



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
South East

CPRE South East eBulletin

November 2011

The government consultation on the **National Planning Policy Framework** has closed. Ministers received almost 14,000 responses, nearly a third coming through the CPRE website (page 1). Ministers have promised to amend some aspects of the NPPF after they have studied the consultation responses. They have also hinted at transition arrangements for local authorities where local plans are not in place or certified as conforming with the new regime.

In **Planning News**, the localism bill has finished its passage in the House of Lords (page 2). It is expected to become law before Christmas. The government has published draft regulations for neighbourhood plans. In the South East, some planning authorities are beginning to adopt lower targets than those imposed on them by the almost abolished South East Plan.

Our **Housing** round up brings unsurprising news of the continuing house building shortfall and high rural house prices, along with a call for older people to move into smaller homes (page 3).

In **Landscapes and Ecology**, the launch of the Green Infrastructure Partnership is rather overshadowed by growing concerns for protection of green spaces as town green rules are overhauled and the Local Green Space designation is introduced (page 3). Heritage groups have published their annual buildings at risk reports, with English Heritage highlighting the threats to industrial buildings.

London's airports and High Speed 2 continue to dominate **Transport** news, with the new Transport minister sounding less enthusiastic about HS2 than her predecessor (page 4). There are growing calls for action to increase airport capacity around London, including a proposal from Lord Foster for a Thames Hub airport in north Kent.

Our **Climate Change and Energy** assemblage looks at the government's proposals for changes to renewable subsidies, with the usual array of wind turbine news (page 5). We also report definitive research that global warming may have been proved to be occurring, and that perhaps it isn't happening.

Finally, on page 6, we briefly look at **Farming and Food**, including proposals for revising CAP, **Rural Communities** and **Campainging**.

1. The National Planning Policy Framework

The Great Planning Row. The consultation into the draft National Planning Policy Framework led to the biggest planning row ever, generating thousands of press and broadcast articles. CPRE and the National Trust headed the campaign supported by around twenty green leaning and planning groups. Around 13,700 responses received by the government. More than 5,200 people used CPRE's website to respond to the consultation, and nearly 7,500 CPRE campaigners have written to their MP about the NPPF. More than 212,000 people have signed the National Trust petition. The debate is gradually moving towards consensus and Chris Brown's summary is well worth a read (Regen: <http://bit.ly/qdMHNU>).

Silence of the Plans. Thirty-five planning authorities in the South East will not have Core Strategies in place by next April. The Daily Telegraph reported that councils may be given between 18 months and two years to get their plans in place (<http://tgr.ph/raht7>). Planning magazine says the government is in talks with the Planning Inspectorate over ways to speed up examination of local plans to ensure that they comply with the NPPF (£: <http://bit.ly/mYvWA7>).

CPRE legal opinion. In an opinion for CPRE, John Hobson QC said the NPPF "is a significant change which may weaken the protection that applies to Green Belts... If the government do indeed wish to carry forward the protection of the Green Belt to the same degree as at present, the express presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt should be reinstated." Hobson also wrote that the lack of a definition of sustainable development meant that the government risked planning by appeal (CPRE: <http://bit.ly/nP8C5F>; <http://bit.ly/pqgpJA>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/qUEbEE>).

Cities. In a first rate speech during the House of Lords debate on planning reform on 13 October, Lord Rogers of Riverside said: "the only sustainable form of development is the compact, polycentric city, which is well-connected and encourages walking and the use of public transport, where public spaces and buildings are well-designed and the poor and rich can live in close proximity. The intensification of existing settlements is economically efficient because it optimises the use of existing infrastructure and the embedded energy within schools, hospitals, roads and homes" (Hansard: <http://bit.ly/nCgFsJ>). The Urban Design Group complained the NPPF ignores the role of cities and transport in promoting the quality of life and jobs (<http://bit.ly/qWXcHL>).

Town centres. The John Lewis Partnership said that the draft NPPF weakened protection of market towns already struggling in the recession and contains no measures to encourage smaller shops back into town centres (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/rkg5X4>).

Green spaces. The Open Spaces Society complained that the new Local Green Space designation is "so shackled by restrictions as to render it useless" (<http://bit.ly/nVZ1e8>). The Football Association and Sport England said that football pitches and sports facilities could be lost to development under the draft NPPF (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/nqSnty>).

