

Wind Farms

Closure. Energy secretary Amber Rudd said she would legislate to close the Renewables Obligation subsidy for new onshore wind farms from 1 April next year. From then companies must compete for subsidies under the [contracts for difference](#) scheme. Amber Rudd said: “We are driving forward our [manifesto] commitment to end new onshore wind subsidies and give local communities the final say over any new windfarms. Onshore wind is an important part of our energy mix and we now have enough subsidised projects in the pipeline to meet our renewable energy commitments” .

Local decisions. The government is to change the Planning Act to give local people the final say on large applications. The energy secretary currently approves schemes of more than 50MW . Greg Clark announced new planning guidance, effective from 18 June  .

When determining planning applications for wind energy development involving one or more wind turbines, local planning authorities should only grant permission if:

- the development site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan; and*
- following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been fully addressed and therefore the proposal has their backing.*

In applying these new considerations, suitable areas for wind energy development will need to have been allocated clearly in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan. Maps showing the wind resource as favourable to wind turbines, or similar, will not be sufficient. Whether a proposal has the backing of the affected local community is a planning judgement for the local planning authority.

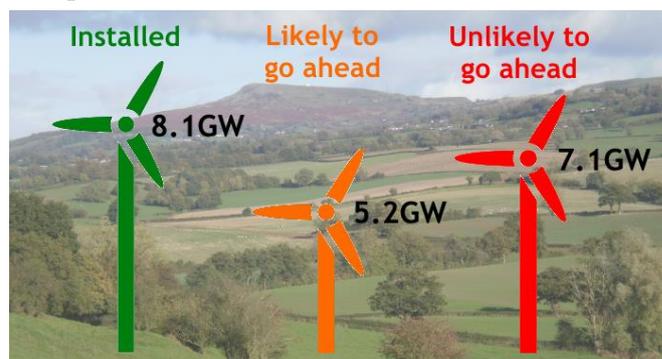
Where a valid application for a wind energy development has already been submitted to a local planning authority and the development plan does not identify suitable sites, the following transitional provision applies. In such instances, local planning authorities can find the proposal acceptable if, following consultation, they are satisfied it has addressed the planning impacts identified by affected local communities and therefore has their backing.

Statement. Amber Rudd briefed the House of Commons on the changes to subsidies  . She said:

In 2014, onshore wind made up around 5% of electricity generation, supported by around £800 million of subsidies. At the end of April 2015, there were 490 operational onshore wind farms in the UK, comprising 4,751 turbines in total. Those wind farms have an installed capacity of 8.3 GW—enough to power the equivalent of over 4.5 million homes... We now have enough onshore wind in the pipeline, including projects that have planning permission...

She estimated that with closure of the RO, 12.3GW of onshore wind to be operating in the UK by 2020. After closure of the RO, 7.1GW on new onshore capacity will not be eligible for subsidy, around 2,500 turbines. The remaining capacity, 5.2GW is expected to be eligible for subsidies under the grace period announced earlier by Dec . Amber Rudd hinted that restrictions could be put in place later in the year on contracts for difference offered to larger onshore wind schemes. She said that the government is likely to continue supporting community projects of one or two turbines:

I do not wish to stand in the way of local communities coming together to generate low-carbon electricity in a manner that is acceptable to and supported by them, including through small-scale wind capacity. However, that action must be affordable as well as acceptable.



Future onshore wind capacity

Reaction. Jenifer Baxter of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers said: “This is a welcome move from the government. Onshore wind turbines are an intermittent and expensive way to generate low carbon energy. The money saved from this decision should be channelled into research and development of the next generation of low carbon technologies”  . Friends of the Earth said: “While the government rolls out the red carpet for fracking, they’re pulling the rug from under onshore wind” . Neil Sinden for CPRE said  .

Wind farms should only be allowed where local communities have been able to engage with developers and councils, achieving sensitively-located and well-designed infrastructure. Communities would prefer developments on brownfield or low quality agricultural land that have very low visual, noise and wildlife impacts. Offshore wind also needs good planning to minimise visual intrusion in coastal areas and the associated onshore impacts.

