

SHROPSHIRE VOICE

Annual Report 2015

Campaign to Protect Rural England



Photo: Sarah Jameson

AGM NOTICE

CPRE Shropshire Annual General Meeting



Tuesday 30th June

5.30pm Annual General Meeting (AGM)
6-8pm Speakers and refreshments
at Wilderhope Manor (near Much Wenlock)

*We are delighted to announce our guest speaker will be
Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive of the Campaign to Protect Rural England*

The evening will include a brief talk by Peter Carty, National Trust Property Manager on the work of the Trust on the Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge and a talk by Shaun Spiers, CPRE, on the national perspective.

Wine & canapés in the beautiful setting of Wilderhope

All Members and visitors are welcome, but booking is essential. Please book your place now by ringing Sarah Jameson on 01547 528546 or emailing admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk

Deadline for bookings: Monday 15th June 2015

AGM papers enclosed with this report.

President's report

May I start by saying how much I appreciate being asked to be President of the Shropshire Branch. The aspirations of the CPRE have always been close to my heart. Being involved in farming and managing land in North Shropshire we have always been aware of CPRE's activities and while never directly involved have been full of admiration of the profile and results CPRE has achieved both looking locally and on a national basis doing so with very limited resources.

These achievements have only been made through the unstinting efforts of our volunteers, without whom we would be unable to achieve even a small proportion of what we do. We are, as an organisation, so fortunate to have the breadth of skills and knowledge needed to read the plethora of reports, recommendations and then being able to digest them and produce the reasoned intellectual arguments needed to ensure that the case for the protection of landscapes is secured.

Working in any voluntary organisation is an imprecise art; and we have been extremely fortunate in having Sarah Bury both as our Chairman and President. She has taken on the role of Chairman in such an enthusiastic and positive way, having had a foot in many Shropshire organisations; that experience has helped us to forge many important external links with other likeminded organisations.

Our two vice chairmen have added huge strength to the work of the branch. Judy Crabb's work in the community has done so much in raising CPRE's

profile throughout the county. This coupled with Keith Ridland's flare for organisation and his political contacts has also helped enormously in raising awareness of CPRE.

There is a continuing need for all rural voluntary groups to work closely together. We have forged strong links with organisations such as the Wildlife Trust, The National Trust and the Shropshire Hills AONB, through these informal partnerships we are able to achieve so much more than we would have done in isolation. It does, of course, give an external perspective to what we do and the cross fertilisation of ideas between organisations can never be underestimated.

I very much welcomed the chance to meet a number of Officers and Trustees from the National Office at the launch of 'Creating living space from wasted space' reception at the House of Commons. I was struck again by the depth of knowledge, dedication and commitment of all concerned, both of the Officers of the CPRE and the Volunteers. There is such a strong ethos of commitment to the countryside running throughout the organisation.

May I finish by thanking, once again, everyone involved in our Shropshire Branch. Time is always precious, and by the very nature of volunteering and the sensitive and important nature of what the CPRE is about, our efforts necessarily can be both very frustrating but also most rewarding. Thank you!

Robin Thompson
President, CPRE Shropshire

Chair's report

I am writing this report with two weeks to go before the general election and it is useful to look back on the coalition's policies for the countryside and development in it. The largest step change has been the drafting of NPPF, consequent changes to it largely driven by CPRE and the National Trust and now the implementation of the legislation. Shropshire Council had their core strategy adopted in 2011 but the SAMDev allocation of housing sites has been a painfully slow process which at the time of writing has still not been finalised.

NPPF

The effect of NPPF and the high numbers of houses which have to be built between now and 2026 has produced a frenzy from developers. Sites have been put forward which are not within the site allocation agreed between local communities and the Council. In some cases these have been outside village boundaries and if built will have a detrimental effect on the landscape and the character of the countryside.

