

South East: Planning



Eric Pickles wrecks Cherwell local planning

Decisions. Eric Pickles approved appeals for four greenfield developments in north Cherwell, all of the sites conflict with the local plan [\[C\]](#). Citing lack of five year land supply and an out of date local plan, he approved 145 homes east of Bloxham Road, Banbury [\[C\]](#); 70 homes off Bourne Lane, Hook Norton [\[C\]](#); 75 off Barford Road, Bloxham [\[C\]](#); and 85 near Milton Road, Bloxham [\[C\]](#).

East of Bloxham Road. Cherwell council worried that approval of this site could lead to further speculative developments south-west of Banbury. The planning inspectors' comments make it clear that if a heritage asset does not have national or locally listed status, then it has little protection under the NPPF. Pickles signed off the decision claiming that although: "There would be no demonstrable harm to the topography and character of the landscape, some harm would occur to the rural character of [the historic] Salt Way."

Milton Road and Barford Road, Bloxham. Eric Pickles and his inspector make it clear that local policies to protect landscape have little value under the NPPF. The designation of land at Milton Road as an Area of High Landscape Value "is not afforded significant weight by the Framework." They also say that the harm to landscape "would be no greater than that caused by any greenfield development" so "the appeal can be dismissed on this ground alone." Villagers argued that Bloxham, which has undergone a lot of recent development, is full. The inspector sided with the developers in saying there was not "there is no objective evidence to show that the character or functionality of Bloxham have been unduly harmed by this development" so the quantity of development could not be a determining factor in the appeal. For Barford Road, surrounding developments were a factor, the inspector arguing that as there has already been some development, more is fine.

Bourne Lane, Hook Norton. The inspector said development will cause a "moderate amount of harm to the character and appearance of the countryside, and to that extent some local landscape harm" but dismisses this as a reason for rejecting housing. Eric Pickles added that although work has started on preparation of the Hook Norton neighbourhood plan, "little weight should be attached to prematurity" – pre-empting the neighbourhood or local plan. He said "local opposition against the scheme" carries "little weight."

Reaction. Cherwell council is to seek a judicial review of the decisions in the high court [\[OM\]](#) [\[C\]](#). An infuriated Tony Baldry, MP for Banbury, said the decisions: "runs roughshod over any concept of localism or elected local councillors deciding where new housing should go through a local plan process. Where housing is built is determined entirely by which developers are first in getting in their planning applications" [\[L\]](#) [\[g\]](#).

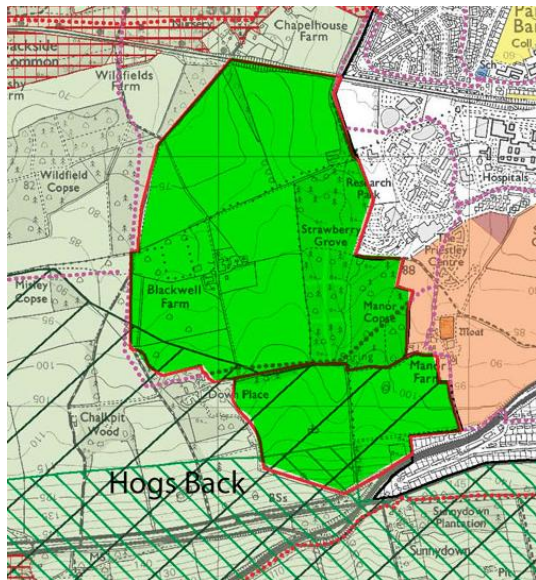
Berkshire. Eric Pickles approved 450 dwellings on Kiln Farm, Basingstoke [\[C\]](#). The site is one identified for housing in Basingstoke and Deane council's latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the council has not identified a five year land supply. The local press called it: "Basingstoke's most objected to application" [\[P\]](#) [\[BG\]](#). Plans for a care home near Wokingham have been rejected as too large and inappropriate development in the green belt [\[L\]](#).

Hampshire. Hart District Council in Hampshire has withdrawn its core strategy after a planning inspector said that it had not complied with the duty cooperate with neighbouring councils [\[P\]](#) [\[LG\]](#) [\[O\]](#). A laser game business has been denied retrospective planning permission to operate in protected woodland at Colden Common, Winchester [\[L\]](#). Residents of Rowlands Castle, Horndean and Clanfield are concerned their villages are being forced to take the lion's share of new homes in east Hampshire, to reduce development within the South Downs National Park [\[L\]](#).

