



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

FIELD WORK

Spring 2017

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The end of the road?

New research published by CPRE in March reveals that road-building is failing to provide the congestion relief and economic boost promised, while devastating the environment.

The research, the largest ever independent review of completed road schemes in England, arrives as Highways England starts consulting on which road schemes will receive funding, set to triple to £3 billion a year by 2020. 2014's 'Road Investment Strategy' was announced as the biggest roads programme since the 1970s, and is set to start building 1,300 extra miles of road lanes at the end of 2019.

In view of the direct loss of countryside caused by previous road programmes, and their wider impacts on patterns of development, there has never been a more important time to test the evidence behind the road-building programme. CPRE commissioned consultants Transport for Quality of Life Community Interest Company (TfQL) to examine 86 official studies of completed road schemes. The TfQL study examined 13 road schemes for changes in traffic levels; all 86 schemes for landscape impact; 25 road schemes where economic benefits had been used to justify development; and 30 to 40 road schemes for possible reductions in median journey time.

The research was able to draw on more than 80 post-opening project evaluations (POPEs) of road schemes, many of which were carried out five years after the road scheme opening, as

well as two overall reviews that sought to evaluate all their findings together. Four geographically-diverse case studies were also examined in detail, including two featured in the 2006 CPRE report, *Beyond Transport Infrastructure*, thereby allowing impacts up to 20 years after opening the new roads to be assessed. The researchers visited the roads, interviewed local people and studied wider traffic data on comparable roads across regions. They also investigated economic trends in similar comparator areas where there had been no changes to the road network.

Drawing on the research, CPRE's report, *The End of the Road?*, directly challenges government claims that 'the economic gains from road investment are beyond doubt'; that road-building will lead to 'mile a minute' journeys; and that the impact on the environment will be limited 'as far as possible'. The report shows how road building over the past two decades has repeatedly failed to live up to similar aims.

The key findings on traffic

Traffic was found to increase much more in road corridors with new schemes than background traffic in the surrounding area. Schemes completed eight to 20 years ago demonstrated a traffic increase of 47%, while traffic more than doubled in one case. There were negligible reductions in journey times - the research showed median

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FIELDWORK

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Editor: Oliver Hilliam
(fieldwork@cpre.org.uk)

Contributors: CPRE Sussex, Friends of the Peak District, Samantha Harding, CPRE Kent, Sophie Spencer, CPRE Shropshire, CPRE Bedfordshire, CPRE Somerset, Graeme Willis, Nick Thompson, Louise Hartley, CPRE Northamptonshire, CPRE Herefordshire, ELF, CPRE Surrey, Paul Miner, Jane Seymour, Neil Sinden.

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CPRE works locally and nationally to stand up for the countryside: to protect it from the threats it faces, and to shape its future for the better.

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Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

5–11 Lavington Street
London, SE1 0NZ
Tel: 020 7981 2800
Fax: 020 7981 2899
info@cpre.org.uk
www.cpre.org.uk

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The end of the road?

Continued from p.1

savings of 90 seconds' journey time during peak periods and one minute at non-peak times.

We repeatedly see the cycle of more roads generating more traffic and congestion which leads to demands for more roads. And yet, road schemes failed to deliver the boost to jobs and local economies so often promised. Of roads promoted for their benefits to the local economy, just one in five demonstrated any evidence at all of economic benefit, and that was weak. Furthermore, every case study road scheme resulted in traffic pressure on adjoining roads.

The A120 dual carriageway Stansted to Braintree has created pressure to make the A120 east of Braintree a dual carriageway; junctions on either side of the new A46 from Newark to Lincoln are now above capacity, leading to plans for a southern bypass that will link to the A46 dual carriageway; the local council is seeking to enlarge junctions and sections of the old road bypassed by the A34 Newbury bypass, because development has renewed traffic pressure in place of promised traffic 'relief'; and there is pressure to widen and extend the M65 Blackburn Southern Bypass because of congestion, largely due to car-dependent development alongside the scheme.

Impacts on local landscapes and communities

More than half of the road schemes analysed harmed protected landscapes and designated environmental sites. 33 schemes affected an area that had either a national or local landscape designation. Of these, three schemes affected National Parks and ten Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Twenty-five affected areas locally designated for their landscape; 11 schemes affected places with heritage designations, including Grade I and II listed buildings and at least two Registered Parks and Gardens designed by Capability Brown; 20 schemes damaged areas that were nationally or locally designated for their importance to biodiversity, while 14 damaged ancient woodlands.

“More than half of the road schemes analysed harmed protected landscapes and designated environmental sites”

Overall, there was evidence that 80% of schemes built damaged the surrounding environment. The case studies also revealed specific examples where attempts to protect rare animals and plants failed. All four case study schemes showed how road-building is

“The current Road Investment Strategy should focus explicitly on keeping roads in good repair and reducing their environmental impacts”

closely associated with a pattern of development that is highly car-dependent. In Essex, over 13,000 new dwellings are anticipated at various rural locations along the 'old' A120. Road schemes were also found to be associated with the development of business parks and retail parks that rely on people driving and undermine town centre businesses.

The findings suggest we need major changes across transport policy and beyond, in particular to: the model of using road-building to drive economic development; the tools for assessing road schemes versus other transport options; and the evaluation of completed road schemes so that appropriate lessons can be learned.

CPRE's conclusions

Chief Executive, Shaun Spiers, said: “This powerful study demonstrates that we need a major overhaul of national roads policy. Predict and provide – building more roads to meet demand, in turn generating demand – will fail. We need truly sustainable transport policies, founded on the principles of smarter travel: reducing the need to travel; increasing travel choices; and maximising efficiency through new technology. In a small, crowded, affluent country like ours, we cannot possibly build our way to free-flowing roads. We need cleverer solutions – solutions that will improve people's quality of life, benefit the economy and safeguard the countryside. I hope that government, both locally and nationally, will heed the evidence set out in this report and be brave enough to set a new direction of travel.”

CPRE is calling on the Government to focus on a new mobility investment strategy that can realise the potential to widen travel choices. The current Road Investment Strategy should focus explicitly on keeping roads in good repair and reducing their environmental impacts, rather than increasing capacity. This would make our transport system more sustainable and efficient by reducing reliance on cars, cutting carbon emissions and improving air quality.

Ralph Smyth, CPRE's head of infrastructure and legal, concluded: “This landmark research shows that any benefits from road building are far smaller than thought but the harm much worse. The Government should reopen old rail lines and harness new technology to make more efficient use of road space. It should promote new housing on brownfield sites closer to jobs and services, rather than unleash car-dependent sprawl on green fields. Building ever bigger roads should be the last resort – not the default choice.”

BREAKthrough

How our work is making a difference

South Downs sell-off averted

CPRE Sussex campaigners were celebrating in early March when Eastbourne Council listened to local residents and halted the sale of iconic downland in the South Downs National Park.

The council received a total of 4,373 opinion slips back from residents who were asked in the Eastbourne Review to choose between the council selling 3,000 acres of their downland farms or cutting public services. A total of 75 per cent of valid polls received (2,632) voted in favour of service cuts, while 25 per cent (858) voted to sell the farms.

The branch had been working alongside groups including The South Downs Society and Eastbourne Friends of the Earth to urge the council to reconsider, arguing the historical significance of the land. Acquired by the council - through an Act of Parliament - in 1926 for the benefit of the people of

Eastbourne, the downland had been under great threat from the possibility of being turned into giant housing estates. Since that time, CPRE – and Eastbourne Borough Council – have worked hard to protect the downs from development and to conserve and improve the landscape, wildlife habitats and opportunities for public access and enjoyment, culminating in the creation of the South Downs National Park.

CPRE Sussex had argued that despite National Park status, private ownership would make it harder to increase access and enhance landscape and wildlife – including through re-establishing new areas of precious, and slowly eroding, chalk grassland habitat. They also pointed out that the farms provided a steady income stream and that the sale would jeopardise Eastbourne's sense of place and heritage, as well as its tourist economy. In February, the Daily Telegraph reported

that the 1920s campaign to buy the land had helped inspire the formation of CPRE. They quoted CPRE Sussex director, Kia Trainor, who said: "We appreciate that the Council, like many across the country, is hard pressed in terms of finances. However the iconic Eastbourne Downland is amongst the jewels in its asset portfolio and should not be squandered for short-term financial gain."

