

ENGLAND'S AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY - UNDER THREAT AROUND THE COUNTRY

AVON

Threat to Mendip Hills AONB: Pylons and overhead lines

Status: Public consultation

Details: CPRE Avonside is opposing plans to install new high voltage pylons and overhead lines across the county. One of the proposed routes is through the Mendip Hills AONB and would have a major visual impact on an area designated for its natural beauty. The cause of the threat is the proposed new Power Station at Hinkley Point in Somerset which will connect with Avonmouth (some 65km) and require an increase in the size and capacity of pylons crossing the area.

CPRE Avonside believes undergrounding lines in protected areas is essential and that alternatives for further undergrounding and/or underwater cables could be considered for this route in particular as it follows the coastline. The new pylons would have a detrimental visual impact on the landscape in important areas including the Mendip Hills AONB and the Somerset Levels which are valued by both local communities and tourists.

CPRE has been working with local communities, campaign groups and across county boundaries and providing expert information. We are in continuing dialogue with National Grid about their proposals.

Contact: *Georgie Bigg, Chairman, CPRE Avonside: 01934 863070*

BERKSHIRE

Threat to North Wessex Downs AONB: Incinerator

Status: Public consultation

Details: A new incinerator plant is proposed at Chieveley, within the North Wessex Downs AONB. Waste firm Grundon want to build the incinerator plant, with 85-metre high stacks capable of powering 50,000 homes, at a previously undeveloped site. Architects have also sketched designs for three oval buildings 47m in height and other waste reception and handling facilities. A scoping report application has been made by the company to the local council and is being pursued, but a formal planning application is yet to be submitted. The proposals face huge opposition from local people, the local council, the local MP, the AONB and CPRE Berkshire. There are also plans to expand current sand extraction operations on the site as part of a separate planning application. The site is due to be restored to agricultural land and woodland under the terms of the existing planning permission for gravel extraction. If the incinerator goes ahead then the plans for restoration will come to nothing.

The company held an exhibition about the proposal earlier in 2011, which started the public consultation process.

Contact: *Gloria Keene, CPRE Berkshire: 0118 930 6756*

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Threat to Chilterns AONB: High Speed Rail

Status: Public consultation ongoing

Details: In 2010 the previous Government published its High Speed Rail plans for a new line between London and Birmingham, which would then continue in a Y-shape to Manchester and Leeds. The current Government made some small amendments to reduce impacts and the proposals are currently the subject of public consultation until 29 July 2011. The route goes through 13 miles of the Chilterns AONB. Any route proposed to go through the AONB requires the most rigorous examination and, if shown to be in the national interest, would need exceptional levels of mitigation.

CPRE has led the development of the Right Lines Charter, which sets out principles 'for doing High Speed Rail well' and has found that the current proposal falls short of these. It has been signed by a number of environmental, transport and civil society organisations, which are now pressing the Government to do better.

Contact: *Karen Gardham, Campaign Manager, Right Lines Charter: 020 7981 2827*

CORNWALL

Threat to Cornwall AONB: Housing development

Status: Planning permission granted

Details: There is an acute affordable housing shortage in Cornwall, like other counties. Trevone is a small village about two miles from Padstow, a major centre with many facilities and a recognised location for additional development including affordable housing, which is being built there. Trevone has no facilities at all. It has no school, shop, post office or pub. It is therefore an unsustainable community/location in which to build affordable housing. In addition it is located within the AONB.

A proposal for 15 affordable houses on, by implication, an exception site was proposed at the same time as a large development in Padstow which included a significant number of affordable housing units on a private development. Despite strong local objections including from the AONB Unit in Cornwall the proposal was approved on the Cornwall Council policy that affordable housing can be built anywhere.

The proposal therefore contravenes existing national planning policy as well as several saved Local Plan and Structure Plan policies. The approach in this case is mirrored elsewhere in Cornwall. The Council's Affordable Housing Development Plan Document allows market housing to be included with affordable housing proposals on exception sites in the AONB. The proportion of market housing proposed is growing and this approach means that there may be more threats to the AONB in the future.

