



The  
countryside  
charity

# Fieldwork



## Fracking ban hailed as a significant step in tackling the climate crisis

**C**PRE, the countryside charity, has long argued that fracking could industrialise rural England and contribute to the climate crisis, so we were delighted to join our community and NGO partners in celebrating the 2 November announcement of a moratorium on the practice with immediate effect. The halt to fracking comes after a two-year CPRE campaign against government proposals to 'fast-track' shale gas development through the planning system, thereby removing local people from the decision-making process.

Ministers decided that fracking will not be allowed to proceed in England following the publication of

new scientific analysis from the Oil and Gas Authority which concluded that it is not possible, with current technology, to accurately predict the probability of tremors associated with fracking. The government announcement stated that fracking would be 'paused' until 'compelling new evidence is provided', and also cited the disturbance caused to residents living near Cuadrilla's Preston New Road site in Lancashire, including a 2.9 magnitude earthquake that forced a halt to operations in August.

CPRE North Yorkshire said: 'Having campaigned hard against the KM8 well in Kirby Misperton [cover photo] we welcome and support the view taken by government that

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# Fieldwork

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## Editor

Oliver Hilliam  
fieldwork@cpre.org.uk

## Contributors

Robert Bamforth, Jo Lavis,  
David Johnson, Ketsia Tampo,  
Amelia Furness.

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CPRE The countryside charity  
5-11 Lavington Street  
London SE1 0NZ  
T 020 7981 2800  
F 020 7981 2899  
info@cpre.org.uk  
www.cpre.org.uk  
@CPRE

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## Fracking ban hailed in battle against the climate emergency

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fracking is not a suitable method for extracting natural gas in the UK.' CPRE South Yorkshire also welcomed the news but remains vigilant until there is more clarity on what the moratorium means in reality. They said the decision would not have happened without the brave and sustained campaigns led by the local communities they worked with at Harthill and Woodsetts in Rotherham and Marsh Lane, near Eckington. CPRE South Yorkshire's statement continued: 'We are proud to have shared our planning expertise with them, fought shoulder to shoulder alongside them at three public inquiries and to have worked with Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, 38degrees and others to oppose this insidious new form of fossil fuel. We are clear that, to avert the worst impacts of climate change on our local countryside, fracking has no role in our low carbon future.'

### A victory for local communities

The government also confirmed that it would not be taking forward proposed planning reforms for shale gas developments that were consulted on in 2018. CPRE mobilised thousands of people to respond to the consultations as part of our 'Don't fast-track fracking' campaign, and the results published after the moratorium announcement revealed the extent of our influence, recording an unprecedented level of opposition: 83% of respondents opposed the move to make fracking applications go through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime, cutting out local councils; while 97.5% opposed permitted development rights for shale gas exploration which would have removed the need for planning permission for initial work. The government's response to the consultations also noted the petition against the plans signed by over 307,000 people, with over 200,000 of those names generated by CPRE.

Our campaign for local democracy saw us team up with 20 organisations to

object to the proposals in a joint letter published in the Telegraph. We also joined forces with Friends of the Earth to poll Conservative councillors on the proposals, which revealed that 80% of them were opposed to the government's plans. An accompanying CPRE campaign action encouraged 11,000 people to ask their council leaders to support the campaign. All of this pressure resulted in two parliamentary debates last year which saw a packed room of cross-party MPs challenge ministers on the undemocratic nature of the measures.

**83% of respondents opposed the move to let fracking applications cut out local councils**

### Tackling the climate emergency

November's long-awaited announcement finally came a week after CPRE welcomed a National Audit Office report supporting our warnings that fracking has no demonstrable benefit to local people, communities and the country at large. The report also highlighted the lack of clarity on who will meet the costs of decommissioning wells, and the lack of progress on developing the carbon capture and storage technology which would be essential for fracking to be compliant with reaching net-zero emissions targets.

**This is a fantastic win for everyone who cares about protecting the countryside from climate catastrophe and mass industrialisation**

Tom Fyans, CPRE's deputy chief executive said: 'This is a fantastic win for local democracy and everyone who cares about protecting the countryside from climate catastrophe and mass industrialisation. In a state of climate emergency, the decision to ban new fracking is absolutely essential but CPRE urges the next government to go even further with a range of policies that will help tackle the climate emergency.'

# Break through

How volunteers are making a difference



## A Gold Award for a visionary rural community

Following an initial idea by CPRE members in Ryedale, the Thornton Le Dale Hub was set up in 2018 by residents who were concerned about a gradual decline in both community-spirit and village amenities.

In the past year, the Hub's volunteers have organised litter picks, created a nature trail and sensory community herb garden, and turned the village pond area into a place where residents can enjoy natural beauty and tranquillity. The project has been so successful that the North

York Moors National Park team invited members of the Hub to act as a 'model' for other villages, while the village recently won the Gold Award in the Yorkshire in Bloom competition. Trustees from CPRE North Yorkshire visited during preparations for the contest (above), and were so impressed they are now thinking of re-establishing their Best Kept Village competition to help other parishes in the county take on similar environmental projects and restore local pride.

## Support for new 'national landscapes'

CPRE welcomed September's publication of recommendations from an independent review into the future of our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Instigated by the government as part of its 25 year environment plan, our lobbying influenced the review's proposals for improved protections and funding for AONBs, and for every school pupil to have the chance to visit these special landscapes.

The review was also tasked with exploring potential new 'national landscape' designations, and its recommendations supported CPRE

Dorset's case for the Dorset AONB to be made a National Park. Dorset's spectacular Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site would double the extent of coastline represented in English National Parks, while our campaigners believe a Dorset National Park would be central to a positive future for the county's rural environment, communities and economy. Meanwhile, CPRE Gloucestershire was pleased that the review endorsed their strong argument, made over many years, that the Forest of Dean should be designated as an AONB, with the Cotswolds AONB considered for National Park status.

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### Greener transport in Oxfordshire

CPRE Oxfordshire has called for an outline transport strategy for England's Economic Heartland – a strategic partnership looking at development including the 'OxCam Arc' – to provide solutions that address the climate emergency. Campaigners welcomed the strategy's acknowledgement that 'economic growth should not be at the expense of the environment', and have called for a plan that: co-ordinates jobs and housing to minimise commuting; commits to integrated public transport; offers genuine public engagement; and rejects the unnecessary and environmentally damaging OxCam Expressway road.

