

# Countryside Update

November 2005 (issue no. 70)

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## Romney Marsh Wind Farm Given Go Ahead

Disappointing news for campaigners in Kent as the Romney Marsh Wind Farm has been accepted by the Inspector.

The planning application was opposed by several environmental organizations including the Ramblers' Association, RSPB and CPRE as well as the local authorities. It borders areas which have been designated for their high ecological value, which should give them higher protection in the planning system.

We are currently trying to get a copy of the Inspector's report to see what we can learn for future inquiries.

## Mark Prisk's Private Members Bill

Mark Prisk MP has introduced a Private Members' Bill aimed at improving protection for the Green Belt.

The aim of the Bill will be to reform the Planning Policy Guidance to remove the possibility of any land swap and ensure permanent designation. This will help to promote urban regeneration and protect valuable areas of our countryside.

The Bill has cross party support and you can write to your MP and ask them to support the Bill 'to make provision about the Green Belt, and for connected purposes'.

## New Guidance on Conservation Boards

Defra have issued new guidance on establishing Conservation Boards for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The power to establish Conservation Boards was given in the CROW Act and the Chilterns and Cotswolds ANOBs established the first conservation boards in December 2004.

The guidance looks at the creation of Boards, dissolution (which it recognises will hopefully be very rare!), who should sit on a the board and what areas a board could look at.

Further information is available from Defra.

## News From Wales

### Countryside Campaigner for Wales

A review of countryside protection issues is under way in Ramblers' Wales. Martin Dowson, newly appointed to the team in their head office in Cardiff, is establishing the first full-time role of Countryside Campaigner for Wales.

Circular no. Date From	05/114 November 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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Whilst many issues are common to the UK as a whole, the unique nature of the Welsh environment, combined with increasingly devolved policies of the Welsh Assembly Government means that special pressures apply here. For instance did you know that the Welsh Assembly Government in its planning guidance has already identified 7 'Strategic Spatial Areas' which are to be prioritised for wind turbine development in Local Development Plans?

Martin will be liaising with Countryside Officers and Secretaries in Wales. Any contact should be through the Wales office (029 2964 4308) or [martind@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:martind@ramblers.org.uk).

### **New Pipeline**

Local groups in Carmarthenshire and Powys have been reviewing development plans for a new 115 mile gas pipeline which will run from Gloucestershire to the Swansea area and in a separate project further west to Milford Haven. The detailed routing of the pipeline is now being studied by consultants.

Input from the Ramblers', together with Brecon Beacons National Park and others, is seeking to minimise its impact to the local environment and recreational access. The CLA is seeking compensation for landowners resulting from the anticipated disruption to farming and for the reinstatement of farmland.

Already the overall pipeline routing has been modified to avoid the protected uplands of the Brecon Beacons, but still passes through some.

The Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline is a fundamental element of the 'Wales Energy Strategy' (2003) - supporting the increasing reliance on imported natural gas as North Sea reserves decline.

### **Wales - Environment Strategy**

Ramblers' Wales have been reviewing the draft Environment Strategy for Wales. Such strategies set out the framework for how the aims of key policy areas, for example Energy, might be achieved.

The consultation has allowed the Ramblers' Association to respond on issues such as climate change, land management, sustainability, quality of life and biodiversity. We have sought to emphasise the need to seek a landscape scale approach to countryside protection, not just site

specific protection for biodiversity. Alternative term solutions to on-shore wind farms have also been pressed for.

Needless to say, together with our colleagues in footpaths and access, the full recognition of rights of way in the priority of local government has also been pursued through our response.

### **New Forest Decision**

An appeal has been heard in the High Court recently which potentially has very worrying developments for the designation of the South Downs and extension of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

One of the landowners within the boundary of the New Forest National Park had contested the inclusion of some of the land on two counts. Firstly that as there were no rights of way then the land did not have opportunities for recreation. Secondly, and with bigger implications for the South Downs, that the Inspector had confused the criteria and purposes of designation of national parks.

The full report had not yet been received and we are waiting to see if Defra will appeal against the decision.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance for Renewable Energy**

We are currently looking at drawing up guidance for volunteers wishing to get their local authority to introduce supplementary planning guidance on renewable energy in order to help fight against wind turbines in inappropriate areas.

This has been done effectively in some parts of Scotland and we are looking to see how it can be done in England.

We will be looking at the guidance offered by the Peak District National Park Authority and we would be pleased to hear of other local authorities in England, which have similar guidance. If you know your local authority has issued guidance, please contact Sarah at central office on 020 7339 8571.