



CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND Cheshire Branch
92nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on 14th May 2024 at The Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight.

Minutes

1. Welcome

Jonathan Clarke, Chairman of CPRE Cheshire Branch, welcomed everyone to the meeting. 26 people were present of which 18 people were CPRE Cheshire members (and 2 proxy votes had been received prior to the meeting) which equaled a total of 20 members with voting rights.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Ismail Ravat, Jacqui Johnson, Christine Mann, Beverley Moore, Rod Tann, Peter Moore-Dutton, Derek Goldstraw, and Jennifer Maddock.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the last AGM at the Forest Hills Hotel, Frodsham on 16th May 2023.

Proposed: Peter Raynes **Seconded:** Jonathan Clarke **Vote:** everyone agreed.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes of the AGM of 16th May 2023

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Report

Jonathan Clarke thanked the members for their continued support, he also thanked the Trustees, volunteers, Debbie Janney and finally Becca Nelson for her huge contribution over many years, who had now left CPRE to live and work in Scotland. In 2023 the Branch was able to support a further 100 metres of hedge planting in association with TCV at the Countess of Chester Country Park with the money received from a couple of donations. As usual, planning has taken up a lot of time and effort for our volunteers. We have participated in the Warrington Local Plan Examination which was a success as we helped reduce the amount of Green Belt to be taken for development of warehouse sheds in that area. There was the Danes Moss planning proposal for ca 1,000 dwellings and related development in a large peat land area where we raised our concerns. We have also taken part in joint work with CPRE Lancashire to respond to the Manchester GMSF (a partial success in reducing the amount of Green Belt to be taken) and have made joint comments on the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Development Strategy. The Sandstone Ridge is shortlisted as a potential National Landscape area, and we are working with the Sandstone Ridge Trust to get this status approved. A key challenge facing the branch is that membership is slowly reducing. The Branch is looking at a range of measures to address this including improving communications as a way forward and we have just taken on an excellent volunteer, Beverley Moore, who is an invaluable resource to help us address this issue. Another of our priorities this year will be the General Election and how we can influence MPs and candidates locally. Jonathan again thanked members for their continued support of the branch.

6. Treasurers Report

Branch Treasurer, Ismail Ravat, was unable to attend this AGM due to illness, so Vice President and Trustee, Peter Raynes, gave the Treasurers Report on his behalf. Key points to note are that the

Branch's overall assets are healthy and we have a solid financial base. There are also Restricted Funds of £15,250 for projects. Notes sent in from Ismail Ravat:

- Funding of £33,339 was received in 2023; an increase of £9,241 for the year;
- The budgeted income was for £14,400;
- This large increase was due to the receipt of £15,250 as restricted funds from NW region and JH Willis in the main.
- Expenditure for the year totaled £16,542, compared to £20,059 for the previous year. So, a reduction of £3,527;
- The budgeted expenditure was for £21,354;
- This reduction in expenditure was due to reduction in rent and service charge from Middlewich Town Council (£908) and a reduction in commissioned work due to the departure of Jackie Copley (£2,340);
- This resulted in a surplus of £17,017 for the year;
- Liquid assets at year-end (31/12/23) totaled £51,962.

7. Update on Wirral Local Plan and Leverhulme Estate Inquiry - Jackie Copley, Planning Director, CPRE Lancashire gave a brief history of the Wirral and the creation of the Wirral Society in 1928 led by Sir Patrick Abercrombie (one of the founders of CPRE). She then explained the Wirral Local Plan was a political and planning saga. In 2018, CPRE joined forces with Wirral Green Space Alliance (WGSA) and Wirral Society led by John Heath who attended this AGM. The group was made up of 30 organisations and argued that removing land from the Green Belt was inappropriate due to the following reasons: there were already plenty of sites on the east side of the Wirral for regeneration; using the Brownfield Toolkit Jackie Copley found many more hectares of brownfield areas; and the group also confirmed that the Wirral population is mainly static so massive house building plans were totally unnecessary. During the Local Plan Examination, Leverhulme Estates chose to put in numerous planning appeals which halted the Local Plan Examination until the Leverhulme Inquiry was decided. The Inspector decided that the Leverhulme appeals should not be allowed. (Following the AGM, Jackie Copley sent a copy of her PowerPoint presentation for anyone interested to view).

8. Acceptance of the Year 2023 Trustees' Annual Report including the Accounts for year ending 31st December 2023

Proposed: Andrew Needham **Seconded:** Jerry Spencer **Vote:** All agreed

9. Election of Officers

Vice –President: Peter Raynes

Honorary Branch Treasurer: Ismail Ravat

Proposed: Andrew Needham **Seconded:** Chris Wilkshire **Vote:** All agreed

10. Election of other Trustees:

Jonathan Clarke

Andrew Needham

Derek Goldstraw

Jacqui Johnson

Peter Moore Dutton

Rod Tann

Rhoda Bailey

Ismail Ravat

Proposed: Jerry Spencer **Seconded:** Andrew Needham **Vote:** All agreed

11. Election of Auditors

Christine Mann was recommended for re-election as our Honorary Independent Examiner

Proposed: Peter Raynes

Seconded: Andrew Needham

Vote: All agreed

12. Any Other Business

Nick Thompson, Trustee, from CPRE Lancashire thanked Jonathan Clarke for inviting them to the AGM and confirmed that both branches work well together sharing staff and other resources to cover issues in both areas.

13. CPRE National update by Roger Mortlock, CEO at CPRE National

Roger Mortlock said it was lovely to visit Port Sunlight again and commented that he had cycled through there with an aged aunt 3 years previously. He thanked Jonathan Clarke for the Branch activity update and congratulated Jackie Copley and John Heath on their endeavours on the Wirral.

CPRE National are now starting to focus on their 2026 Centenary celebrations and the forthcoming General Election predicted for later this year, on which he feels there is a sense of change much like the 1997 election. CPRE National have agreed 4 areas of influence that CPRE both nationally and locally will highlight to candidates:

- A planning system that is for the people/nature/climate
- The countryside next door – we are the only group who champion the ordinary countryside.
- Addressing the housing crisis – providing much needed affordable and social housing.
- Energy issue – looking at wind and solar. We are pushing for building them in the right places and rooftop solar first.

CPRE National also intend to set up some hustings.

Beyond the Election, Roger Mortlock highlighted 4 areas where CPRE National will focus on:

- the future of the countryside and the need to build on the work that Abercrombie did when CPRE first started.
- Identifying the role of the countryside in the future, for example in relation to energy, planning and farming. We also need to think about land use, and how we can encourage young people to help with the future of our land.
- Anniversary of the Green Belt in 2025 – highlight the Green Belt, but should it be put to more beneficial use?
- Building our movement – CPRE National have already been testing ways to encourage new members via online marketing, plus a trial using some professional recruiters at various Shows around the country in 2024 to gain members. Roger Mortlock also thanked Peter Raynes for his earlier work analysing how CPRE National should best use its financial resources.

Finally, he recently noted that when members of the public were asked what they most loved about England, the NHS came first followed a close second by the countryside.

Jonathan Clarke thanked Roger Mortlock for his excellent talk, and also taking the time to visit Cheshire Branch and attend our AGM.

The meeting ended with members enjoying tea and cakes.