



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
OXFORDSHIRE

CPRE Oxfordshire Campaign Briefing 20 February 2007

It is nearly twenty years since CPRE Oxfordshire marched in protest. Then the cause was the proposals for a new town named Stone Bassett. But that march was not videoed by security guards with faces covered by balaclavas or under the shadow of wide-ranging injunctions. The protest march at Radley Lakes organised by CPRE with Save Radley Lakes drove our message home in a peaceful way. We look forward to npower releasing their video of the event. The Oxford Times condemned npower's attack on civil liberties: "as for the idea that RWE npower should need to resort to these measures to protect itself from Save Radley Lakes, it would be laughable, if there were not serious cause for concern for every protest group in the country." The Oxford Mail in a leader succinctly summed the impact of the week on npower's reputation: "it has scored a spectacular public relations own goal by taking such sweeping unilateral action".

1. CPRE Oxfordshire

Radley Lakes. Local campaign news has been dominated by Radley Lakes this week. npower moved in a heavy security presence and footpaths were patrolled by staff with faces covered by balaclavas. People walking their dogs were videoed and others were followed. Injunctions were served. Large swathes of trees were felled. On Saturday, a protest march was held by CPRE and Save Radley Lakes. 250 people young and old joined us and the event gained excellent media coverage. The application for Town Green status is now being processed by Oxfordshire County Council, but will it be in time to save Thrupp Lake? More at the end of this Briefing.

Warneford Meadow. The application from the Health Trust will be decided by the Strategic Development Control Committee on 28 March. The Town Green application is in progress but the Health Trusts have refused to withdraw the application while this is considered. The Guardian said that many sales of NHS land were contested because local residents wanted buildings to be retained by the NHS or land used as green belt (<http://tinyurl.com/3x92us>).

South East Plan Examination in Public. A revised list of Matters and Participants has been published (<http://tinyurl.com/2sl2ul>). The Oxfordshire sessions begin next week:

- ◆ 27 February. Morning. Central Oxfordshire. Role and economy.
- ◆ 27 February. Afternoon. Central Oxfordshire. Infrastructure and implementation.
- ◆ 28 February. Central Oxfordshire. Housing and green belt.
- ◆ 1 March. Rest of Oxfordshire.

2. Upper Thames Reservoir

OCC says Thames Water 'jumps the gun' on proposed Steventon reservoir. On Tuesday, Oxfordshire County Council's Executive decided that the case for a reservoir has not been made, that fundamental questions had not been answered and criticised Thames Water for going ahead with the Stage 2 consultation before the questions asked in Stage 1 had been answered. Keith Mitchell, the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said: "We remain unconvinced of the basic need for a reservoir... It appears that some 70% of the water held within the reservoir would be for London, with the remaining 30% for Oxfordshire and Swindon. This reinforces the importance of looking at water resources at regional level, and in particular of looking at the proposals of the different water companies in total... it feels like the process is now being rushed. Thames Water needs to tread very carefully and work with local people in trying to prove its case. If this does not happen Thames Water will upset a great many people."

Liberal Democrats in Grove have conducted a survey of residents' views on the reservoir proposals from Thames Water (<http://tinyurl.com/25wd4g>):

- ◆ 67% of the respondents did not think that the reservoir would bring benefits to the area
- ◆ 82% thought that Thames Water should be required to fix their leaks before permission is given to build a new reservoir
- ◆ Only 25% of respondents agreed with the view that the reservoir would enhance the local environment.

This Friday: **Group Against Reservoir Development** meeting at Steventon Village Hall, 7.30pm..

3. Other Oxfordshire News

Roads and tolls. Oxfordshire County Council plans to introduce 50 mph limits on five roads (OCC: <http://tinyurl.com/2jaakb>). On Radio Oxford, Keith Mitchell, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said that congestion charging would only be introduced in Oxfordshire if the government orders it. The Green Party told the station that they support charging.

Minerals. SEERA is consulting on the apportion of extraction by Minerals Planning Authority area. Deadline 30 March (<http://tinyurl.com/2pam49>).