Green Belt on Radio 4

Insight on BBC Radio 4 asked: “How far can we protect the countryside when the need for houses is so acute?”   . Research by Glenigan for the programme showed the number houses approved on greenbelt land had doubled in the last year. Planning permission was granted for 2,258 homes in 2009-10 and in 2013/2014, the number had risen to 5,607, but in 2014-15 this figure increased to 11,977.



Houses approved in the green belt

Source: Glenigan

Brandon Lewis, the housing and planning minister told the programme it was up to local authorities to decide the future of their greenbelt:

Greenbelt is something that has been there to give a strategic protection to those green lungs. We have outlined what local areas need to do if they want to go through a review of their greenbelt. It is very much a matter of those local authorities.

CPRE. Paul Miner said the statistics were a “worrying trend”. He said local authorities are under pressure from the government to increase planning permissions. More than 70% of planning applications for large housing developments rejected by local councils were allowed on appeal. Kevin Fitzgerald from Hertfordshire CPRE said:

We are getting continual statements by government ministers, correspondence from government departments saying it is their determination to protect the greenbelt and the wider countryside. But, nevertheless, throughout our county, our planning authorities are coming out with these proposals for quite major development.

Insight quoted a survey of local authorities by Natural England that found 37% had housing allocations in or around AONBs: 30,000 houses within the boundaries and another 20,000 just outside. Henry Oliver, director of the North Wessex AONB which is facing proposals for 1,400 homes at Harwell, said these projects could have a huge impact on the rural landscape:

This has been here for thousands of years. The idea that it's worth trading all this wonderful landscape off against a relatively short-term economic boost is not one that I find acceptable.

Archive on 4 took a historic perspective asking: “Which is a better use of our land? A beautiful green field, or a human home?” .

Landscapes and Environment

So much more than the view... England’s finest landscapes contribute more than £20bn each year to economy, similar to that of Birmingham, according to a report from England’s AONBs and national parks  . Nick Johannsen, director of the Kent Downs AONB, said: “In a county as busy as Kent, having places of great beauty is vitally important, not only providing a very high quality of life and places for much needed quiet rest and recreation but also attracting high quality employers, and visitors too.” CPRE rural policy campaigner, Emma Marrington said:

We welcome this fantastic report, which sets out why England’s designated landscapes are valuable to the nation and offer great bang for the buck. They are visited by 260 million people annually, who spend in excess of £6 billion and support thousands of jobs and businesses – all for less than £1 a person in public spending each year. CPRE is delighted that the report cites the increasing interest in dark skies tourism. We supported both Exmoor and Northumberland National Parks in their bids for international Dark Sky status.

Briefings. The Office of National Statistics has published five ‘essential facts’ about the UK environment, including that natural capital was worth £1.6 trillion in 2011 and that woodland covers the same area of the country as urban areas . A second ONS briefing shows the green economy contributed £26.3bn and 357,200 jobs to the UK in 2012 .

Green belt. A First-Tier Tribunal judge has dismissed a legal challenge by a developer to the designation of a 5-hectare green belt site by St Albans council as an asset of community value .

Roundup. More than 100 wildlife and environmental groups have joined forces to campaign against any weakening of EU directives on birds and habitats. These are currently under review as part of an EU deregulation drive  . Charity Plantlife said many councils are threatening wildflowers and the wildlife that depend on them by cutting verges too early in the year . Defra minister George Eustace said the government would act to reverse the decline in food self-sufficiency .

Litter

Litter grows. “Rates of fast-food littering and fly-tipping are on the rise and people find this really offensive. We are now on the verge of a crisis,” said Richard McIlwain, the head of Keep Britain Tidy. “We seem to have more litter than anywhere else in the world.” Sam Harding of the CPRE said: “We need a national action plan that changes people’s behaviour. Littering is a cultural problem which needs long-term messaging.” She says public bodies such as the Highways Agency and Network Rail are failing in their statutory responsibility to keep their networks clear of litter, while fly tipping has significantly increased since householders began to be charged for the removal of garden waste .

Planning

Fly-tipping grows. Keep Britain Tidy is calling for fines of £1,000 for fly-tipping of items such as furniture and industrial waste to deter offenders after recent research showed incidents had increased by 20% in the past year. Defra secretary Liz Truss said: “We will step up our crackdown by giving councils the power to tackle small-scale fly-tipping through penalty notices rather than costly prosecutions and look at higher fixed-rate penalty notices for littering” .

