

Campaign to Protect Rural England

South East Region eBulletin: News for January 2010

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1. Planning

Kent Garden of England to be "Garden City". Last Thursday, Architect Sir Terry Farrell launched his 20-year strategy to turn Kent into a "21st century garden city" and the most connected county in the country. The vision includes building 10,000 new homes in Ebbsfleet and doubling the size of Ashford to become be Kent's 21st century garden city. The plan also proposes an extension of High Speed 1 to Thanet; a third Thames crossing on the lower Thames; the expansion of Kent International Airport at Manston; high-speed links to Gatwick Airport; and improvements to Dover port. The Kent Green Grid will be completed and Kent will have a Coastal Park extending from the Thames Estuary to Romney Marsh. The proposals have been welcomed by Kent International airport at Manston (KCC: <http://tinyurl.com/yzfs7vd>; BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/ygeq52h>; KO: <http://tinyurl.com/yk8tmq7>; OK: <http://tinyurl.com/ykjzbbq>).

NPSs. The RSPB said the draft ports national policy statement (NPS) is contrary to the EU Habitats Directive (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yl9m8jh>). Campaigners also slammed the nuclear NPS labelling the consultation process a farce. Friends of the Earth threatened a legal challenge & the government may be forced to reconsult (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yj5vn4e>; <http://tinyurl.com/ylzwyf9>; FoE: <http://tinyurl.com/yhz9a73>). Environmental groups and the Sustainable Development Commission criticised the lack of any spatial element in the draft NPSs, saying they must give a clear idea of where energy projects should be developed (NEF: <http://tinyurl.com/ylqxcba>). The REA and BWEA have rejected a spatial approach to developing renewables in the National Policy Statements (NEF: <http://tinyurl.com/yh54uhn>).

Regional Strategies. The Commission for Rural Communities has issued guidance aimed at ensuring that rural interests are fully recognised in forthcoming Regional Strategies (<http://tinyurl.com/ykpcecd>). Kent County Council is proposing to abolish regional quangos and return spatial planning powers to local authorities (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/ylijkwy3>). The implications of the CPRE Oxfordshire legal challenge to the South East Plan for the City's Core Strategy are to be considered at a Procedural Meeting at the Town Hall on 9 February. The City is contending that progress can be made with the examination on the Oxford Core Strategy pending its resolution (CPRE Oxon: <http://tinyurl.com/ytguff>).

PPS3: Garden Grabbing. Housing minister John Healey announced that he will reinforce Planning Policy Statement 3, which covers the development of brownfield land for housing, in response to concerns about back gardens being used for housing. Healey pledged to make clear there is no presumption that all brownfield land should be regarded as suitable for development and that local authorities are responsible for making decisions on whether developments on garden land should be given planning permission (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/ygtccqy>; Hansard: <http://tinyurl.com/ylnplv7>). The percentage of housing on brownfield land has risen to 80% (DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/yf64btv>).

PPS4. The Commission for Rural Communities said it is concerned by PPS4's reference to protecting the countryside for its intrinsic character and beauty. "This should not be read as a blanket restriction on development in the countryside, as this would run counter to the other positive messages" (RSN: <http://tinyurl.com/ykjt98>).

Impossible Hamster. "Indefinite global economic growth is unsustainable" the New Economics Foundation said, in a call that echoed the roots of the environmental movement (*Limits to Growth* 1972). The 148 page report (NEF: <http://is.gd/7d8uv>) was largely ignored by the mainstream press, perhaps because it was issued just as the news broke that the UK is out of recession by a smidgen of 0.1% growth. The Impossible Hamster tag derives from a neat video NEF produced to communicate its message in just one minute ten seconds (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yhhqoby>).

Population. The Cross Party Group on Balanced Migration of MPs and peers is demanding all major parties take action to prevent the UK's population reaching 70 million in under 20 years (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/ygb8xyc>).

Planning democracy. Oxford City Council is hoping to circumvent protests, such as the Warneford Meadow campaign, by withdrawing the powers for the full council to call in an application for determination (OxT: <http://tinyurl.com/yg4t4jo>).

Disguised barn approved. A property developer who fraudulently built a luxury home disguised as a barn on green belt land in Hertfordshire has fought off a council eviction bid. Lord Justice Mummery said in his ruling: "It is a surprising outcome which decent law-abiding citizens will find incomprehensible. A public authority, deceived into granting planning permission by a dishonest planning application, can be required by law to issue an official certificate to the culprit consolidating the fruits of the fraud" (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/ybhucuse>).

