

CPRE Gloucestershire Views

Campaign to Protect Rural England
Standing up for your countryside



Issued each Spring and Autumn. For the latest information see our website

www.cpreglos.org.uk
President Dame Janet Trotter

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Have you considered joining CPRE?

I MAGINE THAT many members of CPRE may have followed a similar path towards membership to mine. When I was in full-time employment, I was vaguely aware of CPRE's existence via occasional sightings in national or local newspapers. I'd reached a conclusion from that limited exposure that CPRE seemed one of the more rational of the environmental campaigning groups. But work, family life and the other things which occupy us got in the way of my taking that consideration any further. Some years later, I happened to be in conversation with a friend about an environmental matter (these days a very common occurrence). He

*Mike Mackey
Branch Chairman*

asked whether I'd ever considered joining CPRE and suggested that I should. So I did a bit of research and decided that my appraisal of CPRE's work all those years ago was fairly accurate, if more than a little incomplete. Importantly, I realised that CPRE was not a NIMBY organisation,

“An important personal focus during my period of office will be to work to grow our membership numbers”

which is the impression that many people hold of all environmental campaigners. As our strapline says, “Change is inevitable: it should be for the better”. Our Awards, which are regularly highlighted in our Newsletter, typify this philosophy.

So I joined CPRE Gloucestershire and, after having later served as Chairman of the Forest of Dean District for a few years, I was delighted when the members present at this year's AGM elected me to succeed Charlie Watson as Branch Chairman.

An important personal focus during my period of office will be to work to grow our membership numbers from just under 1400 which we have at present. A healthy membership brings huge benefits to the Branch and its work. Firstly, the greater the membership that we can demonstrate, the greater the influence that our campaigning will have. Secondly, a growing membership gives a great feeling of worth and recognition to those who volunteer their time and energy to the work of the Gloucestershire Branch and Districts. Thirdly, we receive financial benefit from your

Mike Mackey, new Branch Chairman, with Dame Janet Trotter, Branch President and Charlie Watson, outgoing Chairman at the 2016 AGM



Ron Lane

membership subscriptions and from those who are kind enough to leave legacies to CPRE Gloucestershire. This income enables us to fund the running of a part-time office and to contract for a limited amount of necessary professional support in planning matters and in PR. Finally, of course, it is from members that we derive our volunteers who scrutinise and make submissions on planning applications and draft plans, man stands at shows and organise events. They are the engine room of the Gloucestershire Branch. I realise fully that not all members have the time or the inclination to volunteer. However, rest assured that we are not all planning gurus (I certainly am not!) and your District Chairmen would be delighted to receive expressions of interest in participation from members with all types of experience. As I noted earlier, the financial support which we receive from your subscriptions, donations and legacies is critical to our ability to carry out our role effectively. You will find throughout this Newsletter examples of successes which we have been able to achieve with your help. We regularly use PR support to get our messages across in the media, often with great effect. However, to mount a campaign to increase markedly the public's awareness of CPRE in Gloucestershire would be far beyond our means. Our most successful recruiting tool will always be word of mouth, from member to potential member. It is how my interest in membership started and that is very possibly also the case with you. "Have you ever considered joining CPRE?" can be a very powerful question!

Mike Mackey

AT THE AGM held at Stowell Park on 4 May, Mike Mackey was elected to succeed Charlie Watson as Chairman of CPRE Gloucestershire Branch. Mike was previously Chairman of the Forest of Dean District of CPRE for nearly 3 years and was a trustee of CPRE Gloucestershire Branch throughout that time.

He became actively involved in environmental matters at around the turn of the century, when he joined a group which successfully defeated a proposal for a huge limestone quarry within the Wye Valley AONB, less than a mile from his house. That group still exists and retains a watching brief on the development of the latest Gloucestershire Minerals Local Plan. Mike was introduced to CPRE's work by a member of that group and was attracted by both CPRE's aims and its rational approach to planning issues. He joined CPRE Gloucestershire around 8 years ago.

Mike, who is 64, was born and brought up in Scotland but has lived south of the border for nearly 40 years. A graduate of the University of Glasgow, he spent almost all of his working career in the energy industry. For several years, he was Commercial Director of South Wales Electricity (Swalec) running that company's electricity and gas supply businesses and its electricity generation and telecommunications ventures. He has also been a Non-Executive Director of a range of companies in the energy, IT and retail fields.

Mike and his wife Val have two children who have long since fled the nest and who now live in Edinburgh and London.



CPRE Gloucestershire AWARDS

THE ANNUAL CPRE Gloucestershire Awards ceremony took place on 4th October at the Gambier Parry Hall, Highnam. Seven very diverse projects were recognised this year. Representatives of the organisations involved received plaques and certificates presented by Viscount Bledisloe.

The projects were:

- **Berry Hill Community Orchard** An attractive and imaginative community space designed, delivered and managed through community effort and enthusiasm
- **Gloucester Services Motorway services on the M5** which have set the highest standards of design and sustainable construction and are a joy to use

- **Renishaw Innovation Centre** A major new building which is an exemplar of sustainable design and construction, and respects its surroundings
- **Reordering of St Michael and All Angels, Tirley** A rural church carefully reordered with great attention to detail, following extensive flooding in 2007
- **Stroud Rural Sustainable Drainage Project** An innovative project to reduce the risk of flooding after high rainfall by slowing the rate at which water flows
- **The Green Shop, Frampton on Severn** A new shop for Frampton on Severn carefully designed to fit its location on the edge of the village green
- **The Walled Garden Project, Stratford Park, Stroud** A delightful re-created walled garden and new learning centre, inspired and largely delivered by volunteers, adjoining the Museum in the Park

More detail and photographs of the projects will be included in the Spring 2017 Newsletter.





