

Campaign to Protect Rural England

South East Region eBulletin: News for August 2010

My apologies for the late delivery of this report. Last week proved ferociously busy in Shropshire planning. We won cases against an incinerator and Tesco—for now (<http://is.gd/eX5FD>). In the South East, the major news is of course the significant victory against KIG. There is also a change this month. The eBulletin is being sent only as a PDF file. This will allow me from next month to improve formatting, graphics and links. But if this change causes you problems, please let me know. Thanks. Andy Boddington.

1. Planning and Economy

Kent International Gateway freight depot plan refused. CPRE Kent and local residents won a significant victory when Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has thrown out the massive KIG freight depot. This followed a nine-week public inquiry at the end of last year (BBC: <http://is.gd/eCgjY>). Chairman of Protect Kent Richard Knox-Johnston said: "We are delighted with the decision... We are relieved that common sense has prevailed" (<http://is.gd/eSLdr>). The main reasons that the appeal was rejected was there was an adverse effect on the adjoining Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and on the village of Bearsted. The decision was one of the first to be made in the absence of the South East Plan. Following rejection of a rail freight terminal at Radlett, St Albans, proposals are being developed for a terminal at Slough (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/eNeEK>; BDB: <http://is.gd/eK6OP>).

Policy changes. The government is consulting on simplification of Environmental Impact Assessments (Deadline: 25 October; <http://is.gd/eNLq7>). CPRE has joined forces with the Environmental Law Foundation to call on the Conservative party to deliver its pre-election promise of a third party right of appeal. CPRE's Paul Miner said that a public right of appeal in planning would end the costly judicial review process and ensure the delivery of good development (<http://is.gd/eCgIy>). The Commons Communities and Local Government Committee is to hold separate inquiries into the decision to revoke and abolish regional spatial strategies and the Coalition's localism agenda (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/eNO0w>).

Larger than local planning will deliver government's objectives. CPRE joined with 20 other bodies, including environmental groups, planners and developers to call on Eric Pickles to retain larger than local planning. It is calling for "an effective framework to deliver the Government's objectives in terms of the economy, the environment, sustainable development and social policy". The group is calling for a meeting with the government: "such a meeting is, we believe, particularly urgent now that RSSs have been revoked and there is the need to limit any adverse impacts that this may have on investment" (Letter: <http://is.gd/eCk9C>).

Rural Challenge. The Rural Coalition, of which CPRE is a member, issued a major report on the future of rural England, *The Rural Challenge*. Rural Coalition chairman Matthew Taylor said: "With no change in policy and no commitment to action, much of the countryside is becoming part dormitory, part theme park and part retirement home. The rural coalition believes the Government's commitment to localism and the Big Society opens the door to reforms - but as yet there is a very real risk that in practice cuts will fall heaviest in rural communities which may lose services altogether." The report calls on local authorities to base planning on a thorough understanding of rural needs and "must not assume that rural communities are inherently unsustainable, even the smaller ones" (<http://is.gd/etLvl>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eNe3M>). The report said town hall planners, local councils and communities should be free to come up with innovative solutions to the rural affordable housing crisis and urged the Government to give greater independence to local residents and councils. It called for "a radical transformation of planning practice to give communities the lead in planning for thriving and sustainable new neighbourhoods when market towns need to grow. Too often market towns in urban areas have been ringed with endless suburban

style housing estates and business parks, without any sense of rural identity.” The coalition attacked the community Right to Build saying the referendum requirement could “wreck the aim of the Government’s proposals and create long lasting conflict within communities which brings local development to a halt” (CPRE: <http://is.gd/eKXKM>; “The Curious Case of the Right to Build”: <http://is.gd/eKYf6>).

Economy. Rose Consulting has produced a rural vulnerability index for the most predominantly rural counties. Oxfordshire is the least vulnerable and the Isle of Wight the most (RSN: <http://is.gd/eNT5s>).

South East Plan. “The South East Plan was just that – a sophisticated, inclusive way of managing the all but unmanageable”, Jonathan Porritt wrote in support of the SEP (24dash: <http://is.gd/eCkng>).

