

Winter/Spring 2017



Photo © Frances Morris

Rural Shropshire "Post Brexit" What next for our farming, food & landscape?

Friday 3rd March, Shrewsbury

CPRE Shropshire invites you to a free conference on the future of farming and how agricultural policies and subsidies post BREXIT could affect a landscape which was formed by centuries of farming. We have an excellent line up of speakers. See page 3 for more information and how to book your place now!



.... Save the date!

CPRE Shropshire's AGM will take place on **Tuesday 27th June** at the beautiful Souldon Hall, near Wem. We are excited to tell you that the National President of CPRE, Emma Bridgewater, has agreed to come and speak. More information in our next mailout.

The Shropshire countryside: Farming, Food & Landscape

For the first time in 40 years there is a chance to shape a farming policy to match our needs. It is a momentous opportunity and a challenge for the Government and for all those who care about the environment and the future of farming. The goal must be to create a resilient, financially stable and dynamic farming industry, which works for the wider community as well as for the environment.
(Quote from CPRE National Office).

The Shropshire Landscape is one of great variety from the Mosses and Meres of North Shropshire to the Hills of South Shropshire; from the rich farmland of the Shrewsbury plain to the sheep country of the Stiperstones and Clun valley. The one theme that is common to the whole county is the importance of agriculture, which has shaped our landscape over centuries. In the last fifty years agriculture in the whole country has undergone enormous change. Farms are larger, machinery is larger but the workforce has often dwindled to one or two full time workers per farm. This has had an effect on the landscape of our county as well as on the livelihoods of those who work the land. Subsidies have played an enormous role in how the land is farmed, sometimes for the better and sometimes at the expense of wildlife and the landscape. One report suggests that some farmers rely on over 50% of their incomes coming from subsidies.

CPRE members care passionately about conserving our beautiful landscape and protecting the environment for wildlife which is so vital to our wellbeing as well as our enjoyment. Very often we work as fire-

fighters to oppose development be it houses, solar farms or hedge removals in the wrong place. With Brexit and all its uncertainty we have an opportunity to enter positively into the debate, working closely with landowners, farmers and our partners from environmental charities to conserve our beautiful landscape as well as supporting farmers and food production.

Our conference on the 3rd of March (***see opposite***) will draw speakers from the CLA, NFU and farmers who are directly involved in agriculture and food production. We will be highlighting the initiatives which existing farm subsidies have enabled through schemes such as Countryside Stewardship and will include those conservation organisations who have worked with farmers and landowners to promote and enhance the environmental health of the area as well as protecting the landscape and promoting local food production. The keynote speaker is Christopher Price, Director of Policy at the Country Landowners and Business Association who will set the political scene from a national perspective.

We invite you to come and hear—and take part in—the debate. Places are by ticket only, so do book your place/s now!

Sarah Bury
Chair, CPRE Shropshire

Photo: Shropshire barley field © CPRE Photo Library



Rural Shropshire

What next for our farming, food & landscape?

Friday 3rd March, 1.30 to 5pm
Sovereign Suite, Shrewsbury Town Football Club SY2 6ST

CPRE Shropshire invites you to a free conference on the future of farming and how agricultural policies and subsidies post BREXIT could affect a landscape which was formed by centuries of farming.

Speakers include:

Christopher Price, Director of Policy, Country Landowners Association (CLA)

Clare Cole, Natural England, North Mercia region

Mark Measures & Joy Greenall, Organic farmers in the Shropshire Hills

Simon Latter, Senior Account Executive, NFU Mutual

Cath Landles, Community & Landscape Officer, Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (SHAONB)

Liam Bell, Gamekeeper and National Chair, National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO)

Graeme Willis, Farming Adviser, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Chaired by Robin Thompson OBE, DL, President, CPRE Shropshire

Farm subsidies : Protecting the Landscape : Rural economy
Soil conservation : Tourism & local communities : Organic farming
Small farms : Conservation & shooting

Free parking : free entry
Light refreshments
Disabled access

To book your free place now, contact:
Sarah Jameson, Administrator, CPRE Shropshire
admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk or 01547 528546
Deadline for bookings: Monday 27th February

Telford & Wrekin district—Stop Press!

