

CPRE Shropshire

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Annual Report



View towards the Long Mynd from Edenhope Hill, Clun Forest

CPRE Shropshire needs you!

Do you have an interest in, or love for, the Shropshire countryside and our environment?

Do you have experience or an interest in land use, housing, employment and environmental issues?

Can you communicate with the media, printed and/or digital (eg Twitter, Facebook, blogging)?

Do you have any other skills or experience that could help us run our Branch and our campaigns, eg fundraising, membership recruitment, working with volunteers?

Could you serve on county or local committees (for example, we need a Branch Chair and Treasurer and other officers)?

Do you have any spare time to help us?

CPRE Shropshire is reviewing its structure and the way forward for the Branch.

This is an exciting opportunity for new people to get involved and help us tackle the many challenges ahead in Shropshire. We enclose a questionnaire with this newsletter for all Members to complete and return to us. Do spend a few minutes filling this in—we would like to hear from you!



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SHROPSHIRE

CPRE Shropshire's Annual General Meeting will be held on *Thursday 12 May 2011* at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury, 7pm for 7.30pm. All Members and visitors are welcome.

Report from the President

Many members will know of the sad loss of one of our most stalwart executive members, Janet Goose, who died in December. Janet edited the Shropshire Newsletter for ten years and brought to it a vast wealth of experience and knowledge of environmental matters. We shall also miss Dr Alicia Symondson who died this year. Alicia was a founder member of the Oswestry branch of CPRE and chairman until her 90th birthday six years ago.

Janet and Alicia are representative of the thousands of people up and down the country who care passionately for our countryside. The pressures on that countryside seem to increase every year as the population grows and the housing numbers rise as a result. Much of what is now built is poorly designed and inappropriately placed. New planning legislation which seeks to reduce regulation may also reduce the ability of local people to influence what and where development occurs. Shropshire remains one of the most rural and beautiful counties in England and we need more people who are passionate about our county to fight with CPRE to retain its character and landscape. Please do get in touch (contact details on back page) if you have skills and experience you can share with CPRE Shropshire as we continue with our essential campaign work. More than at almost any time the voice of CPRE is needed locally as well as nationally to campaign for our countryside.

Sarah Bury
President

A Vice-Presidential Overview

This has been a challenging year in the context of both human resources and planning for CPRE Shropshire. Last May we elected Andy Boddington as Chairman, recognising his vast fund of experience and knowledge of the planning system and unremitting efforts to protect Shropshire's countryside. Andy had to step down due to other pressing commitments in November, but nevertheless, he continues to keep us in touch with developments in the Coalition Government's reforms and this is a great help to us.

The current planning system is so complex and involves so many separate documents that it is a challenge for us (and quite impossible for the general public) to know what's going on. The Shropshire Council's Core Strategy was the latest in a sequence of three lengthy documents and came before an Inspector in November. With Andy Boddington's help, we argued on several grounds that the housing targets for Shropshire were too high and would result in environmental damage at the cost of urban regeneration.

Part of the process was the Site Allocations and Management of Development Document (SAMDev for short) which was given widespread publicity and put out for consultation last June. The responses are in the public domain and we hope to look through them and get in touch with at least some CPRE members who responded. The final SAMDev plan will come out in September. This will provide us with a further and final chance to ensure we do our best to protect our local environments here in Shropshire.

CPRE Shropshire needs to move forward as an organisation, and to do this we would like to have your views on what issues most interest you and how we can work together to further our aims. Do, please, complete the enclosed questionnaire and let us know your thoughts!

Selby Martin
Vice-President

Membership statistics 2010-2011

CPRE Shropshire receives income from the joint lottery with the local hospice and from individual donations, but for the mostpart our regular income depends on our membership subscriptions. As you will see below in the comparison tables from January 2009 to January 2011, CPRE Shropshire continues to experience a steady downward trend in total membership numbers (with the exception of Oswestry whose supermarket campaigns have perhaps kept its profile high - and its membership numbers steady - in that district). The 2010-2011 figures show an overall decrease of 4.1% in membership numbers in Shropshire.

Shropshire membership figures by District, January 2011

District Name	2011	2010	2009
SS unassigned	6		
Bridgnorth	56	52	57
North Shropshire	27	38	41
Oswestry	55	53	54
Shrewsbury	139	146	152
South Shropshire	112	125	137
Wrekin	39	38	45
Outside Shropshire	8	9	13
Shropshire totals	442	461	499

This picture of membership numbers is very much reflected in CPRE branches all over the UK with all branches except four reporting declines of between 1% and 10%, with the average fall in the core membership being 3.8%. The current challenging economic climate, coupled perhaps with CPRE's national decision to increase membership fees in 2011 is likely to put further pressure

on membership retention, so we need to work hard on ways of building and keeping our core membership in order for our work to continue successfully in this county.