Greenfield and environment. Griff Rhys Jones, president of Civic Voice, said he fears that there will be a “house in every field” because the NPPF is so badly framed (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/s6QoC3>). The North Wessex Downs AONB said would significantly weaken existing protection for AONBs (Newbury Today: <http://bit.ly/rpnveU>). The Environment Agency and Natural England have broken their silence on the NPPF to warn that the presumption in favour of development could have “unintended consequences” (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/s4sDn4>).

Design and heritage. The Royal Institute of British Architects called for the NPPF to deliver high-quality, inclusive design for all developments, and for it to be accompanied by further guidance for design codes, local standards, community consultation and energy mapping (<http://bit.ly/mXu942>). Archaeological lobby group Rescue objected to the NPPF saying that it does not adequately protect the historic and natural environment (<http://bit.ly/nriWbJ>). Hank Dittmar, Chief Executive of the Prince’s Foundation called for sustainability to encompass ‘community capital’ to deliver developments designed for a sustainable lifestyle and maintain a sense of wellbeing through historic and cultural character (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/obSdH0>; <http://tgr.ph/o6tZzX>). English Heritage has come to an agreement with the government on the wording of the NPPF, which is reported to maintain the level of protection given by PPS5 (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/qZAtDI>).

Housing. CPRE’s Shaun Spiers issued a quality challenge to house builders (CPRE: <http://bit.ly/pEsRMx>). He called for five principles to be adopted:

- ◆ A brownfield-first approach to identifying sites
- ◆ High design and building standards
- ◆ New homes with decent space standards
- ◆ Master planning for better places, not just planning for houses
- ◆ Industry support for a democratic planning system.

House of Commons. MPs held two debates on the NPPF and the Commons Communities and Local Government Committee began its hearing into the draft. On 14 October, a Westminster Hall adjournment debate saw coalition MPs defend the NPPF, while Labour’s Jack Dromey claimed it undermined the green belt (ePolitix: <http://bit.ly/qmmXD6>; Hansard: <http://bit.ly/rpYt1H>). On 20 October, Greg Clark opened a six-hour debate in the main Commons chamber, attended by around 60 MPs. Clark acknowledged that a longer NPPF may be needed but was less than clear on definition of sustainable development. He promised greater clarity on brownfield first in the government’s response to the consultation: “It is our intention... to ensure that we bring back into use first land that has been derelict or previously developed and that makes a lesser contribution than green fields”. He assured the house that the 20% extra housing land supply was only a buffer. Responding for Labour, Hilary Benn, made much reference to CPRE, including the legal opinion that NPPF weakens green belt protection, as did Bill Esterson, MP for Sefton. Greg Clark, however, dismissed their concerns over the green belt (PA: <http://bit.ly/p3Gexc>; Hansard: <http://bit.ly/nodGem>). CPRE’s CEO Shaun Spiers called for a second round of consultation on the NPPF at a Commons Communities and Local Government Committee hearing on 24 October (<http://bit.ly/tcJlhf>).

House of Lords. In a debate on 27 October, Baroness Hanham, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Communities and Local Government, said she was not expecting a further round of consultation on the NPPF. Under pressure from Lord Reay, she said that adopted core strategies would be updated on a “on a fast-track basis” and the planning inspectorate would issue certificates of conformity with the NPPF. She denied that an existing up to date local plans would be out of date “but the NPPF will then be a matter that has to be taken into account alongside it” (Hansard: <http://bit.ly/tG8eTU>; Planning £: <http://bit.ly/tj10CS>).

2. Planning

Localism Bill. The Bill has completed its Report Stage in the House of Lords. The Third Reading is on 31 October, when an opposition clause on sustainable development is likely to be rejected. The Bill will be considered by the commons on 7 November, after which it is expected to proceed quickly to Royal Assent unless the houses disagree. The government has gone part way to assuaging fears over controversial Clause 130. Strongly opposed by CPRE, the RTPI, the National Trust and others, the clause makes “any local finance considerations” material to an application. A government amendment makes it clear that the clause does not establish whether regard is to be had to any particular consideration or dictate the weight given to different material considerations (Out-Law: <http://bit.ly/pv8ScK>; Planning £: <http://bit.ly/or9Y1i>). The Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords killed off plans for local referendums on local issues (LDV: <http://bit.ly/rpqWUR>).