Renewables

Renewable energy schemes have also been a major part of the planning applications on which the district representatives have spent a great deal of time. CPRE is very aware of the need for renewable energy but not at the cost of the landscape. Our members have supported local groups opposing wind turbines and solar farms

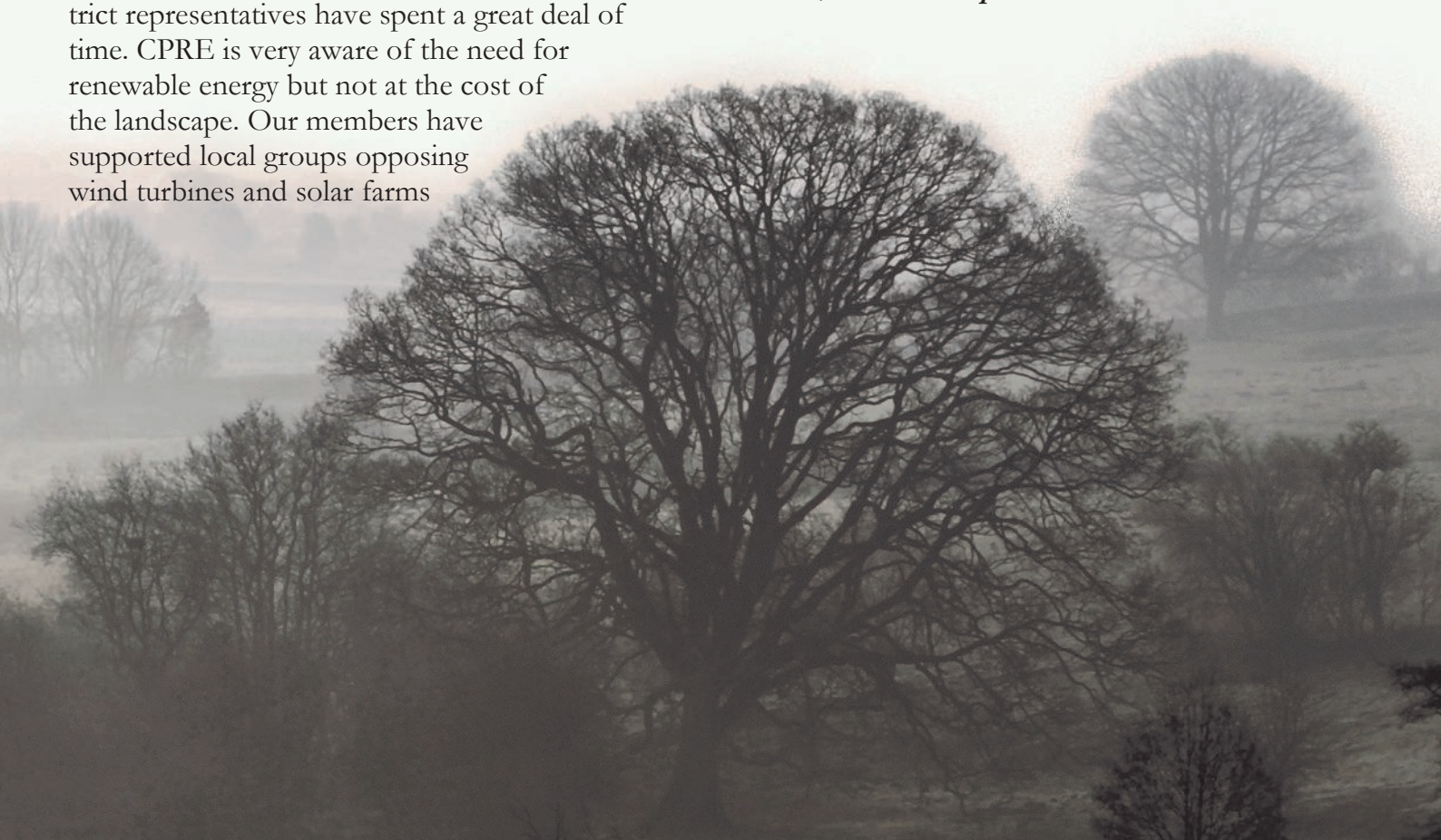
which will be prominent in the landscape. We have supported solar farms on brownfield sites and areas which are not prominent and do not take up valuable agricultural land.

