local planning. Closes 8 March [T](#) [T](#) [T](#).

Infrastructure. The Design Council Caba has been appointed as the statutory adviser for major infrastructure projects and has published guidance to improve the quality of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) [O](#).

The health of the LEPs. The Financial Times suggested that business leaders think the local enterprise partnerships are far from ready for their new responsibilities. South East LEP, covering Kent, Essex and East Sussex is seen as too unwieldy. Thames Valley and Berkshire LEP, Solent and Hertfordshire also need to improve. Coast to Capital (including Brighton, Gatwick and Croydon), Enterprise M3 (Hampshire and Surrey), Greater Cambridge/Greater Peterborough, Oxford and New Anglia (Norfolk and Suffolk) are LEPs that are “strong and delivering” [FT](#).

Housing

Housing need. Nick Boles repeated his plea that England needs more homes: “Between 2000 and 2010 the population of England went up by 3.4 million, of which half was immigration. What are you going to say – sorry you can’t be a separate household?” He said people who have been lucky enough to buy a home should not oppose extra houses for the next generation [T](#) [M](#) [T](#). Boles suggested that officials might identify where new roads and rail lines were planned and then allow developers to buy the land cheaply before planning permission was granted [T](#).

Rural housing. In a Lords debate, communities minister Baroness Hanham said the government expects rural housing to account for nearly 10% of anticipated completions of the programme outside London in the next two years. Lord Knight responded that these: “figures do not compare well to the estimated rural housing need of at least 11,000 additional units per year” [M](#).

Stalled sites. A Centre for Cities report placed Oxford at the top of its list for housebuilding problems for having 385 stalled sites. London, which came second in the list, has 101,745 stalled sites [24](#) [O](#).

Local plans. The majority of councils that have had local plans rejected by the inspectorate were told this was because they had not allocated enough homes for predicted population growth [M](#).

Town Centres, Retail and Services

High street futures. The minister for town centres Mark Prisk announced a national Future High Streets Forum to bring together leaders from retail, property and business to understand the competition town centres face. The Forum will advise the country’s Portas Pilots and Town Team Partners on how to adapt to an era of online shopping. It will also investigate: parking solutions; making it easier for pop-up shops; allowing commercial landlords to part-use properties for residential; and reinforcing town centre first planning rules [M](#) [P](#).

Supermarkets. Christine Tacon has been appointed as the Groceries Code Adjudicator. Her remit includes ensuring fairness for everyone in the food chain that supplied supermarkets and she said that a major part of her role will be to arbitrate between parties [FWI](#) [O](#) [BBC](#). Former Tesco boss Sir Terry Leahy described the rise of supermarkets and the closure of small shops across the country as being “part of progress” [g](#).

Pubs. The British Beer & Pub Association is to seek a judicial review over Cambridge City Council’s interim planning policy guidance on the protection of pubs [O](#) [O](#). The IPPR published a report setting out the social value of pubs to their communities [O](#); see also [O](#).

Landscapes, Food and Farming

Green belt. Communities minister Baroness Hanham told the Lords that the government believes that occasionally affordable homes will now have to be built on green belt land. She said that some of the land is not “absolutely brilliant” and should be used for developments in order to avoid having to build in “real open space” [T](#) [M](#). Cambridge is consulting on developing six green belt sites for housing and industry [L](#) [L](#) [f](#). Cheshire East Council has proposed swapping part of its green belt for new settlements and creating new swathes of green belt elsewhere in the borough in its draft local plan [P](#) [L](#) [L](#). The Yorkshire Post looked at green belt threats in the county, including to the Bronte’s Howarth [L](#).

Biodiversity offsets. Environment secretary Owen Paterson told the Times he wants to offer planners “a way of resolving disputes between developers and their opponents.” He is proposing a power to offset large infrastructure projects that harm wildlife populations. “Developers would compensate local people for environmental damage by buying credits to improve the natural habitat elsewhere in the area. A road may be going through a rare site for bats, wet land or a plantation. If so, then the builders could mitigate by offering to compensate with an environmental credit nearby. You could use environmental credit on huge projects like high-speed rail or a power station or small ones like a farmer wanting to extend a dairy. Usually the poor old newts lose out in the end and only the lawyers win, this way everyone benefits” [T](#) [M](#). Paterson is also calling for Britain to be allowed to introduce GM crops independently of the EU ban [FWI](#).