The branch believes that public ownership of the farms ensures public accountability and a co-ordinated approach to land management and access. They are delighted that the continuity of ownership will help ensure the future of an internationally important landscape and ecosystem, with huge benefits for the local economy and the integrity of the National Park.

Find out more at: cpresussex.org.uk/news/news-from-sussex-districts/national-park

Celebrating the Peak District

Friends of the Peak District, who represent CPRE in the National Park, were thrilled when their fantastic new Peak District Boundary Walk project was shortlisted for a public vote in Tesco's #BagsofHelp initiative during February.

Only three groups in every Tesco region were shortlisted to receive the cash award, including the Friends' unique 192 mile long distance walk following the stunning scenery around the National Park boundary. It follows existing paths, tracks and quiet lanes and enjoys a wonderful mix of all that the beautiful Peak District has to offer: from dramatic crags and open moorland to quiet

woodlands and popular trails; as well as industrial heritage, breath-taking views and some little known backwaters through rarely trod corners of the Park.

The current Peak District National Park boundary is almost identical to the one drawn up and proposed by legendary Friends campaigners, Ethel and Gerald Haythornthwaite, 80 years ago. Working to create the walk has been going on for two years, and the finished route is a fitting celebration of not only the huge diversity of our first national park but also its historical significance. The trail will be launched by CPRE President Emma Bridgewater on 17 June,

with a 'first footing' of the route setting off from Buxton and 20 other designated start points.

The Friends have been campaigning hard to defend the beauty and setting of the National Park, and were delighted by the Planning Inspectorate's December ruling that the proposed Griffie Grange windfarm near Matlock, hard on the southern boundary of the National Park, would not go ahead. The Inspector recognised that the key problem was the harm to landscape and visual amenity in the unspoilt landscape that forms the setting of the National Park, and campaigners congratulated Derbyshire Dales District Council for standing its ground.

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Current issues

A land use strategy for England?

CPRE's March pamphlet, *Landlines: why we need a strategic approach to land*, featured ideas from a number of experts on how to tackle England's fragmentary approach to land use.

Shaun Spiers' foreword suggested a Royal Commission to investigate and develop a national land use strategy, while former Environment Secretary Lord Deben (John Gummer) called for a government Department of Land Use to encourage the use of brownfield sites and "enable a much tougher approach to development on green fields. It would ensure that local authorities concentrate on the integrated planning of our towns and cities and it would make developers recognise that there would no longer be the easy option of using virgin land." Landscape Institute president, Merrick Denton-Thompson, suggested the creation of "a new National Rural Land Management Policy, articulated at a landscape scale through the family of protected landscapes and character areas, providing the brief for individual estate and farm management plans."

The pamphlet argued for greater national coordination on a longer term approach that can enhance both the environment and the economy. Belinda Gordon, CPRE's head of government and rural affairs, said "a national land use strategy would bring treasury and infrastructure officials on board with environmentalists, and help deliver "green transport networks, natural flood defences, sustainable housing developments, and local food systems".

Mapping recognition

CPRE's work with LUC (Land Use Consultants) on our Night Blight light pollution mapping has been nominated for the Campaign of the Year by the Environmental Data Services (ENDS) Environmental Impact Awards.

NEWSroundup

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

CPRE Bedfordshire help save historic common

Thanks in part to CPRE campaigning, a proposal for a development of 390 homes on Freeman's Common in Brickhill has been withdrawn as a possible site for housing in Bedfordshire Borough Council's draft Local Plan for 2035.

CPRE Bedfordshire had criticised its inclusion in the plan last November, arguing that the 12.5 hectare area of open countryside is a "hugely important open green space, with fabulous views". This part of Bedford town's north-eastern urban fringe was established as Common Land in the late 1700s and is now held in trust by the council for the people of the borough. The Common forms part of a green corridor extending from Clapham all along Bedford's northern perimeter, through to the River Great Ouse. Although it can be

accessed by public footpaths, the Common is currently rented out by the trustees and used as farming land.

At a council meeting in February, Councillor Charles Royden moved a resolution asking that Freeman's Common be withdrawn from the list of sites for potential housing, saying afterwards: "It has been specifically mentioned by the Government Planning Inspector that the site is unsuitable for development." The resolution was carried at the meeting, meaning positive news after a long campaign by CPRE Bedfordshire and others to protect this really important open green space.

A spokesperson for CPRE Bedfordshire said: "We are delighted that Freeman's Common has been saved from housing development and we

congratulate Bedford Borough Council on their decision to withdraw the land from their draft Local Plan 2035. We look forward to the Council discussing the future of Freeman's Common with local people with a view to opening up the land to increased public access and improving biodiversity by the planting of trees. Green spaces on the urban fringe of towns like Bedford are extremely important places where residents of all ages can experience tranquillity and peace of mind. They provide green corridors essential to our wildlife." In other welcome news, CPRE Bedfordshire celebrated defeat for a Green Belt development of 145 homes in Eaton Bray, which was refused after being re-submitted.

Find out more at: www.cprebeds.org.uk

Progress towards a Deposit Return System

With more than 24 billion drinks containers being sold in the UK every year, CPRE is continuing to campaign for a Deposit Return System (DRS), which our research has shown could create jobs and be introduced at no cost to the taxpayer.

Thanks to the monetary incentive, such schemes wield an unrivalled return rate of between 70-98.5% with an associated reduction in other container litter of up to 80%. We currently recycle less than 50% in the UK. But we've already seen what a relatively small economic incentive can do here in England – the 5p charge on plastic bags led to an 85% drop in its first six months alone.

The success of deposit return systems in boosting recycling and reducing litter overseas have not gone unnoticed and we've seen much high profile support. Sky plc

launched its #OceanRescue campaign, with one of the core recommendations being a series of UK-wide deposit return systems for plastic bottles – endorsed by Prince Charles and Richard Branson. With the beverage industry traditionally fighting against the introduction of new deposit return schemes, we were delighted that Coca-Cola recently announced that it thought a deposit system in Scotland could work well. Another company that has assessed the potential of deposit return systems is Suez Recycling and Recovery UK, part of the global waste giant Suez Environment. Suez UK recently said that deposit systems are a 'win win' for the environment and the economy.

Any remaining arguments need to be further investigated, and we were pleased that the Government's Environmental Audit Committee has just

launched an inquiry into drinks containers (and coffee cups) and what solutions could be implemented to prevent them being littered and landfilled. Our research estimated we could have a return rate of 90% in the UK. This is significant, as although kerbside collections are generally successful, some containers still end up in black bags, and many become dangerous and unsightly litter alongside our roads, rivers and coastlines.

Besides the huge increase in recycling and the reduction in litter, there is a further benefit to DRS. When pollster Ipsos Mori asked people whether they would consider donating their deposit to a local charity, if given the opportunity to do so, a heart-warming 12% of people said they always would. With an average deposit of 15p, that would see local communities receive over £432 million every year.

dates of note

Planning for the future of National Parks

CPRE joined forces with Campaign for National Parks and the National Trust in December, to launch independent research about major development in, and on the edges of, National Parks.

Researchers at Sheffield Hallam University investigated, in unprecedented detail, the national policy to control major development in National Parks. The researchers interviewed National Park Authority planners across the country and examined the decisions on 70 planning applications and 15 detailed case studies, including solar farms, bypasses and football stadiums. Current threats from major development included the world's largest potash mine (by volume) in the North York Moors National Park, approved last year but predicted to result in an annual reduction of £35 million in direct tourism expenditure. Other threats include a nuclear power station near the Lake District; major road widening in the South Downs and Peak District; increased quarrying

in the Yorkshire Dales; and fracking in a number of National Parks, including Exmoor.

