

SHROPSHIRE SHROPSHIRE SHROPSHIRE

LANDSCAPES

Campaign to Protect Rural England

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IS INCINERATION THE WAY FORWARD?

See the article on page 8

CONTENTS

Editorial	Page 1	Incineration	Page 8
Secretary's Report	Page 2	Icons of England	Page 10
New Planning Era	Page 4	List of Officers	Page 11
Church Stretton Changes	Page 6		



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SHROPSHIRE

**CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL
ENGLAND**

EDITORIAL

Saving and Protecting are two thoughts we should keep in our minds particularly at this time, when there is a downturn in the British economy. We are likely to feel the importance of watching our pence as well as our pounds! We will be considering the best way to spend our money wisely as well as enjoyably. Try to buy goods that have been produced with the least harm to the environment, even if these, perhaps, cost a little more!

So here, once again, is a plea that we should buy food particularly, but also other items which have been produced in our locality, or at least in this country. The shops most likely to stock these are, of course, local shops and markets. They are far more fun to shop in than the supermarkets! Mind you, 'local' tinned tomatoes are hard to find, so use a local trader when you buy something like this, not a supermarket.

I buy my seed for the garden from a firm in Essex, who send my seeds to me by post, while Cuttings Compost provide sacks of lovely black compost which helps to augment our home-produced composted material. It is always amazing how seemingly vast amounts of household of kitchen and garden material compost down to rather small heaps, it needs to be augmented!

Our country is small, yet we have a large population, but we still have countryside and coastline both so varied. Why not resolve to have our holidays next year, without leaving for another part of the world? Shropshire is a beautiful and varied county, but think of exploring other parts of our coastline, countryside or small towns. Because we are supporting another part of our economy by simply being there and using local facilities, we are helping to sustain and protect another part of our economy and, of course, our countryside, whether inland or on the coast.

Janet Goose

Secretary's Report

I said in my report in the Autumn 2008 edition of Landscapes that in each future issue I would provide a summary of the activities and discussions in the Executive Committee – well here goes!

Since the last edition of Landscapes there have been two Executive meetings – one in October and one in November – traditionally there is not one in December.

The October meeting was a very important and very busy gathering. Firstly we have an Acting Chairman (Betty Carlyle) due to the absence of our elected Chairman, Alwyn Lewis due to ill health. Betty was Chairman for a number of years so we are fortunate in having such an able stand in.

The main item at the October meeting was to do with the current issues in the West Midlands Region. Shropshire is part of this region so any decisions will affect us directly so it is important that CPRE has an active role and voice. CPRE, via our National Office, employs a Regional Policy Officer to work on this full time. He is Gerald Kells and he came to our meeting to update us and ask for our views.

There is currently a review going on of the RSS (Regional Spatial Strategy). This is basically the plan for the West Midlands when it comes to things like housing numbers, employment, waste, and economic development. Gerald said that all Regional Assemblies are coming under huge pressure from Government to increase the planned housing numbers. Over the next few years the Assembly had said that they thought 365,000 houses were reasonable, CPRE argued for 285,000 and the Government's own study group are talking in the terms of 415,000 to 445,000. Gerald asked that the Executive should comment on these and other proposals from the point of view of the impacts likely to be seen in Shropshire. To this end a small sub group was formed to work on this.

Gerald said that as from 2010 Regional Assemblies in their current form will be disbanded and, a currently unknown system, will replace them. The challenge for CPRE would be to find ways of exerting influence over the new arrangements.

We also had Adam Royle from National Office with us. Adam is originally from Bishops Castle but now lives and works in London as a

Parliamentary Officer for CPRE. Adam's job is to engage politicians and parties in debate and try to influence policies that will protect our countryside – quite a challenge!

Katy Anderson (Transport Member) updated us on the developments in the saga of the possible North West Relief Road that is proposed around the northern part of Shrewsbury. This has caused much local debate from 'is it needed anyway?' to 'is this the right site?' Everything appears to be on hold at the moment but Katy tells us that it is costing £300,000 per year just to keep the process going. Interesting figures show that traffic in Shrewsbury town centre has decreased by 21% since 1997 and a recent closure period to undertake major road works resulted in a 52% increase in cycling, more shoppers and 16% less traffic – perhaps there is an answer in there somewhere?

At this, and every meeting, each District group reports their activities and any major issues from which other groups can learn or offer advice are aired. This is a very useful function.

The November meeting featured an update by Jim Cox (Waste Member) on the proposed incinerators in Telford and Shrewsbury. In Telford there is concern about the visual impact of the incinerator which has a stack of some 65 metres - 212 feet. The proposed site is also on the green network – hardly the best of messages. Both the Telford and Shrewsbury incinerators, if built, would have operating capacity in excess of the waste available so would almost certainly be 'importing' waste from elsewhere with all the extra traffic that this would involve. This whole question is clearly a difficult one with huge amounts of non recyclable waste still being produced and no holes in the ground to put it in. Jim was asked to come up with a policy for Shropshire and he has also written an article in this edition of 'Landscape'. This is clearly an issue to which we will have to return.

