

Review of the Year

The last 12 months have been very busy and difficult for us in many ways. Just after the last AGM our Chairman, Alwyn Lewis, became ill and has not been able to resume his duties since that time. I am happy to report that he is now well on the mend but regret having to report that he does not feel that he is currently in a position to continue in his role as our Chairman.

I know I speak for everyone when I say that he will be greatly missed as he has done considerable amounts in moving our practices and procedures on to a much more professional footing. Everyone clearly hopes that his health will continue to improve and that the problems are now behind him – maybe in the future he will feel able to, once more, be a valuable member of the Executive Committee.

In the meantime our former Chairman, Betty Carlyle, has stood in and done her usual efficient job – for which we owe her a great debt.

We were, as many of you will know, already without a Vice Chairman due to the sudden death of Chris Ayton, so we have both of our major posts to fill.

We also say farewell to our Honorary Treasurer, John Scurfield, who is retiring. John has done a wonderful job for a number of years. He was responsible for linking us up with the Hospice Lottery so that we benefit, along with the Hospice, from those of you who have taken out this special membership category. This has proven to be an invaluable source of extra income. John is a hard act to follow and he will be greatly missed by us all.

Before everyone begins to think we are on the verge of a capsizing, let me say it has not all been bad news! Our new President, Sarah Bury, has settled in and is proving to be a huge asset. The committee has been joined by Andy Boddington, now living in South Shropshire, and we already owe a debt to Andy which is incalculable. His energy, enthusiasm and knowledge is truly remarkable. Thanks to Andy we have a new, and really excellent, web site (cpshropshire.org.uk) and his work on the 'Issues and Options' document for the new Shropshire Unitary Authority was inspiring and of the highest class – and widely recognised as such.

Finally, an appeal for as many of you as possible to join us on May 14th 2009 in The Shire-hall, Shrewsbury for the AGM. We have a really interesting and nationally respected speaker – Andy Wigley, who will talk on the historic landscapes of the county (see the enclosed agenda for further details).

Thank you all for your wonderful support that has enabled us to continue the struggle to protect the landscapes of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

David Challoner
County Secretary

Membership Statistics

Those of you interested to see how our Shropshire members has changed over the course of the last year may find the tables below of interest. Current numbers at the end of February 2009 are shown with those in brackets giving last year's numbers.

In general there has been a slight drop in most types of membership in most districts.

I would urge members to encourage their friends and colleagues to join us, to help swell our membership again.

Membership figures by District

Branch	District Code	District Name	Households	Members
Shropshire	SS00	SS unassigned	1	(2)
Shropshire	SS01	Bridgnorth	44	(46)
Shropshire	SS02	North Shropshire	30	(35)
Shropshire	SS03	Oswestry	42	(41)
Shropshire	SS04	Shrewsbury	114	(121)
Shropshire	SS05	South Shropshire	96	(97)
Shropshire	SS06	Wrekin	39	(37)
Shropshire	SS07	Outside Shropshire	10	(9)
Shropshire Total			376	(388)
			498	(513)

Membership figures by Membership Type

Branch	Membership Type	Households	Members
Shropshire	Branch Life	8	(8)
Shropshire	Family	6	(6)
Shropshire	Individual	183	(192)
Shropshire	Individual Concessionary	12	(11)
Shropshire	Individual Life	9	(9)
Shropshire	Individual Under 25	2	(2)
Shropshire	Joint	108	(111)
Shropshire	Joint Concessionary	1	(1)
Shropshire	Joint Life	1	(1)
Shropshire	Organisation	7	(6)
Shropshire	Parish/Town Council	39	(40)
Shropshire Total		376	(387)
		498	(512)

Janet Stone
Membership Secretary

REPORTS FROM DISTRICT GROUPS

South Shropshire District Group

“Stop the Drop” Bill Bryson said. South Shropshire CPRE Group swung into action. We issued a Press Release in which we invited the public to be our eyes. This they did and we were able to report a number of litter hot spots to the relevant authorities. Members also participated in “hands on” clearance of litter from parts of Church Stretton and Ludlow. Mindful that this is a three year campaign, we will stay vigilant.

We have joined with colleagues from Herefordshire, our own County Executive Committee and London Office to protest at the proposal to establish a four turbine industrial wind farm on Reeves Hill, just outside the borders of South Shropshire and the Shropshire Hills AONB. A highly effective and vigorous campaign, spearheaded by the Offa’s Dyke Association, is still in progress at the time of writing and has resulted in the matter being referred to the Government Office of the West Midlands. It is hoped that the planning application will be called in by the Secretary of State and that a public inquiry will be held to determine the matter. Once again, relations between our Group and the AONB team have been strained over an issue of crucial importance to the protection of the AONB. Initially, the AONB’s planning officer lodged a holding objection to the application. Subsequently, and for reasons with which we cannot agree, the objection was withdrawn. Similarly, Natural England originally objected to the application, but subsequently withdrew its objection in circumstances that are currently being questioned by bodies more influential than our group.