Our volunteers

The last few years have been very busy: District volunteers give advice to action groups, parish councils and individuals as well as responding in detail to planning applications. They do a wonderful job and devote a huge amount of time and emotional energy to their job and we are most grateful to them. We have new representatives in Oswestry, Charles and Sally Green and John Woolmer in South Shropshire. We do need representatives in North Shropshire and in Telford and Wrekin.

Finally I would like to draw attention to our work in the community led by our vice-chairman Judy Crabb. This is being aimed at giving CPRE Shropshire a more positive and inclusive face; Judy has worked with schools and parish councils and with funding from the Big Lottery Awards for All organised the Big Draw (see next page). Judy is also working with John Woolmer on the litter campaign.

Sarah Bury
Chair, CPRE Shropshire



CPRE Shropshire's Big Draw

In a completely new departure for CPRE Shropshire, and backed by Lottery funding, we took part in the nationwide Big Draw campaign in October and November 2014.

At four venues across Shropshire, we welcomed over 400 people of all ages who took part in our four Big Draw events. The Big Draw initiative takes place every autumn to encourage people to draw—and also use drawing and collage etc to help people see, think, invent and take action.

The Big Draw theme this time around was 'It's Our World, a celebration of the environment and sustainability,' - quite perfect for the aims and work of CPRE Shropshire.

So, with funding from the Big Lottery 'Awards 4 All, free all-day events were organised around the county: at Apley Farm near Shifnal, Acton Scott, Church Stretton, The Wildlife Trust HQ, Shrewsbury and Fordhall Farm, Market Drayton.

Our lead artist was Angela Martin from Clun (instigator of Art Allotments) who came up with an ingenious way of creating large scale artworks through everyone working on individual square 'tiles' of collage. Participants were given a sealed envelope of collage papers (newspaper cuttings/tissue paper/cut outs from magazines, bits of twine and wrapping paper, etc), a square of coloured card and a glue stick—and they created individual pictures from the contents of their envelopes, along with pens/paints etc. We discovered that collage is a great medium for novice and more advance artists alike and can be strangely addictive!

The serious side to this project was to share with people of all ages through art what is important to them about their local countryside. The events also helped raise our profile amongst the general public—something we have to keep working on hard! We were surprised and overwhelmed at the response and the creative skills of participants (many of whom had not drawn for years or tried collage at all), who all said how much the local landscape means to them.

After the four Big Draws were over, we came home with four large bags of collage 'squares'. We wanted to make something lasting from the project, so using Clun based graphic designer, Elliott Stallion, we set about creating four square printed canvases and a new roller banner for the branch, using the artwork created.

On Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th April, the four brand new canvases and banner were put on display in a pop up retail unit in the Darwin Shopping Centre in Shrewsbury, where shoppers popped in during the day to browse the artwork, the CPRE publicity on display and to try their hand at more collage!

Each of the four venues that took part will be given a copy of their Big Picture to display on site and CPRE will be using the artwork in future publications.

We hope that the events have raised awareness of the special landscape of Shropshire and the work that CPRE Shropshire is doing to try and protect it.

With particular thanks to Judy Crabb, our Vice Chair, for successfully completing the Lottery application and for driving the project through from start to finish.



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Photos (top right): Elliott Stallion; others: Sarah Jameson

Annual District Reports

North Shropshire

Like the rest of the county, North Shropshire has had its fair share of challenging and contentious applications for inappropriately sited housing, wind turbines and solar farms in the last twelve months. Such applications have always been very carefully considered and formal objections have been submitted whenever plans would adversely affect our landscape and/or communities. Dart Energy's application to carry out Coal Bed Methane drilling at Dudleston and National Grid's proposed pylon line from Cefn Coch in Powys to Lower Frankton in North Shropshire are matters of particular ongoing concern.

Your help is needed!

CPRE Shropshire urgently needs volunteer members, ideally with a planning background, who would be prepared to assess applications in the north of the county and proactively contribute to our work. Anyone who feel that they may be able to assist in this respect is requested, in the first instance, to contact CPRE Shropshire's administrator, Sarah Jameson, on 01547 528546 e-mail admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk.

