



Planning white paper: bad for the environment, bad for communities

A coalition of environmental and social organisations supported by over 2.3 million people has come together to fight damaging Government proposals to reform the planning system.

The Planning White Paper aims to speed up the planning process for major infrastructure projects like airports, power stations and roads. The proposals would cut local communities out of major planning decisions and spell disaster for valuable habitats and landscapes.

The changes are a result of the Treasury seemingly being determined to rebalance the planning system in favour of business and away from environmental and social concerns. At a time when action on climate change and environmental protection is needed more than ever this rebalancing is a step in the wrong direction.

The Government would be able to give the green light to big developments, while local communities who will be most affected will have little say in the proposals. This would lead to unsustainable developments like airport expansion or motorways being pushed through more quickly.

The coalition, which includes AirportWatch, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Civic Trust, Council for National Parks, enoughenough.org, Friends of the Earth, The Grasslands Trust, the New Economics Foundation, the Ramblers' Association, RSPB, Transport 2000, UKRIGS, The Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust intends to fight and defeat these proposals over the coming months.

(ends)



Editor's notes

The Coalition has produced a shared vision entitled 'Making Planning Better' that sets out our ambitions for the Planning White Paper. We see the proposed reforms as an opportunity to achieve a stronger and more democratically accountable planning system that contributes to the achievement of sustainable development, and places land use planning at the heart of climate change reduction and adaptation.

The starting point for the current White Paper was a Treasury-commissioned review of land use planning by the economist Kate Barker and transport by the former British Airways boss Rod Eddington. Officials have said that the Government is taking forward Eddington's recommendations on major infrastructure projects. The Eddington report is also informing current re-structuring of DfT. A key point about the Barker and Eddington reports is that the authors were asked to focus on economic competitiveness and their briefs completely ignored social and environmental considerations. The Coalition considers that the recommendations in the final report of the Barker Review published in December 2006, are based on inconclusive evidence and will lead to an erosion of environmental protection and local democracy.

This Coalition is not anti-development, but it is deeply concerned that the proposals in the Planning White Paper may undermine effective action on climate change and sustainable development, as well as, seriously weakening public consultation on major planning issues, particularly at the local level.

Coalition members include the AirportWatch, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Civic Trust, Council for National Parks, enoughsenough.org, Friends of the Earth, The Grasslands Trust, the New Economics Foundation, the Ramblers' Association, RSPB , Transport 2000, UKRIGS, The Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust