

RTPI NEWS

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Second home ownership debate key to building rural community balance

The government response to the Taylor review rejected the call to limit the growth of second homes through the planning system but debate continues on the issue of reviving rural communities, *Rhian Brimble* explains

Second homes can have a significant impact on rural communities. They are likely to stand empty for long periods, which has a detrimental impact on local life and the viability of key services including shops, schools and public transport.

Demand for second homes can often result in local people being priced out of the housing market, causing significant social problems. These impacts are likely to be worse in areas where second homes make up a significant percentage of housing stock, such as coastal locations and areas of high landscape value.

The issue has been raised repeatedly, including by Matthew Taylor's *Living Working Countryside* review and the work of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, the Commission for Rural Communities and the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU).

The Taylor review of how land use and planning can better support rural business and deliver affordable housing was presented to the government last July. This sparked much debate. However, it is widely recognised that there is a lack of evidence on the social, economic and environmental consequences of second home ownership.

The NHPAU's *Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Research Literature on the Purchase and Use of Second Homes*, also published last year, warned that a failure to plan for second homes will affect those "at the margins of homeownership in certain areas because of the impact of further undersupply".

The Taylor review focused on two issues — how to nurture a healthy rural economy and how to ensure an adequate supply of rural housing. Taylor set out the importance of the planning process as an "engine of regeneration" and as a key tool in



Rural communities: affordable home undersupply is growing problem

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Is the absence of planning control causing significant harm, outweighing the personal right to own a second home?”

providing a “positive, lasting legacy of places in which people actually want to live”.

In his report, Taylor recommended that the government examine the options for revising secondary planning legislation to limit changes of use of full-time homes into second homes. He advised trialling this in a community that is already feeling the impacts of a high rate of second home ownership.

However, the government rejected his recommendation over concerns that it would be difficult to implement through the system and would interfere with the “legitimate rights of second home owners”. Instead, it called for more innovative ways of providing affordable housing.

The RTPI rural planning network is debating the issues through its online thinkpiece on planning for second homes, which aims to gauge views to feed into RTPI policy. The

network is asking its members to consider a number of questions.

These include identifying the positive and negative impacts of second homes on rural communities and helping planning authorities to find the right balance between these, bearing in mind that such areas and communities are diverse.

It also asks whether the government's response to the Taylor review tackled the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of the problem. Have we reached a point where the absence of planning control over the growth of second homes is causing significant harm, outweighing the personal right to own a second home? If this is the case, should the planning system intervene to ensure that balanced judgements are made?

The government is calling for fresh approaches to the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. So what current examples of good practice are there? Should Taylor's recommendation on change of use limits be followed? How will new affordable housing sit next to older, more traditional rural properties that are currently used only as second homes?

These are just a few of the issues that provide rural planners with a unique set of challenges in the delivery of sustainable communities. It is important that we work to bring together the different sectoral and professional interests to ensure a co-ordinated approach to development — a course that the network aims to promote.

Rhian Brimble is the RTPI rural planning network manager. To contribute to the network's debate, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/rural_planning_network or email rural.planning@rtpi.org.uk

Road map informs carbon challenge

Planners must help cities and regions take a lead in strategies for cutting emissions to meet government targets, argues Jenny Crawford



Crawford: supporting research

Chancellor Alastair Darling's announcement about the UK's carbon budgets last month received relatively little media attention. Yet it has profound implications for public policy. The budgets reflect the severity of the environmental "debt" that is driving climate change.

Their policy significance will only become fully apparent when the road map for a low-carbon UK is published in September. This will set targets for individual sectors, including housing and transport. The heat and energy strategy will play a major role in shaping these targets and a transport strategy is due to be published in the summer. Meanwhile, the statutory instruments to implement the budgets will be in place by next month.

This new policy landscape is still littered with huge question marks. When asked about the role of decentralised energy, Committee on Climate Change chief executive David Kennedy described it as "a not insignificant opportunity" that has still to be assessed.

What this might mean in terms of retrofitting and designing urban areas will be shaped by local authorities and partnerships. It is vital therefore that regional, city and local partnerships take a lead in devising their own road maps towards minimising carbon emissions and that the national road map encourages innovation and diversity in place-based responses.

