

CPRE Annual Review

Gloucestershire

Campaign to Protect Rural England

2014

www.cpreglos.org.uk



Chairman's Statement

THIS IS the fourth year that I have had the honour to introduce the Branch Annual Review.

We always thought that 2014 might be a difficult year because of the lack of up to date Local Plans in five of our District Council areas. Unfortunately we were right. Developers throughout the County have argued that the presumption in favour of development applies to their site virtually wherever it lies in the countryside. A host of

appeals have been lost and some of our market towns and villages are now in real danger of being overwhelmed by new development.

We are a campaigning organisation, so nationally and locally we have sought to persuade the Government of the adverse and unnecessary consequences of its current approach to planning policy. As a result, we have been involved in a number of meetings with Ministers and opposition politicians and have contributed to all the

campaigns being led by our National Office.

At the same time, we have found new ways to raise our profile with the press and media. We have continued our successful Awards Scheme, funded a post in the National Office to work on new housing policies, and commented on emerging Local Plans and on major or controversial planning applications.

None of this would have been possible without the expertise, commitment and time given by a small group of volunteers



acting on your behalf. I am immensely grateful for their continued support and trust you all appreciate their endeavours.

Charlie Watson
Chairman

Gloucestershire - an iconic landscape.



INTRODUCTION

THIS ANNUAL Review, the latest in a sequence going back to our founding in 1928, highlights our major activities during the reporting year 2014.

The year has been dominated by our efforts in:

- Influencing the preparation of Local Plans
- Scrutinising contentious planning applications and responding accordingly
- Raising the profile of the Branch
- Implementing a members' recruitment and retention strategy devised in the previous year.

Particular issues and concerns, highlighted in the campaigns section of this report, have been:

- Difficulties in achieving a five-year housing land supply
- The Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy
- Getting brownfield land redeveloped
- The scale and location of solar farms
- Long standing proposals for a Forest of Dean AONB.

BRANCH ORGANISATION

THE BRANCH Executive Committee is responsible for managing the affairs of the Branch and administering its funds and assets. It met four times during the year. Its officers have remained unchanged - Charlie Watson, Chairman; Richard Lloyd and David Brooke, Vice Chairmen; David Bayne, Secretary; Andrew Ellis, Treasurer; and Elizabeth Bourne, Membership Secretary.

The Executive Committee also benefits from the membership of our District Chairmen, elected and co-opted members, and representatives of kindred organisations.

A Management Sub-Committee

and a Policy Sub-Committee, both of which met quarterly, advise the Executive Committee; and a separate group administers the CPRE Gloucestershire Awards.

A major task during the year has been a thorough review of our Branch Constitution which was last updated in 1993. The revised Constitution was endorsed by the national CPRE Trustees as the year ended and it will be recommended for approval at our next Annual General Meeting.

Lisa Belfield has continued as the Office Manager and Planning Advisor

in our small office located in the heart of Gloucester. During the year we were sorry to say farewell to Marilyn McKechnie, our long standing Branch Administrator. In turn we were pleased to welcome Vanessa Paterson to the position. At the year-end we appointed Rachel Reeves as our Campaigns Manager and look forward to working with her in this new post.

Our CPRE Districts, as ever, have shouldered the burden of our local campaigning, particularly our planning casework. Our thanks go to our District Chairmen and their committees – Prue Vernon, Berkeley Vale; Tom Hancock, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury; Mike Mackey, Forest of Dean; Peter Loveday, North Cotswolds; Nick Dummett, South Cotswolds; Geof Murray and later those who have represented the Stroud District on a 'rota' basis; and Geraldine Shepherd and later Giles Preston in Tetbury.

Our AGM for 2014 was held in April at Berkeley Castle. We welcomed Dame Janet Trotter as our new County President, taking over from Lord Vestey who had held the position since 1986. A large audience heard an inspirational address from Sir Andrew Motion, former Poet Laureate and national President of CPRE.

In furthering the work of the Branch the Trustees of CPRE Gloucestershire have been guided by the published advice of the Charity Commission.

Charlie Watson, Dame Janet Trotter, Sir Andrew Motion and Lord Vestey at the AGM in April.



