



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
SOUTH EAST

## CPRE South East eBulletin

21 April 2007

Coverage: 10 March to 20 April

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*The Examination in Public hearings are over but the battle for the South East has only just begun. The final contribution by SEEDA to the inquiry presages the likely attitude of DGLG—more of everything is better. Policymakers seem unable to grasp the concept of 'smart growth': adding value not volume. They have failed to grasp the challenge of infrastructure needs, despite their assertions that lack of infrastructure hampers growth. And they have failed to address the problem of the South East overheating at the expense of the rest of the country, fuelling inward migration which in turn fuels pressure for housing and infrastructure. It is time to put the sustainability back into 'sustainability', which has been hijacked by some to mean growth at all costs. It is time that the limits to environmental capacity in the South East are recognised. And it is time to recognise that saying "no" to unlimited expansion in the South East is the best way of saying "yes" to a prosperous future.*

### 1. Examination in Public

**EiP ends.** As the EiP closed, Councillor Keith Mitchell, Seera's chairman, said "If ministers are serious about tackling the pressures on housing, they must work with us to determine how to finance the investment we need in roads, rail, water supply and sewerage, as well as schools and hospitals." (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yr5va2>). CPRE Hampshire issued a press release to mark the end of the inquiry. Edward Dawson said "I think we have had a big impact. The Panel seemed grateful for CPRE's enthusiastic and positive contributions" (CPRE Hants: <http://tinyurl.com/2ny3pm>). Hampshire police bosses say they want more cash from developers if the county's population is going to expand (This is Hampshire: <http://tinyurl.com/ysz14g>).

**SEEDA bids to carpet the South East with housing.** An average of 34,800 new homes per year for the next 20 years will be required to support the levels of economic growth needed for sustained improvements in the region's quality of life, SEEDA claimed at the end of the inquiry. This is compared to the 28,900 new homes proposed in the draft South East Plan. It rejects the argument that the environmental impact of new housebuilding might outweigh the benefits to the region. "SEEDA remains concerned that the public debate on housing numbers has focused on the perceived 'threat' to the environment of more housing, and has not sought to engage people sufficiently in solving the issues around sustainable economic growth". Concerns about water shortages in the South East, it insists, will be alleviated by measures set out in its Regional Economic Strategy, which has a target 20% per capita reduction in water usage over the next 10 years. (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/27z5mu>; SEEDA: <http://tinyurl.com/33bbbd>).

### 2. The Green Belts

**CPRE.** Research by the Guardian and CPRE shows at least 10,000 acres of greenbelt land are likely to be sacrificed to build some of the biggest developments in Britain for the past 30 years. "Many villages will be engulfed by housing, several towns could nearly double in size and others would effectively join up with each other to create new conurbations", said Shaun Spiers, CPRE's chief executive. "This is a time of unprecedented change in the countryside."

- ◆ Guardian (<http://tinyurl.com/3duzqu>; <http://tinyurl.com/2mmttg>; <http://tinyurl.com/32ce6j>).
- ◆ BBC "Green belt faces home onslaught" (<http://tinyurl.com/2wk86k>).
- ◆ Daily Mail: "Stop this blight of the countryside" (<http://tinyurl.com/2mtrfp>; <http://tinyurl.com/2rwky6>).

**Yvette Cooper responds.** Our solutions to Britain's housing shortage will not decimate the green belt, wrote a rattled Yvette Cooper in response to coverage of CPRE's campaign. "The green belt retains all of its protection and that will not be changed by the planning white paper later this year." She accused the home guard of Tory councillors and CPRE of talking rubbish and "tilting their bayonets" (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/22xeHy>).

**"Let's turn green belts a deeper shade of green and create turquoise belts along rivers."** Environment Secretary David Miliband outlined his vision for the future of England's countryside to CPRE on 9 March. Wind farms will be needed and environmental security will take priority over food security. CPRE should forge a consensus on how to manage land in the future (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/25eqqt>; Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/29smqy>). The NFU welcomed the speech saying that there "now needs to be a rural renaissance so the real value of agriculture is recognised by society" (Farming UK: <http://tinyurl.com/235ymn>). The Country Landowners Association was irritated that Miliband did not mention landowners and called the speech "good in theory". (<http://tinyurl.com/yucd4s>).

