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Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SOUTH EAST

CPRE South East eBulletin

31 January 2008

1. South East Plan

Plan delayed. The government response to the Inspectors' recommendations following the Examination in Public into the South East Plan has been delayed. Nothing is expected until February at least. To avoid the May local elections, the consultation on Hazel Blears' reaction will need to be issued early in February or it is likely to be held over until mid-May.

Other Regional Spatial Strategies. The government is continuing to raise the level of housing proposed in draft RSS. In the South West, the EiP Panel report increases the housing allocation to 28,000 new homes per annum, an increase of 40% (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/yo0lrc>). In the West Midlands, the Regional Assembly's proposal for 365,000 homes has been boosted by the government to 420,000 (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2a7qgm>).

2. Planning Legislation & Regulation

Planning Bill. Ministers have confirmed that until National Policy Statements on key national infrastructure have been approved by Parliament, secretaries of state rather than the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) will determine major projects (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/2fqhl2>). A bid by opposition MPs to substitute planning inspectors as the members of the IPC failed in the Commons (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/yryxnv>). Yvette Copper announced details of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which will give councils the power to set charges to pay for infrastructure when a new development takes place. The CIL will operate alongside S106 agreements (CLG: <http://tinyurl.com/2gnmg4>). The Planning Bill in a nutshell (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/283r38>).

Housing Bill. The Commission for Rural Communities has secured an amendment to limit the ability for residents of new shared ownership rural properties to sell on to the open market through 'leasehold enfranchisement'. This should particularly help maintain the stock of affordable rural housing (CRC: <http://tinyurl.com/24v7fg>).

PPS1: Climate Change. The government launched the much heralded revision of PPS1 to a lukewarm reception from environmental groups. Nevertheless, if followed through, the guidance represents a radical rethink of priorities in local planning policy. Councils will be expected to provide for on-site renewable energy and local community energy schemes to help cut carbon emissions from new developments. CPRE gave the new policy only "two cheers" (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2gsdj5>). Planning authorities must:

- ◆ **Ensure local plans have strong carbon targets:** to integrate tackling climate change into all planning policy; to reduce emissions, stabilise climate change and reach zero-carbon targets and opt for designs that will cope with climate change; to locate new developments so they can take full advantage of local renewable and low-carbon energy opportunities; to increase the emphasis on delivery so plans don't sit on shelves.
- ◆ **Help to deliver decentralised renewable and low carbon energy:** to incorporate local renewable and low carbon energy where viable; to apply 'Merton plus' rules across all councils; to encourage

new developments that limit carbon dioxide emissions; to help existing development adopt local renewable or low carbon energy; to set targets for renewable energy in line with national targets, or better where possible; to encourage technological innovation that reduces impact on the climate; to develop decentralised renewable energy generation networks.

- ◆ **Create communities that are resilient to climate change:** to ensure communities are fit for future climates; to provide public and open space in new development; to recognise benefits green spaces provide for people, wildlife and flood storage.

The consultation closes on 8 March 2007 (CLG: <http://tinyurl.com/23b2hg>). See also the EU on climate change below.

PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development. The new planning guidance is designed to help planners get to grips with the longstanding conflict between economic pressures and environmental constraints. But the environment comes a poor second to the economic emphasis of this PPS. The new planning rules will direct councils to provide greater flexibility in their plans to allow businesses to succeed and create jobs. Councils will be expected to identify more sites which can be used flexibly if business needs change. They must:

- ◆ **Plan positively for economic development:** to promote new business and economic growth unless there is good reason to believe costs outweigh the benefit; to develop plans that take account of long term benefits, including for the wider regional and national economy; to address disparities and promote opportunities for regenerating deprived areas and to support business diversification in rural areas; to allow new business and redevelopment without specific permission where appropriate.
- ◆ **Recognise the needs of business and use evidence to plan:** to develop plans that can adapt to emerging sectors or changes to existing businesses; to identify and maintain an attractive, flexible supply of land where sites are multipurpose and ready for business development; to avoid designating single use sites and adapt existing single use sites; to use robust evidence and market information to underpin decisions; to avoid locating hazardous businesses in sensitive areas.
- ◆ **Strike a balance between growth and the environment:** to deliver stability, jobs and growth to be sustainable too; to achieve a proper balance between economic growth, and environmental and social concerns; to encourage new uses for vacant or derelict buildings and identify previously developed land for re-use where appropriate; to consider changing work patterns such as home working or live/work premises; to consider criteria for permitting appropriate tall buildings; to develop car parking policies that encourage use of public transport except for hospitals.

