



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

FIELD WORK

Summer 2016

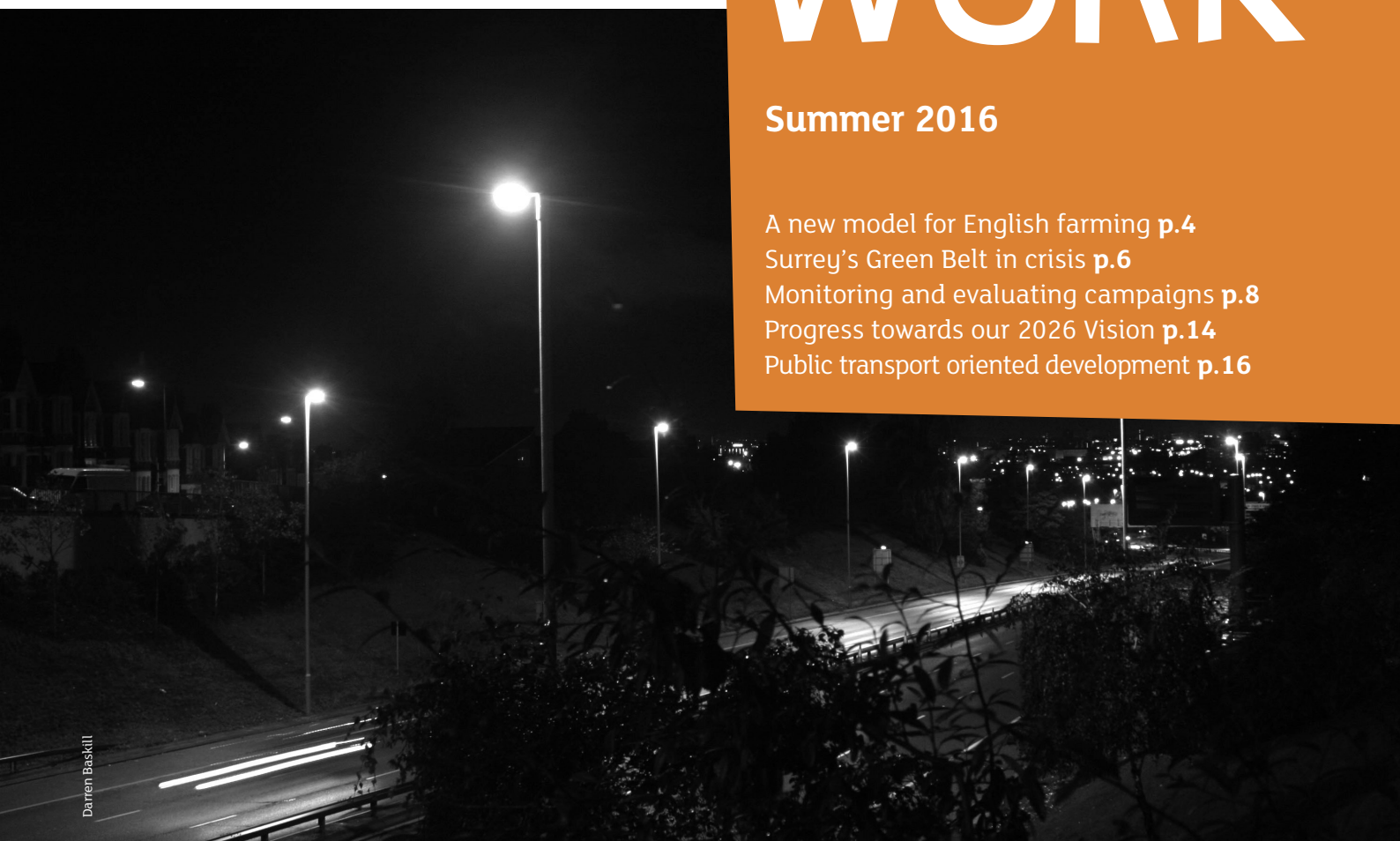
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Darren Baskill

New mapping helps tackle Night Blight

The most detailed ever satellite maps of England's dark skies have been produced by consultants LUC for CPRE, enabling users to search by postcode, and providing a more detailed and up-to-date analysis of England's skies than the global atlas of light pollution released earlier in June.

The interactive maps were produced with satellite images captured at 1.30 am throughout September 2015. They show that the Isles of Scilly, West Devon and Eden in Cumbria are England's darkest districts, and that the very darkest spot in England, out of more than 2.25million pixels, is a secluded hillside on the East Kielder Moors in Northumberland. CPRE's interactive maps also give us an unprecedented level of understanding into where light pollution is most invasive. Unsurprisingly, nineteen of the brightest 20 skies are above London boroughs, while the very brightest spot is above a Tata Steel foundry in Rotherham, followed by the Thanet Earth greenhouse complex in Kent. Nationwide, the maps show that just 22% of England is untouched by light pollution, and that 53% of our darkest skies are over National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Northumberland National Park enjoys 96% pristine night skies, while countryside to the north of Newcastle airport and Allestree Park on the edge of Derby provide oases of dark in areas of high light pollution.

This research comes at a time of increasing awareness of the harmful effects light pollution can have on the health of people,

wildlife and the wider environment: lights typically account for between 15-30% of local councils' carbon emissions – often produced by the £613 million they were estimated to spend on street lighting in 2014-15. The research shows that motorways and trunk roads are significant contributors to light pollution.

CPRE's recommendations

We want Highways England use the maps to identify sections of motorways and trunk roads that need urgent attention to reduce light pollution. Any new lighting should be well designed and the minimum required to meet its purpose. Businesses should review their current lighting and future development plans to save money by dimming or switching off light to reduce pollution.

Above all, we hope our new maps will encourage local authorities to develop policies in local plans to control light pollution, using the maps to inform decisions on local planning applications by ensuring that existing dark skies are protected and that new developments do not increase local light pollution. They should also be identifying areas with severe light pollution and targeting action to reduce it, such as investing in dimming technology or running part-night lighting schemes. The maps can also be used to identify existing dark skies that need to be protected and enhanced.

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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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Standing up for your countryside

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New mapping helps tackle Night Blight

Continued from p.1

With roads being such a major part of the problem, we'd like local highway authorities to develop a Street Lighting Policy, which could include Environmental Lighting Zones to ensure that appropriate lighting is used in each area. In early 2015, Northumberland County Council began an ambitious £25 million project to modernise all the street lights in the county over the next three years. Around 44,500 street lights will be replaced with Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology, with nearly 17,000 existing lampposts being replaced. The council are hoping to cut energy consumption by street lighting by more than 60%, which will lead to savings in the region of £300,000 per year and reduce the carbon footprint of the street lighting stock by more than 5,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Positive reaction

Duncan Wise, Visitor Development and Marketing Manager, Northumberland National Park, welcomed the report, saying: "Everyone should have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of the Milky Way with their own eyes. It should not be the preserve of just those who are fortunate enough to live in rural areas. We can all do our bit. If you need to install outside lights on your home or business, make sure that they are fully-shielded, to only shine downwards, where the light is needed. Also consider how much light you need and the colour temperature of your light bulb. These simple steps will make a real difference to our quality of life and help ensure that our skies above remain truly dark."

"Local authorities should be identifying areas with severe light pollution and targeting action to reduce it"

Sir Martin Rees, Astronomer Royal, commented: "It has taken a great deal of dedicated effort to generate these maps. By highlighting the regions where light pollution is greatest, they will encourage remedial efforts that will not only save energy, but also enable more of us to enjoy a dark sky in the way earlier generations could." Responding to our research, a Tata Steel UK spokesman told the Sunday Times: "We are always looking at ways of reducing the impact of our operations on the environment and the communities in which we are based. For that reason we have an ongoing programme to replace all lighting with modern low-energy units which are more directional and therefore create less light pollution."

"Remedial efforts will not only save energy, but also enable more of us to enjoy a dark sky in the way earlier generations could"

Take action in your area

CPRE's Night Blight website includes the interactive mapping, as well as a host of resources for branches and parish councils including a CPRE report and template leaflet to help raise awareness and lobby local authorities to take action to reduce light pollution.

Detailed maps have been created for English counties, districts, National Parks, AONBs and National Character Areas. Each map shows the percentage of pixels within the boundary that falls under each brightness category. An editable template leaflet has been created for use as a county based handout at CPRE events, showing local information from the maps. They will also be useful in responding to planning applications, and with CPRE contacting English local authorities to promote the maps, it is worth arranging meetings with your contacts in local authorities to discuss the detailed maps for the county or district, and what action they could take to tackle sources of light pollution and protect dark skies.

