



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

Gloucestershire Views

Rob Colley



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

www.cpreglos.org.uk
President Dame Janet Trotter

**SPRING
2018**

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Let's hear it for our countryside!

WE LIVE in turbulent times. The usual certainties in international relations, in our own national politics, even in the weather, seem to have been swept away, to be replaced by developments with unknown significance. We know that Brexit in particular, will bring sweeping changes to the familiar tapestry of our

*Professor Patricia
Broadfoot CBE
Branch Chair*

relationships with Europe; changes to the way we will travel around; changes to our legal framework; changes to our very sense of ourselves as a nation and how we see our future.

Nowhere is there likely to be more impact from Brexit

than on our countryside and on the farmers that make it what it is. Earlier this year, the Government published its vision for the future of our natural environment. 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' spelt out ambitious and welcome targets to achieve 'a Green Brexit – seizing this once-in-a-lifetime chance to reform our agriculture and

fisheries management, how we restore nature, and how we care for our land, our rivers and our seas' (p9). As the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, writes in his Foreword,

Environment is – at its roots – another word for nature, for the planet that sustains us, the life on earth that inspires wonder and reverence, the places dear to us we wish to protect and preserve. We value those landscapes and coastlines as goods in themselves, places of beauty which nurture and support all forms of wildlife. Respecting nature's intrinsic value, and the value of all life, is critical to our mission. For this reason, we safeguard cherished landscapes from economic exploitation, protect the welfare of sentient animals and strive to preserve endangered woodland and plant life, not to mention the greening of our urban environments.

These are fine words – words that must be welcome to every CPRE member and supporter. But there are hard choices that will have to be made by future governments: choices about money and choices about priorities. Currently, those choices suggest an, at best, cavalier regard for making maximum effort to protect our green spaces. We are already seeing evidence of this in CPRE's campaign to protect green-field sites from development by highlighting the extensive availability of brown-field sites in its 2016 report: 'Housing capacity on suitable brownfield land'. This Report estimates that over a million homes could be built on the available suitable brownfield sites across England but that this is not happening.

We see it too in the heart-breaking pictures of Threats to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty currently on the CPRE national website. We see it in the countless examples of decisions by Planning Inspectors to allow

housing development in places where local communities and planning authorities have deemed it unsuitable. Even approved Neighbourhood Plans do not always provide protection from unsuitable housing development when other factors are deemed more important, as documented in the hard-hitting, draft CPRE County Branch Forum Report of February 2018 'Devolution or Distraction'.

Currently, the provision of new houses to address the apparent national shortfall in supply seems to have more political appeal than the safeguarding of the English countryside. But, as the Government's own Environment Plan asserts, there is only one countryside on which all of us, directly or indirectly, depend. We depend on having clean water, unpolluted air, fertile land for farming, trees to help combat climate change and wildlife and open green spaces to enrich our lives.

Locally and nationally, CPRE exists to campaign

“the voice of CPRE is only as strong as the voices of those who support it”

for these precious benefits; to make protecting our countryside the important political issue it needs to be. But the voice of CPRE is only as strong as the voices of those who support it. This is why CPRE Gloucestershire is committed to amplifying that voice. We will be seeking to add new voices to the call to protect our countryside from across the County. We will be working with other organisations who also care about nature and about those who live and work in our countryside. Thank *you* for the support *you* give to CPRE. I hope you will continue to lend your voice to this cause so that together we can create an ever-louder chorus of support for rural England.

JOINT CORE STRATEGY: ADOPTED AT LONG LAST!

Lisa Belfield



FOLLOWING VOTES in favour by all three councils, Gloucester City, Cheltenham Borough and Tewkesbury Borough Council issued an Adoption Statement of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) on 11th December 2017. This is the final stage in a process which has taken almost ten years! And because it has taken so long it will now be subject to an early review.

The JCS sets out how the area will develop up to 2031. Although we do not support some key aspects – in particular the unrealistic growth assumptions, the exaggerated housing requirement and the consequent removal of large parts of the Green Belt – it does now provide the point

of reference against which planning proposals are assessed and should discourage and prevent many speculative development applications such as those we have been fighting for the last few years.

The JCS will also provide the framework for more detailed Local Plans being prepared by each of the three Councils and which can now progress. The policies within these Local Plans must be in line with those of the JCS. The first of the three Plans, that for Cheltenham Borough, has now been issued in draft and has been the subject to a period of public consultation which ended on 9th April. Others will follow.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING WORKSHOP 6TH JUNE

A date for your diary

WE ARE running a joint event with GAPTC and GRCC on 'Made' Neighbourhood Development Plans, ie those that have come into effect.

The Workshop will be held in the Gambier Parry Hall at Highnam Community Centre from 10.30 until 3.30 on Wednesday 6th June.

The topics to be covered will include Landscape and Green Infrastructure, allocating sites and settlement boundaries within NDPs, and once a plan is Made what happens next.

The event will cost £20 per head to include lunch. Places can be booked on line via bookings@grcc.org.uk



A 25 YEAR PLAN TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT

Richard Lloyd

Ancient woodland

WTP/L Jane Corey

THE GOVERNMENT'S 25 Year Plan for the Environment, due to be published in 2016 but delayed by the EU referendum result and ministerial changes, was finally launched on 11th January this year. Under the title *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*, it was launched by the Prime Minister at the London Wetlands Centre.

The media focussed on the urgent need to tackle avoidable plastic waste and proposals to address the issue, but the Plan is far more wide-reaching. At 151 pages it covers the full spectrum of environmental issues.

The Plan contains a good number of proposals of particular relevance to issues of concern to CPRE. These include:

“the Plan says very little on how commitments will be delivered, even less on funding”

- Embedding an ‘environmental net gain’ principle for development, including for both housing and infrastructure
- Ensuring new development happens in the right places and demonstrates high environmental standards
- Maintaining and strengthening environmental protection in national planning policy, notably ancient woodland, flood risk areas and best and most versatile agricultural land
- Enhancing the Green Belt
- Developing a new environmental land management scheme for farming, replacing the current arrangements under the EU Common Agricultural Policy, to incentivise and reward farmers and land managers to deliver landscape, biodiversity and other environmental objectives
- Supporting larger scale woodland creation, including a new Northern Forest
- Reducing risks from flooding by greater use of natural flood management solutions and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in new development
- Securing large scale wildlife habitat creation and improvement to reverse species decline, including creating 500,000 acres of new habitat
- Reviewing the network of National Parks and AONBs in terms of delivering their purposes, how they are financed and whether the network should be expanded
- Seeing National Parks and AONBs as vehicles for delivering environmental enhancement
- Identifying opportunities for environmental enhancement in all of England's 159 National Character Areas
- Greening our towns and cities and helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces
- Creating more green infrastructure, and encouraging more woodland creation close to where people live
- Reducing litter and littering, and tackling fly tipping

There is a welcome recognition that, in past decision-making, the nation has failed to recognise the full value of the benefits provided by the environment to the economy. The value of “natural capital” is often understated, as the value of environmental assets is not captured by traditional accounting methods. A “natural capital approach” to decision making is being developed as a tool to help achieve better decisions at every level, and decisions that can support environmental enhancement.

