



# THE SUNDAY TIMES

28<sup>th</sup> August 2011

**Your view**

Do you believe the National Trust is right to say the government's new planning rules will damage the countryside?

Response	Percentage
Yes	44%
No	25%
Don't know	20%
Neither	11%

Source: YouGov questioned 2,657 adults on August 25-26, 2011

## Rural lobbies in planning battle

**Kate Mansey and Maurice Chittenden**

A COALITION of Britain's leading countryside groups has vowed to work together to fight the government's new planning proposals.

The RSPB, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), the Woodland Trust, WWF and Friends of the Earth believe new rules will encourage councils to let beauty spots be bulldozed in return for handouts from developers.

The Greenest Ever Planning Coalition, an umbrella body set up last October to represent 22 organisations, will oppose proposals forcing councils to make a "presumption in favour of sustainable development".

Alice Hardiman, acting head of planning for the RSPB, said of the plans: "This is effectively allowing planning applications to be bought and sold."

Among the concerns are that greenfield sites, which are not officially designated as greenbelt, will be at risk of development.

The National Trust has launched its own campaign

opposing the plans and is asking its 3.6m members to write to their local MPs.

However, the government and developers insist that the plans will help address the country's housing shortage.

Jake Berry, private parliamentary secretary to the housing minister, Grant Shapps, said: "Many groups have voiced their support for much-needed reform of the planning system to provide the sustainable growth this country desperately needs."

"We hope organisations more interested up to now in falsely portraying a doomsday scenario will put aside the hyperbole and start putting their energy into offering a constructive response."

Stewart Baseley, executive chairman of the Home Builders Federation (HBF), accused environmental groups of "scaremongering" and ignoring the "acute housing crisis".

According to a YouGov poll for The Sunday Times, more than half of people support a simplification of planning rules, but 44% believe the changes put the countryside at risk.

### Building Consensus

Political Liaison | Community Consultation | Media Relations