

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

**AUTUMN
2015**

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What a lot of rural issues

I HAVE just read the latest issue of Fieldwork magazine, published by CPRE's National Office three times a year. You may have seen it. It is available to all members but, to my surprise, I am told that relatively few of you have opted to receive it (to do so see below). This summer's edition again reminded me of how many aspects of country life CPRE campaigns cover.

For example, Luke Burrough's latest Foresight Paper – funded by our Branch – took centre stage, explaining how best we can secure “home building of the right type and in the

right place”. It is interesting to see how often our Gloucestershire Branch campaigns and initiatives feature as examples of good practice – there are a further two references this time to our successful work to resist appeals by developers.

Continuing to read – other articles cover the need for really strong safeguards on Fracking Sites, concern over the lack of Rural Affordable Homes, the ‘Warm and Green’ report advocating greater energy efficiency, the promotion of local food production in the Green Belt, a Food and Farming Strategy for England, a successful campaign to



*Charlie Watson,
Branch Chairman*

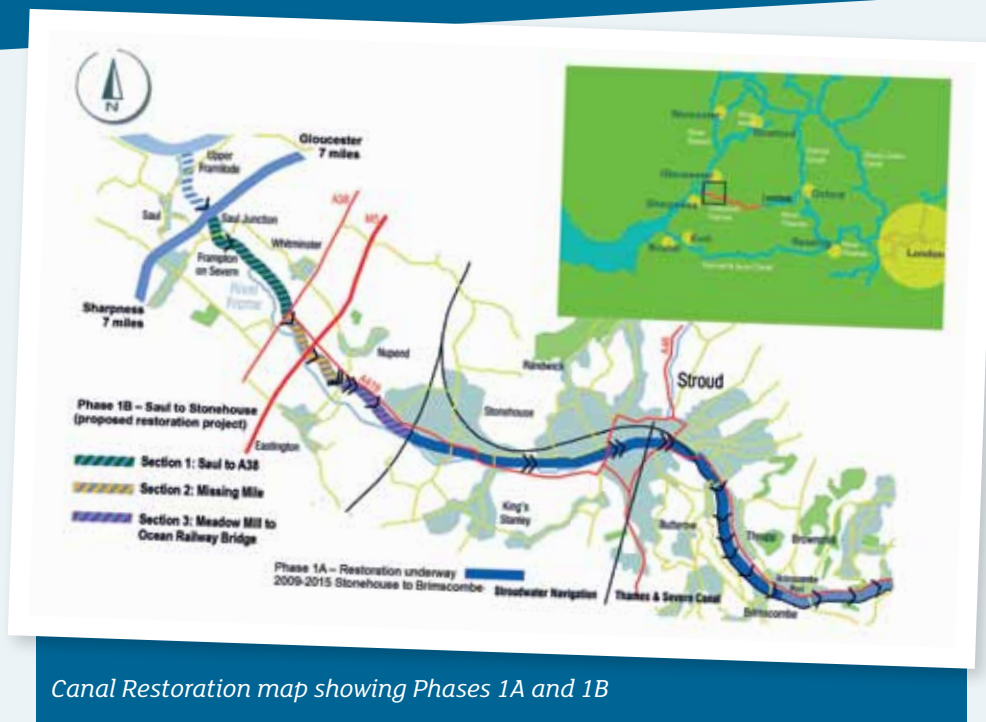
deal with litter problems in the Yorkshire countryside, new research into changing land use patterns – showing the loss of green fields and particularly highlighting the loss of agricultural land over recent years – plus articles on Rural Rail Services and the need for better Cycling and Walking.

The centre spread shows CPRE's Save our Countryside Charter, signed by over 80,000 people, being delivered to No 10 as part of our continuing pressure to raise concern over the

COMPLETING THE RESTORATION OF THE STROUDWATER NAVIGATION

Richard Lloyd and Val Kirby

AT THE height of the industrial revolution a 36 mile commercial canal connected the Rivers Severn and Thames. There were in fact two canals – the Stroudwater Navigation, built between 1775 and 1779 from Framilode on the River Severn to Wallbridge at Stroud, and the Thames and Severn Canal built in the 1780s linking Wallbridge to the River Thames near Lechlade. Falling commercial traffic and the lack of leisure use led to abandonment of the Thames and Severn Canal in 1933, and a similar fate befell the Stroudwater Navigation in 1954. Today the two canals, known collectively as the Cotswold Canals, are the focus of an enthusiastic and dedicated Cotswold Canals Trust working tirelessly to secure their restoration and reopening to navigation.



Canal Restoration map showing Phases 1A and 1B

COVER STORY Continued:

unnecessary loss of our green fields.

Finally, there is a long article on Membership Recruitment and Volunteering. This is a constant issue for all Branches and one I want to dwell on.

Over the last few years, after much effort, we have succeeded in halting the decline in membership numbers here in Gloucestershire. But we are still struggling to find sufficient numbers of active volunteers from the membership to support our work in each part of the County.

Recently I wrote to every member of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury District seeking two volunteers: the first to take over from Major Tom Hancock as Chair of the District Committee and the second to take over from David Bayne as District

Secretary. Remarkably both have held these roles for the last 27 years. So far, we have not been able to fill these positions. If we don't succeed, then this important District will have to close and part of its invaluable work lost.

Volunteering really can be rewarding, at times actually fun and definitely satisfying, particularly when our lobbying succeeds or a controversial development proposal is rejected. We know it is difficult finding time to help the many causes that you support but without active volunteers to join a local Committee or to help recruit other members this Branch of CPRE will wither on the vine.

