



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Parliamentary News: December 2009

National Policy Statements should reinforce countryside protection

On 9 November, the Government published its long-awaited consultation papers on energy infrastructure. CPRE wants to ensure that the Government's proposals do not lead to decisions on major infrastructure projects which give insufficient weight to evidence of environmental harm. The new National Policy Statements (NPSs) need to reinforce, not override, established policies to protect the environment and tackle climate change if they are to deliver the sustainable development we need.

Stop pylons intruding on our most beautiful landscapes

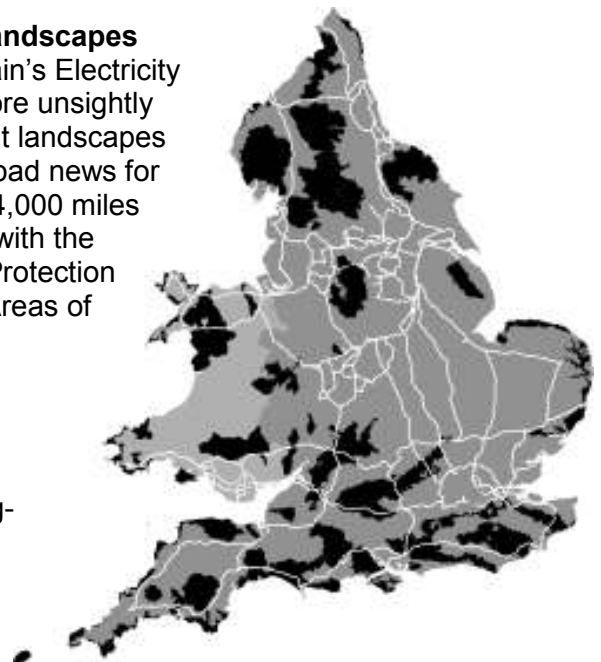
One of the draft NPSs deals specifically with Britain's Electricity Networks Infrastructure and proposes to erect more unsightly towering pylons in a number of the most important landscapes across the country. These new proposals will be bad news for a countryside already criss-crossed by well over 4,000 miles of existing pylons. CPRE has formed an alliance with the Campaign for National Parks, Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales and the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, calling for a 'smart' electricity grid which reflects the value of the countryside by minimising damage to our most beautiful landscapes.

We are calling on the Government to begin a long-term national programme of investment to bury around 8% of existing transmission lines which currently intrude upon designated landscapes, such as National Parks and AONBs (this equates to approximately 350 miles).

They include:

- the line from Dungeness in Kent, to Exeter, running through two National Parks and three AONBs;
- the line running through Snowdonia National Park, and by the North Wales coast;
- the line running through the Peak District National Park at Woodhead.

We also want the Government to ensure that a presumption against erecting new lines in our most treasured landscapes is adopted in the final NPS.



Existing transmission lines across England and Wales, with designated landscapes in black.

We urge parliamentarians to respond to the NPS consultation and press the Government to:

- remove pylons from our most important landscapes by launching a programme of investment in underground transmission lines; and
- adopt a presumption against further development of transmission lines within our most valued landscapes in the final statement.

Celebrating National Parks

This month marks the 60th anniversary of Royal Assent for the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. CPRE has been celebrating the anniversary and we were delighted, as reported in our June newsletter, at the Government's announcement in March that the South Downs would become England's 10th National Park. This welcome decision was the culmination of many years of campaigning – the final Confirmation Order for the park was signed by the Secretary of State last month.

But this anniversary year is about looking forward, as well as celebrating success. National Parks remain as important and relevant now as when they were first created; possibly even more so, given the growing development pressure on our countryside, and the increasing scarcity of tranquil open space accessible to everyone.

Ahead of the General Election, we are calling on all parties to reaffirm strong support for National Parks and other protected landscapes. They can do this by endorsing the work of Natural England, which is examining the case for extending the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks, and by supporting the creation and extension of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including along the English border with Wales and in the Forest of Dean. It is also vitally important that National Policy Statements for major infrastructure do not add to the pressures on our most important landscapes.

Season's Greetings

CPRE wishes you all a very happy Christmas, and would like to say a big thank you for your continuing support over the last year.

We're here to help

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www.cpre.org.uk

Stop the Drop visits Parliament

Between 26th and 30th October, you may have seen our *Stop the Drop* anti-litter and fly-tipping exhibition in Parliament's Upper Waiting Hall. *Stop the Drop* is CPRE's current 'flagship' campaign, led by our president, Bill Bryson. We would like to thank all those who visited the stand and spoke to our staff, and particularly Joan Walley for hosting the exhibition.

Litter remains a real problem in the countryside. Litter rates in many areas are 'unsatisfactory', according to Keep Britain Tidy's own assessment, and, worryingly, roadside litter has become a significant problem. A combination of better education, enforcement and incentives to stop people dropping litter is needed.

In particular, CPRE wants to see high-profile, sustained national educational campaigns on litter, with government, industry and others working in partnership. We also support a national deposit scheme for drinks containers, including plastic and glass bottles and cans. Government could do more to encourage councils to use their powers to punish those who litter and fly-tip, and ensure that those who throw litter from vehicles can be fined.

Show your support for *Stop the Drop* ahead of the General Election by signing our Early Day Motion on 'Stop the Drop Campaign: Action on Litter and Fly-tipping', which has cross-party support, and which sets out a programme of action to help tackle our litter problems.

Opencast coal-mining

CPRE is concerned that the recent growth in opencast coal-mining is wrecking some of our most beautiful landscapes and shattering tranquillity. Opencast mining can also have a devastating effect on wildlife, and hinder efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

We were disappointed when the Secretary of State for Communities, John Denham, allowed a massive new opencast coal mine in Huntington Lane in Shropshire, which will devastate part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Please write to Ed Miliband and John Denham urging them to recognise that extracting and burning more fossil fuels is not in the public interest, has detrimental effects on the countryside and, without proven carbon capture technology, will only hinder the fight against climate change.