

Campaign to Protect Rural England

South East Region eBulletin: News for June 2010

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In the first part of this eBulletin, we look at emerging government policy on planning, housing, energy and the environment. The second part covers events around the South East and across the country, including reaction to the abolition of the South East Plan.

The Coalition Government

1. Planning

Out: Regional Strategies. Communities Secretary Eric Pickles sent a letter to planning authorities instructing them that the forthcoming abolition of Regional Strategies and national housing targets should be a material consideration in planning matters (<http://is.gd/czoaJ>). (In most areas, the Regional Strategies have not yet been unified and still comprise Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Economic Strategies). The Planning Inspectorate advised that the South East Plan and other regional strategies are still in force, and that a five year supply of housing will need to be maintained. However, where the regional policies are relied on to justify housing and other policies, the Inspectorate suggests that a decisions should be delayed until the policy situation is clearer. It also says that where regional policy has been central to public inquiries and hearings which have not reached a decision, they may need to be reopened (<http://is.gd/dbDp3>). The government has promised further guidance on the implications of the decision to scrap regional strategies and suggested it may use secondary legislation rather than wait for primary legislation to make the changes (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/dbDL0>).

Out: Infrastructure Planning Commission. The government announced the IPC will be abolished and replaced by a Major Infrastructure Planning Unit in the Planning Inspectorate. Fiona Howie, CPRE Head of Planning, said: "This announcement will be seen as a victory for local people who will no longer fear the threat of unelected bureaucrats forcing through unwanted development. The need for speed must not compromise the quality of planning decisions." National Policy Statements are to be retained but will be subject to ratification by Parliament (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/dbDnb>; IPC: <http://is.gd/ddywr>).

Out: Regional Development Agencies. The Public Bodies Bill will close down Regional Development Agencies by the end of March 2012. South East councils had already voted to scrap SEEDA (New Start: <http://is.gd/dctnU>; <http://is.gd/dctq5>). The government also abolished the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives scheme.

Out: South East Partnership Board. The board is to close at the end of July after DCLG pulled its funding (<http://is.gd/dcxL9>).

In: Local Enterprise Partnerships. Regional Development Agencies will be replaced with LEPs which will bring together councils and businesses "on an equal footing". Vince Cable said that the LEPs will reflect "the genuine interests and commitment of enterprise, local councils and other stakeholders like universities and colleges [and will] take on the task of renewing local economies and tackling local barriers to growth." The LEPs will tackle planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure, employment, enterprise and supporting business start-ups. Other roles currently carried out by the RDAs will be centralised to Whitehall including inward investment, sector leadership, responsibility for business support, innovation, and access to finance (Guardian: <http://is.gd/da5Jw>). Town halls are to be offered the casting vote on the boards of LEPs as an incentive to accept elected mayors (Regen: <http://is.gd/da5Bp>). Eric Pickles and Vince Cable sent a letter to councils and business leaders inviting them to submit proposals (DCLG: <http://is.gd/da6ad>; Regen: <http://is.gd/dbEB9>).

Out: Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. This fund, which rewarded council's housing and planning performance, has been cancelled at a saving of £146m. Planners have warned the decision could cause development standards to plummet (Planning: <http://is.gd/dcxZi>).

In: Regional Growth Fund. The government launched the fund for areas and communities hard hit by public spending cuts, including the cuts to RDA budgets. It provides £1bn for 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 to fund "private bodies and public-private partnerships" (Regen: <http://is.gd/dcFCR>). One in three jobs in predominantly rural local authority areas are within the public sector, compared to one in four elsewhere. Oxfordshire has the highest number of public sector employees of all rural counties in England (RSN: <http://is.gd/d9Zko>; Rose: <http://is.gd/da0mN>). A White Paper on local and regional growth is promised.

In: Simplified planning consent. In the budget, the government announced that it will "promote the role for a simplified planning consents process in specific areas where there is potential or need for business growth, through use of Local Development Orders" (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/dcwq2>). LDOs were introduced in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 with the intention of setting permitted rights for small areas and targeted projects, but there was no take up until pilots were launched in 2009. The new government is expected to outline an expanded role for LDOs in a white paper later this year.

In or Out?: Leaders Boards. The local authority Leaders Boards which replaced regional assemblies will no longer be funded by the government, though it has not directed that they should be dismantled (Regen: <http://is.gd/dbDZQ>).

