

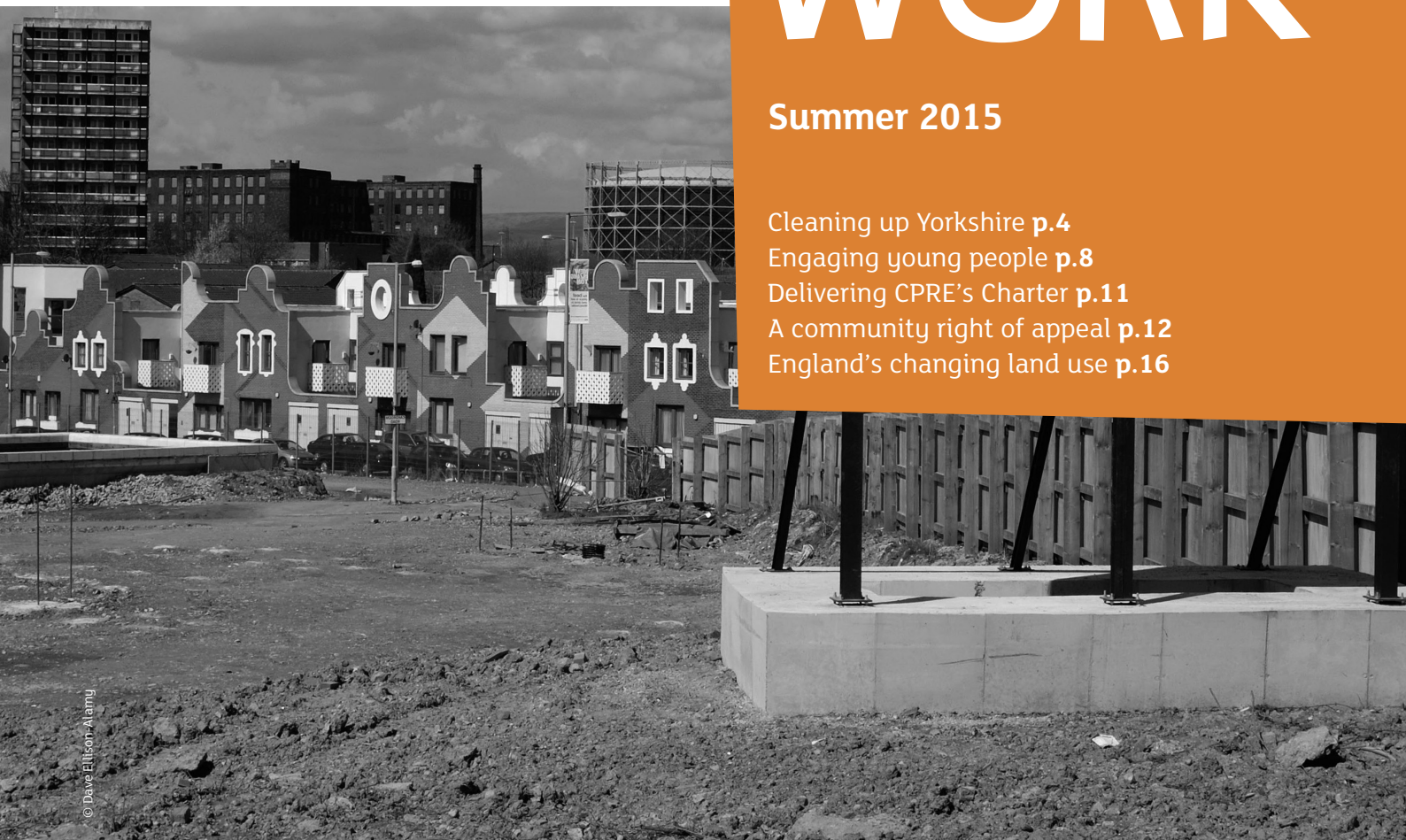


Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

FIELD WORK

Summer 2015

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Engaging young people **p.8**
Delivering CPRE's Charter **p.11**
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Getting houses built – in the right place

On the 10th of July, the Government set out their 15 point Productivity Plan, *Fixing the Foundations*, which included plans to increase housebuilding to help “drive the next phase of our growth and raise living standards.” The stated aim is that “Britain becomes the richest of all the major economies by 2030.”

With the plan promising to increase ‘planning freedoms’ to keep up with housing demand, the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Secretary, Greg Clark MP, pledged to go “further and faster” in “removing the barriers” than the National Planning Policy Framework he introduced as Planning Minister in 2011. Introducing the productivity plan, Business Secretary Sajid Javid MP said “we’re going to introduce a new zonal system, which will effectively give automatic planning permission on suitable brownfield sites.” When pressed on whether increasing housebuilding should be achieved by building on Green Belt, he asserted that “there’s no need to build on the Green Belt...that can be rightly protected.”

The detail of the plan set out that where local authorities don’t put plans in place, the Communities Secretary will intervene to “arrange for local plans to be written, in consultation with local people.” The plan also stated that “government will go further by legislating to grant automatic permission in principle on brownfield sites...

reducing unnecessary delay and uncertainty for brownfield development.” This follows a welcome announcement in the Summer Budget that a Land Commission will be set up in Greater Manchester to identify and bringing forward publicly-owned brownfield sites; CPRE had called on the Government to implement similar initiatives around the country after the creation of a London Land Commission earlier this year.

Housing market failings

Reacting to the proposals for Government intervention when local plans are not coming forward, CPRE’s Planning Campaign Manager Paul Miner said that “our research has shown that the main reason local plans are being delayed is because developers are challenging the housing numbers at every step.” CPRE is calling on the Government to give more support for councils that aim for realistic numbers of new homes in their area, with greater backing for those who want to avoid building on the Green Belt but are under pressure to meet estimated numbers.

While welcoming the Government’s enthusiasm for brownfield redevelopment, CPRE argues that granting automatic planning permission for brownfield sites won’t tackle the problem that we are currently seeing where developers effectively ‘landbank’ brownfield sites with planning

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FIELDWORK

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CPRE works locally and nationally to stand up for the countryside: to protect it from the threats it faces, and to shape its future for the better.

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Getting houses built – in the right place

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permission, preferring to build on more profitable greenfield sites instead. Paul Miner concluded that “to achieve the development we want and need on brownfield land, the Government should implement a ‘brownfield first’ rule at the heart of planning to prioritise urban redevelopment and leave behind the unsustainable status quo.”

The failings of the housing market were the subject of the fourth paper in CPRE’s Housing Foresight series, *Getting Houses Built*, which was published in June. The research presented in the paper strongly suggests that questions of planning restrictions, land availability or housing targets are less important than the make-up of the housebuilding industry in determining the supply of housing. Being dominated by private companies, the sector acts in the interests of shareholders by acquiring large banks of land, but only building-out sites at a rate that will keep prices high. Because land yet to be developed on a site with planning permission is not included in estimates of housing land supply, local authorities are forced to allocate more land or approve new developments elsewhere, putting pressure on Green Belts and open countryside.

“Developers have 314,000 housing plots in land banks and are able to dictate supply without meeting need”

Research by Luke Burroughs, the author of *Getting Houses Built*, found that the nine largest housing developers have 314,000 housing plots in strategic land banks and are able to dictate supply without meeting need. CPRE argues that this figure indicates the need to reform the current system to accelerate the supply of homes in the right places. Luke explained that “large scale greenfield sites are forced through the planning system with new housing slowly drip-fed onto the market, while suitable brownfield land remains undeveloped.”

How to get homes built

May’s Queen’s Speech saw the Government announce the launch of a ‘Right to Build’ policy to give people the right to be allocated land with planning permission to self-build or commission a local builder to build a home. In light of this, *Getting Houses Built* suggests a number of options that could empower local authorities to accelerate house building by smaller builders. It suggests that authorities could be given ‘use it or lose it’ measures if

“Smaller brownfield sites must be more regularly identified to provide more opportunities for small builders”

land with planning permission is not developed quickly, and that authorities could learn from European land acquisition models and use reformed Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire land suitable for housing at existing use value. An earlier Housing Foresight report on *Better Brownfield* highlighted an example of this in Vauban, a 40 hectare, 2,000 home urban extension to Freiberg in Germany. The local authority bought the land at close to current use value; ensured a tramline into Freiburg; then sold the individual plots to small builders and groups of residents.