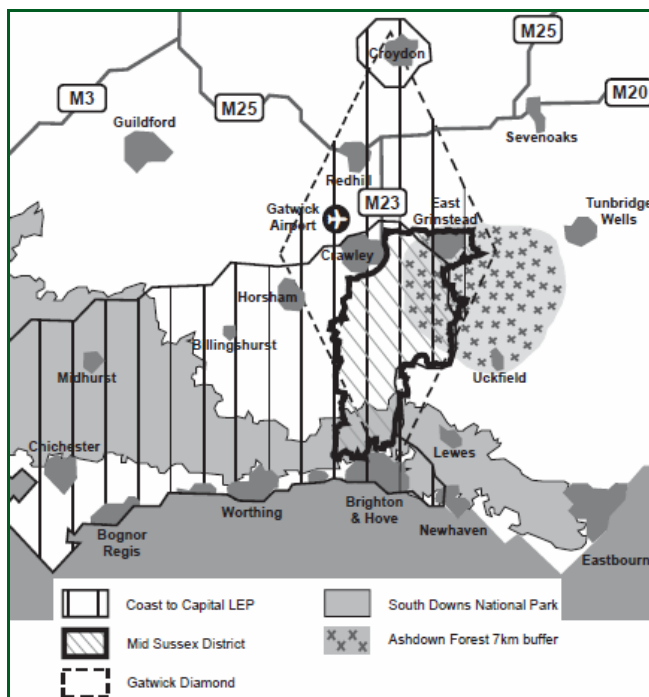
Revocation of RSS. The government published environmental assessments of the revocation of regional spatial strategies, including the South East Plan. The study claimed: “revocation of top down targets will remove pressure to review green belt to accommodate growth” (CLG: <http://bit.ly/w2U24s>).

Neighbourhood plan regulations. CLG has issued draft regulations for consultation (closing date 5 January: <http://bit.ly/p378Ku>). Neighbourhood plans must have appropriate regard to national policy; conform to strategic elements of the local plan; be compatible with EU obligations; and be compatible with human rights obligations. Plans will be developed by neighbourhood forums. Parish councils, where they exist, which will become forums. In urban areas, ad hoc groups and businesses can be established as forums with planning authority approval. Businesses will not be able to dominate forums after an amendment to the Localism Bill restricted the role of business-led neighbourhood forums which must be “established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area”. Neighbourhood plans must conform with the local plan and cannot recommend a lower level of housing or development than that in the local plan. The regulations do not say what will happen when the local plan is silent or out of date. Plans. Completed neighbourhood plans will be examined by an independent examiner, and if found sound will be subject to a local referendum. If approved by more than 50% of those voting, the neighbourhood plan becomes legal planning document that will confer planning permission on developments identified in the plan.

Neighbourhood plans. CPRE Isle of Wight is hosting a symposium on the localism bill and neighbourhood plans (Island Pulse: <http://bit.ly/vsY0nF>). Action on Market Towns is also holding a symposium on neighbourhood planning (9 November: <http://bit.ly/ov07UG>).

Planning consultations. 75% of councillors believe that the silent majority is overlooked in planning decisions and 82% say consultations only capture the views of the most vocal people (ComRes: <http://bit.ly/tlpZoa>).

Local plans. The draft Andover and the Test Valley core strategy proposes to review the boundaries of nearly 30 villages to allow housing expansion, though the council intends to retain four strategic gaps around the draft (Advertiser: <http://bit.ly/uPNrri>; <http://bit.ly/rFVPvI>; Test Valley BC: <http://bit.ly/rYiVKw>). A legal challenge to Oxford's core strategy failed in the High Court (Oxford Mail: <http://bit.ly/tCFXsP>). A consultation into plans to build up to 5,200 homes in Gravesham has begun with a. The target is much lower than the 9,300 in the South East Plan (SEP), but still includes hundreds of homes in the green belt. Early in the month, residents and CPRE Protect Kent marched against the proposals (GM: <http://bit.ly/u11zwl>; TI London: <http://bit.ly/t3oWTy>; GBC: <http://bit.ly/vQUNxG>, closes 8 December). Mid Sussex District Council is also planning to cut the number of houses imposed on it by the SEP, aiming to build 10,600 homes in the next 20 years (Mid Sussex Times: <http://bit.ly/rraXOY>; MSDC: <http://bit.ly/ulwo00>, closes 13 January).