In many cases there is something that can be done. The first UK law tackling light pollution came into force in 2006 under Section 102 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (2005). Exterior lighting joined noise and smells on the list of things that can be treated as a Statutory Nuisance, and something your local council's Environmental Health Department can take legal action against. The law makes 'exterior light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance' a criminal offence. This law doesn't tackle all forms of light pollution, only incidents of particularly bad lighting from some types of premises which cause people real nuisance. CPRE would like to see it used (and our Night Blight website offers further guidance) to raise awareness of the issue and to help people who really are suffering from severe light pollution.

We have also developed exciting lesson plans for primary school children, with funding from the Royal Astronomical Society. The plans focus on art and design for Key Stage 1 and science for Key Stage 2. They are a fun and educational way for children to learn more about stars and gain a basic understanding of light pollution. Emails have been sent to all English primary schools to encourage use of the lesson plans. We hope that branches and parish councils will promote the lesson plans with their local schools.

Find out more: Read our full report, search our mapping and download resources at <http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk>

BREAKthrough

How our work is making a difference

Mapperton solar farm quashed

CPRE Dorset campaigners were celebrating in June when the High Court of Justice quashed planning permission for the proposed Mapperton Solar Park on land owned by South Dorset MP Richard Drax. This decision is the result of Katharine Butler's successful application for a Judicial Review of East Dorset District Council's decision to grant permission for a solar farm to be sited on good arable land amongst highly valued heritage assets in an Area of Great Landscape Value. She was supported by the Mapperton Preservation Group (MPG) and CPRE Dorset.

Deputy High Court Judge Rhodri Lewis Price QC agreed with Katharine that East Dorset's Planning Committee

was seriously misled by the Officers' Report which recommended permission be granted. The report admitted that the proposal would do harm to heritage assets but failed to point out that, if this was the case, this would not comply with policies in the Local Plan. The judge has refused appeal.

Over 700 objections were sent to East Dorset District Council last year to protest at what would have been, if built, the second largest solar farm park in Dorset, saying it represented damaging industrialisation of the county's beautiful countryside. This was the largest protest ever mounted against a solar installation application in Dorset. The revised proposal

came after Good Energy Limited were forced to withdraw an earlier application in the face of a successful legal challenge. The solar park would have covered 106 acres with 90,000 solar PV panels. Local residents formed the Mapperton Preservation Group to object.

Ironically one of the key objections was the adverse impact on the setting and views from Grade II listed Charborough Park, which is owned by Drax. Pevsner, the acclaimed architectural historian, described the landscaped park as "the most splendid in Dorset". Rupert Hardy, a representative of both MPG and CPRE Dorset, argued "the vast installation would have been a blight on the landscape of Thomas Hardy's Wessex".

Backing for Metropolitan Green Belt

CPRE branches in London, Essex, Kent, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey and Hertfordshire have joined forces with the London Green Belt Council to create a new 'Threats to London's Green Belt' map.

The map also highlighted the huge potential loss of countryside across the Home Counties, with plans for 41,500 homes in Hertfordshire; 20,000 in Surrey; 27,000 in Essex, and a further 29,500 across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Kent. Kevin Fitzgerald, of CPRE Hertfordshire, was quoted in the Sunday Telegraph coverage of the campaign, saying: "These are attractive areas of open countryside, well used for agriculture and recreational amenities and building on them would have a substantial impact of our Green Belt."

There are signs that the campaign is having an influence. Taking his first Parliamentary questions as the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in July, Sajid Javid said: "The Green Belt is absolutely sacrosanct. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we shouldn't be carrying out any development there." New London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, also strongly backed the Green Belt, in Bromley – a borough where CPRE London has been tenaciously defending green spaces, in one of his first major decisions as Mayor. Refusing planning permission for a development including a stadium, two blocks of flats and 393 car parking spaces within Chislehurst's conservation area, he said: "I am determined to oppose building on the Green Belt, which is now even more important than when it was

created. I will continue to use my full range of planning powers to further strengthen protections for open and green spaces in the London Plan and ensure we are making the most of brownfield sites across the city."

In further positive news, CPRE Kent's Richard Knox-Johnston – in his capacity as Chairman of the London Green Belt Council – secured support for threatened Green Belt playing fields from major sporting stars in July. The Oakfield site in Redbridge has also been the subject of CPRE London campaigning, and happens to be where former England footballer, Sir Trevor Brooking, and England cricketer Ravi Bopara learned their skills. Both sent letters of support for the campaign, with Bopara saying that "from the age of 9 to 16, Oakfield provided me with a safe and healthy environment on and off the field".

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Current issues

Ministerial update

Following the resignation of David Cameron, we congratulated Theresa May on becoming Prime Minister. As MP for Maidenhead she has supported local campaigns to improve the town and protect the countryside around it, and gave a well-received speech at CPRE Berkshire's AGM in October 2015. Hansard reveals that she is a keen supporter of urban regeneration and Green Belt protection – even supporting, in 2005, an Early Day Motion to commend CPRE's work to protect the Green Belt and wider countryside.

We also look forward to working with the new ministers at the Department of Communities and Local Government, led by Sajid Javid, the new Communities Secretary and a strong supporter of the Green Belt. Even as Business Secretary, he stood up for it, saying on the Today programme on 10 July last year: "There's no need to build on the Green Belt... it's very valuable and we need it". Gavin Barwell, the new Housing and Planning Minister has also been an outspoken supporter of the Green Belt in his Croydon South constituency. He led a campaign to protect local Green Belt, saying: "Croydon has got a huge amount of brownfield land which we should be using to build the housing we so desperately need. That doesn't mean we should be building over the few remaining green spaces that we've got."

At Defra, the new Secretary of State, Andrea Leadsom, has worked well with her local CPRE branch and lists cycling and 'walking in the Northamptonshire countryside' as her hobbies. The experienced George Eustice returns as farming minister, and we'll be urging both – as prominent 'Leave' campaigners – to ensure that whatever replaces the Common Agricultural Policy and EU environmental regulations strengthens protection for the countryside.

NEWSroundup

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

A new model for English farming

Early August saw the publication of the first in a series of research papers that will examine different aspects of the food and farming system. The Food and Farming Foresight series follows five successful Housing Foresight papers, and begins at a time, following the EU referendum decision, when there is an opportunity for major policy change.

The Government will need to work with a wide range of organisations to comprehensively review the legacy of farming policy within the EU and to develop a new vision and policies to establish a sound future for farming. With this in mind, CPRE's Graeme Willis has written a paper, *New Model Farming*, designed to promote new ideas and practical recommendations.

We believe the report identifies a range of policy changes needed for the Government to increase the diversity, sustainability and resilience of the farming sector on which so much of our countryside depends. Firstly, as negotiations begin that will take England out of the Common Agricultural Policy, the paper argues for secure, long-term public funding to continue, but in a progressive and publicly accountable way. Direct funding should provide a safety net for all farmers and growers, with targeted help for new entrants and to aid succession between generations. In particular, 'Green' farming should be supported by strong incentives, and rewards for practices which ensure farming has a positive impact on natural assets.

To encourage new blood

into the sector, the paper recommends a package of measures to increase the availability of land for new farmers and growers, such as transparency in land ownership, new incentives for landowners to release land and changes to land-use planning to deliver allotments, community right-to-grow plots and smallholdings. The paper also suggests the role of county farms should be reviewed with a view to reinvigorating the estate and its role as an incubator of new producers. A new national programme of farmer field schools is recommended to help develop and spread methods to cut risks, boost productivity and net income as well as restoring nature.

Find out more: Read *New Model Farming* at www.cpre.org.uk

New Bills in Queen's Speech

Several new bills of interest to CPRE were announced in the Queen's Speech in May. A Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill appears to put neighbourhood plans at the heart of planning, and we believe it has been introduced as a direct result of CPRE's lobbying on the Housing and Planning Bill (now Act) in the preceding months.

Although we did not succeed with our amendment for a neighbourhood right of appeal, we did win significant Parliamentary support for the idea that Neighbourhood Planning must carry more weight, particularly in the House of Lords which twice voted to introduce the amendment. Even though the Government twice rejected

the right of appeal, we were heartened that the then Planning Minister Brandon Lewis pledged to "work with colleagues to ensure that neighbourhood plans enjoy the primacy that we intend them to have in planning law".