Cuts. RDA budgets have been cut for this year. SEEDA loses nearly a quarter of its budget: SEEDA: £28.3m (23%); Advantage West Midlands: £37.1 million (19%); EEDA: £23.3m (23%); EMDA: £28.3m (23%); NWDA: £52m (18%); One North-East: £32.9m (15%); SWERDA: £27.8m (20%); Yorkshire Forward: £40.3m (19%) (Regen: <http://is.gd/d8HRw>).

2. In: Decentralisation and Localism Bill

The Decentralisation and Localism Bill will set out the structures for a "locally driven planning regime, driven by incentives".

In: Localism. Joking at a recent conference, Communities Minister Eric Pickles said "I've said my three main priorities are localism, localism, localism, but I reserve the right to change the order" (DCLG: <http://is.gd/dcuWi>). Planning minister Bob Neill said: "People who make planning decisions will no longer be able to avoid reporting back to those whose lives are directly affected by them. Communities will be able to come together and take responsibility for solving their own local challenges in a way that makes sense for them" (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/dcwQA>).

In: Incentives. The government will give local authorities who build new homes a payment worth 100% of council tax revenues from the homes for six years after completion. For affordable homes, the payment rises to 125%. Keith Mitchell, leader of Oxfordshire County Council said that the cash would not be enough to persuade some councils in the South East to build more homes. Communities are promised "business rate and council tax incentives which would allow local authorities to reinvest the benefits of growth into local communities". (Regen: <http://is.gd/da5kF>; Guardian: <http://is.gd/dcmOC>; Times: <http://is.gd/dcso5>). "Nimby protesters offered tax bribes" (Independent: <http://is.gd/dbDz6>).

In: Cooperation. The Bill will contain a statutory obligation for councils to cooperate across area boundaries. In a speech, decentralisation minister Greg Clark used the Thames Gateway area as an example saying there could be "cooperation and collaboration" between the Gateway areas of Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock (Planning: <http://is.gd/da1q6>).

In: Local Housing Trusts. Housing Minister Grant Shapps confirmed that plans for Local Housing Trusts will be included in the Bill (DCLG: <http://is.gd/dbCOL>). LHTs would have to prove that any new schemes had support from an "overwhelming majority – around 90% – of the local community". They would also have to meet some "basic planning criteria" but would not have to lodge formal planning applications (Planning: <http://is.gd/dbDa0>).

Housing Minister Grant Shapps claimed that “the age of aspiration is back” and promised to help people trying to get on the property ladder by boosting the number of new homes being built (NHF: <http://is.gd/dctzl>).

3. Housing

Out: Housing Targets. Eric Pickles freed councils from national and regional housing targets (<http://is.gd/czoaJ>), and councils around the country began cutting housing targets. In a letter to the Observer, CPRE’s Kate Houghton said: “we should avoid a kneejerk reaction to the government’s decision to scrap centrally imposed housing targets. It has become clear that not only did these targets fail to deliver housing numbers, they also failed to deliver enough well-designed, affordable housing in the places where it is most needed” (<http://is.gd/dbFJI>).

Out: NHPAU. The National Housing and Planning Advice Unit, which called for ever higher housing targets, has been abolished with immediate effect (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/dadOk>). The RTPI said “the unit was a reliable source of objective data to further understanding of housing supply and affordability” (Planning: <http://is.gd/ddDT00>).

Cut: Homes & Communities Agency. The new housing minister Grant Shapps said the national housing and regeneration quango will not be abolished, but faces a future as a smaller more strategic body (Regen: <http://is.gd/dbE8Q>).

Cut: Thames Gateway. The coalition government has pledged to support the Thames Gateway regeneration but will review its funding (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/dcfBP>).

In or Out?: Eco-towns. In a letter to all affected councils, DCLG set out the coalition policy on eco-towns. “In terms of going forward with eco-towns and eco-developments the Housing Minister has made clear that his priority is to see that plans are well supported locally and will achieve genuine improvements in sustainability. The government will not designate or impose a solution on a particular area and will not support an eco-town if the local community are opposed to it” (Letter: <http://is.gd/dbCuD>). Campaigners in Warwickshire celebrated the demise of Middle Quniton (BARD: <http://is.gd/dbCy3>). Developers and Cherwell Council are uncertain whether the planned eco-town extension to Bicester in Oxfordshire will continue, though much of the government money is already banked (Banbury Cake: <http://is.gd/dcm2j>). Grant Shapps suggested the towns might be rebranded: “it is ridiculous to have towns that have eco as a tagline falling behind eco standards” (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/dcmgr>; GBP: <http://is.gd/dcmmH>).