Clean up. The Yorkshire Post has launched a Clean Up Yorkshire campaign, supported by CPRE . A petition has been launched by CPRE with the aim of persuading the government to give powers to local councils to fine people that litter from vehicles  .

Survey. A Sunday Times survey found that three-quarters of Britons find litter annoying (76%). Most are reluctant to confront litter louts, with only 25% saying they had challenged someone they saw dropping rubbish .

The New Government

Select Committees. Clive Betts (Labour) continues to chair communities & local government; Angus MacNeil (SNP) replaces Tim Yeo on energy & climate change; Neil Parish (Conservative) replaces Ann McIntosh on environment, food & rural affairs ; Louise Ellman (Labour) continues as chair of the transport committee.

Defra has belatedly announced the responsibilities of its three ministers.

Liz Truss. Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: overall responsibility for Defra; EU and international relations; emergencies; and departmental administration .

Rory Stewart. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs: natural environment; floods and water; resource and environmental management; rural affairs; lead responsibility for the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission; and deputy for the Secretary of State on Environment Council  .

George Eustace. Minister of State for Farming, Food and the Marine Environment: food and farming; animal health and welfare; marine and fisheries; science and innovation; better regulation; lead responsibility for the Rural Payments Agency, FERA, Cefas and the Animal and Plant Health Agency; and deputy for the Secretary of State on Agriculture and Fisheries Council.

Cuts. The Department for Transport is facing a further £545m spending cut this year the chancellor has announced, though £345m will come from the sale of land at King’s Cross . George Eustace said Defra is considering its options after being told by the Treasury to cut £83m from its budget this year . George Osborne has said that every government department except health, education and international development will have to contribute to 13bn worth of central government savings  . The Budget on July 8 is expected to give further details of cuts and may also announce further relaxation of planning rules.

New permitted development rights? Brandon Lewis is “looking for new ways to free small housebuilders from excessive regulation.” Lewis has “no big plans” for “surprise changes” to the NPPF, “but developers wanting to create up to five homes on small sites outside London – for example at the edge of villages and suburbs – should face a quicker, simpler planning regime” .

Gypsies and travellers. Communities minister James Wharton says 2007 advice telling councils to increase pitches for traveller by 3% a year is just guidance and “councils do not have necessarily to deliver when looking at the circumstances and factors in their own local area”  . He told MPs:

Increasing authorised site provision should not be at the cost of the countryside. The green belt and other sensitive areas of interest and natural beauty must be protected and recognised, and local authorities need the power to ensure that that is the case.

Brownfield. A report from Wildlife and Countryside Link said that while most brownfield land can be redeveloped without negative impacts, a “small but important number of sites are hugely valuable for both people and wildlife.” A core planning principle of the NPPF (paragraph 17) is that local authorities should “encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed provided that it is not of high environmental value.” The report gives guidelines for determining when land of high environmental value, including where the land holds designations, including SSSI and local wildlife sites  .

Tranquillity. CPRE called for a national tranquillity map to help councils protect England’s most peaceful areas from development. Its survey of councils, National Park Authorities and AONBs found 90% wanted more guidance on the construction of infrastructure on local wilderness spots. Graeme Willis said: “Our research shows that councils are unlikely to drive forward the policies we need to protect some of our most tranquil areas without better open data and guidance”   .

Local plans. Communities secretary Greg Clark has directed that Maldon council’s emerging local plan is submitted to him for approval after the council disagreed with an inspector on gypsy and traveller policies  . Durham council is seeking a judicial review after failing to persuade an inspector to reopen the examination into its local plan . Warwick council has been told by an inspector that its plan is unsound because it fails to allow for enough housing   . Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire councils have been told by planning inspectors that the hearings into their local plans should be suspended. The inspectors said that the methodology for assessing importance of potential green belt sites for housing is “difficult to understand”. The inspectors also asked the councils to improve analyses of housing and infrastructure needs, and to provide more detail on alternatives to its preferred sites for development  .