A DAVID AND GOLIATH FIGHT

Patricia Broadfoot

THE NATIONAL Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was created to simplify planning rules. It was also supposed to give more say to local communities about the development that would take place in their area. It was a commendable idea. But it is an aspiration that seems almost impossible to achieve in practice because the scales are loaded in favour of commercial developers.

In my Gloucestershire village of Kingswood, we continue to be besieged by development applications. Since 2000 there has been a 23% growth in the size of the village. Current applications by Gladman Developments for up to 100 houses would make it 40% in 16 years; by Persimmon Homes for up to 60 houses would make it 55%.

Yet Stroud District Council, the local authority concerned, has done all the right things. It has an agreed housing supply and an approved Local Plan. Kingswood village has also done all the right things. It has a Village Design Statement and a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) that is in the final stages towards being approved. The preparation of an NDP involves an enormous amount of work, much of it by volunteers. There is an elaborate process of consultation and inspection by independent experts before it can be approved. And yet it seems, developers can harness their huge financial resources to challenge and

derail the process of local democracy. In Kingswood village, the Inspection of the draft NDP is being challenged by not one, but three, developers who are employing a team of barristers to challenge the work of the committed team of local volunteers who have worked over many months to draw up the Plan.

The accompanying picture shows the view from Kingswood village hall. This view is soon likely to be obliterated by a recent ruling by the Inspector at Appeal to allow Crest Nicholson to build up to 51 houses on the site. As well as losing the unbroken view of the Cotswold Escarpment that has been enjoyed by the people of Kingswood for over 2000 years, these houses will require the erection of very high nets every time cricket is played in the adjoining village playing fields. The proposed houses will also impact significantly on the local population of rare Great Crested Newts. Yet, despite the extensive evidence produced by the both the community and the local authority that this

“Developers can harness their huge financial resources to challenge and derail the process of local democracy”

Current view across field at Kingswood to be lost to 51 houses, towards the recent Taylor Wimpey development and the escarpment

Matt Bigwood

development will result in social and environmental harm – a key provision of the NPPF – it seems nothing can stop those who have the cash to mount sustained attacks.

That they have both the money and the incentive was made clear by the BBC on 13th June this year when they reported the following news item:

‘A leading City investor has called on house-builder Persimmon to cut back an executive pay plan that could see the management share £600m over the next five years. The scheme is one of the largest ever at a FTSE 100 company outside banking. The biggest beneficiary will be chief executive Jeff Fairburn, who could earn more than £100m.’

Kingswood is just one village among many thousands who are facing the sustained and unscrupulous attacks of developers who are out to make an easy killing. It is time that the Government recognised the David and Goliath nature of the fight between small local communities with very limited resources and the commercial companies that so often win Appeals as a result of their superior fire power. If the NPPF was genuinely about giving a say to local communities about what happens to them, it is not working.

JOINT CORE STRATEGY: THE END IS IN SIGHT - ALMOST

Lisa Belfield



THE EXAMINATION into the Joint Core Strategy for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury started in May last year. At the end of May this year the Inspector published her 'Interim Findings'. These set out some significant changes that she requires the JCS authorities to make to the proposed Strategy.

As we had feared, the number of new houses which have to be accommodated over the Plan period to 2031 (the 'Objectively Assessed Housing Need') has been increased: first by 5% to make it easier for developers to deliver the affordable housing requirement and then by a further 5% to reflect the highly aspirational economic growth targets of 'Gloucestershire First', the Local Enterprise Partnership. The total now stands at 35,175, and is expressed as a minimum requirement.

The Inspector has altered the apportionment of housing, simplifying land allocation so that each local authority meets its housing needs within its own boundaries or immediately adjoining in the neighbouring authority. This has potential implications for Stroud District (to accommodate Gloucester's overall requirement) and for Wychavon District, outside the County (for Tewkesbury Borough's requirement).

The good news is that she is recommending that the non-green belt strategic allocation at Leckhampton be removed from the Plan. It is unfortunate that the Tewkesbury part already has planning permission (subject to conclusion of a Section 106 legal agreement) although the permission may be challenged in a judicial review. An application for much of the Cheltenham part has been turned down by the Council and then on appeal, where concern about traffic on the A46 and landscape impact were key factors. As expected, to compensate for reductions in housing in this and other areas and to cater for the overall increased housing need, additional areas for development are recommended. These include part of the Green Belt immediately west of Cheltenham as well as some parcels of land to the north of the town.

CPRE attended an Examination session to discuss the Interim Findings report in mid-July. The authorities are now working on Main Modifications to the JCS to take account of the Interim Findings. These were expected to be discussed at Examination sessions during September. The modified Strategy will then be subject to (yet another) six weeks public consultation before being submitted for adoption to the Secretary of State.

The latest timetable indicates that the Inspector's final report is now to be issued in February 2017. By then, the examination will almost have taken an astonishing two years. Will this be a record?

Lotts Meadow,
Leckhampton



Martin Davies

HOUSING FORESIGHT PAPERS

A Gloucestershire Initiative

Charlie Watson

In a unique partnership over the past three years Gloucestershire CPRE has been paying the salary of a research officer based in our National Office.

Following a major review of CPRE's housing policy, we identified the need to stimulate discussion on new ways to tackle the shortfall in housing provision. So the idea for the Foresight series of papers was born. Its aim was not to set CPRE's policy position but rather to explore 'blue sky' ideas in order to help to shape future government housing policy.

A key requirement was that the research should be evidence based and we were exceptionally fortunate to appoint Luke Burroughs to the post. As well as contributing generally to the National Office planning team he wrote the first five of at least eight planned Housing Foresight Papers.

The papers to date have dealt with a variety of issues including new ways to release the potential of brownfield sites for development, to assist small and medium sized builders back into the market and to increase and sustain a greater provision of affordable homes in rural areas.

Each paper has provided the basis for discussions with Ministers and senior civil servants and generated considerable press interest. Overall they have been exceptionally well received and clearly have helped CPRE's credibility in influencing Government policy during difficult times.

Unfortunately for us, no doubt because of the papers' success, Luke has recently been headhunted to work for the London Councils on their housing policies. But fortunately our new post-holder, Trinley Walker, has quickly settled into the job. By the time this newsletter is published the next Paper in the Foresight series should have been launched in Parliament. It concentrates upon finding better ways to improve urban re-development, including securing the benefits of a better relationship between transport and higher density development. This will be quickly followed by a paper looking at ways to incentivise rural landowners to help in providing more affordable housing. Indeed, further research is already underway to investigate how rural exception schemes could be made to work more effectively.

We are now hoping that other county branches will follow our initiative by helping to fund this post over coming years. Indeed the precedent and principle that we have established of a Branch and National Office working together has demonstrated the added value that closer co-operation can bring to future projects.

Copies of the Foresight Papers may be found via <http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-planning/housing/update/item/3972-innovative-policy-solutions-to-critical-housing-issues> or may be requested from CPRE National Office.

PAPERS IN THE HOUSING FORESIGHT SERIES



A living countryside: Responding to the challenges of providing affordable rural housing

The fifth paper in CPRE Housing Foresight series identifies a range of solutions to increase and sustain affordable housing in rural areas. These include better funding and guidance, incentives to identify suitable sites, and rural exemptions from national policies which restrict rural affordable housing

© Hasloe Housing Association



© Chris Howes Wild Places Photography - Alamy

Getting houses built: How to accelerate the delivery of new housing

Our fourth Housing Foresight paper argues that the focus on profitability within the current housebuilding sector is dictating supply but not meeting need.



© Cyclingabout

Better Brownfield: Ensuring Responsive Development on Previously Developed Land

Our third Housing Foresight paper argues that large scale brownfield sites require a comprehensive approach to development which should adopt best practice from Europe.



© Peter Astles

Removing obstacles to brownfield development: Realising the potential of previously developed land

Our second Housing Foresight paper calls for Government to implement a range of inventive policies to realise the potential of brownfield house building.



© Jayfish - Alamy

Increasing Diversity in the House Building Sector: Re-establishing small and medium sized enterprises in housing construction

The first paper in our Housing Foresight series explores how the dominance of volume house builders is having potentially harmful impacts on the supply, location and design of new housing in England.

“It is up to us to
decide whether this
magnificent estuary
will be sustained,
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supported”

A VISION FOR THE SEVERN ESTUARY

Richard Lloyd

“WITH THE largest tidal range in Europe, a vast array of wildlife, rich cultural heritage and a wild and beautiful landscape, the Severn Estuary is one of the UK’s great natural wonders and a globally important site for nature. However, centuries of human development pressure have degraded the estuary and left much room for recovery. Today, this highly protected and unique place is at a critical juncture as a result of both this development pressure and climate change. It is up to us, collectively, to decide whether this magnificent estuary will be sustained, restored and supported – to benefit nature and people.”

These are the introductory words to the Severn Vision, an ambitious vision for the Severn Estuary developed by an alliance of organisations. CPRE has been pleased to be a partner in this project. Gloucestershire Branch has represented CPRE on the Steering Group and is contributing towards the costs of the work. The other partners are the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, National Trust, Salmon and Trout Association and the Severn Rivers Trust.

The Vision is for a Severn Estuary that:

- is restored as a healthy functioning ecosystem, valued for its internationally important wildlife, habitats and landscapes;
- provides more benefits for people, local communities, places, and economies, including greater resilience to climate change; and
- becomes a natural powerhouse, where development is planned and managed in a way that sustains and enhances the estuary’s resources.

Seven steps are offered to help catalyse a dialogue with all those who can help bring about the changes necessary to achieve this Vision.

The products from the work will be an attractive narrative report and a website (both with English and Welsh versions) and the “Map Journal” which will be added to and enhanced over time. With EU and partner funding an Advocacy Coordinator has been appointed at Slimbridge to promote the Vision over the next two years.

Do have a look at a preview of the products by visiting www.severnvision.org

The Seven Steps towards achieving the Vision

1. Avoid further loss of nature

The most practical and (cost) effective way of sustaining existing nature and landscapes is to prevent habitat destruction and degradation. Beyond this where damage is genuinely unavoidable, no net loss should occur within the estuary’s bounds of its wildlife, habitats, significant landscapes or the benefits they deliver.

2. Restore nature

The restoration of the estuary is fundamental to ensuring that it can act as a healthy, fully functioning natural system that both supports nature and continues to provide a wide range of benefits to people. We need a bold new approach to restoration at this scale, and our ambition is to see 6,000 ha of intertidal and associated habitat created by 2040, with half of this by 2025.

3. Use coastal habitats to reduce climate change impacts

Intertidal habitats can provide efficient and cost effective solutions to help protect people and property from coastal erosion, storms and flooding. The estuary’s role in building more resilience to climate change

should be championed as a good investment for a safer and more productive future.

4. Use the estuary to help reduce carbon emissions

Intertidal and associated habitats are large reservoirs of so-called 'blue carbon'. Conserving them will retain this and, in the long-term, new habitat creation can lock up additional carbon. New initiatives are needed that blend conserving and restoring habitats as complementary and additive strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with appropriate financing.

