



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England

## Avonside Branch Newsletter

Issue 1

SPRING 2010

Registered charity number 1078047

### Village of the Year



Congratulations to Backwell,  
2009 winners and current  
holders of the Wills cup  
(large villages)

Chew Magna current holders of the  
Armstrong cup (small villages)



All the winners can be viewed on our website at [www.cpreavonside.org.uk](http://www.cpreavonside.org.uk)

After many years, Calor have withdrawn their sponsorship and instead they are going to promote a scheme to assist in reducing rural fuel poverty. CPRE Avonside however has decided to continue with the local competition and has identified the necessary funds. We will also be re-introducing the CPRE plaques so that villages will have a more lasting reminder of their success. Please encourage your village to enter. This competition is for more than for a "Best Kept" village, it's about demonstrating that the village and its people are well cared for, with a sense of community and thriving societies, clubs and activities. We hope that in 2010 more villages than ever will take part! The deadline for entries is the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquility and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

## North Somerset Planning Strategy to be tested in Weston

2010 promises to be the year when the North Somerset Council (NSC) planning strategy of Employment-led Sustainable Development gets its first major test....and the omens are not favourable. The owners of the former RAF Locking (Locking Parklands) have received planning consent for Phase 1 of their scheme and are starting on site now. The good thing is that the early start means that Government money is available for much needed infrastructure....the bad thing is that in driving through the application both the site owners and NSC ignored major objections from CPRE, Locking Parish Council and local residents groups requesting that any development accommodated both resident protected bat populations and an established well-wooded nature reserve designated by the RAF and sited adjoining one of the areas of ex-RAF quarters. Despite the policy of employment-led, this initial phase of development is to include no fewer than 100 houses, with no prospect of any of these - due to the development time-scheduling - being occupied by people actually working in the commercial elements also included in the Phase 1 planning consent. Which means in all likelihood.....yet more cars heading for the M5 junction at peak times. This seems to be in direct contravention of NSC's flagship planning policy to REDUCE out-commuting and go greener. We will be monitoring how things develop.

Of course, its not just groups like CPRE and anxious residents and Parish Councils who have been watching the RAF Locking development with interest.....just down the road the owners of Weston Airfield, Persimmon Homes, have been looking for an opportunity to obtain planning consent to build houses without the requirement to provide jobs as well. They have obtained planning consent for Phase 1 of their development scheme - which is completely commercial; good as far as it goes - - - but we are still waiting for them to actually DO something to implement it. And now we understand that a planning application from them is imminent for Phase 2, which comprises 900 houses. With no local jobs created for the residents of these houses, that means - according to NSC's own multiplier of jobs required per house - the best part of 1500 cars heading for J21 each morning.

Rest assured CPRE will be keeping a close eye on events.

*Cliff Dumbell*

## Bristol Airport

Bristol International Airport who have recently changed their name to Bristol Airport, last year submitted a planning application to almost double annual passengers numbers to 10 million requiring extension to the terminal building and other considerable major development.

The application has been considered by all the North Somerset Council Planning Committees and recently recommended for approval by the South Area Planning Committee in whose Parish the airport sits. CPRE has monitored and responded to the development through the Master Planning stage and all the various individual proposals. It has been a member of the Stop Bristol Airport Expansion alliance group from its inception taking a consistent stand to limit the damage of Bristol Airport expansion on local communities and the countryside. CPRE believe the current application will impact detrimentally on North Somerset and the wider area and have supported the Stop Bristol Airport Expansion (SBAE) group in its request to the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) to 'call-in' the planning application for consideration by the Secretary of State.

*Georgie Bigg*

## National Grid arrogance electrifies activists

It probably hasn't escaped your attention that National Grid are proposing to build a new overhead power line through North Somerset using pylons that appear twice as tall as the existing pylons, which are owned by Western Power Distribution. Town and Parish Councils along the whole route and many environmental groups, including CPRE, are also up in arms about the proposals.

Eon is proposing to build a nuclear power station at Hinkley Point that is bigger than any power station yet connected to the National Grid as it produces six times as much power as the existing Hinkley power station. To take all of that power away from Hinkley, National Grid propose building a new 400kV overhead power line from Hinkley to the Seabank power station at Avonmouth. They are consulting the public on their plans in two stages, the first of which took place at the end of last year.

National Grid has been heavily criticised for paying lip service to the need for consultation. They did not provide enough information for people to make an informed choice about alternatives. Before starting the consultation they studied overhead line and other possible methods of power transmission but only issued a sanitised version of their study towards the end of the consultation period. The study did not consider environmental costs and had several other flaws. The methods selected for consultation by National Grid included a choice of two broad corridors for overhead lines with the possibility of removing the existing 132kV line. Removal of the existing line would need to include a spur to Brindsea feeding a big new sub-station to service Western Power Distribution's remaining power supplies.