### Vearse Farm update

CPRE Dorset was pleased to report that a public hearing in October saw a judge give the go-ahead for a judicial review of the biggest development ever proposed for an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The ADVEARSE campaign group had been part-funded by CPRE in challenging Dorset Council's decision to grant planning permission for 760 houses and industrial units at Vearse Farm, near Bridport. Their case argued that AONB land should only be built on under exceptional circumstances, and even then the scale of the development should be limited. Follow the latest at [dorset-cpre.org.uk](https://dorset-cpre.org.uk)

# News round-up

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

## A manifesto for the countryside

**The choices made by the next government will have big consequences for our countryside, so December's General Election is a time to put the countryside at the top of the political agenda.**

At CPRE, the countryside charity, we believe that everyone has the right to enjoy a countryside that promotes a healthier economy and a happier community, and our 'Manifesto for the next government' promotes a bold set of reforms to make this ambition a reality. We want to see the next government tackle the climate emergency, implementing measures to reach net-zero emissions by 2045 at the very latest; improve access to green spaces for everyone, particularly for children and those from disadvantaged communities who do not currently have access; and support a well-resourced planning system

that empowers communities and promotes development that responds to their needs.

The election gives us all a great chance to talk to candidates as they canvas for votes and attend hustings, and we're urging Fieldwork readers to ask them how they will work to promote, enhance and protect our countryside. Will they, for instance, support the planning system as one of local democracy's most powerful and effective tools, and back our calls for a 'brownfield first' policy to help safeguard our Green Belts? Will they work to increase energy efficiency and promote natural climate solutions, to ensure there will be no further delay in reducing carbon emissions? And will they work towards the investment in public transport and genuinely affordable homes that will allow our rural communities to thrive? Read our manifesto and look out for more ways to lobby locally at [cpre.org.uk](https://cpre.org.uk)

## Link road threat to the Chilterns

**CPRE recently issued a national response to the government's decision not to hold a public inquiry on plans for a destructive link road between the M1 and A6, through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

We expressed disappointment that the government has decided not to intervene and carry out a public inquiry on proposed plans for the M1-A6 link road, north of Luton, part of which will build on 170 acres of the Chilterns, including the 'green lung' of Sundon Wood. CPRE Bedfordshire had called on the government to halt the application and allow a full public review of plans that will also adversely impact on two ancient woodlands and an important SSSI site. The entire development will be within the Green Belt and constitutes 'environmental vandalism' – increasing air

pollution and carbon emissions.

However, the communities secretary Robert Jenrick decided not to 'call in' the decision, as he was 'satisfied that the application should be determined at a local level.' Our local campaigners called this 'an appalling abdication of responsibility', arguing that 'the Chilterns AONB is a landscape of national significance – it is not simply a local matter.' Lois Wright, manager of CPRE Bedfordshire, said: 'The "Glover Review of Protected Landscapes" (which reported to government in September 2019) called for AONBs to be given much stronger protection and recommended that the Chilterns be re-designated as a National Park. By refusing to hold a public inquiry into this completely unjustified and unnecessary intrusion into the Chilterns the government has failed the first real test.'



## Green Clean 2019

**C**PRE's Green Clean returned for a second year during September, removing over 10,000 bottles and cans from our green spaces. Volunteers across England got outside for litter picking sessions as part of an effort to clean up the countryside and highlight the need for a comprehensive deposit return system for drinks containers.

CPRE Northumberland led the way on the first on the month, holding a Green Clean retrieving 21 bags of rubbish and recyclables in Newbiggin, followed by

an event clearing 15 bags of litter from Throckley on the 22nd. Elaine Brown, deputy town clerk of Newbiggin Council, helped organise the first event (above) and said 'it was wonderful to see so many bottles and cans cleared from our green spaces', while Throckley councillor Linda Wright said: 'This is a great initiative and we noticed that there was less rubbish than last year. We think that because last year's Green Clean raised the profile of recycling, people are a bit more aware of the need not to drop litter.'

## Challenging airport expansion

**A** new study carried out for CPRE Avonside by the New Economics Foundation has cast major doubt on the potential economic benefits claimed for the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport.

The study concludes that the development of the airport is incompatible with inevitable and essential future constraints on air travel because of climate change and claimed benefits for the West of England region have been overstated by almost 50%. The study also found that standard methodologies indicate passenger numbers in 2030 are likely to be only 8.5 million a year, not the 12 million suggested by the airport. David Worskett, chair of CPRE Avonside, said: 'To incur all the damage involved – to the Green Belt, to the tranquillity of the whole region, to the levels of congestion and

pollution – when the benefits are simply not there would be highly irresponsible.'

Meanwhile, CPRE London has called for an independent review of aviation, with a view to using the site of London City Airport to unlock the development potential of the city's former Docklands. Their director Neil Sinden said: 'In the longer term, we believe a phased closure programme would be justified in the face of the major and growing impacts that the airport has on communities across east London in terms of damage to human health and in contributing to climate change and air pollution.' He concluded that the land could be better used 'for the creation of new sustainable communities, with affordable homes, green spaces and new jobs, well connected to central London by improved sustainable transport infrastructure.'

### Building Beautiful – How to create well-designed places

This CPRE Sussex planning training session will combine expert presentations with participant workshops to show how you can help improve development design. **Saturday 30 November 2019; see [cpresussex.org.uk/events](http://cpresussex.org.uk/events) for details**

### Carols from St Mary's, Easton Neston

CPRE Northamptonshire hosts an inspirational evening of carols with Musica in this charming church, followed by mulled wine and mince pies. **Saturday 14 December; [cprenorthants.org.uk/whats\\_going\\_on](http://cprenorthants.org.uk/whats_going_on)**

### Friends of the Peak District's Magnificent Walk 2020

10 and 20 mile routes with friendly marshals and homemade flapjack along the way. Start and finish at The Three Merry Lads pub near Sheffield and explore the fantastic scenery on the eastern edge of the Peak District. **Saturday 16 May 2020; [friendsofthepeak.org.uk/events](http://friendsofthepeak.org.uk/events)**

### Order your CPRE Christmas cards and help raise funds for our work

With seasonal images of Salisbury Cathedral from CPRE Wiltshire, Birling Gap from CPRE Sussex, and a selection of designs from CPRE Hampshire. In need of a 2020 calendar? CPRE Hertfordshire's 'Countryside Under Threat' calendar is back! See county websites for details.