**Oxford.** The green belt debate flared in Oxford after city planners admitted to the EiP that they could squeeze 10,000 new homes into the city by 2026. Andy Boddington said "it's quite clear the city doesn't need [green belt] land south to meet its housing needs. The city council is a landowner and the suspicion must arise that its main interest is in the financial gain it will receive when the [green belt] site is developed." (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/2tmxnc>). In a letter to the Guardian, he said that "More housing is needed in Oxford, but its green belt does not need to be sacrificed... It is not the need for housing that is threatening England's green belts, it is the failure to make best use of urban land. The push to build in green belts is being driven by landowners that wish to profit from their assets." (<http://tinyurl.com/2884q8>).

**Solutions?** The only sustainable solution to the housing crisis lies in 'recycling' cities, not building on the greenbelt (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2as9fo>). A review by IPPR finds a case for managed reviews to green belts, but says that the jury is out on reforming the 'town centre first' approach, and proposals for planning major infrastructure need further work (<http://tinyurl.com/2mg5bw>). "We politicians must either betray the green belt, or look harder at all the alternatives... I am [suggesting] taking us to France, and the lands that used to be English." MP Boris Johnson wrote (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/367vxt>).

### 3. Planning in the South East

**Basingstoke.** High phosphorus levels in the River Loddon could get worse if further housing development in the town is permitted, according to a study by Basingstoke and Deane Council (<http://tinyurl.com/32dzhy>).

**Bearsted.** Plans for a huge depot to transfer goods from lorries on to rail freight trains in the Kent countryside have sparked furious opposition. Residents near the site east of the M20 at Bearsted said they were "devastated" to hear of the proposal from developer Kent International Gateway (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yuyake>).

**Former coalfields** have been turned into employment land, including at Deal in Kent, according to DCLG (<http://tinyurl.com/2trvoj>)

**Marlow** Football Club is the latest in an all too long line up of clubs to try and build on green belt land (Bucks Free Press: <http://tinyurl.com/2c9tmq>).

**Mudfog** is having a makeover. It is the city of the future, the place where 600,000 new Londoners will eventually make their homes—John Prescott's glittering Thames Gateway, the biggest redevelopment project in Europe was reviewed in the Observer (<http://tinyurl.com/2glvnn>).

**New Forest.** Plans to turn a green belt site into a huge quarry were defended at a public inquiry against objectors who say the scheme would turn part of the green belt into an industrial area. A company plans to extract more than 800,000 tonnes of gravel near Milford-on-Sea (Daily Echo: <http://tinyurl.com/2ju42j>).

**Radley Lakes.** The Town Green inquiry has been adjourned until late June. RWE npower has refused to confirm it will not restart work to infill Thrupp Lake before a decision is made. Andy Boddington for Oxfordshire CPRE said: "Npower should immediately promise to stop all work at Thrupp Lake until the inquiry has reached a decision." (Oxford Mail: <http://tinyurl.com/2kl6zh>; <http://tinyurl.com/2jyfjk>). The Forestry Commission is considering prosecuting RWE npower for felling trees without a licence. The High Court hearing into the Radley Six injunction has been adjourned. More at CPRE Oxon (<http://tinyurl.com/yztntc>).

**Wye.** "The story of Wye is the story of the death of English niceness, the idea that good people with good intent can sit around a common table with their foes and reach a happy consensus for the benefit of all." David Hewson reviews the battle to save Wye from Imperial College (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2hun2q>).

#### 4. Planning Nationwide

**Barker deconstructed.** The ability of the planning system to deliver a high quality environment will be weakened under sweeping Government changes, CPRE said, launching a critique of the Barker Report in advance of the planning White Paper (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/2wpbzc>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2lyod7>). In the Ecologist, Simon Fairlie said Barker replaces democracy with economic growth and claims that our land is being sold to the highest bidder (Ecologist: <http://tinyurl.com/23bage>).

**Brownfield.** The budget speech launched a consultation on improving the effectiveness of tax incentives for cleaning up contaminated land, land remediation relief and the exemption from landfill tax for waste from contaminated land (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/3acsf>; <http://tinyurl.com/2apcro>).

**Consultation Bill.** A Somerset MP has won parliamentary approval to bring forward legislation designed to improve planning consultation. "The aim of my bill is to give an exact definition of the term 'consultation' and to ensure that the relevant people are consulted." (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/294g76>).