National Parks' (and AONBs') level of protection means that major development should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. However, the research found that interpretations of 'major development' vary between the National Parks, and decisions to approve planning applications often reflect the Government mood at the time, with policy changes that lean toward economic growth rather than putting landscape protection first. CPRE and our partners would like to see improvements to national planning guidance so that there is more clarity about both the interpretation of 'major developments' and what 'exceptional circumstances' may allow them. This should begin with Government reconfirming its commitment to National Parks in the forthcoming 25-year plan for the environment, by clearly

setting out exactly how they will ensure their long-term protection and enhancement.

The research also found that European regulations such as the Birds and Habitats Directives play an important role in safeguarding biodiversity and wildlife in National Parks – so it is vital that such protections for nature are maintained, post-Brexit. We'd also like to see Natural England, the Government's advisors on the environment, take a more active role in ensuring that National Parks are protected from unsuitable major development. National Parks are living landscapes – but if they are chipped away by inappropriate development then we risk irreparably damaging the 'crown jewels' of the English landscape. With that in mind, we'll be working closely with CNP and the National Trust to do what we can to improve the future of England's astounding National Parks, for the benefit of current and future generations.

A Greener UK, post-Brexit

The Greener UK coalition of 13 major environmental organisations, including CPRE, launched its manifesto in March, calling on the UK Government to restore and enhance the environment as part of its plans for leaving the European Union.

Greener UK is looking at four key areas for our environment: food and farming; fisheries and marine; climate and energy; and environment and wildlife laws. Together we have produced a manifesto, setting out the eight actions necessary to make the vision of a greener UK a reality. There are three core areas in the manifesto: secure the benefits of existing environmental laws as the UK leaves the European Union, and pass an ambitious new Environment Act; secure the UK's global climate leadership;

and introduce new policies and investment that create thriving farming and fishing industries.

We hope some of the ideas in CPRE's well received 2016 report, *New Model Farming: resilience through diversity*, will form part of the Government's vision and establish a sound future for farming in the post-Brexit era. CPRE's chief executive Shaun Spiers is leaving the organisation to head up the charity which is coordinating the Greener UK coalition, Green Alliance, saying: "Brexit presents the biggest challenge and the greatest opportunities the environment and countryside have faced in Britain for at least a generation. The opportunity to lead Green Alliance at this time was too good to resist." 199 MPs from across the UK's political parties have so far signed up to the

Greener UK coalition's Pledge for the Environment.

The Greener UK manifesto calls specifically for the UK to: "lead the world by setting measurable milestones for environmental restoration and high standards for pollution and resource efficiency, as part of a strong 25 year plan; create sustainable farming and land use policies that deliver real value, by investing taxpayers' money in public benefits, including abundant nature, clean water, climate change mitigation and beautiful landscapes; and lead the world with high environmental and animal welfare standards in agriculture, to establish a global reputation for quality food that people can trust."

Find out more at <http://greeneruk.org/index.php>

CPRE Sussex Bug Hunt

A children's activity for the Whitsun half term. Professor Dave Goulson from Sussex University will lead an afternoon discovering bees, butterflies and numerous other bugs.

2nd June. Doctor's Orders Café, University of Sussex, Brighton & Sussex Medical School, Falmer. 2-4pm

Find more details and book (£5) via www.cpresussex.org.uk/events

Test Valley open meeting on fracking

Caroline Dibden, a petroleum geologist and a member of CPRE's national advisory group on fracking, will speak on fracking and the countryside - facts and impacts.

3rd May, Stockbridge Town Hall, from 7pm. Booking is not required.

For more info, email moyagrove@gmail.com

Peak District Magnificent Walk 2017

This 20-mile challenge walk will include the stunning Dovedale and Manifold Valley. Two shorter, but equally beautiful walks will also be on offer.

20th May. Royal Oak Inn, Wetton. Departs 9pm

Find out more at www.friendsofthepeak.org.uk/whats-on/events/

Open Farm Sunday

Visit your local Open Farms and discover at first-hand how they produce our food and enhance the countryside.

11th June, at participating farms

Find your nearest farm at <https://farmsunday.org/visit-a-farm>

Current issues

Road freight in Kent

CPRE Kent recently responded to Kent County Council's Freight Action Plan consultation by expressing concern about the negative impact of HGVs, including their impact on air pollution, noise, litter and rural verges and hedgerows.

The branch response also reiterated its opposition to a single gigantic lorry park as a solution to Operation Stack, and concluded:

"We recognise that KCC is keen to maximise the economic benefit to the county of the freight industry, but question whether the highlighted benefits actually take into account the net cost of the negative impacts of HGVs. The damage and wear to road surfaces caused by HGVs is hugely excessive in comparison with smaller vehicles, and research from the Campaign for Better Transport has shown that HGVs are disproportionately more damaging in terms of their contribution to air pollution and the number of serious traffic incidents. These external costs are not borne by the freight industry."

"A strong and growing economy undoubtedly needs good transport links for the trade of goods, but Kent is in a unique position as a significant and inevitable bottleneck in transport between mainland Europe and the rest of Britain. There must come a point when the continued expansion of road-based freight transport through the channel corridors ceases to be a good thing for society and for the environment, and will have a serious detrimental effect on the continued resilience of our trading links. We strongly believe that a more sustainable freight strategy would not place such a keen focus on the continued growth of road-based freight through the port of Dover."

letter from the field



Words from local campaigners

Sophie Spencer, director of CPRE Avonside, explains why the branch has been taking a wider look at the West of England.

Dear reader,

CPRE Avonside has responded to the two latest consultations on the future housing and transport in the West of England (covering the old county of Avon).

The outcomes of the initial consultation were positive. They told us that there is support for protection for the Green Belt, and maximising the use of brownfield sites, while maintaining or enhancing environmental quality. We do have deep concerns that the plans do not make clear *how* we can ensure that brownfield sites are developed first; make sure that developers provide the high proportion of affordable housing needed; provide a high quality and attractive public transport system; and give our local landscapes the recognition and protection they deserve.

The Joint Spatial Plan consultation proposes 105,000 houses to be built in the next twenty years in this area, and the Joint Transport Study proposes a number of transport options, such as new roads, park and rides and an extension to MetroBus. The vision the documents are trying to achieve is a worthy one. But CPRE Avonside believes that there should be more focus on urban regeneration and

building on brownfield sites before precious Green Belt or greenfield sites are released. We also want to see a public transport system that offers a viable alternative to the majority of residents of this area. Currently, the consultation proposes a vision of reducing car based journeys from their current level of 60% to 48%. Given the increase in population that is predicted, we could well end up with just as many cars on the road as now, if not more.

We are supportive of the need to build more houses, particularly affordable houses, locally. However, we don't believe that just allocating more greenfield land will achieve the houses we need in the most sustainable locations. If we allow developers to 'cherry pick' our best greenfield sites before tackling suitable brownfield sites, then we are likely to end up with more expensive houses that are only accessible by private car.

Our local landscapes are well loved. They are what make our area desirable as a place to live, and ultimately contribute to its economic attractiveness. We need to ensure that we don't lose what is special and distinctive about our area in this process.

In transport terms, we are concerned by many of the suggestions, including plans for more roads and more park and rides. These tend to swallow up large areas of land, which can increase flood risk and damage our beautiful and highly-valued local landscapes. Large Park and Rides are also an exclusive form of public transport, being aimed at those who already have access to the private car. Their increased use can threaten existing rural bus services rendering them unviable and putting more vulnerable passengers (particularly the elderly and the young) at risk of isolation. We want to see an integrated and forward thinking transport policy that allows people to leave their cars at home, and maximises the use of effective public transport.

We know the West of England can do better than this. We are a thriving area, which needs housing and public transport, but we believe we must value and protect our local countryside for the enormous landscape and amenity benefits it brings to our two fabulous cities of Bristol and Bath.

