



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
CHESHIRE

CHESHIRE

News and Events

NOVEMBER 2006

A busy season draws to a close ...

This summer, volunteers have manned CPRE stands at the Cheshire and Nantwich Shows, events at Wilmslow and at Reaseheath College, and the Ploughing Championships.

We have had some success in publicising CPRE through meetings with local MPs, both on Green Belt issues in Chester and at the presentation of our very first 'Buy Local' awards. We have had correspondence with all Cheshire MPs in supporting Age Concern's campaign to save rural Post Offices which are a life line to some communities.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is the hot topic of the moment – 'What's that?' I hear you say! It will set a regional framework that addresses the 'spatial' implications of broad issues like housing, investment, transport, the economy and environment. This is all about 'how much', 'how big' and 'where'. (See P 4)

Our website continues to provide a useful source of information to members, the public and the media, and we would like your help in keeping it fresh and up-to-date by sending us news about what is happening in your district, what issues concern you, and what would you like to see on the web pages. If there is a helping hand available to deal with the technical bit of maintaining the site, our Webmaster would love to hear from you!

Finally, after being associated with CPRE Cheshire Branch for some 6 months, I am finding that my existing commitments have not tailed off as I hoped they might, and I have had to accept that I do not have the time that the job requires. I have therefore reluctantly tendered my resignation as Branch Chairman.

I need to be open about my ability to deal with this challenging post and I feel that it is in our best interests that I stand down. I have made observations and suggestions to the Branch Executive Committee on the essential activities that the Branch needs to address, and all members will by now have received a letter from them on this subject. Many thanks to all of you who have shown me your support and given freely of your time and hospitality.

John Turnbull

Now is the time to come to the aid of CPRE Cheshire!

Cheshire CPRE faces many challenges as we gear up to work with the changing circumstances of the 21st Century.

To meet these, we need to draw on the talents, experience and enthusiasm of our members, and we are asking all readers to consider giving some of their time to take on an interesting and demanding voluntary management role with the Branch.

We need to replace our retiring Chairman, and most of you will know that we have been seeking a Treasurer for some time. We urgently need to fill both of these posts to enable us to continue working on behalf of our members and all Cheshire residents to protect our wonderful county.

We also need a new Webmaster, as our present one moves on to new challenges after doing a sterling job in setting up and managing our busy and attractive website for the last five years.

There are many exciting opportunities to take CPRE Cheshire forward and become involved in new initiatives, but without dedicated people in these key roles, who understand and support our aims, we will miss out on these.

Potential Chairmen or Treasurers need the time to give to the role, experience of managing budgets and staff, and preferably, of working with a charity. Potential Webmasters need good IT skills together

Also in this issue:

New campaign protects tranquil areas.....	page 2
MPs get Green Belt message.....	page 3
Local impact of RSS	page 4
Our first 'Buy Local' winners.....	page 5
Wind farm decision chaos.....	page 6
Airports plan massive expansion.....	page 7
Join our local history trip.....	page 8

with up-to-date knowledge of the benefits of the Internet to a charity and the time and enthusiasm to maintain a striking site. Volunteers for all three roles would be supported by our experienced Executive Committee, and dedicated Branch staff.

To take full advantage of the opportunities to advance Cheshire CPRE's aims, we also need more people to volunteer to work with our staff and existing volunteers on tasks such as fundraising, organising events and writing articles for this newsletter and the website.

Working as a volunteer offers many benefits to the individual as well as the charity. Apart from the personal satisfaction and sense of achievement you will get from knowing you are working for a cause you believe in, the work can also help you develop or refresh your skills and experience, or enable you to learn new skills that can be of benefit in other aspects of your life.

Many people before returning to paid work after a gap, or seeking a career change find that voluntary work such as this provides valuable experience towards their next career move.

Work of this type, where experience is highly valued, is often just what newly retired people find they need to bridge the gap between a hectic working life and a more leisured pace.

We cannot afford to stand still in the face of new challenges, and we cannot move forward - or continue to exist - without filling these essential roles.

If you believe you have what it takes to help ensure the future of CPRE Cheshire, call our Branch Secretary Debbie Janney on 01606 835046 to find out how to apply.

Branch news

Summer fun at Shows

A very warm welcome to the new members who joined CPRE at the summer shows this year!

We made an early start to the shows season, promoting our local foods campaign at the Wilmslow Environmental extravaganza in May, where we launched the children's "Design a Local Food Poster" competition and introduced our Cheshire CPRE scarecrow for a family-friendly 'Guess the Scarecrow's name' competition to win a book prize,

This was swiftly followed by a really enjoyable time at Reaseheath College Open Day, organised by our Crewe and Nantwich District, complete with a highly popular competition to guess the 'food miles' travelled by two delicious hampers of local goodies, generously donated by businesses in the area, and a 'find the tick on the sheep' activity for kids.



'Food Miles' winners receive their hampers at Reaseheath from our Chairman, John Turnbull

Our stand at the Cheshire Show in June celebrated CPRE's 80th anniversary by featuring eight decades of CPRE achievement, (and the scarecrow came too!)

We had an action-packed day at the Nantwich Show, where Crewe and Nantwich District again prevailed on local food companies to donate items for the food miles competition, and a bottle of bubbly was opened to toast the winners of our first-ever 'Buy Local' Awards, presented by Stephen O'Brien MP. (see Page 5 for more on this)

The season came to a close as usual with the Ploughing and Hedgelaying competition at the end of September. Our scarecrow needed re-stuffing by then so we left him slumped at his desk in the Branch Office.

Without our volunteers it would have been impossible to get out and take our message to all of these events.

You are sincerely appreciated: thank you!

SUMMER COMPETITION WINNERS

Scarecrow Competitors

James Marsland, Wilmslow; Tom Armstrong, Knutsford; Emily Holinshead, Nantwich

Food Miles Hampers

Ms L Davies, Stapeley; Mr Andy Birchall, Hoole; Holly Dunham, Crewe

Many thanks to donors of prizes:

Ottaker's of Wilmslow; Harvest Interiors, Nantwich; J Hulse, Worleston; Alison's Homemade, Poole; Eddisbury Fruit Farm, Kelsall; The Great Tasting Meat Company, Poole; PH Stokes, Nantwich Market Hall; Barleycorn's, Nantwich; Cheerbrook Farm, Willaston; The Harvest Store, Wimboldesley; Everwood, Poole; Cholmondeley Castle; Snugburys Ice Cream, Hurleston; Brookshaw's, Nantwich; AT Welch, Nantwich; Salad Bowl, Audlem; Chatwin's, Nantwich; Fire Station Chocolate Shop, Tarporley; Reaseheath College Farm Shop, Nantwich.

New campaign aims to protect tranquil areas

CPRE's new national campaign aims to protect tranquillity – one of the countryside's most valued attributes and an important indicator of countryside quality.

We all need to 'get away from it all' and visit areas that are largely free from intrusive manmade noise and structures. The tranquillity we experience in such places is good for our hearts, minds and bodies. Sadly, that's getting harder and harder to do, and in fact, Cheshire emerged from CPRE's study as one of the least tranquil of the shire counties. Tranquillity is under threat from the spread of major roads, airports, houses and other buildings, wind turbines, quarries and, crucially, the new traffic movement and noise such development generates, on the ground and in the air.

Up to now, it has been hard for decision-makers to protect tranquillity because they haven't been able to measure it. CPRE has developed an accurate way to measure tranquillity and from that measurement have produced a detailed map revealing the likelihood someone would experience tranquillity in any locality. We hope decision-makers at all levels will use our method for measuring tranquillity in order to create policies and take decisions about land use that protect, enhance and reclaim tranquillity.

If you think you can help, or wish to know more about the campaign, contact the Branch Office for more details, on 01606 835046 or email: info@cprecheshire.org.uk

Read about our first event for this campaign, on page 8!

