

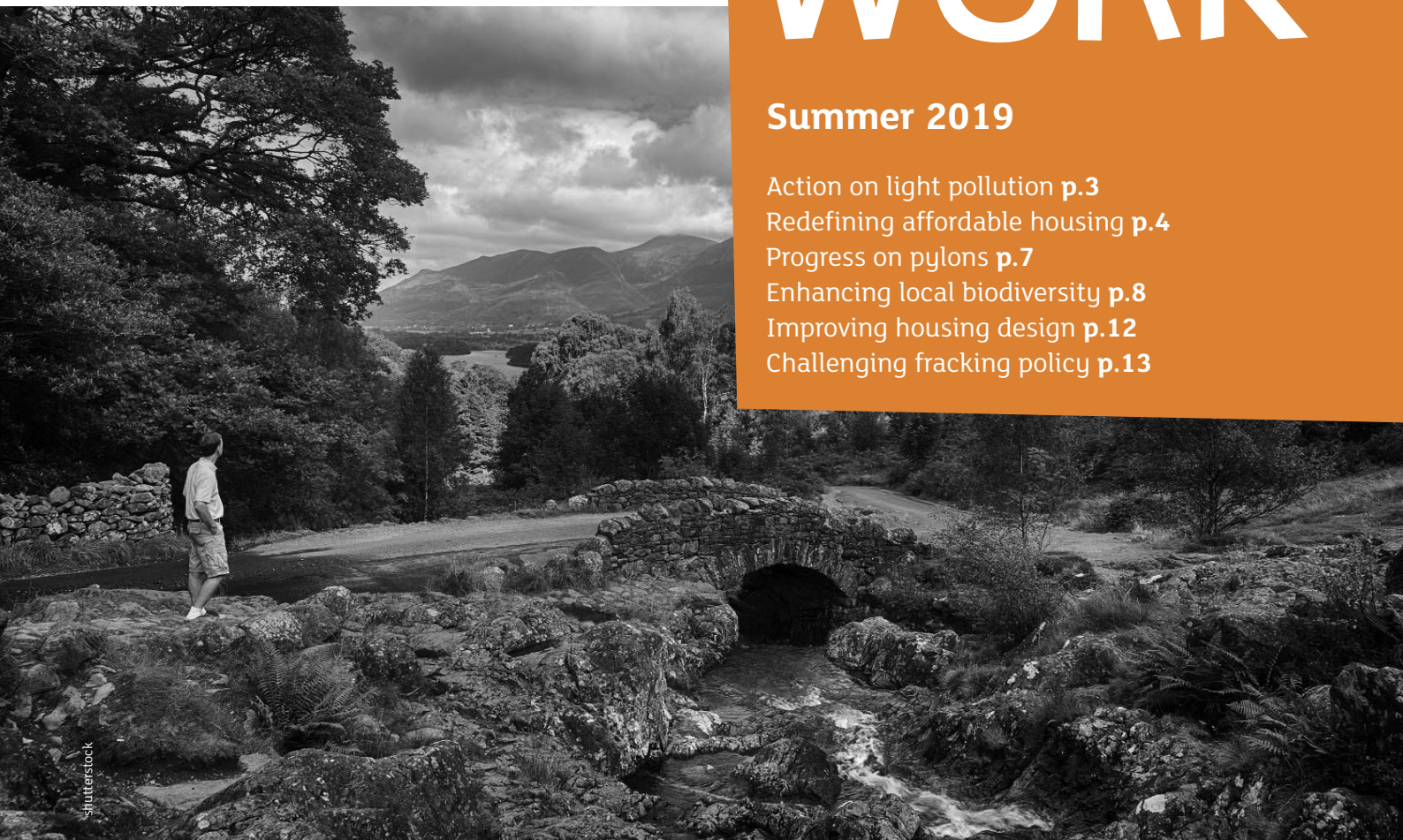


Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Standing up for your countryside

# FIELD WORK

## Summer 2019

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## Bridging the North-South divide

**M**ay saw the launch of the UK2070 Commission's report on rebalancing the UK economy – *Fairer and Stronger*, which recognises that encouraging more and more building in the South East is economically unfair, requires billions of pounds in public funding and would be environmentally unsustainable. CPRE's strategic planning lead Paul Miner responded with a letter to the *Financial Times*, noting that 'solving the North-South divide is partly about encouraging more high quality jobs to be located in the north, but also about protecting and improving environmental quality everywhere.'

The UK2070 Commission is an independent inquiry into city and regional inequalities in the UK. Chaired by Lord Kerslake, it has been set up to conduct a review of the policy and spatial issues related to the UK's long-term city and regional development. The reference to 2070 is an explicit recognition that the timescales for successful city and regional development are often very long, in contrast to the short-termism of political cycles. As an organisation has long campaigned for more equal regions, CPRE submitted oral evidence to three separate sessions of the Commission, and attended its first national symposium held in Leeds.

We submitted a full response to the *Fairer and Stronger* report in June, recommending that the Commission now needs to go

further, and consider the land use and environmental dimension of inequality (particularly in relation to access to public transport and high quality landscapes). While we particularly welcome the statement that 'the current pattern of development in the UK is not sustainable', we raised concerns over the North-South divide in terms of care for the wider historic environment. Even though the northern regions have fewer conservation areas, the proportion of these that are classed 'at risk' is nearly double that in the south (282, or 7.45% compared to 220, or 3.75%). Data on the availability of local authority staff also suggests that this problem could either persist or get worse in the coming years: the northern regions appear to have only a quarter of all the full-time equivalent staff, a divide that has grown in recent years.

### Enhancing landscape assets

In other important respects – such as land coverage of National Parks and SSSIs – the north has a share of environmental assets at a comparable level to, or exceeding, that of southern England. This is an important basis on which to make the case for further investment in the northern regions, as well as highlighting key environmental attributes. Any future devolution settlements for the north, or for cities or counties within it, should protect and seek to enhance these assets. Considering new AONB designations in the north could help regional imbalances and improve access. Areas where there have been longstanding

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## FIELDWORK

Volume 16, Issue 2

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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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## Bridging the North-South divide

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claims for new designations in these regions include Charnwood Forest (in Leicestershire), the Herefordshire Black Mountains, the South Pennines and the Yorkshire Wolds.

Green Belt land, of which there is more in the north overall, could also be used to help address regional divides in environmental quality, particularly in relation to tree cover. The Northern Forest, which envisages a programme of tree planting across large areas of Green Belt and other land in both the North West and South and West Yorkshire, could make a major contribution towards improving the quality of life in the northern conurbations and we urged the Commission to support it. Again, though, the northern Green Belts lack the institutional support for environmental enhancement found in particular in the Lee Valley near London, a regional park which has been able to sustain a well-resourced plan of environmental enhancement since its establishment in 1965.

### “Green Belt land could be used to help address regional divides in environmental quality”

CPRE’s recommended that the Commission highlights the continued relevance of, and need for, Green Belt policy as part of a suite of measures to help address regional inequalities. In our view, if Green Belts did not exist then imbalances would be worse still, as developers would gravitate to sites with higher land values nearer major cities, especially London. There would be less incentive to regenerate urban brownfield sites in the northern regions.

### Tackling regional inequalities

In CPRE’s view, a number of existing Government policies are reinforcing imbalances across England and should be either reformed or scrapped altogether. The Government’s standard method for calculating housing need is essentially a predict and provide approach that entrenches the existing uneven patterns of development and thereby a bias towards London and southern England. The New Homes Bonus, introduced in 2011, has partly replaced annual central Government grant to local authorities with payments directly linked to the completion of new homes given planning permission in the authority’s area. It is particularly relevant to the question of rebalancing the economy that the scheme, in a July 2014 investigation by the Financial Times, was seen to exacerbate regional inequalities by effectively redistributing

### “A better housing mix is needed across the board, not just in areas of high demand”

money from areas in economic decline to more buoyant areas.

CPRE support Sir Oliver Letwin’s 2018 review of build out recommendations that local authorities a greater role in site assembly and master-planning, and are able to insist on a variety of types of new houses that better match local needs than current output. Letwin also recommended that housing mix requirements could be implemented so that development land values would not exceed ten times that of existing use value. But Letwin’s terms of reference only apply to areas of high housing demand, most of which are in the southern half of England. CPRE would argue that greater local authority powers and a better housing mix are needed across the board, not just in areas where currently there is high demand.

### Emerging ‘super regions’

We also raised concerns about the emerging approach to regional planning that suggests a bias towards the South East. Four ‘super regions’ are emerging - the ‘Ox-Cam Arc’, the Thames Estuary, the ‘Midlands Engine’ (combining the former East and West Midlands government office regions) and the ‘Northern Powerhouse’ (combining the former North East, North West and Yorkshire & Humber government office regions).

