



The
countryside
charity

CPRE RUTLAND ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Meet the Leadership Team

The charity is indebted to the commitment of its volunteers and their families



President Sir Laurence Howard with President Nominee Dr Sarah Furness



CPRE National Chair Simon Murray (right) with local Chair Ron Simpson



CPRE Chief Executive Roger Mortlock with
CPRE Rutland Vice Chair Rachel Burkitt



Planning Lead Carolyn Cartwright and
Planning Support Cliff Bacon



Research Officer Malcolm Touchin and
Membership Lead Annabelle Meek



Treasurer Margaret Simpson
and Administrator Geoff Clyde



Governance Trustee Giles Clifton

1. Introduction

This 2024 Annual Report is published at a noteworthy time of change and opportunity for CPRE, the countryside charity. Not least because of the recent announcement that His Majesty the King has agreed to continue Royal support for the work of the charity by becoming Patron of CPRE.

This Royal support endorses the continued logic of inviting His Majesty's representative in Rutland, the Lord Lieutenant, to be our local branch President.

The CPRE national AGM on July 2nd 2024 will also formally appoint a new national President. The Board is proposing Mary-Ann Ochota for a period of two years and considers that she will bring together our work at CPRE and speak with passion about the value of landscapes. Mary-Ann is a writer, broadcaster and campaigner on countryside related issues. She's written two books on the countryside, presented programmes on ITV and Channel 4 and regularly writes for newspapers including the Guardian, the Daily Telegraph and magazines such as Countryfile and Summit. She works as a host, chair and interviewer at festivals and events. She's Ambassador for the British Mountaineering Council, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and sits on the Natural England Landscapes Advisory Panel.



His Majesty the King: Patron CPRE

Here in Rutland, as in London, the charity is still undertaking many of the activities for which it has become well known including environmental and land use campaigns and planning objections. However, a new complementary and positive environmental agenda is emerging which sees our charity promoting the sustainability of countryside communities through such issues as affordable housing, renewable energy, community transport, partnerships, equality of access to the countryside and the strengthening of our dialogue with the farming community and young people.

At national level our new Chief Executive Roger Mortlock has a mandate to re-examine CPRE's sources of funding and allocation of expenditure while exploring any appropriate commercial opportunities for a more businesslike charity. Several new trustees are in the process of being appointed with two more vacancies expected next year. A number of new staff have joined the charity and a new computer based information system will strengthen links with county branches once it has overcome its teething troubles.

Longstanding regional governance structures and budgets have been devolved in most areas including the East Midlands. The following paragraphs aim to highlight just some of the research and projects CPRE colleagues are undertaking. This includes, of course, the forming of influencing relationships with all of the major parties involved in the general election.

At branch level the charity has worked closely on a number of issues with the county's MP, Alicia Kearns. It has also sought to sustain a positive working relationship with Rutland County Council and Rutland's many parishes. Our new constituency of Rutland and Stamford is a key driver behind the AGM proposal to re-align the CPRE branch eastern boundary with the new constituency such that the branch will then relate to two planning authorities, three market towns and an even larger number of parish councils and parish meetings.

New and existing structures are evolving which enable positive engagement with a wider range of statutory, social and economic partners. CPRE is now part of the Rutland Quarry Forum, the RCC Future Rutland Partnership, several neighbourhood planning groups and the Uppingham Vanguard Board. It also currently chairs and hosts the Rutland Water Partnership. The branch is part of a CPRE £1M+ bid to the National Lottery to progress the Rutland Renewable Energy Charter and undertake three Rooftop Solar Audits (small village, large village, market town) over the next three years. If successful the work will begin in December. The membership of CPRE Rutland has cause to be proud of the efforts of its volunteers.

In Rutland and South Lincolnshire, CPRE is working with local government, community and environmental groups on Neighbourhood and Local Plans to help create the environment we all desire for tomorrow. And yes, CPRE will still support local parishes in raising objections to planning applications that challenge local aspirations.

Because of the sheer scale and apparent disregard for the countryside by some huge housing and energy projects, the charity is proud to be working with the Mallard Pass and other solar action groups who are defending the unwanted potential transformation of their nearby countryside; also, parish councils who seek to honour their local mandate to ensure 'appropriate' development in their neighbourhood.

One can only praise the efforts of such groups as the Rutland Quarry Forum whose level of expertise and knowledge on mineral extraction provides diligent monitoring of the balance required between environmental protection and the economic extraction of the minerals the nation needs.

The 2024 CPRE Rutland AGM agenda invites the membership to endorse a number of key trustee decisions to help ensure a positive and economically sound future for the charity and ongoing support for the rural communities it seeks to protect. These include:-

- The alignment of the charity's eastern operating boundary to coincide with that of the new political constituency
- To seek the approval of the CPRE national board for the above boundary change
- To create a new local parent charity called the Rutland and Stamford Countryside Charity (RSCC)
- To appoint a successor to Sir Laurence Howard KCVO OBE, the charity's current President
- To receive and approve this Annual Report and the included 2023 Accounts which show an increase in the end of year bank balance from £14,961 in 2022 to £18,363 in 2023.

CPRE is a network of charities requiring an effective working relationship between a national office with staff, some county branches with staff, and a number of county branches run entirely by volunteers. CPRE Rutland falls into the latter category. Given Rutland's motto of 'multum in parvo' (much in little) the county charity aspires to punch above its weight. In this respect the branch chair has been offered and has accepted the role of Vice Chair of the new CPRE Nominations Committee. Rutland is, therefore, now actively supporting the ongoing development of a reinvigorated national CPRE Board of Trustees.

The charity acknowledges the positive working relationship, the regular CEO exchange of information meetings and the invitation to key partnership meetings, extended by Rutland County Council and its Leader Cllr Gale Waller. This, together with the more collaborative dialogue now established with many parish and town councils on matters of mutual interest, should help ensure greater mutual understanding on such critical issues as the new Local Plan, controversial planning applications and development control.

In the spirit of this collaborative relationship, it therefore seems appropriate in this CPRE Rutland Annual Report to comment at length upon some national activity which local members and community partners may find of interest.