Branch news

MPs get the Chester Green Belt message

Our Chester Green Belt campaign concluded this summer, when representatives of CPRE held two meetings with local MPs to present residents' views about their Green Belt.

The campaign, funded by the National Lottery's Awards For All scheme, followed the 50th anniversary of the Green Belt last year, and aimed to ensure this much-admired institution for the protection of the countryside got its second half-century off to a good start. The activity centred on the Green Belt around Chester as this has been under pressure from development proposals almost since its adopted in 1983.

Over 12,000 homes received the mailing, which included a postcard for residents to use to tell the Government what the Chester Green Belt means to them. We were delighted to receive many comments in support of the Green Belt together with generous donations to fund our work, and it was wonderful to welcome new members in Chester District as a result of the campaign.

The final stage of the campaign took place when local MPs accepted the last batches of these postcards to pass on to the Government, making sure Chester voices are heard on this important issue.

Stephen O'Brien, MP for Eddisbury, whose constituency includes a substantial Green Belt area, said he was very pleased to be involved, as he and his party firmly believe in the value of the Green Belt. 'Our Green Belt is of tremendous benefit, both to the surrounding countryside and to the City of Chester itself,' he said.

Christine Russell, MP for Chester City, who invited the small CPRE delegation into her office to discuss the issues over coffee, said:



Christine Russell MP with Roger Parkin, John Turnbull and Ann Jones

'The success of the Green Belt has been that it has so far managed to protect the unique historic character of the City while at the same time safeguarding the character of most of the rural villages surrounding it.'

Chester's beleaguered Green Belt would be in a sorry state without the tireless action of CPRE's volunteers in the District, spearheaded by Ann Jones, CPRE's Chester planning coordinator. Ann is pleased that the recent campaign has made people in Chester much more aware of the pressures on their Green Belt, and although we have now successfully brought this particular campaign to a close, Ann assures readers that CPRE in Chester will go on working to protect the Green Belt in the future.

INFO: Ann Jones 01244 390314 / Clare Lewis 07731 659 786

CPRE's National Office recently featured Ann Jones' inspiring work in its 'Fieldwork' magazine for campaigners. The magazine, full of tips for campaigning success, can be downloaded from the National CPRE website: www.cpre.org.uk, or sent to you by post. (See contact details page 8)

Keep in touch with CPRE on the web

The CPRE Cheshire Branch website, www.cprecheshire.org.uk, is a great source of information on what's happening in the Branch and in your District. It includes all the latest news, regularly updated, and information on all our Campaigns. It also contains brief summaries of our policies, all our Press Releases, copies of our Newsletters and other publications, handy links to other sites which may be of interest, details of how to get in touch with us, and lots more besides.

The site is coming up to its fifth birthday, and since we launched it we've had almost 500,000 'hits'. We know that it is

used regularly, not just by members in Cheshire but from all over the UK and abroad. So, if you haven't looked at it recently, don't miss out.

And if you have some news which should go onto the site, perhaps from your District or a local campaign success, do let us know. It's a great shop window for our work!

After almost 5 years of designing, building and maintaining the site, our Webmaster feels it is time for some fresh ideas and new blood to help take the site forward. If you have some basic IT knowledge, can spare a couple of hours a week and, most importantly, have lots of enthusiasm for spreading the word about CPRE.

INFO: webmaster@cprecheshire.org.uk.

Talking about CPRE

The Branch has applied for a grant to enable us to purchase a laptop computer and projector to add another dimension to the talks our Press and Membership Officer gives to community groups on the work of CPRE

If you know a group that would like to hear more about our work and campaigns, ask them to contact Clare Lewis. Topics include an introduction to Cheshire CPRE and its work, the importance of local foods, and saving tranquil areas.

Talks are tailored to suit local issues, group interests and other requirements.

INFO: Clare Lewis 07731 659 786

Branch and regional news

Don't underestimate local effects of RSS

Andy Yuille, CPRE's North West Regional Policy Officer, explains how the Regional Spatial Strategy affects all of us

Under the new planning system, the Regional Spatial Strategy - now out in draft form - will have tremendous importance in local planning matters. Once it is in place, the RSS is a statutory document: it will become part of your Local Development Framework, and as such, any proposals it contains will be extremely hard to fight.