CAMPAIGNING ISSUES

ON THIS and the following page we record our main campaigning issues for 2014. Equally important though is our day to day work in scrutinising the many more smaller planning applications. Individually and cumulatively they all have an impact on Gloucestershire's countryside

Five year housing land supply

A KEY feature of the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) is its requirement that planning authorities must identify and update annually a supply of deliverable housing sites, sufficient to provide five years' supply. Where they cannot do so planning permission will usually be granted or upheld at an appeal unless the adverse effects would be overwhelming.

This policy is having serious implications throughout Gloucestershire, where villages and town edges continue to be targeted for speculative development. We have opposed a steady stream of planning applications where we were concerned that the development would be harmful to our interests. Almost all have been lost at appeal, even where Local Plans are in place.



The Slad Valley – Laurie Lee's countryside under threat from housing development.

Rob Colley

The Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy



The southern edge of Cheltenham at Leckhampton allocated for substantial housing

Mary Nelson

AT THE year end, the Core Strategy was submitted for independent examination. While we find the general policy direction of the strategy acceptable with its focus on urban containment rather than a dispersed pattern of growth, we remain concerned that the plan is fundamentally unsound in a number of important respects:

- There are serious questions about its deliverability, particularly of essential infrastructure
- Its economic growth projections are unrealistic leading to excessive housing numbers
- A number of the proposed land releases would impact on the fundamental purpose of the Green Belt to maintain the separation between Gloucester and Cheltenham
- Policies do not phase development to ensure first use of vacant sites and derelict land.

Getting brownfield land redeveloped

WE WERE pleased to support the national CPRE campaign highlighting the extent of derelict land and its potential to provide a major contribution to meeting housing needs. The campaign – #Waste of Space – has encouraged people to photograph and record unused land in their locality. Nationally, a report for CPRE by the University of the West of England shows that local authorities have already identified the capacity for at least 1 million new homes on suitable brownfield land in England. The national campaign chimes well with our own efforts to promote brownfield first policies in the Local Plans of our area.



'Brownfield land first' should be the basis of all Gloucestershire's Local Plans.

Richard Lloyd

Solar panels are much better located on agricultural and commercial roofs rather than in mass arrays.

Solar Arrays

GENEROUS GUARANTEED payments for energy from solar arrays have led to a steady stream of planning applications across the County for solar farms, some of considerable size. We were pleased when the government announced that guaranteed subsidies would cease and solar farm developers would need to compete for finance with other sources of renewable energy. The renewable obligation for new solar photo-voltaic capacity above 5MW is due to end in April 2015 and this has resulted in a rush to get schemes approved. We have considered each case on its merits, assessing issues of scale, visual impact and land quality.

Forest of Dean Proposed AONB



The Forest of Dean – a future AONB?

CALLS FOR special measures to conserve and enhance the landscape of the Forest of Dean go back to 1929 - just after the founding of CPRE Gloucestershire itself! We have stepped up this long-running campaign in recent years and 2014 has, we hope, brought us closer to our goal of

AONB designation.

Alongside Friends of the Forest and other local organisations we have persisted in our lobbying, which has included useful discussions with senior officials of Natural England (the body responsible for designating AONBs) and

at ministerial level too. Our lobbying has been greatly aided by our eight-page illustrated brochure that sets out the case for designation and proposes boundaries for any future AONB. We hope to see the success of our efforts in early 2015.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

WORKING WITH other groups and individuals is an important part of our campaigning philosophy. We benefit immensely from the input of the kindred organisations represented on our Executive Committee and we have wider contacts through specific initiatives. Examples include:

- A partnership with the University of Gloucestershire, where we have established a joint research programme designed to increase understanding of the lower Severn Vale. A growing GIS will in time provide sound evidence to underpin our campaigning in this part of Gloucestershire

- Membership of a group of environmental organisations working towards a Vision

for the tidal Severn Estuary. This will define an approach to sustainable development which will retain and enhance the unique environment of this special area. The work had been prompted by proposals for renewable energy including barrages and tidal lagoons

- Membership of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP), bringing together voluntary sector and statutory bodies. The LNP mission is to improve the prospects for Gloucestershire's natural environment while demonstrating its vital role in our health and well-being, its significant contribution to a thriving economy and to a better quality of life for all

- A series of farm visits for CPRE members organised by Gloucestershire NFU. The

visits provided a valuable understanding of the challenges facing farmers and their role in conserving the environment

- Sponsorship of an event at the Cheltenham Festival of Poetry in March. An enthusiastic audience met in the Oxfam Bookshop to hear Paul Kingsnorth read his poetry on an environmental theme.

