

Join us to celebrate two historic landmarks

We are inviting members and guests to join us on the evening of Wednesday 23rd November to celebrate two CPRE anniversaries. CPRE will be 90 years old in December which is also the 80th Anniversary of the initial formation of the CPRE branch in Leicestershire.

The evening will feature a talk, 'CPRE and Leicestershire', by Oliver Hilliam, co-author of the new book "*22 Ideas that saved the English Countryside*" (reviewed on page 5) and a viewing of the 1970 CPRE Leicestershire film '*Leicestershire: A Heritage at Risk*'.

Oliver's talk will explore the role of Leicestershire in the countryside preservation movement which developed following the formation of CPRE. He will explain how local campaigners helped establish a CPRE Leicestershire branch in 1936 and how CPRE has attempted to defend England's and Leicestershire's landscapes and countryside over the past 80 years.

The 1970 film contained a powerful message, which is still very relevant today, that more needed to be done to protect the countryside and historic buildings of Leicestershire. Depicting many familiar locations across the county, it highlighted the quality and importance of Leicestershire's natural and built environment.



The evening is an opportunity to find out about the history of CPRE both nationally and locally and to reflect on what is precious about Leicestershire, its landscape, countryside and rural communities and what we need to do to protect its future.

Join us for an interesting and enjoyable evening



Oliver Hilliam

This event will take place on Wednesday 23rd November at 7pm in the Parlour at Roots Farm shop.

All are welcome to this free event. A light buffet with tea and coffee will be available from 6-30pm.

So we can organise the catering, please let our Chair, Richard Windley, know if you are attending.

**Contact Richard Windley,
on 07970 079855 or
email: richardwindley@outlook.com**

The Farm Shop will be open before the meeting. It sells local produce, cakes, bread as well as some local beers and UK wines.

**Address for event:
Roots Farm Shop, Thorpe Farm,
King Street, Barkby Thorpe,
Leicestershire LE7 3QE**

Parking is available

To contact or to join CPRE Leicestershire, please phone, email or write to:

CPRE Leicestershire 8 Ribble Drive, Barrow upon Soar, LE12 8LJ

tel: 01509 414519 email: info@cpreleicestershire.org.uk web: www.cpreleicestershire.org.uk

Rural Housing and Right to Buy

CPRE, both nationally and locally, have been concerned about the impact on rural housing provision of the Government's election commitment to extend Right to Buy provisions to tenants of Housing Associations.

In his latest report to CPRE Leicestershire, Richard Mugglestone, Project Delivery Manager at Midlands Rural Housing, reports that in October 2015 the Government agreed to implement its plans by way of voluntary agreement rather than through legislation. Since then, Housing Associations have been working with the National Housing Federation to discuss with Government how Voluntary Right to Buy (VRTB) will work in practice. However, much of the detail around the VRTB agreement is yet to be worked out.



Housing on Rural Exception site at Sharnford

Rural organisations are seeking to ensure that the VRTB does not have a detrimental effect on current and future affordable housing stock. They are lobbying for a position where rural homes can be excluded from the VRTB and therefore secured for future generations. Along with other rural advocates, Midlands Rural Housing and the Leicestershire Rural Housing Group are supporting a proposal, which is being presented as part of the current negotiations on VRTB through the Rural Housing Alliance, to incorporate a broader protection for rural areas which would protect all affordable homes in villages.

What is for certain is that, due to the 'voluntary' aspect of VRTB and provisions of Section 106 planning agreements which underpin 'exception site' developments in rural areas, none of these properties will be available for VRTB. These schemes had only been allowed because they were delivering affordable homes for local people in perpetuity. They cannot be sold and VRTB exercised. While this will help to protect existing homes, it will also be of comfort to land owners who may wish to sell some land at 'exception site value' to help deliver affordable homes for local people. Without this protection, landowners may not be willing to release land if the homes were in time to end up on the open market.

Five questions about Neighbourhood planning

CPRE has welcomed those parts of the Government's new Neighbourhood Planning Bill that will make it quicker and easier for communities to get their aspirations for the future of their neighbourhood in place, and allow communities to update or amend their plans without having to start from scratch. There is concern, however, about planning authority capacity to support neighbourhood plans. We have been fortunate to have a dedicated officer in Harborough District who has helped provide support to neighbourhood plans in the area.