The Government has prioritised the regional-scale development of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc, with at least £5.5 billion set to be spent on infrastructure to service development in this area. However, compared to the northern regions, there are relatively few deprived areas that would benefit from such a major programme of investment. CPRE has particular concerns about the scope for unnecessary countryside loss, the insufficient commitment to providing affordable housing or local public transport, and on the lack of meaningful public involvement to date. In particular, the Arc is adjacent to the Chilterns, one of the most water-stressed areas of England. There appears to have been little or no cognizance of former regional planning work, for example in the former South East Regional Strategy to link proposed major development areas with water quality sensitivity.

We agree with the Commission’s argument that the Arc proposals have ‘not been set within a wider network of national connections’, and we recommend that it does more to link these with its wider analysis of regional inequalities. We also recommended that any Local Enterprise Partnership investment from a new National Prosperity Fund should be distributed to prioritise regenerating areas of need, rather than focusing on areas of economic opportunity.



# BREAKthrough

How our work is making a difference

## Shedding light on the Isle of Wight

**CPRE Isle of Wight's annual Good Lighting Awards have once again showcased the latest attempts of local companies to respond to CPRE's challenge to protect dark skies.**

With roads a major source of light pollution across England, Island Roads were awarded for upgrading their network with energy-saving LED lighting which has already enhanced the Isle of Wight's night skies. The improvement programme involved enhancing or replacing 12,068 streetlights across the Isle of Wight - which now use less energy and require less maintenance, with old columns and lights reused or recycled where possible.

Awards coordinator John Langley said: 'Since Island Roads completed its highways illumination project, international light pollution monitoring satellites, together with Island-wide sky quality readings, show that our skies are now on a par with the best in the world and we believe that much of that is down to the good work carried out by Island Roads. Thanks to their work we are now in a position to make a bid to have the southern part of the Island designated as an International Dark Skies Park which involves submitting evidence to the International Dark-Skies Association in the USA for accreditation. We are

hopeful our bid will be successful, putting the Isle of Wight well and truly on the map as a top destination for stargazing.'

Other winners included Ryde Co-op, which has installed sky-friendly luminaires on its external walls, and Ryde Mead Tennis Club, which has a shielded lighting system on its court. The final award went to overall winner, Vestas Offshore Wind Blades, who had adopted more sensitive lighting for its huge factory, minimising the potential for skyglow over much of central Wight. Vestas was presented with a cheque to its chosen charity, Gift to Nature, and CPRE Isle of Wight's Merlin trophy.

## Support for Bedfordshire brownfield site

**Following demands from CPRE Bedfordshire at the Public Examination of Bedford Borough Council's Local Plan, the council were forced to release updated figures showing - as CPRE Bedfordshire has long predicted - that the plan contains a massive surplus (or contingency) of over 1,000 houses.**

This surplus is equivalent to a village the size of Oakley, and half of the plan's entire allocation of new homes to the Key Service Villages of Sharnbrook, Great Barford, Bromham and Clapham - all due to be built on greenfield sites in open countryside. CPRE campaigners called on the Mayor to use the contingency to substantially reduce the number of new homes allocated to the Key Service Villages, arguing the 500 new homes that both Sharnbrook and Great

Barford are required to take represent an environmentally unsustainable 50% increase in the size of each.

The council subsequently conceded that an additional 600 houses can be built on Stewartby old brickworks brownfield site over the local plan period to 2030. Cloud Wing, the developers who are proposing a new village of 1,000 homes on the site, told the Inspector that there were no reasons why development could not start in the next two years. They estimated that they could build 700 of the 1,000 new homes by 2030 - compared to the council's 'conservative' estimate of 100 homes.

The statement from Cloud Wing is in line with CPRE Bedfordshire's submission to the local plan consultation calling for the council to build on Brownfield land first to avoid further environmental degradation and biodiversity

loss. CPRE campaigners support the development of the new village at the brickworks site, where a huge biodiversity gain could be achieved through sympathetic development methods including quality open green spaces. The site already has sustainable transport infrastructure in the form of a railway line and station, whereas expanding villages will increase the impact of car traffic on local communities and the A6 which already operates at capacity during peak times. Meanwhile, CPRE Bedfordshire has objected to a proposed new A6 - M1 Link Road that will slice through Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty north of Luton, destroying the tranquillity of ancient woodland at Sundon - all without improving traffic flow.

**Find out more** on all the latest campaigns at [www.cprebeds.org.uk](http://www.cprebeds.org.uk)

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## Current issues

### A UK-wide deposit scheme

May saw CPRE submit its evidence to the government's consultation on introducing a deposit return scheme (DRS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. While agreeing with the basic principles for a DRS, we suggested adding a further five principles. Firstly, we want data relating to the deposit system to be completely transparent, and that the system seeks to be carbon neutral. We also want to see any infrastructure built to support the system built on brownfield land where possible, in order to minimise the impact on local communities and the environment. We recommended that the system should follow the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle – with modulated fees used to encourage design for recyclability and reuse, as well as to reduce any unnecessary or difficult to recycle packaging or components. Finally, we want a UK-wide DRS to be future proof, and automatically include every pre-sealed drinks container sold here, regardless of its content or material type, to avoid confusing consumers and adding to the political burden of monitoring and reviewing the system.

CPRE's submission also warned against restricting DRS an arbitrary restriction to 'on-the-go' products, which would limit the impact, efficiencies and effectiveness of deposit systems and provide loopholes for producers. Furthermore, when litter picks like CPRE's Green Clean repeatedly show that all sizes of drinks containers are found, it would be a missed opportunity to not include all sizes and would lead to continued pressure from the public and environmental groups for the system to be extended - 88% of respondents to the Scottish consultation said 'no' when asked whether Scotland's system should be limited to 'on the go'.

# NEWSroundup

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

## Redefining affordability

**A report published in June by the Affordable Housing Commission estimated that 4.8 million households across England are struggling with housing costs, and proposes a new approach to measuring housing affordability. CPRE welcomed this analysis of what 'affordable housing' means for people, and supports the commission's calls to peg affordability to no more than a third of income for low earning households.**

The report also highlights, as CPRE has long argued, that the current approach of tying measures of affordability to market prices is flawed and does not help to tackle the crisis in housing affordability. Lois Lane, housing policy and campaigns officer at CPRE said: 'People living in the countryside are just as susceptible to the effects of the affordability crisis

as those in cities, such as high housing costs and being forced to live far from where they work. Current measures of housing affordability mean that new homes billed as "affordable" are often anything but.'

CPRE strongly welcome this detailed look at what "affordable" really means for families struggling to make ends meet, and we support the commission's ongoing efforts to redefine how we measure affordability. We look forward to working with the commission to ensure that the voices of rural communities are heard in the debate. Later in June, we were part of a coalition of leading housing groups and charities, including the National Housing Federation, Shelter, Crisis, and the Chartered Institute of Housing, who called on the Government to investment £12.8bn per year in councils

and housing associations to end the housing crisis.

CPRE chief executive Crispin Truman said: 'Everyone needs a secure, stable and affordable place to live, but right now there are more than 170,000 families in rural communities, who are on social housing waiting lists. At the current rate of building, it would take 130 years just to meet this backlog. Homes for social rent offer long-term stability to families on lower incomes in rural areas, where life is more expensive and work can often be insecure and seasonal. They allow people to put down roots and plan for the future. This investment in homes for social rent and other low cost tenures would help to guarantee the future prosperity of our rural communities, and society as a whole.'

## The Time is Now

**Climate breakdown and the resulting damage to nature poses the greatest threat to the countryside we all love. That's why, on 26 June, CPRE staff, supporters and local campaigners were among an estimated 12,000 people who came from all over England to call for political action on the climate emergency facing our environment.**

*The Time is Now* 'mass lobby', co-organised by The Climate Coalition and Greener UK, saw supporters of nearly 150 different groups descend on Westminster to speak to their MP about the protection of the environment, and tackling climate change. The event aimed to get MPs to commit to a target of reaching 'net-zero' carbon emissions by 2045, and introduce legally binding targets for the

restoration of nature through the Environment Bill.

In recent weeks the Government has committed to a net-zero target of 2050, so the lobby provided the first opportunity to promote the urgent actions needed to achieve this aim, as well as asking for commitments to the more ambitious 2045 target. CPRE supporters spoke to their MP about the key role the countryside can play in meeting the challenges posed by climate change: addressing car dependency and improving public transport to reduce carbon emissions in a way that benefits rural communities; dropping the government's proposals to fast-track fracking; and ensuring that new homes are built to the highest levels of energy efficiency, with existing homes suitably retrofitted.

We also used the opportunity to call on the government to introduce goals to stop soil degradation and implement an ambitious deposit return system to provide a simple solution to recycling confusion. Over 300 MPs from across the political spectrum took part, and the day provided a rare opportunity for those passionate about the future of our environment – including many school groups - to speak to their MPs in person and promote CPRE's vision for responding to the climate emergency, restoring nature and empowering communities in our countryside. Many of the MPs committed to a future meeting with constituents, and the friendships forged by activists will hopefully provide avenues for more lobbying at a local level.

