

CPRE SE eBulletin: 8 October 2008

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1. Government Reshuffle

National Economic Council. A nineteen strong war cabinet has been created to tackle the economic crisis.

Energy and Climate Change. Ed Miliband is the new Secretary of State of a department charged with establishing what energy the country needs and the most environmentally sound way of getting it. The department will combine the energy responsibilities of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' environment and climate change briefs. The change has been broadly welcomed (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/4koadz>). Miliband will face early decisions on Kingsnorth power station in Kent, and the future of coal and nuclear generation (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/3qf337>).

Communities and Local Government. Hazel Blears remains in post at Communities. Margaret Beckett returns as Minister of State (Housing) replacing Caroline Flint (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/4z9yl4>). Beckett is expected to champion a revival of social housing.

Defra. Hilary Benn remains at the helm of Defra, which has been stripped of its environmental role. Jane Kennedy is Minister for Farming and the Environment, Phil Hunt joins as Minister for Sustainable Development, Climate Change Adaptation and Air Quality, and Huw Irranca-Davies is Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs.

Transport. Geoff Hoon becomes Secretary of State for Transport as Ruth Kelly leaves the cabinet.

Elsewhere. Phil Woolas has become immigration minister and is suggesting a cap on migration numbers (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/3zmb7>). Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform has been stripped of its energy functions; Peter Mandelson is the Secretary of State.

2. Planning

Planning Bill. CPRE welcomed Conservative plans to abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/4nf636>). London's Councils have also voiced opposition to the IPC (<http://tinyurl.com/4etqlr>). Peers will make a second attempt to amend the Government's Planning Bill so that decisions on major infrastructure projects like airports and power stations would explicitly have to take into account their climate change implications (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/47gnta>). The DfT hopes to include provision for more truck stops in its National Policy Statement once the bill is passed (roadtransport.com: <http://tinyurl.com/4p76zt>).

Sub-National Review. DBERR and the DCLG are considering giving regions the option to transfer their planning powers rather than making it compulsory, as the SNR proposes. An announcement is expected this week (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/4xdrqj>). The National Housing Federation, Chartered Institute of Housing and Shelter want regional development agencies to be given a formal duty to meet housing needs (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/3ojxpu>).

South East Plan. Councils and residents around the South East have been reacting to the government's proposals to increase the number of houses in the draft South East Plan. Residents in Forest Row, East Sussex are opposing a relief road and housing (This is Sussex: <http://tinyurl.com/4vgnsj>). Wokingham Borough Council wants its housing quotas halved (Get Wokingham: <http://tinyurl.com/48q6tg>). Buckinghamshire County Council is concerned that the plans will trigger further green belt releases and massively urbanise the county (eGov:

<http://tinyurl.com/3l9cni>; Bucks Free Press: <http://tinyurl.com/4u5qtr>). Reigate and Banstead branded the plans "naive if not illegal" (This is Surrey: <http://tinyurl.com/4xejaa>). Hampshire County Council has objected to the housing targets vowed to fight the removal of green gap policies from the SEP (This is Hampshire: <http://tinyurl.com/3v25zu>; 24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/3slydn>). The South East England Regional Assembly planning committee rejected the government's minimum threshold for housing.

Minor extensions to homes have been freed from planning permission. Planning permission will be needed for non-permeable surfaces of more than five square metres, a move welcomed by the RSPB (<http://tinyurl.com/46wqd8>).

Planning incentives. The Conservatives said they will to liberate Section 106 Agreements to provide benefits to those who welcome new development. "And we'll guarantee that when more homes are built, and more council tax is collected, more of that money stays your community". The party is also setting up a working group to look at rolling Community Land Trusts out in far greater numbers across the country (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/3kecau>). CPRE is calling on the government to stop wind farm developers offering 'goodwill payments' to host communities. It is pressing for changes to the Planning Bill to prevent the practice (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/3ujx2f>).

CPRE damages refused. The High Court has rejected a claim for damages from the White City development in west London by CPRE London branch. CPRE mounted two judicial review challenges, both of which were dismissed by the high court and court of appeal (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/4pe7w7>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/4lcbvm>).

Thanet. CPRE Kent has written a strong letter to the Secretary of State, Hazel Blears, to lobby for a public enquiry into the so-called 'China Gateway' development, saying it will have implications beyond Thanet District and would be contrary to the South East Plan (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/3pckch>).

