



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SOUTH EAST

CPRE South East eBulletin

December 2006

Published 15 January 2006

I plead no excuse for this issue being delayed other than an extended new year in the Shropshire Hills. Back in the gritty reality of the South East, the temperature of the battle for the future of the countryside is increasing. The government has already decided that the East of England EiP did not deliver the result they were hoping for and Ruth Kelly is demanding that green belts are moved outwards, that there should be more housing and, of course, more air traffic. Is this the fate we await with the South East Plan EiP? CPRE has for eighty years maintained a clarion call that the landscape is not to be swept away by as a inconvenience. In the South East this could be our most important year. Good luck and good campaigning for 2007.

1. South East Plan Examination in Public

"Battle for the South East." County leaders from West & East Sussex, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Hampshire, Surrey and Oxfordshire launched the "Battle for the South East": <http://tinyurl.com/yg6cu7>. Edward Dawson of CPRE SE told the Basingstoke Gazette: "Many of the helpful policies in the plan are undermined by other policies which place the highest emphasis on economic growth. The countryside, the wider environment and our quality of life risk being sidelined as a result." (<http://tinyurl.com/y7kbe3>)

Rural issues. The EiP is asking whether there is a sufficient emphasis on rural issues in the South East Plan. CPRE SE responded "The simple answer is no; the rural parts of the South East form its fabric, and provide context and setting for the settlement pattern across the region. Managing and valuing that fabric is as important as managing the urban areas" (<http://tinyurl.com/ynxedy>).

Highways at the EiP. Congestion growing into gridlock is the broad thrust of the Highways Agency's evidence to the EiP (<http://tinyurl.com/twy6k>). If the housing, employment and airport growth in the South East Plan come to fruition, trunk roads and motorways in the region will suffer significant congestion. The Agency mapped traffic projections for the major roads in the South East but did not take into account any traffic management measures, such as congestion charging. The Agency expects congestion level across the South East trunk road network to increase by 10% by 2016 and by 23% in 2026. Although the traffic modelling takes no account of traffic management, the Agency strongly recommends the South East Plan has a much greater emphasis upon this (<http://tinyurl.com/t2saj>). Careful consideration should be given to housing allocations that have the potential to affect routes to the ports, and steps taken to reduce the risk of local traffic inhibiting access for strategic long-distance traffic. The Highways Agency submission identifies the worst traffic hotspots.

Participant statements to the EiP. CPRE South East: <http://tinyurl.com/v9cy3> (see also the list at the end of this eBulletin). GOSE: <http://tinyurl.com/ye7tyk>. SEERA: <http://tinyurl.com/v9cy3>. All participant statements: <http://tinyurl.com/yzt3v2>.

East EiP to be over-ruled? The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) has criticised proposed changes to the draft East of England Plan. The government has said that it wants a different strategy on where growth will be allowed, changes to plans for Green Belt reviews, greater housing provision and a bigger job target. EERA also objects to the government's proposals for a second runway at Stansted, the extra 30,000 homes that ministers want in the region and the insistence that housing figures should be treated as "minimums" (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/yxhbta>). Harlow will be badly affected by a green belt review, with up to 20,000 houses in the green belt; Stop Harlow North said the value of the EiP had been entirely undermined (HEN:

<http://tinyurl.com/yyuonl>). Lawrence Wragg, Chairman of CPRE East of England, said the "Government's failure to accept that there are limits to development if we are not going to destroy our environment and quality of life totally contradicts their commitment to environmental issues. As does their continued support of a second Stansted runway" (<http://tinyurl.com/yzobvf>).

2. Green Belt

"CPRE renews call to shield green belt." In December, Ruth Kelly told a conference that "my view is that existing green belt policy has served us well, and I am yet to be convinced that substantial policy changes are needed" (<http://tinyurl.com/uxgg6>). CPRE Chief Executive Shaun Spiers said: "We'll be campaigning for Green Belts strongly in the next few weeks, as Government draws up its planning White Paper" (<http://tinyurl.com/y7dbaq>). Andy Boddington told the Oxford Mail "It is good to hear a voice of scepticism about the Barker report from within the government. The question is, do her colleagues share her views?... the Green Belts of England are not safe yet" (<http://tinyurl.com/y3gpl2>).