We have good internal links with CPRE National Office in London and with CPRE SW, for example:

- Charlie Watson is Vice-Chairman of the County Branch Forum and has helped prepare the Partnership Agreement between CPRE national and branch charities. Additionally, he has been


involved in National Office meetings with Ministers and Opposition spokespersons to discuss our concerns over current planning policy

- Richard Lloyd is a member of the National Policy Committee.

- We are part-funding a research post in the National Office dealing with housing policy.

- David Brooke contributed to the 2014 CPRE national conference focussing on our work with the University of Gloucestershire.

- Charlie Watson is our formal representative at meetings of CPRE SW, while Richard Lloyd chairs the Rural Economy Topic Group and Bob Brown the Topic Group on Minerals.



The lower Severn Vale – study area for the joint research programme with the University of Gloucestershire.

OUR AWARDS



1. Applewood, Cashes Green

An exemplary housing scheme on a brownfield site with imaginative landscaping



4. Hartpury Village Hall and Play Area

A splendid new multi-purpose village hall with spacious facilities



2. Capel's Mill Canal Realignment, Stroud

Reinstatement of a further section of the canal through part of a waste tip

WE LAUNCHED our CPRE Awards Scheme in 2007 and since then some 38 projects have been recognised by one of our Awards for the outstanding benefits they have brought to Gloucestershire's environment, people and local communities.

In 2014 six CPRE Gloucestershire Awards were made:



5. Laurie Lee Wildlife Way

A circular waymarked route in the Slad Valley with poetry posts celebrating the life and work of Laurie Lee



3. The Gillyflower, Elmore Court

An events venue constructed mainly with local materials including rammed earth walls for sound proofing and energy efficiency



6. The Westonbirt Project

A stunning new building to welcome visitors and a relocated car park, enabling the restoration of historic parkland.

GETTING OUR MESSAGE ACROSS

COMMUNICATIONS ARE at the heart of what we do. We continue to enjoy the able assistance of Nicky Godding Communications in our links with the media through press releases, journal articles and in arranging interviews on the radio and television. This activity has increased our profile but we are conscious of the need to do more. At the end of the reporting year we appointed Rachel Reeves to a new part time post of Campaigns Manager. The Campaigns Manager will allow us to expand our promotional efforts and to get our messages across even more effectively.

We continue to publish our Newsletter Gloucestershire

Views in spring and autumn. All members receive a copy and the Newsletter has a wider role as an important part of our communications. It is distributed widely across the County and can also be downloaded from our website. We again thank David Bayne as our Newsletter editor and those who have contributed articles. CPRE Stroud District published its Stroud Update for local members and friends.

Our Branch website - www.cpreglos.org.uk - continues to evolve and flourish, acting as a first point of reference for our work. Over the year we have seen an encouraging increase in the number of hits and downloads.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

OUR MEMBERSHIP includes individuals, families, Parish and Town Councils and other kindred organisations. In 2014 we welcomed some 104 new members to the Branch, a number that was unfortunately more than matched by those leaving us. In December 2014 our membership stood at 1438, which represents a small net loss of seven members over the year.

Our ability to attract new members is in major part due to the creation, in 2012, of a Branch Recruitment and Retention Strategy that has been taken forward each year by our CPRE Districts. Central to this has been a programme of visits, to which all are welcome. The visits, designed to be informative as well as providing a social occasion, included days or half days at Kelmscott Manor, The Jet Age Museum,

Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings and the Cotswolds Woollen Weavers' Museum.

Some of our District Committees took stalls at their local country shows in the summer and autumn months to promote the work of CPRE and to attract new members. Our recruitment has certainly benefitted from this approach and we will repeat it in the future.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CPRE Gloucestershire Branch

Summarised Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2014

	2014	2013
Income		
Branch Share of National Subscriptions	19746	16715
Interest and Investment Income	9465	9338
Legacies		75813
Other Income		152
	<u>29211</u>	<u>102018</u>
Expenditure		
Administration Expenses	16605	13897
Postages, Telephone, Printing etc	3693	3933
Rent and Service Charges	3467	3467
Annual Report/ AGM	2720	1848
Newsletters	2723	2470
Miscellaneous	976	969
Award Scheme	1401	577
Contribution to Head Office	26250	
Other Expenses	10567	68402
	<u>4827</u>	<u>31988</u>
Deficit/Surplus for the Year	-39191	70030
Gain on Investments	12195	20343
Transfer to Fighting Fund		-80000
General Fund, brought forward	367803	357430
General Fund, carried forward	<u>340807</u>	<u>367803</u>
Balance Sheet as at 31st. December, 2014		
Assets		
Debtors	5521	5466
Bank Accounts	192481	222409
Investments	254456	242261
	<u>452458</u>	<u>470136</u>
less Current Liabilities	<u>11651</u>	<u>2333</u>
	<u>440807</u>	<u>467803</u>
Financed by		
General Fund	340807	367803
Fighting Fund	<u>100000</u>	<u>100000</u>
	<u>440807</u>	<u>467803</u>