North West RSS. CPRE welcomed publication of the North West Regional Spatial Strategy saying "It's great to see strong policies on tranquillity and landscape". It expressed disappointed that the Government had taken the cap off the number of houses that can be built in each district over the next 15 years and had removed the policy on housing density (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/46cznq>).

Thames Gateway. The Conservatives said they would freeze all spending on the project until it was certain it was getting "a bang for our buck" (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/454p6d>).

Studentification. The Government has said it may introduce changes to the Use Classes Order to try to give English planning authorities greater control over 'studentification' of towns (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/3hjc7v>).

Bodleian Library. The Planning Inspectorate has dismissed an appeal made by Oxford University against the decision of Oxford City Council to refuse planning permission for a new library depository building. CPRE and others had said it would damage views of the city's skyline (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/4gnema>).

3. Housing

House building is at a record low. Only 66,220 new homes have been built in 2008, with a fall below 25,000 per quarter likely by the year end (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/4ccy4o>).

Affordable housing (1). CPRE and the National Housing Federation said that 700,000 people were now on waiting lists for an affordable home in rural England. The Federation and CPRE launched a charter, *Save Rural England, Build Affordable Homes*. It contains an eight point blueprint, including ensuring that a fair share of future government spending on social housing is committed to delivering affordable rural homes, restricting the right to buy in rural areas of acute housing pressure and ensuring all rural planning authorities set ambitious but achievable affordable housing targets (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/3n8kw3>).

Affordable housing (2). The government is proposing that rural communities with severe housing shortages could be designated as protected areas ensuring affordable housing is retained for local families. Affordable housing providers in the protected areas will be able to retain a share in new shared ownership homes, or have the first option to buy back such properties, to ensure they remain available for the local community. The government also plans to expand Community Land Trusts (CLTs) to allow first-time buyers in rural areas to own a home for as little as £60,000. The proposals are out for consultation until 31 December (CLG: <http://tinyurl.com/49a374>).

4. Eco-towns

Judicial review. Protest group BARD have succeeded in getting a judicial review against the Long Marston eco-town in Warwickshire (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/47vvm6>). CPRE welcomed the decision (<http://tinyurl.com/3vydh8>).

Eco-standards. The criteria for eco-towns should include a requirement that all new housing should meet the Building for Life Gold standard and involve emission reduction measures, said BioRegional and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. This would mean building at densities of between 50 and 100 homes per hectare. The report also defines an eco-town as a place which helps residents to reduce their ecological footprint by two thirds and their carbon dioxide emissions by 80% below 1990 levels. Residents should be monitored on the number of trips made by car and the types of waste produced (CABE: <http://tinyurl.com/4b7bwo>).

Weston Otmoor. Developer Parkridge made its final submission document publicly available. CPRE Oxfordshire notes that it bears little resemblance to earlier plans, and it remains concerned about loss of the green belt and transport issues. Local campaign group, the Weston Front is applying to be an Interested Party to the BARD judicial review (CPRE Oxfordshire: <http://tinyurl.com/5znpjja>).

Ford. Campaigners have handed a 10,000 signature petition into Downing Street (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/4v6pov>).

Shelter. A hydrogenous coalition of planning, environmental and social justice organisations, led by Shelter and the Town and Country Planning Association, have joined forces in support of eco-towns (Shelter: <http://tinyurl.com/482ygg>; TCPA: <http://tinyurl.com/4rto4y>). CPRE Oxfordshire has sent a letter to Shelter challenging the accuracy of its pamphlet which purports to deliver "the facts" about Parkridge's plans for Weston Otmoor (CPRE Oxon: <http://tinyurl.com/5yy53a>).

5. Green Space

Politics. CPRE welcomed the Conservative's support for the green belts (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/4nf636>).

Oxford. Oxford City Council has asked the Boundary Committee for England to redraw its boundary to take in approximately 530 hectares of Oxford's Green Belt currently lying within South Oxfordshire District Council. CPRE Oxfordshire believes the city wants to take control of this land, making it the planning authority, in an attempt to build up to 12,000 on Oxford's Green Belt. Helena Whall, told the Oxford Times "If this becomes part of the city, there's no stopping them. They could erect 12,000 homes comfortably, but we think they could build up to 20,000 homes on the site if they wanted" (<http://tinyurl.com/4afyey>). The leader of South Oxfordshire District Council told Oxford City Council that she will not agree to the plan (<http://tinyurl.com/4mahv5>).

