



Annual Review Gloucestershire Campaign to Protect Rural England

2015

www.cpreglos.org.uk



Chairman's Statement

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

Looking back, I think that it has been the busiest year yet. There has hardly been a day when I have not received an email either for information or action sent by a Branch or District volunteer. Their volume clearly shows how much these volunteers are doing on your behalf to protect our countryside.

Much of their work has focused upon contributions to the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury together with Local Plans for Stroud and the Cotswolds. These important Plans will set

the pattern for development over the next decade or longer.

Our input, as ever, has sought to minimise the impact of essential development and to protect the most valuable countryside areas. This has been no easy task as legions of developers, assisted by very significant Government changes to its planning policy, have lined up to argue for development of both Green Belt and open countryside sites. Undoubtedly, once adopted, these Plans will lead to the loss of large swathes of countryside.

More positively, however, in the short term we have seen some notable successes in recommending District Councils to refuse a number of

speculative and inappropriate applications. At the same time, we have forged closer working relations with other local environmental organisations, Parish and Town Councils and again have directly supported the campaigns being led by our National Office.

This coming year we are going to celebrate the 90th birthday of CPRE. What a remarkable achievement and how fortunate we are that our founding fathers had such foresight. Their original objectives remain equally pertinent today.

Over time our charity has consistently punched above its weight in influencing both national and local policy to



Nicky Godding

protect and enhance our countryside. The creation of National Parks, special protection areas like AONBs and the Green Belt all stemmed from CPRE advocacy.

With your continued support and the support of those that follow, I trust the next 90 years will be as productive.

Charlie Watson
Chairman



Cotswolds edge near Prinknash

Rob Colley

INTRODUCTION

THIS ANNUAL Review follows the same pattern as those of the previous two years and highlights CPRE Gloucestershire's major activities during the 2015 calendar year. The year has been dominated by the following areas of activity and achievement:

- Influencing the preparation of Local Plans. In particular, much of the year has been taken up with participation in the Examination of the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy.
- Scrutinising contentious planning applications and responding accordingly. As last year, we have needed to counter both applications for damagingly-sited solar farms and speculative housing projects where the local authorities cannot demonstrate a five year supply of available sites.
- Raising the profile of the Branch and taking forward our recruitment and retention strategy, which is now in the process of review.
- Improving governance of the Branch with the adoption of a new Constitution.
- Working with and supporting others, notably the Cotswold Water Park Trust, the Cotswold Canals Trust, the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils and the University of Gloucestershire, towards protecting the rural environment.
- Supporting the work of CPRE regionally and nationally.

BRANCH ORGANISATION

MANAGING THE affairs of the Branch and administering its funds and assets is the responsibility of the Branch Executive Committee, which met three times during the year.

During the year we were sorry to lose the services of our long serving Honorary Treasurer Andrew Ellis who retired at the AGM. We welcome our new Treasurer, Julian Oxley. Otherwise our officers have remained unchanged – Charlie Watson, Chairman; Richard Lloyd and David Brooke, Vice Chairmen; David Bayne, Secretary; 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.

The Executive is advised by a Management Sub-Committee and a Policy Sub-Committee, both of which met regularly. A separate Group, including independent judges, administers the CPRE Gloucestershire Awards.

We continue to maintain a small office in the heart of Gloucester with Lisa Belfield as our Office

Manager and Planning Advisor, who is ably supported by Vanessa Paterson as Branch Administrator. Rachel Reeves continues as our Campaigns Manager.

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; a rotating chairman for Stroud District; and Jeremy Lodwick in Tetbury.

We held our 2015 AGM at the Gillyflower, the stunning events venue at Elmore Court which had received one of our CPRE Awards the previous year. The AGM was chaired by our County President, Dame Janet Trotter. The speaker this year was Sir Simon Jenkins former Chairman of the National Trust. His thoughts were well received by an enthusiastic audience.

Last year we reported on a thorough review of our Branch Constitution which was last updated in 1993. It was duly approved at the Branch AGM and has now been endorsed by the Charity Commission.

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



Simon Jenkins addresses the 2015 AGM

CAMPAIGNING ISSUES

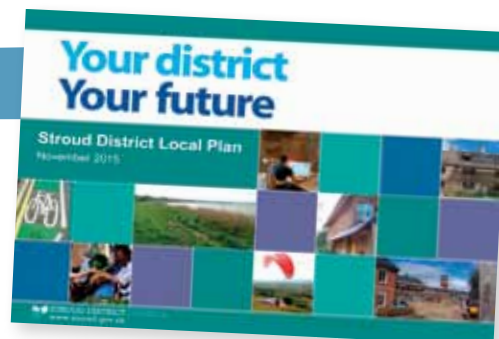
IN THIS section we report on our main campaigning issues in 2015.

