

# Campaign to Protect Rural England

## South East Region eBulletin October 2009

### Regional Spatial Strategies

**The South East Plan Challenge Victory.** CPRE Oxfordshire has successfully challenged the SE Plan, forcing a rethink by the government on how Oxford should be expanded. Although DCLG said only weeks ago it would be contesting CPRE's case at the judicial review, it has now admitted that insufficient consideration had been given to alternatives to the controversial Grenoble Road extension. CPRE Thame chairman Michael Tyce said: "This is not only good news for the green belt but for Oxford too. It has always been CPRE's case that reckless expansion is the wrong track for our unique and historic City to take, and the City Council are misguided to pursue it." CPRE Oxon said although details have still to be hammered out with the Department for Communities and Local Government, this almost certainly means that the current proposal in the South East Plan to grab Green Belt land south of the City for a 4,000 house urban extension is dead. Oxford City Council claimed the decision had moved the whole project forward and shortened any period of uncertainty (CPRE Oxon: <http://tinyurl.com/ytguff>; Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yeekx78>; Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/y95gtfl>). Several other challenges to the SE Plan by local authorities have yet to be determined.

**Other RSS.** The government has announced a second delay to the South West Regional Spatial Strategy to conduct further sustainability appraisals (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yd38jlv>). There is no let up on housing in the West Midlands, where the RSS Review confirmed high housing numbers. But proposals for even higher housing numbers were rejected (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/y9wobkv>; Birmingham Post: <http://tinyurl.com/yzn7qsp>).

### Planning

**Conservative policy.** Confusion still surrounds Tory policy on the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), which began work on 1 October. A green paper is promised (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yzc7q9n>). Shadow communities secretary Caroline Spelman has advised Tory-run councils to delay major commercial and housing developments until the Conservatives get into power. She said the Conservatives will introduce a local government and housing bill in its first year of office to abolish regional spatial strategies, but the LDF regime will be retained (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yhj2wl4>). Housing and planning minister John Healey responded: "The Tories are getting ahead of themselves and taking the election for granted" (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/y9auep7>). The Conservatives are also proposing to give local people more say over projects such as wind farms. The Conservatives' Shadow Local Government Minister Bob Neil said: "If the next government is led by the Conservatives we will be making some very significant revisions to planning policy. We will make it harder for developers to appeal against properly made local decisions and give power and control back to local communities" (Politics: <http://tinyurl.com/ybz6s3t>).

**IPC.** The government has produced guidance for applications to the IPC, including for the pre-application consultation stage (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/y9zyawp>).

**Town centres.** Planners are concerned that removal of the needs test for out-of-town shopping centres from PPS4 will undermine the viability of town centres (Regen: <http://tinyurl.com/yjgt4tu>). Protect Kent is concerned that a proposed superstore will stifle local shops in Hythe. Deputy Director Sean Furey said: "While we encourage brown field development, this scheme is a bland grey box that does nothing for the historic character of the town which is so valued by residents and visitors alike" (<http://tinyurl.com/ycms5za>).

**Hampshire.** James Arbuthnot, MP for North East Hampshire, slammed the Government over its handling of the Pyestock warehouse development and called the decision to proceed with the plan, "a perfect example of government by fiasco. Some minister knows better than 12,000 local people who opposed this application. As the Campaign to Protect Rural England has devastatingly pointed out, the development may or may not produce 1500 jobs – but they won't be new jobs. They'll

simply have resulted from the closure of other, more local, distribution centres" (Politics: <http://tinyurl.com/ydgxsjj>).

**Eco towns.** A Planning Inspectors Panel report following the examination in public into the West Midlands RSS has rejected plans for the Middle Quinton eco-town at Long Marston, Warwickshire (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yics7pda>).

**LDFs.** New Forest District Council is the first Hampshire local authority to have its new planning strategy found sound by a government planning inspector. The inspector ruled out bids for a regional distribution depot on the edge of the National Park at Ower, and also did not include a policy for port development at Dibden Bay (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/ygdgakk>).

**Regional Economic Strategy.** The first report of the House of Commons South-East regional committee gave strong support for the Regional Economic Strategy and called for greater funding for SEERA, which they say "can more quickly generate revenue for the public purse than investment elsewhere". North East leaders rubbished the proposal (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/ylnkdwz>; Report: <http://tinyurl.com/yzzkb8k>).

**Planning permission.** The government announced that the power to extend the time limits for existing full planning permissions will apply to all eligible consents and not just those for major development (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/y8huhj4>).

**Quarry victory.** Construction company, Tarmac, has withdrawn its application to enlarge the current quarry at Kingsley, Hampshire, following fierce protests from the South Downs Society and CPRE. John Venning, CPRE Hampshire chair warned: "The threat hasn't entirely gone away. It's essential that the new national park is respected and that the Minerals Plan for the area gives proper weight to environmental concerns" (Post: <http://tinyurl.com/ycf8qk>).

## Housing

**Shortfall claim.** The gap between English housing supply and demand this year will be equivalent to an area the size of Nottingham, around 150,000 homes, according to a discussion paper published by the Town and Country Planning Association. Caroline Davey for Shelter said the worsening housing shortage meant that 565,000 households were living in overcrowded conditions (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ykretjz>; Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yehkvrz>).

**Affordable housing.** New affordable homes could benefit from as much as 125% in matched council tax contributions under a Conservative government, the Shadow housing minister Grant Shapps said (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yzq5446>).

**HCA.** Almost half the homes built in England by March 2011 will be funded by the HCA according to its corporate plan (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/y8rxk53>). The Tories are threatening to scrap the Homes and Communities Agency in favour of deregulation to pave the way for house builders to meet demand (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yej2z55>).

**South East.** Dunsfold Park Ltd has lost its appeal against a decision to block plans for a 2,600 home eco-development at a former airfield in Surrey. Friends of the Earth supported the development proposals and said the decision was a "betrayal of the environment by the government" (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yd9pptq>). South Oxfordshire's plans for housing at a beauty spot in Henley-on-Thames have been blocked by a successful town green application (Henley Standard: <http://tinyurl.com/lc925e>). An application for up to 200 homes is expected for a reserved greenfield site at Petersfield within the South Downs National Park (Post: <http://tinyurl.com/y9kzfbm>). The controversial Barton Farm 2000 home scheme at Winchester has been thrown into doubt by a planning inspector who criticised the council, saying "vagueness and lack of clarity on some key policies could cause the core strategy to be found unsound – particularly the Hedge End development area, housing numbers, Bushfield Camp..." (Hants Chronicle: <http://tinyurl.com/ydetuva>). Fareham Borough Council will tell the government that building 10,000 new homes north of Fareham is not possible (The News: <http://tinyurl.com/ydkbq6j>). Wokingham Area Residents Action Group (WARAG) was been set up to save the town's green space (Get Wokingham: <http://tinyurl.com/y9n5qwx>).

**Matthew Taylor** MP, author of the Taylor Report on rural housing and renaissance, has been named the new chair of the National Housing Federation (NHF: <http://tinyurl.com/ylgzewq>).

## Landscapes and Environment

**Rewilding.** At the Labour Conference, Hilary Benn celebrated his government's decision to create the South Downs National Park and announced a new 'landscape scale' approach to countryside conservation. Reserves would be as large, wild and natural as possible, and be connected to each other so that animals can roam freely. "Now that we've fulfilled the original dream of the National Parks' creators, our next task is to enrich and link together more wonderful places where wildlife, bees, flowers and trees can flourish, and we can enjoy them as they do." Natural England, which will research the idea for Defra, said the most obvious potential sites for reserves were England's uplands "but we want to find lowland regions, too" (Labour: <http://tinyurl.com/yej6yxn>; Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/yz8t44x>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/ygrt4wj>; Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/yeawfl3>). Ian Woodhurst, CPRE's farming campaigner welcomed the decision: "Taking a joined up approach to managing our countryside should both help our wildlife and improve the character of our landscapes" (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/yaj7l42>). "Something rather peculiar is going on here – the development of a two-tier countryside" (Terrence Blacker in the Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/yl8hbas>).

**Tories to trim Natural England.** Shadow Defra Secretary Nick Herbert said tough economic times would lead to spending cuts at Defra, claiming there are substantial efficiency savings to be made throughout the agricultural department. He said the powers of quangos such as Natural England had spiralled out of control and they had become 'political lobbyists'. The Environment Agency will also come under scrutiny (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yboacx6>).