The Digital Economy Bill, meanwhile, seeks to establish a legal right to fast broadband, following a recent consultation discussing how to extend superfast broadband services to the 5% (most often rural areas) who do not currently have adequate access. CPRE welcomed measures to speed up the building of broadband infrastructure, and suggested that visual impact could be minimised by fixing new masts to existing buildings – such as churches or farm building roofs – provided

that their heritage value is considered and protected.

Meanwhile, we called on the Government to ensure the Bus Services Bill will secure an integrated bus network across local authority boundaries and deep into rural areas. We suggested that including a requirement for a Bus and Coach Investment Strategy in the Bill would help roll out smart integrated ticketing, GPS tracking, faster journeys and better access. Many members of the House of Lords kindly raised our concerns about the apparent lack of rural-proofing at the Second Reading of the Bill. We will also be calling for the return of a Rural Bus Subsidy Grant to prevent wide swathes of rural England becoming bus-free zones by 2020.

dates of note

Housing and Planning Act

The Housing and Planning Act received Royal Assent on 12 May 2016. Months of CPRE campaigning had notable results, working closely and effectively with the CLA (Country Land and Business Association) and Hastoe Housing Association as part of the Rural Housing Network. Although not all of our amendments were incorporated there will be opportunities for more campaigning to improve secondary legislation.

Our lobbying to ensure that rural exception sites continue to focus on affordable housing for local people succeeded when the Government put forward its own amendment to dispense with the requirement for Starter Homes (market homes with a 20% discount for first time buyers) on such sites. We also argued for a rural exemption to the Right to Buy housing association properties, but although the

Government accepted the need to protect scarce rural affordable housing they argued that the voluntary agreement left housing associations in the best position to decide where the Right to Buy would be appropriate, and where replacement properties should be built.

On the proposed forced sale of high value council houses, we succeeded in exempting some rural areas, with the Government conceding that in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty there are greater planning constraints which would make it more challenging to replace homes that are sold off with new affordable homes for rent. The Government subsequently committed to exclude local authority housing in these areas from forced sale, and will look at other rural areas that might also be excluded in secondary legislation.

Despite a strong campaign - in conjunction with the National Association of Local Councils and Civic Voice - for a Neighbourhood right of appeal, we only won a small concession that any planning conflicts with made Neighbourhood Plans would be reported on. However, cross party support for our calls for Neighbourhood Planning to be strengthened could mean more progress towards this in the subsequent Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Overall, our efforts improved a poor Bill and ensured that rural issues were high profile during its passage. Because this was the first Bill to go through the 'EVEL' (English Votes on English Laws) procedure - meaning that a large majority would have been needed in the Commons to make any changes to Government proposals - we put more emphasis on our work with the House of Lords, where we were highly influential.

Reviewing the National Planning Policy Framework

With the Government consulting on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), our online action saw over 9,000 people sending a letter to their MP by July, demanding that the Government uses the review to prioritise Green Belt protection and prioritise brownfield sites. With the EU referendum likely to delay the outcome of the review, we will continue to lobby to influence the final decisions on key changes.

CPRE welcomed the April report of the Communities and Local Government select committee on the NPPF consultation. The report analysed and commented on the evidence collected by the committee, which included oral evidence from CPRE Chief Executive Shaun Spiers, and its conclusions showed significant support for many of CPRE's arguments. The Committee agreed that the Government

needs to provide stronger policies to ensure that brownfield sites are developed before greenfield. The report also endorsed CPRE concerns that greenfield sites are coming forward unnecessarily in areas where brownfield sites with planning permission are available.

Another bone of contention with the Government's proposals is the idea of a housing delivery test, which would work by 'comparing the number of homes that local planning authorities set out to deliver in their local plan against the net additions in housing supply in a local planning authority area'. If there is a sustained period where housing targets aren't being met, the current proposal is that the local authority would be made to earmark more greenfield sites for development in addition to the ones it has already identified. CPRE's head of planning, Matt Thomson, commented: "The problem is that the test wrongly

assumes that local authorities can control the rate at which houses are actually built once the sites have been identified and planning permission granted."

A fairer and more effective policy would be for the Government to focus on the housebuilders rather than local authorities, and we're calling for more thought to be given to incentivising developers to build houses, and in the right places. CPRE has suggested that the granting of planning permission should be tied to a contract with the developer that determines the rate at which homes will be built. We also argue that a developer's failure to construct homes at a reasonable rate could lead to financial penalties or the revocation of the developer's right to build all or part of the outstanding planning permission, and delegation of that right to competing developers, including custom-and self-builders.

A 90th anniversary celebration with CPRE Kent

A very special occasion to celebrate CPRE's 90th anniversary. Tickets cost £30 per person and include drinks, canapés and access to the grounds (and for an extra £2.50, the castle itself). Tickets can be booked via <http://cprekent.org.uk> 5th September, Hever Castle, Kent 4-6pm

Launch of the Northamptonshire Countryside Design Guide

CPRE Award winner David Edsall launches his new guide to maintaining local character. 12th September, Stanwick Lakes, 7pm

Cheltenham Literature Festival panel discussion on the countryside

To celebrate CPRE's 90th anniversary book, *22 Ideas that saved the English countryside*, join co-author Oliver Hilliam, CPRE Gloucestershire Vice Chairman, Richard Lloyd MBE, and The Times columnist Alice Thomson for a discussion on the issues facing rural England chaired by Simon Jenkins. 14th October, Cheltenham Town Hall, 1pm

CPRE Autumn Conference

Key topics will include: Campaign priorities for the next three years; key strategic issues that we need to tackle; capitalising on opportunities identified. 3rd November, The Studio, 7 Canon Street, Birmingham, B2 5EP 10.30am-5pm

Current issues

Lower Thames Crossing

Transport campaigner Dr Peter Foreman of CPRE Essex writes: "I agree with CPRE Kent that the Highways Agency needs to re-think about another crossing; this is not the way forward. Much more localism is needed to grossly reduce emissions, rather than destroying more valuable farmland for roads. Kent may now have acres of HGVs parking, because of troubles crossing the channel. The problem is that the environmental damage has no cost in the present economic system. Instead of building more roads for cars and HGVs, which should pay much higher taxes, it would be much more economical to provide safe foot/cycle paths. Huge areas of land used for a few storage areas causing miles of HGVs may be cost effective with our present economic system, but only because all the problems they cause are not accounted for, so wider/more roads are proposed as with the new Thames crossing.

Now we have the internet there is no longer the need for so much journeying. Our roads and towns and villages would no longer be destroyed by HGVs if the transport system returned to train carriage and local stops for goods to be moved on by small local vehicles. More car-hire facilities at stations could save hours wasted driving, when work could be done on the train before you get there or much closer to your destination. Transport, energy and land issues in this small island should be co-operating not competing, and considered holistically, rather than in a 'big is beautiful' approach."

A record 47,000 people took part in the Lower Thames Crossing consultation and a decision is still awaited.

letter from the field



Words from local campaigners

CPRE Guildford's Tim Harrold gives his analysis of a draft local plan which puts swathes of Surrey's countryside at risk

Dear reader,

CPRE Surrey is facing a major crisis on the Green Belt as never before. Guildford has been selected by the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership as one of four towns where growth is to be encouraged and as a result the Green Belt is under huge threat from housing development at three strategic sites: Blackwell Farm on the Hogs Back (1,800 houses), Gosden Hill Farm between Burpham and West Clandon (2,000) and Three Farms Meadows at the former Wisley Airfield close to Ockham, Ripley and Send (2,100). Another 1,100 houses are planned between the villages of Normandy and Flexford, with other major housing developments at the Horsleys, all within the Green Belt.

It has been made clear by the Government that they remain committed to protection of the Green Belt and wider rural environment. Indeed, the outgoing Minister for Housing & Planning recently restated that "Green Belt boundaries should be adjusted only in exceptional circumstances through the Local Plan process and with the support of local people. We have repeatedly made clear that demand for housing alone will not change Green Belt boundaries." Unfortunately, this policy

statement is not reflected in the draft Local Plan which not only encroaches on the Green Belt in a wide range locations, but calls for housing development on a number of sites in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

In view of the clear national policy, we should like to see Guildford Borough Council reconsider the draft Local Plan which, as we have seen, will constitute an extensive incursion into the Borough's Green Belt, which is expected to accommodate over 8,000 houses in total. We are also dismayed about the draft Local Plan's adherence to the unrealistic 'Objectively Assessed Need' (OAN) figure of 693 houses per annum from GLH Hearn's West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Guildford, Waverley and Woking. This means that the Borough must find land for the building of 13,860 new homes over 20 years, inevitably putting huge pressure on the Green Belt and open spaces. What is required instead is a more careful consideration of the many widespread and serious constraints on development within the Borough, and the need to protect and enhance the countryside adjacent to and around Guildford, rather than undermining this valued resource.

