



Our year

A review of 2020-21



The
countryside
charity



Our year

Crispin Truman reflects on the past 12 months and looks to our future

The extraordinary circumstances of the past year have given a glimpse of a greener, fairer future for our country. To honour the crucial role that access to green space and nature has played during lockdown, CPRE is redoubling our efforts to influence policies and legislation that can enhance our countryside for people and wildlife. That must begin with a democratic planning system to regulate development and balance the needs of society, environment and economy.

After a year in which we've all become more invested in our neighbourhoods, local people have never been better placed to have a constructive input on decisions that affect them. And yet government proposals risk cutting communities out of the process, handing our green fields to developers for unaffordable, car-dependent houses. We'll continue to stand up for people's right to protect their valued green spaces and shape the development they want to see – which can regenerate our towns and cities and revitalise our villages in the process.

People's increased interaction with nature has also created a better understanding that their local patch is part of a global environment in need of care and attention. With climate change presenting the biggest single threat to the countryside, we're stepping up the campaigns that can reduce carbon emissions and make our beautiful landscapes more resilient. Not only that, things like planting more hedgerows and reviving public transport will make our countryside and communities greener and better places for nature and for us all to live and visit.

For thousands, if not millions of people, the countryside has become an integral part of their lives this year. If you are one of those people, or if you can appreciate the importance of the work contained within these pages, please consider joining, donating or volunteering via cpre.org.uk. With your help, we could achieve even more in working towards our vision of a beautiful and thriving countryside that enriches all our lives.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Truman'.

Crispin Truman OBE
Chief Executive
CPRE The countryside charity

Tackling climate change

This year saw us engaging many more people with our work to put the countryside at the heart of action on the climate emergency

Keeping coal in the ground

You helped our campaigning stop plans for the first deep coal mine in Britain for 30 years. The Whitehaven mine in Cumbria looked set for approval until the secretary of state met our demand for a public inquiry. We believe the government should signal an end to dirty coal and begin to deliver on promised investment in greener alternatives supporting sustainable jobs.

We also celebrated the long-overdue decision to save the beauty and tranquillity of Northumberland's Druridge Bay (pictured here) from opencast coal mining, in line with CPRE's public inquiry evidence on its carbon, wildlife and landscape impacts.

Natural solutions

We received major national press coverage for our analysis showing that without their urgent restoration, emissions from UK peatlands could cancel out all of the carbon-capture benefits of new and existing forests.

Our campaigning against the regular burning of peatland vegetation helped convince the government to announce new rules to ban this damaging practice in protected blanket bog habitats. We then welcomed the government's England Peat Action Plan, which – in response to CPRE demands – included funded plans for peatland restoration and proposals to ban peat in composts used in amateur gardening by 2024.



End of the road

With £27 billion of public money set to be spent on new road schemes, we continue to argue that these major sources of carbon emissions fail to deliver promised economic benefits. So we were delighted when the government scrapped the Oxford to Cambridge ‘expressway’ as not offering value for money, after coordinated campaigns from CPRE groups along the route.

Our volunteers continue to fight damaging and unnecessary new roads across the country – defeating plans for an expressway through the Leicestershire countryside affecting 60 communities, and two link roads threatening ancient woodland in County Durham.

Greening government

We influenced the government’s ‘10-point plan for a green industrial revolution’, which adopted our calls for greener buildings and public transport, and a greater emphasis on cycling and walking. We particularly welcomed its recognition that ‘the natural environment is one of the most important and effective solutions we have for capturing and sequestering carbon’ – a key CPRE argument for many years.

Our pressure also helped win a commitment from the prime minister to cut greenhouse gas emissions faster than other major economies – a welcome pledge we want to see backed with real action and investment.

Connecting people and countryside

We're promoting the importance of a welcoming countryside we can all be inspired to care for



An inclusive countryside

We made a stand against all forms of racism, acknowledging that many people do not always feel welcome in rural areas. CPRE's website hosted a range of viewpoints and experiences from people of colour, then celebrated England's rich, but often hidden, history of rural diversity for Black History Month.

