

CPRE South East eBulletin for September 2010

Welcome to our new look CPRE South East eBulletin: a monthly roundup of national and local news with a particular focus on the South East of England.

Our audience is CPRE and its friends. Please feel free to circulate it. If you are not on our circulation list and want to receive the eBulletin regularly, just let me know at cprenews@gmail.com.

Items you'd like considered for inclusion should be sent to the same address.

Andy Boddington, Editor

In Brief

It has been a slow month for planning, with a lot said and speculated about the new planning regime but few significant decisions. The government has received 56 overlapping bids for Local Enterprise Partnerships. **Planning**, page 2.

Across the country and the South East, many planning authorities are dramatically downsizing their housing ambitions, though some are still clinging to targets established in the RSS. The Right to Build remains controversial and the TCPA is calling for Housing Enterprise Zones. **Housing**, page 2.

A rare detailed insight into rural England is provided by the **Buchanan Report** on affordable rural housing, which examines study areas in Sussex, Shropshire Norfolk and Yorkshire. Page 3.

In a major report, **Making Space for Nature** Sir John Lawton has proposed 12 Ecological Restoration Zones to give biodiversity a better chance of survival and recovery. Page 4.

The government proposes more immediate protection for trees, local decision making and tranquillity is officially declared to have a tranquil effect in our roundup on **Landscape and Biodiversity**, page 5.

Badger culling, apples and biofuels all get a brief mention in our summary of **Farming, Food and Retail** news, along with Tesco and a Retail Planning Workshop on Friday. Page 6.

A new Local Sustainable Transport scheme was announced with the claim the government intends to help public transport at the expense of road schemes. HS2 remains as controversial as ever, as does Lydd airport, where the public inquiry may cost £150K. **Transport**, page 6.

A major report from the Committee on Climate Change says that Britain must plan for adaptation to climate change. The Energy Secretary announced his 'green deal' of insulation and nuclear power, while uncertainty continues about the future of feed-in tariffs and ROCs. Solar farming schemes are becoming the fashion, though not yet in the South East. **Climate change and Energy**, Page 7.

CPRE launched its proposals for a bottle deposit scheme to widespread acclaim except from the supermarkets and packaging industry. Food waste is declining and opponents of incineration come under fire in our summary of **Water, Minerals, Recycling and Waste**, page 8.

Is there something we should have covered? Its too late for this month, but let me know your CPRE news for October by 28 October. cprenews@gmail.com. Cheers! Oh, perhaps no longer cheers, as sadly 893 **Rural Pubs** closed last year, page 4.

1. Planning

Localism. Communities minister Bob Neill spelled out how the Government would reconcile national policy and local determination. He said: “generally, planning should be a local matter, with planning decisions being made at local level wherever possible. We will ensure that national planning policies support local decision making.” He reiterated that the existing Planning Policy Statements and guidance will be consolidated into a single simplified national planning framework (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/fJA6f>). As a result, the government has shelved plans to publish a legally-binding statement on its planning policy on climate change and renewable energy (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/fJKVL>). The new national planning framework could also lead to a review of permitted development relating to urban supermarkets (Planning: <http://is.gd/fJL6F>). CPRE called on Ministers not to abandon strategic planning in their drive to forward the Government’s localism agenda. In a new report *The Bigger Picture: the Case for Strategic Planning*, CPRE sets out how the loss of strategic planning, without a viable replacement, would be bad news for environmental protection for the countryside and for the development of local infrastructure (<http://is.gd/fGFGa>).

Local Development Frameworks. The hearing into the Oxford Core Strategy has ended, with CPRE Oxon telling the inspector that “the City has been too pre-occupied with pushing through the original political aspirations” (<http://is.gd/fGTYg>; Oxford Mail: <http://is.gd/fJBFI>).

Legal challenges to RSS abolition. There are now three court challenges to the government’s decision to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies, after housing schemes were rejected. These include Cala Homes, which has ambitions for 2,000 homes with shops and a primary school on an 84-hectare site at Barton Farm, Winchester (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/FFXJM>).