## dates of note

### Green Belt a factor in local elections

**May's local elections saw some extraordinary results around the South East – particularly in response to Green Belt concerns. The London Green Belt Council (LGBC) commented: 'One of the lessons of the local elections is that voters place greater emphasis on protection of the environment than on almost any other issue.'**

According to research by the LGBC, the ruling groups in local authorities that allocated Green Belt countryside and green spaces for housing development in their Local Plans have been decisively punished by the electorate for doing so. Where authorities had proposed development on Green Belt land, the ruling party in each case had been voted out of office or its majority substantially reduced.

In the three Surrey districts where the Local Plans threatened Green Belt land for housing (Tandridge, Guildford and Waverley), the Conservatives lost control

to residents' associations, local campaign groups and independent candidates pledging to defend the Green Belt from development. In Guildford, the newly-formed Guildford and Villages group, which stood on a platform of defending the Green Belt, won 15 seats, and an existing local party, the Guildford Greenbelt Group, won an additional seat, giving them a total of four. Meanwhile, Hertfordshire saw the Conservatives lose control of North Hertfordshire, St Albans and Welwyn & Hatfield due to similar opposition. Richard Knox-Johnston, chairman of the London Green Belt Council, said: 'There is a powerful lesson here for all political parties in London and the Home Counties that tampering with the boundaries of the Green Belt will result in further losses of councils to independent and single-issue Green Belt campaign groups. Local Plans should protect the Green Belt and should concentrate new development

on urban and brownfield sites in need of regeneration.'

July saw many local authorities in London and the Home Counties declaring a 'Climate Emergency' in their districts, despite the fact that some of the same authorities are putting forward large swathes of Green Belt land for housebuilding despite. The LGBC warned that these councils should be preventing development on the Green Belt countryside and open spaces which provide vital mitigation for climate change. They called on all local authorities to state categorically that climate change mitigation requires the protection of Green Belt countryside and open spaces, and to agree to block developers' proposals for building on Green Belt land. This is especially important, the LGBC points out, at a time when London itself needs to become more resilient to climate emergencies which means it needs to have plenty of green spaces around it.

### Grounds for change

**Alongside CPRE and Shelter, 10 of the country's top housing experts – including Clive Betts, chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee and Nicholas Boys Smith, the interim chair of the government's Building Better, Building Beautiful commission – came together in June pamphlet pushing for urgent reform to the 1961 Land Compensation Act.**

In a system where the value of almost every scrap of land is maximised to deliver the highest possible return for the landowner, they argued that the losers are communities left with unaffordable, poor quality homes in the wrong places. *Grounds for Change: the case for land reform in modern England* is a collection of essays by thought-leaders

from across the housing sector. Its publication marked the start of a campaign to advocate for a fairer way of trading land in order to unlock England's land market and build the homes the country needs. The call for legislative change is backed up by evidence from a new Shelter survey of chief council planners in England, which shows the cost of land is the biggest barrier to council housebuilding.

Crispin Truman, CPRE chief executive said: 'Our broken land market means that developments are increasingly sited where there is the greatest profit to be made, rather than in the most sensible and sustainable locations. Profits from rising land values should be invested in public green spaces, walking and cycling infrastructure, community facilities, and well-designed

homes that people can afford to live in, rather than accruing primarily to landowners.'

At present, the 1961 Land Compensation Act dictates that if a local authority compulsorily purchases land, it must pay the landowner 'hope value'. Given that land can increase in value more than a hundredfold when planning permission is granted, removing 'hope value' to bring down the cost of land would allow local authorities to assemble sites for their own ambitious affordable housing schemes using urban brownfield sites. As Crispin's essay argued: 'Land compensation reform could help give us higher quality developments on more sustainable sites. In the long run we would lose less countryside and enjoy better places.'

#### CPRE Norfolk Rural Housing Conference

A look at how to provide much-needed affordable housing in our villages and towns, with a range of excellent specialist speakers and a networking lunch. £35 per head or £25 for CPRE members including parish councils and other member organisations. **Find out more at [www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/rural-housing-conference-2019/](http://www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/rural-housing-conference-2019/) Friday 6th September, Memorial Hall, Dereham**

#### 'A day at the dump' with CPRE Somerset

Join the trip to Castle Cary's landfill site to find out how Carymoor Environmental Trust have achieved wonders with their land restoration and habitat creation over the last 20 years. £7.50 for CPRE members, including a cup of tea in the visitor centre. Email [admin@cpresomerset.org.uk](mailto:admin@cpresomerset.org.uk) for info and to book. **Wednesday 4th September from 2.00pm**

#### Landscape Training with Suffolk Preservation Society

Understand landscape proposals as part of development schemes as well as the assessment of landscapes when delivering Neighbourhood Plans. With landscape architect Ruth Elwood and landscape character assessment expert Alison Farmer. **Contact [sps@suffolksociety.org](mailto:sps@suffolksociety.org) or 01787 247179 to book your place. Tuesday 15 October 2019. 9.30am - 1pm, Haughley Park Barn, Haughley, Stowmarket,**

#### Winter Wine Tasting with CPRE Wiltshire

Brian Clover, a former Trustee of CPRE Wiltshire, will be giving another of his informative and enjoyable wine tastings just in time for planning your Christmas festivities. Limited tickets cost £15 and include the tasting and canapes. Book via [www.cprewiltshire.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.cprewiltshire.org.uk/contact-us) **Thursday 14th November 2019 at 7 p.m. in Devizes Museum.**



## Current issues

### Concerns for the Chilterns' chalk streams

Chalk streams are a characteristic and attractive feature of the Chilterns landscape. Globally rare habitats, more than 85% of all the chalk streams in the world are found in England. A dozen of those are in the Chilterns. While they are a haven for wildlife, they are also very delicate environments, vulnerable to changes in the underground aquifers that feed them. However, they are also attractive to water companies, who extract large amounts of water from them with minimal treatment required.

CPRE Buckinghamshire have responded to an Affinity Water consultation on its long-term plans for coping with variations in supply from chalk streams in the face of increased demand from planned new housing. Many of the streams dry up completely for long periods of time, risking permanent damage to the ecosystem of each chalk stream each time they dry up. And global warming means droughts are likely to get more frequent and longer, while wet periods may get wetter.

One proposed solution to this dilemma is to build a massive new reservoir near Abingdon in Oxfordshire. This reservoir is proposed to cover over four square miles of green fields, including a large proportion of good quality farming land, and will be surrounded by a 100ft high bund (embankment). But CPRE Buckinghamshire believes that the abstraction from chalk streams can be greatly reduced, without needing to build this huge reservoir. Instead, they are pushing water companies reduce leakage in the supply network, encourage reduction in demand through use of water meters and do more to even out the distribution of water availability across the country.

# letter from the field



Words from local campaigners

## CPRE Lancashire's Jackie Copley explains how their Brownfield Land Register Toolkit has facilitated partnerships with planners and local communities, and helped reduce the pressure to develop in the countryside.

### Dear reader,

Our Toolkit is designed to help identify sites that are missing from Local Authority Brownfield Registers, by highlighting previously-developed sites as a more sustainable alternative to building on green field.

To promote the idea, we held meetings with planners from both Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region. All were generally accepting of the Toolkit, and agreed to have a link on their websites, while Bury and Rochdale councils now have a form to submit sites on their website, we think partly as a consequence of our engagement. Anne Morgan, Head of Planning Strategy for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), actively endorsed the Toolkit to campaign groups during the Revised Draft Greater Manchester Strategic Framework (GMSF) consultation, and we are also promoting the project under the umbrella of the Liverpool City Region Year of the Environment 2019. A public meeting on *More and better regeneration of brownfield land* was held in Manchester in March, and showcased the Toolkit with the support of politicians and academics including Graham Haughton, Professor of Urban Planning at the University of

Manchester, and Councillors Derek Long (leader of St Helens Council) and Paul Dennett (leader of Salford City Council).

We also advertised Toolkit Training sessions to local campaign groups – including the Save Greater Manchester Green Belt Group, which has some 44,558 followers, and links with 42 separate groups. In Greater Manchester we undertook 9 training sessions with 39 representatives from 28 campaign groups. In total, 56 Toolkits were completed, with sites checked against the Greater Manchester Open Data Infrastructure Map. 40 'missing' sites were forwarded to the Local Planning Authority to support the process of updating the Brownfield Register. The total of 74 hectares of brownfield land identified could potentially accommodate 2,960 dwellings – saving 74 hectares of countryside and local green space!