Henley. An application to extend a farmhouse in attractive countryside is proving controversial (Henley Standard: <http://tinyurl.com/32668f>)

4. Housing and Planning

Front gardens are under threat as more and more are turned into concrete parking spaces. The Royal Horticultural Society has launched a campaign to save them (The Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2hblf6>).

Local shops. Planning can no longer stand aside as mega firms, squeeze out small shops and local businesses, the Town and Country Planning Association has said in its response to Kate Barker's Review of Land Use Planning. It said local authorities should be allowed to protect sites for small shops and call a halt to local monopolies in land ownership (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/383oke>).

House building. New figures from DCLG show that house building continues to increase, with 183,000 new houses started in 2006, up a quarter on 2000 (<http://tinyurl.com/38qhsml>).

Social housing. Ruth Kelly is about to propose that council houses should no longer be "for life" in a speech today, newspapers suggest. People living in them should be means tested to ensure that they are not too rich to benefit from council provision (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2hcbka>; Mirror: <http://tinyurl.com/2e97hn>). The speech is the result of a review by John Hills of the London School of Economics (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2nvcy3>). She is also proposing that tenants could buy a small share in their homes. The NHF said that home ownership support must not come at expense of new affordable homes (Politics: <http://tinyurl.com/2v5wao>). The Local Government Association said that the case for increased affordable housing "has never been clearer" (<http://tinyurl.com/3aglf7>).

5. Transport

Road pricing charges unpopular. As the anti-road pricing petition closed, it had reached 1.8 million signatures but we are unable to bring you the exact number as the No 10 petitions website has crashed (<http://tinyurl.com/y2yucm>). Friends of the Earth urged the Government to do more to promote road-pricing as a way to tackle climate change and cut congestion (<http://tinyurl.com/32a8nq>). The government will win over critics of its road-toll scheme before plans go through parliament, Transport Minister Stephen Ladyman and Tony Blair have insisted last week (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2ok86c>). Green lobby hails road-toll extension in London (The Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/25xb9d>). The Times said that local authorities will not get access to investment funds for improving public transport unless road pricing is introduced (<http://tinyurl.com/2q5b8k>). As we go to press, The Times reports that 1,792,168 people signed the online Downing Street petition (<http://tinyurl.com/2jw33d>). CPRE says that it is, in principle, in favour of road pricing: such a scheme is needed to avoid the growing damage to our countryside and environment caused by ever-rising road traffic (<http://tinyurl.com/2t8fb7>). Much more no doubt on this topic in Wednesday's newspapers.

CPRE on road clutter. An action plan to cut street clutter in Ledbury has been submitted by the local branch of the CPRE (Ledbury Reporter: <http://tinyurl.com/yo3lk3>).

The **Department for Transport** is not meeting most of its performance targets and lacks a "clear strategy" to put it right. Targets for congestion, air quality, public transport and carbon dioxide emissions are being missed (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2zbnqo>).

6. Environment and Energy

Food miles. The British and Kenyan governments weighed into the debate over "food miles", insisting it was ethically and environmentally sound to buy flowers from Kenya (The Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/352ur5>).

Waste. Number 10's proposals for a blanket "pay-as-you-throw" system for charging for disposing of household waste are "unhelpful and unnecessary," the Local Government Association said (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/397777>). The European Parliament voted for each Member State to recycle 50 percent of municipal waste and 70 percent of industrial, manufacturing, construction and demolition waste by 2020 (FoE: <http://tinyurl.com/2d6vly>). The Independent looked at recycling, including an Australian scheme that recycles all waste without landfill (<http://tinyurl.com/298ns2>).

Nuclear power. Greenpeace won a victory in the High Court, which ruled the government's consultation on the Energy Review unlawful (Greenpeace: <http://tinyurl.com/2oc62q>). Tony Blair remained defiant over nuclear plans (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yqum8h>). The Times said there is a government policy vacuum over nuclear power (<http://tinyurl.com/2uydsu>).