To help CPRE gain a better understanding of rural racism we commissioned participant-led research from people who have experienced it, raising their findings with the government. We are committed to challenging anything that prevents people gaining access to the countryside – whether related to race, disability, age or income – and have begun a pilot project to organise visits for groups in London and Lancashire who face some of these barriers.



Starrier skies

Almost 8,000 of you became 'citizen scientists' for our annual Star Count in February 2021, when we think a 10% drop in people experiencing severe light pollution might have been due to the 'lockdown effect'. Five per cent of you, the most since 2013, even enjoyed the truly dark skies indicated by more than 30 stars being visible within Orion.

Star-filled views of the cosmos are one of the most magical sights of the countryside, and we want more people to be able to experience them. But as well as shrouding our view of the night sky, wasteful light pollution is contributing to climate change and disrupting wildlife. We'll continue to use our Star Count evidence to highlight the need for strong local and national policies to encourage efficient lighting and protect our dark skies.



Hedgerow heroes

We made national headlines with our argument that hedgerows are a beautiful way to store carbon (and help soils do the same), reduce flooding and provide havens for a range of species threatened by climate change. Environment minister Rebecca Pow attended the online launch of our Greener, Better, Faster report which highlighted the benefits of a 40% increase in the extent of the UK's hedgerows.

Recognising the need to engage the public in the practical action required, we began a project to plant and restore over 15 kilometres of hedgerow by May 2022, led by five of CPRE's county groups working with local landowners and engaging 600 volunteers, 15 schools and two colleges.



‘The environmental sector could follow the example of CPRE in their recent statement against racism: “We will listen to, and learn from, people who are experiencing barriers to sharing a more inclusive countryside.” And listening to us is key – it will help create an environment that welcomes Black and brown people, whether as visitors or residents.’

Louisa Adjoa Parker, poet, writer and consultant on inclusion and diversity

Promoting rural life

We're working towards a sustainable vision for rural communities built on affordable housing, accessible public transport and a thriving farming sector



Saving affordable homes

We helped convince the government to backtrack on proposals to allow developers to build schemes of up to 50 homes without any of them being affordable. We argued this change would have put village life out of the reach of thousands of key workers and young families each year, threatening the viability of local schools and services.

The concession came after CPRE urged ministers not to raise the threshold at which 'small sites' become exempt from affordability requirements from 10 homes to 40 or 50, which the government admitted could reduce the delivery of affordable homes by 20%. Rural councils had predicted this could have been closer to 50% in many parts of the countryside and we estimate the U-turn will avert the loss of around 6,000 affordable rural homes each year.



A connected countryside

Our campaigning helped influence the government's national bus strategy and the transport secretary's acceptance that 'everyone deserves to have access to cheap, reliable and quick bus journeys'. We welcomed the strategy's commitment to giving 'the needs of rural users equal consideration' but called for this to be backed with the funding needed for regular rural bus services, by re-directing money being wasted on destructive new roads.

Meanwhile, we welcomed the news that, for the first time in nearly 50 years, daily rail services are set to resume between Okehampton and Exeter. CPRE's Rural Reconnections report had previously found that re-opening the line would provide major economic and social benefits for the rural areas in this part of Devon.



Supporting our farmers

The passing of 2020's Agriculture Act was a policy landmark and a battle won for CPRE. Our lobbying helped ensure that farmers will receive more support for their environmental stewardship, particularly influencing measures to improve and maintain healthy soils. The act was followed by the government's policy 'roadmap', which incorporated many of our ideas and confirmed that future funding will prioritise nature restoration.

We've long argued the need for more and better opportunities in farming. So having called for more investment in council-owned 'county farms' – a neglected but vital source of tenancies on equipped farms – we were pleased to see them highlighted in the roadmap's support scheme for new entrants.



‘Transport campaigners will be delighted to see CPRE launch “Every village, every hour” – a bus strategy we can believe in and a sure means of reversing the cuts to over 3,000 bus routes made over the last decade. CPRE should be applauded for their bold and transformative vision, which has been published at exactly the time it’s most needed.’