Green space. Rye residents are trying to buy a wildlife haven at the edge of town. Rye council has nominated the land to be included on Rother Council’s Assets of Community Value Register [L](#). Oxford residents are raising a petition against the destruction of views from Port meadow by Oxford University accommodation blocks [O](#).

Forests trust. A new independent public body will hold in trust the nation’s publicly-owned forests for future generations, the government announced. Working alongside the Forestry Commission, the new body will own, maintain and safeguard forests on behalf of the public [M](#).

Hedges. A scheme to grub out up to 11.4km of hedgerows in the Welsh Marches was withdrawn after hundreds of objections including from CPRE Shropshire and the national team [RE](#) [O](#).

Flooding. The commons environment, food and rural affairs committee called for rules to force developers to build in a way that allowed water to soak into the ground [FWI](#). The government announced 93 flood defence and alleviation schemes, including the Littlehampton and Sandwich Town Tidal Defences [M](#) [M](#) [M](#).

Light pollution. The CPRE and the Campaign for Dark Skies annual Star Count Week is underway until 15 February. CPRE President Andrew Motion said: “Dark skies are so important for the inspiration they provide; artists, philosophers, scientists and poets have all found a muse in the night sky for millennia. The really encouraging news is that darker skies are within our reach...” [T](#). From July, all shops and offices in Paris will be required to shut off all their lights at night under the Environment Ministry’s goal to make the country a pioneer in preventing light pollution [O](#).

Biodiversity. Britain’s moths are declining, especially in the South East, pointing to a wider decline in insect species including bees, beetles and flies, which could have a knock-on effect for a wider range of wildlife from birds to mammals [M](#). Defra is consulting on measures reduce disease in bee colonies maintained by Britain’s 44,000 beekeepers [M](#).

Heritage. The Hampton Court Rescue Campaign is objecting to plans to demolish part of Hampton Court railway station to build a hotel, a care home and apartments [L](#).

Europe cuts conservation. The RSPB condemned moves by the European Commission to cut €11bn from its conservation budget. Martin Harper said: “This is a bad deal for Europe’s wildlife, providing flexibility for a race to the bottom” He called on Owen Paterson and colleagues to maximise the money going to conservation [RSPB](#).

Transport

Speed. The DfT issued new guidance for councils on setting local speed limits .

National rail. Network Rail unveiled a £37.5bn programme to provide faster journeys, extra seats and more trains. It will also electrify 1,000 miles of track and refit stations by 2019. The plans include a £900m project to reduce the bottleneck on the Great Western Line around Reading station, and the completion of the £6bn Thameslink upgrade and £2.3bn Crossrail project in London .

East West Rail. Network Rail has announced its plan for construction of the western section of the East West Rail link between Bedford and Oxford, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, which will be operational by 2017. It remains a “firm aim” of the East West Rail Consortium to re-introduce a rail link between Bedford and Cambridge  .

Surrey County Council has commissioned a new rail strategy. It will examine ways to reduce overcrowding, increase capacity, make faster journeys and run longer trains, while boosting economic growth .

Aviation. Boris Johnson suggested Stansted airport could become the new international hub for the South-East . A report commissioned by the commons transport committee says a massive hub airport in the Thames estuary would only be viable if it had a public subsidy of £10-30 billion . The DfT is seeking views on night flying restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted .

Wind Energy

Markets. Wind company Ecotricity is to target the urban market with 15m high turbines . Hundreds of wind turbines are planned for the Irish Midlands after Ireland signed an agreement to supply UK homes .

