



Campaign to Protect Rural England
North East Newsletter
Autumn 2014



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Your Home, Your Voice, Your England



CPRE fights for a better future for the English countryside.

We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving, countryside for everyone to value and enjoy.



Lambley Viaduct, South Tyne, Northumberland

Campaign to Protect Rural England - the countryside campaigners

North East NEwsletter Autumn 2014 Issue 25

(Issues 1-16 titled *Overview*)

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covering
Northumberland
Newcastle
North Tyneside

Durham Branch

Covering
Gateshead
South Tyneside
Co Durham
Darlington
Stockton
Hartlepool
Middlesbrough

CPRE Meetings

18th November Darlington
27th Nov. Northumberland
1st December Durham
16th December Darlington
13th January NE Region
20th January Darlington
2nd February Durham
17th February Darlington
17th March Darlington
31st March NE Region

Please confirm meeting details before travelling

Campaign to Protect Rural England

CPRE fights for a better future for England's unique, essential and precious countryside. From giving parish councils expert advice on planning issues to influencing national and European policies, we work to protect and enhance the countryside.

We believe a beautiful, thriving countryside is important for everyone, no matter where they live. Nationally, we don't own land or represent any special interests. This differentiates us from organisations like the National Trust and the Countryside Alliance. Our members are united in their love for England's landscapes and rural communities, and stand up for the countryside, so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations. We'll be stronger by being inclusive - CPRE is for everyone.

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Items for the next issue should be with the Editor by 1st December 2014.

3rd Nov 14

Chair's Desk

Since my last Report, things have remained pretty busy.

As people will no doubt know, the Newcastle/Gateshead Examination in Public (EiP) has been adjourned for an issue relating to the Newcastle Great Park to be further considered but has now finished. Nic Best, Howard Elcock and myself all attended various sessions to give evidence. Others, including Andy Blanchflower, John Urquhart and Ron White, were there virtually on a full time basis. Time alone will tell whether this will lead to changes in the proposed Core Strategy that may bring it more in line with CPRE thinking.

Meanwhile, the Examination in Public into the Durham Plan started on 1 October. The Inspector held a pre Examination meeting on 31 July and a

number of further statements have been sent in on behalf of CPRE. October has been a busy month for many of us (there was also an open cast inquiry).

In both Plans, the biggest issue is housing numbers and the proposed deletions from the Green Belt to accommodate these numbers. This has been a concern of City of Durham Trust and Friends of the Durham Green Belt. A considerable amount of evidence has been given to the Inspector about population projections. Nic was again busy and the Inspector also asked us to call John Blundell who has carried out considerable research into this subject.

One further major concern regarding housing, if County Durham is typical, is that applications keep being made for significant housing sites that

are not allocated in the proposed Plans. I tend to look only at applications for more than 100 houses in County Durham. Even so, I have been amazed at the number of applications that have come in for this number or more, most of which are not included in the proposed Durham Plan. If we are correct with our “numbers arguments” I think this is very worrying and have great concern for our greenfield sites in the future. People may have heard of the Cambridge Report that was issued in June which considers the pressures that are being placed on our land for various activities (including of course feeding the nation) and questioning whether there will be enough to do what we want by 2030 if we do not manage it more carefully.

At the time of writing, we have also considered the General Development Policies at the Durham Examination. These include policies for air quality and light pollution as well as noise. John Urquhart gave an excellent presentation on issues regarding air pollution, a subject that may well raise its head again when transport is considered in November. These General Development Policies also include those relating to green infrastructure, renewable energy and the siting of future wind turbines. There was some healthy debate about the numerous conditions in the proposed policy on wind turbines and whether they went far enough or (if you are a developer) too far. Separation distance was a specific issue and the recent finding of the Inspector conducting the Examination in Public of the Allerdale Plan was that such a policy was “sound”.

We have also discussed policies relating to the “prosperous economy”, including visitor attractions and accommodation. One issue we were

very concerned about was a suggested theme park at Auckland Castle which is not mentioned in the proposed Plan but was included in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). We questioned whether this was in fact legal. We are pleased to say that the Council has now agreed not to proceed with this SPD so it will not form part of the Plan.