It is going to happen!

In October 2016, a number of local Parish Councillors and other community-minded people got together and discussed the future for CPRE in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin—and it is looking a positive one!

The event, held in High Ercall Village Hall, was organised by Katrina Baker and seemed to be a great success. Thank you to everyone for the very positive feedback.

Telford & Wrekin has a unique balance of an urban/rural identity and we have some beautiful landscapes and areas of interest within our boundary, many of them 'hidden'.

Have you ever visited Apley Woods, the Telford Town Park, Randlay Valley, Madeley Pit Mounds or any of the areas of countryside of which we should be very proud?

Telford Town Park which is the UK's current best park winner welcomes visitors from all over the world, along with the world famous Iron Bridge and we have some fantastic community groups in the Borough which look after our green spaces and help improve our identity, so much that we have a new group called the Telford Green Spaces Partnership who work with Councils and community groups to grow volunteer engagement and support groups with funding opportunities, they also

help identify and gain Local Nature Reserve (LNR)s across the Borough.

There is so much going on in the Borough to protect our green spaces and enhance the identity of some landscapes that it is without doubt that we need our own Telford & Wrekin district group within CPRE Shropshire.

We are planning to have a public information conference with speakers at Harper Adams in 2017 to gauge more interest with local businesses, organisations and the community about CPRE coming to the Borough and hope that from this event we can formally set up our new group.

We welcome all residents of Telford & Wrekin to contact Connor or Katrina to register your interest in being part of this exciting new venture and to learn more about what we do.

As soon as the date is announced for the conference, we will be pleased to let you know.

Connor Furnival: connor.furnival@telford.gov.uk
or 07583 041572

Katrina Baker: katrina.oaklands@btinternet.com
or 07813 788094

*Beautiful Hollinswood, near Telford.
Photo © Friends of Hollinswood & Randlay Valley*



Other news from the districts

Shrewsbury: A plea for help

For many years, our dedicated Shrewsbury district committee has monitored draft planning documents put out by both County and Local Councils for consultation and submitted our views as to the impact of such a development on the countryside. We have scrutinised developments proposals which might be inappropriate, supporting some, objecting to others.

Unfortunately our present CPRE Shrewsbury committee is no longer able to fully monitor all potentially inappropriate development proposals. Several long-serving members are no longer available, whilst those remaining need support. We also need to pass on our knowledge of the local planning system to new people. Training and help will be available.

If you feel you can assist in any way, please contact Sarah Jameson, branch Administrator (see back page for details).

Oswestry

PV Factory

The appeal against the refusal by Shropshire Council of a 10MW, 40,000 panel, 21 hectare solar PV factory north of Gobowen was refused (with mention of CPRE in the decision letter), although a reduced, 5MW scheme (part of this larger scheme) had already been granted permission. The Inspector said of the larger scheme that *“the intrusive proposal would have an adverse impact on the local character of this unchanged tranquil, rural landscape”* and that *“overall the solar panels would appear visually overwhelming”*. In the appeal statement the developers, Elgin Energy, said that the smaller, approved scheme was unviable economically, and there is no sign of that being built yet.

Kinnerley

The core of Kinnerley village has now been designated as a conservation area, but the Cross Keys Inn still remains closed at the moment.

Housing Need

Some developers tried to resurrect schemes on the back of the Teal Drive, Ellesmere appeal in May. This found, disturbingly, that Shropshire Council could not prove an up to date Full Objectively Assessed Housing Need (FOAHN) and that therefore they could not demonstrate a five year housing land supply. The presumption in favour of devel-

opment therefore reared its head again. But Shropshire Council appealed to the High Court, and promptly issued a revised FOAHN; appeal decisions are again supporting Shropshire Council's robust stance against development that is not in SAMDev, and they have now won their High Court case.

In the meantime, outline plans have been submitted for the 600 house development on the eastern outskirts of Oswestry, regardless of the fact that there is no extra provision for schools, employment etc etc.