The Association of British Commuters

Empowering communities

You supported our campaign for democratic decisions on development to enhance valued green spaces and prioritise urban regeneration



The countryside next door

CPRE's latest research revealed that over a quarter of a million homes are proposed on Green Belt countryside around our cities – four times as many as in 2013. This at a time when our polling shows that 67% of you think protecting and enhancing local green spaces should be a higher priority after lockdown.

We stood up for Green Belts around the country, with CPRE West Yorkshire helping the Greetland Pressure Group (above) convince a planning inspector to recommend that valued village sites are saved from development. Meanwhile, CPRE Warwickshire was backed by the Office for Statistical Regulation when highlighting that flawed population projections had been used to justify targeting Coventry's Green Belt – including part of the historic Forest of Arden – for large-scale executive housing development.



Recycling our land

Supporting our calls for an official 'brownfield first' housing policy, CPRE's Recycling our Land report found that local authority brownfield registers contain enough previously developed sites for 1.3 million new homes. That means communities have identified enough suitable land to meet this government's ambition to build 300,000 homes a year, without putting greenfield sites at risk.

We were delighted to see work start on the regeneration of the York Central brownfield site (above). Next to the city's railway station, it will provide 2,500 new homes (40% affordable) on 100 acres, while creating around 6,500 new jobs. We had highlighted its potential when successfully campaigning against a York Green Belt development, also on 100 acres, but providing just 500 car-dependent homes on farmland.



Planning for people

You help us sound the alarm after the government proposed deregulating development controls and revoking the right of local people to have their say on planning applications. We immediately signed up 17 environmental charities to our letter to the prime minister calling for 'locally accountable and democratic' planning.

Our research then showed that the government's method for calculating housing numbers would increase the pressure to build over countryside in the south, while ignoring opportunities to regenerate derelict urban areas elsewhere. Following massive CPRE pressure in the press and parliament, we welcomed the government's decision to update their calculations to prioritise homes 'on brownfield land first to protect the countryside'.



‘I have been educating myself on planning practice with the help of CPRE West Yorkshire. That knowledge helped ensure the community was equipped to write the most effective objections we were capable of. Collectively, we submitted around a thousand – we had put Greetland on the map.’

Lyndsey Ashton, Greetland Pressure Group

Local action

Enhancing shared spaces



Living legacies

The legacy of Yvonne Connolly – Britain’s first female black headteacher – will live on in the form of hedgerows we funded for an Islington community garden named after her. Yvonne, who sadly died in February 2021, had thanked

CPRE for the grant she said would benefit people and wildlife ‘for many years to come.’ **CPRE London** have also helped communities enhance green spaces with hedgerows in Merton, Lewisham and Crouch End (above).



Greening communities

CPRE Sussex helped volunteers in Eastbourne plant over 6,000 trees to create carbon-absorbing greenery (left), and supported the planting of a hedgerow at Hove Junior School to attract wildlife and help screen air pollution.



Cleaning up

CPRE Somerset recruited and equipped over 30 regular volunteers for their #2minute Litterpick challenge, then installed clean-up stations in popular beauty spots so that anyone could join in. As well as helping keep Somerset litter free, the project has engaged younger people in the issue and forged useful working relationships – including with the Somerset Waste Partnership, who helped created a special ‘pledge against preventable plastic’.