There was a week's break starting 20th October and the EiP will restart on 27th. It still has various specific issues relating to housing, the natural and historic environment, transport and minerals to consider.

As I mentioned last time, the government has now “published” the online version of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). I have used this a few times when considering planning issues, including commenting on the proposed plans. While sometimes it has provided useful information (for example the guidance in relation to wind turbines, including the pre application compulsory consultation) I have also found occasions when it has perhaps been surprisingly silent, eg in relation to sustainable transport or even the Green Belt (and certainly green wedge).

We are now approaching the General Election. As yet, we are not in “Election Mode” but I am attending the next meeting of the National Office Policy Committee where CPRE approach to the Election will be discussed. I will try to include some information on this in my next Report.

In my last Report I also mentioned a proposed Partnership Agreement that National Office is preparing. A draft has now been prepared and we hope to discuss this at the next Regional Quarterly Meeting
Richard Cowen



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CPRE Northumberland Annual General Meeting

There were smiles all round at the Northumberland Branch AGM. Perhaps holding the AGM in July at the delightful Feathers Inn at Hedley-on-the-Hill had something to do with it. Prior to this the members enjoyed a conducted tour round Prudhoe Castle. The Castle was built in the mid-11th Century following the Norman invasion and remained a significant military asset for the next three hundred years. It is currently operated by English Heritage and well worth a visit.

At the AGM the Branch reflected on a busy and reasonably

successful year. Much was owed to the work and enthusiasm of Howard Elcock who served as Acting Chair during the year and was taking a well-deserved holiday when the AGM was held. As always, the challenge now will be to maintain the strength of the Branch through the coming years so that we can successfully take forward the aims of CPRE and play our part in protecting the unique and attractive landscape which is so highly prized by all who know and love Northumberland.

*Les Ashworth
Northumberland Branch*



Teesdale legacy working for birds and landscape

The late Thomas Raine originally came from Teesdale and regarded the area as "God's own country". He very generously left some money in his will to CPRE to help protect the area he loved so it was passed to CPRE Durham.

After some discussion, CPRE Durham members agreed that it would be appropriate to spend some of this legacy directly in Teesdale. It was decided that the best way to obtain greatest value from the funds would be to spend it on supporting the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird's (RSPB) work with farmers, creating habitats for wildlife in the local area. They agreed that the funds should be spent through the Mid Teesdale Project Partnership, a registered charity based in Teesdale and with a CPRE member as its treasurer, to liaise with the RSPB.

The RSPB is working with farmers in the North Pennines Dales because it is a special place, providing excellent habitats for a wide range of important wildlife. The landscape has the highest density of breeding waders in mainland UK and more than 80% of England's black grouse. As a result, the area has huge potential to help boost populations of nationally declining upland birds including lapwings, curlews and black grouse.



In Teesdale, RSPB staff are helping farmers to manage their land in a way that will benefit the wildlife on their farm, whilst sustaining their farm business. They want to ensure that farmers are valued for producing high-quality food whilst preserving the landscape and making space for wildlife.

This autumn, some of the funds from the legacy have been used to help three farmers in Baldersdale and Lunedale to manage dense infestations of soft rush, which will ultimately improve fields for breeding waders and grazing.

Soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) is an important aspect of the upland landscape. It provides shelter for stock, particularly young lambs, and is an important habitat for various birds, invertebrates and insects. Traditionally, soft rush stems were soaked in fat and used in household lamps as wicks, as it was a cheaper alternative to candlelight. This

Teesdale legacy working for birds and landscape (cont.)



Dense soft rush infestation



After "Weed wiping"

practice was revived during the Second World War in some rural areas.

Unfortunately, soft rush can also be invasive and troublesome. It spreads by rhizomes (underground plant stems capable of producing the shoot and root systems of a new plant) and each seed head can produce more than 8,000 seeds every year. The seeds can remain dormant within the soil for at more than 20 years, until the conditions are right for them to germinate.

Soft rush can spread rapidly to form extensive, dense stands, and is tough and waxy so most livestock will avoid eating it. Once a soft rush infestation covers more than a third of a field, the value of that field is significantly reduced for both breeding waders and grazing livestock.

