

# Countryside Update

April 2005 (issue no. 65)

## Election Fever

It's official! May 5<sup>th</sup> will see the next General Election and the incoming government will decide on issues like transport, the South Downs National Park, quarrying and many other environmental issues. At the time of writing, the Green Party, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party had all issued their manifestoes. The Liberal Democrats were due to do so shortly after Donald delayed them.

The media will, of course, be in fevered speculation about polls, spin and sleaze for the next few weeks, but they are providing some online resources to help you compare the different parties and where they stand on different issues. The BBC has a compare and contrast section on their website:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/vote2005/issues/html/grid.stm?s1=GRN\\_UK&s2=UKIP\\_UK&s3=LD\\_UK&x=10&y=11](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/vote2005/issues/html/grid.stm?s1=GRN_UK&s2=UKIP_UK&s3=LD_UK&x=10&y=11)

The Guardian's looks at the three main parties:

<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/election2005/policyguide/>

Of course, the best way to find out what the parties stand for is to read the manifestoes and to ask your Prospective Parliamentary Candidate (PPC). There will probably be opportunities for you to question them about the issues you hold to be important, so ask them about their commitment to countryside protection issues.

The Charity Commission have guidelines relating to how charities can campaign without breaching the law and becoming too involved in any political party. If you, or your group, are involved in campaigning it could be worth having a look through if you're not aware of them already. These can be found on the website at: <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/publications/cc9.asp> or you can contact the Charity Commission by phone on 0870 333 0123.

## Two Thirds of the World's Resources 'used up'

The importance of sustainability was highlighted earlier this month when a report, backed by over 1,300 scientists from 95 countries warned that two thirds of the natural machinery that supports life on Earth has been degraded.

It is a stark warning to what could lie ahead if we continue to develop unsustainably and not treat our countryside and landscape with the regard it is due.

## Inquiry into Whinash Wind Farm due to start

The public inquiry into Whinash wind farm will have started by the time you receive this newsletter. The proposed wind farm would be the largest in England and right on the boundary of the Lake District National Park. It is in an area

Circular no. Date From	05/35 April 2005 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>  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
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which is currently being considered for inclusion into an extended national park boundary.

The Ramblers' Association is part of a coalition opposing the proposal, which is being opposed by the councils and local businesses as well.

## **Government Launches its Sustainable Development Strategy**

The Government launched its new sustainable development strategy in March, called Securing the Future. It replaces the previous 1999 strategy.

- The strategy establishes five new guiding principles
- Living within environmental limits (which is strengthened from the previous strategy)
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy. This replaces the previous 'high and stable levels of economic growth'
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

There are also steps in the strategy to try and keep it on track with practical actions. The actions include the requirement for each Government department to produce an action plan setting out its aims for implementing the strategy.

## **DTI Launch Consultation on the Renewables Obligation**

The DTI have just issued a review of the renewables obligation which looks at the funding of renewable energy in Britain. The Ramblers' Association will be submitting a response covering England, Scotland and Wales.

We are focusing our campaign on trying to get a change in the funding system of renewable energy so that it is more supportive of all forms of renewable energy, not just large scale wind farms.

The consultation closes in June and during that time we will be working with other NGOs to look at how we can best influence this review.

We currently have a volunteer on a short placement in central office who has been looking at the differences between UK and other EU countries with regard to the funding of renewable

energy. We expect this report to be completed soon and we will hopefully make it available on our website.

## **South Downs Newsletter Available**

The new South Downs newsletter is now available from central office. It explains in brief the benefits of a South Downs National Park and also has an update on the draft South East Regional Plan, which managed to include one disgraceful, brief paragraph on the South Downs National Park, looking at why it could be ignored.

## **Have Your Say on Aviation and Climate Change**

The European Commission is currently consulting across Europe as to how the negative climatic impacts of air travel can be best tackled.

There is concern that people are not aware of how damaging air travel is to the climate and that people might fly less if they were aware of the negative impacts.

The consultation is a very short, on-line survey which only takes two minutes to fill in. The deadline for responses is May 6<sup>th</sup> and the address of the consultation is below.

<http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/forms/dispatch?form=394&lang=EN>

## **Minerals Planning Statement Two Issued**

Minerals Planning Statement (MPS) 2 was issued recently. This MPS, called Controlling and Mitigating the Environmental Effects of Minerals Extraction in England, has been issued with two annexes, one for noise and one for dust

As part of the reviews of the Minerals Planning Guidance (MPGs), there will be fewer MPS's published as they will be amalgamated into fewer documents with annexes.

We are currently waiting for the new MPS1 to be published.