



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SOUTH EAST

CPRE South East eBulletin

16 May 2007

1. Planning in the South East

Kent: Greenfield battles. CPRE Kent is opposing the Kent International Gateway (KIG), a 264-acre, greenfield road-rail freight interchange near Maidstone. Dr Felicity Simpson, of CPRE Maidstone described KIG as a "horrendous proposal that will despoil a vast tract of rural Kent to the detriment of the whole borough, and without any benefits to the people of Maidstone." (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/yrdw3g>). CPRE Kent is also helping oppose plans to build a concrete-block factory on green belt land in Ightham (Wrotham PC: <http://tinyurl.com/236xkt>).

Sussex: Fawler Stadium. Brighton MP David Lepper is pressing the Government to name the date for its decision on Brighton and Hove Albion's Falmer stadium plans (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/21dn98>). Brighton chairman Dick Knight said "Ruth Kelly cannot afford to let a club which has been at the heart of its community for 106 years to die. It would be a huge blot on English football and would leave a huge hole if that was allowed to happen" (365: <http://tinyurl.com/2r9jjw>). The Argus supports the proposals "the stark fact is that Falmer is now the only realistic option" (<http://tinyurl.com/2ugcyf>).

Kent: Land banking. Sevenoaks District Council said that two years ago a new green belt site on the borders of Chipstead and Dunton Green was being offered for sale by property developers as individual plots. The council has served an 'article 4' direction restricting the activities that can normally be carried out without planning permission such as putting up fences, gates or walls (Kent News: <http://tinyurl.com/3bp4yw>).

Berks: Bramley. Ruth Kelly has said she is minded to approve this development near Basingstoke, which opponents claim is unsustainable (Gazette: <http://tinyurl.com/37nkwn>).

Hants: Eastleigh. Allotment holders have applied for a High Court judicial review into the plans that would see up to 430 homes built over three plots in the town (Daily Echo: <http://tinyurl.com/2kl8jm>).

Bucks: Hardwick. Proposals by Oxfordshire company, Agrivert, for a composting facility are being opposed. Hardwick Village Action Group (HVAG) was formed and they have had an independent report commissioned by transport specialists. (Aylesbury Today: <http://tinyurl.com/39ldgu>)

Surrey: Mole Valley. Gipsies camped on green belt land near Fetcham have won their battle with the council to stay on while the District Council finds alternative space (Surrey Advertiser: <http://tinyurl.com/3yn2cj>).

Sussex: Glyndebourne. CPRE is stepping up its campaign against the wind turbine in the Sussex Downs AONB (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2p8d48>). Roy Haycock, Chairman of CPRE Sussex, said: "CPRE Sussex believes the South Downs are a priceless part of the beauty, tranquillity and heritage of England. It should not be squandered in return for an unreliable and severely limited supply of "green" energy when more efficient alternatives and locations are available." (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/22athw>).

Oxon: Oxford greenfield battles. The NHS, which wishes to sell Warneford Meadow for development, has appealed the decision of city councillors to not even consider the proposal (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/3bzfdx>). CPRE Oxfordshire has responded to the Oxford Core Strategy saying it will lead to significant loss of open space within the city and calling for a green grid for the city (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/22jy7t>; Oxford Mail:

<http://tinyurl.com/3d5c2p>). Oxford colleges stand to make in excess of £1 billion by offering up thousands of acres of rural land, The Oxford Student revealed. Andy Boddington for CPRE claimed that "Oxfordshire's Green Belt is under threat like never before. If Oxford is allowed to sprawl onto the countryside, the character of the countryside will be wrecked." (<http://tinyurl.com/2nnran>).

Oxon: Radley Lakes. RWE npower took out full page advertisements in Oxfordshire's local press to justify tipping fly ash into Thrupp Lake. CPRE responded with its own open letter in the following week's press saying "The fly-ash that you plan to dump in Thrupp Lake is not waste but a useful by-product of burning coal. It can and should be recycled into building materials... CPRE calls on you to guarantee to halt all work at Thrupp Lake until the Town Green case is determined" (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2thlvo>). Ecowarriors and a local protestor fighting to save Radley Lakes have lost their High Court battle to overturn an injunction but the judge eased some conditions of the injunction (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/ywyp7a>).