2. Housing

Housing plans. 500 people have written to Winchester planners about the scheme for 2,000 homes at Barton Farm. Christopher Napier, chairman of CPRE Hampshire, said: "The current Local Plan has been thoroughly tested through numerous inquiries and appeals, which have proved time and again that there is no justification for large-scale development at Barton Farm" (HC: <http://tinyurl.com/yihmq55>; SDE: <http://tinyurl.com/ya6t4t>). CPRE Protect Kent expressed disappointment that Dover's high growth strategy has been given the green light. Brian Lloyd said: "We remain very concerned that the strategy is very aspirational and that the anticipated economic regeneration on the back of large scale greenfield housing development will not materialise" (<http://tinyurl.com/yhcl76h>). Residents in Oxford have passed a motion of no-confidence in the city council's planning department, complaining the council wants to make the town like Swindon (OxT: <http://tinyurl.com/yg5y7xj>). Tom Holme, new chairman of CPRE in Essex, said that while there were more than one million empty properties across the UK, building on greenfield sites should not be permitted (EADT: <http://tinyurl.com/yh7llda>).

Affordable housing. More than half a million affordable homes could be axed from government building plans if public spending cuts are implemented, the National Housing Federation warned (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yg4jg27>). The NHF also said the Church of England should sell land and buildings to provide thousands of affordable rural homes (RSN: <http://tinyurl.com/yg36x57>). The NHF's Save Our Villages campaign celebrated the news that local authorities will be required to regularly assess rural housing need from April (NHF: <http://tinyurl.com/yztmvp3>). Landlords who ban council tenants from starting businesses in their homes could be prosecuted under legislation being proposed by the Conservatives (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yg6pjyt>).

3. Landscapes and Environment

Green Belts: a Greener Future is the title of a new report from CPRE and Natural England. Helen Phillips, Natural England's Chief Executive, said: "By containing urban sprawl, the Green Belt has been a great success story of post-war planning. We need to look at ways in which it can expand on its success to date." Shaun Spiers, CPRE's Chief Executive, said: "This report confirms that the countryside around our largest and most historic towns and cities is a vital but fragile, environmental asset." Paul Miner for CPRE said "the green belt is more important than ever today for allotments so people can grow their own fruit and vegetables as farmland and for leisure to tackle obesity. Countryside is also important for tackling floods and climate change" (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/y88jwja>). Tristram Hunt wrote: "Southmouth doesn't exist. Thank the Green Belt. Britain has been spared from US-style, countryside-gobbling, urban creep: but would a Tory government put that at risk?" (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yjz3nkd>). The CLA is angry that Natural England had teamed up with CPRE, and not itself and other countryside groups. It complained the report could do more harm than good. "The quality of the landscape is not relevant to the inclusion of land within a Green Belt or its continued protection. It is the purposes of including land which is of paramount importance, and these purposes take precedence over other land use objectives" (Farming UK: <http://tinyurl.com/ykttc4z>). Helena Whall for CPRE Oxon said: "The report confirms that the countryside around the city of Oxford is a vital, but fragile, environmental asset... We must not sacrifice the health of the city of Oxford and the surrounding environment by allowing plans to build homes in protected countryside" (CPRE Oxon: <http://tinyurl.com/ytguff>). Environmentalist Oliver Tickell told BBC local radio that green belt land should be used for allotments and fruit growing to reduced imports rather than for crops.

Naturalist Sir John Lister-Kaye said: "the notion that the Government may raid our precious green belt is nothing short of treasonable.", in an article about CPRE's green belt campaign, the environment and climate change. "Our political leaders north and south of the border no longer consider wild nature to be important; that our unsustainable consumer culture and growth economics are more valuable to them, together with satisfying our ever-increasing lust for energy, than the protection of wildlife habitats, or uplifting scenery, or green tourism, or even the spiritual and recreational significance of wildlife green spaces" (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/ydhmc3d>).

