

The Daily Telegraph

Gove's 'nimby' jibe at planning law opponents

A senior Cabinet minister yesterday accused campaigners opposed to the Government's planning reforms of being more concerned about their "precious" lawns than jobs.

Michael Gove, the Education Secretary, said that the Coalition was "on the side of jobs, not the nimbys" after David Cameron claimed that planning laws were frustrating growth.

Referring to those who oppose developments near their homes, Mr Gove said: "When it comes to reforming planning laws in order to allow companies to expand, he [Mr Cameron] made it clear that he's on the side of jobs, not the nimbys."

Speaking on the sidelines of the Tory conference in Manchester, Mr Gove added: "In so doing, he was saying to some of the people in the hall, 'I know you think your lawns are precious, but actually people's jobs at the moment are what's important'."

Ministers are pushing through plans to replace 1,300 pages of planning regulations in England with just 52.

The new rules include a "presumption in favour of sustainable development", without defining clearly what it means, leading campaigners to fear that parts of rural England will be concreted over. It is opposed by a number of groups, including the National Trust, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. This newspaper's Hands Off Our Land campaign is also urging ministers to reconsider the plans.

Last night the National Trust, which has entered talks with the Government about changes to the framework after receiving assurances from the Prime Minister that he had the interests of the countryside at heart, criticised Mr Gove's "rudeness".

A trust spokesman said: "This is so far from what these reforms are supposed to be about. We have got used to rudeness but we are not going to let it have any effect."

The remarks could overshadow talks which continue today in London between senior officials at the National Trust and Greg Clark, the planning minister.

Mr Cameron had earlier told his party's annual conference that companies could not expand because they were "stuck in the mud of our planning system". He said: "Our businesses need the space to grow — literally. That's one of the reasons we're reforming our planning system."

"To those who just oppose everything we're doing, my message is this: Take your arguments down to the job centre. We've got to get Britain back to work."