Copies of the full independently examined accounts will be available at the AGM

Treasurer's Report

OUR SHARE of the national subscriptions increased by £3,000 and our interest and investment income was virtually the same as in 2013. However, as anticipated, our office running expenses increased by about £4,000 resulting in a deficit of £2,000 approximately (compared to £1,000 last year). Our reserves are partly being used to support a head office employee and 'other expenses' which include grants to local organisations and planning and consultancy fees. The value of our investments continues to grow but at a slower rate than in previous years.

Andrew Ellis



Gloucestershire
Campaign to Protect Rural England

CPRE GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH TRUSTEES

The Trustees of the Branch are the Branch Officers, Elected Members of the Executive Committee and CPRE District Chairmen. CPRE Stroud District currently has a rota of short-term chairmen and thus de facto were not represented by a Trustee in the latter part of the year.

Mr Charlie Watson
Chairman

Mr David Bayne

Mrs Elizabeth Bourne

Mr David Brooke

Mr Nick Dummett

Mr Andrew Ellis

Major Tom Hancock

Mr Nick Holliday

Mrs Ros Lane

Mr Richard Lloyd
Mr Peter Loveday

Mr Mike Mackey

Mr Geof Murray

(to May 2014)

Mr Giles Preston

(from July 2014)

Mrs Geraldine Shepherd

(to July 2014)

Mrs Prue Vernon

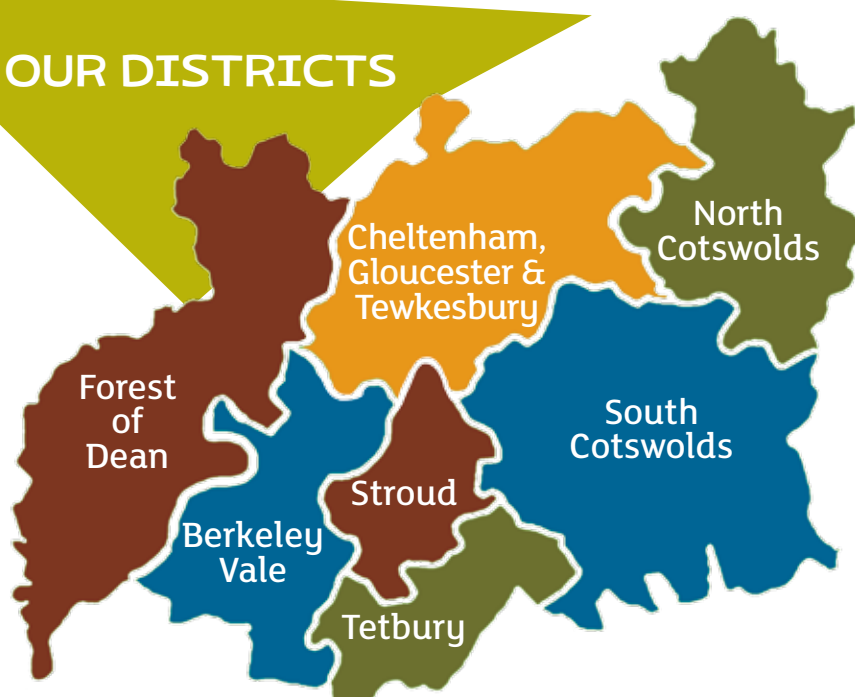
THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE Branch of CPRE promotes and encourages, for the benefit of the public, the improvement and protection of the Gloucestershire countryside and its towns and villages, and the better development of the rural environment. It acts upon any matters affecting the planning, improvement and protection of the countryside and landscape.

www.cpreglos.org.uk

**CPRE Gloucestershire
Community House
15 College Green
Gloucester
GL1 2LZ**

Charity number: 248577

OUR DISTRICTS



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