

CPRE SE eBulletin: 2 February 2009

1. Planning Act Implementation

The government produced a road map setting out how the Planning Act will be implemented (CLG: tinyurl.com/d9ufq7). The Infrastructure Planning Commission will be set up in the autumn and start to assess applications after April 2010. There will be a brisk start to development of National Policy Statements with eight of the 11 issued for consultation this year. Aviation will be the last in the series, perhaps not issued for consultation until 2011, well after major decisions on projects such as Heathrow's third runway have been made.

- ◆ **Applications.** The government is to consult on guidance on making applications to the IPC, including on Environmental Impact Assessments, and dealing with the Habitats Directive. Developers will have to conduct "effective consultation prior to an application being made". The government's consultation is expected to start shortly.
- ◆ **Operations.** The government will set out how the IPC will examine and decide on applications, including the prescribed matters the IPC must have regard to when coming to decisions on applications. The consultation will commence in the summer and the regulations will come in force in April 2010.
- ◆ **Transitional Arrangements.** Applications submitted under the existing consent regimes will be decided under those regimes. Once the government has "switched on" the new regime for a particular type of infrastructure, all new applications over the thresholds will be considered by the IPC.
- ◆ **Consultation.** The draft list of statutory consultees for National Policy Statements includes the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, and Commission on Rural Communities (Consultation deadline 20 April: tinyurl.com/cf4dpv).
- ◆ **National Policy Statements.** These will be subject to "thorough and effective public consultation" and debate in parliament. Where a Select Committee recommends a debate on a draft NPS, the government will make available time in both Houses.

NPS	Consultation	Designation
Non-Nuclear Energy: Renewables; Fossil Fuel; Electricity Networks; Oil & Gas Infrastructure	Summer 2009	Early 2010
Nuclear	2009	Spring 2010
Ports	Summer 2009	Early 2010
National Networks: Strategic roads & railways, strategic rail freight interchanges	Autumn 2009	Later in 2010
Waste Water	Late in 2009	
Hazardous Waste	Spring 2010	
Water Supply	Later 2010	
Airports	By 2011	

- ◆ **Community Infrastructure Levy.** Regulations to introduce the CIL have been delayed until the autumn (Planning: tinyurl.com/8d9zz6). Over 50% of authorities are unlikely to implement the levy (Planning: tinyurl.com/d73bjf).

2. Planning

Dibden Bay. The Labour group on Southampton Council wants to resurrect the plan for a container port at Dibden Bay blocked by the Government five years ago, and push it through under the Planning Act (Daily Echo: tinyurl.com/9busqg; Hampshire Chronicle: tinyurl.com/ba7vsd; "Dibden Bay: The new environmental battleground", Independent January 2001: tinyurl.com/bykqnj).

Dunsfold Park. Consultant surgeon Professor Chris Marks, who led the successful campaign to save the Royal Surrey County Hospital, is now heading the Stop Dunsfold Park New Town protest group. The public inquiry into the 2,600 home plan begins on 10 March (Get Surrey: tinyurl.com/79zgnv). CPRE Surrey is objecting to a multi-purpose development at Clandon Park, near Guildford. CPRE's Tim Harrold said "the whole development as proposed will undermine further, rather than enhance the quality of this existing heritage parkland, and harm what remains of its beauty and tranquillity" (Get Surrey: tinyurl.com/c7qnn9).

Kent County Council has launched *Unlocking Kent's Potential*, its vision for regeneration over the next twenty years. It is intended as a building block for the forthcoming Single Regional Strategy (Thanet News: tinyurl.com/c3vces; KCC: tinyurl.com/b5xad7).

Leaders' Boards. Five regional leaders' boards have been set up in readiness for the transfer of regional planning powers from the eight outgoing regional assemblies. The South East board, *South East England Councils*, is expected to be ratified by the South East England Regional Assembly on 1 April (Planning: tinyurl.com/cx4tad).

Regeneration is slowing in the recession, is the unsurprising conclusion of a report for DCLG, which concludes that it must be a long-term game (CLG: tinyurl.com/cryr6r).