Protected landscapes. Farmland in Surrey at the centre of an oil-drilling planning dispute may be reclassified as an AONB. Tim Harrold, vice-president of CPRE Surrey branch said: "We are absolutely agreed with the decision Surrey County Council have made concerning areas of great landscape value" (GS: <http://tinyurl.com/ygrz5c2>). CPRE East Hampshire has written a strongly-worded seven-page letter to East Hampshire District Council to object to the council's proposals to earmark more than 1,400 homes on greenfield sites, saying it will harm the South Downs National Park (TN: <http://tinyurl.com/yk6m6gq>). Surrey County Council has called for assurances from Boris Johnson that plans to cope with London's growing population will not put added pressure on the Surrey green belt (GS: <http://tinyurl.com/yl73g6r>). CPRE Chester says it has serious concerns over a £225 million 'Eden Project of the North' in the green belt (CF: <http://tinyurl.com/yjcpcm6>). Planning permission for an existing caravan park in the Brecon Beacons National Park has been quashed (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yga2vc9>).

Town greens. The decision to designate Oxford's Warneford Meadow as a Town Green will be challenged in High Court judicial review on February 25 (OxT: <http://tinyurl.com/ylyfp2vz>).

Dark Skies. CPRE Norfolk is backing plans to turn off 27,000 street lights in the county between midnight & 5am (EN24: <http://tinyurl.com/yfgjjh5>). CPRE Shropshire is taking part in a crowdsourced online campaign to promote dark skies on 20 March 2010 (#darkskies2010: <http://darkskies2010.wordpress.com/>). CPRE was among groups attending a conference: Tackling the Environmental Impact of Obtrusive Light (EPUK: <http://tinyurl.com/yibel4p>). The Environment Agency is predicting the era of the 'on-all-night' illuminated high street could end as the Carbon Reduction Commitment rolls out (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yjc4cfz>).

Biodiversity. Hilary Benn is calling for biodiversity to be given a cash price, like carbon (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ybual2m>). The whinchat is now virtually extinct south of the Pennines (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/y8pqq53>). Natural England has published new guidance for halting the decline of farmland birds and wildlife (WLE: <http://tinyurl.com/yzf7nf2>; NE: <http://tinyurl.com/yzdbdbe>; <http://tinyurl.com/zyz2zct>). Britain's upland birds are in danger of being driven off hills and mountains by onshore wind farms (<http://tinyurl.com/yly6lbk>). Plans to save Britain's declining bee population are in disarray after row between beekeepers & government (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/7pgSi>).

Heritage. The government is to put forward fewer sites for consideration by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yfbrm6f>). Natural England has published a guide on farming for the historic environment (<http://tinyurl.com/yfb5aqd>). The future of the former Cold War USAF base at Upper Heyford has been clarified after the publication of the Inspector's report following the public enquiry last year. The number of houses on the site will be restricted to 1,075 with appropriate employment opportunities (see forthcoming CPRE Oxfordshire Campaign Briefing: <http://tinyurl.com/yfgcjd5>). The Prince of Wales has become the Patron of the Historic Towns Forum (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/ykzv59d>).

4. Climate Change & the Carbon Economy

Global warming. NASA said the last decade was the warmest on record (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/ybyrvnx>). Over the last ten years global warming has been slowed by about 10% by reduced water vapour in atmosphere (NYT: <http://tinyurl.com/y8uc9s9>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yerhyv6>). The EU has reaffirmed its commitment to the Copenhagen accord and offered to increase emission cuts, a move backed by the UK government (DECC: <http://tinyurl.com/yhsydlw>; <http://tinyurl.com/yz7jusa>).

Glaciergate. After Climategate, sceptical press attention has turned to problems with claims that glaciers are retreating quickly and that natural disasters are linked to climate change (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/ykcl4zl>; <http://tinyurl.com/yf5pkr4>; <http://tinyurl.com/yfxms8n>; Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/ybttcwc>; <http://tinyurl.com/yetgqay>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ylbx5fc>). The Stern Report was changed between launch and publication to remove overstated climate impacts in USA and Australia (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yaepf79>). "Inaccurate claims predicting Himalayan meltdown have handed gainsayers a big victory. But nothing material has changed" (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yk7xnew>). Climate Change Secretary Ed Miliband warned that controversies over scientific data must not be allowed to undermine efforts to tackle global warming (Observer: <http://tinyurl.com/yjyba34>). The Government's chief scientific adviser John Beddington said there is an urgent need for more honest disclosure of the uncertainty of predictions about the rate of climate change (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/y8p4gdu>).