## Reviewing polytunnels in Herefordshire

When plans for a 91 acre polytunnel development in Ocle Pychard were submitted in 2018, CPRE Herefordshire was asked by villagers to lodge an objection to this inappropriate application. The proposal would damage the neighbourhood's wildlife, heritage sites and quality of life, with even the developer's landscape and visual impact assessment conceding 'a high and long term adverse scale of effect on the character of the application site itself'. Indeed, the polytunnels will be visible from many footpaths, including the nationally important Three Choirs Way.

The proposed site was a 'county farm' (a publicly-owned tenant farm) recently sold off by Herefordshire Council, where sustainable livestock farming had helped restore this grade 2 agricultural land. Despite massive local opposition the council's planning committee granted the application, but CPRE Herefordshire agreed to pursue a judicial review, funded by generous donations from a small group of local residents. Their case that the council failed to follow their own polytunnel guidance, comply with habitats regulations or allow adequate public consultation was found to be arguable at a judicial review set for 4 December. Follow the case by searching for Ocle Pychard at [cpreherefordshire.org.uk](http://cpreherefordshire.org.uk)

# letter from the field

Words from local campaigners



## The story of Castle Hill

**CPRE West Yorkshire's Robert Bamforth writes on the battle for one of West Yorkshire's most historic landscapes.**

Castle Hill stands like a proud sentinel, towering almost 800 feet above Huddersfield town centre. It is an open, windy, wild, yet amazingly quiet place that is much valued by local people. It is topped with a simple stone tower, built to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Tower and hill complement each other perfectly, as a key feature in the wider Pennine landscape. To the surprise of no one it has become an iconic symbol of the whole area and the identity of Kirklees.

Features on the ground surface show that it is also a very well-preserved example of a bronze-age hillfort, then an iron-age hillfort and then a Norman motte and bailey castle. Many of the historic features of Castle Hill are of outstanding national importance. They are unique on one site.

We are not aware of any physical battles on Castle Hill but the modern day 'battle of Castle Hill' has been raging for over ten years now and is still unresolved. Developers want to build a 'restaurant with rooms and a visitor centre' on the summit of the hill, within the defensive earthworks of the hill forts and castle. They argue that visitor facilities are sorely needed and the new building would sit on the site of the old Castle Hill hotel which was demolished circa 2005. Planners argue that the site of the old hotel has now reverted to Green Belt and the need to protect the ancient monument and Green Belt landscape outweighs the



need for intrusive visitor facilities on the summit of the hill. Public and politicians are split between the two opposing arguments.

CPRE, along with many other local groups, including Huddersfield Civic Society and English Heritage, is totally opposed to any development on the summit of the hill, as it would do irreparable damage to the wider landscape and the open, immediately recognisable layout of the ancient hill forts and castle. CPRE's view is that much more can and should be done to make the site accessible to visitors and articulate the history of the site, the geology, the environment and the surrounding landscape.

Castle Hill is an outstanding place with an outstanding story to tell. Given the historical, landscape and access constraints, our view is that the only way to do this is to reinstate the original historic access to the hill, from the north east side and create a visitor centre and car parks at a much lower level, just outside the boundaries of the historical sites. 'Castle Hill Country Park' has a really nice ring to it but it must be done in the right way; one which protects the outstanding historical site and the precious landscape.

# Good ideas

Learning from each other



## Celebrating Shropshire's landscapes

© Tom Blockley

The winners of CPRE Shropshire's 70th anniversary photo competition were unveiled in October at the launch of a special exhibition at the National Trust's Attingham Park. The group received over 400 entries from the county's amateur photographers for their 'My Shropshire' landscape contest. The judges were unanimous over the winning entry, a dramatic image of a 'Storm on the Shropshire Hills' by photographer Richard Greswell. Janet Lewis's 'Offa's Dyke on Llanfair Hill' and Olwyn Wall's 'Misty

Morning on the Severn' were named joint runners up. CPRE Shropshire's chair, Sarah Bury, said: 'We're delighted that these beautiful images will now be showcased at Attingham Park and around the county over the coming months. We hope local people will get a chance to visit and see these carefully crafted shots of Shropshire's varied and stunning landscapes.' Enjoy Tom Blockley's highly commended 'Looking towards Hope Bowdler' (above) and view all the highlights at: [cpreshropshire.org.uk/winning-entries](http://cpreshropshire.org.uk/winning-entries)

## Exploring Manchester's Green Belt

October saw 35 people of all ages gather at Sale Water Park to walk stage two of the Greater Manchester Ringway with CPRE Lancashire. The purpose of the walk was to highlight the beauty and accessibility of Green Belt locations including Chorlton Water Park and Kenworthy Woods. CPRE volunteers and staff were on hand to talk about their work to protect and enhance these landscapes, and welcomed several people who had booked through their group on the Meetup website, which now has 37 members. With a Wigan Green Belt walk scheduled for late November, CPRE Lancashire hopes its Meetup group will

be an important way to reach people with a shared passion for protecting and improving our countryside. Look out for details of future walks and join up at [www.meetup.com/CPRE-Lancashire](http://www.meetup.com/CPRE-Lancashire)



## Saving Staffordshire's hedgehogs

Kingsmead School in Hednesford has been awarded the 2019 CPRE Staffordshire Schools' Trophy in recognition of its work in protecting and enhancing wildlife. Kingsmead must be one of the few schools with two pet sheep and a number of chickens in its yard – in addition to Mr Prickles, the resident hedgehog. The school works with the west midlands hedgehog rescue group, which has been teaching students about responsibly releasing hedgehogs back to the wild. The pupils recently took part in a community day where staff and members of the public helped them build feeding stations and houses for rescue hedgehogs.

