

# PLANNING

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South Downs: park backed

## Downs set to become park

The campaign for the South Downs to become England's tenth national park has come a step closer as the inquiry inspector backed the plans.

But details of Robert Parry's recommendations will be unclear until the full report is released next week, when DEFRA restarts the designation process with a six-week consultation.

Some recommendations were cited in a legal notice issued by DEFRA last week, including an alternative boundary line from Petersfield to Pulborough and an additional 25km<sup>2</sup> of land to be included in the park.

The South Downs Campaign (SDC) gave a cautious welcome to the news. It is concerned about the effect that the boundary change might have on the Low Weald in Hampshire and West Sussex and settlements such as Liss, Midhurst, Petersfield and Petworth.

SDC chairman Robin Crane said: "We are strongly opposed to the area losing protected status and firmly believe that it should be part of the national park. But we cannot comment further until we have seen the detailed recommendations."

The inquiry finished in March 2005 but the process has been on hold since February 2006, when all boundary work in England was postponed due to legal complications arising over the New Forest.

## Brown boosts brief of housing minister

By Catherine Early

The planning and property industry strongly welcomed Gordon Brown's pledge to give the housing minister more clout as he took over as prime minister this week.

The housing minister will attend cabinet meetings and lead the debate on vital new homes, Brown said. "By engaging the British people in a national debate about the future of housing we can make affordable housing for

all one of the great causes of our time," he promised.

RTPI head of policy and practice Rynd Smith said housing is increasingly important to the economy. The Home Builders Federation said the move will bring a senior ministerial focus to housing and planning.

The National Housing Federation hopes that a cabinet-level housing minister will help put the case for more funding in the comprehensive spending review.

British Property Federation director of regeneration and development Faraz Baber said Brown's promised eco-towns should feature high-density development to tackle climate change.

But Friends of the Earth planning adviser Hugh Ellis urged Brown to drop the planning white paper. "As prime minister, he must appeal to a wider audience and the white paper puts him on collision course with the middle classes," he warned.



Crow Holt: project refused

## Tall turbines turned down

A planning appeal for a wind farm that would have erected the tallest onshore turbines in England has been refused.

The Crow Holt scheme by Renewable Energy Systems (RES) near the village of Grove in Nottinghamshire included ten 125m turbines. But the inspector agreed with Bassetlaw District Council that the environmental impact would be "severe".

Enplan planning partner Martin Carpenter, who appeared on behalf of the council at the inquiry, said: "This was not a case of objecting to renewable energy but a scheme with a significant landscape impact."

But RES project manager Annette Deveson said: "If the UK is serious about a sustainable future then it cannot refuse schemes like this." RES claimed that the project would have powered 11,000 homes and displaced 45,000 tonnes of carbon a year.

## TEES VALLEY PARK DEVELOPERS SELECTED



A consortium was chosen this week for Tees Valley Regeneration's £200 million Central Park in Darlington. Commercial

Estates Group, Keepmoat and Yuill Homes will develop 600 homes, leisure and commercial space on the 30ha site.

## IN THIS ISSUE

### HOUSING REVIEW ON 2

The Office of Fair Trading has begun a year-long review that will probe the housing market and in particular the shortage of homes

### NUCLEAR PLAN REFUSED 5

The Scottish Executive says it will not back Westminster's nuclear waste disposal plans



### STRATEGY SOUGHT 16

Ensuring that housing growth is backed by appropriate infrastructure is going to be a key challenge for planners in the coming years (left)

### JOB OF THE WEEK 37

Dacorum seeks head of planning and regeneration — salary £55,857 to £57,777

### REGULARS

Environment news . . . . . 5  
 Transport news . . . . . 6  
 Regeneration news . . . . . 7  
 Private sector news . . . . . 8  
 Scottish news . . . . . 9  
 Letters & Comment . . . 12-13  
 Skill up . . . . . 20  
 DC Casebook . . . . . 21-25  
 RTPI News . . . . . 26-28  
 Planning jobs . . . . . 33-51