The Queen’s Speech also confirmed the creation of a new register of brownfield land, a resource which could provide smaller sites for housing at a time when just eight per cent of sites securing planning permission are for fewer than ten units; the paper suggests that smaller brownfield sites – which are currently developed twice as fast as large sites – must be more regularly identified, in order to provide more opportunities for small-scale builders, housing associations, and self-builders. The innovative design and ecological standards of many of these smaller builders would also benefit from greater transparency in the development process. The paper argues for the compulsory registration of all land ownership, options and sales agreements with the Land Registry, to make it easier for those outside the major players to enter a market which is so often a closed shop.

Transparency should extend to negotiations around viability which currently allow developers to delay many developments and reduce their planning obligations (design standards, the number of affordable homes, support for infrastructure) on the grounds that they make a scheme unviable. The paper proposes an open book approach to assessing viability, with clear guidance based on a single methodology to reduce uncertainty and give greater clarity to developers, local authorities and land owners.

The paper concludes that weakening the planning system to release more land for housing is unlikely to help build the homes we need while the structure of the industry remains the same. With the new Government aiming to build more houses while fulfilling its manifesto commitments to protect the countryside, CPRE believes the practical proposals in *Getting Houses Built* and earlier Housing Foresight papers can help achieve these aims far better than another round of damaging planning reforms.

Find out more: Read the Housing Foresight series of papers at www.cpre.org.uk/resources

BREAKthrough

How our work is making a difference

Fracking relief in Lancashire

CPRE Lancashire expressed relief over Lancashire County Council's recent decision to refuse planning permission for exploratory fracking for shale gas at Roseacre Wood and Preston New Road. The Branch submitted detailed objections to both applications, helping to influence the council's decision by raising concerns over the noise and visual intrusion of the surface drilling, and the capacity of local country lanes to carry the required heavy lorry traffic.

On 25 June, Lancashire County Council, in its capacity of Minerals Planning Authority, unanimously refused planning permission for Cuadrilla to carry out exploratory fracking at Roseacre Wood, citing the unsuitability of the local road network for the large tankers and other HGVs that would be

necessary for the development and operation of the site. On 29th June, Cuadrilla's Preston New Road application was also refused, on the grounds of significant landscape impacts and unacceptable noise impact on local residents.

Jackie Copley, Planning Manager for CPRE Lancashire, highlighted that if permissions had been granted, the Council had not accepted their calls for conditions to be imposed requiring fracking to be confined to the very deep target rock formations specified in the planning application. Both the Environment Agency and the Oil and Gas Authority accepted the possibility that fracking could occur above the target formations, despite CPRE Lancashire's negotiations with Cuadrilla leading to an agreement from its CEO to operate voluntarily according to the terms

of the Branch's condition.

In identifying a positive way forward, CPRE Lancashire hopes to ensure the use of the maximum amount of information available to ascertain the location of the fluid injected by the fracking process. They believe this would confine fracking operations to very deep target formations, and out of shallower formations where the environmental risks would be significantly greater. The Branch feels the campaign has shown that there are wider aspects of the regulatory process which are not fit for purpose; in the event of future fracking applications, they will continue to press for the development of shale gas to be subject to exemplary practice and sound, transparent, regulation.

Find out more: Read the latest from [//www.cprelancashire.org.uk](http://www.cprelancashire.org.uk)

War Horse valley skyline saved

A planning inspector has dismissed an appeal for planning permission for a 50m (to hub) wind turbine to be sited on a farm in the village of Iddesleigh in Devon, the setting of the Michael Morpurgo's novel War Horse which has made the area's countryside world-famous.

The producer of the film of the book, Steven Spielberg, once called the local landscapes "some of the most natural wonders in all of England", adding that their unspoilt qualities meant no special effects were needed to recreate the uncluttered skies of the Great War period. This quality was referred to in the planning inspector's decision, which noted that "the landscape hereabouts is presently almost untouched

by major or large scale development with an absence of major infrastructure or pylons". Because of this, she felt "the large scale of the turbine together with its movement would have a significant impact on the gentle pastoral scene."

Referring to the fact that the "literary and artistic connections, past and present" are "bound up in the tranquillity and beauty of the landscape and its unchanging character", the inspector concluded that the "the turbine would be a dominant and discordant feature". Her report, published on 6 July, said "the harm identified to the setting of important heritage assets, to the qualities of the landscape and to living conditions substantially outweighs the benefits of the

proposal." She also felt the proposal would "conflict with the underlying aims of the development plan policies which seek to support proposals that would have a positive effect on the landscape and conserve heritage assets."

CPRE Devon expressed relief at the news, pointing out that the proposal "did not have the support of the majority of local people" and welcoming "the fact that the government is now saying that only wind turbine applications that have the support of the local community would be able to be approved." The inspector said recent policy changes announced included in a ministerial statement last month (p13) had been considered, but that the scheme would have been rejected anyway.

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Current issues

Action needed on fracking safeguards

Following the Government laying draft secondary legislation in Parliament in July to define protected areas, CPRE were dismayed that although the Government has included National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and World Heritage Sites in the definition of protected areas, it did not include anything in the legislation to rule out fracking from wells that are within these areas. It also reneged on its previous promise to also include Sites of Special Scientific Interest and ignored CPRE's request to ban fracking underneath these areas.

CPRE had earlier joined the RSPB, National Trust and Wildlife Trust in signing a joint letter arguing that shale gas and oil extraction should only go ahead if the regulatory framework is world-class. This is vital to safeguard the countryside and increase public confidence. The letter called for drilling *beneath* particularly sensitive areas to be explicitly ruled out, with Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar (wetland) sites and Local Wildlife Sites and nature reserves added to the list of designations covered. The campaigners argued this would prevent unnecessary negative effects from drilling rigs next to these sites, which would harm their tranquillity and people's enjoyment of them.

CPRE's Senior Energy Campaigner, Nick Clack, said "the decisions on Cuadrilla's two fracking applications in Lancashire (p3) have set an important precedent for any future proposals — that the strongest possible safeguards are needed otherwise applications will be rejected. In terms of national regulation and public engagement we are still some way away from the gold standard that's needed to ensure environmental protection as well as increase public confidence."

NEWSroundup

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

Cleaning up Yorkshire

Hundreds of bags of litter were taken from Yorkshire's streets and country lanes following a month of action through the Clean Up Yorkshire campaign.

The initiative was launched by the Yorkshire Evening Post in partnership with CPRE after the paper revealed Yorkshire councils were spending £77m a year cleaning our streets, including £8m alone in Leeds. More than 30 litter picking events took place in June, while a Pick Up A Piece Day at the end of the month asked everyone to pick up just one piece of litter in a bid to clear 2.5m pieces in just one day. The campaign inspired dozens of community groups to get involved, including CPRE Craven District Group who turned their attention to Skipton and the canal running through

the centre. CPRE volunteers collected drinks cans, fast food boxes, old socks, sweet wrappers, vodka bottles, carrier bags and countless energy drink bottles.

Following a successful month of action, the Yorkshire Evening Post has pledged to continue to support CPRE's efforts to lobby the Government to extend new powers to local authorities to fine people who litter from vehicles. Hundreds of people have signed a petition calling on Environment Secretary Liz Truss to take action following a year of delays since the Government approved the necessary legislation. The new powers, which make the vehicle owner of the vehicle responsible for any litter thrown from it, are already available to local authorities

in London and were due to be extended to the rest of the country in April.

CPRE's Stop the Drop Campaign Manager, Samantha Harding, urged the Secretary of State to "make sure her officials are taking the required action to bring this legislation to life and to prevent further littering from vehicles." In a March report of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, MPs revealed how the Highways Agency cleared 150,000 bags of rubbish from the major road network in 2012/13 at a cost of around £6m, or £40 per bag. The committee concluded that current penalties for littering from vehicles are "unenforceable", recommending the powers were extended immediately to all local authorities.

Giving peace a chance

New research from CPRE published in May showed that better data collection and a new indicator of tranquillity are needed to increase protection for England's most peaceful areas.

In surveying a range of authorities, from National Parks to borough councils, CPRE found that 90 per cent of authorities would like better guidance and new data to develop tranquillity policies. More than 90 per cent of respondents support the case for new national tranquillity maps, which CPRE believes could greatly help local authorities when new infrastructure projects are planned. The research suggests that councils are unlikely to drive forward the policies we need to protect some of our most tranquil areas without better open data and guidance to help

them improve quality of life in their communities.