Key diagram from the Mid Sussex local plan

Labour Party. Hilary Benn is now Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Jack Dromey has been promoted to shadow housing minister (24dash: <http://bit.ly/phiKdo>).

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3. Housing

Housing record condemned. The government is failing to deliver on its promises to boost housing supply and protect vulnerable people, a report from the Chartered Institute of Housing, the National Housing Federation and Shelter said (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/qXX3VC>; <http://bit.ly/vmrJp5>).

Housing supply. Housing organisations also called for the NPPF to give stronger support for affordable housing (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/r2Thml>). BBC News examined eight radical solutions to the housing crisis (<http://bbc.in/tdmpQz>). The Intergenerational Foundation called for tax breaks to encourage older people to move into smaller homes to free up some of the estimated 25 million unused bedrooms in England (FT £: <http://on.ft.com/r8Rugo>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/rmsGrb>; IF press release: <http://bit.ly/ruatN9>).

Housing. Launching its Homewise campaign for better homes, the Royal Institute of British Architects said Britain's new-build homes are the smallest in Western Europe and many are too small for family life (BBC: <http://bbc.in/nxJVzq>; HBF: <http://bit.ly/r6WwFD>; RIBA: <http://bit.ly/pp8veG>; <http://bit.ly/pQMqiU>). Homes in the countryside cost an average £27,000 (16%) more than those in urban areas, the latest annual Halifax Rural Housing Review reports. The average property price in the rural south is £252,000 compared to £166,000 in the rural north. House prices in the South East have grown by 40% since 2001, up from £217,000 to £304,000, but eight of the ten least affordable districts are in the South West (<http://bit.ly/uB8nVC>).

Second and empty homes. Eric Pickles is considering allowing councils to change full council tax on second homes (BBC: <http://bbc.in/sq4xzz>).

Around the South East. CPRE Oxfordshire condemned plans by Vale of White Horse District Council to relax planning restrictions to allow more housing to be built in villages (Oxford Mail: <http://bit.ly/szgsMi>). Billingshurst Parish Council in Sussex has strongly objected to plans to construct up to 550 homes east of the village (WSG: <http://bit.ly/vnVr71>).

4. Landscapes and Ecology

Green space. Environment and planning ministers launched the Green Infrastructure Partnership, which will support the development of green networks in urban areas. The launch was accompanied by a Landscape Institute report on Green Infrastructure (Defra: <http://bit.ly/ne0ltY>; LI: <http://bit.ly/ndyJx>). The Open Spaces Society condemned Defra for driving a bulldozer through the laws for registering land as a new village green. Under proposals, only land which "accords with the popularly held traditional character of such areas" and is "open and unenclosed in character" can qualify as a town green. Land already with planning permission cannot be registered (<http://bit.ly/o3FCOU>; Sunday Mail: <http://bit.ly/oyinv0>). A bid to register a town green in Southwater, Sussex failed (WSCT: <http://bit.ly/vK90dz>). Prince William launched the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge to give permanent protection to 2,012 green fields to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 2012. The public will vote for choices pre-selected by local authorities (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/oFS2L6>; <http://www.qe2fields.com/>).

Biodiversity. On 28 October, Defra issued press releases on committee appointments and air pollution, but as in previous years, it failed to publicise the release of its biodiversity indicators issued the same day. Just half of the measures show improvement since 2000, a fifth show little change and a fifth have deteriorated. These include farmland birds, water and wetland birds, wintering water birds, butterflies of semi-natural habitat, plant diversity in neutral grassland and boundary habitats and growth of invasive species in all habitats (<http://bit.ly/sqlEgW>). Defra and the Forestry Commission launched the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Action Plan to tackle serious tree and plant pests and diseases (<http://bit.ly/rOLSgz>).