Keith Ridland

Oswestry

We were greatly diminished by the sad death just before Christmas of Mike Bullen, our chairman for many years. His obituary is on the back page. Charles and Sally Green took over from Mike and Hilary last October as joint chair/secretary. We have about 50 local members but always need more who are active.

The routine job of the District remains keeping an eye on the weekly lists of Shropshire Council planning applications (in conjunction with the local Civic Society) and objecting to any we consider to involve bad planning. Sometimes that entails just the one letter, sometimes it leads to campaigns that go on for years.

Old Oswestry

One such long running campaign involves Old Oswestry Hillfort and the battle to protect its setting from the inappropriate housing estate still included by Shropshire Council within SAMDev. We have supported the Hands Off Old Oswestry Hillfort campaigners, who have enlisted nationally important archaeologists to their cause.

National Grid

Another ongoing and long-running campaign is that opposing National Grid's proposed pylon line across north Shropshire.

This has involved taking part in the year-long mid Wales Windfarms Conjoined Public Inquiry, working as part of the "Alliance" of 22 campaign groups and liaising with Shropshire Council. The result of the windfarm inquiry has been delayed until after the election, and National Grid has announced that it will not be making any planning application before the 2nd or 3rd quarters of 2016.

Cross Keys, Kinnerley

We continue to campaign to protect threatened heritage properties, most notably the Cross Keys Inn in Kinnerley, and the Gatehouse on Shrewsbury Road in Oswestry. Shropshire Council have approved Aldi's plans to bulldoze the Gatehouse, but we intend to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If a planning application is turned down, the applicant can appeal, but if it is approved there is little redress for objectors.

In this climate where Shropshire Council felt vulnerable because SAMDev is not yet formally approved, and developers think it's open season, there are also battles going on against inappropriate housing plans in numerous local villages. Fortunately Planning Inspectors largely agree that development outside the 'plan' is not 'sustainable' and are refusing appeals by the developers. Because of the strains Shropshire Council is under from the austerity cuts a vital part of our role is to try to make sure the planners are doing their job properly, and that their delegated powers are not over-used and are supported by adequate officer reports that can be available at least to Parish Councils where they have objected. In other words, to try to give some teeth to Localism!
Charles and Sally Green

Telford & Wrekin

We are receiving an increasing number of requests for support from both members of the public and Parish Councils. Unfortunately we are finding it very difficult to respond as we do not have a local group in the 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! Please contact Sarah Jameson on 01547 528546 e-mail admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk.

Shrewsbury & Atcham

During the year Judy Crabb agreed to take over the position of chairman for the group, Roger will continue as minutes secretary and Rosemary will continue as administrator. Both Selby and Roger agreed to continue informal vetting of new planning applications, objecting where deemed necessary and supporting where possible. We continued on the basis of 3 meetings a year and once again during the year were well supported by visitors.

Planning Minister meeting

As a result of Shropshire's inability to demonstrate an available 5 year land supply developers and land owners flooded the Council with planning applications, many of them conflicting with local plans. CPRE wrote to Keith Barrow, leader of the Council pointing out how government policy was overriding the efforts of local planning to build the right type of houses in appropriate numbers in suitable locations. Possibly as a result of this letter and representations from other bodies, a delegation of Council officers and local MPs for the Marches area met with Nick Bowles the planning minister in London to discuss the matter. Over more recent months there seems to be a slight impression that planning applications are being scrutinised a little more carefully both at local Council level and also by Government inspectors on appeal.

SAMDev

CPRE made three representations to the Inspector at the SAMDev public inquiry. This was not a particularly rewarding exercise and despite the passage of some 5 months the Inspector has still not issued her final report.

There is still no final decision as to whether any of the 5 Welsh wind farms will be granted permission to proceed.

Roger Carlyle

South Shropshire

A busy and eventful year. Too many speculative planning applications are being submitted and passed by planning officers that typically involve substantial market value new houses on greenfield land – often in good agricultural fields on settlement edges. Little or no affordable housing is included - yet this is perhaps the real rural need, along with SAMDev approval and an acknowledged five year supply of housing land.

