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CPRE SE eBulletin: 6 January 2009

1. Queen's Speech

Three planning related bills were introduced in the Queen's speech and the long awaited Heritage Bill was dropped. CPRE said the Speech "misses key opportunities. In business-proofing its programme, we hope the Government will not lose sight of the fundamental value of the countryside and the environment to people's lives" (tinyurl.com/65k6ms).

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. The bill will implement the government's changes to regional planning proposed in the Sub National Review. Regional economic and spatial strategies will be combined into a new Regional Strategy, which will be developed by the Regional Development Agencies and the Local Authority Leaders' Boards. Local authorities will be given a duty to promote economic development (Planning Portal: tinyurl.com/6gwrq4).

Marine and Coastal Access Bill. The bill will improve the protection of wildlife at sea through Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), establish a new system of marine planning and give walkers access to most of Britain's coast (Grough: tinyurl.com/6ys6ew; Guardian: tinyurl.com/5og36h). The bill will enable the creation of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast plus areas of spreading room, for example beaches, dunes and cliffs, where it is appropriate to do so (Defra: tinyurl.com/5m45ud).

The Business Rate Supplements Bill gives upper tier local authorities powers to raise and retain funds for economic development projects in their area (24dash: tinyurl.com/6q8au7).

The Heritage Protection Bill. A third of heritage reforms are to be put on the back burner after the Heritage Bill was dropped. A revised planning policy statement on heritage to update PPG15 and PPG16 will however go ahead (Planning Portal: tinyurl.com/5njgmq).

2. Planning

Radley Lakes saved. After more than three years of campaigning by residents and CPRE Oxfordshire, the lakes have been saved. Power giant npower will now store ash adjacent to Didcot power station until it can be recycled. The lakes will become a nature reserve with an environmental centre. The battle was won despite planning permission for dumping in the lakes being granted, and campaigners losing a case for town green status. Quiet negotiations involving CPRE Oxfordshire, a local ecological trust and the power company RWE npower led to a successful conclusion (Oxford Mail: tinyurl.com/4pcajp; CPRE Oxon: cpreoxon.org.uk). George Monbiot accused the police National Extremism Tactical Co-ordination Unit (NETCU) of demonising peaceful protesters, including some of those at Radley Lakes, to stay in business (Monbiot: tinyurl.com/87gylb).

London and the Thames Gateway. The London Plan is to be fully reviewed by Boris Johnson (Planning: tinyurl.com/9khpg9). Councils in east London are lobbying the government to reinstate plans for a £450m bridge over the Thames axed by Boris Johnson (Building: tinyurl.com/6bf3by).

Hampton Court. Elmbridge Borough Council approved hotel plans opposite Hampton Court palace in the green belt (Get Surrey: tinyurl.com/6om9fb; Planning: tinyurl.com/a9eckf). Marcus Binney president of SAVE Britain's Heritage said of the decision: "Of all the natural wonders of England none continues to be more systematically abused than the River Thames as it passes through London" (Times: tinyurl.com/3urjzu).

Elsewhere in the South East. The public inquiry into the Dunsfold Park eco-village plans will start in March, with the hearings expected to last four weeks (Get Surrey: tinyurl.com/6wupwj). A joint venture has been created to aid the regeneration of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Cranbrook, Paddock Wood and Southborough (Regen: tinyurl.com/5j3yys).

David Dimbleby attacked plans for 500 new houses near his home at Folkington in East Sussex (Times: tinyurl.com/95xa0x).

RSS. The Surrey Wildlife Trust claimed the South East Plan will result in "significant environmental costs" (Get Surrey: tinyurl.com/777ytd). 35% of housing in Yorkshire and Humber could be built on greenfield land, after the government launched a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, published only last May (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/75jt5f>).

Population. London was the only region of the UK to experience a net population loss, 344,558 people, between 1998 and 2007. The South East of England was the most popular region for people to move to from elsewhere in the UK, leading to a net increase of 550,889 people (24dash: tinyurl.com/9yz4tj).

Abolish SEEDA. The Centre for Cities called for more power for city regions, including taking over housing from the HCA. It also calls for a single RDA for the north and for SEEDA to be streamlined or abolished (tinyurl.com/57666h).