Contact: *Richard Ward, Planning and Development Manager, CPRE Cornwall: 01840 779026*

DEVON

Threat to South Devon AONB: housing development

Status: Planning application expected

Details: Churston Golf Club is in discussions with Bloor Homes and Torbay Council to demolish an existing 12 year old lottery-funded Club House. The Torbay Council lease on the land is protected by a covenant to be used for either golf or agriculture. The proposal is for the land to be used for a large housing estate of approximately 90 houses and a 50-bed care home. This site is not allocated in the Local Plan for housing and has been used as a golf course since 1890.

The Club House would then move to a site which is on an AONB, Coastal Preservation Zone, Countryside Zone and Devon Biodiversity site. The new access to the Club House would be through a Conservation Zone via narrow country lanes.

Over the past 15 months this subject has attracted a large amount of press coverage and a very active campaign by RAGS (Residents Against Golf Club Sell Off). Local residents strongly object (94%) to the new Golf Club House being built in the AONB. CPRE Teignmouth and Torbay district group have been working closely with the RAGS group to oppose the development.

Contact: *Geoffrey Melbourne, Chairman, RAGS: 01803 845460 or John Hartley, CPRE Devon: 01803 873339*

DORSET

Threat to Dorset AONB: Onshore wind farms

Status: Public consultation

Details: The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Energy Strategy is open for consultation between the 21 June and 19 August this year, possibly extended until 30 September. The figures used in the Strategy were prepared by SQW Consultants for the Department of Energy and Climate Change. The draft document suggests that 36% of the county's renewable energy could come from onshore wind turbines over the next nine years.

Figures set out in the Energy Strategy assume that 31GW of offshore wind energy contributes 7.5% of the UK's 15% requirement by 2020, and it is calculated that Dorset would require approximately 90 onshore wind turbines to meet a proportional share of the remaining 7.5% national renewable energy target for onshore wind. It has been indicated that 50 of the turbines could be in West Dorset.

If the Dorset AONB, which forms 80% of West Dorset, has to take most of the 50 turbines, this would have a serious visual effect on the AONB as it is likely that they would be situated on the higher landscapes. Note, however, that the national SQW Consultants assessment of the UK's onshore wind energy resource as used in developing the Draft Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Renewable Energy Strategy excludes wind turbines in National Parks and AONBs. CPRE Dorset are responding to the public consultation on the Energy Strategy and believe that AONBs should be protected from such developments.

Contact: *Richard Nicholls, CPRE Dorset Chairman: 01308 422679*

ESSEX

Threat to Dedham Vale AONB: Retail park

Status: Planning permission refused... for now

Details: The western end of the Dedham Vale AONB has been threatened by repeated applications over a ten year period for development of a large retail park called Horkesley Park. The development is marketed as a heritage centre and would have a highly damaging effect on the beauty and tranquillity of the AONB.

The most recent application was overwhelmingly refused by Colchester Borough Council's Planning Committee in May 2011. CPRE Essex spoke against the application, which would be 75% within the AONB boundary. However, given the many applications for planning permission in the last decade, it is almost inevitable that further applications will be made in the future.

Contact: Tom Holme, CPRE Essex Chairman: 07971 649831 or David Williams, CPRE Essex Press & Publicity Officer 01702 710232/07831 857382

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Threat to Cotswolds AONB: Motorway service station

Status: Judicial Review to take place

Details: Despite no evidence of need, a new major motorway service area on the M5 has been approved by Stroud District Council, abutting the AONB just south of Gloucester in a critical gap between the Cotswolds scarp and Robinswood Hill, an outlier of the Cotswolds. The decision has been challenged by the operators of the service areas either side who argue that need has not been demonstrated and that the views of Natural England and others on landscape impact have not been properly addressed. There is to be a Judicial Review of the decision to grant permission. The motorway service area was vigorously opposed by CPRE Gloucestershire Branch, by the Cotswolds Conservation Board and by a local campaign group.