Find out more about CPRE Avonside's work at <http://avonside.cprelocalgroups.org.uk/>

GOODideas

Learning from each other

Sharing good ideas on the future of farming

CPRE Shropshire held a successful March conference on the future of rural Shropshire after Brexit, attracting over 130 delegates and some excellent guest speakers.

The keynote speaker was Christopher Price, Director of Policy at the Country Landowners and Business Association, who set out the political scene from a national perspective. He pointed out that Defra is much more important now than pre-Brexit, with Andrea Leadsom and George Eustice, as ardent Brexiteers, having a huge personal vested interest in getting it right. Above all, he stressed that farmers *must* be properly supported as they affect everything from water purity and leisure access to tree planting to absorb carbon emissions. Clare Cole from Natural England gave an update on CAP and the future of farm subsidies, noting that there are over a thousand live Environmental Scheme agreements in Shropshire alone, covering 112,772ha of land, with 588 agreements referring to the management of the county's iconic hedgerows. Organic farm adviser, Mark Measures spoke

of the crucial importance of soil and the need to care for it for future productivity.

Joy Greenall, a Clun Forest hill farmer, said that nature conservation is at the core of farming, and that for many farmers, the subsidy *is* the income. This means that if we want a beautiful landscape it must be paid for, if not via food, then by subsidy. Joy also pointed out the importance of supporting farming's role at the heart of local economies, with her farm employing 20 people during the year, and trading with 35 businesses. Simon Latter, NFU adviser in North Shropshire, raised the importance of technology, diversification and specialist enterprises, and reiterated the need for Government to provide certainty, not a cliff edge. Liam Bell of the National Gamekeepers Association, said that shooting had major benefits for conservation and the rural economy, and that the 6 metre field margins used for re-introducing grey partridges were also encouraging barn owls.

In his concluding presentation, CPRE's senior farming campaigner,

Graeme Willis, said that we need to support a farming industry that is diverse in size and ownership, and ideally adapted to place and landscape. He added that public investment will be needed to pay for what the market will never fund over the longer term, and to help farming become more resilient and environmentally sustainable. He concluded with a powerful vision of farming working with nature to enable the countryside as a whole to thrive.

A group discussion then raised several interesting points, noting that intensive farming is not necessarily bad; local food still has more potential; and organic yields are not catastrophically less than conventional farming. Fundamentally, there was agreement that farmers are vital for the economy beyond food production - encouraging tourism (by facilitating access and maintaining the landscape) and mitigating the impacts of climate change (where their land helps in flood prevention and carbon storage) - and must be rewarded for providing these public benefits.

Helping the sparrows of Sussex

CPRE Sussex is delighted to be joining members of the Brighton and Hove Wildlife Forum in an excellent project to stabilise the decline of the iconic house sparrow, which is now categorised as 'at risk', with numbers falling by more than 70% over a 30-year period.

The project aims to carry out surveys around Brighton

and Hove to identify where house sparrows are living successfully and where they are absent, to identify the problems and possible solutions - including better planning to improve our green spaces. The branch's involvement will enable CPRE members to take part in similar work in towns and villages across Sussex,

with the ultimate aim of making the local environment more welcoming for house sparrows and other wildlife. The project will run for two years from Spring 2017. For more information on how to get involved, get in touch with CPRE Sussex by phoning 01825 890975 or emailing: info@cpresussex.org.uk

A future for closing barracks?

CPRE North Yorkshire campaigners have raised the interesting possibility of turning former military barracks into flagships for sustainable brownfield development.

With the proposed closure of Strensall and Imphal Barracks meaning bad news for York, campaigners raised the successful transformation of Vauban outside Freiburg in Germany. A 40hectare military base until 1998, it is now a thriving community of 5,000, created in conjunction with grass roots leaders, its high density, mixed-use neighbourhoods have reduced car-dependency, leading to a car ownership ratio of 150 cars per 1,000 people.

Safer cycling potential

As part of their response to Bedford Borough Council's Draft Local Plan 2032, CPRE Bedfordshire has proposed a new 'Dutch-style' protected cycleway completely separated from the traffic, linking the village of Milton Ernest in the north, to the centre of Bedford, to the new town of Wixams in the south.

A dual use footpath-cycleway already exists from Milton Ernest to the northern edge of Clapham. Whilst in the south, a protected cycleway has already been constructed linking Wixams to the outskirts of Bedford town. So campaigners have proposed that they be linked together to form a safe, north-south cycleway that would be a great asset for local people looking to cut down on their car use and increase their fitness, while enjoying some great countryside and green spaces.

Current issues

Taunton 'Garden Town'

In the wake of the Government's new year announcement of their support for 14 'garden villages' and 3 'garden towns', CPRE Somerset raised concerns that Garden Town status for Taunton will create further pressure on a town already struggling with the pace and scale of current housing developments. The branch argues that the proposed masterplan for the Taunton Garden Town must be open to public consultation and should fit with the democratically adopted Taunton Deane Local Plan.

Chris Lewis, CPRE Somerset chairman said: "CPRE welcomes efforts to tackle the housing crisis in the form of high quality, well-planned and well-located developments. If Garden Town Status means that Taunton will have better green spaces and sustainable transport, then this must be seen in a positive light. We would also like to see better links between town and country and we feel all new developments must have sustainable drainage systems to ease the risk of flooding in future years. Huge housing estates are already being built around Taunton before the necessary sustainable transport links, community facilities and local employment opportunities are in place."

CPRE South Somerset recently objected to a proposal for "landscaping of a couple of golf holes" at a course near Cricket St Thomas. On closer inspection, this would have meant hundreds of lorries importing 144,000 tonnes of fill material over two years. The application has now been withdrawn, after campaigners pointed out it was invalid, but they fear it may resurface as a waste application so are monitoring the situation closely.

stepbystep

Guide to good campaigning

How to support local food

There are many good reasons to choose local foods, such as benefits to your health, your community and your local environment. In presenting some of the best for you here we hope to encourage you to seek out local food.

If you usually shop only at supermarkets, it could mean making gradual changes to where and how you shop. Shopping around can take a little more time but once you see how rewarding, cost-effective and tasty it can be. Local food has travelled a much shorter distance to your plate and so is usually fresher. Local producers are also free to choose what they grow for flavour rather than varieties that travel well or have a long shelf-life. Local food promotes a healthier lifestyle as buying more raw ingredients, like newly picked fruit and vegetables, can encourage you to cook more and take control over what goes onto your plate. This can work out cheaper and improve the freshness, taste and quality of your meals.

If you don't buy seasonal, local food, your food could have an unnecessarily high carbon footprint, especially if it has been flown in from across the globe and trucked up and down the country. Also, non-local food needs to be packaged to stop it deteriorating, creating millions of tonnes of wrapping waste made from oil-based plastics that we can't yet easily recycle. Local food travels a much shorter distance, and is often sold unpackaged or in simple recyclable containers.

Seeking out seasonal and local produce is an easy way to do the right thing for the environment.

1 Support your local economy

Whether you buy from a local shop or direct from a farm, you're providing a market for local producers where they can get a fair price. Most local food producers are small or micro (with fewer than ten employees) businesses, so you'll be helping them to survive alongside larger companies. What's more, when the whole supply chain is taken into account, spending locally can support hundreds of jobs in your area.

Buying local is one way to get to know where your food comes from and the people involved in providing it, from producers to local shops. You can find out more about what's in your meals, give people feedback and positively influence both the way they run their businesses. In particular you can support smaller, traditional and mixed farms by giving them a fair income and ensuring that the character of your local countryside is protected for the future.

2 Go online

The internet is, of course, a great hub for finding local food sources. The best general websites we've found so far are *Big Barn* and *FARMA*. Both of these

are well-maintained and have map tools so that you can search using a postcode or place name, to bring up a wide range of local food outlets: farm shops, farmers' markets, delicatessens, independent shops such as butchers, and community-supported farms.

The *Food Assemblies* website is also a great, new way to find local food – buy from a range of local producers online then pick up your order from them weekly at one central location.