Planning permission. The National Audit Office said that the 13-week target for deciding application had resulted in some "perverse consequences", leading to more applications being rejected (Planning: tinyurl.com/4q23sx). CLG is consulting on the costs of planning appeals. The proposal to allow costs for appeals decided on written submissions may make councillors more wary of allowing the views of pressure groups to influence their decisions (Planning: tinyurl.com/68x5vt; tinyurl.com/6e8y5d). Closing date 20 February 2009 (CLG: tinyurl.com/6228ch).

Flooding. The government is to strengthen responses to flooding and is to set up an early warning centre (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/6aq6vg).

3. Eco-towns

Weston Otmoor. "It's a spectacular own goal" is the verdict of local councillors after the developer's consultation showed 80% of the public opposed the eco-town. Damage to the environment was the major concern (24dash: tinyurl.com/42pw4s). Campaigners will join those from Middle Quinton (Warwickshire) in the judicial review in the High Court on January 22-23. Mr Justice Sullivan said: "The issues raised are of considerable public importance and the court may well be assisted by evidence and submissions in respect of another eco-town." (Oxford Mail: tinyurl.com/5h39ab). The Weston Otmoor campaign has also won a protective costs order (Planning: tinyurl.com/6g3unh). Government Housing Minister Iain Wright said that that only one of the Oxfordshire eco-town sites could go forward to the final shortlist, but he made clear that the government viewed an eco-town as a partial answer to the county's chronic shortage of affordable homes. Referring to the alternative eco-town plan at Bicester, he added: "Reheated old development proposals, which simply add greenwash will not make it through" (Oxford Mail: tinyurl.com/6nklyg). Parish councils are opposing the alternative scheme and are accusing the District Council of secrecy (Oxford Times: tinyurl.com/8rz335).

Planning Policy Statement. The deadline for consultation on the draft planning policy statement (PPS) on eco-towns has been extended to 6 March as a result of the forthcoming judicial review (Planning: tinyurl.com/8gyak9).

Other eco-town news. A county councillor attacked the continuing plans for a Ford eco-town as 'credit crunch craziness' (Shoreham Herald: tinyurl.com/84qao0). A plan for a 12,000 home eco-town at Pennbury near Leicester has been condemned as economically "unsustainable", "ambiguous" and "fundamentally weak" by the Halcrow Group (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/a5f6dv). Eco-towns should exceed government targets on waste and inspire communities to think of it as a resource, the TCPA and Environment Agency said (Planning: tinyurl.com/5z99as).

4. Housing

Taylor affordable housing report response is due this month. In the government's response to the Matthew Taylor report "Living Working Countryside" expected later this month, local authorities are to be ordered to adopt a relaxed approach to the building of new homes in villages and market towns where planning permission has traditionally been refused (Times (tinyurl.com/73jyf3; Telegraph: tinyurl.com/9hqxhb). Reports are that councils will be told to:

- ◆ earmark new sites in every village and hamlet where affordable housing is needed
- ◆ use sweeping powers to overrule normal planning curbs in protected areas
- ◆ provide incentives for farmers to sell land to developers
- ◆ create new communities on the outskirts of market towns, similar to Poundbury.

The Country Land and Business Association said its members were willing to provide land at low cost for affordable housing but were being 'stymied by the planning system' (Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/a2sk6e).

Targets and numbers. The government should rethink its housing targets to take into account a likely fall-off in European migration, a leading housing academic said (Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/68x5vt). Work began on just 135,000 homes in 2008, compared to 203,500 in 2007, the lowest peacetime level of housebuilding since the mid 1920s (Regen: tinyurl.com/892txw). However, more affordable homes were built last year than in any year since 1996-97: 53,730 affordable homes were provided in England in 2007-08, an increase of 21% from 44,570 in 2006-07 (Planning: tinyurl.com/7uvdp6). The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is predicting fewer than 80,000 new homes will be built in 2009 (Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/a7lu39). It is also calling for 5% VAT on repairing empty homes to encourage renovation for the rental market (Planning: tinyurl.com/95c2aq). The house price to earnings ratio has dropped from a peak of 5.84 to 4.56, following house price falls of more than 16% (24dash: tinyurl.com/7vb9pt).