The work so far has demonstrated that Brownfield Registers are generally comprehensive databases – local people are now aware that local councils have done their job, while planning officers are pleased to receive intelligence on missing sites. Overall, the Toolkit has been useful in building a positive and constructive dialogue with stakeholders, and helping

the public understand the issues relating to recording brownfield sites. The narrow definition of 'suitable' was a common concern, and we agreed with comments that all sites should be recorded, with a 'constrained' category introduced so that sites have a prospect of being brought forward during the life of a local plan. CPRE Lancashire remain concerned that there are too many brownfield sites which under the Revised Draft GMSF have little or no prospect of being brought forward for development. We think GMCA could use its devolved powers to more effectively unlock the potential of the wasted sites currently defined as 'unsuitable', and in doing so more greenfield, including Green Belt, land could be spared from needless development.

CPRE Lancashire continues to call for increased investment in brownfield, and promote a better understanding of new powers to compulsory purchase land, raise finance to tackle constraints and capture land value. We are progressing similar 'alternative land to build' site searches in St Helens and Wirral. Nationally, the Government needs to do more than just requiring Brownfield Registers, and must attach funding to an improved National Planning Policy Framework policy of 'brownfield first'.

# GOODideas

Learning from each other

## Going underground in Dorset

**CPRE are members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group of National Grid's Visual Impact Provision project to reduce the visual impacts of existing electricity lines, advising National Grid on how best to mitigate the impact of their existing network of high-voltage electricity lines in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

In November 2014, CPRE Dorset supported the decision of an independent study recommending that a section of National Grid's existing transmission line near the villages of Martinstown and Winterbourne Abbas in the Dorset AONB had a significant landscape and visual impact, and should be replaced with underground cables. Planning permission for the scheme was approved by district councillors last year, and welcomed by CPRE Dorset and local parish councils, and work to remove

the 22 pylons is due to begin this summer.

This major project is expected to take three years to complete – causing some disruption to communities – but will enhance a huge area of landscape currently scarred by 8.8km of overhead cables and giant pylons between Winterbourne Abbas and the hamlet of Friar Waddon, west of Dorchester. The route of pylon removal also takes in Bradford Peverell, Compton Valence, and Portesham, and Sam Lamburne, National Grid's project manager, said: 'This is the first time existing high voltage overhead lines will be replaced purely for landscape benefits, and we're thrilled to be working in the beautiful Dorset AONB.'

CPRE Dorset has recently published an Independent Survey of the Evidence for a National Park for Rural Dorset which would incorporate the AONB. To assist the government-

appointed Glover Review and to facilitate further detailed assessment, CPRE Dorset commissioned Jo Witherden, an experienced and respected Dorset planner, to review the evidence for a National Park with boundaries based on the new Dorset Council area. The author concluded that the evidence base can be improved outside the county's AONBs by researching the landscape quality, cultural heritage, biodiversity and recreational opportunities in the rest of rural Dorset. CPRE Dorset will consider an ongoing evidence-gathering project, to create an opportunity for communities, societies, agencies and individuals to participate by contributing to a growing evidence base.

**Find out more** about CPRE Dorset's latest work and read the full National Parks report at <http://dorset-cpre.org.uk/news>

## Saving Sheffield's countryside

**CPRE South Yorkshire met the public at Sheffield station just before Easter, where they unveiled their map of countryside at risk. The event allowed campaigners to meet people from all across the city to learn about the parts of the countryside that matter to them, and received positive media coverage in the Yorkshire Post and Sheffield Star and Telegraph.**

Their key message – that Sheffield can and should meet its housing needs without eating into precious countryside – struck a chord with many people, with CPRE research showing enough brownfield land in Sheffield for about 25,000 homes, or

around 11 years' supply. And these are just the brownfield sites that landowners have already put forward for development, with CPRE South Yorkshire arguing that even more could be done to re-model run-down areas of Sheffield and revitalise existing neighbourhoods.

Our campaigners urged the people they met to write, email or talk to their councillors to tell them to help save precious Green Belt land, and are planning further public engagement events in places under pressure for development. An email action in May saw them give people a chance to email the leader of Sheffield City Council, to urge her to reconsider plans

to redraw the boundaries of the Green Belt in order to build thousands of new executive houses. CPRE South Yorkshire fear the homes will not meet local needs, nor be close to public transport or services, but will see valuable countryside lost unnecessarily. They continue to call for the retention of high quality green spaces close to where people live – as key assets for everyone's quality of life that underpin Sheffield's reputation as the 'Outdoor City'.

**Find out more** about the campaign at [www.cpresouthyorks.org.uk/campaigns/save-sheffields-countryside/](http://www.cpresouthyorks.org.uk/campaigns/save-sheffields-countryside/)

### An urban right to roam

As London becomes more densely populated, pressure on green spaces and the wider public realm will grow. As part of their AGM discussion on improving public access in London, CPRE London asked a panel of experts whether we need an urban equivalent of the rural right to roam? Over 90 people heard from the likes of Kate Ashbrook (Open Spaces Society), Anna Minton (author of *Ground Control*), Daniel Raven-Ellison (London National Park City founder) and Marion Shoard (environmental campaigner and author of *A Right to Roam*). CPRE's chief executive Crispin Truman proposed an 'urban right to the countryside' alongside an urban right to roam. Arguing that it should be everyone's right, wherever they live, to be able to access and enjoy the countryside, he noted that many communities in London are not easily able to access the Metropolitan Green Belt due to poverty or lack of transport.

The panellists concluded by prioritising the enhancement of the Green Belt and the collaborative mapping of all land within the Thames watershed, and suggested that all new development to be required to provide public rights of way, and for private squares to be opened up. With the Public London Charter being prepared by the Mayor of London to address rights and responsibilities over the use of new open space, there were calls for greater public open space provision, and more action to encourage communities to use green spaces for a wider range of activities – including its free use for sports in the face of growing commercialisation.

**Find out more:** Download the full minutes of the event at [www.cprelondon.org.uk](http://www.cprelondon.org.uk)

## Current issues

### Cumbrian clean-up success

An army of over 1,000 willing volunteers joined in with Friends of the Lake District's 'Great Cumbrian Litter Pick 2019' in April, collecting 270 bags of rubbish at 46 separate litter picks to help clean up the county. The Friends, who represent CPRE in the county, were assisted by more than 20 primary schools, as well as community groups, scouts and businesses right across Cumbria. One litter picking team went out on paddle boards to pick litter from Lake Windermere, and another team went 'plogging' – jogging while litter picking.

Head Teacher of Arnside National Primary School, Nick Sharp said: 'All of the children at Arnside National Primary School took part - 143 pupils ranging from Nursery to Year 6. We divided the village into sections and as a school, we covered all the main areas. The older pupils litter picked the coastline and beach. Each class collected a bin liner full of rubbish, one lucky pupil finding a £20 note! The Year 5 pupils have been prompted to write to manufacturers to encourage them to change their designs and the younger pupils are writing to the local council to request more bins in litter hot-spots.'

Ruth Kirk, Landscape Engagement Officer for Friends of the Lake District and organiser of the annual event said: 'One of the highlights of this year's Great Cumbrian Litter Pick has been the enthusiastic engagement of so many children and young people. We can feel really proud and optimistic that our Cumbrian youngsters will become the landscape custodians and influencers of the future.'

Find out more at [www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/](http://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/)

# stepbystep

## Guide to good campaigning

### Taking local action to enhance biodiversity

**I**n the latest issue of CPRE Kent's *Kent Voice* magazine, Dr Geoff Meaden, director of the Kent Environment and Community Network, set out his suggestions for what local people and groups might best do to save ecosystems and biodiversity.

#### 1 Give protection to a wider area

Experts have emphasised that it is essential some quantified level of protected status is given to significant proportions of both terrestrial and marine areas. Recommended proportions vary from expert to expert and are dependent on the scale being examined. Edward Wilson, probably the world's leading conservation ecologist, suggests 50 per cent of the planet's land surface needs 'sacrosanct conservation', i.e. the land is set aside solely for nature conservation. On a local scale, Kent Wildlife Trust has set a target of 30 per cent of the county being 'managed to create a healthy place for wildlife to flourish'. That level of protection is probably ambitious but probably necessary if our varied ecosystems are to be maintained and indeed improved.

#### 2 Improve habitats

If habitats could be improved, there are numerous local sites where greater biodiversity could be encouraged. Examples include degraded ponds, areas of intensive weed infestation, silted stream beds or marshland, source pollution points along streams

and areas where rubbish has accumulated. Although much activity is already directed towards improving habitats, a wide range of work can still be usefully accomplished. Besides restoring degraded habitats, new ones can be created allowing for more nature, for example new lagoons in marshland or along riverbanks; planting of wildflower meadows, especially on 'set-aside' land; and creating artificial nesting sites in modern barns.