3 Rediscover specialist shops

Traditional 'specialist' food shops – butchers, bakers, greengrocers and fishmongers – and delis can be excellent places to find local food. Sourcing locally is part of the traditional way they work to ensure produce is of high quality and can be trusted. Get to know your local independent stores and speak to the staff to find out what's local.

Farm shops are also a good bet for local produce. They usually have to sell a high percentage of their own produce, though many also buy in from elsewhere to extend their range or season.

4 Try your local markets

Farmers' markets come in all sizes and rules can vary about where produce comes from. But, in general, producers must sell their own produce on their stall,



Traditional markets are still a great place to find fresh local veg

so they are a very good source for local food. Some markets only allow produce to be described as local if it comes from within a 30-mile radius. Traditional markets are generally under-acknowledged as sellers of local food. In many ways, market stalls are not much different from specialist shops like butchers, bakers, greengrocers and fishmongers, with similar and often local produce. If it's not clear, just ask sellers what's local and in season. There are also over 300 Country Markets held weekly across the country selling home-made and home-grown produce on a co-operative basis.

5 Sign up to a box scheme

Box schemes score highly for providing fresh, seasonal produce, especially fruit and vegetables, and for supporting smaller producers. Our research shows that

box schemes usually supply very high percentages of local food. They can be a convenient alternative if getting to the shops is difficult, and often they can deliver meat, dairy, eggs and drinks as well as the traditional fruit and veg. The Soil Association has a helpful map with a postcode and place-name search function for your most local organic box scheme.

6 Don't forget the farm

Farms with Pick Your Own (PYO) schemes are worth seeking out in your local area or nearby. Whether you're picking strawberries, asparagus or apples, PYO can be a fun, family friendly day out and you'll come home with fresh fruit and vegetables to cook and eat. Big Barn can help you search for local farms and you can also try the PYO Farms website. Many farms also sell produce such

as eggs, honey, milk and fruit at the gate that you're welcome to pick up and buy.

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) has grown rapidly over the past decade with new farms starting up across the country. Sign up as a member and commit yourself to a regular supply (often a year) of local, freshly picked fruit, veg and sometimes other produce (such as meat or honey); most will be organic. This gives the farm a secure stable income and a decent return to the farmer. Members are encouraged to volunteer and get involved with planting and harvesting, and it's a fun way to meet new people and make friends. It's also a great way to eat really fresh, sustainable and fairly-traded local food and to be connected to its production. You can find if there is a CSA project in your area at the CSA Network website.

Find out more: For web links and much more information go to www.cpre.org.uk/supportlocalfood

Current issues

Fighting for rural Lancashire

Lancaster City Council is drawing up housing requirements for its 15-year Local Plan. In the lovely Lune Valley and surrounding countryside, proposals for large housing estates threaten small hamlets and villages (such as Denny Beck, Dolphinhholme, and the open areas of Slyne with Hest Bank.)

CPRE Lancashire is helping the local groups to submit strong planning-supported objections, particularly criticising unrealistically high housing projections. At Sefton, Liverpool, the branch commissioned a demographer to look at the housing projections proposed by Sefton Council. Among other objections, we challenged housing estimates: these have now been reduced and this will save green fields. In addition, a recently-organised public walk alerted people to the threat to the green wedge of Rimrose Valley where the possibility of a new road is being investigated by Highways England. In St Helens, a large warehousing scheme on Green Belt land at Haydock is being vigorously objected to by residents. Again, CPRE Lancashire campaigners have given them advice and will be strongly objecting on the basis that the Green Belt must be protected; there is plenty of brownfield land and spare warehousing in the area.

To support all this vital activity, CPRE Lancashire's Chairman Nick Thompson is appealing for small donations to their fighting fund, specifically to help fund a professionally-qualified planner to help fight the loss of countryside and green spaces to inappropriate development. Please consider donating via www.cprelancashire.org.uk

Buckinghamshire activities

CPRE Buckinghamshire recently sponsored two kissing gates in Wing installed by North Bucks rRiPPL project (ramblers Repairing & Improving Public Paths for Leisure & Exercise). The initiative was launched by Ramblers' volunteers in early 2015 to help improve the path network, including by installing gates to replace less accessible stiles. The branch is currently looking for proactive and enthusiastic volunteers to support them in their campaigns and planning work. They are advertising for two specific roles - a Social Media Volunteer and Housing Volunteer. Anyone interested in applying, or getting involved in some other way, should find out more at www.cprebucks.org.uk or contact branch manager Louise Hartley at louise@cprebucks.org.uk.

Meanwhile, CPRE Bucks will be holding its inaugural planning roadshow for Parish and Town Councils on Saturday 6th May 2017. The free event will explore how local people can best influence planning matters in Buckinghamshire, and runs from 11.00am – 2.00pm (including light refreshments) at Bledlow Village Hall, Chinnor Road, Bledlow, Bucks, HP27 9QF. Speakers include The Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan, MP for Chesham and Amersham and President of CPRE Buckinghamshire; Peter Lerner, a chartered town planner with over 40 years' experience, working both as a local authority officer and consultant; Dr Geoffrey Botting, the vice-chair of the Woodcote Parish Council in Oxfordshire who led the team that produced the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan, one of the first dozen to be made nationally; and Dr Stan Jones, Chair of CPRE Buckinghamshire, and trustee of the London Green Belt Council. Book via the branch website or contact Louise with any questions.

PARISHbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

Helping villagers save Green Belt farmland

Planning permission has been refused for farmland at Wood Street Village, to the northwest of Guildford, to become a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), following objections from CPRE Surrey and two parish councils.

The planning application sought a change of use of 34.5 hectares of Green Belt land, from agricultural (currently used for grazing cattle), to public open space and a nature reserve with associated fencing, access works, car park and highways access. Local people had feared the application would have enabled developers to build over 1,800 new homes proposed in the draft Guildford Local Plan in the 400m-5km mitigation zone around the Thames Basin

Heaths Special Protection Area. The Normandy Action Group website stated: "The SANG proposal was designed to support eight sites' housing volume to offset of loss of land (mostly Green Belt), particularly in Ash Green (900 dwellings). SANG is a planning mechanism designed to allow the applicant to provide alternative green space to which to divert the leisure walks of the increased number of residents and associated pet dogs away from the rare Surrey heathland habitat."

Worplesdon and Normandy Parish Council raised several concerns – including the lack of very special circumstances to justify Green Belt development and loss of agricultural land. CPRE Surrey objected to the inappropriate

development of the Green Belt and endorsed the points made in the Worplesdon PC and Wood Street Village Association submissions. The branch also argued that Public Open Space and Nature Reserves are not compatible, due to the increase in dog walking and traffic. Tim Harrold, the Chairman of CPRE Surrey's Guildford District Group highlighted the importance of the existing wildlife, saying the proposal "would harm the biodiversity currently present on the farm which includes 'red list' birds such as the ground nesting skylark, together with linnetts, field fares, song thrushes and cattle egrets", as well as badgers and crested newts.

Find out more: For all the news and views from CPRE Surrey follow <https://twitter.com/cpresurrey>

Supporting community arguments on housing

An application for 128 new houses on a site on the northern edge of Greens Norton was refused recently, following objections which included representations from the parish council, members of the local community and CPRE Northamptonshire.

This was a second application for the site, the first having been refused in 2015. The developer disputed South Northamptonshire Council's view that the 5 year housing land supply target has already been met and challenged various aspects of the earlier decision to refuse an application. The branch believes it is vital that strategic planning by local planning

authorities and communities outlining where developments are appropriate should be adhered to so that opportunist applications outside those designated areas may be refused. Areas for development in and around Greens Norton have already been identified and therefore this application was extremely unwelcome.

CPRE Northamptonshire campaigners argued that the 5-year land supply had been met and that the application did not meet a large number of the planning policy conditions. This was particularly relevant because the proposed development occupied a high point overlooking the village and surrounding countryside

and would have been clearly visible on approaches to the village, blighting the current scenic rural landscape.

The branch invites Parish Councils in the county to attend the CPRE Northamptonshire Roadshow on 27 April at 6 pm at Great Houghton Village Hall. CPRE's national planning campaigner Rebecca Pullinger will talk about the new Housing White Paper and its likely impact on our countryside.