Green wedges. One of the conclusions of Kate Barker's report (below) is that "green wedges" close to where people lived would be valued more than green belt. Shaun Spiers, chief executive of CPRE, told the Financial Times that "no one will object if some [green belt] of it is converted to community forests, but not if the cost is much more development in other parts". The Policy Exchange said it was more important to have green cities than green belts that people rarely visited (<http://tinyurl.com/ycueo7>).

CPRE South East told the SE EiP in its evidence that the "current world scale success of London is at least in part because of the existence of the Metropolitan Green Belt... [which] has also protected market towns around London, which have maintained their character, and some have become significant economic hubs themselves and drivers of the economy in the South East... The academic, research and economic vibrancy of Oxford is proof that the established fact of the Oxford Green Belt has not limited this success... There is no case for a strategic review of the Green Belts within the region." (<http://tinyurl.com/yyvwym>)

More statements to the EiP on green belts (<http://tinyurl.com/y86nb7>).

3. South East Plan EIP Day 8: Green Belt & Strategic Gaps

Commentary by Edward Dawson

The South East Plan Policy CC10a did not support the need for a Green Belt review. It had been one of several strategic factors shaping the Plan. The Panel wanted to know if there was consistency between this and the emphasis of the spatial strategy on urban areas and regional hubs.

The discussion began with consultants Barton Wilmore suggesting that the existing Green Belts were no longer relevant, and did not fit the modern ideas of sustainable development. They had largely served their purpose, and should not form part of the Plan. They quoted from the final report of the Barker Review of Land Use Planning to suggest that Green Belts should be reviewed rather than accepted as a status quo.

CPRE then spoke, and defended the decision not to review boundaries. There was clear consistency between the policies that resulted in the retention of the Green Belt. This resulted from the permanence of the designation. It was understood that Green Belts had no landscape value, and were an instrument of planning policy. However, the Metropolitan Green Belt was the saviour of the South East; the platinum element in the region. The concept of a 'cordon saniter' around London went back centuries. It had checked the growth of London, and had acquired a certain mystic; many people thought that all green fields were essentially Green Belt. A more authentic quotation than Kate Barker came from G K Chesterton, who lived in Hertfordshire in the 1930s. He had commented on the 1933 Green Belt declared by the London County Council, and said: *the Green Belt is where London ends and England begins.*

More recently, Green Belts had been designated to protect historic city centres, such as Cambridge, Oxford and York. Other historic cities had not been so fortunate, such as Winchester and the World Heritage Site at Canterbury Town Centre. Green Belt worked well best when it was combined with urban regeneration measures. Sadly, the later did not always happen. It was important to retain the integrity of the Green Belt. Others believed that Green Belt continued to play a valid role, resembled a Morris Minor, which required an MOT. It was possible to retain the integrity of the Green Belt, while adjusting the boundaries. Hubs could also

exist in the Green Belt, and could be sustainable urban extensions. They would address issues of the quality of life. There was mention of the need for Green Infrastructure, and the wildlife value of the Green Belt. The Chilterns Society accepted the need for reviews to Green Belt boundaries.

Kent County Council reminded the Examination that previous BG reviews had resulted in land being reclaimed that now formed Bluewater, and Eastern Quarry near Ebbsfleet. The leap-frogging of the Green Belt had created commuter communities that were not sustainable. Boundary changes were inevitable, as pressures for development increased. Reviews were allowed under PPS2, in any case. It was more practical and effective to carry these out at a strategic level, and not via small scale reviews. The latter could become caught up in local political controversy, and more flexibility would be helpful. These could act as a safety valve releasing pressure in places under stress.

4. Barker Report

Barker summarised. A special edition of the CPRE Oxfordshire Briefing examines the Barker Report into Land Use Planning (<http://tinyurl.com/yg2omj>).

Planning Disaster. CPRE is one of seven environmental groups that have joined forces to campaign against some of Kate Barker's proposals for reform of the planning system. A website (www.planningdisaster.co.uk) features an online letter to be sent to Gordon Brown to protest at the proposals.

Goat seen in Kent. CPRE Kent director Hilary Newport said "Putting an economist in charge of planning is like putting a goat in charge of your garden. If the recommendations of this report are accepted by Government it will have a terrible effect on Kent's countryside, especially those areas within the Green Belt" (<http://tinyurl.com/y9wknv>).

Flawed survey. In a letter to the Financial Times, Andy Boddington for CPRE Oxfordshire criticised Kate Barker's assertion that people do not value land on the edge of towns and cities, saying the results she quotes are an artefact of the methodology used and do not reflect public opinion (<http://tinyurl.com/ym2fks>).