Design. CABE has published a paper to "challenge some of the myths which are used to excuse poor design." It aims for every major public housing programme to specify high quality design, and for the majority of local authorities to be committed to using Building for Life to assess quality (CABE: tinyurl.com/byeouk).

Quarrying. Plans to open a quarry in the Isle of Purbeck which was granted permission 58 years ago, is being opposed by CPRE Dorset (Planning: tinyurl.com/9cyxe4). Long standing permission for quarries near historic remains on Stanton Moor in the Peak District National Park has been formally rescinded (Planning Portal: tinyurl.com/bg3orj).

Potential of England's Rural Economy. The government published its response to October's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee report on the rural economy (Parliament: tinyurl.com/c23v4g). It brushed off the majority of the committee's recommendations and denied that the rural economy was being marginalized within government. It said it will shortly publish a response to the Rural Advocate's June 2008 report on the rural economy and the Taylor review of affordable rural housing. The government rejected a call to carry out a review into the role of National Park Authorities in deciding planning applications. "To lay a greater emphasis on the economic development of National Parks would threaten the very qualities of natural beauty and opportunities for sustainable recreation which attract people to them - and which attract businesses to relocate in or near them".

Planning debate. Relaxing planning laws will help prevent villages becoming commuter homes, argues Mole Architecture's Meredith Bowles, while the CPRE's Kate Gordon counters that it will divert building from towns and cities (BD: tinyurl.com/bdy425).

3. Eco-towns

Legal challenge rebuffed. Mr Justice Walker, sitting at the High Court in London, rejected a claim by campaigners that the government had been "consulting on a programme that the Government had already decided." Bard, fighting the proposed eco-town at Long Marston, Warwickshire, led the action and was joined by the Weston Front, fighting Weston Otmoor, and CASCET, opposing Pennbury in Leicestershire. The judge stressed that the project was "at a relatively early stage" and there would be future opportunities for consultation. He ruled that the Government had not followed unlawful procedures or attempted to "outflank" the planning system. He also rejected accusations that it had proceeded with "a closed mind". Margaret Beckett welcomed the decision but the Local Government Association said "the approach the Government is adopting is deeply flawed". Helena Whall for CPRE Oxfordshire said: "We are disappointed by the judge's ruling, [we] remain convinced that the whole approach by the government to eco-towns has been misconceived and badly managed. We

continue to oppose the Weston Otmoor proposal which has nothing to recommend it." (Planning Portal: tinyurl.com/bx7w8a; Independent: tinyurl.com/brtpua; Leicester Mercury: tinyurl.com/csw2c2; CPRE Oxfordshire: tinyurl.com/cu5l6q). William Sheate, a reader in environmental assessment at Imperial College London, described the eco-town sustainability appraisals as "exceptionally poor" (Planning: tinyurl.com/dc9z79).

Weston Otmoor. The proposed eco-town will have a damaging impact in Kidlington and Bicester, a report commissioned by the government and local councils found, with new leisure facilities and job opportunities planned for Bicester at risk (Oxford Times: tinyurl.com/bppca5). Cherwell District Council has threatened a legal challenge saying the government's site selection and sustainability appraisal were fundamentally flawed (CPRE Oxfordshire: tinyurl.com/5znpjja).

Whitehill and Bordon. Designer Wayne Hemingway, who is backing Whitehill and Bordon's bid for eco town status, cycled around the town and declared it had "even greater potential than he had imagined" (Petersfield Post: tinyurl.com/ambf37).

Ford. Shadow housing minister Grant Shapps backed residents in their fight against the eco-town: "It's no good sitting in a cosy office in Whitehall thinking you know best where 5,000 homes should be built... We would scrap all the top down, almost Stalinist, planning policies of this government" (Bognor Regis Observer: tinyurl.com/cqnv44). A county councillor attacked the plans for a Ford eco-town as "credit crunch craziness" (Shoreham Herald: tinyurl.com/84qaoo).