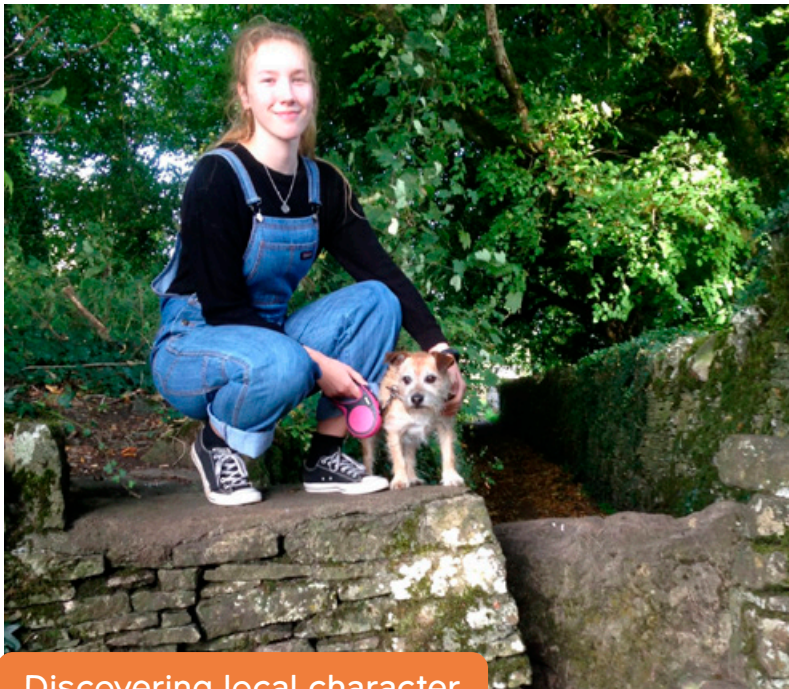
Restoring views

After a 10-year campaign against pylons spoiling National Park views near Dunford Bridge, **CPRE Peak District & South Yorkshire** welcomed a decision to approve National Grid’s application to remove

them. The seven pylons also intrude on the openness of Barnsley’s Green Belt, and both landscapes will offer a more natural environment for people’s enjoyment once the wires are replaced by underground cables using an existing rail tunnel.

We supported our local network in their efforts to improve your countryside and green spaces. Here are just some of the highlights from 2020-21:

Promoting rural assets



Discovering local character

CPRE Gloucestershire supported an initiative by member Peter Wilson to locate, record and promote the county’s unique stone stiles. Volunteer detective work from local walkers and history buffs is helping to create a comprehensive record of the stiles, ensuring this important landscape heritage won’t be lost to future generations.



Saving services

CPRE Dorset highlighted the need to support rural assets struggling from lockdown, championing rural shops and pubs as vital for reducing rural isolation and car dependency. Without being able to run their usual Best Dorset Village Shop competition, they promoted outlets online instead – including pop-up shops like The Larder, opened by the Rose & Crown pub in Longburton. But with many establishments struggling to survive, CPRE Dorset urged communities to take advantage of the government’s £150m community ownership fund.



Valuing countryside

With 730 acres of farmland south of the village of Cliddesden earmarked for a ‘garden village’ of at least 2,500 dwellings, expert volunteers from **CPRE Hampshire** helped local people assess whether

this landscape merits protection. Taking account of the quality of views, sense of tranquillity and accessibility via footpaths and rights of way, they concluded the area should be protected as a ‘valued landscape’ as defined by national planning policy.

Protecting special places



Working for woods

Opposition from **CPRE North Yorkshire** helped persuade councillors to turn down plans to expand a spring water bottling plant next to a cherished green space. The Harrogate

scheme would have required the destruction of parts of Rotary Wood, much of which was planted by community groups including Scouts and local schoolchildren.



Defending heritage

CPRE Derbyshire supported local people in seeing-off a proposal for a 180-house development at Sandbed Lane in Belper. The site is a valued local space for recreation, with its historic green slopes and hedgerows forming part

of the official ‘buffer zone’ of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. Thankfully, on this occasion, the weight of objections – including one from Historic England – convinced the developer to withdraw the application.



Challenging harm

CPRE Wiltshire is part of the Stonehenge Alliance campaign against a new dual carriageway and tunnel that would cause significant harm to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. We were delighted that individual supporters of the Alliance succeeded in securing a judicial review of the decision to proceed with the scheme.



Caring for coasts

CPRE Cornwall played a leading role in stopping an inappropriate development on a remote and protected coastal landscape. The High Court victory they supported also created an important legal precedent, with its ruling that permission for a large, luxurious house at Rame Head should be quashed. The area is part of the designated Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where building is normally only allowed for agricultural workers’ dwellings.

Inspiring young people



Developing skills

CPRE in Cumbria, the **Friends of the Lake District**, were delighted that their first four apprentice land managers successfully completed their 18-month training programme. Skills for the Future is an apprenticeship scheme designed to address shortages in countryside management skills. Part of the Friends' Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership, it has helped all four gain relevant employment or university places.