CPRE's main concern is the landscape impact of the much taller pylons, particularly over the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), across which the existing line of smaller pylons already passes.

CPRE's SW Regional Energy topic group prepared our response. Members of the group are CPRE members from across the south west including several engineers. The group sent a holding response because National Grid failed to explain why they rejected the connection through the Bristol Channel, which is one of the methods that we prefer. National Grid do not want to use the Bristol Channel route because the largest project so far built anywhere in the world that uses the most suitable technology carries only one-tenth of the power of Hinkley. Their study report also says that that technology cannot respond quickly enough to fault conditions and changes in load.

Undergrounding the cables is CPRE's other preferred method. National Grid's response to this is that it would cost about 12 times more than overhead pylons. However, National Grid's guidelines do require them to underground cables in AONBs.

The new Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) will decide whether to approve National Grid's proposal. The IPC is controversial because it decides matters independent of any democratically elected politicians. National Grid have registered the project with the IPC and expect the decision in 2012. In January the IPC criticised National Grid's poor consultation allaying some early fears the IPC would rubber-stamp projects. Following this criticism National Grid have organised further consultation which includes meetings with individual groups and a larger meeting chaired by the IPC.

*Dave Gray*





## South Gloucestershire Council's Core Strategy Pre-Submission

South Gloucestershire District CPRE Chair, Marilyn Palmer, believes that the new document is a big improvement on the draft Core Strategy which looked at ways of allocating the Government's figure of 32,800 homes. Because of the uncertainty in finalising the South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and the Council's strong objections to the high levels and distribution of housing development proposed by the Government, the new version concentrates on identifying sites for 21,500 houses. This means that the impact on the Green Belt could be far less than previously feared. There is now no mention of development in the Green Belt to the East of Kingswood. The Core Strategy proposes that the Green Belt will remain unchanged except to the west of the M32 where land will be released from the Green Belt subject to the delivery of the Stoke Gifford Transport Link for a new neighbourhood. Exceptional circumstances will need to be demonstrated to justify further amendments to the Green Belt.

The uncertainties relating to the RSS have meant that the Council is faced with speculative planning applications seeking to bring forward housing sites (eg at Oldland Common) ahead of the RSS being confirmed. An up to date policy framework is required to deal with these planning applications, as well as to help guide development on sustainable housing sites the Council considers should be delivered.

What is proposed? The Core Strategy outlines how sustainable communities, with the appropriate facilities and the right infrastructure, will be achieved. The Council says that these will be designed to a high quality and will be built to reflect the latest environmental standards.

The Core Strategy also includes policies to enhance and protect our town centres and ensure that there is sufficient land available for new employment. The Core Strategy proposes 21,500 homes to be built in total between 2006 and 2026. Around 2,600 have already been built. And of the remaining 18,900, over 12,200 have already been granted planning permission or allocated as a housing development in the Council's Local Plan from 2006.

In addition to the South Gloucestershire Local Plan sites, the key areas now proposed in the Draft Core Strategy are:

- A new neighbourhood of up to 1,750 homes, local services and facilities at Cribbs Causeway and south of Filton Airfield.
- A new neighbourhood west of the M32 of up to 2,000 homes at Stoke Gifford, subject to the delivery of a new congestion-relieving transport link serving Stoke Gifford.
- Subject to a new sewer connection being provided to deal with existing and potential future flooding problems, a new neighbourhood of 2,400 homes at North Yate is envisaged.
- approximately 500 homes are also planned to the north of Thornbury, adjacent to the Castle School site.

Public consultation on the Pre-Submission Publication Draft Core Strategy has now commenced and will run until July 2010. The document is available on-line or in South Gloucestershire public libraries and One Stop Shops.

*Marilyn Palmer*

Reports on the other Core Strategies around the Area will be in the next edition of our newsletter. For further information please contact us.

## Premature development applications

We are seeing a flood of premature applications anticipating approval of the South West Regional Spatial Strategy including 'Ashton Park' – the south west urban extension of 9,500 homes in Green Belt and numerous others around the Bristol boundary. Communities are out in force campaigning against all these proposals. CPRE is responding to the applications and working with the various groups under the Save our Green Spaces alliance. See <http://www.saveourgreenspaces.org/>

## Management of HGVs in the South Area of North Somerset

CPRE is a founding and participating member of the Action Group Traffic Management for The Villages (TMTV). This Group, comprising the CPRE, a number of Parish Councils, The Mendip Society and various concerned Action Groups was brought into existence some eight years ago when the Banwell Area Traffic Study was being progressed. This study raised alarm amongst the Parishes and their residents in the South Area of North Somerset because of the already noticeable problem of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) traversing the area and using many small and unsuitable rural roads becoming much worse. These roads meander their way through the many villages in and around the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the quality of an exceptional countryside is being destroyed. TMTV of course recognised that some HGVs have to use the roads for access to farms and businesses in the area but felt strongly that the non delivering HGVs should be persuaded by signage to use the recommended Freight Routes rather than the small rural roads.