The Plan is good in terms of its extensive coverage and commitments and it has been widely welcomed. However, the Plan says very little on how commitments will be delivered and even less on funding from Government. And new legislation looks to be needed to deliver key elements through a new Environment Act.

The Plan is intended to be a “living” document, to be updated every five years following annual progress reviews.

COST PUT BEFORE ENVIRONMENT IN FILLING A417 'MISSING LINK'

Nick Dummett and Richard Lloyd

The present A417 climbs Crickley Hill

Mark Connelly

PLANS TO build the long-discussed A417 "Missing Link" dual carriageway from the end of the Brockworth Bypass to the Cowley roundabout are being progressed by Highways England. As this newsletter was being written, public consultation on two surface route options was in progress. CPRE will have responded.

Our initial reaction to the consultation was to welcome the Government's commitment to deliver a road scheme to resolve long-standing problems of congestion, road safety and air quality, but to raise serious concerns about the present proposals.

The environmental sensitivity of this dramatic landscape cannot be overstated. As part of the designated Cotswolds AONB it also has important nationally-recognised wildlife habitats and ancient monuments. All these factors demand a road scheme designed to embrace environmental considerations at its very heart rather than as an add-on.

The outcome we should all be striving for is an exemplary road scheme that meets the needs of both the traffic and the economy while also delivering real environmental improvements, ensuring this magnificent part of the Cotswold scarp remains attractive to visitors. There will be only one opportunity to get this right.

We recognise the need for road schemes to represent value for money for taxpayers but this value must include the relative benefits of the environmental dimension of schemes. Decisions on infrastructure projects should take into account the value of natural capital. The Government's

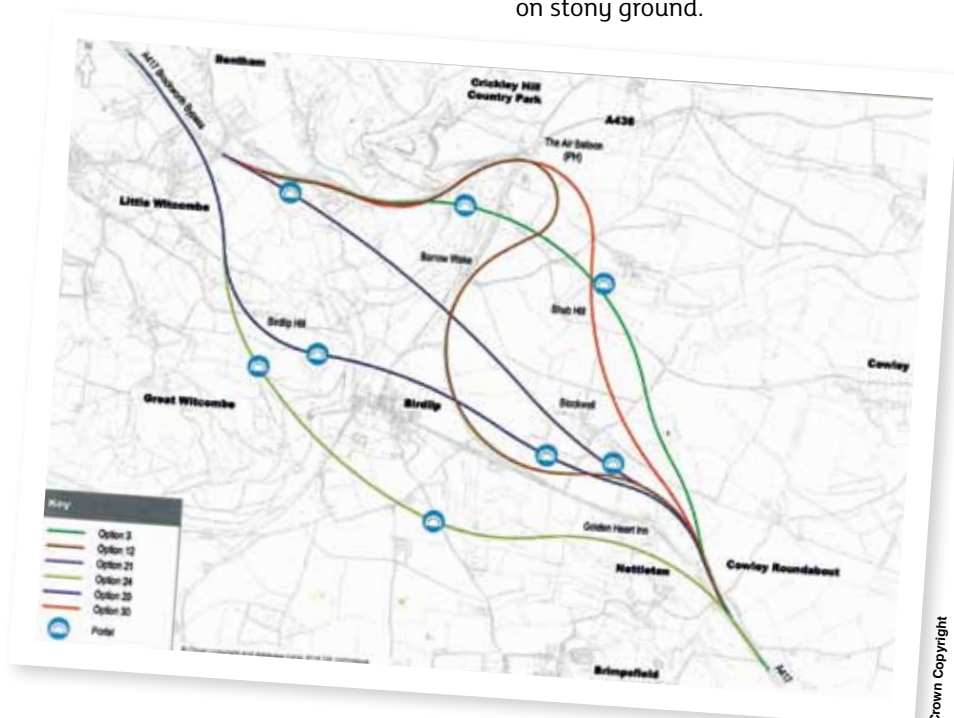
"We are disappointed that only surface options have been offered for consultation"

recently-published 25 Year Plan for the Environment includes a commitment that AONBs, such as the Cotswolds, are not only conserved but enhanced over the next 25 years, and it makes specific reference to a natural capital approach to investment decisions.

Despite earlier development of a wide range of options including tunnels, only two surface options (12 and 30 on the illustrative map) have been offered for consultation. One of these

(Option 12) is essentially the old 'brown' route which was previously rejected as unsatisfactory. The lowest cost tunnel option (Option 3) offers significantly greater benefits economically than the preferred surface option (Option 30) but would cost nearly twice as much. However, in terms of costs minus benefits it provides the second best value for money. We are therefore disappointed that it was not put forward as a second option for consultation to allow the public to express its views.

We had previously written to the Secretary of State for Transport pressing for the consultation to be broadly based and taking full account of environmental as well as economic benefits. Our request has clearly fallen on stony ground.



Crown Copyright

GLOUCESTERSHIRE 2050

David Bayne

GLOUCESTERSHIRE 2050 (or Glos2050) is the name of a six-month consultation – referred to as a ‘big conversation’ – that was launched on 1st February to produce a vision for what the County should be like by the middle of the century. Assuming it takes off – and it is being driven by powerful interests such as the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership and the County Council – it will have a major influence on all of us and our successors’ way of life. We all need to take it seriously.

There are a number of driving forces behind this initiative but the main one is that young working-age people are leaving the County. If things stay as they are, the balance between young and old will become even more skewed than in the country at large so that services and prosperity will suffer. Unless something is done, the highly ambitious – some would say unrealistic – growth targets set by GFirst will be missed by a long way.

Clearly a lot of work has already been going on behind the scenes, as Gloucestershire 2050 has already come up with a set of eight ‘ambitions’ for what the County will be like (see table). These in turn have led to six ‘key ideas’ that have been floated for discussion.

They comprise:

- Growing and regenerating Gloucester and Cheltenham by developing a third centre to connect them and create a ‘super city’
- The development of a National Cyber Security Park near Cheltenham for cyber-related business and education development

■ The designation of the Forest of Dean and Severn Vale as regional parks, the latter creating a wetlands area for flood management

■ The building of a new multi-purpose crossing over the Severn between Lydney and Sharpness linking the two cultures, landscapes and heritage, to encourage business and housing