Cuts. Communities and Local Government has been told to find £780m savings in 2010/11. Central funding for local government will be cut £1.166bn (DCLG: <http://is.gd/dcIF7>). 7,000 homes are threatened by cuts to the HCA budget (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/dcvZF>). The National Housing Federation expressed alarm at the shortfall in funding for affordable housing, claiming that social house building will fall by 65% during the next year. It is also predicting a 20% rise across the whole country in the number of families living in overcrowded housing by 2013, to 90,000. There are currently 203,000 South East households on housing waiting lists (BBC: <http://is.gd/ddEEH>).

4. Out: Garden Grabbing and Density Targets

The letter. The government issued a letter removing the classification of private residential gardens from the definition of previously developed land (brownfield), and abolishing minimum housing density targets (CLG letter: <http://is.gd/dadhn>). The Planning Inspectorate issued an advice note on the changes (<http://is.gd/dbC5e>).

Green reaction. CPRE’s Shaun Spiers cautioned that government could be risking environmental disaster and said the changes “could undermine the sustainable use of land and leave the English countryside under the threat of sprawling new development” (<http://is.gd/db2aW>; Express: <http://is.gd/dbGvq>). Hilary Newport of Protect Kent said: “We welcome the change where gardens are no longer designated as brownfield sites. But on the other side of the coin, we must ensure a planning system with strong enough policies to stop

new developments spreading onto greenfield sites" (Your Canterbury: <http://is.gd/dbGn7>). EPUK welcomed the move (<http://is.gd/d9Ouj>).

Other reaction. "These measures will encourage councils to use their powers to protect the character of residential neighbourhoods but the impact on councils' ability to protect open space, green belt and countryside will need to be monitored" (RTPI, Planning: <http://is.gd/dadFm>). "Density targets are at the basis of sustainable development, with a compact city based on public transport the way to create sustainable places. Lowering the density would fundamentally damage everything we've been trying to do in that area" (Richard Rogers, Building: <http://is.gd/dcgLd>). "The government won some easy popularity... but has made the housing headache that much more splitting" (Rowan Moore, Guardian: <http://is.gd/dcety>). "Far from being the beginning of 'wholesale reform' they are... likely to cause an increase in urban sprawl and creating a very real threat to our countryside" (Mike Davies, Birmingham Post: <http://is.gd/dcgIg>). "However much (or little) new housing the market will now bear, almost all will henceforth be on greenfield land, with dire consequences for cities, neighbourhoods, social fabric, transport demands, and most people's housing needs" (Alan Wenban-Smith, Guardian: <http://is.gd/dcqfh>).

5. Landscapes, Tranquillity and Environment

Defra strategy. Defra Secretary Caroline Spelman promised to tackle the decline in biodiversity, prioritise coastal erosion and support community-led broadband in rural areas. She said: "For the first time, we are developing an integrated strategy across Government, and across the public, private and third sectors, to tackle the loss of biodiversity, address the way that we use resources, adapt to climate change and grow a greener economy that provides the clean, green jobs and industries of the future" (<http://is.gd/cznNx>).

Cuts. Defra takes a £162 million cut this year. National Park budgets for the current year have been cut by 5% (RSN: <http://is.gd/da10W>); English Heritage by £4m (4%); CABE by £0.6m (3%). The planned visitor centre at Stonehenge, the subject of decades of debate, will no longer be funded (EH: <http://is.gd/dcyZ8>).

6. Transport

In or Out?: Transport Schemes. The DfT has told planning authorities not to assume that schemes prioritised under the previous Government's Regional Funding Allocations process will be funded. "They will wish to consider carefully whether investing further time and resources in developing such schemes is justified" (<http://is.gd/dcv3a>). Government ministers are considering the case for a fuel duty discount in remote rural areas with a lack of public transport (RSN: <http://is.gd/d9Zjr>).

In: More Flights. Philip Hammond has set up a task group with the aviation industry to work out how to meet growing demand for flights to and from the region without building new runways (Planning: <http://is.gd/d7qcp>; DfT: <http://is.gd/dcvaG>). The Government will explore changes to the aviation tax system, including switching from a per-passenger to a per-plane duty, which could encourage fuller planes.

Cuts. The DfT will reduce spending by a total of £28.9 billion between 2011/12 and 2018/19, unconfirmed reports say (Regen: <http://is.gd/dcHdb>). The Campaign for Better Transport said salami slicing of transport budgets will decimate bus and local train services (New Start: <http://is.gd/dctcG>). HCA funding of up to £10m towards the Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme has been suspended and will be considered as part of the Government's forthcoming departmental spending review (DCLG: <http://is.gd/dcxdo>).