**Polytunnels.** A decision by Herefordshire County Council to require all new polytunnel developments to have planning permission is threatening the competitiveness of the entire horticulture sector, according to the NFU. Growers may also be forced to obtain planning permission retrospectively for some existing developments (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yqsx7e>).

#### 5. Housing

**Housing numbers.** DCLG has issued revised housing projections for England through to 2029. It is claiming that 225,000 extra dwellings are needed each year. Of these 24% are due to an increase in single dwellings for over 65s; 42% due to growth in younger single households and 33% due to international immigration (<http://tinyurl.com/2a99qw>). In the South East, DCLG is predicting that 34,400 dwellings a year will be needed, 5,500 more than the 28,900 proposed in the South East Plan. The data in the table below is for dwellings per year (full SE data: <http://tinyurl.com/ym6k3c>).

	2004	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2029
Buckinghamshire	190	193	198	205	212	217	220
East Sussex	219	223	234	247	260	273	280
Hampshire	515	525	549	575	600	622	634
Kent	566	579	615	653	691	724	743
Oxfordshire	248	254	268	282	296	309	316
Surrey	441	4438	466	488	510	530	540
West Sussex	328	333	348	365	383	400	409
South East	3,368	3,435	3,601	3,783	3,963	4,125	4,211
England	21,062	21,519	22,646	23,837	24,973	25,975	26,497

**Immigration.** Migrationwatch said that immigration to England will require at least 200 new homes to be built every day for the next 19 years and that 73,000 new homes would be required for foreigners moving to England by 2026 (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/24fdao>). The Home Office is setting up a Migration Impacts Forum (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/32dct9>). The Commission for Rural Communities has produced data on the A8 (EU accession) migrant workers in rural areas and the impact this is having on rural economies and societies (<http://tinyurl.com/2yevb9>).

**Unaffordable housing.** More than two-thirds of UK towns are unaffordable for key public sector workers, according to the Halifax. In the South East that rises to 98%, up from 75% in 2002. Houses are considered affordable at 4.5 times average pay; in the SE the ratio is 9.4 times, up from 7.1 in 2002. Gerrards Cross, Weybridge and Sevenoaks are the three least affordable towns in the SE (HBOS: <http://tinyurl.com/3d35so>).

**Affordable housing.** The government, having not yet acted on the advice of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, has set up the Rural Housing Advisory Group to give it more advice (Housing Corporation: <http://tinyurl.com/364gof>; 24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/27v24m>). CPRE Oxfordshire has published its affordable housing policy (<http://tinyurl.com/2cwmhn>). The first of John Prescott's £60,000 homes have gone on sale at Newport Pagnell, priced between £175,000 and £195,000 (Standard: <http://tinyurl.com/39jm4v>). The Housing Corporation has commissioned property consultancy Savills to help it make the case for affordable housing funding ahead of the comprehensive spending review. It will also help the corporation work out how to deliver Barker's demand for an extra 70,000 to 120,000 homes a year (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/33wpfa>).

**Speculators.** Young families are being squeezed out of the housing market by a new breed of speculators who buy new homes and leave them empty. Greedy investors have no intention of letting the houses out but are just waiting for prices to soar, Yvette Cooper warned (Mirror: <http://tinyurl.com/yovbx9>).

**Eco-towns** built on brownfield land could lead the way in cutting carbon emissions and building affordable homes, Housing Minister Yvette Cooper said when announcing £2 million of funding for their design under the New Growth Points scheme. The new eco-towns, of between 5,000 to 10,000 homes, will have strong public transport links to nearby towns and cities. (DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/2dxqye>).

**Hidden Infrastructure.** The Environment Agency has called for attention to be given to the "four pillars" for sustainable housing growth to minimise pressure on environmental infrastructure (<http://tinyurl.com/2gno2y>).

