

Fieldwork



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

HELPING YOU TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE COUNTRYSIDE

September 2008

Renewable energy: transforming the countryside?

New crops and many more wind turbines may well be coming to the countryside. The Government's renewable energy strategy could have a dramatic impact on the future appearance of the landscape. CPRE is urging readers to get involved in the consultation, which closes on 26 September 2008.

The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform published the *UK Renewable Energy Strategy* consultation paper on 26 June 2008. The Government wants a policy that will help the UK move towards a low-carbon-energy future. One of the motivations for this move is the European Union target of meeting 20% of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2020. All the EU member states are committed to this binding target.

The UK's proposed share would be to generate 15% of its energy from renewable sources by that date. Given that the current share of renewables in the UK energy mix is around 2%, this is extremely ambitious. Much of the consultation deals with how to achieve the target within the required timescale.

Increasing renewables

The Government is already putting in place mechanisms to deliver more renewable energy, through the current Energy and Planning Bills. However, it

Derry Robinson



The Government's renewable energy strategy could have a dramatic impact on the future appearance of the landscape

believes it must do even more. For instance, energy companies already have an obligation to produce a certain amount of their energy from renewable sources every year (9.1% for 2008/09). The new consultation paper proposes extending this renewables obligation to encourage up to 30–35% of our electricity to come from renewable resources by 2020.

The paper proposes new financial incentives to encourage

a very large increase in renewable heating, and more effective grants for small-scale heat and electricity technologies in homes and other buildings. To make sure that things happen on the ground, it suggests that a clear deployment strategy could be created at regional level – similar to the approach established for housing. As for the electricity grid, there could be incentives for new infrastructure and for

removing barriers that hamper renewable energy being added to the grid.

The consultation paper looks at the possibility of exploiting the full potential of energy from waste, by discouraging the landfilling of biomass. The proposals mean that all biofuels could be required to meet strict sustainability criteria, in order to limit adverse impacts

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Fieldwork

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Editor

Laura Jansen
(fieldwork@cpre.org.uk)

Contributors

Michael Blank, Jo Cleary, Gerald Kells, Emma Marrington, Paul Miner, Richard Moseley, Marina Pacheco, Rosamund Macfarlane, Joyce Noon, Thea Platt, Ralph Smyth, Gill Stride, Graeme Willis

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CPRE promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. We have 60,000 supporters, a branch in every county, nine regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in central London, making CPRE a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning.

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Campaign to Protect
Rural England

CPRE
128 Southwark Street
London, SE1 0SW
Tel: 020 7981 2800
Fax: 020 7981 2899
info@cpre.org.uk
www.cpre.org.uk

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Renewable energy

Continued from p.1

such as rising food prices. Also proposed is effective support for the development of new renewable technologies, particularly where the UK has the potential to be a market leader. Focusing on potential benefits for UK business and jobs, a clear long-term policy framework could be established, working with Regional Development Agencies to tackle key blockages, support specific technologies and address skills shortages.

Countryside threatened

Clearly, action to tackle climate change is of huge importance and CPRE, as a member of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, supports such action. However, other environmental interests must also be safeguarded, and countryside protection does not figure strongly in



It is comparable to the challenge we faced when the National Grid was set up



Make a difference

Send CPRE information for our consultation response. If you are a branch or regional group, please tell us where it might be possible to achieve landscape gains, such as minimising the impact of new transmission lines by putting them underground. Contact Marina Pacheco at marinap@cpre.org.uk or CPRE, 128 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SW.

Complete your own consultation response. Visit www.berr.gov.uk/consultations; click on 'open consultations' on the left hand side. Request a hard copy from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform publication orderline: 0845 015 0010.

Attend the strategy seminar on 3 September at CPRE national office. Contact Judith Rosten at CPRE: judithr@cpre.org.uk, 020 7981 2836.



The Government aims to roll out a programme of renewable energy infrastructure across the UK at an unprecedented rate



the Government's plans. The consultation is being carried out by the Government department responsible for business and trade. So it is unsurprising that the 50 questions in the consultation paper focus primarily on identifying blockages and problems, and devising incentives and solutions, for renewable energy production across the board (covering electricity, heat and transport). Worryingly, the paper makes frequent reference to the planning system acting as a block on the roll-out of renewable energy schemes, and how that can be overcome.

The Government is clearly in a hurry to deliver new energy capacity to meet its two key energy policy challenges – climate change and security of energy supply. To meet these challenges it wants to see a diverse low-carbon energy mix including renewables, nuclear power, and carbon capture and storage. It sees renewable sources of energy as a vital part of this strategy and therefore aims to roll out a programme of renewable energy infrastructure across the UK at

an unprecedented rate. Some have predicted, for example, a six-fold increase in onshore wind power for the UK.

Challenge ahead

This development of renewable energy infrastructure will have far-reaching impacts on the landscape of England, and we need to get it right. For CPRE, it is comparable to the challenge we faced when the National Grid was set up, or the national road network.

We must present the Government with a coherent and compelling set of solutions that will minimise adverse impacts from development, channel investment into the least harmful forms of renewable energy, and pay more attention to reducing energy consumption. In our press reaction on the launch of the strategy we stated that we must not sacrifice the landscape to protect the environment: and more, we must actively work to come up with solutions that will help to protect what we find most valuable.

When responding to Government consultations you don't have to be restrained by the questions they ask. Address other issues you don't feel the questions cover. As well as landscape impacts, CPRE also intends to cover suggestions on how the planning system can be strengthened and used appropriately in determining the location and design of renewable energy infrastructure and encouraging a focus on reducing overall energy use.

It is vital that we get involved in this consultation and that our voices are heard. We are the only ones speaking for the beauty of the countryside: if we don't make the case for maintaining its tranquillity, nobody else will. ■

breakthrough

How our work is making a difference

Village green status secured

Thirteen years of campaigning have finally paid off for CPRE Stockport and local residents. Thanks to them, an important piece of land has been registered as a village green.

It all started in 1995 when CPRE Stockport learned that a valuable piece of open space in Hazel Grove was threatened by a superstore development. Outline planning permission for a retail store on the land was granted on appeal in 1994. Although the landowner, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, was at that stage unwilling to sell the land to Tesco, CPRE Stockport and local residents felt that the best way to protect the land in the long term was to register it as a village green.

The group was aware that a piece of open space can be registered as a village green if local residents have used it continuously for more than 20

years after 1970. This was certainly the case at Hazel Grove. It had been used for all manner of community activities from dog-walking, sledging and kite-flying to Scouting and Guiding activities.

So CPRE and local residents set about collecting evidence of usage. They sought advice from the Open Spaces Society, enlisted the services of an Environmental Law Foundation solicitor, and set up a fighting fund, which received generous donations from local people and CPRE Cheshire.

Fifty evidence of usage forms were gathered, along with numerous photos showing the site in use, to back up an application for village green status. However, the council turned it down, arguing that the evidence forms were not representative of Hazel Grove as a whole.

Fortunately, the law changed with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This allowed applications to be made for smaller neighbourhoods. So the campaigners repeated the process and submitted a second application in 2003. After a long wait, earlier this year they finally heard the news they'd been waiting for. The land is now protected and safe from applications from Tesco or anyone else.

Find out more: The Open Spaces Society can help you register a piece of land as a 'new' green, although you need to become a member first. They can also help if a public path has been blocked, or there has been an encroachment on common land. You can contact them on 01491 573 535 or visit www.oss.org.uk to find out more information.