Volunteers from the community and the school's 'eco group' of students have also been involved in creating a wildflower meadow and repairing the school pond, which houses a population of more than 30 newts. Mary Booth, chairman of CPRE Staffordshire, presented the school with an engraved trophy and £50 prize money – which will be put towards looking after injured or rescued hedgehogs that cannot be released. All schools in the county were invited to enter the competition, which is run annually to find inspiring projects that help protect or enhance the local environment. See all the latest news from the county at [cprestaffordshire.org.uk](http://cprestaffordshire.org.uk)

### An exemplar development in Leicestershire

This autumn saw CPRE Leicestershire celebrate the launch of the county's latest Rural Exception Site. This fantastic development of 32 new homes at Prior William Close and Croft Road, Cosby, will create a strong and sustainable community for many local families and individuals.

The scheme is another example of great partnerships, with Midlands Rural Housing identifying the local housing need and working with the community along with Blaby District Council, GEDA Construction and Nottingham Community Housing Association – which own and manage the homes. Of the 32 new homes, 22 will be allocated on an affordable rent basis through Blaby District Council's choice based lettings scheme. Seven will be offered on a shared ownership basis (part rent, part buy), and the remaining three properties have been taken through Rent to Buy, a low cost home ownership option.

Midlands Rural Housing joined campaigners from around the East Midlands at CPRE's affordable housing conference in Nottingham in November. Local decision-makers and housing providers came together to consider how to implement solutions that will contribute towards the sustainability, longevity and vibrancy of rural communities, while supporting the delivery of homes that meet local need.

# step by step

Guide to good campaigning

## Supporting rural exception sites

**R**ural exception sites are small sites (typically 5-20 dwellings) within or adjoining a village. They are not allocated for development and are only considered for planning permission if they provide affordable homes to meet a local housing need.

In some cases, they will include an element of market housing, but usually only to provide cross-subsidy to make it viable to deliver the affordable housing. The homes will be developed, managed and owned by either a housing association or community led housing organisation, sometimes with the two working in partnership. Occasionally, landowners may choose to deliver and manage a scheme themselves.

The rural exception site approach has been around since 1989 and, whilst each scheme is small, evidence shows that they have made a significant contribution to their host communities. The existing body of evidence has established a number of common stages for developing a rural exception site. These are not necessarily sequential, particularly during the early pre-development phases.

### 1 Make the initial case and build support

Find and go and speak informally to a local 'leader' who you think may or could be sympathetic to what you want to achieve. This might be a particularly influential individual, a parish councilor or the ward councilor. Take some photos of completed schemes and perhaps some case studies. You could do this alone, or with the local rural housing enabler (RHE) – these are people who are independent of a developer or local authority. Their role is to support communities through the process of gaining affordable housing to meet their needs from start to completion. They will help with evidencing the local housing need; finding a suitable site; facilitating positive community engagement – including in the design of the homes;

acting, when necessary as a broker between the different agencies who will be involved.

Make formal contact with the parish council – you could ask to speak at one of their meetings, perhaps accompanied by your sympathetic local leader. Again, you could do this with the RHE who will be able to provide more of the technical details and set out how they can support the parish council bring a scheme forward. Speak informally to others in the community to explore the idea – perhaps parents at the local school or play group, the WI, older residents, the vicar, people who run local businesses.

### 2 Keep championing the scheme

Once the scheme moves into the more formal stages it will still need your support. Keeping people informed of progress, dispelling myths early on, opening up opportunities for others to become involved – all will help keep the scheme on track and ensure it is a success. Not everyone is going to be supportive and sometimes people have legitimate concerns that need to be addressed.

You could set up a Facebook page, Instagram or blog on the village website – but remember not everyone is online. Write articles for the village newsletter, or flyers that update people on progress and next steps, and run regular 'briefing' sessions – maybe at the local pub where you can explain what is happening and invite people to ask questions.

### 3 Get involved in the pre-development process

The pre-development phase has a number of stages that include community engagement where you could take part. You could join or offer to set up a working group – sometimes the parish council will form a working group to support them in promoting and securing a scheme that meets the community's needs. Or, assist



Rural exception sites like Little Stocks Close in Kinlet, Shropshire can help keep villages alive

the RHE with advertising and the encouraging people to complete the local housing need survey.

Take part in the call for sites – as rural exception sites are not allocated they have to be identified. It is usual for this to be done with members of the community. You could contribute by speaking to landowners who you think may be willing to release a rural exception site. You will need to explain this will be an affordable housing scheme, why it is needed and that the homes will be retained as affordable housing for local people in perpetuity. It might be worth taking along some case studies and photos with you to show the high quality of these developments.

There will often be an organised ‘walkabout’ around the village to identify possible sites. This will include parish councillors, community members and the RHE, often the development manager from the housing association, local authority planner or housing enabler.

#### 4 Take part in the design process

One way in which local objections are avoided or overcome is by ensuring the scheme is in keeping with the village and designed to a high standard. Equally, there has to be pragmatism so, whilst the aesthetic reflects local form and materials, it does not result in costs that would make it unviable to deliver the affordable homes.

Check for any existing design guidance – there may be guidance produced by your local planning authority or a character assessment in support of your neighbourhood plan. Undertaking a quick

village design statement can set out the key design features that characterise your village and that you would like to see reflected in the scheme design.

Organising a ‘concept statement’ event can help members of the community, the developer and the local authority identify the assets and aspects of the site which they value and wish to ensure are retained or replaced. A day is spent considering what layout might work best, and the shape, form and materials that characterise the village to be reflected in the scheme design.

#### 5 Encourage potential tenants to register

The homes will be allocated first to those who have a housing need and have a connection with the local community. Having a formal record of those looking for an affordable home also helps supplement the evidence base that supports the scheme. You could encourage people to register by providing information on how to register in any briefings or updates about the scheme and at any public events, such as exhibitions on the design. Putting articles in village newsletters and websites can help make sure people are aware of when the homes will be advertised and how to bid.

Taken from ‘How to improve the supply of rural affordable housing: A Guide for CPRE members’ prepared by Jo Lavis of Rural Housing Solutions

### Affordable housing in the Peak District

Friends of the Peak District have welcomed the development of the Bakewell neighbourhood plan, which is nearing completion following a sustained effort by all concerned. As the plan sits within the context of the National Park’s local plan it has strong policies to conserve the landscape, and the built and green infrastructure of the town. It also recognises the need for more affordable housing and, working with the National Park authority, has identified land near Lady Manner’s School. This is in addition to an adjacent site, which already has permission for 30 affordable homes.

