



The countryside charity  
**Cheshire**

# Cheshire Viewpoint

Newsletter | Spring/Summer 2020



## Welcome to our newsletter

**We hope that our members are all keeping well in these unprecedented times.**

Cheshire is at its best in the spring, with lighter mornings and evenings, birdsong serenading early risers, new lambs in the fields, and a succession of flowers, from early bulbs and blackthorn in the hedgerows to bluebells and wild garlic as seen above (photo taken in woodland near Comberbach). However, we are currently confined to our homes in light of a national emergency; the need for the huge changes that have had to take place would have seemed unthinkable even a few weeks ago.

In light of the changing situation with the Covid-19 virus, we have had to reassess our campaign priorities and activities over the upcoming months.

We were looking forward to a number of events over the coming months, including a taking part in a 5-day exhibition at Chester Cathedral, running a seminar about the role that the countryside can play in mitigating climate change, our AGM at Willington Hall, and our annual stand at the Cheshire Show. All of these events have of course now been cancelled, and instead we are working out how best to do our bit to reduce the spread of the virus whilst remaining here to support our members and volunteers.

The Covid-19 outbreak has highlighted the importance of many of the things that CPRE has long campaigned for,

from local food production to the need to protect the Green Belt and urban green spaces, to ensure that people from all areas have safe access to nature and the outdoors.

We hope to introduce new ways of working with our members, potentially online if possible, to maintain contact. We plan to hold our AGM later in the year, and are investigating other options in case meeting in person is still not possible. We will share our audited accounts and Chairman's Report once the AGM details have been finalised.

If you would like to keep up to date with CPRE Cheshire more regularly than in the spring and autumn newsletter, please check the details on the back for more information on how to follow us and keep in touch on social media and via our website.

In the short term, we want to highlight the importance of community in light of the crisis.

CPRE's Chief Executive, Crispin Truman, commented: 'With Public Health England advising us all to avoid unnecessary physical contact, vulnerable people living in rural communities – including more elderly people – are of particular concern to CPRE. Through small acts of kindness, whether it be a kind message or phone call to someone you know is in need, we will be able to ease the burden on those most vulnerable and support each other through the coming months. Let's all look out for each other.'

# Welcome back to Chairman Peter Raynes!

**We are delighted to report that Peter Raynes, former Branch Chair, National Trustee and Regional Chair, has returned to take over as Branch Chair following the conclusion of Andrew Needham's six-year term.**

With our current restrictions on movement, we are all more aware of how important the local countryside is for exercise and relaxation. The CPRE's role in ensuring sensible planning over the last century has created a unique environment of great scenic beauty despite England having a higher population density than Holland. It is a cause I have supported for many years and it is a pleasure to return as Chair of the Branch.

I would like to thank Andrew Needham, who has chaired the Branch for his maximum term of six years, for all his hard work and am delighted to say that he has accepted the role of Vice Chair and to run the planning committee.

While the purpose of our Charity remains ensuring future generations enjoy our countryside the threats and challenges we need to overcome do not remain the same. Indeed the reason the CPRE has been and is so successful is not because it stops inevitable change but that it creates ideas and campaigns to make those changes possible without the unnecessary sacrifice of our natural heritage.

In this newsletter you will see how we are engaging with issues like climate change, which will lead to changes in land use and indeed new infrastructure. However, our view will always be that this can be achieved through well thought through planning, by finding solutions that respect the countryside, wildlife, and our ability to access and enjoy nature.

One change you will notice in this newsletter is our new headline "The Countryside Charity". Our work has never been easy to explain despite millions every day enjoying the benefits of what has been achieved. For those of us who have been at County Shows introducing the CPRE to members of the public it is always a challenge. A new look and a change in wording will not solve this problem but I am confident it will make it easier.

I would like to end by asking if any of our readers would like to become more involved in running the Charity, we of course are always pleased to hear from those with an interest in planning, but like any Charity we also need people with the skills to act as Trustees and Officers for the Branch. If you are interested, please contact us (details on back cover).

My very best wishes to all our members and your families, I hope to see some of you at our events when life returns to normal.

Peter Raynes,  
Chairman



## Climate Change

Following the declarations of a Climate Emergency by all the borough councils in Cheshire, CPRE Cheshire contributed to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Climate Emergency Taskforce.

It is understood that all the boroughs are currently developing action plans and CPRE members with connections to the boroughs are invited to submit evidence and comments on these. These may be made directly to each of the relevant councils. CPRE Cheshire has established a subgroup which will consider further action and campaign on climate change and sustainability issues. For further information or to get involved in this campaign please contact us.

The Branch contributed to the national CPRE Review of Climate Change Policies. The main policy areas are Building and Planning, Energy, Land Use, Farming and Forestry and Transport, but all policies are linked and National Office is continuing to review these.

CPRE Cheshire has worked with the Chester Sustainability Forum and Chester Cathedral on an exhibition in the cathedral in May. This has been postponed due to the corona virus; details of the rescheduled event will follow. As "the countryside charity", we are concentrating on the revised CPRE policies for Land Use, Forestry and Farming, and promote thought and action on climate change and sustainability with relevance to Cheshire. We welcome public discussion and engagement on these issues, particularly with rural and farming communities.