Low quality homes? Commentators are warning that in the rush to build housing in the Thames Gateway, Milton Keynes and elsewhere, we are about to repeat the mistakes of half a century ago, creating settlements of high-density, low-quality homes where people won't want to live. Eco-towns will be also too small to be sustainable. Kate Gordon for CPRE said "With the original new towns, there were existing communities that were decanted and destroyed. I hope we don't make the same mistakes we made 60 years ago, but there is a real danger of that happening" (Observer: tinyurl.com/a8jfa2).

Growth Point funding. Margaret Beckett announced £93 million funding for accelerated housing growth through the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), claiming that the funding of £572 per house will lead to 162,587 more homes than previously planned by 2016 (CLG: tinyurl.com/5uec5d). The South East allocations are:

- ◆ **Berkshire.** Basingstoke £5.7m (over the next two years to help build 9,980 more homes than previously planned by 2016); Reading £5.4m (6,110 homes)
- ◆ **Buckinghamshire.** Milton Keynes £18m (33,728); Aylesbury Vale £9.4m (17,184)
- ◆ **Hampshire.** Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) £17m (40,000)
- ◆ **Kent.** Ashford £15.5m (16,435); Maidstone £5.1m (5,540); Dover: £2.6m (4,725)
- ◆ **Oxfordshire.** Oxford £3.7m (5,740); Didcot £2.3m (6,500)
- ◆ **Surrey.** Reigate & Banstead £4.8m (5,620).
- ◆ **Sussex.** Shoreham £3.2m (11,025 more homes).

Land take. A switch from building apartments to family homes means that there will need to be a 67% increase in the amount of land made available for new housing if the government is to meet its housing target of 240,000 new homes a year, according to Hometrack (Planning: tinyurl.com/5d872c).

Eco homes. DCLG is consulting on a more flexible definition of zero carbon houses, which will allow builders to meet the government's target that all new homes should be zero carbon by 2016. The requirement that all zero carbon homes be supplied by renewable energy generated on site or directly connected to the development will be scrapped. Developers will be required to achieve a minimum level of carbon reduction on the site of the housing development through improved insulation or providing onsite renewable energy, the remaining carbon emissions of the new homes, by choosing measures from a list of "allowable solutions", such as providing energy efficient appliances with the home. The amount developers have to spend on "allowable solutions" will be capped. Closing date for consultation 18 March (DCLG: tinyurl.com/3ecb3k; Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/4r2d4d). A new development of 15 environmentally friendly affordable homes has been honoured at the CPRE Norfolk Awards. The housing costs just 5% above the price of Housing Corporation standard homes and offers significant savings in running costs for tenants (Green Building: tinyurl.com/7rkos6).

5. Green Space and Environment

Warneford Meadow, Oxford. Last year, an inspector recommended town green status for the meadow and a decision will be made by Oxfordshire County Council on 16 February. The NHS, which was given the meadow for the health and well being of patients, is objecting to the recommendation so that it can sell the land to developers (FoWM: tinyurl.com/36z6k3).

South Downs. Campaigners have collected more than 2,600 signatures on a petition to get Lewes included in the National Park (BBC: tinyurl.com/7o28jk).

Coastline. The Environment Agency has decided to allow the Cuckmere Estuary in East Sussex to flood. "Restoring the Cuckmere Estuary to a tidal floodplain will allow the area to adapt to climate change and will bring with it great opportunities and benefits for visitors and wildlife." Local MPs and campaigners oppose the move and are calling for a public inquiry (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/5eqxld; Mid Sussex Times: tinyurl.com/6c7nuy; BBC: tinyurl.com/6a9tk5). A decision by Natural England to allow the fossil-bearing cliffs in Suffolk to continue to erode "for scientific reasons" was unlawful, the High Court ruled, allowing a resident to continue to build sea defence to protect homes (Independent: tinyurl.com/5j47e6). The Agency is to appeal the decision (Regen: tinyurl.com/6l6fon).