7. Climate Change and the Carbon Economy

In: Green Investment Bank. The Green Investment Bank Commission, set up by the Tories before the election suggested that the GIB should be formed from several quangos, including the Carbon Trust, the Energy Technologies Institute, and the low carbon wing of the Technology Strategy Board (Independent: <http://is.gd/d9Lcd>; Guardian: <http://is.gd/d9MJj>).

In: Housing Retrofit. Energy and Climate Change Secretary Chris Huhne said his plans for cutting carbon emissions from homes would be his department's flagship bill for the new parliament (Energy Security and Green Economy Bill). High street shops and energy companies will pay for £90 billion of energy-efficiency improvements to homes, which householders will pay back from the savings they make through lower fuel bills. Huhne said: "Energy saving is the cheapest way of closing the gap between demand and supply, yet it is the Cinderella of the energy ball. At the moment, we may as well be burning £50 notes outside our front doors" (Guardian: Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/d7pnt>).

Cuts. The Department of Energy and Climate Change has been cut £85 million for 2010-11 (7.5%). It has closed the Low Carbon Buildings Programme (NEF: <http://is.gd/dcxuS>).

8. Energy, Waste and Water

Out: Pay as You Throw. Caroline Spelman, the Environment Secretary announced a complete review of how Britain collects and disposes of rubbish promised to make the country a "zero waste economy" (Defra: <http://is.gd/dcuMB>; Guardian: <http://is.gd/daebS>). Friends of the Earth expressed disappointment at Communities Secretary's Eric Pickles decision to scrap plans to allow councils to levy 'pay as you throw' charges for household waste (FoE: <http://is.gd/daeeu>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/dae3k>).

In or Out?: Nuclear. Chris Huhne, the Energy and Climate Change Secretary, said there was a £4bn "black hole" in the nuclear power budget due to the costs of decommissioning aging nuclear plants (Independent: <http://is.gd/d9LRI>). He also said the Belarus gas dispute highlighted desperate need for Britain to build up a low-carbon energy policy and domestic energy security through new wind farms – and possibly nuclear reactors (Guardian: <http://is.gd/d9Ynp>). But, while reiterating that the government will not block new nuclear plants, Huhne claimed Britain's lights will stay on even without new nuclear power plants (Reuters: <http://is.gd/ddEIV>).

9. Rural Affairs, Farming and Food

Out: Commission for Rural Communities. Caroline Spelman abolished the four year old CRC and transferred its functions to a smaller Rural Communities Policy Unit within Defra. She pledged: "We are committed to improving the quality of life for those living in rural areas and we will put the fair treatment of rural communities at the centre of government." Shadow rural affairs secretary Hilary Benn condemned the move: "This will destroy a cross-government body that gave advice to all departments, and replace it with new civil service posts in just one department. This will reduce the rural voice in Whitehall by taking away an independent view representing the countryside and its needs." Shaun Spiers said: "I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Commission for Rural Communities as a public and independent voice for rural communities over the last four years, and to its Chair, Stuart Burgess, who has been a tireless Rural Advocate to Ministers. With the demise of the CRC, and the threat to the policy and advocacy role of other non-departmental public bodies, there will be an even greater need for Government to listen to NGOs and civil society organisations such as CPRE" (RSN: <http://is.gd/d9K9d>; Defra: <http://is.gd/d9Mia>).

Out: Farming Red Tape. Defra Secretary Caroline Spelman promised to cut red tape and suggested that EU direct payments to farmers may eventually be reduced in favour of environmental payments (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/cYU0P>). Friends of the Earth warned of a bonfire of environmental rules safeguarding the countryside after the government appointed Richard Macdonald, former director general of the National Farmers Union, to chair a deregulation taskforce (Guardian: <http://is.gd/da2Je>).

In: Rural Broadband. Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Defra Secretary Caroline Spelman confirmed the intention to bring superfast broadband to rural areas "to prevent a new digital divide between urban and rural communities." The government is also to look at boosting local TV. It has ditched plans to impose a levy on fixed telephone lines to fund rural broadband provision. (DCMS: <http://is.gd/d9XCr>; RSN: <http://is.gd/d9Zvm>).

Planning & Environment News

10. Planning

Mega depot approved. A High Court judge gave the Pyestock mega depot between Fleet and Farnborough the go ahead (Get Hants: <http://is.gd/dcdYw>).