LDF challenges and changes. A survey conducted by Roger Tym & Partners found that 51% of authorities expect to review their local development framework (LDF) housing targets. Just 35% expect to stay with existing targets, mostly based on regional strategies; 12% are still undecided, with many awaiting members’ decisions in September (Planning: <http://is.gd/eNNtA>). Cala Homes is seeking a judicial review to reinstate its proposals for 2,000 homes in Winchester, which were refused by the City Council following the announcement that RSS were to be scrapped (Planning: <http://is.gd/eNdRq>). Plans for 3,600 new homes at Tipner, Horsea Island and Port Solent are on hold awaiting news of funding for a new junction of the M275 and new housing targets (The News: <http://is.gd/eNN9Q>). Milton Keynes and Ashford councils have both made it clear they want to review growth plans following the government’s cancellation of regional spatial strategies. The proposed 5,400 home Salden Chase development on the Milton Keynes/Aylesbury Vale border has been thrown into doubt (Building: <http://is.gd/eNWqE>; Advertiser: <http://is.gd/eNMVv>). CPRE Norfolk is among groups calling for a review of the Joint Core Strategy for Greater Norwich saying the political and economic environment has changed fundamentally (Planning: <http://is.gd/eCOT3>). Plans for 59,750 homes in the South West have been scrapped by councils in response to the government’s abolition of house building targets (Planning: <http://is.gd/eNern>).

IPC. The Infrastructure Planning Commission has begun its first examination, an energy from waste and materials recovery facility in Bedfordshire (Planning: <http://is.gd/eH6lk>).

LEPs. The Commission for Rural Communities has issued a call for evidence on Local Enterprise Partnerships and rural areas (deadline 17 September: <http://is.gd/eHS2S>). “The regional scale is vital for innovation” (Birmingham Post: <http://is.gd/eNcly>).

Angular Atkinson “architectural atrocity” approved. Actor Rowan Atkinson has been given permission to build a controversial modern home in the Chilterns AONB near Wallingford, in Oxfordshire despite planning officers recommending refusal. CPRE Henley and Mapledurham District decided not to object to the project saying: “The extreme angularity of the modern design is not to every member’s taste and these members think the new house may not sit well in the gentle curves of the Chiltern landscape. Others, however, think it is an exciting project by a world-renowned architect which will be of great architectural significance in the future” (Daily Mail: <http://is.gd/eHP3T>; CPRE Letter: <http://is.gd/eHPrr>).

Around the South East. Two landowners who broke planning laws by building mobile homes, kennels and stables without permission have been fined £27,500 at Reading County Court (Planning: <http://is.gd/eHR4R>). A January date has been set for a planning appeal for the controversial housing development in Polegate (Sussex Express: <http://is.gd/eK63I>). The Petersfield Society has set up the *4sites Campaign* to prevent four green field sites on the outskirts of the town being used for new housing projects. CPRE Hampshire has written a letter to East Hampshire District Council setting out the reasons why it believes councillors should throw out the plans (Petersfield Post: <http://is.gd/eK937>; <http://is.gd/eNIXg>). Canterbury Council has denied it has “allowed the aims of constructing the A2 slip roads,

providing a new park and ride car park to serve the south of the city, and the provision of a business park, to pervert the entire LDF process" (Your Canterbury: <http://is.gd/eN5Bb>). CPRE Horsham and Crawley said plans for housing in Horsham are based on questionable assumptions about population growth, the economy and employment (County Times: <http://is.gd/eNJOi>).

2. Housing

Affordable housing. Councils are to be allowed to favour social housing applicants with a strong local connection (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/eN3GW>). The South West is seeing a tsunami of "in-betweeners" – people who cannot afford to buy a home and do not qualify for social rented housing (24dash: <http://is.gd/eAmmE>). Social housing construction is down 40% in a year (24dash: <http://is.gd/eNSqn>).