Cherwell loses green gaps. The council's local plan has been found sound by a planning inspector, subject to modifications. These include removing designated 'green buffers' of land between Bicester, Banbury and rural villages. The buffers aim to protect the separate identity of the towns, and to preserve views and the setting of important landscape and historic features in and around the towns. The plan allows for 7,319 homes for Banbury, 10,129 in Bicester and 5,392 elsewhere including about 2,361 at former RAF Upper Heyford. To support economic growth, the plan delivers 61 hectares of employment land in Banbury and 138.5 hectares in Bicester. The plan is expected to be adopted in July [Ch](#).

The Design Commission is calling for evidence on how infrastructure and planning policy can be used to design for good behaviours and environments in which people and communities thrive. Deadline 3 July [design commission](#) [P](#).

Briefings. The House of Commons Library has produced several useful briefing notes: gypsies and travellers [HL](#); infrastructure policy [HL](#); planning for nationally significant infrastructure projects [HL](#); planning for housing [HL](#); neighbourhood planning [HL](#). The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation has published a guide to local transport consultations setting out the legal and statutory duties involved in local or nationally significant infrastructure and place-shaping projects. The CIHT has also published guides on planning for walking [CIHT](#).

Housing

Let's house the nation is the title of a report from the Town and Country Planning Association and the Association of Public Service Excellence. It says more than half of local authorities believe the **NPPF viability test** stops them from building affordable homes. For more than two thirds of councils, the main method of delivering social and affordable housing is through developer contributions such as Section 106 agreements. The report calls on ministers to reverse rules which exempt developments of 10 homes or less from S106 affordable housing contributions [transp](#) [FT](#).

Local Place Partnerships. Think tank Respublica said the government should set up more house building partnerships consisting of local authorities, housing associations, developers and community representatives to increase supply and 'combat nimbysism'. It wants the partnerships to produce cross-council development plans [Respublica](#).

Affordable housing challenge (1). West Berkshire and Reading councils argued in the high court that government rules that exempt developments of ten homes or less from affordable housing contributions are unlawful. They said that more than 20% of housing developments in England and Wales are of ten homes or less. The new policy would cost more than £690 million a year, the equivalent of 2,500 houses. The government argued that the policy will bring forward more small sites and encourage small developers. A judgement is awaited [@](#) [P](#).

Affordable housing challenge (2). Shropshire council has been defying the government's ruling, insisting its core strategy policies on affordable housing contributions takes precedence. However, in a recent appeal, a planning inspector declared that the government's policies override those of the council. He did so despite affordable housing not being an issue in the appeal and the developer having signed a unilateral undertaking to fund affordable housing. The council is continuing to defy the government policy and is considering its legal options [P](#).

Housing Foresight. CPRE said the nine largest housing developers have 314,000 housing plots in strategic land banks. It wants local authorities to have new powers including 'use it or lose it' powers to accelerate the amount of new housing in the right places according to its latest foresight paper. It is also urging the reform of Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire land for housing at existing use value [CPRE](#) [P](#).

Public land. Greg Clark called on government departments and local authorities to "loosen their grip" on sites that are standing idle so they can be released for new housebuilding [24](#) [GOV](#). The National Audit Office said the previous government's claims to have released enough land for more than 1,000,000 homes cannot be verified [NAO](#).

Roundup. Housebuilding statistics published by the Office for National Statistics show there were 141,290 homes started in England in 2014/15, a 6.8% increase on the 132,250 started in 2013/14 [ONS](#) [HO](#). A survey for research institute Create Streets found residents would rather see traditional housing styles built on streets near them than "innovative housing just built." The survey also found that 64% of British adults saying they either strongly or tend to support the building of new homes locally on brownfield land [Create Streets](#).

Appeals and Courts

Appeals. The planning inspectorate allowed 33% of appeals in the first quarter of this year. Just over half of appeals for major housing developments, ten or more dwellings, were allowed. Developers had most success at public inquiries. More than half of planning appeals heard at public inquiries were allowed (55%), compared to 40% of appeals examined at hearings and 31% decided by written representations [P](#).