Local enterprise partnerships. The government has received 56 LEP bids. In the South East they are: Bexley, Dartford, and Gravesham; Coast to Capital: Brighton and Hove, Croydon, the Gatwick Diamond and West Sussex; Coastal West Sussex; East Sussex; Enterprise M3: covering parts of Hampshire and Surrey including Andover, Basingstoke, Aldershot, Farnborough, Fleet, Hook and Camberley; Hampshire; Kent and Medway; Kent-Essex; Oxfordshire City Region; Thames Valley Berkshire; and finally Thames Valley Buckinghamshire. No date has yet been given for decisions on which bids will be successful (DCLG: <http://is.gd/fGBW6>). The CLA urged ministers not to ignore the rural economy when setting up the LEPs (<http://is.gd/fGGnt>).

Funding. Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg has announced that local authorities will be allowed to borrow extra business rates to pay for new developments (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/fI9AG>).

Streamlining. The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (the GDPO) has been consolidated and renamed the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (the DMPO). Clarifications have been introduced on outline planning permission where implemented in stages and appeal rights for a non-material change to a planning permission (CLG: <http://is.gd/fGLn3>). The National Planning Forum is calling for closer integration of planning and building control within councils (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/fI6L3>).

2. Housing

Right to Build. Housing Minister Grant Shapps has reduced the referendum threshold for the controversial Right to Build scheme from 90% of the local community to 75% (RSN: <http://is.gd/fGAi9>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/fGu56>). The Planning Officers Society said that the scheme could help address the serious shortfall in housing in rural areas but complained that because the Right to Build is outside the mainstream planning system it is at “considerable risk from poorly considered planning constraints, unforeseen planning impacts, flawed procedure, and human rights, and possible legal challenges” (Planning: <http://is.gd/fJLrw>).

Housing Enterprise Zones. The Town and Country Planning Association argued Housing Enterprise Zones could boost housing supply by offering 100% capital allowances to developers, in a similar way to the Enterprise Zones 25 years ago designed to help revive industrial areas (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/fI5ph>).

Right to Build. The Policy Exchange think-tank said housing associations could build an extra 100,000 affordable homes a year if they were reconstructed as mutuals (24dash: <http://is.gd/fq6kN>). The Scottish Government has established the National Housing Trust, which is expected to generate £130 million for local authorities to build around 1,000 new homes with loans underwritten by the government (Inside Housing: <http://is.gd/fxiq0>). The Commission for Rural Communities has issued a call for evidence on the state of rural housing (RSN: <http://is.gd/fGAUW>).

South East housing plans. The future of the Milton Keynes-South Midlands growth area has been thrown into doubt by a unanimous vote by Aylesbury Vale District Council to withdraw its core strategy (24dash: <http://is.gd/fJJKJ>). Milton Keynes Council is also planning to slash its proposed housing provision by nearly a third following the abolition of the South East Plan (Planning: <http://is.gd/fGL4C>). Havant Borough Council has decided to plough ahead with the housebuilding targets and 6,300 new homes on green spaces (The News: <http://is.gd/fl59y>). Campaigners are unhappy that despite councillors reducing housing numbers the high level of homes proposed for Binfield and Wokingham could lead to 20,000 new houses in the area (Get Bracknell: <http://is.gd/fl5DI>).

3. Affordable Rural Housing: The Buchanan Report

Defra commissioned the consultancy Colin Buchanan and University College London to look at affordable rural housing (<http://is.gd/fl5eg8>). The study considered:

- ◆ rural affordability and its impact on change in communities, stability and social networks
- ◆ how the attributes of a rural location affect prices and affordability
- ◆ the priorities for housing amongst local populations.

It took four study areas were:

- ◆ Mid Sussex: dynamic commuter area; study villages: Slaugham & Cuckfield
- ◆ South Shropshire: deep rural area; study town/village: Bishop's Castle & Hope Boulder
- ◆ North Norfolk: retirement retreat area; study villages: Happisburgh, Blakeney & Wiveton
- ◆ Selby: transient rural area dominated by urban centres; study villages: Riccall & Cawood.