Eco controversy. Margaret Beckett said that Rackheath, near Norwich, is close to meeting the government's environmental criteria, but would not say when exactly any decision might be made. She said: "I think it's quite fascinating and strange that the eco-towns idea is so controversial . . . I can't help slightly wondering, to be honest, whether people are just resisting the idea of new homes being built" (Evening News: tinyurl.com/czh65u). Robert Shaw of the Sustainable Development Group and Kate Gordon of CPRE debated the merits and demerits of eco-towns (FindaProperty.com: tinyurl.com/c59ffc). Officials said that only five eco-town proposals might make the grade (Independent: tinyurl.com/8a5w3e).

4. Housing

Affordable housing. The number of households on local authority housing waiting lists has hit 1.77 million, up 100,000 on last year (24dash: tinyurl.com/bqcvaa). Margaret Beckett announced a consultation on allowing councils to keep the rental income from homes they either buy, build, or bring back into use, to invest in new housing (Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/dndbhn; NDS: tinyurl.com/chg96s). Gordon Brown has given his backing to a new council house building programme as part of his plans to build the UK out of recession (Regen: tinyurl.com/cbpks4; the speech in full—Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/bygj3z). The government has spent £18 million buying 379 market houses for affordable homes; none are in the South East (CLG: tinyurl.com/7fhjf7). Boris Johnson's plan to drop the capital's 50% affordable housing target was criticised by London Assembly's planning committee (Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/ae42zk). The Commission for Rural Communities brought together top executives from across the housing, economic and finance sectors, including CPRE's Shaun Spiers, to debate the rural housing crisis (24dash: tinyurl.com/ah4bus). The *South East Housing Coalition*, a partnership between the Chartered Institute of Housing South East, Shelter and the National Housing Federation, has been created to give a stronger voice for affordable housing (Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/c96r4a). The Rural Housing Trust is to stop building homes and will continue as a pressure group (Inside Housing: tinyurl.com/bzk8wb).

Carbon retrofit. Gordon Brown launched a £10 million competition to develop technologies to improve the energy efficiency of the country's existing homes. The UK's housing stock is among the least efficient in the developed world and accounts for 27% of the country's carbon emissions (Energy Efficiency: tinyurl.com/csbe3x).

Zero carbon houses. Only 18 properties have qualified for the stamp duty exemption on zero carbon homes (24dash: [tinyurl.com/b6mmnf](https://www.tinyurl.com/b6mmnf)). "Zero carbon homes will only be lower carbon homes" if the consultation announced by Housing Minister Margaret Beckett goes unchallenged (Green Building: [tinyurl.com/dfszyt](https://www.tinyurl.com/dfszyt)). The UK Green Building Council has urged ministers to drop plans to let developers meet zero carbon targets by raising the energy efficiency of nearby homes (Planning: [tinyurl.com/bbsht4](https://www.tinyurl.com/bbsht4)).

5. Green Space and Environment

Thames Basin Heaths. Wildlife experts in Hampshire have raised serious concerns about plans to allow 900 houses to be built close to the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area in Hart. A country park is planned to alleviate recreational pressure on the SPA (Gazette: [tinyurl.com/b8sub53](https://www.tinyurl.com/b8sub53)).

South Downs National Park. A 3,000-signature petition was presented to Hilary Benn in a bid to include Lewes in the boundaries of the national park (Planning: [tinyurl.com/b6nfsh](https://www.tinyurl.com/b6nfsh)).

CPRE Hampshire is among those campaigning against a 2,000 greenfield development at Barton Farm on the edge of Winchester (Hampshire Chronicle: [tinyurl.com/ctacdo](https://www.tinyurl.com/ctacdo); This is Hampshire: [tinyurl.com/dlyyze](https://www.tinyurl.com/dlyyze)).

Surrey Green Belt. CPRE Surrey has urged the public to defend the county's green belt against Government plans to build new houses. Thousands of "Hands off the Green Belt" leaflets, posters and car stickers have been distributed across county and more than 1,600 Surrey residents have taken part in the CPRE campaign by sending in "My right to be heard" postcards to the Government Office for the South East (Surrey Comet: [tinyurl.com/d747y4](https://www.tinyurl.com/d747y4)).

