

Countryside Update

January 2004 (issue no. 50)

Correction

Countryside Update December 2003 was incorrectly numbered as issue 48, it should have been issue 49. Apologies if this caused any confusion.

Glimmer of hope for Planning Bill

As the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill makes its way through the House of Lords, the Government has made a significant concession regarding the role of county councils in strategic planning. Keith Hill, the Minister for Planning, is seeking an amendment which would require Regional Planning Bodies to ask for advice on preparing, reviewing and monitoring regional spatial strategies from county councils and other authorities (such as national park authorities). These authorities would be under a corresponding obligation to provide advice.

This is a major victory in the campaign to improve the Bill which previously removed any statutory role for county councils in the strategic planning process. It also offers a potential opportunity for greater public involvement in strategic planning, although whether or not this will actually be the case remains to be seen. The RA has signed up to several briefings and amendments to the Bill calling for this change.

Possible improvements for third parties in planning appeals

Subsequent to the above announcement, a further press notice was published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister asking 'Do you want a

bigger say in planning matters for your community?'. It marked the publication of a new consultation document proposing possible changes to the planning appeal process for interested parties. This is of a particular interest to the RA which has for some time been campaigning for a limited Third Party Right of Appeal. Under current legislation, if a planning permission is refused, the applicant can appeal the decision, whereas if it is granted, third parties do not have the right to appeal the decision.

Although the consultation paper does not go so far as to offer a Third Party Right of Appeal, it does consult on three possible options for giving third parties an extra three weeks to make written representations at appeal which would enable them to take into account those of the appellant (instead of having to submit them at the same time).

We will be responding to this consultation nationally. However if you wish to submit comments for us to include in our response, please send them to Emily at central office. When Countryside Update went to press, the consultation was not yet on the ODPM's website. However it is expected to be there soon. Try searching for Planning Appeal Procedures at www.odpm.gov.uk. The closing date for responses is 14th April 2004.

How you can help

Due to the rush of consultations over the Christmas period, we have not managed to get as much on our website as we would have liked. However, we hope to pick this up in January and

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get back on track. We shall be posting consultation responses and sample letters that you can write to back them up on the website, so please keep an eye on it and help when you can.

Currently on the web are our responses to PPS7 on the countryside, PPS 12 on the new Local Development Frameworks and PPS 22 on renewable energy.

Scout Moor Wind Farm

The campaign against development at Scout Moor Wind Farm is continuing thanks to Alan Johnson, the Countryside Secretary for North East Lancashire.

Alan has been heavily involved with organising a campaign to protect the area from a development proposed by United Utilities. The campaign started in July 2003 when Alan spoke at meetings held in three villages which would be affected by the development. Over 500 people attended and campaign committees were established.

The campaign has attracted a lot of support and media attention, with articles in the local press and on television. A walk in January across the moor attracted 500 people including David Bellamy and TV chef Andrew Nutter. Signs have sprung up in gardens declaring opposition to the wind farm and they have been highly successful in lobbying local councillors. Three local councils have all objected to the wind farm, with only one supporting it. This has been helped by over 1000 letters objecting to the development and only 26 supporting it.

The next stage is to wait for the date of the Public Inquiry. We will keep you updated with developments and would like to thank Alan and everyone else involved for all their hard work so far.

New coalition to protect Peak Park from telecoms mast

John Riddall, the Countryside Secretary for the Derbyshire Dales group has been campaigning to protect one of the Peak District's most familiar landscapes, Win Hill, from an application by Vodafone to erect a 20 metre high mast. The campaign is being backed by a coalition including CPRE and the Council for National Parks.

The application was refused by the Peak District National Park Authority in August, but the company is now appealing against the decision.

Details on how to object to the scheme are available from the National Park Authority, 01625

816200. The appeal is expected to be heard by the Planning Inspectorate in the Spring.

News from Wales

Motorised recreation on forest land

A series of exploratory meetings have taken place between RA staff and members and staff from the Forestry Commission (FC) and unitary authorities in Wales.

These followed incidents where walkers had found themselves sharing paths with rally vehicles. It also followed discussions on forest design plans aimed at managing mechanically propelled vehicles on the forest estate.

In amicable meetings a number of action points have been agreed starting with discussing the agreements between the FC, the Motor Sports Association and Auto Cycle Union; liaison between local rally organisers and RA members; ensuring that local authorities endeavour to steer rallies away from public rights of way network and making sure that land closures on dedicated access land are kept to the minimum.

Walking and cycling strategy for Wales

This document was launched on the 11th December 2003 but gained little publicity. Coming from the Transport division of the Welsh Assembly, it dwells on road safety, safe routes to school and speed reduction amongst others. It also looks at the importance of walking, the contribution that an accessible public rights of way network can make to lifestyle change.

More work is still being done on walking targets to match those of cycling. Funding will be available for this research.

Aviation White Paper published

The White Paper which will set the policy for aviation for the next 30 years was published in December last year. It is hugely expansionist, using the outdated 'predict and provide' planning approach and setting few constraints.

At the time of writing, the Countryside Team was in the process of digesting the White Paper, and more information will be in next month's Countryside Update. In the mean time, if you would like more help and advice on what is included in the White Paper and some ideas for campaigning, please contact Sarah at central office.