Mobile homes site saved

Frank Thomas, a volunteer at CPRE Nottinghamshire, recently had a success saving a mobile homes site from redevelopment.

The mobile homes had been on the site, in a rural part of the county, for 40–50 years. Around four or five years ago the site owner applied for planning permission to redevelop half the site for executive homes, which would have meant at least half the residents being thrown off the site.

At the same time, strange things started to happen. People were thrown out of rented vans. Others were moved around the site for no

reason. One home was burnt to the ground while the owner was on holiday.

Frank got involved in starting up a local campaign against the plans. The campaigners lobbied all the councillors. The council refused planning permission, and the Planning Inspectorate threw out the case on appeal.

Mobile homes provide a very economical way of living at a fairly high density. However, tenure of mobile homes is questionable at times, so site owners sometimes take advantage of this. Around the country there also seems to be a push to regrade these sites as

brownfield land to pave the way for building houses and turning out new estates. Residents have the right to challenge being moved, but this hardly ever happens.

However, things seem to be moving in the right direction. Other campaigners around the country have heard about this success in Nottinghamshire and have contacted Frank asking if he can help with their campaigns. Frank has met with parliamentarians and is pushing for councillors to receive updated information, as part of his continuing campaign to protect mobile home sites.

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Regional Plan threatens Yorkshire Green Belt

The Yorkshire and Humber Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy) sets out plans to accommodate the half a million new homes the Government has announced for the region within the next 20 years. Despite the threats this poses, CPRE Yorkshire and Humber has found some things to welcome in the plan.

The document provides for over 22,000 new homes in the region each year – almost twice the number originally proposed by the Regional Assembly in the draft plan. The scale and pace of development will have huge implications for the region's countryside and quality of life. The Government admits that the extent of Yorkshire's Green Belt may need to be reviewed to accommodate it.

The plan is not all bad news. CPRE Yorkshire and Humber is encouraged by the influence it has had by engaging with the progress of the plan from the start. The reinstated target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 25% is particularly welcome, as are new targets for energy efficiency, greater prominence for the environmental policies and a new commitment to avoid further damage to the region's environment.

CPRE Yorkshire and Humber is producing a guide to help its branches and district groups use the plan in their campaigning on Local Development Frameworks, which will have to conform with the plan. CPRE is also taking an active role in the update of the plan, which is already under way and will have to take on board even higher levels of growth.

To view *The Yorkshire and Humber Plan* visit www.goyh.gov.uk. Click on 'planning' then 'regional planning'.

newsroundup

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

Rural accessibility needs improving

Vulnerable people in the countryside are getting a raw deal when it comes to access to jobs and critical services such as hospitals, shops and post offices. So says Cause for Concern, CPRE West Midlands' new report on public transport in the region's counties.

The report identifies some examples of good practice. But local transport plans have set unambitious targets for bus and rail growth. So there is not much hope of improvement for the most socially excluded families who do not have a car, or for people in car-owning families who do not have access to the family car much of the time.

The position could become even worse. The Government's high housing targets are very likely to make it harder to resist

new development in the countryside, which is rarely able to support the introduction of a regular bus service. At the same time rising petrol prices will disproportionately hit the rural poor.

The report argues that to reduce rural traffic problems coherent comprehensive solutions are required and current good practice needs to be applied more consistently over a wider area. It suggests that scheduled bus services may not be the right solution for every community, especially the most isolated. It calls on councils to support a mixture of new bus services, demand-responsive transport and community transport. It recommends that where a conventional bus service is unfeasible, it should be replaced by a demand-responsive or

community transport service. As far as possible community transport provision should be consistent across the region, without unnecessary restrictions on use.

If community transport cannot link directly to a market town or other centre it should be integrated with conventional transport at a railway station or bus interchange. In some areas provision depends on local initiatives: these initiatives should be actively encouraged, with advice and expertise on practical and legal matters readily available. There should be more publicity about community transport generally and better local information about particular services.

Grab a copy: Contact Gerald Kells, West Midlands Regional Policy Officer: gerald.kells@talk21.com, 01922 636601.

Consultation now under way on town centres

The Government is consulting on proposals to revise planning policy for town centres. The changes could affect the way towns, town centres and shopping develop for years to come.

The Government has presented the proposals as giving stronger powers to planners to protect the individuality and diversity of high streets and to prevent large out-of-town developments that threaten high streets and small independent shops. However, the opposite appears to be the likely effect, because the need test, which gives local authorities

the power to resist large supermarket developments not in their development plan, will disappear.

Removing the need test seems an odd way to help local planners protect the character and special qualities of town centres and the local stores that contribute so much. The test assesses future demand for retail floor space. Since the late 1990s it has helped reverse the growth of out-of-town shopping: the proportion of new retail floor space which is in, or on the edge of, town centres has gone up from a low of 25% in 1994 to around 40% in 2005.

The changes could lead to yet more large stores on the edge of town centres or even out of town, which would favour big supermarkets and discounters like Aldi and Lidl. A new impact test is proposed to prevent any such developments harming the town centre, but it is untried and untested. In trying to refuse a development, it may prove much harder for planners to demonstrate harm than to show there are enough shops already.

Take action: Respond to the consultation. For a copy, visit www.communities.gov.uk, and click on 'consultations'. The deadline is 3 October 2008.

dates of note

Find out about hedges

Hedgerows make a valuable contribution to our landscape and it's important they are protected for the future. A new film, website and leaflets will help people do just that.

The film, *A Cut Above the Rest*, looks at the life cycle of a hedge, explores the many different types of hedge that occur, and advises how to manage a hedgerow and the trees within it. Created by CPRE, Natural England, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Tree Council, the RSPB and the National Hedgelaying Society, the film is aimed at landowners, farmers and the general public.

Alongside the film, a new website acts as a one-stop-

shop for all sorts of information about hedgerows. You can read about why hedgerows are so valuable and bone up on the flora and fauna you may find in a hedge. The site also contains information on hedgerow legislation and funding opportunities; an extensive photo library; links to biodiversity action plans, research and surveys, local groups, training and events; and a forum where you can share information about hedgerows.

A number of useful question and answer leaflets about hedges are now available from Natural England. They cover hedge cutting (code NE36), hedgerow trees (code NE69) and hedgerow planting (code NE70).

Find out more: To see the film visit www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns, select the 'landscape' link on the left hand side, then 'hedgerows'. Click on the 'hedge management video' on the right. A free copy of the film is available on DVD: call Natural England's enquiry service on: 0845 600 3078.

The hedgelink website can be accessed at www.hedgelink.org.uk.

Natural England's hedge leaflets can be found on its website www.naturalengland.org.uk. Select 'publications, data and forms' on the left, then the 'publications catalogue' link, and type in the relevant leaflet code to the search box. You can also order free hard copies from Natural England Publications: 0800 694 0505.

England's heritage sites deemed to be at risk

One in every 12 of 70,000 recently assessed protected heritage sites is at high risk of neglect, decay or inappropriate change. This was the stark message of English Heritage's Heritage at Risk register, published in July.

The results show that at high risk are 1 in 5 scheduled monuments; 1 in 5 registered battlefields; 1 in 5 protected wreck sites; 1 in 14 registered parks, gardens and landscapes; 1 in 30 Grade I and II* buildings; and 1 in 40 Grade II buildings in London.

