

SUSSEX

REVIEW

FOCUS ON FARMING

Defenders of the Weald

Brexit – what would it mean for farmers?

Proposed changes to the NPPF

Contents

- 3 Welcome
- 4 News Update
- 6 Brexit – should we or shouldn't we?
- 7 Campaigns
- 8 NPPF, what's new?
- 10 The impact of Gatwick 2 on local travel
- 12 Clean energy – or murky waters?
- 14 Defenders of the Weald
- 16 Challenges facing our local farmers
- 18 Farming in the Weald
- 20 Dates for your diary

CPRE Sussex Countryside Trust

Brownings Farm, Blackboys, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 5HG
Phone: 01825 890975
Email: info@cpresussex.org.uk
Visit us at:
www.cpresussex.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter:
Follow us on Facebook:
Registered Charity number:
1156568

Published by
CPRE Sussex Countryside Trust
The Campaign to Protect Rural England: Sussex Branch CIO

We exist to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of our countryside by encouraging the sustainable use of land and natural resources in town and country.

The opinions expressed in the Review reflect the views and interests of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Branch.

President

Lord Egremont

Vice Presidents

Margaret Moore
Gerald Summerfield

Trustees:

Chairman: David Johnson

Treasurer: Richard Shirley
Rodney Chambers, Stephen Hardy,
Julian Hill, Penelope Hudd, John
Kay, Sally Pavey, Dr Roger Smith
David Willingham

Staff

Branch Administrator:

Lesley Wilson

Office Administrator

(Accounts):

Sas Drury

LOCAL GROUPS

Adur & Worthing

Bill Freeman

katbill@talktalk.net

David Johnson

davidjohnsonsurething1@yahoo.co.uk

Arun

Martin Beaton

martinl.beaton@gmail.com

Brighton & Hove

Andrew Wright

andywright20@hotmail.com

Corinne Attwood

corinne.attwood@brightonbeautiful.com

Chichester South

Richard Hill

randghill@btinternet.com

National Park (Chichester North)

Alan Smith

alancliffordsmith@gmail.com

Sarah Dobson

sarah@littlewoodfarm.co.uk

Horsham & Crawley

Dr Roger Smith

rogerfinch.smith@gmail.com

Lewes

Prof Edmund Critchley

e_and_m_critchley@yahoo.com

Mid Sussex

Michael Brown

m.brown@zoo.co.uk

Rother & Hastings

Stephen Hardy

stephenhardy1948@gmail.com

Wealden

(South) John Hurwood

john@hurwood.com

(North) Lesley Wilson

(Branch Office)

lesley.wilson@cpresussex.org.uk

Orchestrator: Penny Hudd

Editor: Judith Chamberlain

Design & Production:

Emily Wilkinson, 07801 453 9453

emilyw@freeuk.com

Printing: One Digital

01273 887575

Photography:

Cover:xxxx



*Review Cover and Photographs:
Pages xxx by kind permission
of Peter & Morgan Greenhalf,
The Avocet Gallery
and Tea Rooms, Rye Harbour.
avocetgalleryandtea.co.uk*

Welcome to the Spring Review



This year we are celebrating 90 years of promoting and protecting the Sussex countryside!

For almost a century CPRE has been active in campaigning for democratic and appropriate planning decisions, for National Parks and for the vital protection of our countryside with continued success.

To all our members, a huge thank you for your continued support. With you behind us and with our splendid new Director, Kia, we are all looking forward to another active and successful year.

The welcome surfeit of early spring flowers has led to increasing public discussion about global warming and record rainfall makes us question the sense of building where there is flood risk. Increasingly non-experts are talking about natural ways to manage heavy rainfall. For example at Alfriston, the impact and viability of reintroducing meanders to the Cuckmere River to better mitigate run-off is being considered. Academic research and country people's expertise are coming together as we saw at the recent CPRE Sussex 'Making Places' workshop in Barnham.

The jewels of the Sussex landscape – the Downs, the coast and Cuckmere Haven – are familiar to all through souvenirs but sadly much of our countryside, although very beautiful and often species rich, is seen only as an opportunity for development. Those fields, wildernesses and woods where we walk, take our dogs,

run or ride especially on the edge of towns, so valued but lacking any designated planning protection, are what we will have to fight hard for now and in the immediate future.

There seems to be a growing disconnection with nature and an increasing lack of understanding of the value of the working countryside as decisions about the future of Sussex are being made by those living in towns and cities, removed from the realities of country life.

We live our lives making trade offs between scarce resources; today even solitude, beauty, and tranquility are ascribed monetary values. There is a very real danger as city dwellers lose their emotional connection to the countryside and have little understanding of its true value, the more it becomes something developers are free to plunder.

The government, and its agencies, seem less and less keen to add to the number of sites with any protection against development – its mantra, of 'housing, housing, housing,' has dramatically increased the vulnerability of the countryside to despoliation.

Everyday countryside, greatly valued by local communities, will be lost to development supposedly for society at large, despite the government's push for 'localism' and the bandying of words like sustainability and affordability,

With no agreed national or regional planning for the public to scrutinise, the continuous demand for development of the economy, for jobs and housing dominates. The city demands, the countryside obeys – and slowly disappears.

To protect our precious heritage and hand it on to future generations, we as country lovers need to be as active as we can. Convincing others, young and old of the inestimable value of the countryside, for everything from tranquility, clean air and leisure to food production is vital. The more people who care about it the safer from despoliation the countryside will be. So, if you're not already a member, please join us and get your friends to join us too and help us celebrate.

David Johnson, Chairman



News Update

from Kia Trainor: Director CPRE Sussex

The A27

Being able to travel around Sussex easily is very important – nobody likes being snarled up in traffic jams. In rural areas public transport options are often limited and underinvestment in our rail infrastructure over many years has led to slow east/west connections and crowded commuter lines to London.