Kent. CPRE Kent is stepping up its campaign against the Kent International Gateway as Maidstone Borough Council launches a new consultation on plans which will consume 112 hectares of green land in a Special Landscape Area (CPRE Kent: [tinyurl.com/dmlaao](https://www.tinyurl.com/dmlaao)). A car park at Lullingstone is set to go ahead on green belt land after the county council awarded itself planning permission in the face of fierce opposition (This is Kent: [tinyurl.com/cm77so](https://www.tinyurl.com/cm77so)). The local development framework for Sevenoaks aims to protect the green belt in the face of 3,300 new homes (This is Kent: [tinyurl.com/arla5r](https://www.tinyurl.com/arla5r)).

Green belts. The Core Strategy for Harrogate has been approved. It will keep its green belt intact (Planning: [tinyurl.com/bgp538](https://www.tinyurl.com/bgp538)). An unauthorised gypsy encampment in the green belt is illegal, the court of appeal ruled (Times: [tinyurl.com/djyd2k](https://www.tinyurl.com/djyd2k)).

Parks. Parts of London parks will be turned over to meadows in a bid to increase populations of the house sparrow (24dash: [tinyurl.com/c3mh3b](https://www.tinyurl.com/c3mh3b)). Landscape architect Martha Schwartz claimed the British obsession with gardening is damaging to public parks and green spaces (Horticultural Week: [tinyurl.com/bw4f24](https://www.tinyurl.com/bw4f24)).

Bees and bugs. The government announced an additional £4.3 million funding for bee protection and research (NDS: [tinyurl.com/b9cvbe](https://www.tinyurl.com/b9cvbe)). Co-op own-brand suppliers will be banned from using eight pesticides implicated in Colony Collapse Disorder (Guardian: [tinyurl.com/aab67o](https://www.tinyurl.com/aab67o)). Wildlife charity Buglife lost its legal challenge to block a development at an environmentally sensitive site in West Thurrock, Essex. It is rated as one of the three most important sites for endangered wildlife in the country with 17 protected species (Planning: [tinyurl.com/d6bjjw](https://www.tinyurl.com/d6bjjw)).

Ponds. Pinkhill near Oxford it is to become a model for an ambitious plan to double the number of ponds in England and Wales from 500,000 to 1 million. The Million Ponds Project will be launched later this month (Guardian: [tinyurl.com/bxt8pr](https://www.tinyurl.com/bxt8pr); Pond Conservation: [tinyurl.com/b742ko](https://www.tinyurl.com/b742ko)).

Coast. Natural England is to appeal a decision that its policy of letting Suffolk cliffs erode to expose fossils is unlawful. Fourteen homes will be lost if the cliffs erode (BBC: [tinyurl.com/azkacu](https://www.tinyurl.com/azkacu); Natural England: [tinyurl.com/bm5xp5](https://www.tinyurl.com/bm5xp5)).

Recycling. Recycling policy came under attack for damaging the environment as it emerged that China now takes more than half of the UK's exports of recovered paper and more than 80% of recovered plastics. Experts rejected a call to switch to incineration (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/bdmoo6; Times: tinyurl.com/ab4272). No councils have applied to trial the government's pay-as-you-throw waste scheme (Guardian: tinyurl.com/bk17k9). Councils will be fined millions of pounds if they miss mandatory EU targets to halve the dumping of waste in landfill sites, the National Audit Office warned (Guardian: tinyurl.com/bpocgc). Friends of the Earth said that incinerators are not needed to reduce landfill (FoE: tinyurl.com/8gzf87).

Litter. Plans under discussion will see the owner of a car fined if litter is thrown from their car, even if they are not driving (Telegraph: tinyurl.com/9onhxy). "Littering in Britain clearly isn't going to be eradicated by protest alone. It needs to be eradicated by education" (Michael Deacon in the Telegraph: tinyurl.com/8jogiz).

Pollution. Greater London and Brighton/Worthing/Littlehampton are among the areas where PM10 levels breach EU limits. The government is applying for more time to meet the limits (NDS: tinyurl.com/dk9ba5).