Meanwhile, in nearby Buxton, the Friends have raised concerns over the overall sustainability of a development they support in principle. While 73 affordable houses, as a mix of shared ownership and rent, on the east side of the town is good news, it would involve the loss of part of a greenfield site enjoyed by local people. They argue the value of this important space has not been recognised and requires compensation, suggesting that the remainder of the allocated site be retained for local amenity. They propose this could be achieved if the density of the planned development was increased to 35-50 dwellings per hectare, and car parking provision reduced in view of the proximity of buses, shops and services.

## A 'garden village' for East Cambs?

A residents' group in Kennett is raising money to start a judicial review of a proposed 500-house 'garden village' extension of their 152-house village – to be built by a developer effectively owned by East Cambridgeshire District Council. With the communities secretary refusing to 'call in' the planning application, Kennett Action Group is relying on a judicial review to reverse the district council's decision for this development to go ahead. Kennett Parish Council objected to the original planning application, calling the growth of the village 'disproportionate' and objecting to the permanent loss of open countryside.

In August 2018, CPRE Cambridgeshire objected to this planning application citing a number of sustainability issues, including the loss of grade 2 agricultural land. With infrequent train and bus services the new community would also be highly car-dependent for work and leisure. In terms of the landscape setting of the village, the development would remove countryside that is currently providing a protective buffer to the village from the A14 and A11, at the cost of local character and quality of life.

Find out more and donate to Kennett Action Group's judicial review crowdfunding appeal at: [www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sherine-awadallah-1](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sherine-awadallah-1)

# Parishbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

## Parish planning in Devon

**CPRE Devon is delighted at the positive response from town and parish councils to its first planning workshop, held at Hatherleigh Community Centre this week. There was an impressive turnout at the event on Tuesday 15 October, attended by 80 representatives from Devon's town and parish authorities.**

Led by experienced, independent planning consultant Jo Widdecombe, the morning workshop aimed to empower local councillors and clerks to engage fully with the planning process and to gain confidence in commenting on applications. Attendees tackled practical case studies as well as receiving up-to-date information about planning regulations, their powers as consultees and the importance of creating comprehensive neighbourhood

plans to shape sustainable development.

CPRE Devon president Rebecca Bartleet said that bringing together interested parties in the planning process gave them a united voice. She told the meeting: 'Let's start putting pressure on the powers-that-be to tie up loose ends and come down hard on developers who don't deliver on conditions or fulfil agreements that were part of their planning permission.' David Ball from Chittlehamholt said, 'parish councils are by their nature small and the more you get them together, the more you discover that everyone's got the same problems. You can pass information across and have good discussions so it's very valuable.' CPRE Devon plans to hold further practical workshops and hopes even more local councils will take part.

## Intensive poultry farming in Herefordshire

**A planning application for intensive poultry developments in Lyonshall Parish has caused concerns for CPRE Herefordshire. The applicant – who already has large poultry units in the village as well as in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire – now wants to erect six broiler houses, nine biomass boilers, a manager's house and a number of associated buildings, with an access road to the site through an ancient woodland.**

If allowed, about 2,880,000 birds will be raised a year, in seven-week cycles, placing a major impact on local roads and water supplies. Large quantities of manure will result, all of which will be transported off the site since the applicant has no nearby land. Inevitably large quantities of vehicles, including tractors and HGVs, will be using the site, while the high volumes of water needed by the sheds could deplete the boreholes and spring-fed wells supplying nearby households.

Lyonshall is already surrounded by

poultry farms, and CPRE Herefordshire has been campaigning to highlight their cumulative impact around the county.

In May, CPRE Shropshire won a Court of Appeal ruling that may be helpful in this case, in making planning authorities responsible for identifying fields used for the storage and/or spreading of poultry manure and assessing the cumulative effects on the environment and nearby residents.

Meanwhile, CPRE Herefordshire celebrated August's confirmation of a Tree Preservation Order for the magnificent avenue of lime trees along Kings Acre Road, leading into Hereford. It is three years since Breinton Parish Council formally made the proposal to Herefordshire Council, who recently concluded that 'the trees within the order have significant landscape, heritage, biodiversity and public amenity value' but 'are under potential threat from development'.

# Campaigner

## David Johnson of CPRE Sussex

**Our first national apprentice, Ketsia Tampo, recently met up with David Johnson to get his reflections on his six years as CPRE Sussex chair, and his hopes for the future of the countryside.**

**Ketsia: David, what were your proudest achievements as Chair?**

**David:** CPRE Sussex is full of hugely positive people, and I'm proud that our members and volunteers have helped us inspire community action and media coverage on important issues around land use, the environment and wellbeing. The challenge has been to recognise successes – whether it is a landscape we've saved or affordable housing we support – and spread the word about those positive stories. We certainly seem to have gained a good reputation: when our previous director left we only had eight candidates, but when we advertised the role a few years later we had 42 really good applications. I'm proud that we chose Kia Trainor, who has been excellent on all the planning and environmental issues and has given us a really dynamic image in the media.

**Ketsia: CPRE Sussex works on so many topical issues, which do you think are the most important?**

**David:** The future of the countryside is decided in towns, by people who live in towns. So we need everyone to develop deeper connections – so that they can understand its true value and weigh up those planning choices better. Because the countryside is essential for the long-term wellbeing of everyone, we need to fight for everything – from roadside verges to farmland – as part of a continuous landscape and habitat.

We supported a climate change summit in October, where we heard positive examples of how communities can become more sustainable and self-sufficient in energy. In the context of the climate emergency, the emphasis



David and Ketsia at the CPRE Sussex office

on new roads and airport expansion is completely wrongheaded. If Gatwick gets another runway, that will be used by people in Eastbourne to lobby for a new dual carriageway. We often seem to be fighting a cabal of 'sub-regional' politicians who think everyone wants expensive new roads that will save delivery lorries five minutes – at a huge cost to the environment and wellbeing.