Contact: Richard Lloyd, CPRE Gloucestershire: 01454 613302

HEREFORDSHIRE

Threat to Wye Valley AONB: Poly tunnel development

Status: Recently approved

Details: In 2008 a group of concerned residents formed the Wye Valley Action Association Ltd (WVAA) to campaign for a more comprehensive planning process to be applied to poly tunnel development. The group has been locked in a legal battle to modify a retrospective application for a 54ha poly tunnel development in the Wye Valley AONB. Approximately 74 mobile homes and caravans are also on the site, to house seasonal workers for the poly tunnels. All of these mobile homes are without planning permission and have been allowed to become permanent and 'lawful' through the passing of time. The argument of the WVAA was that Herefordshire Council granted planning permission for the poly tunnel development without carrying out an environmental impact assessment. The original High Court judgement (in December 2009) was in favour of the Wye Valley Action Association, and quashed the planning permission, but Herefordshire Council, together with the National Farmers' Union, decided to appeal that decision and succeeded in January 2011.

The Wye Valley Action Association, CPRE Herefordshire and CPRE nationally are concerned that this may set a precedent for further large scale poly tunnel development in areas that are designated for the quality of their landscapes.

Contact: Bob Widdowson, Chairman, CPRE Herefordshire: 01544 230050

ISLE OF WIGHT

Threat to Isle of Wight AONB: onshore wind farm

Status: Awaiting decision of Public Inquiry

Details: The site is in the AONB on Cheverton Down, Shorwell. Nearby are public rights of way, bridleways, and 15 Bronze Age barrows. In 1995 permission was granted for three wind turbines (tip height 45.5m), but a variation was granted in 2003 for an increase to 52m with maximum output 600KW each, and for a limited time of 25 years. This was implemented by breaking ground but no turbines have been erected, and turbines of this specification are now obsolete. A new replacement application, by Cornwall Light & Power (CLP), was made in 2009 for three turbines, tip height 125m, output 3MW each. The local authority turned down this application and CLP appealed. At a full Public Inquiry in August 2010, CLP was permitted to file instead an application to reduce the tower height by 15m, to give a tip height of 110m with the same output of 3MW each - it is this variation which will be decided when the Inspector reports.

Contact: *Dennis Russell, Planning Secretary, CPRE Isle of Wight: 01983 852614*

KENT

Threat to Kent Downs AONB: Lydd airport expansion

Status: Public Inquiry

Details: Proposal to extend the runway and expand the terminal buildings at Lydd airport, in the most remote and tranquil part of Kent, with a view to accommodating 500,000 passengers per annum, up from 3,000-4,000 per annum at present. Increased over-flying of the Kent Downs AONB, by larger and noisier aircraft, would be inevitable if this were to go ahead and would have a serious impact on the tranquillity of the AONB. Due to the remoteness of Lydd, there are wider implications such as increased traffic - existing surface transport links are very poor.

Permission was granted by Shepway district council in 2010, and plans called in for inquiry which began on February 15th this year and will run until mid-September. CPRE Kent's evidence focuses on tranquillity (with support from CPRE's expert witness), transport and planning issues, and impacts on local quality of life.

Contact: *Hilary Newport, Director, CPRE Kent: 01233 714541*

LANCASHIRE

Threat to Forest of Bowland AONB: Onshore wind farm

Status: Public Inquiry due

Details: In 2009/10 Community Windpower applied for 20 wind turbines, each 126.5 metres high, on Claughton and Whit Moor in the Forest of Bowland AONB. The local authority refused their application and in 2010/11 the company submitted a revised plan for 13 turbines, again 126.5 metres tall, on the same site. The local authority refused the revised application, although the decision became meaningless as a few days before the company (after seeing the recommendation to refuse) filed to the Secretary of State for non-determination. Subsequently the application will be heard at a forthcoming Public Inquiry. CPRE Lancashire are part of a consortium of local groups opposed to the development and will give evidence at the Public Inquiry.