6. Energy and Climate Change

Global warming. Floods, limited water supply, the erosion of coastal areas, irreparable damage to wildlife and summer overheating lie in wait for Kent if climate change is ignored. So warned CPRE Kent in a report *Tomorrow's Kent* (Kent Online: tinyurl.com/82nwv8; CPRE Kent: tinyurl.com/tomorrowskent). More than 200 people attended CPRE Kent's alternative energy conference in Tunbridge Wells (This is Kent: tinyurl.com/bfbobs; CPRE Kent: tinyurl.com/bn4xxu). Scientists have concluded that global warming cannot be reversed for 1,000 years (24dash: tinyurl.com/cfenr9).

Green measures. Energy efficiency measures could more than halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared with 1990 levels (Energy Efficiency: tinyurl.com/ddgy5k). Half of voters are ready to accept a steep rise in airfares to reduce the environmental damage caused by flying, the annual British social attitudes survey revealed (Guardian: tinyurl.com/akauwu). More than half the government's £2.3 billion bailout of the car industry will go on lower carbon initiatives (Energy Efficiency: tinyurl.com/cscb5w). The Local Government Association unveiled plans for a 'green new deal' to create 150,000 jobs in a low carbon economy (LGA: tinyurl.com/atkfbf). Nailsworth in Gloucestershire will cut its carbon emissions by switching off up to half its streetlights between midnight and 5.30am (24dash: tinyurl.com/ddkozc).

Conservatives. The Tories proposed developing an "electricity internet", with a smart grid distributing micro-generated power and smart meters for reducing consumption. Energy firms will automatically turn off non-essential appliances to cut peak loads. Every home will be entitled to fit up to £6,500 worth of "green loan" energy efficiency improvements, repaid through fuel bills over a 25-year period. Feed-in tariffs will incentivise local electricity generation and there will be a national recharging network for electric cars. The party also calls for a "more ambitious" Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation and a network of "large scale marine energy parks", funded by the as-yet untouched £50 million Marine Renewables Deployment Fund. The party gives backing to both onshore and offshore wind (Tories: tinyurl.com/7hbsav; New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/9mbaqq). George Monbiot complained, "The Conservatives favour expensive and grossly inefficient systems like rooftop wind turbines and solar panels because its members hate onshore wind farms, which are much cheaper and more efficient" (Guardian: tinyurl.com/9ly9t3).

Monbiot at war. George Monbiot has completed his series of "aggressive", "bare knuckle" and "fierce" interviews with shakers and movers from the world of climate change (Guardian: tinyurl.com/6a7yy6).

Obama. Nasa scientist and leading climate expert Jim Hansen claimed Barack Obama has only four years save the world from devastating climate change (Guardian: tinyurl.com/9z6u63), but Hansen refused to back Heathrow runway protestors (Guardian: tinyurl.com/bz4qva). Obama announced an \$819 billion economic recovery plan, including support for renewables and funds to improve the energy efficiency of government buildings. He directed the Department of Transport to tighten up fuel efficiency standards and told the US Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider California's request to set its own, lower greenhouse gas emission limits for vehicles (Energy Efficiency: tinyurl.com/an8ahw).

Severn Estuary. Ministers announced a shortlist of five schemes to generate electricity from the tidal Severn. Three are barrages and two are lagoons. The governments also made £500,000 available to research the alternative tidal reef and fence schemes favoured by conservationists. The winning scheme is likely to be announced next year and the scene is set for a major confrontation between the ecological and carbon wings of the environmental movement (Independent: tinyurl.com/cobexr; DECC consultation: tinyurl.com/b3up7o). Natural England urged the government not to commit to tidal power without a full understanding of the environmental impacts (Natural England: tinyurl.com/dadmfr). The Green Party, RSPB and Friends of the Earth criticised the government for backing schemes they claim will destroy the natural habitat of thousands of birds, but the Sustainable Development Commission welcomed the shortlist (Planning Portal: tinyurl.com/chfzaz; New Civil Engineer: tinyurl.com/bru5cf; RSPB: tinyurl.com/cbwsb6; FoE: tinyurl.com/bcf3no).

