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Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SOUTH EAST REGION

CPRE South East Briefing

30 September 2006

How do you reduce the news of a month into four pages? In my case by failing—five pages follow. As the weeks go on, this Briefing will feature more of the work on the CPRE SE Region, and will inevitably become dominated by the EiP; we might need more pages or a more frequent edition. But we should not fall into the trap of thinking that "region" is more important than "local". The "bigger picture" is actually only generated when we are aware of what is happening in every part of the south east. Send in your contributions!

Acronyms are part of our age but sometimes they get in the way. The choice of CALAE for the worthy campaign against Luton airport's expansion brought this issue to mind. It takes along time to get an acronym established, so it is often better not to go down that route. CPRE South East is fond of calling itself SERG. By the time SERG has any achieved resonance with anyone, Dover to Oxford will one great expanse of concrete. Let it be CPRE South East. Or is that CPRE Southeast? Or even CPRESE?

1. CPRE in the South East

"The English are philistines." Cycling crusader Marina Voikhanskaya pedalled into Mole Valley. "The English countryside is under threat," stormed the 72-year-old former Russian dissident (brief biography at: <http://tinyurl.com/ole8c>). "The English are philistines. They do not know what they have got or seem to care. It is up to all of us to preserve the countryside." Surrey Advertiser: <http://tinyurl.com/gxgah>

Ashford. CPRE is calling for house building in one of the South East's major growth areas to be halted until job creation catches up. Elizabeth Rix said the Ashford Masterplan promised 2,800 new jobs between 2001 and 2004 but only 400 had materialised. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/je3ya>. Rail passengers for the continent will need to use Ebbsfleet, as services are withdrawn from Ashford. This is expected to lead to greater road congestion. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/mwj3r>. The Sunday Times suggested that planned expansion of Ashford is threatened as a result: <http://tinyurl.com/klzln>

CPRE Kent is opposing night flights at Headcorn Aerodrome. Hilary Newport said the night flights would be the "thin end of the wedge. I think it is inevitably going to lead to quite a significant expansion in air traffic over the years." BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/f86ge>

Imperial defeat. As the university withdrew plans for development at the former Wye College, Hilary Newport celebrated. "This was a rotten proposition for Wye from start to finish. Everyone acknowledges the need for quality employment, but this should never be at the price of a vandalised natural landscape." CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/g8arz>. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/zkozy>. The Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/pyulq>

Luton Airport. An action group, CALAE—Campaign Against Luton Airport Expansion, has been formed to promote the battle against proposals to build another runway and increase passenger numbers to as many as 35 million a year. CALAE is led by the Hertfordshire branch of CPRE and chaired by its director Kevin FitzGerald. Herts Advertiser: <http://tinyurl.com/r2czx>

Maidstone Borough Council has said that parcels of Green Belt land sold for speculative development are unlikely to get planning permission. For CPRE Kent, Hilary Newport said: "If it is fenced up and parcelled off, who is going to look after it?" BBCK <http://tinyurl.com/ofvnz>

Milton Keynes. Plans to expand Milton Keynes into the Newton Longville area of Aylesbury Vale will fail because of inadequate transport infrastructure, said CPRE Bucks: <http://tinyurl.com/qyo5v>. Alan Myers chairman of CPRE Vale of Aylesbury said: "We want Milton Keynes to be a success. Yet the absence in the Growth Strategy of imaginative plans for an attractive and viable public transport system gives us little confidence that the expanded city will add up to more than a car-dependent urban sprawl."

Polytunnels. CPRE and local campaigners in Surrey are continuing to campaign against polytunnels on Tuesley Farm. The case goes to appeal in December. Surrey Advertiser: <http://tinyurl.com/ejqee>

Wheezing. CPRE Kent reacted to a large increase in asthma in the county. "Air quality in urban areas of Kent has suffered greatly from road traffic... The car is king in Dartford, and affects air quality. We are profoundly worried about the unrestrained growth in road traffic." Local London: <http://tinyurl.com/gaulq>