5. Energy, Waste and Water

Renewables. Customers are paying more than £1 billion a year to subsidise windfarms and other forms of renewable energy, adding an estimated £13.50 to the average household electricity bill last year (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/y8m7vxp>). There is still a huge amount to do to win public support for renewable energy, Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, warned (NEF: <http://tinyurl.com/yj59438>). The Royal Academy of Engineering called for a step-change in retrofitting old buildings to make them waste less energy and warned that attaching "eco-bling" such as wind turbines or solar panels to buildings will not help the UK cut the carbon emissions from buildings fast enough (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yfdklf9>). Twelve million low-energy light bulbs were posted to households over Christmas by npower as part of its legal obligation to cut carbon emissions, despite government advice that many would never be used (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yfvoqma>).

Offshore wind. The Prime Minister announced the most ambitious offshore wind project in the world, which could see 6,400 turbines built around the coast by 2020. It will require a massive offshore supergrid and a new harbour, energy experts warned (DECC: <http://tinyurl.com/yacyjyq>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/ydm6fzr>). Offshore accommodation may also be needed (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/y94ccum>). Off the coast of the South East, E.ON Climate and Renewables has won the 0.6 GW Hastings zone; Eneco New Energy won the 0.9 GW West of Isle of Wight zone (EE: <http://tinyurl.com/ykst3yf>). CPRE Sussex has warned that power will need to cross the South Downs National Park to get to the current grid, and it will strenuously resist any consideration of overhead lines. An offshore substation may be a better solution than onshore (information CPRE Sussex).

Wind. The Government has failed to persuade any of the major wind turbine manufacturers to open a factory in Britain (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yho7vuc>). Environment protection experts are calling for government guidelines on wind turbines to be revised as they were drawn up for turbines one-third the size (EUK: <http://tinyurl.com/yg5a75l>). Energy minister David Kidney dismissed claims that the permitted night-time noise limit for onshore wind turbines is too high (NEF: <http://tinyurl.com/yjdcwb9>). American scientists working for the wind industry have dismissed the idea of a "wind turbine syndrome" but concede that the swishing sound caused by wind turbines can "annoy" some people, keeping them awake at night and even causing psychological problems because of the stress (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yecu5q9>; Report: <http://tinyurl.com/ybmgw6q>). Noise from roads is more disruptive to people's lives than that from wind turbines, the president of the Institute of Acoustics said. Suggesting noise regulations should not be changed, he said "undermining the noise regulations is a useful tactic for campaigners who are trying to stop planning permission being granted" (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yjl4v5g>; NEF: <http://tinyurl.com/ykulazt>). A Natural England study looks at the impact of building wind farms on peat bog & provides criteria for assessment of applications (<http://tinyurl.com/ylyzpa2k>). One in six of the UK's officially-designated beauty spots could soon be blighted by wind farms (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yegj9op>). The Two Moors Campaign, CPRE Devon and the Exmoor Society have won the battle against two wind farms on the fringes of the Exmoor National Park (TND: <http://tinyurl.com/yly75we>).

Bioenergy. The Energy Technologies Institute, a £1bn public-private investment body, said it was launching a project to map all the “under-utilised” land in Britain, including moorlands, to find out how much could be turned over to growing bioenergy crops. Ian Woodhurst of CPRE said: “Large bioenergy crop monocultures will damage landscape character and cause problems for wildlife, for example by obstructing the movement of some species around the countryside. In the 70s hundreds of conifer forests were planted and now we are spending a lot of money getting rid of them. We don’t want to go back to that” (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yauomv8>). The Renewable Fuels Agency said using biofuel in vehicles may be accelerating the destruction of rainforest and resulting in higher greenhouse gas emissions than burning pure petrol and diesel (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yhaeu3m>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ygfkvxe>).

Nuclear. The National Audit Office raised the prospect of public subsidies for nuclear (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yddg5zs>). The Lake District National Park Authority has warned that two proposed nuclear power plants would have a serious impact on the area’s tourism industry (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yk9jv7a>). Energy companies called on the government to include the Dungeness nuclear site on the Kent coast as a potential location for a new nuclear power station (PP: <http://tinyurl.com/yz6rbuk>).

Coal. Ageing coal-fired power stations should be exempted from environmental regulations and kept open to stop the lights from going out in cold weather, the chief executive of E.ON UK urged the government (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ybfxwvj>). CPRE Northumberland is backing residents opposing the extraction of two and a half million tonnes of coal from countryside on a site less than 300 yards from a village school (Journal: <http://tinyurl.com/ykldak5>). Police and a specialist evictions team have begun a major operation to end a six-month occupation of an opencast mine site in Scotland (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/ygc35m6>).

