



Our year

A review of 2022-23



The countryside charity



A year of achievement and change

I'm pleased to both be introducing this annual review of CPRE's fantastic year – and myself as CPRE's new chief executive. I've been delighted to read this, as I hope you will be, and to see the fantastic range of work CPRE has been involved in and the impact the charity has had during 2022-23.

In my first month here, we've launched a new campaign to help make sure the government adopts a rooftops-first approach to solar panels. And we launched our Hedgelife Help Out as part of the coronation celebration Big Help Out – we hope it will encourage even more people to care about their local hedgerows. Both of these campaigns, in very different ways, help our countryside resist climate change and create an environment that we can all enjoy and value.

But that's all for the coming year. In this review, you'll find more on how our lobbying has influenced government planning legislation: winning substantial improvements in support of local democracy; helping reinstate the fracking

moratorium and winning government commitment on planting more hedgerows as part of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.

Indeed, this year has seen huge progress in both long-term campaigns and emergency ones; we've protected some of our most iconic landscapes, highlighted the value of local green spaces, and helped connect communities to their countryside, from village greens to national parks.

Along with the rest of the nation, we mourned the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in September – our patron for all of her reign, who contributed so much to rural causes and our own work. Many of our supporters have treasured memories of events she hosted for our volunteers over the decades. We look forward to announcing and working with our new patron in a similar spirit.

This past year has seen CPRE volunteers become citizen scientists, hedge planters and star counters – to name just

some roles. They and our other loyal supporters make such a difference to the impact and influence we have.

So while looking back at an eventful year, and celebrating this year's achievements, I'm looking forward to working with CPRE and our wider network of groups and supporters and meeting many of you soon. Together we will continue to make sure our countryside is loved and enjoyed for generations to come.



Roger Mortlock

Roger Mortlock
Chief Executive
CPRE The countryside charity



Connecting countryside and climate

Hedgerows are important for wildlife, people and the planet – and this year our campaign to restore them saw successes at both national and local level

Huge win on hedgerow targets

We celebrated a major victory for England's hedgerow network in early 2023, with the government setting a new official target to create or restore 30,000 miles of hedgerow by 2037, and 45,000 miles by 2050, as part of its new Environmental Improvement Plan. The move followed our two-year campaign calling for a clear target to be set to increase England's hedgerow network by 40% by 2050 (#40by50) – the figure recommended by the independent Climate Change Committee to help tackle the climate emergency.

Harnessing our hedgerow heroes

Our successful campaign for a hedgerow target was built on support from the CPRE network, community groups and the general public, with nearly 50,000 people signing our #40by50 petition to the government. CPRE staff and volunteers delivered the

petition to Edward Barker, Defra's director of the natural environment, trees and landscapes, during National Hedgerow Week in October 2022.

We also successfully lobbied parliamentarians to back a clear hedgerow-planting and restoration target. By December 2022, 82 MPs had signed up as 'hedgerow heroes' in support of our campaign. In the same month, we unveiled new research which revealed strong support among the farming community for an increase in hedgerow networks. Our survey of more than 1,100 farmers, carried out on CPRE's behalf by Farmers Weekly, found 86% say hedgerows are important to them and their business, while 80% supported a government target of 40% more hedgerows by 2050. We used this research to help us call for simple, accessible environmental land management schemes that properly support the many farmers who want to look after hedgerows.

Local action for hedges

Following the success of our externally funded hedgerow restoration projects run by five CPRE county groups in 2021-22, a further seven groups gained funding and have been putting it to good use over the past year. Working in partnership with local environmental and volunteering organisations, farmers and landowners, many groups have been delivering practical training in hedgerow management and carrying out hedgelaying and planting sessions in their area (see page 10).

Community engagement is also a vital element of these projects, and our groups' activities have ranged from providing learning sessions for local children and organising walks and talks, to supporting qualifications in hedgerow maintenance for volunteers.