There is no doubt that

these are difficult times for countryside campaigners. The Government is pushing for extra home building – apparently at all costs rather than in the right place and of the right type. The new Right to Buy existing

Affordable Homes and the attempt to change the rules that ensured small sites have a proportion of affordable homes both seem to threaten

the future viability and diversity of our villages.

At times recently it has felt as though the Government is not listening to the concerns being voiced by so many people who live or work in our countryside. Often the cards seem stacked against us. But then, suddenly, our efforts and those of local groups are rewarded – by

the rejection of appeals by developers, for example, in Alderton, Dymock, the Slad Valley, Bourton and Moreton in Marsh or by the Government financially supporting the development of 'brownfield' sites. The work of our National Office has clearly shifted Government policy by raising the profile of issues like the protection of the Green Belt, the need to use 'Brownfield' before 'Greenfield' land and, to quote the Minister's advice to the Planning Inspectorate, plans should now recognise "the different roles and ... intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside" and not just in our specially protected areas like National Parks, AONBs and SSSIs.

To receive CPRE's Fieldwork magazine just send an email to fieldwork@cpre.org.uk or a note to National Office for the attention of its editor – Oliver Hilliam.

“Without active volunteers this Branch of CPRE will wither on the vine”

The task is ambitious and very challenging. It is divided into three phases: Phase 1A from Ocean Bridge, Stonehouse to Brimscombe, Phase 1B from Ocean Bridge to Saul Junction on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, and Phase 2 from Brimscombe to the Thames. This final phase will include reopening Sapperton Tunnel, the third longest canal tunnel in England and currently blocked with a number of roof falls.

CPRE has been very supportive of the Phase 1A restoration (now nearing completion) and is backing Phase 1B.

Led by Stroud District Council, Phase 1A has cost over £20 million. It has been generously supported by grants of £12 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), £7.5 million from the South West Regional Development Agency and contributions from other sources. The Cotswold Canals Trust raised a further £800,000 and there has been an amazing volunteer effort worth more than £1m.

CPRE saw the Phase 1A restoration as more than just the restoration of the canal with its host of heritage features. It is a catalyst for the regeneration of the whole corridor from Stonehouse to Brimscombe. Landscape and biodiversity are enhanced, there are new recreation opportunities on the canal and beside it, and communities and volunteers are engaged and involved. It's an impressive achievement. We were therefore pleased when two projects from Phase 1A were

successfully nominated for our CPRE Awards, notably work at Wallbridge and at Capel's Mill. The Trust has also received Waterways Renaissance Awards for the work at Wallbridge and at Ryeford and Ebley, and an Award from the Institute of Civil Engineers for the work at Capel's Mill.

Phase 1B will achieve the important goal of linking the Stroudwater Navigation with the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, thus enabling access by boat from the national canal network. The Cotswold Canals Trust is the lead partner for Phase 1B which has been estimated to cost a further £20 million. HLF funding will again be sought and a bid is in preparation for submission in November: it will be called 'Stroudwater Navigation, Complete and Connected'. Other partners are the Canal and River Trust, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the Inland Waterways Association,

Stroud District Council, the Stroudwater Navigation Archives Charity and the Stroud Valleys Canal Company.

Phase 1B has its challenges: a new bridge is needed under the railway at The Ocean; a new channel will take the canal under the M5; two new bridges will take the canal under the A38 and Walk Bridge needs replacing. A whole mile, filled in during the construction of the M5, needs recreating along a new route. There are bridges and locks to restore and a multi-purpose towpath to create. The project will create a biodiversity-rich corridor, enhancing wildlife and providing new opportunities for public access. Volunteers will be needed to restore locks, to create the missing mile and new wildlife habitats and to deliver an extensive education and interpretation programme. The project will also plan how the canal will work once restored, so that it is financially sustainable in the long term.

The HLF will announce its decision in spring 2016. If an Award is agreed a "development stage" will commence during which final details of the project will be planned and all permissions obtained. After that, work on the restoration can begin. If everything goes to plan the Stroudwater Navigation will be complete and connected to the rest of the country's navigable waterways between 2020 and 2023.

Val Kirby is a member of CPRE Stroud District and is leading on the HLF bid for the Cotswold Canals Trust.

“If everything goes to plan the Stroudwater Navigation will be complete and connected to the rest of the country's navigable waterways between 2020 and 2023”



Canal Restoration Phase 1A – Ebley Mill

2015 AGM ADOPTS NEW BRANCH CONSTITUTION

David Bayne

THIS YEAR'S AGM was significant for all sorts of reasons. Among these, in no particular order, it was the first time it had been held in a building with walls of mud, a green roof and lighting via optical fibre, it was the first to be held under the Presidency of Dame Janet Trotter, it marked the retirement of Andrew Ellis as our Hon Treasurer after long and distinguished service and it saw the approval of an up-to-date Branch Constitution.

We are most grateful to Anselm Guise and his staff for making around 160 members and guests so welcome at Elmore Court and the Gillyflower, especially at the start for them of a busy week-end. Members enjoyed the opportunity to visit the Court beforehand and it was fascinating to hear from Anselm how the state of the art and ecologically sustainable Gillyflower came into being.