So what is the solution? Is it a high-level strategy to ensure that a broad range of future-proofed travel infrastructure investments is made – aligned to growth and appropriate development? Or is it a piecemeal package of road building/expansion projects?

Highways England, the organisation responsible for the UK's major roadbuilding programme, thinks that more roads are the answer. CPRE Sussex and other concerned organisations have been involved in a number of consultations and stakeholder meetings with them. These meetings have been limited in scope and designed to consider options for road expansion at four 'pinch points' along the A27: Chichester, Arundel, Worthing and Lewes/Polegate.

Chichester

Highways England has now announced that they are delaying consultation on improvements to the A27 at Chichester until the summer of 2016. This delay is causing a great deal of local frustration. However, one piece of good news in the recent announcement is that the option of a second bypass to the north of Chichester has been dropped.

Building a northern bypass at Chichester would have had serious implications for the South Downs National Park and Goodwood Estate. It was not clear if a second bypass really would have reduced congestion on the existing road, although it would certainly have diverted money for improvements.

Arundel and Worthing

Highways England is also currently reviewing options for the A27 at Arundel and Worthing/Lancing, with the aim of consulting on these sections in the spring of 2017. The greatest cause of current concern is the option of a new bypass at Arundel, which would cause severe harm to the meadows, the forests and the villages to the South of Arundel. CPRE Sussex supports the Arundel Neighbourhood Bypass Committee (ABNC) and Arundel SCATE (South Coast Alliance for Transport and the Environment) – local groups campaigning for improvements to the A27 and wider transport infrastructure which will benefit local people and people traveling around Sussex, without undue damage to the landscape and heritage of Arundel.

CAN YOU HELP?

Local campaign groups Chichester Deserves Better www.chichesterdeservesbetter.co.uk

Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee: <http://www.arundelbypass.co.uk>

We urge members to review the information provided as part of the consultation by Highways England and take part in the consultation: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england

A big thank you to everyone who attended our strategy planning event in Billingshurst last Autumn and shared their thoughts on how we can be more effective as a charity and what issues we should focus on for the next three years. It has already

sharpened up our work protecting the countryside!

We have now drawn up a detailed plan of what we are going to do this year and put it on our website www.cpresussex.org.uk.

A summary follows:

Staying ahead: planning for tomorrow

A SUMMARY

- Continue our planning work and fight for the 'right development in the right places' across Sussex.
- Campaign against inflated housing targets, locally and nationally, within local plans which are based on 'ambition' rather than local need.
- Continue to campaign against airport expansion and a second runway at Gatwick (see article page 14).
- Campaign for junction improvements on the A27 and travel solutions which really do benefit local people and protect our precious landscapes.
- Raise awareness of biodiversity loss through the planning system and encourage measures to tackle this through our new biodiversity group (see page 19).
- Begin a programme of engagement with young people in terms of valuing the countryside.
- Carry out the 'Making Places' project to create locally influenced design guides to promote attractive, sympathetic and sustainable development, where it is needed within Sussex (see page 19).
- Oppose fracking in our countryside.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?

Our membership is key to everything. Collectively we have the power to make our voice heard by decision makers and to affect the future for Sussex.

If your business would like to get involved by becoming a corporate partner, a corporate member or a supporter we would like to hear from you.

We really need to increase our membership and encourage more volunteers in areas where there are significant threats.

In 2016 we will also be reviewing new sources of fundraising – so if you have any ideas for new opportunities do let Lesley Wilson at the CPRE Sussex office know: lesley.wilson@cpresussex.org.uk
Tel: 01825 890 975



Kia and Lorna Train



Alan Smith, Chichester North

Brexit – should we or shouldn't we?

Andy Boddington, long-time CPRE supporter, writer and researcher looks at the pros and cons for farming and the countryside.

The debate on whether we should leave the European Union – take a Brexit – rages on.

Farming barely gets a look in amid the arguments over sovereignty and migration. Few people are talking about environmental protection, so much of which is legislated by the EU. Yet it is clear that farmers, our landscape and the environment face uncertainty if a Brexit goes ahead.

If we leave the EU, farmers' eyes will be on the government's plans for replacing the single farm payments they receive under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This makes up as much as half the income for many farms across the country. CAP supplies some stability for farmers who face a maelstrom of price fluctuations on milk and crops exacerbated by the uncertainties of Britain's weather. Will our Westminster government provide an equivalent subsidy of nearly £3 billion a year to farmers? We simply do not know.

After a Brexit, farmers will still need to comply with a wide range of European laws if they want to trade with the remaining 27 European states. If Britain wants greater independence from rules of the single European market, our farmers could end up paying tariffs to sell in the EU. To do so, they will have to be more competitive than producers on the European continent. This will often be hard to deliver in the heavily protected landscapes of England.

Much of our landscape protection comes from EU environmental agreements. CAP regulations also demand that farmers work to improve our environment and protect our countryside.

In a letter sent to Defra secretary Liz Truss in January, environmental scientists warned that a Brexit could lead to a very sharp decline in protection for habitats and species: "Being part of the Union has enabled us to co-ordinate action and agree policies that have improved our quality of life,

including the air we breathe, the seas we fish in, and have protected the wildlife which crosses national boundaries."

The gritty reality of politics is that farming and the environment are likely to count for little in the referendum on a Brexit. But we know that the environment doesn't understand borders or trade agreements. We know we are not self-sufficient in food. We can't even pick and process many of our crops without the aid of migrant labour from Europe.

We must protect our countryside from an unregulated free for all. This means we must ensure the voice of the countryside is heard during the referendum campaign.

"We must ensure the voice of the countryside is heard during the referendum campaign."