Building without planning permission. Council leaders across Kent have called on the government to outlaw the practice of building without planning permission (Planning: <http://is.gd/dczDB>). Medway Council, supported by the RSPB, took action against the Thameside Terminal depot at Cliffe in North Kent, which was built without planning permission. An inspector has ruled that site, which damages an environmentally important area, should be cleared (RSPB: <http://is.gd/daeTc>). Runnymede Council is struggling to evict businesses from green belt land (Staines News: <http://is.gd/dcheT>).

Private sector cities. The Centre for Cities urged the government to relax planning rules over brownfield development and greenfield housing in a bid to boost cities like Brighton, Reading, and Milton Keynes with private sector growth (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/dcAzW>).

Planning for Change in the Countryside. The Country Land and Business Association called for more development in rural areas saying "the current planning system acts as a brake on appropriate and much-needed development in the countryside in the misplaced belief that this supports communities and the environment" (CLA: <http://is.gd/czFki>; Report: <http://is.gd/czENv>).

Population growth is not just a 'poor world' problem and needs to be reversed in the UK too, the Forum for the Future said. While a population of 70 million is not inherently unsustainable, managing that level of population sustainably will require an "extraordinary combination of planning, investment, and innovation" (Ecologist: <http://is.gd/dcANZ>).

Planning Aid. The free planning help service run by the RTPI has launched a new website (<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid/>). Planning Aid has also published a guide to good public engagement in development schemes (<http://is.gd/dczw6>).

11. Housing

Reaction to abolition of South East Plan. Several councils and campaign groups have reacted to the abolition of the SEP and the removal of housing targets. Hilary Newport of Protect Kent said: "It risks having the worst of all outcomes because it will be hard, in the absence of any plan, to redirect development to brownfield sites. There could be a free-for-all... pulling the rug from under the planning system until there is something very secure to replace it risks creating a vacuum developers may exploit" (Kent Online: <http://is.gd/dcfVv>). Sean Furey of Protect Kent welcomed the move: "The power went the wrong way and a lot of things were imposed on Kent as a result. Hopefully this trend can now be reversed because local authorities know the local issues better" (Kent News: <http://is.gd/dcg3y>). Redhill and Reigate council is now expecting to build the housing it needs without eating into the green belt (RRH Life: <http://is.gd/cznEU>). Bracknell Forest Council is waiting for further announcements before deciding whether to press on with 3,000 houses around Binfield (Get Bracknell: <http://is.gd/d7tj7>). South and West Oxfordshire councils are to withdraw or review their core strategies (Planning: <http://is.gd/czoLA>). Mole Valley District Council has reversed a recent decision to release reserve sites for development (Get Surrey: <http://is.gd/dcdCn>). Winchester council is seeking a "big public debate" on the future of development in the city, including plans to build 2,000 homes on Barton Farm (Hants Chronicle: <http://is.gd/dcdGX>; <http://is.gd/dcdPJ>). The requirement for 945 homes to be built every year in Basingstoke and Deane is "as good as dead", a borough planning councillor claimed (Gazette: <http://is.gd/dce49>). Neil Parkin, Conservative leader of Adur District Council said the number of new homes planned for Sussex will fall "significantly" following the decision (Argus: <http://is.gd/dce8l>). Wealden District Council welcomed the abolition of targets and is hoping to reduce the target of 11,000 houses (eGov: <http://is.gd/dcgAS>). Tony Mernagh of the

Brighton and Hove Economic Partnership said "Councillors remain keen on building homes in the city but they want them in the right places and not on the Downs" (Argus: <http://is.gd/ddCsi>). MP John Redwood called for new lower housing targets for Wokingham (Get Wokingham: <http://is.gd/ddCx8>).

Court victory. Guildford Borough Council has won its legal challenge at the High Court against the requirements set out in the South East Plan against plans to build 422 homes every year until 2026 (Get Surrey: <http://is.gd/dfcKL>).

No Nimbys. The National Housing and Planning Advisory Unit published its Public Attitudes to Housing survey, showing that more than three quarters of people would support more homes being built in their area, provided that local services such as GP surgeries and schools do not suffer (DCLG: <http://is.gd/dcuHD>).

Community Land Trusts. The National Community Land Trust Network has been set to help rural communities provide affordable housing for local residents. It will provide legal, financial and development advice to Community Land Trusts (CLTs). The Network is being hosted by the NHF (RSN: <http://is.gd/cZnYY>). The Transition Towns are already beginning to explore the Community Land Trust model as a way of bringing localism back to communities (New Start: <http://is.gd/d93IK>).