Contact: *Juan Murray, Planning Officer, CPRE Lancashire: 0161 438 0441*

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Threat to Nidderdale AONB - wind turbines

Status: Public consultation expected

Details: In 2009, Yorkshire Water submitted an application to construct two wind turbines 125 metres high at Chelker reservoir, between Skipton and Ilkley, one mile from the Nidderdale AONB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park, which would have a high visual impact. The application was rejected by Craven District Council on the grounds of the effect on heritage (Bolton Abbey), on landscape impact (designated landscape) and loss of residential amenity. There was no appeal against the refusal.

Yorkshire Water submitted a new application in February 2011 for three 80 metre turbines on the same site. English Heritage have submitted a strong objection to the application, as have the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the AONB. Due to the objections, the proposals have very recently been withdrawn. A public consultation about wind turbines on the site will begin shortly and it is feared that another application will be submitted in the coming months.

Contact: Peter Rigby, CPRE North Yorkshire: 01756 710387

NORTHUMBERLAND

Threat to North Pennines AONB - opencast mine

Status: Refused but may appeal

Details: The proposal to dig high-grade coal from 75-acres of farmland at isolated Halton Lea Gate, which is adjacent to the North Pennines AONB, has recently been refused for the second time in 17 months. Planners had asked the applicant for a more detailed environmental assessment but they felt that little effort had been made in this respect for the second application and extensive gaps remained in the ecological information submitted. The applicant, HM Project Developments, hoped to dig 140,000 tonnes of coal over three years from the site. The local CPRE group and concerned locals have long opposed the mine. Despite the second refusal of permission, it is feared that the applicant will appeal the decision. The threat of a vast mine next to the North Pennines AONB may well resurface in the future.

Contact: Les Ashworth, CPRE Northumberland: 01661 842675 (Monday 4 July onwards)

SHROPSHIRE

Threat to Shropshire Hills AONB: Pylons and overhead lines

Status: Public consultation recently closed

Details: CPRE Shropshire is opposing plans to install pylons and overhead lines across the county. One of the proposed routes is immediately adjacent to the Shropshire Hills AONB and would have a major visual impact on an area designated for its natural beauty. The proposals would have a huge impact on the Shropshire countryside. The cause of the threat is rooted in the Welsh Assembly Government's guidance on renewable energy, issued in 2005, which would allow the construction of around 700 large turbines in Mid Wales. The guidance was published without any consultation over its consequent effects in Shropshire.

The National Grid consultation has recently closed on alternative routes for pylons and overhead lines to connect wind farms to the grid through Shropshire.

CPRE Shropshire have been working with local campaign groups to oppose the plans, which are also opposed by Shropshire Council.

Contact: Selby Martin, Chairman, CPRE Shropshire: 01743 343784 or email Sarah Jameson, CPRE Shropshire: admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk

SUFFOLK

Threat to Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB: Nuclear Plant: (Sizewell C) and associated pylons/overhead lines

Status: Planning application expected

Details: The Sizewell nuclear plant is hoping to build a new reactor 'Sizewell C' within the Suffolk Coasts and Heath AONB. Sizewell A and B are extant nuclear plants and a planning performance agreement has been signed by the local authorities and EDF to progress a planning application for a third plant adjacent to the existing ones. This is likely to perpetuate a need to upgrade the national grid further, potentially involving a new line of pylons through the AONB. No details are yet available regarding the design of the plant but it will inevitably be a very substantial building.

Contact: *Simon Cairns, Director, CPRE Suffolk Preservation Society: 01787 247179*

SURREY

Threat to Surrey Hills AONB: Mineral extraction

Status: Ongoing threat

Details: The Surrey Hills AONB is under severe threat from the recently published Minerals Plan. Current exploration for hydrocarbons in the AONB relates to drilling applications at Albury near Newlands Corner (Star Energy), Coldharbour near Leith Hill (Europa Oil and Gas) and the Hog's Back. Other sand extraction proposals have been supported by the Plan in Tandridge which are damaging to both countryside and community there. Environmental Impact controls at a number of sites are not sufficiently enforced, resulting in dust storms, noise disturbance, air pollution, and landscape destruction.