CPRE Northamptonshire is continuing to engage with the progress of HS2: raising the issue of countryside access during the years of construction, monitoring the progress of its design panel, and liaising with South Northants Council on its section of the route.

CAMPAIGNER

Making a stand for the countryside



Sussex farmer and countryside hero Robert Worsley (right) with Sir Nicholas Soames MP at the Examination of Mid Sussex's Local Plan

CPRE's branches in Sussex and Bedfordshire have recently celebrated outstanding efforts from two members of the public who are helping the fight to defend our countryside and local democracy.

In Sussex, Twineham farmer, Robert Worsley made national news when he turned down £275m to protect the Sussex countryside. He has since taken things a step further by publicly challenging the developers for continuing to promote their proposal for his land. Back in 2015, CPRE's national farming expert, Graeme Willis, said it was "extremely admirable" that Mr Worsley had "rebuffed the offer for quality of life and community reasons. He has sought to preserve the countryside for the generations after his – and has placed these considerations above financial incentives. It is invidious that so many landowners are put in this position by highly speculative land acquisition – especially where there is huge community opposition and no planning permission."

For the past four years, the property company, Mayfield Market Towns (MMT) has been promoting Mr Worsley's farm as a 'new settlement'. Although MMT has never submitted a formal planning application, it has published maps of the farmer's land on its website showing hundreds of acres of his countryside which would be obliterated by the proposal. Mr Worsley responded by dealing the company a crushing blow – speaking at the Examination of Mid Sussex's Local Plan in January, he left the government inspector, Jonathan Bore in no doubt of MMT's shortcomings.

He referred to paragraph 173 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states the need to establish that there is a willing landowner before a site can be considered: "As the landowner of the land in that area, I can confirm that the land is not available – it doesn't have willing landowners there, both in terms of my land and the land belonging to all the farmers and landowners around me. I can confirm that it (Mayfields) is not

supported, it is not deliverable and frankly it's a non starter from any constraint point of view. It is the definition of 'constrained'."

Mr Worsley's actions have delighted local communities – many of which are feeling the effects of other unwanted developments. His intervention was also watched by local MP Sir Nicholas Soames, who had joined the Public Examination for the morning and called him a "real hero", saying that the "countryside owes him huge debt". Sir Nicholas also praised the contribution of CPRE Sussex's Michael Brown, tweeting that he had made an "important point that in our crowded islands, Sussex countryside is truly precious #treatwithcareandrespect"

In Bedfordshire, CPRE campaigners have backed the actions of Pottton councillor Adam Zerny, who set up a campaign group, All 4 Better Development, and started a government petition which now has over 20,000 signatures. The petition calls for a parliamentary debate on building on greenfield land, a community right of appeal and the removal of the "presumption in favour of sustainable development".

CPRE Bedfordshire feels the issues are crucial for Central Bedfordshire, which is seeing a surge in planning applications for large developments on green fields – usually on the edge of communities left without the right to appeal building schemes that will change their character and put additional strains on services and infrastructure. Branch chair Gerry Sansom said: "CPRE Bedfordshire supports Councillor Zerny's decision to petition parliament for a debate to discuss the issue of communities having the right to appeal planning decisions."

Praise for litter heroes

CPRE North Yorkshire vice chair Stuart White has been leading work to tackle litter in the Redcar and Cleveland area, including on a successful recent clean-up alongside the Cleveland Way footpath. In Northamptonshire, Werner Schulze's unselfish and strenuous efforts, have helped make Collyweston a litter-free zone. For the past 13 years Werner has been busy picking up carelessly discarded litter around the village from his mobility scooter, collecting over 400 full bin bags and clocking up some 550 hours of unpaid work. Meanwhile, a CPRE Norfolk litter warden, Nigel Ford from Hardingham, has masterminded a 'Love Norfolk, Hate Litter' campaign to encourage locals to take pride in the county. Winning support from Norfolk councils and the Country Land and Business Association, he has been asking residents to collect just one bag of rubbish in 2017, and join forces to help reduce littering and educate schoolchildren about its impacts.

CPRE Isle of Wight had a very enjoyable and successful litter pick at Yaverland last October. Committee members practised what they preach by gathering an impressive amount of rubbish from around the sailing club and the Yaverland car park. Then, in March, a number of CPRE branches took part in the Great British Spring Clean. CPRE Northern Lincolnshire organised a clean-up of Westwoodside, with chair David Rose thanking North Lincolnshire Council for arranging the litter picking equipment and collection of the rubbish. CPRE Devon volunteers enjoyed taking part in tidy-ups at Hackney Marshes, Kingsteignton, organised with Teignbridge District Council Rangers.

Current issues

Protecting green lanes

Friends of the Peak District were delighted that Staffordshire County Council has put in place the first steps towards managing Hollinsclough Rakes – idyllic lanes in the Staffordshire Moorlands District of the Peak National Park which were once a packhorse route for the trade of salt. Now reduced to a rock scramble in places with horse riders, cyclists and walkers unable to pass – the council has introduced an emergency restriction order preventing anyone from using Limer and Swan Rakes.

Limer Rake in particular is in a terrible state of disrepair and is unsafe for all users. Although water has played a part, their destruction is largely as a result of off-roaders destroying the surface and tearing down adjacent walls to try to get through. In addition, off-roaders have been illegally using fields to exit the lane, creating disturbance for Hollinsclough residents during the night and disrupting farm business.

The Friends have urged Staffordshire County Council to continue to protect both Rakes by making a temporary traffic regulation order. This will give the Council time to prepare an order to ban all motorised vehicles permanently. Nothing less will do as the lane has been ravaged by their use which cannot be sustained. Once the lane is protected, campaigners argue consideration should be given as to how to repair the severe damage in a manner that reflects the history of the lane.

Find out more about all the Friends' campaigns at www.friendsofthepeak.org.uk

INreview

Our perspective on countryside issues

Intensive Poultry Units in Herefordshire

A major threat to Herefordshire's countryside today is the rapid growth in the intensive livestock industry, which is generating a wave of vast industrial complexes across the rural landscape.

Shocking as it is to see these giant steel sheds in the countryside, their visual impact is not the only concern: like many other industrial operations, intensive livestock units produce many undesirable impacts, which in any other industry would be confined to a brownfield site.

Industry or agriculture?

The Environment Agency categorises intensive livestock units as industrial installations and the planning system recognises their huge potential impacts on the environment: an intensive poultry development to house more than 85,000 birds falls under Schedule One of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011, the same category as a new airport or a nuclear power plant. But there is an anomaly in the planning system: because intensive livestock units are considered to be farm diversification, there is a presumption that they should be located in the countryside.

Planning applications for intensive livestock developments will address the most significant impacts - traffic, noise, odour, dust, and so on - but because the principle that such

development is allowed in rural areas is already established, planning authorities are obliged to agree ways of reducing the harm and can only refuse planning permission if it would not be possible to mitigate the harm to the landscape and environment. Mitigate does not mean prevent or avoid, it means reduce to an unspecified degree.

Impacts on rural Herefordshire

Herefordshire already has one of the highest densities of intensive poultry units of any county - with more than 1,000 birds per square km (source: Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board) - and the council has received planning applications for more. The broiler industry adds very large vehicle movements (one 4-shed development can generate up to 3,000 HGV movements) on to Herefordshire's roads every year: the eggs are laid on one farm and then delivered to a hatchery in another part of the county; day old chicks are delivered to the broiler units on farms across the region where they grow for around four weeks before being transported to Hereford for slaughter and processing. It is the taxpayer who pays for the highway improvements and maintenance needed to support all this traffic. Farmers do not pay business rates on intensive livestock buildings.

