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## The new threats to green spaces

Our campaign to save your green spaces is just beginning. As you know, two ominous government consultations closed last month—

(1) the proposed new Local Green Space designation in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Communities and Local Government) and

(2) changes to the law for registering land as town or village greens (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

The Local Green Space designation is festooned with restrictions, eg about size and location, and all coupled to a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' whatever that may mean. The designation may well prove to be useless, if not damaging.

We have also strongly opposed the thrust of Defra's consultation on new greens. On the unproven premise that registration is being used to thwart development, the Defra proposals threaten to undermine, if not destroy, the legal basis for registration. This could outlaw applications on land which is already allocated for development or has planning permission, and it could limit greens to traditional village-centre sites. It may even be retrospective, killing applications already in the pipeline. Communities will be severely hamstrung in their attempts to record their rights on land where they have long enjoyed informal recreation.

What is worrying—and dare I say unpatriotic—is that these places should be seen as targets for development under any circumstances. Patches of 'free' land, where people meet, talk and play, have been at the heart of community life for more than a thousand years, and central in the development of the kind of local democracy the government is keen to promote.

Our job now is to galvanise MPs and Peers to ask questions and lobby ministers, and to mobilise the media, to ensure that the Local Green Space designation is effective and that the greens registration process is preserved. Such an outcome would be localism at its best, which is at the heart of this government's policies, but we know it won't be an easy ride: our small society is in for another testing struggle.

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As ever, we need money to run this campaign. Please help us to help save your green spaces by giving what you can afford.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Mabey". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Richard Mabey  
Vice-president

**PS Please visit our website <http://www.oss.org.uk/appeals/> to donate. Thank you.**

**Richard Mabey is Britain's foremost nature writer and a poet (in prose) of the countryside and its commons. He is author of *Flora Britannica*, *Nature Cure* and much else.**