5. Grow knowledge to enable better decision making

There remain many gaps in our understanding of the estuary and how it functions. A wide range of stakeholders can provide support for building our collective knowledge of the estuary. Our Map Journal focuses on the estuary's biodiversity, natural assets and services, but there are knowledge gaps waiting to be filled in these and other areas, and these are key to better decision making.

6. Develop – in harmony with nature – tidal renewable energy

A renewable energy revolution is at the heart of fighting dangerous climate change which is itself arguably the biggest threat to nature. Tidal energy from the Severn has a seductive place in this, but it should not itself become another driver of biodiversity loss and wider environmental damage. Tidal energy should be developed in harmony with nature and not reduce the stock of 'natural capital'.

7. Establish stronger governance for a sustainable Severn

The estuary system is a great source of natural, economic and cultural wealth for the west of Britain and an integrated management approach that includes all interests is needed. Existing approaches need to be urgently examined and adapted to ensure stronger, inclusive 'whole estuary' governance that is fit for delivering a restored and sustainable estuary.

BRANCH AGM

David Bayne

IT WAS on a beautiful sunny spring afternoon, with rural England looking its very best, when a record number of Branch members and their guests – some 170 people – gathered in the splendid gardens of Stowell Park, by generous invitation of Lord Vestey, our former Branch President.

By 2.30pm all were seated in Stowell's magnificent ballroom where our current President invited our guest speaker, Jonathon Porritt, founder of 'Forum for the Future' and a champion of green issues, to address us. Jonathon certainly lived up to his reputation as a controversial figure, choosing to speak with great passion and conviction about the environmental case for remaining in the European Union.

He argued that the most serious threat to the environment was climate change on which urgent action was required. He deduced that if the UK were to leave the EU it would be very bad news for the environment and expressed his disappointment that CPRE had not supported the 'remain' campaign.

Needless to say, this was a topic that polarised the audience. However, in response to a question during the AGM itself, it was made clear that CPRE's national Trustee Board had concluded that it was in no position to present a single collective view on the EU Referendum on behalf of CPRE members.

In his final report as Chairman,

“Jonathon Porritt certainly lived up to his reputation as a controversial figure”

Charlie Watson focussed on three issues. The first of these was his heartfelt thanks to all active volunteers and the office staff. Specifically, he singled out Tom Hancock and David Bayne, both of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury District, who were each presented by Dame Janet with CPRE's 20-Year Service Medal. He then went on to highlight the numerous projects being undertaken by or on the initiative of the Branch. Among others, he referred especially to the Housing Foresight Papers produced by the Branch-funded officer in London, the Solar Panels Design Guide in preparation, the work in support of the Associate Membership to parish and town councils, the Planning Training Seminar, the Severn Vale Study work with the University of Gloucestershire, and the new 'e-Bulletin' to members. Thirdly and finally, he referred to the difficulty in developing and maintaining CPRE membership which was the lifeblood of the organisation but shrinking. He urged everyone to promote CPRE.

Following approval of Julian Oxley's first annual accounts, which included a generous legacy of £12,000, and the reappointment of Andorran as Reporting Accountants, the meeting went on to elect the Branch Officers and Executive Committee members. Mike Mackey, formerly Chairman of CPRE Forest of Dean District was elected to succeed Charlie Watson as Branch Chairman and Professor Patricia Broadfoot and Charlie Watson were newly elected to the Executive Committee. Other outgoing officers and members were re-elected.

Charlie Watson was then given a wholehearted vote of thanks for his dedicated, professional and tireless work as Chairman over the past five years and the afternoon concluded with a most delicious tea.

Jonathon Porritt addresses the meeting



Ron Lane

DON'T LOSE YOUR WAY

A Ramblers project to find and record historic paths

Richard Holmes, Gloucestershire Ramblers Association

IT IS not widely appreciated that the legislation which gave the public the right to roam on mountain, moor and heath also introduced a cut off date for logging unrecorded footpaths and bridleways. If not recorded by 2026 many valuable and historic routes will either disappear or lose any sort of legal protection.

Over the years historic routes have been lost as a result of changes in work patterns, such as paths to farms, mills or canal wharfs. Routes also disappeared in the preparation of the 'definitive map'; this is held by the local Highway Authority and shows all public rights of way. When the definitive map was drawn up for England and Wales in the 1950s the task of deciding which paths to include was delegated to Parish Councils. As a result of inconsistency of approach, some parishes are well served with public paths, others less so. In Gloucestershire there are many examples of paths that change status at parish boundaries (from bridleway to footpath) or paths that stop at the edge of large country estates.

Over the years a number of such anomalies have been corrected and paths reinstated on the definitive map. However legislation has now placed a cut off date for further changes. So the challenge now is to identify remaining routes by researching historic maps and documents, to collect any evidence of past or present use and to make a claim for the path to be included on the definitive map.

So where are these missing paths or unrecorded routes? The answer is that they are all

“If not recorded by 2026 many valuable and historic routes will either disappear or lose legal protection”

around – a country lane that suddenly veers left or right, an avenue of trees marooned in a field or the dots showing a public footpath on an OS map that suddenly ends in the middle of nowhere, often at a parish or county boundary. Surprisingly, due to flexibilities in legislation, many towns and cities have not included urban paths on the definitive map. Such paths are not protected as public rights of way and hence could be lost through development.