Sustainable use of space

From restoring the countryside next door to safeguarding prime farmland, we're championing the long-term future of valued landscapes



Fairer funding

A new report by CPRE underlined that Green Belt should receive a fairer share of funding for natural and cultural heritage restoration. For millions of people, the Green Belt land around our cities is the countryside next door, and is hugely valued for its health, wellbeing and recreation benefits. Yet our research has shown that only 28% of Green Belt is covered by government funding schemes to plant trees, improve soil health, boost biodiversity and restore historic sites. This compares with 42% of land nationwide, while only 7% of national spending goes to Green Belt (which covers 12.5% of England in total). Our report – the first to look at where agri-environment funding is being spent – made a compelling case for investment in greener, healthier Green Belts.



Focus on food security

We published new research showing that in little more than a decade there was a hundredfold increase in the amount of top-quality agricultural land being lost to development. We called on the government to put a proper land-use strategy in place that will balance the competing demands on England's finite land resources – and help avoid development on prime farmland that's important to our future food security.

CPRE has long advocated for a sustainable, resilient and diverse farming system, and we recently joined forces with like-minded farmers and charities in order to speak with a powerful collective voice on food and agriculture. Forged at the 2023 Oxford Farming Conference, this new consensus will champion a food system that works for people and the planet.



Regenerating brownfield

The number of new homes that could be built on previously developed land has reached record levels, according to our latest annual report on the state of brownfield. Analysing local councils' own registers, we found there were enough disused brownfield sites available to build 1.2 million new homes. More than half a million of these units have already been granted planning permission, yet remain unbuilt.

We highlighted our findings to the government as further evidence that planning policies must do more to prioritise brownfield development over greenfield. So it was encouraging to see stronger measures to promote brownfield regeneration in the evolution of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill (see page 6).



‘Shade, shelter for livestock, food for pollinators and birds, food for us, making the landscape look so much better. I can’t think why you wouldn’t want proper hedges!’

Farmer responding to a CPRE survey

Building better communities

Wanting to see a thriving countryside means we help people shape their local community – and campaign to make sure they can afford to live in it



Local democracy upheld

We celebrated a clear success in our campaign for a better and fairer planning system when, in late 2022, the government set out new measures in its Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill. The announcement by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities echoed CPRE's own language in its commitment to 'building enough of the right homes in the right places with the right infrastructure'. The changes to the draft legislation give communities a greater say in housing targets in their area, as well as awarding local authorities more powers to encourage brownfield development. We also welcomed the news of a wider government review of how to promote the reuse of brownfield land. CPRE is continuing to keep up the pressure on government to amend the Bill and ensure we have an Act that creates a planning system that works for both people and nature.



Tackling rural homelessness

A ground-breaking report funded by CPRE and its allies revealed a hidden homelessness crisis in rural areas. The year-long study commissioned by English Rural found that the majority of frontline support workers, service providers, NGOs and shelters say homelessness in the countryside is a serious and worsening problem. Yet rural local authorities received 65% less funding per individual through the Homelessness Prevention Grant than those in urban areas. Meanwhile, interviews with those experiencing rural homelessness revealed that farmers are often providing a lifeline for rough sleepers on their land. We're calling for immediate action to fix the affordable housing crisis, as well as better support for 'at risk' rural dwellers, including services to address mental health and social isolation.



Affordable housing

In the wake of our work on short-term lets in early 2022, which found that holiday lets were causing major issues for local people looking to rent in some popular rural tourist destinations, the government launched a consultation on controlling the number of properties that become holiday lets. Our research found we've lost 150,000 private rented homes, with the boom in Airbnb-style lets clearly contributing to that loss. The consultation, just closed, is on planning measures that would give local councils greater ability to control increases in the number of such lets in their area and so make sure there are places for locals to buy or to rent. We've been supportive of a change to planning policy so that short-term lets require change of use permission from local authorities to make sure rural communities have the homes they need to thrive.



‘People do not believe that rural homelessness exists, but it does. There are far fewer accommodation options in rural villages with high second-home ownerships and few AST [Assured Shorthold Tenancies], and we do not build sufficient social housing.’