Kent County Council is consulting on its minerals and waste strategy, with plans for quarry sites at Faversham and Tainham already causing concern (Kent News: <http://bit.ly/tJRP9E>; KCC: <http://bit.ly/sEw5To>, closes 19 December). CPRE Oxfordshire said the amount of sand and gravel Oxfordshire County Council wants to extract should be cut by a third (BBC: <http://bbc.in/sCFIV9>). East Sussex DC is also consulting on its Waste and Minerals Plan (WST: <http://bit.ly/tXCKON>; closes 8 December, <http://bit.ly/uosy8k>).

Heritage. English Heritage said that our industrial heritage is more at risk than castles and ruins. One hundred heritage buildings in South East are at risk, including a 99-year-old crane at Cowes (EH: <http://bit.ly/qlRewM>; <http://bit.ly/rXsL58>; Guardian: <http://bit.ly/uwnKMJ>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/nYMKSB>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/nWBToc>; <http://bbc.in/uDNbV2>). Save Britain's Heritage has also issued its latest Buildings at Risk Register (<http://bit.ly/uopS22>). In its annual Heritage Counts report, English Heritage says that has been a good year for heritage tourism and that heritage organisations are enthusiastic about the Big Society (<http://bit.ly/qP1VBg>; SE report <http://bit.ly/rB8yt5>).

Dark skies. The Ennerdale valley in the Lake District has become a Dark Sky Discovery Site and Exmoor National Park is the first place in Europe to be designated an International Dark Sky Reserve (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/tOsyDV>; ENP: <http://bit.ly/uor5pb>).

Rights of Way. The Ramblers said that public access should be a right rather than a privilege and the UK's coastal and countryside paths should be better protected (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/tlx0rg>).

5. Transport

Reshuffle. Philip Hammond moved to the Ministry of Defence following the resignation of defence secretary Liam Fox. He is replaced as Minister of Transport by Putney MP Justine Greening, who is an opponent of the third Heathrow runway (Rail News: <http://bit.ly/n8vKpr>; FT £: <http://on.ft.com/oiGFHt>).

Sea. The New Forest's district council and park authority have withdrawn their objections to a bigger ferry terminal at Lymington after the ferry company and Natural England agreed a way to mitigate the impact of the scheme (BBC: <http://bbc.in/sMDRvq>). The government published the final Ports National Policy Statement, which be adopted by parliament in mid-November. It orders the Infrastructure Planning Commission to "start with a presumption in favour of granting consent to applications for ports development" (<http://bit.ly/vvPlsM>).

Heathrow. Colin Matthews, chief executive of Heathrow operator BAA, said the airport must expand to keep its place in the international league of airport hubs and that it had not given up on the idea of building a third runway (FT £: <http://on.ft.com/nHCEWn>; ES: <http://bit.ly/mU75DZ>; Reuters: <http://reut.rs/mUHMVF>; Times £: <http://thetim.es/p9l6s7>). *Connecting for Growth*, a report by Frontier Economics, says that Heathrow brings £11.1 billion and 220,000 jobs to the economy and suggests that Heathrow will lose out to continental air hubs (<http://bit.ly/pMgQJe>). Labour has dropped its support for a third Heathrow runway but said a blanket ban on growth and new capacity in the South East makes no sense (Independent: <http://ind.pn/vplQwa>; Labour Party: <http://bit.ly/tZomTF>).

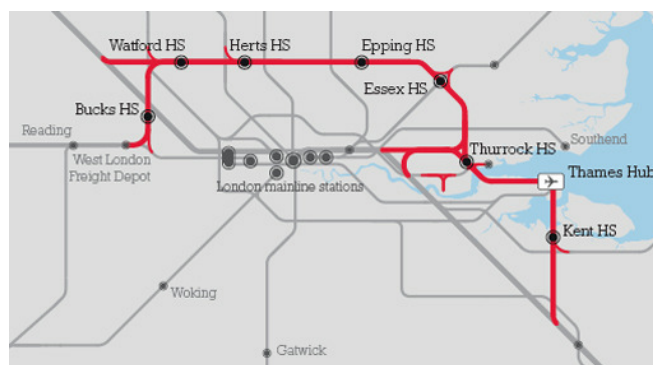
Heathwick. A proposal for a joint Heathrow Gatwick hub linked by a £5 billion, 15 minute high speed rail is gaining momentum. It would be routed alongside the M25 and then in tunnels to Gatwick. The aviation industry is largely hostile to the idea and the FT suggests that a new runway at Gatwick will be needed after current planning restrictions end in 2019 (FT £: <http://on.ft.com/nwlI0j>; <http://on.ft.com/otZp5A>; <http://on.ft.com/qHg4LK>; PA: <http://bit.ly/qVeJnW>; ES: <http://bit.ly/opy0Kj>; Get Surrey: <http://bit.ly/qdJeGT>).

