

CPRE SE eBulletin: 6 June 2009

1 Reshuffle

Communities. Hazel Blears departed and Southampton Itchen MP John Denham took over as Communities Secretary. Rynd Smith for the Royal Town Planning Institute, said: "John brings a wealth of experience as an environmental campaigner and local councillor, former housing committee chair and as universities and innovation secretary". Gideon Amos for the Town and Country Planning Association, said: "There is a genuine opportunity to focus on the real priorities for the country, pressing climate change and housing need. John Denham has shown his keen interest in delivering genuine sustainable development and energy efficiency measures in his Southampton constituency."

Housing. In his reshuffle press conference, Gordon Brown promised 'more action on housing' and appointed local government minister John Healey to replace Margaret Beckett as housing minister. He is the fourth person to hold the job in less than two years. The TCPA said the appointment "is very welcome. At this crucial time for delivering housing in the recession Mr Healey's experience of local government, housing, planning and the economy will be incredibly valuable."

Transport secretary Geoff Hoon resigned, to be replaced by Lord Adonis, who previously held the rail brief at the department.

Environment & Energy. Hilary Benn remains at the helm of Defra and Ed Miliband continues to lead the Department for Energy and Climate Change.

2 Campaigning

CPRE 2026 vision. CPRE said that England can be a greener and even more pleasant land (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/mokzez>). CPRE's wish list includes: more green space; vibrant neighbourhoods; people-friendly transport; urban populations reconnected with the countryside; children more engaged with nature; two million high quality homes; a new focus on quality of life and local distinctiveness; more planning decisions taken locally; farmers valued once more for the food they produce; and more woodlands and wetlands. Shaun Spiers told ePolitix "We want to rebuild a consensus on the value of the countryside and how it can be protected and improved. This sort of consensus existed after the Second World War" (<http://tinyurl.com/pcuhl3>). Tom Oliver told the Yorkshire Post: "So what will the cost of this vision be? What won't have happened? Hasty, railroaded decisions won't have been made. The loudest voices for quick bucks and easy targets will have been soberly resisted. It won't always be the biggest purse which wins the day. Innovation and fresh thinking will be welcome" (<http://tinyurl.com/nph77t>). "Valiantly trying to shed its tweedy image, the CPRE welcomes holistic new development and champions the kind of planning values that brought about green belts and national parks" (Guardian Leader: <http://tinyurl.com/omhdx4>). "CPRE is poised to establish a commission to review land-use planning in England" (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/q63ot4>).

The **Civic Society Initiative** has been launched by the National Trust, North of England Civic Trust, CPRE and RIBA to give a national focus to the civic society movement. The move follows the demise of the Civic Trust which went into administration in April. Launching the appeal, Griff Rhys Jones said "politicians don't care about heritage" (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/nwu82d>; Telegraph: Culture24: <http://tinyurl.com/mtcjj7>; CSI website: <http://tinyurl.com/nnklab>).

Environmental law. Community groups struggle to secure environmental justice because they are unable to fund the costs of challenging planning permissions. Head of legal at Friends of the Earth Phil Michaels says: "Legal costs are used as a litigation weapon to silence campaigners." In "bog standard" planning cases the costs might be £10,000, but in the majority of environmental challenges "you are looking at tens of thousands and in some cases well over £100,000" (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/oyyhoy>).

Law and Your Environment is an online "plain guide to Environmental Law", mainly covering England and Wales. Launched on 1 June, this website is an excellent resource for campaigners and covers problems covered such as fly tipping; noisy neighbours; graffiti; litter; dog mess; pollution; planning; wildlife and rights of way (<http://www.environmentlaw.org.uk/>; UKELA: <http://tinyurl.com/oao8ga>).

Sussex awards. Ten countryside projects received CPRE Sussex's first Countryside Awards. Awards were given in two categories: New Sussex Landscapes and Field to Table, for local food projects. Gerald Summerfield, Vice Chairman of East Sussex, said "our new CPRE Sussex Award Scheme has been a unique opportunity to support and encourage innovative and sensitive development schemes here in Sussex. The judges have been full of praise" (CPRE SE: <http://tinyurl.com/q88j8n>).