CPRE Herefordshire is also very concerned about the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of waste produced by

poultry units in Herefordshire and surrounding counties. Much of this is spread on fields as fertiliser with the risk that nutrients and toxins get into the rivers, causing pollution. The growth in the industry has coincided with a rise in phosphate levels in the River Wye Special Area of Conservation and the River Lugg, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Poultry litter contains more phosphorus than any other farm manure as well as arsenic and other residues. The intensity of the production process increases every year as the industry produces birds that reach 'maturity' ever more quickly. The broiler industry is predicting that by 2020, chickens will reach 'table-weight' just 19 days from hatching. This can only increase the amounts of manure produced.

Campaigners at CPRE Herefordshire are calling for a change in planning policy to recognise that intensive livestock units are industrial development, with impacts as harmful as other large industries. They should be located on brownfield land with good transport connections, away from people's homes and on sites where the landscape would not be harmed, not in the open countryside. The branch would like the industry to re-think its model and operate more sustainably by locating all the different processes – egg-laying, hatching, growing, feed production and so on – if not in a single location, at least in close proximity to one another.

QandA

The answers you need

Protecting literary landscapes

Q A local green space with a connection to a famous local author is at risk from a housing development. Aren't planning authorities or Historic England duty-bound to protect these kind of cultural sites?

A Landscape designations tend to protect beauty or scientific value, and the landscape-based 'heritage assets' administered by Historic England focus on World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also highlights the need to protect the natural and historic

environment, but not artistic or cultural sites specifically. But although literary landscapes aren't explicitly covered, the NPPF glossary defines a 'heritage asset' as: "A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest".

Historic England advises that sites that make a positive contribution to a local planning authority's character and sense of place can be identified (and offered some level of protection) on a "formally adopted list of local heritage assets", with criteria including "literary associations" and

"associations with individuals of local importance".

Their advice (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/locallylistedhas/>) continues: "Whilst local listing provides no additional planning controls, the fact that a building or site is on a local list means that its conservation as a heritage asset is an objective of the NPPF and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application. Local planning authorities are obliged to consider the positive contribution that conserving such heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality [i.e. tourism]."

When a development is not a structure

Q A farmer in my village had built a slurry lagoon without planning permission, which he claims wasn't needed because it is a permitted development. With the huge impact this will have on the roads and environment of the area, surely permission must be sought first?

A For a number of months, CPRE Somerset has been supporting residents in communities near Spaxton who are concerned about an industrial-scale anaerobic digestion facility in the area. This has grown exponentially after a series of piecemeal planning applications – including for large agricultural waste lagoons, big enough to hold hundreds of thousands of tonnes of slurry.

The Environmental Law Foundation (ELF) advised the branch and a local resident that the lagoons were being constructed under the agricultural permitted development rights you mention, and therefore not subject to the usual planning controls including public consultation. The company in question has been awarded an accreditation for its digestate, effectively meaning it is no longer considered waste and therefore not under the authority of the local waste regulator, but a planning matter to be dealt with by the planning authority.

The company contended that as the digestate had become a "product" with the same spreading regime as farmyard slurry, a lagoon for its storage could be notified as agricultural permitted development (APD) as it was argued that the lagoon was

not a "building or a structure". To the great consternation of local people, the local authority accepted the prior approval notice that the construction of the lagoon fell was not covered by "developments not permitted" provisions.

The question of whether or not a lagoon is a "building" was the crux of the matter, and was clarified for ELF by Claire McGregor, barrister at 1 Crown Office Row. She concluded that case law has established a wide definition of "building", and that lagoons are considered to be a "building or a structure" and therefore cannot be claimed to be Permitted Development under the APD provisions. CPRE Somerset has joined ELF (<http://elflaw.org/>) as a community member and has been able to inform the Council that these huge lagoons cannot be built in the landscape without planning permission.

Current issues

Keeping the Dales alive

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority recently made an Article 4 Direction withdrawing the permitted development right to convert light industrial premises into dwellings without planning permission. CPRE North Yorkshire endorsed this move, in view of the need to keep the Dales alive by protecting the businesses within the park.

The authority explained the decision with the following notice on its website: "In March 2016 the Government introduced a new permitted development right to allow light industrial premises to be converted to one or more dwellings without full planning permission. The permitted development right is due to come into force on 1st October 2017. At its meeting in December 2016 the National Park Authority expressed concern regarding the potential loss of important business premises without full planning scrutiny.

In particular it highlighted concerns relating to: the permanent loss of economic assets in the National Park that are critical to retaining viable local communities; the majority of economic sites not being protected by conditions or covenants that might apply to a few; a general lack of interest from the Local Enterprise Partnerships in developing new economic sites in the National Park; the expense of developing any new sites being such that protecting existing sites is critical to the wellbeing of the area; the economic policies in the newly adopted Local Plan being strongly supportive of the retention of existing economic sites; the need for long-term consistency in the application of local planning policy rather than dealing with each proposal on a case by case basis."

Find out more at www.yorkshiredales.org.uk

Current issues

High Court victory over Green Belt sports hub

CPRE Surrey welcomed a January decision ruling that Elmbridge Borough Council's scheme to develop a 'sports hub' at Waterside Drive by the Thames in Walton, was unlawful. The site is a large area (14 ha) of Green Belt land which used to consist of a small playing field for Walton Casuals FC, a large grassed area, and scrub, overlying an old landfill site. The Council planned to redevelop this open space with a three private sports clubs, a stadium and floodlighting, enclosed by high fencing to prevent public access to the grounds.

The judicial review case was brought by Amanda Boot, a resident across the Thames in Sunbury, who was concerned about the effects on her and other residents' views, as well as noise and light pollution. Andrew Parkinson, counsel for Ms Boot, argued that that the Council had unlawfully decided when granting itself planning permission that there was harm to openness but that the harm was acceptable. Mr Justice Supperstone agreed that this was an unlawful approach and the matter must be re-determined.

CPRE campaigner Andy Smith said: "CPRE Surrey has supported the local campaign against this development since 2015, so we are delighted with today's judgment. It is vital that we oppose unwanted, unnecessary and inappropriate developments like this, especially when they threaten the openness of the Green Belt and destroy local tranquility. The fact that Elmbridge Council gave itself permission for this Sports Hub development, disregarding Green Belt planning constraints, was a major concern for CPRE and we are pleased that the High Court judgment reflects this."

Greening the Green Belt

New research published by CPRE in December shows the huge potential of the Green Belt in terms of amenity and nature conservation. We are calling on the Government to prioritise investment in Green Belts in the forthcoming 25-year plan for the environment (expected as we go to press) and make sure Green Belt protection is enforced.

Produced by environmental consultants ADAS, *Nature Conservation and Recreational Opportunities in the Green Belt* shows how Green Belt is particularly valuable in giving people access to the countryside and opportunities for recreation. It also shows how the woodland and wetland in Green Belt can be enhanced to help us mitigate climate change. Given Green Belt's protected status, CPRE argues that we have the perfect case for investment in improving these vital public amenities. The ADAS research sets out several case studies that

provide models for how that can best be done in funding terms and by demonstrating where previously derelict industrial sites have been converted to thriving nature reserves and woodland.

Key findings of the new research

The research found that Green Belt land offers more opportunities for recreation than similar areas without Green Belt status, and that new opportunities are coming forward all the time. A third of community forests created in England since 1990 are in the Green Belt, as are 48 new local nature reserves - nearly a third of all created in England since 2009. England's Green Belt provides urban dwellers with invaluable access to the countryside: 17% of public rights of way (including both public footpaths and bridleways) are within Green Belts compared with 13% in similar, non-Green Belt areas. Nearly half of country parks, a third of local nature reserves

and one fifth of England's deciduous woodland can be found in the Green Belt.

ADAS also found that Green Belts include a significant proportion of 'priority habitats', endangered areas of wildlife and biodiversity that need conservation. The Natural Capital Committee recently argued that that more wetland and woodland on the edge of urban areas would do much to help the recovery of nature and fight climate change. The analysis of Green Belt and comparator areas plus the case studies detailed in *Nature Conservation and Recreational Opportunities in the Green Belt*

“Long-term Green Belt management plans should be introduced to enhance natural capital and recreational opportunities.”