Kent. The high court has rejected an application for a judicial review of the decision to extend Hermitage Quarry into ancient woodland at Oaken Wood [\[BBC\]](#) [\[g\]](#). A planning inspector said that the Gravesham local plan is unlikely to be found sound due to insufficient provision for housing. The council has asked the inspector to make recommendations, which will "inevitably include a significant addition to the total figure for new housing over the plan period and an increase in the target annual delivery rate" [\[LG\]](#). The argument over whether Maidstone council has calculated its five year land supply correctly continues, with council officers admitting they have failed to include windfall sites in their calculations [\[KO\]](#). Shepway council has adopted its core strategy [\[L\]](#) [\[LG\]](#).

Oxfordshire. As students move into the controversial accommodation blocks overshadowing Port Meadow, a planning expert has begun his independent inquiry into Oxford City council's planning processes that lead to the development being built. He is seeking views through an online survey. Closes: 1 November [\[C\]](#). CPRE Oxfordshire's Helen Marshall said she was appalled students are moving in while "serious planning and environmental issues, including concerns over contamination, remain unresolved." CPRE Oxfordshire's application for judicial review will be heard in the high court on 23 October [\[OM\]](#) [\[BBC\]](#) [\[C\]](#) [\[CPRE\]](#). City councillors have rejected 40 homes on sports pitches in Cowley, citing unacceptable loss of green space [\[OT\]](#). Campaigners are hoping to block 500 houses at Gavray Drive on the outskirts of Bicester, which they say threatens a site of ecological importance [\[OM\]](#) [\[f\]](#). CPRE Bicester is expressing concern that plans for a new road to link Bicester's new 5,000-home eco-town with the town centre will lead to a new ring road around the town and attract more traffic [\[OM\]](#). Businesses are being urged to take part in the joint Henley and Harpsden neighbourhood plan [\[L\]](#). Oxford City council has granted outline planning permission to proposals to create a new 885-home garden suburb to the west of Barton [\[O\]](#) [\[OT\]](#) [\[C\]](#) [\[LG\]](#).





Potential area for housing at Blackwell Farm

Surrey. A campaign and petition has been launched to save the AONB-protected Hog's Back in the green belt after the University of Surrey made Blackwell Farm available for housing and Guildford Borough council earmarked the land for a potential 1,933 homes [GS](#) [C](#) [T](#). Petition: [C](#). Mole Valley council has for the third time rejected plans for housing in the green belt at Brockham [GS](#). The council has also said that it will appeal the high court decision to throw out planning permission for development of Cherkley Court as a hotel and golf complex. CPRE Surrey's Andy Smith called the decision a "criminal waste of money" [VLG](#). Waverley council has withdrawn its core strategies after an inspector raised concerns over a housing land supply shortfall [P](#) [GS](#). Consultants have told Tandridge council it needs to build up to 460 homes a year, way above the 125 set out in its 2008 core strategy. The district is 94% green belt and any increase in targets will inevitably lead to a review of green belt boundaries [GS](#) [LG](#). The four year campaign to oppose workings, mineral processing and waste processing works in the green belt at Milton Park Farm, Egham continues and Runnymede council has lodged objections [GS](#) [GS](#).

Sussex. A developer is appealing a decision to reject plans for 160 homes in Henfield [WST](#).

National: Biodiversity Offsetting

The government is consulting on biodiversity offsetting, by which a developer buys or funds compensatory biodiversity actions offsite. The government prefers to allow the developer maximum flexibility in offsetting mechanisms. As alternatives is also suggesting compulsory offsetting for developments over a certain size; or surcharging all developments though the community infrastructure levy. Closes 7 November [C](#) [C](#). Owen Paterson said: "For the developer there are massive advantages. You'd have certainty, you'd have clarity, you'd have speed and a massive reduction of cost. But you'd also leave the environment in a better place than you found it for the longer term" [I](#). The Country Landowners Association welcomed the move [C](#). Green groups say the plans could be a licence to trash the landscape. The RSPB said biodiversity offsetting should only be used as a last resort: "Offsetting can be a useful tool for compensating harm to wildlife when all other options have been exhausted. But it is very difficult to get it right, and it is much safer to maintain wildlife habitats where they are. There is a real danger that offsetting could simply amount to a licence to trash" [E](#) [O](#) [G](#) [RSPB](#).