Planning for nature

Join our new Biodiversity Group!

CPRE Sussex plans to launch a Sussex-wide biodiversity group in the spring with the aim of putting the value of nature at the heart of planning decision making.

Many planning applications don't adequately assess the impacts of development on local wildlife, or they propose inadequate 'mitigation' measures that don't protect all the species identified at the site.

Even worse, some sites are cleared before an application is submitted

and an assessment carried out. Although many of our designated sites, such as the National Park, are afforded greater protection in terms of conserving landscapes and scenic beauty, many, many beautiful areas, rich in wildlife remain at risk across Sussex and urgently need our support to protect them.

To get involved or for more information about the group contact the CPRE Sussex Office, Tel: 01825890975, email lesley.wilson@cpresussex.org.uk



Making Places

CPRE Sussex: Supporting good design across Sussex

We have joined forces with Action in Rural Sussex to challenge 'developer mediocrity' and encourage higher quality building design that makes a positive contribution to rural towns and villages. Our new campaign, *Making Places*, aims to put the unique character of rural Sussex at the heart of local planning.

Many of us are all too aware of the uniformity of so many new housing developments. With this campaign we have two aims: to help local communities influence design in the countryside, and also to persuade developers to improve the design of their projects and support local character.

The initiative was launched in Barnham on Saturday, 30 January, with the first of two workshops

for rural communities. The workshop was well attended with representatives from Tangmere, Boxgrove, Aldingbourne and Angmering, all under pressure from massive proposed development.

The session used a mixture of techniques, from mapmaking and photography to discussion and drawing, to establish what good design really means to those living in those communities. The participants found the workshop "very informative" saying, "It has really helped us see what is good about the village and what perhaps needs improving".

Chairman, David Johnson reflected on the success of the first workshop, saying, "We join many others in wanting to see the right development in the right places



in Sussex, and a large part of this is good design."

Informed by this grass roots opinion, we plan to develop a 'Making Places Charter' to encapsulate the principles of good design for rural areas, and to encourage planners and developers to protect and nurture the distinctive character of rural Sussex. The second workshop will take place in East Sussex in March (see page 20 for details).

Concern over NPPF changes

John Kay, Trustee and key member of our Protect Sussex Group and Trustee Roger Smith, PSG Chairman, outline the government's proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recently the Department for Communities and Local Government held a consultation on their proposed amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Government's main policy document for planning. The consultation covered a wide range of topics and in many respects overlapped with the provisions of the new Housing and Planning Bill currently making its way through Parliament.

The proposed National Planning Policy Framework changes include:

- Broadening the definition of affordable housing to include discounted sales to first time buyers and the encouragement of 'starter homes' in both urban and rural areas.
- Increasing development density around 'commuter hubs'. As currently defined, a rural railway station served by a weekly bus, or even a pavement, might qualify.
- Promoting the creation of 'sustainable new settlements' in the countryside.
- Supporting development on brownfield sites and other small sites, defined as up to 10 units.
- Driving through delivery of housing on sites allocated in local and neighbourhood plans.

There are some changes here that CPRE would support, such as brownfield registers, and others that might become acceptable with suitable amendment.

However, the approach being considered to achieve the last objective, in terms of 'allocated sites' for development, has so far attracted less attention than it deserves. The big idea is that in areas where a planning authority fails to deliver enough new house building to match its planned trajectory, it should be required to identify and release additional sites until the trajectory is achieved.

This bright idea doubtless originated in the fertile minds of the lobbyists for the Strategic Land industry, whose profits come from gaining planning permissions for unsustainable greenfield sites.

This proposal is a perfect example of the government, influenced by self-interested lobbyists, taking careful aim at exactly the wrong target.

If the Strategic Land industry gets its way the outcome will be the exact opposite of the government's declared aim – more new greenfield development while sustainable urban brownfield remains derelict, and developer-led rather than plan-led planning.

Local planning authorities have the duty to allocate enough sites via local and neighbourhood plans to meet the housing needs of their area. It is then up to the house-building industry to build the houses. However, delivery delays are inevitable when this is left exclusively to private sector

organisations whose prime duty is to maximise their shareholders' profits. Profits depend on the scarcity value of the housing built – oversupplying the market leads to the disasters we saw a decade ago in Ireland and Spain.

If the government really wants to deliver the housing targets it proclaims, it is more house-building activity that is needed, not more planning permissions. Current policies have uplifted planning permissions over the past two years. Actual housing starts are currently falling.

“This bright idea doubtless originated in the fertile minds of the lobbyists for the Strategic Land industry, whose profits come from gaining planning permissions for unsustainable greenfield sites.”

Given a free choice, mass-market house builders will always prefer the simplicity of greenfield sites over the risks and uncertainties of brownfield. As one real-life example, the brownfield-specialist house builder Gleeson Homes announced in its 2015 annual report a modest increase in its housing delivery to 750 units. It also reported a land bank of sites with planning permission of ten times that number – a decade's supply. Such a land bank is an asset only if plot values continue to soar.

