

CPRE South East eBulletin News for June 2011

Editor's Notes

One of the ambitions of this eBulletin is to convey the jargon ridden world of planning policy in reasonably plain English. Sometimes I am defeated by the obscurators in Whitehall. This month it was a DECC press release that had me stumped. 'We [will] consider the read across from microgeneration to community scale and decentralised energy solutions.' Last year the same department declared that 'following a collaborative consultation process, the government has published a consultation document'. I do at least know what that phrase means: the government is going around in circles.

The government's planning regime however is consistently staggering in one direction. Almost every day we hear of a reduction in ambitions for localism, a weakening of spatial planning, an erosion of place shaping, and an abdication of controls on use, design and quality. As for the environment and green landscapes, the government is determined to encourage developers to trample all over them, providing they pay cash to placate disrupted communities and to 'recreate' biodiversity. Communities facing a collapse in government funding for local services may find the only way they can raise the social funds they urgently need will be through agreeing to developments that would not get a look in under a rationale planning regime.

The government's plans for sustainable development and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) redefine sustainable as anything goes. Under the presumption of sustainable development, sprawl over green fields will be cheered on unless it causes significant provable damage in excess of the benefits or it contravenes an up to date local plan. This presumption applies immediately, even though the local plan process is in turmoil. Existing local plans will be required to seek a certificate of conformity with the NPPF before they can be legally declared up to date. Many of the 70% of plans that have not completed the hurdles of the LDF process will need to be revised to confirm with the NPPF. Meanwhile, councils will have to presume in favour of development and give permission by default, unless they can PROVE damage outweighs benefits. Expect a bulldozer near you any day soon.

Although this eBulletin has a South East focus, we cover news from across the country. In 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) published planning policy TAN8 which has sponsored a forest of wind turbines in mid-Wales. Protests have largely been ignored until the current National Grid plans for pylons and substations brought matters to a head. Thousands of people have marched in the streets of Cardiff and 2,000 protestors turned out to a local council meeting. This level of protest cannot be cast aside and there are healthy signs that the WAG is backtracking on the TAN8 policy. Many in Wales regard TAN8 as surrendering the Welsh countryside merely to generate energy that England then carelessly throws away in poorly insulated homes. The spectre of Tryweryn (a rural community sacrificed for the thirst of Liverpool: <http://bit.ly/Tryweryn>) has repeatedly been raised in the energy debate, as it has with Boris Johnson's madcap idea to convey Welsh water to London. There is every danger of the environmental and nationalist debates becoming confused. This could be disastrous for energy and water planning. But it could save Montgomeryshire from the march of turbines and pylons. Growing nationalist anger in Wales could well strike a more effective blow for localism than the government's confused, contradictory and calamitous planning reforms.

Andy Boddington, Editor.

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THE NEW PLANNING REGIME

The Localism Bill

Localism challenged. In a critical report on Localism, the Commons Communities and Local Government committee said ministers have failed to communicate a compelling vision of localism. It said: 'The government will have to resist temptation to intervene in local affairs—a measure of restraint for which ministers have shown worryingly little appetite thus far. The litmus test of localism will be the government's reaction to local decisions with which it disagrees' (eGov monitor: <http://bit.ly/initx1>; Report: <http://bit.ly/mis2zW>).

Localism Bill. The bill is currently in the House of Lords where the government is still refusing to include a definition of sustainable development in the bill, claiming it would create a lawyers' paradise (Planning Portal: <http://bit.ly/ldNVET>). Councils will be allowed to refuse to hold referendums if there is already a process available for consultation, appeal or review of the matter in question, which will mean referendums cannot be held on planning matters (Planning: <http://bit.ly/mGA3C1>).

High streets. The Association of Convenience Stores told MPs that the government had done nothing to deliver the coalition agreement commitment to create 'a level playing field between small and large retailers'. One year on from the promises made in the coalition agreement, almost one in six shops on the high street has been vacated, but the big four has opened 407 new stores and added more than five million square foot of new retail space. It said the Localism Bill is not Tesco proofed (Grocer: <http://bit.ly/lcdeJd>; <http://bit.ly/IPUsJA>).

