



# EECAS NEWSLETTER

East of England Civic & Amenity  
Societies

Issue: February 2012

Website: <http://www.cambridgeppf.org/eecas/>

## Message from the Chairman

### National Planning Policy Framework

The government's proposed new [National Planning Policy Framework](#) aims to simplify the planning rules but has attracted a lot of opposition because of its stated aim of favouring the needs of business. A couple of months ago I wrote a [letter](#) to the region's MPs, along with the regional directors of the CPRE and the National Trust. A dozen or so responded. They included Andrew Lansley, whose reply was maybe not what we would have wanted, but at least indicated that we had given him cause for thought. The CPRE and the National Trust are keeping up the pressure.

### Loneliness and old age

From the [Campaign to End Loneliness](#) I learn that "about 20 percent of the older population is mildly lonely and another 8 to 10 percent is intensely lonely" and "half of all older people (about 5 million) say the television is their main company". With the number of old people rapidly increasing - a quarter of today's under 16s can expect to live to 100 - this must be cause for serious concern. I draw your attention to [Future East](#), which seeks to improve the homes, communities, neighbourhoods and lives of the growing number of older people in the east of England.

### Local Nature Partnerships

In mid-October I had a visit from a senior staff member from the headquarters of Natural England. We talked about the new Local Nature Partnerships, which DEFRA says are aimed at bringing together local people and organisations to get the most from the natural environment. They should all be in place by next spring. We talked also about the 134 Natural Character Areas with similar landscape character which cover the whole country and for each of which there is and a statement of environmental opportunity. These may perhaps be used to

help campaign against inappropriate developments. [Volume 6](#) describes our region.

## Smart cities and climate change

On 23 November I was at the QE2 Conference Centre to learn about Smart Cities. We were told that by 2020 there will be 20 trillion devices on the "Internet of Things", for example every traffic light or all our recycling bins. The small Spanish city Rivas is a forerunner example of a digital city, where a single centre controls almost everything in the city and achieves 40% energy savings. Manchester is going down a similar route. 3-dimensional printing will soon be widespread, making objects on demand, varying between clothes and concrete. We were assured that there is money to do these things even when it seems there is not, provided there is confidence in the outcomes from spending it. What is needed is long-term vision.

The CEO of the government's Committee on Climate Change reminded us that the Climate Change Act imposes on us by 2050 an obligation to reduce emissions by 80% compared with 1990. There are significant opportunities to reduce energy consumption in buildings, for example by installing heat pumps and through wall and loft insulation, though lowering thermostat temperatures by 1 degree C has the same effect as improving insulation - when I was a child, before central heating was common, we all wore thick pullover indoors. Better land use and transport planning will be important, as will creating freight consolidation centres, and teaching people to drive economically. The cost of meeting the Climate Change Act target will be no more than 1% of GDP. The load on domestic fuel bills per unit of energy consumed will be perhaps 10%, but this will be more than offset by reduced consumption. The government's new 'Green Deal' will allow energy-saving measures to be paid for by additions to fuel bills but again the bills will be reduced because of the reduced consumption.

## Education

On 24 November I heard a talk by Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove, who told us of his measures to improve the quality of schools and the aspirations of the pupils. It was all highly intellectual and I worried that it fails to address the severe shortage experienced by our knowledge-based economy and the associated problem highlighted in the recent [Wolf report](#) to the government, that what the schools teach is not what the children need to get jobs. For example, I have been told by a farmer that a new piece of equipment he buys typically costs £100,000 and is very sophisticated, but he cannot get staff capable of operating it.

## Transport

On 25 November I attended the annual Transport Forum at Stansted Airport. Stansted is proud of the fact that nearly half its passengers travel to and from the airport by public transport, which is rather more than for any other UK airport. 20% of passengers are "kiss and fly"; while this is much less than Manchester's 60%, such passengers cause twice as much carbon emission as those who

simply drive themselves to the airport and park there. We heard how Stansted and other organisations are preparing for the half million overseas visitors expected to come to the Olympics, in addition to 74000 members of the "Olympic Family" and 120 heads of state. They are aiming to handle this as an addition to "business as usual", though 13 August is likely to be a day of mass departure with huge stress on the transport system. We also heard a talk by the Transition Director of Abellio, the subsidiary of Netherlands Railways that is taking over the Greater Anglia rail franchise from National Express on 5 February. Their contract is for 29 months, during which time they aim for many improvements, including reliability, cleaner stations and trains, station and ticketing facilities, passenger information, and car and cycle parking.

## Heritage Lottery Fund

Following its recent consultation, the [Heritage Lottery Fund](#) is progressively creating a new strategic plan and putting the details on its web page as it does so. The budget for our region will increase by some 25% next year. Details of its various programmes are changing and there is a new fund, Catalyst, a match-funding initiative for the creation of endowments. Looking forward to 2014, the HLF wants to encourage projects with a learning element that will commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of World War 1, such as the restoration of war memorials.

The HLF funds the [East Anglia Film Archive](#), which is owned and operated by the University of East Anglia, Norwich. The Archive has 12,000 hours of film, of which 200 hours can be viewed without charge.