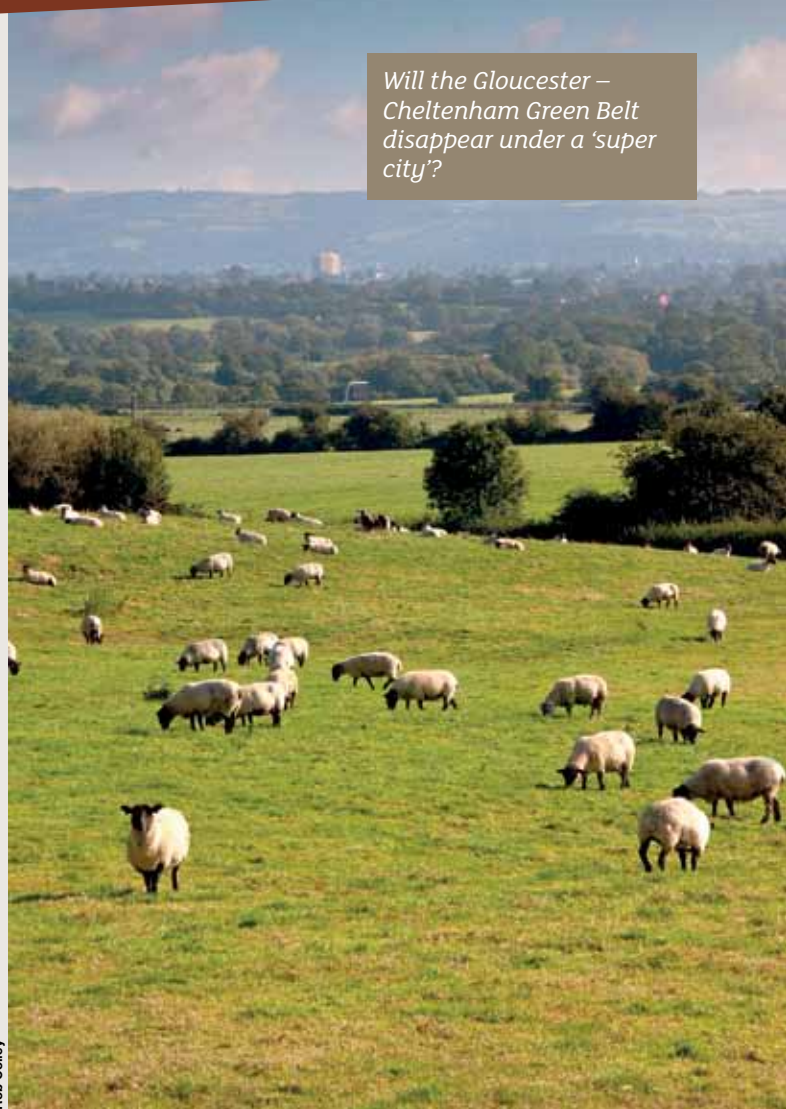
■ The creation of a new Cotswold Airport to promote the county’s economic success through higher value tourism and transport – or a base for drone technology

■ The development of the Cotswold Water Park into a major tourist destination, by redesigning the lake system, expanding leisure uses and developing a 5-star hotel.

The origin of these ideas or exactly how they would meet the ‘ambitions’ has not been explained. But, as you will see, some, if taken forward, would have major consequences, not always in line with CPRE’s policies.

Whatever emerges from the consultation, the results are likely to greatly influence the form of future planning strategies and policies, including future county-level and local plans. CPRE Gloucestershire has started work on its response. But it is important that all of us as individuals have our say. Please, therefore, have a look at the website – www.glos2050.com – and respond to the on-line survey. If you do not have internet access, please contact the CPRE Branch Office (01452 309783, Tuesdays and Thursdays) for a printed form.

Will the Gloucester – Cheltenham Green Belt disappear under a ‘super city’?



Rob Colley

“a major influence on all of us and our successors’ way of life”

Gloucestershire 2050 ‘Ambitions’

- 1 A magnet county: a growing population of 18 – 40 year olds with high level qualifications.
- 2 An innovative county: more businesses starting up, growing and investing in research.
- 3 A skilled county: more people with high level skills and jobs in skilled occupations.
- 4 A prosperous county: rising productivity and household income compared to other places.
- 5 An inclusive county: everyone benefits from the economic and social benefits of growth.
- 6 A healthy, happy county: good work/life balance and improved health outcomes.
- 7 A connected county: improved transport and internet connections.
- 8 A sustainable county: efficient use of resources and sustainable energy sources.

GOVERNMENT REVISES THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Richard Lloyd

“simplistically increasing the numbers of houses according to market demand will destroy precious countryside unnecessarily”

ON 5th MARCH, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the draft text of a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the key national policies for plan making and planning decisions. First published in 2012, as many will know the NPPF is the fundamental document against which all local plans and planning applications are assessed. The government regards a revised version as necessary to deliver its higher targets for new homes.

This is a very important consultation for CPRE. The aim is to produce a “One CPRE” response: Gloucestershire Branch will be inputting to the process. It’s a huge task as the wording of every clause of the NPPF’s 70 pages could have a significant impact.

In a preliminary statement, CPRE National Office has given a cautious welcome to some of the changes proposed, but has warned that failure to guarantee that land is used sustainably for housing and in a way that genuinely meets communities’ needs threatens to undermine the government’s aims in addressing the housing crisis. In particular, a simplistic reliance on increasing the numbers of houses according to market demand will do little to address the lack of affordable housing and end up destroying precious countryside unnecessarily.


The CPRE statement went on to note some positive steps to accelerate the build-out rate after planning

permission has been given and reassurances that Green Belt protection will be maintained. AONBs and National Parks could benefit from better protections, especially against ‘major’ development proposals.

Particularly welcome are changes to prevent developers undercutting affordable housing requirements through viability assessments; a greater priority given to redeveloping brownfield land; increasing the density of development in town centres and around transport hubs; measures to make it easier to convert retail and employment land to housing where this would be a more beneficial use; and promoting the conversion of empty space above shops.



Regeneration: canal side housing near Ebley Mill



“a countryside where food production goes hand-in-hand with delivering benefits for the wider public”

Cotswolds Conservation Board

A FUTURE POLICY FOR AGRICULTURE

Richard Lloyd

Arable farming in the Cotswolds.

ON 27th FEBRUARY, the Government launched a consultation on future agricultural policy to replace the current EU Common Agriculture Policy which will no longer apply as the United Kingdom leaves the EU. Entitled ‘Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment’, the consultation sets out a new direction for a countryside where food production goes hand-in-hand with delivering benefits for the wider public. The proposals take on board many of the recommendations CPRE made in New Model Farming, published just after the EU referendum.

The government’s proposals will see money redirected from direct payments under the Common Agriculture Policy, which are based on the amount of land farmed, to a new system of paying farmers public money for public goods – principally their work to enhance the environment and invest in sustainable food production.

In a statement issued immediately after the launch, CPRE National Office welcomed the Government’s proposed direction on future agricultural policy and urged it

to resist calls to simply maintain the status quo. “This is the first time in a generation we have had the chance to set our own agricultural policy and is a fantastic opportunity for this Government to revitalise our countryside and enhance our cherished farmed landscape.”

The eventual policy is, of course, critical to the protection of the countryside and is therefore another very important consultation for CPRE. As with the consultation on changes to the NPPF, the aim is to produce a “One CPRE” response. Gloucestershire Branch will be inputting to the process.



IT ONLY
TAKES A
LEGACY
... to help save
countryside



CPRE Gloucestershire AWARDS



A BUMPER SET OF RURAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Richard Lloyd

LAST YEAR we celebrated the tenth year of our Awards scheme with an appropriate bumper crop of 10 Awards. Below is a brief description of each project, the citation and a photograph. You can find details of all the Awards made over the years on the Branch website – www.cpreglos.org.uk – by clicking on Awards recipients 2008-2017

◀ *Dursley Tree House*

This is no child's play house but a highly innovative domestic dwelling built on a difficult wooded sloping site with the principal floor elevated above the ground. The home makes extensive use of materials sourced from redundant buildings and is highly energy efficient.

■ **CITATION:** For a town centre energy neutral family home, preserving the natural environment, recycling materials imaginatively, using a derelict site in an innovative manner, supported by the local community.