National: Planning

Local plans challenged. Kirklees council has withdrawn its core strategy after a planning inspector questioned whether it had complied with the duty to cooperate with neighbouring councils. North West Leicestershire District Council has withdrawn its core strategies after inspectors raised concerns over inadequate housing land supply [P](#) [L](#). Dacorum has adopted its core strategy [LG](#), but is already being threatened with a legal challenge by a housing developer that wants to build in the green belt [L](#). An inspector has said that the Lichfield local plan will be unsound unless it find sites for a further 900 homes [O](#).

Neighbourhood plans. In an unprecedented move, three housebuilders are demanding that Chester and Cheshire East council withdraws the Tattenhall neighbourhood plan because they want higher levels of housing in the area. They are threatening a judicial review, while the council accuses them of "corporate bullying of a local community." The plan goes to referendum on 24 October [P](#) [L](#).

Prematurity. The government has issued guidance on prematurity with regard to local and neighbourhood plans. It says that local plans must be at the examination stage before they have any weight. Neighbourhood plans will carry no weight in planning until the plan has ended its six week consultation period, immediately prior to examination. Civic Voice said: "Surely we should be doing all we can to incentivise communities to support the flag-bearer of the localism agenda?" [C](#) [P](#).

Special measures. Twenty-six minerals and waste authorities and three district councils are set to be put on special measures for not processing planning applications quickly enough, including Buckinghamshire, and the Peak and Yorkshire Dales national parks. The districts are Worthing in Sussex, Halton in Cheshire, and Blaby in Leicestershire. In these areas, developers will be able to take major planning applications directly to the planning inspectorate for a decision [O](#) [P](#).

Five year land supply. Eric Pickles and the planning inspectorate continue to overrule local decisions by approving housing wherever an adequate housing land supply has not been demonstrated. They include 359 homes at Dawlish in an Area of Great Landscape Value and in conflict with the local plan [O](#) [C](#); 350 greenfield homes in Guisborough, Yorkshire [O](#); and 350 homes in a green wedge in Stockton-on-Tees [O](#).

Design. The Design Council has called for a national design strategy to deliver quality architecture and spaces [DC](#).

Housing. The RTPI has published a report on *Delivering Large Scale Housing*, which identifies the "loud voice of objectors" and difficulties in "engaging with the silent majority" among the obstacles to development, but offers little new in terms of recommendations [C](#). The Bureau of Investigative Journalism looks at 82 major city developments and found that just one in five will provide the level of affordable housing set out in local policies [O](#) [C](#).

In the courts. Although some councils are still clinging to old regional strategy housing numbers, a high court judge said that St Albans council and the planning inspectorate were wrong to rely on these numbers to reject more than 100 homes in the green belt. The planning inspectorate must now re-decide the case. Developers say the decision means the NPPF is a new start when it comes to assessing housing need [P](#). A high court judgement reaffirmed that when assessing planning applications, material considerations, including the NPPF, need to be analysed separately from the local plan, which carries the greater weight [C](#) [C](#).

Around the Party Conferences

Conservatives. Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin told a fringe meeting on HS2: "I am tired of the moaning London commentators who are pleased enough about the billions we are spending on the Crossrail but can't understand why the rest of the country needs a great transport system too" [□](#). Owen Paterson continued to build his reputation as a climate change and environment sceptic [i](#). Nick Boles challenged CPRE on brownfield, saying it had got its figures wrong and greenfield must be built on [P](#) [P](#). He also told an audience: "If I'm still planning minister after the next election, I want you to shoot me" [P](#).

Labour. Ed Miliband said: "We'll identify new towns and garden cities and we'll have a clear aim that by the end of the parliament Britain will be building 200,000 homes a year, more than at any time in a generation" [□](#). Sir Michael Lyons is to lead a new commission to explore ways to increase housing supply beyond Miliband's targets [□](#). The Town and Country Planning Association welcomed his commitment to new towns [IH](#). Shadow housing minister Jack Dromey, who lost his job in the reshuffle, said that a Labour government would continue to ramp up the housing target once it had been achieved but ruled out reintroducing regional targets. He said Labour would continue with many of the coalition's current policies on housing and planning to ensure the housebuilding industry has continuity. The NPPF will be amended but Dromey did not give details [P](#) [G](#) [G](#) [□](#) [□](#). The party proposes raising charges for developers that hoard land with planning permission or allowing local authorities to compulsory purchase it and pass it to a new developer [IH](#) [T](#) [T](#). Labour also announced a "right to grow", which will allow cities and town to expand outwards, even if neighbouring councils objected. Jack Dromey cited the long running disagreement over expansion of Stevenage and Oxford's wish to expand into the green belt as examples where the right to grow might be used. Lord Adonis, who is leading Labour's growth review, suggested that a new independent National Infrastructure Commission could bring housing within its remit [P](#) [S](#). Ed Balls presented a decidedly sceptical view of HS2 to the conference, outlining where the money would be better spent [FT](#) [G](#) [A](#). Shadow transport secretary Maria Eagle departed from her speech to give unequivocal backing for HS2 [T](#). Eagle, who was moved from transport in the reshuffle, also promised that councils would be given transport cash from the single pot funding instead of the LEPs [P](#).