CPRE view. Neil Sinden, policy and campaigns director at CPRE told the Guardian that environmental arguments within Whitehall have lost out to those pushing economic growth. 'The government's approach to planning is emerging as a major fault line between key departments. We've been led to believe that Defra has had terrible trouble with CLG in getting it to accept that the planning system should say anything very specific about the natural environment. There is a real source of tension there' (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/mBFlux>).

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The draft. CLG published its draft presumption in favour of sustainable development (<http://bit.ly/kPY9tW>; <http://bit.ly/mJg9Ra>). Greg Clark said that councils should start to apply the presumption now, because the intention to introduce it is clear and not reliant on parliamentary approval. The government will be seeking comments on the wording during the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework to be launched in July.

The presumption. *‘There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system, which should be central to the approach taken to both plan-making and decision-taking. Local planning authorities should plan positively for new development, and approve all individual proposals wherever possible. Local planning authorities should:*

- ◆ *Prepare local plans on the basis that objectively assessed development needs should be met, and with sufficient flexibility to respond to rapid shifts in demand or other economic changes*
- ◆ *Approve development proposals that accord with statutory plans without delay and*
- ◆ *Grant permission where the plan is absent, silent, indeterminate or where relevant policies are out of date*

All of these policies should apply unless the adverse impacts of allowing development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policy objectives in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) taken as a whole.’

The implications. The government’s ‘clear expectation is that we move to a system where the default answer to development is *yes*, except where this would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in national planning policy’. The definition means that in any situation where a local plan is out of date or unclear on a particular issue, an application should be treated on its merits, with the assumption that it should be approved unless there is a good reason not to. Given that only 30% of councils have so far ratified core strategies under the Local Development Framework, this could become a development free for all. However, there is no current definition of ‘out of date’ suggesting that unless it is defined in the NPPF much planning policy is set to be defined in the courts.

Reaction. Paul Miner for CPRE said: ‘This proposed policy is as insidious as it is misleading. It’s as if ministers believe that by using the word sustainable no one will think to question any of the details. In reality, this proposed presumption could open the floodgates to environmentally damaging development across the country. This Government said they would bring local people back into real decision making on the future development in their area. But people will not be empowered by the planning reforms if the system merely promotes development at any cost to the environment.’ CPRE policy director Neil Sinden, speaking yesterday at the Royal Town Planning Institute’s Convention in London, said that unless the presumption was changed ‘people would have to work much harder to resist bad development’. Roger Hopher, head of planning at Savills said: ‘The definition doesn’t get you very far. It’s... not a practical definition. We could be heading for a busy and rather unsettling period of appeals and legal challenges while the courts define the real rules of engagement.’

National Planning Policy Framework Leaked

The leaks. *Planning* magazine and the *Times* have secured a government draft of the National Planning Policy Framework dated from mid-June (Planning: <http://bit.ly/k5C382>; Times: <http://thetim.es/iCy0qz>; <http://thetim.es/IVoMyO>). It seems to bear many similarities to the Practitioners Advisory Group draft issued last month but incorporates the presumption of sustainable development.

Local plans. Local authorities will have to seek a certificate of conformity with the NPPF for local plans, or to prepare a new or revised plan. Local planning authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having cooperated with neighbouring authorities to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts. This demand alone may mean that many recently approved core strategies may need to be revised, and those in progress will need to be revisited.

Presumption of sustainable development. In line with the draft presumption of sustainable development, planning authorities should only restrict development only where the adverse impacts of allowing development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Cash for permission. The draft says it is legitimate for financial considerations, including the New Homes Bonus and the Community Infrastructure Levy, to be taken into account in the determination of planning applications. Worrying that planning authorities might fight shy of the new incentives, the government draft says that they must not take an overly-cautious approach on financial considerations.

Green belt. The *Times* suggested that the new policy shifts planning in favour of developers, with local authorities having to show an application on greenbelt land would result in adverse impacts that ‘significantly and demonstrably’ outweigh the benefits.