Creating beauty

CPRE Devon's annual My Outdoors art competition became more important than ever in 2020, when it gave children a focus for their creative energies during the first lockdown. Our volunteers were inundated with a record number of entries of the highest quality, with some entrants reproducing their favourite locations from memory. The deserving winners included 10-year-old Thomasin Manley-Frost for this painting of Bowerman's Nose in Dartmoor.



Shining stars

Thanks to **CPRE Avon and Bristol's** entertaining Starry Skies workshops, around 500 people learned about the wonders of the night and the impact of light pollution during our Star Count week. The online sessions helped make up for activities postponed in lockdown and inspired plenty of creative artwork, including the phases of the moon drawn here by Henry and Poppy.

Our year in numbers: Campaigning together



1,173 

The number of CPRE supporters who signed up for The Time Is Now virtual mass climate lobby in June 2020 – a sizeable chunk of the 14,000 total. You helped put CPRE’s message across in more than 200 online meetings with MPs, reporting widespread backing for our demands for stronger environmental protections, greener buildings and lower-carbon transport.



310,265 

Voices who told the government ‘Don’t silence communities’ in planning decisions, thanks to CPRE’s online campaign supported by Sum of Us and 38 Degrees. While the government have since said their Planning Bill will allow ‘more active public engagement in the development of their local area’, we will continue to press for communities to retain the right to challenge individual applications.



10,281 

People who used CPRE’s online action to write to secretary of state Robert Jenrick MP, highlighting the climate impact of allowing a deep coal mine in Cumbria and urging him to intervene. The weight of support encouraged him to ‘call-in’ the plans for a public inquiry, acknowledging the ‘increased controversy’.



10,618 

CPRE briefings you sent to help your MPs highlight the environmental impact of relaxing rules over development. The key debate on the issue saw CPRE mentioned by six speakers as Theresa May led a backbench rebellion. Our in-depth analysis also helped win a pledge from the current prime minister to ‘avoid desecrating our beautiful countryside’.

You helped our campaigns reach more people than ever in 2020-21. We'll let the numbers speak for themselves:



78%



The proportion of people we polled who agreed the government must take more action on litter. Our Litter in Lockdown report, launched by 9-year-old CPRE campaigner Isla Lester (above), showed that PPE had exacerbated throwaway culture and called for policies to discourage all non-essential, single-use items – building on the 2020 ban CPRE helped win on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds.



300



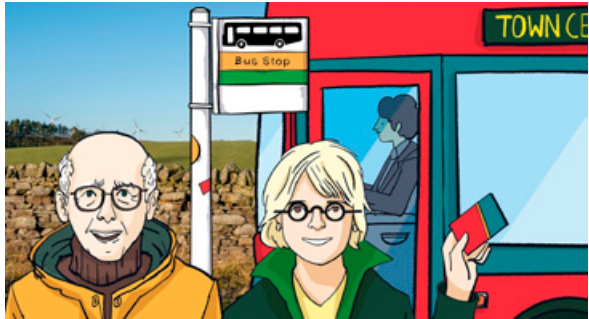
Combined years of dedicated service – helping thousands of local people – of the 14 incredible CPRE volunteers honoured with awards at our first ‘virtual’ annual conference. Winners included CPRE Staffordshire’s Paul Windmill (above, far right), who has been helping communities protect their green spaces for over a decade.



32,908



People who signed our ‘message in a bottle’ to Boris Johnson, urging him to implement an all-in deposit return system (DRS) for drinks containers to encourage recycling. You have long supported our campaign for a DRS as the most impactful and sustainable solution to litter that could be implemented now, so were dismayed by the government’s plans to delay its introduction.

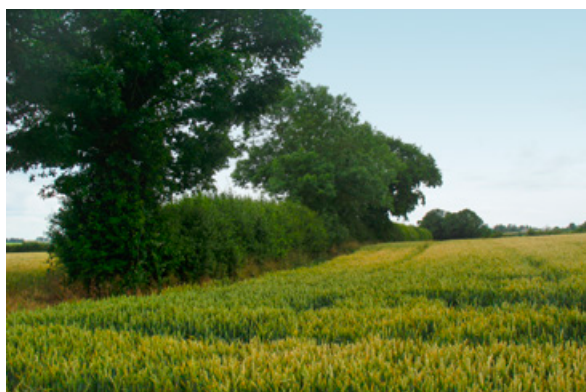


50,987



The number of you who signed our ‘Save rural life’ petition for a reliable bus service for every community, making it one of our most popular online actions ever. We’re calling for regular, affordable services for our towns and villages, to put an end to rural transport poverty.