Infrastructure. In his pre-budget speech, Gordon Brown backed plans for planning decisions on major infrastructure projects to be made by an independent body, as recommended by Barker report into Land Use Planning. Planning policy should be "independent of government" like monetary policy, he said.

5. Planning Policy Statements

Climate Change: PPS1. DCLG is consulting on a draft Planning Policy Statement "Planning and Climate Change". The PPS sets out how planning should "help shape places with lower carbon emissions and resilient to the climate change now accepted as inevitable." Deadline 8 March (<http://tinyurl.com/tljs3>).

Housing: PPS3. The government published new planning guidance for homes: Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3). Full details in a special edition of the CPRE Oxfordshire Bulletin: <http://tinyurl.com/ylnou5>.

Flood risk: PPS25. DCLG has published new guidance on planning and flood risk to "ensure that new homes and buildings are constructed in sensible locations at least risk of flooding" (<http://tinyurl.com/ydvy55>). A new Direction requires planners to notify DCLG of applications for major development in a flood risk area against advice from the Environment Agency (<http://tinyurl.com/ybd4sy>). The Royal Town Planning Institute said that PPS25 could help planners prevent concreting of front gardens (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/t2eml>).

6. Planning

Flooding. A Berkshire-based community group decided the flood risk to their homes is so great they may pay for a £200m flood relief scheme themselves (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/y8oebu>). The role that trees can play in cutting the risk of flooding is to be investigated in a Defra study (<http://tinyurl.com/yhu6q4>).

Wasted sites. CPRE Bucks has criticised Buckinghamshire County Council for needlessly blighting areas of countryside and of towns with proposals for waste sites that may never come to fruition (<http://tinyurl.com/y4mm5e>).

Single planning system? Tony Blair is promising a single national planning system. Applications will be submitted electronically and judged against more consistent criteria (<http://tinyurl.com/wtftf>).

Kent depot. The County Council has approved the Wrotham highways depot in the green belt, subject to approval by Ruth Kelly. CPRE Kent director Hilary Newport said "It's impossible to see any wisdom - or even logic - in KCC's decision. The county council has gone directly against its professed intentions to safeguard the Kent countryside" (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/ya3t67>; CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/yjar4n>).

Land banking. CPRE has found nearly 30 operators involved in buying up land in open countryside and subdividing it into small plots. They market the plots with inflated prices to match. (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/vcmwn>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/y2bbyq>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/ydx5t4>).

Milton Keynes. The Liberal Democrats say plans for 15,200 new houses in environmentally sensitive areas of Buckinghamshire are "seriously flawed and environmentally damaging" (Aylesbury Today: <http://tinyurl.com/yc5he3>) and the Tory's are being accused over a "stitch-up" by Milton Keynes Council (Milton Keynes Today: <http://tinyurl.com/ycyt27>). Peter Cleasby said "the MK Growth Strategy is not fit to be used as the basis for future planning in the so-called Milton Keynes/Aylesbury Vale sub-region" (CPRE Bucks: <http://tinyurl.com/yfhhx8>). GOSE eBulletin on the Milton Keynes Growth Area: (<http://tinyurl.com/yc4kwf>).

Polytunnels. Large-scale polytunnel installation on a farm in Surrey constitutes development and requires planning permission, the High Court confirmed in a decision over Tuesley Farm, Surrey (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/y89j5q>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/ya69rv>). CPRE welcomed the judgement as "a crucial victory for the planning system which will ensure that local democracy and national policy are properly taken into account when polytunnels are proposed on farmland, and in particular on nationally and locally designated landscapes" (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/y829fy>). Tim Harrold, chairman of CPRE Surrey said "It is a wonderful result because people have stood up and been counted defending some of the most important countryside we have." (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yh9y62>. Daily Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/y5rbea>.)

Surrey gas. A gas exploration company has applied to install two drilling rigs within an AONB. Tim Harrold, chairman of CPRE Surrey said: "This is a horrific proposal. The countryside... has been made an AONB for good reason. It would be a mockery of the protection that has been applied if this were given the go ahead" (Daily Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/y7x277>).

Sussex. CPRE Sussex has criticised the choice of Yapton for a proposed crematorium. Roy Haycock, chairman of the CPRE Sussex, said "We contest the proposal for a crematorium in this location because the council has not established the need for one in its local plan, whether at this location or elsewhere in the district". (Bognor News: <http://tinyurl.com/ydq5jk>).