Wirescapes. Two and a half miles of power lines are being removed in the South Downs National Park (SE: <http://tinyurl.com/yh58fle>). National Grid transmission director Nick Winser promised Parliament “complete openness” about the economics and technical feasibility of undergrounding power lines (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/yzas53x>). The Scottish Government has approved the controversial Beaulieu - Denny power line upgrade project, pylons along 220km of the Highland’s finest scenery, five years after it was proposed (PP: <http://tinyurl.com/yzupp4a>).

Supply. Gas supplies to major customers were interrupted in the January cold snap (UPI: <http://tinyurl.com/yhegrkz>). A huge gas storage scheme in Lancashire was rejected again, the developers vowing to fight on (PP: <http://tinyurl.com/yfss8o9>). Wind farms produced “practically no electricity” during the cold snap (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yjc273q>).

Waste. The government is proposing to end dumping of food waste within two years and use it for composting or energy (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yibkw93>). CPRE Sussex has told the County Council to go back to the drawing board with its waste disposal strategy, because none of its proposed Areas of Search will yield an acceptable waste disposal site (<http://tinyurl.com/2xlanw>).

Water. Following complaints from local residents and others, the South East Water strategic water plan inquiry, due to start in May, has been relocated from Ashford in Kent to the more central location of Gatwick (information CPRE Sussex).

6. Transport

Manifesto. The Campaign for Better Transport (CBT), CPRE, CTC, Friends of the Earth and Living Streets have issued a pre-election manifesto calling on the Government to introduce a ‘transport test’ for all new policies so they do not lead to people having to travel further, particularly by car. They are calling for a ‘walkability test’ to ensure public services are easily reachable for the population by foot, and for the government to raise up to £6bn through lorry road user charging and saving cash by cancelling road schemes (<http://tinyurl.com/tranmani>). The Campaign for Better Transport unearthed claimed Highways Agency research showing the claimed benefits of new roads don’t work out in practice and some roads actually create new problems (<http://tinyurl.com/yfj7pka>).

Operation Stack. Kent County Council was instructed to reveal details of all the locations it has considered as possible lorry park sites to deal with Operation Stack under the Freedom of Information Act (KO: <http://tinyurl.com/yzoxhu7>; <http://tinyurl.com/yhucz5e>).

Aviation. BAA said it will not take the next step towards building a third runway at Heathrow, public consultation, until after the general election (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yhbvftp>). Greenpeace has launched a competition to design a 'fortification' for its airplot, a piece of land at Simpson owned by more than 65,000 protestors (<http://tinyurl.com/y93gaec>). The London Assembly's environment committee said it had "grave concerns" over the runway plans, saying pollution and noise would breach health and safety regulations (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/y8j5be7>). Medway Council slammed plans for a Thames Estuary airport, saying it will be too far from London and too close to a major liquefied natural gas port (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/ykqvt42>). Campaign group Fight the Flights has secured a judicial review against the expansion of London City Airport (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yzlcpfl>).

Rail. The Tories slammed government plans for failing to include a suitable connection from High Speed Two to Heathrow airport (NCE: <http://tinyurl.com/yksh3ps>). Harriet Harman suggested an announcement on High Speed Two will be made by mid-March (NCE: <http://tinyurl.com/ykyxehc>). The rail press said that plans are expected to be rushed through planning stages and parliament following a hybrid bill in March (Rail News: <http://tinyurl.com/yzecb72>). Chiltern Railways has submitted a planning application to help create a new main line from London to Oxfordshire, via Bicester (Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/yz68jo5>).

Ramblegate. The Ramblers broke cover with a very public row over policy in the Guardian. CEO Tom Franklin wrote an upbeat article about the group and its campaign for young walkers, supported by trustee Kate Ashbrook. Vice President Chris Hall launched a counter offensive "disabusing" Franklin and accusing him of being "astray". Director of campaigns, Keith Roberts responded somewhat unconvincingly "our vice-presidents have a range of views, which we welcome" (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/y9ptw4a>; <http://tinyurl.com/yzzs87h>; <http://tinyurl.com/yebds8m>; <http://tinyurl.com/yj6granr>).

Footpaths. The South Downs Society called on West Sussex County Council to reverse its decision to prevent the new South Downs National Park Authority from looking after footpaths in the county (SL: <http://tinyurl.com/yff9hg8>).

