

Chair's report

An interesting and challenging year

CPRE Shropshire has had a very good year in terms of new members of the Executive Committee. We welcomed Robin Thompson as our new President and now have two Vice Chairs Keith Ridland and Judy Crabb. After several years of struggling to find representation in some Districts, we now have Caroline Oakes leading in North Shropshire and John Woolmer has taken over from Claire Cox in South Shropshire. We have also been joined by Carole Ryan-Ridout, the former County Conservation Officer, who has contributed her wealth of knowledge and expertise to some of the more contentious planning applications involving listed buildings and important Heritage sites. We were sorry to say goodbye to Claire Cox, who led the South Shropshire District group for so many years. She has contributed so much both within the District and to our Executive Committee, she will be sadly missed.

Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan (SAMDev)

The Year has been extremely busy with much work focussed on the Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan, SAMDev, which has just been through its final round of consultation. It has not been good news for CPRE members, with



Wild orchids on Roman Bank, near Wenlock Edge

AGM NOTICE

CPRE Shropshire Annual General Meeting

Thursday 22 May 2014, 7pm for 7.30pm at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury

to include a talk by Colin Richards on:

Conserving the Saxon Villages of Transylvania: A journey back through time

Come and hear how Shropshire craftsmen and students led by Colin Richards have helped to share expertise in conservation to maintain a culture and landscape of world significance.

It is deemed the last wilderness in Europe, the wild west of the east.

All Members and visitors are welcome. Refreshments.
(Voting papers enclosed with this newsletter for Members)

27,500 houses being proposed in the County by 2026. The take-up of planning permissions over the last 5 years has been below the expected number as a result of the economic downturn and this has had a knock on effect on the houses expected to be completed over the next 5 years. Shropshire's Plan has been unable to produce the required 5 year supply which will mean it is not adopted and planning applications will be dealt with according to National Planning Guidance rather than Shropshire's Core Strategy. The NPPF is very developer-biased and it will mean that local communities will lack the tools to argue against proposed development which is inappropriate to their villages and countryside.

Events

We have had two CPRE Events in the last twelve months: A Veteran Tree and Hedge Laying day on Millichope Estate in October which was well attended, and despite dire forecasts of hurricane winds, the day was sunny and benign and a good time had by all! In April this year we organised a Planning Conference jointly with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust at the Lord Hill Hotel in Shrewsbury. It was extremely well attended with over 200 people in the audience and some very interesting and professional speakers. The level of debate was high at the same time as being good natured and I hope participants went away feeling better informed about the processes of planning and how to object to applications. My thanks go to Keith Ridland for masterminding it all and chairing on the night.

Successes

CPRE Shropshire has had some successes in the year working with local communities and Parish Councils to turn down applications. In the SAMDev process two proposed sites on Caer Caradoc in Church Stretton and two out of three proposed sites around Oswestry Hill Fort were removed from the final plan. A number of wind turbine applications have been turned down contrary to officer recommendation and we are actively supporting the fight against wind farms in Powys which would then have the power transferred by pylons across North Shropshire.

Sarah Bury
Chair, CPRE Shropshire

Our Shropshire

It was great to see over 200 people at our joint event with Shropshire Wildlife Trust on the evening of April 3rd. That this should be the case is a crystal clear indication of the depth of current concern amongst our members, and the public as a whole, for the wellbeing of our county's beautiful countryside and landscape.

The event was not cast as a protest meeting but as informative and educative, so there are no specific follow up actions. Nevertheless, we are sending a copy of this edition of Shropshire Voice to everyone who attended, whether CPRE members or not. A short resume of the evening follows for the benefit of those who were unable to join us.

Sarah Bury's introduction highlighted the current difficulties for local people to influence planning applications in the county despite the Government's national trumpeting of localism. Niall Blackie, Senior Partner at FCB Manby Bowdler, picked up this theme and, in explaining national policy, showed how the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework with its presumption in favour of sustainable development were actually working against localism; as a result communities were feeling disconnected from the planning system and losing faith in it. Dave Parker, of DPPA Oswestry, moved the focus from national policy to local reality and, having gauged the prime interest of the audience, explained how to best present an objection to a planning application considered to be hostile. We have produced a summary of his keypoints which is enclosed with this newsletter. Colin Preston, Chief Executive of our co-hosts, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, highlighted that 60% of UK species were in decline and emphasized a need to protect habitats, not only through determined resistance to threatening applications, but by also talking to developers at a very early stage of a proposal.

