



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Shropshire

SHROPSHIRE VOICE

Annual Report 2016

Campaign to Protect Rural England



Photo (c) Malcolm McDonald

AGM NOTICE

CPRE Shropshire Annual General Meeting

Thursday 9th June 2016

5pm Annual General Meeting (AGM)

***at Shropshire Wildlife Trust
193 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6AH***

We are delighted to announce our keynote speaker will be Graham Harvey, Agricultural Adviser to Radio 4's "The Archers". His talk is entitled: "***Farming and the Rural Economy***" and he will make the case for ecological agriculture - producing good food whilst keeping soils fertile and our countryside rich in wildlife.

All Members and visitors are welcome. Refreshments.

AGM papers are enclosed with this report.

President's report

It is said that the years pass more quickly as we get older. The last year is no exception. This has prompted me to reflect on the issues facing us when I first became involved in the Rural Development Commission thirty years ago.

It is no coincidence that perhaps the greatest challenge then, as now, was the provision of affordable, high quality homes in our villages and smaller market towns for local people. Arguably, that is the same today. The causes are much the same: greater prosperity leading to the advent of the long-distance commuter and the search for a rural idyll. This coupled with the very understandable desire for retirement in beautiful and peaceful surroundings has conspired to keep house prices beyond the reach of those on an average rural wage. The spectre of the Right to Buy has never really disappeared. The Housing and Planning Bill is a major concern and while there is a main focus on brownfield sites, this could still be undermined by other proposals. Nothing seems to change!!

In Shropshire we are fortunate not to have to grapple with the issues affecting the Green Belts. It is interesting to note that even county branches such as Somerset, Norfolk and East Hampshire have growing support for the establishment of new Green Belts round towns such as Yeovil. I wonder if this could happen on the eastern

fringes of Shropshire. Of course, there are threats to our landscape in Shropshire that Sarah addresses in her Chair's Report, most particularly affecting the AONBs. It is so fortunate that we have Members who have the talent, knowhow and time to address areas of concern as they arise.

It is 90 years since Patrick Abercrombie published his book entitled *The Preservation of Rural England* in 1926. It was this book (or perhaps better described as a pamphlet) that laid out the original vision that led to the formation of CPRE at its inaugural meeting in December of that year. That manifesto is as relevant today as it was then. Oliver Hilliam has written an excellent article in the Spring Edition of CPRE's *Countryside Voice* about the birth of CPRE which I thoroughly enjoyed reading.

The ethos of CPRE over those 90 years has not changed. It is the volunteer who is the keystone to everything that is done and achieved. In Shropshire we are lucky to have a strong, dedicated and knowledgeable team. Perhaps I can echo Sarah's words of thanks to everyone involved in CPRE Shropshire and wish everyone every good luck for the challenges ahead.

Robin Thompson
President, CPRE Shropshire



Chair's report

Since my last report for the AGM in June 2015 life as usual has been busy although contentious planning applications have dropped off since the adoption of the Site Allocations; SAMDev was formally adopted in December. It appears that developers are accepting that the adopted SAMDev is for real and of the 48 appeals since then only three have been allowed. There have been a number of appeals for solar farms turned down by the Planning Committee and two of them, including the one at Acton Scott, won at appeal. This was particularly disappointing as it is in the AONB which theoretically should ensure that such developments are only permitted in exceptional circumstances. The wind farm inquiry in Powys found against the majority of the farms, which should remove the need for pylons in North Shropshire, although the wind farms may still go to judicial review.

In October a small group of Executive members presented our paper *How many houses, what kind of homes?* to Ian Kilby, chief Planning Officer. The summary of the paper is on page 5 of this newsletter but the reason for bringing it forward to the council at this time was to inform the production of the new Core Strategy which is now being commenced by the Planning Department.

In April 2016, CPRE Shropshire with the Wildlife Trust and some other partner organisations ran a training session on the use of the County's Planning website. Ian Kilby demonstrated how to get the most out of it and agreed to look into some of our criticisms mostly associated with accessing parishes by the ward or old district. Over the year we have developed a closer (but not cosy) relationship with the Planning Department on general policy development and there are some statistics which are of interest:

- There were 1079 net additional dwellings built in Shropshire during 2013-14 and 1155 completed 2014-15. These completions represent increases on previous years. Since 2006, 9,500 net additional dwellings have been built.
- In 2014-15, 324 affordable dwellings were completed. A significant increase on the 152 completed in the previous year.
- 60% of housing development took place on Brownfield land in 2014-15.

