

# Countryside Update

September 2004 (issue no. 58)

## News from Derbyshire Dales

This month's update comes from John Riddall who is the Countryside Secretary for the Derbyshire Dales group.

We supported the objection by the Peak District National Park to the construction of a wind farm in the rim of hills to the south of Buxton, our concern being not only with the turbines themselves, but also with the pylons that would lead carry electricity (when the wind was blowing) to the national grid. (We lament the effect that windfarm pylons will have as they gradually lace the uplands of Britain far removed from the turbines themselves). The Buxton proposal was abandoned, not because of the widespread objections, but owing to the noise at the nearby government research laboratories. Having learned that one organization concerned with protecting the countryside receives money from wind turbine companies we are writing to various amenity societies to enquire whether they accept money from commercial companies whose business involves damage to the countryside. (We started with the RA in London and were glad to get a reassuring reply!)

Quarrying takes up a lot of our time, not so much opposing new quarries as with getting existing conditions complied with. The problem here is the scale of the work in relation to the paucity of staff available within the Peak Park authority. We ask questions, urge action, and give strong backing to the Peak Park's minerals team. We are on a CPRE minerals co-ordinating team, on which local groups fighting quarries have representatives. Other

concerns include illegal advertising (the acne on the face of England – look at Buxton), street furniture, road traffic signs (on which Derbyshire County Council leads the country in its sensitivity and good sense (look at Wardlow), uncoloured industrial and farm buildings ... and so on. (There just isn't enough time!)

*Note from the editor:*

*CNP, the organisation alluded to in the article above, has a Corporate Forum with which it forms professional relationships with companies that have an interest in national parks. This allows more open dialogue and the funding of specific projects, such as the printing of CNP's magazine. It in no way prevents CNP from campaigning against these companies, as indeed happened with Buxton proposal.*

## Strategic Environmental Act

More than a decade ago, a campaign began to get environmental protection written into plans and policies before damage was done rather than trying to fix it afterwards. A European Directive (no. 2001/42/EC) on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) reflecting the work of that campaign came into force in July. It aims to 'provide for a high level of protection for the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development'. Quite a mouthful!

Circular no. Date From	04/98 September 2004 Ramblers' Association Countryside Protection Team – Central Office Sarah Williams – Tel 020 7339 8571 Email <a href="mailto:sarahw@london.ramblers.org.uk">sarahw@london.ramblers.org.uk</a> Emily Richmond – Tel 020 7339 8541 Email <a href="mailto:emilyr@london.ramblers.org.uk">emilyr@london.ramblers.org.uk</a> NB – Please contact Sarah if you would like to add others to the circulation list	For To	Information Area and Group Countryside Officers Area and Group Secretaries Area Media Contacts England and Wales (Scotland for Information only) Staff and EC  Countryside Update members Extra Countryside Secretaries
------------------------------	--	-----------	---

Unlike Environmental Impact Assessment (which relates to specific proposals by developers) SEA relates to plans and policies and should be used to see off potential adverse effects during the design stages. Consultation and public participation are integral to the process, as are tools such as the consideration of alternatives using the best practicable environmental option.

The list of plans and programmes that the Directive covers varies from country to country. In general, it covers plans relating to land use, including plans for agriculture, energy, transport and tourism. The key objective of SEA is to inform decision making and it is therefore going to be key to the development of plans from a number of levels.

For example, SEA should be used to assess the new Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Plans. It should allow for informed debate amongst a number of parties which could lead to more sustainable decisions being taken. It could look, for example, at whether there are ways of meeting societies need for travel which do not involve building more roads or runways. This would translate into policies about how much quarrying is needed.

The main thing is that it embraces a new approach which can be used to give people a stronger voice in challenging assumptions about development and in making better decisions about how we develop our towns, countryside and communities.

For more information on the new Directive and how to apply it, go to the government website at [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk) then click on 'planning' followed by 'environmental assessment'.

## **New Members Needed for National Park Authorities**

The government announced at the beginning of September that it was looking for new members for the following authorities:

Broads Authority

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Exmoor National Park Authority

Lake District National Park Authority

Northumberland National Park Authority

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

They are also looking for new members for a New Forest National Park Authority which will start work on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2005.

National Park Authorities were established to recognise the national and international importance of the landscape within the Park boundary. They work both to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their area, and to help improve public understanding and enjoyment of their area.

The Authorities' members are appointed to ensure a balanced range of local, national and specialist interests. The successful Secretary of State appointees will be expected to provide a national voice on the Authority, and take a particular interest in strategic issues such as responsibility for conservation, recreation, planning, access and resource issues.

Members will need to volunteer for a minimum of two to three days a month and the appointments will initially be for three years. More information and an application pack can be obtained from Carol Foster at The Countryside Agency, 01242 533284, email: [carol.foster@countryside.gov.uk](mailto:carol.foster@countryside.gov.uk). They are also available on the Defra website: [www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/appointments/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/appointments/index.htm) The deadline for completed forms is 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

## **Consultation Closes on Phone Box Closures**

Earlier on in September we were alerted that BT had issued proposals to close up to 3,000 phone boxes in rural areas. We are aware that this has happened in at least two areas of the country and may well be happening nationwide.

In the areas we are aware of, the deadline for objections was the 24<sup>th</sup> September, however it may be that in other areas of the country phone box closures may be proposed and the deadline may not have passed.

If you think that there are phone boxes in your area which are helpful to walkers in remote areas, it may be worth keeping an eye out for any proposals to close them. If you would like more help on writing an objection, please contact the Countryside team at central office.