Lord Kennet. Former CPRE chairman Lord Kennet has died (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/qgl3yt>).

3 South East Plan

Legal challenges. At least three legal challenges may be made against aspects of the South East Plan. *Planning* reports that Mid Sussex and South Oxfordshire District Councils are taking legal advice. Mid Sussex is objecting to the requirement for 17,100 homes to be built in the district by 2026. South Oxfordshire is insisting that the government has not listened to its arguments against a 4,000-home urban extension in the Oxford green belt (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/pjd3wx>). Local authorities in Dorset are preparing to launch a judicial review when the South West regional spatial strategy is published at the end of next month (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/o3z88v>).

Reaction to the SEP. The South East England Partnership Board (which has replaced SEERA) welcomed the removal of references to minimum housing numbers but argued that the region cannot rely on developers to provide infrastructure (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/pcsjny>). Basingstoke MP Maria Miller said: "This housebuilding target would mean the biggest housebuilding programme in Basingstoke's history, with no money to ensure local services can cope. These plans would spell disaster for Basingstoke and the surrounding villages if they are allowed to proceed" (Gazette: <http://tinyurl.com/mhvwx6>). Bracknell Forest councillors expressed disappointment at the SEP targets (Get Bracknell: <http://tinyurl.com/luloue>). East Grinstead Town Council leader James Baldwin described the plans as "disappointing" and "unsustainable" but a local businessman retorted that the "nimby mentality has led to planning strangulation" (This is East Grinstead: <http://tinyurl.com/qrwhph>; <http://tinyurl.com/qj4rl3>). The SEP proposes a small-scale local review of the green belt around Reigate and Redhill, and East Surrey MP Peter Ainsworth re-affirmed his "resolute support" for the green belt. Reigate MP Crispin Blunt slammed the plans, claiming the Government's top down approach could create an urban sprawl from the capital (R&R Life: <http://tinyurl.com/qubv55>; This is Surrey: <http://tinyurl.com/qnuv7n>). Arundel and South Downs MP Nick Herbert said the "The government continues to ignore the concerns of local authorities who say that housebuilding on this scale is unsustainable and there is inadequate infrastructure, like roads and schools, to support it" (Shoreham Herald: <http://tinyurl.com/paf8sm>).

Kent's countryside is likely to come under increasing pressure from developers for house-building because it is cheaper to build on, according to CPRE Kent. Brian Lloyd said there would be extra pressure in places like Maidstone, Dover, Shepway and Thanet. "A significant proportion of green field land in these places will be needed to meet these targets. KCC leader Paul Carter, who now chairs the South East England Partnership Board cast doubt on whether the targets would be hit. "These housing numbers seem somewhat hypothetical in the current economic climate. The big challenge in the south east is how we create the environment where house builders have the appetite to take risks and build" (Kent Online: <http://tinyurl.com/oby5a9>).

East of England RSS rejected in court. A High Court judge ruled that the government's strategy for development at Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield was flawed, and must be quashed and reconsidered. The three areas are identified as "key centres for development and change" in the East of England Plan, published in May last year. The judge ruled that the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) had not properly been considered, and that alternatives to the housing on green field sites and the green belt had not been properly considered. The QC for the councils suggested the verdict might also apply to the SEP (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/oelhyf>); Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/qlpjan>).

4 Planning

Climate Change Planning Policy. The Town and Country Planning Association and Friends of the Earth are calling on the government to combine and update the climate change supplement to PPS1 and PPS22 on renewables into a single PPS. FoE national planning adviser Hugh Ellis said: "The situation in planning at the moment is scandalous... While there are planning delivery grant penalties for authorities that fail to meet housing targets, there are none as far as I can see for missing climate change targets". The government has promised to listen carefully to the argument (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/r8xpt3>).