Upper Thames Reservoir. Thames Water launched its plans for a four-square mile reservoir on farmland near Abingdon, Oxfordshire. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/ftwo3>. Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/kmo9s>. CPRE Oxfordshire said "It is unacceptable that Thames Water is planning such a huge development at this stage. It should not be distracted from its main tasks of reducing leakage and encouraging its domestic and industrial customers to use a precious resource more efficiently." <http://tinyurl.com/j2hxx>. Much more on this in the weekly Oxfordshire Campaign Briefings: <http://tinyurl.com/flk4j>

2. SE Plan EiP

SE Plan EiP. The public inquiry (Evidence in Public) into the South East plan commences in November. The final list of Matters and Participants will be published on 12 October. The inquiry begins at Woking on 28 November. Is it a coincidence that Holiday Inns features Woking in its latest advertisements?

Consultation. Summaries of responses to the pre-inquiry consultation are available: <http://tinyurl.com/ktddc> Congratulations to the residents of Woking, and also Bracknell, who submitted half the responses. None were from Holiday Inns.

Preliminary meeting. A preliminary meeting was held on 7 September. Several CPRE representatives attended. Edward Dawson asked whether there were lessons from the East of England EiP, especially about the level of detailed considered. The SE EiP will not be asking for Sustainability Statements for individual sites. It will not be commenting on specific sites, but it will do so in broader terms for transport infrastructure and the broad locations of, for example, reservoirs. Minutes: <http://tinyurl.com/q6kwr>

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. An Assessor, Peter Burley, who will look specifically at the issue of the TBH SPA and English Nature's Delivery Plan. He will circulate a paper by 6 October 2006 to "all known interested parties"; responses to be submitted by 30 October 2006. <http://tinyurl.com/hyy6m>

3. Planning

Landbanking. *Inside Out* for BBC South exposed the practice of landbanking—selling plots of land in green fields at a high price, even though there is no prospect of development. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/oojj>

"Climate proof" planning. Friends of the Earth and the Town and Country Planning Association said that regional and local development plans must be "climate proofed" with binding carbon dioxide reduction targets and measures to help communities withstand extreme climate impacts including flood risk. The Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/oensu>

4. Housing

Eco-affordable. A 1950s council house in St Albans has become an eco-home that is energy and water efficient. Green Building: <http://tinyurl.com/fjs8y>. Ken Livingstone pledged that all new affordable homes in London will be carbon-neutral. 24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/fqxa4>

Not Affordable. The Rowntree Foundation has launched its *Housing and Neighbourhoods Monitor*. Households are up by 35% since 1971, compared with a population rise of just 8%. In the South of England, half of all working households under 40 cannot afford to buy even at the low end of the housing market. The

number of new affordable homes at 35,000 in 2005–2006, it is half the levels achieved in the mid-1990s, and well below the 48,000 that Kate Barker said is needed. Rowntree: <http://tinyurl.com/r57uz>

Council carbon tax. Yvette Cooper said that all homes for sale from next summer must have an Energy Performance Certificate. Councils will be able to use this rating system, which goes from A to G, to determine council tax levels. This is Money: <http://tinyurl.com/z2u9s>. Or the rating could be used for "green mortgages". in2perspective: <http://tinyurl.com/es7pd>

Suburbia is best. Housing Corporation chief executive Jon Rouse attacked the 'urban cognoscenti' and lauding the suburbs as the natural home of the British. He outlined seven reasons for a return to suburbia and said anyone who believes the country's housing crisis can be met through the expansion of urban centres is 'frankly kidding themselves'. The Thames Gateway, he said, was suburbia. Europaconcorsi: <http://tinyurl.com/mvvnv4>

5. Transport

"**Cheap flights** should be a cause of national rejoicing." David Soskin of cheapflights.co.uk defends no-frills holidaymaking against its "ignorant" critics. Spiked: <http://tinyurl.com/fq4tt>

Brighton Main Line. The DfT is consulting on improvements for commuters. The Gatwick Express may be axed. Deadline 22 December. DfT: <http://tinyurl.com/knpkn>. The Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/kgwrg>

Environmental impact statement changes. DfT is planning amend the procedures for the environmental impact assessment of highway projects, to take account of European directives. It says that other types of projects may be subject to equivalent environmental impact assessment regimes. Closing date for consultation: 14 December. DfT: <http://tinyurl.com/g3xt7>