Type	No.	Allowed
Change of use	107	34%
Householder development	651	40%
Major dwellings	93	51%
Major retail, distribution & servicing	4	29%
Minor dwellings	305	26%
Minor manufacture, storage & warehousing	6	24%
Minor offices	4	40%
Minor retail, distribution & servicing	25	48%
Other major development	14	28%
Other minor development	142	39%
Unclassified	46	27%
All appeals	1,397	33%

Green belt review not required. Luton council has failed in its appeal court challenge to a decision by Central Bedfordshire council to grant planning permission for a 262-hectare urban extension in the green belt at Houghton Regis on the northern outskirts of Luton [P](#) [GL](#) [D](#). The court ruled that development can be permitted within the green belt in “very special circumstances”, without the boundaries first being altered though a green belt review. The case turned on interpretation of NPPF 83, which says: “Green belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the local plan.” Lord Justice Sales said NPPF 87 & 88 “plainly contemplate that development may be permitted on land within the green belt, without the need to change its boundaries in the local plan, provided ‘very special circumstances’ exist” [P](#).

AONB development ‘not major’. A planning inspector allowed an appeal for 24 homes, 12 affordable, in the Malvern Hills AONB. NPPF 116 says “planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.” The site is in the countryside adjacent to Welland village. Malvern Hills council does not have a five year land supply. The inspector ruled the site “would not constitute major development when looked at either in the context of the village or in the context of the wider AONB. It is not therefore necessary for the appellant to demonstrate exceptional circumstances and public interest” under NPPF 116 [P](#).

Non-designated landscape still valued. Despite Stratford-on-Avon council lacking a five year land supply, an inspector dismissed an application for 43 houses in Stockton village. Citing a legal judgement he made clear that landscape does not need to be designated (for example, as an AONB), to be valued under the NPPF. But to be valued it must be more than just popular. He said: “All in all, I consider there to be a wealth of evidence to suggest that the appeal site forms part of a landscape which may reasonably be regarded as ‘valued’ in the sense intended by the NPPF.” He was also concerned about the impact on views from the Millennium Way [P](#).

Neighbourhood plans. Former secretary of state for communities, Eric Pickles had been favouring emerging neighbourhood plans in decisions made before the election. In December, he rejected an inspector’s recommendation to allow an appeal against East Staffordshire council’s refusal of planning permission for 100 homes in Rolleston on Dove, Staffordshire saying the proposal would undermine the emerging neighbourhood plan. The college decided to bring a legal challenge and Eric Pickles “consented to judgement” before reaching court. The appeal will now be redetermined [P](#). His decision to give weight to the emerging neighbourhood plan for Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common was also overturned by the high court [P](#). Larkfield Homes failed to overturn the Uppingham neighbourhood plan in the appeal court. The plan gained a 92% vote in a July referendum [P](#) [L](#).

New local plan protected. An inspector rejected two housing schemes totalling 460 homes on the outskirts of Chard, Somerset [P](#) [Wessex](#). He dismissed the council’s argument that it had a five year land supply and said the housing schemes would be sustainable development. But he said they could jeopardise plans for future development of Chard:

The local plan has only very recently been found sound and adopted and the council and local people have clearly invested much time and energy in ensuring that outcome. The approach to development in Chard, enshrined in the local plan, needs to be given some time to succeed before it could reasonably be set aside. To do otherwise would undermine the primacy of the plan-led system.

Heritage protected. Gladman’s plans for nearly 100 homes on the edge of Bredon, Gloucestershire were rejected by a planning inspector. He said Wychavon council had a five-year supply of land for housing and gave great weight to the damage the houses would cause to the setting of two Grade I listed buildings. St Giles Church and the Tithe Barn [P](#) [L](#). The high court overturned planning permission for a 77 metre turbines because Cornwall council’s planning officer failed to report the concerns of Historic England and the National Trust to the planning committee [P](#). A planning inspector said proposals for a 36,000 panel, 35-hectare solar farm would introduce “a development of industrial appearance into an otherwise agricultural landscape for what would be at least a generation.” Rejecting the application for Little Chalfield in Wiltshire, he said the conclusions of the appellant’s archaeological and heritage assessment had been uncritically accepted. He said the benefits of the scheme would not outweigh the damage to the setting of heritage assets. He also gave great weight to “the core planning principles that recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the need to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance” [P](#) [Wessex](#).