Membership is an issue at both national and local level. It will, therefore, be a delight at the annual lunch which follows this year's AGM to publicly welcome into CPRE a number of recruits from the South Kesteven area who are involved in a community planning challenge supported by their parish councils.

It is the intention of our Rutland President to stand down from the role this year to enable the election of an appropriate and worthy successor. Much has been written about Sir Lawrence Howard's public and charitable service to the community of Rutland. From a CPRE perspective he has been an exemplar in the role of President. His counsel, wisdom and discrete supervision have frequently helped the charity move forward with its mission. CPRE Rutland could have asked for no finer guide. As Chair I could not have asked for a better mentor.

Ron Simpson BEM – CPRE Rutland Chair 2023-2024

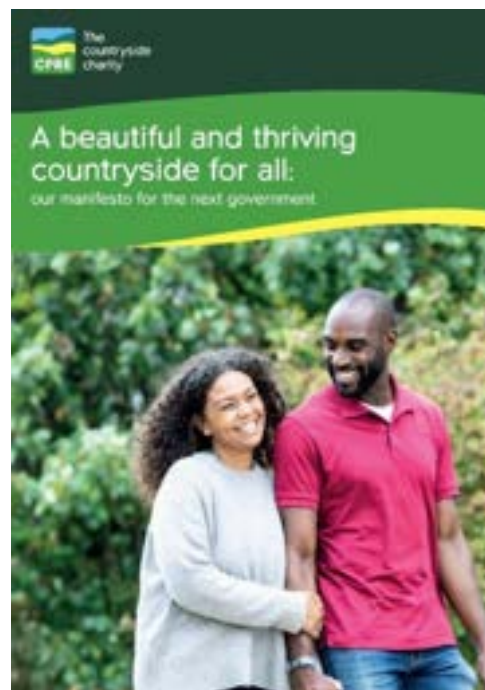
2. CPRE National Initiatives

A recent meeting of the CPRE National Assembly, at which all county branches come together, provided a useful update on current CPRE activity on a number of issues central to its raison-d'être. A synopsis is presented below for trustee and member information.

2.1 General Election

A General Election has been called for Thursday 4 July 2024. Commenting on the announcement, Elli Moody, head of policy, campaigns and communications at CPRE, said:

'This general election will be make or break for the countryside. We call on all political parties to recognise the value of the countryside and the role it can play in tackling the challenges that face our country and our planet. The next government will be faced with era-defining decisions on housing, environmental protections and energy supply. These will have big impacts on rural communities and our finite supply of land. We urge all political parties to think about the future while tackling the priorities of today. Decisive action is required to protect our green spaces at the same time as delivering the genuinely affordable housing people are crying out for up and down the country. To decarbonise our energy system, we need to unlock the potential of our rooftops to deliver clean and sustainable electricity while upgrading our crumbling energy grid. The climate emergency is the biggest threat to the countryside. We need a long-term, cross-departmental vision for how we manage and use land across England and a planning system with local communities at its heart. With enough political will, it is possible to build a Britain fit for the future and protect the countryside for everyone's benefit.'



CPRE Election Manifesto

CPRE's General Election Manifesto sets out the charity's key asks for prospective MP candidates. They are asked to:

- Develop a planning system for people and nature
- Fix the broken housing system for rural communities
- Enhance the countryside next door
- Deliver a common sense rooftop solar revolution

The charity's General Election Manifesto in full will be distributed to CPRE Rutland members attending its 2024 AGM. It can also be found on the CPRE website.

At the time of preparing this report all of the major political parties were preparing to publish their election manifestos. It may be possible and appropriate by the time of the AGM to offer a CPRE view and comment on their content.



2.2 Land Use Framework



The government had promised to publish a Land Use Framework (LUF) before summer recess 2024. Given the General Election has been called, this did not happen. Nonetheless, the new government will need to pick up this agenda and the Labour Party has said it would commit to publishing a land use framework were it to win the General Election. The key context for the promise is the inquiry and subsequent report in 2022 of the House of Lords Committee on Land Use, which clearly advocated for the introduction of a land use strategy, and the development of the government's Environmental Improvement Plan and post-Brexit Environmental Land Management policy. The national team and some local branches across the CPRE network have had an increasing focus on thinking about and talking about a land use strategy/land use framework and what principles and policy should be contained within those.

CPRE provided both written and oral evidence to the Lords Select Committee on land use in 2022. In the evidence the charity emphasised the need for any land use framework to:

- Seek to guide - by virtue of being cross-departmental - the development of housing, energy and infrastructure as well as farming and forestry policies outside the planning system, by informing national, regional and local planning policy. We stated that much more new housing will be built and some greenfield land will be needed, but an approach to housebuilding without consideration of efficient use of land will mean a much greater overall area of land being unnecessarily developed for housing, and reduced scope for multifunctional benefits.
- Seek a multifunctional approach to land use in peri-urban or urban fringe areas of England, including those designated as Green Belt.
- Improve management of land in protected landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) for nature, more dark skies and easier access for those social groups, including people of colour and people with disabilities, who are not benefiting now.
- Be backed up by effective mechanisms for leadership, collaboration and policy development – both on farming and planning policy - at both the strategic level of individual landscapes or waterscapes, as well as at the local authority and neighbourhood levels.

Gathering key points from discussion within the charity on the issue, a list of topics has been identified that are likely to be important for CPRE in influencing this agenda. These are presented to local branches as a list of calls for specific actions that could be taken. They are:

a) **Government should develop a national vision and or strategy for land use**

It should consider current and future land use pressures, e.g., including taking account of / horizon scanning for risks to land use and increasing pressures from climate change, demographic shift, defence/national security including drought, flood, fire. For example :

- i. It should account for the future impact of climate change on the productive capacity of land. Currently 60% of England's grade 1 agricultural land is within the Environment Agency's flood zone 3.
- ii. It should map land to store carbon and support nature through habitat creation, such as woodlands, wetlands, and agroecology. This should be compared to the agricultural land quality map to explore where land use change would avoid the worst trade-offs.
- iii. There is a need for the UK to improve food security, in response to political and climate threats.

b) Government should determine the estimated scale of land use change needed to meet all government goals to 2050