We have commissioned Green Balance to review and supply an independent commercial opinion on the validity of the OAN housing figure. Their report makes clear that they judge this document to be flawed and the OAN figure for Guildford to be too high. CPRE Surrey believes the maximum per annum figure should be 481, based on the Green Balance evidence. This puts the credibility of the whole draft Local Plan in question. And the proposed numbers seem even more unlikely in view of the £3 billion shortfall in infrastructure backlog across the county which is recorded in the Surrey Infrastructure Study. The over-estimation of housing need and disregard for national Green Belt policy makes the draft Local Plan unsound. Indeed, our 28-page submission to the consultation justifiably describes it as "over-ambitious", "unrealistic" and "misguided".

As CPRE Surrey Branch Director, Andy Smith, says: "What the Council have come up with here is a blueprint for the steady erosion of the Green Belt, the consequence of which will be to merge the town of Guildford with neighbouring villages, and to lose the tranquillity and rural character which makes this Borough so special."

GOODideas

Learning from each other

Monitoring river pollution

CPRE Herefordshire has been doing its bit to monitor water pollution in the countryside, where phosphates from agricultural pollution and sewage treatment can cause serious damage to ecosystems.

The River Wye is a Special Area of Conservation designated under the EU Habitats Directive, and although monitored by the Environment Agency, data on phosphates is not published. In December, the branch submitted a legal information request using the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (known as an EIR request) to obtain the phosphate data for the Wye and River Lugg. The data released showed the

Lugg was in poor condition with phosphate levels rising significantly through the summer of 2015. Campaigners then raised the profile of the problem when BBC Hereford and Worcester featured the story on their morning radio programme in January.

CPRE Herefordshire's priority is to end the secrecy over river pollution in the county, so that responsible public authorities can be held to account. They argue that the Environment Agency must be required to publish the monthly phosphate levels online as they are monitored. There were signs of support in July when the Hereford Times reported that Councillor Felicity Norman was calling for the River Lugg pollution to be addressed, in

the context of the county's non-compliance with the Water Framework Directive and Habitat Directive.

She said: "The problem is the very high levels of Soluble Reactive Phosphates (SRP) in our rivers, apparently being addressed by the creation of a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) but whether this is effective is a matter of concern, not just to myself but to others, including organisations such as the Wye and Usk Foundation and CPRE." Councillor Norman also raised the need to think about water quality when assessing planning applications for intensive livestock units, a particular concern for the branch which is fighting numerous applications for 'broiler shed' developments.

Raising density

With South Oxfordshire District Council currently consulting on the preferred options for its Local Plan 2032, CPRE Oxfordshire is arguing that, where appropriate, higher density development could reduce the greenfield land needed and encourage the right type of housing.

The branch believes that high density housing not only takes up less precious land, but it also provides less expensive houses. It suggests that lower price houses and starter homes for local people is where the real demand lies, not in yet more executive houses for commuters. Campaigners fear that the consultation is silent on density targets because

it is carrying forward the "at least 25 per hectare" from the existing Core Strategy. This is remarkably low, given that Government targets are between 30-50 dwellings per hectare. Whilst accepting that precise sites will need to be evaluated on their own merit, CPRE Oxfordshire believes that a yardstick target of at least 70 dwellings per hectare would be more appropriate.

In fact, campaigners point out that historical standards of 75 per hectare would have been the norm – the average density in Kensington and Chelsea today, where people are happy to pay £4 million for a terraced house. They argue that such densities would not be inappropriate in the countryside, where

many, if not most, villages contain small rows of terraced cottages, where farm workers used to live.

CPRE Oxfordshire is putting pressure on local councils to introduce compulsory minimum densities on all available sites, to reduce the glut of unaffordable executive homes. Bringing back terraces would minimise land take, provide the less expensive houses that young people need, and help guarantee vibrant communities.

Find out more: The branch has produced some simple density guidelines which can be downloaded from www.cpreoxon.org.uk (search for 'how densely should we build?')

Norwich Green Belt

CPRE Norfolk launched their first-ever online petition in March, calling on Broadland and South Norfolk Councils to set up a Green Belt around the historic city of Norwich. Data on household projections by the Office for National Statistics demonstrates that the number of new houses provided for in local plans greatly exceed requirements. And with local authorities beginning the process of reviewing the recently adopted local plans for Norwich and its surrounding districts, it is more urgent than ever that Norwich has a Green Belt in place to protect its setting and surrounding countryside from the onslaught of development and urbanisation. If you have not yet signed their petition please visit www.change.org search for 'Green Belt for Norwich', sign and share! The petition has now reached almost 1,000 signatures and attracted headlines in the Eastern Daily Press (EDP) plus an online EDP poll showing a massive majority in favour of the initiative. On the back of this petition campaigners held a very promising meeting with the Planning Heads of Broadland and South Norfolk Councils and say "watch this space!"

Walks of the month

CPRE Hertfordshire has produced an impressive series of illustrated walks for people keen to explore the beauty of the county. Branch Chairman David Irving has devised a walk for each month of 2016 so far, giving interesting information on local landscapes and heritage. Each circular walk is between 3 and 10 miles in length, and comes with a detailed map and guide that can be downloaded from www.cpreherts.org.uk/campaigns/countryside

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Current issues

Growing support for bag charge

A poll partly-commissioned by CPRE has revealed increased public support for the bag charge in England. The ICM-conducted poll for the Break the Bag Habit (BTBH) coalition found that 70% of English respondents now find it reasonable to charge 5p for all carrier bags - an 8% increase in support in the eight months since the English charge came into force. The increase was particularly marked amongst younger people, where support has jumped 10%.

Despite this encouraging news, the poll indicated that more people find the current charge confusing than not. The charge, introduced on 5 October 2015, does not apply to businesses of fewer than 250 employees, paper bags or franchises such as Subway. Answering the ICM survey, 42% of respondents found it confusing that only some shops charged for bags. We continue to call for a universal scheme that applies to all bags and all retailers will eliminate confusion, boost public support, and most importantly reduce bag usage and litter.

A new National Park?

Campaigners from CPRE Dorset have been involved in proposals for a Dorset and East Devon National Park which have been given a positive first assessment by Natural England. Their independent report on the 'Economic Opportunities, Benefits and Wider Impacts of a Dorset and East Devon National Park' argues that the designation would benefit local economies and businesses, promote affordable housing and key services, and conserve and enhance the area's environment.

Find out more at <https://dorsetandeastdevonnationalpark.wordpress.com/>

stepbystep

Guide to good campaigning

Measuring campaigning progress

CPRE's quantitative assessment of progress towards its 2026 Vision (see Campaign Spotlight, page 14) illustrates the importance of monitoring and evaluating campaigns. Effective monitoring of progress can tell us how well we are delivering on our aims, providing us with a means to assess any gaps or problems with achieving them. Evaluation takes it a step further, analysing why results were (or were not) achieved by assessing which hurdles were overcome or which tactics didn't seem to work.

Monitoring and evaluation is an important part of reporting to funders of projects, those who have supported campaigns, members of organisations as well as the general public (our potential members!). It is used to justify expenditure, justify further fundraising and address accountability – as well as increasing the chance of success with future initiatives. Furthermore it can help rally staff and colleagues by celebrating achievements – a vital part of the process of defining progress through milestones.

CPRE's 2026 Vision paints a picture of a "beautiful, varied and tranquil countryside". Here, we ask what lessons can be learnt from our 'gap' analysis (measuring the gap between desired and actual progress) of our work towards that Vision and how they can be applied to measuring CPRE's ongoing progress and your own local group's future achievements.

1 Define your terms: SMART targets

CPRE's 2026 Vision, was written as an inspiring call to action, not to be analysed; this creates a problem when trying to carry out an assessment of progress.

The breadth of the Vision and of individual words within the Vision, such as 'tranquillity', created the first difficulty. Many of the statements are heavily nuanced, with concepts such as tranquillity covering a range of different areas that cannot be measured through one, or even a few, simple statistics. The inspirational text also creates difficulties when trying to measure each statement. The Vision, for example, talks of litter and fly tipping being no longer tolerated: how can this subjective statement be measured effectively to match the meaning contained with the Vision?

Whilst, as a Vision for 2026, the document is in theory time-bound, it is clear that the Vision itself was not expected to be anywhere near realistic. Many of the statements also represent an ongoing process and do not have a well-defined end point, such as urban regeneration. These issues highlight the importance of having SMART targets. They allow you to clearly set out what are you trying to achieve. Having Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely objectives allows more effective analysis of progress. They mean that there is no ambiguity in what exactly you are trying to achieve, and that there is data available to measure it.

2 Find the right data

As part of developing SMART targets it is important to look at what you are trying to achieve: what is it that you want to change? In order to then measure this change, you need to know where you are starting from. This needs data.

The source and type of information will depend on what is being measured. There is a range of official statistics, collected across a range of topics, for example the land use change statistics or the 'Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment' surveys. A number of other organisations collect data, such as the RSPB's Farmland Birds Index, or Forestry Commissions woodland data. The risks with this data are that the frequency, timeliness and method of data collection may change over time, making it difficult to make direct comparisons.

If no data exists, then you will need to carry out your own research, for example your own survey of public attitudes towards a particular issue. It is important that this is carried out at the beginning to ensure that there is data for comparison when you come to evaluate progress.

In the absence of available data in the Vision Analysis, proxies had to be used instead as a means to measure progress. For example, tolerance against litter was taken to mean the number of groups involved in CPRE's Litter Action groups; for successful urban regeneration the proportion of new homes of brownfield sites was taken as a proxy.



CPRE's community award schemes are good ways of monitoring progress on littering, finding case studies and celebrating success (Pictured: Holbeach was CPRE Lincolnshire's Best Kept Town of 2014)

Quantitative evaluation is important for providing an objective view, not impacted upon by specific personal experiences of a campaign: other non-measurable changes are also important. Changes in policy and allocations of government funding for example can also be a useful measure of success. However, the use of statistics can help determine the impact of these changes and investments 'on the ground'.

3 Monitor day to day, and annually

Outside of specific campaigns where it is often easy to have a small number of SMART objectives, day to day monitoring can help the effective evaluation of our work.

For example, branches respond to significant numbers of planning applications and local plan proposals each year; but how many of these does CPRE win or improve? And how many relevant applications were not responded to due to a lack of capacity? These statistics could be used to

evaluate the need for new staff and volunteers, for which funding could be applied for. If detailed data is collected than the impact of CPRE's involvement in the proposals could be measured.

In addition to the day to day recording of information, it is essential that these findings are collated into regular reports. Whether or not these are for funders or supporters of the campaign/work, regular evaluation enables better understanding of progress towards your goals.

4 Use case studies

Case studies should be used to illustrate the case: where have your aims been achieved, why did they work, what can be learnt for the future? The analysis of progress towards CPRE's 2026 Vision has been a case study in this article, for example.

Real life examples are invaluable when illustrating more complex issues, and local examples from CPRE branches have long been a crucial means of illustrating national policy arguments.

They can also help show that change is possible, even if only at the moment, changes are occurring on a relatively small scale. Ultimately, case studies can show us what success looks like: for example, an exemplar housing development can show that high standards are realistic and achievable. That's why our 'Living the Vision' document was published alongside the Vision in 2009, to show how our long-term aims could be achieved by adopting pioneering schemes as a benchmark.

CPRE is in the process of developing its next strategic plan – for 2017-2019. It will build on the Vision to create a small number of SMART objectives. These will include a number of key performance indicators, possibly a number of which have been used as indicators within the Vision analysis, that will enable us to effectively measure progress in the areas chosen.

Find out more: Read the assessment of progress towards CPRE's 2026 Vision at www.cpre.org.uk/annex-of-vision-analysis

Current issues

Northants design guide

For the countryside to prosper at a time when there is considerable pressure in the county for expansion, some new development in the villages and small market towns is important. The new CPRE Northamptonshire Design Guide seeks to encourage the right kind of building in suitable locations so that the county's distinctive vernacular style is maintained. The text, amply supported by illustrations and diagrams, shows how to assess the existing character and settlement pattern, and indicates details of building design that will enhance rather than clash with the existing buildings.

The branch hope that it will be highly useful to those involved with producing Local Neighbourhood Plans, to Parish Councillors assessing the details of planning applications in their area, to developers, both large and small, who wish to build on sites adjacent to existing vernacular buildings, and to remind planning officers of the important details which give the buildings their local character. After the official launch of the guide at Stanwick Lakes on the 12th September (see page 5) the branch shall be distributing the Guide to those actively involved in these issues.

The branch's 2016 design award winners included the Mercedes Technology Centre at Brixworth, where the large, well designed modern building has been sensitively integrated into the landscape, and The Artizan public house in Northampton which was been sensitively refurbished to enhance a nineteenth century residential area.

Find out more at www.cprenorthants.org.uk

Saving local heritage

CPRE Bedfordshire joined together with the people of Kempston and The Victorian Society to save The Bury manor house in Kempston from a planning application that would have seen its demolition. At a meeting of Bedford Borough Council Planning Committee on Monday 11 July, councillors listened to CPRE Bedfordshire's arguments and unanimously rejected plans to demolish The Bury and replace it with a massive block of 55 flats.

The Bury manor house and the 17th Century wall surrounding it is the last remaining historic landmark to the west of Bedford. A spokesperson for CPRE Bedfordshire said: "We are so pleased that councillors recognised how important it was to the people of Kempston and Bedford Borough to retain a part of our history particularly when this area west of Kempston is undergoing such a massive amount of new housing development. The sense of place created by the retention of well-known local buildings is so important to people." CPRE Bedfordshire is now calling on the owners of The Bury to enter into meaningful discussions with local people and other interested parties, with a view to developing creative proposals for the site which would see the manor house as the focal point.

Joining CPRE

CPRE Staffordshire is keen to build relations with local Parish Councils to offer support on neighbourhood planning and challenging planning applications. If your Parish Council would be interested in joining them, the branch can arrange for a representative to attend your council meeting to explain what they have to offer. For more information, email protect@cprestaffordshire.org.uk

PARISHbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

Shaping the neighbourhood

CPRE Lancashire's planning manager, Jackie Copley, visited Broughton in Amounderness Parish Council in July, to advise on next steps for its Neighbourhood Plan process following an initial round of public consultation.

Broughton and the wider area is the focus of the Preston City Deal, with ambitious development proposals including a new by-pass and volume housing. Jackie advised the Parish Council on keeping Broughton distinctive by drawing on its heritage assets and other local characteristics. She

discussed the Neighbourhood Plan vision and how it could be best achieved via stated strategic objectives, written policies and spatial plans to guide development over the next 20 years. While the Neighbourhood Plan cannot be used to halt housing development, which was identified as site allocations in the Central Lancashire Local Plan, it can influence developers to bring forward development that is necessary.

The Guild Wheel cycleway, a key local visitor attraction, prompted a suggestion to ensure new neighbourhood is cycle-friendly with

cycle-paths connecting different parts of the Parish. New development should enable the provision of a central village 'focal point feature' with the family friendly leisure, health and retail facilities which were identified in the consultation feedback as lacking in the area. Also discussed was the retention of important green spaces, to provide an attractive setting, and to protect local farmland.

Find out more: For further information about the progress of Broughton's Neighbourhood Plan at www.broughtonparishcouncil.org.uk

Northamptonshire's litter heroes

CPRE Northamptonshire was delighted to tie in their regular annual spring-cleaning competition with the national Clean for the Queen campaign. Any group in the county who holds a litter pick between March and midsummer was eligible for cash awards to be spent on litter projects or other community-related initiatives.

The branch was delighted with the number of communities endeavouring to clean up the county, with many sending in detailed, illustrated reports with

their competition entries. The first prize of £500 was awarded to Little Houghton. They submitted an impressive report which showed how the whole community supported the day, with the school producing litter posters and volunteers from several village groups participating. They also sent six very good photographs, which beautifully illustrated their hard work and achievement.

There were three runners up, Blisworth, Brigstock and Towcester, each receiving prizes of

£150. In Blisworth the pick started as a school poster project and was then extended to other villagers, who picked the main roads. The children not only picked litter, but discussed the causes behind the problem and potential solutions. The branch felt that it was good to recognise that community action is just as important in market towns as in villages, and rewarded Towcester for its 'Tidy-Up' project, which picks litter in areas of the town not covered by the Town or District council.