Solar farm landscape impact ‘mitigated’. A planning inspector approved an 80.5 hectare solar farm at Melksham in Wiltshire [P](#). The inspector said that the local plan policy on landscape character does not “exclude all negative impacts but does seek that they are mitigated.” Noting that the land was poor quality, agricultural grade 4, he said: “While the use of greenfield land is not encouraged, a site of this size could only reasonably be accommodated in the open countryside. He concluded:

There would be a major effect on landscape within the appeal site but minor or at most moderate effects on the wider landscape as a whole and that negative effects can be significantly mitigated... While the proposed scheme would have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the local area there would be little effect on the overall tranquil, open and expansive aspects of the character and appearance of the wider area.

Wiltshire Protect, which campaigns on the cumulative effects of solar farms, said it is “disappointed and baffled by the decision” [Wii](#) [f](#).

Heritage

A tougher stance? There are signs that Historic England may be taking a tougher line on development that affect heritage and conservation assets. English Heritage initially described a redevelopment of art of King's College, London as causing "less than substantial harm" to a conservation area. Historic England has now revised that opinion to "substantial harm" .

Guidance. Historic England has published a Farmstead Assessment Framework, which aims to guide owners and planners intending to convert agricultural buildings to housing .

Archaeological investigations ahead of development are being threatened by local authority cutbacks and increasing house building .

Energy

Decarbonisation. Leaders at the G7 Summit, unanimously agreed to a full "decarbonisation of the global economy over the course of this century" . A group of UK scientists and economists launched the **Global Apollo Programme**, with the aim of halting climate change by making renewable energy cheaper than coal by 2025 .

Tidal. Amber Rudd has granted planning permission for the world's first tidal lagoon energy project. The £850m Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon will be developed by British firm Tidal Lagoon Power. The lagoon will have an installed capacity of 320MW – enough electricity to power 155,000 homes     .



Visitor centre for Swansea tidal lagoon

Solar. A survey conducted for PwC and the Solar Trade Association found that solar companies plan to concentrate on smaller solar farms after withdrawal of feed in tariff subsidies for installations generating 5MW or more. Developers were also concerned about increasing costs of connecting to the national grid .

Northumberland council is planning a 16,000 panel solar farm in the Ashington Community Woodland . Former climate change secretary Greg Barker questioned the aesthetics of "bright blue [solar] panels with aluminium standing proud on a tile roof" and said he was "amazed that so many of those ugly solar panels were installed on residential houses without more of an outcry" . The Defence Infrastructure Organisation's solar farm at DTTC Lyneham in Wiltshire, completed in March, is the largest operating in the UK at 69.5MW .

Wind. Planning inspectors have made their recommendation on the Navitus Bay scheme to the secretary of state for energy, Amber Rudd, who must make a decision by 11 September . A high court judge rejected a claim by Broadview Energy that the minister was guilty of bias in rejecting a wind farm proposal between the villages of Helmdon and Greatworth in Northamptonshire. The company claimed that lobbying by Amanda Leadsom as unlawful. Justice Cranston ruled that lobbying of a minister by the local MP is "part of our parliamentary democracy and generally there can be no lawful objection to it"  . Donald Trump has vowed to go to the supreme and European courts after the Court of Session appeal court threw out his challenge to offshore turbines near his Aberdeenshire golf course  . A new bladeless wind turbine promises to be more efficient, less visually intrusive, and safer for birdlife than conventional turbines. It has been cautiously welcomed by the RSPB and CPRE .

Fracking

Fast fracking. The Environmental Agency plans to create a one-size-fits-all permit that will be awarded to oil and gas companies that show they can meet basic criteria. Newspapers suggested that fracking would be 'fast tracked' under the new rules. The Independent said: "The government is attempting to fast-track fracking by doing away with the need for the public to be consulted before test drilling goes ahead" . David Santillo for Greenpeace said: "This is a big deal. To be looking to relax the rules on what is essentially a relatively new activity I think is irresponsible. There is still so little experience with what can go wrong with the geology in the UK." Decc said the claims by the press and protesters were "simply untrue" .

Lancashire council's planning officers have recommended councillor's give permission for Cuadrilla to begin drilling near Preston. This will be the first well since fracking was suspended after concerns about earth tremors in 2011. The officers recommend planning permission for a second well is rejected on traffic grounds    . As we go to press, the decision has been deferred after a row over legal advice provided to councillors .

