



The countryside charity
Cheshire

Cheshire Viewpoint

Newsletter | Spring/Summer 2021



Countryside and climate change

If you're a gardener or a birdwatcher, you have probably noticed that our seasons seem to be going through a period of flux, with indicators of spring such as hawthorn coming into leaf or frogs spawning occurring earlier than usual – which can then have a detrimental effect on these species if a cold snap follows. The variable seasons also have an impact on crop growing, undermining the long-established timetable of the arable year. 2020 saw the fifth-wettest winter ever recorded, followed by a dry, sunny April and the driest May on record, having a huge impact on the yield of crops such as winter wheat and oilseed rape.

As well as being affected by the changing climate, the countryside has a role to play in mitigating these changes and adapting to changing weather patterns, and CPRE is working hard to highlight nature-based solutions for these problems.

In terms of practical actions, perhaps the most obvious place for us to start is with the planning system. We want to see the climate emergency embedded into Local Plans, and are working nationally and locally on a model climate change policy for local authorities. We are also in the process of recruiting a volunteer to look at the status of local plans across Cheshire on climate change, to support our work to highlight measures that local authorities can take to ensure new development is truly sustainable and that any associated harm is mitigated or compensated for to create net benefits in the future.

By planting more hedgerows and trees in the right places, we can improve the landscape, create new habitats and enhance biodiversity, and capture greenhouse gases. Our aim is to resume our Hedgerow Awards scheme, to recognise the value of excellent hedgerows, and offer advice to those applicants whose hedgerows are not currently worthy of an award for them to improve the value. If you would be interested in getting involved in the scheme and have the expertise to judge, or would like to help us to develop our judging criteria, we would love to hear from you! Contact details are on page 4. Nationally, CPRE is campaigning for the restoration and replanting of hedgerows with the aim of achieving at least a 40% increase in their length by 2050.

CPRE Cheshire is working to set up a webinar to look at the role that the countryside can play in climate mitigation, with representatives from DEFRA, the NFU and the CLA, as well as CPRE's Graeme Willis, lead on food and farming for the National charity, and familiar with the specific issues in our county, having grown up in a farming family in Mickle Trafford. We will send details of this event to all members on email when announced. If you would like to be notified, please contact the Branch Office.

Our members and volunteers are the backbone of our charity, and we could not continue without you. In this edition we have tried to highlight opportunities to get more involved with CPRE Cheshire now that we are (hopefully) coming out of the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

Peter Raynes, Chair

Local news

Response to the Manchester Recovery Group Rail Consultation

CPRE Cheshire has submitted a joint response to the Manchester Recovery Task Force Consultation looking at timetable options to improve rail performance in the North of England, considering the proposals in detail as well as expressing the overall view that the focus on traffic in and out of city centres to the detriment of connectivity and frequency of services in surrounding towns and rural areas.

The response also highlights the fact that, post-Covid, people may be working from home at least part of the time, making fewer rush-hour trips into city centres, which would increase capacity and potentially allow for new or enhanced services to support access to the countryside.

Our response urges the Department for Transport to make sure that all their plans are part of a holistic endeavour to mitigate climate change, protect the countryside for its own sake, and achieve a better quality of life.

Local Plans update

Our headline message in responding to the Cheshire East Local Plan is that we do not believe there are the exceptional circumstances to release Green Belt. Too many houses are being planned for, based on out of date population growth data. Largely as a result of CPRE's campaign work, the Government has announced it is to change the way housing numbers are to be calculated, and that there is renewed focus on reusing existing brownfield

land in our settlements.

Our response highlighted the need to respond to the climate crisis when progressing the local plan, which will steer 'sustainable' development in the future. We made specific comments to a number of site allocations, where we think the balance of harm is negative.

We do want Cheshire East to have an up to date local plan adopted, but it must be sound and it should do all it can to protect and enhance our rural places for the benefit of all in the future.

We also responded to Local Plan consultations in Trafford and the Wirral.

Stockport borough voted against the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework in December on the grounds of Green Belt release, The borough must now produce its own Local Plan by the end of 2023.

Cheshire Planning Committee

Did you know that CPRE Cheshire Branch planning volunteers meet regularly, every other month, to discuss current issues across the county? Normally the meetings have taken place in person, but the committee currently meets on Zoom, making it more convenient for volunteers who live further from the Branch Office in Middlewich.

We are always keen to welcome new volunteers who would like to keep an eye on planned development in their local patch, and can provide full training to new volunteers who would like to learn more about how they can help to influence development in their local area.

Please contact the Branch Office if you would like to find out more.

Yvonne Sanné

Rod Tann, CPRE Cheshire Trustee and Chair of the Wirral Society, remembers Yvonne Sanné, pictured here with Lord Grey of Codnor, at the Hedgerow Awards Ceremony, September 2009

It was with much sadness that we learned of Yvonne's death on 29th January. As a Wirral Society Committee member, I first knew Yvonne when her husband Eric joined us as Hon. Secretary in 1986. Longer-standing members will recall that Eric replaced me as the Society's representative on the Branch in 1995 and, in 1998, he became Branch Chairman. During this time, it was evident that Yvonne was a great support to him. It was my pleasure to see them presented to HM The Queen at a CPRE function at Windsor Great Park, in 2001.

Following Eric's death in 2002, Yvonne, as a serving Trustee on the Wirral Society's Committee, took over from Eric as a Trustee of Cheshire Branch. Since then, she has been a loyal and supportive member of each Committee well into her 90s. It was a great disappointment to her when she felt the time had come when she could no longer face driving herself all the way over to Middlewich for 10am meetings & day events. She was still keen to know what was going on and if she could be of help.