Sussex. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in Sussex has called for environmental groups and the public to join it in fighting renewed plans for 520 houses at Polegate, East Sussex which it calls "a brazen affront to the new National Park". Stuart Meier, Director of CPRE Sussex, said "this proposal has rightly been thrown out by the council. CPRE has long resisted the suggestion of development on this sensitive site, which manages both to be inaccessible to people because it is on the wrong side of the A27, and to be very prominent in the landscape because it is right at the foot of Folkington Down". CPRE Sussex is taking rule 6 status and plans to give evidence at the Inquiry.

Milton Keynes. CABE has reviewed the proposed development of 5,311 new homes at Salden Chase, Milton Keynes. It called for ambitious sustainability targets and said the proposal could do more to capitalise on the assets of this vast site. A well-designed landscape concept could help develop the special historic landscape character of Salden Chase (<http://is.gd/da4xi>).

12. Landscapes, Tranquillity and Environment

Green Belt. Communities Secretary Eric Pickles said "The previous government gave a green light for the destruction of the Green Belt across the country and we are determined to stop it" (BBC, 31 May: <http://is.gd/dcwHy>). The same Eric Pickles approved a housing scheme on green belt land at east Tilbury, Essex (Planning Portal, 24 June: <http://is.gd/dcwBU>). The High Court has ruled that travellers can build toilets on a green belt settlement built without planning permission (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/db0NM>). Residents in Surrey claim a 350 home development in Row Town is the first step towards losing the area's Green Belt (Surrey Herald: <http://is.gd/dchum>). A planning inspector has thrown our proposals for 350 houses on green belt land in Linslade (LBO&C: <http://is.gd/dci0q>).

Green Belt and policy changes. Reacting to the abolition of the South East Plan, Andrew Povey, Leader of Surrey Council said: "We don't need the sort of government diktats that could have seen the green belt between Guildford and Woking concreted over. The green belt has a purpose and helps to keep Surrey the special place that it is" (Independent: <http://is.gd/dchjo>). Bath council chiefs have promised that they will not allow green belt land to be used for housebuilding (Bath Chronicle: <http://is.gd/dchz1>). Plans to build thousands of homes on green belt land around Stevenage have been abandoned by the Borough Council. Kevin FitzGerald of CPRE Hertfordshire said: "We have been campaigning for years against proposals such as this to build in the Green Belt rather than use previously-developed land, bring the thousands of empty properties into use and redevelop rundown areas at higher densities" (Local London: <http://is.gd/dchRN0>; Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/dcqUt>).

Brownfield. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation said blanket percentage targets for brownfield development have worked exceptionally well but concludes they may no longer be useful for informing planning for housing. Local targets may be more effective, with the government giving funding to development on contaminated land, and permitting greater greenfield development in areas with a brownfield shortage (JRF: <http://is.gd/d7qSG0>). The government meanwhile cut the contaminated land budget (EPU: <http://is.gd/d9O0ir>).

Woodland. Clive Anderson, president of the Woodland Trust, called for a doubling in the amount of woodland in the UK so that the number of trees is equal to the European average (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/d9O00p>). A plan by the Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust to fell 75% of the trees in an area of Crookham Common is concerning councillors (Newbury Today: <http://is.gd/dckSh>).

Common land. The Open Spaces Society has published a new guide to managing community involvement in common land (Finding Common Ground: <http://is.gd/dczKp>).

Heritage. Small and medium-sized towns, suburbs, villages and hamlets, historic town centres, and other local areas will benefit from undertaking historic area assessments in the face of increasing pace of change, English Heritage said. It has published guidance to help local authorities and others to conduct such assessments (NDS: <http://is.gd/dcuFZ>).

South Downs National Park. A landowner wants permission to dig 75,000 tonnes of sand a year from his estate in the South Downs National Park for housing development. He is facing widespread opposition including from CPRE (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/dbGWp>).

Clutter. CPRE called for action to reduce the proliferation of man made clutter that is choking the landscape, saying that our 'Green and Pleasant land' is being lost under a blanket of overhead wires, phone masts, advertising boards, pylons and unnecessary road signs. It called for redundant mobile phone masts to be removed and for more power lines to be buried underground. It is also demanding a new requirement on councils to audit and reduce clutter (Daily Mail: <http://is.gd/dcg5S>; Grough: <http://is.gd/dbGLq>). CPRE Sussex said the new South Downs National Park is blighted by unnecessary clutter generated by bad management and insufficient planning controls (Sussex Today: <http://is.gd/dbEOv>).