Local Plans

CPRE SUPPORTS a plan-led planning system. In Gloucestershire, we remain concerned at the slow process of producing the new style Local Plans. While the Core Strategy for the Forest of Dean was adopted in 2012 it is now subject to review to ensure compliance with current national government policy. We were relieved when the Stroud Local Plan was finally adopted at the end of 2015 which we hope will reduce the number of speculative planning applications in the area. Work on the Cotswold Local Plan has reached the stage of consultation on the policies to be included in the plan; in our response we emphasised the need for stronger policies to protect villages from unsustainable development while at the same time encouraging the provision of much needed affordable housing. The Joint Core Strategy for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury is at last at

independent examination, having taken no less than eight years to get this far – see below.

We have committed considerable Branch and District resources to responding to consultations as plans are progressed. Getting these plans right is of fundamental importance to the future of Gloucestershire's countryside. We are also encouraging communities to produce Neighbourhood Plans but do not have the resources to engage with individual plans.



The Joint Core Strategy for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury



Part of the site of the proposed Urban Extension at Leckhampton

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION of the Core Strategy got underway in May 2015. We have had an opportunity to input views to the Inspector and to take part in examination hearings. We concentrated our efforts on the sessions dealing with housing need, employment and employment land, the spatial strategy and strategic land allocations, and Green Belt issues. The general policy direction, focusing growth around Gloucester and Cheltenham rather than a dispersed pattern of growth, has wide support but a number of areas of concern remain, notably:

- Unrealistically high economic growth forecasts;
- Proposals to remove land from the Green Belt which would impact on its primary purpose of maintaining the separation of Gloucester and Cheltenham;
- The lack of policies for phasing development to ensure first use of vacant sites and derelict land.

The Examination process looks certain to extend well into 2016.

Planning Casework

SCRUTINISING PLANNING applications and making representations where development would be particularly harmful is an essential part of our day to day work. All our Districts are involved. This year has been exceptionally busy both with applications and appeals. Many of the cases involve housing proposals. Increasingly, developers are pursuing speculative projects where the local authorities cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing sites, or where the Local Plan has yet to be approved. Our main concerns are typically sustainability of the location and impact on the landscape. These issues are important everywhere and particularly in our AONBs. In this work we are admirably supported by our planning consultant David Crofts.



View across Baxters Field – still under threat in Stroud District



Solar Arrays

Site of proposed solar array at Awre

Bob Brown

DURING THE year there was a steady stream of planning applications for solar farms. Our policy is to judge each case on its merits, noting their scale, their impact on the landscape and loss of valuable agricultural land. We opposed a number of proposed solar farms including an application at Awre, subsequently

refused, for what would have been one of the largest schemes in England. Changes in the subsidy regime for solar energy coming into effect in 2016 should reduce the number of future cases coming forward.

Government policy, which CPRE endorses, is to encourage greater use of

roofs for solar power installations, but the installations need to be well designed aesthetically. The Branch has persuaded national CPRE to commission guidance on the visual aspects of roof-mounted installations. The Branch is funding this work and is represented on the Steering Group.

Membership Matters

DURING THE year we welcomed 82 new members to the Branch. However, that number was more than matched by 120 members who left us. This gave us a total membership at the end of 2015 of 1,400, a decline of just under 3%. Our membership includes individuals, families, Parish and Town Councils and other kindred organisations.

We are keen to strengthen our links with Parish and Town Councils. To this end we introduced a new category of Associate Membership for all parish and town councils who are not full CPRE members. A particular benefit will be closer working at local level on planning matters.

CPRE Gloucestershire has a Membership Recruitment and Retention Strategy. It was developed in 2012 in response to concerns that, like most other CPRE Branches, our membership was slowly declining year on year. The Strategy, while initially stemming this decline and growing numbers in its first year, has proved less effective than we had hoped. Accordingly, working with CPRE National Office we have started a process of review. The Branch is not alone in having to address declining membership: in 2015 only three CPRE branches grew their membership.



The CPRE stall at the Stroud Show (with new marquee)

Martin Dering

We continue to provide a programme of visits for our members to which guests are also welcome. The visits are designed to be informative as well as to provide a social occasion. In 2015 these included trips to Bletchley Park, Stroud Brewery and the Cotswold Woollen Weavers at Filkins. In addition, some of our District Committees took stalls at their local country shows in the summer and autumn months to promote the work of CPRE.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

WE ARE working with other groups. This is an important part of our campaigning philosophy – and we would like to work with more. We already benefit from the input of the kindred organisations represented on our Executive Committee; and we have good contacts with other bodies through specific initiatives, including:

- Working with other groups to oppose the creation of a new settlement of 2000 houses at Cotswold Airport near Kemble. An amendment to the draft Cotswold Local Plan now has a specific policy to ensure the airfield remains as an airfield.