"Hands off the Green Belt" is message being pushed by CPRE Surrey as it mounts a challenge to the South East Plan target of 59,160 new homes in Surrey. Andy Smith, Green Belt campaign co-ordinator, said: "Once we start losing slices of the Green Belt to development, we will be unable to safeguard the remaining areas" (Epsom Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/8l4y68>; CPRE Surrey: <http://tinyurl.com/8fxh9v>).

Green belts. The Tories criticised the government for forcing the over-development of university towns and undermining the green belt around them. New student accommodation is not counted as increasing housing supply, even though such dwellings take the pressure off private rented accommodation (24dash: tinyurl.com/5rburb). Tristram Hunt, Neil Sinden (CPRE) and Professor Alan Evans of the University of Reading debated in the Guardian whether fields should be concreted over and whether green belts help to minimise fuel use (tinyurl.com/5lzwkv; tinyurl.com/4x9o3n; tinyurl.com/9jsyat). Tandridge Borough Council rejected plans for a sports stadium in the green belt (This is Surrey: tinyurl.com/5zt33t). A swan sanctuary in Surrey has been given permission to go ahead after twice being turned down for breaching green belt rules (Surrey Herald: tinyurl.com/5hdcuz). A high court

injunction has halted the illegal dumping of waste on green belt land in Maidenhead (Maidenhead Advertiser: tinyurl.com/a5qjoc).

Hedgerows. CPRE Cheshire has launched the Cheshire Hedgerow Network (CHN) in response to the dramatic loss of hedgerows in farmland and country lanes (Chester Chronicle: tinyurl.com/59y4k8).

Woodland. The Forestry Commission and Natural England published a report calling for a five-year action plan to increase the amount of trees and woodlands across England. It says that trees and woods are particularly beneficial in urban and growing communities and we need to plan more effectively for trees, woods and forests to be an integral part of new communities. One of the aims is to create more attractive and inspiring places by enhancing the contribution of Green Infrastructure to local environmental quality (Forestry Commission: tinyurl.com/8wwchr).

Wildlife freefall. Sir Martin Doughty, chairman of Natural England, said that wildlife was already in freefall in many parts of the country. "Large parts of England remain in biodiversity freefall and we are still witnessing alarming declines in species and habitats." Numbers of farmland birds have declined by 70% in less than 40 years while house sparrows have declined by a similar amount in just 30 years and bumble bee populations have halved since the 1950s. He called for an urgent programme of planting with new tree-lined streets in cities and special wildlife areas on farms to help replace lost habitats (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/6ujbl9). But there is hope for wader numbers on Elmley Marshes on Sheppey, Kent (RSPB: tinyurl.com/9lsp4p). Support is growing for 'rewilding', which could see bears, wolves and elk roaming Britain (Times: tinyurl.com/9oheez).

Water. Campaigners opposing plans for a £1 billion Upper Thames Reservoir near Abingdon have claimed the scheme would amount to a "gigantic act of vandalism". Environment Agency chairman Chris Smith told meeting: "We need to be absolutely sure that all other alternative options will be properly looked at before we consider supporting a reservoir of such size" (Oxford Mail: tinyurl.com/5k7nyv).

Recycling and litter. A public opinion poll commissioned by CPRE revealed overwhelming public support for a return of bottle deposit systems (CPRE: tinyurl.com/6wo22e). The press has accused CPRE of encouraging an "army of vigilante villagers to dish out on-the-spot fines for litter" (Daily Mail: tinyurl.com/9379d7; Telegraph: tinyurl.com/73c86s).

