



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Outlook

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Wide angle lens



Standard lens



Telephoto lens

In this issue

- Wind farms & trick photography..... 1
- Farming and the CPRE 2
- Farming Diversification ... 2
- Stop the Drop challenge... 3
- Lost Villages lecture 3
- FoodMiles update 3
- Supper at Fermyn Woods . 4
- Blakesley Show 4

WIND FARMS: CALLING TIME ON TRICK PHOTOGRAPHY

BRIAN SKITTRALL

One of the undisputed adverse consequences of industrial scale wind turbines is their impact on the landscape. For this reason a planning application must contain photomontages and/or wireframe diagrams, to enable the planners and consultees to assess the impact of a proposal.

As we have been reviewing the wind farm planning applications that are coming through we felt that almost invariably the visual representations were carefully designed to hide the true impact of the development, rather than to illustrate it. This is simply unacceptable, and so we felt that we had to take action to try to prevent developments being approved based on misleading visual representations.

We have seen cases where developers have used wide angle lenses which make the turbines look smaller, where they have carefully positioned the camera location so that bushes or hedges near the camera hide the turbines from view and where items have been placed in the foreground to give the impression that they are taller than the turbines.

To try to stop these practices, we have developed a set of guidelines (see www.CPRENorthants.org) that highlight good and bad practice when preparing visual representations. We have distributed this to all the county's planning departments. Our intention is that they can be given to developers in the early stages of the planning process so that they know that we are aware of the tricks that have been used in applications to disguise the impact on the landscape of their proposals and know that such practices are unacceptable. The guidelines can also be used later in the planning process by the planning departments as a yardstick by which to judge the quality of the photomontages and wireframe diagrams that have been submitted. If the planners feel that the photomontages and wireframe diagrams are misleading, they have the power to require the developer to prepare some that are not.

FARMING AND THE CPRE

In Oklahoma, according to Oscar Hammerstein, the farmer and the cowman should be friends. In Northamptonshire, should the farmer and those who would protect the countryside be friends?

In many cases over the years, there has been unfriendliness – and worse – between the two communities. Farmers are those people who erect big sheds to spoil beautiful landscapes. But farmers must be lovers of the countryside too, or why else would they spend their working lives there? And didn't they and their predecessors over many centuries create the landscape that we now all enjoy?

Perhaps Territory folks should stick together. Or, at least, perhaps they should recognize their common interests and understand some of the issues that can create tension. These often arise from diversification, the strategies that farmers are following to supplement the income from their traditional activities.

We want our countryside to be beautiful, accessible and diverse. We want our locally grown food to be of a high quality and at a fair price. And we want rural economies to be in good shape. So, we need our farmers. We should always assess their proposed developments for their impact on both the landscape and the rural economy.

We asked **Trevor Foss** to speak on behalf of farming to the recent meeting of our Executive Committee which focused on farming. Trevor farms at Ravensthorpe and is the chairman of the NFU for the counties of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire & Rutland. The following are his thoughts on farm diversification, first published in the NFU Countryside magazine earlier this year.

FARMING DIVERSIFICATION

THE VIEWS OF COUNTY NFU CHAIRMAN TREVOR FOSS

Get bigger to be more efficient, or find a niche and diversify to survive: these are words that farmers have heard from politicians and financial experts for many years now.

In the early years this meant cutting out the middlemen and selling produce from your farm directly to the public. Farmers markets have in the main been very successful in doing just that and have given a real boost to selling fresh local produce. We also have some excellent farm shops up and down the country that sell a wide range of local produce. Location is the main driver in a successful farm shop enterprise, together with that certain substance that you can't bottle - but successful people seem to have it.

Outlying barns, which had simply been used to store a few bits of machinery, and from which the slates often disappeared one night, suddenly became hot property. Barns became an asset rather than a liability, and not just outlying barns but also those in villages too. Planning restraints have put a great deal of pressure on villages with many restricted to infill only. Over the years property prices have rocketed and taken away the chance for many first time buyers to stay. However I believe that farm diversifications have to some extent brought back life to many villages. Buildings like our old piggery that we converted to a factory unit now provides work for three local people. In Northamptonshire many farms now have units like our own which enable people to work locally. From top class office facilities in converted red brick buildings to covered barns storing vintage machinery, old and nearly new buildings are earning extra income for farmers.



The Internet has also opened up the market for a much wider diversity of sales of farm produce. I had a very interesting chat with a farmer in a remote part of the Yorkshires Dales. We were visiting friends near Otley and had decided to go for a walk up in the Wharfe valley area. We met a young farmer quite by chance and got chatting about the price of lambs and where he sold them and so on. This enterprising farmer told us he was selling his lambs on the Internet. His sales pitch was selling fresh home produced lambs direct from his farm in the Dales. He took his lambs to the local abattoir that jointed them for him; they were then boxed and sent to customers all over the country.