Well, at last, after a number of most helpful meetings and consultations with North Somerset Councillors, an important step forward in achieving this aim has been put in place by North Somerset Council (NSC). A section of the A368 now has a permanent weight restriction of 7.5tonnes for non delivering HGVs. The section of road between Churchill and Burrington Combe is a strategic link in the HGV movements and the restriction

has substantially reduced the numbers of non delivering HGVs passing through the area. A recent survey in November of 2009 has revealed that the numbers of HGVs over 7.5tonnes using the road are just under half of the original numbers before the scheme was introduced. It had been hoped that Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES) would have been able to work with the NSC timetable and that the section of the A368 from Burrington eastwards to the A37 at Chelwood would similarly have the restriction. This would have protected further the AONB villagers of Blagdon, Compton Martin, West Harptree and Bishop Sutton. Also part of this scheme was to have a weight restriction on the B3130 through Chew Magna and Winford, thus protecting those villages as well as Chew Stoke. TMTV, with the CPRE, will continue to work with NSC, B&NES and the villages in bringing this scheme to reality and will also have further dialogue with Somerset County Council to ensure that proper signage is provided at Green Ore on the A39 warning HGV drivers that there is a weight restriction ahead. NSC will also be informing the satellite navigation map providers that the restriction is now permanently in place and hopefully the HGV drivers who may not be aware of the restriction will have better information.

*Stephen Edwards  
CPRE and TMTV*

## Bristol City Football Stadium

Bristol City Council has approved the planning application for a 30,000 seater Stadium on a new site at Ashton Vale despite fierce opposition from local people. Local residents have done an enormous amount of work particularly providing evidence for the traffic issues this development will impose. The proposal is outside the current Local Plan, it is not mentioned in the South West Regional Spatial Strategy and is completely opposite to Bristol's current and proposed policies on Green Belt and Green Spaces.

Being outside the current Local Plan the application needed to be referred to the Secretary of State who has now 'waived' it through although North Somerset Council is still to make a decision on the part of the Stadium application which provides access to the Stadium and car parking. A considerable amount of the car parking is proposed for North Somerset which will directly impact on local communities, particularly Long Ashton where it may even mean a permit scheme for residents.

CPRE objected to the application and has spoken at Bristol City Council and North Somerset Council Planning Committee meetings. Planning officers have admitted that without North Somerset's approval it would require a re-think.

The application has been considered by North Somerset Council Central Area Planning Committee and recommended refusal but the application is still go to the Planning & Regulatory Committee for a final decision.

## Public Inquiry into Failand Proposed Development of 500 houses

Following an appeal by Fox Land Property (FLP) into the non determination by North Somerset Council (NSC) of their Planning Application at Failand, the Secretary of State consented to a Public Inquiry which took place between the 9th March and the 31st March 2010.

The Inquiry was originally scheduled for 6 days but then extended as the parties were unable to complete within the time scale because of the inability of NSC and FLP to agree Section 106 arrangements and conditions.

The proposal is in the Green Belt. The developers are arguing that the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy creates the very special circumstances to overcome the restrictions of the Green Belt.

The Local Authority, the Parish Councils of Long Ashton, within whose boundary the site is located, and Wraxall and Failand Parish Council whose residents are the most directly affected, fought the application at the Inquiry.

CPRE objected to the application and also spoke at the Inquiry.

It is a significant development in this case that, notwithstanding North Somerset Council's own action in this matter, the Wraxall and Failand Parish Council raised the funds to commission legal and technical expertise to fight the appeal at the Inquiry by increasing the Precept and by becoming a Rule 6 party. This was in addition to monies raised by the local residents group, established at the first hint of the proposal, to respond to the pre-consultation stage evidence.

The present understanding of Green Belt is that boundaries can be moved in very special circumstances. Should this appeal succeed then a precedent will have been established such that developers can cut holes in the Green Belt. The Secretary of State is due to issue his decision on or before the 16th August 2010.

*Chris Ambrose*

## Government Sustainability Appraisal required for South West

On 25th September 2009 the Government announced that it would carry out a new Sustainability Appraisal of proposed changes to the South West Regional Spatial Strategy (SWRSS).