- Membership of a group of environmental organisations working towards a Vision for the tidal Severn Estuary. The Vision, which we are part-funding, is aimed at retaining and enhancing the unique environment of this special area. The work is substantially complete.

- A joint planning training day organised jointly with the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils. This proved a great success with a capacity attendance.

- A joint study with the Cotswold Water Park Trust into delivering the aspirations of the Cotswold Water

Park Master Plan, where a consultant's report is now complete. The study has achieved two important outcomes already: it has provided the Trust with a clear set of strategic priorities; and it has provided the evidence to press for significant alterations to the policy for the Water Park in the emerging Local Plan

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

- Membership of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP), bringing together voluntary sector and statutory bodies to inform strategic environmental priorities in the county.

- Sponsorship of an event at the Cheltenham Festival of Poetry in May. An enthusiastic audience met in the Everyman Studio Theatre to hear environmental poets Sean O'Brien and Michael McKimm. We also sponsored a book of poems titled *My World*, with a foreword by our national president Sir Andrew Motion and which was launched at the festival.



David Hall

Cotswold Water Park – Neighbridge

- Support for the Cotswold Canals Trust's bid for a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore the section of the Stroudwater Canal from Stonehouse to Saul Junction.

- Continuing, with other groups and organisations, our campaign to secure AONB designation for the Forest of Dean. We welcomed reaffirmation of support from Forest of Dean District Council.

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

- Charlie Watson is Vice-Chairman of the CPRE County Branch Forum and helped prepare the Partnership Agreement between CPRE national and branch charities, now endorsed by this branch. 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 CPRE National Policy Committee

Stroudwater Navigation – new swing-bridge near Stonehouse



Richard Lloyd

- We are continuing to part-fund a research post in the CPRE National Office dealing with housing policy.

- David Brooke contributed to the 2015 CPRE national conference, reporting on our Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

- 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.

Planning Training Day



Mike Mackey

Forest of Dean



Rob Colley

OUR AWARDS



1. Coln Valley Village Hall

A replacement Village Hall planned, designed and implemented by the community which fits well in a very rural landscape



4. Sly's Close, Northleach

An exemplary development of six affordable houses carefully designed to fit their setting, funded by a local charitable trust



2. Horsbere Brook Flood Storage Area

A flood protection scheme for Gloucester creating an attractive wetland area and a valuable new amenity for the community

SIX CPRE Gloucestershire Awards were made in 2015, bringing the total since the Awards Scheme was launched in 2007 to 44. The Awards celebrate projects which have brought outstanding benefits to Gloucestershire's environment, people and local communities.



5. Tirley Pressure Reduction Installation

An excellent example of successfully fitting a major engineering structure into the landscape through careful design and landscaping



3. Rural Innovation Centre, Harnhill

A training centre for the Royal Agricultural University demonstrating design excellence, developed from redundant farm barns



6. Whitecroft Railway Station

A reconstruction to the original design of the former station building of 1875, providing a delightful addition to the heritage railway scene

PROMOTING OUR MESSAGE

THE PROMOTION of our campaigns and views is fundamental to our work. Without good communication our campaigns will fail to reach the decision makers we are trying to influence. Accordingly, we have continued to develop our links with the media: we have issued eight Press Releases during the year, matched by articles in journals and interviews on radio and television. We are always conscious that we could do more.

We have the able assistance of Nicky Godding Communications to help with our media work, while Rachel Reeves, our Campaigns Manager, is developing more practical promotional material. This includes the successful launch during 2015 of an e-bulletin for members, which has the potential to spread outside our immediate ranks too. The

aim is to provide a regular summary of Branch activity and ideas.

Our informative newsletter, Gloucestershire Views, remains an essential element of our communications under the sound editorial guidance of David Bayne. Two editions were circulated to members and beyond in the spring and autumn, with both printed and web-based versions available.