Liberal Democrats. Nick Clegg announced a 5p charge on supermarket carrier bags [BBC](#) [S](#). The Daily Mail claimed a victory and CPRE's Samantha Harding said: "To win the campaign little more than a year after the Break the Bag Habit coalition was formed is great news" [A](#) [RE](#). Owen Paterson said that charge might be restricted to non-biodegradable bags [T](#). The Lib Dems agreed a [wide ranging green policy paper](#) which includes a review of the NPPF's green credentials to ensure it contributes "positively to creating a zero carbon Britain or to long term sustainability" [S](#) [P](#) [O](#). Friends of the Earth thought little of the moves [O](#). The Lib Dems also want a new use class for betting shops to protect town centres [P](#).

Green politics. The Green Alliance has published three pamphlets on green politics: Green Liberalism [ga](#) [S](#); Green Conservatism [ga](#) [S](#). In *Green social democracy: better homes in better places*, Shaun Spiers writes on how to unlock housing and calls for more state investment [ga](#). The Green Alliance also published its assessment of the environmental performance of the three main parties: its verdict is condemning [ga](#) [S](#).

Government Reshuffle

Reshuffle. The three largest parties change their teams on the same day. But, with the exception of the Scottish Secretary, all the new appointments were at junior levels. It is of concern that green voice in Defra has been downgraded in favour of Owen Paterson's enviro-scepticism. The housing minister is also now at a more junior level.

Communities. Former media lecturer and Yorkshire MP Kris Hopkins has been appointed housing minister, replacing Mark Prisk, who was regarded as being good at his brief but having too low a media profile [AJ](#) [IH](#) [S](#) [O](#) [G](#). The National Housing Federation was among those condemning the downgrading of the post. Retailers said that Prisk's departure puts the future of the [Future High Streets Forum](#) at risk [i](#). Local government minister, Brandon Lewis takes on the high streets portfolio [P](#). For Labour, Wolverhampton MP Emma Reynolds replaces Jack Dromey [IH](#) [IH](#).

Defra. Lib Dem minister David Heath and Tory Richard Benyon were both sacked. They are replaced by [George Eustice](#), Conservative MP for Camborne and Redruth, and North Cornwall Lib Dem MP [Dan Rogerson](#), who is at more junior position than his predecessor [S](#). Maria Eagle became Labour's shadow minister for Defra.

Transport. Transport minister Norman Baker was moved to the Home Office. He is replaced by Lib Dem Baroness Kramer, an infrastructure expert, who has staunchly opposed a third runway at Heathrow. Conservative Robert Goodwill replaces Simon Burns as parliamentary undersecretary for transport [□](#). Labour replaced Maria Eagle, a committed supporter of HS2, with Mary Creagh, but denied this signalled it was turning against the line [S](#) [□](#).

Communities. Don Foster was replaced by Stephen Williams, the MP for Bristol West as parliamentary undersecretary. Foster had weeks before said that Eric Pickles should stop trying to micromanage local councils [□](#).

Communities and People

Town centres. The Policy Exchange, which counts Nick Boles among its founder members, called for town centre first planning policies to be scrapped and for high streets to be run by business improvement districts [P](#) [□](#). The Centre for Cities also called for scrapping town centre first rules [P](#) [□](#). Just 209 high street shops closed in the first six months of 2013, compared to 953 in the same period next year. They are being replaced by charity, cheque cashing, betting and coffee shops and convenience stores [□](#) [BBC](#) [FT](#).