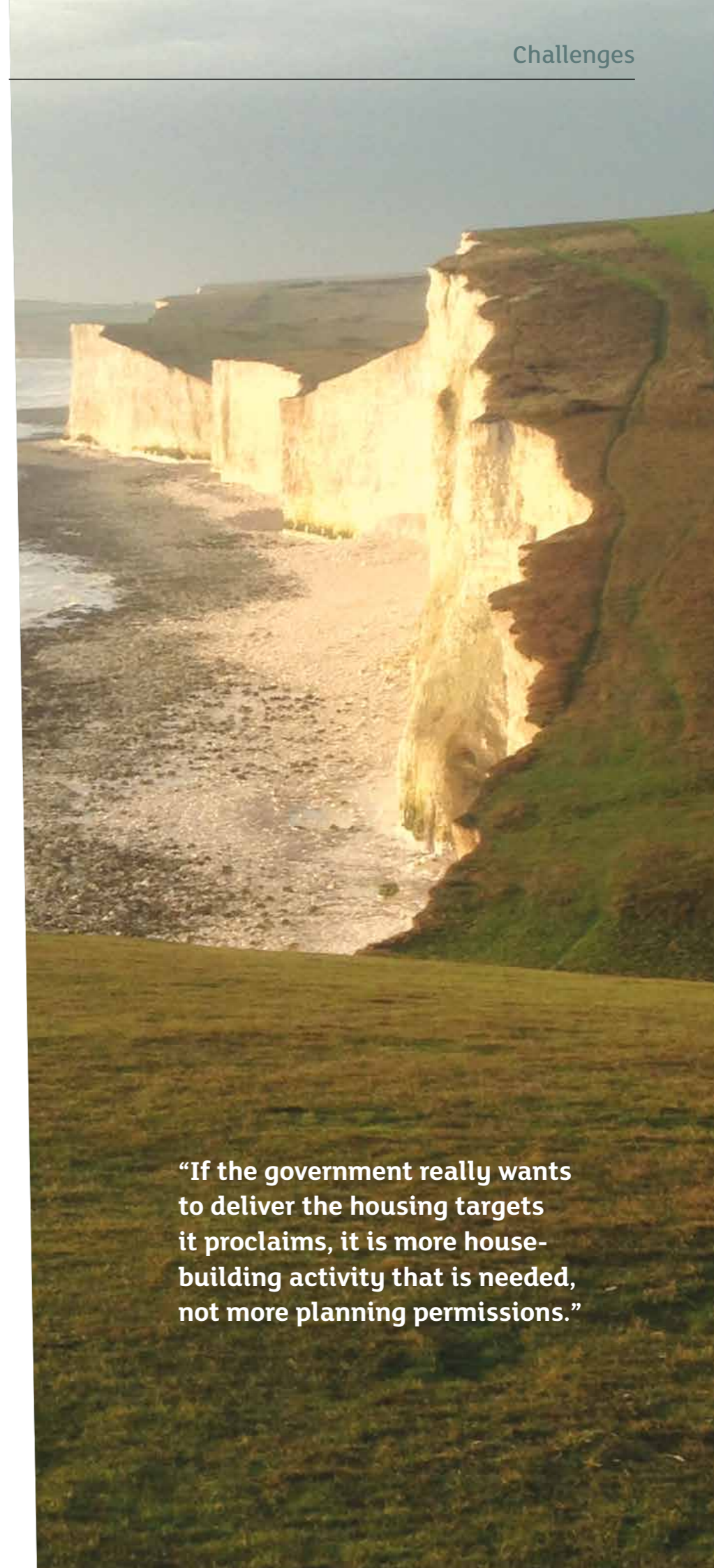
Closer to home in Sussex, brownfield sites large and small, continue to languish undeveloped, despite planning permission. A large site around Newhaven Marina fell, due to the poor commercial decisions of a previous developer, into the hands of the bank RBS. RBS decided, in the interests of its shareholders (mainly the government), to bank the land for a few years until its value rose. A large brownfield site in Lewes, a popular commuter town with an over-heated property market and a vast unmet need for affordable housing, may at last be on the point of development, but it has taken over a decade to reach this point, and no houses are likely for 2016. Similar stories affect several other large urban brownfield sites across Sussex.

It isn't only large urban sites that have this problem. For example, two late Georgian cottages along a lovely country lane have been kept empty by a local farmer since the 1980s, despite planning permission for replacements and dozens of enthusiasts seeking to buy them for renovation. Leaving them derelict has proved an excellent financial decision – the site value has soared.

This is the target the government must get in its sights if it really wants to get brownfield development moving. There is nothing a planning authority can do to ensure delivery. Developers and owners need incentivising by a healthy mix of carrot and stick.

We also need a house-building industry with adequate capacity and a stable economic climate that ensures confidence there will be willing and able buyers for all the houses built.

We can dream!



“If the government really wants to deliver the housing targets it proclaims, it is more house-building activity that is needed, not more planning permissions.”



The impact of Gatwick 2 on local travel

Sally Pavey, CPRE Sussex Trustee and Chair of CAGNE (Communities Against Gatwick Noise and Emissions) explores the impact of a second runway on an already strained transport system.

According to Network Rail, 51,000 people travel from Sussex commuter towns to London every single day using the Brighton mainline – one of the worst lines in the country.

“By 2043, (National Rail Sussex Route Study) foresees an enormous increase in passenger numbers on the Brighton mainline by 115% for those travelling to London Bridge and 34% to Victoria.”

Gatwick Airport estimates that the number of passengers arriving at the airport by rail will almost treble with a second runway. That means less space and more delays for commuters, with an anticipated 90,000 extra passengers on the network daily.

Has any authority truly examined how Gatwick expansion will affect the daily rail journeys of residents? Or considered what 40,000 extra daily car journeys on the M23 will mean to a road that will be full, even using the hard shoulder, before Gatwick is finished? Or decided that major motorways across the countryside will have to be built? One London Major candidate, Sadiq Khan, wishes to place a brand new rail link, Heathwick, through Sussex and Surrey countryside costing London taxpayers £5bn, are local residents aware of this?

Furthermore Gatwick airport has estimated that freight will increase by 1000% but not planned how it will get to and from Gatwick. This all means major issues for the residents of Sussex and Surrey and its rural landscape.

The recent National Rail Sussex Route Study of 2015 (SRS) was not a happy read for anyone that uses the line. By 2043, it foresees an enormous increase in passenger numbers on the Brighton mainline by 115% for those travelling to London Bridge and 34% to Victoria (SRS Exec. sum p.9). This is on top of an increase of 65% in passenger numbers since 2003.