The draft North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) will be debated at an Examination in Public over six weeks in November 2006 and January 2007. The following are some of the major concerns CPRE is raising.

Housing

The RSS requires an increase of 79% on the planned provision of housing per year in existing regional planning guidance. These new figures are based on the number of new houses estimated to be needed to accommodate the numbers of people estimated to be needed to make the amount of money that the Regional Development Agency wants the region to be making in 2021!

Brownfield targets are generally high (80% or more) and the draft RSS requires brownfield land to be developed first, but the sheer numbers of new houses mean that a significant amount of greenfield land will have to be built on. The situation is particularly worrying for the districts with lower brownfield targets – for example in Crewe and Nantwich the brownfield targets could be met and we could still see an average of 200 houses per year built on greenfield land: 3,000 houses on green fields over the plan period.

The RSS contains no targets for affordable housing. Although it refers to providing homes primarily to meet local need in some areas, the actual numbers proposed suggest that this is not the main aim.

City Regions

The RSS divides much of the North West up into 3 'City Regions' - Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire, derived from the Northern Way economic growth strategy. These giant expanses cover around half the region between them. They were introduced without public consultation, and are untested as a planning concept. They encompass many rural communities, much open countryside, and most of the region's Green Belt.

Manchester City Region is made up of the ten Greater Manchester local authorities, together with High Peak, Congleton, Macclesfield, Vale Royal and Warrington. Liverpool City Region includes the Cheshire Branch districts of Halton, Wirral, Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston, and Warrington (again!). South Cheshire forms a sub-region of its own, with Crewe as its major town.

RSS policies make too little distinction between urban and rural areas, or areas with different needs and characteristics within the City Regions. There is a danger that this will allow urban sprawl and inappropriate development in the countryside and in areas that already have strong local economies, instead of focusing investment where it is needed to secure physical, social and economic regeneration

Green Belt threat

City Regions pose a threat to Green Belt protection in general and in North Cheshire in particular: a former policy which protected the countryside and Green Belt is replaced with a call to 'optimize the contribution made by the southern parts of the City Region in order to promote...growth in economic performance'. This is likely to open up North Cheshire to significant development pressure.

City Region policy-making champions road schemes and growth in air travel at the expense of open countryside, tranquillity, reducing air and noise pollution – and in contradiction of the evidence that they bring no automatic economic benefits

Focusing planning policies on the City Regions is intended to boost economic growth, as cities are seen as the drivers of the region's economy. However, this has resulted in a very significant lack of consideration of environmental and social objectives and issues in City Region policies and plans, and threatens to marginalise rural issues and areas outside the City Regions.

INFO: Andy Yuille 01524 840937

Cheshire CPRE Hedgerow Award Scheme

Cheshire CPRE encourages and rewards good hedgerow maintenance through its annual Hedgerow Awards Scheme.

The awards are normally presented at our AGM in May – a busy time for the farming community, so we were delighted when the Cheshire Ploughing and Hedgecutting Society invited us to present our awards at their championship event from next year. The 2007 championship will take place at Eaton Hall, Eccleston, Chester on 26th September 2007, and our Hedgerow Awards for that year will be presented in the Vice Presidents' tent before lunch

CPRE, which has our Cheshire farmers' interests at heart, finds this opportunity to demonstrate support for their efforts in conserving and enhancing these important features of our landscape most welcome.

We start the 2006/7 Hedgerow Award scheme with 6 award winners from last year, all of whom can enter again this year, and if they have done further work will qualify for a second award. We are now looking for new entrants who look after their hedgerows and take pride in them, so don't hesitate to come forward.

Anyone with field hedgerows may enter (garden hedges are excluded). Old hedgerows coppiced, new strikes set, hedgerows laid, gaps planted up, new trees planted in hedgerows, hedgerows cut to A shape are all qualifying factors. There is no cost involved in entry. We will visit in February, March or April 2007 to assess and judge the entries.