Heritage at Risk is a new project that extends English Heritage's work on the Buildings

at Risk register. Over the next few years, conservation areas, listed places of worship and all Grade II buildings will be added to the register, to make England the first country in the world to have a comprehensive picture of every bit of its protected heritage at risk, and the analysis that can be used to protect it.

Heritage at Risk will be used to help experts prioritise action to deal with the most urgent cases. English Heritage will be able to identify what types of heritage are vulnerable to what types of threat, recommend local solutions, and encourage local authorities to use the register to prioritise their resources. It will help fund councils to

serve more Repairs and Urgent Works Notices. Local authorities can also, for example, help to protect registered battlefields, which have no formal protection, by declaring them a conservation area, and can make sure that the historic parks and listed buildings at risk in their own care are restored to glory.

English Heritage also wants people to help spot what is going on in their area, let them know, talk to their local authority's conservation officer and find out if and how they can get involved.

Further information can be found at www.english-heritage.org.uk.

Green buildings in Norfolk: open days 2008

Guided tours at private eco-homes, zero carbon developments, energy efficient social housing and environment centres in Norfolk. To book, call 01733 566910.

11-14 September, Norfolk

Inspirational Landscapes, Aspirational Communities

Association of National Park Authorities' conference. Speakers include Environment Secretary Hilary Benn and Poet Laureate Andrew Motion. Includes visits to exemplars of community and business initiative and the opportunity to meet people involved and interested in the people end of National Parks. See www.anpacconference.com, or call 024 7663 5530.

17-19 September, Lake Windermere

Deadline: UK Renewable Energy Strategy consultation

Have your say on the future appearance of the countryside. Visit www.berr.gov.uk/consultations and click on 'open consultations' on the left hand side. Request a hard copy from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform publication orderline: 0845 015 0010.

26 September

CPRE's Sharing Success conference

A day of sharing great ideas and stimulating workshops by and for CPRE people. Contact your CPRE branch for details. (Open to people from CPRE district, county and regional groups.)

1 November, Centre Point, London

current issues

Share autumn recipes to celebrate hedge cuisine

Environmental charity The Tree Council is collecting recipes that use the wild food from hedgerows.

Hedgerows, and the trees that grow in them, are a good source of fresh wild food, from blackberries and crab apples to rosehips and hazelnuts. The Tree Council is gathering recipes which it can publish to highlight this important resource. It is keen to hear from anyone who would like to share a tried and tested recipe with others. As well as recipes for the fruits and seeds that can be gathered in autumn, it would also like to receive ideas for using elderflowers or dandelion leaves, for example, which can be harvested at other times of the year.

The Tree Council is particularly interested to hear about regional variations. For example, is sloe gin made the same way in Cornwall and Cumbria?

If you are planning to collect ingredients from hedgerows don't forget that fruit is the property of the landowner, whichever side of the hedge it's on, so do ask permission first. One other thing to bear in mind is that it is illegal to uproot any wild plants.

Send recipes, with your name and contact details, to Hedge Cuisine, The Tree Council, 71 Newcomen Street, London SE1 1YT, or email hedgetrees@treecouncil.org.uk.

Tell us a story

We are always interested in hearing from our readers. If you have a suggestion for an article, please contact Laura Jansen, *Fieldwork* editor.

letter from the field

Words from local campaigners



Joyce Noon, Chairman of CPRE Charnwood and a planning campaigner for CPRE Leicestershire, is concerned about the ramifications of e-planning

Dear reader,

CPRE Charnwood had a fairly good relationship with our borough council's planning department. That is until we were told, in 2006, that the weekly planning list would cease to be mailed out to us and paper plans would no longer be available in future as the department was adopting e-planning.

This has seriously affected our ability to consider planning applications at our monthly meetings, since they have to be downloaded as documents and printed off at A4 size. At this size we often have to use a magnifying glass to look at details. The important and larger planning applications that are of interest to CPRE amount, more often than not, to anything in excess of 180 listed documents. For most of these, the only way to tell whether we need to look at them is by opening up the files, wasting valuable time. Although we can access the plans on the web we are refusing to comment online and, like many others, we continue to forward our observations in letter form.

In our view this system disenfranchises not only CPRE but other local groups and non-

governmental organisations. It is time-consuming for volunteers to trawl through planning application lists, which are now not even in village A-Z format. In the past most planning officers were well briefed on CPRE interests; they would automatically alert us when something came up and post out the consultation letter and appropriate plans. It is rare now for us to be contacted even when we have sent officers details of planning types CPRE would be interested in.

All these problems seem to have been brought about by the Government financially rewarding planning authorities that adopt e-planning. These methods may work for someone to view a plan for a neighbour's extension by going to an office and being shown the plans on screen. However, for unpaid volunteers it means they have to work even harder, and incur the additional expense of internet access and printing, not to mention the time consumed by these activities.

Charnwood Borough Council is now funding IT equipment for all parish councils in its district, following concern by councillors

and clerks that the system is unmanageable. Other groups which are not considered statutory consultees have made complaints at the (ir)regular development control forum meetings. However, this has failed to produce any solutions. CPRE Charnwood is considering withdrawing from this sham exercise (presumably intended to show that Charnwood is consulting with its so-called stakeholders).

We are not averse to better access for the general public. Sadly, e-planning isn't working for those who give up valuable time to try to work with it. Is it OK to transfer the costs to consultees in order to gain additional grants from the Government? We think not. In our view there has to be some compromise to avoid the total collapse of democracy in planning.

We would be interested to hear of similar problems being experienced by CPRE volunteers and more particularly if your local council has retained a paper planning system for stakeholders. You can contact me at joyce_cppe@yahoo.co.uk, 01509 414519.

goodideas

Learning from each other

Celebrating local tranquillity

CPRE Nottinghamshire was left a small legacy and the branch decided to put it to good use in the creation of a path that would celebrate the tranquillity of the Nottinghamshire countryside. Plans are now in train to bring the idea to fruition.

The group searched for a circular walk in the Nottinghamshire countryside that would fit its criteria. Ideally between three and six miles in length, it needed to be largely out of earshot of aircraft and traffic noise, although quiet roads could be crossed en route. The branch also wanted to make sure it incorporated tranquil sounds such as bird song and the rustle of leaves or running water.

The walk it chose incorporates beautiful views of rolling arable land. Bespoke CPRE waymarkers have been designed especially to mark out the route. Explanatory, durable A4 posters will be hung at the start of the walk. These will give information about CPRE as well as providing a map of the route (for which permission has to be obtained from Ordnance Survey). The walk will be advertised on as many appropriate websites as possible. A promotional leaflet which details the route, outlines the importance of tranquillity in our lives and gives CPRE contact information will be widely distributed.

The main expenditure on this project will be the siting of a bench somewhere along the

walk with a good view. This will need the landowner's permission. A plaque on the bench will identify the donor as CPRE and have a short quotation about tranquillity engraved on it.

CPRE Nottinghamshire is planning an opening ceremony to which the local media will be invited.

Everyone the branch has approached has greeted the idea with enthusiasm. The project should not only benefit walkers, but also raise the profile of CPRE among people who appreciate the countryside, thus achieving an increased membership for the branch. There are hopes that this will be the first of several such walks in the county.

Fun day gives positive message about CPRE

CPRE Hampshire's recent countryside day was a resounding success. The idea behind the event was to help change people's perception of CPRE. The branch was keen for Hampshire residents to see CPRE in a more positive light as well as doing something fun that would engage younger people.