There are several methods for reducing the amount of soft rush in a field, such as cutting, herbicides, grazing and re-seeding. The choice

will depend on a range of factors, including the topography, botanical diversity, ground conditions, cost and proposed management after control. In Teesdale, a method called 'weed-wiping' is proving to be a successful way of controlling dense soft rush. The weed wiper is towed behind a quad bike, and has a rotating brush which is set to such a height that it applies the herbicide directly to the rush stem. This ensures that the soft rush is killed without damaging the grass or any botanical diversity in the field.

Just four weeks after weed wiping, all of the soft rush has turned a straw brown colour as it has died. The photo shows the weed wiping has controlled the rush, but not harmed the grass underneath.

About 32 hectares of soft rush has been controlled across the three farms this autumn. The RSPB are planning to monitor how successful this work has been by carrying out breeding waders surveys next spring.

Further habitat creation works are planned with the remaining legacy fund. The next task will be to plant a small area of scattered trees on a farm in Baldersdale for black grouse this winter. Work is also progressing on searching for a suitable site to create some scrapes next year.

Janet Fairclough
Conservation Advisor, RSPB



Weed wiper

Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England	PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
EiP	Examination in Public	SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
M&S	Marks and Spencer	UK	United Kingdom
NE	North East		
NFU	National Farmers Union		



We are grateful to NFU Mutual for generously supporting this newsletter

CPRE's Manifesto - Help us campaign for the countryside at the general election

- the right housing in the right places
- the right infrastructure for the right reasons
- a beautiful countryside to sustain us all

Last July, CPRE launched its *Charter to save our countryside*. Since then over 30,000 of you and counting have signed up.

We are calling for better protection for the countryside, a fair say for local communities in planning, and more housing - but of good quality and in the right places. With a general election just months away, now is the time to make ourselves heard.

Download our *Manifesto for the 2015 General Election* at:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/cpre/campaigning/item/3731-stand-up-for-the-countryside>

The scale of threats facing our countryside is beyond anything we've seen for generations. There are 200,000 new homes planned for the Green Belt, and 500,000 more houses planned for the rest of the countryside, the biggest road building programme for fifty years and a seriously weakened planning system which makes it difficult to get good decisions on the location of new development. There is enough brownfield land available and suitable for 1.8 million new homes, which house builders are being allowed to overlook in favour of greenfield sites.

Our countryside provides

natural and cultural resources, food and produce, a place for outdoor recreation, access to nature and beautiful landscapes. It also nourishes our physical and spiritual wellbeing.

As the main political parties prepare their manifestos, we want to persuade politicians that prosperity and decent housing for a growing population does not need to be at the expense of the countryside. The value of ordinary countryside and the local landscapes that mean so much to people is not being recognised in decisions on development. Too much greenfield development is both damaging and unnecessary, especially when there are so many opportunities within urban areas to provide homes where people need to live and at the same time regenerate wasteful, ugly and derelict brownfield land. We want a commitment from all parties to prevent damaging development across our countryside, and at the same time make our towns and cities better places in which to live. We are already working hard to influence political programmes; meeting MPs and policy advisers to inform their thinking; working with partner organisation on joint campaigns and finalising plans for fringe events at

the main party conferences in the autumn.

Over the coming months, we will produce materials for groups and volunteers passionate about the countryside to help them run events and debates and encourage prospective candidates to sign our *Charter to save our countryside*.



Sign CPRE's charter to save our countryside

Our charter is asking for better protection for the countryside, a fair say for local communities in planning for the places where they live and work, and more housing - but of good quality and in the right places. Go to

[https://e-activist.com/ea-action/action?](https://e-activist.com/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=21&ea.campaign.id=215)

[ea.client.id=21&ea.campaign.id=215](https://e-activist.com/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=21&ea.campaign.id=215)

Two ways you can help

We will stand up for the countryside at next year's general election and we need your help now.