2. Planning Nationwide

Consultation Bill. A Somerset MP has won parliamentary approval to bring forward legislation designed to improve planning consultation. "The aim of my bill is to give an exact definition of the term 'consultation' and to ensure that the relevant people are consulted." (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/294g76>).

Polytunnels and caravans. A decision by Herefordshire County Council to require all new polytunnel developments to have planning permission, is threatening the competitiveness of the entire horticulture sector, according to the NFU. Growers may also be forced to obtain planning permission retrospectively for some existing developments (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yqsx7e>). In another Herefordshire decision, Ruth Kelly has ruled that permitted development rights do not apply to temporary buildings for strawberry picking because the strawberry season is too long (Shropshire Star: <http://tinyurl.com/2hxvga>).

3. Housing

Affordable housing. A major building programme designed to increase the supply of affordable homes is expected to be a centre-piece of Gordon Brown's agenda (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/357v3b>). Yvette Cooper said that councils should take a lead in ramping up house building numbers (<http://tinyurl.com/2pzs3s>). Gordon Brown is to start a massive council house revamp to give two million kids decent homes by 2010. He also wants 100,000 council houses built in the next two and a half years (Sun: <http://tinyurl.com/2s8w5h>; with cartoon of "Brown the Builder").

New towns. Gordon Brown is planning five new "eco towns" with 100,000 new homes, all powered by locally generated energy (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/2qz8br>; Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/37fj6a>). The Treasury is looking at establishing a new breed of development corporation with the power and money to force the pace of housing provision and Yvette Cooper has set up a taskforce (Building: <http://tinyurl.com/2tjmos>). The BBC looks at what eco-homes involve (<http://tinyurl.com/376fp4>). Keith Mitchell has told the Oxford Mail that there will be no eco towns in Oxfordshire.

Buy-to-leave. The government has launched a probe into the number of homes being bought up and left empty by investors (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/3ymvns>). The Commission for Rural Communities said that one-third of rural houses are bought for cash, which has "increased the pressure on an already over stretched housing market and exacerbates the problems of affordability" (CRC: <http://tinyurl.com/2hov7b>).

Housing signals. The government wishes planning authorities to be more responsive to market signals in planning housing delivery. But its own research shows that there are many problems in the methods of measuring and acting on such signals (DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/33mgqm>).

Housing design. A Housing Corporation report on the Thames Gateway has called for better design of affordable housing to avoid the mistakes of the large scale estates developments of the 60s and 70s (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/22dkqt>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yosaef>).

Eco buildings. Yvette Cooper has hailed two Norwegian affordable eco-home complexes in Redditch as a national blueprint for the future (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/yph9f9>). It costs an extra £21 pounds per square foot, or 12.5%, to build a UK house which meets zero-carbon standards and there are still insufficient

incentives to meet the added cost (Planet Ark: <http://tinyurl.com/2q7mr8>). Cooper is drawing up deadlines for all new commercial buildings to be "zero carbon" (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/3bvttl>).

4. Transport

Weymouth bypass. Ruth Kelly has decided not to call in the application to build the controversial road. CPRE's Tom Oliver said: "This shows a breathtaking disregard for the Government's own stated aim to protect nationally protected landscapes and wildlife sites... One reason advanced for building this road was that it was needed to support the sailing events at the 2012 Olympics, which will take place over a few weeks. So much for a Green Olympics when the 2012 event is used to justify environmental destruction and increased carbon emissions on this scale." (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/3aecxl>. BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/29qo8n>).

Roundabout advertising. CPRE launched a national press release based on campaigning against roundabout advertising in South Oxfordshire. Mike Tyce from CPRE Oxfordshire said: "South Oxfordshire District Council maintained that it could erect signs without the necessary consent and against its own policies. It then had to back down when we presented it with a clear legal opinion that it was wrong, but still hasn't removed the adverts in question. If a Council cannot abide by its planning policies and national laws, how can we trust it to protect the countryside" (CPRE Oxfordshire: <http://tinyurl.com/33bfnl>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2rrkww>).