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions from a member involved in making a plan in their neighbourhood:

1. Will it cost too much?

Making your community plan doesn't have to cost the Parish Council anything at all. Grants of up to £9k are available from Locality (<http://locality.org.uk/projects/building-community/>) and it is also possible to secure up to £10,000 from Awards for All (<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/Awards-For-All>). Locality also offers free expert help – our PC has just had a helpful "health check" on its draft plan.

2. Will it take too much time and effort?

It will take effort and it will take time. Do you have someone in the community who would be willing to manage the process and put the time in? You can't rely on

contracted consultants to drive the plan although their help is invaluable. A consultant will get you started and help all the way through, but people from the community are needed to keep it moving and provide vital local knowledge.

3. Will it take too long?

Some have, but if you are driving the process there is no reason why it can't be completed comfortably within 18 – 24 months. In our neighbourhood we had the first NP Committee meeting in May 2015 and finished the Regulation 14 consultation on September 7, 2016. All being well the plan should be made early next year. Larger communities inevitably may take longer.

New farmers and new small farms can kick-start agricultural revolution

Brexit presents opportunities for farming in England to change and to become more diverse and environmentally resilient, according to a recent CPRE report, 'New Model Farming: resilience through diversity'.

The report argues that a more diverse agricultural sector in terms of demographics, farm size and production could enable farming to be efficient, resilient and able to invest for the future while at the same time offering rewards beyond food production: beautiful landscapes, clean water, plentiful wildlife, comprehensive flood management and better carbon storage. This would justify and make clear the benefits of the enormous public investment in farming that will follow our exit from the EU.

The paper suggests that the Government should attempt to reverse the trends of industrialisation and short term efficiency that have damaged natural assets such as landscapes, wildlife, soils and water. Damage to soil alone is estimated to cost £1.2 billion each year and populations of farmland birds in England have more than halved in the past 40 years.

To stop the decline in diversity across the sector, CPRE suggests that the bias in policy towards larger farms could be addressed by a tapering of public funding to benefit smaller farms. About 80% of the Common Agricultural Policy monies go to the 20% of largest farm operations. The decline in the number of farmers is alarming with 34,000 fewer farmers than 10 years ago. Thus it is imperative that land should be made available to new groups of farmers and communities.

Launching the report CPRE's food and farming campaigner, Graeme Willis, said "the Government has a great opportunity post-Brexit to determine what farming and the English countryside will look like...To forge a more resilient future, the Government should encourage a mix of farms that produce different foods for local people and varied, thriving landscapes. The obvious place to start is by redirecting funding to help smaller, more innovative and mixed farms, and by making land available for new farmers to enter the market."

Written to encourage debate around the future of farming, the paper is the first of CPRE's new *Food and Farming Foresight* series. These will be evidence-based research papers that support innovative policy solutions to critical food and farming issues. This report can viewed on the CPRE's national website.



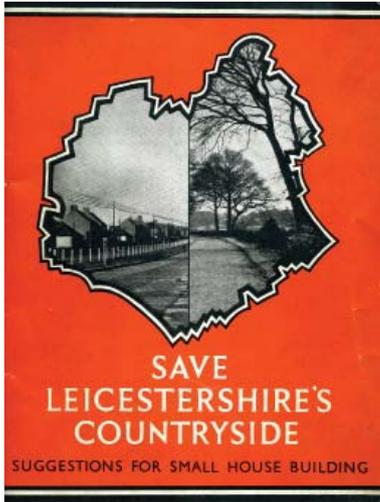
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4. Do we have the expertise?

You can buy in expertise with your grant funding - that is what it is for. It is essential to have planning expertise on board to help form the policies in the plan - to say what the community wants in a way that can be used by planners. There are some consultants who can help with this. Your district/borough council will advise you. But local people will play a crucial part too, especially when it comes to the detailed work around housing sites, environmental assessment, community facilities, economy and transport.