A land use framework will have to balance government targets for the environment, food security, energy, infrastructure and housing. This will require collaboration across all government departments. This should include types and locations of land best suited to delivering environmental goals. As it stands, the Royal Society estimate is that a third more land to deliver the existing environmental goals for 2050 is needed.

c) It should publish a full cost of the desired pathway for meeting policy priorities

How land is valued socially and environmentally as well as economically should be considered to enable land use change. This involves robust assessment of the role and limitations of the market in different sectors in delivering public policy goals.

d) It should join up government policy and delivery on land use across National Government

Policy coherence is critical across departments (currently Defra, DLUHC, DCMS, Transport, Defence) as well as national agencies (esp. Historic England, Homes England, Office for Environmental Protection, Natural England, EA; DFT – Highways Agency); potentially also government/ Crown land holdings such as The Crown Estates, Homes England and Forestry England.

e) We need a framework for decision making at sub-national levels

This includes regional to sub-regional and local level. This should enable joined up public policy levers and joined up targeting of public and private delivery mechanisms/investment at the local level including:

- i) **Policy**, e.g., Local Plans should consider land use in the round - as a minimum, defining where renewables go and defining wildlife corridors. Local Plans should also take more account of protected lands (Green Belt, National Landscapes, river corridors), county mineral and waste plans, Local Nature Recovery Strategies etc.
- ii) **Delivery mechanisms/ incentives**, e.g., Biodiversity Net Gain, Environmental Land Management (ELM) and other schemes supporting farming and forestry, Carbon Credits, Water Company funding, Environment Agency flood defence and mitigation funding'

f) Decision making on land use should be decentralised

Local communities and stakeholders, including landowners and farmers/land managers, should be engaged to ensure decision making, in a transparent and accountable way and to ensure decisions are deliverable.

g) We need to adopt a coherent geography for delivery at local level

CPRE would start from a preference for city-region and county level land use frameworks, but we need to approach the issue with an open mind. Frameworks could also, or alternatively, be based on catchments, national character areas (NCAs), LA first-tier authorities (unitary and county). Whichever model is chosen should avoid 'capture' by any single existing authority or vested interests and needs to be properly funded (e.g., avoid risk of overburdening under resourced LAs).

h) A land use framework should be spatial and rooted in evidence

It should be underpinned by mapping and latest data, and pull together all relevant spatial data. It should make best use of Local Nature Recovery Strategies which are spatial strategies at county level. It should: enable stakeholders to establish land condition and value its potential to deliver on different land uses; assess natural capital of all land and potential flows of ecosystem services; consider not only existing natural capital at its potential e.g. if in restored or improved condition (to avoid degradation being used as argument for development); and assess ecosystem service flows over the long term for future generations (not heavily discounted as at present).

i) The government should enable and promote delivery of multifunctional land use

It should assess potential for multifunctional uses of rural and urban land – so combining food and fibre production with nature restoration and carbon storage; ensuring existing and future developed areas also mitigate flooding, store carbon, capture rainwater, generate electricity; any land use strategy or framework should be underpinned by promoting a circular economy in land use so that 'wasteland' is remediated and restored to multifunctional use if not biodiverse.

CPRE National invites comments on the stimulus points above to shape future discussion, with the specific questions:

- CPRE has long advocated for an integrated approach to land use. Given that, how should CPRE position itself in relation to emerging thoughts around a land use framework and what is the particular contribution it can make both in branches, nationally and together? And specifically:
- At what scale could a land use framework or strategy be most useful? And how might it interact with existing land use planning?
- How might farmers and landowners use the framework?
- What ideas do we have to ensure the voices of local communities are heard in how the land use framework is operated?

Members views are welcomed on CPRE's positioning within the land use agenda. Please email chair@cprerutland.uk

2.3 Ground and Roof Mounted Solar



Renewable energy like this rooftop installation can provide clean energy without landscape impact : *RosHelen editorial / Alamy Stock Photo*

On the current government's position on ground mounted solar, a recent written statement¹ (15 May) by Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Claire Coutinho, aimed to reinforce that developers should minimize the impact on the best and most versatile land Best and Most Versatile (BMV) (grades 1, 2 and 3a) and preferably use land in areas of poorer quality. The statement highlights that:

- Food security is part of national security, and the government is committed to maintaining the current level of food production domestically.
- Renewable energy is part of their plan for energy security and the new National Policy Statement (EN-3), published in January this year, stated that "Solar also has an important role in delivering the government's goals for greater energy independence and the British Energy Security Strategy states that government expects a five-fold increase in combined ground and rooftop solar deployment by 2035 (up to 70GW)".
- It also states that, "applicants should, where possible, utilise suitable previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land, and industrial land. Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land avoiding the use of "Best and Most Versatile" agricultural land where possible."
- And "The National Policy Statement can also be a material consideration in determining applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990", i.e., the policy statement should apply to solar schemes both above and below 50GW. The Labour Party has pledged that if it forms the next government, it will triple the nation's solar power with a target of 40GW by 2030 in a mix of rooftop and larger field solar, with little further detail at this stage. Whichever party wins the election, it is likely that more solar farms will be brought forward and CPRE should help define best practice.

National CPRE's Rooftop Solar Research and Campaign

In 2023, CPRE published research by members of the UCL Energy Institute, which found that there is potential for up to 117 gigawatts (GW) of solar panel capacity on rooftops and other developed spaces across England. This is substantially more than the government's target for 70GW of solar energy by 2035. CPRE launched the Rooftop Renewables campaign on the back of this research calling for the Government to commit to increase the proportion of rooftop solar within the overall solar energy target to 60% up from 40%. The asks to all parties in the CPRE General Election manifesto are to:

- **Set a target for 60% of solar to be on rooftops**

Set a new government target for at least 60% of new solar energy generation to be delivered through rooftop solar installations, increasing this target over time.

- **Make rooftop solar the norm on new buildings**

As set out in the response to the government's recent consultation on the Future Homes and Buildings Standards, CPRE thinks solar PV or thermal panels ought to be a standard requirement for all suitable new build housing, commercial buildings, and canopies over car parks to secure planning permission, whilst accelerating investment in local grid capacity to accommodate increased generation from rooftop solar.