## 6. Transport

**Aviation.** SEERA has called for a halt to runway expansion. "SEERA reaffirms its view that 'plan, monitor and manage' would be the most appropriate approach to provision of additional airport capacity in the South East while effort is directed at achieving more sustainably balanced solutions to airport development. SEERA therefore calls on the Government for a review of current aviation policy and for a halt to plans for the expansion of runway capacity in the South East." (SEERA: <http://tinyurl.com/2uhm6v>). Residents of Lydd and New Romney have voted overwhelmingly against plans for the expansion of nearby Lydd Airport, whose owners have applied to lengthen the runway by more than 400 metres, build a new terminal and provide additional car parking (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/ypmru3>). The EU has agreed an "open skies" pact with the USA. Environmental groups say the increased air traffic generated by the measure will write off all the benefits expected from plans to "green" aviation by bringing airlines into the EU's carbon emissions trading scheme (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2v5qoc>).

**Roads.** The controversial Weymouth relief road has been approved. It may still be called in by Ruth Kelly but planning officers have decided to press ahead with preparations regardless (Dorset Echo: <http://tinyurl.com/3xex2p>; <http://tinyurl.com/35eh23>). Proposals drawn up by the Department for Transport could lead to service areas doubling in size and the creation of separate, Continental-style picnic areas. In the past, moves to build new service areas have been blocked by local authorities, so the Government is suggesting giving the Highways Agency more powers (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2fb5pz>). Road schemes are coming in late and over budget said the Audit Commission (Transport Briefing: <http://tinyurl.com/2jyass>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/2t6swv>). A Quiet Lanes scheme in Gloucestershire has been declared a success (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/25qqvu>).

**Roadside advertising.** Councils have been given stronger and more flexible powers to tackle companies whose adverts flout the law, dangerously distract drivers and blight the countryside, Yvette Cooper said. Local planning authorities will have access to a national database, enabling them to track offenders with companies prosecuted for repeat offending being "named and shamed" on the site (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2y3sfj>). The RAC and CPRE are working together to clear countryside clutter and improve safety (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/36wgjc>).

**Rail.** The £10 billion cross-London railway is finally to be approved according to the Telegraph (<http://tinyurl.com/3adf3x>) and the Department of Transport is consulting on Crossrail 2 (Transport Briefing: <http://tinyurl.com/2a8mke>). The Gatwick Express is to be retained but with service changes (Transport Briefing: <http://tinyurl.com/35bbj3>). Moves to reopen the mothballed railway line linking Oxford to Bletchley have won

the backing of English Welsh & Scottish Railway, which has put the project on a 'Super 16' list of capacity improvement schemes to win more freight traffic from the roads (Oxford Times: <http://tinyurl.com/2g7fdn>).

## 7. Water

**Water.** Water companies' 25 year resource management are now on a statutory basis and customers will have a greater say in the long term plans (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/222xak>). Ofwat has published its initial findings on competition in the water industry (<http://tinyurl.com/2rk6tw>). Defra are inviting views on proposals to modernise hosepipe bans and drought orders which restrict or prohibit discretionary and non-essential uses of water (<http://tinyurl.com/ypfk34>). Singapore company, Newwater plans to keep water flowing along Hampshire rivers even during drought periods by pumping thousands of cubic yards of treated sewage a day into their headwaters (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2p3ua2>; This is Hampshire: <http://tinyurl.com/2s7ycm>).

**Desalination fails.** Plans to alleviate the south-east's water shortages by making sea water drinkable have been abandoned as too expensive. South East Water explored the possibility of desalinating water by installing a pilot plant at Newhaven in East Sussex (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/3dpt24>).

**Lewes.** Archaeologists are examining the site of the proposed Ringmer reservoir (Lewes today: <http://tinyurl.com/2l7xkz>).

## 8. Energy

**Wind turbines.** A survey of people whose homes are situated within 1.2 miles of turbines has shown that threequarters of them feel that the noise has damaged their quality of life while four out of five say it has affected their health. A spokesman for the British Wind Energy Association said it was just a "myth" that turbines were noisy (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/yosn2u>). Two thirds of planning applications for onshore wind farms are being refused. Since October 2006, 12 of 18 (33%) decisions for onshore wind farms have been refused; where the Planning Inspectorate was called in to adjudicate, just 2 out of 7 (28%) decisions awarding permission. This compares to an average approval rate of 76% for other major applications, such as offices, dwellings and retail (Green Building: <http://tinyurl.com/2z9gh6>).