Oxfordshire town green campaigns. In the final steps of the long and successful campaign, the Northmoor Trust has been appointed to manage Radley Lakes as a wildlife site, and campaigners' plans for legal action have been withdrawn. The site had failed to get town green status but RWE npower withdrew the threat to the lakes under pressure of ferocious adverse publicity (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/qk9fjj>; <http://tinyurl.com/o7fysy>). In Oxford, campaigners cautious celebrations for town green status for Warneford Meadow, were cut short when the NHS declared that it would appeal the decision (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/no9l7o>; FoWM: <http://tinyurl.com/36z6k3>). Both campaigns were strongly backed by CPRE. CPRE Wallingford is to seek town green status for NHS land to block future housing development (Oxford Times: <http://tinyurl.com/oz6f6n>). Town green status seems the last hope in the long CPRE battle to stop the Cogges Link road in Witney, where work could begin next year (Oxford Times: <http://tinyurl.com/pypgaf>; Witney Gazette: <http://tinyurl.com/q9fjsr>).

Heritage. English Heritage and CABI have published guidance on siting large digital screens in public spaces (CABI: <http://tinyurl.com/r8n5xt>). English Heritage issued guidance on alternatives to straw thatch (HELM: <http://tinyurl.com/obk7zc>) and published its action plan for implementation of the European Landscape Convention (HELM: <http://tinyurl.com/prcyp2>). The River Medway has been added to the bid to secure World Heritage Site status for Chatham Dockyard (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/pd7b4w>). Heritage bodies urged the government to use its proposed statement on the historic environment to encourage local authorities not to cut historic environment services (HELM: <http://tinyurl.com/mwh8ef>).

Regional Development Agencies. Tory policy on RDAs continues to be unclear, and some RDAs may continue despite earlier promises of their abolition (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/onrvlu>).

5 Eco towns

General. Housing Minister Margaret Beckett said: "I will say this: that if no [eco town] schemes meet the standards required then there will not be any names coming forward. But I would be very disappointed, and somewhat surprised, if that was the case" (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/rxbp6n>). The Landscape Institute said that is disappointed that the concept of green infrastructure does not appear to have been fully understood in the draft PPS (<http://tinyurl.com/nga2be>). The government has agreed to more research into New Towns in a bid to ensure that major housing plans, such as the eco-towns project, can learn lessons from the earlier schemes (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/l6w5ko>). The announcement that householders in eco towns may face charges for rubbish collection led to shock and horror in the Telegraph (<http://tinyurl.com/pmj5uv>) and an accusation of opponents being "apoplectic bin tax ranters" in the Guardian (<http://tinyurl.com/q7rv72>).

Oxfordshire. A petition asking the Prime Minister to withdraw Weston Otmoor from the list of eco towns attracted 2,338 signatures and a response from No 10 that "it would be premature to rule any proposals out at this stage" (No 10: <http://tinyurl.com/q7fcjd>). A Bicester resident, furious at the way a proposal to build 5,000 homes on farmland north west of Bicester has been "fast-tracked" with little public consultation, wants to launch an action group. The eco town being backed by Cherwell District Council as a rival to Weston Otmoor, but the council is ironically being accused of bypassing the normal planning system (<http://tinyurl.com/pyhppv>).

Ford. MPs challenged government minister Margaret Beckett about the Ford eco-town proposals, citing overwhelming opposition to the scheme from residents, councils and businesses (Bognor Today: <http://tinyurl.com/q6sfju>).

Other eco towns. Nearly 60% of Rossington residents support plans for the eco-town, according to a poll by MP Caroline Flint. **Long Marston** developer, St Modwen has submitted alternative planning proposals for a mixed-use holiday homes and housing development on part of the site, saying the application does not affect its eco town ambitions (Tewkesbury ADMAG: <http://tinyurl.com/pexfdp>). The Advertising Standards Authority ordered **Middle Quinton** developer St Modwen not to repeat a press advertisement unless it could provide evidence to back up its claims that the town would create 4,700 jobs and 6,000 homes. The ASA also found the advert's use of "brownfield" misleading (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/qhy4kx>).