Even after completion of the Thameslink improvement, the SRS states there will be unacceptable standing from as far out as Haywards Heath and by 2024 serious capacity problems overall. By 2018, with or without a new runway, the SRS states that Gatwick passengers will be subject

to significant congestion and standing on trains. In fact even if awarded to the airport, the new runway would not be operational before 2025. Many people who board the train to London at Brighton at peak hours will have to stand all the way and the same would apply on their return journeys.

“By 2018, with or without a new runway, the SRS states that Gatwick passengers will be subject to significant congestion and standing on trains.”

With a second runway, supposing there would be 70 million (currently 40 million) air passengers annually through LGW with about 50% using public transport, an average of about 2,750 passengers would be added to this picture each hour.

Together these figures at best paint a picture of a rail line at the edge of its tolerance. At worst they

flag a very serious capacity issue and what will amount to a totally appalling service for passengers.

Some, like Brighton and Hove council are placing great hope on making good an old route that goes via East Grinstead, but this will be like a ‘slow boat to China’ and so is not expected to take the major burden of huge increases in passengers away from the main line to London.

All of this says Sally “is without adding the increase in housing deemed necessary for Gatwick 2, some 40-45,000 new homes which are to be spread across the counties. This increase in housing brings with it families all looking to use the railway, local roads and the M23, all adding significantly to what we anticipate will be intolerable levels of congestion and pollution for everyone living in the area.”

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Find out more at www.cagne.org

Write to David Cameron – object to the second runway at Gatwick for the above reasons – Rt Hon David Cameron MP, Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA
Email via www.number10.gov.uk

Write to the Leader of West Sussex and East Sussex Council and object to Gatwick Airport expansion – louise.goldsmith@westsussex.gov.uk and keith.glazier@eastsussex.gov.uk accordingly

Write to your local MP to express your concerns

Join the CAGNE mailing list
– www.cagne.org – and stay informed

Follow CAGNE on twitter @cagne_gatwick

Like CAGNE at www.facebook.com/gatwickcagne

Support CPRE Sussex stance that there is no need for any new runways in the southeast and join us on **twitter** @cpresussex and **facebook**

Page reference from South East Route: Sussex Area Route Study September 2015

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/strategicbusinessplan/cp5/supporting%20documents/our%20activity%20and%20expenditure%20plans/route%20plans/sussex%20route%20plan.pdf>

Clean energy – or murky waters?

Michael Brown, CPRE Sussex volunteer, believes a long-term energy strategy is the only way forward.

Our Sussex countryside has involved changing and managed landscapes ever since our first settlers carved homesteads and fields out of the dominant Wealden woodland. From medieval times until the late 1700s, exploitation of the area’s accessible ironstone resources turned the Weald into the country’s armaments and industrial heartland.

The greatest changes of all have occurred since the Second World War: a result of long-sighted policies devised to meet fast-changing social needs for new homes and jobs, an explosion of economic prosperity and of population growth, and changing farming practices. One wonderful legacy of the post-war changes has been the creation of our country’s National Parks and AONBs.

Changes in our landscape have always been driven as much by commercial forces as by social ones. We require our countryside to be not only beautiful but also useful and profitable. We even measure the value we place on it in terms of the monetary return it makes from the people who visit it.

And it has always been a resource exploited to meet our energy needs: in the past its wood and its

iron. And now, in the 21st century, industry is looking at Sussex’s countryside for the potential of oil locked in shale layers a mile or more beneath the Weald, and as potential sites for solar arrays and wind turbines.

“CPRE, as an environmental charity focussed on the sustainability and appearance of our landscapes and rural areas, faces a challenge when considering new rural energy infrastructure proposals.”

CPRE, as an environmental charity focussed on the sustainability and appearance of our landscapes and rural areas, faces a challenge when considering new rural energy infrastructure proposals. It has to balance social imperatives and the push for clean energy sources with the visual and other environmental impacts of wind farm, solar and other renewable energy schemes. Further change to our countryside to deliver renewable energy is inevitable.

Which leaves CPRE looking at the individual merits of each: type, scale, location and the availability (or otherwise) of alternatives are the crucial considerations. We have our likes: renewables over fossil

fuels; brownfield sites; rooftop solar panels; community sponsored schemes; sensitivity to landscape and biodiversity. But unfortunately our likes and dislikes do not always accord with the (broadly pro-development) rules that determine energy planning decisions.

If only one could say that these tricky planning decisions are at least being taken in line with a clear long-term, politically agreed, publicly accepted energy strategy to meet growing energy demands and carbon reduction at affordable cost. But that is not so. Energy policies come and go along with ministers and governments. Big decisions are deferred to the point where we face a serious shortage in generating capacity.

The challenges of making nuclear energy work, of supporting a switch to renewable energy sources – which will require the oil industry to accept that available reserves will have to be left unexploited – and to do this affordably to consumers, has made cowards of successive Governments. They, and we, don’t know the road that they are driving us along. The environmental lobby will not start to breathe easier until innovation reduces the commercial price of renewable energy below that of fossil fuels.



Government support for renewables constantly flip-flops, for example, witness its change of attitude to onshore wind farms and sudden withdrawal of Government subsidies for solar schemes. One sad consequence of this was the last minute collapse of a community solar scheme being promoted by Balcombe residents for which they had planning permission.

“CPRE looks at the individual merits of each renewable energy source: type, scale, location and the availability (or otherwise) of alternatives are the crucial considerations.”

