

## **Neighbourhood Planning Conference**

On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November, more than a hundred delegates attended a conference on the new Localism Act which will offer opportunities to set up local planning policies at town and parish level. Those attending the event at the Riverside Centre included Andrew Turner MP, county councillors, many town and parish councillors, representatives of non-profit organisations and interested members of the public.

Gill Kennett MBE, Chairman of the IW Association of Local Councils opened the conference. “As the Island is fully covered by 33 town and parish councils, with a high proportion awarded 'Quality' status the Island is well placed to take advantage of the opportunities to develop Local Neighbourhood Plans.”

She was followed by five presentations by two local planning experts, the IW Society, IW Council and the National Farmer’s Union. They explained current policy and the challenges of the next forty years concerning housing needs, the need for greater conservation and increased food production.

The afternoon session was opened by John Langley, Chairman of the IW Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE-IW). He explained how the CPRE began both nationally and on the Island and its record in monitoring all Isle of Wight planning applications. His presentation was followed by the Deputy Head of Planning Services (Policy), Wendy Perera, who explained the role of the IW Council in supporting Local Neighbourhood Plans. Phil Turner, a retired Chartered Town Planner, drew upon his experience to further explain the implications of the Localism Act which will replace thousands of pages of national planning regulation by detailed local planning, such as in the Island Plan Core Strategy and complementary Local Neighbourhood Plans.

A major part of the afternoon was concerned with workshops aimed at informing delegates about different aspects of the new legislation. It was a great relief in one of the sub-events to discover that the “Council Planning Department” agreed the application for construction of “A Windmill at Bembridge” despite there being vociferous opposition to ‘this new-fangled monstrosity’ from some members of the local population. (A hypothetical exercise to demonstrate how the planning process works in practice!)

The conference had been organised jointly by the IW Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the IW Association of Local Councils (IWALC) as part of a national government campaign to involve new people in the planning system and establish the voluntary development of Local Neighbourhood Plans.

Beginning in February 2012, CPRE-IWALC will hold a series of evening training events in different parts of the Island for people who wish to start a Neighbourhood Plan for their town or parish. To find out more please visit the IWALC website ([www.iwalc.org.uk](http://www.iwalc.org.uk)) or phone John Medland on 01983 753467 (office-hours).