Across England and Wales, the Ramblers initiative 'Don't lose your way', has set up projects to find and record these historic paths to stop them being lost forever. Other organisations, such as the Local Access Forums, individuals and

local groups, are also working independently or co-operatively to claim these lost ways before the cut off date. To date Ramblers in Nottingham and the British Horse Society in North Yorkshire have made progress and have secured additions to the definitive map. In the town of Kendal, Cumbria Ramblers have identified 46 unrecorded urban paths, including tarmac paths and short 'ginnels'; these have all now been claimed as public rights of way.

Training and workshops are available and as more paths are identified the knowledge base is increasing. In Cheshire, a group including a cartographer, a local history society, walkers and cyclists have developed



an electronic system of layering so that historic maps can be compared with contemporary mapping to identify 'lost ways'. Having completed this first stage other volunteers will research County records and claim the routes for posterity.

So it is a matter of making sure that historic paths are recorded before 1st January 2026. Here in Gloucestershire, Ramblers are working on this project in a limited area. We would welcome more volunteers to help us cover more of the County. If you are interested or would like more information please contact

Richard Holmes,
Gloucestershire Ramblers
Area Footpath Secretary
(horbox@hotmail.com).





A Cotswolds road verge with Meadow Cranesbill

Mark Connelly

ROAD VERGES AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY?

GRASS VERGES are a characteristic feature of rural roads and lanes and provide important habitats for wildlife. Wild flowers can be abundant, adding colour to the countryside: primroses, cowslips and cow parsley in the spring; and in the summer, particularly in the Cotswolds, the blue Meadow Cranesbill is widespread. For plants and pollinating insects, verges have assumed more importance as habitats have been widely lost in the farmed countryside. They are also linear, allowing species to move and spread.

To realise their full potential for wildlife and amenity, verges need to be managed appropriately. Without cutting, coarser vegetation will take over and scrub and trees will invade. Cutting too early or too frequently will also reduce the diversity of plants and prevent them setting seed.

Responsibility for managing road verges in Gloucestershire rests with the County Council as highway authority. With a reduced budget it has limited resources so that verge management is largely confined to keeping highways safe by ensuring good visibility for road users. But more is needed, and a number of parish councils have taken on responsibility for road verges in parts of their areas.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has published guidance on road verge management*. This sets out a number of good practice guidelines which

Richard Lloyd

are generally applicable throughout Gloucestershire. They include:

- For all routes, cutting vegetation regularly in front of signs and to maintain visibility splays
 - For all main routes, and where pedestrian safety is an issue, cutting a metre swathe regularly adjoining the carriageway, extending to two metres where cycle and horse safety is also an issue
 - For all routes, deferring cutting of the remainder of the verge until the end of July to ensure plants set seed
 - On minor roads, limiting cutting to once or at most twice a year
 - Making the last cut of the year a full width cut to the base of the hedge or wall
 - Removing trees and scrub from locations where they are encroaching on species-rich verges or are affecting views
 - Considering identifying verges of exceptional wildlife interest for special management.
- Gloucestershire County Council has a Road Verges Action Plan and is able to highlight important road verges to highways contractors to ensure that wherever road safety allows, verges can be managed for their wildlife interest.

Ideally cut material should always be removed off site. Removing material gradually reduces the fertility of the sward and the vigour of the grass making cutting easier and greatly benefiting flowering plants.

Find out what your local Parish Council is doing.

“To realise their full potential for wildlife and amenity, verges need to be managed appropriately”

The charity Plantlife is running a campaign to encourage highway authorities to manage road verges better. A number of authorities have responded. In Dorset, the County Council is investigating methods to improve biodiversity while at the same time reducing the need for frequent cutting. Trials have included stripping topsoil to expose soil of lower fertility; harvesting mini bales; seeding with yellow rattle, a plant which is parasitic on grasses and reduces their vigour; and using cut material as a feedstock in biomass generators.

***Cotswolds Conservation Board.
The Management of Roadside Verges
Position Statement**
(see <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/userfiles/position-statements/management-of-road-verges-position-statement-adopted-2015.pdf>)

A SECOND PLANNING TRAINING EVENT

LAST AUTUMN, jointly with the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils, we ran a training event about the planning system for members and for parish councillors. The focus was on responding to planning applications, particularly those relating to housing developments which are

a major concern in many villages.

We had a good panel of speakers and the day went well. The event was oversubscribed and is to be run again this autumn on 10th November at the Centigen Meeting Rooms in Newent. If you are interesting in attending, please advise Lisa Belfield

at the Branch office (01425 309783 or lisa.belfield@cpreglos.org.uk).

The Planning Training Day in Autumn 2015



Mike Mackey

THE COTSWOLDS LANDSCAPE Through the lens

TO MARK the 50th anniversary of the Cotswolds being designated an AONB, the Cotswolds Conservation Board has launched a new community project to celebrate the rich history of the region's landscape.

'Cotswolds landscape through the lens' hopes to build a comprehensive picture of landscape change in the past 50 years and to understand how societal change has influenced it.

Residents and visitors are being encouraged to share snippets about life and landscape in the Cotswolds since the 1960s. If you have a photograph, video or even an old film clip that features the Cotswolds in this period or before and would like to get involved then visit www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/throughthelens.



CPRE'S 90TH ANNIVERSARY BOOK FEATURED AT CHELTENHAM LITERARY FESTIVAL

BY THE time you read this, the new book to mark CPRE's 90th Anniversary – *22 Ideas that saved the English Countryside* – will have been the subject of a panel discussion at the Cheltenham Literature Festival. Sir Simon Jenkins chaired the panel which also comprised the book's author, Oliver Hilliam of CPRE National Office, Alice Thomson of The Times and formerly a CPRE Policy Committee member, and Richard Lloyd, a Gloucestershire Branch Vice Chairman and a current member of CPRE national Policy Committee. We of course hope that the event was well attended, that it led to many sales of the book and that it results in increased publicity for CPRE.