Biofuels. 38% of biodiesel used in UK transport fuel is subsidised fuel from the United States (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/aj4t7v). Only 20% of biofuel supplied in the UK reaches a recognised environmental standard and a target for 30% of biofuels to meet environmental standards this year is unlikely to be met (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/a6zcsu). The government has cut the target for biofuels in transport fuel from April 2009 to 3.25% (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/aaey2v). The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council has launched a Sustainable Bioenergy Centre to research biofuels from willow, miscanthus and straw (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/azymuj; 24dash: tinyurl.com/buggcf). People power, well their sewerage anyway, will be used to fuel buses in Oslo (Guardian: tinyurl.com/awwutv). If sewerage is not to your liking, try instead creating biofuel using the gribble, a relative of the woodlouse (Guardian: tinyurl.com/aj83za).

Wind. Newspapers and blogs around the world buzzed with the theory that a wind turbine in Lincolnshire had been hit by a UFO (24dash: tinyurl.com/8foz6y; New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/a3tkph). Domestic wind turbines perform on average at 5-10% the level claimed by manufacturers (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/7ksmyq). A report to the government has confirmed that 25GW of extra offshore wind capacity from 5,000 to 7,000 turbines is possible. It recommends a buffer zone around the coast to protect the marine environment (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/d7mj34; DECC: tinyurl.com/df74zb). There are doubts about the economic viability of the London Array, which could generate energy for 750,000 homes (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/bjmrg5).

Renewable funds. The European Commission proposed a £460m package to support offshore wind energy and carbon capture and storage (New Energy Focus: tinyurl.com/bojo7f). Four British power stations, including Kingsnorth in Kent, could share €250m under the CCS scheme. €150m will be set aside to develop an offshore wind grid in the North Sea to link Britain, Holland, Germany, Ireland and Denmark (Guardian: tinyurl.com/cpdfy2).

Coal. The government gave UK Coal permission for an open cast mine, overriding widespread opposition including from CPRE (Journal Live: tinyurl.com/8fgjwe). The UK government is lobbying to water down proposed EU emission limits on power plants, which may pose a serious threat to the construction of the Kingsnorth power station in Kent (Guardian: tinyurl.com/7228y4; tinyurl.com/bqhejy). The government said it will be making a policy announcement on CCS in the next few weeks (Planning: tinyurl.com/b85soo).

Nuclear. German power giant RWE and its French rival E.ON are teaming up to build new nuclear capacity in Britain (Reuters: [tinyurl.com/76qthj](https://www.tinyurl.com/76qthj)). French power company EDF completed its takeover of British Energy (New Energy Focus: [tinyurl.com/7k4gm3](https://www.tinyurl.com/7k4gm3)). Ministers have given the nuclear industry two months to nominate sites for the "first wave" of new nuclear power stations in the UK. EDF will put forward Dungeness in Kent (New Energy Focus: [tinyurl.com/attshj](https://www.tinyurl.com/attshj)). The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has launched a consultation website ([tinyurl.com/cxg3mf](https://www.tinyurl.com/cxg3mf)). The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority has said it will put four sites into the ring (Energy Efficiency: [tinyurl.com/dyclot](https://www.tinyurl.com/dyclot)).

7. Heathrow

Third runway. Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon announced the go-ahead for the controversial third runway at Heathrow. He promised to limit the initial extra capacity to around half of the original proposal and that only the "greenest" planes could fly from the new runway. Flights will increase from 480,000 to 605,000 a year. A new target to limit aviation emissions in the UK to below 2005 levels by 2050 was also offered. Hoon also said he saw a "strong case" for a new high speed rail hub at Heathrow and has created a new company to explore a high speed line between London and Scotland (24dash: [tinyurl.com/dk6ans](https://www.tinyurl.com/dk6ans); Independent: [tinyurl.com/6tq443](https://www.tinyurl.com/6tq443); NDS: [tinyurl.com/cn62wp](https://www.tinyurl.com/cn62wp)). 700 homes will be demolished for the runway, 70 of them social housing (Inside Housing: [tinyurl.com/9vh492](https://www.tinyurl.com/9vh492)).