If you know anyone who might be interested in joining us do encourage them. Membership leaflets are available from Sarah, our Administrator (details on back page).

Shropshire membership figures by membership type, January 2011

Membership Type	Households			Members		
	2011	2010	2009	2011	2010	2009
Branch Life	7	7	8	7	7	8
Family	5	6	6	15	18	18
Individual	155	171	184	155	171	184
Individual Concessionary	13	9	12	13	9	12
Individual Life	8	8	9	8	8	9
Individual Under 25	0	1	2	0	1	2
Joint	98	100	108	196	200	216
Joint Concessionary	2	2	1	4	4	2
Joint Life	1	1	1	2	2	2
Organisation	6	6	7	6	6	7
Parish/Town Council	36	35	39	36	35	39
Shropshire totals	331	346	377	442	461	499

Electricity Pylon Threat: Act Now!

You may have heard that the National Grid have organised a number of local exhibitions to inform residents living in the area to the west of Shrewsbury of proposals for a new 400kV power line to connect a plethora of proposed wind farms in mid Wales to the National Grid. These pylons will represent a huge threat to some of Shropshire's most beautiful countryside.

A local campaign group, People Against Pylons is urging anyone concerned about the proposals to write urgently to the National Grid at the following (free) address: "Freepost National Grid / Mid W Connection." More information about the group and how you can get your voice heard can be found on their website: www.peopleagainstpylons.co.uk

Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) website is at ww.spmidwalesconnections.info (or freephone 0800 988 9174) for more information on the proposals.

Annual Reports from the District Groups

CPRE Oswestry District

Oswestry's supermarkets

Twelve months ago, I reported that the four planning applications for a supermarket each on a different site in Oswestry would be heard by the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) at the end of March 2010. Three meetings later, in the autumn of 2010, the SPC, against the advice of their own Planning Officers and contrary to Government Planning Guidelines, chose the site furthest from the town centre, which will have the greatest, negative impact on the town centre economy of Oswestry. CPRE, (Oswestry) has made a formal complaint about the conduct of the proceedings. Although it is always upsetting to lose, we at CPRE, (Oswestry), take pride in the quality of the arguments put forward, described by a recently retired Senior Planning Inspector as "the best argument from a third party that he had come across throughout his career."

Loss of landscape

CPRE, (Oswestry) recognises that efficient agriculture is essential to the wellbeing of our countryside. However, there has been a recent rise in the number of planning applications for what can only be described as "industrialisation" of the countryside. Often such proposals will, if implemented, cause major changes to Shropshire's outstanding landscape; substantially increased traffic, reduction of the wildlife corridors, degradation of the ecology and reduced wildlife survival in areas already under pressure. These conflicts of interest are likely to increase as our Planners encourage more and more housing in rural areas.

CPRE, (Oswestry), will continue to object to the removal of hedgerows in areas where the existing fields are large enough for modern agricultural machinery to work efficiently.

At the March meeting, members of the RSPB described their four year "LIFE Blanket Bog project" in the Berwyn Mountains, above Lake Vyrnwy. The talk was followed a week later by a field trip. We were shown the use of heather bales to block former drainage ditches, which had originally been dug with the help of government subsidies. Blocking the drainage ditches had reduced the flow of run-off rain water, which had, in turn, led to better water quality as it gave time for the water to filter through the peat; it also reduced flooding on the plains below.

Invitation to a summer Garden Evening

In June 2010, a successful CPRE garden evening was held for the second year running, at Tedsmore Hall, thanks to the continued generosity and support of the owners, the Reverend Robert and Mrs Parker.

We have been invited back again this year and the Garden Evening will be held on Friday 17th June from 6.30 – 8.30pm. We would welcome any of you who might like to come along to enjoy the view, a light supper and some music. The address is Tedsmore Hall, West Felton, SY11 4HD.

*Mike Bullen Chairman
CPRE Oswestry District Group*

Shrewsbury & Atcham District

A barbeque was held in mid May at The Old Hall, Cruckmeole with Mr and Mrs John Quallington acting as hosts. Despite rather inclement weather, we enjoyed a very cosy atmosphere thanks to a marquee. Due to great efforts on the part of the organisers, many non members attended, including the Mayor and Mayoress of Shrewsbury.