5. Can it stop all development?

No it can't, it is, after all, a development plan for your neighbourhood. A Neighbourhood Plan can't stop development but it gives the community the opportunity to control and plan it rather than be at the mercy of unwelcome development applications. Through many consultations it will be possible to build a picture about how and where and what your neighbourhood wants to develop and what local characteristics it wants to protect. Repeated consultation will help to build consensus in the community.



80 years of CPRE Leicestershire: a brief history

1936 – Branch formed

The headline “Safeguarding Leicestershire’s Scenic Features”, which appeared in the Leicester Advertiser, heralded the formation of the CPRE Leicestershire branch. Over-shadowed by the abdication of Edward VIII, the inaugural meeting was held on 11th December, and presided over by Sir Arthur Hazlerigg, Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire.

1945 – Publication of ‘Save Leicestershire’s Countryside’

Written with the help of the Leicester Society of Architects in 1939 and published in 1945, this well illustrated booklet was designed as a constructive attempt to improve the quality of buildings and encourage ‘intelligent development’. It was welcomed by Sir Robert Martin, Chairman of the County Council, in his foreword.

1950s – CPRE and the M1

The branch ceased to operate in 1952. But CPRE campaigned, sadly unsuccessfully, for the M1 to avoid the heart of Charnwood Forest. However, the road was put in a cutting.

1968 – Branch re-launched

A new CPRE Leicestershire branch was formed at a meeting on 31st May which was organised by the Leicestershire Rural Community Council following discussions with CPRE’s national office. Lord Hazlerigg was elected as President and Alderman E.G.A Farnham as Chairman.

1970s – Projects and Planning

The branch produced the film, ‘Leicestershire: A Heritage at Risk’ (see page 1), and organised the clearing of the Incline Plane at Foxton Locks. It successfully opposed a new town at Catthorpe and a quarry extension at Dunton Bassett. It was involved in discussions on the M1-A1 link road plans and in the late 1970s, heavily involved in the partially successful campaign to oppose the National Coal Board’s plans for 3 new coal mines in the Vale of Belvoir.

1980s – Trees and Planning

The Branch, with County Council support, launched a unique and successful scheme for voluntary Tree Wardens in January 1981, which was featured in the Spring 1988 edition of CPRE’s Countryside Campaigner. Planning work included opposition to proposals for new villages, such as those at Wymeswold, Six Hills and Melton Mowbray Airfield, objections to plans for Groby quarry and comments on plans for the A46 Leicester Western Bypass.

1990s - Successes

Increasingly, planning work involved responding to draft local and structure plans. It also involved dealing

with individual developments, for example, the Motor Industry Research Association plans for a test circuit at Higham on the Hill. The branch was successful in its opposition to a Seagrave farmer’s plan to remove a mile of historic hedgerow and, following an appearance at a public inquiry, to Redland’s proposals for buildings for industrial purposes, offices and warehouses on 30 acres of open land off Slash Lane and Sibley Road in Barrow upon Soar.

2000s – Good Design and Planning

In an effort to publicise and promote good design, the Branch launched successful Design Award schemes in 2006 and 2007. Planning work involved responding to local and regional plan consultations and objecting to the Pennbury Ecotown proposal located in open countryside to the south-east of Leicester as well as to East Midlands Airport’s plans to re-route aircraft across eastern Leicestershire. Following a public inquiry, the Branch, with other groups, was successful in opposing the installation of 2 wind farms in the Vale of Belvoir.

2010 onwards – a difficult climate

To promote awareness of the beauty of Leicestershire, the Branch organised a photo competition and an exhibition of the photos under the title ‘Leicestershire Landscapes Matter’ at Snibston Discovery Centre. The winning photos were printed in the Leicester Mercury. The Branch worked with Leicestershire Rural Housing Association to support rural affordable housing schemes. It responded to local and national planning consultations, objected to many speculative planning applications for housing development as well as objecting successfully with others to a sizable wind farm at Asfordby, near Melton Mowbray.

If you have any records that tell us more about our history, Tony Stott would like to hear from you on 0116 2302715.