Reaction. For the Campaign for Better Transport, Richard Hebditch said: ‘The document overall is a manifesto for sprawl and congestion, rather than supporting the creation of sustainable communities. The lack of detail will weaken local authorities’ ability to engage with and negotiate with developers to produce outcomes that are positive for local communities or to achieve national objectives around climate change or to tackle congestion.’ Paul Miner for CPRE said: ‘In the headlong rush to boost the economy, the government is forgetting what makes England an attractive place in which to live and work.’

Communities. CLG told *Planning* that the government does not comment on leaks but later, apparently rattled, dismissed the *Times* story as ‘inaccurate and misleading. It said the NPPF, which is due to be published shortly, will in no way weaken the government’s commitment to maintaining the greenbelt, and other environmental protections. The government remains committed to maintaining greenbelt protection as set out in the Coalition Agreement. Abolition of the last government’s Regional Strategies through the Localism Bill will protect the greenbelt by removing top down directives to review or weaken greenbelt protection in over 30 towns across England. What the new framework will do is set out essential reform of the planning system to support the economic recovery and growth this country needs, while safeguarding and enhancing the environment’ (Building Design: <http://bit.ly/iiewWJa>; LocalGov: <http://bit.ly/IUXdj4>).

PLANNING AND HOUSING

Planning

Change of use. Greg Clark launched the promised review of change of use regulations, with the intention of making change of use, including temporary changes, easier under the planning system (Deadline 1 September: <http://bit.ly/jjditA>; <http://bit.ly/maLOiT>; Planning Portal: <http://bit.ly/iz5vQz>).

Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Kent, Essex and East Sussex LEP is bidding to turn the Pfizer research and development facility at Sandwich into an enterprise zone (BBC: <http://bbc.in/f3Lt90>). The Coast to Capital Board LEP has dropped Croydon and the Gatwick Diamond from its enterprise zone bid in favour of Bognor Regis (RRH Life: <http://bit.ly/jc8XBg>).

BS 8904. The British Standards Institute has issued a draft *Guide to the Sustainable Development of Communities* for consultation. BSI says it aims to pioneer the progress of sustainable development, which it does not define, in sustainable communities, which it also does not define (<http://bit.ly/lhhLSi>; NB: The website is infuriating!).

Housing

South Downs National Park. The King Edward VII Hospital site between Midhurst and Fernhurst, on a wooded ridge in the Downs, is proving an early test case for the new Park Authority's Planning Committee. The hospital building, an early 1900s TB sanatorium closed over ten years ago, is Grade 2* listed and in urgent need of restoration and possible conversion. It has grounds designed by Gertrude Jekyll. The current application is for 168 dwellings in the buildings and 245 houses in the grounds. The scheme has aroused vehement opposition from the communities of Midhurst, Fernhurst and Haslemere, and CPRE Surrey's Waverley District. They are concerned about: unsustainable burdens on already strained educational, medical and other local services; substantial extra traffic on narrow roads; and severe parking problems at Haslemere station. CPRE Sussex is opposing the application as grossly intrusive and a threat to the natural environment and rural communities nearby. It appreciates the need to conserve the listed building, and has in the past accepted schemes that do so. It will be interested to see whether the conservation of a listed building outweighs the need to protect the countryside (Source: Rodney Chambers, Chairman, CPRE Sussex).

'The eternal conflict between growth and localism.' A report by BNP Paribas Real Estate claims localism will hit house building with 31,000 fewer homes expected to be built each year, because 11.7% of local authorities have already decided to reduce their housing targets. In the South East, housing is expected to drop by 18.2%, 16,712 homes a year against the targets in the South East Plan (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/lqRzZh>; Report: <http://bit.ly/jRjN9s>).

Eco Towns. Work has yet to start on any of the eco towns says an in-depth ENDS report. Talking about the NW Bicester eco town, Helena Whall for CPRE Oxfordshire says: 'We're supportive in principle, but have grave reservations about the way the consortium is going about it. So far they've only got bits of what they need... they're ploughing ahead with it anyway in a piecemeal fashion' (<http://bit.ly/iEkmWz>; you can get a trial subscription for free to read this).