In his fourth report as Branch Chairman, Charlie Watson reminded the meeting that five out of the six planning authorities in the County still had no

adopted Local Plan. Hence, the predicted implications of the new planning regime were now being felt with permissions for building on damaging, unsustainable sites and the swamping of villages and market towns with new housing. The result would be a terrible legacy. CPRE had been lobbying vigorously for change over the past two years without seeing any significant result. But, over the past few months the government had at last begun to respond with Guidance to develop brownfield sites first, to limit out-of-town shops and to protect the green belt. The Branch was supporting CPRE nationally both in its campaigning and in the lobbying of ministers and senior officials, activities that were at last bearing fruit. He concluded his report with a renewed plea for everyone to recruit additional members

“A major item of business was the unanimous adoption of a new Branch Constitution”

Members listen attentively to Simon Jenkins



Nicky Godding

Dame Janet Trotter makes a farewell presentation to Andrew Ellis

and to lobby their candidates for the forthcoming general election.

In presenting his final accounts, Andrew Ellis drew attention to the planned increased expenditure on staffing, planning and public relations but noted that the Branch was due a further legacy of around £35,000. He observed that, in the course of his 20 years as Treasurer, Branch assets had risen from £38,000 to £440,000. Dame Janet, on behalf of the Branch, thanked Mr Ellis for the dedicated, professional and loyal service he had given to husbanding the Branch's finances over this long period. Julian Oxley was unanimously elected to succeed him as Hon Treasurer. The outgoing President, Vice-Presidents and other Officers of the Branch were all re-elected unopposed.

A major item of business was the unanimous adoption of a new Branch Constitution to replace that of 1986.

Bringing the Constitution up to today's standards of good governance was long overdue. The draft before the meeting had been thoroughly discussed and approved by the Branch Executive Committee and was acceptable to National CPRE. It has since been accepted by the Charity

Commission. Copies are available via <http://www.cpreglos.org.uk/about-us/how-we-work> or the Branch Office.

Following the official business, the well-known journalist, author and broadcaster Simon Jenkins addressed the meeting. Campaigning, he observed, was all about those paid nothing fighting those paid millions of pounds and achieving successes against the odds. He went on to deplore the lack of protection now given to historic views and, with the aid of many well-known views, to illustrate the complex relationship between development and nature. He observed how difficult it was to define what made something of beauty, contrasting examples of treasured historic constructions with what might be acceptable today. He argued for a language to define beauty which all could accept.

After Simon Jenkins had responded fully to a good number of questions, Prue Vernon, Chair of CPRE Berkeley Vale District, gave a vote of thanks to him, to Anselm Guise and to all at Elmore Court for their contributions to a successful meeting. All then enjoyed a sumptuous tea.

COTSWOLD WATER PARK

CPRE Gloucestershire lends a helping hand

Nick Dummett

THE COTSWOLD Water Park is the UK's largest man-made lake system, covering some 40 square miles and with about 150 lakes. In its extent, variety and potential it is comparable to the Norfolk Broads. The lakes form when gravel extraction ceases; the quarries fill in naturally, forming lakes of very pure water. This is how the existing lakes have formed but gravel extraction will continue for the next 20 years, creating new lakes in so far unexploited areas.

The Park is of international significance for its nature conservation interest with ten of its lakes having SSSI status; there are two grassland wildflower meadows of outstanding quality. The Park is an important recreational facility for activities such as fishing, water skiing and walking as well as providing tourist accommodation. Where restoration has been done well, the lakes form a stunningly beautiful

landscape in which development and recreational activity sit naturally alongside ecological preservation. The area thus forms an extremely valuable resource, not just environmentally but also economically as a tourist and local recreational area.

To realise its potential it is vital to achieve a coherent balance between mineral extraction, inter-connected access across the Park, environmental corridors, recreational activities and tourist accommodation. This requires the active co-operation of a large number of stakeholders including local communities and the two county authorities in which the Park sits. In 2008 this coherent approach was enshrined in a Master Plan. But implementation of the Master Plan has stalled. One of the problems has been lack of leadership particularly given the ambition (some would say over-ambition) of the Master Plan.

The Cotswold Water Park Trust (CWPT) is the only body with the knowledge and position to take a leadership role with the stakeholders. However the Trust suffered a major fraud which has weakened its reputation and severely depleted its financial resources. It will take some time to rebuild its strength and influence. But without this leadership, development will be haphazard and we will fail to conserve a significant countryside asset unique in the county and probably in England.

This is where CPRE Gloucestershire has stepped in to help. We have offered to fund the major part of the cost of an expert consultant to take a look at the Master Plan and talk to the stakeholders to see where effort can best be focused to achieve real impact over the next 5 years. This focus will include how we and the CWPT should input into the emerging Cotswold District and Gloucestershire Minerals Local Plans.

“It is vital to achieve a coherent balance between mineral extraction, inter-connected access across the Park, environmental corridors, recreational activities and tourist accommodation”



JOINT CORE STRATEGY: NEARLY THERE?



Richard Lloyd

AFTER SIX years of work by our local authorities, the Joint Core Strategy for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury (the JCS) is at last in sight of completion and adoption. Getting the JCS agreed is increasingly urgent, together with more detailed local plans for the three authority areas: these are in preparation and will sit beneath the JCS and must be in conformity with it. Together, this suite of new plans will give our authorities a much stronger hand in determining where development will go.

The planning process is supposed to be “plan led”. In the absence of an adopted JCS which is compliant with the government’s National Planning Policy Framework, and up to date local plans, it is open season for developers and very difficult for our local authorities to prevent unwanted development.