The consultation closes on 17 March 2008 (CLG: <http://tinyurl.com/2eawbe>).

3. South East Campaigns

South Downs National Park. Campaigners fighting to keep an area of land in Seaford within the South Downs National Park turned out at a pre-inquiry meeting (Eastbourne Herald: <http://tinyurl.com/2hdvem>; <http://tinyurl.com/32aon5>). The South Downs Campaign is hoping to convince the planning inspector that an area of land dubbed the western Weald deserves to be included in the park, but the Inspector said that although he will take written representations on the subject he would not decide whether campaigners will be allowed to verbally argue their case until February's inquiry has begun (Petersfield Post: <http://tinyurl.com/yroqe7>). Sussex CPRE is working with Hants CPRE and the South Downs Campaign to prepare for the inquiry which opens on 12 February.

Glyndebourne. Roy Haycock, Chairman of Sussex CPRE, took local MP Nigel Waterson to task over the case for the turbine, Waterson responding that he remains unrepentant in his call for more honesty in the debate about energy and the environment. (Eastbourne Herald: <http://tinyurl.com/25pdg6>; <http://tinyurl.com/2y47c9>). Both the appellant and Council support the application (against the advice of their case officer) and the application has been called-in by the Secretary of State. The GB Consortium is gearing up for the Inquiry which opens on the 26 February, and to liaising with the South Downs Joint Committee and Natural England, all of whom are fighting this proposal (CPRE Sussex).

Radley Lakes. Oxfordshire County Council refused town green status for the Lakes, but energy company RWE npower admitted that it does not need to dump fly ash at present. Nevertheless, an application has

been made to extract the remaining gravel from Thrupp Lake, which local campaigners are opposing (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/2dve25>; BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yp7468>).

Bodleian Repository. Oxford University is to renew its battle to create a £29m book depository in the floodplain after the initial application was rejected following a campaign involving CPRE Oxfordshire (Oxford Times: <http://tinyurl.com/2afkkw>).

Ashford, Kent. Ashford and its surrounding areas could be “sullied by ill-considered, poorly executed development on a massive scale”, according to a damning report from CPRE Kent. At least 31,000 homes and 28,000 jobs are planned for the area by 2031, virtually doubling the size of the town. The report warned that “the same old town planning mistakes of the past risk being repeated”. Hilary Newport for CPRE Kent said the development had the potential to make Ashford “an exemplar” in how to build sustainable 21st century communities but raised fears that the project is losing its way (Kent News: <http://tinyurl.com/2zx4ar>; CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/26d5px>).

KIG & Lydd, Kent. The decision on the Kent International Gateway freight interchange, planned on greenfield, has been delayed while the local council seeks information on traffic movements (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/yqh8r4>). The decision on expansion of Lydd Airfield has also been delayed. CPRE Kent has joined forces with the RSPB and Kent Wildlife Trust in a campaign to highlight the threat of expansion from the airport (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/ys5w7a>).

Uckfield Public Inquiry. A conjoined inquiry into three separate sites on the edge of this East Sussex Town is further complicated by an unfinished non-statutory Local Plan. The weight of the plan as a material consideration forms one of the main challenges Wealden District Council face in opposing development at these sites. CPRE Sussex is focussing its campaign on the Downland Site where extensive ancient woodland and protected landscape is threatened (CPRE Sussex).

Woodland saved. Four Acre woods in Haywards Heath has been saved following a ruling by Hazel Blears. Stuart Meier of CPRE said: "We have fought for an incredibly diverse and rich area of ancient woodland and this is a landmark decision for the country. The decision has effectively overturned an allocation to develop this land in the local plan. This sets a national precedent in protecting ancient woodland and will protect woodland nationwide" (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/2bez4q>).

