

Countryside Update

July 2004 (issue no. 56)

Area Update

This month's update comes from Jill Green who is the Countryside Secretary for the Isle of Wight.

The Isle of Wight is part of the South East region, however we feel more in tune with the South West and our problems are very similar.

Bob Bridges wrote in June about the wind farms. Here, we now have planning consent for three turbines in our AONB. On April 3rd notification came regarding 'West Turbine Technology Park'. We estimate the land to be about 3sq km. Seven turbines are proposed with a hub height of 65m and 40m blades, a height to blade tip of 105m. They will be seen for miles. They would visually impact upon the whole of the Solent and large swathe of the New Forest from Bournemouth to Southampton.

We highlighted the issue of small plot development in 2001. Gladwish and other firms would buy a plot of land and then sell it off into small plots. This happened on an area of land adjacent to a local Nature Reserve.

The reason this is detrimental to our countryside is not that we envisage houses or even stabling for horses, but that caravans are parked permanently on these small plots. Gladwish has been selling land in this way since 1987.

A caravan was put on one of these 27 plots of land adjacent to the Nature Reserve and remained there for ages, enforcement notices and appeals took so long. The application only failed for this owner because he wanted it for leisure use. It was great when the van and its plastic fence finally

went. A similar caravan was placed on one of eth tiny plots at Shalfleet, next to a National Trust property. The owner plated a few things and so needed a caravan to keep his tools in. This was allowed, the plot in question is now up for sale with caravan in-situ.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act has a clause which introduces temporary stop notices which are designed to try and stop small plot sales. These should come into effect in September 2004. The Government have also committed to review permitted development rights, which would affect this. However, as yet, no consultation has been issued.

New Forest Becomes a National Park

After a long campaign fought by the Ramblers' Association and other organisations we were very pleased when the Secretary of State announced that the New Forest was to become a National Park. It will be the first National Park in England for nearly 50 years.

However, we were disappointed that the boundary that was decided upon was not only smaller than the one the RA had been campaigning for, but it was also a lot smaller than the boundary advocated by the Countryside Agency. Dibden Bay, which was relieved recently of a proposed port development, is excluded as well as other beautiful areas which, in our view, meet National Park criteria. We are concerned that the areas left out not only risk damage from development themselves, but that such development will

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seriously affect the area which has been designated.

The Secretary of State accepted most of the Inspector's recommendations and we are watching closely to see what impacts this might have on our campaign for the South Downs National Park. During the New Forest inquiry the Inspector remained inscrutable and so far this has been the case with the South Downs, so it is very difficult to gauge which way they will go on these important issues.

Way to Go Update

At the beginning of July we handed in our giant 'wish you were here' postcard with pictures of bad streets and pavements around the country. As you can imagine there was no shortage of images! Thank you to everyone who sent us a picture.

The postcard was used to highlight one of the manifesto points that the campaign is advocating: streets, lanes and paths in good condition and pleasant for walking. With help from Living Streets and Transport 2000 we collected the images and mounted them on a postcard which we delivered to the Department for Transport.

We also attended an adjournment debate, which was secured by Colin Challen MP, a strong supporter of the Way to Go campaign. Tony McNulty was the government's spokesperson and argued that the campaign proposals were being listened to. He also argued that the aviation White Paper did not take a 'predict and provide' approach to transport planning, so we're not too sure we can believe him!

All will be revealed when the review is published shortly. Although it was not published at the time of writing Countryside Update, we expect it will have been published by the time you receive it. We will update you in the next edition.

Walking Out in National Parks

As a celebration of the success of the Walking Out project and also to celebrate National Parks we held an event on the 10th July in the Peak District. The event was attended by about 70 people, most of whom were people who had participated on the Walking Out walks in Lincoln, Sheffield and Stoke on Trent.

The park rangers led us on three different walks around Ladybower Reservoir, all of which were aimed at people new to walking. They provided a great introduction to the Peak District and National Parks in general. Many of the people who came on

the walk had never been to any of the National Parks before and have said that they are looking forward to visiting one again. At least one participant told us that she had always wanted to visit the Peak District, but was unsure of how to get there and what places she could visit.

Next Steps for Walking Out

We are pleased that each city has agreed to carry on the Walking Out project, each organising between five and ten walks. The walks will introduce people to areas of countryside and green spaces close to where they live. We hope to continue to build relationships with community groups in these cities in order to introduce walking to people who don't currently walk a lot.

The walks will start at the end of July and will carry on through August, September and into October. We are also hoping to carry the project on with a monthly walk during the winter months and continue to seek funding for this project.

Guidance for Airport Master Plans Published

The Department for Transport has published guidance for airport operators on how to produce master plans. The guidance includes the list of 30 airports which have to produce a master plan.

The White Paper recommended that airports should try and produce a master plan by the end of 2004 or very soon after. However the DfT recognise that some airports will find this difficult, so ask for an outline master plan in this timescale and a full master plan by the end of 2005. The master plans are likely to have significant impacts on the local plans in each area.

These master plans should be consulted on and although environmental non-governmental organisations are not part of the key stakeholder lists, it should be possible to get your local RA group put on the consultation list. The document is available on the DfT's website: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/aviation/whitepaper/post/index.htm>, or you can call central office and we will post a copy out to you.