Eco-warriors join battle for Radley Lakes. The battle to save Thrupp Lake in Oxfordshire from becoming a dump for fly-ash from Didcot power station looks lost. Ruth Kelly refused to call in the application and the County Council has given planning permission, despite the spot being a county wildlife site. Protestors still hope to get the lake classified as a Town Green and eco-warriors, said to be "off-duty" Greenpeace, have moved onto the site (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/y6w4gp>; <http://tinyurl.com/sfr2c>). Andy Boddington for CPRE Oxfordshire said "It is a shameful decision with which to begin 2007... We should pause a moment to weep a few tears for our county's future." (Oxford Times: <http://tinyurl.com/txnhf>).

Green homes. Ruth Kelly said that from 2016 new homes should generate at least as much electricity as they use from renewable or low carbon sources (<http://tinyurl.com/yfed8y>). Houses will have a "green star" rating. "Zero carbon" in this context means all emissions from power generation after construction and not the "embodied" carbon in the building materials or transport to the site (Reuters: <http://tinyurl.com/yj6sq8>). The DCLG consultation ends on 8 March (<http://tinyurl.com/ymzcuY>).

Uckfield. Will a mistake in the way Wealden District Council compiled its local plan set loose a free-for-all in housing development in Uckfield? (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/yeabq6>).

Lyons report. The review into local government finance by Michael Lyons has been delayed until the spring to consider the implications for local government of the Eddington report on transport, the Barker report on planning and the Leitch review on skills (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/y9xqvl>).

Planning Gain Supplement. The DCLG consultation on a new system of planning obligations in England end on 28 February (<http://tinyurl.com/yl3w7k>).

Quarrying. DCLG has begun a consultation on proposals to amend the environmental impact assessment regulations for old minerals permissions, including suspension of operations for sites where assessments remain undetermined (DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/yyoxqg>).

Support for green fields. 64% of UK adults say they would like to see properties built in urban centres rather than on green field sites according to research from Hyder Consulting (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/yxc9ex>).

Thames Gateway. DCLG is giving £1m towards creating green spaces to link historic sites and buildings in north Kent. Newsshopper: <http://tinyurl.com/yds7pe>

Wirescapes. The DTI has begun a consultation on overhead power lines, including allowing minor changes in National Parks and AONBs without requiring fresh consent, and whether the bar on exemptions for lines within Sites of Special Scientific Interest should be maintained (<http://tinyurl.com/thjt6>).

7. Housing

South East housing. A public debate on housing issues in the South East of England will be held on 22 February hosted by Shelter and the Campaign for More and Better Homes (<http://tinyurl.com/yxvoza>).

Communities England, partly made up by the merger of quango the Housing Corporation and regeneration agency English Partnerships, is reported to be going ahead (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/yykm35>). Gordon Brown announced in his pre-budget speech that the Housing Corporation faces "efficiency savings" of 6% a year.

Brownfield. English Partnerships has promised to use brownfield land more effectively. It has identified six 'over-arching principles' to ensure the country's 63,000 ha of previously developed land is used to better effect; including focussing on the widest possible range of uses, not just housing; concentrating in areas where existing infrastructure can support redevelopment; and that all future uses should, where possible, help support families and assist in combating anti-social behaviour (<http://tinyurl.com/ykfan3>).

High density city homes to save countryside? CPRE published a major report arguing for a new approach to high-density urban housing to save rural land from being concreted over. It says that mistakes from the past—like the hated tower blocks built by Labour governments in the 1960s—have blighted public opinion against high-density housing in towns and cities. (Daelnet: <http://tinyurl.com/unldh>. CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/t2lhf>).

Affordable housing. "We must act now. Otherwise we have a housing time bomb on our hands." The National Housing Federation is calling for 80,000 affordable homes a year to be built saying the Government should invest £11.6 billion in affordable housing (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yxk5b3>. NHF: <http://tinyurl.com/y58bfx>).

Affordability declines. House-price to household-income ratios for working households have reached record levels (Rowntree: <http://tinyurl.com/ylea46>. The Observer: <http://tinyurl.com/y5fn39>):

- ◆ England: house price to income ratio is 4.43; the average price £173K; and average earnings £39K
- ◆ South East: 4.76; average price £196K; average earnings £41K.