4. Planning

People power? Hazel Blears is consulting on her proposals that local authorities could be required to respond to petitions on local matters. Deadline 20 March (CLG: <http://tinyurl.com/28qu7q>).

Thames Gateway. The government said it would spend £9 billion on infrastructure at Thames Gateway. This would pay for 27 new or refurbished secondary schools, three new university campuses and eight new hospitals. New transport schemes that will benefit the area include the £16 billion Crossrail project. Dubai Ports World has been given planning permission to build a new deepwater port in the region; the initial phase is due to open in 2010 (Reuters: <http://tinyurl.com/2ewusp>). The HCA is to take charge of the Thames Gateway project (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/2yodwr>).

High Streets. Three quarters of people are opposed to “any changes” in UK planning law that would make it easier to build out-of-town supermarkets, according to a poll carried out by GFK-NOP for the Association of Convenience Stores. The survey found that choice is important for consumers with 77% saying that they want a mix of branded retailer, independents and market stalls in their town centres. Two thirds say they are not being given enough say in the planning decisions that affect their retail community (Talking Retail: <http://tinyurl.com/ywec5j>). Friends of the Earth, the Women's Institute and CPRE have joined forces to try to stop ministers following “the flawed advice” given by the Competition Commission which they claim will sign the death warrant for high streets and independent shops (EDP24: <http://tinyurl.com/yqj2pk>; Talking Retail: <http://tinyurl.com/2dhyfj>).

Green belt threats. Almost 14,000 acres of Green Belt land have been lost to development since Labour came to power. Essex, Kent, Cambridgeshire and the London suburbs, where there is a high demand for housing, have seen the greatest amount of protected countryside disappear. CLG countered that the Green Belt had grown by 64,000 acres since 1997 (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yws8zc>). Planning permission

was refused for green belt housing at Sevenoaks (News Shopper: <http://tinyurl.com/yv9wrf>). Warwick is the latest university to propose expansion into the green belt. Coventry City Council has given permission but the decision next lies with the County Council (icCoventry: <http://tinyurl.com/295q8y>). The owners of Redhill aerodrome in Surrey are trying to turn it into an equestrian centre (icSurrey: <http://tinyurl.com/yt4dpg>). The Inspectors' report from the EiP into the South East Plan recommended an urban extension to Oxford "south of Grenoble Road" into the green belt. Now South Oxfordshire District Council has launched a "Hands off our Green Belt" campaign (<http://handsoff.southoxon.gov.uk/>). The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has reluctantly agreed to a review of its green belt but councillors remain opposed (Maidenhead Advertiser: <http://tinyurl.com/25dnww>). The High Court ruled that a house built in the Mole Valley green belt must be demolished, though its owner is furious that gypsy sites will be allowed in the same green belt (icSurrey: <http://tinyurl.com/2bacgg>). Also in the Surrey green belt, a farmer has been ordered to tear down a castle he had hidden behind an enormous stack of straw for four years (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2zkfn5>).

Hampshire. Politicians and campaigners are opposing recommendations in the South East Plan for 7,500 houses in the Kennet Valley floodplain near Newbury, Hampshire. Both the Environment and Highways Agencies objected to an earlier proposal for the site (Newbury Today: <http://tinyurl.com/yr3ysn>; BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2g34pp>).

Life in the South East. According to the latest indicators, people living in the South East are more satisfied with their lives than the national average. Employment levels in the region are higher than many other regions. But the amount of waste from construction, industry and households waste was the highest in the country, and the region has seen the greatest decline in woodland and farmland bird populations. School children in the region are less likely to walk or cycle to school than in most other regions (Sustainable Development: <http://tinyurl.com/259bd2>).

5. Housing

Yvette Copper leaves housing. Gordon Brown announced that Cooper joins the treasury while Caroline Flint is the new Minister for Planning and Housing (Guardian profile: <http://tinyurl.com/yp4q2p>).

Homes and Communities Agency. Sir Bob Kerslake will be the first Chief Executive of the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Newspapers allege he accepted his new role only after receiving assurances on the delivery plan for Thames Gateway, which is to produce 160,000 new homes to the east of London. (GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/2y49ul>; Observer: <http://tinyurl.com/2eyahy>). Yvette Copper set out the responsibilities for the HCA (GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/29s8kw>).