The branch organised the day over the course of about six months, with some help from students from Winchester University. Helpfully, the branch was able to apply for a grant from the Big Lottery Fund as a contribution towards covering the costs. The family event was arranged for a Sunday in

mid-May and held at a local country park. Representatives from organisations such as the Environment Agency, the RSPB and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust were invited to pitch up stalls.

A whole range of interesting activities were lined up: orienteering, Nordic walking, laser clay pigeon shooting, hawk displays and a 'beat the goalie' football game. The Environment Agency offered fly-fishing tutorials, and the RSPB brought along owl pellets for children to dissect. A local hog-roast and stall selling local Hampshire ice-creams were laid on. To make it easier for people to travel there, CPRE offered free bus trips

from Portsmouth city centre to the event.

CPRE Hampshire's pitch included trash fashion, where children made hats out of rubbish, a 'guess how many cans in the bale' game, seed planting and a quiz. By encouraging children to play at their stand, members found it much easier to chat to the parents about the work that the branch does.

Photos of children having fun helped sell the message to the media, and there was excellent coverage of the event in the local press.

Next year, the branch is hoping to plan a similar event for a different part of the county and attract even more people.

current issues

Using canals for freight

The Department for Transport has published a report and supporting set of maps highlighting the key inland waterways suitable for freight transport.

The documents, called *The Key Inland Waterways for Freight*, highlight those areas where the UK's existing network of inland waterways has the greatest potential for freight services and can fit with the needs of modern freight businesses. The Department hopes this will allow potential users to focus more easily on existing possibilities for water freight. The waterways that have been highlighted are either suitable in their current condition or could be used with minor infrastructure improvements.

Inland waterways already play a significant role in the movement of construction materials, agricultural products, waste and liquid bulks. The Government would like to see the use of waterways increased in order to reduce the environmental impact of moving goods. The aim is to promote the use of our waterways for freight transport where they provide a viable alternative to road freight. The report shows that the areas of greatest potential are the larger waterways and river navigations linked to major estuaries.

For further information visit www.dft.gov.uk. Search for 'inland waterways with freight potential'.

Planning help

If you need some help with understanding the planning system, or want a reliable source of planning information, log on to CPRE's planning help website: www.planninghelp.org.uk.

Dealing with lawyers and lay advocates

While lawyers may be helpful, you do not have to have one. If your local authority is not presenting the same legal or technical case that you support, you may want to seek advice from a planning lawyer or another expert when you are preparing your case. Contact the local authority lawyer first to assess the approach they are taking.

Establish how much it will cost to get experts involved. Organisations that provide low-cost legal and planning advice, such as the Environmental Law Foundation or Planning Aid, may be able to help. You can also choose to nominate one of your own group to act as a lay advocate.

Do not be intimidated if a lawyer representing another party is aggressive. If you are having trouble explaining your case, ask the inspector for assistance. If a lawyer confuses you, refer them to your answers in your proof of evidence or ask them to repeat the question. Generally speaking, the tougher the cross-examination you are facing, the more seriously you are being taken, so make sure you keep your nerve.

If you are using a lay advocate, or non-professional, to present your case, here is some advice for them to follow. They should ensure they are clear about the procedure; familiarise themselves with the material; call witnesses in an order that helps to make sense of your arguments; plan any supplementary questions, and deal with additional points that witnesses may want to add; wait until the inspector has finished before asking another question; prepare cross-examinations from other parties' proofs of evidence; and attend as much of the inquiry as possible.

stepbystep

Guide to good campaigning

How to present your case at a public inquiry

1 If a planning application is refused permission, or conditions are attached to the permission that restrict the development in some way, the applicant may decide to appeal.

The Planning Inspectorate can deal with an appeal in one of three ways: through written representations, with an informal hearing, or by ordering a public inquiry. In each case, an inspector is appointed to preside over the appeal and take the final decision. In exceptional circumstances, the decision is referred to the Secretary of State.

If a public inquiry is held, anyone who wants their opinion to be taken into account by the inspector has the right to present their case there. There are steps you can take to ensure you put your case as well as possible.

1 Pre-inquiry procedure

Whenever an inquiry is called, the local authority must draw up a timetable of proceedings and distribute copies to all interested parties. If you have not been involved prior to this stage, contact your local planning department for the timetable.

As a witness, you must provide a document known as a proof of evidence, which will be sent to all other parties three weeks before the inquiry. Your proof of evidence is a written account of the case you want to put before the inspector at the inquiry.

2 Preparing your case

Prepare your proof of evidence carefully and you will be well equipped to make your case orally on the day.

In the three weeks before the inquiry, you will also have an opportunity to examine the 'statements of case' and proofs of evidence prepared by all the other inquiry participants. You can draw on this evidence to strengthen your own case and to prepare yourself to tackle opposing arguments. If for some reason you cannot appear at the inquiry, and no one else can appear for you, you may choose to submit written evidence only.

3 Writing your proof of evidence

Your proof of evidence is a written account of the argument you want to present at the inquiry. Set aside as much time as possible to prepare it. Make sure that your points are easy to read out loud and to follow, as you will need to take the inspector through the arguments. They should be set out in a way that leads the inspector to your preferred decision.

In planning appeals, each party pays for the cost of preparing and presenting its own case. Legal costs can only be awarded to or against third parties in exceptional circumstances. If you feel intimidated at any point in the proceedings by threats of costs being brought against you, bring this to the attention of the inspector.

4 Procedure at the inquiry

A public inquiry may take from days to months. It usually takes the following form. The inspector opens the inquiry by describing the appeal. They will note which members of the public wish to speak. The appellant's (planning applicant's) lawyer will open their client's case. The appellant's first witness will be called, usually to read the summary proof of evidence. Additional points may be raised from other witnesses' proofs of evidence. This process is called examination in chief. Other principal parties can then cross-examine the witness. The inspector may then ask questions. The appellant's lawyer can re-examine the witness on matters raised in the cross-examination.

This procedure is followed for each of the appellant's witnesses. The local authority then presents its evidence; and all other interested parties are invited to put forward their case. This may take the form of a short statement by an individual member of the public, or be a full case presented by a lawyer.

5 Your role

You may feel daunted at the prospect of appearing at an inquiry, especially if you've never done so before. The best thing you can do is to be as well prepared as possible. Checklists of all the documents and other props that you need can be very useful. It is your right to speak out and the inquiry is designed to help you do this.



CPRE and other campaigners outside the South Downs National Park pre-inquiry meeting in December 2007

If you represent a body of local opinion, choose the person who is most familiar with the case to present it. Remember that the inspector, as the person who makes the final decision, is the most important person at an inquiry. Be sensitive to their reaction to the proceedings and focus on persuading them. Be prepared to suggest alternative uses for the site. Don't save points for cross-examination – you may not get a chance to use them.

At some point during the proceedings, the inspector will ask all parties involved for a list of conditions they would want imposed on the planning application, if permission were granted. This does not necessarily mean permission will be granted. Have ready a clear, precise list of conditions you would like to see imposed.

All parties are given an opportunity to make a closing statement at the end of the inquiry. Use this to make as strong a case as possible: make a note of the points you may want to make as the

inquiry progresses. If necessary, ask for a 10–15-minute adjournment to prepare your speech. Do not repeat everything you said in your evidence. Deal with new points that have emerged in the course of the appeal. Highlight key points and add supplementary points that have emerged from other submissions. Summarise your case concisely.

6 Cross-examination

Cross-examination challenges evidence put forward by a witness to reduce its weight in the eyes of the inspector; and brings out helpful evidence from the witness for your own case.