**Ketsia: What do you love about the countryside?**

**David:** The mixture of continuity and change. We still have farming methods that the Romans would recognise, but the landscape has also been constantly evolving over thousands of years. We forget that in the near past the countryside was pretty messy and industrial, with lots of smoke, noises and smells, while the Downs were covered in scrub and not all the beautiful green places we know today. At the same time, if you're unfamiliar with it, the countryside can seem a genuinely daunting place – governed by secret understandings and ways of doing things. So we need to be better at maintaining young people's connections with the countryside, and create a feeling that it is a place for everyone to enjoy.

## Enhancing Brighton's biodiversity

CPRE Sussex's Brighton and Hove district group continues to monitor development plans for Toads Hole Valley – the 98 acre greenfield site next to the South Downs National Park. The site's mixture of dense and scattered scrub, rough grassland and mature woodland supports habitats for dormice, slow worm and common lizard, and is a breeding ground for linnet, white throat, song thrush, dunnock and yellowhammer.

However, the vegetation on the main site has been assessed to be of 'low botanical value' meaning the entire area can be grubbed out if permission is granted. Consent would then exist for 880 dwellings served by three new roads, threatening the valley's Local Wildlife Site – which CPRE members want to see left untouched by the development. They are also calling for an emphasis on walking and cycling infrastructure to ensure most journeys generated by the development can be made by walking or cycling, compared to the proposed target of 40%.

Meanwhile, our district volunteers have joined the Ovingdean Residents Preservation Society in engaging with a local farmer to plant a native species hedge along Greenways. Nine trees have already been planted along the road this year, to benefit wildlife by linking the allotments and woods with the gardens and nature reserve.

### A national design guide

CPRE welcomed housing secretary Robert Jenrick's new building design guide launched in September – a new standard to measure the quality of new homes that are built.

Too often, the new housing estates that we've seen go up in the countryside have been poor quality, both in terms of design and finish. However, future design guides need to go further. We need to know that help will be given to local authorities to consistently achieve higher standards. The promised new future homes standard for energy efficiency must be introduced much earlier than the proposal of 2025; the skills and technology exist to implement this now and the planet cannot afford any further delay.

The national design guide addresses the question of how we recognise development that works, by outlining and illustrating the last government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics:

- Context** – enhances the surroundings;
- Identity** – attractive and distinctive;
- Built form** – a coherent pattern of development;
- Movement** – accessible and easy to move around;
- Nature** – enhanced and optimised;
- Public spaces** – safe, social and inclusive;
- Uses** – mixed and integrated;
- Homes and buildings** – functional, healthy and sustainable;
- Resources** – efficient and resilient; and
- Lifespan** – made to last.

# In review

Our perspective on countryside issues

## A new approach to housing affordability

**T**he definition of 'affordable housing' in the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) comprises a wide variety of tenures, some of which are much more expensive than others. In particular, 'affordable rent' – which can be up to 80% of market value – is not affordable for many low-income households in high demand areas. This can be a real problem in desirable villages in rural areas, where housing costs are high and work is often insecure and seasonal. As highlighted by an interim report of the Affordable Housing Commission, affordability should be defined in terms of what people can afford to pay, rather than in relation to market values.

Rural communities would stand to benefit as much as cities from a revised definition of affordability, linked to incomes rather than market rents and house prices. One of the key barriers to persuading Government to adopt a new approach is a lack of consensus over how an income-linked definition would work and what data it would rely on.

### Helping struggling families

CPRE analysed the impact of a new definition of affordability proposed by Helen Hayes MP in her 2019 Affordable Housing and Land Compensation Bill. The proposed new approach would define homes as affordable in the NPPF if they consumed 'no more than 35% of net household income for lowest quartile income groups in each local authority area'.

Provided it is introduced alongside guidance to ensure tenants in lower-demand areas do not face rent increases, tenants stand to save almost £200m per year on rent under a new definition. In particular, the proposed new definition would lead to significant savings in high demand areas. It would be cheaper than current market-linked rents in all but one

local authority area in the south east region (the sole exception is Dover). In some rural authorities like Waverley in Surrey, savings could be as high as £6,760 per year. This reflects very high cost of housing in this desirable local authority area, which includes much of the western portion of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is driven in large part by proximity to Greater London.

However, a definition based solely on incomes would not automatically lead to savings in lower demand areas. In mainly rural Copeland, on the west coast of Cumbria, high full-time salaries at Sellafield nuclear power station, the borough's major employer, mean income linked rent would be a striking £80.54 per week more expensive than current average affordable rent levels. In only two authorities in the north west region (and none in the north east) would an income-linked rent be cheaper than current affordable rent levels – Trafford and South Lakeland.

**CPRE is urging the next government to set affordable rents at no more than 35% of net lower quartile income, unless 80% of market rate is cheaper.**

Consequently, the proposed new definition would need to be introduced with guidance specifying that rents would not increase in areas where an income-linked figure would be greater than current affordable rent levels. CPRE is urging the next government to set affordable rents at 35% of net lower quartile income, unless 80% of market rate is cheaper. Using the lower of these two indicators, the average household would stand to save £18 per week on their rent. That's £936 per year. This will provide a major boost to struggling rural families and help to even out the huge discrepancy in 'affordable' rent prices in different parts of the country.

# Q&A

The answers you need

## The impact of developments on air pollution

**Q** As I understand it, local councils must take air quality into consideration when deciding on housing development. My rapidly growing market town already suffers from pollution from increasing traffic congestion, and I fear that proposals for a new development on the edge of town will only exacerbate this. Are there any useful precedents that could force my council to take this seriously?

**A** The Court of Appeal recently ruled on air quality in rejecting an attempt by Gladman Developments Ltd to overturn the refusal of permission to build up to 330 homes and a care facility at Pond Farm, Newington, near Sittingbourne. The proposals were refused by a planning inspector and again by a High Court judge in 2017. Gladman took that decision to the Court of Appeal, where the decisions of the inspector and the High Court were upheld in a judgment handed down in September.

CPRE Kent challenged the proposals as it was clear homes built in this location would be heavily dependent on car-based transport, and that building in this area would only worsen already unacceptable levels of air pollution along the A2 at Newington and Rainham.