Work on the JCS began in 2009 and has been a painfully slow process; the final stage – an examination by an

independent inspector – is proving to be particularly so. The examination commenced on 18th May, is taking much longer than anticipated and is now unlikely to be completed until early 2016! The inspector is incredibly thorough and the local authorities have been asked to produce substantial amounts of additional information to support the policies in the JCS.

The government is pressing local authorities hard to complete their development plans quickly and threatening to do the job for them if there are delays. It is particularly ironic that it is the government’s part of the process – the examination – which is holding up completion here. At the time of writing this update, the critical Objectively Assessed Housing Need for the area had yet to be agreed: this will set the housing targets to be met by 2031. However, substantive discussions on the Duty to Co-operate with neighbouring authorities, Employment Land Provision, the Spatial Strategy, Green Belt policy and on the proposed

Strategic Housing Allocations have been concluded. Richard Lloyd, Lisa Belfield and David Bayne have taken part in a number of the hearing sessions and we will be accompanying the Inspector on two site visits.

The Inspector is promising an interim report early in the autumn. Developers are pressing for more land to be included for development and an important discussion to come will be on Omission Sites. The final sessions, expected in early 2016 will concern Infrastructure, Transport and Flood Risk. If the Inspector requires major changes to the JCS, for example higher housing numbers and additional allocations of land, the JCS team will need to make modifications to the plan and consult on these. This would delay the process even further.

“In the absence of an adopted JCS and up to date local plans it is very difficult for our local authorities to prevent unwanted development”

Churchdown Hill - at the heart of our Green Belt



FROM THE BRANCH ARCHIVES:

PRESERVING COTSWOLD COTTAGES

David Brooke

YOUNGER MEMBERS will be bewildered by the need for a Gloucestershire charity, founded in 1961, with the sole aim of preventing the demolition of Cotswold cottages – many of which would be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds today.

The Branch archives, though, illustrate the rigour with which the Rural District Councils of the day pursued their public health duties. Many village cottages and houses were undoubtedly dark and damp but the response by the Councils to demolish and replace with modern houses seems to have been the only option they considered. The idea of renovation and modernisation apparently did not get a passing glance.

In response to this destruction, a group of Gloucestershire residents, with the support of CPRE, launched a new charity – The Period Cottage Improvement Society Ltd – with an appeal for £10,000 to fund the purchase of cottages under threat. The cause célèbre was a proposal for widespread demolition in Woodchester. Let the Society's 1962 Annual Report speak for itself:

"The formation of the Society was a direct result of the action of the Stroud Rural District in declaring nineteen stone-built, stone tiled cottages in Woodchester to be Clearance Areas. Four Demolition Orders and a number of

Closing Orders were made and it was apparent that these orders were merely the beginning of a larger scheme ...

"In November 1961 the Society invited officials of the Rural District Council to a meeting to discuss the possibility of modernising the cottages included in the scheme but unfortunately no agreement was reached and on 23 December a Compulsory Purchase Order was confirmed by the Council.

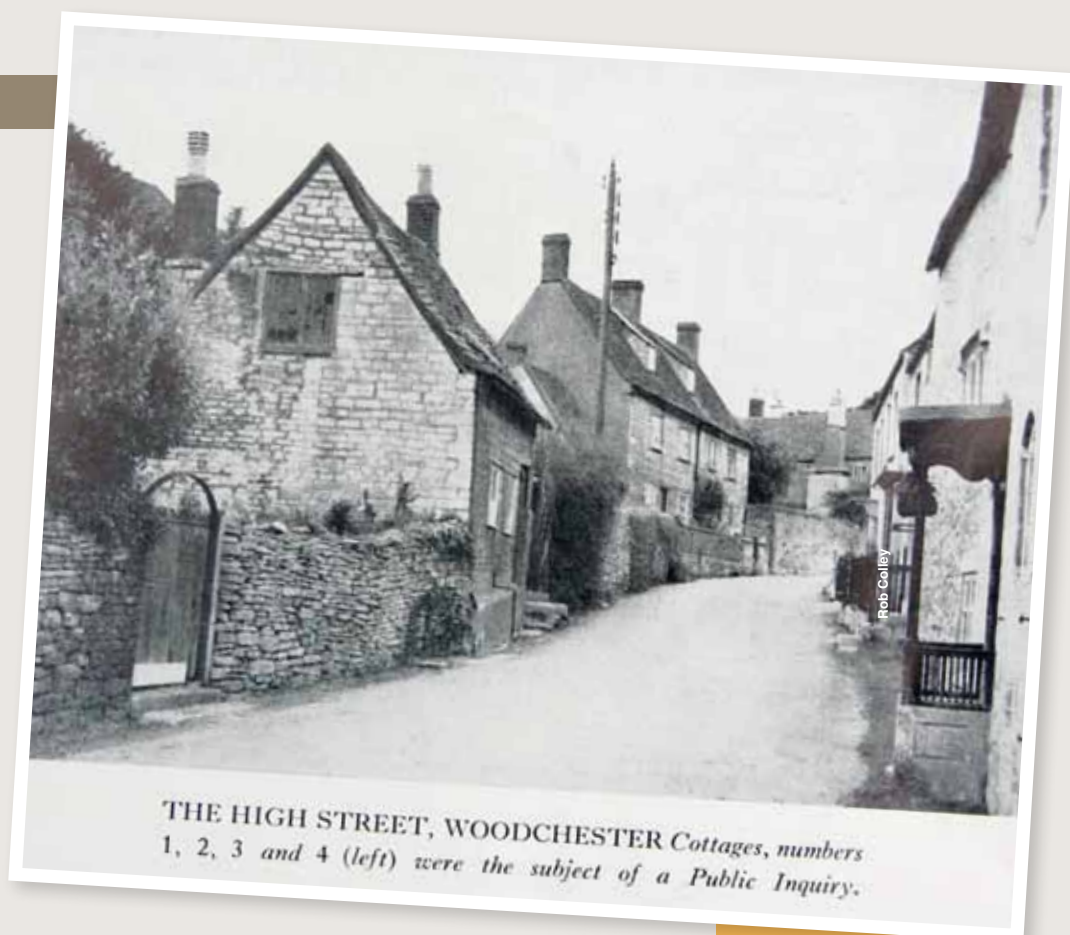
"It was decided that the Society would fight this Order to the best of its ability and engaged Counsel to act on its behalf at the Public Enquiry on 13 June 1962."

