

Countryside Update

September 2008 (issue 80)

South Downs National Park on the horizon?

Whilst the public inquiry has been closed for a number of months now, the pace of our campaign for a South Downs National Park that includes the key settlements and the Western Weald has not dropped. We recently met with the environment team of the Liberal Democrats to promote the benefits of a National Park in the South East as well as the need to get our key messages to Defra whilst they start to take decisions on the boundary of the Park.

We have supported the strong case made by the South Downs Campaign to keep the exceptional and much-walked landscape of the Western Weald inside the National Park. The latest news is available at www.southdownscampaign.org.uk.

Final government confirmation of the South Downs National Park has been pushed back to after Government's Christmas recess.

TAKE ACTION:

Email Hilary Benn MP at hilary.benn@defra.gsi.gov.uk and ask him to make a quick decision and the right decision (to include the western weald in the National Park) so that the South Downs is confirmed as the latest edition to the National Park family early in the New Year (2009) (Or you can write to him Nobel House 17 Smith Square London SW1A 3JR).

The Battle of Backdale Quarry

This summer saw a Court of Appeal decision which could prevent quarrying destruction at Backdale Quarry in the Peak District National Park and help resolve other problematic old mineral permissions which threaten valued countryside.

The Court of Appeal gave the Peak District National Park Authority and the Government leave to appeal a High Court decision that has left 350 hectares of land at Longstone Edge vulnerable to mining devastation. A High Court judgement in March overturned a public inquiry recommendation and a stop notice by the National Park Authority allowing Bleaklow Industries to continue quarrying using a mineral extraction permission granted in 1952.

In granting leave to appeal, Lord Justice Keene agreed with the arguments that the appeal should proceed because of its wider importance to the minerals industry and the significant impact on the amenity of the national park.

As part of the Longstone Edge Coalition of campaigning organisations, The Ramblers' Association welcomes this 'trailblazing' decision as an opportunity to properly and finally resolve outdated and arbitrary old mining permissions.

Follow our campaign via the 'Save Longstone Edge Group' website at <http://www.longstone-edge.org.uk/>

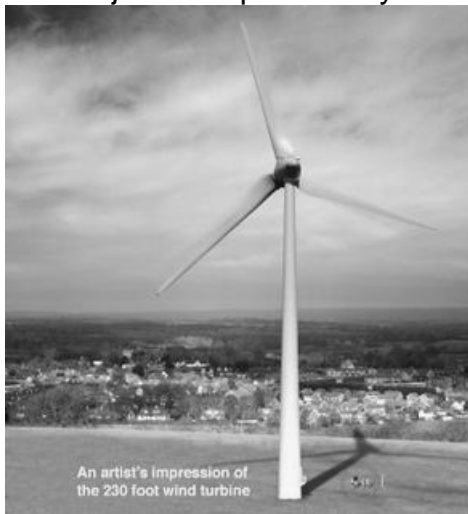
Circular Number: 08/63 **Date:** Sept 2008 **For:** Information and Action

To: Area and Group Countryside Secretaries; Area Secretaries; Countryside Update members; Extra Countryside Secretaries
Contact: England: c/o Central office David Murray 0207 339 8586, countryside@ramblers.org.uk • Scotland (Wildland Campaigner): Davie Black, 01577 867742, davieb@ramblers.org.uk • Wales: Cardiff Office 029 2064 4308, cerddwyr@wales.ramblers.org.uk • To add someone to the circulation list please email countryside@ramblers.org.uk

Glyndebourne Wind Turbine to go ahead

The large (70m/230ft) wind turbine proposed at Glyndebourne Opera House has been granted permission after the planning application was called in to central government for a decision. Despite the efforts of a consortium of local and national conservation/recreation groups (actively supported by the Ramblers' Association) turbine construction will go ahead.

With a height equivalent to a 24 storey skyscraper, the development sets a nasty precedent which will see the largest turbine in any National Park in England once the South Downs joins the park family next year.



An artist's impression of the 70m/230ft turbine overlooking Glynde village (Credit – South Downs Society

www.southdownssociety.org.uk)

Countryside Campaigns Survey

You might be aware of the survey that we are currently conducting as part of a strategic review of our Countryside Campaigns work. A quick line to say thank you to the 60+ volunteers that have responded to the paper based survey (and 160 online).

For those who might still like to respond (as a rep of an area/group or as an individual), the survey remains open until 16th November and can be accessed online through www.ramblers.org.uk/countryside (further paper copies available on request).

Please do promote this survey to your members wherever this is practicable.

If you have any news items that you would like to see appearing in the Countryside Update, please send them in to countryside@ramblers.org.uk.

Also, if you would like to discuss specific countryside protection issues affecting your area or group, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0207 339 8586 or on the email address above.

Renewable Energy Strategy out for consultation

At the time of print, we are nearing the deadline of a Dept for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) consultation on a strategy for UK renewable energy

Whilst the Ramblers' Association is encouraged by DBERR's work highlighting the need to consider and scrutinise the UK's energy consumption and demand, we are disappointed by the apparent lack of interest in investing in energy conservation and public awareness raising as a priority over increased investment into new energy infrastructure.

We are also concerned that the proposals as set out in the consultation are limited in scope so that it is difficult for the public to have an idea of what our renewable energy infrastructure might actually look like on the ground (having only put forward one 'scenario' for illustrative purposes).

TAKE ACTION

email

renewableconsultation@opinionsuite.com or

write (Before October preferably) to

Renewable Energy Strategy Consultation,

Renewable Energy Strategy Team,

Ropemaker Court, 11 Lower Park Row, Bristol

BS1 5BN

Suggested points to raise:

1. We are disappointed that the consultation only offers one scenario to our renewable energy challenge. A greater number of possible approaches would give us all a better understanding of what our energy infrastructure might look like.
2. We believe it is possible to meet increased energy needs without compromising designated landscapes including National Parks and AONBs from intrusive large scale development. Visual intrusion from such development must be avoided so rural communities do not suffer from losses in decreased tourism.
3. Meeting our energy needs should be considered secondary to finding ways of conserving energy.