Our South Shropshire Committee numbers received a welcome boost during the year with the recruitment of four members, bringing our strength up to eleven. All our newcomers have settled in well and are making valuable contributions to the effectiveness of the Group.

During January we made the CPRE County Executive aware of our views on the Core Strategy – Issues and Options document, circulated on behalf of the soon-to-be Unitary Authority for Shropshire and in March this year, we are looking forward to hosting a debate to consider the question “Are we losing the battle of the bland?” in Shropshire. The debate will be led by Paul Kingsnorth, environmental journalist and campaigning author of “Real England”. Jim Hawkins of Radio Shropshire will chair the proceedings. From across Shropshire, CPRE members, councillors and the public have been invited to take part.

Derek Bartlett
Chairman

North Shropshire District Group Report

.The main matter of continuing interest is the proposal to erect a windfarm near Woore; having been turned down by the District Council, the matter has now gone to appeal. The pre-Inquiry meeting is set for 27 Feb, and the inquiry itself is due to commence on 6 May, both events being at Victory Hall, London Road, Woore.

While a watch has been kept on planning applications, little beyond the usual "householder" matters have arisen since last autumn. We wrote to "raise no objection" to a proposal for a non-fossil-fuel (landfill gas) electricity generator at the former Heathgates landfill site, the electricity produced being welcomed. We also wrote to "raise no objection" to the proposal to extend the Ellesmere Business Park out to the back, taking the opportunity to comment on the poor appearance of the fairly newly erected building nearest to the Ellesmere to Oswestry road.

This will be the last report from North Shropshire District as such, as from April 1 (*absit omen!*) new arrangements will apply; should you have need to contact the Council about a planning matter in North Shropshire, contact the Wem customer service office and ask there what to do. Should you need to contact CPRE, just carry on as usual.

Minerals Report

In each case, the relevant District Group Chairman has been consulted concerning the representation.

Proposal for opencast coal near Little Wenlock - Our objection (made Jan 2008) is on the Shropshire CPRE website. The matter has been considered in detail by Telford Council. In December, the applicant appealed on the grounds of non-determination. Since then the Telford & Wrekin Council has had a meeting of the Plans Board to discuss the matter (22 Jan at 6 pm). Councillors opposed the proposal. The inquiry will follow in due course. I have had no further details of the inquiry up to the time of writing.

Clee Hill Quarry, Clee Hill, Ludlow - sought extension of working hours - our response was that if nearby residents did not object, then we didn't.

Caughley Quarry near Broseley - sought extension of workings - our response was to object on grounds of adverse effects on nearby residents, projected size of stockpile and ecology (particularly an access through ancient woodland)

Condover Quarry, near Condover - We wrote to "raise no objection" - as noise/ dust/ landscape of nearest property well within "acceptable" limits, other near properties financially or otherwise connected with the scheme, other effects continue existing state of affairs. Moreover, if application was refused, they would have to start up elsewhere. So scheme seemed to be the least of evils.

Haughmond Hill Quarry, near Shrewsbury - (1) & (2) both similar to Clee Hill above. (3) a recent pre-application public meeting indicates that there is likely to be a future application to extend the quarry south-westwards towards, but not reaching, the fort and Queen Eleanor's Bower. Confusingly (2) and (3) came simultaneously, nearly fooling me into pooh-poohing a report of (3)! Moral - persist if you think I'm wrong.

TO ALL CPRE MEMBERS

If you come across applications for, or even rumours of developments in the fields of minerals, waste, transport/highways, or renewable energy, please contact either the relevant person or the Bear Steps Office. Even if we've already heard of it, better a repeat than missing something important.]

Vivian Hancock

North Shropshire and Minerals Representative

Bridgnorth District Group

There have been fewer meetings of the committee over the last year due to various reasons, but in a handful of issues there has been lively activity, some with important planning implications.

Affordable Housing Issue

While wishing to encourage the provision of greatly needed affordable housing in the district, there was some concern about the application for eight such dwellings on land at Peacock Hill, Alveley. The main issue was the close proximity of the development to the Daddle Brook where there was risk of flooding which had occurred in the rain storms of June 2007. However, after investigation the Environment Agency declared that there were adequate preventative flooding measures in place, and consequently Bridgnorth District Council permitted the development.