A correspondent of The Times later takes up the story:

"Sir Keith Joseph, Minister of Housing and Local Government, has refused to confirm a Compulsory Purchase Order as a prelude to the demolition of four Cotswold cottages in the village of Woodchester

because he thinks they can be repaired and improved".

It is perhaps too easy to condemn the Council officials who thought that they were doing the right thing by bringing crisp new houses to Gloucestershire villages. Fortunately the shift in attitude from demolition to conservation came soon after – and none too soon. There were casualties before and we still have casualties today but thank heavens for those allies who fought so long ago to effect the change.



THE HIGH STREET, WOODCHESTER Cottages, numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 (left) were the subject of a Public Inquiry.

“The shift in attitude from demolition to conservation came soon after – and none too soon”

From the 1962 Annual Report of the Period Cottage Improvement Society Ltd

FORESTERS' FOREST NEEDS YOU!

Sue Middleton



Shaden Tuft Oak within the Ancient, Veteran and Notable tree survey being run by Paul Rutter, Plantlife & Andrew Hoan

LOCAL PEOPLE are being asked to get involved in an exciting new programme that could result in a £2.5m investment for the Forest of Dean from the Heritage Lottery Fund. 'Foresters' Forest' is working with local communities to develop 50 projects exploring the Forest's natural, built and cultural heritage.

The projects need local volunteers to help with a range of activities. There are a wide range of projects to get involved in, such as surveys for bats, ponds, veteran trees, waterways or archaeology. Or people might be interested in Forest literature or music or have a wealth of Forest experience that they could provide as

“Foresters' Forest' is working with local communities to develop 50 projects exploring the forest's natural, built and cultural heritage”

an oral history. Full training will be given to volunteers so there is a chance for people to learn new skills. If you would like to register your interest as a volunteer please email forestersforest@fvaf.co.uk or call 01594 822073.

Some surveys are happening now to identify important areas for wildlife and to look at how they can be made bigger, better and more connected. This work will incorporate the needs of all the rare and special plants and animals, so that we will create an enhanced Forest maintained and monitored by Foresters.

You might want to learn



about the ancient, veteran and notable trees within our area. This project plans to raise awareness about the ecological and cultural significance of these trees, recruiting volunteers across the Forest to survey and record information about them.

If you think the Forest has lots of trees, you might be surprised at the number of ponds, currently estimated at about 140. We need to survey all these ponds in order to gain an overview of where they are, what condition they are in and what species live in them. The loss of ponds has led to a decline in the variety of wildlife, so future work may involve the creation of new ponds or clearing vegetation from existing ponds.

The waterways that link ponds are also important to help species move from one area to another. Volunteers will be needed to walk along waterways to check for barriers that might inhibit the progress of salmon and eels back into the Forest.

The Forest has an immense amount of built heritage remains but many people who see the beautiful green Forest today will be unaware of its darker, industrial past when thousands of men worked in the mines and quarries. The Hidden Heritage App currently in development will reveal 'then and now' photos which portray the history of selected sites. Once this first App has been created, it will form the template for other potential heritage trails which could be in your village or around sites near you.

In order to investigate what lies beneath the Forest an archaeology project will be asking volunteers to validate



Taster session for the Pond survey being run by David Dewsbury

'LIDAR' data which is a way of looking at our landscape as if the trees were not there. This might identify previously unknown features or sites which are still hidden within the Forest.

The Forestry Commission are the lead partner for the Foresters' Forest programme and will also be involved with delivering some of the projects. A new geocache trail will be created to start and finish at Hopewell Colliery. This will tell the story of the Freeminers by hiding artefacts and information about their mining history and practices on a route from Hopewell, up and around Bixslade, taking in the remaining mines and quarries on the way.

The Foresters' Forest projects will help all Foresters (those born and bred here, those who have moved here or work here) and visitors to the Forest understand more about our heritage, why the Forest is special and what we can do to ensure that it remains so. Find out more about the projects on Facebook (Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership), on its website <http://www.forestersforest.forestry.gov.uk/> or by contacting Sue Middleton, the Programme Manager sue.middleton@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.

Speech House colliery on the site which is now Beechenhurst



FORESTERS'
FOREST



CPRE Gloucestershire AWARDS

THE ANNUAL CPRE Gloucestershire Awards ceremony took place on 7th October at the Gambier Parry Hall, Highnam. Six excellent projects were recognised this year and representatives of the organisations involved received plaques and certificates, presented by Viscount Bledisloe. The projects are:

- **Coln Valley Village Hall** A much needed new village hall appropriate in scale and design to its setting, built on the footprint of a former hall, and conceived and delivered by the local community.
- **Horsbere Brook Flood Storage Area** A major flood defence scheme on the eastern edge of Gloucester designed to create an attractive wildlife area to be managed as a community nature reserve.