Global warming. More than 100 of the world's top musicians will perform at a series of worldwide concerts on 7 July to highlight the threat of global warming (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/3dp2aj>). Developing countries will also have to meet targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions, as well as rich countries if a pact agreed in Washington is implemented (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/3y599d>). China is promising a cut in greenhouse gases (<http://tinyurl.com/34po2e>). People aged between 50 and 64 have the UK's largest "carbon footprints" but they are also the most concerned about climate change, and want the government to do more to tackle global warming (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2gy489>). Scientists warn it may be too late to save the ice caps (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2xdyae>). Budget airline easyJet promised to play its part in combating climate change and met derision from Friends of the Earth (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/26bwot>). Greenhouse gases have jumped to record highs in the atmosphere, apparently stoked by rising emissions from Asian industry (Reuters: <http://tinyurl.com/29bfffk>). An experiment in burying CO2 underground has begun (New Scientist: <http://tinyurl.com/2q5p95>).

Wind power. An offshore wind farm capable of supplying more than the electricity needs of Suffolk was given permission. The Greater Gabbard scheme, 12 miles from the Suffolk coast, will occupy 90 square miles and supply enough electricity for 415,000 homes (The Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/3dz3t6>). Councillors have approved the controversial Lewis wind farm but the RSPB is furious (Scotsman: <http://tinyurl.com/2oztyu>).

Biomass. An Oxfordshire firm is seeking to construct a £5 million biomass plant in Tenbury Wells, producing enough power for 2,500 homes (Shropshire Star: <http://tinyurl.com/yvz3ul>).

Renewables targets. Britain is trying to block new European rules that would set binding targets on renewable energy generation to tackle climate change, according to leaked papers. The EC wants to force member states to generate 20% of their energy by 2020 from green sources such as wind power and wood chip boilers (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/352ur5>).

7. Rural Affairs

Coastal access. Natural England will ask the government to provide it with the powers to deliver a new right of access to the coast. It wants to create a clear and well managed public access along the entire 4000 km length of England's coast (Natural England: <http://tinyurl.com/2mllgm>; The Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/yqtxvh>). The Country Land and Business Association said the proposals were draconian, while the NFU warned they would lead to confrontation and controversy (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/2gssyt>; Farming UK: <http://tinyurl.com/3bqxjd>).

Pubs. More than 1,300 pubs are currently under threat from closure and around 56 pubs shut permanently every month the Campaign for Real Ale said; one fifth are in rural areas (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/2sr5qg>).

Local food. The environmental benefits of organic and local food production are not clear-cut, according to a report by Manchester Business School for DEFRA. The report considered the environmental consequences of food production from “the farm to the fork” but other effects, such as social or economic were not covered (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/36kgp2>). Another study has warned that many of Britain's fells and pastures are in danger of disappearing unless consumers buy more home-grown farm produce (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2jz3ak>).

Why Farming Matters 2007. The NFU has launched a year long campaign to highlight the huge contribution British farming makes to the nation. MP Boris Johnson is among the first to subscribe to its aims (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/32wkwf>).

Badgers. The debate over badgers and bovine tuberculosis study supports support the thesis that culling badgers is likely to increase the prevalence of disease. However, NFU deputy president Meurig Raymond said the study was “an incomplete appraisal of the contribution culling could make to the current situation” (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/2utsey>).

8. Diary

23 February. Group Against Reservoir Development meeting at Steventon Village Hall, 7.30pm.

27 March. Oxford. Bringing an historic city into the 21st Century. A RTPI seminar with the Oxford Preservation Trust.

2 April. Deadline for Oxford Preservation Trust's Environmental Awards scheme (<http://tinyurl.com/22sntk>).

13 July. Opening of the Oxford Green Belt Way.

Abbreviations and Links

DCLG: [Department of Communities and Local Government](#). EiP: [Examination in Public](#). GOSE: [Government Office of the South East](#). SEEDA: [South East England Development Agency](#). SEERA: [South East England Regional Assembly](#).