For our question and answer session, the speakers were joined by Shropshire Council's Planning Policy Officer, Dave Wallace, who told the meeting that Council officers were meeting Mr Boles, the Government's Planning Minister, on 9th April

countryside under Threat!



to explain how the county's current inability to produce a 5 year supply of housing sites was laying the county open to inappropriate development and also denying localism. Questions from attendees included items on sustainable development, short-falls in SAMDev delivery, the high and vital value of proper Neighbourhood Plans and the impact of legal challenges to planning decisions.

Without question, the mood of the meeting was that the threat to our county's countryside is *real* and we urge readers who may not be members of CPRE to join our campaign to protect our most precious Shropshire landscape. Once lost, and that could happen pretty soon in wide areas of the county, it will be gone forever.

Keith Ridland
Vice Chair, CPRE Shropshire



CPRE Shropshire and Shropshire Wildlife Trust invite you to a public meeting

Our Shropshire countryside Under Threat!

National and county planning policies: Their impact on communities, landscape & wildlife

Thursday 3rd April 2014, 6.30 for 7pm
The Regency Suite, The Lord Hill Hotel, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6AX

- National and County planning: what you must know
- Countering countryside threats: making your views count
- Key sources of help on planning, landscape & wildlife matters

Principal speakers:
Niall Blackie - Senior Partner, FBC Manby Bowdler
David Parker - Planning Consultant, DPPA Oswestry
Colin Preston - Chief Executive, Shropshire Wildlife Trust

All welcome - Admission free (no ticket required)

For further information contact:
Sarah Jameson (CPRE): adam@cpreshropshire.org.uk / 01547 528546 or,
Heather Besnett (Wildlife Trust): heatherb@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk / 01743 284288

Love wildlife, love Shropshire



Photos: top left: Keith Ridland, CPRE Shropshire; middle: the meeting in full swing; bottom: speakers on the evening: Colin Preston, Niall Blackie, Veronica Coussens, Dave Parker and Sarah Bury, Chair, CPRE Shropshire.

A CPRE for all seasons

In 2006 CPRE became 80 years old. To mark that anniversary, the historian (now MP) Tristram Hunt, produced a CPRE book, *Making our Mark*, in which he provided a commentary on the landmark events of CPRE's evolution from, as he put it, "an elite lobbying body to a popular pressure group with tens of thousands of supporters". In each year for 61 of its 80 year life, Mr Hunt identified something of significance that CPRE had achieved in the fight to protect England's countryside from the adverse effects of rapid demographic changes and technological advances in agricultural and industrial processes.

In the Spring of 1926, the pioneering town planner, Sir Patrick Abercrombie published a booklet called *The Preservation of Rural England*. He had become alarmed at the sprawl of the built environment of London into the surrounding countryside. His suggestion was that a national committee of the great and good be established to produce ideas for containment. Thus it was that the baby CPRE was born and christened "The Council for the Preservation of Rural England". Its parentage included Abercrombie (Secretary) and the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres (Chairman). Neville Chamberlain was an early supporter, to be joined later, in the 1929 General Election Campaign, by Stanley Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald and David Lloyd-George who jointly wrote a letter to *The Times* supporting CPRE's aims. What happy days, when support for CPRE was deemed to be a vote winner and how appropriate today are the trio's closing words; "....and in these days when methods of planning and the appreciation of trees and landscape are more widely studied than ever before, we ought to be able so to effect necessary changes as to avoid injuring a precious heritage."

With such a pedigree, it is not surprising that, in the thirties, CPRE almost became an arm of government when it was appointed by the Minister of Transport to be the advisor to the Electricity Commissioners on the positioning of overhead cables. Also in that decade, CPRE set out on its long campaigns to secure the establishment of Green Belts around our major cities and the creation of National Parks. But, it had to wait until the fifties to see these two ambitions fully realised.

The immediate post-war years of the forties witnessed what Mr Hunt describes as "a welter of legislation dedicated to preserving the character of rural England and preventing the planning mistakes of the inter-war years". That "welter" included the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, which Mr Hunt has hailed as

"an incredible monument to the work of CPRE" and which founded the planning system that, for the next 60 years, protected the countryside from all manner of undesirable exploitation.

Over time, CPRE recognised that "Preservation", in the literal sense, had become neither feasible nor desirable. What was needed was protection against environmental and ecological disasters. Thus, to reflect its wider mission, in 1969 CPRE changed its name to the "Council for the Protection of Rural England".

Through the 1980s, 90s and the earliest years of this century, CPRE has continued its mission to protect the countryside. It has repelled several attempts to encroach on Green Belts; it successfully campaigned for the establishment of a National Rivers Authority and it secured the first "green" farm payments. Having effectively contributed to the initial debates on the routing of the M1 and M4 motorways, it used its influence again, in the 80s, to stop a proposed M40 extension which would have damaged unspoilt countryside. It secured, instead, the adoption of its own, well researched alternative. With others, CPRE managed to prevent conifer plantations appearing on English uplands and helped build public resistance to the selling off of many of England's forests.

CPRE has become a strong supporter of sustainable farming and continues to campaign strenuously for the retention of services to rural communities in the belief that the social and economic welfare of those communities is vital to the protection of the countryside.

In acknowledgement of CPRE's increasing public appeal as a broad-based campaigner, 2003 brought with it another name change; this time CPRE became the "Campaign for the Protection of Rural England".

Since its 80th birthday in 2006, CPRE has campaigned for "Tranquillity" to be a factor in Planning considerations, for "Darker Skies", and for the elimination of litter from the countryside. But, overarching these and all other concerns, has been the challenge set by the effect on the countryside of the many attempts to temper the worst consequences of climate change. As an organisation, CPRE accepts climate change as fact. The limitation of Planet Earth's traditional energy resources is also accepted as fact. To continue to use fossil fuels as the main source of energy will accelerate climate change and bring closer the day when the lights go



CPRE demonstrating in Ludlow, with others, to save the local hospital from closure

out. But, among CPRE members, the extent to which damage to landscapes, wild life habitats and eco systems that may result from the pursuit of renewable energy sources, can be tolerated is still debatable and we must now add the practice of fracking to the growing list of contentious issues with which to tax our minds.

CPRE in Shropshire is no stranger to open cast mining and quarrying, but, so far as I am aware, we have yet to be involved in an application to produce oil from shale rock. Unfortunately, the legislation to enable the fast tracking through the planning system of any applications for on-shore oil and gas extraction is already enshrined in the 2013 Growth and Infrastructure Act. This fact might limit the scope for effective future campaigning.

CPRE campaigned vigorously against aspects of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) when it was drafted. This document proposed the most dramatic loosening of the planning system, which had evolved since the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and which had afforded the countryside a good measure of protection. The result of CPRE's efforts and those of others, was the beneficial amendment of important draft provisions. Even so, the final version of the NPPF, which became law in March 2012, was far from satisfactory. Two years later, on 24th March 2014 to be precise, CPRE published a review of how the NPPF has worked in practice. This well researched and thoughtful document highlights several practical failings. It is to be hoped that Government will be open to reviewing those aspects of the NPPF which have been tested and found to be wanting.

CPRE has an illustrious past. It faces now a challenging present and whatever the future holds, we

expect CPRE to continue to be the first to stand up for the English countryside. In a recent issue of "Countryside Voice" CPRE's President, Sir Andrew Motion, wrote "I find it difficult to think of any period in recent history in which there was such an urgent need for a campaign to stand up for our green spaces, large and small, famous and little known...." He concluded his piece with a sentiment with which, hopefully, all CPRE members can agree; "Our countryside is not some kind of nice-to-have extra. It makes us the people we are – and makes us a better version of ourselves than we are if we're deprived of it. So let's climb together to the top of the mountain and shout about it"

Derek Bartlett

CPRE South Shropshire District

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT (SAMDev)

This details the sites throughout the county which have been approved for housing and employment development over the next five years. It is based on recommendations submitted in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) - see below. The consultation period ended on April 28th, and later this year a public inquiry will be held to consider objections that have been raised.

SHLAA

An updated version of SHLAA has recently been published by Shropshire Council. This sets out further possible development sites up to 2026. It is out for consultation until May 7th and comments/objections to any of its proposals should be sent in before then.

The document is on the Council's website- type in "Shropshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment". **It is essential that CPRE members should examine for their particular area.** It may be easier to look at a hard copy at Council offices.

Telford & Wrekin

Telford and Wrekin's planning policy is separately managed from Shropshire's. The current Telford and Wrekin SHLAA information and maps (2012) are available on the Telford and Wrekin website. The draft local plan 'Shaping Places' will be available for consultation from 6th May to 17th June 2014

If you have any difficulty locating the SHLAA documents, please contact us (see back page for details)

Annual District Reports

Bridgnorth

It has been a busy time since the last AGM of our Bridgnorth District Committee with several issues dominating activities, and those among them are as follows:

- Dealing with the continuous stream of applications for wind turbines which is causing great concern that this proliferation is being harmful to the countryside.
- The growing concern that the new planning directives within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are weighing heavily in favour of developers.
- The erosion of democracy caused by the increased difficulties local people have in attending planning authority meetings which are now all held in Shrewsbury rather than Bridgnorth.
- Promoting National Office press releases at local level that challenge the ways the new planning laws are being implemented to the detriment of the wishes and desires of local communities.
- The need to make appropriate representations about the effect on Place Plans caused by the SAMDev strategy.

The following gives a taste of our local CPRE committee activities:

First, wind turbines. Against the recommendations of Shropshire Council Officers, the Councillors on the South Planning Committee, under pressure from local views including those from CPRE, have refused two planning applications, one at Meadowley and the other at Ditton Priors. More wind turbine applications are in the pipeline with the imminent consideration of one near Middleton Priors, where Officers have again recommended approval, despite serious objections being made by CPRE and several other bodies.

One other happy result on a local planning application was Shropshire Council's refusal last October to permit five houses to be built at Ludlow Heights, Bridgnorth, which ensured the preservation of a grand old oak tree.

Our appreciation goes to our Secretary, Stella Voysey, for her enthusiasm for the CPRE

cause. She continues to be active as our representative on the County Executive Committee, and on the CPRE Regional Committee. Our Treasurer, David Shannon has also been a stalwart in his investigations into energy issues, and in particular wind power. Thanks also to Lynn Holdship and Norman Lamputt for their contributions in handling planning problems, such as that over the caravan issue at Wheathill.

David Voysey

North Shropshire

A new group is in the process of being set up. At the moment there are five members, who to start with will keep an eye on planning matters in the North Shropshire area. As we are a new group we are looking for more people and ideas to move the group forward. If you live in North Shropshire and would like to be more actively involved with CPRE, please contact us (details on back page).

Caroline Oakes

Oswestry

CPRE Oswestry has been much involved in trying to protect landscapes around Oswestry which are acknowledged to be sites of national and local historic importance. Unfortunately, Shropshire Council does not appear to attach the same importance to such sites, even though clauses in the NPPF and Shropshire Council's own Core Strategy do so.

Old Oswestry

Of outstanding national importance is the threat to build on the historic landscape around the Old Oswestry Iron Age Hillfort, where three sites have been put forward for development. On 19th February 2014 a U-turn by Shropshire Council saw two sites removed from the final draft of the SAMDev plan. However, the site OSW004 (Off Whittington Road) with 117 houses, remains in the SAMDev plan. Explaining its decision, the Council said there were dangers in also removing OSW004 given that the county does not have a 5 year supply of housing. In mitigation, Council leader Keith Barrow said that there would still be an opportunity for campaigners to appeal OSW004 at the inquiry stage.

There is huge frustration throughout the area that consultation now seems only to be taking place between planners and developers, excluding local residents and Parish Councils. This is not what we expected when the Government's Localism Act came into being.

Mike & Hilary Bullen

Shrewsbury & Atcham

Shrewsbury & Atcham District Group continues to operate on a much reduced programme. Three committee meetings were held during the year, and on each occasion our numbers were swelled quite significantly by visitors.

SAMDev

As predicted the consultation on SAMDev seemed to have little or no effect on the Council's decision making. However, during the year it emerged that Shropshire Council could not provide adequate proof of a 5 year development land supply. Early in the year the calculation, which is complex to say the least, indicated a figure of 4.1 years but as the year progressed this was overtaken by a later calculation which reached 4.95 years. This is only 18 days short of the 5 year target but the consequences of this shortcoming are serious. Under the government rules, where a local authority cannot demonstrate a 5 year land supply, the National Planning Policy Framework takes precedence over local plans. On current interpretation this means that where an application meets the dubious distinction of being sustainable it will be approved. In practice local plans, village boundaries and local housing demand become irrelevant and the development is given the go ahead: where the Council reject an application the decision is nearly always overturned at inquiry and the Council have to pay the costs. Land owners, Land Agents and developers are fully aware of the situation and are submitting a flood of new applications in locations that 6 months ago would have been rejected out of hand.