- **Rural Innovation Centre** An attractive new training centre for the Royal Agricultural University imaginatively developed from a redundant farm barns complex at Harnhill and incorporating renewable energy generation and rainwater harvesting.
- **Tirley Pressure Reduction Installation** An excellent example of successfully fitting a major engineering structure into the landscape through careful design and generous landscaping.
- **Sly's Close** An outstanding small housing scheme using Cotswold materials and vernacular design funded through a charitable trust to provide affordable homes for local people in Northleach.
- **Whitcroft Railway Station** A reconstruction of the former station at Whitcroft on the Dean Forest Railway, faithfully recreating the original structure and bringing environmental gains and supporting local tourism.

More detail and photographs of the projects will be included in the Spring 2016 Newsletter.

REMOVING TRAFFIC SIGN CLUTTER

THE DEPARTMENT for Transport announced in August that it was setting up a taskforce to "obliterate pointless road signs". The taskforce, which will be overseen by Conservative MP Sir Alan Duncan, is to make recommendations for how clutter can be reduced, and what could be done to change the culture within local authorities to help this aim.

A consultation on a series of proposals to reduce clutter has also been launched. Proposals include both banning adverts and distracting logos and putting a 'remove by' date on temporary signs.

This follows an earlier government initiative to reduce roadside clutter which we reported back in 2013 (when the same example was used by the government then as in the recent press release). The consultation will close on 6 October and the taskforce is due to report by December 2015.



SEEKING A NEW BRANCH CHAIRMAN

NEXT YEAR, Charlie Watson, who has led the Branch for the last five years as Chairman, will be retiring at the 2016 AGM. The Branch is therefore seeking a successor.

Gloucestershire is one of the most active and well funded of CPRE's County Branches. The Chairman's role is to continue to provide leadership to CPRE Gloucestershire, its Trustees and members. It is a voluntary job which will occupy some eight or more hours a week.

The specification for the job can be found on the CPRE Gloucestershire website or is available from the Branch Office via 01452 309783 or info@cpreglos.org.uk. Among other things this sets out the following qualities required:

- an ability to inspire and ensure success;
- an empathy with CPRE philosophy and interests;
- a good understanding (but not necessarily expert knowledge) of rural issues;
- good communication and networking skills;
- experience of chairing meetings and committee work and
- impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences

Please let us know of anyone whom might be interested in becoming Branch Chairman. If you, or they, wish to speak to the current Branch Chairman, please contact Charlie Watson on 01242 230008. To apply for this role please send a brief CV and covering letter by email to the Branch Office:

info@cpreglos.org.uk

Berkeley Vale

Prue Vernon, Chairman

WE HAVE had a busy summer which included attending the Inspector's examination of the Stroud Local Plan. We are relieved to know that we now have an approved 7 year land supply but have to accommodate 4,200 houses, 200 more than originally put forward, and to plan for double the number of anticipated local jobs, ie 12,500, intended to reduce the need for long distance commuting. The large development 'West of Stonehouse' is part of the housing provision; it will provide 1,350 houses and include a primary school, local shops, playing fields etc. Now that we are obliged to accommodate

this development we must ensure that it is an example of excellent design, layout and quality of build.

Our AGM was held at Woodchester Mansion when we had a fascinating talk on the history of the Mansion by one of its trustees. Sadly, our President of many, many years, Mr John Berkeley, has retired. He has been most supportive of all CPRE concerns, particularly in the Berkeley Vale, and has kept up to date with the many activities and developments in the Branch. I am sure he will continue to keep an eye on what is happening. We welcome a new committee member, Mr

Christopher Creswell, who is knowledgeable about the Dursley and Cam areas.

Solar arrays are proliferating – the large one at Cambridge is up and running; so is the one at Lower Wick. Now there are applications for one by Cam and Dursley Downton. There is also an application for a really huge one at Awre, opposite Frampton on Severn (and in Forest of Dean District – see below). Depending on where you stand in the Vale these could be considered inoffensive but from the escarpment, Frocester Hill and the Cotswold Way, they are all too visible and will be even more obvious in winter.

Due to its location and lack of facilities, Kingswood is not considered a suitable village for more development in the new Local Plan, but it is still the target for significant development. The most recent, for 51 houses, was withdrawn at the last minute but another, for 95, is outstanding. Whitminster is having the same problems. A large application for 100 houses on the Uley side of Dursley adjacent to the AONB was refused. The refusal was confirmed at appeal – 'impact on the AONB' which was encouraging. The application for 186 houses to the rear of Canonbury Street, Berkeley is still to be determined.

“The large development 'West of Stonehouse' will provide 1,350 houses”

View from Downham towards the Cambridge array and Awre



Prue Vernon

Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury

Tom Hancock, Chairman

BY THE kind permission of Tim Wiltshire, the District's 2015 AGM took place at Brockworth Tithe Barn preceded by a visit to the fine gardens of adjacent Brockworth Court. Following the AGM, a representative of Great Western Air Ambulance gave a fascinating insight into this life-saving organisation.

The invitation to the AGM contained a plea for successors to Chairman and Secretary, both looking to retire after many years.

As no nominees were forthcoming, both Tom Hancock and David Bayne agreed to continue in these roles in an acting capacity. The Branch Chairman has since written to District members again seeking volunteers.