Opposition. James Lovelock, famous for inventing “Gaia Theory” has expressed despair that the original intentions of the movement have been misconstrued as a license to cast aside our “priceless ecological heritage” in favour of wind farms . CPRE’s Bob Barfoot is among voices calling for a buffer zone between residential properties and AONBs . Cumbria Council leader Eddie Martin said the county is at risk of being ruined by politicians “determined to steal Cumbria’s soul in the name of green energy” . Northumberland planners are suggesting a minimum separation distance between turbines and homes of six times the turbine height . A report from the Adam Smith Institute said that wind power is limited due to the increased need for power storage, decrease in grid reliability, and increased operating costs . The public accounts committee accused the government of awarding over-generous contracts for connecting offshore wind farms to the National Grid  .

South East schemes. Residents and sailors continue to protest against the Navitus offshore wind farm off the Jurassic Coast    . Navitus is currently consulting on its revised plans. Closes 5 April   . Aylesbury Vale district council threw out plans for a wind turbine “taller than Big Ben” near the south Bucks village of Ford . Keep Hampshire Green is opposing plans for 14 wind turbines up to 126 metres tall at Bullington Cross, north of Winchester   . Hampshire County Council has agreed a blanket ban on large wind farms on council-owned land. Friends of the Earth said it was “outraged” by the decision   .

National wind schemes. South Northamptonshire Council has won a legal challenge against the approval of a wind farm between Greatworth and Helmdon. The judge ruled that the inspector failed to attach proper weight to protecting the landscape, heritage assets in the area and residential amenity   . Another judge gave the go ahead to two wind farms in West Norfolk . Proposals for up to 22 turbines at Heckington Fen in Lincolnshire have been approved by the Secretary of State despite objections from North Kesteven and Lincolnshire councils  . An estimated 763 turbines are due to be built onshore in 2013, up 60% from last year. There are 4,366 turbines in operation in the UK providing 8.2GW of power, and a further 7,843 turbines that have been approved but are yet to be built .

Energy, Waste and Water

Pylons. Researchers say the capacity of the existing national pylon grid could be increased by installing more effective cross-arms .

Oil and gas. West Sussex County Council’s planning committee gave Celtique Energie planning permission to construct a temporary drilling rig to look for conventional energy deposits at Woodbarn Farm, Broadford Bridge .

Severn Barrage. Peter Hain MP told the energy and climate change committee that a £34bn tidal barrage could create up to 50,000 jobs over the nine year construction period and potentially provide billions of pounds of savings through improved flood defences     . Angling, wildlife and heritage groups condemned the proposal  . The Environment Agency warned the barrage could increase flooding, though the developers take the contrary view . FoE Cymru warned that the costs would outweigh benefits and the falling cost of wind and solar energy will soon leave the business case “dead in the water” .

Solar. A proposal to build 50,688 solar panels on farmland on the edge of Oxford near Barton have been abandoned after objections about damage to the green belt  .

Nuclear. Centrica has shelved its plans to invest in UK nuclear power plants  . Plans from Japanese firm Hitachi to build up to six new nuclear reactors in the UK progressed today as Ministers asked the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the Environment Agency to assess the design of their reactor . MPs published a report slamming Sellafield’s costly waste management efforts . Cumbria county council voted to block a new radioactive waste storage facility in the county, but Copeland and Allerdale borough councils are still backing the scheme  .

Fracking. The Times reported that the British Geological Survey has increased dramatically its estimate of shale gas, and Britain could have enough shale gas to heat every home for 1,500 years . Shale gas reserves in Lancashire alone could have a market value of £136bn, Cuadrilla claimed . Baroness Hanham told the Lords: “At present, fracking applications will not be taken out of the hands of local authorities” but left the option for the government to intervene under the national infrastructure regime .

The eBulletins

CPRE South East eBulletin is written and edited by Andy Boddington. To receive a regular copy or to alert me to news, please email cprenews@andybodders.co.uk. Views expressed in the eBulletin and its editorial approach are those of its editor and not any part of CPRE. CPRE London eBulletin January 2013 . CPRE Buckinghamshire eBulletin February 2013 .