A Certificate of Lawfulness

Last summer a cry for support came from a local CPRE member to oppose an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness to ascertain that to site six caravans on land by The Smithy, Hampton Loade, Bridgnorth, did not constitute a change of use. In opposition our committee claimed that the increase of caravans on the land did not come within the original approved site cartilage for one caravan in 1957, was land in the Green Belt, was seriously vulnerable to flooding from the River Severn, and thus on a number of accounts the application did not conform to the policies in the Bridgnorth District Local Plan. After some deliberation the application was refused.

The Shropshire Core Strategy

Recently, considerable time and effort was taken by our committee in discussing the Issues & Options consultation document on the proposals for the Shropshire Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework, resulting in a completed Response Form being submitted to Shropshire Council. In essence it was considered that the only fully favourable strategic approach was the Rural Rebalance option which provided a chance to sustain the vibrancy and life of villages and smaller settlements, without neglecting a reasonable proportion of development in the towns. It has just been revealed to our dismay that Bridgnorth District Council has opted for development to be concentrated around Shrewsbury. The committee believes that this is the worst choice and may well result in the

demise of smaller rural settlements, migration to urban areas, and excessive use of Greenfield sites. The reasons for the District Council's option are currently being sought.

Interim Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing

The committee's next important task is to discuss the consultation document on affordable housing and submit comments to Shropshire Council before the end of April.

The Hampton Loade Ferry

The ferry at Hampton Loade is a valued historical feature of the Severn Valley located near Bridgnorth, and it is one of its kind in this country that has a cable and chain across the river using the natural current. It has transported people across the River Severn for countless years. It has been in private hands but sadly due to poor health of the current owner it ceased to operate over a year ago, and efforts to sell it as a going concern has met with no success.

In consternation, some months ago local enthusiasts, including representatives from neighbouring parish councils have formed a group to bring the ferry back into active service. The forming of a Trust is underway and a business plan is being prepared to get the ferry up and running with volunteers. The owner has agreed to lease the ferry for the next couple of years out to the Trust for an annual fee. Investigations are proceeding to secure funding from various sources such as businesses and local charities. There were hopes of getting the ferry back on the river by this Easter but that now appears over-ambitious and during the summer is a brighter prospect.

Our committee are fully supportive of this worthwhile venture and once the Trust is properly established it will look to contribute in a small way towards the running of the ferry.

David & Stella Voysey

Shrewsbury and Atcham District Group

After a lull in activity the North West Relief Road has been put forward by the West Midlands Regional Joint Strategy and Investment Board as a candidate for Regional Funding. The basis for this would seem to be supporting Shrewsbury's role as a Settlement of Significant Development. This has now gone forward for consideration by Government of West Midlands and Department of Transport.

The Borough Council made arrangements with the Probation Service to carry out work on the Conduit Head site and significant progress has been made. An open afternoon was organised and it was pleasing to see some sort of order being restored. It is also interesting that those asked to do the work found the task both interesting and rewarding. However, a considerable amount of restoration is still necessary before the site becomes a genuine visitor attraction.

During the year the Shrewsbury River Partnership applied successfully to install piles for mooring pontoons in both the Quarry and the West Midlands showground. Other than this, there seems to have been little activity by the partnership.

TEP Consultants published their "Green Infrastructure Strategy" during the year. This was funded from the money SABC received by accepting the invitation from central government to be designated a "Growth Point." The strategy is a very thorough and perceptive piece of work. Many of the ideas put forward would be beneficial for the quality of life in the borough. CPRE will be doing all in its power to ensure that the document is not put to one side and forgotten, but that as many of the proposed ideas as possible are adopted.

During the summer we held a most enjoyable Garden Party at Cruckmeole Hall at the invitation of Mr & Mrs John Quallington. Once again we were fortunate with the weather; the attendance was good and everyone enjoyed the afternoon.

A new planning application at Corporation Lane has occupied us for most of the year. In 2003, a "finely balanced" application was approved for 14 open market houses with a further 8 affordable units on recreational open land owned by the council. Approval was given on condition that a Section 106 agreement was signed by the parties concerned. Under this agreement, the landowner undertook to plant and maintain two and a half acres of land with trees, while the council designated an area for open space and children's play. The agreement was signed in November 2003. The land owner undertook "following planting out of the Woodland, not to permit, use or suffer the area to be used for any purpose other than woodland." The council, for their part, undertook "not to use or permit the Play Area to be used for any purpose other than as a play area."