# News update

## A round-up of planning news from across Cheshire

**HS2:** Following the Heathrow ruling, there is a challenge to the HS2 project on climate change grounds. North of Crewe, HS2 will be combined with Northern Powerhouse Rail in some way. The current proposal is to link Liverpool and Manchester via High Legh. There is a potential variation making use of the freight line to Fiddlers Ferry power station which has now closed. The National Infrastructure Commission has invited businesses, passengers, transport experts and regional leaders to share their ideas for transforming the rail landscape of the north alongside the East and West Midlands and help create a lasting legacy from the construction of High Speed 2. Electricity consumption is an issue: the total maximum demand of HS2 for both Phase One and Two is estimated to be 800 MW. There is an alternative link through Cheshire based on upgraded existing infrastructure, which would have much less of a detrimental effect on our countryside.

**Chester Northgate Scheme:** Having objected to the planning approval in September last year, CPRE Cheshire continues to campaign against this development and particularly to the massive 8 storey car park. This development will damage the city and its surrounding countryside. It conflicts with the council's climate change policies and some 20 other planning policies, particularly regarding transport and its context in the historic city.

Its 788 car spaces provide a surplus of several hundred additional city centre car parking spaces, where car use in the city should be discouraged. It will adversely affect the environment, air quality, health, traffic flows, and safety. It closes Princess Street, damaging connectivity, and spoils views to the city from the West and from the city to the West, where there are exceptional views of the Welsh Hills and sunsets over the Wirral.

This development is important for the regeneration of Chester, but we believe that the current proposals are wrong and could be so much better. We encourage CPRE members to look at these proposals, continue to raise objections with the council and to keep a very wary eye on consultations on any future Northgate development including Phase 2.

**Local Plans:** There have been a number of local plan consultations for CPRE Cheshire to respond to over the past couple of months, including Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington. It is CPRE's view that local authorities ought to have an up to date local plan in place to steer sustainable development. Of course it is paramount that they have good policies for protecting rural places, and site allocations in the right places, focusing on a brownfield first approach and including enough affordable homes and developer contribution for local infrastructure. If the local plan policies are good, when planning applications are decided in the future, it follows that officers are more likely to make good decisions.

**Wirral:** We have been working closely with Wirral Green Space Alliance, a collective of more than twenty local groups, and the Wirral Society, the local arm of CPRE, to respond to the Issues and Options Consultation, which closes in April (extended due to Coronavirus). The Consultation sets out 90 questions covering all planning issues. The documents identify a number of strategic spatial options, including both urban intensification and Green Belt release in a dispersed or focused way. There are over 54 new evidence base documents to comment upon. A huge task.

We are pleased to note the preferred option is for urban intensification; however the Council suggests the release of land from Green Belt if the urban supply falls below 12,750. In our view this number of houses is excessive. We have used the calculations of local experts who both derive a figure of 3,400 homes required over the plan period up to 2035. The experts applied the required Government's standard method, and use of the growth projections based on Office of National Statistics 2014 data. We do believe latest ONS 2018 data should in fact be relied upon. It is best practice to use the latest data. Furthermore, the December 2019 Queen's Speech (page 48, bullet 6) identified a national requirement of one million homes over the period of parliament, which significantly lowers the rate of housing growth previously announced.

We have met with local residents to better articulate their concerns, and with the officers overseeing the process. We are seeking to persuade the officers and politicians to best champion the rural areas and coastline that provide joy to residents, workers and visitors alike.



Chester riverside in spring



# Let's keep in touch!

CPRE could not exist without our members and volunteers - and we'd like to use this time to get some feedback from you as to what you would like to see the charity doing in coming months.

## Member questionnaire

We have enclosed a questionnaire in this mailing, and would be very grateful if you would complete and return it to us, either by post, email, or by completing the online version (a link and QR code can be found on the questionnaire).

## Please be our eyes and ears!

As we know, no council always gets everything right. Please look out for development proposals in your area and tell us if you have any concerns. We can't promise to take up every case, but can help you to get them properly considered. If we work together, we can help to make things better and do more. Full training can be provided if you would like to become a planning volunteer. Or if you have any other ideas for activities that you would like to organise for CPRE Cheshire members, from walks and days out to articles for our new website, please do get in touch. We look forward to hearing from you.



## Christmas Celebration

We were delighted that so many of our members and guests supported our Christmas Celebration, at St. Mary's in Rostherne. It was a wonderful afternoon, with traditional carols accompanied by organ, our incoming Chairman's piano trio playing a variety of seasonal tunes, and a range of seasonal poems and readings, the afternoon concluding with plenty of cakes and cups of tea!

Many thanks to all those involved, including our musicians (Robert Anderson (violin), Robin Coulthard (organ), Peter Raynes (cello) and David Taylor (piano)), readers (Peter Evans, Val Moore-Dutton, Andrew Needham, Reverend Philip Robinson, Cassa Townsend), our President Lord Grey of Codnor, and Reverend John Whitehead, who was the driving force behind the event. A special thank you goes to the team who served the tea and helped with the washing and drying up at the end! We hope to return to Rostherne in December and to spend longer exploring the fascinating historic features of this beautiful church.



Join in:  
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