Intelligent suburbs. Acclaimed architect Richard Rogers said that the urgency of climate change makes the rebirth of our cities crucial to the planet, and its people. In calling for "intelligent suburbs" he said in the Guardian (<http://tinyurl.com/yykgtl>) that the "most worrying are the signs that the government is losing its nerve: that it is beginning to focus on quantity at the expense of quality."

8. Transport

Roads. Despite an earlier commitment to cut back on new roads, the Highways Agency is widening around 60 miles of the M25 swallowing tens of thousands of acres of greenbelt land. It is just one of 150 road schemes approved or already under construction (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/skmff>). Consultation has begun on changes to toll charges at the Dartford River Crossing. (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yml5fo>).

CPRE joined with Friends of The Earth, Transport 2000 and Road Block to condemn the government for failing to gather crucial information on the environmental impacts of road schemes (<http://tinyurl.com/yc8w8n>).

Motorway hoarding victory. Just because a motorway might be ugly, that's no reason to spoil the countryside alongside it a planning inspector concluded when refused permission for yet another advertising hoarding alongside the M40 for being "out of keeping and intrusive" (CPRE Oxfordshire: <http://tinyurl.com/y3t4sn>).

Aviation. The government has backed a major expansion of the country's airports. There will be new runways at Heathrow and Stansted (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ym6qzf>. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/ygru3b>). CPRE said "this is a huge missed opportunity for the Government to review basic assumptions about aviation on all fronts. CPRE will continue to campaign for a root-and-branch review of national air transport policy" (<http://tinyurl.com/ylcesc>). AirportWatch has launched a Rethink! campaign calling on the government to rethink its plans for massive expansion of aviation (<http://tinyurl.com/yyuzwz>).

Lydd. Protests are mounting against the proposed expansion of Lydd Airport (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yl6gcs>) as consultation on the plans begins (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/ynf8pc>). Jim Little for CPRE Kent said that "Romney Marsh is one of the most tranquil parts of Kent. The last thing it needs is the roar of airliners over its countryside and coastal towns and villages, or the passage of up to 15,000 cars a day along roads woefully unsuitable for that weight of traffic." (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/yz3n6y>).

Stansted. A planning application by BAA to expand Stansted from 25 million passengers a year limit up to a maximum of 35 million was rejected by Uttlesford District Council (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/sbx4t>. Guardian Leader: <http://tinyurl.com/uxkly>). BAA has announced it is to appeal against the decision. (CEN: <http://tinyurl.com/yy8ko2>. HEN: <http://tinyurl.com/y13fks>).

Heathrow. BAA is said to be developing a pollution charging scheme targeted at lorries to overcome the problem of poor air quality around the airport (The Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yyjhoq>). The 2M Group of local authorities has been formed to campaign against expansion at the airport (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/y1h7ph>).

Buses. The government has announced consultation on a shake-up of bus services in England in an attempt to counter the decline in bus travel. Local authorities will have a greater say in determining bus frequency, timetables and fares (Transport Briefing: <http://tinyurl.com/ycmmzd>).

Waterways. The Environment, Food and & Affairs Committee is reviewing British Waterways' progress towards creating "an expanded, vibrant, largely self-sufficient waterway network" (<http://tinyurl.com/y7ucas>).

Rail. A £200m upgrade of Milton Keynes station will provide more capacity for inter-city trains and east-west traffic (Transport Briefing: <http://tinyurl.com/yxxg8v>).

Eddington Report. Road tolls rather than more road-building are the answer to Britain's transport problems, former BA chief Sir Rod Eddington concluded (<http://tinyurl.com/rm27b>). Charging would "internalise" transport's environmental and social costs, could cut congestion by half, and might bring £28bn annual benefits to the economy. Eddington also called for inquiries into major transport schemes to be headed by panels of appointed experts who would make the final decision. CPRE spokesman Peter Langley said: "There is much to welcome in this authoritative study, but proposals for a new transport planning system and for airport expansion are wide of the mark." CPRE said it supports Eddington's endorsement of a national road pricing scheme, but any such scheme must be designed so that it does not cause households and businesses to move out of town into the countryside in search of cheaper road travel (<http://tinyurl.com/ygxwgi>). Transport 2000 also gave the report a mixed reception: <http://tinyurl.com/yjytcq>. George Monbiot took a critical line in The Guardian (<http://tinyurl.com/y4ohbv>) saying "I'm all for putting more vehicles on our roads. As long as they're coaches." The DfT has published the evidence base for some of Eddington's conclusions; it seems that none of the rail schemes considered were assessed for value for money, unlike most road schemes (<http://tinyurl.com/y9nblj>).