Please feel free to email me about suggestions and issues that concern you

**Peter Landshoff:** [pvl at damtp.cam.ac.uk](mailto:pvl@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

Chairman, East of England Civic and Amenity Societies

## Localism Act Now In Place

The Localism Act, which received Royal Assent in November 2011, and two months on from this, a parliamentary measure, known as a commencement order, officially brought into effect much of the legislation including:

- Increased accountability on local pay: councils are now required to publish their pay policies and put the policies that underpin senior pay packets to a full council vote opening up how public money is being spent in the area to local people.
- Preparations for HomeSwap Direct: the national home swap scheme that will take full effect in April 2012, enabling people to "swap their social home more easily", for example because they wish to move jobs.

- Reform of social housing regulation: initial legislative preparations for the formal implementation of changes due on 1 April 2012, which will give social landlords “greater freedom to meet local needs” and tenants “stronger tools to hold landlords to account”. Changes to the way complaints are managed will follow in 2013.
- “Freeing Cities”: gives the means to transfer of powers from central Government and non-departmental public bodies to local authorities for improved accountability and economic growth.
- New planning enforcement rules: a first step in the process to give councils the ability to take action against people who deliberately conceal unauthorised development in preparation for commencement of the substantive provisions in April 2012.
- Bin Taxes are now “officially consigned to the scrapheap of history”. These provisions would have charged families, on top of council tax, for emptying their bins - and “would have fuelled fly-tipping and backyard burning”.
- Home Information Packs have been officially removed from the statute books freeing those who wish to sell their home from this costly red tape.
- The rules on predetermination have been clarified freeing councillors to express their opinions on issues of local importance without the fear of legal challenge.
- Councils can now move to a committee system of governance, if they wish, regardless of their size.

For further details please see:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/2067635>



## Local Nature Partnerships

The recent Natural Environment White Paper recognised that partnership working is the best way to achieve effective action for the natural environment and set out a vision for Local Nature Partnerships. Once established, their overall purpose will be to bring a

diverse range of individuals, businesses and organisations together at a local level to create a vision and plan of action of how the natural environment can be taken into account in decision making.

For full details see the DEFRA webpage:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/>

**Catherine Cairns**, Chair of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Partnership, has a presentation on-line regarding the position of the Local Nature Partnerships in the East of England. It can be found here:

<http://www.cambridgeppf.org/eeef/documents/lnp.pdf>

## Mary Portas' Review of the High Street

At the request of the Prime Minister, celebrity “Queen of Shops” Mary Portas recently undertook a study into the future of the UK’s High Street shops. The full report from the study can be read here;

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-sectors/docs/p/11-1434-portas-review-future-of-high-streets>

A list of the report’s 28 recommendations is shown below.



## **THE 28-POINT PLAN TO SAVE THE HIGH STREET**

1. Put in place a 'Town Team': a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets
2. Empower successful Business Improvement Districts to take on more responsibilities and powers and become 'Super-BIDs'
3. Legislate to allow landlords to become high street investors by contributing to their Business Improvement District
4. Establish a new 'National Market Day' where budding shopkeepers can try their hand at operating a low-cost retail business
5. Make it easier for people to become market traders by removing unnecessary regulations so that anyone can trade on the high street unless there is a valid reason why not
6. Government should consider whether business rates can better support small businesses and independent retailers
7. Local authorities should use their new discretionary powers to give business rate concessions to new local businesses
8. Make business rates work for business by reviewing the use of the RPI with a view to changing the calculation to CPI
9. Local areas should implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres and we should have a new parking league table
10. Town Teams should focus on making high streets accessible, attractive and safe
11. Government should include high street deregulation as part of their ongoing work on freeing up red tape
12. Address the restrictive aspects of the 'Use Class' system to make it easier to change the uses of key properties on the high street
13. Put betting shops into a separate 'Use Class' of their own
14. Make explicit a presumption in favour of town centre development in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework
15. Introduce Secretary of State "exceptional sign off" for all new out-of-town developments and require all large new developments to have an "affordable shops" quota
16. Large retailers should support and mentor local businesses and independent retailers
17. Retailers should report on their support of local high streets in their annual report

18. Encourage a contract of care between landlords and their commercial tenants by promoting the leasing code and supporting the use of lease structures other than upward only rent reviews, especially for small businesses
19. Explore further disincentives to prevent landlords from leaving units vacant
20. Banks who own empty property on the high street should either administer these assets well or be required to sell them
21. Local authorities should make more proactive use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to encourage the redevelopment of key high street retail space
22. Empower local authorities to step in when landlords are negligent with new “Empty Shop Management Orders”
23. Introduce a public register of high street landlords
24. Run a high profile campaign to get people involved in Neighbourhood Plans
25. Promote the inclusion of the High Street in Neighbourhood Plans
26. Developers should make a financial contribution to ensure that the local community has a strong voice in the planning system
27. Support imaginative community use of empty properties through Community Right to Buy, Meanwhile Use and a new “Community Right to Try”
28. Run a number of High Street Pilots to test proof of concept

### **From the e-Newsletter Editor:**

**Please e-mail or call me with news and articles from your area for our next issue to be published in May 2012.**

**Please send me any contributions by 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012.**



Nigel Bell – Telephone: 01223 - 243830 x 205  
I usually work Tuesday and Wednesday –  
if unavailable, please leave a message.

E-mail: [planning@cambridgeppf.org](mailto:planning@cambridgeppf.org)