7. Rural Affairs, Farming and Food

Rural communities. Nearly seven in ten of today's rural residents moved to the countryside from more urban areas, with 37% arriving recently. Contrary to popular myth, the new comers integrate well into rural life and are welcomed by country folk (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/ydd8lke>). Rural communities should be granted the right to try to save essential services by turning them into community-owned enterprises, the Plunkett Foundation said (RSN: <http://tinyurl.com/yhpx72d>). A community-owned, timber-framed, self-heating village shop in Sussex in a SSSI, is featured in the Ecologist (<http://tinyurl.com/yznxjco>).

Food 2030. Government's Food 2030 report was slammed by Sustain for failing to tackle the unsustainable nature of our food and farming system. FoE said the government "yet again has failed to choose the path to fair and planet-friendly food". CPRE welcomed the report but said "A new 'Golden Age' for agriculture will require investment in both agricultural research and green farming schemes so we can continue to enjoy a beautiful countryside alongside sustainable supplies of food" (Sustain: <http://bit.ly/65D444>; FoE: <http://tinyurl.com/yk9xox4>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/yigbwct>; CPRE Shropshire <http://tinyurl.com/yfp9vbl>).

Food. Government Chief Scientific Advisor John Beddington gave his backing to GM food. FoE retorted there is "no conclusive evidence that GM increases yields and called for a move away from damaging industrial farming" (FoE: <http://tinyurl.com/yhj42x>). The London Assembly said London's planning system must be reformed to fully exploit the capital's potential to increase its self-sufficiency for food, after finding that much of the green belt is not actively farmed (<http://tinyurl.com/cultcap>).

Supermarkets. The government finally agreed to a Supermarket Ombudsman but the Forum of Private Business said it will not help small shops (RSN: <http://tinyurl.com/yj7jh4u>; FWI: <http://tinyurl.com/yffop6r>). At least one of Britain's big retailers has told suppliers it intends to slash farmgate prices by 15% prior to the Ombudsman being established (FWI: <http://tinyurl.com/yz8p2fc>). CPRE said: "This is an important and overdue step forward in reining

in the excessive power big supermarket chains can wield over our food system. We need to go further and find ways to strengthen the range of food market outlets, including independent and community shops, farmers and traditional markets, local parades and high street stores" (<http://tinyurl.com/yfabzrv>). "One of the most striking observations made by Peter Kendall, the president of the National Farmers' Union, at the Oxford Farming Conference, was that the supermarkets have been allowed to create a climate of fear in the countryside, with their abuse of retail power" (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/ye5d3d9>). Friends of the Earth has launched a campaign against Tesco's dominance of the market, calling on the government to introduce a competition test (<http://tinyurl.com/tescofoul>).

Broadband. The government is consulting on the Next Generation Fund, which will allocate £1 billion to benefit rural communities and hard to reach areas without access to next generation broadband. However, the proposals are only to "support the roll out of NGA to at least 90% of households in the UK by 2017" (RSN: <http://tinyurl.com/yiptbvb>; Deadline 1 April: <http://tinyurl.com/ykj5wmb>). At the time of the last Census in 2001, 9.5 million people (19.3% of the population) lived in rural England (<http://tinyurl.com/ylxzmfk>), so the plans will reach perhaps only half rural England.

8. Campaigning

Guide. The Ecologist has published a brief guide to campaigning (<http://tinyurl.com/y9syyzx>).

Kingsnorth. The arguments over policing of protests at Kingsnorth rumble on. The Guardian published documents revealing the Kent Chief Constable urged E.ON to do more to disrupt environmental activists. The Chief Constable retorted "the company was treated in exactly the same way as any victim of crime" (<http://tinyurl.com/y9xkl6l>; <http://tinyurl.com/yf65zum>).

Law. Environmental campaign groups welcomed proposals by Lord Justice Jackson for changes to the legal system to improve access to justice in environmental protection cases. The Jackson Report recommends that claimants in all judicial review cases should not normally be at risk of having to pay the other side's costs (FoE: <http://tinyurl.com/ygwmhj6>).

Open data. The government has released thousands of datasets for researchers, developers and campaigners (<http://data.gov.uk/>). One of the early applications is a map of renewable energy installations (<http://www.renewables-map.co.uk/>). Another is a prototype map of planning applications near you (<http://tinyurl.com/yfltcjw>; type postcode & click 'run pipe').

CPRE South East eBulletin

We hope you find this eBulletin useful. Please forward it to colleagues who you think it may interest.

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