The latter statistic on brownfield sites is interesting as it is a central theme to CPRE's national push on the Government to put brownfield sites first. Research by CPRE revealed in March that brownfield sites are on average built out more than six months quicker than greenfield sites once they have planning permission.

Our work in the community has been mainly centred this year on the "Memories of the Landscape" project (see page 4), which was funded by the Big Lottery and led by our then Vice Chair, Judy Crabb, who has sadly now left us for Edinburgh. We will miss her hugely and thank her very much for the enthusiasm and expertise which she has brought to CPRES. In addition to this work, Judy and John Woolmer have been working with Harper Adams students to produce two videos, one on commenting on planning applications and one on litter. These will be available soon on YouTube, links to follow. We very much hope that our Treasurer, Emma Ireland will continue the contacts with Harper.

We have been very pleased to welcome Isabel Mathias to the Executive Committee. She comes from a background in journalism and has worked extensively with social media, something of which the majority of our members have scant knowledge, so we are looking forward to her working with Sarah Jameson to increase our appeal to younger members and connect with other like-minded organisations. Welcome Isabel and watch this space!

I would like to thank our Vice Chairman Keith Ridland who does all the difficult things like chairing large meetings and supporting me. Finally, CPRES is almost completely dependent on volunteers who are one of the most committed and hard working band of people I have come across. We all owe so much to them and to our wider membership who are our ears and eyes.

Thank you.

Sarah Bury
Chair, CPRE Shropshire

CPRES “Memories of the Landscape” project

“A fantastic way for the children to learn about their local landscape through communication and activity with those who were experts in the land and ultimately those who have known, worked and cherished this beautiful area throughout their lives, the older members of our community,” said Mrs Gittins, Head of Newcastle CE Primary School. “The Memories of the Landscape project stimulated and informed children with a wealth of knowledge and the outcome has enthused children about their local area.”

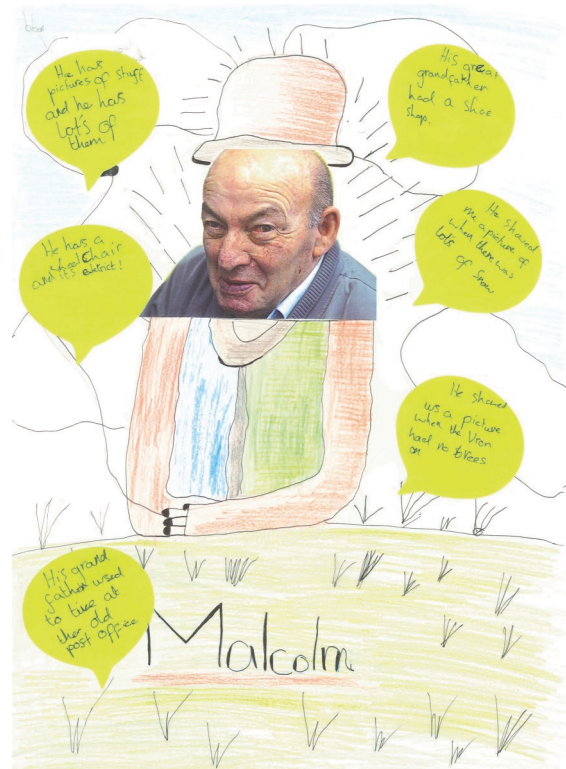
Wednesday 24th February saw the culmination of a CPRE Shropshire project that started in October last year. Funded by The Big Lottery, it brought together eight year 6 pupils from Newcastle CE Primary school, near Clun in South Shropshire with a group of older local people who have an interest in, or connection to, the land. The group explored how the local landscape has changed in living memory, and the impact of man on the landscape over hundreds of years.

Judy Crabb, CPRE Shropshire, together with the support of Cath Landles (Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership), Viviana Culshaw (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust), local artist Angela Martin, film-maker, Tom Middleton and Sarah Griffiths, heritage learning consultant, orchestrated this pilot project, which has the potential to be rolled out and have value in other rural areas.

A final celebratory event was held in Newcastle on a bright February day, with all participants and attended by Antonia White, Senior Branch Development Officer at CPRE National Office (pictured right).