Standing up for Stroud

CPRE Stroud District Group is hoping that their successful recent objections to damaging planning applications are a sign that the Stroud Local Plan will help protect the District's countryside. Campaigners helped stop plans for 150 houses in Minchinhampton and saw off a renewed attempt to build

homes on Baxter's Field in Laurie Lee's Slad Valley.

The new Stroud Local Plan is also having a positive impact in Berkeley Vale. CPRE campaigners were pleased that Kingswood – currently a target for developers – is not considered a suitable place for further development, while an

application for 95 houses 'South of Charfield' was refused as the then 'Emerging' Local Plan had achieved sufficient weight. CPRE has also been involved in resisting the application for 186 houses which would be a huge blot on the setting of Berkeley, with an appeal against this refusal to be heard in August.

CAMPAIGNER

CPRE's new award winners



Barry Porter (left) receives his Lifetime Achievement Award from East of England chair Greg Peck

A special conference in July, 90 Years of CPRE: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, was a fitting setting for the presentation of the four latest CPRE awards to outstanding campaigners in the East Midlands and East of England regions.

CPRE East of England's planning expert Michael Brooks received a Long Service Award, having given freely of his time and knowledge since joining CPRE 1984. Michael was a member of the small group which examined the East of England Regional Plan, and also helped develop the CPRE response to the Plan's review in 2009. He has, on many occasions, used his expertise to help the regional group to respond to consultations, and has run training courses for volunteers across the region on the planning system and how to tackle planning applications.

Also receiving a Long Service Award was David Edsall of CPRE Northamptonshire, who joined CPRE in 1993 and became the East Northamptonshire District

committee's Technical Secretary – responding to planning applications and District Plan Consultations, as well as appearing at appeal inquiries and public examinations of both the County Structure Plan and District Local Plan. David became CPRE Northamptonshire's official representative to the East Midlands Regional Group in 1998 and contributed to the work of the region ever since.

From contributing to CPRE's work on the East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and campaigning on the Government's Milton Keynes and South Midlands growth policy, David has worked closely with many branches in the midlands and East of England. His latest project has been to coordinate the production of 'The Northamptonshire Design Guide' which seeks to promote good design and traditional character in new building.

Receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award was Barry Porter, who joined CPRE in 1993 and is currently the Vice-Chairman of the East of England

Regional Group. He has also served as vice-President of CPRE Suffolk and a trustee of CPRE Norfolk, and even as a Vice-Chairman of CPRE South West. Barry was instrumental in setting up the East of England Regional Group and was their Chairman from 2001 – 2005. He has been a staunch supporter of the regional group, believing that branches are stronger together, and has represented CPRE at dozens of important events and meetings over the years.

Finally, CPRE Leicestershire's Tony Stott received an Outstanding Contribution Award having first joined CPRE in the mid 1970s. Tony has been interested in planning, countryside and environmental issues for a long time as an academic and local councillor. After retiring from Charnwood Borough Council in 2003, he became increasingly active within CPRE's Leicestershire Branch, serving as Chairman from 2008 until April this year. Under his leadership there has been a revival of the Branch thanks to his strategic, pro-active and team-spirited approach.

Tony helped implement a strategic plan which has prioritised activities and ensured that the Branch has a positive approach to issues such as rural affordable housing development and neighbourhood planning. His writing, editing and desk top publishing skills and knowledge of planning issues also enable him to produce an excellent Branch Newsletter, which together with his leadership on the creation of a Branch website in 2013, has revitalised their communications.

Find out more about nominating your local colleagues for an award at www.cpre.org.uk/awards

Current issues

Support for digester

For CPRE South Downs and Central Hampshire District Group is supporting an anaerobic digester at Sparsholt College. This would be a large industrial-style plant but is designed to use feedstock of grasses and ryegrasses from local farms, where they will be a break crop, rather than commercial and food waste as used in other anaerobic digestion plants. It is intended to supply gas to the grid and to heat the College, so saving liquid petroleum gas. The group have asked for an independent assessment as to whether this feedstock could provide the 60,000 tons per year the plant would need, more mitigation of landscape and lighting impacts, and a condition to prevent tractor and trailer traffic passing through local villages.

Saving Devon's bats

CPRE Devon district groups are doing their bit for the Great Horseshoe Bat. Teignbridge members are working hard with local residents' groups to protect habitats and flyways, and have lobbied the district council to protect the bats from damaging planning applications within Teignbridge and the other four districts in the South Hams Special Area of Conservation (SAC). CPRE volunteers continue to lobby for the completion of an overarching mitigation strategy for the bats, and the speedy implementation of a co-ordinated approach to their protection across the five planning authorities of the South Hams SAC. Torbay volunteers continue to challenge development that threatens the Greater Horseshoe Bat and other protected species like the Cirl Bunting. They are concerned that existing EU Habitats Directives are not being enforced, and are working to ensure that 'Brexit' does not mean a 'bonfire of European protective regulations without replacement UK legislation'.

Current issues

Building more homes

The cross-party House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee released its report, *Building more homes*, in July. CPRE provided written evidence to the committee's investigation of the housing crisis, and the final report recommends that the Government lift its building target to 300,000 homes a year, with local authorities and housing associations freed to build substantial numbers of homes for rent and sale.

The report makes clear that a small number of large, private housebuilders will not build the numbers or types of homes we need, suggesting that small and medium sized housebuilders, as well as local authorities, must be empowered to provide more genuinely affordable housing, to rent and to buy. Local communities, via neighbourhood planning, are also shown to have a role in encouraging more housebuilding.

The report is also helpful in outlining the gap between permissions granted and houses built, with developers sitting on thousands of unfulfilled permissions. The Committee recommended that local authorities are granted the power to levy council tax on developments that are not completed within a set time period. For rural areas specifically, measures to extend the Right to Buy to housing associations and to define starter homes as affordable are criticised for reducing the supply of homes for people who need low cost rental accommodation. CPRE spokesman Benjamin Halfpenny commented: "As the depth of this report indicates, there are many issues for new Communities Secretary Sajid Javid to address. Further investment in brownfield sites, support for smaller housebuilders, and additional pressure on builders to build out permissions would be good places to start."

INreview

Our perspective on countryside issues

Suitable and harmonious infrastructure?

In 1926, CPRE's first statement of aims and objects declared: "It is part of [CPRE's] policy to promote suitable and harmonious development." What are the prospects for such development now?

CPRE is calling for a new approach to infrastructure planning, one where national and local aspirations go hand in hand. The National Infrastructure Commission offers a great opportunity to help deliver this, and we welcome the Government's decision in May to include quality of life within the Commission's scope. There still needs to be a substantial shift in emphasis, however, particularly on full engagement.

Engaging with people

The French have developed one of the finest processes for public debate on infrastructure projects. First developed in the 1980s after public outrage over a high speed railway proposed through vineyards, they have continuously improved it. France's Public Debate Commission has representatives from user groups, the courts, industry, environmental NGOs, courts and local politicians, not least those from rural areas.

Of the dozens projects it has considered, a third have been fundamentally changed. In some cases, such as the planned route of Charles De Gaulle Express air rail link, the objectors' proposal became what was approved. Scheme promoters welcome its feedback, as it means they get things right early on. We believe a similar Commission should be set up here through the Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill. It could carry out debates on the

top three most controversial issues identified in the 2017 consultation on the National Infrastructure Assessment vision, and streamline pre-application consultation on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, taking responsibility for this from developers.

Making not breaking places

Poor decisions can ruin places. But good design need not cost more, even leaving aside the economic value of beautiful places, and the cost of ugly places which no one wants to look at, still less live near. How should the route strategies that Highways England is preparing take account of opportunities to make better places. The removal of the A14 viaduct in Huntingdon or the tunnelling of the A3 under the Devil's Punchbowl are well known. But there are other, smaller potential opportunities, not least in rural areas.

In response to the Government's roads reform agenda, CPRE made the case for a 'roads retrofit'. We are pleased that the Road Investment Strategy includes a £500 million Environment Fund to help deliver this. We hope that Highways England will shortly announce plans to deliver green bridges over its network, to restore landscapes and connectivity for wildlife and communities. The Netherlands has over 60; we only have half a dozen.