Among its many conclusions are that the key factors in attracting people to the case study villages are accessibility, local facilities, schools, rurality and the sense of community. Around 90% of respondents said that peace and tranquillity, quality of the surrounding environment, and safety and security are important in their choice of location. The green space between the villages is viewed as essential, to preserve their identity and character.

In mid-Sussex, 88% of residents quoted an easy commute to work as a significant factor in village choice, compared to 53% in North Norfolk. Schools are a factor in attracting people to villages, but a school in the village is not seen as being as important as quality schools within reach. Parents seem more than happy to drive their children to school in the morning, sometimes from quite distant villages.

A recurring view across rural England is that planning often turns communities into dormitories, without due regard to their future economic or social viability. Villagers complain the practices of housing associations impact negatively on communities. It would be possible to engineer more harmonious communities if the power to grant access to affordable housing was transferred from housing associations to the local community.

There is much more of interest in this report, including what makes a person "local".

A summary report is available from CPRE Shropshire (<http://is.gd/fg8NI>).

4. Rural Affairs and Economy

Vibrant Rural Communities. Rural areas need to grow to sustain the services they need. Unfettered growth is not desirable, but modest steady rural growth supported by communities and which ensures a sustainable balance between the growth in population and growth of the economy and services is both feasible and desirable. That is the main message from *Vibrant Rural Communities. Unlocking the Potential of the East of England's Rural Areas* (<http://is.gd/fGGIn>). It concluded:

- ◆ Digital inclusion can help to spread economic growth, increase access to services and reduce underachievement in education.
- ◆ Rural economic growth can deliver growth for the regional economy whilst also helping rural areas to be more sustainable, reducing the need to commute and bringing community cohesion benefits.
- ◆ Demographic change is real and challenging but with appropriate policies on affordable housing, employment and skills, more young families can be retained in rural communities and make them more sustainable whilst improving the services provided to the growing elderly population.

Agenda for Change. The Commission for Rural Communities published the *Agenda for Change* highlighting the need for:

- ◆ more attention to ensuring economic policies and delivery address the needs of rural communities;
- ◆ local authorities and other public bodies to demonstrate a commitment to responding positively to locally developed plans which embody the ambitions in the Government's Big Society agenda;
- ◆ the planning system to be used to support rather than frustrate economic growth in rural areas;
- ◆ improvements in broadband and mobile infrastructure in rural England. (<http://is.gd/fGDoy>)

Cuts. According to press reports, ministers have agreed to slash spending on local communities and rural affairs, and more than 50 rural-related groups face the axe under government plans to reduce Britain's budget deficit (RSN: <http://is.gd/fGAEJ>; <http://is.gd/fGAMC0>). Caroline Spelman told the Independent: "Defra is recognised by the Treasury as being a comparatively lean department" but her officials are suggesting that any cut of less than 33% will be a victory. Spelman also wants to reform the water industry and make the farming industry and the countryside feel loved again (Independent: <http://is.gd/fHYgr>).

Services. Almost 900 pubs closed down in rural Britain during 2009, the British Beer and Pub Association said. Rural areas saw 893 pub closures, with only 195 new hostelries opening (RSN: <http://is.gd/fGB1B>). The Plunkett Foundation has announced it will support rural pubs wanting to become community co-operatives (RSN: <http://is.gd/fGBf5>). Rural outreach post offices set up in shops, village halls and mobile vans are under threat of closure, unless the Post Office improves the reliability and range of services offered Consumer Focus said (RSN: <http://is.gd/fGI0X>).

5. Making Space for Nature: The Lawton Report

In a major report for Defra, Professor Sir John Lawton sets out a strong framework for supporting and enhancing biodiversity (<http://is.gd/fqE4e>). Ministers have been urged to recast planning for nature conservation in England in a programme which could cost around £1 billion. Lawton recommends the creation of 12 new 'ecological restoration zones' (ERZs) where local authorities, businesses and landowners would team up to ensure particular species can thrive or even return to that area. He says that planning policy and practice should continue to provide the strongest protection to internationally important sites and strong protection from inappropriate development to SSSIs, and provide greater protection to Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodland and other priority BAP habitats.