Wind farms update

We still await the Government decision on the re-determination of the two Mid Wales wind farms that appealed their refusal. This affects whether National Grid comes out of hibernation with its threat of a large pylon line across Montgomeryshire and North Shropshire. Disappointingly, the pro-wind Welsh Government appears now to have hijacked the last stages of the ailing Powys County Council's Local Development Plan by designating yet more “Local” areas for wind and solar development, without proper consultation. This may yet allow enough windfarms through to trigger National Grid's pylon plans. We continue to liaise with Shropshire Council and our CPRW neighbours in Montgomeryshire about this and other matters of joint cross-border interest.

Charles & Sally Green
Oswestry district

Attention all Photographers!

Whether you take photos on your phone, your tablet, your SLR or your Hasselblad ... look out for details in the next newsletter about our exciting new CPRE Shropshire Landscape Photography competition. Details are still in the pipeline, but we have secured a great award-winning judge and plan to launch the competition county-wide later in the year. So when you are out and about in our lovely Shropshire countryside this winter/spring, do take your camera with you and get snapping!



Photo © Sarah Jameson

South Shropshire district—update

South Shropshire

Having lived in South Shropshire for a mere sixteen years, perhaps I am not best qualified to hold strong feelings about our amazing landscape and the Shropshire way of life – yet I am increasingly saddened when I compare the political landscapes of then and now. At the turn of the century, Shropshire seemed less ‘discovered’ than it is today...more rural, more community-minded, better organised and better run in terms of the services that we then took for-granted – housing, roads, policing, health, and public rural transport.

Most of the problems facing post-Brexit residents in South Shropshire today seem to centre on an impoverished government; a council that has abrogated most of its 150 services and responsibilities; a cash-strapped, shrunk and demoralised planning service; too many greedy & inappropriate planning applications; libraries, museums, leisure centres, visitor information centres, swimming pools, medical centres all threatened with closure in our market towns; land banking; industrialised farming; low wages; worryingly inadequate affordable housing provision; reduced footpath maintenance and walking tourism; increased child poverty and the re-urbanisation of youngsters from our villages and hamlets.

Thankfully not all is doom and gloom. We have a much loved monarchy, a tolerant & better educated society, community cohesion – if only in times of adversity and threat, stable politics, a strengthened Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty, more concerned councillors on our Planning Committee, a good record of success on planning appeals, caring volunteers on our Executive, more diversification and undoubted post-Brexit opportunities that could make a real difference to rural Shropshire.

We need a sustainable but ambitious rural vision, more realistic housing targets, more affordable housing, better leadership & government, a long term energy policy, an improved planning system, and healthier finances if we are to emerge as a stronger, more unified and a more prosperous county that people feel connected to and want to protect.

As to more local issues in South Shropshire, the major planning application to build a hundred dwellings on the lower slopes of our iconic Caer Caradoc was thankfully withdrawn at the last moment, a new estate of 137 houses at Foldgate Lane, Ludlow is being challenged as outside the Local Plan, and the Rock Green supermarket plans are being modified to suit local opinion. Applications to build large and expensive houses on the outskirts of hamlets and villages continue to appear, while there are too few applications to build smaller affordable houses in these rural locations.

Finally, may I urge all our members to consider coming to our afternoon conference on Friday 3rd March at the Shrewsbury Town Football Club? It is designed to showcase how our countryside is protected, farmed, managed and enhanced: we have some really interesting speakers, wide-ranging topics together with question & answer sessions that should interest and involve our audience.

John Woolmer
Chair, South Shropshire district

Rural South Shropshire Under Threat



Squirrel Lane solar farm under construction
© Peter van Duijvenvoorde

As I write this, yet another solar farm is under construction on the outskirts of Ludlow in rural South Shropshire. The 33 acre site which, until this winter, was a productive arable field is now a sea of mud. Incessant pile-driving can be heard 2 miles away as the contractors prepare to install nearly 22,000 solar panels.