For further details, please contact the Branch Office. Closing date for entries is January 31st 2007.

**INFO: Geoffrey Sparrow
01625 861269**

Branch and district news

'Buy Local' Awards 2006

Cheshire Branch presented its first 'Buy Local' Awards this summer. Eddisbury Fruit Farm, Kelsall, Cheerbrook Quality Farm Products, Nantwich, and Phil Davies Butcher's of Holmes Chapel were selected to receive engraved brass 'CPRE Mark' plaques and specially-designed certificates, and a further three runners-up will soon receive commendation certificates.

The Branch's newest award scheme was launched last year at the RHS Tatton Flower Show, and asked CPRE members and the public to nominate businesses that provide excellent opportunities to buy good quality local foods – produced within 30 miles of the point of sale.

We sought the support of Stephen O'Brien, MP for Eddisbury, who has a keen interest in food quality and rural issues, and he agreed to make the presentations to two of the winners at CPRE's stand at the Nantwich Show. The third, a high street butcher unable to attend the Show, received his award at his village shop from our Chairman, John Turnbull.

All of the nominees offered excellent foods and the selection process was a difficult one, but the three winners had 'that little extra'!

While English apples are rare on supermarket shelves, and orchards are disappearing, Monica Haworth of Eddisbury

Fruit Farm, is rightly proud of the 26 varieties she can offer, many also available as bottled juices, and Cheshire cider. Monica visits country shows and markets and hosts a FARMA approved farmers' market at her own farm. She is especially keen to encourage children to appreciate fresh home-grown produce, and often visits schools and community groups to talk about English apples.

Sarah and Andrew Shufflebotham of Cheerbrook Farm, provide their own home-reared beef and other local meat and wholesome local produce at their farm shop. Cheerbrook even have their own highly skilled chef who makes local food truly convenient by turning it into delicious ready-meals. On the day of the presentations, Cheshire Branch heard that Cheerbrook Farm had just received another award – Best Farm Retailer at the NFU-sponsored National Farming Awards.

The meat and poultry Holmes Chapel butcher, Phil Davies, provides for his high street customers is ALL sourced from Cheshire farms, and prepared using traditional butchery methods. Customers also enjoy good, old-fashioned village-shop service. Mr Davies is therefore supporting both local foods and the ethos of high-street shopping, making it easier for busy people to 'buy local'.

Nominations for the 2007 Awards close on 31st December. See our website or phone for more information.

INFO: Clare Lewis 017731 659 786



Monica Haworth celebrates with Stephen O'Brien MP



Stephen O'Brien with Andrew Shufflebotham



Phil Davies and John Turnbull

WIRRAL

No to Airport expansion

While we accept that the convenience of air travel makes it an increasingly popular choice, the Wirral Society has objected to the expansion of operations at Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

On the positive side, we welcome the airport company's efforts to embrace a carbon reduction scheme and its involvement in the sustainable strategy for aviation.

However, from a noise point of view we

remain very concerned. The noise currently experienced over the Peninsula is already an increasingly unwanted and intrusive factor for those living and working near to and under flight paths. This intrusion also affects those who go out into Wirral's countryside, in search of some respite from the pressures of everyday life.

As far as the proposed expansion is concerned, the Wirral Society recognises this development is closely linked with the economic prosperity of the area. However, we believe the situation described above can only get worse, as we fear it is highly unlikely that either aircraft engines will be

made appreciably less noisy than they are at present, or that larger aircraft will significantly reduce the number of movements.

We also note that many people in other parts of Cheshire - Stockport and Knutsford, to name but two relatively local examples - already suffer much greater intrusion than currently exists in Merseyside. If what they experience now is what would be in store for many Wirral residents should this plan go ahead, then this would be a high price to pay for whatever benefits accrue.

INFO: Rod Tann 0151 625 1234

District news

TRAFFORD

Hedgerow winner in line for second CPRE award

One of the winners of last year's Cheshire CPRE Hedgerow Awards, Little Heath Farm, Dunham, has just been nominated for one of our 'Buy Local' Awards for the farm shop the owners have opened this year.