CPRE's Ben Stafford supported the ERZs and said the real challenge for planners would be for councils to work together across boundaries. "We have national parks in terms of landscape and sites of special scientific interest in terms of wildlife which are not delivering as much as we would like. Ecological restoration zones are a good thing and we want to see that sort of ambition as part of the forthcoming white paper" (Planning: <http://is.gd/fJKPr>).

The CLA complained the Lawton Report downplayed the role of farmers and land managers: "The report needs to recognise that it is only farmers and land managers who can create and protect the sort of environment we all want to see in the countryside. Wildlife management has an economic cost, and if rural businesses are prevented from evolving to meet the changing demands of the marketplace, the delivery of wildlife management will ultimately decline" (<http://is.gd/fGCvn>).

6. Landscapes and Biodiversity

Nature reserves. Local authorities will soon be able to make, confirm and revoke local nature reserve byelaws without approval from the Secretary of State (Defra: <http://is.gd/flbrH>).

Greener Planning. The *Greening the UK Campaign* has produced a report aimed at encouraging local authorities to improve green infrastructure. The report has much useful guidance but has not been updated to take account of the emerging planning and performance regime (<http://is.gd/fHZZD>).

Town greens. Bristol City Football Club's proposals for a new stadium may be blocked following an inspector's recommendation that the whole site should be registered as town green (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/fl5YA>).

Trees. Regulations and orders covering tree preservation orders in England will be streamlined into one document. All new TPOs would have immediate provisional effect (Planning Portal: <http://is.gd/fGMFy>). The future of Britain's conker crop is at risk from an alien invader that is attacking horse chestnut trees across the country (Independent: <http://is.gd/fHXy7>). Do you want more trees on your street? Why not try Woodland Trust's new online photo montage tool to lobby your councillors? (<http://ow.ly/2HWOH>).

Tranquillity. Its official. Scientists at Sheffield University have proved tranquil scenes relax and restore the mind (<http://ow.ly/2EFrL>).

Light pollution. The night-time glow from cities is affecting the birds of the forest. Light pollution from streetlamps and house lights that can reduce darkness over huge areas is having a real impact on the mating life of songbirds, German research has shown (Independent: <http://is.gd/fGcx9>). Slovenia is ahead of Britain in tackling light pollution (BBC: <http://is.gd/fJAWH>).

Clutter. Kent County Council said it hopes to raise £500,000 over four years through the sponsorship of signs on roundabouts and grass verges. CPRE Kent said: "Signs are put in but then they're never reviewed, so you get more and more signs in some locations, which are utterly bamboozling" (BBC: <http://is.gd/fJK7W>). "Paddy Power loses with Ryder Cup stunt" screamed the Daily Mail as Monmouthshire County Council was granted a court injunction against an illegal 15m high advertisement overlooking this year's Ryder Cup venue. As a result Paddy Power gained huge press publicity at no cost & promises to repeat the stunt elsewhere (<http://is.gd/fDPSW>). Welsh country roads are cluttered with ugly and unnecessary signs which the Assembly Government should uproot, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales said (Wales Online: <http://is.gd/fJKga>). The City of Winchester Trust is renewing efforts to reduce signs and other obstacles on the city's pavements (Hampshire Chronicle: <http://is.gd/fGSTT>). The Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation has published *Manual for Streets 2: Wider Application of the Principles* (<http://is.gd/fGTfF>).

Heritage. English Heritage is consulting on the setting of heritage assets. Its draft guidance is intended to assist implementation of *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* and the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide*. Deadline 26 November (<http://is.gd/fhAtv>). English Heritage has also issued guidance on commemorative blue plaques (<http://tinyurl.com/38ebf5p>).

Waterways. Canals and towpaths will close, rivers could become unnavigable and tunnels could collapse if the government imposes 25% cuts as expected on Britain's inland waterway network, the Inland Waterway Advisory Council said. It concluded that the best way forward is to create a highly decentralised organisation to manage the inland waterways with a small central authority (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fG1Op>; IWAC: <http://is.gd/fG2dF>).