However, this year both parties decided that they wished to revoke their earlier agreement in order to build more houses in Corporation Lane. Following many initiatives and meetings we were very disappointed to learn that a 106 agreement can be set aside with the joint consent of the parties making that agreement; any third parties who benefitted from the agreement having no power to stop the action.

Despite the involvement of the local Member of Parliament the new application was approved against the united opposition of local residents. CPRE were most upset and disappointed to lose this important issue.

The Phase 2 Revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy has continued during the year, moving towards an Examination in Public which begins on April 28th. In parallel with this, at a local level, work on the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework has been taking place. Both of these activities have required significant effort on our part. In both cases we are concerned that the housing numbers being proposed are higher than is either justified or necessary

**Roger Carlyle
Chairman**

Oswestry District Group

Out of town retail development.

The Oswestry District Group of CPRE has had one of its busiest years, largely due to the work generated by our opposition to various proposals for out-of-town centre, retail park development. The need for this development was based on a two year old report carried out by consultants commissioned by Oswestry Borough Council. For smaller councils, with a limited number of officers, there will always be a tendency to accept consultants' reports as fact, with little detailed scrutiny of the figures, as these are often difficult to review without a time consuming examination and analysis of the underlying data.

One of our members undertook the huge burden of carrying out the scrutiny of this report and was able to demonstrate clearly, using data drawn from the consultant's own report, that the need for either more convenience or more comparison shopping space was not proven. It was therefore disappointing to find that the Planning Officers' response was to defend the report of their consultants rather than to examine the arguments put forward by CPRE Oswestry District Branch.

It was intended that before Oswestry Borough Council was absorbed into Shropshire Council, it would examine the three outstanding planning applications for the retail parks and select one of them. It has now been decided to postpone the decision. The three planning applications will have to be considered by the new Unitary Authority at a later date.

The Shropshire Council

The decision to go unitary has been made, and organisations such as CPRE will have to learn how to work with it. A much more centralised system is proposed, which will pose problems for such a large county with a low population, (average population is 0.90 people per hectare). Shropshire is a large, very varied county and it is difficult to see how a policy of "one size fits all" will meet democratic requirements. Many people, particularly those in the rural areas and on the periphery of the county, will find it much more difficult to influence a remote authority, based in Shrewsbury. An example of this is the need, in future, for six people to object to any planning application in order for the application to be brought before the Development Control Committee. This will make it extremely difficult for planning applications in isolated rural areas to be contested, although such restrictions could well be acceptable in urban areas.

The Local Development Framework (LDF)

A new LDF is being prepared to cover the whole county; initial consultation has begun. The first document, "Issues and Options," described the main planning and development choices and asked for views. It is very important that these wordy documents are scrutinised by as many peo-

ple as possible. On this consultation, the development of the county over the next 20 years will be based. For example, Oswestry Borough will have to absorb some 4,000 houses during this period. The consultation document suggested sites where 750 houses could be built in Oswestry, but failed to give definitive proposals for the location of the remaining 3,250. This is clearly important to those of us who live in Oswestry Borough, but obviously of less importance to the rest of the members of Shropshire Council.

Planning activities

As usual we have handled a large number of planning applications. It has been noticeable that the number of applications for extensions and enlargements to cottages and small houses has increased. We have had some success, as the planners have started to realise that every time a small cottage is enlarged, an affordable or low cost house is removed from the housing stock and becomes unavailable to local people. The failure by the planners to provide low cost/affordable housing in the rural villages, while allowing large houses to be built on windfall sites in the villages, usually gardens, has caused a severe shortage of housing for local people and those who work locally.

Other activities

We have developed stronger links with other pressure groups based in Oswestry; in particular the Civic Society and a new pressure group, OS21, which is concerned not only with the proposals for retail parks but also for the regeneration of Oswestry Town and its environment.

During the past year Oswestry District branch of CPRE held two well attended public meetings with interesting speakers. We learned about the way of life of the drovers of North Wales at the first meeting. At the recent March meeting the talk was entitled 'Great British Wildlife', and was illustrated with excellent photographs. As usual, members of the public outnumbered CPRE members; we are always pleased to see non-members, but would be delighted if more of the local CPRE members attended.

Our annual, summer garden party was held on a bright but bitterly cold summer's day at Pradoc Hall, West Felton, the home of Mr and Mrs Kenyon. In spite of the weather, we had a good attendance and a pleasant evening. The money raised at the garden evening enables us to fund campaigns on local matters for the following year.

Mike Bullen
Chairman

CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND
Shropshire Branch

ANNUAL REPORT



**Titterstone Clee from Bitterley
South Shropshire**

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Spring 2009