6. Energy and Climate Change

Climate change. EU government agreed to the "Triple-20" challenge: cutting CO2 emissions by 20% by 2020, getting at least 20% of energy requirements from renewable sources, and achieving an overall 20% cut in energy use by 2020. Biofuels will comprise 10% of transport fuel by 2020, but the EU has commissioned a study into their impacts (Guardian: tinyurl.com/5s8cz8; tinyurl.com/5ak2hp). Environmentalists welcomed the decision but criticised the targets for biofuels and the concessions given to dirty industries in Germany and eastern Europe (FoE: tinyurl.com/597xwq; Independent: tinyurl.com/6ebok4). Talks in Poznan in preparation for a successor to the Kyoto Treaty met with limited success. Questions over an equitable balance of emissions cuts between richer and poorer nations remaining mostly unresolved (LA Times: tinyurl.com/5z5efm; FoE: tinyurl.com/6267vr). Scotland is to have its own Climate Change Act (Scotsman: tinyurl.com/5ery8w). It is not clear whether emissions from spacecraft will be included in this bill, but Scottish hopes for the UK's first spaceport are rising (BBC: tinyurl.com/a8xh8l). Australia is to cut emissions by 5-15% (Guardian: tinyurl.com/55le7b). The USA looks set to tackle climate change after Barack Obama appointed a leading environmentalist to lead the Energy Department (Independent: tinyurl.com/6o5pjq). Trials are to begin in Sussex of biochar, which aims to trap atmospheric CO2 in the soil as a long acting fertilizer (Independent: tinyurl.com/6o2gjk).

Energy supply. Power blackouts could blight Britain unless the government takes urgently increases capacity to store gas and generate electricity, the House of Commons Business and Enterprise Committee warned (Guardian: tinyurl.com/5ao59q). George Monbiot gave CPRE a rough ride over its opposition to wind farms in an ill-informed video interview (Guardian: tinyurl.com/45uz9t). Shaun Spiers rejected Monbiot's arguments in a responding article (tinyurl.com/spiers-monbiot).

Renewables. Red tape is accused of holding up renewable projects. A government fund set up three years ago to for development of wave and tide power has yet to award funds (Independent: tinyurl.com/64smmt). A row has broken out over the costs of an environmentally friendly alternative to the Severn Barrage (Guardian: tinyurl.com/7bwh76).

Wind. Four 125m-high turbines on Sheppey were set to be approved by Swale Council, despite concerns from residents, Natural England, CPRE and RSPB (This is Kent: tinyurl.com/67sc6s). A marquee is to be set up to house objectors to a plan to build five 120 metre turbines less than 500 metres from homes in East Langdon (This is Kent: tinyurl.com/9zly6p). The RSPB, usually an ardent opponent of wind power developments because of the threat to bird life is planning to build turbines on its bird reserves. Neil Sinden for CPRE said "We would have concerns if they fail to pay due attention to the landscape character, sensitivity and capacity to accommodate large scale, often quite intrusive energy infrastructure" (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/5h8dyb). One of the biggest offshore wind farms in the world will be built eight miles off the North Wales coast. Between 150 and 250 turbines will power up to half a million homes (24dash: tinyurl.com/6mt2uu). Planning, supply problems, skills shortages and National Grid capacity are delaying offshore wind farms, which cost twice as much as their onshore counterparts, a cost that is rising (Climate Change Corp: tinyurl.com/5hy53o). The Advertising Standards Authority has told the British wind industry to halve its advertised figures for the amount of carbon emissions being saved by wind turbines (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/7s89fd).

Coal. RWE npower is increasing its stake in development of carbon capture and storage technology, including at Didcot, Oxfordshire (Reuters: tinyurl.com/5c29ns) but full scale roll out of the technology could be twenty years away (News Post: tinyurl.com/6bm7u3). The technology is likely to cost £1 billion to retrofit to a power station and use up to 40% of the power station's energy output (Guardian: tinyurl.com/5dd459). The government apologised for exaggerating the injuries to police officers to justify its £5.9 million bill for policing the Climate Change Camp at Kingsnorth (Guardian: tinyurl.com/5tytzt; tinyurl.com/5wh3y5).

Nuclear. The 2017 target for a first new UK reactor is "extremely ambitious" and costs are rising, the industry said (Guardian: tinyurl.com/5kakbl). Cumbria has signalled its interest in hosting the radioactive waste repository (Planning Portal: tinyurl.com/58h6nk). RWE npower is planning a nuclear power station at Wyfla, Anglesey (Times: tinyurl.com/8bbp5k; Guardian: tinyurl.com/9c6frr).