Isle of Wight. Property consultants Knight Frank are making bullish claims that the Isle of Wight will see a 33% increase in new housing over the next 20 years (CityWire: <http://tinyurl.com/ywvtcq>).

Hampshire, Romsey. Nearly 4,000 new homes, an edge-of-town supermarket, more leisure facilities, and improved rail and bus stations are planned for Romsey, which will look to be an alternative "shopping haven" to lure people away from Southampton, Winchester and Eastleigh (Daily Echo: <http://tinyurl.com/28yxk4>).

Berkshire, Woking. The fate of Woking's green belt could soon be sealed as the hunt for potential building sites across the borough begins. Dubbed the Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment, the scheme will see landowners, agents, developers and the public being quizzed on potential sites in Woking (Woking News: <http://tinyurl.com/27dgja>).

6. Eco Towns

Planning. Yvette Copper has confirmed that the New Town Act may be used to speed up development of eco towns (Hansard: <http://tinyurl.com/yvfkqg>).

Hampshire, Micheldever Station. Winchester Council has called on the government to reject a developer's bid to build a 12,500-home eco-town near the Winchester city. Earlier applications being have been thrown out by the local authority (Architects Journal: <http://tinyurl.com/2d7ehe>). Nearly 200 people attended a meeting organised by conservation group the Dever Society. Edward Dawson for CPRE said "It was a good meeting with positive and purposeful ideas—it was not gloomy at all. It's important to

have a rural barrier between north and south Hampshire otherwise towns would all be mixed in together" (Gazette: <http://tinyurl.com/ywedbm>). Tom Oliver for CPRE said the new town "would overshadow a huge swathe of rural Hampshire. The site has been rejected repeatedly as a possible major new development and has only returned as a figment of corporate opportunism. To decorate this proposal with 'eco-bling' is cynical and undermines the credibility of the Government's eco-towns competition" (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/ywz72n>).

Sussex, Ford. A rural village could be swamped with up to 20,000 new homes via the back door, councillors have warned. Thousands of new homes would be built in an eco-town in Ford, near Arundel, if controversial plans are given the green light. Concerned councillors say the village does not have the road infrastructure to cope with so many new homes. They also argue that residents are being left out of the loop as eco-town schemes are granted permission (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/2a8zef>).

Surrey, Deepcut. The barracks are to be sold as an eco town site (Daily Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/2a86kl>).

Bucks, Winslow. Development of a 5,000-home eco-town north of Winslow could contribute £15m towards the cost of the Oxford to Milton Keynes rail link (Green Building: <http://tinyurl.com/2d8ozz>)

7. Transport

Noise pollution. A series of maps showing environmental noise around 18 major airports in England have been published by Defra. The mapping, carried out during 2006-07 in line with the EU's Environmental Noise Directive, gives details of daytime and night time noise levels at each airport as well as noise levels around each site on an average day in 2006 (Defra maps: <http://tinyurl.com/ypzlyy>).

Heathrow. All four mayoral candidates for London oppose a third runway at Heathrow (Greenpeace. <http://tinyurl.com/2fj285>).

Clutter. Distracting roadside adverts and inappropriate posters on lampposts are to become a thing of the past as South Somerset District Council launches a Do's and Don'ts leaflet about how to advertise using signs. "We have been congratulated by the CPRE for our proactive approach around stopping inappropriate signs, and they list us as one of the best authorities in the country in this field" (Yeovil Express: <http://tinyurl.com/2c2ok7>).

Roads favoured. Good bus and train services, travel plans and small infrastructure projects would be cheaper and better than going ahead with the a major scheme to improve the A418 in Buckinghamshire, according to a study by Friends of the Earth and Buckinghamshire County Council. The study showed that the government's appraisal and funding systems favour road building and make it difficult for local councils to secure money for public transport and demand-management projects (Transport Briefing: <http://tinyurl.com/2cjhrm>).

Rail. The Chairman of the Association of Train Operating Companies has called for new rail lines and electrification of existing lines (Rail News: <http://tinyurl.com/22bhxb>).

