

# Places Places Places Places

News and views from the National Trust

Summer 2008

## Going Under? How land can help protect us from flooding

Last year's flooding, billed as the worst in modern British history, caused more than £2bn worth of damage, and left thousands of people without power or drinking water. Flooding is predicted to become more frequent in the future as a result of climate change – and this brings home the need to adapt.

The National Trust is calling for investment in more sustainable solutions to flood risk management, based on restoring the natural function of river catchments. The way we manage our rivers and their catchments can make a significant impact on reducing flooding. Every piece of land, including land in major built developments, can play a part in storing water, slowing the speed at which it moves downstream and reducing flood risk.

One example of this is the Stamford Brook development of over 700 new homes on National Trust land in Altrincham, Cheshire. At the heart of the new estate is a river restoration project, turning the previously canalised and straightened Sinderland Brook back into a meandering stream with its natural floodplain. Combined with an on-site Sustainable Urban Drainage System, the restoration has made space for water, people and wildlife, significantly reducing flood risk and improving wildlife habitats for people to enjoy.

Key features include a reduction in flood risk from one in 35 to one in 300 years, and a reduction in the flood risk zone so that the developers could actually build more houses on the site. It also resulted in approximately 35% increase in the sale price of houses with a river frontage.

We're concerned that unless a more sustainable approach to flood risk management is adopted nationwide, more expensive 'hard defences' such as concrete will be needed. These tend to increase the speed at which water moves through rivers – increasing the flood risk for communities further downstream.

We have undertaken an evidence based review, involving a number of the UK's leading academic experts, to examine the links between land management and flood risk. The review concluded that at a small catchment scale (which applies to 97% of England and Wales) land management has a significant impact on the amount of water run-off and can be used as part of an integrated approach to flood management. As a result, a larger slice of the £800m flood risk management budget needs to be invested in land use solutions that make space for water, delivering multiple benefits and securing a more sustainable future for land use.

**Below Sinderland Brook. Work to restore the river and floodplain has increased the river's natural dynamics and helps prevent flooding of the development area**



Inside



2 Holidays at home



3 Green places



4 Heritage protection

## Holidaying at home

As summer approaches, where do you plan to spend your holiday? Will the draw of guaranteed sun and warm seas promised by the classic foreign holiday win through, or are you considering avoiding the airport and spending some time in the UK?

For lots of reasons, the Trust wants to encourage more people to think about holidaying at home. Not only are there some fantastic places to explore, from beautiful coastlines, sophisticated cities and open countryside, but holidaying in the UK can deliver a range of other benefits.

For starters, it will help reduce the UK's tourism deficit – UK holiday makers currently spend £20 billion more abroad than visitors to the UK are spending here. A rise in domestic holidays would also provide welcome investment in some of our more remote or economically challenged rural and coastal communities.

Domestic tourism also reduces the need to fly – and the need to expand ever-congested airports. We are concerned about the implications for noise, air pollution, quality of life and traffic which would be brought about by an expansion of aviation in the UK. Aviation is also widely recognized as

the fastest growing contributor to climate change – from which the National Trust is already beginning to see impacts on properties in our care.

Within the next few weeks, VisitBritain will be submitting the conclusions of its Tourism Strategy Review to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The review was announced following a particularly tight financial settlement for VisitBritain in last year's Comprehensive Spending Review and will lay the ground for how the Government invests and supports a significant sector and contributes to the nation's quality of life.

We have called for the review to champion a new approach to tourism which better understands and promotes the ways in which tourism can contribute to wider Government priorities. This means going beyond viewing and supporting tourism simply as another economic sector, important though that is, and embracing the role of tourism in underpinning environmental investment, addressing climate change and supporting the regeneration of local economies.



**Right** Children enjoy the water at Marsden Bay, Tyne and Wear. As well as beautiful coastline, the UK offers open countryside and bustling cities for domestic holiday makers to explore



## Trust says 'No' to more airport expansion

The Trust is opposed to plans for further expansion at Heathrow and Stansted airports. While we are not against people flying, we do believe that the Government's forecasts of an increase in air travel of 200–300% to and from the UK by 2030 are not sustainable and have serious potential consequences for climate change, from which we are already seeing the impacts on historic houses, gardens, coastline and countryside in our care.

Proposals for a second runway at Stansted risk major consequences for the internationally important and thousand year old Hatfield Forest. And an increase in capacity at Heathrow threatens the tranquillity and quality of some of London's most

precious green space, including Osterley Park in Hounslow. We are unconvinced of the claimed economic benefits and we are frustrated at the contradiction between expansion plans and the Government's policies on addressing climate change. We've welcomed the recent Sustainable Development Commission report which concluded that a new evidence base establishing the true benefits and impacts of aviation must be created before any decisions on major airport expansion can take place.

**Left** A plane flying over the ancient woodland at Hatfield Forest. The National Trust has voiced concerns about the proposals to expand nearby Stansted airport which could put Hatfield's trees and wildlife at serious risk

## Valuing green places

'It makes me take a deep breath and relax. I love the light in the trees, the changing seasons, the movement, the lack of straight lines, the sound of birds and of children playing. Without this life would be pretty much meaningless.'

'The National Trust should follow with vigour the spirit of its founding fathers to protect areas of open space.'