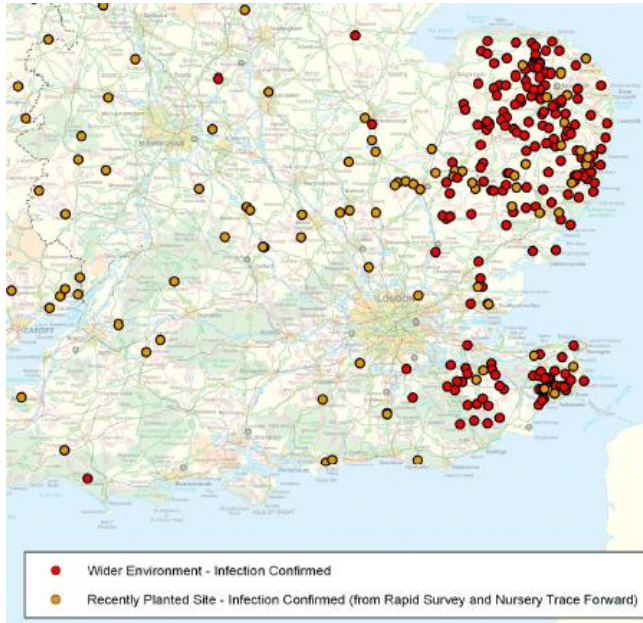
Broadband. Superfast Berkshire is set to expand superfast broadband coverage to 91% of homes and businesses in the county by 2015 [□](#). A report by the commons public accounts committee said that the government has given BT a monopoly called for payments to the company to be halted until competition is introduced [G](#) [BBC](#).

Prizes. Upham Brewery Expansion Project won the rural enterprise category of the CPRE Hampshire countryside awards. Andover Trees United (below) won the youth category, and Jodrell Close Wildlife Garden, Horndean, took the voluntary and community category [IH](#) [RE](#).



South East: Landscapes

Ash dieback. More than 500 cases of chalara fraxinea have been found across England, with the greatest concentration in the East and South East. The Woodland Trust said: "It has become clear that stopping its spread is an impossible task. What we need to focus on now is building a resilient wooded landscape" [\[M\]](#) [\[A\]](#). Identified cases have increased fivefold in Kent [\[KO\]](#).



Sussex. The Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Biosphere Partnership has submitted a bid to designate a large part of Sussex as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. The area lies between the Rivers Adur and Ouse, and extends from the South Downs National Park boundary to two nautical miles out to sea [\[L\]](#) [\[NP\]](#) [\[M\]](#). Southern Railway has launched a partnership with Sussex Wildlife Trust to improve the biodiversity across its network in the county [\[E\]](#).

Oxfordshire. Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust has taken on ownership of Warneford Meadow in Headington pledging to preserve it for the community. The meadow was saved after a long campaign to get it declared a town green [\[OM\]](#). CPRE and the Woodstock Action Group are fighting a planning application for 64 houses on the former Marlborough School playing field. Gareth Hammond for CPRE West Oxfordshire Chairman described the proposal as "a prime example of urban creep into our precious countryside" [\[RE\]](#).

Thames Gateway. A report from Buglife highlights the alarming loss of wildlife-rich brownfields in the Thames Gateway. Over a six-year period, half of nearly 200 important brownfield sites in the region have been lost, damaged or are in immediate threat [\[A\]](#).

Surrey. Caterham School has purchased ancient woodland at Oldpark and Gravelly Woods, and is promising continued public access [\[GS\]](#).

Surrey Hills AONB is to bid to English Nature to expand its area. Andy Smith of CPRE Surrey welcomed the move: "With mounting development pressures across the whole of Surrey, mostly from the unrealistic and unsustainable house building targets imposed on Surrey's districts, it is more important than ever that our most precious rural landscapes have the statutory protection that they deserve" [\[GS\]](#).

National: Landscapes and Biodiversity

Green belt. The Yorkshire Greenspace Alliance has been formed to fight threats to green fields and the green belt. Charles Tunbridge of CPRE West Yorkshire said: "We've taken this important step to create a pan-Yorkshire alliance because we will collectively have a much stronger influence on planning issues at a local level" [\[TA\]](#). Northumberland council is proposing to take land out of the green belt at Hexham, Prudhoe and Ponteland. Hexham MP Guy Opperman criticised the "attack on green belt" land and said the proposals meant his "worst fears were could be coming true" [\[L\]](#) [\[C\]](#). After lodging 4,300 objections to 280 green belt homes, residents in Ponteland, Northumberland held a silent protest [\[L\]](#) [\[L\]](#). In Durham, plans for nine homes in the green belt at Langley Moor were rejected [\[L\]](#). Cambridge Past, Present & Future has made what it terms "its final bid" to halt development plans for the green belt [\[\]](#). Eighty acres of green belt around Castle Point in Essex after under threat according to a leaked letter [\[L\]](#). Writing in the Guardian, Hannah Fearn argued that if the green belt is to be saved, we will need to build more high rise homes [\[g\]](#).