- **Make rooftop solar more affordable for people and communities**

Increase the Smart Export Guarantee for low income households and community led schemes selling electricity from rooftop solar installations. The Lighting the Way report shows how governments elsewhere have achieved much faster role out in this way, such as Germany and Japan.

- **Set a 'roof first' solar policy**

Employ a 'roof first' approach for determining ground-mounted solar applications, which prioritises suitable brownfield land, avoids productive farmland, and makes greenfield solar permissions more exceptional.

National CPRE position on ground mounted solar

CPRE's position paper on the climate emergency refers to solar energy in a number of places and, along with the rooftop renewables research, determines the charity's current position on ground mounted solar farms. Notably for this purpose as follows:

"Impacts on landscape and character: large onshore wind and solar installations are often poorly integrated with existing landscape form. Better understanding of landscape character and the universal delivery of good practice is required to mitigate these impacts, especially in relation to cumulative impacts."

"Rural renewable energy sites have the potential to provide multiple benefits and can potentially improve their local environment. Further onshore wind and solar farms must be accommodated sensitively but much more support is required for other locally appropriate solutions, such as roof mounted solar, hydro, bioenergy and anaerobic digestion, wave and tidal, plus geothermal and energy storage."

"New national renewable energy guidance for landscapes is required to underpin the roll-out of a new phase of more countryside friendly energy sites and infrastructure, notably for wind and solar; CPRE will contribute to this with an imaginative and 'can do' approach; no options will be off the table, including the sensitive use of the green belt. However, planning conditions must ensure land can be returned to its original use, when required."

"The following climate change mitigation efforts should be prioritised... producing renewable energy. The countryside can provide space for renewable energy (e.g. wind, solar, hydro, anaerobic digestion, battery storage etc.) if undertaken sensitively, especially by increasing the utility of existing rural buildings."

Given the political focus and contention around solar farms, the intended next step for national CPRE is to publish a short 'Solar farms done well' policy briefing that will set out the charity's position and how it thinks ground mounted solar can be done in the best way when necessary and provided it is in the 'right place'. ^{Discussion} on the issue in the recent CPRE National Assembly focussed around:-

- Should CPRE campaign for brownfield and roofspace first, and then also have guiding principles to achieve better outcomes on the ground? Consider: BMV, landscape character, ecology, public rights of way and other impacts, including decommissioning, so land will not be classed as previously developed
- Should CPRE remain focused on 60% of solar energy on roofspace or add + to make it 60%+?

The charity welcomes member opinion on this important issue.

2.4 Affordable Housing

In the recent report, 'Unravelling a Crisis', CPRE aimed to increase understanding of the issues surrounding the supply of rural affordable housing, what actually constitutes 'affordable' housing and what policies are currently in place to support affordable housing delivery.

The report's findings show that:

- *The definition of affordable housing in national planning policy does not enable the delivery of genuinely affordable homes. Rural social-rented delivery has plummeted with just 348 homes delivered in 2020/21 and 3,282 delivered in 2021/22, whilst general 'affordable' housing delivery has increased with 21, 826 general affordable homes delivered in 2020/21 and 25,294 delivered in 2021/22. This shows it is more viable for developers to deliver intermediate and discount market housing rather than lower rent homes that are desperately needed.*



- *Rural social housing waiting lists have risen since 2020/21 in all but two regions in England. It would take 89 years to clear the social housing waiting list under the current build rate.*

- *Rural homelessness has increased by 20% since 2020/21 and 40% since 2018/19.*

- *As many as half of all parish councils in rural England are not covered by 'Section 157' regulations which generally prevent resale of affordable housing units at market prices or as second homes.*

- *Rural exception site policy is being utilised to deliver housing in line with locally assessed need, however its impact is limited to a relatively few areas of the country and it is not clear whether the mechanism is a particularly effective means of providing social housing as opposed to other planning policies.*

- *The current mechanism for securing affordable housing in new developments is via planning agreements where developers can negotiate the proportion of affordable homes delivered down due to viability concerns. The proposed infrastructure levy regime may lead to an increase in affordable housing delivery as the contribution will be non-negotiable and should therefore be factored into the cost of the development from the outset,*

- *Changes of use from office space to residential conversions under permitted development rights are delivering limited amounts of affordable housing and often of poor quality.*

As a result of these findings, CPRE set out the following recommendations in the report:

- **Government must redefine the term 'affordable housing' so that the cost of new affordable homes for sale or rent are directly linked to average local incomes. Where homes are not linked to average local incomes they should not be classed as affordable, as this obscures the type of housing that is being delivered.**

- **Hope value should be reformed to increase the viability of social housing provision and enable local authorities to deliver additional social rented homes. Alongside this, national minimum requirements for affordable housing should be increased, with specific targets set for social rented homes**

- **Government should show greater support for rural communities using neighbourhood planning and rural exception sites to deliver small scale affordable housing on the edge of villages in line with locally assessed need. This includes making grant funding available and aligning planning policy with funding pots to enable social rented housing to come forward on such sites.**

- Both government and local authorities must show greater support for community led development, where it meets a local need.
- Government should more forcefully advise and support local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to reject developments that do not live up to the design standards set out in the National Model Design Code, National Model Design Guide, and other relevant local design policy and guidance.
- Introduce a second home and short term lets register, with planning controls to regulate the provision of short term lets and powers to levy extra council tax on second homes.
- Extend restrictions to all parishes with a population of less than 3,000, as well as larger rural towns where there is particular pressure on the housing stock, in England on the resale of affordable housing, so that these houses continue to be used by local workers and not as second homes or holiday lets.

2.5 Farming

CPRE wants farming that works with nature. With farm land making up two thirds of our countryside, farming is responsible for so much more than the food we eat. CPRE will support farming that puts back habitats for wildlife, provides fresh air and clean water, stores carbon and looks after the landscapes that make our countryside so special.

CPRE's policy on farming and how it will engage with the farming community to support a sustainable and thriving farming industry is reproduced below.