6 Housing

Affordable housing. The United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights said the UK has a "chronic shortage" of social housing (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/qj2oe7>). The Homes and Communities Agency dished out £2.8 billion in its first four months in a bid to revive social home building, but the agency's housing and regeneration budget is set to fall by 50% to £2.7 billion in 2010/11 (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/qe5u2b>; <http://tinyurl.com/p6oepz>). New housing starts rose by 13% during the first three months of the year, ending steep declines seen in the previous two quarters (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/pgrzdp>).

Rural exodus. More than 100,000 rural residents aged under 35 are expected to migrate from villages and market towns across England to urban areas by 2012 because of a chronic shortage of affordable places to live, according to the National Housing Federation, which represents housing associations. The Federation said the number of young people living in rural areas had been declining at an alarming rate for more than a decade, with 341,000 people aged between 24 and 35 leaving the English countryside between 1997 and 2007, 22% of the age group. It called for 100,000 new homes to be built in rural areas and for local authorities to draw up action plans to address the needs of their communities. Mr Orr added: "We want affordable homes to be built in every rural area where there is a proven need for it. It's crucial that every rural local authority in the country now draws up an action plan detailing how they plan to meet the demand for affordable housing." The NHF warned that schools, shops and transport services could all face closure because of the exodus as younger workers are priced out of villages due to an influx of wealthy commuters, second home owners and retirees (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/q9vfud>).

Save Our Villages. The National Federation wants to halt the decline of rural England (NHF: <http://tinyurl.com/ok5425>). Its three-step plan seeks to ensure that housing need is understood and dealt with at a local level, ensuring mixed, sustainable and working villages:

- ◆ Every local authority should have an up to date assessment of housing need for rural wards.
- ◆ Authorities should publish a rural housing action plan to show how they will meet that need.
- ◆ To ensure the rural housing crisis is addressed not just now but also for future generations, assessment and action planning should be repeated every three years.

Sussex. Residents in Lewes are protesting against plans to build 600 houses in the floodplain (Worthing Herald: <http://tinyurl.com/ryuvqp>).

Hampshire. CPRE Hampshire is objecting to a 500 acre log cabin settlement in ancient woodland and home to the threatened hazel dormouse (Romsey Advertiser: <http://tinyurl.com/otrzk6>). It praised an eco friendly redevelopment of a housing estate in Petersfield: "One of the beauties of this development is that by consultation with the residents the community has been built into it" (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/pu44dg>; BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/r6cvuz>).

Brownfield use up. Land use change statistics published by Communities and Local Government show that 78% of dwellings were built on previously-developed land in 2008, compared with 77% in 2007 (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/ofh5fg>). Neil Sinden for CPRE said: "The brownfield figures are good news for the countryside as well as for urban areas that have benefited from regeneration" (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/q7twak>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/r44ahu>).

Density. The density of new housing developments has increased by 84% since 2001. New developments last year were built to an average density of 46 dwellings per hectare, compared with the 2001 average of 25 dwellings per hectare (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/l5hdkx>).

Eco housing. Building regulations will from October require builders to make sure homes come with devices that limit the temperature of bath water and meet efficiency standards of 125 litres of water per person per day (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/p4lptx>). An 195 home eco-village in south Gloucestershire with houses built to Level 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes has been given planning permission. It is being billed as England's first large-scale zero-carbon development (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/o6qhxj>). In Wales, housing developers will have to meet the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 while non-residential buildings will need to achieve the BREEAM Very Good standard (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/ku94yc>).

7 Green Space

Green belt. CPRE has launched a survey on the future use of the green belts surrounding London, Bristol and Bath and Merseyside. "Through the survey we aim to get the views of people who live in inner city areas... and areas nearer to the green belt. We're also keen to involve people who live in, own and/or manage land in the green belt" (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/qpntg5>; <http://tinyurl.com/ow3yfh>). Film studio owner Pinewood Shepperton has submitted plans for a £200m expansion to its Buckinghamshire studios on green belt land next to the M25. The proposals include a number of sets and up to 1,400 homes, 425 of which will be affordable, which will be built behind the façades of the sets. The company recognises that the company recognises the location in the green belt represents the biggest objection to the project (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/o8gont>). Environmental campaigners and residents are fighting plans to turn historic meadows in the green belt close to the river Avon in Bath into a park and ride for 1,400 cars (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/oag4ew>).