Badgers. Owen Paterson declared the badger cull a success despite Defra halving the target number of badgers to be killed. The first phase of the badger cull has been extended in Somerset. The cull is designed to limit bovine TB, but Defra chief Owen Paterson is now also accusing badgers of moving goalposts. The Football Association has yet to comment [\[i\]](#) [\[M\]](#) [\[BBC\]](#) [\[M\]](#) [\[A\]](#).





Light pollution. Astronomers are warning that Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park, Britain's only dark sky park is being threatened by applications for wind turbines [\[BBC\]](#).







Rights of way. Before he was sacked in the reshuffle, Defra minister Richard Benyon promised to look again at the possibility of the Isle of Wight being included in the English Coastal Path. The Country Landowners Association is opposing the move saying the Isle already has an adequate path network [\[\]](#) [\[\]](#).


Heritage. The chief executive of English Heritage, Simon Thurley said that wind farms and flyovers which block some of the country's best views are one of the biggest threats to Britain's cultural heritage [\[M\]](#). He said: "The heritage legislation we have today was not designed to protect the views of Ely Cathedral", which is threatened by a flyover. "My focus, and the focus of English Heritage at the moment, is to try and find ways that we can judge the impact of wind farms, for instance, and other structures which have an impact on the aesthetics of buildings" [\[T\]](#). After English Heritage refused to list a site on the edge of York purported to be that of the Battle of Fulford, the high court threw out a bid for a judicial review designed to block housing [\[YP\]](#) [\[YP\]](#). Archaeology lobby group Rescue warned that after years of cutbacks, Britain was "close to reaching a point at which the provision of services designed to safeguard our historic environment is no longer adequate" [\[i\]](#).

Bugs and woods. The government has decided not to ban use of neonicotinoid pesticides by gardeners in defiance of its own scientific advice [\[BBC\]](#) [\[A\]](#). Buglife is aiming to create a 3,000-mile network of wildlife rich grassland corridors to enable insects — including butterflies, moths and hover flies — to migrate around the country [\[T\]](#) [\[M\]](#). The Woodland Trust is trying to persuade developers to locate an M1 service station north of Sheffield on a brownfield site, not ancient woodland [\[L\]](#) [\[A\]](#) [\[L\]](#).


National Parks under assault













Biodiversity offsetting. Speaking to the National Park Authorities Conference, Owen Paterson said he is keen on biodiversity offsetting in national parks. “Offsetting gives us a chance to improve the way our planning system works. It gets round the long-running conundrum of how to grow the economy at the same time as improving the environment. It could provide real opportunities in our National Parks”  . He argued that any potential damage to the landscape North York Moors National Park caused by a £1.5bn potash mine could be off-set elsewhere . CPRE retorted: “Exactly how would it be possible for a developer to replace, for example, ancient hedgerows by way of mitigation? Some habitats, particularly sensitive ones, are irreplaceable and thoroughly integral to the landscape’s character because it’s taken centuries to evolve – you can’t just order a new one to be delivered somewhere else like it’s an Amazon purchase” .


Planning. Nick Boles wants to relax planning controls in national parks. He told the Commons that there was a “danger of making rural communities into museum pieces where they are not so much protected as embalmed.” Emma Marrington for CPRE said: “National Parks are the jewels of English countryside. Many of the misconceptions being pedalled in the debate – and there were quite a few – were not based on the evidence”    . Arundel and South Downs MP Nick Herbert said he will strongly oppose any changes . CPRE Horsham chair Roger Smith said: “The South Downs is [already] subject to the threat of a huge solar farm development. This is the kind of development that could be pushed through if National Parks were given a duty to promote economic growth” .



Declaration. The leaders of the national parks and AONBs have issued a declaration urging the government to value landscape. It says that “maintaining tranquil and wild places is increasingly important as our population grows” and “the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of landscapes should be valued alongside the economic and material ones” .

South East: Energy and Waste






Solar. Lightsource Renewable Energy is planning a 39-acre, 31,000 panel solar farm at Tackley .



Fracking. Energy firm Cuadrilla has dismantled its rig and left Balcombe after completing drilling. Protestors, who have claimed success, are also departing after two months occupying road verges outside the site   . MP Caroline Lucas has been charged over her role in the Balcombe fracking protest . Cuadrilla has is seeking permission to carry out flow tests at Balcombe to test the rate of extraction after test drilling found oil in rock samples . Frack Free Fernhurst flew a barrage balloon to publicise their case against fracking . Kent county council has extended the consultation period on three applications to explore for shale gas near Dover   . Residents are growing concerned about fracking between Staines and Windsor   .