7. Transport

Heathrow. Transport Minister Geoff Hoon delayed the decision on a third runway until the end of January, claiming more time was needed to consider consultation responses (Times: tinyurl.com/5pfbvw). A split in the cabinet is evident, with Environment Minister Hilary Benn saying the government must not breach EU noise and air pollution limits at Heathrow (Times: tinyurl.com/6xz7t3; Guardian: tinyurl.com/4y96vc). Hoon claimed that the risk from increased air pollution has been exaggerated (This is London: tinyurl.com/9qmwad).

Gatwick. BAA wants to keep the option of a second runway at Gatwick open and some bidders for the airport want its construction brought forward, but bidders are not keen (Times: tinyurl.com/3fjc86; tinyurl.com/42tcoo; Guardian: tinyurl.com/4cvpxn). Brendon Sewill of the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign said the suggestion was like someone selling their house with the potential to build in the back garden (Argus: tinyurl.com/9zyr54).

Stansted. Plane Stupid occupied part of the airport leading to cancellation of flights and arrests (24dash: [tinyurl.com/6rbl95](https://www.tinyurl.com/6rbl95); [tinyurl.com/6qjfyf](https://www.tinyurl.com/6qjfyf); Guardian profile of Plane Stupid: [tinyurl.com/6nurpw](https://www.tinyurl.com/6nurpw)). The CAA has refused to allow BAA higher charges to reflect the planned spend on a second runway at Stansted. This may push the project back beyond 2015 (Telegraph: [tinyurl.com/5vzozf](https://www.tinyurl.com/5vzozf); Planning: [tinyurl.com/6xtb9o](https://www.tinyurl.com/6xtb9o)).

Kent International Airport. Kent Green Party said plans to expand Manston airport to handle up to six million passengers a year by 2033 are "flights of fancy". CPRE Kent said the airport plan fell far short of the mark: "The master plan is full of aspirations, but is very light on justification" (BBC: [tinyurl.com/789geq](https://www.tinyurl.com/789geq); CPRE Kent: [tinyurl.com/726ejw](https://www.tinyurl.com/726ejw)).

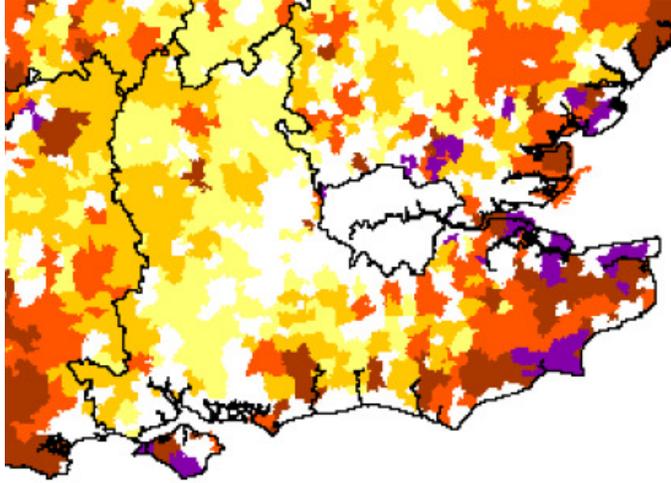
Cogges Link, Oxfordshire. 1,000 people have objected to plans for the £15m Cogges Link Road at Witney, Oxfordshire. The CPRE/First Witney protest group released a computer-enhanced view of the road as it crosses the Windrush floodplain on a five-metre high embankment, as they stepped up their campaign against the road (Oxford Mail & Times: [tinyurl.com/5m4p3k](https://www.tinyurl.com/5m4p3k); [tinyurl.com/6qv475](https://www.tinyurl.com/6qv475)). Latest figures show more than 1,200 objectors and 170 supporters of the scheme, but the District Council continues to back the scheme (Oxford Mail: [tinyurl.com/77ha7x](https://www.tinyurl.com/77ha7x)).

