



The
countryside
charity

Stand up for your local countryside

A manifesto for the
2021 local and mayoral elections





About CPRE, the countryside charity

CPRE is the countryside charity that campaigns to promote, enhance and protect the countryside for everyone's benefit, wherever they live. With a local CPRE in almost every county, we work with communities, businesses and government, nationally and locally. We stand up for the countryside so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations.

We are calling on candidates to commit to:

- Develop and implement a local authority strategy for climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Embedding climate change considerations into policy making on all issues, demonstrating leadership by, for instance, maintaining and managing publicly owned farmland to ensure it is farmed in harmony with nature to lock up carbon
- Urging central government to invest in nature-based solutions, including the restoration and planting of England's hedgerows, to achieve at least a 40% increase in their length by 2050

1: Climate emergency

Countryside solutions to the climate emergency

As everyone from councils and countries declare a climate emergency, its impact is already clear in our daily lives. Seasons are on the move, crops grown for generations are failing and some species hover on the brink of extinction. Our countryside is changing - and we need to make sure it does so in a way that helps mitigate the impacts of the climate emergency and creates a countryside that we can all cherish.

The countryside itself can provide many of the solutions to tackling climate breakdown, these changes will also bring other benefits to people and wildlife. CPRE is particularly supportive of nature-based solutions. By planting more hedgerows and trees, restoring peatlands and moving towards a more sustainable way of farming, we can use nature's toolbox to capture greenhouse gases from the air, while revitalising our natural environments.

2: Planning

A planning system that works for people, nature and the environment

Our planning system is the toolbox for thriving communities. It has vast potential to deliver positive outcomes for people, nature and our economy, supporting the delivery of new homes in order to solve the housing crisis. However, the **Planning for the future** White paper, published by the government in August 2020, outlined many damaging proposals which would put these purposes of the planning system under threat.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of creating the right balance between the economy, the environment and people. Taking a holistic view of the 21st century challenges we face and the role of the planning system to balance them, can ultimately lend itself to supporting a healthy and resilient economy.

3: Rural transport

Every village, every hour – a comprehensive bus network for rural communities

Reliable bus services are essential for levelling up access to jobs and education, tackling loneliness and inequality, and reducing car traffic, air pollution and carbon emissions.

CPRE's 2020 report **Transport deserts** found that many rural towns and villages are being left with inadequate public transport, cutting local residents off from services and life opportunities. For rural communities to thrive, to rebuild our economy, and to tackle the climate emergency we need a comprehensive bus network that matches the standards in Switzerland and Germany where services reach every village, every hour.

We are calling on candidates to commit to:

- Setting ambitious policies in local plans targeted at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to ensure that all developments are well designed
- Protecting, enhancing and increasing access to the Green Belt and other protected landscapes, as well as local green spaces
- Making building affordable homes and local needs a priority, and ensuring that all developments are in sustainable locations

We are calling on candidates to commit to:

- Urging central government to redirect funding from environmentally road building to provide the investment your council needs to fund a reliable and affordable bus service for local communities
- Prioritising future transport infrastructure investment towards sustainable travel including footpaths, cycleways, and bus lanes which help people lead healthier lives while cutting carbon emissions
- Making sustainable transport opportunities an essential requirement for approval of new housing developments. All new housing should be well connected to footpaths and cycle routes, as well as having reliable bus services available from day one

4: Litter

An 'all-in' Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers

In 2018, the government announced it would look to introduce a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers. Nearly three years later, despite the insurmountable evidence of the benefits of the system, the rollout still seems a long way off.

We need an 'all-in' DRS to help ensure cash-strapped councils no longer foot the bill for the waste that companies sell and profit from. By placing a small deposit on drinks containers, these items would be gone from roadsides, public bins, green spaces and waterways, providing huge savings for councils and responding to public's ever-growing concerns about plastic pollution, waste and failing recycling systems.

By working to ensure we have the best recycling systems - including an 'all-in' DRS - and a more circular economy, councils can help cut carbon and create thousands of green jobs. An easy way to act on declarations of a climate emergency.

We are calling on candidates to commit to:

- Urging central government to introduce an 'all-in' Deposit Return Scheme
- Making the case for ambitious Extended Producer Responsibility and consistent collections reforms, so that in order to local authorities can save money, create local green jobs and work towards their climate goals

We believe in countryside and green spaces that are accessible to all, rich in nature and playing a crucial role in responding to the climate emergency. With a local CPRE group in every county, we're advocating nationwide for the kind of countryside that enriches all of our lives, regenerating our wellbeing, and that we in turn regenerate, protect and celebrate. We've worked for almost a century to support and promote the countryside, and we'll be doing this for generations to come. That's why we call ourselves 'the countryside charity'.

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