A standard agenda item at the moment is the introduction of the Unitary Authority for Shropshire. We are being kept informed on progress by Nigel Brown from the Shropshire Association of Local Councils. Andy Boddington (South Shropshire CPRE) had been concerned about the apparent lack of democratic accountability in planning for a period whilst the new council was being formed. This issue had been raised with Government by CPRE and Andy was able to report that a single planning committee with a democratic overview of its activities would be appointed to see us through the transition from the current system to the new.

Finally in November CPRE welcomed a new member to the Executive Committee to oversee Renewable Energy (which usually seems to mean wind turbines). She is Mary Robinson from Oswestry. Although, to date, Shropshire has only seen one move for a 'wind farm', and that in North Shropshire, it cannot be long until many more arrive on our doorstep.

David Challoner

Branch Secretary

New Year Ushers in a New Planning Era

A New Year dawns and many of the rules in planning have changed. Again! Soon large wind farms and ugly power lines will be much harder to oppose. So will airport expansion and coal fired power stations, even though the government has imposed a new legal commitment to reduce carbon emissions. The unloved regional assemblies are to be abolished and replaced by more representative Leaders Boards, but excessive demands for housing and economic development will still dominate the regional agenda.

First up is the Planning Act 2008. The government has grown frustrated with the growing ability of campaign groups, including CPRE, to protest against large scale developments, delaying and modifying them, sometimes defeating them. The political answer is a new national policy for infrastructure. It brings into being a suite of National Policy Statements (NPS), which will set out the government's strategy on energy, aviation, rail and road, water and waste. Many of these will be cobbled together from existing government policy statements, including the 2003 Aviation White Paper which gave the go ahead for environmentally destructive aviation expansion. After scrutiny in the Commons and Lords, each NPS will guide infrastructure development across England, and to a lesser extent in Wales. Decisions on specific proposals will be made by a government appointed Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC). Local authorities, the public and environmental groups will only have limited right to be heard. The IPC will award planning permission, and give consent for compulsory purchase, closure of footpaths, loss of common land and approval to build in green belts.

In Shropshire the IPC will decide on wind farms of over 50mw (around 20 turbines), any replacement for Ironbridge power station and the proposed mid-Wales to Shrewsbury 400kv overhead power line. The incinerators proposed for Telford and Shrewsbury will however still be decided locally.

The world's first Climate Change Act has also received Royal Assent. It's a bill that CPRE supports. It commits the UK to an 80% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and creates a Climate Change Budget set by a new Committee on Climate Change. The Committee has already decreed a necessary but challenging cut in emissions of at least 34% by 2020. This will have a major impact on planning, with developments being required to emit less carbon in construction and over the lifetime of the buildings. Renewable energy will be required on a large scale, so we should expect many more applications for wind farms. But by the time you read this the government may have already approved the third runway at Heathrow and the coal fired Kingsnorth power station in direct conflict with the Climate Change Budget.

The third package of legislation is the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, which is still ploughing its way through parliament. It will abolish the Regional Assemblies, and replace them with Local Authority Leaders' Boards. The new Boards will work with the Regional Development Agencies to develop a single unified regional economic and planning strategy, but the RDA will have the whip hand. The Bill also places a new duty on local authorities to promote economic development. The signs are that the new Unitary Council will interpret this as a go-ahead to plan for low paid jobs in giant tin sheds on the edge of Shrewsbury and our market towns.

These changes have many implications for our work at CPRE Shropshire but we can meet the challenges. Planning rules have changed many times over the eighty years since CPRE was founded but we have never lost sight of our core values of protecting landscapes and rural communities, values that have proved more sustainable than the government's latest fashions in planning.

Andy Boddington

South Shropshire CPRE

Changes in Church Stretton 1946 – 2008

My first six years here were just after the 2nd world war when I was teaching in Birmingham but home in holiday time. Church Stretton was a very structured society, I remember, with some residents not really accepting newcomers for at least 10 years. Food was scarce but being in the country we kept hens, geese and a pig. Petrol was scarce but one could obtain red petrol in Shropshire. Building materials were scarce so for several years only houses with a small ground plan were built.

Church Stretton was compact and small. The wonderful hills on the doorstep made it a great place to explore. Looking back it is the increase in traffic – more and more cars – bigger and bigger lorries – that I find the greatest change. Very long goods trains were a feature for years.

Big events in the early days were the Rectory Fete and the September sheep sales when temporary sheep pens were erected over what is now our main car park.

By 1952 I was teaching in Shrewsbury and commuting from home by bus. I joined the WI and this was a big gain for me in making friends and felling part of the community. My parents and I went on day outings with the Caradoc Field Club. I joined an evening class held at Church Stretton Modern School which was situated in wooden buildings vacated by St Dunstons. St Dunstons had run a successful rehabilitation centre here in the war. My class was for Folk Dancing and I was soon asked to take it over but not as an evening class (trivial leisure pursuits suddenly had a big increase in fees). We went independent I ran a folk dance club for 50 years. Our first hall was the old (now pulled down) Parish Hall with a terrible floor, then came the ballroom on the lower ground floor at the Hotel, then came the new Methodist Hall, not as comfortable as it is now, then the Denehurst while it was a hotel and lastly the welcome All Stretton Village Hall. Early on we held public folk dances in the Silvester Institute which was much admired in the days before subsidised new village halls came on the scene.