At the planning inquiry, Gladman argued that it had offered a financial contribution to undertake measures that would limit the effects of its development on air quality. However, CPRE Kent's air quality witness, Professor Stephen Peckham, argued there was no indication of how that contribution would be spent, nor any evidence provided that those measures would actually limit the use of petrol or diesel vehicles and in doing so reduce NO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In refusing permission, the inspector agreed that air quality and human health would suffer if this development were to go ahead.

Lord Justice Lindblom at the Court of

Appeal concluded that the inspector had made it 'obvious' that the proposals were in conflict with local air quality action plans and paragraphs 120 and 124 of the NPPF. Furthermore, he agreed that the air quality action plan for Newington made it clear that it might require planning permission – that would improve air quality – could not be secured.

Hilary Newport, director at CPRE Kent, said: 'This important decision serves to underline that government simply must commit to its obligations on air quality. We simply cannot continue to allow "business as usual" planning decisions that ignore the impact of unsustainable transport on the health and well-being of communities. We must act quickly to bring about significant changes in the way we plan for future homes, employment and travel needs.'

Richard Knox-Johnston, vice-president of CPRE Kent, said: 'We believe that winning this planning appeal represents the first time air quality mitigation leading to health concerns has been given as a reason. CPRE Kent used air quality in this case even though the local planning authority did not object. In having this precedent tested in the High Court and subsequently in the Court of Appeal it has been shown that air quality mitigation must now be taken into consideration in any planning application. My thanks go to Professor Stephen Peckham for his expert advice without which we would not have been able to put our case.'

CPRE Kent also wishes to thank the legal teams at Cornerstone Barristers and Richard Buxton Solicitors for their hard work and expertise.

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**Find out more:** Read the history of the case and the full Court of Appeal judgement at: <https://cprekent.org.uk/news/important-new-judgment-on-air-quality>

### Abingdon reservoir returns

CPRE Oxfordshire's campaigning allies at the Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD) are warning that the previously-defeated plans for a 'mega reservoir' at Abingdon are back on the table. They report that Ofwat and the Environment Agency have asked for a strategic study into water supply for the whole of the South East, with completion for decision by 2022. GARD are highlighting that the revised plans are for a reservoir covering more than four square miles with walls 30 metres high, on good agricultural land with important wildlife; the 2010 public inquiry found that a far smaller proposal was not fit for purpose. The proposed site is also the flood plain for Abingdon and surrounding villages, which should not be developed according to Environment Agency guidance.

GARD argue that if water companies achieved leakage targets set by Ofwat, water supplies would be sufficient to the end of the century without the need for any reservoir. They also have proposals on how reducing abstraction from chalk streams could be achieved sooner and more cheaply without the scheme. GARD have suggested a range of alternatives to the reservoir, including water transfer from the River Severn and further consideration of water re-use and desalination schemes. Find out more at [www.abingdonreservoir.org.uk](http://www.abingdonreservoir.org.uk)

### Finding brownfield sites in the Wirral

CPRE Lancashire planning officer Jackie Copley has conducted research alongside the Wirral Green Space Alliance (WGSA), finding that the number of brownfield sites available on the Wirral has been under-recorded; land that could potentially site 14,960 dwellings currently awaits development, which could drastically reduce the pressure on sites in open countryside. CPRE Cheshire also responded to the Wirral local plan open space assessment consultation to appeal to the council to protect as much greenfield land as possible, and to provide green spaces in urban areas where deficits are identified.

The WGSA is an umbrella group of over twenty local residents' groups, many with an interest in conserving and enhancing the environment and wildlife in the future. Members value their natural environment for its intrinsic character and for the health and wellbeing of all who benefit from it; they share the ambition of a sound local plan for Wirral that enables the area to prosper economically, socially and environmentally. The group is working alongside CPRE to highlight where new brownfield land is becoming available, and ensure that the Brownfield Register is kept up-to-date.

Find out more about CPRE's work in the Wirral at: [wirralsociety.net](http://wirralsociety.net)

# Campaign spotlight

## Space to breathe in the Green Belt

**T**he Green Belt gives our cities and towns space to breathe, and enables wildlife to thrive. Escaping from urban life into the tranquil countryside improves our health, boosts our mood, and gives us pause to reflect on the world around us. Revitalising and protecting our living green spaces has never been more important, and habitats in the countryside on our doorstep will play a vital role in sequestering carbon and mitigating the worst impacts of climate change.

Autumn's party conferences saw a number of MPs reiterate their support for protecting the Green Belt as a resource for the wellbeing of our towns and cities; CPRE's 'manifesto for the next government' calls on all politicians to recognise this and commit to its future enhancement. CPRE's 'Space to Breathe' report on the state of the Green Belt in 2019 shows that building on this land is not the answer to the housing crisis, and instead recommends investment in the Green Belt for the enjoyment of communities today and for generations to come.

### Unaffordable and inefficient

Our research shows that, while small in number, developments on both greenfield land where Green Belt designation has been removed, and greenfield land still in the Green Belt, are not providing homes that people can afford. Green Belt developments are providing executive housing, with 'affordable' housing comprising just 13% of the homes completed (since 2015/16) on greenfield land that has been removed from Green Belt designation over the past 10 years.

Housing development on the Green Belt is also inefficient and land hungry, with the average density of newly created residential addresses within the Green

Belt just 14 dwellings per hectare (dph), compared with an average of 31 dph outside the Green Belt. Since 2013/14, of Green Belt land that has been changed to residential land uses, 66% was previously greenfield, most of it used for farming. Last year was the second highest loss of greenfield land in the Green Belt on record.

• **lower density developments in the Green Belt could lead to upwards of five million car journeys** •

Where there are exceptional or very special circumstances for releasing Green Belt land or building on it, as well as for house building more widely, development needs to occur at much higher densities than at present. Research by CPRE London has found that lower density developments in the Green Belt could lead to upwards of five million car journeys, which is unacceptable in the face of a climate emergency. In contrast, high-density development can support the use of public transport and encourage more active modes of travel, thereby reducing reliance on private cars. Active travel and reduced car use can improve the health and wellbeing of local communities by



A clear brownfield first policy can reduce the need to build on the Green Belt and regenerate our cities



We must restore and enhance the Green Belt to provide the space to breathe and engage with nature

reducing air pollution, encouraging more active lifestyles, and leaving more space for green infrastructure in lieu of car parking spaces.