Anonymous respondent to the Homelessness in the Countryside report

Winning the long game

There were landmark developments in some of CPRE's long-running campaign areas over the past year, from pylons to fracking



Beauty enhanced

Unightly pylons were taken down in parts of the Peak District National Park and Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 2022, following our successful campaign 10 years ago – pioneered by CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire – to banish intrusive overhead power lines from iconic landscapes and run the cables underground instead. National Grid committed £500 million towards removing the trickiest high-voltage lines back in 2012, and after a decade of development work, it was very satisfying to see the last pylons in these beauty spots finally toppling in late 2022, with more to follow in Snowdonia in 2023. A similar scheme run with local energy operators, with the support of a number of CPRE groups, has already resulted in over 200km of lower-voltage lines being undergrounded since 2005.



Fracking fended off

We thought we'd successfully seen off fracking in 2019, when the government announced a moratorium on any further exploratory drilling for shale gas, after huge opposition from concerned communities and environmental organisations, including CPRE. So when Liz Truss broke her own party's manifesto pledge and lifted the moratorium during her brief stint as prime minister in 2022, we swiftly reignited our powerful campaign against fracking. We believe that fossil fuels such as shale gas have no place in a net-zero future – and local communities that didn't accept fracking in 2019 are no more likely to accept it in 2022. Incoming prime minister Rishi Sunak reinstated the fracking ban just 34 days later, after more than 80,000 people signed our petition for a rethink.



Time for recycling

Our decade-long campaign for a deposit return scheme (DRS) that would incentivise people to return drinks bottles and cans to supermarkets for recycling was victorious in 2018, when the government finally pledged to introduce one. Fast forward to 2023, and while the administrations in Wales and Scotland now have a comprehensive DRS planned, the government in England has opted to water down its long-delayed scheme by focusing on plastic containers and excluding glass. We've been urging the government to hurry up and introduce a DRS that includes all kinds of drinks containers – rather than bowing to pressure from supermarket chains who claim glass is too expensive for them to recycle, and would rather leave the cost to be picked up by taxpayers.



‘Ministers need to stop watering down the [DRS] proposals and get on with it. The countryside is paying the price, with discarded bottles and other packaging littering footpaths, fields and streams.’

Christopher Hinchliff, CPRE’s campaigns manager

Local action

Enhancing shared spaces



Helping hedgerows

Many CPRE groups have been taking practical action for hedges in the second and third year of our ‘hedgerow heroes’ project (see page 3). Those joining the project over the past year included **CPRE Derbyshire**, **CPRE Nottinghamshire**, **CPRE Lincolnshire** and **CPRE Leicestershire**, which have laid more than 2,000m of hedgerow and planted 8,495 trees in total with the help of their local partners. **CPRE Avon and Bristol** teamed up with South

Gloucestershire Council to restore hedgerows damaged by machine flailing, while **CPRE Northamptonshire** is supporting hedge planting in local public spaces and canal sides, and **CPRE Lancashire**, **Liverpool City Region** and **Greater Manchester** is working with The Conservation Volunteers to develop hedgerows in local country parks and brownfield sites. Meanwhile **CPREs Suffolk**, **Shropshire** and **Hampshire** all continued their hedge-planting and restoration programmes.



Cleaner waters

With many waterways and beaches being subjected to sewage discharges in 2022 after heavy rains overwhelmed our antiquated waste-water infrastructure, **CPRE Sussex** and **CPRE Cornwall** have been among those demanding that water companies and regulators clean up their act. The Sussex group has been calling on Southern Water, planning authorities and the government to ensure we have sustainable supplies of clean, safe drinking water, while our Cornish campaigners have challenged South West Water on its polluting practices.



Building better

CPRE Northumberland continued its campaign, launched in autumn 2021, for better-quality buildings in the countryside that prioritise

need, location, people and the planet rather than profit. They have been encouraging public debate about what makes great housing, and how communities can input constructively on development in their neighbourhoods.