The network of European metropolitan regions METREX recently published a *Mitigation Manual* based on the greenhouse gas regional inventory project process developed by Sebastian Carney, based at the University of Manchester. This tool is being used by a number of cities and the state of California to develop their carbon inventories. Its adoption in Glasgow and the Clyde Valley was recognised in the recent Scottish awards for quality in planning.

The tool highlights the fact that each place has different sectoral potential to deliver cuts in emissions. For example, the transport

sector will have varying capacity for modal switching and there will be different opportunities for renewable energy development.

At the same time, the relationship between mitigation and adaptation must also be assessed in relation to actual places. The extent of adaptation required anywhere will depend on the level of cuts in greenhouse gas that are made in the next few years. However, places have particular physical, social and economic capacities to respond to climate change. Planners therefore need to work to reduce the vulnerability of places and communities.

Research Councils UK's adaptation and resilience to climate change programme was launched this week. It brings together a number of research projects that have a common focus on the adaptation of the built environment. The RTPI is a direct stakeholder in two projects.

These are the ARCADIA project, led by Newcastle University, which aims to use integrated assessment to better understand the vulnerability of urban areas and develop policy responses. The SNACC project on neighbourhood adaptation for a changing climate project, led by the University of the West of England, will also be identifying effective, practical and acceptable means of suburban redesign.

Jenny Crawford is RTPI head of research. The *Mitigation Manual* is available at PlanningResource.co.uk/doc. For more information on Research Councils UK's adaptation and resilience to climate change programme, please visit www.ukcip-arcc.org.uk

Research Bulletin

Group to prepare guidance on planning and health tools

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence is to prepare guidance on spatial planning and health. This will assess the use of tools such as strategic environmental assessment, sustainability appraisal, environmental impact and health impact assessments. A group is being set up to develop the guidance and will be drawn from local government, the NHS, education, academia and the wider public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The chairman is Tim Chapman, a sustainable communities specialist in the Homes and Communities Agency Advisory Team for Large Applications.

For more information, please visit www.nice.org.uk/getinvolved/joinnwc/healthandotherprofessionals/PDGMemberSpatialPlanningHealth.jsp

Greenwich project bids to improve living space and mental health

Feeling Good About Where We Live is an initiative by the London Borough of Greenwich focusing on improving the local environment and living space in the hope that it will boost mental health. This three-year project is based on research by Greenwich Teaching Primary Care Trust joint director of public health Dr Hilary Gute, who in 2004 published a literature review examining evidence for a link between mental health and the physical environment. This identified five key domains — the internal environment of buildings, overall quality of housing design and attention to maintenance, density and the opportunities available for a person to "escape", crime and fear of crime and opportunities to participate.

For more information, please visit www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagel=9358694

University programme offers land-use and transport guidance

The Design and Implementation Support Tools for Integrated Local Land Use, Transport and the Environment (DISTILLATE) project has devised 18 tools and guidance documents on effective development and delivery of sustainable urban transport and land-use strategies. The work is co-ordinated by the University of Leeds institute for transport studies and covers seven areas, including behaviour and barriers, organisational effectiveness, funding and appraisal. A web-based guide for practitioners advises on which tool might be appropriate.

For more information, please visit www.distillate.ac.uk

Department passes on policy lessons of mixed community estates

Lessons About Mixed Communities is a DCLG report that encompasses in-depth work across ten different estate and area-based transformation programmes. It explores existing programmes with a view to highlighting transferable lessons on policy issues.

For more information, please visit www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1185658.pdf

Transport scheme programme aims to evaluate productivity gains

The DfT is carrying out research to develop a way of evaluating the impacts of key transport schemes. The aim is to understand how schemes influence productivity at different geographical levels.

For more information, please visit www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/evaluation/evaluationguidance/evalprodimpacts



Housing: study links environmental improvements with health

Planning Summer School to build on shared experience

Volunteering at this year's event offers a chance to support its valuable learning ethos, says *Neil Pearce*

My first experience of the Planning Summer School (PSS) was in the prestigious and historic setting of St Andrews last year. At the 75th anniversary event I was not only impressed by the speakers' depth of knowledge and understanding but also by their ability to impart this to their audience.