New Homes Bonus. The government announced it will match the council tax raised on each new house for six years. For every new home built the government will match the council tax raised on each new house for a period of six years - for a band D home that would be around £1400 (BBC: <http://is.gd/eNJ9Y>; DCLG: <http://is.gd/eNMhz>). Protect Kent chairman Richard Knox-Johnston said: "The concern is that cash-strapped councils needing money may be encouraged to promote housing schemes that will damage the environment" (Your Canterbury: <http://is.gd/eNJKm>). There is concern that the government will not be able to finance the scheme (Planning: <http://is.gd/eOMye>). The right wing Policy Exchange think tank is suggesting that "cash incentives" should be paid to encourage people to accept developments near them (24dash: <http://is.gd/eOPJw>).

Home truths. The National Housing Federation is predicting that house prices will increase 22% over the next five years – fuelled by a chronic under supply of new housing. It said more than 1.76m households, or the equivalent of 4.5 million people, were on social housing waiting lists in 2009, a 23% increase in the last five years (<http://is.gd/eNHTN>).

Brownfield and density. 'Garden grabbing' now accounts for around a quarter of all new homes built, according to government figures (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/eNN07>). The proportion of new dwellings built on previously developed land has remained constant at around 80%. Housing density is unchanged at 43 dwellings per hectare (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/eNORY>).

Travellers 'who play by the rules' will get the same rights as other mobile home residents and could benefit from more authorised sites under plans announced by Communities Secretary Eric Pickles. In addition, the government will allow councils to decide for themselves how many traveller pitches are necessary in their area according to local need and historic demand (24dash: <http://is.gd/eNh9f>; DCLG: <http://is.gd/eSLwG>).

3. Landscapes, Tranquillity and Environment

Hedgerows and trees. Research from CPRE found that though hedgerows enjoy more protection than ever before, in England their overall length fell by 26,000 kilometres between 1998 and 2007. Emma Marrington said: "It's over a decade since the introduction of the Hedgerows Regulations, and the time is ripe for the Government to make improvements that give local authorities the power they need to better protect the great diversity of England's hedgerows". In the South East, planning authorities approve half the length of hedgerows submitted for approval (BBC: <http://is.gd/eN5aj>; Independent: <http://is.gd/eK5OE>). The Countryside Land Association South West supported the call saying "Maintaining the hedgerows is also vital because it helps tourism in our area. Visitors have an expectation that the Devon and Cornwall countryside will be properly looked after" (This is Cornwall: <http://is.gd/eN9pr>). Writing in The Sun newspaper, CPRE's Shaun Spiers said hedgerows "are the living seams that have held the English countryside together for centuries. Hedgerows are the countryside's unsung heroes" (<http://is.gd/eN9TC>). Dutch elm disease has returned and our last remaining English elms are at risk (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eK6UN>).

Private sector role in nature reserves? The 'Crown jewels' of Britain's landscape could be sold off and key nature reserves could be run by big business. Jeremy Biggs, Director of Pond Conservation. "I'm especially worried that this will be another nail in the coffin for wonderful places for freshwater plants and animals like the Pevensey Levels in East Sussex." Morgan Parry, chair of the Countryside Council for Wales, said: "We have to ask whether we actually need nature reserves and whether the business sector can come in to provide new revenue streams." The Environment Agency's latest strategic objectives no longer include biodiversity (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eNfHI>). Wildlife and Countryside Link, a coalition including CPRE, said even small cuts to government environmental spending could devastate England's wildlife through loss of habitats. Chairman Paul de Zylva said: "There may be a temptation to see cuts in conservation and recreation as an easy win, but ministers need to think hard before making decisions that could have profound and perhaps irreversible consequences for England's wildlife, landscapes and people" (Planning: <http://is.gd/eK7Dw>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eNIm0>; Guardian: <http://is.gd/eNIp8>).

Green spaces. George Monbiot wrote on the on the importance of green space in new developments (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eb4Kd>; the article includes many useful references).