#### 3 Support local conservation groups

Membership of the many groups supporting nature gives the opportunity for active or static participation. For those who are relatively inactive, their support and encouragement are welcome, as are financial contributions. But organisations such as Kent Wildlife Trust, Kentish Stour Countryside Project, RSPB, Friends of the Earth, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, The Woodland Trust and Amphibian and Reptile Conservation offer a variety of volunteer opportunities to get involved. Most groups have action plans explaining their aims and how these might be achieved, while ample information is available on websites. It is estimated that worldwide recent conservation efforts have reduced the extinction rate of land-dwelling vertebrates by about 20 per cent.

#### 4 Go beyond conservation areas

The majority of land in Kent will always retain a variety of

non-conservation purposes, for example housing, industry, transport routes and urban centres. However, most of these areas offer opportunities for nature improvement, such as providing additional food for birds, adding flower and plant varieties and leaving 'wild areas' in urban gardens. On a broader scale, wildlife corridors need providing outside conservation areas to allow for natural transit routes between dispersed protected areas. This may be along railway lines, hedgerows, through golf courses and via an assortment of 'natural stepping stones'. An important set of wildlife corridors that needs enhancement comprises the headlands or set-aside land along field edges, which too often receive no management or improvement by farmers. Most of these non-conservation areas need to be recognised and given some formal level of protection.

#### 5 Tackle local wildlife pressure points

Recognition needs to be given to existing and planned structures, industries, pollution sources and other major constructs that could be detrimental to 'nature'. Kentish examples of these sites include the proposed solar farm at Cleve Hill and the sewage plant at Bybrook. These single points or areas could cause environmental damage out of all proportion to the size or scale of the pressure point itself. We can all participate in 'watching' these developments and, if necessary, contact the owners or the local authority if problems occur.



Liz Reynolds



Thriving local biodiversity can help inspire the conservationists of the future

## 6 Gather data

For most local biodiversity there is a deficiency of quantitative and locational data, a deficit that environmental organisations should be able to address. For instance, the RSPB organises an annual garden bird count and this is a valuable source of knowledge about bird populations, at least in urban areas. However, this type of data collection needs replicating across a wider range of biomes and species. Most major wildlife organisations should have the resources to turn their data into useful information, for example tables, graphs, maps and time-trend analyses. This information can be essential to wildlife recovery plans – something to which all major local environmental or conservation groups should aspire.

## 7 Identify keystone sites or areas

For all Kent biome types and for a range of important indicator species, it is vital to select conservation areas where either the biomes or selected species are thriving. Once selected, these sites need to be sacrosanct from development; it may also be necessary to bar general human access to some sites. It is now known that Marine Protection Areas (MPAs)

have a high capacity - both to give protection to species and to act as overspill sources, i.e. when populations build up within an MPA the resources pressure obliges species to spread into surrounding waters and soon replenishment of these waters becomes noticeable. The same principle is likely to work in terrestrial ecosystems, though management may be necessary.

## 7 Use friendly persuasion

The reversal of ecosystems and biodiversity declines is unlikely to be accomplished solely by actions on a local scale. It will be vital that both groups and individuals participate in 'friendly persuasion' across the widest possible audience; 'friendly' because success is more likely to be achieved through a positive approach, and 'persuasion' because we are attempting to change someone's mind or to suggest new approaches to a problem. There are many measures that might come under this category, such as letter-writing to decision-makers, issuing press releases, spreading the word via social media, circulating petitions, talking to a councillor or your MP or giving public talks.

These measures must be pursued with determination and commitment – as if our

lives depended on what we're doing... which perhaps they soon will. Before embarking on any campaign, it is essential to be well informed on the aspects of a topic about which you feel most strongly; this is important because mind-sets need to be changed. Only if people are thoroughly convinced will there be a chance that the status of ecosystems and biodiversity can be rescued from their present situation. There is little evidence that any local or international person, body or group has an overall perspective on the management priorities necessary to halt ecosystem and biodiversity decline.

A body like the United Nations should have a whole agency committed to fostering the future of 'nature', but the United Nations Environmental Programme's Convention on Biological Diversity has no such comprehensive plans, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's plans for combating worldwide climate change. Likewise, the Department of the Environment should be the lead organisation in the UK, and indeed in 2018 Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, produced a 25-year plan for the environment. However, although this plan recognised some of the main actions that are needed, it said almost nothing on how the plans would be implemented. The same can be said of earlier government plans.

Vision, action and coordination will be vital to arrange funding; define primary aims and objectives; develop suitable metrics for measuring progress; establish priorities; delegate specific roles to existing nature conservation groups (a rationalisation of effort); and build a volunteer structure. Most of these actions could best operate at the county level. I also believe that an organisation going under the title of the Campaign to Protect Rural England needs to be at the forefront of attempts to reverse the diminishing fortunes of our local ecosystems and biodiversity.

# Current issues

## Defending Vearse Farm

CPRE Dorset is helping to local action group ADVEARSE raise funds for a judicial review over the biggest development ever to be built on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). After much deliberation with their lawyers, ADVEARSE decided in June that they would go ahead with the judicial review (JR) to challenge the outline planning permission for the Bridport urban extension on area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) land at Vearse Farm. The campaigners are objecting to West Dorset District Council's consent to allow 760 houses (plus industrial development and other mixed use – and up to 930 houses planned) to be built in the Dorset AONB. After the planning committee ignored the overwhelming opposition of local people to the extension of Bridport – a historic little market town – campaigners set up a crowdfunding appeal.

CPRE Dorset agreed to match donations up to £10,000, because if the development goes ahead, it will effectively destroy all AONB protection, while a successful judicial review will set a helpful legal precedent that can be applied all over the country. Barry Bates, Chairman of ADVEARSE, says: 'Local people are angry because their concerns about traffic and the strain on our infrastructure and medical and care services have been ignored by the council; and because despite the gross oversupply of expensive houses the council plans to build all over the West Dorset countryside, it admits it will still fail to provide the affordable housing needed by local families.' ADVEARSE treasurer Phil Summerton said: 'We are humbled and grateful for the fantastic support of local people, the CPRE and people from wider Dorset and beyond.'

### Wiltshire's Best Kept Villages

Bratton has been named the 'Best Kept Large Village in West Wiltshire' beating five other villages to the top spot. Organisers CPRE Wiltshire said: '39 villages throughout the county were tested against the competition criteria which look for tidiness, cleanliness, presentation and village community spirit. The parish councils and their volunteers had clearly been hard at work, achieving encouragingly high standards and making the judges' task that much more difficult. Each village is judged within the categories of 'small', 'medium' and 'large' and in this first round they are only judged within their own of four districts: West Wiltshire, North Wiltshire, South Wiltshire and Kennet (East Wiltshire).'

Bratton's win will now see them compete against other large villages in the county to take home the best kept large village in Wiltshire award. Jeff Ligo, chair of Bratton Parish Council said: "The council is delighted to win this competition. Since the council was elected in 2017 it has found an additional £5,000 per year to invest in keeping the village in good order. Our thanks are due to the team of volunteers led by Peter Brabner and our contractor and the parish steward who do much to keep the village spick and span. Thanks too to all our residents who are so good at picking up dog 'poo', depositing litter in bins and trimming their hedges alongside public footpaths. We hope that we will be declared the best kept large village in Wiltshire next month, having secured the West Wiltshire prize.' This annual competition continues to foster pride in the Wiltshire's unique patchwork quilt of villages. Prizes are presented on Sunday 15th September, so look out for the results at [www.cprewiltshire.org.uk](http://www.cprewiltshire.org.uk)

# PARISHbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

## Norfolk village character retained

**CPRE Norfolk celebrated with Great and Little Plumstead Parish Council in March when a planning inspector turned down 84 homes on countryside near Norwich, saying: 'I appreciate that there is a national housing shortage, but this does not mean development at all costs.'**

Members of Broadland District Council's planning committee had rejected the application for Salhouse Road in Little Plumstead last July because it would harm the countryside and was not sustainable. CPRE Norfolk had pointed out that the site was outside the settlement boundary on land not earmarked for housing within the Plumsteads' adopted Neighbourhood Plan. They also argued that the suburban feel of the proposed design and type of housing were also contrary to

the Neighbourhood Plan, which aspires to maintain the character of the village and cites the *Building for Life 12* Government-backed industry standard. CPRE Norfolk also highlighted that the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk requires that new development results in a strong sense of place.

Applicant Glavenhill Strategic Land appealed to the Planning Inspectorate, but inspector John Morrison dismissed it although it was 'more likely than not that the council cannot demonstrate the required supply of housing sites'. Despite this, he still needed to consider whether the adverse effects of the planning application outweighed the benefits, saying the location was not sustainable and made it 'more likely that new journeys arising out of the

proposed development would be by means of the private car'.

The inspector recognised that 'the housing and affordable housing this scheme would deliver would no doubt be beneficial, and there are associated economic benefits that come with a general increase in population'. However, he concluded it would be outweighed by harms, including 'encroachment into a currently undeveloped area' and 'the loss of what is an attractive open space forming the setting of the village'. Shaun Vincent, leader of Broadland District Council and councillor for Plumstead ward, welcomed the decision: 'I'm delighted that the appeal has been dismissed and that the planning inspector took into account our concerns, which contributed to his assessment that this is not a suitable location for large scale development.'