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Radley Lakes

Last week, events at Radley Lakes became more dramatic by the day. Emotions ran high, but aggression and violence were absent, as they always should be. Although CPRE took responsibility for the march, it was a community march and demonstrated the strength of feeling for Lakes and the sense of disbelief that such a treasured landscape can be destroyed in this so-called environmental age. Our thanks to Thames Valley Police for their advice and support throughout, and to Save Radley Lakes for their determined campaign.

npower moves in. Security staff arrived at Radley Lakes two weeks ago and on Wednesday last, npower's contractors began felling trees around the edge of Thrupp Lake and on its islands in preparation for filling the Lake with fuel ash. A number of islands have been cleared of vegetation, including Cormorant Island. As we go to press, tree felling is continuing. As far as we can judge, bearing in mind the strict injunctions that are in place, the main bird nesting sites have been cleared, especially on the islands. On Tuesday npower were suggesting that the work is 95% complete.

Security. On Wednesday and Thursday security staff, their faces hidden by balaclavas followed everyone who used the public footpath. On one occasion, a lady walking her dog was videoed. Andy Boddington was assigned two hooded security staff on his tour of Thrupp Lake, and the security company recorded his car registration. The situation had eased by Friday, with a less threatening presence and a general absence of balaclavas.

Injunctions. A wide ranging injunction was served, and applies to several hundred people involved in the Radley Lakes campaign. The function was to prevent harassment or identification of npower's contractors (CPRE supports this) but its wording and effect was to suppress the freedom of reporting. Specifically it bans "all protestors conducting activities against [npower's] intended use of... Radley Lakes [from] photographing or videoing [npower and contractors] or their vehicles which are protected in their entirety". This is understood to prevent any campaigner from photographing the destruction of Thrupp Lake if a npower contractor appears in the photograph, even if he or she is unidentifiable. An attempt to serve an injunction on the NQO newspaper group however backfired, earning npower vitriolic leaders in the Oxford Mail and Times. One freelance photographer was served with an injunction onsite (<http://tinyurl.com/2ch8r6>). As rumours spread that public protest had been banned by the injunction, npower placed a statement on the Oxford Mail website stating that there was no intention to restrict protest; this was withdrawn within hours but is still available on indy websites (<http://tinyurl.com/374kw6>).

Arrests. Three ecowarriors were arrested as they breached injunctions or refused to provide names and addresses. There have been no arrests or trouble within CPRE or Save Radley Lakes campaigners, though all are subject to npower's injunctions.

250 people march for Thrupp Lake. CPRE held a protest march in collaboration with Save Radley Lakes. Thames Valley Police provided full support and gave approval for the march at 3.00pm Friday. At 1.30pm on Saturday, 250 people, young and old marched. npower felt the need to video children, families and an eighty-year-old man on an electric bikes. The police provided support throughout but the event was trouble-free.

Town Green status. Jo Cartmell has applied for Radley Lakes to be declared a Town Green. The closing date for comments was last Friday. We do not yet know when they will be considered and whether the application will proceed to an EiP. Everyone's concern is that Thrupp Lake may be severely damaged before the application is determined.

Press coverage. There was extensive local press coverage including:

- ◆ "Protester arrested as clearance work starts" (NQO: <http://tinyurl.com/2wy7wu>)
- ◆ "Civil liberties battle looms over lake protest" (NQO: <http://tinyurl.com/2k3b4x>)
- ◆ "Draconian laws out of place" (Oxford Mail leader: <http://tinyurl.com/2drlub>)
- ◆ "Heavy-handed" (Oxford Times leader: <http://tinyurl.com/yod8rv>)
- ◆ Andy Boddington and Leon Flexman (npower) talk to Bill Heine (<http://tinyurl.com/3a43mu>).
- ◆ "Rallying cry to join lakes fight" (NQO: <http://tinyurl.com/2wn456>)
- ◆ "Silent protest" (NQO: <http://tinyurl.com/3yes7j>).
- ◆ "250 people march to save Radley Lakes" (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/3amsav>)
- ◆ BBC South Today covered the protest march on Saturday and Monday.
- ◆ Radio Oxford covered the protest march on Monday (<http://tinyurl.com/2wwxkz>).