Litter. Peter Silverman used a little known law to clean up the M40. Under section 91 of the 1990 Environmental Protection Act, for £200 citizens can ask their local court to serve litter abatement orders on those who are responsible for tidying up (Guardian: <http://is.gd/d0Ic7>).

Flooding. The Environment Agency warned that towns at risk of flooding will be expected to pay more for their own defences as Government money becomes increasingly scarce (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/d9NNd>).

13. Transport

Lydd Airport. Secretary of state Eric Pickles has called in proposals for the £25 million redevelopment of Lydd Airport in Kent (Kent News: <http://is.gd/dbGAH>; Regen: <http://is.gd/dbEpN>). Protect Kent said "Expanding the airport is the wrong way to go, and would damage internationally important wildlife habitats in the process" (Planning: <http://is.gd/dcggV>). The RSPB hailed the decision as a victory for the environment, for local people, and for common sense (<http://is.gd/d9NVI>). Campaigners are calling on BAA to compensate homeowners affected by its abandoned plans to expand Stansted (EPU: <http://is.gd/d9Oez>).

Whitney Cogges Link. Oxfordshire landowners have spent £20,000 on a report to prove that the Shores Green alternative to the controversial Cogges Link Road is viable (EWLC: <http://is.gd/dcl29> (excellent website); Whitney Gazette: <http://is.gd/dclbz>). A public inquiry has begun into the application to secure town green status for part of the route (Oxford Times: <http://is.gd/dclga>).

High Speed Two. Transport secretary Philip Hammond ordered HS2 to develop route options for a direct high-speed link to Heathrow airport; to draw up plans to link the route

with the existing High Speed 1 route through Kent; and to halt preparation work into a possible high-speed rail route between the West Midlands and Leeds (Regen: <http://is.gd/dbEIB>). The Department for Transport is refusing to publish maps which show the impact of the proposals on north Bucks (Bucks Herald: <http://is.gd/cznp1>). Campaigners from more than 30 action groups in Buckinghamshire protesting against the plans under the umbrella of the HS2 Action Alliance (BFP: <http://is.gd/dbG7I>; <http://is.gd/dbGdN>).

Cycling. CPRE urged Boris Johnson to set more ambitious cycling targets for London (Planning: <http://is.gd/dcdKO>).

14. Climate Change and the Carbon Economy

Zero Carbon Britain? A report from the UK's Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) said the country could be zero carbon by 2030. The report puts emphasis on offshore wind turbines and energy crops. Dustin Benton for CPRE, said: "Many policies which are good for the climate are good for rural character and natural beauty too". But he questioned some of the agricultural policies, accepting there would be a need to reduce livestock numbers but saying it was important not to risk biodiversity and beauty in an effort to drive down carbon (CAT: <http://www.zerocarbonbritain.com/>; CPRE: <http://is.gd/dad1q>). Households are typically being charged £84 a year in "hidden taxes" to help combat the impact of climate change (Independent: <http://is.gd/d9KKv>).

Emissions of failure. Britain is not on course to meet its climate change targets for reducing carbon emissions, the independent Committee on Climate Change warned Parliament and the government (Independent: <http://is.gd/d9KIG>). Changing the clocks to give another hour of daylight throughout the year would save the same amount of energy as taking 200,000 cars off the road (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/dabq2>).

15. Energy, Waste and Water

Upper Thames Reservoir. The public inquiry into the reservoir has begun. It is being strongly opposed by CPRE Oxfordshire and the Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD). Bruce Tremayne of CPRE Oxfordshire said: "If this reservoir is built it will be an enormous concrete basin that will totally alter and destroy the landscape in the Vale" (Independent: <http://is.gd/db1TP>; Journal: <http://is.gd/d7q2K>; BBC: <http://is.gd/dcgWM>). Nick Thompson, Chairman of GARD, said: "For 20 years, Thames Water has promoted this reservoir plan but failed to justify why it is needed. It will hit consumers with a £1 billion bill and local people will be blighted by construction lorries on their roads for 10 years" (GBP: <http://is.gd/dcgbi>). Oxfordshire County Council and Vale of White Horse District Council are opposing the scheme and the Environment Agency said the plan was neither "robust" nor a "sustainable solution" to forecast water shortages (Oxford Times: <http://is.gd/dcgUd>).

Water. London's desalination plant has opened at Beckham and will run on waste fryer oil (BBC: <http://is.gd/dceD7>).