Mark and Sue Jones, who took over the farm about four years ago, are now offering best quality home produced meat, eggs and vegetables at the farm, where their Angus and Hereford cattle graze in fields near the appropriately named Cow Lane.

The couple say their animals are 'reared at nature's own pace', and all of the food they consume is produced on the farm, from summer grass to winter barley. The home produce is supplemented with produce from other local farms, together with some imported goods to meet demand for out-of-season and more exotic foods.

INFO: Arthur Jurgens 0161 928 8402

CONGLETON

Arthur Wong

We are sad to report the death of Arthur Wong, a long-standing CPRE member who was active in our Transport Campaign group from its inception around ten years ago.

Arthur was an engineer by profession, and spent many years working in Germany. He put his skills and enthusiasm to valuable use as a German – English translator and in working with many organisations besides CPRE, including East Cheshire Rail Users Association, of which he was Vice Chairman.

Several of Arthur's colleagues on CPRE's Congleton District Committee attended his very moving Humanist funeral in Liverpool, and we will remember him for the example he set of active citizenship.

Lillian Burns and Mike Bond

VALE ROYAL

Aston Grange wind farm - Refused?

In an astonishing series of events at Vale Royal Borough Council last month, a decision was made to refuse the application to build a wind power station at Aston Grange Farm, followed two days later by a call for the application to go to full council, effectively wiping out that decision.

At a special meeting on 3rd October, Vale Royal's Planning Committee refused Tegni Cymru's application to erect four giant turbines and associated development on the site, which lies within Green Belt, an Area of Special County Value, an Area of Local Environmental Value and the new Weaver Valley Regional Park, and is close to Sites of Biological Importance, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and the Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area. The vote was split 50-50, and the Chairman's casting vote won the day for those of us who had argued that this highly inappropriate development should not be permitted.

However, our celebrations were cut short on 5th October, as five Councillors called for the application to go to full council, apparently overturning the previous decision. CPRE's Vale Royal District, initially delighted that our views protesting against this ill-advised proposal had been taken on board, are now quite dismayed at the current situation.

We had argued that the site is designated as a valuable landscape, which ought to be protected from such an insensitive development. The proposed turbines would be amongst the largest yet seen in the UK, and siting these giants in such a prominent location would have a negative visual impact for many miles around. Construction of the turbines and associated development calls for an enormous number of truck movements and access by large plant, and this, along with the long-term presence of the wind power station, would have the effect of 'industrialising' this area of countryside.

While we support the provision of renewable energy, this should not come at the expense of the very environment the move to renewables is supposed to protect. The second debate on this application is due at the end of November.

INFO: Chris Hampson 01606 852820

CREWE AND NANTWICH

Sharing Parish Plans expertise

In July, we held a Parish Plans evening, with Cheshire Community Council's Parish Plans Officer, Bron Kerrigan, as guest speaker. Parish Councils throughout the Cheshire CPRE area were invited by the Branch staff, and around 25 delegates were given the low-down on producing a good Parish Plan.

Ms Kerrigan stressed the importance of involving the whole community from the outset, and her advice on sources of funding for the process and for specific projects was very useful. She highlighted the fact that the finished Plan is not just a document to keep on the shelf, but a way forward for the Parish, and a useful tool in seeking funding for future initiatives to benefit the community. Delegates had plenty of opportunity to ask questions and to share tips from their own experience.

In view of its success, we are now exploring ideas for similar evenings, to be opened to other Districts and the public.

INFO: Rodney Copping 01270 780125

Transport matters

Airports propose massive expansion

Draft Master Plans outlining growth up to 2030 have been issued by Manchester and Liverpool John Lennon airports, in response to the Government's controversial White Paper, 'The Future of Air Transport'.

The scale of expansion proposed by the airports appears to conflict with UK obligations to reduce greenhouse gases, at a time when the European Parliament is arguing for a substantial deterrent charge on air transport to reduce carbon emissions.