Boris Island. Boris Johnson continues to press the case for a huge island airport in the Thames estuary (London24: <http://bit.ly/qmTQrc>; Business Green: <http://bit.ly/pO482r>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/rh2ahs>).

Thames. Boris Johnson called for ministers to consider plans for a three runway £15 billion Thames Hub airport on north Kent's Hoo peninsula but he is opposed by local councillors and MPs (ES: <http://bit.ly/o6heOa>; Kent News: <http://bit.ly/o8hjpL>; TI Kent: <http://bit.ly/rokl7a>; FT £: <http://on.ft.com/vswdLG>). As we go to press, the plans for the airport have been launched. They include orbital rail around London (Halcrow: <http://bit.ly/uQRSqj>; Standard: <http://bit.ly/t0djoM>).



Thames Hub airport proposal



Thames Hub connections

Gatwick airport has launched a consultation on its masterplan to grow to 40 million passengers a year by 2020, without requiring a new runway or extra terminals. Larger aircraft and more off peak capacity are among the options being considered (<http://bit.ly/ncbnTE>; <http://bit.ly/gatwickmp>; closes 13 January 2012).

Aviation. Friends of the Earth described Thompson's first biofuel flight as a hollow PR stunt which will pave the way for rainforest destruction (EEN: <http://bit.ly/p0gNX1>). Virgin airways is testing a 'revolutionary' biofuel made from waste gases (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/q7ic6W>). The European Court ruled that plans to include all flights into and out of Europe in the EC's emissions trading scheme are legal (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/q5wZGR>). A High Court challenge to plans to expand Bristol International Airport has been blocked (BBC: <http://bbc.in/uu5l6i>).

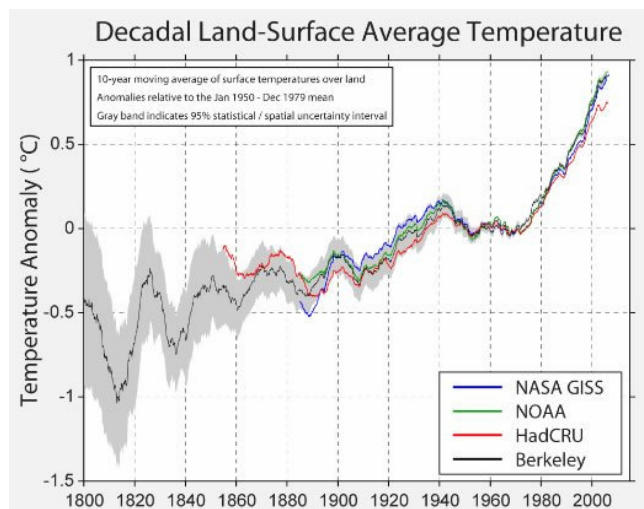
High Speed 2. Andrea Leadsom, MP for South Northamptonshire, secured a short House of Commons debate on HS2. She attacked the economic and environmental case for the line and proposed a new line between London Euston and Milton Keynes to allow the west coast main line to be dedicated to passengers to the north of England (Hansard: <http://bit.ly/pDBATT>; Uxbridge Gazette: <http://bit.ly/pbAVia>). A 108,000 strong petition against HS2 has been presented at Downing Street (BFP: <http://bit.ly/nlwqwq>). In her first appearance in the Commons as Transport Minister, Justine Greening showed no enthusiasm for HS2, telling MPs: "I recognise what a big decision this will be and also recognise there are many views on this and I will take great care on how I look at them" (Yorks Post: <http://bit.ly/nq0hTk>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/uAzVPZ>; Uxbridge Gazette: <http://bit.ly/uM67cA>). A report from the Adam Smith Institute said that HS2 is a white elephant and should be scrapped (<http://bit.ly/vXZuZb>). More than 1,000 people attended an anti-HS2 rally in Wendover (Bucks Herald: <http://bit.ly/rs7F93>). Maria Eagle, the shadow Transport Secretary, is arguing that HS2 should run from Heathrow, not central London, and skirt the M40 (Independent: <http://ind.pn/vplQwa>; Labour Party: <http://bit.ly/tZomTF>). Terry Farrell called for a new rail hub at Old Oak Common centred on High Speed 2 and Crossrail to connect existing airports (AJ: <http://bit.ly/oO21Xj>; F&H Chronicle: <http://bit.ly/oskqJg>; YouTube: <http://bit.ly/o1eziX>).