Consultation ignored. 70,000 people responded to the consultation. They were not asked whether they were in favour of an expansion programme, but 25,337 respondents said that they opposed expansion and only 8,128 supported it (Independent: [tinyurl.com/8tp7x3](https://www.tinyurl.com/8tp7x3)).

Reaction. CPRE argued that the decision makes a mockery the Planning Act 2008 ([tinyurl.com/bs3v8j](https://www.tinyurl.com/bs3v8j)). Edward Dawson, director of CPRE SE commented: "CPRE feels that the regional aspects of Heathrow Airport have not been fully taken into account. Expansion of Heathrow is likely to be detrimental to the green environment of the South East. Now that the Government has made a decision in principle, the implications of this development can be assessed in detail. We remain opposed to this development for several reasons, mainly relating to its location and to a whole range of environmental and other impacts." The South East England Regional Assembly said the Committee on Climate Change must establish the climate impact of an expanded Heathrow airport now and not after a third runway is built (Planning: [tinyurl.com/asq5p6](https://www.tinyurl.com/asq5p6)). The Campaign for Better Transport said that the only way to reduce emissions to below 2005 levels by 2050 would be to stop expansion at all other airports (Planning: [tinyurl.com/agjrza](https://www.tinyurl.com/agjrza)). RSPB reacted with dismay saying the decision will shatter hopes of cutting the UK's carbon emissions (RSPB: [tinyurl.com/bsjl4h](https://www.tinyurl.com/bsjl4h)).

Comment. "The irony is that nobody now believes that a third runway will go ahead... This is no way to run a country" (John McDonnell MP in the Guardian: [tinyurl.com/aqzh4p](https://www.tinyurl.com/aqzh4p)). "Transport decisions are driven, more than almost any others, by a Civil Service in love with aircraft" (Camilla Cavendish in the Times: [tinyurl.com/9l6vra](https://www.tinyurl.com/9l6vra)).

Alternative proposals. Boris Johnson again called for a new airport in the Thames estuary, and suggested increasing capacity at airports like Stansted, Gatwick, Luton, and Manston in Kent (BBC: [tinyurl.com/8ka5dg](https://www.tinyurl.com/8ka5dg); Guardian: [tinyurl.com/dyb98e](https://www.tinyurl.com/dyb98e)). London assembly member Murad Qureshi said the Thames airport would affect wildlife, cause disturbance to the fishery and shipping business, create a "disastrous" impact on tidal flows, and increase flood risks on the Kent and Essex coastlines (Guardian: [tinyurl.com/72tdot](https://www.tinyurl.com/72tdot)). Shadow transport secretary Theresa Villiers said the Tories did not "rule out airport expansion in the south-east". Luton, City Airport or Southend could be allowed increased numbers of flights or an extra runway, but she ruled out expansion at Gatwick and Stansted, and a new airport in the Thames Estuary (Guardian: [tinyurl.com/aaapnm](https://www.tinyurl.com/aaapnm); Times: [tinyurl.com/aooq88](https://www.tinyurl.com/aooq88)). The Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign promised to mount a ferocious campaign against any plans for a second runway at Gatwick (Times: [tinyurl.com/ajdpxy](https://www.tinyurl.com/ajdpxy)).

Protest. A group called The Climate Suffragettes smashed windows at the offices of the Department for Transport in Westminster (Independent: tinyurl.com/8tp7x3). Greenpeace is selling plots of land on the extension site to celebrities and protestors (tinyurl.com/997bem). The Sunday Times reviews the growing protest movement (tinyurl.com/743sl9).

8. Transport

Rail. Geoffrey Hoon announced that a new company, High Speed 2, will develop a proposal for an entirely new line between London and Birmingham, which could link to Heathrow and Crossrail. It will then consider continuing the line to Scotland (Planning: tinyurl.com/dyvhas). 2M, a coalition of 22 local authorities close to the airport, said the airport could become a rail hub serving large areas of London and south east England, but it rejected government plans for a new high-speed link (Guardian: tinyurl.com/dg9dx5).