**Hedgerows.** 16,000 miles of managed hedgerows in England disappeared between 1998 and 2007 but brambles, ivy and stinging nettles are all on the increase, according to an ecological survey by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. Only an eighth of those on agricultural land were in a good condition (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/mczwya>).

**Allotments.** The government has been urged to dramatically expand the number of public allotments by using brownfield sites and encouraging landowners to donate unused land to local communities. The number of allotments in the UK has declined from 1.4 million in the 1940s to 200,000 in the present day (NLGN: <http://tinyurl.com/n2qso8>).

**Quality space.** Nine out of ten people say that better quality buildings and public spaces improve their quality of life, according to research published by CABE (<http://tinyurl.com/ygt9d3p>).

**Soils.** Planners have a key role in improving soil quality to meet rising demand for food and combat climate change, Defra said. Farmers are being encouraged to adopt technology that allows "no tilling and low tilling" to avoid disturbing the soil fabric and allow it better to capture carbon emissions. The Soil Association called the plan unambitious (*Safeguarding our Soil*: <http://tinyurl.com/ya3jga5>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/ye3s4pl>).

**Dirty Rivers.** The Our Rivers campaign (a coalition of the RSPB, WWF UK, the Association of Rivers Trusts and the Angling Trust) has called for tougher action to protect waterways and ensure they remain clean and healthy for the benefit of wildlife, after the Environment Agency said that just five rivers remain 'High' status waterways under the EU Water Framework Directive, all in remote areas of Northumberland and Wales. The report says that 74% of rivers are failing, including 117 rivers (2%) which are classified as 'Bad' making them among the worst in Europe. The EA, however, said that the quality of rivers in England and Wales is best for over a century (EA: <http://tinyurl.com/ydhb5hx>; RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/yc6kggp>).

**Flooding.** The Environment Agency has issued the Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy for consultation. The aim is to reduce flood risk to 15,000 properties (Deadline 4 December: <http://tinyurl.com/ycpws7n>). The House of Commons EFRA committee published its response to the draft Floods and Water Management Bill. It said that "Defra still has a long way to go... The current draft is a confusing mix of measures, many of them poorly drafted; a patchwork

that seeks to address individual identified problems, rather than deriving from a coherent and comprehensive strategy" (Parliament: <http://tinyurl.com/yeyqlu3>).

**Water.** Defra has launched a campaign to persuade people to save 20 litres of water a day each (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/yek6896>).

**Recycling.** Rather than fining people who do not recycle, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is taking an alternative approach of rewarding those who do. Environment Secretary Hilary Benn is planning to introduce a ban on sending food, aluminium, glass and wood to landfill sites (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/lck6ln>).

## Climate Change

**Green Manifesto.** CPRE was among eight environment groups that published a challenge to the parties for the coming general election. *Common Cause: the Green Standard* manifesto on climate change and the natural environment urges the next government to make this agenda a high priority. The manifesto calls for ten commitments, including putting the UK on track to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2020, and by 80% by 2050. It also asks parties to commit to making significant progress towards restoring the natural environment by 2020, "including the doubling of UK woodland cover, meeting other habitat targets and ensuring that protected sites are in good condition; through utilising reforms to agricultural incentives, planning policy and other measures to create high quality landscapes rich in nature and able to adapt to climate change" (Green Alliance: <http://tinyurl.com/ybfva8k>).

**Bored with climate change.** The UK's ability to meet challenging emissions targets is being threatened by the failure to persuade mainstream consumers to adopt lower-carbon lifestyles, warns a report by the Institute for Public Policy Research. People are tired and bored of hearing about climate change and are cynical about the Government's motives in pushing for action on climate. The Government may need to introduce a personal carbon trading scheme to ration emissions by 2012 if existing measures fail (ippr: <http://tinyurl.com/yza5l27>).

**Climate of opinion.** The latest Defra survey of public opinion on climate change says that 47% of respondents said they would like to do a bit more to help the environment (up 4% on 2007) and 27% said they were environmentally friendly in most or everything they did (up 6%). 62% of drivers claim they have switched to walking or cycling instead of driving for short, regular journeys. Fewer people say they have given thought to the loss of biodiversity. 80% of respondents agreed that they worried about changes to the countryside in the UK and loss of native animals and plants. 76% of respondents said they were cutting down on the use of gas and electricity at home, compared with 58% in 2007. The survey also covers attitudes to water use and recycling (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/ydx4og6>).