We supported CPRE's local network in their efforts to improve our countryside and green spaces. Here are just some of the highlights from the past year:

Promoting rural assets



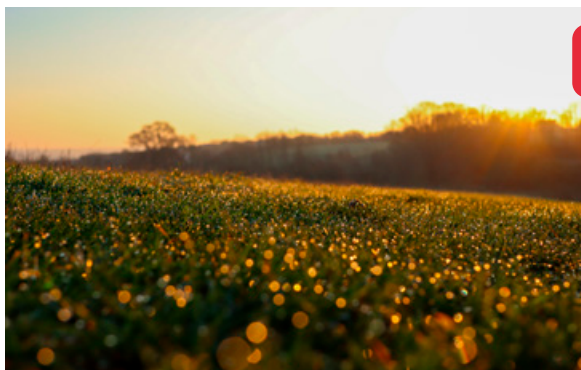
A trail for Greater Manchester

CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester has teamed up with the Ramblers to establish a 300km walking trail for Greater Manchester: the GM Ringway. Thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the 20-stage route will be supported by new signage, digital resources and a handy app. Joining up existing footpaths and green spaces across all 10 metropolitan boroughs, the GM Ringway will, we hope, encourage more people to access the countryside on their doorstep.



Celebrating Green Belt

CPRE Hertfordshire's guided summer walk aimed to help connect local people with beautiful Green Belt countryside near Welwyn. The route took in many local landmarks and beauty spots, as well as farmland that is currently under threat from a solar farm development that the group, along with many local people, has opposed. We want to see solar energy prioritised on commercial, municipal and residential rooftops and on brownfield, not on valuable agricultural land.



Marking the Way

CPRE Essex played a key role in the creation of the Essex Way back in 1972, and was delighted to mark the footpath's 50th anniversary in 2022. To celebrate the beauties of the 81-mile route, the group held an Essex Way photography competition, open to all ages. The winners included this stunning shot of sunlit fields by Anne Franks, who won the over-18s category.

Protecting special places



Saving rivers

CPRE Herefordshire and **CPRE Hampshire** have been championing their iconic local rivers. In Herefordshire, volunteers are monitoring water quality in the Wye Catchment, and together with their allies, calling for an end to nutrient pollution from farm run-off. Hampshire's renowned chalk rivers face similar threats, as well as pressures from water over-abstraction. The Hampshire group has been closely monitoring water recycling and transfer pipeline plans to ensure they won't adversely impact on the rivers Test and Itchen.



Averting urban sprawl

CPRE groups standing up for the Green Belt buffering our countryside from towns and cities this year include **CPRE Oxfordshire**. The group has been campaigning for the draft Cherwell local plan to be amended, to avoid further eroding the area's beleaguered Green Belt. Similarly, **CPRE West Yorkshire** has called

for a rethink of the Calderdale local plan to avoid loss of Green Belt for 'Garden Suburbs', and **CPRE West Midlands** challenged the housing targets used in the Birmingham and Black Country plans, which its analysis showed are inflated, and could place Green Belt under greater pressure.



Tackling Peaks traffic

CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire launched a legal challenge to the A57 'Link Roads' scheme, which would carve up Green Belt land near Mottram to create dual and single carriageways, potentially increasing traffic through the national park. After applying for a judicial review, in spring 2023 the group received the good news that it will be granted a two-day hearing in October to make its case.'

Inspiring communities



Engaging young people

Alongside our hands-on hedgerow restoration work (see page 10), many CPRE groups have also been encouraging the next generation to care about local hedges.

These include **CPRE Buckinghamshire**, which held a story session in a High Wycombe nursery; **CPRE Shropshire**, which is creating 'story sacks' for forest schools; **CPRE Staffordshire**,

which enlisted the help of Ranton schoolchildren to survey hedgerow wildlife and **CPRE Hampshire**, which welcomed local Sea Scouts for a hedge planting session.



Connecting with nature

CPRE Norfolk held a Norfolk Nature Day in autumn 2022 to help raise awareness of community-led nature recovery projects. Participants toured the village of Great Massingham's biodiversity project, and heard from host Oliver Birkbeck of the Little Massingham Estate on his regenerative farming practices.



Climate action for schools

CPRE North and East Yorkshire has been running 'Poetry for Climate Action' sessions in local schools, in partnership with bilingual English/Bengali publisher Bok Bok Books. The volunteer-run sessions aim to inspire conversation about climate change, using poetry, video and origami activities to help unlock children's own creativity.