Find out all our latest news and how to get involved at

www.cpre.org.uk/how-you-can-help/take-action/countryside

Downloadable booklets on planning



Downloadable from: www.planninghelp.org.uk/

www.planninghelp.org.uk

Durham Examination in Public

The Durham Plan has entered this crucial stage. The Planning Inspectorate has appointed Mr Harold Stevens as the Inspector and proceedings got underway on 8th October at the Durham County Cricket Club at Chester Le Street.

This is the stage when everyone who has put in objections by the appropriate stage has the opportunity to present their case to the Inspector. In some ways watching the process was as interesting as the content. If you would like an observer's view go to the CPRE Durham website at www.cpredurham.org.uk, click on the EiP box then on "EiP Latest News" and scroll down. The notes are not meant to be a detailed record, but an impression of events and observations about the procedure which may be of interest to those with an EIP in the future.

CPRE Durham has been working with a number of other organisations. Most of the issues centre around Durham City. At the risk of oversimplifying, the campaign groups consider Durham County Council should be using the Office of National Statistics Population Projections for 2012, rather than the 2008 and 2011 ones they are using. The groups consider the earlier figures result in too high a population figure and consequently too high a housing allocation. The Council believes it requires 31,000 plus houses, 4 of the campaign groups independently came to the conclusion about 20,000 are all that are required. The groups

believe that with this lower number there is no need to use the 2 Durham City Green Belt sites of Arnison and Sniperly for housing so they do not need to be removed from the Green Belt and in addition the Western and Northern Relief Roads are also not required. Basically the Council's and campaign groups' differing views were discussed in depth with the Inspector adding his questions when he wanted more information. Now he will have to consider the differences when he compiles his report after the Examination has finished early next year. At the time of writing many more topics have yet to be covered so it is early days yet.

Gillan Gibson
Secretary, CPRE Durham

An Examination in Public involves an Inspector considering whether a Plan is "sound". In other words has it been/is it:

- Positively prepared
- Justified
- Effective
- Consistent

If it does not meet these criteria it is "unsound" and this can have major repercussions.

At the Examination there is a large square of tables. The Inspector and his staff sit on one side, the Council use most of another side and everyone else uses the remaining places. How many places are taken all depends on the topic. Those who sit at the table will have commented during Plan consultations and so receive an invitation to participate. Anyone can sit in the public seating but they can only observe.

The Inspector chairs the proceedings, collects information, consider what is said and then writes a report saying whether the plan is "sound".



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CPRENortheast>

NFU Mutual have supported CPRE nationally for a number of years and a few years ago began sponsoring this *Newsletter*. As part of this they value feedback and would be grateful if you would complete a short on-line questionnaire. As a thank you, if you'd like the chance to win a £25

NFU Mutual online Survey

M&S gift card, please leave your name and contact details when you complete the questionnaire.

To join in either copy the address above into your browser or go to www.cpredurham.org.uk and there should be a link off the Home Page.



Send us your waste of space photos

All we need from you is an image of the site (as simple as a quick snap on your smartphone) and an address of the site including the postcode and street address. Just send us this and we will do the rest.

Our aim is to upload each nomination to our #WasteOfSpace map the same day it is submitted (or the next Monday if submitted at the weekend). So make sure you keep an eye out for your #WasteOfSpace nomination on the map so you can share it with your friends and family on Facebook and Twitter once it is published.

More housing is needed in England and CPRE supports the Government's policy that brownfield land should be used for new homes.

However current planning policy doesn't prioritise building new homes on brownfield land before building in the countryside. More needs to be done to use suitable sites in our towns and cities rather than forcing development into our precious green spaces.



Making solar work for town and countryside



The roof of the Bentley factory Crewe used for generating solar energy Photo: © Lightsource

In summer 2013, the Government introduced changes to planning policy on renewable energy. The aim was to create a better balance between protecting the countryside, tackling climate change and the concerns of local communities.

One year on, our research has revealed a 20% drop in planning approvals for wind turbines and solar farms in the countryside. This has helped reduce some landscape and other local impacts, but there is too much national political intervention in planning decisions. Our research published in our report: *The countryside generation game*, has found there is little evidence from appeals decisions that the policy changes have embedded the right balance between providing low-carbon energy and local environmental concerns. It's difficult to separate the effect of the planning policy changes from Communities

Secretary Eric Pickles's decisions on planning applications.