Prepare model answers to questions that you think other parties might ask. Always stay calm and polite and answer questions as directly as possible. Your evidence is there in writing in your proof of evidence, so refer the lawyer to the answer if it is in the proof. If you feel there was something in the cross-examination you did

not make clear, ask the inspector for an opportunity to do so. Although you will be facing the person cross-examining, always direct the substance of your answers to the inspector. Keep your points focused on the planning merits of the case.

Do not try to cross-examine another party's witness without preparing. Make sure you prepare the questions you wish to ask based on their proofs of evidence and sort out the order in which you propose to ask them. Ensure you do not ask questions which have already been asked.

Pay attention to the questions asked by the inspector of all witnesses. This is one of the few pointers you will get about which issues the inspector is focusing on.

Find out more: Visit www.planninghelp.org.uk/action and click on 'How to stop or improve a bad development'. Also read Circular 05/00, available at www.planningportal.gov.uk: search for 'circular 05/00'.

Writing a good proof of evidence

Your proof of evidence should be clearly set out. This will help both you and the inspector to understand it. It needs to be clearly written and supported by appropriate evidence. Ensure it is comprehensive, but succinct. Don't leave things out just because you are reluctant to deal with them. If you introduce difficult issues at this stage, it will give you time to think about how best to present them at the inquiry. Make sure your proof of evidence is accurate – if you exaggerate your case, it will weaken it.

It may help if you structure your evidence. It is especially important at inquiries to establish your credentials for giving evidence on the topic in question. Therefore you should set out your particular qualifications, and involvement in local organisations, giving details of any organisation that you are representing. Describe the site and surrounding area. Although others may do this, it is important to put your case in context, in your own way. Describe the proposed development. Point out elements of particular concern. Draw attention, in the following order, to development plan policies, national planning guidance and other official documents that strengthen your case. Only quote from them sparingly, but explain their relevance to the appeal.

Use information about the history of the site that illustrates your case in relation to the development. Your proof should lead the inspector into the decision you want them to make. Use graphs, diagrams and statistics to simplify your case. Summarise. Supply any documents you have referred to in your evidence.

current issues

Revised guidance on local planning

In June 2008, the Government revised its guidance for the preparation of local plans and policies (*Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning*). This comes only four years after reforming the system and is a result of poor delivery on the ground. Only 8% of local planning authorities have achieved a sound core strategy, the first and most important local development plan document.

The widespread failure has also been of concern for CPRE, as we campaign strongly for a plan-led system. Local plans and policies are vital tools for protecting the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside. They provide a basis for decisions to be made in the light of local needs and circumstances and for securing consensus over the location, scale and nature of development. In particular, local plans address the impacts of development on landscape, employment, housing, infrastructure, water and biodiversity.

Plan-making arrangements have been simplified in the revised national guidance. But the amendments are focused on the national picture, and we are concerned that it may now prove more difficult to adopt robust local policies tailored to local circumstances. Without these it is difficult to see how plans can be effective and responsive at the local level. Making the case for local policies, supported by clear evidence, will be crucial.

CPRE has put together information on how you can use the guidance as a tool for protecting the countryside in your local area. Contact Judith Rosten at judithr@cpre.org.uk, 020 7981 2836.

parishbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

Update on the state of rural England

Parish councils may well be interested in the *State of the Countryside 2008* report. Published by the Commission for Rural Communities in July, it provides a comprehensive description of social, economic and environmental conditions and changes across rural England. It also highlights the main challenges and future trends for the Government and other organisations.

More people are choosing to live in rural communities and those who do live healthier lives. 'The population of rural England continues to rise at a faster rate than in the country as a whole. Most households moving into rural England are families with young children and

people aged from 44–64.'

This latest report from the Commission highlights a rise in households living in poverty in rural England and a growing inequality between remote rural areas and other parts of the countryside. Each year the Commission has found there are fewer outlets for many services and poorer accessibility to services for people without cars.

'Demand for new development is significantly higher (per household) in rural areas than urban areas ... Meeting affordable housing needs in rural areas remains a dominant challenge ... In 2007 the average rural house price was £257,600 compared with £212,823 in urban areas. Rural house prices are 6.8 times

annual household income, compared to 5.8 times in urban areas. In some more sparsely populated rural areas, however, house prices can be up to 9.7 times annual household income.'

The report uses CPRE's intrusion maps and finds that 'the character of large parts of England's countryside is changing as a result of built development ... Comparison of the levels of visual and noise intrusion since the 1960s shows that rural areas have become much busier with a three-fold increase in the "disturbed" areas in the most rural districts.'

You can see the report at www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk, or phone 0845 620 5595 for a copy.

Shady dealings on golf courses

You may have noticed in your parish that there is an increasing threat to the countryside from the growing number of planning applications for improved landscaping of existing golf courses.

One cause of this growth is waste disposal companies looking for ways to avoid paying landfill taxes when disposing of their inert waste from construction and demolition. By striking a deal with the owner of the golf course to take the waste in return for new investment in facilities, a fair outcome can be reached for both parties. But is this a fair outcome for the public interest that the planning system serves to protect?

It is clear that in two-tier authorities there can be a lack of communication between waste planning officers at the county level and the planners at district level who are dealing with the golf course application.

District planning officers should automatically be considering whether the development will cause undue harm to landscape character, whether the short-term disruption caused by heavy vehicular traffic on the network is acceptable, and whether it contravenes planning policy – policy protecting designated Green Belt land, for example. However, it is possible that planning officers may not question the source of the material for the landscaping

project before coming to their decision.

Waste planning and enforcement officers should be keen to find out how waste is being moved and disposed of in their area. It is likely that they would be strongly opposed to these planning applications. The landfill tax was designed to achieve a change in commercial behaviour to reduce the level of waste: this practice of tax avoidance removes the incentive for companies to change, and should be discouraged.

If you have concerns about a similar planning application in your parish it may help your case to seek advice and support from your local county council waste planning department before responding.

campaigner

Preserving the character of Cumbria's rural roads

The splendour of the hills and fells in the Lake District meant so much to Jo Cleary that she jumped at the chance to become a project officer protecting the character of the area's rural roads.

The post was advertised by Friends of the Lake District, which was setting up a rural roads character project in response to its 2005 report, *Rural Roads at Risk*. The report looked at the changing character of rural roads in Cumbria during recent decades. It highlighted problems like sign clutter and over-use of engineering techniques designed for heavily used inter-urban roads. It also showed how much better it would be to use local materials, restore traditional signposts and employ natural traffic calming – rather than signs and lines – to improve road safety.

Jo had been a sustainable transport planning consultant in the Midlands. After 15 years of interesting urban transport work for local authorities, central Government and others, Jo and her family decided it was time to move somewhere more rural.

Inspired by learning new skills

Jo sees unsympathetic development as a threat to sustainable transport and quiet enjoyment of the countryside – things she has a strong personal commitment to. She was keen to find more creative solutions to rural transport issues. She was also ready for a change. 'Branching out into a slightly different area of work', she says, 'helps you to stay interested in

Chris Stevens



Jo Cleary is keen to find creative solutions to rural transport issues

your professional life because you have to learn new skills and increase your knowledge.'

Jo has been working closely with Cumbria Highways to set up a highways and public realm working group so that organisations can work together to maintain rural road character. The group comprises representatives from Friends of the Lake District, Cumbria County Council and other interested organisations. It has focused on raising awareness and training people such as engineers and council staff who build and maintain the rural roads.