Or, they give us the good news that coal-fired power stations are to be phased out but in the next breath we are told that they want to encourage development of shale oil reserves below the Wealden basin. If needs be this will be done using fracking techniques outside and possibly underneath the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB, despite shale oil being a CO²-emitting fossil fuel and despite genuinely serious associated environmental problems. And, arrogantly, the Government has not even bothered to tell us

why that need justifies overriding environmental and climate change concerns.

Our precious Sussex countryside must continue to adapt to human needs, as it always has. But what is woefully lacking in the planning process is the context of an underlying transparent, long-term, consistent energy strategy focussed on reducing energy demand and on the delivery of the promised switch to affordable renewable energy sources. Meanwhile the planning powerbrokers lack sensitivity to the on-the-ground consequences of planning decisions on our countryside and wildlife in all its diversity. We are being asked to take balancing judgements between social and environmental imperatives in a policy vacuum.

Expect Sussex’s countryside to face continuing pressure as a commercial resource required to deliver our energy needs in one way or another for many decades to come. And expect CPRE to be engaged there on the battle lines challenging the authorities on the most sensitive and sustainable way to do so.

“We are being asked to take balancing judgements between social and environmental imperatives in a policy vacuum.”

Defenders of the Weald

Jane Watson talks to Low Weald farmers about development threats to their land.

Two hundred years ago the artist John Constable stood on Devil's Dyke and famously described the view as 'the grandest in the world'. He was looking down at the Sussex Weald – the vast tapestry of lush green countryside which so typically defines the character of Sussex.

Today the same view is seen by some as nothing more than an expanse of easy money – a blank canvas ripe for vast urban sprawl.

However, to the astonishment of prospective developers, the principled people who own this land have been turning down eye-watering sums of money – and in doing so have become the heroes of rural Sussex.

"The principled people who own this land have been turning down eye-watering sums of money – and in doing so have become the heroes of rural Sussex."

Twineham farmer, Robert Worsley made national news when he rejected a nine-figure offer for his 550 acres. But he is not alone. Hundreds of landowners large and small have joined his stand against



a speculative company named Mayfield Market Towns. Together they have pledged to protect more than 4,000 acres of rural Sussex.

"The Weald has always had its own character and sense of place alongside the South Downs," says Pauline McBride who owns the 32-acre Sussex Prairie Garden near Henfield. "It is a living thing which should be valued and cherished forever."

Pauline's family ran a small beef farm before she and her husband, Paul transformed it to create an award-winning garden.

"Farming strategies and techniques have had to evolve over time to give farmers, the guardians of the countryside, an economic living," she says. "None of us want to see a sterile and lifeless countryside and it is the reason that Paul and I created our garden."

Veronica Brookes and her husband Tony live a few miles north at Sakeham Farm on the banks of



"The Weald has always had its own character and sense of place alongside the South Downs. It is a living thing which should be valued and cherished forever."

the River Adur. This ancient 200-acre holding is mentioned in the Domesday Book and is a sanctuary for nightingales, kingfishers, rare geese and even, on occasion, a passing osprey.

"The idea that you could build here is ridiculous," says Veronica. "It is such a beautiful part of Sussex and I don't think they understand how much it floods – when I mentioned this to the developers they discarded it as an irrelevance."

"It is very important that land owners stand up for our outstanding local environment. These developers are being completely irresponsible – their sole motivation is money. I don't



know of any locals, farmers or otherwise, who support these people."

This is a view shared by Gaye Allen, who co-owns a 480-acre arable farm in Blackstone. The Allen family has been farming in Sussex for five generations and Gaye believes that the rural character of the Weald should be preserved at all costs.

"I personally would never, ever dream of selling," she says. "It would never cross my mind. Most people who live here are very proud of their village and they feel committed to it. They have chosen to live somewhere with no amenities and they've chosen to do so for obvious reasons – they have come here for the beautiful countryside, tranquility and wildlife. It would be a travesty to destroy it."

The growing size of this army of countryside heroes has delighted Robert Worsley who says he was initially worried that his neighbouring landowners may be more easily bought.



"I was very heartened to hear that I am very much not alone," he says. "I had a horrible feeling that I would be completely surrounded if I didn't capitulate, so I am a lot happier now knowing that I am among friends."

Talking to Robert, it is clear that he is not simply a man of principle, but a man who carries his passion for the countryside in his DNA.

"It's not just this bit of land I feel so strongly about," he says. "A part of me dies every time I hear of another large development, particularly in the South of England because I feel we're the most pressured and threatened part of the country."

"I don't know why I care so much about the whole greater picture. I see a loss of countryside – an irreversible creeping demise of open green spaces. Even if I hear it in the news and it is 50 or 100 miles away I feel saddened by it. I'm not sure why I feel as strongly as I do, perhaps just because it's woven into me having lived in the countryside all my life."

For centuries the people of Sussex have prided themselves on their ability to stand up for what they believe in. The old proverbial saying, 'Sussex Wunt be Druv' is thought to have originated in the Weald, where in the Middle Ages people had more freedoms than in the rest of the county.

"For centuries the people of Sussex have prided themselves on their ability to stand up for what they believe in."

This spirit of determination is characteristic of the area. 'Ponies-n-Kids' is a thriving family-run riding school at the epicentre of Mayfield Market Towns' aspirations. It is owned by the Langhornes, a principled, warm-hearted local family who are not interested in doing deals with developers.

"They would be destroying something very special," says Lucinda Langhorne. "Why should people be denied that just because of someone's greed?"

PICS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ROBERT WORSLEY, PAUL AND PAULINE MCBRIDE, VERONICA BROOKES, LUCINDA LANGHORNE AND HER MOTHER, NAN LANGHORNE.

Challenges facing our local farmers

Louise Schweitzer talks to farmers around Sussex about the issues they are facing. She lives in Hove and is both a country lover and local writer.