Our year in numbers: Campaigning together



49,665 

The number of you who signed our hedgerow petition calling for a target to increase the hedgerow network by 40% by 2050, delivered to Defra during October's National Hedgerow Week.

3,937 

People who joined in our Star Count 2023 and submitted results. We also enabled 1,848 of you to write to your MP, encouraging them to support stronger national and local planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework to drive a reduction in light pollution levels and for progress to be monitored.



81,270 

Signed our fracking petition calling for the fracking moratorium to be reinstated, which we set up when Liz Truss's government announced that the ban was being lifted.



18.64 

Kilometres of hedgerows planted over the past year by our volunteers in local groups. A further 4.95km of hedgerows were restored as part of the same hedgerow heroes programme.



250,000 

Tonnes of vegetables a year that couldn't be grown because of the 14,500 hectares of best agricultural land lost to development, as revealed by our research. That quarter of a million tonnes would be enough to feed the combined populations of Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield their recommended five-a-day.



6,515 

Local Green Spaces that had achieved 'designation' – a protected status – according to our survey published in February 2022. Our analysis estimates that over 80% of Local Green Spaces have been designated partly for their recreational value – highlighting their importance for people seeking the outdoor exercise that is so vital to our health and wellbeing. Richness of their wildlife was a factor in over a third of designations, suggesting that Local Green Spaces can play a major role in reviving the UK's biodiversity.



91 

Percentage of respondents to a survey we helped fund who have seen homelessness increase in the past five years. Those who responded included frontline support workers, service providers, NGOs, and shelters.



82 

MPs signed up to be 'hedgerow heroes' by the launch of the farmers survey on hedgerows in December 2022.

Our year in numbers



28 

Percentage of Green Belt farmland covered by government funding schemes for the restoration of nature and cultural heritage, compared with 42% nationwide. We noted that as Green Belt provides the countryside next door for 30 million people, pointing a greater share of government funds towards the Green Belt could give a huge boost to people's health and wellbeing – because so many people use its network of public footpaths, bridleways, cycle tracks, nature reserves and historic parks and gardens.



10.3 

Kilometres of the most challenging highest voltage transmission pylon cables put underground in iconic landscapes last year thanks to a commitment won by CPRE a decade ago. A second scheme run with the local operators, backed by several CPRE local groups, has seen over 200km of lower voltage overhead lines buried underground in protected landscapes since 2005.



7 

Of our local groups won funding to develop planting and restoration projects for our hedgerows.



1.2 million 

Homes that could be built on brownfield land according to our 2022 review of brownfield land registers. The government required local councils to set the registers up after campaigning from CPRE.

Our volunteering year in numbers

Nearly 500

Volunteers for Herefordshire's water quality citizen science project to help monitor the water quality of the River Wye.



20

Volunteers presented with CPRE awards in 2022. Their roles range from long-term trustees to initiators of single projects that have invigorated their local group.



200

Litter pickers in Somerset and Hampshire who have been partnering with key sites to provide equipment and encourage regular litter picking.



1,006

New hedgerow volunteers working on planting and restoring hedgerows with local groups' projects.



68

Schools engaged with our hedgerow projects.



> 1,429

Active volunteers confirmed at the end of the year, up from 1,255 on the previous year.





Funding and finance in 2022

£5.1m

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

£347,000

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

£564,000

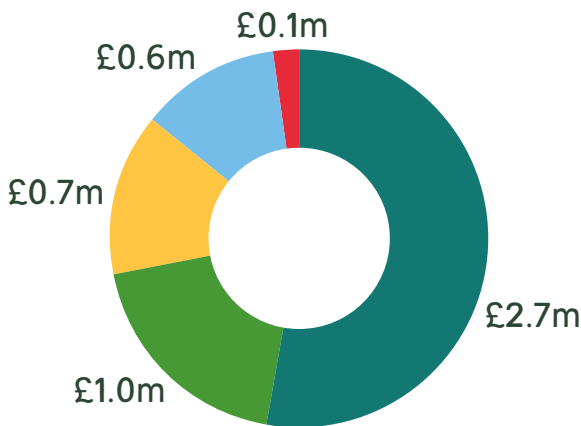
Funds shared with local groups to support their communities.