CPRE Vice Chair Rachel Burkitt with Rutland Farmer Chris White

CPRE's Policy on Farming

At a time of immense policy change and growing environmental, social and economic pressures, farmers have to address a range of challenges. These include the production of the food we need at an affordable price in a more volatile world; the reduction of waste and greenhouse gas and other pollution; and the management of their land to deliver greater public benefits. These benefits include helping to reverse the decline in biodiversity, broadening access to and engagement with the countryside and improving the landscapes which are valued and enjoyed by millions.

One of the real pressures that farmers are facing is change to the type of government financial support offered under the Agricultural Transition. The single farm payment has been cut progressively and well in advance of a significant package of rewards from new environmental schemes coming on stream. Farmers will need to make far reaching changes to how they farm to address these multiple issues but also to adapt to make their farms resilient to climate change and to earn a living. To enable them to successfully navigate this transition they will need people across government as well as other key actors in the food chain to put the right policies, incentives, and other support in place.

Farming is the most widespread land use in the country. As the main steward of rural land, it is central to how the countryside looks, is managed and functions. Farming and farmers play a vital role in ensuring the countryside continues to provide vital public benefits for the nation. CPRE believes that we should properly safeguard farmland, its healthy functioning and the character and beauty of the farmed countryside so that these benefits continue to flow and, indeed, that the countryside delivers greater benefits for our long-term future. This, in particular, means

protecting the farmed countryside from potentially damaging or unnecessary developments and other uses which will deplete its natural assets and the long term benefits they provide.

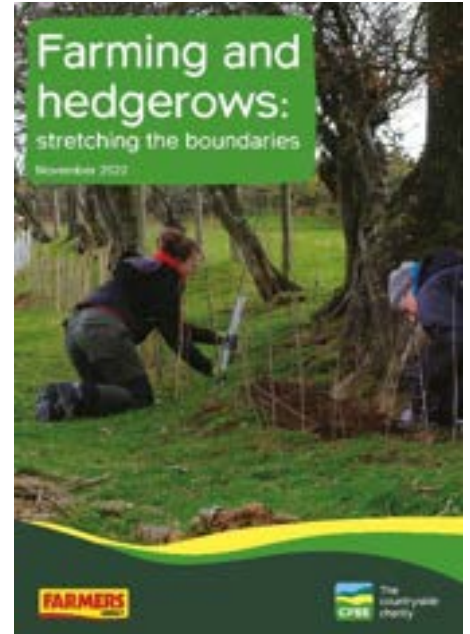
The health and vitality of farmers and the sector itself are central to tackling the interconnected crises of securing our food supply, restoring nature and stabilising the climate as well as sustaining the health of the countryside. As such farmers should be properly rewarded by the market for sustainable produce and by public funding to enable them to deliver key goals set publicly.

‘Farming’ should be understood to include horticulture and growers working predominantly to produce food. CPRE recognises that those who manage the land are diverse and they do so for many different reasons not only to produce food but also timber and other fibre crops, look after nature and the beauty of their surroundings as well providing recreation and therapeutic, social and well-being benefits.

CPRE’s Farming Policy sets out the changes that the charity believes will make it possible to secure a sustainable future for farming. A summary of its principles follows:

- **A thriving sustainable farming sector** - CPRE wants farming to be a thriving, innovative, sustainable and diverse sector that benefits society as a whole, as well as economic activity and communities in rural areas and the wider environment. Government should play a key role in providing relevant support in the form of joined up farming, planning and rural development policy as well as through financial incentives such as environmental land management payments, packaged and bespoke advice, grants and loans to achieve a thriving diverse farming sector. Farming should be enabled to be financially viable, with farmers receiving a fair share of profit from the marketplace for sustainable farm produce alongside fair reward for the delivery of environmental public goods. To support this government should apply the same standards strictly to imported farm products as are required of UK producers. CPRE wants working farms of all sizes retained with diverse forms of tenure to enable farmers to thrive at all scales and for the sector to be attractive and accessible to talent from a wider range of backgrounds.
- **Environmentally sustainable farming** - Farmers should be encouraged and supported to apply integrated whole farm approaches that work with ecosystems, landscape context, and processes to make the best use of the natural productive capacity of their land, reduce inputs and greenhouse gas emissions, waste and costs and to minimize environmental harms.
- **A step change in (re)building local and speciality food supply** - Sustainable and distinctive local food should be championed across government with joined up rural policy to help the development of more diverse, direct, resilient and fairer short supply chains. This should open up new routes to market and decent incomes for farmers and enable them to profitably sell produce locally from more diverse cropping and livestock under nature friendly farming.
- **Farm diversification** - Farmers should be enabled and supported where they wish to diversify their business and this fosters the continuation of sustainable farming and land management; delivers greater public benefits; and is in keeping with, or will enhance, landscape character and place.
- **Adapting farming to a changing world** - The bases for our farmed food supply are threatened by degradation of climate, biodiversity and soils. A reductive either/or approach of land sparing or sharing is not the right way for farming to address these crises; we need farming to adapt to the local context of landscape and natural resources. All farming must adapt to become resilient and sustainable.
- **Reducing overall resource use and impacts to within environmental limits to maintain food supply while delivering other critical natural services** - Resource intensive farming to produce most of our food at scale will continue for some time alongside low impact forms of farming but it must genuinely be environmentally sustainable, not just more efficient at producing food. It will be essential to work with nature to drive soil health, fertility, and resilience. Building natural assets to reduce input and other resource costs will also be essential for open field farming. These multiple challenges also mean high quality land with mineral soils must be strongly protected for food production. Expanding horticulture as part of making diets more diverse and reducing the environmental footprint of our food will be particularly important. Farming policies and practices should therefore:

- **Address climate change** - Farmers should be supported by government initiatives to adapt the ways they manage land, livestock, natural assets and energy use to increase the resilience of their farms and help drive down the carbon footprint of farming towards net zero and beyond.
- **Reverse nature's decline** - The decline of nature should be reversed by making more space for biodiversity across current cropped and grazed land, farming in harmony with both ecological processes and landscape character and enhancing natural assets providing food and habitat for wildlife. In particular, we see a central role for restoring and growing our hedgerow network.
- **Value high quality soils for farming in land use planning** - Government land use policy should be integrated across agriculture, horticulture and planning to better manage the multiple pressures on land from a strategic to local level, and to conserve and enhance the multiple critical functions of rural open land; a high priority should be given to protecting the highest quality soils for their strategic importance for food production.
- **Promote sustainable horticulture** - Government should take a strategic approach to ensuring a secure, sustainable resilient supply of food by supporting the targeted expansion of growing of horticultural food crops where there are deficits in domestic production which increase our reliance on imports.
- **Enhancing the character and quality of farmed landscapes** - Farming should be supported to maintain and enrich the character, beauty and diversity of local farmed landscapes while adapting to address challenges and embrace new opportunities. CPRE wants government particularly to invest in farming which improves the Green Belt and countryside around other large towns and cities and in farming to manage uplands and more economically marginal areas of the lowlands. National character area profiles and evidence should be used to guide environmental improvements which work with local landscape character.
- **Building new and stronger connections between the public, farmers and the countryside** - Government should implement measures to:-
 - a) Support local land use policy frameworks and decisions about funding public goods delivery on farmland, engaging those who own and manage land with local communities.
 - b) Improve the connection between local people and farmers and their understanding of the farmed countryside and from where their food comes.
 - c) Incentivise farmers to broaden access to the countryside in carefully managed sustainable ways.



Members views on CPRE farming policy are welcomed.



A CPRE Rutland Community Workshop



Speaking at Community Event in Preston Village Hall

2.6 Green Belt

The Green Belt is the countryside next door for approximately 30+ million people living in our large towns and cities. One of the primary roles of the Green Belt is to maintain the openness of the countryside, and it encourages housing to be located near places where we work and the amenities we need. However, the potential of this land is much greater than this.

Green Belt land provides a vital space for nature and recreation and includes a significant number of our nature reserves, as well as double the national density of public rights of way. (The average public rights of way density is 20 metres per hectare (m/ha) in Green Belt areas, which is significantly higher than for England as a whole (8 m/ha)).

Through the protection and enhancement of Green Belt land, we can increase the natural and recreational value of this land, as well as providing a natural solution to the climate emergency through its ability to sequester carbon. Crucially, the defining feature of countryside which is designated as 'Green Belt', is its permanence; the assurance that it will remain for generations to come to reap the benefits.

The NPPF formalises this commitment by stating that development in the Green Belt or the alteration of Green Belt boundaries should only occur under 'very special' or 'exceptional' circumstances respectively and should be managed through the Local Plan process.

CPRE led the campaign for the creation of the Green Belts, a term first coined by English reformer, Octavia Hill, in 1875. To date, they have been a great success in terms of protecting the countryside near to many of our towns and cities and reducing the damage of urban sprawl to both people and the environment. However, Green Belts continue to be threatened by development, decreasing the ability of this land to provide for nature, assist in combatting the impacts of climate change, and enable access to green spaces. As set out in Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the fundamental aim of Green Belt planning policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belt areas are their openness and their permanence. We believe that many more affordable homes need to be built, especially in rural areas.

Not all Green Belt areas are necessarily rural, but nonetheless there are rural communities in need that are surrounded by Green Belt. The determination of a local authority's housing supply requirement should, essentially, be determined on the basis of locally assessed need. CPRE believes that the best available data should be used for land use planning decisions and currently this means the Census 2021 data, collated two years ago, verified and published. The Office of Statistical Regulation has stated that older 2014 data ought not to be relied upon for land use planning decisions in the future, although government planning practice guidance perversely continues to encourage use of the older data.

The CPRE State of the Green Belt Report investigates past and future proposals for development on Green Belt including greenfield land. It shows that large scale house building in the Green Belt is not the answer to the housing crisis, and instead recommends investment to protect, preserve and enhance it for the enjoyment of communities today and tomorrow.

It is with concern that CPRE notes that some who aspire to government are promoting future development on parts of the nation's Green Belt. Vigilance will be required.



2.7 Countryside Day

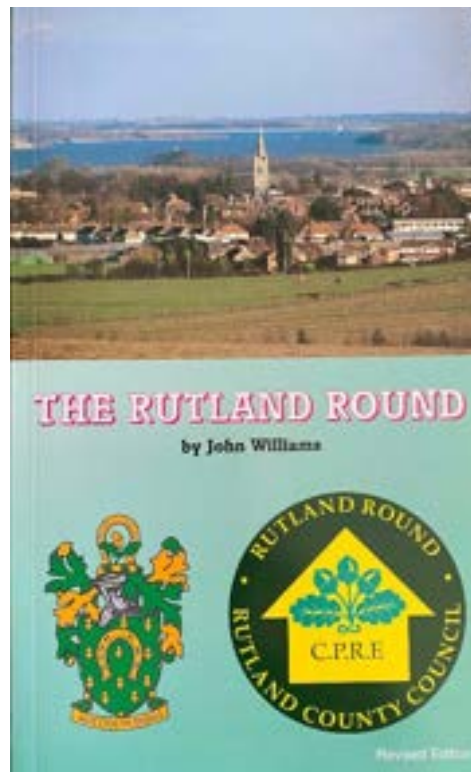
The concept of a national Countryside Day is being developed by a small group of national and county colleagues who are exploring what form it might take via a pilot project. The outcomes will be presented to CPRE Rutland and Stamford charity Trustees later in the year.

On Saturday 7 September 2024, a group of local CPREs are hosting a Countryside Day event as part of a pilot with a view to establishing an annual event for CPRE. The pilot arose from a Network Assembly discussion following a successful Countryside Day event held last year by a CPRE branch. National CPRE teams are supporting the pilot with communications, volunteer recruitment and general resources and support. Chairs are urged to join the pilot group and host an event.

At the time of writing, seven local CPREs have confirmed that they are holding a Countryside Day event this year. Branch activities will include:-

- Hedgerow focussed day with talks and practical activities. Young people from a variety of communities will present their survey on enablers and barriers to accessing nature conservation roles
- A series of walks on the Berkshire/Oxfordshire border and an exhibition at a Village Hall
- Guided walks along the Tolkien Trail and an online evening quiz and video
- A visit to a model farm
- Notable building tours
- Event with stalls, walks, talks and children's activities

Members' thoughts on what might be appropriate for Rutland and Stamford would be welcomed. Perhaps something centred on the Rutland Round?