Efficiency. Half of UK homes do not even have basic insulation installed (<http://bit.ly/miPxPN>). The government detailed plans to set up a joint industry Green Construction Board chaired by construction minister Mark Prisk to steer plans for an 80% cut in carbon emissions from the industry by 2050 (Inquirer: <http://bit.ly/TT86X>).

Targets. Housing targets for Winchester could be furthered lowered following the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies and the economic slowdown (Romsey Adv: <http://bit.ly/lgUQMk>). The government has dropped its ambition to build 40,000 affordable homes on public sector land (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/l6W9gp>).

Design and standards. Housing Minister Grant Shapps called for better housing design, warning that a lack of creativity could lead to Scandinavian-style 'eco-bling' homes as housebuilders prepare to go zero carbon in 2016 (CLG: <http://bit.ly/lxoIRJ>). CLG has set up a working group with the Home Builders Federation and the Local Government Association to look at reducing the complexity of building standards (<http://bit.ly/ikz69c>).

LANDSCAPES AND ECOLOGY

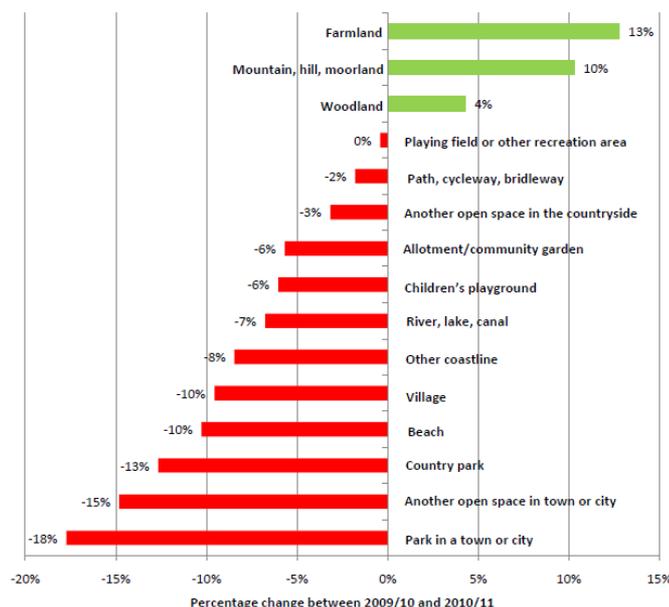
The **Independent Panel on Forestry** has announced more fields visits including to the New Forest (<http://bit.ly/iHlGF8>). The campaign group 38° is trying to drum up responses to the Panel's consultation (<http://bit.ly/ige1nz>).

South Downs National Park. East Sussex County Council voted unanimously against a controversial plan to dump waste in Filching Quarry (Herald: <http://bit.ly/kRIFzd>). 'It would be a travesty if the first achievement of the South Downs National Park was to preside over the loss of the English elm' (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/mR8EsK>).

Engagement with nature. The Defra annual survey of people's engagement with the environment shows that 'visits to the natural environment' have dropped by 13%. However, visits to rural landscapes increased while decreases in visits were recorded for urban parks and other open spaces in towns and cities. Poor weather and business at work are major factors in not visiting. There were 1.3 billion visits to the countryside; well above the 0.9 billion visits to urban green spaces.



Monthly decrease in visits 2009/10 to 2010/11



Change in type of natural environment visited

Green belt. The West of Stevenage development, 3,600 homes on green belt land, was thrown out in the high court (Times24: <http://bit.ly/jzLn9d>). Residents of Barton, Oxford are fighting with CPRE Oxfordshire to save a nature park on the edge of the green belt from housing (Oxford Mail: <http://bit.ly/mnayQf>).