7. Food, Farming and Retail

Farming. After years of decline, this autumn will see the harvest of 29 new varieties of English cider apples (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fG7gP>). Lord Sainsbury called for a renewed debate on genetically modified crops, while Lord Melchett said the tide has turned globally against the introduction of GM crops (Independent: <http://is.gd/fGsoE>; <http://is.gd/fGsAj>). Farmers in England will be issued licences to cull badgers in TB hotspots under controversial proposals published by the government (Independent: <http://is.gd/fGcP4>). Organic farming is better for the long term health of the soil, according to the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (<http://is.gd/fGIcY>). Converting up to a fifth of UK wheat into biofuel will force prices even higher at a time of food shortages. Friends of the Earth said food should not be used for fuel. "In a time of rising food prices and global shortages, it is cynical to burn wheat in our cars" (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fGKo4>).

Supermarkets. An appeal inspector ruled in favour of a Tesco at Ashstead, Surrey saying: "the detriment to local food and convenience shops would be outweighed by the positive contribution which a supermarket of the size proposed can make" (Planning: <http://is.gd/f6Ckg>).

Retail Planning Workshop. CPRE Shropshire is organising a Retail Planning Workshop on 8 October in central Birmingham. The aim of the workshop is to share knowledge and build a CPRE-wide network of people who are fighting superstore applications and appeals. There are a few places left. There is no cost, lunch is provided but you will need to cover your own transport costs. Further details from Andy Boddington, cpre@cpreshropshire.org.uk.

Sustainable food. Seven out of 10 UK consumers say they would pay more attention to the environmental impact of the foods they buy if labels were clearer (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fG9yD>). Shoppers need to buy at least 25 items from a website, before any environmental benefits take effect, researchers said (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/fGHgV>).

8. Transport

Funding. Local Transport minister Norman Baker announced plans for a new Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Measures funded could include encouraging walking and cycling, initiatives to improve integration between travel modes and end-to-end journey experiences, better public transport and improved traffic management schemes (NDS: <http://is.gd/fI8Pk>). Parliamentary under-secretary for transport Norman Baker said that a "revision" of how transport projects are appraised is ongoing at the Department of Transport and that a new formula would "help public transport schemes and disadvantage road schemes" (Regen: <http://is.gd/fI9aR>). Several travel industry groups have joined forces to create the "Transport Hub" to enable the sector to talk "more coherently" about the value of transport to economic recovery (ePolitix: <http://is.gd/fHYQE>).

Aviation. Up to £150,000 could be spent by Shepway Council on a public inquiry into plans to expand Lydd Airport. Shepway Council had approved the £25 million scheme but Secretary of State decided that the level of concern merited a full inquiry (BBC: <http://is.gd/fHRX1>). Stop Bristol Airport Expansion is taking legal advice on challenging the government's decision not to call in expansion plans for Bristol Airport (Planning: <http://is.gd/fI6e2>).

High Speed Two. Secretary of State for Transport, Philip Hammond, was jeered by around fifty HS2 protesters as he attended a meeting in Aylesbury (Bucks Gazette: <http://is.gd/fGR2M>). As a walker spent 20 days highlighting destruction along the route, Transport Secretary Phillip Hammond said “I don’t want to see one inch of the countryside unnecessarily eaten up, but we cannot start by saying there is an absolute prohibition in improving infrastructure by building in the countryside” (Farmers Guardian: <http://is.gd/fHU1o>). Protest group Conserve the Chilterns and Countryside gave backing to an alternative scheme put forward by engineering company Arup. This would see HS2 centred on a Heathrow transport hub, directly link to Eurostar and travel through the narrowest possible part of the Chilterns with javelin spurs to Aylesbury and Princes Risborough (Bucks Herald: <http://is.gd/fJBU5>).

Rail. CPRE Oxfordshire has submitted its proof of evidence to the public inquiry into the Chiltern Railway’s improvements between Bicester to Oxford. While supporting the scheme as a whole, CPRE is saying some aspects would be damaging to the Green Belt and the rural setting of Oxford (<http://is.gd/fGUN7>).

Eco-towns. Two thousand households across Bicester are to take part in a travel survey. The results will form the groundwork for how the 5,000 home eco-town planned for Bicester will be integrated with the town (Oxford Mail: <http://is.gd/fHVaa>).