Recycling. Ashford Borough council is England’s worst performing council with only 14% of waste recycled, while Vale of White Horse (37%), South Oxfordshire (37%) and Surrey Heath (40%) are among the best .





Wind. Airvolution Energy is promising £1 million for the community of Eastchurch, Kent if it gets planning permission to build four turbines . The huge offshore Navitus windfarm may be scaled back and moved further away from the coastline .







National: Energy



Climate change. The sixth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change said that global warming is “unequivocal” and “unprecedented”. The 30 years until 2012 were probably the warmest in 1,400 years . It warned: “Human influence on the climate system is clear... It is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century” . Defra secretary Owen Paterson shrugged off the evidence: “I think the relief of this latest report is that it shows a really quite modest increase, half of which has already happened” . The Commons environmental audit committee said there is “no scientific case for watering down our long term emissions reduction targets”  .

Power supply. Ofgem warned of growing risks to power supplies this winter while the National Grid said supplies are adequate . The government has published an explanatory leaflet on how smart metering will work from 2015 .

Solar. The government has issued a solar photo-voltaic roadmap setting out guiding principles for deployment of solar in the UK, ahead of a full strategy to be published in spring 2014. One of its four guiding principles is to: “give proper weight to environmental considerations such as landscape and visual impact, heritage and local amenity, and provide opportunities for local communities to influence decisions that affect them” . The Times suggested that the new policy could lead more than 2,000 solar farms being built by 2020 . Energy Minister Greg Barker said he wanted solar panels on the roofs of car parks, warehouses, supermarkets and other sites and he wanted to discourage prominent solar parks liable to interrupt pretty countryside views . A planning inspector approved an 11,500 panel solar farm at Mickleton in Gloucestershire adjacent to the Cotswolds AONB. She gave great weight to national renewable energy targets and argued that given: “the low height of the proposed solar modules, I consider that they would not be prominent in views or materially harmful to the character of the landscape”  .

Nuclear waste disposal may get its own national planning statement and will be treated as nationally important infrastructure. Local participation will be a district council level, not county – a rebuke to Cumbria county council which rejected plans for waste storage at Sellafield earlier this year. Consultation closes 1 December    .

Wind. North Devon council said the Atlantic Array in the Bristol Channel will have “will have significant adverse impacts on locally and nationally important landscapes in northern Devon (including Lundy Island) which cannot be mitigated” and may bring no local economic benefits  . CPRE Yorkshire and the Humber said the growing number of windfarms in the East Riding is threatening the tourist industry. Chairman David Rose said: “The number of single or double turbine applications is absolutely scary” . The Western Morning News has produced maps of the locations of hundreds of wind turbines and solar farms across Devon and Cornwall . The Bishop of Newcastle hit out against windfarms: “In parts of Northumberland our landscape is becoming marred and disfigured and turned into one industrial site after another”  .

Severn barrage. Ministers have said that case for the £25 billion barrage are unproven and the company behind the scheme had not conducted enough work on environmental impact, or demonstrated that it could raise the funds  .

High Speed 2

HS2 Ltd. In a reworking of the case for the line, Tim Smart from HS2 Ltd said the line is “not about getting to Birmingham or Manchester, Leeds or any other northern city faster. It is about capacity and connectivity.” He said the line had not got an open chequebook and the case for building HS2 “can sometimes be obscured in the fog of argument about whether people work on trains, benefit-cost ratios” []. Chairman of HS2 Ltd Douglas Oakervee is to be replaced, after just a year and a half, by the man who delivered the Olympics infrastructure, Sir David Higgins [P].