Over the last few months we've received thousands of passionate views from National Trust members and the wider public on the importance of green places such as parks, woodland, wildlife sites and riversides. Certainly, many of them are aware that this isn't something new for us. In fact, Octavia Hill, one of the founders of the National Trust, was an intrepid campaigner for those without access to open spaces. She fought for green spaces to relieve the crushing poverty in Victorian England,

in the face of rampant industrialisation.

As part of our wide ranging activities to determine how we should interpret our role as protector of green places today, we also commissioned some research. This revealed that 94% of people believe that the National Trust should get more involved in protecting and looking after local green places.

The increasing importance of green space to people's quality of life is something we can't ignore. We want to work closely with other organisations involved in green places and to understand how we can make a real difference. We will publicise our conclusions later this year. If you've got any questions or suggestions in the meantime please contact us.



**Right** A young girl enjoying fresh air and exercise in the bluebell woods at Hatchlands Park, Guildford, Surrey. Access to local green space is essential to people's quality of life

## Revolution in the regions?

Reforming regional governance may not be the hottest topic in public and political debate, but this belies the significance of proposed changes in the consultation *Prosperous Places: taking forward the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration* - otherwise known as the Sub-National Review or SNR.

But what should regional government be seeking to achieve? Should success be measured merely by short-term economic growth and housing numbers – or by progressive, long-term objectives that ensure the delivery of sustainable development by integrating social, economic and environmental needs?

The Trust welcomes the SNR as an opportunity to make regional governance more streamlined and coordinated. But it should be fit for purpose. Economic growth targets should not compromise the achievement of social and environmental objectives, and in today's post-Stern world – the

SNR should drive the shift to a low carbon economy.

Third sector organisations have made a valuable contribution to the current Regional Strategies, and we believe that a strong partnership approach is essential to policy development, delivery and scrutiny in the new regional structures.

The Trust is a major business with an annual turnover exceeding £350 million, the largest landowner/manager in the UK, and a conservation charity. As an organisation with a stake in much of what the SNR could deliver, we are keen to share our experience and to demonstrate the importance and benefits of a more integrated approach.

This, we believe, is critical to ensuring genuinely sustainable development in the English regions.

**Right** As well as economic growth, regional policy making needs to consider people's health and well-being



## Public access to the coast



We have welcomed the Government's intention to open up a continuous walking route around the coast of England, as part of the Marine Bill. As the largest owner of coastline with over 1,100 km in our care, we have been involved with conservation and access to the undeveloped coast for over 100 years.

Access to the coastline is a highly prized public asset. By recognising the dynamic nature of the coast and suggesting a corridor of access, the Bill provides for future generations. The flexibility of not putting a permanent

line on the map is much welcomed. The development of a Marine Planning system, mirroring the established approach to land use planning, will be another important outcome of the Bill, along with the creation of a representative network of Marine Conservation Zones.

The success of the new legislation will depend on the resources being available to implement it.

**Left National Trust volunteers on a working holiday at Poltesco in Cornwall rest while looking over the bay**

## Heritage Protection Bill

**Below Visitors to Osterley Park, Middlesex enjoy the spectacular historic interiors**

A valuable opportunity for everyone who cares about the historic environment has arrived with the publication of the draft Heritage Protection Bill. Whilst the level of protection currently in force is welcome, the actual mechanics of protection and management are often unwieldy, leading to criticism that the system does not, and cannot, work for the needs of the 21st century.

We've welcomed the Government's proposals to create a more open,

democratic and efficient means of caring for our heritage. It is how the Bill is delivered on the ground which is where our support for the proposed changes will be most influenced.

We have already given a health warning to the Government about the skills, resources and capacity of those responsible for making the changes happen, especially in local government. We also believe there is an urgent need to provide the setting of important historic parks and

gardens with extra levels of protection from gradual encroachment by new development.



## Eco towns: threat or opportunity?

**Below Wildlife at Passfield Common in Hampshire could be affected by the development of an eco-town nearby**

Earlier this year the Government announced it will consider proposals to build eco-towns on brownfield land as a way to address shortages in housing and to reduce carbon emissions.

We have raised concerns that eco-towns could become a distraction from the pressing need for the Government to meet its target for all new homes – not just eco towns – to be zero carbon by 2016.

New developments need to avoid damage to landscape, heritage and wildlife and not generate extra traffic. We have particular concerns in relation to the potential impacts of one of the proposed eco-towns at Bordon in Hampshire which lies next to Passfield Common and Conford Moor, a 90 hectare area of lowland heath, wood pasture and wetland. Water abstraction close to the site could have a major effect on the important wildlife in this protected area.



**TO OBTAIN COPIES OF THE REPORTS MENTIONED IN PLACES PLEASE CONTACT US AT THE EMAIL ADDRESS BELOW**

**Our contact details are** The National Trust, 32 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AB

**Tel** · 0207 799 4541 **Fax** · 0207 222 5097 **E-mail** · [externalaffairs@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:externalaffairs@nationaltrust.org.uk) **www.nationaltrust.org.uk**

The National Trust is a registered charity, independent of Government and receives no state grant or subsidy for its general work. Charity no. 205846. © The National Trust 2008

Photos © p1: Monty Rakusen, NTPL/Ian Shaw/Jennie Woodcock/Simon Tranter; p2: NTPL/Joe Cornish, Keith Turner; p3: NTPL/John Miller/Paul Harris; p4: NTPL/Ian Shaw/David Levenson, David Burges