

2013 SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 22nd May - 5:30pm

Room 401

Bartlett School of Planning - UCL

*Ralph Smyth **

Barrister and senior transport campaigner, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Public participation in major transport infrastructure planning: Aarhus Convention, open data and HS2

Investing in major transport infrastructure is increasingly seen as the path out of recession and economic stagnation. Particularly for those communities directly affected, moves to accelerate construction seem, however, to fly in the face of the coalition Government's localism agenda and commitment to involve local people in decisions. While the Aarhus Convention has in the UK led to rights to environmental information and most recently reduced the cost for judicial review of decisions, its provisions on effective public engagement remain largely forgotten.

The talk will consider ways to improve process and outcomes, whether by learning from other countries or new technology. It will consider, for example, whether the open data agenda is the key to improving engagement at the macro and micro levels - such as considering the validity of long-term official forecasts or the likely impact on house prices.

* Ralph Smyth has led on transport issues for CPRE, a national environmental NGO, since 2008. In 2011 he set up the Right Lines Charter, under which a coalition of over a dozen NGOs has sought to improve the process of and proposals for High Speed 2. He has taken part in examination of nationally significant infrastructure project and public inquiries, including helping defeat proposals for a Thames Gateway Bridge, and was part of the successful legal challenge to a third runway at Heathrow. He is regularly quoted in the national media on transport issues and has appeared at select committee inquiries on transport issues.

As a postgraduate at Oxford University, he specialised in comparative law and afterwards gained experience at the Council of Europe and on a legal scholarship in Germany. He has been involved in a range of grassroots movements, including significant involvement in the 1990s in the UK's anti-roads movement when he took part in civil disobedience against airport expansion and road building.

All are welcome and participation is free.

Further details about the OMEGA Seminar Programme can be found on the OMEGA Centre's web site (<http://www.omegacentre.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/outputs/seminar2.php>).

For enquiries and to join the mailing list, please contact Marco Dean marco.dean.11@ucl.ac.uk.