In the light of the High Court's judgment on challenges to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, the Government has said it wishes to be satisfied that the Sustainability Appraisal for the South West tested reasonable alternatives to Areas of Search for strategic housing, business and other development proposed in the Strategy. It has therefore decided to carry out a new Sustainability Appraisal, to ensure that alternatives to its proposals are properly tested. The new Appraisal was expected early 2010 but is still awaited.

In the light of the Appraisal's finding, the Government will then decide what action to take to progress the Strategy.

CPRE are still pursuing the following issues as the most important changes required before the draft SWRSS is 'signed off':

- Reduce the number of new houses allocated and remove the need for a minimum number of houses.
- A sequential approach across local authority boundaries.
- Commitment to regenerating urban areas and using previously developed land first.
- Brownfield first policy enforced.
- Ensure priority is for fully funded affordable homes.

*Georgie Bigg*

## New report: Green Belts: A greener future

A new CPRE report examines to what extent Green Belts are both fulfilling their purposes and positive land use objectives. A summary document of the findings asks how this vast national asset might better connect urban centres to the wider countryside and to food production; how it can help us to tackle the huge challenges posed by a changing climate; and how it can be valued as part of a nationwide ecological network providing breathing places for people and for nature long into the future.

The reports are available through the CPRE national website at

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/planning/green-belts/green-belts-campaign-update>

The findings from the Bristol Area Green Belt Survey can be found in the 'Avon Green Belt Fact Sheet' which is on the CPRE local website at <http://www.cpreavonside.org.uk>

*Georgie Bigg*

## Big Reward!

We are fortunate to live in such a thriving area, having the benefits of the cities of Bristol and Bath together with beautiful countryside on our doorstep. The balance between town and country is a fragile one and there are constant challenges and pressures that CPRE need to rapidly respond to if we are not to see changes that would damage our local environment. CPRE Avonside has a dedicated team of volunteers but we need others, particularly in the Bath and North East Somerset area. Do please contact us if you value and care for your local environment and want to help retain it for future generations. We have a wide range of volunteering opportunities and any help you can give will be of value. Please contact us.

*Georgie Bigg*

## Oldbury Power Station Proposals

South Gloucestershire District Committee CPRE has responded to the consultation on the Draft National Policy Statement for Oldbury Power Station with a strong objection to the proposed four cooling towers which Horizon Nuclear Power suggest could be up to 200 metres high. If so, they will blight the countryside and be seen from miles around. If there is insufficient cooling water available at this site then another site should be considered, because the cooling towers would be completely unacceptable at this location.

With regard to flooding, the consultation document claims that Oldbury is no worse than other possible sites, but we are very sceptical about this claim as the site is in a flood zone (3). A couple of years ago at a meeting with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority regarding the Oldbury site, Sir Anthony Cleaver, the NDA Chairman at that time, replied that there would not be another power station at Oldbury because the site would be under water in 100 years.

Another crucial point is that the impact on the Severn Estuary if both Hinckley and Oldbury are built would be more severe than the impact of each of them separately. Likewise if a Severn Barrage is built. It is very important that there should be a detailed study of the environmental impact on the combination.

Finally, we expressed concern that the local infrastructure around the Oldbury site is simply not adequate to cope with the heavy lorries and additional traffic during the construction of a new power station on the scale proposed.

This was the first in a long series of consultation responses that we will be required to make.

*Marilyn Palmer*

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## Events

**North Somerset Show, Wraxall, North Somerset, Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2010** – meet the team at our stand and catch up on the news – we look forward to seeing you there.

For information on the show see: <http://www.north-somerset-show.org.uk>

**Festival of Nature, Bristol Harbourside – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

CPRE will have a stand at this event organised by the Bristol Natural History Consortium.

Come and talk to us at the Environment Group Marquee. For information on the Festival see:

<http://www.bnhc.org.uk/home/festival.html>

**CPRE North Somerset AGM, Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010** at Burrington Village Hall.

Topic – National Grid pylon proposals.

For further information see [www.cpreavonside.org.uk](http://www.cpreavonside.org.uk)

Email [info@cpreavonside.org.uk](mailto:info@cpreavonside.org.uk) or telephone 01275 857746.

## Stop Press!

### Skies awash with light pollution

Results of our latest survey now available. Contact us for detailed survey information or go to

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/landscape/light-pollution/light-pollution-in-your-area>

### Obituaries

We are sad to report the recent deaths of Dorrie Ellis and Frank Vine, two CPRE members who dedicated a considerable amount of time and expertise to the work of CPRE Avonside. Both were enthusiastic campaigners committed to retaining and improving our local countryside so that everyone may enjoy it for generations to come.

Avonside Branch Chairman

Mrs Georgie Bigg

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