Yvonne was the kindest of people who believed in serving



others. She much enjoyed the company of CPRE Committee members and loved to attend various social meetings and shows to support the organisation – and Branch functions wherever she was able. She especially enjoyed helping out on our stalls at the annual Cheshire Show and the Ploughing & Hedging Competition. In latter years, she would often encourage me to attend particular events in the hope I could chauffeur her – and she was always great company.

She was also a regular attender at monthly Wirral Society meetings up until her move to Canterbury, to be near her son. As with CPRE events, she was always keen to help with any organisational tasks that were needed. We miss her very much.

Rod Tann

Seasonal walks

It's hard to beat the wonderful sight of a sea of English bluebells under the fresh green of beech trees newly into leaf.

There are lots of great places to spot bluebells in Cheshire, from the woodlands surrounding some of our fantastic stately homes like Arley Hall or Rode Hall, to scraps of woodland and reclaimed sites on formerly-developed land.

Northwich Community Woodlands is one place where both these habitats come together. Big Wood (image at bottom) is a great place to see bluebells and other flowers associated with ancient woodland, including wood anemone, wood sorrel and dog's mercury. Walk down the slope into Hopyards and you'll see (and smell) the spiky blooms of wild garlic as well.



There is a description of our Marbury bluebell walk on the CPRE Cheshire website, but we would love to add more sites - if you can recommend a great place to see bluebells, or have another suggestion for walks that we can feature on our website, please do get in touch. We would like to come up with walks for all seasons to share on our website and feature in future issues of the newsletter. Please email us if you would like to get involved: becca.nelson@cprecheshire.org.uk

Parkside Inquiry

Our Planning Officer, Jackie Copley, represented the Parkside Action Group at this Public Inquiry, which took place for most of the month of January. The response raised serious concerns with the proposed developments including traffic on local roads, air quality, noise, harm to landscape, biodiversity, and historic assets. The plans would also create further carbon and are not sustainable in light of our Net-Zero Carbon targets.

Thank you to our members!

The decision should be released in summer 2021.

We were delighted with the response to our Winter appeal and would like to thank all of those members who generously donated. Being able to employ a professional Planner or commission expert reports, though costly, can really add weight to the responses we put in to planning applications and local plans.

Branch Strategy workshop

One of our aims when it is clear that the Coronavirus lockdown rules will no longer be in force is to gather together with members who would like to have their say in the development of a Branch strategy for the coming years, or are interested to find out more about volunteering with CPRE Cheshire. If this is something that you would like to join in with, please email info@cprecheshire.org.uk to be added to the list of members to be contacted once this can take place.

The importance of healthy soil

CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester organised a very interesting online talk on soil health and the importance of farmland ponds in January. If you missed the talk but would like to find out more, you can now view a recording of it on their website:

<https://tinyurl.com/cpre-soil-talk>

New Chairman sought

Do you have leadership and charity board experience and a passion for environmental and countryside issues? Could you provide strategic leadership to our board of trustees and oversee the future direction and development of our charity?

We are looking for a successor to our Chair, Peter Raynes. It's a fantastic opportunity to influence our campaigning locally across Cheshire, and to make a real difference.

Full details of the role are available from our website, but if you would like an informal chat, please contact the Branch Office in the first instance. Thank you.



Branch AGM

We have decided again to hold a virtual AGM, in light of uncertainty over Covid arrangements. Many thanks to those who supported the AGM last November. If you are unable to attend, we would be very grateful if you would return the proxy vote forms to ensure that we are quorate. Thank you.

Volunteer Opportunities

We are looking for volunteers in a number of new roles, listed briefly below, but more information can be found on our Volunteer Hub. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/CPRE-Cheshire-Volunteering> to find out more.

Hedgerow Project Leader

We want to use our Hedgerow Award Scheme to highlight and share good practice in hedgerow planting and management across Cheshire, as well as give feedback on how to improve to entrants whose hedgerows do not qualify for an award.

We are looking for a volunteer with expertise in Hedgerow management for wildlife to lead this scheme.

Assistant Planning Volunteer - Halton

We would like to find a member who lives within or near to Halton, to keep an eye on planning applications in the borough, as currently we don't have a representative in this part of the county. Training will be provided.

Further roles coming soon:

Walks volunteer: this role is for keen walkers who would like to share their walking routes in Cheshire, writing a walk description and taking photographs, for us to share on our website.

Local food project leader: we are looking for a volunteer to help us to map local food suppliers in Cheshire, and potentially to develop an awards scheme.

Accessible Cheshire researcher: this role will be for a researcher to find data on accessible loos, pubs/ restaurants and wheelchair-friendly paths to help a wider range of people to experience the restorative effects of getting out into nature

If you are interested in any of the above roles and would like more information, please email becca.nelson@cprecheshire.org.uk

Events

We are hoping to run a number of events, including walks and talks, once Coronavirus restrictions are relaxed. Further details will be available at our AGM, or if you're on email, why not sign up to receive our events newsletter via the link at the bottom of the column?



CPRE Lancashire Branch is holding an online quiz on Wednesday, April 28th at 7pm, with an admission price of £5 per team. Scan the QR code (left) to book via Eventbrite



Sign up to our events newsletter here:
<http://eepurl.com/hoWfoT>
Or scan the QR Code:



Join in.
cprecheshire.org.uk

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