CPRE is committed to protecting and enhancing our landscape heritage for the benefit of all and this project was hugely enjoyed by older and younger people alike. Two handling ‘cases’ were created, based on the work of the group that can now be used and enjoyed by generations to come. One case will be for use by schools in the area; the other has been designed for use in care settings with residents who may enjoy reminiscing. Since the collection aims to stimulate memory and start a conversation, this may be particularly helpful to those living with dementia.

The ‘community’ case has been donated to Bishops Castle Heritage Resource Centre (see opposite) and will be available for booking by local care homes, community groups and other organisations that care for elderly people living in the area. To borrow the case, please contact Patricia Theobald at Bishops Castle Heritage Resource Centre (01588 630556).



A collage of some of the children's drawings and notes about one of their interviewees in the project.



Pupils from Newcastle CE Primary School, examining local maps with Antonia White from CPRE National Office at the final event.



Sarah Griffiths and CPRE Chair, Sarah Bury handing over the memory case to Patricia Theobald at Bishops Castle Heritage Resource Centre

Paper on Housing Targets



The current Shropshire Council Core Strategy running from 2006 to 2026 has a target for new dwellings which escalates over the 20 year period. Last year the Office for National Statistics published its 2012 Household Projections covering the period from 1991 to 2037. During the later years of the Core Strategy Shropshire's annual housing target is significantly in excess of the government's projected household demand.

Shropshire Council will be preparing an updated local plan over the next two years which will extend to 2031; it will be based on evidence relating to the local housing market. It is therefore timely to recon-

sider how the county should develop, and whether there are reasons to change direction. As part of this process the Council is required to carry out a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and an Objectively Assessed Need. These documents will provide a basis for the formulation of the updated local plan.

Matters to be considered include demography; Shropshire has an aging population; inward migration to the county and how much this should be encouraged, the need for affordable housing, particularly in rural areas, and the desirability of ambitious housing targets to boost development growth. The outcome must be justifiable with employment prospects in the area.

To inform the process we commissioned a paper on housing target by Gerald Kells, a consultant who previously worked for West Midlands CPRE, which we presented to council officers. It calls on them to:

- Critically assess the overall need for housing
- Consider whether to reduce housing numbers
- Review the balance of social and age mix
- Develop policies to meet the need for affordable housing and specialist housing for older people.

CPRES aims to continue to engage with the council throughout formulation of the new plan.

Roger Carlyle, Shrewsbury District

Treasurer's Report

In 2015, CPRE Shropshire received a second grant from the Big Lottery Fund (for the Memories of the Landscape project). Our expenses and receipts reflect the busy Big Draw and Memories of the Landscape projects, which both contributed the majority of the 'events' expenditure in the last year.

Our membership income has increased considerably from last year, mostly due to some brilliant membership drives in South Shropshire and Shrewsbury. Income received from the Severn Hospice Lottery finished in 2014, but our membership increase has covered this loss.

Expenditure for 2015 remained comparable to 2014, largely due to the Big Lottery projects again. Meeting expenses have increased from 2014. Expenditure was down on grants given out in 2015 as the wind farms campaign in the north of the county and Wales had

received large sums from CPRE Shropshire in 2014. As the branch is in good financial health, additional funds have been targeted towards paying for specialist input in projects, and in 2015 £1,279 was spent on professional fees for planning advice.

The Memories of the Landscape project will cause expenses in 2016 to be higher, as the majority of the grant paid in 2015 was not spent within the year.

CPRE Shropshire's savings remain untouched and have increased from the interest rate we receive. Overall, our financial state is very positive for a small charity.

Emma Ireland, Hon Treasurer

Annual District Reports

North Shropshire

North Shropshire faces significant threats to its landscape and countryside and we remain very keen to strengthen our influence in the region and improve our ability to react strongly when the occasion demands. Solar farm, wind turbine and exploratory methane drilling applications particularly require careful monitoring and the number of housing applications in inappropriate places with landscape implications seems to be increasing. We are in the process of establishing a new group of members to react more effectively to such issues and would be grateful to hear from anyone in the North Shropshire area prepared to lead, help or assist.

On 5 March CPRE Shropshire played a role in an event organised to highlight restrictions imposed by a new owner to footpaths and byways through the ancient woods above Weston-under-Redcastle. Organised by CPRE Shropshire's new Social Media expert, Isabel Mathias, and Christine Moodie, 70 people walked historic trails through the woods before the Chief Executive of Open Spaces, Kate Ashbrook, gave an inspiring and informative address. CPRE Shropshire Vice Chairman, Keith Ridland, also spoke.