Better and clearer planning

The lack of clear planning for renewable energy is unhelpful and confusing for communities, developers and investors.

Better, we think, to have a robust planning system that properly manages renewable energy development, taking account of local impacts – without Ministerial intervention.

Without clearer planning policies, notably changing the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), better strategic planning, and incentives for renewable energy on brownfield sites and commercial buildings, the countryside is still at risk as the pressure from energy infrastructure grows.

Solar energy on brownfield land

There is enough space for more than 250,000 hectares of solar panels on existing commercial roofs or located on brownfield land unsuitable for housing. That's an area almost twice the size of London that could help protect our precious countryside, while producing the low carbon energy we need. It's positive that the Government wants to stimulate a significant expansion of solar electricity on commercial roofs. However, major barriers need to be addressed if this vision is to become reality, like the complexities created by building ownership and tenancy

arrangements.

There are those that will say that solar electricity on buildings will cost more than in fields, so it will give less renewable energy for the finite subsidy pot. But it doesn't have to be so. For example, subsidies focused on integrating solar energy into new buildings should be more cost effective than fixing panels on older buildings, especially as costs come down as more integrated solar energy is installed. On a broader point, simply looking at subsidies doesn't give the whole story on costs. For instance, if a solar farm is poorly sited or designed then any local impacts – such as effects on the landscape or wildlife – will have costs attached to them outside the subsidy system. All the associated costs should be factored in when considering costs and benefits to society.

The way forward

The planning system needs to be better reconciled with the subsidy system. This should include exploring how subsidies can further encourage renewables in locations where impacts on the countryside are lower, like using brownfield land and commercial roofs for solar energy and integrating solar electricity into new buildings – both new commercial buildings and new homes. Other fiscal incentives such as tax relief could also be used in tandem with subsidy stimulus.

The planning system and subsidies cannot, on their own,

solve our energy 'trilemma' of providing the low-carbon, affordable and secure energy that we need.

However, our report's recommendations will help protect our countryside from increasing pressure from energy developments while we go about it. The report, *The countryside generation game* can be downloaded at: <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/energy-and-waste/climate-change-and-energy/item/3677-the-countryside-generation-game>

For more information go to: <http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/3689-making-better-use-of-brownfield-land-for-renewable-energy>
Nic Clack, Senior Energy Campaigner, CPRE National Officer

And the local perspective:- There are proposals for a solar farm of 40,000 panels on this field, the long yellow triangle, by the A19/A1231 junction in Sunderland's Green Belt. CPRE Durham is watching for any application.

Field proposed for solar farm (yellow triangle)



Opencast update

Whittonstall

For the past five years residents in the small community of Whittonstall have campaigned against a proposal to carry out open cast mining near their village (see photo). What the photo doesn't show is that the proposed site is widely visible and overlooks the Derwent Valley - hundreds of people including many tourist attractions would have a grandstand view of the opencast workings, not to mention the dust, traffic and noise which the site would generate.

After a five year campaign, the planning application was to have been heard by Northumberland County Council in June 2014, but the application was withdrawn without explanation just days before it was due for discussion. The reason for the sudden change is not known.

The case against the opencast was solid - this is Green Belt land, an area of outstanding natural beauty, and widely visible over the surrounding area. The level of objection was high and included many businesses that depend on tourism for their viability.

Such was the strategic importance of this application that the local action group was supported by both Northumberland and Durham CPRE members. However, it was the action group members themselves who did an enormous amount of work to oppose the opencast over the five year period and displayed high levels of professionalism and dedication at all times. Without their efforts we

could now be looking at a new opencast coal mine overlooking the Derwent Valley, probably leading to other nearby sites being subject to further opencast applications.

The threat to Whittonstall has not gone completely, as a further planning application could be submitted at any time. Such is the lob-sided nature of our planning system that developers can re-submit planning applications as often as they wish, and with the ability to appeal against refusals. Once permission is given, however, there is no appeal for objectors. This process can blight communities for years. It remains a gaping wound in our system of justice, and is one of the many reasons that CPRE needs to remain resolute in fighting to protect and conserve the countryside we all value.