22 Ideas That Saved The English Countryside

By Peter Waine & Oliver Hilliam

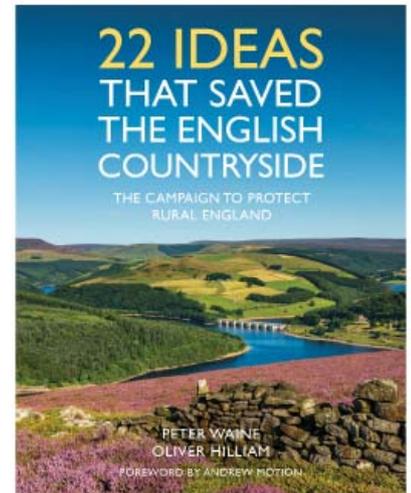
In December 2016 CPRE celebrates 90 years since its foundation in 1926, when as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England it was established to coordinate the campaigning activities of twenty two constituent bodies including Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Town Planning Institute, the Ramblers, National Trust, RSPB, Women's Institutes, Society for Checking Abuses in Public Advertising and the Commons Preservation Society amongst others.

A new book was specially produced to mark this occasion, the title of which recognises the contribution of the original 'twenty two' regarding which the Spectator observed: *'Twenty-two – the length of a chain or cricket pitch, the unit of the square acre – is quite the most English of all the numbers.'*

Each Chapter or Idea is introduced by high profile celebrity supporters including Melvyn Bragg, John Le Carre, Jonathan Dimbleby and Kate Adie with a foreword written by Andrew Motion, a recent past president of CPRE. The book traces the history of England's conservation movement from the Commons Preservation Society in 1865 to the present day and acknowledges the contribution of many famous figures to the cause of safeguarding the countryside, including Ruskin, Wordsworth, Octavia Hill (founder of The National Trust), Guy Dawber (President of RIBA) and Patrick Abercrombie (President of the Town Planning Institute).

The inaugural meeting at RIBA headquarters on 7th December 1926 was chaired by Guy Dawber, and addressed by guest speaker, Neville Chamberlain, who welcomed the formation of 'a body of authoritative character'. The Times newspaper reported: *'The existence of so strong a combination can hardly fail to impose a check on the spirit of careless vandalism which has already done so much harm throughout the country.'*

CPRE campaigned vigorously against urban sprawl and ribbon development and in 1928 commissioned Clough Williams Ellis to write 'England and The Octopus' which declared war 'on the ugliness insidiously creeping across the countryside.' The book attracted wide support, including a glowing review from D H Lawrence. Throughout the 1930s CPRE campaigned for policies to regulate development and protect the countryside including the concept of Rural Planning, Green Belts and National Parks. After many years of campaigning the Peak District was established as the first National Park in 1951. CPRE's campaigning led to



the tightening of development controls introduced by the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act – 'effectively nationalising development rights in land' Post 1947, for the first time, developers had to seek permission to build from a democratically elected local planning authority, without receiving compensation if the application was refused.

The book further explores CPRE's current campaigns including the protection of productive agricultural land and support for farmers, prioritising brownfield first developments, anti-litter campaigns, saving forests, nature conservancy, controlling advertising, signposting clutter and removing pylons. However, CPRE's concerns over the provision of affordable homes (particularly in rural areas) and appropriate homes to meet local needs including bungalows for the elderly and disabled, are not discussed.

A reading of this book reminds us how it is no accident that we are able to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of the English landscape, despite 300 years of sustained development and population growth. This positive book shows how once-radical ideas such as National Parks, Green Belts and Democratic Planning have not only saved much of our countryside, but also remain hugely relevant solutions to the problems of today. We can take heart from the fact that these 22 ideas have stood the test of time. As Peter Waine, one of the authors writes "we must continue to take inspiration from the pioneers who have handed down to our generation something which remains the envy of the world - the unique beauty of the English countryside."

The book is available to buy online from Blackwells, as well as usual bookshops and websites, regular retail price £25.

Enjoying Events

'90 Years of CPRE: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'

Many CPRE Leicestershire members enjoyed an interesting and informative day celebrating the 90th anniversary of CPRE at this conference, organised by CPRE's East Midlands and Eastern Regions and held in Peterborough on 6th July. The day reminded us of the significance of past battles, how much we owe to our predecessors and why we need to continue fighting to protect the beauty of England and its countryside.