Cumbria Highways is appointing around 26 highway stewards, who will be responsible for minor maintenance on roads, covering the entire county between them. Jo will be involved in training them about how their work will impact on rural road character.

Agent for change

Jo was instrumental in Cumbria being selected by the Department for Transport to host a national demonstration project in good design for rural road improvements. Clifton village, south of Penrith, now features in the new best practice guidance, Local Transport Note 1/08 *Traffic Management and Streetscape*. The scheme's speed reduction features look good and fit in with their surroundings.

Jo continues to inspire parish councils and community groups to steer proposals that affect rural roads in the right direction. Instead of the urban 'signs and lines' approach, she argues for road design that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also promotes the idea that rural roads and village streets are spaces for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, as well as motor vehicles.

current issues

Taking a look at local area agreements

In 2005 local area agreements were initiated on a voluntary basis, as a management tool to integrate various disparate local area-based initiatives and to provide a more effective public service. The 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act gave local area agreements a more prominent function by putting them on a statutory footing. They are now the statutory vehicle for delivering the area's sustainable community strategy. A three-year programme for delivering these strategies was agreed between the Government and local delivery bodies in June 2008.

Compared with the earlier voluntary agreements, new statutory local area agreements should be prepared through a more robust, open and accountable process. The first requirement is the development of a sustainable community strategy, at county and unitary level, that will contain detailed aspirations which the local area agreement can transform into a programme of delivery.

Second is the translation of aspirations into targeted actions and priorities. The third requirement is that the draft local area agreement, once approved by the responsible local authority through full council, will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

When developing key actions and programmes of delivery, the local strategic partnership should include the views of those who have an interest in the future development of their area but who lack the resources to influence change.

How to start a car club

If you are interested in promoting the development of a rural car club near you, here are some key points, taken from the Improvement and Development Agency's website.

It is essential to identify a local champion, whose primary role will be to advocate for the club at local meetings and to promote and publicise it within the community. The 'champion' needs to be well embedded in the community in order to tap into social capital and to use and develop local networks.

Ensure you provide support during the setting-up stage, including technical assistance where possible. Carplus has a lot of helpful information on its website.

Look at the experience of existing car clubs to help identify good practice and potential obstacles.

Target the recruitment of potential new members. You will need a good knowledge of your local population and an understanding of what sorts of people tend to favour the idea. Car clubs appeal to a range of social classes with a broad spectrum of incomes. They attract people who live in larger households, and people who are fairly 'green' and/or active in other community initiatives. Women tend to be the prime decision-makers about joining a club.

Develop effective marketing and publicity. Research shows that it is important to vary the marketing message according to the stage of the club's development and to target different messages to different sectors of the community.

In selling the concept, the main messages are likely to relate to the cost and cost savings relative to private car use, the benefits of convenience and reliability, and environmental issues and local responsibility.

Find out more: Visit www.idea.gov.uk and search for 'rural car clubs'.

inreview

Our perspective on countryside issues

Rural car clubs

The popularity of car clubs, sometimes described as a pay-as-you-go alternative to owning a car outright, has been surging. Some schemes are reporting a membership increase of 75% in the last four months alone.

Most of their growth has been in urban areas, heavily promoted by a handful of large commercial operators. Some developers are now proposing car clubs as part of new housing: they see them as a way to increase housing densities by reducing the space needed for car parking.

Giving up the only car, or even just the second car, may seem impractical in rural areas where public transport is limited and where the volume of motor traffic on narrow country roads puts people off walking or cycling. In 2000 the Rural White Paper championed the idea of car clubs in rural areas. By 2002 a pilot rural car club programme was funded by the Countryside Agency. In our diverse countryside one size rarely fits all, so the programme trialled ten different schemes in a town and smaller communities.

Successful trial

In its report issued in June 2004, the programme found that 'the existence of a local champion is critical in the bottom-up process of club development. This person (or people) is an advocate for the club in relevant meetings as well as publicising the club locally. The communities where clubs were successful all had effective active formal and informal networks that focused

on social and community issues ... Several of the clubs were incorporated into pre-existing community transport structures, and a healthy symbiosis has developed between the schemes.'

The first rural car club was Moorcars in Devon, which has now expanded to four small towns adjacent to Dartmoor. It is run on a not-for-profit basis, in common with many of the rural schemes. Hourcars in

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A single car club vehicle can take up to ten cars off the road

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Hebden Bridge, for example, grew out of a local community centre and is now run as a members' co-operative. One special feature of its scheme is that it tries to power its vehicles from locally produced biodiesel.

Schemes need flexibility

Research in urban areas has shown that a single car club vehicle can take up to ten cars off the road but that each club needs about 20 members to be commercially viable. These members need to be within ten, but preferably five, minutes' walk of where the vehicle is kept. However, some schemes are experimenting with sites that are near bus stops or include cycle parking. Car clubs can unlock the potential of other transport initiatives in an area as an

alternative to private car ownership. They also allow members to downsize their existing car in the knowledge that they can borrow a larger car or van when they need it.

Car clubs are in between renting and owning a car. Unlike renting you can book by the hour and the vehicles are located in towns and now villages rather than out of the way industrial estates. Booking and billing can be done online. Fuel and mileage is typically included in the hourly charge up to a fixed distance, after which a charge of around 25p per mile is incurred. A smartcard is often used to unlock the vehicles, although some schemes simply keep keys in a safe with a combination lock, so they can be accessed at any time of day.

The Commonwheels project seeks to be the next step, joining up affiliated clubs while allowing businesses to save money by adding their pool cars to the scheme. There is even talk of allowing individuals to offer their cars to car clubs in some rural areas, enabling schemes to start where there is otherwise insufficient capacity to buy new vehicles outright.

Text messaging only really took off when you could send a text between mobile operators. Perhaps the same goes for car clubs and sharing vehicles between them.

Find out more: Visit www.carplus.org.uk (or phone 0113 234 9299) for further information on rural car clubs, and www.carclubs.org.uk for an interactive map showing the location of your nearest car club.

Q and A

The answers you need

Fighting proposals for increased use of airstrips

Q A local microlight club is applying for something called a lawful use certificate for its airstrip. Flying has taken place for some years, so I understand the certificate may well be granted. But the proposal would include a wide range of additional flying activities such as helicopter landings. The planning officers don't think they can impose any restrictions if they have to grant the certificate. What can we do?

A A certificate of lawfulness of use or development can be issued by the local planning authority to describe the precise use, operation or building works on a site which is considered permissible without the need to apply for planning permission. Whether the

development is lawful is defined in legislation under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Much will depend on whether the developer can prove that the use has become established, i.e. it has happened on a permanent basis over a ten-year period. If the developer is able to prove this, then the local planning authority must grant the certificate. Local authorities cannot look at the merits of a case for a lawful use certificate, only at whether lawfulness has been proved.

You can put forward evidence that the use has existed for less than ten years and/or less than 28 days in any year, or highlight any contradictions that may exist in the applicant's evidence. You will need to provide tangible

proof of your points. Legal precedents have confirmed that if there are any contradictions in the applicant's evidence on any relevant issues, then the local authority is entitled to refuse to grant a certificate.

If the authority has to grant a certificate, it is possible to place restrictions on what it allows. Government advice in Circular 10/97, Annex 8 (particularly paragraphs 8.16–8.21) states that certificates should be as precisely worded as possible. You can check to see that the certificate does not cover any use beyond what has already happened consistently over the last ten years.