Contact: *Andy Smith, Director, CPRE Surrey: 01372 362720 (office) or 07737 271676 (mobile)*

SUSSEX

Threat to Chichester Harbour AONB: Glasshouse development

Status: Refusal being appealed

Details: A large scale glass house development is proposed near to the Chichester Harbour AONB. The Dutch applicants, Madestein, seek permission to build 52 acres of glasshouses on an 88 acre site, for growing lettuces. However they purchased another 200 acres of adjacent land after the application was being considered, and admitted at the hearing before the Chichester District Council Committee that they intended to build more glass houses later. The company will probably grow whatever is most profitable: tomatoes, cucumbers, flowers etc, much of it using hydroponic systems. Their aim is to supply the whole of the southern region. The turnover will require many HGVs to make double journeys to and from supermarkets in Chichester and far beyond.

The Harbour provides recreation at coastal beaches, sailing, walking and bird watching. It is much used by weekend visitors from Greater London, residents across the region and national and foreign tourists. The main threat is from congestion on the access roads, which is already significant at rush hours and holiday periods.

The proposed site of the development is one and a quarter miles from the AONB boundary, but the traffic involved will travel along that boundary, which coincides with the A286 and is less than half a mile from the high water at Dell Quay. At the appeal, CPRE Sussex will argue that the development is a threat to all the surrounding countryside, and also that it would have significant adverse

economic impacts on the AONB, particularly regarding local businesses and tourism.

Contact: Richard Hill, CPRE Sussex: 01243 641514 but between 3-23 July: Rodney Chambers, Chairman: 01243 779359

WARWICKSHIRE

Threat to Cotswolds AONB - Onshore wind farm

Status: Permission granted for an anemometry mast.

Details: In 2009, Broadway Energy Developments Ltd. applied for a meteorological mast to measure wind speeds. Parish councils, district councillors, county councillors and residents rose in unanimous revolt and the application was refused. Broadway appealed; the appeal was dismissed. A second application produced a second refusal and a second appeal, and this appeal was upheld. It is planned to put five wind turbines on Feldon Vale, the area of countryside directly below the Avon Dassett Hills, 5 km (3 miles) north of the AONB boundary at Arlescote. The mast is 196 feet high, but the tips of the revolving blades of these turbines will rise 410 feet into the air, higher than St. Paul's Cathedral. The Dassett Hills are crowned with a peak called Magpie Hill, which is crowned with a stone structure called The Beacon. The blades will rise higher than The Beacon. The landscape for many miles around, amongst the best that Warwickshire has to offer, will be affected by the giant turbines.

The proposal is vigorously opposed by the CPRE Warwickshire, local residents, several parish councils, the Stratford-upon-Avon District Councillors and the local Member of Parliament, Jeremy Wright.

Contact: Nicholas Butler, CPRE Warwickshire Press Officer, 01608 684953, or CPRE Warwickshire office, 01926 494597.

WILTSHIRE

Threat to Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB: Housing development

Status: Detailed planning permission imminent; implied further development

Details: The village of Tisbury in the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire AONB was targeted to meet a substantial proportion of new housing in south Wiltshire under the previous planning regime, and a green field site was designated to take 90 houses. It is outside the main village and on much higher ground, visually intrusive with the potential also for night time light pollution of Tisbury's remaining dark skies. It has serious implications for increased traffic and danger to pedestrians and cyclists on Tisbury's narrow approach roads. The developer is also resisting pressure to provide onsite renewable energy generation via PV or biomass.

All parties - the AONB, CPRE, the parish council and numerous local residents have been united first in opposing the development, and now in pressing for improvements to the scheme.

A threat for the future is that two of the roads in the development end abruptly at the boundaries of the development, hinting at possible future applications in the bordering green field sites, which may be hard to resist.

Contact: wiltscpre@btconnect.com