South Downs National Park. Residents living around Green Ridge, a thin band of meadowland between Brighton and the A27, have launched a campaign to include the area in the South Downs National Park. Brighton & Hove City Council has asked the government for clarification of why Green Ridge has been left out (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/qs8p2j>; <http://tinyurl.com/qwwewk>). The South Downs Society called on Volkswind to axe proposals to build two 415ft wind turbines on the Salt Hill and Wether Down hilltops in the National Park (The News: <http://tinyurl.com/r2otux>).

Green infrastructure. The Landscape Institute has published a position statement calling for green infrastructure to be afforded the same priority as more conventional infrastructural components. "Natural assets are often seen as separate entities— afterthoughts in the discipline of land use planning which gives priority to 'grey infrastructure' at the expense of the natural environment. This approach fails to recognise the symbiosis between the quality and connectivity of natural assets with local environmental and economic performance" (LI: <http://tinyurl.com/lido5gt>). CABE has published best practice guidance for open space strategies (<http://tinyurl.com/pjkhaj>).

8 Environment

Eco systems policy. "In the mid 20th century we conserved sites, at the end of the 20th century we extended our reach to the rest of the natural environment. In the 21st century we have come to recognise that these two paradigms for environmental conservation are, on their own, inadequate... A third paradigm, the ecosystems approach" is needed. Natural England is consulting on its Eco Systems policy (NE: <http://tinyurl.com/neconsult>).

Woodlands. New housing, roads and other developments built too near ancient woodlands can have devastating impacts on the UK's equivalent of the rainforest, the Woodland Trust warned. Even if action is taken to avoid destruction of ancient woods themselves, new buildings, transport links, quarries and leisure activities can still harm neighbouring woods and wildlife (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/p7pbox>; Woodland Trust: <http://tinyurl.com/oymv4a>).

Set-aside. Oxfordshire is among the counties prioritised in the NFU and CLAs' Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE), their proposal for a voluntary policy to replace set-aside in England. The campaign will focus on farmland birds, resource protection and biodiversity provision (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/qgakme>). CPRE is among 18 wildlife and environment groups that wrote to the Guardian saying "In our view [CFE] won't achieve what is needed as it lacks urgency and specific targets. The alternative scheme, which would require farmers to manage a small percentage of their land for the environment in return for their subsidy, stands a much better chance of success" (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ogjreo>).

Birds decline despite set-aside. The latest assessment of the status of the UK's 246 regularly occurring birds shows 52 are now of the highest conservation concern and have been placed on the red list, including the cuckoo, lapwing and yellow wagtail. Farmers said the findings call into question the claim that new measures to retain the "environmental benefits" of set-aside would boost bird numbers, but conservationists said the decline would be worse were it not for set-aside (RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/r4tsuu>; Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/qytwkg>). The South East has fared the worst, with farmland species falling by 27% and woodland birds by 16% (RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/pj5zts>). Millions of pounds intended for environmental projects is instead being used to prop up damaging farming practices across Europe, according to a report by Birdlife International for the RSPB; English practices are praised (RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/okhwuy>).

Lakes and rivers. 85% of rivers in England and Wales are failing to reach recognised quality targets due to pollution, unrestrained water use, and dredging and engineering of rivers, according to an EC agency (RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/qnlew8>). The Environment Agency is undertaking an assessment of around 730 of the most important lakes in England and Wales which will need to meet high standards under the EU's Water Framework Directive, in some cases by 2015 (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/pnz35z>; EA: <http://tinyurl.com/ry7e56>).