The White Paper and both Draft Master Plans acknowledge that the budget flights industry is the major driving force behind expansion. However, if these flights become more expensive, it is possible that these long-term plans will be wildly optimistic in their predictions.

There is currently no tax on kerosene,

(aviation fuel), and all aspects of aviation are VAT free. It has been estimated that these tax breaks are worth £9 billion a year, and this enables the industry to lower prices to stimulate demand.

The Government is reluctant to address the industry's unfair tax advantage over other modes of transport because of the perceived benefits airports give to the economy in bringing in business and tourists, yet research can find no basis for the assumption of these economic benefits. Opponents of taxing air travel also claim this would hit the less well-off, despite research that shows it is predominantly the better-off who use low-cost flights.

CPRE is concerned that expansion based on this artificially stimulated market will swallow up vast areas of countryside, create more surface traffic, subject wider areas to noise and air pollution, and act against efforts to halt climate change.

INFO: Clare Lewis 07731 659 786

CPRE's Lillian Burns has produced a detailed refutation of the Manchester plan, on behalf of NW Transport Activists' Roundtable. See it on our website or contact the Branch Office.

MANCHESTER

Manchester Airport states that it aims to double its activity during the Plan's 25-year period.

Positive aspects include a push for improved rail and tram services, and a commitment to regenerate the Wythenshawe area, which during its decades as Manchester Airport's neighbour, has somehow managed to escape the much-vaunted economic and social benefits proximity to an airport is declared to bring. Despite this, the Draft Master Plan is firmly linked to the aspect of the Northern Way and Regional Spatial Strategy that most concerns CPRE – the sacrifice of the environment on the altar of economic growth.

A review of Green Belt is called for, so that Green Belt policy cannot impede economic growth. There are plans to locate some services off-site, and for further park-and-ride sites.

LIVERPOOL

The airport projects a growth in passenger traffic from 3.5 million a year to 12.3 million by 2030 – more than three times the recent levels. It aims to recover its freight tonnage, which has declined.

The runway will be extended to attract long haul services to North America and the Middle and Far East.

On the plus side, the airport plans to create a 50 hectare (124 acres) managed coastal reserve on the Oglet as part of a Regional Coastal Park.

M6 Expressway axed - widening to go ahead

In July, the Government came to its senses and announced it had dropped the ill-conceived proposal for a separate tolled Expressway between junctions 11a and 19 of the M6 through Staffordshire and Cheshire.

However, widening will still go ahead on this section, and the Minister is expected to announce further details later this year. There were two widening options proposed in the consultation earlier this year, but the Minister has not specified whether the plan is to add a lane to each carriageway, or to build a parallel two-lane road. It is likely the Government may propose a combination of these approaches along the length of the stretch. A further consultation will take place after the preferred scheme is announced.

The Government has promised action to restrain traffic growth on the widened section – an acknowledgement that more and bigger roads lead to more traffic, as shown in a study this year by CPRE and the Countryside Agency. No details have yet been given of how the Government intends to manage demand.

CPRE is delighted that the highly damaging Expressway has been scrapped, but still feels strongly that no widening was needed on this stretch: according to the Midman Study 2002, accepted by Government, this stretch would be within capacity for the next 30 years.

The Government has admitted that estimates of the cost of widening the M6 have increased to nearly £3 billion. This money could be much better spent on improving public transport and investing in measures to manage demand and reduce the need to travel - projects which are in need of funding.

INFO: Clare Lewis 07731 659 786

News and views

Tranquillity, history and rural tradition

CPRE CHESHIRE 'CHURCHES IN THE FIELDS' ROGATIONTIDE WALK

SATURDAY MID-MAY 2007- date and cost to be confirmed

As part of CPRE's new Tranquillity Campaign, Rev John Whitehead from Crewe and Nantwich District is arranging a visit to two historic churches which are oases of tranquillity, set in the fields near Nantwich. The visit will be guided by a local historian, and there will be plenty of opportunities to learn about landscape and architectural history, as well as rural Rogationtide traditions.