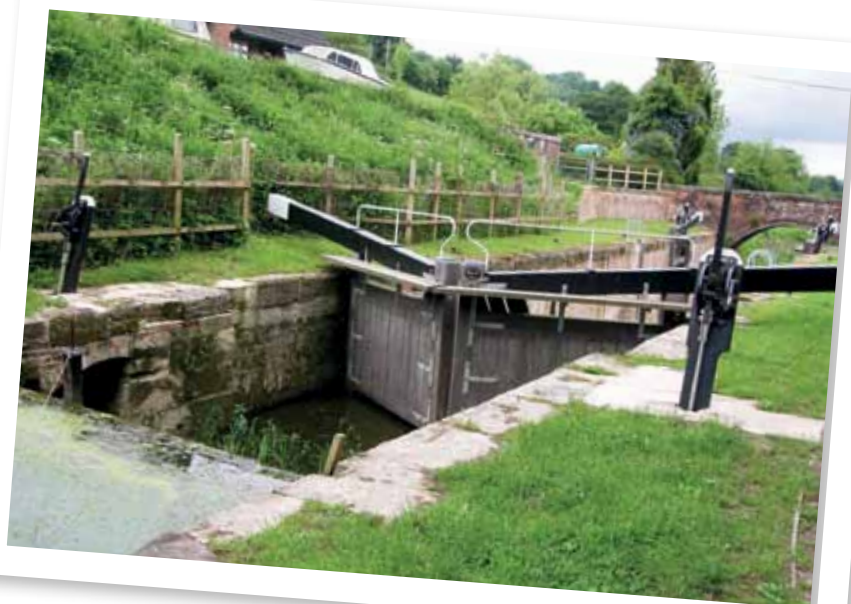


Matt Chisnell

Ham Mill Lock Restoration ▶

A Grade II listed Thames and Severn Canal lock fully restored by Cotswold Canals Trust volunteers. The brickwork of the lock chamber has been renewed, new lock gates installed, the original spill weir restored and the towpath realigned to its original level.

■ **CITATION** For an outstanding example of voluntary endeavour, engineering skill and conservation best practice which will now safeguard the future of Ham Mill Lock.



Horsley Play Project ▷

A run down play area transformed into a beautifully designed space with numerous opportunities for recreation and learning, carefully planned with a huge input from the residents of the village.

■ **CITATION** For outstanding community engagement in providing a revitalised play area of excellent design and scale in the heart of the village.



◁ **Kingswood Village Allotments**

New allotments laid out with raised beds to protect Great Crested Newts, and cultivated using only organic methods and wildlife friendly products. The tenancy agreements specifically promote and encourage local wildlife.

■ **CITATION** For creating and managing sustainably new allotments in Kingswood which provide opportunities for local residents to grow their own food and foster biodiversity, whilst enjoying the benefits of shared knowledge and a growing sense of community.

Little Pinnolds Holiday Cottage ▷

A carefully thought out rebuilding of a dilapidated and disused cow shed that has brought an existing building back into active use. Using the vernacular materials of Cotswold stone and wood the building fits well in its setting.

■ **CITATION** For a well-designed and sympathetically located re-creation of a dilapidated cow shed to form a contemporary holiday home.





CPRE Gloucestershire AWARDS



Minchinhampton RFC Clubhouse ▷ – **Stroud District**

A thoughtfully designed, simple, low cost, well insulated new clubhouse that fits well in the landscape, and with an internal design that is light and airy. Through fund raising and a volunteer workforce this has been an outstanding community build effort.

■ **CITATION** For a good example of both the persistence and commitment of a club membership to deliver a sporting and community asset, and simple and thoughtful design and detailing that has resulted in a building that is appropriate to its rural setting.



▷ **Plusterwine and Alvington Court Saltmarsh Creation Project**

Increased storminess and sea level rise has made flood protection an issue along the Severn Estuary and a need to compensate for habitat loss. Old flood defences have been breached, new ones created further inland and 39 hectares of new saltmarsh is evolving.

■ **CITATION** For devising, implementing and managing a scheme which makes a contribution to flood management in the Severn estuary by creating new saltmarsh habitat and thereby increasing estuarine biodiversity.



STIHL Treetop Walkway,▷ **Westonbirt Arboretum**

Access to Silk Wood is now by a stunning tree-top walkway, the longest in the UK. Respecting the landscape through its steel and timber construction and graceful curves, it incorporates extensive interpretation along its length and also play features

■ **CITATION** For providing an outstanding opportunity for visitors to take to the tree tops with elegance of design, detailing and interpretive information.



Stoke Orchard Community Centre ▸

A splendid new Community Centre and Community Shop which is largely run by local residents to a design conceived by the Parish Council that is highly energy efficient. The external appearance looks good too, with the building set at the back of a new green space with play equipment

■ **CITATION** For a community centre designed on the Passivhaus principle, by forward thinking community leaders, supported and enjoyed by the community.



▽ “Vegetable Matters” Farm Shop, Ebrington

A new purpose-built farm shop offering fresh vegetables grown locally. Constructed of quality materials in keeping with adjacent agricultural buildings and fitting well in the landscape, the shop has good environmental credentials with use of reclaimed bricks and being energy efficient

■ **CITATION** For the use of re-cycled materials in a contemporary and appropriately sited new farm shop, selling locally grown or sourced produce throughout the year, encouraged and visited by visitors and many locals.



COME TO OUR BRANCH AGM on Thursday 31st May

OUR VENUE for this year's Branch AGM is a bit different from usual – Renishaw New Mills near Wotton-under-Edge. It will be on Thursday, 31st May when members and guests are invited to arrive from 1.45pm.

Renishaw is a very exciting engineering and scientific technology company. It is a world leader, with expertise in precision measurement and healthcare and with products and services used in applications as diverse as jet engine and wind turbine manufacture, through to dentistry and brain surgery. We are fortunate that we will be able to see demonstrations of its work before and after the meeting..

The New Mills site is highly attractive, containing many restored industrial buildings as well as new ones in a campus setting. We shall be meeting

in the state-of-the-art Innovation Centre, which received a CPRE Gloucestershire Award in 2016.

The AGM will start at 2.30pm. We are then delighted to welcome Baroness (Barbara) Young of Old Scone as our guest speaker. Baroness Young has, among other posts, been Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, Chair of the Care Quality Commission and Chair of Diabetes UK. She is currently Chair of the Woodland Trust. Her talk will be followed by tea.

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find your invitation to the meeting, along with your copy of the Branch Annual Review for last year, the agenda for the meeting and the minutes of the previous AGM. Summary accounts are included in the Annual Review while



Renishaw New Mills

nominations for the Executive Committee can be found in the Agenda. Please return the slip at the bottom of the invitation whether or not you will be coming to the AGM. Do please include your email address (if any). We need this if we are to maintain an effective way of communicating with you quickly and cheaply.

**31st
MAY
2018**

MAPPING THE LOWER SEVERN VALE

Dr Robert Berry
*Countryside and Community Research
 Institute (CCRI),
 University of Gloucestershire*

IN THE Autumn 2017 edition of this newsletter, David Brooke introduced our work on the 'Severn Vale GIS' project, which I have been coordinating at the University of Gloucestershire along with my colleague Dr Lucy Clarke. In this article I provide some further detail on the project.