The book tells the story of the evolution of England's relationship with the countryside and our desire to defend it from the forces of industrialisation and urban sprawl – from the birth of England's conservation movement with the Commons Preservation Society in 1865, to the recent campaign to save England's forests.

At the heart of the story is CPRE – created in 1926 to unite 22 existing organisations (The National Trust

and RSPB among them) in "concerted action". The Spectator found a good omen in the number:

"22 – the length of a chain or cricket pitch, the unit of the square acre – is quite the most English of all the numbers."

The book looks at the personalities behind CPRE's earliest successes and celebrates some of our most influential campaigns – including green belts, national parks and undergrounding pylons. Well-known figures including Mervyn Bragg, Julia Bradbury, Jo Brand and Tony Robinson provide an introduction to each of the 22 chapters.

As Peter Waine, co-author of the book, says: "We hope this book can offer an optimistic antidote to the 'doom and gloom' of much modern-day environmentalism. While threats remain, and there is no room for complacency, we take heart from the fact that these 22 Ideas have stood the test of time so convincingly. The fact they gained popular currency in the face of overwhelming opposition proves that the right combination of passion, principle, and not a little genius, can allow David to beat Goliath. We must continue to take inspiration from the pioneers who

have handed down to our generation something which remains the envy of the world – the unique beauty of the English countryside."

Members of CPRE – and indeed all lovers of the English countryside – are encouraged to buy copies of the book, both for themselves and as presents (with Christmas fast approaching!). All proceeds from the book go to CPRE.

The book is available from the usual shops and websites (rrp £25), but CPRE members are entitled to a 40% discount. To order a discounted copy for £15.00 including free UK p&p, telephone 01903 828503 and quote offer code QPG420, or send a cheque made payable to 'Littlehampton Book Services Mail Order Department' to:

*Littlehampton Book Services
PO Box 4264, Worthing, West Sussex
BN13 3TG*

Be sure to include the offer code QPG420 with your name and address details. Please add £2.50 if ordering from overseas.



Berkeley Vale

Prue Vernon, Chairman

SEVERAL APPEALS have been lodged against decisions to refuse large developments made by Stroud District Council before the new Local Plan was approved last November. Two of these appeals have been withdrawn as a consequence of the new Local Plan but three have gone ahead, with one at Kingswood allowed and the other two still in process. Such appeals are very time consuming and expensive for Stroud District Council while volunteers put in

an enormous amount of time fighting to ensure the refusals are upheld. Each requires wide consultation with other interested parties and research into planning and other regulations. CPRE is very grateful for all the help it has received with these appeals, described further below.

The Appeal by Gladman against refusal of another development outside the village envelope of Kingswood, Wotton-under-Edge, for 59 houses on a green field on the Charfield

“If allowed, the development at Berkeley would severely damage the setting of the castle”

side of the village is to be heard on the 22 November at Stroud District Council offices. CPRE are making strong representations in support of the refusal of this application.

Charles Church have appealed against refusal to build 186 houses at Berkeley, below Canonbury Street and opposite the entrance to the castle. The public inquiry began on 2nd August when CPRE spoke strongly to uphold refusal of the application. If allowed, the development would

severely damage the setting of the castle, on a steep slope which wraps round the east of the Georgian hill town and which provides such an impressive and historic approach to Berkeley.

Wotton is the target for development on the prominent outlying edge of the escarpment to the right of the Kingswood road as you come up the hill, and also at Coombe outside the town settlement boundary. These are both green field sites in the AONB. Neither is allocated for development in the new Stroud Local Plan and they are not appropriate locations.

Mr Nic Barlow kindly invited us to hold our District AGM at Stancombe Park and walk round the splendid gardens and lake. Mr John Berkeley retired after many years as President; he is a keen and knowledgeable supporter of CPRE and we are grateful for his support. Mr Anselm Guise was elected as our new President. Professor Mark Horton gave a fascinating talk on the current archaeological excavations at Berkeley Castle and the Berkeley family.

The District is trying to recruit more members by having stands at popular events. Frampton Country Fair will have been the next big one and we hope to have seen you there. We are looking for someone from the Wotton area who would be interested in joining the Berkeley Vale Committee. It is interesting and not too time consuming. If you are interested, please contact us via the Gloucester office.

Stinchcombe Hill from
Waterley Bottom



Christopher Mansfield

Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury

Tom Hancock, Chairman

WE WERE delighted when at the Branch AGM in May both Tom Hancock and David Bayne were awarded CPRE Countryside Medals for long service.

The District is most grateful to the Earl of Wemyss and March for again allowing us to hold our AGM in the splendid surroundings of Stanway House. Members were able to enjoy the attractive gardens, the impressive fountain and the CPRE Award-winning restored water mill. At the AGM,

both Chairman and Secretary reiterated their desire to stand down but no replacements had yet come forward. David Bayne has since formally given up being Secretary from the end of August but remains on the District Committee. Following an excellent talk by our Branch President Dame Janet Trotter about her role as Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wemyss gave us a fascinating illustrated analysis of the layout of trees in the Stanway parkland and of his ongoing restoration work.