Clutter. Streets across the country are being disfigured by tens of thousands of unnecessary road signs, bollards, posts and railings. Tony Burton, director of Civic Voice, said: "People are fed up with these things getting in their way" (Daily Mail: <http://is.gd/eAdiv>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eH6Fo>). Supported by Civic Voice, Living Streets and fixmystreet.com, Communities secretary Eric Pickles and transport secretary Philip Hammond have written to councils to ask them to cut levels of street clutter (CLG: <http://is.gd/eG9O1>). CPRE's Ralph Smyth said: "Clutter needs to be tackled in both rural and urban areas. With every local council in England drawing up new Local Transport Plans, this welcome move by Eric Pickles and Philip Hammond could not be better timed" (Planning: <http://is.gd/eEPHL>).

Litter. Town halls across the UK want to be able to take action against the registered keeper of a vehicle from which rubbish is thrown, in a system similar to speeding and flytipping (LGA: <http://is.gd/eG9WJ>).

Light pollution. A year-long trial that saw selected street lights turned off late at night has been completed in Wokingham (Maidenhead Advertiser: <http://is.gd/eNcZI>). Birmingham is to replace 41,000 streetlights (43%) with LEDs in a bid to cut energy costs, light pollution and obtrusive light (New Streetlights: <http://is.gd/eAwfO>).

Biodiversity. Reacting to a government source suggesting that the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) subsidy faced being scaled back, CPRE's Ben Stafford said: "The government must not withdraw funding for farm stewardship schemes. If that money is significantly cut it will be much more difficult to deliver the attractive farmed landscape rich in biodiversity which ministers say they want to see" (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eNIQf>). Defra said that farmers need to do more to ensure that the Campaign for the Farmed Environment, an industry-led initiative which encourages farmers to voluntarily nurture wildlife on their land, is a success (<http://is.gd/eNefv>). Bees fare better in town than country according to the National Trust and a Swindon beekeeper claims to have bred bees that resist the parasitic varroa mite (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eCmxx>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eCvDK>). UN biodiversity chief Ahmed Djoghlaif said that nations risk economic collapse and loss of culture if it does not protect the natural world (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eCmo8>). Radley Lakes, saved after a long campaign by residents and CPRE Oxfordshire, has a new community centre as it continues its transformation from dumping ground to nature reserve (Herald: <http://is.gd/eAcvF>). An interactive Biodiversity Planning Toolkit has been launched by Association of Local Government Ecologists. It is intended as a guide biodiversity legislation and assessing planning applications (<http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/>).

Coastal path. Newspaper reports suggest that the project has been shelved as a result of coalition cuts, but Natural England said it will go ahead until the results of the spending review are known in the autumn. Kent is one of the areas where the budget this year will be cut (Grough: <http://is.gd/eNMEf>; Kent News: <http://is.gd/eNMHt>; NE: <http://is.gd/eNOr5>).

Loved rivers. The RSPB, WWF-UK, the Angling Trust and the Salmon and Trout Association have launched an award scheme to find the best-loved and most forgotten rivers in England and Wales (<http://www.ourrivers.org.uk/>).

4. Transport

Planning. The three transport National Policy Statements may be merged (BDB: <http://is.gd/eK6xm>).

High Speed Two. Civic Voice attacked the government's plans for High Speed Two. It said they risk being decided without understanding the local impact on townscape, heritage, open space and footpaths which should shape the design speed and route from the outset (<http://is.gd/eCmaO>). A letter to the Financial Times claimed that the route had been chosen not run through rural areas to minimise the compensation bill (<http://is.gd/eAyyH>). "It will create a huge cavern in beautiful green-belt countryside. I fear once the railway is built, companies will be left slaving over use of the land for other property ventures" (FT: <http://is.gd/eNcvP>). The Exceptional Hardship Scheme for blighted properties has opened and the bill is expected to grow (FT: <http://is.gd/eNcD7>). The Chiltern Society is to hold a protest walk along part of the route on 11 September (BFP: <http://is.gd/eNIcW>). Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust said the planned railway line would be "like the Berlin Wall" because of the impact it would have on the environment (BFP: <http://is.gd/eNOhz>).

Rural transport. Local Government Improvement and Development has published web guide to help local authorities improve rural public transport (RSN: <http://is.gd/eHRLq>).