You may recall that the aim of the project is to develop an interactive digital map database of the Lower Severn Vale – roughly defined as the area of lowland around the River Severn between Gloucester and the Second Severn Crossing (*below*). This uniquely picturesque and geographically distinct area of Gloucestershire is poorly understood, certainly in comparison to the surrounding landscapes of the Cotswolds and the

Forest of Dean. A deeper understanding of the geography, character and special qualities of the landscape is necessary to inform debates over its future.

Step forward Geographical Information Systems (GIS). GIS is a computer system for managing, analysing and presenting digital spatial data. Pretty much any data that contains a reference to a location on the Earth's surface can potentially be plotted in virtual geographical space and mapped and analysed using GIS software. This makes GIS a powerful tool for understanding the physical and human geography of an area, and for helping to solve environmental and socio-economic problems, which invariably have a strong spatial component.

The initial phase of

this project focussed on data acquisition. For the first couple of years our student interns were tasked with collecting and documenting spatial data that they could find for the area, with specific focus on 'open data' – i.e. data made freely-available for unrestricted use and distribution. This included modern and historical topographic mapping from the Ordnance Survey, and a range of environmental data from agencies such as Defra, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. Socio-economic data from the UK Census and English Indices of Deprivation have also been sourced, as well as historical (e.g. listed buildings, heritage sites) and archaeological data. Once collected, data is

input into GIS software where it can be organised, displayed, and analysed (*bottom right*). The software, 'QGIS' (see www.qgis.org), is an open source product, which means that it can be freely installed on any computer without financial cost or licensing restrictions, allowing on-going resource sharing and active collaboration. When a critical mass of data had been reached, students moved on to data analysis. To date, a handful of data analysis projects have been completed, with students focussing on a variety of subjects, such as tree disease mapping, flood modelling and meteorological data analysis.

The final phase of the project concerns dissemination of the data and outputs from the project. This is being achieved in two main ways. Firstly, a GIS project is being created containing all the data that can be freely distributed. This can be viewed by anyone who has downloaded QGIS software onto their computer. Secondly, our students have been working on building a web-based application, which will allow anyone with a computer and internet connection to interactively explore selected datasets, without the need for installing GIS software (*far left*). This is currently in development and is due for launch this Spring.

Lower Severn Vale GIS project study area



“a powerful tool for helping to solve environmental and socio-economic problems”



Lower Severn Vale GIS project in QGIS software



Lower Severn Vale web-based map application, which is currently under development

PLANTING SUCCESSORS FOR ICONIC TREES

Michael St John and Nick Dummett

HAVE YOU ever noticed how some trees in the landscape form a special marker and without them the local landscape would be missing something? We are talking about individual or small groups of trees, not the generality of copses or hedgerows which give the wider landscape structure and depth. These are truly iconic trees. Some of them have been deliberately planted, mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries, to provide landscape focal points. Others have just planted themselves by happy accident and yet others form important features on village greens or open spaces. However they come to be there, many of these trees are now under threat

– mainly due to old age but also from diseases such as “ash dieback”. Taking action now to plant a replacement near to the tree affected will ensure that in 20 years’ time a key landscape feature is maintained.

This idea was put forward by Susie Robinson, a member of the CPRE South Cotswolds Committee, and the Committee decided to run a pilot project of identifying trees, approaching the landowner and facilitating a planting scheme. The CPRE role is to identify, bring in expertise where needed and engage with the local community. An underlying principle of the idea is that the replacement plants should come from UK-sourced seeds. The first iconic tree project, described

below, was developed with the enthusiastic help of the Earl Bathurst.

The project was to “under-plant” new lime trees beside an existing avenue of mature limes bordering the old Roman road leading out of Cirencester towards Gloucester. The existing trees are estimated to be about 130 years old and will soon reach the end of their lives. Once they come down, that area of Cirencester will look strangely bleak unless action is taken now.

An early challenge in the project was to find a source of whips of native British lime trees – *tilia cordata*. Many suppliers offered whips but on closer scrutiny it emerged that they came from Germany and other European countries. Susie Robinson and Michael St. John persisted in their searches and eventually found a suitable source. The Earl Bathurst kindly offered to buy them.

Two local schools – Stratton C of E Primary School and Powells C of E Primary School – were invited to help in the planting scheme. A member of CPRE South Cotswolds District Committee, Celia Page, visited the schools and gave short presentations to the selected pupils, aged 6 to 11 about the project. Celia explained the importance of trees, took along specimens of seeds and saplings and stimulated the interest of

Helping Lord Bathurst plant iconic trees of the future.

the “eco-warriors”. Each year-group in the schools was represented by two pupils.

Planting took place on two separate chilly winter days – luckily it was sunny that week. Lord Bathurst and one of his estate staff showed the children how to dig the holes, how to plant the young trees and then (possibly the best bit for the boys) hammer in stakes to support the saplings using a two handed “nadger” – a hollow heavy iron tube with handles on each side. They then put plastic tubes over the saplings and tied the tube to the stake thus protecting them against possible damage from wind and wild animals such as rabbits, fallow deer and voles.

Following the planting, CPRE received warm thanks from the two schools – Mrs Towler, Head of Stratton School, wrote to say how much the children had enjoyed it and promised to share the material presented by Celia Page with the school council.

South Cotswolds District is now hoping to encourage further projects and we would love to hear from CPRE members about trees that they think are iconic and might be in danger.



“planting a replacement now will ensure that a key landscape feature is maintained”

Michael St John

Lime trees along Gloucester road out of Cirencester.

PATHWATCH

A Smartphone app to protect our paths

*Richard Holmes,
Ramblers*

WITHIN THE County, and across the country, the Ramblers are working to promote walking, protect our footpath network and improving access for all. To this end they have developed Pathwatch, a free app that allows anyone with a Smartphone to report problems on a public right of way instantly with a few clicks on their phone. For those who do not use this technology there is a similar process available on a computer.

The Pathwatch app may be downloaded free of charge from the Ramblers web site. Once installed and registered it is very easy to use. If you find a problem on a right of way, click the app to 'report it'; then click 'locate me' to confirm your location on an OS map. You can then add a feature and select the type of problem, pick the detail, take a photo, confirm and submit. The whole process should take less than a minute and you can go back at any point to review or cancel your submission.

All reports submitted go to the Ramblers who sort them by Highways Authority. Reports for places in Gloucestershire are collected and dispatched on a fortnightly basis both to the County Council and to the local Rambler's Footpath Secretary. Each report includes details of the problem, the precise location (a ten figure OS Grid reference) and often a photo – but *not* of course any information about the originator. This allows an accurate assessment of the type of problem and its



*Obstructed footpath -
report immediately via
Pathwatch*

Ramblers

*“a free app
that allows
anyone
to report
problems
on a public
right of way
instantly”*

location on the public rights of way network.

Pathwatch has been in place for more than a year and recently a more robust process has been established to use the information. The County Council now has a member of staff who checks reports to prioritise each issue. Thus an overgrown stile on a rarely used path will have a lower priority than a damaged footbridge on a path used by school children. All reports are logged on the GCC system

so over time will provide a further measure of the state of the County's footpaths.

The Ramblers local Footpath Secretary has a number of options. He/she may check out the issue himself/herself or, as in South Cotswolds, pass it to one of a network of volunteers who cover specific areas. A local walking group affiliated to the Ramblers organises regular 'footpath walks' to look at issues reported through Pathwatch.