Chris Howe



17% of public rights of way are within Green Belts compared with 13% in similar, non-Green Belt areas.

give a clear direction to how we should invest in our Green Belts. In particular, there is an urgent need to do more in the Green Belts outside London, none of which have seen anything like the investment in recreational opportunities and nature conservation that has been achieved in the Lee Valley.

Investing in natural capital

The Government should prioritise investment in natural capital in the Green Belts in the 25-year plan for the environment, particularly woodland and wetland creation joined by wildlife corridors to form a stronger ecological network. Professor Dieter Helm, Chair of the Government's Natural Capital Committee, has issued a personal call for a Green Belt with "lots of natural capital" including "much greater public access" and "woodlands located next to people". Similarly, the third State of Natural Capital report describes investments in natural capital that offer the greatest economic returns. Those that are particularly relevant in the Green Belts include expanding urban green space, improving the environmental performance of farming and managing flood catchments. Improvements could be financed through targeted incentives similar

"The protection offered by new Green Belt designations would give government and landowners more confidence to invest in better land management."

Liz Reynolds



Green Belt woodlands near our cities provide natural capital for wildlife and people

to the current Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Combined authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and local government in and around large towns and cities should use regional park funding models more widely. The lack of sustainable funding is a major barrier to implementing change. The ADAS research investigated a variety of funding models including a Regional Park, a Community Forest, a Local Nature Partnership and two Nature Improvement Areas. Of these, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority to date has the most sustainable funding model. This model, or elements of it, should be taken up more widely in Green Belts. Long-term Green Belt management plans should be introduced in order to deliver enhancements to natural capital and recreational opportunities. They are already produced for National Parks and AONBs. Much of the work could be based around existing local authority green infrastructure strategies that cover a number of Green Belt areas.

A bright future for the Green Belt

The Green Belt should also be marketed as a visitor destination in its own right. This is already being done by the Friends of the Ontario Greenbelt around Toronto, Canada. In England,

initiatives like the Oxford Green Belt Way led by CPRE Oxfordshire have helped to provide a sense of identity and make the Green Belt feel more accessible. The Lee Valley Regional Park promotes local walks and places of interest within the Green Belt areas that it covers.

New Green Belts should also be created in areas where they can be particularly justified. CPRE believes that exceptional new designations should be supported around Norwich and Southampton. These areas, and potentially others, would benefit from the long-term protection offered by Green Belt designation. Most importantly, it would give more confidence to Government departments, local authorities and landowners to invest in better land management.

CPRE's planning campaign manager, Paul Miner, argues: "The Green Belt's future depends on the Government's desire to protect it and to fund opportunities to use that land for further public benefits. Yesterday's car parks and sewage works can be tomorrow's wetland and woodland, enjoyed by urban and countryside dwellers alike. Given its potential, we should be looking at how public funding can improve Green Belt."

Find out more: Read the full research and our summary report at www.cpre.org.uk/resources

Current issues

Dark Sky Park for Cornwall?

Cornwall Council and Caradon Observatory are to apply for an International Dark Sky Designation for Bodmin Moor. If the bid is successful, the designation would formally recognise the exceptional quality of the night sky over Bodmin Moor and help protect it from light pollution. Looe councillor Edwina Hannaford, Cornwall Council's portfolio holder for planning, said: the designation would "help protect our wonderfully starry sky for local residents and draw in visitors during the winter months, boosting our local economy. It would also benefit wildlife and the health of local communities." The area proposed for inclusion in the Bodmin Moor International Dark Sky Designation is the portion of the moor that lies within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty plus a two-mile buffer zone around it. A month-long public consultation held last year found overwhelming public support for the bid, including from CPRE Cornwall and Cornwall Police.

Horsham Incinerator

CPRE Sussex joined local residents in January to express their concern over plans to build a new £150m incinerator in Horsham. The branch formally objected to the application put forward by Britaniacrest, and trustee Sally Pavey said: "This incinerator will have a chimney as tall as Big Ben and will be seen for some 15km including from rural communities and areas of outstanding natural beauty." Dr Roger Smith of CPRE's Horsham District also wrote to the West Sussex County Times to highlight concerns that emissions would harmful to health, and that extra HGV traffic would worsen congestion and air pollution.

MATTER of fact

Support for your case

England's land use

Comprehensive statistics on land use in England were first collected in the 1930s by L. Dudley Stamp who instigated the first Land Utilisation Survey of Britain with a focus on monitoring the loss of agricultural land to urban development.

Land use change statistics have since become highly refined and the Ordnance Survey has developed a methodology for collecting digital data on land use change. In the 1990s, CPRE questioned the robustness of different methods of categorising and measuring land use change, arguing that the loss of land to development had been underestimated in official statistics. Today there is less debate over the accuracy of the data and greater discussion of how the data should be interpreted.

Coping with urbanisation

England has a land area of a little more than 13 million hectares; with rising sea levels and coastal erosion, this area is set to decline marginally over coming years. Almost 11% of this area, about 1.4 million hectares, is classed as developed land, that is, land that has been built on at some point or which is part of the urban fabric, including urban greenspace, such as parks and gardens. But land use impact extends beyond the immediate boundaries of the land concerned. CPRE's 'intrusion' maps have shown, for example, that nearly half of England is indirectly impacted by

urban development in terms of visual intrusion – and that affects its character.

Designated Green Belt accounts for about 12.5% of the country and exists around 14 urban areas, including most major towns and cities. While the key purpose of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl, a small proportion of Green Belt comprises developed land as the designation 'washes over' smaller urban areas. 10 National Parks and 33 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), together with Sites of Special Scientific Interest, cover around 40% (5.3 million hectares) of the total land area of England.

In recent years there have been moves to measure 'land cover' – the physical nature of surface of the earth, as distinct from 'land use' – the purpose to which land is put. This can be taken as an indication of the way in which land is managed. The UK Countryside Survey, carried out by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology between 1998 and 2007, has provided a reasonably consistent measurement of land cover across much of the country, excluding predominantly urban areas. In broad terms, this showed there had been an increase in pasture and semi-natural grassland in England of about 8% over that time, and a corresponding decline in enclosed farmland, while broadleaved and mixed forest had expanded by more than 5%. The expansion of woodland is set to continue with the Government's target of 12% woodland cover in England by 2060, from 10% in 2013. This data from the last Countryside

Survey needs updating, however, so a new survey is currently being planned.

A time of change and opportunity

Pressures on land use arise for various reasons. The most obvious relate to the impact of demographic change, particularly projected population growth. Before the EU referendum, projections from the Office of National Statistics suggested that the population of England will grow from about the 55 million it is now to 63.3 million by 2039. It is unclear how this might be affected by Brexit but that represents a growth rate of 7.5%, much higher than in other parts of the UK. During that period, the structure of the population will change with a higher proportion of older people, and a growing number of households, and changes in the geographic distribution due to migration between regions and localities.

In Europe, only Malta has a higher population density than England and projections suggest that, by 2047, England will have the largest population. This growth in population does not correlate with a simple need for new housing – the rate of formation of new households and the extent of existing housing stock are important factors. However, it remains the case that housing development to accommodate a growing number of new households is the most significant cause of loss of greenfield land, with more than 2,000 hectares being developed each year. And with a declining

“At this time of change and opportunity, let's hope the Government have the courage to develop ambitious initiatives such as an English Land Use Strategy”

proportion of new housing being built on brownfield land, this figure is likely to grow, adding to pressure on infrastructure, natural resources and recreational opportunities.

Belinda Gordon, CPRE's head of government and rural affairs, says: “At this time of change and opportunity, let's hope the Government have the courage to develop ambitious initiatives such as an English Land Use Strategy. A first step has been taken through the establishment of the National Infrastructure Commission, which is overseeing decisions about nationally important infrastructure. The next step is for the forthcoming 25 Year Plan for the Environment to recognise the need for better decision-making and a new system. There is a clear role of Government in helping us get the most from this most precious resource: our land”.

Find out more: Download our Landlines pamphlet at www.cpre.org.uk/resources