Fair split between local and national

There will always be competing tensions between investing in large and small scale infrastructure. But once we start

thinking about infrastructure as networks - rather than discrete, individual schemes - the importance of the local becomes clear. When it comes to rolling out broadband, leaving out the last few miles is a false economy. Likewise with energy, we will need to improve the local distribution of energy as we get more decentralised, 'smart' power. The emphasis should be on small scale local improvements. In fact investing at the local level can reduce or remove the need for infrastructure in the first place. Improving energy efficiency is at least as important as building power stations.

"Investing at the local level can reduce or remove the need for infrastructure in the first place"

Change is happening quickly. There are real risks that some people and some areas will not share the benefits. We need better evidence about network effects for new forms of infrastructure and better debates about how the costs and benefits should be distributed across society. We need 'Place Responsive Infrastructure', a new balance between investment in local and national needs, and proper consideration of when new infrastructure might not be the right option.

Find out more: Read a longer version of Shaun Spiers' speech to the Local Government Association July conference at www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/features

QandA

The answers you need

Countryside protection still has teeth

Q The NPPF states that relevant local policies should be considered out of date where a local authority does not have an up-to-date five year supply of housing sites. I live in an area that does not have such a supply, but surely national policies covering my threatened local AONB can never be considered 'out of date' – does their protection hold in any circumstances?

A A recent Court of Appeal case involving Cheshire East and Suffolk Coastal Councils (the Richborough Estates case) has attracted particular controversy, being widely interpreted as meaning that protection for areas like Green Belts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest is now weakened where

there is not an up-to-date five year supply. A report on the industry website Planning Resource states that the ruling 'could give developers wider scope to build on protected land', and other local authorities have used the case to suggest that 'a lack of a 5 year land supply means ... protective policies such as the AONB are significantly weakened and viewed as out of date'.

However, the judge in the Richborough case makes the particularly important point that 'there will be many cases' in which restrictive policies 'are given sufficient weight to justify the refusal of planning permission despite their not being up to date' in the sense that the local authority lacks a five year land supply. The judge also clearly said that the weight to be given to a restrictive policy

(or any other policy) was a question of planning judgement for the local planning authority, and not something for the courts. You can also refer local planning officers to a more recent planning inspector's decision in Ilfracombe, North Devon. This refers to the Richborough judgment. But the planning inspector makes clear that the judgment did not prevent him from refusing planning permission for a major, and harmful, development proposal in an AONB, and on the grounds of policies in the NPPF mentioned above that restrict development in these areas.

Find out more: Read the Richborough judgement here www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2016/168.html and search for the Ilfracombe decision using Reference: APP/X1118/W/15/3012049

Local Government Ombudsman

Q I'm concerned that my local authority is consistently breaching national policies on Green Belt in my area. I have written to the council on several occasions and my local CPRE has made representations but we feel like we're being ignored. Can we take the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman?

A Writing to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) can be an option if you feel all other avenues have been exhausted. You need to be convinced that the breach is serious, and be able to show the local authority is guilty of 'maladministration'. This could mean, for example, that there was no proper response or

investigation of your issue or that no action was taken after a promise of action was made in writing. Other examples of maladministration include: taking too long to reach a decision; giving the wrong information; not following its own rules, or the laws; breaking formal commitments or promises or not following correct decision-making process. The Ombudsman will only investigate a complaint if s/he considers that you have suffered sufficient injustice to justify it, such as suffering distress, losing money, or having your quality of life reduced.

The LGO recently reminded authorities of the importance of correctly and consistently applying relevant policies when considering planning

applications in the Green Belt. In a decision which criticises St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council for allowing a five bedroom house to replace a dormer bungalow in Green Belt, Dr Jane Martin, the Local Government Ombudsman, said: "Planners should be clear and consistent in their decision-making to ensure public confidence in the planning process. I would expect the council to give careful consideration of the proper application of national and local Green Belt policy should another application for the site be received."

Find out more: For our guide to contacting the LGO and other useful case studies search for 'ombudsman' at <http://planninghelp.cpre.org.uk>

Current issues

Tree Protection

Readers pointed out that the Fieldwork (Spring 2016) article on Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) could imply that trees have no protection if not under a TPO or in a conservation area. Although there are exemptions, the unauthorised felling of more than a handful of reasonably mature trees would come under Forestry Commission regulations. Hedgerow Regulations can also in certain circumstances stop unauthorised tree felling, tree felling in SSSIs may need consent, and felling can be prevented if it might impact on protected species such as bats and dormice, or on a scheduled ancient monument.

Find out more and download the useful booklet, *Tree Felling – Getting Permission*, at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-fellinglicences

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood Plans have broken through the 200 mark following strong support for local plans in three referendums in Herefordshire. This is on top of more than 1,900 communities across England - covering nearly 10 million people - that have now also started to get their own plans in place. Since 2013 all 200 plans that have progressed to the referendum stage have been approved by voters, with nearly 340,000 votes cast. On average 89% of people who have voted were in favour of the proposed plan for their neighbourhood.

From 1 October a parish council or neighbourhood forum will be able to ask the communities secretary to intervene in the decision whether to hold a referendum on a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order, in certain circumstances. A neighbourhood planning forum will also be able to ask the relevant local planning authority to notify it of planning applications in its area.

Current issues

CPRE Kent success

A planning inspector has dismissed an appeal by a developer wanting to build 67 homes on the former Norton Ash Garden Centre near Faversham. CPRE Kent had objected to the plans because the site is unsustainable with no community facilities, and would be completely car-dependent. The inspector agreed that “it amounts to the creation of a suburban housing estate in a rural location with few facilities”. He said “the proposal is not in a sustainable location and does not represent development in the right place”.

The inspector also agreed that the development is in fundamental conflict with Swale’s development plan because the site is within countryside outside of any settlement. CPRE Planner Jillian Barr said: “We were pleased that the inspector took notice of Swale’s emerging local plan and attached weight to its settlement strategy. We hope the council will take this decision into account when considering other speculative development proposals.”

The branch is now fighting proposals for a ‘garden town’ of 10,000 homes in Shepway, Otterpool Park. Their letter to the Communities Secretary questioned the wisdom of the development when existing pressures already mean the area is categorised by the Environment Agency as being under ‘severe water stress’. Campaigners are also objecting to two phone masts, both over 300m high, near the Wantsum Channel, the setting of the historic Richborough Fort. Due to the flat, open nature of the landscape, the proposed masts would represent a substantial and unpleasant feature, ruining views to and from Richborough Castle across this beautiful and distinctive area.

Find out more about CPRE Kent’s latest campaigns at <http://cprekent.org.uk/>

Progress towards our 2026 Vision

CPRE’s Vision for the Countryside in 2026 contains 62 statements covering topics as diverse as green belts and green energy to farming and beautiful landscapes. It encompasses the full range of subjects which CPRE actively campaigns on, as well as those which, whilst essential for the fulfilment of CPRE’s overall aims, are carried out by other organisations.

As part of the process that is currently being undertaken to develop the next CPRE Strategic Plan 2017-2019, an assessment was undertaken of the progress that has been made towards this Vision since it was first published in 2009. This analysis has allowed CPRE to take stock of national successes and those across our branches and districts, as well as identifying those areas which may need to be the focus of our efforts in the future. Of the 14 indicators, 3 illustrated progress in the last 6 years; 6 have seen little or highly variable change; and 5 have taken us further away from achieving the Vision.

The great campaigns

More of England’s landscapes are protected for more reasons. The extension to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks was announced in 2015 and means that these beautiful landscapes are better protected. In addition, CPRE’s maps of dark skies have been used as evidence for three areas of England (the Northumberland, Exmoor and South Downs National Parks) that have received Dark Sky status, enabling their Management Authorities to push for better lighting strategies to ensure the longevity of England’s properly dark skies.

CPRE’s Stop the Drop campaign has led to the development of over 840 Litter Action Groups showing that there is less ‘tolerance’ for litter. There has also been a 6% drop in the number of sites suffering from unacceptable levels of litter in the Local Environmental Quality Surveys of England (LEQSE). The 5p plastic bag charge has been widely supported.

Research commissioned by CPRE into local food webs has highlighted the scale and importance of local food to the national economy. There has also been an increase in pride in local food, illustrated by the rise of the gastropub and certification schemes for local produce.