The two key note speakers provided the historical context to the day. Dame Fiona Reynolds, a former Director of CPRE and author of a new book, *'The Fight for Beauty'*, set the tone for the day. She took us through the history of the fight to have the beauty of Britain's nature and landscape recognised and its protection incorporated into public policies. She highlighted how inspirational individuals such as Octavia Hill and organisations such as CPRE contributed to this fight. In spite of ideas about protecting nature, landscape, and countryside being incorporated into legislation after 1945, the fight was far from over. She concluded that although these ideas of beauty seem less influential in an economic growth oriented society, it is essential to continue to fight for them.

Her talk was complemented by that of Oliver Hilliam, a co-author of *'22 Ideas that saved the English Countryside'*. Oliver focussed on formation and work of CPRE. In particular, he sketched out how the pressures that were changing the character of rural England in the 1920s led to the formation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in December 1926. Oliver then pointed to some of



Dame Fiona Reynolds

CPRE's successes and failures that are more fully discussed in the book.

The day was also very much about exploring CPRE's role today and in the future. Members were able to share ideas and experiences through workshops that focussed on aspects of branch development, communication, campaigning and

making our voice heard in the planning system. For instance, the workshops on effective campaigning heard about CPRE Kent's long legal battle (now successful) to save an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from a destructive housing development, CPRE Oxfordshire's experience of working in coalition with other groups to oppose an economic growth strategy plan and CPRE Norfolk's campaign on light pollution. In addition, there were plenty of opportunities to meet people from other branches and National Office staff.

Thanks to the organisers, especially the two Regional Secretaries, Caroline Adams and Tracey Hipson, for their work in organising this rewarding day and successful conference.

Pleasant Summer Evening at Foxton Locks

On Thursday 16th June a very pleasant summer evening was enjoyed by members and guests at The Boat House at Foxton Locks. After a brief explanation of the Branch's new charitable status, everyone tucked into a sumptuous buffet, chatted with each other before listening to Mike Beech's talk on the history of the Old Grand Union Canal from 1814 to 2014.

Mike Beech, Keeper of the Foxton Locks, has been associated with the Locks since 1980 and in charge of the museum since 1989. He spoke about the Foxton Inclined Plane, the initial dream of restoring the slope and rebuilding the Victorian 1890's Plane which for 20 years had carried the working boats up and down Foxton Hill faster than by the locks. He commented on how the CPRE had supported his many efforts to maintain the site and also restore the Boiler Room. Although the boat lift was never restored there is an excellent working model of it in the museum which is well worth a visit.

Mike was thanked for his entertaining talk and he then kindly drew the raffle. The prize, the latest book on the history of the CPRE by Peter Waine and Oliver Hilliam, was won by Ann Irving. A very successful event.

Responding to Consultations

Much time in recent months has been taken up by CPRE Leicestershire responding to consultations organised by Leicestershire Councils. We have worked hard on behalf of our members and the wider public to try to influence future policies and development plans that shape how Leicestershire will look in the years ahead.

Local Plan Consultations

Melton Borough Council consulted on the latest version of its core strategy in late spring this year. The CPRE response expressed concerns about the lack of precision, the vagueness and ambiguity of the wording of some key policies. Particular concerns focussed on policies allowing ‘necessary and appropriate’ development in open countryside, outside of designated settlements, which it was felt were not robust enough to give clarity when planning applications related to this open countryside were considered. Equally the policy on ‘Areas of Separation’ between settlements is confusing. It contains no clearly defined areas of separation with precise boundaries, merely a set of meaningless zig-zag lines. CPRE also argued that the housing targets appeared to involve an over-provision of 1000 dwellings and called for a housing mix that recognises the needs of the over 55s, those less able and other residents requiring single storey accommodation (bungalows) or smaller dwellings on the ‘open’ market.

Responses were made to two other Local Plan related consultations. **North West Leicestershire** consulted on the soundness of their Local Plan prior to its submission to the Government. In CPRE’s view the plan needed targets for renewable energy outputs, and to specify minimum distances between wind turbines and their nearest residential properties. **Charnwood** consulted on the issues that it should address as it takes forward its recently adopted Core Strategy. In CPRE’s view, pressure on the countryside, erosion of green spaces, coalescence of settlements and an under-supply of affordable homes and bungalows for the elderly and disabled are issues that need addressing.