## Green Wedge saved in County Durham

Plans to build 98 homes on a 'green wedge' between the village of Easington and Peterlee were rejected by councillors earlier this year after nearly 100 local residents lodged objections and with planning officers recommended refusal.

CPRE Durham joined Easington Village Parish Council and MP Grahame Morris in objecting to Gleeson Regeneration's applications for a new estate on land south of Nursery Gardens, off Thorpe Road. Council officers criticised the scheme for failing to meet planning tests around design, drainage, sustainability and impact on protected nature areas. Councillor David Boyes said new plans, combined with proposals for 900 homes to the south, could see Peterlee and Easington merge into one

settlement: 'I have nothing against Peterlee, a lot of people from Easington work in Peterlee, but Easington is a 1,000-year-old settlement. Peterlee is a new town - it's incongruous in the extreme to see Easington Village, if this development goes ahead, subsumed into a greater Peterlee. It just wouldn't work.' The planning report drafted for councillors listed several reasons for refusal including fears the plans would 'detract from the open nature of the green wedge between Easington Village and Peterlee.'

Welcoming the decision, CPRE Durham chair Richard Cowen, said: 'County Durham has sufficient land for a five-year housing supply elsewhere in the county without resorting to sites so

clearly in breach of important policies in the Easington Local Plan like this one. We noted the numerous letters from local people objecting, as well as the petition against this application, and we agreed in particular with one of the major concerns raised in those protests, which was the loss of the majority of the break between Easington and Peterlee. The Easington Local Plan protects the countryside from development and creates a strategic green wedge between Easington and Peterlee. This green wedge has already been compromised by approval for some 900 houses at Mickle Hill and it is critical to bear in mind the amount of housing development that has already been approved in the immediate area.'



# CAMPAIGNER

## Our AGM award-winners



CPRE's chair Su Sayer (left) presents Lillian Burns with her Outstanding Contribution Award

**C**PRE wouldn't be here without the generations of volunteers who have given so much time to our county CPREs and regional groups - campaigning on issues that matter to them, coordinating events and awards, recruiting members and encouraging respect and care for our countryside.

So, at our Annual Conference in June, we took the opportunity to publically celebrate a few individuals who have been doing some incredible work, often for many years. Selby Martin of CPRE Shropshire was rightly rewarded with a Length of Service award for more than 30 years of remarkable achievement. While Lifetime Achievement awards went to Christine Drury for ten years as South East Regional chair, followed by six years as CPRE Kent chair and CPRE's national deputy chair, and Ben Nash, for his 45 years of service to CPRE Herefordshire.

Les Ashworth was also honoured for 20 years of work to protect Northumberland's countryside, starting in the Tyne Valley District Group, and becoming heavily involved in opposing threats to the Green

Belt from quarrying and open cast mining (at Halton Lea and Whittonstall). Les also fostered important links with other organisations - including the Corbridge Village Trust and Historic England - and supported many local campaign groups.

Five Outstanding Contribution Awards were presented so some of our greatest campaigning stalwarts. Patricia Almond from CPRE Isle of Wight has been dedicated to keeping the Island litter free for the past 8 years, making a real difference to the people and environment of the island. Donald Mitchell of CPRE London has been a trustee, chairman and vice-president for CPRE London over many years, helping to build its reputation, funding and leading on projects like *Liveable London*. Lillian Burns was nominated for 25 years of influential contributions on sustainable transport and planning in the North West, while Nick Thompson received recognition for his hard work chairing both CPRE Lancashire and the North West Regional Group.

Rob Turner of CPRE Staffordshire and Rosalind

Ambler of CPRE Wiltshire were the recipients of the 'Made a Difference' award. Rob keeps the CPRE Staffs website up to date and helps to prepare and run various stalls and events to engage the local community. Meanwhile, Rosalind transformed CPRE Wiltshire's newsletter, *Wiltshire Voice*, to the extent that they've even had donations commenting on the appeal and success of its appearance! Peter Prag of CPRE North Hampshire was also recognised in light of his work raising the district group's profile and increasing their membership, while Lorna Train was thanked for organising many years' of successful tours and events with CPRE Sussex.

And last but not least, Positive Contribution awards went to Sebastian Archer, who used his skills to help CPRE London with social media, researching and writing case studies and office management, and Grace O'Connell, who was the star of CPRE Staffordshire's latest election manifesto movie, and has been fantastic in procuring donations from local businesses for their grand summer hamper draw.

The Conference was held alongside the AGM, where CPRE chair Su Sayer also paid tribute to the efforts of notable campaigners we sadly lost during the year. Of CPRE Cambridgeshire's Shirley Fieldhouse, Su said: 'While her professionalism was an example to us all, she also made great efforts to forge partnerships with local communities - whether advising on planning or hedgerow management, representing local people at public inquiries, or championing rural quality of life issues. Her impact will never be forgotten.'

## Current issues

### Tree planting in Cornwall

CPRE Cornwall have been doing their bit to counter climate change, create habitats and enhance landscapes by working with the Woodland Trust to plant a new wood at Constantine near Falmouth. Our campaigners thanked landowners Sue and Lynda Bentley, who provided nearly two acres of land for the planting of sessile oak, beech, downy birch, alder, rowan, crab apple, hawthorn and hazel. The initiative came after CPRE Cornwall received a very good response to their appeal for land to plant trees, and another site at Camelford is set for planting this winter.

### Starlit skies over Bath

Sophie Spencer, CPRE Avonside Director, spoke at a Starlit Skies 2019 event in Bath to highlight the damage that light pollution is doing to our glorious night's sky, and what CPRE is doing to raise awareness. The Starlit Skies Alliance is an influential group including CPRE Avonside, Bath Astronomers, the Commission for Dark Skies, Cotswolds AONB and William Herschel Society. The MP for Bath, Wera Hobhouse, attended the event to hear the concerns.

Meanwhile, CPRE Avonside has criticised the Bristol Local Plan review's proposals to develop the fields at Yew Tree Farm with 200 houses, having removed them from the Green Belt. They argue that the land provides a much needed escape from the city, accessible to those without access to a car. Furthermore, they called for the few viable farms remaining within the city boundaries (with Yew Tree Farm one such model of good practice) to be protected and nurtured, and not sacrificed to a desire to exceed housing targets.



## Current issues

### Broken housing market

CPRE submitted evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry on planning and the broken housing market inquiry in April. We raised concerns that the focus on driving delivery through a target culture has unintended consequences that are resulting in poorer quality and/or more expensive homes than are needed, and failing to protect the countryside and address climate change. Our submission recommended that councils should be required to be able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land in terms of sites identified in local plans, neighbourhood plans and on brownfield registers, as well as sites with planning permission. But we argued that the burden of proof on deliverability of these sites should be reversed, such that it is assumed that all these sites are deliverable within 5 years, unless the landowner/developer declares that they are not (in which case it should be reasonable to revoke the planning consent).

We also called for the housing delivery test to be completely excised from the NPPF and planning practice guidance, since it penalises councils and communities for the failures of housebuilders, while adding an enormous amount of unnecessary complexity to the NPPF and practice guidance. In addition, we pointed out that brownfield land registers are starting to show the way on building open data; and this work must be continued and developed for other areas, to make it easier to evaluate the proportion of affordable homes being delivered, or assess whether a local planning authority has a five-year land supply or even an up-to-date local plan.

# INreview

Our perspective on countryside issues

## Building Better, Building Beautiful

**CPRE welcomed the opportunity to submit evidence to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission in May, reflecting our longstanding determination that new housing should respect the local vernacular style (and where possible make use of local materials) and seek the highest possible standards of environmental performance.**

It is equally critical for CPRE that development locations should respect the landscape, historic and neighbourhood character of the area, and that housing should be agreed through a democratic and transparent system led by local strategic and neighbourhood plans. Accordingly, we agree with the stated aims of the Commission to promote better design and reflect what communities want.

### Achieving objective standards

There are currently no references in the National Planning Policy Framework to increasing the experience of beauty in either urban areas or in the built environment, and this omission should be addressed – perhaps by encouraging greater use of design review with a clear expectation to input appropriate ‘beautifying’ ideas which the planning authority would be expected to take notice of. The Government should also undertake to achieve objective standards for both overall design quality and for energy efficiency more specifically. The Future Homes Standard, announced in the March 2019 Spring Statement, offers the potential to begin reversing the damaging effects of cancelling the Zero Carbon Homes policy. But CPRE would urge the Government to introduce the policy well before the announced start date of 2025,

and also to produce a standard that, as a baseline, revives recent best practice.