If the application is refused, you may also need to consider pressing for enforcement action if the use continues: see www.planninghelp.org.uk for more guidance.

Keeping rural phone boxes

Q There are plans for our village phone box to be removed. Not only would this take away yet another local service but it would also mean the loss of a local landmark. Is there anything that our community can do to keep this vital facility?

A BT is planning to remove many rural phone boxes across the country because around 60% of its phone boxes are not profitable. Use of public phone boxes fell by 47% between 2000 and 2006, which BT believes is largely the result of increased use of mobile phones.

However, phone boxes can be a vital service in many rural communities where mobile reception is poor and not all residents have a landline. Some modern booths also have access to the internet.

If BT wishes to remove a phone box it needs to write to the relevant local authority, which will then consult with parish and community councils. The local authority has 90 days in which to make recommendations to BT, either supporting or opposing the closure.

Unfortunately, contribution to the character of a location is not a consideration under BT's

criteria to decide whether a phone box should remain (although CPRE and English Heritage are discussing this with BT). You could suggest to your local authority that the phone box is changed to a cashless one so people can still use it with a pre-paid card and would still be able to use it in an emergency.

Oftcom, the independent regulator for communications, has produced a fact sheet about phone box removal, *Removing Public Call Boxes: A guide to the rules*, which you may find helpful. Visit www.ofcom.org.uk, search for 'removing public call boxes' and scroll down the results.

current issues

Set-aside replaced

In a welcome move, the Government has decided on a replacement for the set-aside scheme. The replacement scheme will require farmers to put a percentage of their land into primarily environmental management and should be in place by August 2009.

Under the proposal farmers would identify small areas of land for environmental management to replace land which has previously been managed in this way but is now back in productive use.

CPRE was concerned that the proposed abolition of the set-aside scheme by the European Union as part of its Heath Check of the Common Agricultural Policy could have led to damaging effects on the countryside, undoing years of good management through set-aside. So this decision is good news for our wildlife, our rivers and streams, and our landscapes. But we need to make sure enough land is dedicated to this task. CPRE suggests this should be a minimum of 5% of cropped land which is not covered by any other green farming rules.

CPRE has lobbied hard for a new measure which would provide important wildlife habitat, protect water bodies from pollution and add to the diversity of the farmed landscape, but which is also easy for farmers to implement. It would have been a pity if all the public money spent over the years on ensuring that farmland provided much-needed environmental benefits had been wasted.

We are urging Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency to press ahead with a measure that is practicable and will mean the reformed Common Agricultural Policy delivers more for the environment.

Long-term planning is key

CPRE has welcomed many of the recommendations in a recent report to the Prime Minister about how land use and planning can better support rural business and deliver affordable housing.

The report, the *Matthew Taylor Review on Rural Economy and Affordable Housing*, is the result of a review by Matthew Taylor, Liberal Democrat MP for Truro and St Austell, undertaken at the request of Gordon Brown. It suggests practical ways of providing more permanently affordable housing for rural communities. Crucially, it identifies the planning system as the key to high quality, attractive settlements and surrounding countryside.

CPRE was closely involved in the preparation of the report. In particular, we support the emphasis on long-term planning through the planning system, high quality design and community consensus.

The report recommends that significant extensions to market towns, where justified and needed, should be master-planned, with long-term quality of building at the top of the agenda. The report puts the consent of local communities at the heart of delivering affordable housing in rural settlements. It recommends support for home working for those living in rented or part-owned accommodation. It also wants it to be made easier for local authorities to insist on a proportion of affordable housing in small-scale developments.

CPRE does not agree with every recommendation in the report, however. In particular, we oppose relaxing planning rules which at the moment attach great importance to the presence of public transport in deciding the location of new business development.

Mapping local food networks

Local food is back on the menu, thanks to a new five-year project, Mapping Local Food Webs. CPRE, together with Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, is going to be researching existing local food webs – the very important local networks of relationships between food producers, processors, retailers, and consumers.

Local food matters. It connects people to the land and countryside nearest to them. It supports farmers and producers in supplying good, healthy food that people can trust. It can create jobs, vitalise and regenerate places, and help healthy eating. It is associated with traditional management of the countryside and the wider

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The project will give people the tools and knowledge to safeguard their local food webs

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environment, with benefits for landscape character. Local food webs make it possible to continue supplying local food as well as supporting a whole host of social, economic and environmental benefits to the local area and communities within it.

Evidence to protect food webs

The mapping project will give people the tools and knowledge to safeguard their local food

webs – and help to expand them by identifying local needs and opportunities. People involved in the project will be able to build and spread understanding of how local food is produced, distributed and sold. The information gathered will be recorded and published in case studies to inform the actions and policies which can help secure local food webs for the future.

The project is part of the Making Local Food Work



Local food webs make it possible to continue supplying local food as well as supporting a whole host of social, economic and environmental benefits to the local area and communities within it

programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This programme will invest £10 million over five years in local food initiatives across England. By supporting food cooperatives, farmers markets, community-supported agriculture schemes and village shops, the programme should increase the availability of fresh, healthy food with clear, traceable origins.

The project draws on Caroline Cranbrook's pioneering research published by CPRE in the *Food Webs* and *The Real Choice* reports. Caroline, an active CPRE member (and recently appointed a CPRE vice-president), became concerned about the impact of a proposed superstore on her local market town of Saxmundham in east Suffolk. By listening carefully to the voices of producers and retailers in her area, Caroline captured the importance of local food networks in providing real consumer choice, sustaining communities and safeguarding local landscapes.

Caroline's research shows how people's quality of life and the success of rural businesses could be damaged by external influences such as a new supermarket development. The supermarket proposal for Saxmundham was rejected and the store has not been built. Since then Caroline's continuing research has documented the growth of her local food web, with business start-ups, expansion of existing small businesses, and producers becoming profitable and resilient through sourcing and supplying local food.

Discovering food webs

Inspired by Caroline's work, the new mapping project will set out to discover and document what is happening to local food webs across the country.

CPRE has commissioned a research team from Coventry and Warwick Universities to create a new action pack which will give people the materials and support they need to research and record (map) their local food web. The action pack

will be tested in six locations, then used nationally to map 24 locations – a mixture of urban districts and market towns – across England. CPRE will recruit a project coordinator in each region and provide resources to support local people to do the research.

