



The countryside charity
Cheshire

CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND Cheshire Branch
**93rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on 14th May 2025 at the Lion Salt Works,
Northwich**

Minutes

1. Welcome

Jonathan Clarke, Chairman of CPRE Cheshire Branch, welcomed everyone to the meeting. 19 people were present of which 14 people were CPRE Cheshire members (and 22 proxy votes had been received prior to the meeting) which equaled a total of 34 members with voting rights.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from James Cameron, Christine Mann, Susan Robson, John Whitehead, Jacqui Johnson, Kathleen Brown, Paul Basford, Amanda Martin, John Higgs, Claire Deruty, Simon Jefferies, Peter Hirst, Rosemary Broadbent, Mr R Boyd, Andrew Pownall, Ian Brown, Roy Kerry, Kath Lloyd, Neil Parry, Tessa Parkin, Kathy Cowell, Paul Spence, Carolyn Andrews, J Smith, Peter Moore Dutton and Jonathan Cartmel.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the last AGM at the Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight on 14th May 2024.

Proposed: Peter Raynes **Seconded:** Derek Goldstraw **Vote:** everyone agreed. The Branch had also received Proxy votes - 17 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 5 ABSTAINED.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes of the AGM of 14th May 2024

Rod Tann confirmed that the Wirral Local Plan had now been approved. Jonathan Clarke said that this had been a success for CPRE as the Local Plan states Brownfield first for building.

5. Chairman's Report

Jonathan Clarke thanked all the Trustees, members, volunteers and supporters of CPRE Cheshire without whom the Branch would not have achieved anything. He also thanked Debbie Janney who has been with the branch for 25 years! It has been another busy year.

Jonathan highlighted the key issues facing the branch which have included (in summary):

- The Government's national planning reform agenda – with more housing, solar farms etc. proposed.
- pressures for development throughout our area which are causing enormous challenges, probably similar to those which existed when CPRE was first formed in the 1920s.
- Lots of community groups coming to us for help.
- The Government agenda around devolution, including the Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority proposed from May 2026. CPRE will need to engage with this new body.

He went on to describe what the branch is doing to address the challenges. In summary we have:

- tried to engage positively i.e. we are not simply “blockers” but do want to see the countryside protected and enhanced.
- supported national campaigns – e.g. rooftop solar.

- written to all MPs in our area – about housing and Green Belts (and met some).
- responded to planning applications and Local Plans – the planning committee has been very busy!
- worked with local groups in the Wirral (the WGSA) to enable one of the country's only "brownfield only" local plans adopted in March 2025.
- Worked with the Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Partnership to prepare a draft Nature Recovery Strategy, which provides a framework for improving nature across our area; nature is very depleted!
- Worked with Sandstone Ridge Trust on a potential National Landscape – the jury is out as to whether this will progress.
- Put in a bid for Hedgerow Heroes – although we are not sure if this will be successful yet.

Jonathan Clarke confirmed that membership has slightly reduced. We now have around 380 members which is a decrease of around 15% over 2 years. To address this, CPRE national has started a membership project (eg via the website and on-line recruitment) and locally we are prioritising better communications. He gave special thanks to Beverley Moore for all her hard work on communications this year, and also to our new communications volunteer Molly Bostock who is working with Beverley Moore; members may have seen the bluebells and farm shops items on our website and Facebook.

The Branch is working jointly with Lancashire CPRE which is a key priority given reduced resources; e.g. joint support for Liverpool City Region ringway proposal which has just received a grant from the Heritage Lottery.

Governance of the Branch - See CIO item later on this agenda. Jonathan Clarke was pleased to confirm that we have a new Trustee – Kathy Cowell OBE DL (chair of Manchester University NHS) who we co-opted early in 2025. In conclusion, Jonathan thanked everyone once again for their continued support.

6. Treasurers Report

Branch Treasurer, Ismail Ravat, confirmed the Branch had a successful end to 2024, in brief the revenue was ca £20,000, the target had been ca £15,000 as the receipt of a couple of legacies had helped our finances. Expenditure had been about £14,000 instead of the predicted £18,000 due to money budgeted for commissioned work, the Press and Membership Secretary role and contingencies not being spent. So, the Branch had a positive balance of ca £6,440 and £55,969 in liquid assets. Rod Tann asked whether the Branch contacted members who lapsed. Debbie Janney confirmed that once a month CPRE National advised Branches which members had lapsed, and both National Office and Cheshire branch then contacted those members separately to ask whether they would consider rejoining.

7. Acceptance of the Year 2024 Trustees' Annual Report including the Accounts for year ending 31st December 2024

Proposed: Andrew Needham **Seconded:** Rod Tann **Vote:** All agreed
Proxy Votes: 21 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED.

8. Election of Officers

Vice –President: Peter Raynes
Honorary Branch Treasurer: Ismail Ravat
Proposed: Derek Goldstraw **Seconded:** Rod Tann **Vote:** All agreed

Proxy Votes: 21 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED.

9. Election of other Trustees:

Jonathan Clarke, Andrew Needham, Derek Goldstraw, Jacqui Johnson, Peter Moore Dutton, Rod Tann Rhoda Bailey, Ismail Ravat and Kathy Cowell

Proposed: Beverley Moore **Seconded:** Jerry Spencer **Vote:** All agreed

Proxy Votes: 21 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED.

10. Election of Auditors

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

Proposed: Peter Raynes **Seconded:** Beverley Moore **Vote:** All agreed

Proxy Votes: 22 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINED.

11. Special resolution: It is hereby agreed that the Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (registered charity 248304) SHOULD CONVERT from its current unincorporated status TO BECOME A CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION (CIO). Jonathan Clarke had sent members a detailed note explaining the reasons for changing the status of the charity to CIO – but went through the information again and explained that these reasons included:

- Greater protection for Trustees: the members and Trustees of a CIO will not usually be personally liable for the charity's debts; and
- Legal personality: A CIO has a legal personality of its own, enabling it to conduct business and employ staff in its own name, rather than the name of the Trustees.

Jonathan Clarke advised that CPRE National Board had already approved the Branches decision to change to CIO status, and some other Branches had already done the same (including Lancashire Branch).

Jonathan Clarke then asked if there were any questions. Rod Tann asked why did Branches have to become a CIO, could CPRE National just become a CIO on behalf of all Branches? Jonathan Clarke explained that each branch is a separate charity with its own charity number, so it was not possible for CPRE National to become a CIO on behalf of all branches.

He then asked the members to approve the motion for CPRE Cheshire Branch to become a CIO.

Proposed: Beverley Moore **Seconded:** Andrew Needham **Vote:** All agreed

Proxy Votes: 21 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED.

Jonathan Clarke then explained the next key steps:

Step 1: Set up and register a new CIO with the Charity Commission;

Step 2: Transfer the assets and liabilities of the current charity to the new charity;

Step 3: Close the existing charity after the transfer.

12. Any Other Business

Rod Tann advised the meeting that the Wirral Society had printed some small leaflets about the charity which will be put into libraries and other public places to advertise the Society. He asked whether CPRE Cheshire had considered doing something similar – Jonathan Clarke confirmed that the Branch was looking into producing some flyers for the Cheshire Show and possibly producing materials relating to the Hedgerow Heroes Award (if we get the money for this), and these would be used to advertise CPRE also.

The meeting concluded with a short talk by Andrew Needham about the Lion Salt Works, and members were encouraged to look around the museum after tea and biscuits.