As a result of additional



information collected by volunteers, the local Ramblers path maintenance volunteers may go out with loppers and secateurs to clear obstructions. Alternatively it could provide additional evidence to challenge the County Council on long standing issues or perhaps highlight new problems which restrict access on our footpath network. It may also facilitate the close co-operation between the County Council and Ramblers and with other groups such as the Cotswold Wardens.

During 2017 there were 164 individual reports of problems on the County's footpaths sent by 41 different reporters. Issues ranged from missing signs (15 reports), electric fences across the path (12 reports), undergrowth

(9 reports) and in one case a bull. The accuracy of the system ensures that the specific location is easily found.

Pathwatch also allows reporting of positive features: the opportunity to share things you find on your walks, such as interesting flora and fauna, or an impressive view. This information is also included in the fortnightly report that goes to the County Council.

Now the system is well established it is an opportunity for more people to get involved. All Ramblers members with a Smartphone are being encouraged to download and use the app. The Pathwatch app is available, free, for both Apple and Android devices: go to www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/pathwatch-report-path-features-and-problems.aspx. It is simple to download and to use. The app works offline, providing the map square is downloaded beforehand, and also allows you to download OS grid square maps to your 'phone for walks in England and Wales. The

information will be recorded on your 'phone and if there is no mobile data signal the report will be sent when reconnected to Wi-Fi.

It is also possible to use Pathwatch from any computer via the Ramblers website www.ramblers.org.uk. This is slightly different to the Smartphone app but provides the same information to the Ramblers and the County Council. There is no need to register or login to make reports. And, as with the app, you can scroll around Britain on OS map data to find the location of the feature you're reporting.

Please support this Ramblers initiative to help protect our public rights of way. Download the app and use it to report any issues, positive or negative, that you come across when out and about. And if you have any queries please contact Richard Holmes, Gloucestershire Ramblers Area Footpath Secretary via footpaths@gloucestershireramblers.org.uk

Top : Pathwatch location map
Left: Pathwatch main menu

JOHN BERKELEY 1931 – 2017

Prue Vernon

JOHN BERKELEY was the quintessential English gentleman, a countryman through and through and a charming man who never forgot a name; we shall miss him. He was a Vice President of CPRE Gloucestershire for many years and a most supportive President of CPRE Berkeley Vale District for even longer, only retiring in 2015. He was keenly interested in significant planning applications in the Vale of Berkeley and a great campaigner and letter writer when occasion demanded. He was most generous in allowing CPRE to use Berkeley Castle for AGMs and other meetings. When CPRE successfully opposed a development proposal of wind turbines below Stinchcombe Hill, the tips of which would have been

taller than the escarpment, he allowed us up on the roof of the castle which gave a wonderful panoramic view of the Vale and its jigsaw

pattern of fields – this was key information in opposing the application.

John Berkeley was a keen gardener and collector of rare trees which were planted at Spetchley Park, Worcestershire. He enjoyed country sports and cricket and supported many local and county organisations. He



was president of Gloucestershire County Cricket Club. He served as High Sherriff of Gloucestershire 1982-83 and for Worcestershire 1967-68. He was a JP for 37 years. He was appointed Deputy-Lieutenant for Gloucestershire in 1982 and for Hereford and Worcestershire in 1983.

Berkeley Vale

Prue Vernon, Chairman

“The new Forest Green Rovers football stadium is not justified”

TRAFFIC CONSIDERATIONS at Wotton-under-Edge are affecting the proposed car park for 80 cars, 2 coaches and 12 four-bedroom houses at Symm Lane, next to the fire station. The net gain in parking spaces following the disruption of access work appears minimal while the proposed houses will be clearly visible on the Cotswold escarpment. The difficulty is balancing private funding for civic improvements like car parks by building houses in areas where no houses should be permitted. CPRE has objected on landscape grounds.

The application for the Forest Green Rovers football stadium at M5 Junction 13 has been resubmitted on a reduced area using only the north side of the A419. In addition to

the very valid planning reasons for objecting to this proposal, the new stadium, however brilliantly designed, is not needed because attendance figures do not justify it. CPRE with the help of Estcourt Planning (who know their football) have submitted a detailed objection. Highways England is still considering the impact on the motorway junction.

The development plans for the Standish Hospital site are vexing. Because the original hospital is a listed country house with stables and its restoration is part of the project all sorts of different planning rules apply. Obviously it will be expensive to restore and adapt the listed buildings and the 20th Century hospital ward buildings – but does this justify 96 new houses in parkland well outside Stonehouse on the

Cotswold escarpment and in the AONB? At present the financial justification is being analysed. CPRE has submitted reservations about the plans.

The District has commented on all the proposed changes to the 2015 Stroud Local Plan in preparation for the 2020 Plan. These are now being considered by Stroud District Council. Should all the suggested sites be allowed, the next Local Plan will make very depressing reading.

We congratulate Kingswood Village Allotments and the builders of Tree House, Dursley, for winning CPRE awards for outstanding contributions to the local community and to the environment. The Tree House is best viewed from Sainsbury's car park in winter.

We had the pleasure

of taking our President, Dame Janet Trotter, on a familiarisation visit to the River Severn and Sharpness Docks. We hope she will be able to spread the word about the need for its ecological and visual protection and how this can be done in a sensitive manner to reduce flooding, and thus further the 'Severn Vision'.

We are fortunate to be able to hold our AGM at Park Farm, Alderley, on 20th June. Mr and Mrs Shepherd have a beautiful garden which you will be able to see. Mr Nick Macer of Pan Global Plants, Frampton-on-Severn, will be the guest speaker so it will be a horticultural occasion not to be missed.

As reported elsewhere we are sad to report that our past President, Mr John Berkeley, died last November. He will be greatly missed.

Standish Hospital – the potential overdevelopment of a beautiful site.



Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury

Tom Hancock, Chairman

AS YOU will read elsewhere in this newsletter, at long last the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) for the area has come into effect, from December 2017. We hope that this will now stem the flow of speculative housing proposals. It also means that the three underlying local plans can progress. Indeed the District is, as I write, preparing its response to the draft Cheltenham Local Plan which is out for public consultation until 9th April.

Some good news is that Ecotricity has withdrawn its appeals against both its original and scaled down anaerobic digester proposals at Fiddington. Not surprisingly since the site is a JCS 'urban extension', the appeal for 725 houses at Twigworth has been allowed. But happily the appeals for 6 houses in the Green Belt at Stoke Orchard and for 35 houses in the AONB on



View of Gotherington - a village targeted by developers.

“The JCS should stem the flow of speculative housing proposals”

the edge of Winchcombe below Langley Hill have been dismissed. Appeals seeking 45 houses off Kidnappers Lane, Leckhampton and 50 houses at Cobblers Close, Gotherington have yet to be determined.

The proposal for a care home and assisted living units at Almsbury Farm, Winchcombe has been refused by Tewkesbury Borough Council although the applicants may yet appeal. The proposed development of 500 homes

on greenfield land off the Evesham Road north of Bishops Cleeve is still awaiting a decision. More recently, the District has objected to applications for 60 houses at Maisemore, 24 houses at Littleworth, Greet and 40 houses at Coombe Hill; decisions on each are still awaited.