5. Energy, Waste and Water

Renewables. At the end of July, Lord Reay presented a bill to make provision for a minimum distance between wind turbines and residential premises according to the size of the wind turbine. It would mean that tall turbines could not be closer than 2km to residential buildings (Bill text: <http://is.gd/eNKY9>). Renewables now account for 6.7% of total UK electricity generation, with wind and hydro providing the largest share (NEF: <http://is.gd/eNPlo>). Cornwall Council has granted planning permission for the UK's first commercial deep geothermal power plant (Building: <http://bit.ly/bbOuYJ>). The government has launched a review into noise regulations for wind turbines (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eOQx6>). CPRE Isle of Wight is planning to support a combined heat and power plant using wood from the island, the UK and Europe (Cowes Online: <http://is.gd/eOXEX>).

Coal. The Guardian claimed the government's coalition is watering down a commitment to tough new environmental emissions standards, raising the possibility of dirty coal-fired power stations such as Kingsnorth going ahead. Energy Secretary Chris Huhne retorted "this government has committed to introducing an emissions performance standard... and will not allow any new coal power station to be built unless equipped with carbon capture and storage" (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eNRTb>; <http://is.gd/eNRWE>).

Nuclear. It is increasingly unlikely that the UK's first nuclear reactors will get full regulatory approval by mid-2011, according to the Health and Safety Executive which called on suppliers to redouble efforts (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eHQmT>).

Biofuels. In the Guardian, CPRE's Dustin Benton challenged Zero Carbon Britain 2030, by the Centre for Alternative Technology, claiming it "proposes changes to England's landscapes that are greater than any change since the 1930s. In order to produce all our power at home, the report proposes to devote 85% of England's grazing land to large-scale biomass plantations." Alex Randall from CAT responded "Our vision for the countryside is about

creating energy security, rural jobs and tackling climate change. It also increases food security [but] it does result in a landscape that looks very different” (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eNRmK>; <http://is.gd/eNRou>). Friends of the Earth urged an end to ‘land grab’ for biofuels predicting more food shortages in Africa because of EU target to produce 10% of all transport fuels from biofuels by 2020 (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eNQtb>).

Waste. Use of carrier bags is down 43% in four years, says Waste & Resources Action Programme but the trend may be reversing (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eHOx1>). The UK may have to import rubbish for incinerators as recycling rates improve. In Hampshire, where the Veolia waste contractor operates three incinerators, a shortage of municipal waste has already led the company to seek to vary the plants’ planning conditions to allow them to process more commercial waste and, potentially, import waste from outside the county. (Independent: <http://is.gd/eOQ6N>). Plans for a Veolia incinerator in Shrewsbury, backed by Shropshire Council, were unanimously rejected by its planning committee.

Water. All homes in England and Wales should be fitted with water meters to relieve pressure on rivers and their wildlife, the WWF-UK said, warning that one-third of river catchments were facing damage as a result of too much water being taken out of them (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eNTf3>).

6. Rural Affairs, Farming and Food

Rural services and the Big Society. Matthew Taylor said savage cuts in public spending in this autumn’s spending review could hasten the deaths of thousands of rural villages. “The bricks and mortar of villages may survive but communities won’t. In hundreds, may be thousands, of villages across the country there is a real risk of the death of rural communities, even though we may preserve the buildings in aspic... What we are saying is that it is not always the right choice to have the better bigger service further away. For rural communities a more limited service, one relying partly on volunteers and community input, is the difference between having a service and no service at all. If a service was axed, then some of the savings should be given to local communities as a subsidy to find ways to replace the missing service”. Lord Taylor said the role of the parish council should be bolstered so that local people can find ways to spend more money locally in a targeted way (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eNgvh>). The Rural Services Network said the countryside must not be overlooked as the government strives to create a Big Society (RSN: <http://is.gd/eNTMU>). The Plunkett Foundation has called a summit to bring together representatives from the cooperative sector to discuss how communities can be supported to set up and run pubs in the wake of the government announcement to scrap the £3.3m Community-Owned Pubs Support Programme (New Start: <http://is.gd/eNLNU>).