Sadly, our two planned coach trips had to be cancelled for lack of sufficient interest. However in June, after most had enjoyed a convivial lunch at The Plough in Ford, a small group paid a highly informative visit to nearby Nosehill Farm, much of which lies on land reclaimed after quarrying. Tanya and Tom Robbins gave us an extensive tour of the farm, including a series of excellent explanations. While the Robbins' mainly farm sheep – most of which are 'Easycare' that shed their fleeces and so don't need shearing – part of their land

is maintained as a wildlife habitat and includes an SSSI; we were fortunate to see many orchids and other rare wild flowers. We are most grateful to Tanya and Tom for giving us such an excellent time, and a delicious tea.

The District has also had a gazebo at both the Stanway Fete and the Winchcombe Fair. At Winchcombe, for the first time we were able to make use of CPRE promotional material. We found that many people were prepared to complete a contact card in return for being allowed to keep the CPRE pen!

In the planning arena, the Joint Core Strategy remains the key issue; the latest position is summarised elsewhere in this newsletter. As always, we are most grateful to the Branch officers for all they have been doing. The publication of the Inspector's Interim Findings in May is an important milestone as, provided her recommended changes are made to the Strategy, we now have a clearer picture of what the future is likely to hold.

Meanwhile the District has continued to respond to significant development applications, engaging the invaluable help of David Crofts in challenging cases. Leckhampton has been given a partial reprieve. While the JCS Inspector proposes it no longer be an 'urban extension' and the proposals for much of the Cheltenham part of the area have been dismissed at appeal, the Farm Lane development

Tom Hancock receives his CPRE Long Service Award from Dame Janet Trotter



is still on the cards. The Secretary of State declined to call in the application but we understand that Tewkesbury's decision to approve it may be challenged in the High Court. Meanwhile, the developer has started building the site access road, which was covered by a separate application.

Gotherington remains a target for developers with two applications currently under consideration and two more expected, potentially for over 250 houses. The District has written regarding both extant applications, one of which has been reduced from 27 to 10 dwellings but still covers the same area of unspoilt countryside.

Tanya Robbins explains aspects of sheep farming on the visit to Nosehill Farm



David Bayne

Forest of Dean

*Clive Osborne,
Chairman*

“A proposed 20-acre, 24,000 panel solar array at Cowles Farm, Elton, has gone to appeal”

OUR AGM at Yorkley Community Centre in July attracted more than 30 members. Guest speaker Sue Middleton, of Foresters' Forest, discussed some of the many projects supported by her organisation, which is a Heritage Lottery Fund programme bringing together groups within the Forest. It aims to “raise awareness and participation in the built, natural and cultural heritage that makes our Forest special”, and Sue's talk illustrated how several objectives are shared by CPRE and Foresters' Forest: fertile ground for further

collaboration.

We will again be raising our profile at the Forest Showcase at the Speech House Hotel on Sunday October 2. Last year committee members spoke to around 200 people about CPRE and its work – we found that very few visitors to our stall initially knew of CPRE but many expressed concern for the countryside and praise for our work when we explained what we did.

A proposed 20-acre, 24,000 panel solar array at Cowles Farm, Elton, has gone to appeal. CPRE's main objections, based on the proposed development's

insufficiently warranted impact on the landscape, heritage assets and consequent enjoyment of the area, were reflected in the district council's decision to turn the plans down.

Public protest at this scheme has been such that the Planning Inspector has decided to conduct the appeal at an informal hearing at the district council offices in Coleford on 18th and 19th October. CPRE will be represented and members are encouraged to attend.

The proposed extension to Stowe Hill crushed rock quarry is now subject to an objection from a statutory

consultee, Natural England, which makes a refusal highly probable. The Stowe Hill extension is also currently proposed as a ‘preferred area’ in the latest Minerals Local Plan (MLP) draft, due out for public consultation in late September and Natural England's objection will be relevant to that. CPRE will be responding to the MLP consultation.

We noted that the High Court overturned plans for an 87 metres high wind turbine at Severndale Farm, Tidenham, because the developer's claimed financial benefits to the local community are irrelevant to issues relating to land use.

North Cotswolds

Peter Loveday, Chairman

“We expressed strong opposition to the recent redrawing of Moreton-in-Marsh’s town boundary”

THE DISTRICT has contributed to discussion with South Cotswolds and Tetbury District chairs led by Nick Dummett of the draft Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-31 consultation. Further details can be found in South Cotswold report. We expressed strong opposition to the recent redrawing of Moreton-in-Marsh’s town boundary to include two damaging sites for development on the south side in the AONB.

Planning applications for three developments have been examined and opposed. At Evenlode the proposal included a new major horse training establishment on an inappropriate and large

site stretching from the railway line up to the village. This went to Cotswold District Council in May and now appears to have been withdrawn.

In Blockley there is a proposed development of 37 houses up-hill from the village centre. We submitted our case for refusal on 27th June, after walking the footpaths around the village and the proposal was speedily rejected by the planning committee on 21st July – surely a record.

At Chipping Campden, as forecast in our Spring 2016 report, the Leasows site was subjected to another proposal, this time for 38 houses, half the previous number.

Again this was refused following our vigorous arguments that there would be severe damage to the landscape and negative non-sustainable effects on the local environment. Our detailed statements were all compiled by David Crofts to whom we are most grateful.

A good number of members attended our AGM held in the Stanton Guildhouse in May when we welcomed two new committee members and increased our District membership. The Guildhouse is an astonishing institution and building, devised and built, apart from the roof, entirely by volunteers led by Mary Osborn in the 1960s & 70s. Her achievement was acclaimed by speaker

Michael Bochmann OBE who had performed there and recalled fond memories of the founder. We thank Lady Mawson for greeting us in this special place, where many activities still flourish including painting, pottery, wood carving and needlework, and where any discussion groups may stay in a peaceful atmosphere.