SAMDev process

At our May committee meeting Selby had invited several people to explain the SAMDev process which CPRE believe is flawed, and to encourage them to write to Shropshire Council expressing their concern. Throughout the Summer and Autumn, Selby Martin and Roger Carlyle were involved in the various stages of Shropshire Council's Core Strategy document. West Midlands Regional planning policy had a clearly established priority to regenerate the major urban areas. As a result of this, outward migration to the Shire counties would be reduced. However, encouraged by government's housing expansion ambitions, Shropshire Council proposed a target which would be dependent on increased outward migration from the major urban areas to achieve its objective. Alas, our representations to the Council and to the Inspector at the Examination in Public that the proposed housing numbers were unsound fell upon deaf ears.

North West Relief Road result

A more encouraging decision in the last twelve months was the abandonment of plans for the North West Relief Road due to the limits imposed on government spending. We sincerely believe that the relatively undeveloped North-western part of the town is the home to such valuable landscape that the inevitable destruction caused by building the NWRR is not justifiable.

Posts of Chairman and Secretary

Unfortunately due to delays with the County Newsletter – Landscapes, the AGM Notice was not circulated in adequate time to hold the meeting. This was doubly unfortunate because both the chairman and secretary had indicated their intention to retire at the end of the year and no new appointments were made. At a Committee Meeting in August it was agreed that we would temporarily suspend further meetings of the Shrewsbury District Group as we had been unable to fill the vacant offices of chairman and secretary. We planned to meet again in April of 2011 to review the situation.

Roger Carlyle
Shrewsbury & Atcham District Group

Bridgnorth District

The Bridgnorth Branch Committee usually meets once a month to discuss topical issues and decide where appropriate, what action to take, especially on controversial issues affecting the countryside.

Among these activities have been several problematic planning applications, responses to consultation planning documents from Shropshire Council, investigation into dubious proposals for wind farms developments, and opposition to the revision of delegated powers on planning applications that in our view threaten democratic rights. We also have concerns about dwindling CPRE membership and what to do about it and how we can help worthwhile countryside projects by small donations from our funds.

Problem Planning Applications

The site for six caravans at the Smithy, Hampton Loade, permitted by a Certificate of Lawfulness about a year ago still raised moments of controversy. Objections to what appeared to be excessive clearance of greenery around the site were dismissed by Shropshire Council on the grounds that no planning rules had been broken. Our pursuit for a Directive under Article 4 of The General Order to the Town & Country Planning Act, to treat this part of the riverside at Hampton Loade as an especially sensitive area, where normal planning policies can be modified, so far has not borne fruit.

One issue of great local interest in Alveley is the pending sale of the Methodist Chapel and its allotments, which lie within the village development area. Provided Shropshire Council adheres to local policy then only much needed affordable housing can be built.

There has been a very recent planning application for a gypsy and travellers' caravan site on a plot of land in the Green Belt on the outskirts of Alveley. The application is on the grounds of very special circumstances and may be the first test of the new policy adopted by Shropshire Council.

“Type and Affordability of Housing”

Our Committee responded to the consultation document on “The Type & Affordability of Housing” We challenged the policy of planning exceptions in the Green Belt stating that they should be avoided as they could create a mechanism for exploitation and erosion. This was highlighted by our opposition that under very special circumstances gypsy and traveller sites could be permitted in the Green Belt. However, Shropshire Council has stated that this is a national policy that has to be retained. The revelation that without consultation with stakeholders Shropshire Council has revised the rules of “delegated powers” on planning applications caused our Committee concern as it appears to weaken the democratic process. Now objections from the public about applications can no longer be heard by a Committee of Councillors but referred to Officers for decisions. Also, the Chairman of the Planning Committee and the Service Manager can now veto referrals by parish councils or its own councillors if, in their view, they are not based on material planning grounds. Our protests have been to no avail.

A Windy Worry

Wind farms continue to concern our Committee members, more recently the proposal for six huge 400 foot turbines on the Staffordshire/Shropshire border near Church Eaton. In our view, the pro-windfarm arguments are much weaker than they might appear to be, with even less justification for them to override concerns about their undoubted environmental impact. Typically, such proposals talk of providing power for thousands of homes, but such “home equivalent” figures create the misleading impression of a secure supply available as when required. In any case, domestic electricity accounts for only 30% of all electricity generated. Resultant savings of CO2 emissions are given in absolute rather than relative terms, which make them seem far more impressive than reality. Finally, the scale of the profits that developers can make is such that they can afford to offer “sweeteners” to local people in the form of support for community projects. Thus, we study with care and caution the environmental effect of wind farm developments.