*Les Ashworth
CPRE Northumberland*

Other opencast

Birklands - Gateshead
So far there has been no notice of appeal.

Bradley - Co Durham
The first Appeal was dismissed but the Inspector's Report was challenged by UK Coal and a 2nd inquiry began on 7th October 2014. Pitch Wilson attended and it is noted UK Coal are now called Juniper (No3) Ltd, a name which relates to the restructuring of the company since it went into liquidation. Pitch has more information for those who would like

it and there is report pm page 18.

Field House, Pittington - Co Durham
This was refused, against an officers recommendation to approve, and so far no appeal has been lodged.

Marley Hill - Gateshead
Pitch attended and spoke at both planning committee meetings.

Gateshead Council was minded to grant permission on the two thirds of the site within its remit, and Durham County Council refused permission for the one third of the site it covers. Pitch will monitor to see if there is an appeal.
*Pitch Wilson
Chair, CPRE Duham*



Whittonstall site

Bradley Opencast - 2nd Inquiry



October 2014

CPRE Durham Branch has just completed giving evidence at a 3 week Inquiry into an application to opencast mine a site near Dipton in the Derwent Valley, known as the Bradley site by UK Coal. The first notice of UK Coal's intention was an exhibition of the proposals in Dipton over 7 years ago. Subsequently a Public Inquiry was held in 2011 and the appeal dismissed.

In dismissing the this appeal the Inspector stated in conclusion that the winning of coal by surface mining would have a material and detrimental effect on the settled environment of the Pont Valley and

the wider Derwent Valley.

Some months later however, UK Coal mounted a legal challenge on the interpretation of the original Inspector's statements in his conclusion regarding presumption against the proposal. The High Court ruled that the decision should be quashed and the public inquiry held again. Three years on from the first inquiry, therefore, a subsequent inquiry has been held with a different Inspector. This has now taken place and lasted for 3 weeks.

UK Coal had 2 barristers and numerous back-up staff, also specialist consultants on many aspects, such as landscape, environment, need, etc.

CPRE were represented by the chairman of Durham Branch, Pitch Wilson, who also represented Derwent Valley Protection Society (DVPS). He had Rule 6 status which meant that he had the facility to cross examine UK Coal's witnesses.

Durham County Council were very much constrained in their opposition because the planning officers had recommended granting permission. However, Council Members overturned the recommendation. Council Officers therefore, were unable to represent the Council at the appeal and Durham was represented by a barrister and 2 consultants.

The local people were very well organised, enthusiastic and well versed in their knowledge of both dealing with another Inquiry and providing well founded written and spoken evidence; this is probably one of the most important aspects of the possible success of an opposition against a planning proposal. Over 50 residents gave evidence and attended regularly throughout the hearing.

Before the Inquiry the Inspector set out what she saw as the main issues regarding the proposal on the environment:

- landscape character and visual impact;
- levels of amenity in the locality (for residents and others) especially in regard to outlook, dust and noise;
- any other environmental effects especially with regard to ecology, heritage assets, hydrology and traffic movements;

- Whether the proposal could be made environmentally acceptable by way of planning conditions or obligations; and
- If the proposal could not be made environmentally acceptable by such means, whether it would provide national, local or community benefits which would clearly outweigh the remaining adverse impacts.

CPRE's case revolved around the need to protect the countryside and the importance of the site within the Derwent Valley; the history of opencast applications within the Valley; and the danger of creating a precedent. There have been 10 previous opencast applications and appeals within the valley at which Pitch had given evidence. All were dismissed on the grounds that the amenity was of greater importance than the need for the coal.

The evidence given by all parties was virtually the same as that given 3 years ago. However, it also included the fact that the area in question is being designated as Green Belt to bring it in line with the rest of the Derwent Valley, and also the Groundwork Trust is in the process of receiving a £3.7m grant towards enhancing the heritage, wildlife and nature conservation, and benefiting tourism within the area.

It is now in the Inspector's hands to review the evidence. She indicated that her report and decision would be available early in 2015.

*Pitch Wilson
Chair, CPRE Durham*