### “The enforcement of design methods by local authorities will have a beneficial effect on design quality”

Our long-held conviction is that the greater application and enforcement of design methods by local authorities will have a strongly beneficial effect on design quality overall. There is an urgent need to enhance the capability of local authorities to be leading agents of change – with in-house urban designers, property and land acquisition skills, and multi-disciplinary teams including project and transport planners. At the time of writing, the Government’s 2019 Spring Statement had undertaken to produce further guidance on getting a wider mix of housing types and tenures in new developments, taking forward one of the Letwin Review’s recommendations. The statement did not, however, commit to the recommendations on giving local authorities more powers to masterplan sites, bring forward a mix of housing types and tenures to reflect local need, and hold down development land values to help achieve this mix – reforms vital for raising design quality.

### Holding builders to account

CPRE recommends that, as urgent first steps, local authorities, developers and the Government should be held

accountable for schemes given planning permission that they are party to, through a renewed process of design audit. The NPPF should be altered to call on all participants in the planning system to contribute towards increasing the experience of beauty in rural areas and the built environment, both in planning policies and in planning decisions. Techniques such as design review and Enquiry by Design should be encouraged to take place much more at the evidence-gathering stage of plan-making rather than just at the planning application stage.

The Commission also should review how the use of permitted development rights is affecting design quality in its widest sense, and recommend the abolition of any rights that are routinely resulting in poor quality development. The Housing Delivery Test should be entirely excised from the NPPF unless and until the Letwin recommendations have been both implemented and have had time to bed in. CPRE believes that this would give local authorities more influence to insist on better designed schemes.

In the longer term, the Government’s Future Homes Standard should introduce objective measurements and targets for both overall design quality and for energy efficiency and public transport links more specifically, progress towards which should be measured by design audits of completed schemes. Finally, the New Homes Bonus should be substantially reformed by linking payments to satisfactory design audits, so that it only encourages housebuilding that is well planned, of good quality and supported by the local community.

# QandA

The answers you need

## Developments on the edge of National Parks

**Q** Part of a National Park I regularly visit is now subject to a planning application for 100 homes outside the boundary, but visible from within it. In fact, because it is on a high ground, it will also spoil views of the National Park from some angles for miles around – particularly from local footpaths. Surely this counts as impinging on the landscape setting of the National Park, and must not be allowed?

**A** The Friends of the Peak District, who represent CPRE in the National Park, recently objected to an application for 120 dwellings at Leek Road in Buxton where the appellant

attempted to downplay the value of the landscape that would be harmed, suggesting if land is not within the boundary of a National Park, or other landscape designation then it cannot be considered a “Valued Landscape”. They therefore welcomed a June appeal decision (APP/H1033/W/18/3207659), where the Inspector ruled that the application be dismissed, noting that site ‘has a much greater affinity with the rural environment than to the built-up area. I consider that the site forms an important and attractive part of the rural scene at the settlement edge and reflects the character of the wider landscape.’

The inspector had also taken the time to view the site

from nearby footpaths, saying that ‘the fine panoramic views currently experienced from the public rights of way would be significantly adversely affected’ by ‘what would be a new estate of housing pushing into the open countryside, in many cases in the foreground of the National Park.’ Other reasons cited included the fact the site lies outside the Built-up Area Boundary of Buxton in open countryside, and that ‘the proposal would result in the loss of some of the dry-stone walls within the site ... an intrinsic feature of the Peak District’ and ‘a positive landscape feature linking it in both visual and character terms to the wider surrounding landscape.’

## A challenge to fracking

**Q** With the Government now pledging to reduce carbon emissions to ‘net zero’ by 2050, won’t all legislation and policy governing fracking have to be revisited – to ensure shale extraction doesn’t wreck our chances of achieving that goal. My area is dealing with a number of fracking applications, and it is outrageous that they are being pursued with flagrant disregard for what must now be the overriding policy ambition – to avert catastrophic climate change?

**A** Back in March, the campaign group Talk Fracking successfully challenged the legality of the NPPF with regard to its policies on shale oil and gas extraction. The outcome of that challenge was that the Secretary of State James Brokenshire MP had

acted unlawfully when he introduced an explicitly pro-fracking policy into para 209(a) of the NPPF, ignoring consultation on the matter and scientific evidence published between the creation of the policy in a written ministerial statement in 2015 and the publication of the revised NPPF in 2018. The court has since confirmed last week that the resolution of this finding should be that para 209(a) of the NPPF should be quashed and can no longer be used in support of fracking proposals in planning applications or local plans. Local campaigners are encouraged to make this point forcefully to decision makers, although the Secretary of State has still attempted to insist that remaining policies of the NPPF (in paragraphs 203-205 and the rest of 209) may still be used in support of

fracking proposals. He also insists that the 2015 and 2018 written ministerial statements should still apply, despite these being discredited by the court decisions (indeed the purpose of including 209(a) in the NPPF was to enable the 2015 WMS to be superseded). Para 209(a) said that mineral planning authorities should: ‘recognise the benefits of on-shore oil and gas development, including unconventional hydrocarbons, for the security of energy supplies and supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy; and put in place policies to facilitate their exploration and extraction’. The judge found the Government failed to carry out a proper and fair consultation on the draft policy, and should have taken all new scientific evidence into account.

## Current issues

### Deposit scheme benefits

The economic benefit of a deposit return system, which included every drinks can and bottle – both plastic and glass – would be eight times greater than the economic benefit of a watered-down system, according to government analysis highlighted by CPRE. We found that, of the two systems currently proposed by the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra), an ‘all in’ deposit return system could generate £2 billion for the economy over ten years, according to the government’s own impact assessment. This is compared to just £250 million that would be generated by a so-called ‘on-the-go’ system, which would collect just a fraction of drinks containers produced. CPRE’s Maddy Haughton-Boakes said: ‘This is yet more evidence of the positive impact that a deposit return system will have in taking us towards a circular economy.’

A reduction in the amount of waste sent to landfill, littered drinks containers and their associated clean-up costs, reduced air and water pollution, as well as fewer carbon emissions caused by the extraction and production of raw materials needed to produce new drinks containers, will result in huge savings for the Treasury, local councils and tax payers. The introduction of a deposit return system would boost recycling rates for drinks containers to more than 90%, and make the producers of drinks and its packaging financially responsible for the full collection and clean-up costs of the waste that they produce. CPRE states that any attempt to water down the system by vested interests would be a huge missed opportunity and drastic loss of future revenue for the British economy, with a so-called ‘on-the-go’ system, for example, resulting in a fraction of the economic benefit.

## Current issues

### Cleaning up Devon

June saw the Corporate Social Responsibility category in the Exeter Business Awards feature CPRE Devon's work alongside cleaning and catering firm Devon Norse. The firm's Norse Tidy-Up campaign included a litter pick with our campaigners which collected 33 sacks of litter in just one hour. CPRE's Penny Mills said: 'We were delighted to help Devon Norse with this worthwhile initiative to improve the area around their office, and we'd be happy to support other local companies with helpers and equipment. It was shocking how much rubbish we collected in the space of an hour.'

### Farming of the future

CPRE welcomed a July report published by the RSA Food, Farming and Countryside Commission which called for a radical 10-year plan to transition to a sustainable food and farming system. Tom Fyans, CPRE's deputy chief executive, said: 'This important report is absolutely right to call for a transformation of our agriculture sector by 2030, and put the countryside at the centre of the green economy. We must, if we are to successfully tackle the enormous challenges posed by the climate emergency, take a strategic approach to how we manage and use our land. The government must introduce policies and the right levels of funding that support a transition to agricultural practices, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture and paludiculture. This will see us plant more trees, regenerate our soils and restore our peatlands, and thereby store carbon. Ambitious targets don't do anything in themselves. Actions speak louder than words.'

# Rural affordable housing

**In the countryside, as in towns and cities, the best way to provide a secure home for people on low incomes is to build more social housing, and this was the priority stressed throughout our April submission to the Affordable Housing Commission.**

Social rented homes can be built by councils or housing associations, and the rent is usually around 50-60% of the market rate for a comparable property. At present there are far too few social rented homes in the countryside to meet the needs of the people who live there. Addressing the shortfall will require significant capital investment. June 2018 saw the announcement of £1.67bn of new funding by 2021/22, of which just over half would be spent on new homes

for social rent. Although a step in the right direction, this money will deliver only 12,500 homes for social rent – fewer than the number of households currently on the local authority waiting list in Cornwall alone.

At present, the Government spends more on subsidising the private housing market than building new affordable homes. The 2017 Budget included a total projected housing spend of £44bn over five years, with an estimated £11.87bn for Help to Buy equity loans up to 2020/21. Meanwhile, the budget for the Affordable Homes Programme over the same period was just £9.1bn. A radical rebalancing of spending is required if we are to build the kind of low cost homes which will actually address the affordability challenge, rather than ever more unaffordable market housing.