Leicester / Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan Statement

This is a poorly publicised but highly significant document. CPRE Leicestershire has responded to this consultation. It is the first stage of preparing a joint county and city wide Strategic Growth Plan. This Plan will be a major influence in determining the future nature and location of development across Leicester and Leicestershire as it will set the framework for individual district Local Plans.

Despite some welcome statements with regard to environmental and countryside concerns, in its response CPRE expressed strong concerns that the main priority of the vision and approach in the statement was on economic growth and development.

Concerned that the implementation of the Plan could lead to continuing incremental and haphazard erosion of Leicestershire’s countryside, CPRE called for a countywide Land Use Strategy. This should involve commitments to preserve specific tracts of valued countryside, also green spaces to prevent incremental coalescence of separate settlements and corridors for nature. More emphasis is also needed on a rural agenda which is not reflected in the proposed plan, and a greater recognition of the features of rural Leicestershire, its communities, landscape and countryside.

This Strategic Growth Plan raises important issues for CPRE and these tie in with our research and evidence gathering on the extent of protected and unprotected countryside in Leicestershire.

Leicestershire County Council Consultation: Accommodation Strategy for older people

CPRE has been concerned about the inadequate supply of ‘open market’ housing for the over 55s, suitable for those wishing to downsize and for those requiring accessible accommodation, such as bungalows. These properties are simply not being built in acceptable numbers. The CPRE response to this consultation commended the County Council for attempting to address the problem of housing suitable for an increasingly ageing population. It called for a new approach by the County and District Councils with fresh policies and efforts to ensure that there is an adequate supply of this housing being provided in all developments. All new housing sites should provide some single storey dwellings (bungalows). ‘Right to Buy’ should not be allowed for social housing properties specifically designed for rent for the over 55s. We also suggested that any new developments should be protected from ‘Buy to Let’ by limiting the numbers available.

Branch Notice-Board

Are you good with Websites and Social Media? Can you help?

We are looking for an individual to manage and keep our website up to date.

As our site uses Joomla as part of a national CPRE template, that individual will need to be experienced in using Joomla.

If you are interested in helping or want to know more, please ring Tony Stott on 0116 2302715 or email Richard Windley.

Newsletter - Branch News

This edition of the Branch News is being posted out to all members.

We are considering making the newsletter available electronically in future for those who would prefer to receive it in this format via email.

Paper copies will continue to be available for those who prefer this format.

If you would like to have future editions electronically, please email Richard Windley, CPRE Leicestershire Chair, via richardwindley@outlook.com

Planning News - Broadnook application

CPRE Charnwood opposed the inclusion of this site between Birstall and Rothley as a Sustainable Urban Extension in the Charnwood Core Strategy. However, it was included and we have now commented on a number of proposals in the current planning application which covers the 1st phase of the development with 194 dwellings of the final total of 1,650 proposed. No single storey accommodation is planned in this phase although there are terraces of smaller dwellings.

We welcome the concept of a 'Garden Suburb' strategy and the proposed architectural and landscape treatment with open spaces within the built development which seems to give pleasant rural aspects. The intention of 'Widening the Choice of High Quality Homes' would be supported by CPRE if future phases show that it means that all sections of our communities really have the opportunity of choice. The intention to provide a retirement village within the site is welcome but there are no details at present as to what type of properties will be provided. There is also a lack of clarity about what happens after the first phase as the master plan is vague regarding later phases.

CPRE is unhappy regarding the extent to which the location is divorced from Birstall. We feel that at the very least a footbridge should be constructed over the A46 to link with the Hallam Fields housing, the service area and commercial development. Equally of concern is that the proposed link to the Cedars Academy and Birstall village is virtually inaccessible to pedestrians from the new 'suburb'.

Will the grand plans for the site and promised facilities be delivered or will it just be another commuter settlement on the edge of the urban area? Time will tell.

CPRE CHARNWOOD AGM Monday 14th November 6.30pm

CPRE Charnwood Members,
please see the enclosed notice for
details of the AGM.



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