Keith Ridland

Oswestry

We have had well attended talks by Nick Rushbrooke, (ex chief engineer on the Lake Vyrnwy aqueduct system) on "Vyrnwy, a marvel of Victorian Engineering", and a recent one by Andy Wigley (Shropshire Council's chief archaeologist) entitled "The view from above: recent archaeological aerial photography over Shropshire", including some juicy LIDAR images.

Tollhouse demolition

The widespread dismay at the proposed demolition of the distinctive Telford pattern tollhouse on the eastern approach to Oswestry did not stop Shropshire Council approving the related Aldi supermarket, merely under delegated powers rather than at full committee. As soon as Aldi had their permission the Gatehouse was duly demolished. CPRE Oswestry complained to the Local Government Ombudsman about the whole process surrounding this approval, particularly the delegated nature of the decision, but the LGO disappointingly upheld Shropshire Council's stance, despite acknowledging ambiguous wording in the Council's Scheme of Delegation rules.

PV Factory

We are supporting local objectors who are threatened with a large solar PV factory north of Gobowen. A 10MW array of 40,000 panels covering 21 hectares was refused by Shropshire Council in July 2015 largely

on landscape grounds. However, a smaller 5MW application (for 20,000 panels covering 13.5ha) on parts of the same site was given permission in September 2015. The developers, Elgin Energy, decided that this smaller installation is unviable economically and have appealed against the refusal of the 10MW site.

Cross Keys Inn, Kinnerley

Sterling work goes on to try to save the Cross Keys Inn in Kinnerley and to get the surrounding core of the village designated as a conservation area. The pub was bought by a local businessman from the developer whose plans to turn the site into houses were defeated, but the ability of the community to raise the necessary grants and finance has stalled at the moment.

SAMDev

At long last (December 15), Shropshire Council approved its Site Allocations and Management of Development plan (SAMDev) and it is also accepted that it has demonstrated a 5 year supply of housing land. This has enabled the Council, and various Planning Inspectors, to take a firmer line against developers who threatened open season for housing developments in our local villages.

National Grid pylon line

National Grid's threat of a large pylon line across Montgomeryshire and North Shropshire has gone into hibernation but is not yet entirely removed. Last September, DECC refused all four of the NG-pylon-related applications in the Mid Wales Windfarms Conjoined Public Inquiry but the largest two appealed. DECC sidestepped the appeal by "quashing" its original decisions and is just about to start the process of "re-determining" these two windfarm applications. In the meantime Carno III, which potentially feeds into NG's plans, has just been granted permission, and others stand ready in the wings, particularly now that the Welsh Government (which is notoriously pro-windfarm) has powers to approve windfarms. The reduction in subsidies does not appear to be stopping all windfarms from being built.

We continue to look for new members, particularly those who could take an active role in publicity or in dealing with planning matters. Otherwise we merely "tick over"!

Charles and Sally Green

Telford & Wrekin

We continue to receive requests for support from both members of the public and Parish Councils, but are finding it difficult to respond as we do not have a local group in the Telford area. We would be extremely grateful for any help that can be offered to monitor planning applications and respond from a CPRE perspective as necessary!

Shrewsbury

SAMdev

The inspector's report on the SAMDev inquiry was issued and the changes proposed were adopted by Shropshire Council in December. The inspector had made several recommendations for tightening measures relating to natural assets within the county and also to landscape character and local distinctiveness. The overall emphasis on protecting environmental assets is to be welcomed.

Five year land supply

The battle between land agents, developers and house builders and Shropshire Council's planning department has continued in relation to the validity of the 5 year land supply figures. At the time of writing the argument seems to be favouring the Council's interpretation. Most appeals decided recently by inspectors have rejected the suggestion that the published land supply figure of 5.75 years is not justified.

Objection to winery

CPRE objected to an application for a winery and visitors centre at Hencote Farm but sadly it was approved. This is a significant development and will dominate a very prominent position overlooking the old river bed. CPRE and a significant number of other objectors considered that it would have a detrimental effect on the views and the enjoyment of the many walkers using the quiet country lane.

Core Strategy

An approach has been made to Shropshire Council with a view to becoming involved in the revision of the Core Strategy. This will be taking place over the next two years. Further meetings are proposed.