9. Climate Change and Energy

How well prepared is the UK for climate change? The Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee on Climate Change has published a major analysis of the UK’s preparedness for climate change. It identifies five adaptation priorities for the UK: land use planning; providing national infrastructure; designing and renovating buildings; managing natural resources; and emergency planning. It calls for locating properties, infrastructure and green space strategically, for example not building new homes on flood-plains, and maximising use of green space in cities to help manage surface water drainage and to cope with rising temperatures and heat waves. The UK must manage natural resources sustainably by using water more efficiently, setting up ecological networks and habitat bridges so that species can adapt and move as the climate changes; and making space for water along rivers and the coast (<http://is.gd/fGdQ2>). In response, Defra chief Caroline Spelman said Britain can no longer stop global warming and must instead focus on adapting to the ‘inevitable’ impacts of climate change such as floods, droughts and rising sea levels (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/fGIme>). Green Party leader Caroline Lucas said responsibility for climate change should be transferred to the Ministry of Defence as the single most important threat facing the nation (Independent: <http://is.gd/fGbE5>).

Climate change. The Royal Society has published a layman’s guide to climate change (<http://is.gd/fG36u>). A new study suggests that in the short term, the period when emissions matter most, planes cause more warming than cars. Ships though are cooling enough to counteract them both (Guardian: <http://is.gd/f3DEP>). However, UK emissions from shipping could be six times higher than current estimates, according to a study by the University of Manchester (EE: <http://is.gd/fHUiH>). Pre-Columbian Amazonia farming may hold the clue to slowing climate change using terra preta (biochar) (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fG6qz>).

Local authority data. The government published CO2 emissions estimates for local authorities for 2008. The South East emits 7.6 tonnes carbon dioxide per resident compared to 8.2 for England as a whole (<http://is.gd/fGE1o>). DEC also published data for how much insulation has been installed in homes across different parts of Britain under the Government’s energy saving Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT). 262,701 properties in the South East and 2,235,383 nationally have benefited from cavity wall or loft insulation (<http://is.gd/fI8m0>).

The price of power. The costs of onshore wind is estimated at £94 per megawatt hour; offshore wind between £157 and £186 per megawatt hour. Nuclear is £99 per megawatt hour; new coal and gas power generation with carbon capture and storage £105-£115 per megawatt hour (<http://is.gd/fELp8>). Brampton in Cumbria could be the first community in the UK to run its own renewable electricity company under a scheme for cheaper power proposed by Sustainable Brampton (News & Star: <http://is.gd/fHVHW>).

The Green Deal. Climate Change and Energy Secretary Chris Huhne announced a plan to create almost 250,000 jobs in green industries, including nuclear power and home insulation. Huhne said that the country needs to “get off the oil and gas hook and on to clean growth... Since there is no money left, my department is pioneering new ways of turning this government into the greenest ever. We use more energy to heat our homes than Sweden, where it’s seven degrees colder in January. We might as well be standing outside burning £50 notes. By stopping this waste, we can make big savings on bills, and use them to pay businesses for the cost of insulation. This is the green deal” (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fGawP>; EE: <http://is.gd/fHUXl>; DECC: <http://is.gd/fI7N1>). Meanwhile, Huhne’s own department is under threat from the Treasury (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fGacA>).

Renewables. DECC hinted the government was not yet planning to change its policies, which included direct support of £265m from 2000-2009, and about £1bn indirect subsidies for large installations through ‘renewable obligation certificates’ in 2008-9. Energy chiefs are threatening to sue the government if there is any change to feed in tariffs (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fG1Ad>). Lower than expected wind speeds and rainfall led to a 12% fall in renewable electricity generated between April and June. However, on 6 September, wind farms provided a record 5% of supply, perhaps 10% if embedded generation (small-scale local sources) is taken into account (EE: <http://is.gd/fIabq>; Guardian: <http://is.gd/fG1I6>; <http://is.gd/fIaGd>). Huhne is reported to be about to abandon public funding for the Severn Barrage (Wales Online: <http://is.gd/fGJHk>). The government launched a £1 million fund to explore the feasibility of deep underground heat (EE: <http://is.gd/fI9JP>). Denmark residents are turning against onshore wind power and Denmark’s state-owned power company is putting its resources into offshore farms (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/fGIFi>).