Biodiversity. Charity Buglife is calling for a reduction in light pollution to protect bugs, and more controversially complains that solar panels are a growing threat to insects (Buglife: <http://bit.ly/mK3aeL>; Treehugger: <http://bit.ly/iKZHeA>). A row blew up over control of ragwort after the Advertising Standards Authority recently adverts by Warwickshire County Council, the British Horse Society and commercial companies which exaggerated the dangers of the plant (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/iRhr3x>; Buglife: <http://bit.ly/k0vCZ5>). The London Wildlife Trust claimed that shows like BBC's Ground Force have done 'more against urban wildlife gardening' than anything else (Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/iR1FEH>). Plans for continued peat extraction from the 10,000-year-old Salford Chat Moss has been turned down (BBC: <http://bbc.in/iGoW5Q>).

Litter. Cherwell District Council in Oxfordshire spends £20,000 a year clearing litter from the A34. Keep Britain Tidy said the littering was down to laziness (BBC: <http://bbc.in/ie10aJ>).

Heritage. The leader of Fenland District Council dismissed opponents of development as 'bunny huggers' and 'historic lefties', and threatened to dismantle all archaeological controls on development (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/kQhIpL>). The public inquiry into the closure of the A344 near Stonehenge has begun (BBC: <http://bbc.in/jrRfM8>).

TRANSPORT

High Speed 2

Economic case weak. A report by Oxera consultancy firm to the Transport Select Committee said the estimates were surrounded by a 'degree of uncertainty... The overall balance of non-monetised impacts – which include landscape, carbon and changes in land use – is difficult to ascertain.' It said there was evidence that service and tourism-orientated cities were 'most likely to benefit. London is thus very likely to benefit, possibly at the expense of less service-oriented cities on the line' (BBC: <http://bbc.in/lAWBJU>; Oxera: <http://bit.ly/jJV8ir>). Philip Hammond said a 30 year lease for HS2 will be sold to the private sector once it has been built with public funds (Rail: <http://bit.ly/lzPj44>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/ltNZMs>).

Northern routes. AGAHST (Action Groups Against High Speed Two) claims to have identified the unpublished northern routes of HS2; one branch will skirt Cannock Chase AONB (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/konz7R>).

Opposition. A YouGov poll found that only 34% support of people support HS2, while 48% want the scheme cancelled (Rail: <http://bit.ly/1YzXvG>). Leicestershire County Council has joined the ant-HS2 campaign, *51m*, which now has 14 councils as members (Bucks Advertiser: <http://bit.ly/leT7F2>). Chiltern District Council has set aside £125,000 to fight HS2 (BFP: <http://bit.ly/iwIoex>). Amersham and Chesham MP Cheryl Gillan said she is prepared to be sacked as Welsh Secretary by David Cameron over her opposition to HS2 (BFP: <http://bit.ly/kRJ80B>).

Supporters. David Begg, the director of the campaign group *Yes to high-speed rail*, told the Transport Select Committee that opponents of HS2 were 'well-off nimbys' (BBC: <http://bbc.in/jkHenY>). More than 400 business leaders and entrepreneurs have given their backing to HS2 (FT: <http://on.ft.com/kXx5vu>).

Other Transport

Roads. As the A3 Hindhead Tunnel prepares to open in July, the BBC reviews road schemes (<http://bbc.in/iFTnIH>). The government is to make it easier to build truckstops on the motorway network (DfT: <http://bit.ly/iJXsjH>). Arundel and South Downs MP Nick Herbert joined businesses in backing the A27 Arundel bypass and funding it through housebuilding (Gazette: <http://bit.ly/16GZfv>). UK cyclists' organisation CTC and sustainable transport charity Sustrans have joined with CPRE and other groups to fight the proposal to extend the maximum length of HGVs by 2.05 metres (Bike Radar: <http://bit.ly/UfcmO>).

Rail. High speed trains in Antwerp are now powered by a solar tunnel (Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/lieMws>).

Aviation. Sixty per cent of arrivals into Heathrow Airport are caught up in holding patterns above the capital generating 600 tonnes of extra CO2 and costing £119,000 in wasted fuel every day. The NATS report led Boris Johnson to again call for a Thames Estuary airport (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/1svzJU>).