### A council house revolution?

In some places, councils themselves may be able to play a key role in financing and building new social housing stock. The Prime Minister indicated that she intends them to do so when she lifted the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap in October 2018. However, not all local authorities have Housing

**“A radical rebalancing of spending is required to address the affordability challenge”**



**Far more of the Affordable Homes Programme budget should be spent on rural housing schemes**



Revenue Accounts. In fact, only 31 of 91 rural authorities own their own housing stock, according to MHCLG's 2017/18 Local Authority Housing Statistics. Two-thirds of rural councils are therefore unable to take advantage of the new borrowing flexibility.

Those councils which have a Housing Revenue Account can now use their new borrowing powers to increase the delivery of social rented homes and CPRE applauds those who chose to do so. But in order to build enough social rented homes to meet the needs of the most vulnerable households, and also the growing number of people trapped in the private rented sector, we will need significant public investment through Government grant funding programmes.

We recommend a rebalancing of spending from demand-side initiatives like Help to Buy to supply-side programmes of affordable and especially social housing delivery. The budget for the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) should be substantially increased and, within it, more money should be spent on rural housing. Homes England spent £142.3m on rural schemes between 2012-13 and 2016-17: just under 9% of total AHP spending per annum. Considering that 17% of the population of England live in rural areas, and that 16% of the total number of households on local authority waiting lists in April 2018 were in rural authorities, this constitutes a significant underinvestment.

## “Grant funding should focus on the pressing need for low cost rented homes”

AHP spending on rural schemes should also prioritise delivering homes for social rent. While intermediate tenures such as shared ownership

Tim Crocker



**Rural communities may be more inclined to accept new housing for those with a connection to the parish**

undoubtedly have a role to play in creating mixed and balanced rural communities, grant funding should focus primarily on meeting the most pressing housing need in these communities, which is for low cost rented accommodation. And with rural communities disproportionately affected by the sale of social housing through Right to Buy, we recommend that the Government suspends the scheme in rural areas (settlements with a population of fewer than 3,000), since the replacement of social rented homes sold under the policy can be extremely challenging in small settlements.

## Planning for affordability

A small change within the existing planning system, which would specifically benefit rural areas, is the removal of the small sites threshold for developer contributions. Currently, developers are not obliged to provide affordable housing on sites with fewer than 10 homes. In designated rural areas (as rather narrowly defined in Section 157 of the 1985 Housing Act), authorities may set a lower threshold of 5 homes, but contributions on sites of 6 to 10 are usually made in the form of off-site cash payments and there is no

guarantee they will be spent in the community affected by the development. Given that rural schemes tend to be smaller than urban ones, the 10 dwelling threshold has a disproportionate impact on rural communities. Developer contributions must be levied on all sites and, other than in exceptional circumstances, they should be made in the form of affordable homes on-site, rather than cash payments.

At present, most new build social housing is provided through Section 106 contributions which rely on the private sector building large numbers of market homes alongside the homes that are actually required to meet local need. Where a specific local need for new affordable homes can be identified, an alternative method for delivering them is through the rural exception site policy. Rural exception sites are small sites that would not normally receive residential planning permission, but where permission is granted, as an exception to normal planning policy, on the condition that the resulting homes should be affordable to people with a local connection in perpetuity. Rural communities may be more inclined to accept new housing development if priority in allocating the affordable homes is given to households with a connection to the parish.

# Current issues

## A strategy for the rural economy

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy published a welcome report in April calling for the Government to develop a rural strategy to address issues faced by rural communities. CPRE agreed with the committee's claims that rural economies have been undervalued and suffered from a lack of investment, with national policies largely devised for urban and suburban economies. This has led to a number of challenges for communities across the countryside, according to the report, including: a lack of affordable and suitable housing; reduced public transport; skills shortages; the decline of accessible amenities and services; and inadequate infrastructure.

The report's recommendations include measures to improve rural connectivity, business support, the planning system, service provision such as health and education and much more. CPRE's chief executive Crispin Truman said: 'Almost one fifth of England's population live in rural areas, but a failure to address the unique and specific needs of these communities have put them at risk of being left behind. The best way to express the political will required to build thriving rural communities is through better funding for affordable housing, infrastructure and public services. By investing in and tackling these issues in a holistic way, we will enable our market towns and villages to flourish, making them attractive places to live, work in and visit for people of all ages. Building sustainable rural economies is crucial to enabling our countryside and environment to thrive. CPRE looks forward to working with the government and partners over the coming months to build on the strategy outlined today.'

# MATTER of fact

Support for your case

## Reversing the loss of biodiversity - what does it mean for the countryside?

**I**f we continue with business as usual, 1 million species will be eradicated from the planet. The loss of species and habitats poses as much a danger to life on Earth as climate change does.

These are the messages of the latest IPBES Global Assessment report, the first major international review of biodiversity since 2005. The report is a systematic review of 15,000 scientific and government papers, as well as drawing on indigenous knowledge from around the world. The UK government has signed up, along with 131 other countries.

### We depend on biodiversity

The technical term for life on Earth, 'biodiversity', is a scientific measure of the variety of species, habitats, and ecosystems across the planet. It is essential for human existence and integral to a flourishing countryside. As well as underpinning the food we eat and the air we breathe, we depend on biodiversity for protection from other threats, like pollution, flooding and climate breakdown.

The IPBES report assessed changes in biodiversity over the past five decades, and demonstrates that rates of extinction are accelerating hundreds of times faster than usual. The red squirrel, natterjack toad, and turtle dove are all in peril in our countryside, alongside many insects that we rely on. But why? What is driving our living world to the brink? And, most importantly, what can be done?

### "Restoring nature is our primary defence against climate breakdown"

The biggest driver of biodiversity loss is 'land-use change': specifically, converting and managing wild land for agriculture and development. Agriculture in particular has had the largest impact on ecosystems that people depend on for food, clean water and a stable climate. We'll need to significantly change the way our food is grown to avert disaster. Last year CPRE's *Back to the land* report explained how the thin layer of soil covering surface of our planet is critical to all life on earth. Healthy soil hosts an incredible diversity of life from tiny, single-celled organisms to fungi, insects, and animals like moles and badgers. Protecting the nation's soil is essential, but we must also reverse the trends by regenerating it to health. Farmers should be supported to phase out ploughing, cut down on fertilisers and pesticides, and diversify their crops.

### Countryside nature restoration

Restoring nature is critical to reversing the loss of biodiversity. By planting trees, shrubs, wildflower meadows, and reintroducing lost animals it is possible to restore ecosystems. In National Parks and across the countryside, we must stop the draining and burning of peat bogs. Our friends at the

Campaign for National Parks recently highlighted exciting peatland restoration going on in Yorkshire. The IPBES report also highlighted the importance of local communities taking the lead in such conservation projects, with benefits for people as well as nature.

Biodiversity and climate are inseparable, and combined, present the greatest threat our countryside has ever faced. Restoring nature is our primary defence against climate breakdown, and climate breakdown will continue to accelerate the decline of nature. Natural ecosystems suck up 60% of our carbon emissions, and nature-based solutions, like planting trees, nurturing soils, and restoring ecosystems, can provide over a third of the climate solutions needed until 2030 with huge benefits for biodiversity.

All of these changes require big commitments from the Government. CPRE will be redoubling its efforts to ensure the government is held accountable – through our work with partners such as the Climate Coalition at the mass lobby of Parliament on 26 June, and our work through Wildlife and Countryside Link and Greener UK calling for the Environment Bill and Agriculture Bill to work for nature. Continuing on our current path will lead to staggering losses for the countryside and us all, but by acting ambitiously, we have the chance to transform our future so people and nature thrive together.

**Mair Floyd-Bosley,**  
**CPRE Campaigns and**  
**Policy Assistant**  
**Find out more**

### Nature in numbers: the key findings of the IPBES assessment

*Since 1970, trends in agricultural production, fish harvest, bioenergy production and harvest of materials have increased, but 14 of the 18 categories of contributions of nature that were assessed (including soil organic carbon and pollinator diversity) have declined. More than 75 per cent of global food crop types, including fruits and vegetables and some of the most important cash crops such as coffee, cocoa and almonds, rely on animal pollination. Land degradation has reduced productivity in 23 per cent of the global terrestrial area, and 75% of the world's land surface is significantly altered since 1970.*

*Fewer varieties and breeds of plants are being cultivated with reductions in the diversity of crops and domesticated breeds mean that agroecosystems are less resilient against future climate change, pests and pathogens. Four crops (wheat, rice, maize and potato) account for more than 60% of global food energy intake by humans, despite two thirds of Earth's 400,000 plant species being edible. Marine and terrestrial ecosystems are the sole sinks for anthropogenic carbon emissions, with a gross sequestration of 5.6 gigatons of carbon per year (the equivalent of some 60 per cent of global anthropogenic emissions).*

*IPBES is the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.*