2.8 CPRE Centenary in 2026

CPRE has a working group putting together a campaign to celebrate CPRE's Centenary in 2026. The Centenary Campaign's main objective is to help deliver our vision of a sustainable future for England's beautiful countryside. Its three goals are:-

- Commemoration of the last 100 years of protecting the English Countryside.
- Celebration with a Centenary Appeal inspiring all to engage & support.
- Creation of a new vision for the future of the countryside and a stronger future for one CPRE.

The first centenary task and finish group met on Thursday 16th May. This included volunteers from across the CPRE Network, with a wide range of skills.

It is hoped that each CPRE branch will take part in at least one centenary related activity. What might be appropriate in Rutland and Stamford?

3. CPRE Rutland Activity in 2023/24

3.1 Engagement with London

It has been a busy year for the CPRE Rutland team as it has set about strengthening its direct relationship with CPRE staff in London following the decision to dismantle funded regional structures. The Branch was supportive of this move and has benefitted financially following the consequential distribution of the regional bank balance.

The Branch was represented at the 2023 AGM and will attend the 2024 AGM in London. The Branch Chair has attended most of the online monthly meetings of CPRE Chairs, and one or more Executive members have participated in all of the year's quarterly meetings of the new National Assembly. These alternate between online and in person.

The Branch Chair is now attending meetings of the new national Nominations Committee which are held in London and funded by national office. He has also attended a number of launch events in the Houses of Parliament, with the Treasurer accompanying him on one of the trips to become a Hedgerow Champion. These events are useful for engaging with MPs and their staff.

Through her work role, our Vice Chair Rachel has met with the new CPRE CEO at a political conference in addition to attending a CPRE national launch event in the Houses of Parliament. She has also been instrumental in developing the charity's ongoing relationship with Ridlington farmer Chris White who has hosted a number of CPRE visits and a tour of his fascinating farm.

Our membership Lead Trustee Annabelle has direct links with national membership staff and has grappled gamely with the new membership system striving to build a positive relationship between the charity and its Rutland members. It would be fair to say she has had some challenging experiences as the new national arrangements evolve.

3.2 Governance

Over the past two years the CPRE Board of Trustees, has been strengthened and its skill set enhanced. Trustees have met quarterly with its Executive meeting much more frequently as required. Gender balance is now 50:50 with only a permanent Treasurer (ideally an accountant) and perhaps a Stamford based Trustee to appoint.

Overseen and supported by Administrative Lead Geoff, the board has updated its governance policies which now provide an operating framework with 100% transparency and scrutiny of income and expenditure by Trustees in line with the latest Charity Commission advice. Governance policies now include:-

- A Board Member Code of Conduct
- A Conflict of Interest Policy
- An Equality and Diversity Policy
- New CPRE Rutland Financial Regulations
- A CPRE Rutland Procurement Policy

All policies and meeting minutes are scheduled to be published online on an updated website from the summer of 2024. The charity's website is hosted by local IT company Purple Cube.

Temporary Treasurer Margaret has engaged with our updated financial management systems, building on from the excellent handover from her predecessor. Whenever possible, transactions are now electronic and cashless. All travel is purchased by card or online ensuring an effective audit trail.

The charity currently operates via online banking with HSBC. Acknowledging the demise of bank branches in Rutland, a Post Office Deposit Card has also now been acquired. A second bank account will be opened for the new Rutland and Stamford Charity, once approved.

CPRE Rutland has a social media presence on Facebook. Posts revolve around its projects and events.

3.3 Planning Matters

- A number of planning objections to the Local Planning Authority prepared by Planning Lead Carolyn and her support Cliff in respect of planning submissions of concern to the local community and/or parish council
- Joint meetings with parish councils on matters of mutual concern
- A CPRE and parish council task group response to the draft Rutland Local Plan coordinated by Research Officer Malcolm and supported by the Planning Leads Carolyn and Cliff
- Meetings, a submitted objection, and attendance at impacted parish councils, with regard to a giant Anaerobic Digester Plant proposed for South Lincolnshire
- Participation in the innovative Uppingham Vanguard Board which brings together the interested parties preparing the local Neighbourhood Plan
- Public meetings and joint work with the county's MP, impacted communities and parish councils resisting planning applications for huge ground based solar farms threatening to change the very character of the Rutland countryside
- The Chair is a government appointed Neighbourhood Planning Champion and responds to a wide range of enquiries in addition to referrals from the national charity Locality
- The charity has started meeting with a Stamford based U3A environmental action group as a part of its climate action work
- CPRE Planning Lead Carolyn has been attending Rutland's Climate Action Group

3.4 Publications

- In collaboration with Sue Holloway of the Mallard Pass Action Group, the charity part funded a major landscape report for submission to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the public hearings on the proposal
- The charity is still marketing the 'Rutland Round' publication to which it owns the copywrite. An updated online version is a possible future project, perhaps for the centenary?
- The charity is also still marketing its model housing needs survey booklet. This was prepared with the help of a national grant.
- The charity's most significant publication of the year was its Community Vision for Renewable Energy in Rutland.
- The CPRE Rutland Renewable Energy Charter can be found in the above publication which is on the charity's website.

3.5 Community Engagement and Media

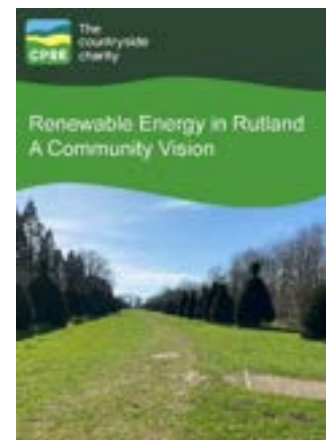
The charity took a stand at the 2023 Rutland Show where volunteers were joined by the Mallard Pass Action Group and the county's member of parliament.

Charity representatives have spoken at a number public meetings regarding CPRE policy and have been seen twice in the year on Regional TV.

CPRE policy, events and opinion, including the 2024 AGM have featured in the Chair's fortnightly column in the Rutland Times. The charity is grateful to the Editor and staff for the publicity afforded in this way.