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Emissions. The International Energy Agency said that due to a record rise in emissions the ambition of preventing a temperature rise of more than 2°C, which many scientists believe is the threshold for potentially dangerous climate change (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/jBVtIe>). The Committee on Climate Change said emissions rose by 3% during 2010. The general trend is flat, which is 'incompatible' with the 3% annual cuts needed (BBC: <http://bbc.in/mgsfHz>).

All Islands Approach. Ministers from the British Isles, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are to cooperate on exploiting the major wind and marine resources in and around the islands. Greater interconnection could lead to wind farms in the west coast of Ireland supplying energy hungry UK cities (DECC: <http://bit.ly/iw3oYf>; Business Green: <http://bit.ly/j2hSNJ>).

Energy Planning Policy Statements

The government has published the final versions of the six energy National Policy Statements (NPS). There have been almost no changes as a result of consultation. The documents will be debated in the House of Commons on 18 July and designated on 19 July. They will then guide planning decisions by the Infrastructure Planning Commission and its successor. The six NPS are:

- ◆ EN-1 – Overarching Energy
- ◆ EN-2 – Fossil Fuel Electricity Generating Infrastructure
- ◆ EN-3 – Renewable Energy Infrastructure
- ◆ EN-4 – Gas Supply Infrastructure and Gas and Oil Pipelines
- ◆ EN-5 – Electricity Networks Infrastructure
- ◆ EN-6 – Nuclear Power Generation.

Nuclear NPS. To the anger of green groups, the nuclear NPS identifies eight sites for new nuclear power stations by 2025 (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/mIqAVJ>):

- ◆ Bradwell, Essex
- ◆ Hartlepool, Co Durham
- ◆ Heysham, Lancashire
- ◆ Hinkley Point, Somerset
- ◆ Oldbury, south Gloucestershire
- ◆ Sellafeld, Cumbria
- ◆ Sizewell, Suffolk
- ◆ Wylfa, Isle of Anglesey.

Wirescapes

Consultation. CPRE and the Council for the National Parks have attacked the National Grid consultation on pylons. Paul Miner for CPRE said that the consultation is closing before a major independent report on the comparative cost of underground or subsea cables is finished (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/jBjqZr>). The study has been delayed after the consultants and the Institution of Engineering and Technology complained that they had not been given enough data to establish costs (Planning Portal: <http://bit.ly/loObsG>). George Monbiot sighed: 'I'm beginning to think it would be less controversial to argue in favour of blackouts' than pylons (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/iwwSIT>).

Electricity Networks NPS. CPRE welcomed the reiteration of the Holford Rules, a set of principles that say beautiful countryside should not be disfigured with electricity pylons if this can be avoided. The NPS has also acknowledged new pylons may be unacceptable in some locations because of their visual intrusion. CPRE's Paul Miner said: 'This will be welcomed by campaigners working to fight newly proposed power lines in Kent, Lancashire, Shropshire, Somerset and Suffolk. But the battle is not yet won as overhead pylons might still be allowed if underground or undersea alternatives are considered too expensive'.

Renewables

Targets. DECC insisted the UK is capable of meeting its target of generating 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020. Renewable sources produced 7.4% of total UK electricity generation in 2010 (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/kmhkDa>). A Policy Exchange report argues the EU should retain its 2020 emissions reduction targets but calls for the 2020 renewable energy target to be abandoned as an unnecessarily expensive route to meeting carbon reduction goals (<http://bit.ly/kfPbHB>).

Solar. DECC announced it is going ahead with major cuts in feed in tariffs (FITs) for large scale solar installations (<http://bit.ly/jePX13>). Climate minister Greg Barker defended the move, as the High Court gave permission for a judicial review of the tariff cuts (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/kXLVDw>). A report by Ernst & Young said that the solar industry might collapse at the planned level of cut, but higher FITs for medium sized solar farms and other changes could protect the industry (SPP: <http://bit.ly/lFywPI>). A solar energy farm on a business park has opened at Wallingford (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/momUCO>).

Anaerobic digestion. Defra has launched an AD Strategy and Action Plan which aims for a £2 billion industry that generates a fifth of the UK's domestic gas (Green Wise: <http://bit.ly/kLZOLp>; Defra: <http://bit.ly/m4ET7o>). Farmers said they were disappointed by the small rise in FITs for AD (Farmers Guardian: <http://bit.ly/kDolj9>).