8. Energy and Climate Change

EU Climate Change Policy proposals. The government welcomed the proposals which will see:

- ◆ The EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) at the heart of EU climate policy, including establishing an EU-wide central cap on emissions covered by the ETS to 2020
- ◆ A reduction of 16% in UK greenhouse gas emissions from sectors not covered by the ETS by 2020 from 2005 levels
- ◆ For 15% of the energy consumed in the UK to come from renewable sources by 2020
- ◆ For 10% of road transport fuels to come from renewable sources, subject to them being produced in a sustainable way (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/22nrtw>).

The Times said that 20,000 wind turbines will need to be built plus a 15% rise in electricity bills (<http://tinyurl.com/yuy7tf>). The Independent guessed that 12,500 wind turbines would be needed, most offshore (<http://tinyurl.com/29kzt5>). Greenpeace and the WWF said that the proposals did not go far enough (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2ghwe2>). The government announced a feasibility study into the

barrage to establish whether the benefits would outweigh the costs, and what to do with 65,000 wild birds (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yr4vg4>).

CCC appointment. Former business leader Adair Turner has been named as the first Chair of the new Committee on Climate Change. The CCC is intended as an independent voice on the government's progress on mitigating climate change (GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/22toqo>).

Biofuels. Criticism is mounting against the environmental impacts of biofuels (Business Week: <http://tinyurl.com/2hbuvo>). Meanwhile, Natural England is continuing to subsidise energy crops up to fifty miles from a power plant (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yp4e8f>). The government's new chief scientist looks forward to second generation biofuels and renewables to reduce the conflict between energy security and the environment. Prof Robert Watson is also supportive of GMOs (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yozgss>).

Nuclear power. Gordon Brown said that up to 10 nuclear power stations could be built in Britain by 2020. The costs, including waste disposal will fall on private companies, but the government will fund waste disposal in the last resort. Greenpeace said that nuclear power will make little difference to climate change but the Conservatives backed the proposals (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2ue7hd>). The Royal Town Planning Institute said the announcement highlights exactly how not to approach national policy setting and says the government has failed in its duty to properly consult with communities who will be directly affected. It has also failed to demonstrate alternative options and why nuclear is the most effective way forward (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/yuvggj>). For CPRE, Shaun Spiers said that "we are not dogmatically against nuclear energy. But we do believe that the problem of the disposal of nuclear waste should be resolved before we build any more nuclear power stations" (ePolitix: <http://tinyurl.com/27ltcc>). Former Chief Scientist David King claimed responsibility for the government's nuclear policy (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yrtkqc>). Dieter Helm, Professor of Energy Policy at Oxford, who has helped to shape energy policy for the past decade, has said that the Government's nuclear energy policy is fundamentally flawed because it relies on the "fiction" that a new generation of reactors can be built without state support (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yunu6p>).

Nuclear waste. Nuclear chiefs are to give Britons millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to accept the dumping of radioactive waste near their home. The operators of the controversial Sellafield nuclear complex have agreed to pay local people in Cumbria some £75m for expanding the only national dump for low-level nuclear waste. Environmentalists attack the concept for putting political acceptability before safety. Tom Oliver for CPRE said the Government was "running development policy by bribe". Tony Juniper for Friends of the Earth called the deal "another subsidy to the nuclear industry" (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/35bng9>). Defra has published the results of its consultation on disposal of nuclear waste (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/8sqe8>) and the Government is to publish a White Paper on its proposals on storing nuclear waste underground later this year (PA: <http://tinyurl.com/ysehfo>).

Coal. A furious row has erupted over a plan to build Britain's first coal-fired power station for more than 20 years. Friends of the Earth said "It is very disappointing that Medway Council has given its backing to an outdated and dirty coal fired power station. If built, Kingsnorth power station will undermine the Governments commitment to meet European targets for producing twenty percent of energy from renewables by 2020" (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yo9p62>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yocyhc>; Kent News: <http://tinyurl.com/2972lq>). "The decision Gordon Brown makes on whether to proceed with Britain's first new coal power station in two decades will make or break his environmental reputation" (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/35s9ks>).