The **New Forest National Park** is consulting on the long-term vision and objectives for the National Park and its Recreation Management Strategy (<http://tinyurl.com/3erp3h>). Plans to ban dog walkers from car parks, restrict horse ownership and introduce road charges are meeting local opposition (Daily Echo: <http://tinyurl.com/3kn263>).

6. Environment

Romney Marsh. A website www.defendourcoast.org.uk has been launched by residents who are concerned whether their coast will survive an uncertain future.

Water. The National Trust is calling for a new approach to managing water from source to sea (NT: <http://tinyurl.com/4yvbsd>).

Noise. Defra is calling for views on how to manage noise from airports. The consultation closes on 28 November (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/48y79s>).

Incineration. West Sussex County Council announced it will build a waste to energy plant, not an incinerator, but may still build an incinerator also (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/4be4rt>).

Reading. Thames Water has been accused of "sheer greed" after pushing ahead with plans to build houses on a wildlife haven in Reading despite local protests (Get Reading: <http://tinyurl.com/3uhgj4>).

7. Energy & Climate Change

Renewables. CPRE Devon has produced a useful summary of the Renewable Energy Obligations and the Climate Change Levy. It concludes that "the Renewables Obligation is both counterproductive and very poor value for money" (<http://tinyurl.com/52gvs7>). The UK's renewable power strategy is "ineffective and very expensive", according to a review by the International Energy Agency (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/4c6dt9>).

Waterways power. British Waterways is planning up to 50 wind turbines alongside canals and small-scale hydroelectric schemes (<http://tinyurl.com/3kmzsa>).

Coal. The Environment Agency has called for a halt to the construction of a new generation of coal-fired power stations unless they are built with carbon capture and storage technology installed (EA: <http://tinyurl.com/4mnb4p>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/4xajw8>). The EA is also consulting on the re-use of ashes from power generation (EA: <http://tinyurl.com/4eq3bv>). Greenpeace protestors were cleared by a jury of causing £30,000 damage to Kingsnorth power station (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/3shqcb>).

Climate change. The government's Climate Change Committee is calling for an 80% cut in emissions by 2050. The RSPB said it is "time to act tough on climate change" (RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/3tndxy>). Veteran energy policy analyst Ian Fells argues that securing the country's supply of electricity is more important than tackling climate change (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/64ku4h>).

8. Transport

Aviation. An incoming Conservative government would cancel plans to expand Heathrow airport and build a third runway (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/4qkn5b>). British Airways and BAA condemned Cameron for the announcement (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/4wbdlo>). Boris Johnson flew in from his holiday to declare "it is ever more urgent that we investigate the possibility of a long-term solution, in the form of a new and more eco-friendly international airport at a site in the Thames estuary" (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/4c72fh>). The High Court upheld the government's block on expansion of Coventry's airport (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/43wl3q>).

Rail. The Conservatives promised a high speed line from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester, to "cut 66,000 flights a year - 44% of the capacity of the planned third runway" - from Heathrow (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/3ucjnz>). Transport analysis Christian Wolmar questioned whether the link would be built (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/4v79e8>).

Bypasses. The government has approved the Weymouth Relief Road. East Sussex County Council will make a decision on the Bexhill-Hastings link road on 8 October.

9. Rural Affairs

Food. Defra has announced the Council of Food Policy Advisers: a team of advisers on food policy from the farm to the fork. It will advise government on food affordability, security of supply and the environmental impact of food production (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/3spcba>).

Coastal Access. Defra has dug its heels in over giving landowners a right of appeal against the new right of public access to the coast, despite criticism of this aspect of the Maritime Bill from the House of Commons Efra Committee and the House of Lords. The NFU has vowed to fight on (NFU: <http://tinyurl.com/3m2e3d>).

Red phone boxes. BT is threatening to remove some of the remaining boxes. Edward Dawson for CPRE said: “The red phone box is part of Britain. BT is riding roughshod over the past for the sake of money” (Sunday Express: <http://tinyurl.com/3fqau5>).

10. CPRE eBulletin

The eBulletin is edited by Andy Boddington on behalf of CPRE SE. The content does not necessarily reflect the views of CPRE. To subscribe to this eBulletin, please use this link:

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