Local food. Farmers markets’ are struggling to survive because of an outdated law that makes it illegal for stall holders to advertise locally – even though circuses and ploughing contests can put up temporary signs (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/eNTqh>). The Fruit and Vegetables Task Force has issued a report; the recommendations include encouraging grow your own (<http://is.gd/eK6IU>). The Local Government Association (LGA) has called for some of the money raised through landfill tax to be used by councils to create new allotments (Planning: <http://is.gd/eOPkt>).

Supermarkets. CPRE welcomed the government announcement of a new Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) to monitor and enforce the Groceries Supply Code of Practice between supermarkets and their suppliers (<http://is.gd/eOPet>). Tesco is making a fresh attempt to build a store in Ash Vale, Surrey (<http://bit.ly/cyD4jB>).

7. Campaigning

CPRE South East. Director Edward Dawson has published his latest report. It gives an analysis of changes to planning policy, the abolition of the South East Partnership Board and the opportunities presented by the Regional Growth Fund (<http://is.gd/eSPL5>).

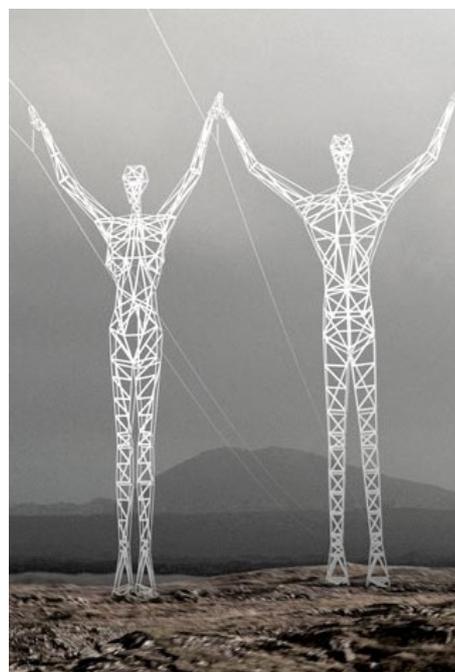
CPRE Sussex has announced it is forming a Cuckmere Valley group to continue the work of the Cuckmere Valley Society which will be handing over its responsibilities to CPRE. Stuart Meier, director of CPRE Sussex said, "This merger of interests will help protect this beautiful area of countryside for the future, and we are keen to welcome former members of the society to join CPRE" (Eastbourne Today: <http://is.gd/eNdnr>).

CPRE innovations. Dorset bakery Fudges is reported to be working with to identify five key 'Bicnic' locations and will also be creating a new 'Bicnic' pack of its sweet and savoury biscuits, straws, wafers and flatbreads to accompany the campaign "to give support for [CPRE's] work to maintain a sustainable future for the English countryside" (<http://tinyurl.com/cprefudge>). The Wensleydale branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England has funded the cost of relocating a dry stone bridge built as a craft demonstration to a beck in the Dales (Grough: <http://is.gd/eNM7z>).

Campaign tactics. A UN tribunal has provisionally warned that the UK government is making it too expensive for campaigners to take environmental planning battles through courts under the Aarhus convention (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eNXON>). Climate Camp targeted the Royal Bank of Scotland. Even the environmental press is questioning their movement's tactics including controlling press access amid claims the Camp's use of Twitter had backfired (Guardian: <http://is.gd/eHOeo>; <http://is.gd/eCD8R>). The Guardian asked is the trial more important than the protest for climate activists? (<http://is.gd/eFgix>).

8. And Finally... Pylon Beauty?

CPRE has long campaigned against unsightly wirescapes. However, for Iceland at least, architects Choi+Shine suggest that an alternative answer might be to erect striding python figures (<http://is.gd/eyEFs>).



CPRE South East eBulletin

We hope you find this eBulletin useful. It is edited by Andy Boddington. 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 by emailing cprenews@gmail.com. You can unsubscribe or change your details using the same email address.