**Geoengineering.** "Do we chance toying with the entire atmosphere? Can we afford not to? Geo-engineering could save the planet and in the process sacrifice the world" (AlterNet: <http://tinyurl.com/ylhsgqj>).

**Aviation.** Speaking on behalf of the aviation industry, British Airways chief executive Willie Walsh said the aviation industry had agreed to cut net carbon dioxide emissions to half their 2005 levels by 2050 (Guardian: ). But most of this would not come from emissions reduction but from carbon offsetting (Ecologist: <http://tinyurl.com/kjv5z2>).

## Energy

**Power shortage.** Professor David MacKay, the newly appointed chief scientific adviser at the Department of Energy and Climate Change (Decc), warned that the UK will begin to run out of power within seven years because new energy sources are not being built fast enough. He blamed public opposition to new wind farms and nuclear power stations for the looming crisis (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/kmcxv2>).

**Wind.** Nick King, the South East England Development Agency's expert on climate change, said the turbines should not go up in the Surrey Hills AONB, but smaller domestic turbines could be acceptable (RRH Life: <http://tinyurl.com/yaebg2a>). Writing to local newspapers, John Songhurst, Chairman of the South Downs Society, said the Downs do not have ideal wind conditions for

turbines (Sussex Express: <http://tinyurl.com/yawt5h2>). Some of Scotland's rarest birds are being displaced by wind turbine developments (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/ydz6kgm>).

**Marine renewables.** The Renewable Energy Association and Natural England have agreed to collaborate to help get marine renewable energy projects off the ground while also protecting the environment (NEF: <http://tinyurl.com/ya9uwfv>). The UK Government launched the Marine Renewables Proving Fund, a £22 million pot for commercial developers of marine energy (Energy Efficiency: <http://tinyurl.com/y93mjxa>).

**Coal.** As the Government's consultation on clean coal closed, CPRE said new coal will accelerate climate change and destroy communities and landscapes (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/ybas9y4>).

## Transport

**Aviation.** Peter Ainsworth MP has written to Crawley Borough Council endorsing CPRE Surrey's opposition to expansion of Gatwick Airport (RRR Life: <http://tinyurl.com/y9vpthg>). North East Hampshire CPRE announced that Farnborough Airport's owners had over-estimated the environmental impact of nearly doubling the number of flights from the airfield (Get Hampshire: <http://tinyurl.com/yeg2vn9>).

**Rail.** The Northern Way says that high speed rail from London to its city regions will accelerate the North's economic growth (<http://tinyurl.com/yz3ppow>).

**Roads.** Oxfordshire County Council blocked an attempt to halt the Cogges Link road in Witney by lodging a last minute objection to town green status for part of the route (Oxford Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yab7tv7>). The Campaign for Better Transport has produced a Car Dependency Scorecard. The South East scores 56%. CBT says people in the South East "enjoy a growing bus network and improved access to train stations but they could do with some trams – popular with commuters – and with more programmes to encourage cycling" (<http://tinyurl.com/y9b7fyk>). The government launched three initiatives aimed at boosting hydrogen-powered fuel cell and electric vehicles (EEN: <http://tinyurl.com/yfse2jh>).

## Rural Affairs

**Food.** The Council of Food Policy Advisers appointed by Defra has called on the government to encourage the production and consumption of more home-grown fruit and vegetables (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yzla8y5>).

**State of Rural Services.** The Rural Services Network is conducting an in-depth investigation to detail the state of rural services in England with the aim of producing the first State of Rural Services report in 2010 (SRS10) (CRC: <http://tinyurl.com/yfpjhzy>).

**Improving rural life.** A report to Essex County Council has revealed more than 60 ways that local authorities can improve rural life, including management of green space, energy policy and multifunctional use of buildings (RSN: <http://tinyurl.com/ygff2xf>).

**Coastal Access.** The government has launched a consultation on proposals to amend the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to create a right of public access to England's coastline (FWI: <http://tinyurl.com/y8ltusb>; Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/yassfnn>).

## CPRE South East eBulletin

We hope you find this eBulletin useful. Please forward it to colleagues who you think it may interest. If you have been sent this eBulletin and would like to sign up to receive it direct, you can do so at <http://tinyurl.com/cpreseeb>.

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