Sussex countryside wouldn't look like the countryside we know and love without farmers and farming. It is characterised by rolling downlands short-cropped by sheep, the flat wet grasslands of the Pevensey levels grazed by fat cattle, and by blazing yellow fields of oilseed rape or cloudy blue linseed, encircled with hawthorn-laid hedges, trimmed blackthorn and hand-scoured ditches.

Farming is more than a career, a profession or even more than a family business. It is a way of life. It binds rural communities in shared values and experience. It connects us to nature – increasingly important in our mechanical lives. And it is a significant employer: England has half a million registered rural businesses with a turnover of more than £369 billion – farming and food sectors employ over three and a half million people. Sussex has over 245,000 hectares of agricultural land.

But there are challenges to Sussex farmers, which pose serious threats to their continuing stewardship of the countryside. These relate to situations undreamt of by the 'Min. of Ag. bit' used by The Archers to broadcast useful tips for farmers and smallholders in post-war rationing.

One of the most cited difficulties now is red tape. Increasing bureaucracy affects all sectors of society, often crippling those institutions it was designed to assist. Robbie Miles at Rickney Farm, Westham, didn't have an hour to spare running his organic mixed grass and livestock farm 20 years ago. "I'm still flat out, only now I've got to find time for the paperwork too. It's harder and harder to understand it, remember to do it, and then do it properly. Complicated laws relating to single farm payments and EU decisions from Brussels make breaking the law all too easy."

"Since the loss of the Milk Marketing Board, it's been a free for all. Milk has become a loss leader for the supermarkets. You can't put prices up..."

Martin Hole who farms Montague, a large beef and sheep holding near Pevensey, believes that political shenanigans between London and Brussels have made the delivery of farming quotas and subsidies so extraordinarily complex and difficult that much of the original purpose is defeated.

Dairy farmers wrestle with cheap imports from abroad. Between 1960 and 1990, Sussex lost over 1,500 dairy units and 30,000 hectares of temporary grassland. Ed Gribble who runs a large-scale unit at the foot of the South Downs near Lewes would like a fairer share of the market and a fairer price. "Since the loss of the Milk Marketing Board, it's been a free for all. Milk has become a loss leader for the supermarkets. You can't put prices up, although Morrisons did put 10p on a pint specifically to help British dairy farmers". The decline in Sussex dairy farms has implications beyond the price of milk. Permanent pasture is ploughed up and there is a reduction in the grass leys of arable rotation. The switch to arable cultivation and a cereal



monoculture requires larger fields and increasing mechanisation leading to risk of erosion and poor soil quality, especially on the steeper downland slopes.

Rules designed to protect the countryside don't always help the farmer in Sussex. AONB, the triple SI and The South Downs National Park safeguard against development but pose problems of access and public sensitivity to agricultural change.

"Perhaps the most ominous threat to Sussex farming is bovine TB. Every farmer interviewed put it top of the list."

But perhaps the most ominous threat to Sussex farming is bovine TB. Every farmer interviewed put it top of the list. It is rife in the county – and perhaps nationwide. Robbie Miles describes how testing for TB used to happen every four years and now it's annual. Nothing seems to halt the ravages of this terrible disease which passes between wild animals, such as badgers, deer and seals, and domestic livestock. Trial vaccination has been partially effective, but successful inoculation appears to be always five years distant. Bovine TB along with BSE and outbreaks of foot and mouth may be one reason for the gradual decline in Sussex livestock farming: another is the loss of abattoirs, slaughterhouses and cattle markets. Often in central urban positions, many of these occupied land now sold off for development.

"Diversification into vineyards, small zoos, museum farms and farm tourism offer imaginative new ways of using land and raising extra income."

Farming, like everything else, changes. Diversification into vineyards, small zoos, museum farms and farm tourism offer imaginative new ways of using land and raising extra income. The Pevensey Levels is a designated Ramsar site – a convention set up for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands – and something Martin Hole has turned to good use with duck vehicle tours for interested visitors.

Coombes Farm near Shoreham runs Lamb Experience days, offering the chance to visit new-born calves and lambs and Birling Gap Sheep Centre, Eastbourne, cares for dozens of different breeds.

As Ed Gribble puts it: "I'd hate to turn the South Downs into a museum. We need people to live and work here, we must help develop affordable housing in local villages and build barns for livestock."

And to do this our farmers need support: a vital role for CPRE Sussex and its members.

With grateful thanks to Robbie Miles, Rickney Farm; Ed Gribble at Cobbe Place Farm, Beddingham and Martin Hole at Montague.

Statistics: Sussex University Research Paper 10, 1993/ Binns Funnell & Stephen & Country Life, November, 2015.



Farming in the High Weald

Isobel Bretherton of NFU South East takes a look at low impact farming in Wealden.

Low input farming is a way of life for High Weald farmer Joe Gingell and his eldest brother Bill. The Gingell family have been farming at Earlye Farm at Wadhurst in East Sussex since 1945 when Joe and Bill's late father, Norman Gingell, came to Earlye and remarked that "it was pretty wild".

It is a mainly grassland farm with ancient and semi-natural woodland on 250 acres of heavy clay and sandstone. Bill Gingell runs a 50-cow beef suckler herd (Angus X Simmental) and a flock of 70

PEDIGREE SUSSEX COW AT FRANKHAM ▼



Joe contract farms 250 acres at Frankham farm next door and rents land around Frant. Here Joe runs the Frankham herd of pedigree Sussex cattle – which has been built up over the past decade, the progeny being well received at pedigree sales. He is also responsible for a productive 100 pedigree Romney ewes, which lamb outside – his own flock of Kents are nearby. Just under half of the farm is in Entry Level Stewardship.

The brothers also rear pigs for their own consumption and Joe grows turkeys for the Christmas market.