There is no doubt that this country needs to prepare for a future of greener energy and improved energy efficiency. But we should not destroy our cherished landscapes and agricultural productivity with industrial developments. Solar capture technology is an important part of our energy mix: it should be deployed on brown-field sites, factory roofs and integrated into every new house. It should not ruin our countryside and destroy the economic prosperity of so many who support the tourist industry in our county.

Regrettably, the cards are stacked in the favour of developers who select undeveloped green fields as the easy way to make a quick return. Proposals for solar on green field sites invariably attract almost unanimous local opposition and local planning committees more often than not reject these ill thought out schemes. Yet developers are able to appeal these decisions at no cost. This is what has happened in the case of several solar farm proposals e.g. Acton Scott, Neen Sollars and Squirrel Lane, Ludlow.

Yet it is possible for local communities to protect their green and pleasant lands. With the help of CPRE Shropshire, local campaign group Save South Shropshire Countryside fought to have two planning applications, for a solar farm near Whitton, and the subsequent appeals quashed.

Key elements in this success included leadership, relevant expertise, teamwork, focus on local and national policies, commitment (the whole process took two years), professionalism, being proactive and creative, communication and engaging support of local and national politicians and councillors. And finally, never give up... and celebrate success when it happens!

Peter van Duijvenvoorde
Chair, Save South Shropshire Countryside

News from the Shropshire Hills AONB

The Shropshire Hills AONB covers 23% of the county and is the 9th largest of 38 AONBs in England and Wales. The AONB Partnership and its staff team have been hosted by Shropshire Council since 2009 and by Shropshire County Council previously, but financial pressures have led to some recent changes in the structure. In 2016, a new charity, the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust, was formed to sit alongside the AONB Partnership. Its main aim is to raise and distribute funds in support of AONB purposes and it will take over the Conservation Fund grants scheme and receive money from Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB and other donations. For further information see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/a-special-place/shropshire-hills-aonb-trust/>.

At the same time, plans have been developed for the AONB Partnership itself to be replaced by a fully independent body, continuing to receive funding from Defra and Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils. The two Councils in October approved a formal request to Defra to create a 'Conservation Board' for the AONB. This is a statutory independent body which takes over the local authorities' legal responsibility to prepare and review the AONB Management Plan. The request to Defra was made in November and discussions are now under way about this. There are only two Conservation Boards in the country – for the Cotswolds and the Chilterns, both created in 2004. With a Statutory Instrument and Parliamentary time required to create a Conservation Board, and government

work very focussed on Brexit, the outcome of the request is far from certain. A strong business case however sets out that the new structure would actually cost less and would provide a strong, long-term structure for the AONB.

For further information see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/proposed-conservation-board/>. Philip Dunne has written to Defra Minister Lord Gardiner in support of the proposal. All support which can be passed on to Defra is welcome and much appreciated.

Phil Holden
Partnership Manager,
Shropshire Hills AONB



Photo: Cattle above the Clun Valley, near Newcastle © Sarah Jameson



CPRE Shropshire Out & About



Photo © Isabel Mathias

CPRE Shropshire was out and about at one or two local events in the second half of 2016 to highlight our campaigns with a travelling 'mini exhibition'. We attended the beautiful market town of Ludlow for its Green Festival in August and Merefest in September at a stunning location in Ellesmere. The public response was very positive and it was a really good way to catch up with some loyal members and talk to non members too about their concerns for the county.

Isabel Mathias

Website & Social Media

www.cpreshopshire.org.uk

The CPRE website has undergone a complete redesign in the last six months and is now more user friendly and colourful with more information.

We have created a monthly calendar of local events that reflects our support for local charities like the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, The Ramblers, Hands off Old Oswestry Hillfort (HOOOH) and others.

Take a look at the site and let us know what you think?

If you're on Facebook check out our new page—search for CPRE Shropshire—and please like our page, add a comment. We will be getting on to Twitter very soon too.

We look forward to hearing from you!

CPRE Shropshire needs volunteers, ideally with an interest in planning, who would be prepared to assess applications. We are in need of help throughout the county, but particularly in the North and in the Shrewsbury area. If you feel able to help or assist, do contact our administrator, Sarah Jameson (details opposite).

Contacts for CPRE Shropshire

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