Roads. The Department for Transport announced a review of road signage that will introduce new signs and many eventually lead to a reduction in roadside clutter (Independent: <http://ind.pn/p5TFxm>; Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/n21PZl>; DfT: <http://bit.ly/qbQZTn>). The government has begun a trial of two metre longer truck trailers, though they will remain within the 44 tonne weight limit (DfT: <http://bit.ly/oi0SjH>).

6. Climate Change and Energy

Labour Party. Caroline Flint has replaced Meg Hillier as shadow energy and climate secretary (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/r0jXq2>).

Climate change. The Berkeley Earth Project, partly funded by climate change sceptics, confirmed previous studies that the earth is getting warmer (BBC: <http://bbc.in/oZcaR4>; Bus Green: <http://bit.ly/s3hxeY>). But one of the scientists involved says the debate is far from over (Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/vG46Ch>).



Berkeley temperature data compared to earlier studies

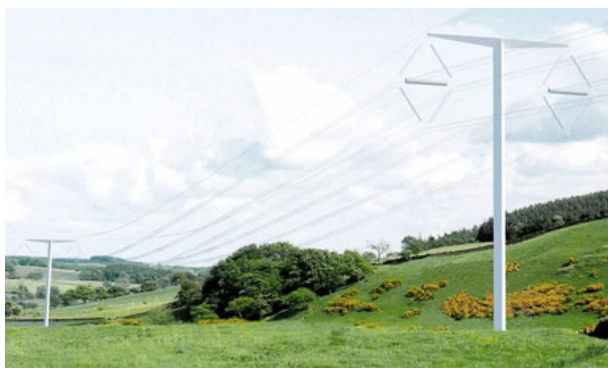
Two-thirds of the UK's local authorities are scaling back or dropping action on climate change, according to the Green Alliance. Its report also notes that "neighbourhood plans are not required to look at environmental sustainability and will receive no steer that they should do so" (<http://bit.ly/vcodv6>).

Energy policy. MPs on the Energy and Climate Change Committee said the government must start thinking strategically about energy security to protect the UK's energy supply against short-term shocks and rising global energy prices. It says new electricity generation currently being built or planned will substitute for generators that are closing but called for greater energy efficiency, including rolling out smart meters (<http://bit.ly/vZ4IWO>). The Energy Bill which heralds the Green Deal and gives private tenants rights to demand energy efficiency improvements gained Royal assent (DECC: <http://bit.ly/sbCamS>).

Not so green government. Environmentalists lined up to condemn the government's environmental record, calling its 'greenest ever' boast "absolutely ludicrous". The Nature Check report found the government has achieved a 'green light' on only two of its 16 commitments to the natural environment (Nature Check: <http://bit.ly/olkLna>; CPRE: <http://bit.ly/mQuwRC>; Jonathon Porritt in Public Service: <http://bit.ly/ocZEWN>; Tony Juniper in Guardian: <http://bit.ly/nUoSKM>).

Renewables. The government has confirmed it is planning to slash solar incentives by more than 50% next month (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/sBC7LJ>). It is also consulting on changes to the Renewables Obligation scheme which will give a slight increase in support for offshore wind and reduce subsidies for onshore wind by 10%. Subsidies for energy from waste (incineration) have been halved. Those for biomass and anaerobic digestion are being slightly reduced (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/tru0go>; <http://bit.ly/sExLul>; Lets Recycle: <http://bit.ly/uaSnPC>; closing date 12 January 2012: <http://bit.ly/uoCKvf>). The EU has reduced subsidies for large biomass plants under the Renewable Heat Incentive due to begin shortly (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/u86sBq>). The WWF called for 60% of the UK's electricity needs to be met by renewable sources by 2030 through demand reduction and improved grid connections to Europe (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/rxfqcJ>).