We have also been encouraged by the number of hits and downloads recorded for our website. The site – www.cpreglos.org.uk – is rapidly becoming the first point of reference for members, supporters and others who are interested in our views. The site is comprehensive and includes our press releases, newsletters, policy positions and information on the main issues with which we are concerned.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CPRE Gloucestershire Branch

Summarised Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2015

	2015	2014
Income		
Branch Share of National Subscriptions	23,318	19,746
Interest and Investment Income	5,612	9,465
Legacy (net of legal costs)	12,022	0
Miscellaneous	<u>655</u>	<u>0</u>
	41,607	29,211
Expenditure		
Staff Costs	16,469	16,605
Office Expenses	4,965	3,693
Office Rent and Service Charges	3,467	3,467
Annual Report and AGM	1,326	2,720
Newsletters	2,508	2,723
Awards Scheme	800	1,401
Contribution to Head Office	33,224	26,250
Consultancy and Planning	18,532	5,498
Other Expenses	7,358	6,045
	<u>88,649</u>	<u>68,402</u>
Deficit for the Year	(47,042)	(39,191)
Gain on Investments	171	12,195
General Fund, brought forward	340,807	367,803
General Fund, carried forward	<u>293,936</u>	<u>340,807</u>
Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2015		
Assets		
Investments	254,626	254,456
Debtors	6,093	5,521
Bank Account	<u>142,640</u>	<u>192,481</u>
	403,359	452,458
less Current Liabilities	<u>9,423</u>	<u>11,651</u>
	<u>393,936</u>	<u>440,807</u>
Financed by		
General Fund	293,936	340,807
Fighting Fund	<u>100,000</u>	<u>100,000</u>
	<u>393,936</u>	<u>440,807</u>

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

Treasurer's Report

THANKS TO a legacy of £12,000 (after legal costs) our income was higher than in 2014 by the same amount. The largest single item of expenditure was our continuing contribution to CPRE National Office for a Policy & Research Advisor working on housing issues. The increase in Consultancy and Planning was almost entirely due to our contribution to a report on the future of the Cotswold Water Park. These two items accounted for the drop in our Reserves, while the value of our Investments remained almost unchanged.

Julian Oxley



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 are not represented by a Trustee.

Mr Charlie Watson
Chairman
Mr David Bayne
Mrs Elizabeth Bourne
Mr David Brooke
Mr Nick Dummett
Mr Andrew Ellis
(to March 2015)
Major Tom Hancock

Mr Nick Holliday
Mrs Rosealeen Lane
Mr Richard Lloyd
Mr Jeremy Lodwick
Mr Peter Loveday
Mr Mike Mackey
Mr Julian Oxley
(from March 2015)
Mrs Prue Vernon

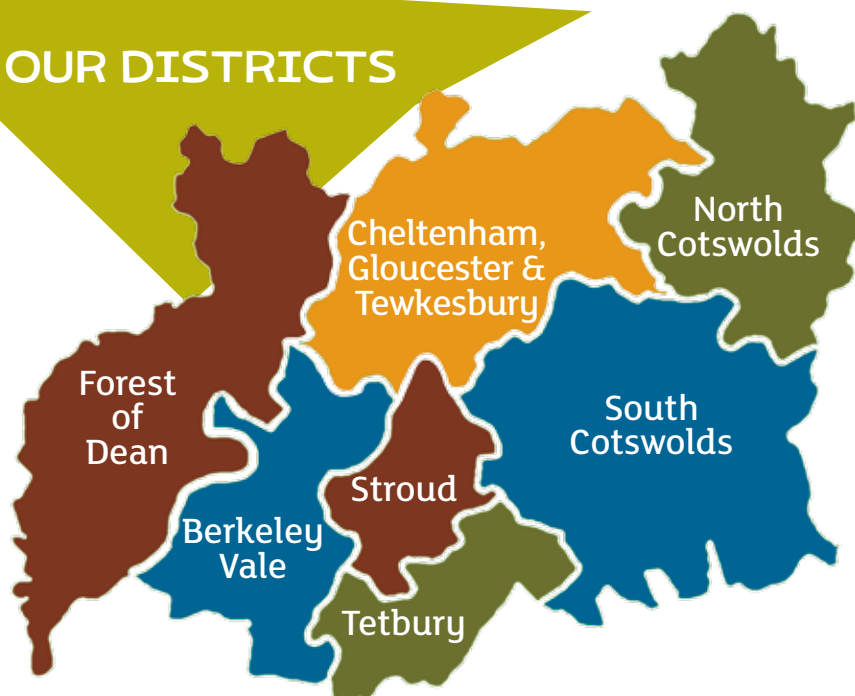
THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE Branch of CPRE promotes and encourages, for the benefit of the public, the improvement and protection of the Gloucestershire countryside and its towns and villages, and the better development of the rural environment. It acts upon any matters affecting the planning, improvement and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

www.cpreglos.org.uk

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OUR DISTRICTS



Design Colette Brownrigg colette@riggerjig.co.uk
Printing TopFlight, Cheltenham © 01242 528906