This year's District AGM will be at Stoke Orchard Community Centre on Wednesday, 16th May at 6.30 for 7.00pm. This is a CPRE Award-winning building and,

following the AGM business, Parish Council chairman Rick Chatham will talk to us about the restoration of the former Coal Research Centre at the site. Please note that we are still looking for candidates to take over as Chairman or Secretary. Then on 7th July there will be an afternoon of music and poetry in the beautiful private garden of Gadfield Elm House, Stanton, to include pimmis and refreshments. Do please come and support us. And we again hope to have a stand at the Winchcombe Country Show on Bank Holiday Monday, 27th August – so do come and visit us there.

Forest of Dean

Clive Osborne, Chairman

“The effects of lifting the Severn Crossing tolls are being followed”

THE BRANCH has written objecting to the new Stowe Hill quarry extension application. Whilst some environmental consequences would be less significant than for the previous proposals, CPRE has reiterated that 'need' has not been justified: the application should not be permitted until the draft County Minerals Local Plan has been assessed by a planning inspector via public examination,

expected in late 2018 or early 2019.

The effects of lifting the Severn Crossing tolls are the subject of a research project currently being followed by Forest of Dean District committee members. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence of rising house prices in the Forest, possibly fuelled by people from in and around Bristol who are preparing to become commuters. Initial indications are that the housing market is indeed

heating up, and estate agents report that a great deal of the interest is from people seeking to move to the Forest from outside.

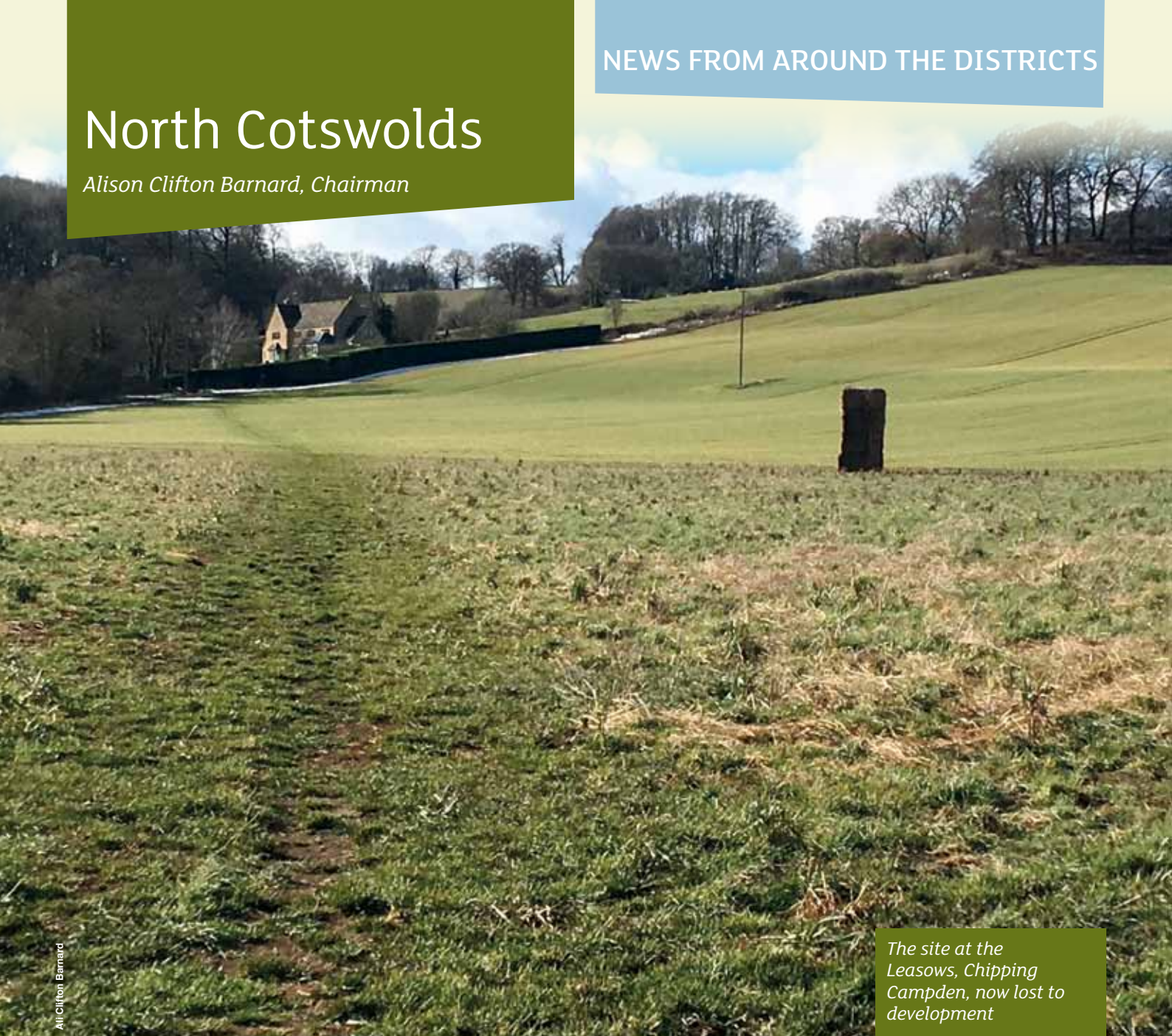
The committee is also looking at likely consequences for roads, particularly at known pinch points, after tolls are scrapped. There are fears that housing developments already in the pipeline will add to congestion, without the added impact of more commuter traffic. An overall review would also include

the role of strategic policy concerning commerce and industry in the Dean.

Committee members have begun to remind individuals and groups who are in correspondence about planning matters of the voluntary nature of the work we do – and lately that approach has paid dividends in the form of new members. Planning issues currently in hand include a response objecting to a retrospective application for two motocross tracks.

North Cotswolds

Alison Clifton Barnard, Chairman



Al Clifton Barnard

The site at the Leasows, Chipping Campden, now lost to development

BEAUTY BETRAYED: how reckless housing development threatens England's AONBs' is a summary of the detailed research commissioned by CPRE. It finds that, despite having the highest level of planning protection, AONBs have long been under significant pressure. When a council cannot demonstrate a five-year land supply for housing, or doesn't have a local plan in place, the NPPF's presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' encourages developers to submit speculative housing applications – even in AONBs. The situation is made worse by a system for determining housing numbers that creates unnecessarily high targets.

“the Appeal to build 30 houses at The Leasows Chipping Campden was upheld”

We saw a clear example of this affecting the North Cotswolds when the Appeal against refusal of permission by Cotswold District Council to build 30 houses at The Leasows Chipping Campden was upheld. In his Decision Notice the Inspector accepted that the Council could demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. But he argued that, to boost the supply of housing, growth will have to occur in the AONB. He concludes: “Thus, merely being within the AONB is not a reason alone to prevent further housing

development”.

Our 'patch' of the North Cotswolds is not entirely AONB though. There are other designated landscapes and villages which need protection. Since Christmas we have opposed an application for 40 homes on the edge of Willersey. This particular site adjoins one where there is already permission for 50 houses. Our main reasons for objection were that the application site is not within the settlement boundary, that it was not included in the recently-examined Local Plan and

that the cumulative impact of a further 40 houses is a significant issue, bearing in mind the amount of development recently permitted in the village.