CPRE's report finds that some planning authorities have successfully developed policies to protect tranquillity since 2012, when the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encouraged them to do so. Yet the report indicates that few authorities outside of those set up to manage protected areas like National Parks have implemented policies protecting tranquillity – and 75 per cent of authorities without a current policy do not plan to introduce one.

With the Conservative manifesto pledging to "build new infrastructure in an environmentally-sensitive way" and for new roads and railways at least to be built "in a way that limits, as far as possible, their impact on the environment," we are

lobbying for measures to cover the impact of noise on tranquillity. CPRE is now calling for Government to invest in planning guidance, an agreed definition of tranquillity, and a new "indicator" of tranquillity - including maps and supporting data.

Alongside investment from Government, we would like to see infrastructure providers and regulators set up design panels, as demonstrated by HS2 and Highways England. The panels would develop good design principles aimed at mitigating the impacts of new infrastructure on rural tranquillity through methods such as putting power lines underground, tunnelling and tree planting.

Find out more: Search for Give Peace a Chance at cpre.org.uk

dates of note

Reconnecting rural rail

A week after trains ran on the Borders line in Scotland for the first time in almost 50 years, a new report from CPRE argued that the case for reopening rural railways in England is becoming irresistible.

Rural Reconnections was produced by research group Greengauge 21, and examines the case for reopening the Exeter-Okehampton-Tavistock-Plymouth route, closed in 1968 due to the Beeching Report. Our report found that the social and economic benefits of a resilient diversionary route that can link up communities and businesses currently cut off from the rail network hugely strengthens the argument for reopening the line. Crucially, valuing these factors properly and taking better account of business losses when a network is temporarily disrupted could have important implications for other lines that are candidates for reconnection elsewhere in the country.

The report emphasises that such reconnections work best when routes link effectively into the national network,

and when reopened stations are made into sustainable travel hubs with good cycling and bus connections. CPRE is already concerned that year-on-year funding cuts to rural buses mean that large parts of the countryside will be cut off from public transport by the end of the decade. This creates huge challenges for young people to access training and jobs; for older people who no longer drive to access services; for businesses and tourism industries in areas without rail; and for carless city dwellers who want to reach tranquil countryside. This is supported by the findings of the Greengauge 21 research.

The Department for Transport is publishing new guidance at the end of 2015 about how to value the economic impact of transport investment. Up to now the needs of rural areas have been largely neglected. CPRE will be campaigning to make sure the needs of non-urban England are considered properly in future. Transport Campaign Manager Ralph Smyth said the

report “underlines the many benefits that can ensue from reconnecting rural rail lines and have been ignored by previous evaluations. Many railways were cut back in the 1960s on the basis that they unnecessarily duplicated other routes. But we need them again now to create sustainable development in our rural communities and to provide resilience against extreme weather.”

With large areas of Devon and North Cornwall having no train services, Penny Mills of CPRE Devon said that reopening the railway from Exeter to Okehampton and beyond would “make such a tremendous difference, unlocking local economies as well as making it easier for people to reach wonderful countryside.” Other dead-end rural railways that could be considered for reopening as through routes include Uckfield to Lewes in Sussex, and Colne to Skipton in North Yorkshire.

Find out more: Download Rural Reconnections from www.cpre.org.uk/resources

Staying warm and green

An April report published by CPRE showed that England needs a huge investment in energy efficiency if we are to even approach our 2050 carbon reduction target and avoid inflicting widespread damage on the countryside.

The *Warm and Green* report asserts that energy efficiency has been grossly underplayed in discussions and policy on England's future energy supply, and that it must become increasingly important in rural areas. Based on research conducted by Cambridge Architectural Research and Anglia Ruskin University for CPRE, *Warm and Green* finds that we can cut carbon emissions from homes by 44 per cent through an ambitious

retrofitting programme. Yet the research shows that even if we make such upgrades, we would still be considerably short of meeting energy demand while cutting carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

To ensure progress on reducing our energy demand, the report calls for a bold national programme to reduce energy and carbon emissions from homes and community buildings; the implementation of stronger zero carbon standards for new homes; and for rural communities to receive a fairer share of funding for energy efficiency. 18 per cent of the population live in rural areas, but those areas receive less than 1 per cent of funding for energy efficiency improvements.

Nick Clack, CPRE's Senior Energy Campaigner said the research showed that unless there is effective Government support for a much bolder national programme to reduce energy and carbon emissions from homes, “we risk seeing large areas of the countryside lost to avoidable new energy infrastructure and even higher energy bills.” The report argued that Community-led initiatives to insulate homes and retrofit energy-saving technology could help reduce carbon emissions and energy bills, while creating jobs and helping to protect our landscapes.

Find out more: Read Nick's Warm and Green blog, with links to the report, at www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/3920

Friends of the Lake District – The Kirkby Lecture

Hear how filmmaker Terry Abraham captured the beauty of the Lakes in his acclaimed 'Life of a Mountain: A Year on Scafell Pike'. Tickets are £5 from 01539 720788 or www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk

18th September, 7.30pm
at Cumbria University
Ambleside campus

CPRE Wiltshire fundraising concert

Enjoy a Baroque concert with supper and wine, to be held in the chapel of Bowood House by kind permission of the Marquess and Marchioness of Lansdowne. More information at www.cprewiltshire.org.uk
24 September 2015, 6.30pm
at Bowood House, nr Calne

CPRE Hampshire community conference

Join a packed agenda looking at how people in many rural communities in Hampshire are finding new ways to deliver services, facilities and activities through community and social enterprises. Find out more and book your place via www.cprehampshire.org.uk
9th October, Wessex Conference Centre, Sparsholt College

CPRE's national Autumn Conference

An important opportunity for volunteers and staff throughout CPRE to come together to discuss key issues for the organisation as a whole. Find out more and book a place by emailing autumnconference@cpre.org.uk
5th November, The Studio, Birmingham, B2 5EP

A living countryside

CPRE's latest Housing Foresight paper argues that the special characteristics of rural areas need to be recognised in Government housing policies in order to meet the challenge of providing more affordable rural housing. Our paper, *A Living Countryside*, suggests that the already low supply is being made worse by a series of policies which are likely to have highly damaging consequences for rural communities unless rural exemptions can be secured.

An exemption for rural communities under 10,000 people from the extension of Right to Buy to housing association properties is one of a number of initiatives proposed by CPRE's paper to increase affordable housing in the countryside. Following changes to national policy in March 2015 that remove the requirement to provide affordable housing contributions on smaller sites, the paper argues that local authorities in rural areas should be allowed to set their own thresholds for affordable housing. As the majority of rural housing developments are small scale, and around two-thirds of affordable housing in very small settlements is provided through the system, this would enable authorities to respond to the needs of their communities more effectively.

The paper also argues that a standard and more inclusive definition of 'rural community' should underpin new initiatives to increase the provision of affordable housing. Current policy and legal definitions do not apply to vast swathes of rural areas and make it complex to assess the level of housing need. The paper recommends a standard definition identifying communities of fewer than 10,000 in rural local authorities.

Find out more: Download *A living countryside* from www.cpre.org.uk/resources

letter from the field

Words from local campaigners



Jackie Copley of CPRE Lancashire writes on the challenge of providing rural affordable housing

Dear reader,

The Rural Housing Policy Review, chaired by Lord Richard Best, and comprising experts and leading politicians of all political hues, considered recent research to learn more about the issues surrounding housing in rural areas. In February 2015, it reported its findings and recommendations, identifying the key problems as the shortage of affordable housing, the lack of strategic leadership in rural provision, a lack of sites and the impact of the bedroom tax; this last issue, in combination with the selling off of council owned houses is uprooting people on lower incomes from the villages in which they have lived for most if not all their lives.

Competition from commuters, retirees and second home owners means finding an affordable home in rural communities is an acute problem, with housing costing about 11 times the average salary.

Compounding the price problem, the supply has not kept pace with need. In 2006, it was estimated that more than 30,000 affordable homes per year were required but only 8,000 each year have actually been achieved, creating huge pressure on rural housing markets. To ensure rents are affordable in 'low wage, high house price' rural communities, the review suggests that Government

should not require housing associations to be required to charge 'affordable rents' at 80% of market rents as a condition for receiving Homes & Communities Agency funding. Rather, it says, rents should be charged at a level agreed between the local authority and the housing provider to be affordable in the context of local incomes.