9 Energy

Renewables. Waste should be used as a low-carbon source of heat, DECC officials said (New Energy Focus: <http://tinyurl.com/qetoul>). The Environment Agency said that public sector land and property has the potential to host renewable energy generation systems capable of providing power for more than 1.5 million households (New Energy Focus: <http://tinyurl.com/m6e792>). Energy minister Mike O'Brien said that he wants to see a system of prior approval for small low carbon energy projects under a certain size (New Energy Focus: <http://tinyurl.com/on5ljx>). Jonathan Porritt accused nuclear hopefuls are accused of advising the government to cut back on renewables and creating a "them and us" situation with renewals (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/oql7dy>). "Wind turbines and solar energy plants are revolutionizing Germany's mix of power sources, creating jobs and making the country more independent from imports. But they aren't helping in the fight against climate change" (De Spiegel: <http://tinyurl.com/cxvj4z>).

Wind. Europe's largest onshore wind farm north of Glasgow opened and is to expand by more than a third. Scotland already generates more than 30% of its electricity from renewables (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/rduve5>). A new radar station for Glasgow Airport had to be built to prevent the wind farm interfering with air traffic control (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/qh9no5>). National Air Traffic Services has asked an American defence company to design the world's first system for allowing radar to see through wind farm interference (The Times: <http://tinyurl.com/p9ryrb>). Powys councillors are outraged to learn that vehicles nearly 50m long will be used to deliver new turbines, squeezing past historic buildings and requiring removal of roundabouts (County Times: <http://tinyurl.com/ned6xk>). Plans to build 150 turbines on the Shetland Isles, one of the world's largest wind farms, have been submitted to Scottish ministers. The islanders will receive £23 million a year from the £800 million farm (New Energy Focus: <http://tinyurl.com/pufo3r>). The green light has been given to a €2.2bn plan to build the London Array off the coast of Essex and Kent in the outer estuary area of the Thames. The ultimate aim is for 341 turbines producing 1 gigawatt of power, enough for a quarter of all the homes in Greater London and by far the biggest off shore development in the world (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/qlaafu>; Edie: <http://tinyurl.com/pncy4>). In Yorkshire there are fears that developers will build bigger wind farms in order to come within the 50MW remit of the IPC (Yorkshire Post: <http://tinyurl.com/r6lnjs>). A Scottish community asked a company building a nearby wind farm to build an extra turbine and sell it to them to make the community one of the greenest in the UK (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/qxp3wa>). And finally... Wind turbines in Taiwan are accused of the death of 400 goats, by keeping them awake until they died of exhaustion (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/p5vuys>).

Thermal. The Eden Project is to be powered by thermal energy. The engineers claim geothermal energy stored in Cornish granite could eventually supply as much as 10% of UK energy needs (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/p8pxc6>). David Cameron pledged "generous incentives" to get deep geothermal technology going (New Energy Focus: <http://tinyurl.com/r5akpp>). The TCPA said local authority planners need more information on the role of neighbourhood thermal masterplanning to assist with combating climate change (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/qsd3yl>).

Efficiency and Climate Change. All homes in Britain will have smart meters installed by 2020 under plans published by DECC. British Gas said the move would herald the biggest revolution in energy use since it converted all the nation's homes to natural gas in the 1970s (DECC: <http://tinyurl.com/ry2z9n>; 24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/p8r2eg>). A team of economists has shown that so-called "rebound effects", where efficiency improvements are offset by behaviour changes could slash future carbon and energy savings by half (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/obmb39>). Britain is the world centre of a multibillion dollar carbon offset industry which is failing to lower global greenhouse gas emissions, a report from Friends of the Earth claimed (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ndsu9d>). The Welsh government published radical plans to make it one of the most energy and resource-efficient countries in the world within a generation. The legally binding plans would see the country become energy self-sufficient in using renewable electricity within 20 years and reduce waste to zero by 2050 (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/r5rdks>).

Coal. Last year six Greenpeace protesters were cleared of causing £30,000 worth of criminal damage to Kingsnorth power station in Kent. Their story is told in Nick Broomfield's Kingsnorth documentary (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/m5z45u>). Energy companies want guarantees that they will not be forced to close their coal-fired plants in 2025 if carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology has not been proven by then (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/prw5sb>). The North Sea has the potential to store hundreds of years' worth of CO₂ in saline aquifer porous rock formations and depleted oil and gas fields (Energy Efficiency: <http://tinyurl.com/pwv7hc>). Scottish Power has turned on a small scale CCS system (Energy Efficiency: <http://tinyurl.com/o42euz>).