### Analysis of planned development

Our research shows that there is a huge pipeline of development proposed on the Green Belt: on land to be removed from Green Belt designation in local plans; subsequent planning applications on this land; and through planning applications on Green Belt land. We found that a minimum of 266,000 homes are planned on land that has been removed from Green Belt designation in adopted plans or will be removed in emerging plans in the near future across 81 local authorities.

### redefining Green Belts in every local plan review is not consistent with the concept of permanence

We expect the number to continue to rise for the foreseeable future as further plans that are at an earlier stage of the local plan allocate land in the Green Belt for development. Several local authorities (for example Bath and North East Somerset, Rotherham and Vale of White Horse) that have recently removed land from the Green Belt for housing are planning to remove more. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that

permanence is one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts, but redefining Green Belts in every local plan review is not consistent with the concepts of either permanence or exceptional circumstances.

### Investing in our Green Belts

We have a huge opportunity to restore and enhance the Green Belt to provide a space for nature and a place to relax, play and grow our food. But in order to deliver a positive future for our Green Belt, and build the homes we need, the next government must introduce a clear brownfield first policy to ensure suitable derelict urban land is prioritised for redevelopment.

We must also require stronger evidence to justify 'exceptional' or 'very special circumstances' to remove or build on land in the Green Belt. Where evidenced and justified, new development in the Green Belt, or on land removed from it, must itself be of exceptional quality. Development must showcase best practice in using land efficiently, encourage sustainable transport, and deliver more affordable and social homes. It must also enhance the environment, including through biodiversity net gain, and maintain and improve footpaths near Green Belt train stations to enhance access to 'the countryside next door'.

### Sustainable Green Belt development

CPRE West Yorkshire campaigners are monitoring plans to redevelop large parts of the Esholt Water Treatment Works (where the River Aire runs to the north-east of Shipley) for 150 homes. In this Green Belt location, the group has warned against the urbanisation of this wonderful area of countryside, while supporting the appropriate 'low-car' redevelopment of the brownfield elements of the site – with a more compact layout, allowing more room for communal green space and tree planting.

The existing uses for the site generate very low volumes of traffic, are quiet and dark at night, and are well screened by mature woodland. The site also offers opportunities to enhance a wealth of heritage features – including a historic village, ancient woodland, and a country house and estate – and improve access for walkers and cyclists via the Leeds-Liverpool Canal. CPRE West Yorkshire has concluded that the scheme should be considered as two rural developments within a wider countryside setting, informing a more comprehensive masterplan of the wider area integrated with the West Yorkshire Green Infrastructure Strategy. Our campaigners will be encouraging Bradford Metropolitan District Council to work with the developer to produce such a plan.

# Matter of fact

Support for your case



Amelia Furness

## Brain, Body & Biodiversity: reasons to protect our green spaces

**C**PRE Lancashire volunteer Amelia Furness, a student at the University of Liverpool, writes on the importance of the countryside, urban green spaces and the Green Belt for the health and wellbeing of people and wildlife.

Here in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, we are blessed with picturesque countryside, thriving nature reserves and beautiful public parks, all waiting for us to explore and embrace them. Here at CPRE, we are passionate about enhancing and protecting the English countryside; but what does it do for us?

### Brain

Glaring lights, unsparing deadlines and blaring sirens; studies have shown that busy urban life is linked to poorer mental health, through increased risk of anxiety and mood disorders. In the UK, 85% of adults experience stress regularly, and the north west comes second in the country for common mental health disorders. So how can the countryside help? One study revealed that going for a walk is the most popular way to relieve stress in the north west, and a 90-minute walk with Mother Nature has shown to lower negative brain activity, reduce overthinking and improve happiness.

‘Shinrin-Yoku’- the art of forest bathing – is a popular method of relaxation in Japan, and can be experienced in the region at places including the Mersey Forest and the Forest of Bowland. It involves disconnecting from modern, urban

life (leave your phone and worries at home) and embracing the rejuvenating and restorative benefits of the woodland. Exposure to forest environments actively lowers cortisol, a stress-causing hormone.

### Body

With city living associated with higher obesity and inactivity, and levels of pollution that can harm our heart and lungs, the countryside can be the pollution respite and workout motivation we need. The Land Trust have found that 50% of people use our green spaces for exercise or leisure, and 90% believe that green spaces encourage themselves or others to keep fit and healthy. Despite this, here in the north west we are still the third least active region in the UK, with 1,560,000 inactive people, meaning our green spaces may be being under-appreciated! With such charming parkland and scenery around us, why not ditch the dull and dingy gym and step outside for a walk or cycle, or even try climbing, fishing or rowing? Another way to get fit and appreciate our beautiful green spaces is Park Run – free timed runs around 600 of the country’s fantastic public parks.

📌 **studies have shown that busy urban life is linked to poorer mental health, through increased risk of anxiety and mood disorders** 📌

### Biodiversity

The countryside and urban parkland offer us the chance to interact with and learn more about what, and

whom, we share the Earth with. However, it is reported that every year, we lose 1% of our biodiversity here in the UK, with hedgehogs and natterjack toads seeing significant population falls in recent times. In Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside, there are thousands of acres of precious habitats, and over 35 nature reserves that our local wildlife call home. One very important area in our region is Formby – one of the few remaining places in England that our native squirrels can still be seen, given that they and their habitat are being protected.

However, it is not just animals that populate the countryside, but plants too. Essential for our ecosystem and helping us breathe, trees and plants must also be protected. Moston Fairway, close to Manchester, is a great example of how a small urban space can be transformed into a natural and accessible green oasis, demonstrating how mossland, grassland and woodland can all flourish together in any unexpected location. For all these reasons, here at CPRE, we believe we owe it to the Earth to look after its beautiful countryside. Considering all that it offers us, we believe we should protect our green spaces, and all they encompass, from threats such as climate change and overdevelopment.

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**Find out more** about CPRE Lancashire’s campaigns and read the full, referenced version of this article at [www.cprelancashire.org.uk](http://www.cprelancashire.org.uk)