Affordable housing can enhance rural places if properly planned, and when care is given to the materials used and infrastructure provided. We encourage new schemes to be built first on brownfield first, and in the most sustainable locations from a transport and services point of view. Community engagement is also important along with sympathetic retention of mature trees, hedgerows and other green infrastructure. We encourage new buildings to reflect local character yet have low carbon credentials to reduce future energy requirements.

In CPRE Lancashire's view there is no doubt that the issue of the affordable housing in rural communities needs more Government attention. We want to help encourage the development of well-sited outstanding projects benefiting people and the environment, and will support local communities to develop neighbourhood plans to encourage small scale housing

developments; using good town and country planning principles can help communities achieve quality rural affordable housing schemes in the right places with adequate infrastructure. To this end we have written to parish and town councils, who may be interested in sponsoring and taking a lead role in neighbourhood planning to offer advice and practical support.

Both the Branch and our West Lancashire District Group were also recently delighted to respond to West Lancashire's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Development of Affordable Housing. We recognise the difficulties faced by Local Authorities in planning for affordable housing in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and its emphasis towards developers and viability. We believe that where possible, local plan policies should seek to optimise the social benefits of development by providing needed affordable homes. We hope the SPD is effective at bringing forward needed rural affordable housing in a sustainable way that helps enhance the countryside for the benefit of future generations.

Find out more: Read the latest from the branch at www.cprelancashire.org.uk and download the report of the Rural Housing Policy Review at www.hastoe.com/fairdeal

GOODideas

Learning from each other

Promoting Local Food in the Green Belt

CPRE Avonside has launched a campaign to promote the Avon Green Belt as a source of local food for the cities of Bristol and Bath.

With Green Belt facing greater development pressures than ever, the branch wanted to promote one of its most neglected benefits – its ability to provide fresh, local food to feed our cities. The Avon Green Belt is under threat from new development and roads, airport expansion, land degradation and the loss of

landscape features, such as hedgerows. But 85% of the public in the South West agreed that they would prefer to buy food known to have been grown or produced by farmers in their local Green Belt than food produced elsewhere.

CPRE Avonside would like to see the proportion of food that is supplied to Bath and Bristol from the Green Belt greatly increased, so that local farmers are able to survive and resist the temptation to sell land for development.

They launched their campaign at Bristol's Festival of Nature in June, with a new leaflet giving people tips on what they can do to support local food in the Green Belt.

With the timing of the campaign coinciding with Bristol's year as Green Capital of Europe, and with Bristol's Mayor George Ferguson telling CPRE Avonside's 2014 AGM that he "believes in 'real countryside' as a resource for leisure, education and food", the Branch has every chance of having a real influence.

CPRE Bedfordshire uncover vital information

Over the last year, CPRE Bedfordshire has been battling to uncover documents crucial to the approval of some 600 new homes in open countryside around the iconic Cardington Airship Sheds, which were kept secret from the public and those making the decision.

Following their Freedom of Information complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) last year, Bedford Borough has now been forced to release the key planning documents that the Council had withheld. Having reviewed the documents now available on the Borough Council's website, CPRE Bedfordshire believes that had the general public and Planning Committee members been allowed access to scrutinise these key documents, the planning application might never have succeeded. With the support of local MP Alistair Burt, CPRE Bedfordshire has brought these concerns to the attention of the Local Government Ombudsman.

When the controversial application was submitted in 2013, the council claimed that it was supported by a new Viability Report and Independent Assessment justifying the application on the basis of needing to provide funds for the applicant to repair Shed No1. It has emerged that these documents in fact never existed. Instead, according to the Council's legal officer, there were a series of discussions with the applicant and a letter to the Council from the Independent Assessor. The letter itself contains no commercially confidential information at all. In fact, the letter from the Independent Assessor which has now been made public, far from endorsing the application, continues to raise serious issues regarding the way in which the value of the airship shed was established by the applicant.

The Branch believes that the public and the planning committee were misled, and has met with the Chief Executive of

Bedford Borough Council and asked that he should establish an external enquiry into all aspects of this case. Campaigners believe the secrecy has resulted in the owner of the shed being given public funds, either directly or indirectly, which will almost entirely fund the £10.9m cost of refurbishment. He has refused their request.

CPRE Bedfordshire believes that a fair and open planning process is fundamental to the public good, and they will be writing to the Planning Committee to make them aware of the serious issues raised by this case and ask for a meeting. All those campaigners and communities relying on an open and democratic planning system will hope that the dogged determination of CPRE Bedfordshire in this case will lead to greater transparency in planning decisions around the country.

Find out more: Find out how to access information from a public body at <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/official-information/>

Allotment is Community Asset

CPRE Surrey has welcomed the decision to classify Barnett Wood Lane Allotments in Leatherhead as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

Branch Director Andy Smith said: "We were among the many organisations and individuals who wrote to support the application for ACV status and we are delighted to hear that the application has been successful. We hope that the classification will not be challenged by the Council or developers through an appeal, and that they will accept that the Allotments deserve to be protected."

In its April submission to Mole Valley District Council, CPRE Surrey argued that it was the Council's duty "to keep this land safe for the benefit of the allotment holders, local community and, in accordance with its statutory duty, in order to protect biodiversity. [It] is irreplaceable in terms of its location within the town of Leatherhead and its proximity to the community of allotment holders who benefit from this important recreational facility and green open space."

The submission highlighted that the land has been worked and enriched by generations of allotment holders keeping the soil fertile and free of contaminants. The Branch also pointed out that "there is no alternative comparable plot of open land in the vicinity suitable to replace this local asset or the biodiversity that it supports." CPRE is concerned about the decline in the number of allotments throughout England and in particular the threat of councils selling off allotment sites for development.

Find out more: Get National Allotment Society tips on registering your site as an ACV at <http://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

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Current issues

Local Enterprise Partnerships

There are now 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in England. The Coalition Government initially outlined several planning roles that LEPs could perform, and have required Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) from each partnership as part of a process of negotiating Growth Deals. A new Royal Town Planning Institute report, *Planning for Growth*, noted that the role of LEPs in planning is increasing over time, in both geographical and institutional ways, and that many of the drivers for growth identified in SEPs have direct implications for planning. Despite this, the report found that "the majority of SEPs make no reference to the nature or status of local plans in their area (although only a small proportion of SEPs identified planning as a specific barrier to growth)."

On 15 June Brandon Lewis, Housing and Planning Minister, wrote a letter to Sir Andrew Watson, Chair of CPRE Warwickshire, about LEPs and related planning issues. The letter states that the Strategic Economic Plans produced by LEPs "are aspirational and not part of the statutory development plan. The role of [LEPs] is not to decide whether development should take place or under what conditions. These are matters for the democratically accountable local planning authority". The letter goes on to state that all LEPs have adopted an assurance framework, which addresses issues of value for money, transparency and accountability. These include a requirement to publish their arrangements for making decisions and handling complaints, and to ensure that all papers, decisions and minutes are published in line with existing local authority rules and regulations.

stepbystep

Guide to good campaigning

Engaging the next generation of campaigners

As CPRE enters the final decade leading up to our centenary, it is a fitting time to work closely with the next generation of countryside lovers and campaigners, and tap into their idealism and enthusiasm.

With CPRE President Sir Andrew Motion using his AGM speech in June to urge attendees to go home and speak to their children and grandchildren about the issues facing the countryside, we look at some of the great examples of youth engagement in CPRE's branches.

1 Encourage new ways of thinking

While planning is a topic many adults can find off-putting, CPRE Shropshire have used an imaginative approach that has helped primary school children get to grips with the basic principles. Their brilliant Treasures and Eyesores project (see p10) helped Year 6 pupils at Oakmeadow School in Bayston Hill see their surroundings with new eyes. A presentation helped get the children thinking about the positive and negative aspects of their local environment, while meeting older residents and looking at archive images of the village helped them understand how it at changed over time. A group walk around the village helped the pupils create a Top 10 list of treasures and eyesores, while the project encouraged the 11 year olds to feel empowered about having a positive influence on where they live.