Sadly, the proposed visit to Tyntesfield in July had to be cancelled for insufficient support but a visit to Bletchley Park is all set for late September. Meanwhile, a damp but productive August Bank Holiday was spent manning the CPRE tent at the Winchcombe

show when some 60 interested people provided contact details, induced by entry to a draw for a handsome hamper.

A separate article provides the latest position regarding the Joint Core Strategy for the District area. We are extremely grateful to the officers of the County Branch for all the time and effort put into presenting the CPRE case, including repeated representations at the Examination. In the same timeframe, the District has submitted detailed comments on the emerging Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Local Plans which will sit below the JCS.

As well as responding to planning applications, the District has been very busy dealing with six planning appeals with public inquiries. For many of these

we have again engaged David Crofts to present the CPRE case. Three appeals have been at Alderton where, encouragingly, the two most significant have been dismissed. However an appeal at Twynning has been upheld while the result at Gotherington is still awaited. A seventh inquiry, regarding one of the major development proposals at Leckhampton, starts towards the end of September. To date Tewkesbury Borough Council has yet to determine the longstanding application at Farm Lane on the edge of Leckhampton, where the number of houses has recently been reduced by seven to 369. Nor has Cheltenham Borough Council yet determined the application to build in the AONB at Glenfall Way.

“a plea for successors to Chairman and Secretary, both looking to retire”

Buttercups bloom on threatened land at Leckhampton

Martin Williams



Forest of Dean

Mike Mackey, Chairman

CPRE GLOUCESTERSHIRE has submitted a strong objection to a planning application for what would be one of the biggest solar farms in the country. It is proposed to be built in one of the most stunning areas of Gloucestershire, overlooking the River Severn at Awre. If approved, an area of over 250 acres of farmland would be covered by around 185,000 solar panels, each standing 2.8 metres high, together with a substation, fencing and CCTV cameras. CPRE Gloucestershire supports the use of sustainable generation, including photovoltaic solar panels, but is opposed to the unwarranted urbanisation of the rural landscape and the loss of the nation's farmland for food production. The sheer scale of the proposed development, which would occupy almost the whole of the beautiful Awre peninsula, would blight the landscape, potentially jeopardising the Forest of Dean's tourist economy.

On 28th July 2014, the Government Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) opened the

14th round for companies seeking licences to explore for onshore oil and gas. Following DECC's review of the applications, 159 license blocks have been brought forward for further consideration. Each of these blocks has been assessed with reference to the Habitats Regulations and this assessment is currently the subject of a

public consultation. Four of the blocks lie wholly or principally within the Forest of Dean. Based on the information available at present, CPRE does not oppose the exploitation of shale gas in principle. Our primary aim is to ensure that the location, the design and the operation of shale gas sites do not harm the beauty and tranquillity of

the English countryside. We are also concerned to ensure that the natural resources of the countryside, especially water, are not polluted or used unsustainably. We shall oppose any development proposals which fail to meet these conditions.

CPRE Forest of Dean District will have had a stand at the Forest Showcase Festival at Speech House on 4 October.

“One of the biggest solar farms in the country is proposed in one of the most stunning areas of Gloucestershire”

Bob Brown

Site of proposed solar array at Awre

North Cotswolds

Peter Loveday, Chairman

“The Secretary of State dismissed the Bovis Homes Stow Appeal”

WE WERE delighted that, contrary to expectation and before the May General Election, the Secretary of State dismissed the Bovis Homes Stow Appeal in line with the Inspector's recommendation. The main reason was spoliation of the landscape immediately outside the town. Meanwhile, in May and June respectively, CPRE

wrote opposing two new major housing development applications threatening Chipping Campden. One proposal is on land allocated for housing in the Cotswold District Council (CDC) draft Plan; the other is on a fresh site. To our surprise and encouragement, in July both applications were refused by CDC Planning Committee. Also refused was a locally-supported

application for a new surgery along with 5 houses for Stow.

Later In July we commented on a proposal for some 33 houses on the edge of Blockley. We drew attention to potential inconsistency in the treatment of different local parcels of land by CDC following the decisions concerning the Chipping Campden sites. A decision is

still awaited.

On 25th June there was a large attendance of about 48 people at our AGM held in Campden House, Chipping Campden, thanks to Philip Smith, a long-time supporter and past Chair of the District. Clive Aslet, Editor-at-Large of Country Life, gave a talk on Cotswold history, starting with reference to William Cobbett's 'Rural Rides'.

South Cotswolds

Nicholas Dummett, Chairman

“A large development south of Chesterton remains the best option to meet the need for housing round Cirencester”

Planning: As we go to press we are expecting Cotswold District Council to publish draft policies for the emerging local plan. As in the past, we will work closely with CPRE Tetbury and North Cotswolds Districts to provide a combined response to the consultation. On the housing consultation on which I reported in the last newsletter, the new issue has been the proposal that Cotswold Airport (formerly called Kemble airfield) be developed as a new town – Tetbury District have reported elsewhere on this unacceptable proposal. As far as CPRE is concerned, a large development south of Chesterton remains the best option to meet the need for housing round Cirencester in the longer term.

On planning applications we have been dealing with, three raise issues of principle:

- 30 houses on the southern side of Gloucester Road, Andoversford. As well as having unacceptable landscape effects on the AONB, the proposal flies in the face of the agreed pattern of development for the village. This is to concentrate new housing behind the existing housing on the other side of the road, although this will not be needed for a number of years. It seems likely that the Council will refuse this application.
- 11 houses in Poulton. Notwithstanding the effect on neighbouring existing properties, the site is relatively discreetly tucked away and would have only minor effects on the more general landscape. However in principle we object to more housing in small villages (where

the result would be to increase commuting) unless it contributes substantially to meeting any need for affordable housing. Although this proposal includes 5 affordable units, it fails to demonstrate that there is a need in Poulton or that the houses proposed would meet this need. It looks as though the idea is to provide token affordable housing to get permission for desirable free-market housing.