In June we visited two remarkable gardens on Bredon Hill; the Walled Garden at Kemerton replanted in 2000 and cared for by Meriel Darby, and the garden at Conderton Manor, preserved with its specialist trees and shrubs by Jane Carr. The views across to the Cotswold Escarpment were spectacular.

View from above the River Windrush towards Windrush village and Sherborne



South Cotswolds

Nicholas Dummett, Chairman

“The draft Local Plan allocates land in the principal settlements for far more houses than are needed”

AT LAST the Cotswold District Council has produced a draft Local Plan. The fact that it has taken so long is not entirely the CDC planners' fault. The government had kept changing the rules and adding requirements – all in the name of simplifying the process. But now we have it and all in all it is a good Plan but fatally flawed in some important respects. The good side is that most of the policies are sound and will protect our countryside and villages. The fundamental flaw is that the Plan allocates land in the principal settlements for far more houses than are needed and is not strong enough on ensuring that they will be affordable to those who wish to live and work in the District. The result will be a continuation of building

houses for commuters to the surrounding major cities such as Swindon and Gloucester rather than to meet local need. Commuting into and out of the district has doubled over the past 10 years and this Plan is likely to ensure this trend continues. With CPRE North Cotswolds and Tetbury Districts we have written to the Council objecting to the Plan and detailing the particular sites which should be cut out of the Plan along with more minor amendments. You will be glad to know that our letter runs to many pages and is couched in the best “planning –speak” but when all is said and done it boils down to the above.

Central to the Local Plan strategy is a major urban expansion of Cirencester south of Chesterton. We

were therefore somewhat surprised when a planning application was submitted for the development earlier this year. So far no decision has been made and in our view should not be until the whole strategy has been subjected to public examination by an inspector. This will not happen until next year. We think the site is the right place for an urban expansion but is much too big.

Other planning applications continue to come forward hoping to get approval before the Plan comes into force and cements the development boundaries around the principal settlements. We have objected to these and all have been refused by the District Council as has an application for two wind turbines above Withington.

In May CPRE Members were privileged to see Giffords Circus rehearsing in the week before their 2016 tour began. In their new base at Fennells Farm near Stroud, we were taken behind the scenes and then sat in the Big Top watching an impressive miscellany of acts. All became fans of this important Gloucestershire “rural industry” and vowed to buy tickets to see the full show later in the summer.

The District AGM was held at Hatherop Castle School when the guest speaker was Ann Deamer. Ann, who had taught at the school for some years and become fascinated by its past, talked about the history of the buildings and the families who had lived there. After the formal proceedings members were able to wander round the school and the grounds.

Stroud

Pippa Schwartz,
Secretary

“The new Stroud Local Plan continues to hold back the tide of planning applications”

THE NEW Stroud Local Plan so far continues to hold back the tide of planning applications for greenfield sites in the District, which is very good news for the small towns and villages in the area.

The committee was delighted that, after a lengthy review of the applicant's visual impact assessment, Stroud District Council refused the application for a large solar farm in Upton St Leonards, where views from the AONB and Cotswold Way would have been compromised. Similarly, a retrospective application for earthworks at Mount Serrat Caravan Park in Butterrow was also thankfully refused. With luck this will deter

others from digging away indiscriminately at the Cotswold landscape.

The good news of the refusal of another application for housing on Baxter's Field in Stroud has been tempered by the appeal by Gladman. Your local committee is intent on fighting this appeal and has again been very fortunate in being able to have the help of a planning consultant.

More recently, two applications have again threatened the sanctity of the settlement boundary in Minchinhampton. In one case, CPRE raised an objection based on the high density of housing planned in a brownfield site at the entrance to the town.

Stroud District Council

is currently embarking on consultation prior to the development of a Heritage Strategy, as an adjunct to the Local Plan. As a first step they are consulting stakeholders, including CPRE, about conservation areas.

Once again the summer has proved busy for the committee, with the District AGM and a stand at the Stroud Show. The AGM involved a wine tasting

The CPRE stall at the Stroud Show.

organised by Woodchester Valley Vineyard and hosted by Woodchester Valley Village, a most enjoyable event on a spectacularly sunny evening in May. The spate of meteorological good fortune continued to the Stroud Show at which the committee was able to raise funds thanks to the kind contribution of plants from the Treasurer.



Tetbury

Jeremy Lodwick,
Chairman

THE ANNUAL Summer Supper and AGM was held on 30th June at Ashley Manor. All committee members had made a concerted effort to invite friends and contacts who were not necessarily familiar with the aims and objectives of CPRE. The effort was successful with an attendance of over 60, 50% of whom were current members and 50% who

were at least interested in hearing our news and views and who were also potential new members. Dame Janet Trotter, the Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire and President of CPRE Gloucestershire was our guest speaker. She gave a typically thought provoking talk about the social inequalities in the county, the post code lottery regarding areas of social deprivation and the need for people of goodwill to get actively involved in developing solutions to modern day social challenges. As in previous

years, committee members made a huge effort in producing a delicious buffet and attractively decorating the marquee which was used to host the event.

The final round of consultation opened for Cotswold District Council's Local Plan and we contributed to the response submitted by Nick Dummett on behalf of CPRE. Depressingly, an additional allocation of 70 houses in Tetbury is included in this latest version of the Plan. With the building of several of the approved developments in Tetbury now

“An additional allocation of 70 houses in Tetbury is included in the latest version of the Local Plan”

well under way it is hard to justify yet more housing and we objected in strong terms. At long last the Tetbury Neighbourhood Plan went out to public consultation and CPRE was recognised and acknowledged for the significant contribution that we made to this Plan.

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