Friends of the Lake District's Secret Windemere project worked with seven Cumbrian schools and youth groups to think

about the idea of tranquillity and discover where it can be found. The Friends took local children out and about to find out more about tranquil corners of Windemere and experience places in a new way; comparing tranquil and less tranquil areas and undertaking activities such as listening, recording, photography and art. They also ran workshops in schools to gather children's views on tranquillity and what it means to them.

Artwork created by pupils using the rubbish collected from two Windemere lake bed 'Debris Dives' was showcased in a Secret Windemere exhibition at Wray Castle to show how young people interpreted tranquillity and litter issues affecting the lake. The Friends found that the project gave local children the opportunity to think about tranquillity as part of their quality of life, try new activities to explore and celebrate the quieter less well known parts of Windemere, and learn about the things that can damage tranquillity.

2 Reward positive action

Many CPRE local groups and parish councils already run successful award schemes, but why not create a special category for younger people? CPRE Hampshire added a Young People category to their 2014 Countryside Awards and found a worthy winner in the shape of Anstey Junior School in Alton, which was rewarded for its Community Growing project to promote local food. Dr Steve Rothwell of Steve's Leaves, the category sponsor said: "The judges were impressed with

the commitment of all of the pupils in the school, which reflected their enthusiasm, understanding and the benefit they have gained from the project in learning how to grow vegetables and interacting with their neighbours."

CPRE Isle of Wight's Merlin Trophy for conservation work is now an integral part of the Island's Best Kept Village Awards. In 2014, the branch decided to reward a group of young volunteers aged between 16 and 25 known as the Green Army, who undertake conservation tasks around the Island. The project has been running for over three years, totalling hundreds of volunteer hours using kit sponsored by CPRE. Green Army volunteer Cory Cruse, aged 23, accepted the Award from CPRE Chairman John Langley and said working with the Green Army had helped open up opportunities by "introducing me, and my family to new places and outdoor activities".

3 Educate in the open air

As well as the Secret Windemere project, Friends of the Lake District have been running regular Fell Care days to encourage people of all ages to get 'hands-on' in improving their local landscape. At their Grasmere Fell Care day in autumn 2014, children from Grasmere Primary School got stuck into clearing the riverbank of overgrown bramble and snowberry to allow access to a seat. Children and volunteers also took part in a red squirrel conservation and monitoring walk around Allan Bank to learn about action to protect the squirrel and help its recovery by recording sightings for a national database project.



CPRE Isle of Wight awarded their prestigious Merlin Trophy for conservation to the Green Army – a volunteering scheme for young people struggling to find work or accommodation.

CPRE Devon has played a major role in bringing the Countryside Classroom, one of the largest outdoor learning projects in the UK, to the county. The project aims to increase the number of school aged children experiencing the benefits that come from learning outside the classroom in their local natural environments. Margaret Hall, Chairman of East Devon CPRE, explained that “with the help of a legacy, we are keen to expand our work to develop an interest and appreciation of the countryside in children. We feel it is so important that children connect with the natural environment and experience first-hand the countryside on which we all depend.”

Find out more: Get involved with a Countryside Classroom project at <http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/>

4 Use the countryside to inspire

As well as their Young People Award, 2014 saw CPRE Hampshire run their countryside poetry competition for schools, launched by CPRE President Sir Andrew Motion and attracting a large number

of entries from school children throughout the county. Gemma Lacey of sponsors The Southern Co-operative said: “The poetry competition is a great way to encourage children’s creativity and, with the focus on the countryside, to get them thinking about what makes our local wildlife and countryside so special.” Judge Joan McGavin, Hampshire Poet 2014, was “reassured and inspired to discover how much the children value and respond to the countryside.”

CPRE Hertfordshire’s 2015 children’s art competition received 540 entries on the theme of Wildlife in the Hertfordshire Countryside. Professional artist and CPRE member, Valerie Cansick, judged the competition and said of this year’s entries: “The children responded enthusiastically and used their imagination to create some striking images...in a way which showed appreciation for Hertfordshire wildlife.” CPRE Norfolk created their Corbin Award for young photographers to help raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Norfolk countryside. The theme for 2014’s competition was *The Landscape and Us: How*

people use and shape the Norfolk landscape, with the aim being to encourage children to explore the pressures facing the countryside. The Branch was encouraged that as well as using their images to highlight threats, many children chose to showcase the beauty of our landscape in the positive way.

The Isle of Wight is the scene of the latest schools initiative. The CPRE branch is joining forces with the Isle of Wight Literary Festival to encourage school children in Ryde and Newport to observe and appreciate their natural environment. Together, they have sponsored children’s author Sarah Holding to take the pupils on a voyage of discovery through the countryside and on the beach as a Summer School project. Branch Chair John Langley hopes that “their senses and imagination will be fired into producing a piece of creative writing based on their recent experiences.” In the long term, John hopes the project will encourage enjoyment of the countryside and increase “their desire to protect it”, and ultimately that “young people eventually become members of CPRE to carry our great tradition forwards into the Centenary Year of 2026.”

New guidance on brownfield wildlife

CPRE campaigns for a ‘brownfield first’ policy approach to new housing and other development, in order to minimise the loss of England’s countryside. Our policy position on brownfield land makes clear, however, that not all brownfield sites should be considered suitable for redevelopment. Consistent with our policy position, we have supported the publication of new guidance covering brownfield sites that might contain wildlife habitat in priority need of conservation. The guidance has been published by Wildlife and Countryside Link, of which CPRE is a member along with 44 other voluntary organisations. The guidance, published on 3 June, is at <http://tinyurl.com/oerjne5>

The National Planning Policy Framework states (at paragraph 111) that the re-use of brownfield land should be encouraged, provided that it is not of ‘high environmental value’. The supporting Planning Practice Guidance refers to possible biodiversity interest and specifically to recognised wildlife habitats often found on brownfield sites. The new Link guidance seeks to add more detail and approaches the issue from the angle of when a site might be of high environmental value, without saying that such sites will necessarily be unsuitable for development.

We hope that branches and community groups will use the new guidance when faced with development proposals on brownfield sites that may be unsuitable for development, or need significant mitigation work before they can be developed. For further information or to give feedback about the guidance or CPRE’s work with Wildlife and Countryside Link, contact Paul Miner at paulm@cpre.org.uk

Broiler battle continues

CPRE Leicestershire recently supported Burton and Dalby Parish Council in their objection to an application for a large intensive broiler unit near Burton Lazars just south of Melton. The recommended minimum distance for such operations from homes is 400 metres but the nearest residence to this site was only 250 metres away, with the prevailing wind regularly blowing emissions across the property.

The proposed development shares a boundary with one of the borough's most important scheduled monuments, and the parish church is downwind from the site. Permission was refused early this year but the developer has appealed and is hoping to house about 270,000 broiler chickens in seven sheds. Parish Council Clerk Stephen Johnson said: "The applicant has reduced the size of the development from nine poultry sheds to seven but it should be further out into the countryside."

Saving Smock Alley

CPRE Sussex helped West Chiltington Parish Council defend a much-loved green space from a 21 home development. Horsham District Council rejected the proposal after villagers gathered 300 signatures in opposition and created a website to make the case for protecting the rural setting of the village and the site itself – an open agricultural field backing on to dense woodland, providing habitat for bats, badgers, and deer. Villager Sharon Davis said "we would like to thank Dr Roger Smith of CPRE Sussex for fantastic advice and guidance. [The decision] shows that these speculative, damaging applications don't always get through. I am absolutely over the moon."

PARISHbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

Parish defeats housing appeal

Campaigners in the village of Alderton in Gloucestershire are jubilant after the Planning Inspector turned down an appeal by Freeman Homes for 60 new homes even though a five year supply of land for housing could not be demonstrated.

The inspector concluded that the development would "lead to the extension of the built-up part of the settlement into the adjoining countryside and affect the setting of the AONB", having "a disproportionate effect on the village in terms of the cumulative impact of development and also on the social wellbeing

of the community." CPRE Gloucestershire strongly objected to the proposal and has highlighted Alderton Parish Council's excellent 66 page statement of evidence to the appeal.

The parish's comprehensive closing statement was delivered by 18 year old Holly Lockley, who pointed out that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm by contributing to a 39% increase in the size of the village in under two years. Holly felt this expansion that would be economically unsustainable "given the distance of Alderton from main employment centres, and the lack of public

transport for full-time workers and shift workers."

Holly also raised the central point of the impact of a new housing estate on much loved local landscapes. She said: "We feel we have a duty to protect this landscape so that future generations can continue to come here for peace and relaxation. It isn't our landscape, it's everyone's."