Solar Farms

Another worry has been the rush of speculative solar 'farm' applications – again on agricultural land and mostly in or near the SHAONB. Fortunately the Councillors on the South Planning Committee have decided to support and protect beautiful countryside and five of these greedy applications have been rejected – as have other major applications that threatened parts of the Wenlock Edge and Ludlow. Planning officers seem to be over-worked, inexperienced and demoralised; Shropshire Council is cash-strapped and fears the costs of planning appeals; localism seems not to count in planning matters; while CPRE seems almost alone in trying to help residents in small villages and hamlets fight the rash of inappropriate applications before tariffs end. I have objected to 28 planning applications in fourteen months.

Other battles

Current battles include opposing plans to build 80 large houses and 14 equally large holiday 'chalets' close to Caer Caradoc on prime farmland, and an attempt by CPRE South Shropshire to put some backbone into dog-fouling and litter laws. We put on a public meeting (attended by over 200 residents) in Church Stretton about the former, and are now in partnership with Shropshire Council and Church Stretton Town Council to produce a Model Action Plan to reduce the anti-social crimes of the latter.

Could you help us in the South?

Should any CPRE member living in South Shropshire be interested in helping to form a new Committee and helping the Group in *any* way, please contact me on 01694 751245.

John Woolmer

Bridgnorth

We cover a large area, diverse, but with lovely landscapes and historical buildings which we all try to protect.

The Committee has been deeply involved in rural issues and planning applications of various kinds that created consternation, controversy and strong opposition from local people and different organisations. There is proliferation of wind turbine applications, some solar farm proposals which were over-large and unsightly on the rural landscape. The Committee accept that there is no objection in principle to solar farms providing they are the right size and in the right place.

There have been housing developments proposed which were in locations quite unsuitable for various reasons, not least inadequate infrastructure or in the Green Belt; developments proposed in the countryside without sufficient thought given to use of brownfield sites instead of Green Belt; problems with developers taking unfair advantage of the new NPPF, especially over the five year land rule.

The threat of disease to trees in Shropshire was highlighted by a train trip into Wales when dying or dead trees of various species were observed. The larch in Shropshire appears at special risk causing us to contact the Severn Tree Trust. The pest disease comes from imported trees and wood chippings.

We look forward to another year caring for and trying to protect the countryside.

Stella Voysey

Obituaries

Mike Bullen

Mike Bullen, who died just before Christmas, was chairman of the Oswestry District for a decade, but his wisdom, energy and outlook were a mainstay of the area for years and he will be irreplaceable.

Mike and his wife Hilary were the District's heart, writing the letters, organising the meetings and fundraising garden evenings and liaising with other likeminded local groups. As a parish councillor for Kinnerley his planning knowledge was used for their 2005 Parish Plan, 2006 Kinnerley Design Statement and Landscape Character Assessment (a document that is universally praised and which to this day remains the only one of its kind in Shropshire) and 2012 Kinnerley Parish Neighbourhood Plan. This and his CPRE work gave him very high regard amongst Shropshire Council's planners. The legacy of the KPNP is now being tested in earnest, along with SAMDev.

Mike was also well-known for his great gardening and botanical knowledge, stemming from a working life in tropical agriculture, mainly abroad, and as a plantsman in this country. The annual plant sale run by him and Hilary at their home raised many thousands for charity and added so richly to the life of the community.

Mike's style was quietly thoughtful and incisive although he didn't suffer fools gladly. He taught many people so much about where we live, and how to identify and hopefully protect what is best in our area. CPRE and the wider community is far poorer without him and our thoughts and good wishes go out to Hilary. (Charles Green)

David Gwilliams

We were shocked and extremely saddened to learn of the sudden death of David Gwilliams in December 2014. David had been our very able and efficient Treasurer for only a few months since his election to the post at our AGM last May.

Our thoughts are very much with his wife and family at this difficult time.

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Telford & Wrekin (Vacant)

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