Unfortunately for Shrewsbury District Group Judy Crabb, our Chair, is leaving the district for Scotland, so we are now on the lookout for a new Chair.

Roger Carlyle

South Shropshire

A continued challenge facing so many small villages in the South lies in developer plans to build large market price houses on fields outside their settlements. Regulations suggest that only affordable houses should be allowed for local workers in these open countryside greenfield sites but planning officers somehow seem to encourage many of these inappropriate and greedy applications.

Thankfully this has been a much quieter year so far for large planning applications – possibly due in part to the support given by our Planning Committee councillors by rejecting many of the large solar and housing proposals on tranquil agricultural fields, often in lovely areas. The Save Our Shropshire Hills group of volunteers proved to be worthy allies of CPRE!

Seventy two percent of the thirty applications we objected to were eventually refused by Shropshire Council officers, but controversial and much disliked applications for two solar 'farms' were finally permitted on appeal by Inspectors, one at Acton Scott being actually inside the SHAONB. The really contentious New House Farm application to build a hundred large houses and holiday chalets on the lower slopes of Caer Caradoc was withdrawn only days before its hearing.

Litter and dog fouling

Two local initiatives promoted by our group have proved successful this year...our Model Action Plan against litter and dog fouling in Church Stretton has involved successful co-operation with both town and county councils, and brought enquiries from other towns and villages, some outside Shropshire. Two thousand new leaflets promoting Coppice Leasowes Local Nature Reserve together with a new Discovery Trail have been printed – largely thanks to a financial contribution from CPRE Shropshire.

John Woolmer

Bridgnorth

Our Committee continues to meet on a regular basis and on 28th April 2016, the District held its AGM. Sadly the passing of Mrs Beryl Bond, wife of the late Ron Bond, founder of our District Group, are both sorely missed as they supported CPRE in so many valuable ways.

Green Belt issues

The new planning rules are causing problems and it is becoming increasingly difficult to protect the Green Belt. We fully supported National Office's critical response to the consultation on proposals to amend the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which it is considered would make it even easier for development to encroach on Green Belt land. A local member backed up National Office objections by submitting his own completed questionnaire.

Highways and Neighbourhood Plans

A representative from our committee attended two important meetings recently. On 3rd March 2016 the Road Safety meeting at Shirehall explored ways to help town and parish councils to work with the Highways Authority to improve village roads and centres. The other meeting on 22nd March 2016, was on Neighbourhood Planning run jointly by Shropshire Community Council & CPRE. This gave an insight on how a community plan can lead to the local parish council taking on some good ideas and implementing them. A neighbourhood plan takes a great deal of time and effort but is more legally binding and important than a standard parish plan.

Local planning

The Committee has been involved in a number of controversial planning applications in the District includ-

ing a dwelling at Ludlow Heights, Bridgnorth, a broiler and biomass incinerator at Faintree, Bridgnorth, and a planning application at Withies Camping site at Much Wenlock regarding the erection of a multiple purpose building that would be harmful to the countryside.

Whenever possible our group will support parish councils, civic societies and other bodies who take action to sustain and improve our countryside. Our District Committee is active and will continue to pursue the aims and objectives of CPRE.

Stella Voysey

Photographers and Artists!

The splendid cover photograph in this newsletter was taken by a CPRE Member, Malcolm McDonald (see more on this below).

We are always in need of good quality photographs of the Shropshire countryside, villages and towns, as well as images showing new development that we can use in future newsletters, publicity and on our website which is well overdue for a makeover (more on that in the next newsletter).

Likewise if you are an artist or painter or celebrate the Shropshire countryside in any other way—we would love to hear from you!

If you have any images that might be suitable, in the first instance, do contact Sarah our Administrator (see contact details opposite) and we will be delighted to use suitable shots with a credit in future.

Our Cover Photograph

Our striking cover photograph this issue shows the centre of the village of Norton in Hales near Market Drayton in North Shropshire, which won the Britain in Bloom Champion of Champion award last year. This is the highest award possible, beating off places such as Bath Truro, Usk. Shrewsbury won the award the year before so the accolade remains in the county!

CPRE Shropshire urgently needs volunteer members, ideally with an interest in planning, who would be prepared to assess applications. We are in need of such help throughout the county, but particularly in the North and in the Telford area. If you feel able to help or assist, do contact our administrator, Sarah Jameson, on 01547 528546 or e-mail admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk.

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