Spaces for nature



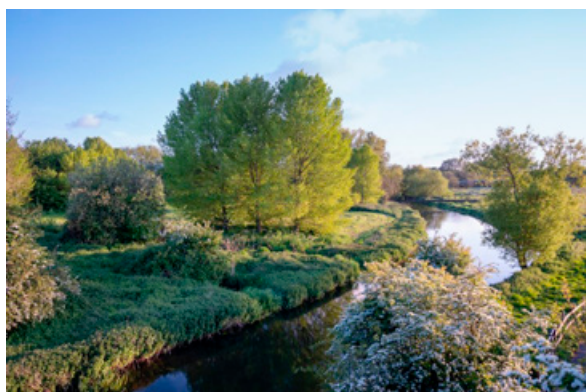
800 metres

The length of treasured hedgerow protected thanks to CPRE Bedfordshire's campaign with Swineshead villagers. We argued these much-loved local landscape features were vital for nature and classed as 'important' by law.



6 acres

The area of ancient woodland in Thatcham which CPRE Berkshire helped local people protect with a Tree Preservation Order. Volunteers acted swiftly when 'Piggy Wood' went up for auction, citing its value as a wildlife habitat and green lung.



7.5 acres

The size of the beautiful and biodiverse Wincheap water meadow saved from a car park by CPRE Kent and community campaigners. Part of the Stour Valley Green Corridor, the site is also an active floodplain.



15 acres

The amount of Grade 1 agricultural farmland in Scarisbrick spared from a factory after CPRE Lancashire supported local parish councils. The Green Belt development would have had a negative impact on two nearby wildlife sites.

Research and advocacy

96%

The proportion of rural areas where private rents are out of reach for care workers, as highlighted by CPRE. Our analysis found that current social housing building rates would take over 150 years to clear rural waiting lists, so we're urging the government to allocate the £12.8bn needed to meet the shortfall.



3 billion

The tonnes of carbon stored in UK peatlands – equivalent to the forests of the UK, Germany and France combined. With 18.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gases (5% of the UK total) released each year by peatland damage, our campaigning helped win a government commitment to spend £50million to 2025 restoring 86,000 acres of it.



44% higher

The difference in public spending in towns and cities compared to the rural areas which, combined, contain more people than Greater London. Our research also showed that urban areas benefit from 36% more affordable homes per 100,000 people, supporting our calls for a fairer 'rural proofing' process.



£3 billion

The funding for home insulation announced in July 2020's Budget, after CPRE's National Housing Design Audit had highlighted that many new housing schemes were falling below basic energy efficiency standards. We welcomed this as a good start, but called for a national retrofit strategy to help tackle rural fuel poverty.



£1.4 million

The boost to local economies created by a 10-home affordable development in the countryside, supporting jobs and generating tax revenue. Our research also found that, over 30 years, the average rural affordable home will save the Treasury £54,000 in costs including housing benefit and temporary accommodation.



x2

The increase (129%), since 2012, in the amount of greenfield land being built on in England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Having won a government pledge to 'protect and improve' them, we want to see AONBs' statutory role in conserving and enhancing natural beauty taking priority over housing targets.





Funding and finance in 2020

£4.4m

Our total income, thanks to our loyal supporters and fantastically generous legacy donors.

£346,000

Amount reclaimed in tax thanks to our supporters completing Gift Aid forms.

£84,818

Online donations, a 71% increase on 2019, thanks to 2,399 kind visitors to our website.