Welsh windfarms

The resistance to the five Welsh windfarms and their associated overhead power lines continues. The Public Inquiry is now underway and resistance is being co-ordinated by Alison Davies, Chairman of Conservation of Upland Powys. Alison is anxious to receive as much support from other organisations and individuals as she can get.

Roger Carlyle

South Shropshire

Claire Cox

Claire announced her formal retirement from CPRE Shropshire in February 2014. All members of the Executive would like to sincerely thank her for her tireless support of the branch for 18 years. With Derek Bartlett's sterling support, the South Shropshire group has remained in operation through Claire's efforts.

New District group

In Spring 2014, **John Woolmer** stepped into the breach and is now leading the new South Shropshire branch with a new group of people to assist him. We look forward very much to working with John and his colleagues (contact details on back page)

Telford & Wrekin

Newport supermarkets

The Court of Appeal very recently backed the proposal for a supermarket on a 'brownfield' site in Audley Avenue, following the public inquiry which was re-run in 2013. T&W have lost their case, and their alternative revenue-raising proposals for a supermarket on a greenfield site on at Station Road looks in doubt. The latter scheme is closely linked to major housing development to which we are opposed.

SHLAA and concerns north of Telford

T&W's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2012 proposals are raising alarm, particularly in the rural part of the district north of Telford. There is no justification for the sites identified at Crudgington and around other villages in the Weald Moors area. There are extensive areas of 'pink' on all the SHLAA maps, but it appears that government guidance on deliverability has been ignored, and that many plots identified by SHLAA ought not to be included. CPRE is taking this up with the LA.

Lightmoor

The Lightmoor area is being developed in partnership by the Bourneville Village Trust (BVT) and others (including Shropshire Wildlife Trust). This is a model housing development, and deserves close attention and study for developments elsewhere

MOD Donnington

A proposal to erect new warehousing on land outside the existing depot. CPRE has commented on the height of the proposed warehouse and the effect on neighbouring properties and on the views from the nearby Strine Levels and the villages of Horton, Preston and Kinnersley, areas recognised by the previous Wrekin LP as having special landscape character which must be protected.

CPRE's effectiveness in Telford and Wrekin is severely restricted due to the lack of volunteers. It is helpful to be alerted to matters of particular concern. If you can also assist us, that is better still, and we would be delighted to hear from you.

Nigel Conner

Treasurer's Report

The accounts this year reflect once again a charity in a sound financial condition, despite the current fiscal climate, and we have once again returned a surplus, albeit somewhat lower than last year.

On the income side we have had a healthy support from our membership thanks to an increase in annual subscriptions for the first time since 2008, as well as continuing funding from outside organisations, but no significant bequests during the year has left us with a lower overall income than last year.

Our expenditure remains fairly constant. We retain a professional administrator and continue to produce our newsletters. However, during the year we have been able to financially support the campaign against the erection of electricity pylons in North Shropshire ("Take the Power Back"), as well as hosting a well attended veteran tree and hedge-laying day.

Our savings with NS&I remain static, thanks to the 0.75% annual interest we currently enjoy.

Phil Hibberd

Treasurer, CPRE Shropshire

CPRE Shropshire Contacts

Officers

Vice President

Selby Martin / 01743 343784
selbymartin@btinternet.com

Chair

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

Vice Chairs

Keith Ridland / keithridland@hotmail.com
Judy Crabb / Judy@bjf.org.uk

Membership Secretary/Administrator

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

Honorary Treasurer

Phil Hibberd

Web: www.cpre.org.uk

CPRE Shropshire Districts

Bridgnorth

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

North Shropshire

Caroline Oakes / caoakes1@aol.com

Oswestry

Mike Bullen / hilarybullen1@gmail.com

Shrewsbury and Atcham

Roger Carlyle / cye@cardeston.zx3.net

South Shropshire

John Woolmer
01694 751245 / johnwoolmer@fsmail.net

Telford & Wrekin (& Newsletter Editor)

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

National Office

The Campaign to Protect Rural England
5-11 Lavington Street, London, SE1
Tel: 020 7981 2800 / Fax: 020 7981 2899
Email: info@cpre.org.uk / www.cpre.org.uk