Local radio has been supportive of the charity's efforts. It is intended to feature the proposed Rutland and Stamford Countryside Charity in a series of adverts on Rutland and Stamford Sound during 2024/25 now that it can be heard via Dab+ radio throughout the day.

CPRE Rutland is regularly posting on Facebook in addition to featuring three regular news items on its website at www.cprerutland.uk



3.6 Recent Events and Projects

- The CPRE Christmas Quiz is now online and remains popular thanks to its content created by Quizmaster Philip Riley
- Four nationally funded workshops to create the Renewable Energy Community Vision publication and Charter
- A major public meeting as a follow up to the Energy Charter, featuring Rutland County Council talking on energy policy and Rolls Royce presenting about their SMR nuclear reactors
- Much work has gone into a joint local/national £1M+ bid to the National Lottery intended to fund progress in implementing the Rutland Energy Charter and three rooftop solar panel surveys over the next three years
- A joint bid with In Bloom to create a tree planting project was unsuccessful
- CPRE supported a community transport pilot to extend an existing service into a neighbouring village. The project was a success and the service is now permanent
- CPRE has made a modest contribution to a youth volunteering project abroad
- CPRE nominated delegates to the county's 2024 International Women's Day Breakfast event which featured among its guest speakers, Sue Holloway of the Mallard Pass Action Group.



3.7 Future Projects and Events Under Consideration

- Finalising the adoption of our new underpinning charity
- Enhancement of the charity's website and the wider promotion of the CPRE Christmas Quiz
- Development of a local gift aid and sponsorship scheme
- A joint meeting (September?) with parishes to review the updated draft Local Plan once published
- A joint meeting of the new constituency's three Market Town Mayors to discuss countryside matters
- Joint work on countryside matters with the constituency's MP once elected
- Action on a suitable 2026 Centenary Project
- A 2025 Countryside Day Event
- A stand at the 2025 Rutland Show
- Further development of the charity's working partnerships
- Rooftop Solar Panel Surveys in a small and large village plus one market town (if funded)
- Partnership and Community projects seeking to attract the next generation of CPRE members.
- A rural tourism and community transport project linking local towns and cities to the countryside next door (A possible centenary project?).

All this will be in addition to the routine planning, partnership and climate action activity expected of CPRE.

4. Postscript

CPRE and its county branches can expect to be busy following the general election. One can anticipate much harmony and perhaps some friction as the charity seeks to balance its response to the climate challenge imperative with protecting the countryside. CPRE can only function with the support of its members. The new Rutland and Stamford Countryside Charity proposes to widen the base of active CPRE members in this area. The new construct should better equip the charity to fulfil its mission. The protection of rural communities and the countryside in which they live.

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Rutland Branch

Annual General Meeting

To be held at 11am on Wednesday 19th June 2024

At the Falcon Hotel, Uppingham

AGENDA

- 1. Introductions and welcome**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (EGM 30 Mar 23)**
- 4. Matters Arising**
- 5. Chair's Report**
- 6. Financial Report and Adoption of Accounts**
- 7. New Constitution and Charity Boundary**
- 8. Proposal of New President**
- 9. To confirm the appointment of Trustees and Charity Officers**
- 10. Any Other Business**

CAMPAIGN FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND - RUTLAND BRANCH
Accounts for the Year to 31st December2023

| <u>Income & Expenditure Account</u> | <u>Year to</u> <u>31/12/2023</u> | <u>Year to</u> <u>31/12/2022</u> | <u>Budget</u> <u>2024</u> |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| INCOME | | | |
| Subscriptions : Branch Share | 7,562.94 | 2,665.57 | 2000 |
| Fundraising & Sales | | | |
| Rutland Round | 290.14 | 727.50 | 50 |
| Christmas Quiz | <u>190.20</u> | <u>380.34</u> | 200 |
| Miscellaneous | 703.38 | 71.50 | 100 |
| CPRE National/Regional Grant | 1,000.00 | 4,200.00 | 1000 |
| Gift Aid | 0.00 | 0.00 | |
| Bank Interest | <u>230.51</u> | <u>15.93</u> | <u>300</u> |
| Total Income | <u>9,977.17</u> | <u>8,060.84</u> | <u>3,650.00</u> |
| EXPENSES | | | |
| Admin Expenses/Meetings | 379.71 | 211.48 | 500 |
| Insurance | 405.32 | 370.84 | 450 |
| Travel Expenses | 63.25 | 0.00 | 100 |
| AGM/EGM | 242.20 | 69.50 | |
| Annual Lunch | 0.00 | 267.00 | 300 |
| Website | 288.00 | 277.11 | 360 |
| Misc.inc Regional Chair Visit, Treasurer retirement etc. | 1246.05 | 213.87 | 500 |
| Bank Charges | 68.40 | 73.48 | 100 |
| Project:- Energy Project | 3,835.80 | 3,200.00 | 1000 |
| Vision for Rutland | | | |
| Quiz | <u>46.94</u> | <u>0.00</u> | |
| Total Expenditure | <u>6,575.67</u> | <u>4,683.28</u> | <u>3,310.00</u> |
| Deficit(-)/Surplus | <u>3,401.50</u> | <u>3,377.56</u> | <u>340.00</u> |
| | | | |
| <u>Balance Sheet as at: 31st December2023</u> | <u>31/12/2023</u> | <u>30/12/2022</u> | |
| Bank: Current Account | 362.98 | 4,536.21 | |
| Savings Account | 18,000.00 | 10,425.27 | |
| Net Assets | <u>18,362.98</u> | <u>14,961.48</u> | |
| Represented by: | | | |
| Reserves Brought Forward | 14,961.48 | 11,583.92 | |
| Current Year Deficit/Surplus | 3,401.50 | 3,377.56 | |
| Reserves | <u>18,362.98</u> | <u>14,961.48</u> | |

*Note: Stock is held at Nil value due to the uncertainty of the timing of future sales.

Accounts for the Year to 31st December 2023

In accordance with the charity's financial regulations
all transactions for the previous period are witnessed
by the Board of Trustees at their regular meetings.

Ron Simpson BEM
Date: 1.5.2024

Signature: *Ron Simpson*