£581,000

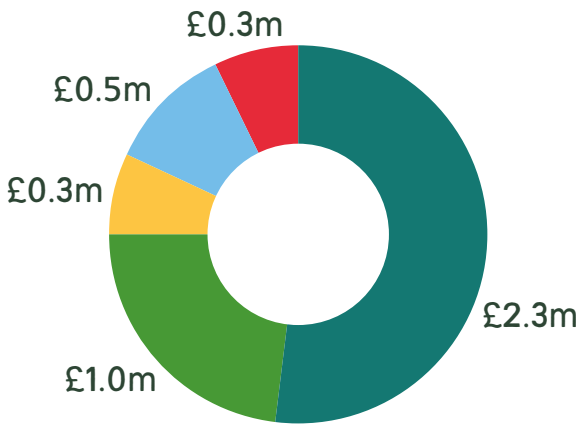
Funds shared with local groups to support their communities.

£3.1m

Unrestricted free reserves at the end of 2020, providing our charity with stability and sustainability during these uncertain times for society and the economy. The level of reserves is within the range set by the Trustees (currently £1.7m-£3.5m) to cover risks in CPRE's sources of income, allow for investment to modernise and strengthen our volunteer network, and fund work to increase and diversify our support.

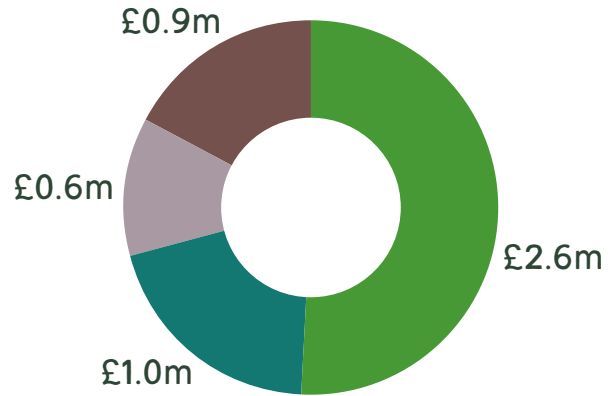
Financial summary 2020

Our total income
£4.4m



- Legacies
- Membership and regular donations
- Charitable trusts and companies
- Appeals and raffles
- Other

Our total expenditure
£5.1m



- Campaigning, communications and other charitable activities
- Support to county and regional groups from membership subscriptions
- Supporter services
- Raising funds
- Other

Thank you

Our amazing supporters are essential for our work with people and green spaces. Your generosity means we'll continue to work to enhance, promote and protect the countryside now and for future generations. Thank you.

We're grateful to the CPRE supporters who remembered us in their Wills. Their contribution to our progress is tremendous; we simply couldn't have achieved what we have without their help.

Miss A Adshead	Mr C Crawcour	Mr C Gregson	Mr W Pollard	Mrs P Swiatek
Mr M Aquilina	Mrs M Crawshaw	Mr M Harradine	Mr B Priest	Mr J Tierney
Ms P Bailey	Mrs P Danton	Mrs G Hemsley	Mr R Rains	Mrs P Tiller
Miss M Baron	Mrs P Davies	Mrs R Horsey	Mr D Rose	Mrs M Townley
Mr A Baty	Miss J Donkin	Miss M Hunt	Ms B Rouse	Mrs M Townshend
Mr R Benson	Mr N Franklin-Taylor	Mr J Kent	Ms A Sayer	Mr L Trerise
Miss E Briggs	Mrs P A Freshwater	Mr E Lewis	Mr R Simpson	Mr B Walton
Mr A Brookland	Mrs J Gale	Mr W Messenger	Miss E Skinner	Mrs R Wren
Mr J Button	Ms I Gazzard	Mrs R Misa	Miss W Spilman	Mr MG Wright
Mr A Chisholm	Miss S Gray	Mrs R Munoz	Mr K Stacey	Mr MGH Wright
Mrs E Chritchlow	Mr M Greenhill	Mrs J Panter	Mrs E Staley	Mr R Wright

Thanks to everyone who supported our campaign work this year, including our anonymous donors. We've been able to make incredible progress – and that's thanks to you.

