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CHESHIRE

PRESS RELEASE

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Cheshire CPRE says – don't weaken Green Belts

Cheshire's countryside campaigners, CPRE[1], spoke out this week to protect our Green Belt, in the face of mounting Government pressure to relax Green Belt controls to meet house-building demands[2].

'The Green Belt not only protects our countryside from sprawling development, it also helps our towns as development is focused within urban areas, promoting regeneration and keeping towns thriving,' said Cheshire CPRE's Jean Stainthorpe.

'Last year, we celebrated 50 years of the Green Belt – a concept CPRE had promoted for two decades. Green Belt policy has been successful in maintaining accessible countryside on our doorstep and in creating sustainable urban communities. The public recognises its value, with 84% of people saying the Green Belt should remain open and undeveloped. [3], ' she continued.

CPRE believes Green Belts also have an important role to play in halting climate change, and that they are therefore more now important than ever before.

'There is a need for housing – in particular, for affordable housing – but building on the Green Belt is not the answer. With good planning, this need can be met without destroying our environment'. Ms Stainthorpe concluded.

– ENDS –

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[1] The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. Its Patron is HM The Queen and its National President is Bill Bryson. For more information and archive of press releases see the CPRE Cheshire website at www.cprecheshire.org.uk and the national CPRE website at www.cpre.org.uk. CPRE's Cheshire Branch was founded in 1928, two years after the National CPRE charity began. While it is a part of the National CPRE organisation, Cheshire CPRE is a registered charity in its own right.

2. At a Select Committee session on Tuesday 10th July, the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, is reported to have refused to give an assurance that the Government is committed to protecting the Green Belt and also, according to the Press Association, dismissively said 'I think we are going to have a tussle ... because some people are concerned about environmental issues'. The new Chancellor, Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, is also reported to have said yesterday that building on the Green Belt may be necessary in view of the need for more housing.

3. In a MORI poll conducted in 2005, when asked 'How much, if at all, do you agree or disagree that Green Belt land should remain open and undeveloped, and building on it not allowed?' a total of 84% were in agreement, comprising 61% strongly agreeing with the statement and 23% tending to agree.

Further Information:

Clare Lewis
Cheshire CPRE Press and Membership Officer
07731 659 786 / 01625 537673
clare@cprecheshire.org.uk

Debbie Janney
Cheshire CPRE Branch Secretary
01606 835046 Mon-Fri 9-12
info@cprecheshire.org.uk