Newbury bypass. CPRE said that one of the most "controversial road schemes" in Britain has led to spiralling costs and rising numbers of fatal accidents. inthenews: <http://tinyurl.com/kh8zo>

North-South rail. The railway industry is split over proposals for a new super-fast train link to help bridge the growing economic gap between the north and south of Britain. The Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/gbfsl>

Rail Freight. Increased capacity for rail freight is planned, taking 12,000 trucks a day off the roads. But decisions on funding will not be made for a year. The Times: <http://tinyurl.com/rnaal>

Road casualties are down and speeding is not such a significant factor as some claim. The statistics do not shed light on the safety of rural roads. DfT: <http://tinyurl.com/eq7xw>. The Times: <http://tinyurl.com/ky9ju>.

Roadside signage. CPRE has issued internal guidance on roadside signage, based on work in Hampshire and with the RAC foundation. Circular: <http://tinyurl.com/macel>. Guidance: <http://tinyurl.com/pe62w>

The Scots are saving the English landscape from road schemes, according to Mark Sullivan of CPRE West Midlands Transport Group, in a homage to Alistair Darling in the Glasgow Herald: <http://tinyurl.com/recyy>

Time limit for roadside memorials. West Sussex has followed its neighbour in putting a 12-week limit on road side memorials to car crash victims. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/g7d65>

Transport Energy. The DfT has published a *Transport Energy Best Practice Guide for Developers* to champion the benefits of sustainable travel as an integral part of a proposal. DfT: <http://tinyurl.com/jy5rr>

Travel statistics. People are making fewer but longer journeys, and walking and cycling are becoming less popular. The Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/ecgvz>. GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/n8ec2>. 11% of households in rural areas do not have access to a car; half of rural households have two cars. Access to bus services (hourly, within 13 minutes walk) has improved in rural areas, but is still only 54%. DfT: <http://tinyurl.com/gxhqx>

6. Environment, Biodiversity and Heritage

Hello to Natural England. The new official watchdog for landscape and wildlife finally arrives this Sunday. CPRE has warned that there is a real risk it will be too poor and too weak to make a difference. Natural England takes over from the work of English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service. Tom Oliver, CPRE Head of Rural Policy said that the 'savagely cuts to its core funding mean that the organisation is seriously weakened even as it embarks on its crucial work'. In a letter to The Times nineteen

environmental groups, including CPRE, welcomed the new body: "Its creation is welcome and constitutes the biggest shake-up in conservation in England since the Second World War... It is time to better protect and restore our countryside, urban green spaces and seas for the benefit of both people and wildlife. This will not be achieved unless the Government commits adequate funding over the long term." <http://tinyurl.com/z8ajo>

Eco-development. Ken Livingstone has set out plans to double the reductions in carbon emission that developments in London must achieve. eGov: <http://tinyurl.com/jqfro>

Fuels Gold. The New Scientist took a critical look at advances in biofuels, which supporters claim will dramatically slash net greenhouse gas emissions. The dissenters say that biofuels will trash rainforests, suck water reserves dry, kill off species and raise food prices, while barely slowing global warming: <http://tinyurl.com/eoqup>.

Biofuels could help save the planet but may threaten the landscape, according to the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. Efracom said that a major change in the government's approach to energy from crops and plants is urgently needed but "if the Government goes ahead with the increase in the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation beyond 5%, as proposed in the Energy Review, there may be serious UK land use implications." The Observer: <http://tinyurl.com/jl38k>. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/p7mvz>. Efracom report: <http://tinyurl.com/jhh5t>

Conkers conquered. Horse chestnut trees across England are under threat in what looks to be the worst case of tree blight since Dutch elm disease 30 years ago. Daily Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/n8q7f>.