Impact report. The government has been ordered to publish in full a report on the impact of fracking, after assessments of the impacts on house prices and local services were heavily redacted in a draft. The internal document, *Shale Gas: Rural Economy Impacts*, had several key sections blacked out when it was released by Defra last summer in response to a request under environmental information laws  .

Water supplies. Hydraulic fracking has no "widespread, systemic impacts" on drinking water, the US Environmental Protection Agency said  .

A poll for the Sunday Times reveals growing opposition to fracking and continuing support for onshore wind. More people would support fracking if community payments were offered  .

Aviation

The war of words between Heathrow and Gatwick is hotting up ahead of the Airports Commission's verdict on expansion in July. Gatwick said expansion of Heathrow would "break the law" because it would breach air pollution limits. It said it would go to court to challenge any decision in favour of Heathrow [iTV NEWS](#) [iTV NEWS](#) [ITV](#). The Guardian reported that David Cameron is warming to the proposal for a second runway at Gatwick [g](#). Virgin's Richard Branson and easyJet's Carolyn McCall spoke in favour of a third Heathrow runway [THE TIMES](#). Crispin Blunt, MP for Reigate, has convened a group of nine MPs opposed to expansion of Gatwick, fearing a "stitch up" by ministers opposed to Heathrow expansion [🇬🇧](#). Zac Goldsmith and Boris Johnson are among MPs that have formed another group to oppose expansion of Heathrow [g](#). Goldsmith said one million people would be blighted by noise if a third runway was built [Evening Star](#). Heathrow is threatening to ditch its domestic routes to Aberdeen, Glasgow, Leeds Bradford, Belfast and Newcastle if does not get a third runway [🇬🇧](#).

Air quality. As part of a **new consultation**, the Airports Commission published revised data which suggest each of the three shortlisted options for Heathrow and Gatwick could go ahead without breaching legally-binding EU air pollution limits in 2030. The estimates however suggest a third runway or an extended northern runway at Heathrow would delay efforts to comply with the EU limit [🇬🇧](#). In its response to the consultation, Heathrow claimed the commission has confirmed that its proposed pollution mitigation measures will enable a third runway to be built without legal air quality limits being breached. The airport also said the government must act to reduce road traffic emissions from the M4 motorway. The Aviation Environment Federation took the view that all expansion options for Heathrow would lead to worsened air quality [🇬🇧](#) [GWL](#). Ray Puddifoot leader of Hillingdon council said the Airports Commission had got it wrong [ES](#):

Davies is telling us that Heathrow can vastly increase flights, passenger numbers and its freight operation, but that there will be no extra traffic on local roads. This is not credible or realistic.

In its response to the Airports Commission **consultation** on air quality, CAGNE said the commission needs to address full air quality impacts on West Sussex and not just the air adjacent to Gatwick as the impact of a second runway will be far reaching due to a lack of public transport. It says: "The real show stopper for Gatwick Airport is the one railway line... Heathrow has more rail and road links than Gatwick and yet Gatwick aims to be larger than Heathrow" [CAGNE](#). CPRE Kent has also made final comments to the Commission raising concerns about the serious impact on air quality of a new runway at Gatwick or Heathrow [RE](#). Pulborough Against Gatwick Noise and Emissions (PAGNE) has taken its concerns to the Department for Transport and handed a protest letter to Patrick McLoughlin [Mid Suss](#) [Mid Suss](#).

Legal moves. The Teddington Action Group said it was considering launching a judicial review over the Airports Commission's consultation, saying chairman Howard Davies has a conflict of interest and the consultation period was too short [BBC](#). Transport campaigner Ralph Smyth suggested CPRE could take legal action over a third runway at Heathrow [BBC](#):

If the government decides to proceed we are bound to take legal advice as the first step to a challenge in the courts. We were part of a broad alliance of local authorities and charities that in 2010 defeated the last attempt to build a new runway. We can be sure the alliance this time round will be even bigger.

Delayed decision. Press reports suggest ministers are not expecting to make a decision on the Airports Commission's recommendation for an additional South East runway until Christmas [TRANS](#) [FT](#).

Heathrow. A public inquiry is underway into extra taxiways at the airport, which are need to increase the number of easterly take offs over Cranford from the northern runway. Opponents include Hillingdon and Hounslow councils and the GLA. They say the plans would increase noise and air pollution [get west](#).