Find out more: Be inspired by the parish council's submissions, as well as their Community Plan, Village Design Statement and Neighbourhood Development Plan vision statement, at <http://www.alldertonvillage.co.uk/planning.html>

Engaging schools in Parish planning

CPRE Shropshire has embarked on a remarkable project to get young people involved with Bayston Hill Parish council. As part of their work to help the parish engage as widely as possible with their community in the development of their Community Led Plan, the branch invited Oakmeadow Primary school to get involved by thinking about local 'treasures and eyesores'.

Three consecutive weekly sessions were held with Year 6 pupils to explain what a Community Led Plan was and why it is important for people of all ages to get involved. The

children then spent class time producing village posters and leaflets and writing letters to the Parish Council suggesting what improvements were needed. A final session celebrated the hard work which pupils presented to the chair of the Parish Council and members of the Community Led Planning team.

The Parish Council will use the children's work to inform the new Community Plan, and aims to feed back any progress to the pupils as they move up to secondary education. Members of the Community Led Plan Steering Group said: "Our

Community Led Plan will set out a vision of how our community wants to develop and will be based on consultation with the whole community. The views of all generations are very important and we have been very impressed by the thoughtful way pupils at Oakmeadow School have approached the task." CPRE Shropshire hope similar projects will be repeated annually to build on this link between the Parish Council and the school.

Find out more: Read about all the branch's community activities at <http://www.cpreshropshire.org.uk/>

Wildlife on the verge

Many Parish Councils do sterling work to look after their road verges by keeping an eye on their general maintenance, removing litter, and brightening them up with colourful planting. But

all Parishes and community groups will be interested to know that Plantlife has launched a new Road Verge campaign to help restore wildflowers to roadsides and assist local communities in

improving one of the most visible, yet neglected, parts of our countryside.

Find out more: Get involved with the campaign at www.plantlife.org.uk/roadvergecampaign

CAMPAIGNER

Campaigners deliver Charter to Number 10



From left: Christine Drury, Sophie Spencer, Jackie Copley and Dee Haas join Tony Nunes and Shaun Spiers (centre) at Number 10.

Four local campaigners recently teamed up with CPRE Chief Executive Shaun Spiers to deliver CPRE's Save our Countryside Charter to Downing Street, along with the signatures of 81,000 members of the public who had given their support.

With CPRE branches playing such an important role in gathering signatures, it was agreed that representatives from four of the branches who did most to generate support should have the chance to hand in CPRE's most-supported campaign action ever. Joining forces with Shaun, and CPRE's Database Administrator Tony Nunes (who had the vital task of keeping track of the names and details of the Charter supporters), were Christine Drury, Dee Haas, Jackie Copley and Sophie Spencer.

Christine has been an active volunteer for CPRE since 2004, and is currently a member of CPRE's national Trustee Board as well as being Chair of CPRE Kent. Having also been

Chair of CPRE's South East Regional Group, Christine has been a passionate defender of some of the most threatened countryside in England. Commenting on her role in the Charter delegation, Christine thanked the many people in Kent who signed-up, saying that "members and non-members alike supported these important demands to the Government: brownfield first, more listening to communities and more housing in the right places."

CPRE Hampshire Chairman, Dee Haas, found it fitting that she was helping to hand in our Charter in the week of the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta. The Hampshire countryside Dee works to protect has a direct link with 1215, as King John embarked on his journey to Runnymede from the village of Odiham. Dee said: "A new Magna Carta for the countryside is just what we need now, to help protect and enhance the beautiful places of Hampshire and

elsewhere. CPRE Hampshire is working especially hard this year to promote the value of the rural economy and ensure a sustainable and living countryside."

Sophie Spencer has been Director of CPRE Avonside for a year, and worked in the Rural Policy team at CPRE's national office from 2000 to 2006. After handing in the Charter, Sophie paid tribute to CPRE's "amazing and committed volunteers"; she had recently joined two such volunteers at a planning inquiry where 12 developers lined up to call for a doubling of housing numbers while "CPRE Avonside were the only environmental organisation arguing for the protection of our beautiful countryside." Sophie spent the weekend before the Downing Street trip at the Bath Festival of Nature, collecting the last few Charter signatories and "chatting to many committed people" who were grateful that CPRE is standing up for the countryside on their behalf.

CPRE Lancashire's Jackie Copley has been actively engaged in the policy campaigning underpinning the Charter – even meeting with Planning Minister Brandon Lewis MP to call for the reuse of brownfield sites - in her role as Branch Planning Manager. Jackie was delighted that CPRE Lancashire gathered so many signatures for the charter, and feels the show of public support can help convince the new Government to make a firm commitment to protecting the countryside "by clearly prioritising the use of brownfield over greenfield land in national planning policy."

Campaigning for Cycling and Walking investment

Earlier this year CPRE secured a commitment for England's first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. Thousands of CPRE members and supporters wrote to their MP to demand it, the Government finally agreed to include it in the Infrastructure Act 2015, meaning there must now be the same long-term strategic thinking for walking and cycling as there is for major roads. The latest figures released by the Department for Transport show why an investment strategy is needed. Walking rates have tumbled by 30% between 1995 and 2013, and with the Local Sustainable Transport Fund ending next year the small progress made on cycling in recent years may be short lived.

Spending on cycling in England, outside London, is just £2 per head, a level the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group described as 'far too low to seriously increase cycling levels'. They called for a cycling budget of at least £10 per head, later rising to £20. We need to see a healthy rise in funding and support for cycling and walking.

Ahead of the Summer Budget, CPRE called on the Chancellor to commit to serious long-term funding for a Cycling and Walking Investment strategy given the widespread public and cross-party political support for the initiative. Although funding was not forthcoming on this occasion, we welcomed the Budget's £30m investment in transport in the North. We urged the Government to ensure that devolved transport authorities and integrated ticketing systems do not forget their rural hinterlands, and are not restricted to metropolitan areas.

Find out more: Visit our Transport Toolkit website for ideas on how to promote walking and cycling in your area at <http://transporttoolkit.cpre.org.uk/>

Current issues

Airports Commission backs Heathrow

CPRE condemned Airports Commission's announcement recommending a third runway at Heathrow which would destroy 694 hectares of Green Belt and 60 hectares of woodland and wreck tranquillity in parks and gardens with impacts likely to spread into the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The new runway would also destroy up to 950 homes and require up to 70,800 new homes to be built by 2030, with many more being required afterwards – all in an area of acute housing pressure.

Transport Campaign Manager, Ralph Smyth, said: "The recommendation today for a third runway at Heathrow casts a dark shadow over a wide swathe of the south east. Besides the destruction of much of the ancient village of Harmondsworth to make way for the new runway, a much wider area is at threat. On top of the almost relentless din of jet engines, runaway development and traffic would shatter the remaining fragments of tranquil countryside in the south east."

CPRE's evidence to the Commission argued that all the short-listed options for new runways would have a devastating impact on the countryside, while undermining the national imperative of rebalancing our economy away from the overheated region. With London already having 50% more flights to it than any other city in the world, we're calling for a national spatial plan to rebalance growth and aviation, making the most of the ample spare capacity in other airports. We pointed out that the Airports Commission's terms of reference had prevented "proper consideration of greater use of high speed rail or an ambitious regional rebalancing strategy."

INreview

Our perspective on countryside issues

A community right of appeal

Just over a year into the coalition Government much fanfare greeted the 2011 Localism Act. Announced as part of the "Government's revolution to hand power back to local communities", the thrust of Localism was that communities should be able to be active participants in planning decisions and be given powers to decide what happens in their area.

However, what happened at local level didn't really match up to the promise of the Act. Instead, numerous planning reforms left local communities feeling disempowered, with decisions being taken out of their hands. In particular, the five year housing land supply policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which provides a loophole for developers if a council cannot meet housing targets, has caused local authorities to allow planning applications, fearful of the cost of losing a subsequent appeal. Last year, CPRE's report *Targeting the countryside* looked at planning appeals where housing land supply was discussed and found that 27,000 houses were given permission at this type of appeal alone over two years.

