



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Parliamentary News: March 2010

General Election 2010: Make the Countryside Count!

As you will know, the General Election is imminent. CPRE is campaigning to ensure that the countryside – valued by so many of us whether we live in town or country - is not forgotten in the heat of the election campaign. In the remaining weeks before the poll, CPRE nationally, and our branches across England, will be asking candidates of all parties to support our manifesto for the General Election, enclosed here.

A positive vision for the future

Our manifesto is drawn from our vision for the countryside in 2026, CPRE's centenary year. This vision looks forward optimistically to a countryside even more beautiful, tranquil and widely enjoyed than today. But to get there, we will need politicians of all parties to take the right decisions in the next five years – and beyond.

Our manifesto calls for action in three areas:

- **21st century planning:** planning is one of the most powerful tools we have to protect the environment, while also delivering the development society needs. But too often those in power have viewed our planning system as an obstacle, rather than the way to ensure the right development happens in the right places. CPRE's manifesto calls on politicians to give clear support for planning, back higher targets for both housing and commercial development on brownfield land, and give strong support to investment in low carbon travel and public transport, in both urban and rural areas;
- **Protecting the human habitat:** the next generation of MPs must be steadfast champions of the ordinary countryside as well as our most beautiful landscapes, too often threatened by development, neglect and the growing impacts of climate change. CPRE's manifesto calls on politicians to make our most valued landscapes 'no-go areas' for intrusive development and support work towards limited extensions and additions to England's network of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Politicians should also strongly support our Green Belts (more on this overleaf), resisting pressure to alter their boundaries to allow sprawl, and supporting the case for creating new areas of Green Belt;
- **Action on litter and fly-tipping:** a rising tide of litter disfigures too much of our countryside, villages, towns and cities. We are calling on politicians to back high-profile campaigns to change people's behaviour on littering, give councils more support in using their powers to tackle litter, and support a national deposit scheme for drinks containers, to reduce litter and boost recycling.

Please read our manifesto and let us know if you support what we are calling for.
Thank you!

A Greener Future

CPRE recently teamed up with Natural England to launch the results of the first major environmental survey of Green Belt land in the report *Green Belts: a Greener Future*.

The report indicates that the enforcement of planning policy protecting the Green Belt is fundamental to its future. More effective land management to benefit people and nature in Green Belts would be a valuable addition to the policy. We found that better management of Green Belts would help to deliver essential environmental services, including attractive landscapes, wildlife rich habitats, places for recreation, healthy soils, fresh water, woodland and improved air quality, for the 30 million people (or 60% of England's population) living in the towns and cities which Green Belts surround.

Helen Phillips, Chief Executive at Natural England said: "The Green Belt is an important environmental resource that, managed effectively, can help tackle climate change, support wildlife and provide health and leisure opportunities for millions to enjoy."

Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive of CPRE, added: "This report confirms that the countryside around our largest and most historic towns and cities is a vital, but fragile, environmental asset."

CPRE urges parliamentarians to press the Department for Communities and Local Government to continue to enforce existing Green Belt planning policy controlling new development (PPG2), and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to give more prominence to the needs of the Green Belt and other countryside close to urban areas in its environmental and rural development programmes.

The full Green Belt report and summary are available on CPRE's website, www.cpre.org.uk, or you can contact Sam Redding for more information.

We're here to help

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Find out more about our work by visiting www.cpre.org.uk

National Policy Statements

CPRE greeted the publication of the draft National Policy Statements (NPSs) last November cautiously. While we are supportive of NPSs in principle, we want the final statements to sit alongside and reinforce well established existing planning policies and not to override them.

We recently submitted evidence on this to the inquiries by the Energy and Climate Change and Transport Select Committees on the proposals for Energy NPSs and a Ports NPS respectively.

The issue of 'need' for new infrastructure is a serious cause for concern. The draft Ports NPS, for example, admits that there is currently sufficient capacity to cope with predicted demand for the next twenty years or more, but the NPS opens up the prospect of capacity being increased above and beyond what we now have. We are calling for an urgent redrafting of both NPSs.

In both cases, we are concerned that not enough detail had been provided on how the Infrastructure Planning Commission would assess national and local priorities. At the moment it would seem that, however serious, negative local impacts of applications could never outweigh the national need for more ports or energy generating capacity.

We eagerly await the reports from both Committees, and are hopeful that the draft NPSs will be effectively debated in Parliament, so that widely held concerns can be appropriately aired, allowing for better scrutiny of the proposals. CPRE intends to brief ahead of any debate.

We would ask parliamentarians to push our key concerns with the appropriate Secretary of State for each of the NPSs. Please contact us for further details if you need to.

Show your support for *Stop the Drop in Parliament*

Thank you to all MPs who have signed Early Day Motion 485 on litter and fly-tipping. Over 120 MPs from all parties have so far shown their support for the EDM, tabled by Joan Walley MP, which highlights CPRE's *Stop the Drop* anti litter and fly-tipping campaign, led by our President Bill Bryson. The latest figures show that councils spend a shocking £1.9 million a day clearing up litter. The EDM sets out actions the Government could take to tackle this costly problem, which spoils too many of our rural and urban areas. If you haven't signed the EDM please do so before the session ends, and help send a message to Ministers that a stronger approach is needed.