**Planning to be eased for microgeneration.** DCLG will issue a consultation document on proposed changes to planning regulations that currently make actions like installing a rooftop wind turbine a bureaucratic struggle. David Miliband said that from 1 October the rules would be changed to "make it as easy to install a wind turbine as a satellite dish." (Reuters: <http://tinyurl.com/2fnjur>; DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/33sb7w>).

**Biofuels.** Gordon Brown announced that he would extend the tax rebate for biofuels until 2010. From next year all suppliers in the UK will have to ensure that 2.5% of the fuel they sell is made from plants: if not, they must pay a penalty of 15p a litre. The obligation rises to 5% in 2010. By 2050, the government hopes that 33% of our fuel will come from crops Farmers' leaders welcomed the biofuel duty extension but criticised the rise in excise duty (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/36acar>). George Monbiot said that biofuels are a formula for environmental and humanitarian disaster. He called for a five-year moratorium on all targets and incentives for biofuels until a second generation of fuels can be produced (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2ftchp>). Biofuel advocate Giles Clark responded saying that the call for a moratorium "is bordering on Luddite" (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/244exc>). Researchers doubt that 2G biofuels will be sufficiently efficient (Biofuel Watch: <http://tinyurl.com/yrfsvu>). A new way of creating fuel from biomass could eliminate the present low efficiency of conversion and the need for vast land areas to grow biomass (New Scientist: <http://tinyurl.com/35lgqh>).

**Woodfuel.** A plan to boost the supply of environment-friendly woodfuel to produce enough energy to power 250,000 homes was unveiled by the Forestry Commission (Farming UK: <http://tinyurl.com/23xyak>).

**Coal.** Greenpeace has sent a lengthy objection to construction of two supercritical coal-fired generating units at Kingsnorth Power Station in Kent to the DTI (Greenpeace: <http://tinyurl.com/3c9bqf>).

**BedZED.** Independent looked inside the Beddington Zero Energy Development, or as it is more commonly known, BedZED, in Wallington, Surrey (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2mnoo5>).

## 9. Environment and Heritage

**Aggregates.** The Aggregates Levy will rise to £1.95 per tonne from April 2008 and the quarry industry is rather upset (Contract Journal: <http://tinyurl.com/yo42s9>).

**Waste.** CPRE Hampshire considers fly-tipping a pressing issue which is worsening. It has produced a very useful guide to help landowners combat the problem, which lists several practical suggestions to discourage incidences of fly tipping (<http://tinyurl.com/yod2fd>). From April 2008, landfill tax will go up by £8 per tonne each year, more than double the current escalator. FoE complained about the absence of a tax on incinerators in the budget (Lets Recycle: <http://tinyurl.com/ytycest>; <http://tinyurl.com/yvbwweb>).

**Liability Directive inquiry.** The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee is to launch an inquiry into why the Government is proposing to limit the scope of the Environmental Liability Directive to EU-protected biodiversity, and into which SSSIs would be affected (EFRA: <http://tinyurl.com/332qnr>).

**Hedge guide.** A revised handbook that promotes greater conservation of hedgerows has been issued by Defra (Farming UK: <http://tinyurl.com/yvqtmn>; Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/23f2qk>).

**Britain's night sky** is becoming increasingly blighted by light pollution, according to a survey by amateur astronomers organised by CPRE and the British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2y7fcj>; BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yqjrvq>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/264qqo>). The Independent attacked Southampton's proposals for giant night time sky lasers (<http://tinyurl.com/yqso72>).

**Heritage.** Developers seeking to build skyscrapers in Britain's world heritage sites will be banned under proposals in the Government's White Paper on heritage protection. Britain's 27 world heritage sites will get the same protection as national parks and AONBs (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2lmtxe>). CPRE welcomed the proposals but called for more resources for heritage protection (<http://tinyurl.com/3yxz4u>).

**Coastal roaming.** Ministers are to open up the entire English coastline to the public in an extension of the "right to roam". The move, which will make it possible to walk all 9,040 miles around the coast of Great Britain and create the first ever right of access to thousands of beaches, is provoking a backlash from landowners who will not be compensated (The Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/26mp6n>). The Independent offered "unstinting praise" and said the move was "a substantial extension of one of this Labour Government's most radical achievements." (<http://tinyurl.com/32whux>).