SE action plan. SEERA has drawn up an action plan for the region's improving transport. The Plan's goals include an integrated transport network, increased investment in public transport, and reduced car use, congestion and pollution at a cost of between £37 billion and £47 billion (<http://tinyurl.com/ybhjx4>).

Transport 2000 South East has been dissolved by its members, the T2000 local groups and local representatives in the South East region, after failure to find a new leader.

9. Water

Kent and Oxfordshire CPRE have had letters published in numerous local newspapers in their counties saying "we are looking forward to the report from the [EiP] rejecting the muddled aims of the water companies in favour of a wiser, more realistic strategy for the region" (eg: Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/ydxjmt>).

Water is wealth. "Rain has been a cornerstone to the developing wealth of the nation... Without this abundance of water over the years, the South East would not have become the most densely populated part of Europe." CPRE Kent's Jim Little writes on the South East's water problems in Kent Life (<http://tinyurl.com/ykndl6>).

Upper Thames Reservoir. The Environment Agency has said it is not convinced there is a need to build a £1bn reservoir in Oxfordshire (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yd7uq7>; Environment Agency Update on the Reservoir: <http://tinyurl.com/ycqajw>). Thames Water was accused of steamrolling its way through a "pantomime" of consultation. Andy Boddington for Oxfordshire CPRE said "Everyone is shouting out that we don't need this reservoir, but Thames Water is roaring back: 'Oh yes you do'" (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/ygrfg9>). The Daily Mail said that critics were "diving in pointing out that while the man-made lake will hold 33billion gallons of water, that is less than half the 70billion gallons Thames loses every year through leaks. They also claim 'Lake Oxford' will swamp a vast area of precious English countryside." Bruce Tremayne for CPRE said: "We do face a growing water shortage in the South-East. But before we disrupt and destroy so much of Oxfordshire's landscape, we must save water rather than waste it." (Daily Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/yjqv7x>).

Water efficiency. Proposals for minimum standards of water efficiency in new homes and new commercial buildings have been issued for consultation by DCLG. Deadline 9 March (<http://tinyurl.com/ydzwso>).

10. Environment and Heritage

Dark skies? CPRE and the Campaign for Dark Skies have joined forces in a campaign to count stars in one part of the night sky this week (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/yl8hy4>; The Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/y9nwsn>). Stargazing residents in Bucks are also being encouraged to count the stars to find out if light pollution is getting worse in the county. "In places like High Wycombe it's pretty much impossible to see the night sky because you get this sort of glow which blocks out the stars", Peter Cleasby from CPRE Bucks said. (Bucks Free Press: <http://tinyurl.com/yx82jm>; complete with "starry-eyed" photo of Cleasby).

Quarries for wildlife. England's quarries and mineral workings could provide wildlife habitat. A report for the RSPB shows transforming such sites could create thousands of hectares of woodland, heath, meadows and reed beds (RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/ykeft9>). The RSPB has purchased Broadwater Warren in Kent, a site earmarked for landfill (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yefxe8>).

Cultural heritage. English Heritage and the Highways Agency have agreed to closer cooperation on preserving cultural heritage (GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/ymempx>). A guide from DCLG will help councils take enforcement action to protect the country's historic buildings: Best Practice Guidance Note on Listed Building Prosecutions (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/tmg1w>. DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/ydekhn>).

Common land. Defra is consulting on rules about common land as part of the implementation of the Commons Act 2006. Changes could include swapping common land if there is an offer of an equivalent area in exchange. Deadline 9 April (<http://tinyurl.com/ygnvgt>).

11. Energy and Climate Change

Wind success. Two major offshore wind farms in the Thames Estuary have been approved. One, the London Array, would be the world's largest of its type with 341 turbines (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/y8jk5f>). Friends of the Earth welcomed the decision (<http://tinyurl.com/yd8obr>). The Ramsgate First group said it was concerned about the effect of the base on residents and visitors to the town (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/y9slg9>). But wind energy productivity varies enormously by location the Renewable Energy Foundation said. The government hopes that three quarters of the 2010 renewables target, and most of the "20% by 2020" target will be from windpower. The REF research shows that "even with best efforts a large wind carpet in the UK would have a low capacity credit." (Press release: <http://tinyurl.com/y7ojkh>. Report: <http://tinyurl.com/wbd8o>).