Nuclear. A group of academics has called on the government to hold a public inquiry into building new nuclear stations (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/qur8jq>). 369 farms in Britain are still restricted in the way they use land and rear sheep because of radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear power station accident 23 years ago (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/qk6p7s>).

10 Transport

Aviation. Airlines have called on BAA to scrap an "extraordinary" £1bn investment plan at Gatwick airport (ABDN: <http://tinyurl.com/pumd4u>). Lord Stern said the decision to allow a third runway at Heathrow was a mistake (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/oupqon>). Some business leaders are also questioning the need for a third runway at Heathrow others are saying it is vital for Britain's economic growth and future prosperity (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/phs9ky>; <http://tinyurl.com/ohn3kd>). A planning decision on a second runway at Stansted is unlikely to be taken before the general election. The inquiry is likely to begin in September but BAA has asked for a delay (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/pj7ttf>; <http://tinyurl.com/qaxyyz>). It told communities secretary Hazel Blears it will pursue plans to expand Stansted, even if she decides to suspend the forthcoming public inquiry while the Competition Appeal Tribunal hears BAA's case against orders from the Competition Commission to sell airports (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/oymv4a>). CPRE is among those calling on Birmingham International Airport to abandon plans for a second runway (Birmingham Post: <http://tinyurl.com/rbp96e>).

Rail. Plans for a direct rail link between High Wycombe and Oxford have been met with a positive reaction (This is London: <http://tinyurl.com/qyae9x>). Construction work on the £16 billion Crossrail scheme has begun (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/qhxjka>). Construction of high-speed line HS2 from London to the West Midlands and the North is a matter of 'how?' and 'when?', not 'if?', according to Transport Minister Lord Adonis. It may run at 250 mph (Rail News: <http://tinyurl.com/qlzqv2>; <http://tinyurl.com/qn7kks>). Britain's railways may need to double their capacity in the next 30 years to cope with demand from passengers (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/oxqzc4>).

KIG & BIG. More than 2,000 people joined a march against the proposed Kent International Gateway development on Bank Holiday Monday. Protest in also increasing against the rival KIG project, the Borough Green International Gateway (BIG) will pave over more than 250 acres of protected countryside. Protect Kent said: "We are against inappropriate development in the green belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and these two applications clearly will have severe impacts on both" (Kent News: <http://tinyurl.com/nwnw6o>).

Thames Crossing. Plans for a new Thames Barrier could be integrated into the Highways Agency plans for a new Dartford Crossing, the Environment Agency said, but there was a lukewarm response from councillors in Kent (NCE: <http://tinyurl.com/kked8y>; Kent News: <http://tinyurl.com/lpvfmq>).

Roads. Car use fell by almost 9% across Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester. The three sustainable travel demonstration towns ran smarter choices schemes from 2004 to 2008 to promote more frequent walking, cycling and public transport use and cut single-occupancy car trips (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/nhwde9>). The government now proposes to fund the country's first Sustainable Travel City (NDS: <http://tinyurl.com/oezovd>). The long-awaited M25 Private Finance Initiative scheme to widen the M25 in time for the Olympics will cost £6.2 billion, despite being cut back (The Times: <http://tinyurl.com/qv4kad>). The European Environment Agency is calling for a range of measures to reduce noise from traffic to levels set in the Environmental Noise Directive 2002 (EEA: <http://tinyurl.com/q4fz7u>).

11 Rural Affairs

Food and farming. Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, has launched a toolkit to guide setting up and running a food co-op (<http://tinyurl.com/oxep6n>). Defra is planning to give more support to farmers diversifying into non-agricultural businesses and small rural enterprises (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/qk727u>).

Rural Proofing. The Commission for Rural Communities has issued a new rural proofing toolkit with the aim of assisting policy-makers to consider how their decisions affect rural communities (NDS: <http://tinyurl.com/poh5rq>). The CRC has also issued a report mapping the poverty of broadband provision in rural areas (CRC: <http://tinyurl.com/p7bhq6>).

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