Pearce: joining school committee

For me, the summer school was not just about sitting in a lecture theatre. It was about the opportunity to meet like-minded planners, share experiences and swap stories in a relaxed and friendly environment. It was about making friends, bumping into old acquaintances and furthering my knowledge and understanding of the pressures facing our profession and the best ways of tackling them.

This ethos of sharing and learning from our experiences is being showcased this year in Exeter at the Planning Academy, replacing the Planners' School 2 as the PSS's final four-day segment. The academy format will offer the opportunity for a more focused, themed workshop approach to learning, with lectures, fieldwork and increased delegate participation and mentoring.

Exeter 2009, therefore, promises to be as rewarding as ever. The programme includes the usual elected members and planning schools as well as study tours, gala dinners, entertainment and the infamous bar quiz the Exeter Challenge.

Last year, much of the credit for my enjoyable experience was down to the dedication of the summer school volunteers in making the event run efficiently and smoothly, despite obstacles such as power cuts being thrown in their way.

It was for this reason that I decided to put myself up for election by my fellow delegates to join the 30-strong summer school committee and support future events. Membership can also be granted through nomination by the RTPI.

Starting at Exeter, this will be a new and challenging experience for me, which I am eagerly anticipating. So come and join me, either as a delegate or by putting yourself forward as a volunteer. I look forward to seeing you in September.

Neil Pearce is senior planning officer (north) at Wychavon District Council and a director of Avon Planning Services. The Planning Summer School will take place from 4 to 16 September at the University of Exeter. In September, the RTPI will appoint five members to the committee to serve a three-year term, starting in October. To apply, please contact James Taylor on 020 7929 8172 or email james.taylor@rtpi.org.uk. Nomination forms must be returned by 26 June.

RTPI Bulletin Board

Local authority information sought on wind farms policy

Politicians in Planning Association (PIPA) member David Milsted of North Dorset District Council wants to hear urgently from planners who are formulating local policies on wind farms' location about whether these have been tested against PPS22 for a pending application. To contribute, please email david.milsted@virgin.net with a copy to PIPA network manager Andrew Matheson at pipa@rtpi.org.uk

Bridging the gap between research and policy

European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) UK members were joined by Planning Research Conference delegates at Newcastle University on 3 April to discuss the challenge of meeting policy needs through ESPON research.

Members can view the report at www.rtpi.org.uk/item/2308

Renewable energy projects win European funding boost

UK renewable and other energy projects will receive up to £4 billion from the European Investment Bank to tackle shortfalls in financing. Offshore wind schemes will also receive £525 million of support over the next two years, funded through the renewables obligation.

Events

Public-Private Sector Partnerships in Plan-Making

14 May. RTPI North West. Northwest Regional Development Agency, Warrington.

Local authorities increasingly rely on the private sector in preparing local development documents and masterplans. This event discusses how best to go about it, the advantages and pitfalls and good practice. Cost: £99.87; £20 for students and unwaged; half-price for retired.

For more information, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_north_west

Tenth Annual Urban Design Conference

15 May. RTPI. The Hatton, 51-53 Hatton Garden, London.

This event will provide an introduction and update on recent tools including the updated English Partnerships urban design compendium and PPS3 and its supplementary guidance. It will cover urban design and practice in delivering quality in differing environments.

Cost: £469 + VAT.

For more information, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/ct/EVENT/616/11/events/616

Project Management for Everyone

19 May. RTPI. Venue to be confirmed. Manchester.

This seminar has been devised for those managing tasks, assignments or formal projects who need to meet challenging time and resource targets. Equally, it offers an intensive introduction to the concepts, methods and techniques for those embarking on a career in the sector. Cost: £469 + VAT.

For more information, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/ct/EVENT/617/11/events/617



RTPI

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- The economy: where are we going?
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- Emerging policy on economic development
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- Evidence bases and planning policies – retail and town centres
- Delivery: the private sector

Chair: Professor Brian Robson, Director, Centre for Urban Policy Studies (CUPS)



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