Floodlighting. A petition calls on the Prime Minister to ban floodlighting of buildings to reduce energy use, carbon dioxide emissions and light pollution (No 10: <http://tinyurl.com/sq5x9>).

Energy review challenged. The government's review is to be scrutinised in the High Court after Greenpeace claimed that it was "legally flawed" (Green Building Press: <http://tinyurl.com/ygrxdv>).

Carbon credits. A personal carbon "credit card" could be used under a carbon rationing scheme that might be in operation in five years, according to a study published by David Miliband. The Tesco loyalty card is apparently the model (The Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yfk3wh>. Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/y4ygs6>).

Emissions. Defra has welcomed "farsighted" EU proposals to cut greenhouse gas emissions, including a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by industrialised countries by 2020 (<http://tinyurl.com/ygdvup>).

12. Rural Matters

Post offices to close. Around 2,500 post offices are to close because of increasing losses and fewer people using them, the DTI has announced (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/y3gjf2>). The government "clearly has no idea what sustainability means in generating what we very conservatively estimate at 30-40 million more road miles a year once the closures take place," CPRE's Tom Oliver said (<http://tinyurl.com/yjzy2r>).

Just Ask. The government and the Country Land and Business Association have launched a *Just Ask* campaign to encourage the public to ask where the food on their plate comes from (CLA: <http://tinyurl.com/yhbzhk>)

"Why Farming Matters." The NFU has launched a campaign to show why farming is becoming more important to 21st century Britain. It argues that that mainstream food production cannot safely be allowed to migrate to other parts of the world, leaving a dwindling number of British farmers and growers to focus on niche markets and diversification (Farming UK: <http://tinyurl.com/yh48fb>).

13. Government in the South East

GOSE has issued its latest issue of GO South East (<http://tinyurl.com/yffu2l>).

14. And finally...

Tranquillity sells. According to The Times, southern Northumberland "stands out nicely on the Campaign to Protect Rural England's tranquillity map", so that's where you should buy a house from which to commute to Newcastle (<http://tinyurl.com/yga9uz>).

15. Abbreviations and Links

DCLG: [Department of Communities and Local Government](#). EiP: [Examination in Public](#). GOSE: [Government Office of the South East](#). SEEDA: [South East England Development Agency](#). SEERA: [South East England Regional Assembly](#). SPA: [Special Protection Area](#). TBHSPA: [Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area](#).

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CPRE Statements to the Examination in Public (EiP) of the South East Plan

Matter 1: Approaches and Levels of Growth

- ◆ [1A: Strategic Issues, vision and objectives](#)
- ◆ [1B: Inter-regional & international issues](#)
- ◆ [1C: Climate change. CPRE Berkshire.](#)
- ◆ 1D: Infrastructure and demand management. No CPRE statement.
- ◆ 1E: Water:
 - [Statement from CPRE Kent](#)
 - [A water resource strategy for the South East](#)
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- ◆ 1F: Social, cultural & health. No CPRE statement.
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Matter 2: Spatial Strategy

- ◆ [2A: Spatial strategy](#)
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Matter 4: Detailed Housing Policies

- ◆ No CPRE statement.

Matter 5: Economic Development

- ◆ 5A: Employment Land Policies. No CPRE statement.
- ◆ 5B: Town Centres. No CPRE statement.

Matter 6: Environment

- ◆ 6A: Biodiversity. No CPRE statement.
- ◆ 6B: Countryside and Coast. No CPRE statement.

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- ◆ 7A&B: Waste and Minerals. No CPRE statement.

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- ◆ 8Bii: Housing and Countryside. Hampshire. No CPRE statement.
- ◆ 8Biii: Infrastructure and Implementation. Hampshire. No CPRE statement.
- ◆ [8Ci: Economy & Environment. Thames Gateway. CPRE Kent](#)
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- ◆ [8Dii: Ashford. CPRE Kent](#)
- ◆ 8Diii: East Kent and Ashford sub region outside Ashford. No CPRE statement.
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Matter 9: Rest of County Areas

- ◆ [9A: Rest of Central Hampshire/ New Forest and Isle of Wight. CPRE Hampshire](#)
- ◆ 9B: Rest of Kent. No CPRE statement.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

- ◆ [TBH 3/1: Statement for First Technical Meeting](#)
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