We have also opposed an application for a caravan and camping site near the village of Evenlode which sits in the Moreton-in-Marsh Special Landscape Area (SLA). We objected on the grounds of the impact on the landscape of the SLA, the unsuitability of the local road network and the likely impact on the tranquillity of the area.

A date and venue for our AGM are not quite finalised but we anticipate that it will be in July; we will contact members with the details in due course.

South Cotswolds

Nicholas Dummett, Chairman

“We are basically happy with the major modifications to the Local Plan”

THE MAJOR activity has been attendance at the examination of the Cotswold District Local Plan. We attended numerous sessions and on 16th January the Inspector made clear what major modifications were necessary to make the plan sound. These have now been published for consultation. We have completely failed to persuade the inspector that when windfalls were taken into account the plan was allocating hopelessly too much land. The only gain we made was that he required some 550 of the 2350 houses in the Chesterton development to be phased to post 2031 – we won't know why he did this until we read his report. The effect is

that the plan will still deliver some 1000 more houses than are needed by 2031. Otherwise we did have some success in changing the way the 5 year land supply is calculated to take account of the over-building in the first five years, strengthening the policy on development in small villages, introducing a policy to prevent new-built housing in the open countryside, protection of the landscape and maintaining the embargo on lifting holiday let restrictions plus some other minor textual amendments. We are basically happy with the major modifications. If there are no major objections to them, the Plan should be adopted in June this year.

The main planning

application has been for the Chesterton site which Cotswold District Council approved on 16th January when it became clear that the inspector was not going to object to it in principle. We argued that the development was too large and land release should be phased, but to no avail.

The saga of the Hare and Hounds continues; a renewed planning application has been submitted with some minor improvements to the design. The major issue is that enough parking can only be provided by damaging the setting of the listed pub. We shall therefore be objecting on the grounds that the development needs to be scaled back

to be more appropriate to the site. We have also objected to proposals for nine retirement homes on the edge of Fairford; the site is outside the development boundary and would use an important green wedge into the east end of the town. By objecting we are in conflict with the town council who saw this site as part of the draft neighbourhood plan. There have also been a number of more minor development proposals which we have opposed or sought to change.

Our AGM this year will be at Owlpen Manor on Tuesday, 22nd May. We are also working on further events and hope that these will be fixed in time for inclusion in the Branch Diary of Events.

Stroud

Pippa Schwartz, Secretary

“Stroud District Council's Local Plan is still holding up well”

STROUD DISTRICT'S Local Plan is still holding up well in CPRE's Stroud district. The three major applications that we have been involved with are all either on hold or dismissed. The application for 95 houses at Forest Green Rover's current site in Nailsworth has been withdrawn, possibly to reappear when the fate of the application for a new stadium at the M5 junction has been decided. An application for accommodation at a site in Folly Lane has been refused and another for an equine incinerator in Waterlane has been deferred by the County Council (the deciding body).

The committee meets regularly to discuss planning matters and the activities of the wider CPRE community and members are cordially invited to join one of these

meetings if they wish, either to raise a specific planning matter that concerns them or just to see how the committee works.

The committee is organising an event for members for 13th October, a Saturday afternoon, in Sheepscombe Village Hall

(with tea and cakes) to listen to a talk by Mike Hemming. His subject is the distinctive architecture of various historic periods, in order to help us identify the age of a house from its exterior features. In the meantime the committee is holding an informal AGM at the house

of one of our committee members. CPRE members are cordially invited to attend, on 11th June. Further information can be obtained from our secretary, Philippa Schwartz, on 01453 883973. And as usual Stroud will have a stand at the Stroud Show in July.



View over Painswick from Edge

Rob Colley

Tetbury

Jeremy Lodwick,
Chairman

THE TETBURY and Tetbury Upton Neighbourhood Plan was finally put to a referendum on 5th December 2017. Hard though it is to believe, the planning group was initially convened in late 2012 with work starting in March 2013. CPRE was represented throughout the lengthy process of consultation, surveys and studies that went into the production of the plan and we made significant contributions in several

vital areas. Cotswold District Council's approval for the referendum came rather swiftly after the independent inspection – which made practically no changes to the document, a testament to the thoroughness of the preparation.

The town council were informed that, as its initiator and as an active supporter, they were not permitted to promote the Plan in the run-up to the Referendum. This was despite having some funds allocated for the promotion and material, in the form of posters and leaflets, already printed. Tetbury CPRE committee members Giles and Amanda Preston

stepped forward and manned the Open Session meetings, placed the advertisements in the local press, distributed leaflets and communicated on social media. The result was a 94% 'Yes' vote on a turnout of 25% of the electorate. So CPRE really did make a difference! One only wishes that a Neighbourhood Plan had been put in place a decade ago, before the disastrous over-building that is blighting the town.

We attended the final sessions of the examination of the Cotswold Local Plan, along with Nick Dummett of CPRE South Cotswolds District who from the outset has co-ordinated the CPRE

contribution to the Plan. We re-stated objections to additional developments in both Kemble and Tetbury that remain in the Plan.

We met with some success in receiving a sympathetic response from the town rugby club about retaining hedges and being mindful of light pollution as they develop some new playing fields on the eastern edge of town, although this development is some years off.

A date for our AGM is not yet finalised but I would anticipate that it will be in July as usual. We have a couple of excellent venues under consideration and will alert members as soon as one is chosen.

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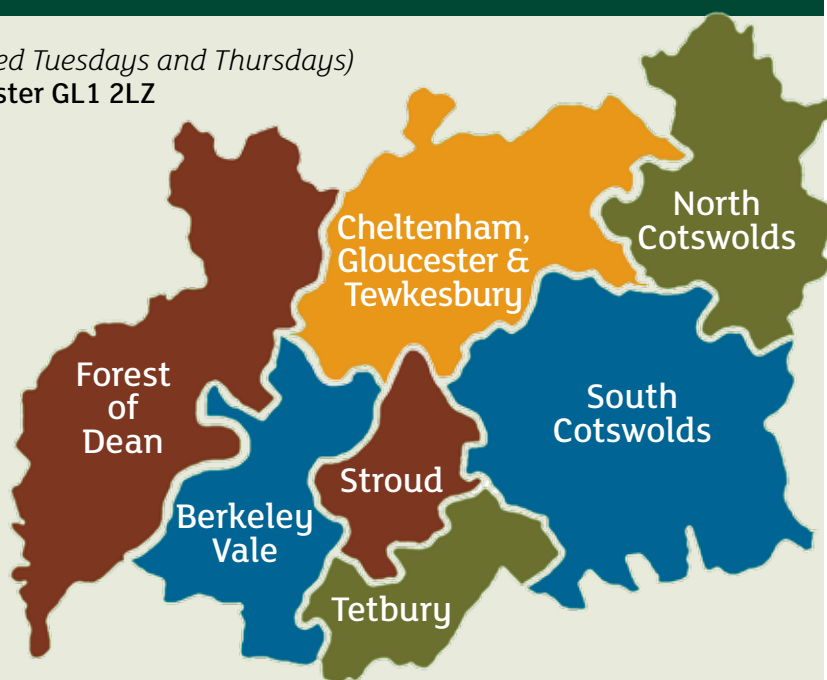
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