£3.1m

Unrestricted free reserves at the end of 2022, 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, cashflow and allow for investment in CPRE.

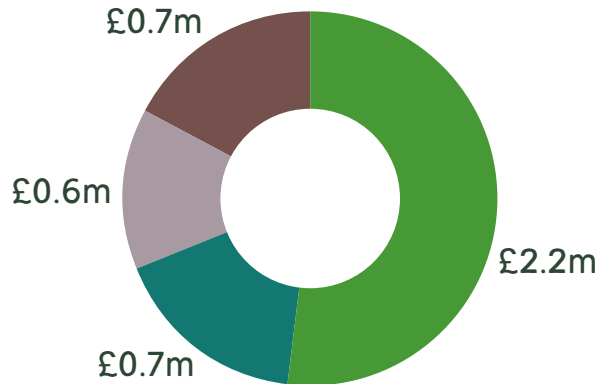
Financial summary 2022

Our total income
£5.1m



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

Our total expenditure
£4.2m



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

Thank you

The generosity of our wonderful supporters continues to be the foundation of all CPRE's work. Your commitment to giving is helping us achieve our vision of a beautiful and thriving countryside that enriches all our lives.

We're incredibly grateful to the CPRE supporters who remembered us in their wills. Their gifts will help us to ensure the countryside they loved will be protected and enhanced for generations to come.

Mr R H Allen	Mr J B Hambling	Mrs S Jarman	Miss J H Patterson	Ms S Turner
Mrs B Armitage	Mrs P J Hamilton-Grierson	Miss S Keech	Mrs M A Rinehart	Mr G Underhill
Brigadier C W Beckett	Miss V I Hands	Mr S J King	Mrs B Scarisbrick	Miss E H M Walker
Mr F G Bramham	Mrs I M Harrison	Ms J G Lambert	Mr R H Seymour	Miss J M D Walker
Mr P L Clarke	Mr A D Hill	Mr P B Laundry	Miss B K Shaw	Ms M A Warman
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Ms A R Davies	Ms N Hillman	Ms A Martin	Mrs C M Smith	Mrs E V Weston
Mr D Edmunds	Miss B P Hudson	Mrs P E Matthews	Mrs J D M Sowden	Miss C White
Mrs S K Forman	Mrs F E H Hunkin	Mrs A M M More O'Ferrall	Mr J E G Stebbings	Miss J W Wilkinson
Mr W J Ganley	Dr J D Huntley	Mr J A Murray	Mr R G Stubblefield	Mr D Wilson
Mr K J Godden	Mr R B Hyde	Mrs C J Neaverson	Professor J N Tarn	Lady M J Wilson
Professor R Griffin	Miss N L Isard	Ms D E Overnell	Mrs C D Tucker	Ms J L Wilson
Mrs J Haines				

Sincere thanks to the generous individuals and anonymous donors who made major contributions to our work this year. The significant successes we've achieved would not have been possible without you.

Sir Rudolph Agnew	Mrs D Moggach	Dr D Shreeve
Ms M de Botton	Ms S Palmer	Mr R Thomson
Ms S Hall	Mr M Reynolds	Mr R & Mrs Y Wilkinson
Mr J Marriott	Mr A M Roberts	Mr A Wood

We hugely appreciate the support of the trusts who kindly facilitated so much of CPRE's work in the past year.

The Dalgleish Trust	Leonard Chadwick Charitable Trust	B and J Lloyd Family Charitable Trust
European Climate Foundation	The Millichope Foundation	The Constance Travis Charitable Trust
The Hiscox Foundation	Samuel Storey Family Charitable Trust	Miss Hanson's Charitable Trust
The John Ellerman Foundation	The Huntly & Margery Sinclair Charitable Trust	Foundation for Integrated Transport
The Underwood Trust	Bearrem Charitable Trust	MCS Charitable Foundation
The Peacock Charitable Trust	George Cadbury Fund Ltd	
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We would also like to thank the following businesses that have supported our work through corporate donations to CPRE:

Canns Down Press Ltd
ESG TOPS Foundation



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.

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Registered charity number: 1089685

CPRE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England, number 04302973

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June 2023

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