7. Thames Gateway

Norma Foster said: "When you look at the decision-making there, you find about 24 different bodies involved. The quality of any project is hugely influenced by the quality of the decision-making." The Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/enwnv>

Dr Tim Williams will spearhead the new Housing Corporation commission on the Thames Gateway, which will look at affordable housing design and quality. <http://tinyurl.com/klq5v>

Wildspace. Plans for a new "green lung"—a nature reserve double the size of Hampstead Heath—were unveiled. The reserve occupies over 1,500 acres in Rainham Marshes. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/q9v7e>

Incinerator. The Novera gasification plant, in Ferry Lane, Rainham, was approved by the London Thames Gateway Urban Development Corporation, despite environmental protests. icEssex: <http://tinyurl.com/k747h>

8. South East Notes

Center Parcs is appealing against rejection of plans for a new £160m holiday village at Warren Wood in Bedfordshire. <http://tinyurl.com/kfjs9>

Crawley. High rise is back as Yvette Cooper approves housing in 333 dwellings a hectare on land zoned for employment. Local objections were rejected because of the "housing shortage." Surrey Online: <http://tinyurl.com/kcda4>; <http://tinyurl.com/er2uu>

Heathrow. Wandsworth council is leading a coalition of south and west London authorities under the flight path and concerned about the environmental impact of Heathrow expansion. 24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/glk2s>

Kent County Council is setting out to tackle rural speeding and is reviewing speed limits. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/lanna>

London brownfield. More than 100 hectares of brownfield will be available as part of a project to upgrade Ministry of Defence facilities at RAF Northolt, providing land for thousands of homes. <http://tinyurl.com/qbl3q>

Muted hurrah in Titnore Woods. 210 out of 265 threatened trees have been reprieved but tree-top protesters say they will only leave if all the trees were saved. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/mk76w>

Sittingbourne. Protests against 5,000 houses at Kent Science Park, near Sittingbourne continue. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/nd8fc>

Thanet. London Array, which plans 270 wind turbines off the Thanet coast, is appealing against the refusal of permission for an onshore substation at Cleve Hill, Graveney, Kent. <http://tinyurl.com/jrvk6>

Worthing Council spent almost £75,000 fighting plans to build an Asda store. And it won! BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/zp3yo>

9. Government in the South East

Power to the people. Ruth Kelly promises a new era of power shift, not just to the town hall, but also from the town hall to local communities. 24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/rdw3c>. In response, local government leaders called for a bold devolution of powers to towns, cities and counties to allow them to generate economic prosperity like Milan or Frankfurt. <http://tinyurl.com/qnnql>

SE Plan. The Regional Assembly Executive Committee has agreed the final draft of the Regional Economic Strategy, subject to reservations about the need for infrastructure before or alongside housing and employment growth, and the contradiction between the RES stance on aviation with that in the SE Plan. <http://tinyurl.com/jll5j>

Traveller sites. New Government requirements require the South East Plan to include planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites. SEERA is consulting until 13 October: <http://tinyurl.com/pv2xy>

10. Other News

Farmer's Markets. Country Life magazine is now seeking votes for Britain's best farmers market. Vote before 12 October at: <http://tinyurl.com/joh74>. And of course, vote for Deddington in Oxfordshire.

Water grid ruled out. The Environment Agency has concluded that there is no need for large-scale transfers of water to south east England from the north of England or from Wales. Press release: <http://tinyurl.com/rzub5>. Report: <http://tinyurl.com/h8hc5>. The report was rubbished by the Institute of Civil Engineers who dismissed it as a narrow "desk-top study". New Civil Engineer: <http://tinyurl.com/gtbmy>

Financial leak. Water companies are failing to invest in leak repairs and customer service, according to Ofwat, spending nearly £1 billion less last year than agreed. The Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/lym2y> Ofwat: <http://tinyurl.com/kzrxs>.

And finally... A bold experiment in Iceland ended in a rather English way. Reykjavik's streetlights were turned off in order to enable city residents to have a better view of the night sky. Sadly cloud cover blocked out the stars. Iceland Review: <http://tinyurl.com/l4rha>.

11. Diary

- 6 October. SEERA Regional Housing Board
- 12 October. CPRE Transport Workshop, National Office
- 12 October. EiP Matters and Participants published
- 13 October. SEFS AGM.
- 17 October. Preliminary Meeting of SE Plan EiP
- 20 October. SEERA Executive Committee
- 27 October. SEERA Regional Transport Board
- 28 November. EiP commences in Woking.

[Further details of SEERA Meetings.](#) [Further details of EiP Meetings.](#)

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