Limitations of judicial review

Judicial review remains the only means of challenging a poor planning decision despite this trend although the need for legal support and the risk of incurring substantial costs puts this option out of reach for the vast majority of community groups. Nor can judicial reviews be concerned with the planning policy merits of a case; they can only

consider whether a decision has been made unlawfully. Further frustration is caused by the fact that developers have the right of appeal against a local refusal of planning permission on grounds of planning merits.

Without the reassurance that decisions granted contrary to a neighbourhood plan can be challenged, there is little incentive for a community to go through the effort required to produce one. That is why we are calling on the new Government to show that it is serious about giving power to communities by backing up local and neighbourhood plans with a right of appeal.

"A community right of appeal would ensure that the planning merits of cases are independently examined in the most controversial cases"

The right we support would apply to decisions to grant planning permission where they go against a draft or finalised local or neighbourhood plan. It could only be invoked by parish or ward councillors, neighbourhood forums, or NGOs with standing. Only the most controversial cases would be affected but it would allow community concerns to be dealt with more efficiently, and in a more equitable manner than the judicial review process.

Some have argued that a limited community right of appeal is not necessary because it would apply to so few cases. It could be said that judicial review of planning decisions also only happens relatively rarely, but it is an essential safeguard against unfair or unreasonable decision making in planning. Moreover, judicial review can only address points of law, rather than issues of planning policy or vision. A community right of appeal would ensure that the planning merits of cases are independently examined in the most controversial cases, where such review is most needed.

Others argue that the right could be abused and over-used. However, until fairly recently local planning authorities were required to publicise applications that they considered to be departures from the plan. This procedure could therefore help to filter community appeals.

A boost for localism

The limited community right of appeal that is supported by CPRE, Civic Voice and the National Association of Local Councils will reduce the expectation that the Secretary of State should become directly involved in planning applications of significant controversy, as well as the number of cases referred to him in the first place. As such it could provide a process more in keeping with localism.

So if the new Government really wants to hand power to local communities they need to commit to rebalancing the planning appeals system so that community groups can both plan for their future and challenge bad plans by others.

QandA

The answers you need

Tranquillity in designated areas

Q I have seen plans for a small garage/workshop development outside my village and although I am happy with the proposed design, I am worried that the noise from the workshop will shatter the existing tranquillity of this part of a National Park. Are there any precedents for protecting tranquillity in designated landscapes?

A In a recent case, Andy Tickle of Friends of the Peak District gave evidence to an informal hearing on the construction of a saw shed in Dale View Quarry. He pointed out that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that “areas of tranquillity

which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value” (para.123) should be protected.

Furthermore in policy terms, tranquillity is a recognised valued characteristic of the National Park. Andy highlighted the cumulative impact on tranquillity of the proposed wiresaws, which would add unacceptably to the three existing quarry operations in the area.

Planning Inspector Hilda Higenbottam dismissed the appeal (APP/M9496/W/15/3004872), pointing out that the Conservation Plan “describes the area as providing a sense of wildness, isolation and tranquillity and identifies the pressures placed upon the area it covers and the

existing quarrying operations that currently detract from the enjoyment of the area.” The Inspector concluded that while the noise level would be relatively low, the cumulative impact of “the introduction of another man made noise source within a very sensitive location is the issue in this case.” She also found the nature of the operations would “erode the fundamental character of Stanton Moor as a tranquil place, which to my mind is an important characteristic of this part of the National Park.”

Find out more: Download our Planning Campaign Briefing on Tranquillity from <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/planning-campaign-briefings>

Defending landscape character

Q A developer has applied to build a large housing development on countryside I cycle through on my daily commute. I don't believe the land is Green Belt or designated landscape, but I and others feel it helps maintain the attractive rural character of the space between the towns where I live and work. Is it worth referring to this ‘character’ in objecting to this development?

A On 27 March, Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP, wrote a letter to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate to highlight several recent appeal cases in which harm to landscape character has been an important consideration in the appeal being dismissed.

The Ministerial guidance emphasises one of the core principles within paragraph 17 of the NPPF that “plans and decisions should take into account the different roles and character of different areas, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.” The Planning Minister states that even outside designated areas the impact of development on the landscape can be an important factor.

In Gloucestershire, an appeal was recently dismissed for a 50 acre polytunnel development in an open rural landscape. The Planning Inspector argued that although the site was not covered by any special landscape designation, its “intrinsic attractiveness” and “easy access by the public give it some value which should be taken into account.” He concluded that

while “no definition of ‘valued landscape’ is offered within the Framework... I consider that its undeveloped nature, forming part of this attractive rolling agricultural landscape, means that it has some value.”

The Inspector also highlighted that people using footpaths alongside the site were currently able to enjoy the same ‘undeveloped, rolling countryside’ celebrated by the Dymock Poets, including Edward Thomas and Lacelles Abercrombie (brother of CPRE’s founder Patrick Abercrombie), so it is always worth highlighting any important cultural connections with the land you are defending.

Find our more: Read Emma Marrington’s blog on landscape character in planning (including links to the Ministers letter) at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/3917>

Current issues

Wind energy changes

The Government has announced its intention to end new public subsidies for onshore wind farms by legislating to close the Renewables Obligation across Great Britain to new onshore wind generating stations from 1 April 2016.

Energy and Climate Change Secretary Amber Rudd said: “We want to help technologies stand on their own two feet, not encourage a reliance on public subsidies. So we are driving forward our commitment to end new onshore wind subsidies and give local communities the final say over any new windfarms. Onshore wind is an important part of our energy mix and we now have enough subsidised projects in the pipeline to meet our renewable energy commitments”.

On 18 June, Communities Secretary Greg Clark announced changes to planning rules meaning that councils should only grant permission for wind turbines if the site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy as part of a Local or Neighbourhood Plan. Planning impacts identified by affected local communities must now be fully addressed through consultation, to ensure plans for new wind farms have the consent of local people.

The Queen’s Speech in May contained an Energy Bill, which will include provisions to transfer existing consenting powers for large onshore windfarm applications (above 50 megawatts) to local planning authorities. CPRE welcomed the move to give local planning authorities powers to decide on large onshore windfarms, but also urged the Government to afford communities greater say over other elements of the planning system.

Current issues

Local Nature Partnerships

The Environmental Audit Committee released its report on Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) in March, stating that a lack of resources and a mixed performance record are compromising the ability of LNPs to protect the natural environment. Emma Marrington, CPRE's Senior Rural Policy Campaigner, called for the Government to give long term support and resources to rejuvenate LNPs, and encouraged well-funded Local Enterprise Partnerships to work with LNPs towards joined up management of the landscape, delivering both economic and environmental benefits - for example, by supporting local food projects that can help preserve landscape character and develop a thriving economy.

HS2 Design Panel

CPRE's Ralph Smyth has met with Sadie Morgan, the recently appointed chair of the HS2 Design Panel, to outline CPRE's hopes for the design of the project. The panel, which was first committed to by the Secretary of State for Transport when he gave CPRE's annual lecture in 2012, finally launched its design vision in March. This framework document will guide the work of its engineering, architectural and design teams in developing the new high-speed rail system.

If HS2 is to be 'admirable around the world', as its Chief Executive hopes, prioritising good design to fit it carefully into the English countryside will be crucial. CPRE continues to campaign on the Hybrid Bill before Parliament to be amended so that planning decisions are required to give significant weight to the panel's advice.

A food and farming strategy for England

Environment Secretary Elizabeth Truss recently announced the start of plans to develop an ambitious 25 year plan for the UK's food and farming industry. The Secretary of State spoke of the potential of food and farming to drive growth and create jobs, but the 'seven key themes' that will be used to develop the plan did not mention the importance of protecting and enhancing agricultural land. Only the aim to 'increase procurement of British produce including in schools and hospitals' would specifically benefit CPRE's campaigning aims, by potentially creating a new market for local food.

As the Government develops its food and farming strategy, CPRE will aim to influence the process by developing our own strategy for a sustainable food and farming system. CPRE

champions a diverse, vibrant and beautiful countryside, and can fight through the planning system to protect land from development. But, unless we fight for a better food system from retailer to farmer to protect the diversity and distinctiveness of farming, we will see gradual erosion of the character of our farmed countryside. Only by addressing how we eat and connect to where our food comes from can we hope to support a thriving, sustainable and diverse agriculture and countryside.