Wirescapes. As power stations near urban areas are retired in the next few years, more power will come from remote wind farms and the National Grid is planning the power lines to connect them to consumers. CPRE called for more lines to be buried underground instead of strung on pylons. Paul Miner said: "Where pylons are needed there is scope for undergrounding," he said. The National Grid "should learn from Germany and Denmark, which have shown that burying cables can be more economic" (Planning: <http://is.gd/d7qeg>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/dabBu>). One proposed line will transit through Snowdonia National Park (Wales Online: <http://is.gd/d7u1E>).

Renewables. Renewables accounted for 3.1% of the UK's primary energy requirements in 2009, up 0.4% from the year before (NEF: <http://is.gd/dcx0>). Drax is complaining that the Renewable Obligation regime is tilted against co-firing coal power stations with biomass (Independent: <http://is.gd/daZNB>). A French carbon sequestration test declared a success (Guardian: <http://is.gd/db1oj>). Hydroelectric power has been growing over the last decade and the number of hydro-electric power plants in Britain is likely to rise from 400 today to

1,200 by 2020 (Independent: <http://is.gd/d9Led>; <http://is.gd/d9LHk>). The next global trend in renewables and biomass “looks set to be the new wind” (NEF: <http://is.gd/dcxAt>). Onshore wind is the “least cost zero carbon” technology option in the near to medium term according to a report published by DECC (NEF: <http://is.gd/dcxCF>). Energy firms are set to receive thousands of pounds a day per wind farm to turn off their turbines if the National Grid cannot use the power they are producing (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/dac2B>). Plans are underway for offshore wind farms in the Solent (IoW Press: <http://is.gd/d7tPM>).

Nuclear. The Environment Agency is consulting on design of nuclear power stations (<http://is.gd/dcvSH>).

16. Rural Affairs, Farming and Food

Uplands report. Days before its abolition, the Commission for Rural Communities published uplands inquiry report (summary: <http://is.gd/d6fgR>; full report: <http://is.gd/dcvLI>). It says that rather than seeing uplands as areas of severe disadvantage, they should be considered as areas of significant environmental, cultural and social value and opportunity. It calls for upland communities to be sustained for their national contribution of carbon, water, woodland products and food, and says that government should instruct local authorities to complete an audit of opportunities for renewable energy. The report says that “to retain and attract young people to the uplands is key to the future of vibrant, sustainable upland communities”, but offers little in the way of policy recommendations in this area. CPRE welcomed the report (Guardian: <http://is.gd/daexG>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/db1tF>; CPRE: <http://is.gd/db1YK>).

Biodiversity & farming. In the seventh of a series of “messages” for 2010, the European Environment Agency addresses farming and biodiversity. It concludes: “The upcoming CAP reform provides a good opportunity to integrate biodiversity issues more effectively... Although food production remains the primary role of agricultural ecosystems, we cannot forget that farming and rural land management... provide ecosystem services and public goods, and although the most important are environmental, they also include maintaining rural social fabric, especially in more marginal areas” (<http://is.gd/da6Jm>; other messages: <http://is.gd/da6Wz>). CPRE expressed serious concerns that 40% of farmers do not intend to participate in the Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) set up to retain the environmental benefits of the abolished set aside scheme (<http://is.gd/dbF23>).

Supermarkets. According to thinktank Demos, big supermarket chains have a key role to play in regenerating Britain’s poorest communities (Guardian: <http://is.gd/dctSE>). Andrew Simms responded: “Supermarkets don’t regenerate communities. These big stores destroy local economies, and hit the poorest especially hard” (Guardian: <http://is.gd/dctXe>). Planning permission for a new Tesco town at Bromley-by-Bow was granted (East London Advertiser: <http://is.gd/dcekL>). An empty supermarket in central London has been reopened as a cooperative food store, The People’s Supermarket, by two entrepreneurs seeking to bring quality food to deprived communities (New Start: <http://is.gd/dctEt>).

17. Campaigning

CPRE Cornwall has published a policy statement on the Coast & Countryside (<http://is.gd/da2y3>).

Peers. Kate Parminter, former chief executive of CPRE has been made a Liberal Democrat working peers (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/dbFXC>). Matthew Taylor, author of the affordable housing report, will also take up a seat in the Lords, joining John Prescott.

CPRE South East eBulletin

We hope you find this eBulletin useful. Please forward it to colleagues who you think it may interest. [Forward eBulletin](#). 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>. [Unsubscribe or change your details](#).