



The countryside charity
Cheshire

CPRE CHESHIRE ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Registered Charity Number 248304

The principal address of the charity and address for correspondence is:

The Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England
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The Charity's Governing Documents: The Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is a Registered Charity, no. 248304. The governing document is the Constitution dated 16 February 1996 (updated 15th August 2007).

The objectives of the charity.

The object of CPRE Cheshire Branch is to promote and encourage the improvement, protection and preservation of the countryside.

The Branch's activities cover the County of Cheshire which now comprises the Unitary Councils of Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Wirral, Warrington, Halton, Trafford and Stockport.

The Branch's activities are aimed at improving the rural environment in the interests of communities living in rural areas as well as those in Towns and neighbouring Cities who enjoy our beautiful Cheshire Countryside.

The Charity does not make grants to third parties. From time to time the Branch may give support to related charities and parties with similar objectives.

Chairman's Summary of the year

It has been another busy year at the Cheshire branch of CPRE (the Countryside Charity).

At the national level, we have continued to campaign with the wider CPRE network for a more sensitive approach to new development, to meet the needs of local communities whilst protecting and enhancing the countryside. We have also sought to influence the government's planning reform agenda. For example, our work has promoted the need for local accountability in planning decisions, set out actions to deliver more affordable housing for rural communities,

promoted steps to address the climate crisis in a more suitable way (for example by using rooftops and car parks for solar power), and stressed the need to protect farmland.

Here in Cheshire, we have funded further lengths of hedge planting at the Countess of Chester Country Park, Chester. We have also continued to respond effectively to local planning issues. Key examples have included:

- Working with local groups on the Wirral to protect large swathes of Green Belt land from unsuitable new housing development
- Attending the Warrington Local Plan examination-in-public to ensure countryside is protected, for example from inappropriate new warehousing at South East Warrington
- Responding to proposals for new car parking at the Lyme Park National Trust site and for a large new solar farm near Winsford.
- Supporting local stakeholders to prepare an alternative, nature led vision for the Danes Moss peatland area (Macclesfield) to protect it from harmful development.
- Working with the Sandstone Ridge Trust to promote designation of a new National Landscape area, along the sandstone ridge running down the heart of our County
- Campaigning to secure better control of lorry advertisements alongside the M6
- Campaigning for more sensitive use of lighting on new developments, to help protect our dark skies
- Raising concerns about the impact of the (now cancelled) Birmingham-Manchester leg of HS2, for example on wildlife and the countryside.

Whilst our charity has had many successes over the year, we are also realistic about the challenges facing us. For example, we are aware of the housing affordability crisis affecting many communities in Cheshire, the need to improve rural transport, and the threats from unsuitable development that still affect parts of our area. We are also taking active steps for example to encourage more new members and volunteers to join us, and to make our communications and publicity activities as effective as possible.

Ismail Ravat, our Treasurer, comments that we have made a trading Surplus of over £17k of which £15k is restricted funds. Our Cash and Investments (i.e. our Reserves) have increased by £17k to £52K. The investment fund has sadly performed poorly in terms of growth. We have started a review to find a better performance strategy.

Finally, I would like to thank our staff, volunteers, and donors for making all our achievements possible.

More details of our work can be found on our website <https://www.cprecheshire.org.uk/>.

Branch Activities

Financial Statement.

Names and address of relevant organisations and advisors to the charity.

Bankers: National Westminster Bank PLC.

Investments: Hargreaves Lansdown, Bristol.

Hon. Independent Examiner: Christine Mann, Sandbach.

Trustees

Chairman – *Peter Raynes until May 2023 then Jonathan Clarke from May 2023 onwards;

Treasurer – *Mr Derek Goldstraw until May 2023 then *Ismail Ravat from May 2023 onwards;

Other Trustees - Andrew Needham (Vice Chairman); Mrs Jacqui Johnson; Mr Peter Moore-Dutton; Rev John Whitehead until May 2023 then resigned; Mr Rod Tann, Mrs Rhoda Bailey from May 2023.

(* = Investment Trustees also)

The Following policies govern the level of reserves:

The Trustees have determined that we should maintain reserves at a minimum level of £10,000 (and repeated in the section detailing steps to mitigate risks). This is consistent with a wish to ensure we have cover for at least three months running costs and any necessary statutory payments and contractual commitments.

The selection of investments for the charity.

There is no written policy for the selection of investments.

In agreement with the Investment Trustees, they consider that the most appropriate investment is in a portfolio to maintain the capital against inflation whilst achieving a balance between capital growth and income.

The Investment Trustees have powers under the constitution to invest in such investments, securities or property as may be thought fit.

Major Risks to which the charity is exposed; Expenditure exceeds income.

Systems designed to mitigate the above risks

The trustees make bi-monthly checks on the cash flow and forward plan activities to identify areas where they may be able to apply for grants.

Trustees routinely apply for grants from suitable bodies to assist with overhead costs.

Trustees are putting plans in place to attract new members.

Provision is made to ensure that sufficient reserves are in place to cover costs incurred, and in any event should not drop below £10,000.

The organisational structure of the charity.

CPRE Cheshire Branch is an Independent Charity within the CPRE National network.

The Cheshire Branch constitution allows for District Committees to be formed mirroring local operates through District Committees mirroring local government administrative boundaries.

Management

The business of the Cheshire CPRE is managed by the Executive Committee comprising the Trustees nominated at the Annual General Meeting. Nominations are sought from CPRE Cheshire

members for these posts. The Chairman is accountable for the day to day running of the branch and is assisted by the Treasurer and members of the Executive Committee. The charity employs a part-time Secretary who reports to the Chairman.

Districts organisation

We have member representatives in the Unitary Authorities covered by Cheshire CPRE. District members monitor planning applications published by their local Unitary Authority. They comment on applications and campaign against threats to the countryside and where appropriate appear in Public Enquiries. Members also offer advice and help to both parish councils and local community action groups on planning matters. They take part in local forums with other environmental groups, business and local authorities. They may respond to consultations on major initiatives such as transport schemes, major retail and employment developments, waste disposal, mineral extraction and renewable energy projects. The Branch provides assistance to the Districts when requested.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Jonathan Clarke
Chairman