Through the years came the big influx of bungalows, housing estates, council housing, a new Junior School, the Comprehensive School. This is the second great change – so much new building. It is surprising that in 62 years the official number of residents in Church Stretton has only moved from 3000 to 4000 – probably because so many more people lived over the shops and existing houses held bigger families.

As housing crept along the roads and up the hills there is a change for the worse in the tree cover. However a new Tree Group aims to plant native trees and undertake a tree survey.

I joined CPRE in the 1960s when a member of the Shrewsbury High School junior staff was very persuasive. In my time CPRE has been campaigning to keep village post offices and schools and we have had some success. We have campaigned to protect the landscape and long may this continue. Over the years the market towns of South Shropshire have become more famous for their attractive settings, for their tourist potential, for their festivals and for their signing up to 'walkers are welcome'.

I chose to retire from CPRE office two and a half years ago. I was pleased to pass on the leadership of the South Shropshire Group to Derek Bartlett. Derek has Andy Boddington as an accomplished assistant. There have been changes and there will be changes in the future. (I hate the way Local Authority Frameworks have become so wordy). I have been very lucky in that my parents, way back, chose to retire to Church Stretton.

Claire Cox
South Shropshire District Group



CHURCH STRETTON—Hills and Houses

Incineration – The Burning Issue

You will be aware from the local press and media that a planning application has been submitted to Telford & Wrekin to build an incinerator in a field adjacent to the Granville landfill site.

We are also expecting an application to be submitted soon to Shropshire County Council to build an incinerator on the industrial estate at Battlefields in Shrewsbury.

Incinerators, (they are now referred to as energy from waste centres, to improve their environmental image) are small power stations using municipal waste from household grey rubbish bins as fuel.

They divert municipal waste away from disposal at landfill sites and thereby help the UK comply with its obligations under the EU Landfill Directive.

The rubbish is burnt in a furnace and the hot gases released are used to produce electricity and heat. The heat is in the form of either steam or hot water. As with any fire an amount of ash is left after burning and this has to be continually removed and disposed of, either to landfill or possible for use in road building.

The Telford incinerator is designed to burn 62,000 tonnes of waste per year and will produce 4.3 MW electricity, 12.8 MW heat, and 15,000 tonnes per year of ash.

Before being discharged to atmosphere the hot flue gases are scrubbed and filtered in a gas treatment plant to ensure that they meet EU air emission standards.

In order for the incinerator to achieve reasonable thermal efficiencies it is important that there is a reliable local market for the heat, ideally in an industrial process. By just producing electricity the plant efficiency reduces to well below that of a typical coal fired power station.

Incinerators are built for 24hr day operation and run continuously at near max production capacity.

Like any power station they are designed to operate for a minimum of 20 - 25 yrs.

As well as getting planning permission to build, the incinerator operators also have to get a permit to operate from the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency are responsible for monitoring the emissions from the plant to ensure they do not exceed the EU emission standards.

Local groups opposing the Telford and Shrewsbury incinerators site the potential risks to human health from the flue gases as their primary concern, and use this as their main argument when objecting to the application.

The problem is that there is no clear evidence to support or reject these health concerns. It depends on which health report and statistics are used. The Government Waste Strategy for England 2007 acknowledges that there is public concern regarding the health risks from incineration, but states that research has shown no credible evidence of adverse health outcomes for people living near them.

As we know planning authorities have to come to a decision through testing the application against relevant policies in national, regional and local planning guidance and strategies.

CPRE Telford & Wrekin District Group have objected to the application, arguing that due to its proposed location the incinerator is in breach of a number of policies in the Wrekin local plan.

It is expected that the application will go before the Telford planning committee during 1st quarter 2009.

I understand that it is not too late to register an objection to the application.

Further information on the Telford incinerator application can be found on the CPRE Shropshire new website : www.cpreshropshire.org.uk

Jim Cox
Waste Representative



Icons of England

Icons of England: stunning new book



Icons of England is a wonderful collection of thought-provoking essays and stunning photographs celebrating more than just the rolling hills and vernacular details that set England apart from the rest of the world. With images from the UK's leading photographers, it could be enjoyed simply as a collection of stunning countryside imagery. Once you have read about the thoughts and memories of its 70 contributors, however, you will start to realise it is a whole lot more.

This book is as moving and surprising as it is beautiful – one that celebrates the experience of being in and enjoying the countryside as much as it does historic monuments and locations. With an introductory essay by CPRE President, Bill Bryson this anthology explores a landscape shaped by personal experience – a countryside treasured by all for so many different reasons.

Order a copy now

Published in association with Think Publishing and Pan Macmillan, this 176 page hardback book

is available from CPRE at a special price of £16.00 (including UK p&p). RRP £20.00. A share of the book's profits will go to help support CPRE's campaigning work.

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