Diversification is now a very important part of income for many farms, in fact for some it has taken over as the main profit earner. A recent DEFRA survey of over 23,000 farms which had diversified showed that this contributed to 40% to their total income. Buildings, sport, recreation, and tourism were the main source of this income. Over 73% of farms in the Southeast had some form of diversity compared to only 37% in the West Midlands. Surprisingly 28% reported that this income was now greater than from actual farming.

Location is very important if selling direct to the public, but isolation can be an advantage. Many industrial estates do not want a noisy or perhaps dirty type of business, where machines need pressure washing for instance. So a farm building can be the ideal venue for this type of work. The recycling of green waste, and now with the new waste legislation other materials such as plastic, offer collection and recycling opportunities for farmers.

When looking at setting up in a new enterprise on a farm, planning consent is often a big hurdle to overcome. Planning can be a long and painful process, frequently resulting in refusal. As NFU county chairman I hear at first hand the frustrations farmers felt when trying to gain planning permission for a change of use on an agricultural building. It is also noticeable how in different counties, planning policies towards farm diversification varies. I do think that to a large extent this is now a thing of the past but hoops still have to be jumped through at planning level.

Farming under the single farm payment, which gives payments per hectare of land and not for what is produced from it, has seen many questioning why they should keep livestock or try to produce a crop for little or no profit. The times they are a changing and we must also change to survive as farmers. Already many farms are growing different crops for fuel and other use, letting out buildings and direct selling their own produce. It may not be possible for every farm to diversify, but for many it is a valuable and welcome profit maker.

LOST VILLAGES OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

There was a full house at Great Houghton Village Hall on Thursday 2nd October for a fascinating lecture by Lady Hayter on "The Lost Villages of Northamptonshire". With more than 80 such villages, all CPRE members are likely to live near to at least one. Deborah Hayter counted no fewer than 7 within a long walk of her home in the south-west of the county. But, as she explained, they are not so much lost as vanished. Since the 1950s much work has been done to identify the relics of deserted mediaeval villages, and traces are to be found of all but two known to have been present in Domesday Book records. She explained many of the reasons why they disappeared, which include the Black Death of 1348-9 and sheep, but are more complicated than that. One such reason can be compared to the principle of LIFO (last in, first out) - villages which came into being on marginal land in the days of plenty and of population growth in the 13th century were the first to go when times got hard. Why would anyone want to live on really tough impoverished land when there were better options available?



Stop The Drop A challenge to Northamptonshire

Many parish and other groups in the county organise litter picks in their villages and towns, to draw attention to the insidious problem of packaging and other detritus, dropped as soon as it is no longer wanted, irrespective of the consequences.

Northants CPRE encourages everyone to join their local organised litter picks. But we also challenge you to name the worst grot spots in the county that are not getting tidied up. Remember, litter on roadside verges and other land belonging to them should be reported to your local District Council: some local councils are doing a very good job on litter, others must try harder. There are however other public access areas which are not their responsibility - woodland, parkland - which desperately need a cleanup.

Let us hear your nominations for the worst grot spots in the county. Please email info@CPRENthants.org or leave a message on 01858 433136. We are planning a series of litter picks next spring as part of Bill Bryson's Stop the Drop campaign. We also want to know about your experience of litter picks and your local authority's performance on litter.

A number of members have asked whether another such lecture can be arranged. The answer is "probably, in due course". Deborah is an expert on "ridge and furrow", a topic of great interest to many people who love the countryside. So watch this space.

FOODMILES UPDATE

The FoodMiles Education Pack has now been sent free-of-charge, thanks to Awards For All funding, to 16 primary schools and after school clubs in the county. There are a few more packs to distribute, after which they are for sale at £25.00 per pack. The feedback to date has been excellent.

Pupils at participating schools are competing for book vouchers in the FoodMiles Poster Challenge: £25.00 worth for the winning pupil and £100.00 worth for the winning school or club.



SUPPER AT FERMYN WOODS

A most exciting event this summer was the Al Fresco Supper Party, held on Friday 15th August in the gardens of Fermyn Woods Hall through the generosity of David and Mary Laing.

Organised by Jane and David Charlton-Jones and friends for 100 guests, it was oversubscribed. Thanks to good planning, hard work and the guidance and practical help of Sally Hanrahan, the evening was most successful, raising £2,025, including the raffle and donations.



BLAKESLEY SHOW

For the first time CPRE Northants had a presence at this famous old agricultural show, sharing the NFU marquee with the Farming and Wildlife Group. This gave us a chance to speak to farmers and farming folk about countryside issues.

This year, the 124th show was held on Saturday 2nd August, when the weather changed from miserable rain in the morning to glorious sunshine in the afternoon. There were some interesting people with fascinating stories to tell.



CPRE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
CHRISTMAS CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT
 AND
PRESENTATION OF THE
2008 DESIGN AWARDS

AT CRANFORD HALL

This now traditional seasonal event will be held this year on
 Thursday, 4th December 2008
 at 7.30 pm

For more details phone 01858 433136 or email
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Outlook is edited by
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