Clutter. A Bill to reverse the visual "brutalisation" of Britain's rural and urban streetscapes by excessive signage failed in the Commons (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/27gnws>).

Flightpaths. The air traffic control service (NATS) is to hold a 12-week consultation later this year over flightpaths and stacking areas. This will lead to be South East being blighted by noise, The Times said. But NATS claimed the new flightpaths will be more environmentally friendly as planes will emit less CO2 (<http://tinyurl.com/2fvewg>).

5. Water

Water efficiency makes sense. The Environment Agency has published a study on retrofitting water efficiency measures, such as low flush loos, into existing homes in the South East. Consumption is due to grow by 160 million litres a day (ml/d) in the South East. Combining metering with replacing WCs with low or variable flush equivalents will save 77 ml/d, reducing to 32 ml/d if this is done only on a change of occupancy. Saving 77 ml/d is enough for all the new housing proposed in Ashford and the Thames Gateway. The report concludes that the costs of retrofitting compares favourably with "resource development schemes", for example, reservoirs. It also calls for water companies to work closely with Housing Associations as they own 8.5% of South East housing stock. The report excluded from consideration methods such as rainwater harvesting, water auditing and water efficient irrigation of gardens due to lack of information. So the savings from retrofitting are potentially much greater. (Press release: <http://tinyurl.com/38wgzf>; report: <http://tinyurl.com/2rr8gc>).

Climate change and water. One of the surprises to emerge from the Climate Change and Water seminar in April was that Southern Water has a one hour response rate to visible leaks. But the government is worried about the costs of repairing leaks. Defra admitted that its water strategy is out of date but it will be 2008 before a new strategy is in place. And the water industry admitted that it was not investing in biogas and sludge incineration from sewerage because the payback was longer than five years. Notes on the seminar are now available (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/33ar5c>).

Ofwat weak. The Commons Public Accounts Committee has criticised Ofwat for not penalising firms that have wasted water by failing to plug leaks, and recommends that it levies maximum fines of up to 10% of annual turnover on the offenders (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/33e7p8>). Industry body Water UK said the report was one-sided and misleading (<http://tinyurl.com/2vuuuy>).

6. Energy

Biofuels are often called 'green fuels' but they also pose a threat to the world's food supplies, the rainforests and their wildlife, as well as the global climate. Greenpeace is collecting signatures against the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligations Order (Greenpeace: <http://tinyurl.com/2vjb7m>; DTI consultation paper: <http://tinyurl.com/2mljow>; deadline 17 May).

Island of Wight gasification plant. The power plant at Forest Park, near Newport, works by heating composting waste rather than burning it. The resulting heat energy produces steam, which will be used to generate 2.3 mega watts of electricity - enough to power 2,000 homes (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2rkxay>).

7. Environment and Heritage

Rubbish. A slurry of press releases from the Local Government Association and the local elections triggered a landslide of articles on recycling. More than 1,000 other articles on waste and rubbish appeared in the national and local press in period of ten days, the majority sceptical or critical of current policies. "Pay-as-you-throw" schemes (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yqjkse>). Landfill space will run out in nine years (LGA: <http://tinyurl.com/2b28xl>). In a misuse of statistics that brings disrepute to the word rubbish, the LGA claimed that councils which alternate weekly collections of rubbish have a 30% higher recycling rate (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yoa9ma>; LGA: <http://tinyurl.com/ypnq8p>).

HIPs. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has warned that Energy Performance Certificates could threaten old buildings (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yntvpv>).

8. Rural Matters

Shopping the Bullies. Supermarkets are using their power and resources to manipulate the planning system in order to build or expand their stores, a report by Friends of the Earth said (FoE: <http://tinyurl.com/2l6btn>).

Food or fuel? DEFRA secretary David Miliband has said he does not think that food security is the best argument for supporting UK farming. Mr Miliband said the country faced big choices about the best use of land over the next century and there would be a new set of relationships. Farmers would have a contract by which they would receive subsidy in return for environmental goods. Citizens would be extended greater rights of access but given greater responsibility to care for the environment (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/3detlc>).

Rape. Britain is losing its green fields, as the grass that once fattened cattle is replaced by oilseed rape. Joanna Blythman investigates our third largest arable crop (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yujdrz>).

Whose countryside? The middle class have hijacked the English countryside for themselves. Unless the urban majority has a sense of entitlement to the land, they're hardly going to become the eco-consumers we all need. Already a debate about who the countryside is for has begun in key organisations like the National Trust and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Provocative comment from Madeleine Bunting on the anniversary of the Kinder Scout trespass (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/28hvhv>).

Brogdale, Kent. CPRE Kent is opposing moves to reduce and move the national fruit collection from Brogdale, near Faversham (Fruit Forum: <http://tinyurl.com/ypkn8f>).

Wye Community Land Trust. Land used as an agricultural college for 100 years could become a community farm under proposals by former students and local residents in Kent. Tom Oliver said "Wye could set a really strong and influential example". Imperial College recently abandoned plans to build on the site in the face of fierce local opposition (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2xbf3d>; WCLT: <http://tinyurl.com/yphvwz>).

9. Campaign to Protect Rural England

Press littered with Bryson. The new president of CPRE is a nice American gone native and a campaign to challenge litter louts will be his priority (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/3ax6kl>; <http://tinyurl.com/2w4omo>; <http://tinyurl.com/27c6dk>). "You are very lucky to have so much. Iowa is the same size as England, but I would struggle to find six places to show you. Here you have a wealth of beautiful places. You have taken them too much for granted." (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/ynqnv4>). "If Bill Bryson can do something to shame the British into maintaining at least the appearances of rural respectability, then he will have done us a great service" (readers' comment on Bryson at the Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2dgbp9>). "The CPRE is a long-standing champion of the English countryside," Bryson said. "It may be small but it can be ferocious." (Reuters: <http://tinyurl.com/ytjrkc>). "So how come this particular Yank is set to be the new president of the Campaign To Protect Rural England? After all, organisations don't come much more English than the CPRE." (The Sun: <http://tinyurl.com/28mvo5>; Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/yut2o6>).

Waste convenor. The South East Regional Group is seeking a volunteer with an interest in Waste Management policy, to act as Convenor for a new Waste Group. This Group will consist of volunteers from the Region, and will aim to develop regional expertise and to influence public policy on sustainable waste management as a stakeholder. For more information on what the post of Convenor of the SERG Waste Group entails, please contact the Vice-Chairman John Beech (01844 212061; reubke2001@yahoo.co.uk); or Jo Shockley at CPRE National Office (0207 981 2857; josephines@cpre.org.uk).

Hampshire. Christopher Napier, Chairman CPRE Hampshire reflects on the EiP and other planning issues in his foreword to the Branch annual report (<http://tinyurl.com/34jkrj>).

10. Regional Government

Ministers have responded to Parliamentary Select Committee on Communities and Local Government report on the Future of Regional Government which was published on 14 March. They responded by ignoring most of its recommendations:

- ◆ **Sustainability.** "Environmental sustainability is critical and without it economic and social progress would be impossible", the MPs said. DCLG responds that environmental sustainability is a "key element" of economic and social progress and is promising only "guidance on good practice" later in the year.
- ◆ **Scrutiny.** The MPs called for the Regional Assemblies to have scrutiny powers over the Development Agencies but this is rejected.
- ◆ **Parliament.** The MPs want to establish select committees for each region, but DCLG said that this a best considered later.
- ◆ **City regions.** The MPs were enthusiastic about city regions but concerned that adjacent settlements would suffer. DCLG is ebullient about city regions and says that "spill over" will benefit adjacent places. DCLG agrees that any requirement for mayors for city regions will become bogged down in legislation so it is not pursuing the idea in the short term.

11. EiP Diary

End of July: EiP inspectors report recommends any changes they think may be needed for the South East Plan.

21 September: The government publishes any proposed changes it wants to make to the South East Plan.

21 September to 14 December: Government consultation on any proposed changes to the South East Plan.

December to February 2008: Government considers consultation responses

29 February 2008: Final South East Plan is published by Government and becomes a legal document.

12. 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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