Roads. The government gave the go-ahead for the Weymouth Relief Road, a decision slammed by CPRE Dorset (CPRE: [tinyurl.com/9gdna9](https://www.tinyurl.com/9gdna9)). A legal challenge by the Woodland Trust temporarily halted preparatory work for the road through ancient woodland and protestors took to the trees (BBC: [tinyurl.com/5cvj66](https://www.tinyurl.com/5cvj66); [tinyurl.com/6p2q9b](https://www.tinyurl.com/6p2q9b)). 50 years after the M6 opened as Britain's first motorway, it has been completed (NDS: [tinyurl.com/5ba9c8](https://www.tinyurl.com/5ba9c8)). The RAC Foundation claims a third motorway to the capital alongside the M1 and M40 is desperately needed to avoid gridlock on the north-south commuter and freight route. Gerald Kells for CPRE West Midlands said building more roads would just create more traffic and gridlock (Coventry Telegraph: [tinyurl.com/5ww4w6](https://www.tinyurl.com/5ww4w6)). Residents of Manchester rejected a proposal for a congestion charge (24dash: [tinyurl.com/58rtmk](https://www.tinyurl.com/58rtmk)). Congestion in major urban areas continues to decline, including in London (DfT: [tinyurl.com/5mbjux](https://www.tinyurl.com/5mbjux)). The government has rejected 'super-lorries' of 60 tons as they could lead to an overall increase in CO2 emissions. Instead, it is considering increasing the length of lorries by 2 metres to reduce congestion (NDS: [tinyurl.com/9jfead](https://www.tinyurl.com/9jfead); DfT: [tinyurl.com/9f9uc5](https://www.tinyurl.com/9f9uc5)).

Rail. The government is considering a £4.5bn international rail exchange for Heathrow airport linked to a new high-speed north-south railway to Manchester and Leeds (Guardian: [tinyurl.com/7sakfx](https://www.tinyurl.com/7sakfx)). Anti third runway campaigners described the plan as a "cynical ploy" (Telegraph: [tinyurl.com/7r356w](https://www.tinyurl.com/7r356w)). Design work has been commissioned for the western section of the proposed Varsity Line reinstatement from Cambridge to Oxford (Transport Briefing: [tinyurl.com/77d3wz](https://www.tinyurl.com/77d3wz)). Transport minister Lord Adonis is proposing a £20 billion, 200mph 'bullet train' high-speed rail service to cut journey times from London to Manchester (Times: [tinyurl.com/8zbarm](https://www.tinyurl.com/8zbarm)).

8. Rural Affairs and Food

Rural deprivation. Statistics based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) do not show the full extent of rural deprivation, the Commission on Rural Communities said. While rural areas suffer less deprivation than urban areas, many sparsely populated areas show high levels of deprivation. Only 2.4% of areas in England in the worst 20% of IMD scores are in rural areas, but 17% of households with less than 60% of the median income are located in rural areas (NDS: [tinyurl.com/644q25](https://www.tinyurl.com/644q25)).



The map left shows the IMD for rural areas in the South East. Purple areas are the most deprived, yellow the least. White indicates urban areas. From CRC Figure 10.

Farming and food. Britain's £300m carrot industry could be wiped out under new pesticide regulations to be agreed by the European Union (Guardian: tinyurl.com/a89mwv). Hilary Benn called for international agreement to secure future food supplies, as he announced membership of the Council of Food Policy Advisors. The chair is Suzi Leather, and Sir Don Curry and Fiona Reynolds are among the members (NDS: tinyurl.com/5eb23c). Public areas in cities should be turned into "edible spaces" which are used for growing food (24dash: tinyurl.com/9zeugp). As organic food sales fall, the Soil Association is proposing a drop in organic standards to cut costs (Times: tinyurl.com/8b92v3). Local food cooperatives are growing across the country, including in Lewes and Reading (Guardian: tinyurl.com/57esur).

9. And Finally...

The use of 'sustainable' is judged 'unsustainable'. An annual guide to political and corporate "newspeak" by the Centre for Policy Studies identified "sustainable" as one of the year's most annoying and potentially damaging pieces of jargon. It said that sustainable is "a word whose very looseness and lack of clarity makes it a perfect prefix for any activity where approval is being sought." Activities hailed as "sustainable"—like the building of eco-towns—may be more harmful to the environment than alternatives, CPS said (24dash: tinyurl.com/a3em5a).

Pubs. The traditional pub sign has been voted the best icon of England in a poll commissioned by CPRE (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/5m7mq5). Cheers for 2009!

10. CPRE eBulletin

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