Pylons. The winner of the DECC pylon contest is a T-shaped structure which will be two-thirds the height and weight of existing 50-metre, 30-tonne pylons. The Guardian leader said: “In a saner world, less hideous pylons would be the minimal option, with underground cables used in beauty spots” (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/oepdel>; <http://bit.ly/pvuzu7>; Register: <http://bit.ly/nbLWag>; DECC: <http://bit.ly/sbRGPS>).



The winning pylon design

Energy efficiency. The government is considering supporting the Daylight Savings Private Members Bill which would advance clocks by one hour if there is UK wide consensus (<http://bit.ly/teXnxk>).

Wind. Renewable UK said that approval rates for new onshore wind farms fell by 11% to 42% in 2010/11 (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/umKRQp>). The Telegraph reports that 2,500 turbines have been refused planning permission due to fears of interference with radar, but new technology will solve the problem from 2013 (<http://tgr.ph/swZ7Zl>). Vattenfall has submitted an application to the Infrastructure Planning Commission to extend the Kentish Flats wind farm (<http://bit.ly/v6OxSE>). A fiercely opposed £1.2million, 230ft tall turbine towering over the South Downs National Park erected by Glydebourne Opera started producing power for last week (Express: <http://bit.ly/t99dst>).



The Glydebourne turbine under construction

Fossil fuels. The government cancelled a £1bn state-funded carbon capture and storage (CCS) project at the Longannet power station in Fife. The money will be used for other CCS projects (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/uXUKBr>).

Incineration and Energy from Waste. The Infrastructure Planning Commission recommended approval of a waste processor at Rookery South, Bedfordshire (AMA: <http://bit.ly/r0exs2>; Planning £: <http://bit.ly/ol8NZF>). Campaigners won a High Court battle to stop a controversial waste incinerator being built at St. Dennis, Cornwall, overturning a decision by Eric Pickles to give the project the go-ahead (PA: <http://bit.ly/nRPq16>; letsrecycle.com: <http://bit.ly/nn3Gu2>; TI Cornwall: <http://bit.ly/pK4tIA>).

7. Farming and Food

Common Agricultural Policy. The European farm commissioner unveiled a proposal to hold back 30% of the basic payment (Pillar 1) until environmental criteria are met. DEFRA secretary Caroline Spelman said the proposals, which include 7% of land being set aside for ‘ecological focus areas’, were unwise given that demands for food were increasing. NFU president Peter Kendall condemned the plans: “The ponderous and blunt approach to greening the CAP is absolutely bonkers at a time when tackling world food production is a priority” (FWI: <http://bit.ly/unxoTL>; <http://bit.ly/uALnq3>).

Megadairy. The world’s biggest megadairy will be built near Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire, after the government confirmed it would not be calling in the application (Bucks Herald: <http://bit.ly/vNa88g>).

Supermarkets. Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire is the latest market town to be threatened by an out of town supermarket (Oxford Mail: <http://bit.ly/rOq24y>; SCOOTs: <http://bit.ly/vEd7iB>).

8. Rural Communities

Labour. Gareth Thomas is now shadow Minister for Civil Society.

Local radio. The row over the BBC’s decision to make heavy cuts to local radio is growing, with claims that the cuts clash with the government’s Big Society and localism agenda (<http://bit.ly/qHUnc3>).

9. Campaigning

National Trust. In an interview with the Guardian, Fiona Reynolds, Director General of the National Trust said the organisation would not become a campaigning body: “We reserve our voice for something that is really important, absolutely at the heart of our core purpose and touches what we stand for and where we make a difference” (<http://bit.ly/uRkFl6>).

About the CPRE South East eBulletin

The CPRE South East eBulletin is issued monthly. We cover planning and environmental news with a relevance to the remit of CPRE. Any views expressed are those of the editor and contributors, not of any part of CPRE. Our audience is CPRE and its friends. Please feel free to circulate this eBulletin.

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