Wind. The National Grid said wind turbines will have to be switched off 38 days every year because it is too windy (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/mQZXWE>). RenewableUK, the wind industry's trade body, complained that Britain has lower density of wind farms than European neighbours (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/jTC6Jv>). A Scottish council issued a temporary stop notice on a wind farm after protests about the noise it created (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/kkt20S>). Vestas has successfully tested radar-friendly stealth blades, potentially opening up new areas for turbines without interference with military aviation (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/lHpYpE>). The overall cost of offshore wind energy will drop by at least 15% over the next decade and further in the longer term (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/jEZGBV>).

Welsh wind. Following growing protests, the Welsh First Minister, Carwyn Jones, announced that controversial wind farm planning policy TAN8 will now be considered to set a cap on the number of wind farms. He called for more energy planning powers to be devolved from Westminster (BBC: <http://bbc.in/jdCFlw>; <http://bbc.in/lq68qk>; Edie: <http://bit.ly/jAyVgy>). His government also accused the DECC of trying to 'ride roughshod over Wales' natural resources' by permitting wind farms over and above TAN8 levels (BBC: <http://bbc.in/lhXu6c>). 2,000 anti-pylon and anti-wind farm protestors packed a Powys County Council meeting as councillors voted in favour of calling for an 'urgent' review of the Welsh Assembly's wind energy policy (Shropshire Star: <http://bit.ly/k2fs5N>). The spectre of Tryweryn is being raised in the battle over turbines and pylons (Daily Post: <http://bit.ly/l1arbS>).

£10 billion wind back up. Seventeen gas-fired plants costing about £10 billion will be needed by 2020 to back-up wind farms when there is either too little or too much wind. As they will be intermittent use, a government will be required according to Centrica (This is Money: <http://bit.ly/k0Moxy>).

Microgeneration. DECC published its Microgeneration Strategy which aims to support the increased uptake of small scale localised energy production (<http://bit.ly/liJsPY>).

Biomass. 92% of the fuel in UK biomass plants is imported, and imports are set to grow (ENDS: <http://bit.ly/li2Xzb>).

Other Power

Fossil fuels. Controversial fracking operations near Blackpool have been suspended after the drilling operations were suspected to have caused two minor earthquakes (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/lz7hEL>).

Nuclear. DECC is consulting on the methodology to be used to 'identify possible sites from areas put forward following a local authority decision to participate in the geological disposal facility siting process' of nuclear waste (closing date 30 September: <http://bit.ly/lfWJCx>; Business Green: <http://bit.ly/iJTXtB>). The government worked closely behind the scenes with nuclear to ensure the Fukushima accident did not derail their plans for new nuclear stations (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/kvaV9r>).

WATER AND WASTE

Waste Review

Recycled policies. The long awaited government Waste Review has proved to be something of a disappointment, reaffirming the government's commitment to recycling and the waste hierarchy but offering few new policies (Defra: <http://bit.ly/k5c8QR>; <http://bit.ly/kbuçpP>). The review confirms that England will still aim for the EU target of 50% recycling by 2020, lower than Scotland (60% by 2020) and Wales (70% by 2025). The government will consider banning biodegradable waste from landfill (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/kF6qA1>). The review rejected CPRE's call for a deposit scheme on bottles and cans and ruled out tougher measures to reduce the 10 million tons of packaging produced in the UK annually (Independent: <http://ind.pn/mEFgt3>; Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/mIei9U>).

Reaction. Samantha Harding, manager of CPRE's *Stop the Drop* campaign, said: 'This Waste Review has proved a huge missed opportunity. The government say they aspire to a zero waste economy yet they appear to be content allow UK recycling rates flat line at 40%.' Friends of the Earth claimed that the policy document had managed to reduce ambition for improving waste efforts (Letsrecycle: <http://bit.ly/lMKUr5>).