High Speed 2

Chiltern HS2 Tunnel. A report commissioned by Chiltern council, supported by Aylesbury Vale council, Buckinghamshire council and the Chilterns Conservation Board calls for a 24.2km tunnel throughout the whole of the Chilterns, beginning at the M25 and emerging between Wendover and Stoke Mandeville. The report says a long tunnel is technically feasible and will protect the designated landscape of the Chilterns AONB [LG](#) [BBC](#) [BBC](#). Full details in the CPRE Buckinghamshire eBulletin [CPRE](#).

Business case. HS2 Ltd says there is "no business case" for extending the line to Scotland. SNP's transport spokesman Drew Hendry said: "The Westminster establishment... seems committed to keeping Scotland in the slow lane" [🇬🇧](#) [M](#) [SCOT](#) [SCOT](#). Writing in the New Civil Engineer, HS2 chief David Higgins said that HS2 holds the key to productivity: "If, as a country, we want to tackle our productivity problem we have to tackle our [transport] capacity problem" [nce](#).

Canals. Concern has been raised by the Canal and River Trust over HS2 proposals for bridges [nce](#) [🇬🇧](#). Marcus Chaloner, urban design team manager for the trust said:

How do we ensure that these huge proposals take account of the special context and character of our waterway world? What we're trying to do is to establish some design principles which can be embedded in HS2's design process which will ensure a certain quality and standard is maintained.

Charter. HS2 Ltd has issued a residents' charter which sets out the company's standard for communicating with people who live along or near the proposed route of the line [🇬🇧](#).

Transport

Rail. A report for CPRE argues that re-opening line between Plymouth and Exeter would revitalise rural communities and provide resilience against climate change and any temporary closure of the coastal line. Penny Mills of CPRE Devon said: “Large parts of Devon and North Cornwall have no trains. Reopening the railway from Exeter to Okehampton and beyond would make such a tremendous difference, unlocking local economies as well as making it easier for people to reach wonderful countryside”  .

Roads. The government has approved the controversial £148.5m Norwich Northern Distributor Road  . A survey by Brake, the road safety charity, and Direct Line insurance found that one in seven drivers (14%) have been forced by another driver’s overtaking to swerve, pull over or brake to avoid a collision in the past year . An expert panel brought together by Highways England to encourage excellence in road design, met for the first time. It pledged to change thinking within the industry and place more emphasis on the importance of good design within the road environment .

Trends. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology has produced a briefing note on trends in transport . The Campaign for Better Transport warned that the government urgently needs to integrate cycling, walking and public transport into its house building programme and other new developments to avoid gridlock . The campaign’s chief executive, Stephen Joseph, said:

You can tackle housing shortages and support new development without resorting to more sprawling suburbs, acres of car parks and big new roads. Our research shows that across the country new housing and retail development planned around public transport is successfully creating better, more economically productive places.

Communities and Campaigning

Freedom of information. After an appeal to the Information Commissioner by CPRE Bedfordshire, Bedford council published information on viability critical to the approval of 600 homes around the Grade II listed airship sheds at Cardington. Chairman Gerry Sansom said an initial viability report found faults with the developer’s case. The FoI request revealed that a second viability test was not conducted. The council has refused an inquiry into the case. Gerry said: “We believe that the public and members of the planning committee have been seriously misled” .

Aarhus. Wildlife and Countryside Link says that Britain is failing to comply with the Aarhus Convention, which guarantees access to environmental justice. In evidence to the convention’s Task Force on Access to Justice, it says that legal costs remain prohibitively expensive and arrangements for protected costs orders are confusing. Link says the six week time limit on applying for a judicial review is far too short to allow individuals and groups to challenge planning decisions. The group also says it is unclear whether judicial reviews can challenge the substantive decision or just the procedures that led to the decision .

CPRE has been shortlisted in the environment and conservation category of the 2015 Charity Awards for its work on promoting brownfield first .

Crime. The National Rural Crime Network is conducting a survey of the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour on rural communities .

Broadband. Two parliamentary briefing notes have been published on broadband infrastructure policy: POST ; House of Commons Library .

Baroness Kate Parminter, former chief executive of CPRE, has been appointed to the House of Lords select committee on the built environment, which is chaired by Baroness Delta O’Cathain .

The CPRE eBulletins

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