The creation of a better planning system – one that protects the countryside and enables local communities and local decision makers a say in local development – is a major element of CPRE’s campaigning. CPRE has had some successes across a range

“CPRE has played a key role in equipping local communities with the tools required to create their own neighbourhood plans”

Friends of the Lake District



CPRE’s former President, Sir Andrew Motion, joined local campaigners to make the case for National Parks extensions – an indicator of progress towards our Vision

of issues, including obtaining (mostly rhetorical) support for the Green Belt across political parties; gaining traction (and Government funding) for the idea of 'brownfield first' and the commitment to a brownfield register; and CPRE and its branches have played a key role in equipping local communities with the tools required to create their own neighbourhood plans, following the Localism Act 2011.

"The presumption in favour of sustainable development is giving the green light to developers, leading to continued loss of Green Belt land"

After much branch-led campaigning to prevent energy developments where the benefit of renewable energy did not outweigh landscape and community impacts, CPRE also welcomed the change in government policy to ensure that onshore wind energy developments must be backed by local communities, and give more weight to cumulative visual impact.

The frustrations and defeats

One of the key frustrations of the quantitative analysis was the lack of a regularly updated data set across some important issues (see the 'Step by step' guide on page 8 to help avoid this). The most recent information on hedgerows and soils, for example is almost 10 years old. This means that whilst qualitative opinion on these elements suggest that the length of hedgerows is declining and the quality of our soils is worsening, it is difficult to assess the real situation – in the context of positive stories from branches promoting hedge-laying schemes,

Malvern Gazette



Neighbourhood Planning brought communities together and has real potential – but has local democracy increased overall?

and the 18% increase in the number of hedgerows protected by the Hedgerows Regulations between 1998 and 2010.

It is clear that attitudes towards 'sustainable development' and the environment have also not developed in the way that CPRE would have hoped for. Economic precedents reign supreme; for example, the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development is giving the green light to developers, leading to continued loss of Green Belt land and open countryside, with ever-increasing housing targets. At the same time, the proportion of new homes being built on brownfield land has decreased over the past 6 years, suggesting our Vision that "successful urban regeneration...has been crucial in protecting the countryside" is even further from being the case than before.

In addition, despite the rise of Neighbourhood Planning, the devolution of decision making is not being carried out in a democratic way. 10 million people are now involved in neighbourhood planning, but there is no mechanism for their effective involvement in devolution deals or the activity of Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Hope for the future

Neighbourhood planning is the best planning innovation for many years; if the system

is strengthened to give neighbourhood plans adequate weight against speculative development, it can be considered a great democratic gain. But in the absence of real progress towards our Vision of a country where quality of life is valued as highly as economic growth, could an economic valuation of nature and the environment – through natural capital – enable us to more effectively protect the landscapes that are valued by local communities?

The Natural Capital Committee was established after our Vision was published, to advise the Government on the use of the country's natural assets, including the countryside. As Shaun Spiers notes in his narrative to the Vision Assessment: "If we were writing the Vision today we would use the frame of natural capital, setting out the wide range of benefits that a healthy natural environment brings. In particular, we would draw out the fact that improving access to a Green Belt richer in nature is essential to meeting the nation's aspirations for natural capital." And Shaun's conclusion still holds true: "It is an attractive vision. It is worth fighting for. But we need major changes in policy, thinking and feeling if we are to achieve it."

Find out more: Read our full *Assessment of Progress against the CPRE 2026 Vision* at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/news>

Current issues

Devolution in England

Lillian Burns, Vice Chair of CPRE North West, has written a discussion paper giving an insight into the impact of devolution on CPRE's work. Assessing the government's fast moving and far reaching devolution of powers agenda in England, the paper queries whether the end result is likely to be a neatly assembled jigsaw made up of empowered communities forging their own future or a scene that communities struggle to understand and can't influence. It is hoped this paper will stimulate thinking and discussion within Town and Parish Councils as well as within CPRE. Devolution is being pitched as bringing greater spending powers and control over decision-making to a more local level, but the paper asks what the setting up of non-elected Combined Authorities will mean to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which interact with government at different levels, to the first tier of local government (Local Councils) or to the average citizen?

To date 'devolution', from a Parish Council perspective, has largely meant being 'invited' to take over services, buildings and responsibilities from principal authorities that neither local government level are statutorily obliged to support. Despite many smaller Parish Councils feeling insufficiently-resourced to take on these burdens, most have been doing so for fear of losing the services or buildings or pieces of land from community use. The paper sets out what has happened thus far, looks at the 'devolution deals' to date, assembles opinions from a number of commentators, attempts to make an assessment of what the outcomes and implications might be, and recommends what moves NGOs and Town and Parish Councils might consider making.

Find out more: Download *Devolution: A CPRE discussion paper* from <http://www.cpre.org.uk/news>

MATTER of fact

Support for your case

Public Transport Oriented Development

Making the Link, the sixth in the Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE) Housing Foresight series, shows how effective coordination between transport and development can improve access to, and take up of, public transport by building high density housing close to public transport hubs. This joined-up approach also fosters compact communities with a range of amenities on one site which are accessible on foot, resulting in vibrant communities with opportunities to provide green spaces that can improve the quality of life.

By siting homes and other amenities around public transport hubs, there is less need for cars and for development land. This combined approach is known technically as transit oriented development (TOD), a term coined in the United States. The concept, while not new, is currently attracting renewed interest in England. In particular, the December 2015 consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) discussed 'increasing residential density around commuter hubs'. Making the Link aims to contribute emerging planning policy and provide some initial recommendations for planning authorities embarking on Public Transport Oriented Development (PTOD) - a new term introduced in the paper.

Environmental benefits

PTOD can make communities more attractive places in which to live. Better design, green spaces, less traffic and less noise all add

up to a better quality of life.

DEFRA research estimates the social cost of road noise as between £7 billion and £10 billion a year. Another inherent benefit is the potential for reducing carbon and other emissions, such as particulates, through increased use of public transport and reduction in car traffic. PTOD encourages sustainable living through prioritising walking and cycling within higher density, mixed use neighbourhoods, where a range of facilities are available, providing opportunities for employment, health and leisure.

Aspects of green urbanism and high-density development can be brought together around public transport hubs, as Cervero and Sullivan outlined in their research into the relationship between green urbanism and TOD. Hammarby Sjöstad in Sweden was one of three cities that came as close to matching the ideal of a 'green TOD' as possible. The assessment of the city included evaluation of an environmental impact profile, commissioned by the City of Stockholm. This found that in 2002, when Hammarby Sjöstad was approximately half-built, it had already achieved a 32%-39% reduction in overall emissions and pollution, a 28%-42% reduction in non-renewable energy use and a 33%-38% reduction in ground-level ozone compared with similar communities.

Economic and social benefits

Buchanan, in a study of the economic impact of high-density development and tall buildings in central business districts, refers to quantified evidence that that a doubling of employment density

within a given area can lead to a 12.5% increase in output per worker. Connectivity naturally fosters economic growth: a key economic benefit of high density development around transport hubs is a reduction in overall congestion. At the present rate of increase, congestion will cost the UK economy an estimated £307 billion between 2013 and 2030. Development around public transport hubs also generates business, investment and employment, all of which contribute to economic growth.

Existing transport infrastructure could be also used more efficiently or disused rail lines reopened. CPRE-commissioned research examined the case for reopening a second main rail line in Devon and Cornwall. The results showed that bringing the line back into use would deliver significant benefits to Okehampton and Tavistock, as well as the surrounding rural area. Rural areas could be reinvigorated by reopening the line, helping local businesses, including tourism, and housing development would be encouraged, resulting in affordable accommodation for young people who need better transport connections to the local employment hubs of Plymouth and Exeter. PTOD must have frequent public transport infrastructure in place to support development. In smaller towns and cities, there may be scope to open disused rail lines to encourage PTOD.

Making the link recommends that guidance should be provided to help authorities to develop an Access to Opportunities and Services (ATOS) approach - measuring

“Development around public transport hubs generates business, investment and employment, and promotes urban regeneration”

access to essential services through public transport and/or walking - in order to facilitate PTOD. This method should also aim to increase public participation in the planning process through open data maps that could be modelled on five, 10 and 20 year projections for development scenarios. This would allow the public to engage with local development plans more fully, as well as helping to embed a cultural shift towards PTOD.

This form of planning should be made easier by the Bus Services Bill, which will require private transport operators to publish data on routes, fares, timetables and delays. Open data maps available to the public could also be used to assess the potential levels of new developments' connectivity to transport infrastructure and wider using walking or cycling modes only, as TfL has done, using ATOS to produce online maps showing active travel accessibility.

Find out more: Read the full report at www.cpre.org.uk/resources