Other Waste and Water News

Incineration. Eric Pickles has rejected plans by Veolia, backed by Nottinghamshire County Council, to build an incinerator at Rainworth (WMW: <http://bit.ly/inspwI>; Decision: <http://bit.ly/kYTrJc>). As is becoming common in these cases, the council has found itself liable for up to £1 million of Veolia's costs at the call-in inquiry (PAIN: <http://bit.ly/k7VdbE>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/iGt9G9>).

Recycling. Communities Minister Bob Neill said that there had been a failure to win over the public on waste and drive up recycling rates (Edie: <http://bit.ly/Is9iCo>).

Water. London Mayor Boris Johnson met a hostile reception when he said rainwater from Wales should be used to 'refresh the bread basket' of South East England (Wales Online: <http://bit.ly/j0aSVG>). In the wake of rejections of plans for the massive Upper Thames Reservoir, Thames Water chief executive Martin Baggs slammed the planning system as slow and deterring investment (Waterworld: <http://bit.ly/kAHJr0>).

RURAL AFFAIRS

Rural Insight 2011. The latest survey makes bleak reading for the future of rural services. Nationally half the people living in the countryside expect rural communities to become less sustainable because of poor housing opportunities and an ageing population. There is a growing perception among young people and those aspiring to live in the countryside that rural areas are inaccessible and exclusive. Nearly nine out of 10 people aged over 60 were finding it difficult to live in rural England because of the lack of services. 84% of people think it is hard to live in rural areas without a car. Public transport is the second most important service after village halls; affordable housing is ranked fifth. Rural people are generally sceptical about the role of the Big Society in providing services (<http://bit.ly/iJAXGy>).

Rural communities risk becoming soulless dormitory settlements as they lose services, schools and business activity, Professor Gerard McElwee of Nottingham Business School said (RSN: <http://bit.ly/j26XdX>).

Food and Farming

Farming Regulation Task Force. CPRE's Ben Stafford gave evidence to the Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. He questioned the effectiveness of voluntary approaches, such as the Campaign for the Farmed Environment, saying it had been taken forward too quickly. He said the idea of defining sustainable intensification within the NPPF, as suggested by the Task Force, 'could have damaging environmental consequences'. He continued: 'some of the developments that we are seeing—the large scale polytunnel developments; we obviously had the proposal for a very large dairy at Nocton recently in Lincolnshire; seasonal worker dwellings—affect the character and the appearance of the countryside; there is cumulative impact from them. We are very pleased that the report talks about bringing poly-tunnels more into the planning regime but we think that there should be a fuller planning process for some of the bigger developments' (<http://bit.ly/ks97yt>).

High streets. With one in seven high street shops empty and high street chains collapsing or retrenching, government retail tsar Mary Portas was set to meet Tesco's UK boss Richard Brasher to discuss solutions (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/jWPtZE>).

Local food. Making Local Food Work has launched a national drive in an attempt to measure the real social and economic impact of community food enterprises (<http://bit.ly/kiKnO1>).

Environment. The area of land under environmental stewardship has increased to 152,000 ha (FWI: <http://bit.ly/k3fh2p>). The RSPB said it will stop being over-critical about farmers' efforts to protect the environment (FWI: <http://bit.ly/lKASfs>).

Badgers. The Welsh government has suspended plans for a badger cull (FWI: <http://bit.ly/jFGGhQ>).

CAMPAIGNING

Brand. CPRE's new brand is examined in *Third Sector*, with one expert scoring it 4 out of 10 (<http://bit.ly/jUDyfU>).

Climate Rush. The Evening Standard profiles Tamsin Omond, leader of Climate Rush, the group that scaled the House of Commons in protest at the expansion of Heathrow airport (<http://bit.ly/jL2dKN>).

And Finally...

Rural incentives. In move that highlights the contrast between nations, the state government of New South Wales is to pay residents £4,500 to move to the country. The serious aim is to revive decaying rural areas (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/j5DB6n>). Here, our coalition government believes that pressures on biodiversity and the shortage of housing can be solved by cash payments. So how about a bounty to encourage young people to move into the English countryside?

About CPRE SE eBulletin

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