A coach will transport us to the first church, St Michael's at Baddiley, and those with less puff can ride rather than walk on to historic Woodhey Chapel, and to The Thatch for a buffet lunch.

We expect the day to be very popular, so we are giving readers plenty of notice. Details were still being finalised as we went to press, and will appear in our Spring edition in April, but if you are already tempted by this fascinating opportunity, ring Debbie at the Branch Office right away for the latest details and to make sure of your place.

Contact details

CPRE Cheshire Branch Office

Victoria Buildings
Lewin Street
Middlewich
Cheshire CW10 9AT
Tel/Fax: 01606 835046
email: info@cprecheshire.org.uk
website: www.cprecheshire.org.uk

Branch Secretary

Debbie Janney is in the office 9 - 12.
Answering machine at all other times.

Press & Membership Officer

Clare Lewis: Tel: 07731 659 786
email: clare@cprecheshire.org.uk

CPRE National Office

128 Southwark Street
London SE1 0SW
Tel: 020 7981 2800
email: info@cpre.org.uk
website: www.cpre.org.uk

Your countryside: your views

Comment and opinion from our readers. Want to have your say? Send contributions to the Branch Office by post or email. Letters will be edited to fit the space available.

We all contribute to waste problem

I read with interest about the proposed waste plant on Ince Marshes. (April 2006) and I sympathise with the concerns expressed, but at the same time recognise the pressing reasons for this proposal.

I have followed the progress of the Cheshire Waste Plan over a long period. The different options have discussed in Council and during widespread public consultations. The problem is difficult to resolve – primarily because any proposal is objected to by nearby residents. Yet every year, despite recycling, the cost to the taxpayer of the rate of landfill tax escalates.

In my opinion, the intention to produce a refuse derived fuel plant is an unfortunate consequence of this opposition and results in enormous process buildings. Straight combustion after recycling, with power generation would be a more efficient solution with smaller buildings.

The solution requires some compromises. If CPRE, however justly, object to the Ince proposal, they should recognise that every member of the public contributes to the problem and try and find a constructive and reasonably acceptable compromise solution.

Mr PWR Jolley, Macclesfield

Editor: With landfill being phased out, the waste disposal issue is urgent, even though as our article stated, the rate of growth has halved in the last 5 years. CPRE believes we all need to act to reduce waste in the first place, and to recycle as much as possible. We fear the massive appetite of the proposed plants at Ince will act as a deterrent to these actions.

Nature, nurture and CPRE ... A young volunteer's view

Psychologists understand two basic notions in the make-up of our dispositions – nature and nurture. If our environment is destroyed, a part of us can become destroyed too. Sometimes it takes a bit of good, old-fashioned letter-lobbying elbow grease and much persistence to conserve some of that pretty green stuff (grass) for our kids. This is a rough analogy outlining that it's important to nurture nature!

The word 'activist' evokes a number of hackneyed images: the bearded eco-warrior; self-righteous pop stars, self righteous politicians ... For me, an activist is any volunteer who pursues their beliefs. For CPRE, it's about direct action: finding out what a community needs in order for its environment to thrive. More importantly, it's about protecting the autonomy of our communities. As modernity pushes on, small villages and towns can easily be consumed. Sometimes we don't even notice. We care, but we soon forget, and then we don't care.

I can make choices. I can sit and complain all day about farmland disappearing under concrete; or I can actually do something.

So I did! I looked for volunteer work and found CPRE. Finding like-minded people is very satisfying. Also, I like trees, fields, flowers, and animals. I like old buildings, suburban 'wastelands', gardens, beauty spots, forests and public property.

Posterity should get to experience these breaks away from the grey too. I want to play a part in making sure they do.

Jane McConnell, Crewe and Nantwich

STOP PRESS -Following our recent letter to members seeking volunteers for essential management roles, we are pleased to have received several offers for the Webmaster post. However, we still URGENTLY need applicants for the positions of Chairman and Treasurer.