“It is a mainly grassland farm with ancient and semi-natural woodland on 250 acres of heavy clay and sandstone.”

‘Kents’ (Romney X sheep). Cereals are also grown on 20 acres. Bill sells his Angus X store cattle, and Texel cross store lambs through South East Marts at Hailsham. Three years ago the farm entered the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme. Stewardship supports a system of management that was already underway at Earlye, funding work on woodland and hedges.

▲ JOE WITH ‘KENTS’ (ROMNEY SHEEP)

They support two local abattoirs – the sheep and pigs go to Forge Farm Meats at Tunbridge Wells and the cattle go through Tottingworth, near Heathfield.

Pasture and hedges

The pastures at Earlye support birds including thrushes and grey wagtails, which forage for insects. Joe says: “This is very low input grassland. Some of it hasn’t been ploughed for 100 years. We have a plant called dyer’s greenweed in one of the fields. And if I go out at night I can see 20 or 30 woodcock here.

“The old leys have reverted to what I call ‘Sussex grassland’ but it seems to provide reasonable keep.”

Fields are bounded by a network of tree belts and stockproof hedges, especially holly. The hedges are a legacy left by Norman who tamed the landscape and trimmed the hedges annually – he was still working the chestnut coppice into his 80s.

Bill says: “Under HLS, the hedges are now cut every other year to provide food and berries for wildlife. We have also done some hedgerow restoration. On the arable land, we have wild birdseed cover



▲ CHESTNUT COPPICE – PILES OF TIMBER

and overwintered stubbles which are really good for yellowhammers and other seed eating birds.”

The landscape at Earlye holds many clues to a long history of human occupation.

“We have bullace in some of the hedges. Often we will find the remains of an old building and the odd fruit tree – a sign of ancient habitation.”

“I am encouraged to cut an acre of chestnut every year, so it is a mutually beneficial arrangement.”

Woodland

Ancient woodland is a feature of both farms – shaws (small copses), coppice and steep wooded valleys known as gills. Joe controls deer to protect the woodlands and any coppice regrowth – fallow are the most numerous and there are small numbers of roe.

The stream that runs through the farm, a tributary of the Teise, is peppered with old ironworkings – the Fowle family of Wadhurst were a well-known family of ironmasters. Much of the coppice is sweet chestnut and hornbeam coppice which was favoured for charcoal production by the iron

industry, and hazel, along with ash and oak standards. Alders grow in the wettest areas and they too are managed.

Two years ago, HLS funded the coppicing of a shaw and a tree belt/overgrown hedge on the southerly edge of the farm. “It has really let the daylight in on the grassland,” says Joe. “We are planting chequer trees as well.” Now rare, the chequer tree or the wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) is confined to pockets of ancient woodland – it favours clay or lime soils. Chequers, the Prime Minister’s country retreat in Buckinghamshire is named after this tree.

Joe is allowed to work the woodland and takes chestnut for fencing. “I am encouraged to cut an acre of chestnut every year, so it is a mutually beneficial arrangement.”

Nowadays fencing can be erected quite quickly. Joe cuts chestnut and makes sturdy posts, peeling the bark off them. A JCB is used to bang the posts in and wire is strung and tensioned between the posts mechanically. Joe has the skill to make chestnut post and railing for areas where an attractive fence is needed, but this takes the biggest and best timber.

“By opening up the canopy a wealth of woodland flora and insects can be encouraged.”

To the ill-informed, the aftermath of timber extraction can look brutal. But by opening up the canopy a wealth of woodland flora and insects can be encouraged. Joe singles out some woodland beside Partridges Lane on the farm’s boundary. “Within four months of it being cleared, there was a tourist attraction – it was beautiful with bluebells and people drove here to see it!” he says, proving that a little input pays dividends for wildlife within a short time.

FACT FILE

At the time of Domesday, the High Weald was the most densely wooded area of England. Over the centuries, skilled woodsmen extracted timber for building, fuel for heating and charcoal for iron smelting. The woods provided pannage every autumn – acorns and beech mast – for pigs.

Dates for your Diary



Making Places: East Sussex workshop
Thursday 17 March, 5-9pm
The Main Hall, Hill Crest Community Centre,
Bay Vue Road, Newhaven, BN9 9LH

Parish councillors and representatives from the Lewes district parishes of Newhaven, South Highton, Peacehaven, Telscombe, Piddinghoe, Seaford, Southease, and Tarring Neville have been invited to the design workshop.



2016 AGM on Saturday 16 July
10am for 10.30
Barcombe Village Hall,
Barcombe Mills Road, BN8 5BH

Please join us for our 2016 AGM. This impressive, beautiful and modern hall is set in stunning countryside with wide reaching views towards the Ashdown Forest and across to the Ouse Valley.

Our traditional AGM programme of informative speakers, a delicious buffet lunch and guided walk of the local area will follow the formal business. Please save this date – full information to follow on the website and in the Summer newsletter.



Family Adventures in the Countryside
“Join the fun at Wilderness Wood”
1 June 2016 meet at 11am
Wilderness Wood,
Main Road, Hadlow Down, TN22 4HJ

If you have children and/or grandchildren, bring them along to the woods for a fun day out.

Lucy’s Little Forest School will lead an hour long den-building session in the woods. The children can build a shelter, an army camp or a dinosaur encampment, learning new skills, using their creativity and connecting with the natural world.

A picnic lunch will be held on reserved tables. In the afternoon you will be able to explore the woodland trail and the children can use the play equipment. There will be creative activities during lunch too.

This is a new venture for us – outings are normally the preserve of adults! We hope you will support us, do come along and bring the family.

Bring a picnic, wellies and suitable clothing
For children from ages 5-11
Cost: £10 per child
Places are limited so book early.