Wind power in the South East. Winchester councillors approved a scheme for three 25-metre turbines between Crawley and Sparsholt (This is Hampshire: <http://is.gd/foh3V>). The UK is determined to get out of the “dunce corner” on renewables, Chris Huhne said as he opened the world’s largest offshore wind farm off the Kent coast. The 100-turbine Thanet wind farm will produce enough electricity to supply the equivalent of more than 200,000 homes a year, and brings the UK’s total power from onshore and offshore wind to more than 5GW. Currently the UK sources just 3% of all its energy from renewables, against a target of 15% by 2020 (24dash: <http://is.gd/fq5CP>; BBC: <http://is.gd/fHZ1m>).

Solar power. Cornwall is set to house the UK’s first solar energy park after permission was granted for a 1.55MW development on a disused mine site south west of Truro (NEF: <http://is.gd/fGUGf>). A 25-acre proposal in Corby, Northants is however trying to beat the Truro scheme to be built first (Evening Telegraph: <http://is.gd/fGVv4>). Solar farm applications are also due in Shropshire (BBC: <http://is.gd/fGrrs>).



10. Water, Minerals, Recycling and Waste

Water. The Demonstration Test Catchments (DTC) project has been launched by Defra, the Environment Agency and others to establish the best ways of halting water pollution from agriculture. The Hampshire Avon is one of the study areas (NDS: <http://is.gd/fHTMA>). Caroline Spelman wants to reform the water industry twenty years after privatisation (Independent: <http://is.gd/fHYgr>).

Incineration. George Batten, president of the Association of Directors of Environment, Planning and Transport said opponents of incineration were “going against the science, a bit like anti-climate change deniers.” All science says incineration is safe, he added, complaining about recent rejections of “Energy from Waste” facilities in Oxfordshire, Shropshire and Cornwall (LocalGov: <http://is.gd/fp5M3>).

Household waste. Government plans to reintroduce weekly waste collections could lead to more than one million extra tonnes of recyclable material being sent to landfill each year, according to waste watchdog Wrap (<http://is.gd/fG6QG>). 51,400 new jobs would be created across UK if we recycled 70% of waste collected by local councils (FoE: <http://ow.ly/2E2DT>). The Love Food Hate Waste campaign has led to a reduction in food waste going to landfill of 270,000 tonnes but eight million tonnes of food waste is still being thrown away each year (Telegraph: <http://is.gd/fGujJ>). The UK has met its EU landfill targets for 2010 (NDS: <http://is.gd/fJALZ>).

Retail waste. Sainsbury's announced plans to cut packaging on cereals, but is facing prosecution for excess meat packaging under the Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations, which demands that wrapping is "limited to the minimum adequate amount to maintain the necessary level of safety, hygiene and acceptance". Overall, retailers have only reduced packaging by 4% in breach of the Courtauld Commitment (Independent: <http://is.gd/fGsPi>; Guardian: <http://is.gd/fGurH>). CPRE's call for a returnable bottle deposit scheme received widespread media coverage (CPRE: <http://is.gd/fGFyl>; Telegraph: <http://is.gd/fGH0s>). The packaging industry predictably said the idea is "old, defunct" and that it is "completely opposed to a mandatory deposit scheme" (Guardian: <http://is.gd/fGton>).

Fly-tipping has declined in England in the past year, but there were still nearly 947,000 incidents on public land. Samantha Harding, CPRE's Stop the Drop campaign manager, said: "These results show that councils are making real progress in the fight against fly-tipping. With councils now facing budget pressures we hope that they will not stop their drive to end fly-tipping but step it up as a way to cut costs in the long run" (Guardian: <http://is.gd/f78CS>).

11. And finally... the bus stops here



You are all dying to know the location of every bus stop in Britain aren't you? Well, maybe this is not a priority but it is an example of the great wealth of data being released by the government under its open data initiative. It will eventually allow us to move away from tedious tables to full visualisation of datasets and that has to be good for rural policy. This example is from the Guardian (<http://is.gd/fHSFU>).

More information at <http://data.gov.uk>.