**Climate Change Bill.** Plans to make Britain the first country in the world to set legally binding limits on its carbon pollution were announced in the draft climate change bill. Under the legislation the UK will have to reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide by 60% by 2050, with an interim target of at least 26% by 2020 (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2z2orf>; Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/2g3285>). The Defra consultation closes on 12 June (<http://tinyurl.com/2ewjlc>).

## 10. Rural Matters

**Farm payments.** Natural England has welcomed the government announcement that spending on agri-environment schemes will increase from £1 billion from 2000-2006 to almost £3 billion from 2007 to 2013 (<http://tinyurl.com/2b66nk>; Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/ytlpm2>). CPRE said it has grave doubts about whether there will be enough money to deliver all the ambitions of the Government's green farming scheme (<http://tinyurl.com/2bn9tq>). The NFU worries that money is being put into rural development not farming (Farmers Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/yqroz4>). Defra is consulting on its draft Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013. £3.3 billion is to be allocated to environmentally sensitive land management through stewardship, cross-compliance, etc. £40 million is to be allocated for biofuels (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/35rvnj>). Britain must continue to intensify its farming practices to meet soaring demand for cheap food and prevent shortages, said Professor Bill McKelvey of the Scottish Agricultural College (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/237gvh>). David Miliband explained the new mechanisms for environmental stewardship of farm land, including the impacts on SSSIs (EDP: <http://tinyurl.com/2zd6k9>).

**Land registration.** Ministers have given the Land Registry permission to consult on tightening the rules for compulsory registration, with the aim of all land becoming registered (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2w5j8z>).

**Rural communities.** The Commission for Rural Communities published an excellent Guardian supplement on rural communities, looking at urban sprawl, affordable housing, biofuels, immigration, transport and post offices (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/27r5nc>). Copies are available from the CRC (<http://tinyurl.com/2efxa3>).

**Supermarkets.** Tesco tried to railroad the Competition Commission into considering the broadest possible definition of the grocery market by arguing that the UK grocery market should be considered as one national market and that "local" should mean as much as a 30-minute drive from a store, according to the Times. The supermarket denied creating "Tesco towns" (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/2qebq5>; 24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/2jf5fs>). Tesco is also launching a new "local choice" milk sourced from farms near its stores, though local has not been defined in this instance (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2nrdb8>). The CLA welcomed the move (<http://tinyurl.com/2whguj>). Unchecked by effective regulation, chain stores such as Tesco resemble nature's hungry breeds, suffocating diversity in the retail ecosystem, argued Andrew Simms in the Guardian (<http://tinyurl.com/2prkus>).

**Post offices** facing the axe could be taken over and run by local councils, according to the Local Government Association (<http://tinyurl.com/2ddb2f>). The Commission for Rural Communities is complaining that consultation arrangements are inadequate (CRC: <http://tinyurl.com/ywpmw7>).

## 11. Campaign to Protect Rural England

**CPRE EGM.** CPRE nationally is seeking to modernise its structure. After a lively debate on the pros and cons of a new Board structure at a very well attended meeting of most branch chairmen last week, it was agreed by a narrow majority to proceed with changes in the national CPRE board numbers and structure. This will see a slimmer, more focused Board to oversee the national organisation.

**Campaign leader.** CPRE has recruited Ben Stafford, former senior parliamentary officer at the RSPB. He reports to policy director Neil Sinden and will become CPRE's main contact with parliament as well as managing the portfolio of national campaigns.

**CPRE SE Annual Report.** The South East regional group has published its report for 2006 "Sustainable Spatial Planning" (<http://tinyurl.com/38uoud>).

## 12. EiP Diary

30 March. EiP examination sessions ended.

End of July: EiP inspectors report recommends any changes they think may be needed for the South East Plan.

21 September: The government publishes any proposed changes it wants to make to the South East Plan.

21 September to 14 December: Government consultation on any proposed changes to the South East Plan.

December to February 2008: Government considers consultation responses

29 February 2008: Final South East Plan is published by Government and becomes a legal document.

## 13. Abbreviations and Links

DCLG: [Department of Communities and Local Government](#). EiP: [Examination in Public](#). GOSE: [Government Office of the South East](#). SEEDA: [South East England Development Agency](#). SEERA: [South East England Regional Assembly](#). SPA: [Special Protection Area](#). TBHSPA: [Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area](#).

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