Wind. Nationally, opposition to wind farms is increasing. <http://www.savenorthdevon.com/> is a good example with links to protest groups countrywide; CLOWD is a north Bedfordshire group typical of many (<http://tinyurl.com/2bdu5e>). The decision to allow local planners a say in the siting of new wind farms has received a cautious welcome from CPRE. In the revision of PPS1 (see above), the government said that local planning authorities should have the right to lay down rules to protect local landscapes and towns (Daelnet: <http://tinyurl.com/26v2yj>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2gsdj5>).

Wirescapes. Overhead power lines are to be removed from the Cuckmere Valley in Sussex (Rye Observer: <http://tinyurl.com/27bjfd>; Eastbourne Today: <http://tinyurl.com/2fqrhc>).

9. Environment and Ecology

Light pollution. The South Downs Joint Committee is calling for a reduction of light pollution in Sussex. The committee is calling for the re-establishment of a "baseline of tranquillity", which they believe is being destroyed by the blanket of lighting across the county (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/29kpbs>).

Incineration. Oxfordshire is the latest county to back incineration, to the fury of green groups (Oxford Times: <http://tinyurl.com/29crju>).

Non-native species. The government has concluded its consultation on the strategy to tackle invasive non-native species and will introduce the strategy in the spring (GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/ypofcm>). Muntjac deer introduced from China are spreading across Britain, threatening woodland plants and wildlife. Their numbers have increased by 20% in two years (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/ypo6mt>).

Set aside. The RSPB warned that farmland birds such as skylarks and stone curlews will come under increasing threat after a Defra survey showed that the amount of arable land left uncultivated in the UK is expected to fall by more than 50% this year (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/22hm3t>; GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/24vuy7>).

Heathland. More of England's heathland needs to be designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) to safeguard endangered animals and plants, according to Natural England (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/28pqqs>; BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/238equ>)

10. Water

Metering. The government has declared a trial in the southwest a success, with metering one of the main ways to increase affordability (GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/2c3kuw>).

Efficiency. Thames Water has introduced a device called 'Leakfrog'. Attached to a water meter overnight, it detects the amount of water escaping from customers pipes. The company claims it could save up to a quarter the 695 million litres of water lost daily (Newbury Today: <http://tinyurl.com/ysqmqca>).

11. Rural Affairs

Rural housing and economy inquiry. Liberal Democrat MP Matthew Taylor is advising the government on the application of land use planning policy to support sustainable rural communities. He has now issued a call for evidence. Deadline Friday 7 March 2008 (CLG: <http://tinyurl.com/2k8rnd>).

Brogdale saved. After opposition from CPRE Kent and others, Defra announced that the National Fruit Collection will remain at Brogdale Farm for the foreseeable future (GNN: <http://tinyurl.com/28rfgv>).

12. Campaign to Protect Rural England

Sussex Director. Stuart Meier has been appointed the first Director of CPRE Sussex Branch. Stuart is a seasoned countryside campaigner and has many years of experience leading conservation efforts in Ashenground and Bolnore Woods in his home town of Haywards Heath, whilst also lending support to campaigns to protect ancient woodland further a field. With a background in law and business management, Stuart will bring leadership and vision to CPRE Sussex during what promises to be a very eventful year (CPRE Sussex).

Bill Bryson, the American writer turned champion of the English countryside, has launched a stinging attack on the Government over its attitude towards the environment. The president of CPRE castigated the "breathtaking disregard" for valuable landscapes (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yquxs8>). But in a reflection of his growing celebrity status, Bryson has himself been attacked for Durham University's much criticised decision to allow housing development on land it once protected. He is Chancellor of the university and a trustee of English Heritage. In the latter role, he has suggested that he is unhappy with the scheme. Durham and Northumberland CPRE is supporting the residents' campaign to save the recreational land (People: <http://tinyurl.com/yszczg>; Journal Live: <http://tinyurl.com/yv83lb>).

CPRE Kent has launched a new look website (<http://cprekent.org.uk/>).

CPRE Oxfordshire has relaunched its Campaign Briefing (<http://tinyurl.com/sgtlz>).

CPRE in 2008. In an interview with ePolitix, Shaun outlined CPRE's priorities for the coming year (<http://tinyurl.com/27ltcc>).

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