Regional transport statistics will now be updated online throughout the year. Traffic on South East roads grew by 11.5% from 1997 to 2007, less than the national average of 12.4%. Aircraft movements grew from 254,000 to 309,100 (DfT: tinyurl.com/dcb7k5).

Cogges Link Road. CPRE Oxfordshire and the Witney First protest group have launched a town green application to block the £15m Cogges Link Road development. The move comes just weeks before the County Council was expected to approve the controversial road (Witney Gazette: tinyurl.com/7fc8nn; tinyurl.com/7cgebs. CPRE Oxfordshire: tinyurl.com/6rvelx).

Motorways. Plans to widen 220 miles of Britain's motorways have been abandoned in a £5bn cost-cutting exercise that will mean lower speed limits and increased use of the hard shoulder, including on the M25, M1, M3 and M4 (GOSE: tinyurl.com/cazru3). Trials had shown fuel consumption fell by 4% and vehicle emissions dropped by up to 10% for hard shoulder running. The Campaign for Better Transport welcomed the switch: "The government has finally accepted that tarmacking over the countryside to build ever-wider roads is too expensive to contemplate and does nothing to solve transport needs". The Tories accused the government of "ratting on its promises" to build roads (Guardian: tinyurl.com/8pzjw2).

9. Rural Affairs and Food

Farming. Sir Don Curry is examining whether single farm payment rules can be tightened to force more English farmers to manage as much as 5% of their arable land for environmental purposes. The NFU opposes the proposals (Farmers Weekly: tinyurl.com/74wjrf). Hilary Benn is considering compulsory environmental management on farms. "Some people seemed to believe farmers should be free to maximise production without regard to the environment... we profoundly disagree" (Farmers Weekly: tinyurl.com/bfoc42). Farmers have started abandoning environmental stewardship schemes following uncertainty over extra cross-compliance conditions, threatening government attempts to retain the environmental benefits of compulsory set-aside (Farmers Weekly: tinyurl.com/c3gzg3). Farming incomes rose by 42% to £18,185 in 2008 (NDS: tinyurl.com/cy8rpr). Defra secretary of state Hilary Benn said the UK will be voting not to ratify the new EU pesticides legislation (Independent: tinyurl.com/bzqzsv; Horticulture Week: tinyurl.com/c9phu7). Our addiction to steaks is killing the countryside, an agriculture expert warned. The trend towards intensive US-style cattle farming could ultimately ruin green rolling landscapes (Guardian: tinyurl.com/dm45sg).

Fera. Defra announced the creation of the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), a national research centre for food and the environment, which brings together existing Defra facilities (NDS: tinyurl.com/c4ag5l).

Retail. Small market towns are suffering as up to half their shops close and new retail developments are put on hold (24dash: tinyurl.com/7oxn5d). 80% of shoppers said they wanted a watchdog appointed to check suppliers were treated fairly, a YouGov survey of more than 2,000 people found (Farmers Weekly: tinyurl.com/8yejp5). The poll was organised by the Cross Cutting Group, which includes CPRE (PA: tinyurl.com/cgolxr).

Thames Path. A public inquiry is being held into plans to create a new stretch of footpath to complete the Thames Path in West Berkshire. Villagers are objecting to the new route (Reading Chronicle: tinyurl.com/ansao5).

Berkshire comes off badly in county contest. Country Life has again ranked England's counties using a variety of indicators, including CPRE's data on tranquillity and light pollution, and property prices (the higher the better). Devon is judged the best county, followed by Hampshire (2) and Kent (3). Other South East counties fared less well: Suffolk (9), Oxfordshire (10), Surrey (14), West Sussex (16), Buckinghamshire (19), East Sussex (24) and Berkshire (26). East Yorkshire came bottom in 40th place (tinyurl.com/clausv).

10. CPRE eBulletin

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