- 92 acres of solar panels at Preston. We do not object in principle to solar farms but believe there are many locations in the district where they can be located such that they are simply not visible. This proposal is enormous and would have unacceptable visual impact from public rights of way in the area. This is important even though

the site is not in the AONB. We will note with interest what the planning committee decides at its next meeting.

Events: The District AGM was held in May at Harnhill near Cirencester in the Rural Innovation Centre of the Royal Agricultural University. After the AGM, Mike Draper, a senior lecturer at the University and also an active farmer with cattle on Minchinhampton Common, gave an engaging and illuminating talk about the changing nature of British farming. He illustrated how farming is becoming less profitable thanks, for example, to technological advances elsewhere in the world, which drive down prices, and increasing regulation from Brussels. Farmers are being forced to look at diversification and environmental schemes in order to maintain incomes.

As an aside, he commented that if Britain left the EU it would hammer farming, but since farming accounts for only 0.5% of Britain's GDP, farmers have little political influence. He described how current and possible future economic changes would affect the landscape – for example, through greater use of farmland for tourism, renewable energy and other speculative ventures.

Following the talk, Members were given a tour of the Innovation Centre, where rural skills are taught in workshops alongside laboratories for more academic work, followed by a tour of the university's farmland in a covered wagon. All were impressed by the conversion of the former barns into valuable teaching space. In spite of the windy and rather damp day, all agreed that it was a stimulating visit and that they had learnt a great deal.



Michael St John

Members touring the RAU Innovation Centre at Harnhill

Stroud

Pippa Schwartz,
Secretary

“There is apparently a new application on its way for about 24 houses at Baxter’s Field”

STROUD DISTRICT has been busy with both planning and promotional events this summer.

Several new planning applications heralded the start of summer, most notably an application for up to 80 houses at Grange Fields, on the northern side of Stroud, and one for 31 houses in The Knapp in Minchinhampton. Both sites lie outside the settlement boundary and within the AONB and both applications just precede the new Local Plan which will, we hope, be finalised by the end of the year. With the approval

of the County Branch we engaged a professional planning consultant to handle the objections which were very well prepared and written. The Grange Fields application is still undecided, but the Knapp application has been withdrawn before a decision was reached.

In Stroud itself, two major applications from last year still rumble on. Gladman abandoned the judicial review for Baxter’s Field at the 11th hour but there is apparently a new smaller-scale application on its way, for about 24 houses on the same site. The second

application, for 100 houses at Rodborough Fields, was refused by the District Council but, as expected, an appeal has been lodged. We continue to defend these two sites from these unnecessary and damaging intrusions into the countryside.

The District Committee has sadly lost some members over the last few months. David Hudson, who had been a member for several decades including a long stint as Chairman, retired in March as did Simon Arundel who had been with us for a couple of years. While not short of enthusiasm here in Stroud, we are very

anxious to find some new recruits who can help us with the valuable work we undertake to protect the beautiful Stroud valleys from unwelcome urbanisation.

The District AGM was held, most enjoyably, in July at Stroud Brewery in Thrupp. The District again had a stall at Stroud Show a couple of weeks later, this year gloriously sunny. This was very well supported and we are most grateful to our green-fingered Treasurer who provided some wonderful plants and jams to sell. We had another stall at the Minchinhampton Country Fair on 12th September.

The CPRE stall at the Stroud Show, with Margaret Fedrick who superbly supplied and manned it



Nick Turner

Tetbury

Jeremy Lodwick,
Chairman

THE DISTRICT annual summer supper and AGM was a great success. We had an attendance of approximately forty people, fairly evenly split between existing members of CPRE and other guests, including local civic dignitaries. Many thanks go to Roger Seelig for hosting the event again in the lovely setting of Tetbury Upton House. The committee was re-elected en bloc and I officially took

over the chairmanship from Giles Preston. Giles' tenure as chairman was short but highly productive and very effective in renewing and refreshing the Committee and giving us a real sense of purpose. Aided and abetted by Amanda Preston as Secretary and Richard Mead as Treasurer we are in fine fettle. A real note of thanks is due to Charles Nicholls who served as Treasurer for more than twenty years.

At the time of writing there are not too many active campaigns on the go in the Tetbury area but we are keeping closely involved in two specific issues. I now

represent CPRE on the Tetbury Neighbourhood Planning Group. This initiative was somewhat de-energised earlier this year but has had a new lease of life with a new chair, funded by Tetbury Town Council. A Neighbourhood Plan for Tetbury is now a realistic possibility sometime in 2016.

We are also keeping a close eye on the Cotswold Airport submission for the airfield site to be a part of Cotswold District Council's housing allocation in their Local Plan. This is a bad site for housing – it would create a new town on a high ridge, visible for miles around – and we do not think it is a realistic proposal

“Cotswold Airport ... is a bad site for housing”

with regard to traffic, access and sustainability. We are biding our time before coming out with a definitive opinion: the prevailing mood in the locality does not appear to be in favour, so we are not minded to take a lead at this stage. CPRE is on record as supporting the existing plans for the development of the Chesterton site outside Cirencester and we do not see any reason to change this stance.

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