Core concepts for CPRE's food and farming work

Sir John Beddington's Foresight report on *The Future of Food and Farming* argued that 'increasing yields whilst reducing negative environmental effects' should

be a priority in the UK and abroad. As a concept we have concerns that it has yet to be properly elucidated and appears to support a 'business as usual' approach with weak environmental protection. We have chosen three concepts to help define CPRE's aims for sustainable food and farming. They also should enable us to question the way farming

"We need to rebuild the connections citizens as consumers have to the people and places which produce their food"

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CPRE wants people to develop a better understanding of where their food comes from

policy is currently framed, for example, through the concept of 'sustainable intensification'.

Stewardship: Policy and markets need to support good stewardship of our natural resources of soil and water, habitats, ecosystems and landscape. This should include, where necessary, restoration or rebuilding of natural capital, such as soil organic matter or biodiversity or landscape character, through what we could term 'regenerative' or 'regeneration' agriculture.

“We want to see farmed land and its soils properly valued and protected as a national, strategic, natural resource”

Re-connection: We need to rebuild the connections citizens as consumers have to the people and places which produce their food, to understand the realities of food and the importance of values such as taste, seasonality, identity and conservation. Policy has a role to play in developing markets for food which change how we relate to it for the better, help us to care and build links to those who produce it.

Resilience: To survive extreme events and remain productive of food and many other benefits, farming must strengthen its ability to adapt to change. To do this more variation needs to be introduced as resilience is closely linked to diversity particularly in healthy natural systems. These are vital for farming to stay productive in volatile conditions and without intensive use of agri-chemicals. Such systems also deliver other things we value and need from farmed countryside such as habitats and biodiversity. Of particular importance for CPRE is the variety of the landscape, which reflects local soil, aspect and topography, but also human intervention which has over time

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Supporting good stewardship of farmland can help restore natural capital and landscape character

created distinctive, beautiful places. Other forms of diversity which contribute to the creation of the character and quality of the countryside need to be sustained, including: in crop and livestock genetics; in what is produced and rewarded by the market and other sources of income; in farm size and ownership types; in skills and techniques used in land management; and in food retail and supply.

Strategic Priorities for 2015 to 2016

Rethinking scale project
CPRE wishes to see number of farmers stabilising and new entrants to farming encouraged. Securing the viability of differing scales of farm businesses is critical to this. We wish to challenge the mantra that viability is delivered solely by an increase in scale and intensity of farming and explore how different metrics might be used to assess the output and value of farms. We aim to research the outputs and inputs of different scale farms, assessing how they perform against a range of metrics in order to develop recommendations on how micro, small and medium size farms could be supported.

The soil bank project
We want to see farmed land and its soils properly valued as a national, strategic, natural resource and well-protected from loss to development through

strong planning policy supported by an up-to-date evidence base. We also want the multiple functions of farm soils to be better valued and managed, and soils to be restored where they have been degraded. We aim to research and report on the threats to the nation's soil and soil capacity to support a campaign for a new land classification system, revised soil maps and planning policy, as well as support for sustainable land and soil management under the Common Agricultural Policy.

Promoting local food

We want to promote greater public engagement with local food and food web mapping by individuals and grassroots groups. We will work with key branches to raise the profile of our local food webs work and the mapping toolkit through their websites, using a variety of media to engage people in buying, cooking and eating more local food.

With limited staff resources, the expertise of Fieldwork readers will be vital to help develop our strategy by contributing to research, identifying case studies, and assisting with media and advocacy work. If you are interested in any of the core concepts and project ideas outlined above and would like to get involved with developing our food and farming strategy, contact our Senior Rural Policy Campaigner, Graeme Willis, at graemew@cpre.org.uk

Current issues

Mapping website launched

CPRE's new interactive mapping microsite launched on 28 May at maps.cpre.org.uk. Besides being a useful tool to find out environmental information in your area, it will help you engage with existing and new audiences. The first new map shows tranquillity, electricity transmission lines and nationally designated landscapes. The second map shows Green Belt, areas where post-NPPF local plans are in force (as of March 2015) and constituency boundaries.

By selecting spatial information and presenting it attractively, we can support our arguments more effectively with a wider range of audiences. The mapping is designed to be easy to reuse within your own digital media. For social media, you can paste a link to a particular view and also a screenshot to your message, tweet or post. If you want to use a hashtag for map images you post on Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest, please use #cpremaps. For website use, you can either link directly to maps.cpre.org.uk or you can link to a particular page view by copying the link in your browser. You can also grab a screenshot, a feature available in the Microsoft Snipping Tool and most graphics programs, of the maps and add a link in from your site.

There will be updates to HS2 maps shortly as well as a new map showing noise from roads. We will produce a simple screencast, showing you how to use the maps, as well as holding a webinar for CPRE branches and members to discuss the way forward. If you have any questions or comments, please contact the project manager, Ralph Smyth, ralphs@cpre.org.uk

MATTER of fact

Support for your case

England's changing land use

Between 2006 and 2012, 22,000 hectares (54,000 acres) of green space was converted to “artificial surfaces” – mostly housing – according to work by the University of Leicester to update UK's land use map with the latest satellite data.

The 'Coordination of Information on the Environment' (CORINE) Land Cover map forms the central part of the European Land Monitoring Service under the Copernicus Programme. It is a European-wide project gathering together information relating to the Environment within the European Union.

Using the CORINE European standard which separates land use into 44 categories, researchers found 14,000 hectares of farmland had been developed in the six year period. Environmental information from satellites is hugely important to keep a check on the quality of life in the UK. The European land monitoring service turns satellite data into policy-relevant information. The CORINE map is the only consistent European information on land cover change that allows a comparison with our neighbours.

The drive for development

Study leader Professor Heiko Balzter, director of the University's Centre for Landscape and Climate Research said that since the first map was created in 1990, UK urbanisation

has continued at roughly the same rate: “We have not seen any evidence of slowing down in the data we've looked at. One of the big drivers of change is the demand for housing; in large parts of England and to a lesser degree elsewhere. It would not surprise me if more development applications were being granted than in the past, due to the financial incentives for councils.”

The study showed the biggest change in land use had occurred around London's outer fringe, where the countryside has been eaten up by advancing suburbs, while over 2,000 hectares were lost to urbanisation in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. In 2011, the EU introduced targets for its members to eliminate the loss of land to development – ‘land take’ - by 2050, but Professor Balzter said that given the UK's consistent rate since 1990 it was not clear how we would achieve this. “Land is a non-renewable resource. There's only a limited amount of land area. Once agricultural fields have been built on, there is no going back. My main concern would be the long-term outlook for the UK. How much of our landscape do we want built up with housing, roads and railways and all that?”

As well as the loss of farmland to housing, over 3,000 hectares of arable land and 2,000 hectares of pastures were converted to mineral extraction sites, but nearly 2,000 hectares of mineral extraction sites were

converted back to pasture land. Over 1,000 hectares were converted from wetlands to artificial surfaces. The most dominant land cover type in the UK in 2012 remains agricultural land, followed by forest and semi-natural vegetation. Artificial surfaces represent 8% of the UK, with the majority being urban settlements.

The interpretation of satellite images took two years and was carried out with funding by the European Union, supported by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the European Environment Agency (EEA). Previous maps were produced for the years 1990, 2000 and 2006. The land cover map, which examines data from 2006 and 2012, is based upon a standardised classification system of 44 land cover and land use classes which are structured in a three tier system that shows how much of the UK is made up of artificial surfaces, agricultural areas, forest and semi-natural areas, wetlands and water bodies.

Mapping out the detail

The updated maps were produced by visual interpretation of optical and near-infrared satellite images provided by the European Space Agency with a spatial resolution of 20m, supplemented with higher spatial resolution images with 5m pixels. The land cover map depicts areas larger than 25 hectares (0.25 km²) and with a width of 100m. In

“Land is a non-renewable resource. Once agricultural fields have been built on, there is no going back. The main concern is for the long-term outlook of the UK”

addition, a land cover change map between 2006 and 2012, which detects changed areas larger than 5 hectares, has been produced.

Professor Balzter said “the maps show the need for a more detailed study of the state of our countryside, because of the technical limitations of the CORINE mapping approach at a coarse spatial scale.” Dr Beth Cole, of the University of Leicester's Department of Geography was in charge of the map production, said: “Monitoring like this at a National and European scale is key to allow us to identify these broad landscape scale changes. With a significant improvement on the previous version of the 2006 map, as well as the 2012 update, this study provides data for a large number of users and can be fed into a wide range of research topics and applications.”