Mrs Acloque	Mrs K Carless	Mrs P Foll	Mrs S Leathes	Mr H Smith
Mr & Mrs T Adburgham	Mrs R Carter	Mr R Foster	Mr & Mrs C Ogilvie	Mr H Webb
Sir Rudolph Agnew	Dr & Mrs H Cecil	Mr S Fremantle	Mrs S Palmer	Mr J Woodnutt
Dr C Beels	Mr F Clarke	Mrs M Hallatt	Mr S Pryke	Mrs M Work
Sir Quentin Blake	Mrs V Dawe	Mrs E Hamilton	Mr J Rank	Mrs V Wormsley
Miss A Brett	Ms M de Botton	Mr B Hamilton	Mr M Reynolds	
Mrs S Buchan	Mr W Edwards	Mr M Hughes	Mr R Robinson	

We very much appreciate the support of the trusts who generously supported CPRE this year, making much of our work possible.

A Team Foundation	Joseph Rowntree Charitable Foundation	Percy Hedley 1990 Charitable Trust
Amelia Chadwick Trust	June Stevens Foundation	Schlaikjer-McIntyre Family Fund
B A Segal Charitable Trust	Leonard Chadwick Charitable Trust	Scouloudi Foundation
B and J Lloyd Family Charitable Trust	Lochlands Trust	Sir Donald and Lady Edna Wilson Charitable Trust
Bearrem Charitable Trust	Loveday Charitable Trust	Sir Victor Blank Charitable Trust
Constance Travis Charitable Trust	McCorquodale Charitable Trust	The Derek and Clare Stevens Trust
Foundation for Integrated Transport	MCS Charitable Foundation	The Dingwall Trust
George Cadbury Fund Ltd	Millichope Foundation	The Essex Trust
Gunter Charitable Trust	Miss Hanson's Charitable Trust	The Hon M L Astor's Charitable Trust
Helliwell Charitable Trust	Muriel and Gus Coren Charitable Foundation	The Huntly & Margery Sinclair Charitable Trust
Henry C Hoare Charitable Trust	Peacock Charitable Trust	The Tolkien Trust
John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust		The Underwood Trust

Building a movement

With Emma Bridgewater CBE
President of CPRE The countryside charity



Over my five proud years as CPRE President, I've seen just what a successful and impressive organisation this really is – as amply demonstrated by the influence and achievement reported within these pages. What I've become most keenly aware of is that our volunteers and local groups are the heart and soul of CPRE, and the reason we prevail against the odds so often.

Countryside campaigning can be dispiriting (especially in the extraordinary circumstances we've been through this year), when we're up against seemingly constant attempts to unpick hard-won environmental protections. With their passion and dedication, it seems to me that CPRE volunteers, supported by our brilliant staff,

are sometimes all that stands between the beautiful, green countryside we all need and an onslaught of development. And their work has suddenly become much more relevant to many more people.

According to CPRE's polling, lockdown has seen almost half of the population engage with green space more often, with 59% becoming more aware of its importance for their mental health. And I think it's because of that journey of discovery, followed by understanding, that over two thirds of people now want to see their local patch better protected and enhanced, post-pandemic.

We're all more likely to care about something we have a connection to, and even step up to help the cause.

Indeed, more people than ever are being welcomed into the volunteering fold by our county CPREs, and they are taking on a huge variety of rewarding roles, from hedgerow planting to digital mapping. That's a testament to the skill and support of our national team and our investment in volunteer-led projects.

We're also making the most of technology – bringing people together online for a wealth of training, events and the social interaction that's such an important part of being a team.

Why not join the team today, and help protect and enhance the places you love, at **cpre.org.uk**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Bridgewater". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'E' and 'B'. Below the signature, there is a decorative graphic consisting of a dark brown wavy line above a solid green wavy line, resembling a stylized landscape.

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; today and for generations to come.

With a local CPRE in every county, we work with communities, businesses and government to find positive and lasting ways to help the countryside thrive.

What we do

We connect people with the countryside so that everyone can benefit from and value it.

We promote rural life to ensure the countryside and its communities can thrive.

We empower communities to improve and protect their local environment.

Through all our work we look at the role of our countryside in tackling the **climate emergency**, including seeking ways to increase resilience and reduce impact.

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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Cover: Three generations of women enjoying the Cotswold's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near Stroud © CPRE/Ruth Davey

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