David Voysey
Chairman, Bridgnorth District Group

Telford & Wrekin District

Group matters

In spite of initiatives to re-establish a district group in Telford and Wrekin, this has so far proved unsuccessful. We do not have the resources to pursue householder applications unless they clearly breach policy in sensitive landscape. Nonetheless CPRE responds to issues which are of concern as they arise. Recent major issues include the proposed incinerator, which has been defeated, and central area developments which impact on the Town Park. We have been consulted on the Local Development Framework core strategy and various policy documents.

It may surprise members that the rural areas to the north and west of Telford comprise a far greater part of Telford and Wrekin district than the urban areas. It would be good to play a greater part in the recently constituted 'Rural Forum'. An opportunity for a volunteer to step forward!

Green belt for Telford?

Telford continues to grow steadily, even during the current economic downturn. The central belt which borders the Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury railway line is stripped bare for future development. Although CPRE supports 'brownfield' development in principle, this can result in the loss of important wildlife habitats where industrial despoilation has been followed by decades of slow colonisation by flora and fauna. We are considering calling for a 'green belt' for Telford, to prevent expansion to meet adjoining settlements. It remains to be seen if, in the current political climate, this will be heeded.

Nigel Conner

Telford & Wrekin District Group

CPRE South Shropshire District

During the last twelve months, it has been a struggle to keep the small District Committee going. Despite this, we have been busy dealing with planning issues. In this connection, we have noticed an increase in applications for retrospective planning permission brought about by the fact that details of the original applications were not followed. We consider that this will continue unless the Planning Authority makes better use of its powers to refuse retrospective applications.

Local campaigns

During the year, two long-running sagas came to an end. We were heavily involved in the early stages of the proposal to build a new school at Ashford Carbonell incorporating two other schools. Building has now started. Similarly, the application to build a biomass plant at Bishops Castle has been settled by the unfortunate decision of Shropshire Council to make its own land available for the purpose. The Committee is now turning its attention to the new proposals to sell off publicly-owned woodland. We support the view taken by CPRE Head Office and are determined to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded as far as woodlands in South Shropshire are concerned.

It is with great regret that I am relinquishing the chairmanship of the Group. However, I am pleased that the Committee have asked me to be Press Secretary, a position I am delighted to accept. I have enjoyed my time as Chairman and thank my colleagues for their support.

Pam Farquhar

Chairman, South Shropshire District

Keeping up to date online at www.cpre.org.uk

Have you visited the CPRE's national website recently?

CPRE provides a host of information and advice on planning and other relevant issues at www.cpre.org.uk. Here you will find up-to-date news and updates on current national campaigns about planning, transport, housing, climate change, farming, food and litter; all the latest press releases and access to CPRE publications, including policy statements on topics as diverse as electricity pylons to rural transport and tranquillity.

Quietly sitting on the bottom of the home page are two links you may not have noticed. One points to the "Planning Help" section, which offers a lot of practical information on how *you* can use the planning system to protect the countryside. There is an explanation of the planning system in England, advice and tips on running a successful campaign (from working with your local authority to planning a rally or march), how to respond to planning applications and appeals, community tools and success stories from around the country, and much more.

The other link is the member login button (let us know if you have forgotten your Member passwords!), which leads to the Members' only section of the site. Here are links to Member events, policy guidance documents, the CPRE Members' Forum and a skills and knowledge directory where you can find people across the country with specialisms and experience in a range of topics relating to CPRE's work, who are willing to help and advise others - a very useful resource if you are looking for particular skills and special interests. www.cpre.org.uk is well worth a look next time you are online.

CPRE Shropshire: Contacts

Officers

President

Sarah Bury D.L. / sarah@millichope.com

Vice President

Selby Martin
01743 343784 / selbymartin@btinternet.com

Chairman (Vacancy)

Vice Chairman (Vacancy)

Membership Secretary/Administrator

Sarah Jameson
01547 528546 / admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk

Honorary Treasurer (not standing in 2011)

Phil Hibberd
01743 762228 / phil.hibberd@btinternet.com

Web address: www.cpreshropshire.org.uk

National Office

CPRE, 128 Southwark Street
London, SE1 0SW
Tel: 020 7981 2800 / Fax: 020 7981 2899
Email: info@cpre.org.uk / www.cpre.org.uk

Districts

Bridgnorth

Stella/David Voysey
01746 780356 / david.voysey@jacd.co.uk

North Shropshire (Vacancy)

Oswestry

Mike Bullen
hebullen@btinternet.com

Shrewsbury and Atcham

Roger Carlyle
cye@cardeston.zx3.net

South Shropshire

pamela.farquhar@mypostoffice.co.uk

Telford & Wrekin

Nigel Conner
01952 592224 / nigel.conner@tiscali.co.uk

Newsletter Editor

Nigel Conner
01952 592224 / nigel.conner@tiscali.co.uk