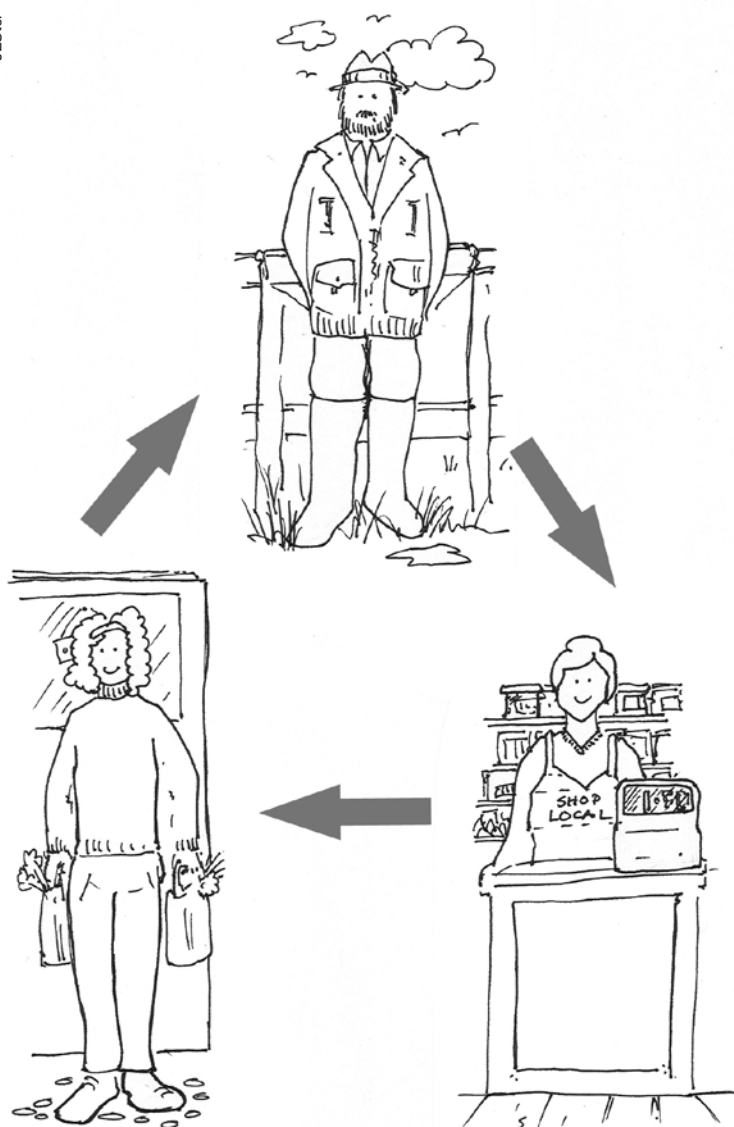
In each area to be mapped there will be two key parts to the research. Firstly, workshops and questionnaires will involve, inform and consult as many people as possible about the project. They will also be used to capture people's knowledge and views about the availability, affordability and accessibility of local food in their area. Secondly, the regional coordinators will help to build local research teams who will gather information about the local food supply chain.

Identifying opportunities

As well as collecting hard facts on what is produced and sold in a specific location, the project will capture the intricate interplay of relationships between the people involved and the assets they bring to an area. At the same time, it will identify new opportunities to improve the supply of local food or raise awareness of existing or impending threats. Crucially, people in the local community will lead the research, with project coordinators lending support. An added aim of the project is for people participating to learn new skills, develop greater understanding and gather information that could benefit them directly.

The mapping process will be repeated in the 24 areas towards the end of the project to find out what has changed and why. We want to find out whether local food webs have been strengthened and become beacons for other towns and cities, or if they have been weakened and need more attention and protection.

The wealth of information collected throughout the project will be compiled into local case studies and regional and national reports. CPRE will



Local food webs are really important local networks of relationships between producers, retailers and consumers

ensure that findings from across the country are circulated to the media and policy- and decision-makers, calling for the action, policies and decisions needed to make local food webs work and thrive.

Enquiries from Slow Food UK, the Women's Environmental Network, Transition Towns and the Women's Institute suggest there is potential for the project to bring together a range of people to share their knowledge and aspirations for local food and ensure it has a future where they live.

Get involved: If your branch or group would like to map a food web in your area please contact Thea Platt at CPRE: theap@cpre.org.uk, 01424 715 306. ■

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Crucially, people in the local community will lead the research
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matter of fact

Support for your case

Supermarket dominance: signs of a change?

The balance of power in the food retail sector is heavily weighted in favour of supermarkets. But could the demand from shoppers for local, fresh food spell a brighter future for local retailers?

Nationally, small shops are closing at a rate of 2,000 a year. In 2000 the Rural Shops Alliance estimated there were only 12,000 rural shops left and these were closing at a rate of 300 a year. Meanwhile, the number of superstores rose from 457 in 1986 to 1,102 in 1997. Their market share of groceries shot up from 30% in 1987 to 54% in 1996. Between 2000 and 2007 the big four supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda, and Safeway and Morrisons combined) saw a 38% increase in their UK sales area.

According to a Cabinet Office report in January 2008, 'grocery market consolidation is a long-term phenomenon; four firms now account for around 75% of grocery sales'. The market share figures for 2008 are revealing: Tesco 31.2%, Asda 16.8%, Sainsbury 15.9%, Morrisons 11.4%, Co-operative and Somerfield 7.9% (at the time of writing, Somerfield had just been taken over by Co-operative), Waitrose 3.9%, Aldi 2.9%, Lidl 2.3%, and Iceland 1.7%.

More supermarkets result in fewer independent shops. The town of Fakenham in Norfolk lost 64% of its convenience stores and Warminster in

Wiltshire 75% after a superstore opened. The New Economics Foundation has shown that as local outlets are replaced by national chains, the distinctive character and identity of town centres is being lost through growing homogenisation.

Local auctioneers, abattoirs, wholesalers, distributors and independent retailers are all at risk as small businesses and farms are taken over, merged or bought out. Closure of local abattoirs means the local farming of livestock in small numbers becomes uneconomic.

Superstores cause job losses

During a two-year period following the opening of 93 superstores, the net job loss in food retailing alone averaged 270 jobs within a ten-mile radius for each superstore opened. These figures do not include florists, clothes shops and newsagents, which would have been badly affected too. The impact is more severe in rural areas, where retailing and wholesaling is often the largest employer.

CPRE campaigners in Norfolk are fighting to keep Tesco out of Sheringham, the only settlement of its size in Norfolk that still has none of the big four supermarkets. The local chamber of commerce estimates that Tesco's arrival would force over 10% of local businesses to close within a year of the store opening.

Highly centralised supermarket

supply systems are increasingly based on fewer, larger producers. These systems threaten local food chains, which provide an alternative outlet for farmers and support the small and medium-sized businesses at the heart of the rural economy. Ninety per cent of all businesses come into this category. In the food sector, 98% of businesses have fewer than ten employees.

In Saxmundham, planning permission for a superstore was



Over 90% of money spent in a supermarket leaves the area immediately



refused, mainly because of Suffolk Coastal District Council's proactive retailing policy. The Council had commissioned consultants who concluded that there was no retailing need for a large new superstore. This policy became part of the development plan and has proved a strong defence against further attempts by the developers.

A recent survey looked at what had happened in Saxmundham in the absence of a large new supermarket. In contrast to a decline in independent stores nationally, all the market towns still had their butchers, bakers, fish shops and outlets for fresh

vegetables. There were more farm shops and farmers markets. The number of local and regional food suppliers had increased from 300 to 370. A greater range of local products were on sale, with many more producers adding value and selling through informal cooperatives.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has estimated that food miles generate economic, social and environmental costs to the UK of £9 billion a year. Food which is produced, processed, sold and bought locally reduces food miles, typically uses less packaging and is responsible for lower carbon dioxide emissions.

Shoppers want local food

Typically, only 1-2% of supermarkets' turnover comes from locally produced food. National consumer surveys show that 70% of British shoppers would like to buy local food and 49% would like to buy more than they do now. There is also a growing interest in seasonal food. Two-thirds of people now take steps to buy seasonally.

According to one survey in 2007, 57% of people buy local food in order to support local businesses, while 51% of respondents do so to support the local economy. The figures support this stand: money spent locally in independent shops is then re-spent three times before it leaves the area, while over 90% of money spent in a supermarket leaves the area immediately.



Campaign to Protect Rural England

Fieldwork

Helping you to protect and enhance the countryside