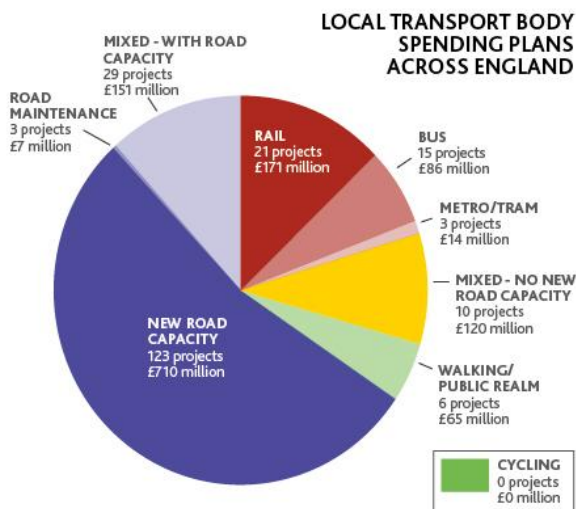
Costs. The Treasury Select Committee followed the National Audit Office in questioning the project’s value for money. It called for the project to be put on hold until the financial case is sorted out [C] [sky]. After KPMG said the line would bring £15bn in benefits, LSE’s Professor Henry Overman said the companies estimates are “technically wrong and possibly out by orders of magnitude” [] []. The 51M group of councils called for a national referendum on the line. The councils also called for the £50bn cost to be put towards roads, transport schemes in the eight core cities outside London, broadband infrastructure and local growth [] [C].

Legal. The supreme court will hear the latest legal challenge on 15 October [C]. Treasury minister Danny Alexander suggested that legislation for HS2 will not be in place by the next election [FT].

Roundup. Historians have identified the site of the 1469 battle of Edgecote near Banbury and HS2 cuts right through it [C]. David Heath, a Defra minister sacked in the reshuffle, said that he was concerned about the lines impact on ancient woodlands “because you can mitigate lots of things but you can’t grow old trees” [i]. Cheshire Against HS2 (CAHS2) has been formed to link nine action groups from across Cheshire and Staffordshire [L].

Transport

Local spending. The Campaign for Better Transport and CPRE have analysed the spending plans of the new Local Transport Bodies. The lion’s share of the funds will be spent on roads, with no dedicated cycling schemes prioritised. A quarter of projects are for public transport and sustainable travel. Just 7% of funds are for bus projects. The report warns that building new roads could make traffic worse in some areas, including in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Shaun Spiers said: “Coalition priorities to protect the natural environment and increase cycling risk falling on deaf ears. Many of the schemes being put forward are discredited road schemes that would damage the countryside” [b] [C] [T].



Cycling. Surrey county council is consulting on its cycling strategy. Closes 1 November. The BBC is to broadcast a live debate on the strategy on 23 October [LG].

Aviation capacity. Chairman of the Airports Commission, Sir Howard Davies said that it is inevitable that more runway capacity will be needed in the South East [L24] [C]. Ed Miliband warned Davies that he had grave doubts about extra runways at Heathrow [ES]. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead voted to continue opposition to more runways at Heathrow [L]. Eastbourne council has given its backing to a second runway at Gatwick [L]. Gatwick airport told the Airports Commission that it will be able to minimise noise impact of a second runway and it will have less impact than Heathrow [WST] [FT]. The Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign said there is no room for a second runway [WST] [C]. CPRE Oxfordshire told the Airports Commission proposals for a new London airport in countryside near Abingdon are “not creditable” and “a non-starter” [RE]. Stop Stansted Expansion is launching a high court challenge against the criteria the Airports Commission is using to sift options of aviation capacity [L] [C] [RE].

Aviation noise. Researchers have shown that rates of strokes and heart disease increase with people’s proximity to Heathrow. Those living in the noisiest, 63-decibel-plus areas were 24% more likely than people living in areas with lower noise levels to be hospitalised because of stroke and 14% more likely to be hospitalised because of cardiovascular disease. An American study found that elderly people exposed to long term aircraft noise also suffered increased cardiovascular disease [R] [i] [g]. Simon Calder said the warnings could halt expansion of the UK’s airports [i].

Roads. Suffolk councils are opposing the introduction of tolls to pay for the improvement of the A14 []. Campaigners have lost their high court challenge against the Heysham to M6 Link Road. Angus Walker gives a useful summary of the judge’s comments [DD].

Road building policies. A new document from the Highways Agency removes the requirement for developers to pay for traffic mitigation measures, except where the impact is severe. It brings practice into line with the NPPF. Where planning applications are consistent with the local plan, full traffic assessments will not be needed. Retail development on A roads and motorways will be at the discretion of the local planning authority. The Campaign for Better Transport said the new guidance was “a recipe for more congestion, car development and sprawl across the countryside.” The Agency will not object to advertising signs erected outside the highway boundary unless they are a clear safety hazard [SA] [P].

Rail. A report to Surrey county council suggests extending Crossrail 2, which will new north south across London, to Epsom, Hampton Court and Shepperton [GS]. Peter Jones, who chairs the SE local enterprise partnership is to talk to the owners of High Speed 1 about extending the line to cross the River Thames and link Essex and Kent [i].

The CPRE eBulletins

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