

CPRE Herefordshire News Update

March 2005

CPRE AGM 2005

Saturday, 4th June 2.30pm
Hergest Croft Gardens
Kington
with
Sir Max Hastings
President of CPRE

Please put this date in your diary!

Why Volunteering Matters

I have just been reading that 2005 is being named 'Year of the Volunteer', with an amazing 26 million Britons participating in some form of voluntary work.

With so many deserving causes to choose from it would be easy to say 'So why CPRE?' Why is an organisation that avows its aim as protecting the beauty, tranquillity, and diversity of rural England, so important?

This month, the long-awaited Public Enquiry into the Unitary Development Plan for Herefordshire begins. A small team led by Ian Jardin are ready. We are the largest single 'objector', with significant inputs prepared for virtually every aspect of the plan.

When we speak it is with an authority drawn from members who show an interest in a wide range of the County's endeavours. We set out to take a strategic view, and are one of the few organisations that can truly say this. Our members endeavour to link soil and landscape, planning and development, roads and transport, the environment, energy, waste, tourism, agriculture, retailing, housing and the economic wellbeing of the County. We are as concerned with the expansion and concentration of urban centres as we are with quiet rural lanes. A few people covering a lot of ground. When the UDP is eventually adopted it will become the statutory framework for the medium term future of Herefordshire.

Our inputs, if the Inspector is persuaded by our arguments and adopts them, will not only benefit those of us who live, work and play here, it will ensure that there is a sustainable foundation for colleagues in the myriad of other like-minded organisations to achieve their aims.

That is one reason why volunteering for CPRE matters.

Eric Loe, Chairman, CPRE Herefordshire

Public Inquiry into the Herefordshire UDP

The Public Inquiry into Herefordshire Council's draft new Unitary Development Plan began on 8 February. CPRE's objections will be among the thousands considered by the Inquiry Inspector. For this purpose the Policy Group has put together statements of evidence backed by a team of volunteers to argue the case at the Inquiry hearings. Several key sessions have already been held, covering the overall strategy of the Plan and its housing policies. Our basic themes were that the Plan showed a lack of understanding of rural areas and that the target for new housing was unmanageably high. The Inquiry continues until June. Sessions still to come - and on which we are submitting evidence - include the Bullinghope site, employment land allocations, transport, landscape protection and the polytunnels issue. The Inquiry report will probably be published towards the end of the year.

Ian Jardin, Policy Group, CPRE Herefordshire

Profile

Continuing our series on some of the hard-working people who help run CPRE Herefordshire.

Hello, my name is Barbara Bromhead-Wragg and I work part-time for CPRE Herefordshire, in the dual roles of admin support and information manager. I provide support to the Policy & Executive committees. This involves circulating agendas & minutes of meetings. I also pass on circulars and information from National Office & other regional offices, including any information from other CPRE branches and other linked groups and charities.

Another of my duties is to update the extranet, which is the members' section of CPRE Herefordshire's website. The extranet holds a wealth of useful information for members and volunteers, including minutes and circulars, which are updated weekly.

On a personal basis I am a trained Fine Art printmaker, painter and photographer. My love of the English countryside and its ancient monuments is at the core of my work, although no one was more surprised than me – as an avowed traditionalist – when in my last year of training I expanded into abstract work also!

At the present time I am developing links with local galleries in the hope of showing (and maybe even selling) my work. It is either that or move house, as there is so much of it now! I am also working on ideas for an open exhibition in June, in Oswestry.

Herefordshire Clutter Challenge!

We have just launched our Clutter Challenge – an on-line survey to find out where people think the countryside is cluttered with too many road signs, inappropriate road markings, villages spoiled by the clutter of signs and road markings and obsolete signs. There are some amazing examples of clutter from around England – one day there is nothing, the next a whole new signing scheme is in place or one sign goes up and 5 years later there are 20 or more. Much of the clutter on our roads results from policies designed to 'manage' traffic, but often little thought is given to the impact these schemes will have on the quality of the environment. Frequently they do not fit in with the character of our villages. Although opinions vary, some believe that management schemes can be counter-productive, distracting drivers rather than making the road safer. A pilot scheme in London has taken an idea from Europe to have no road markings or pavements at all, this is supposed to make drivers more aware of pedestrians and other drivers as they have to find their

own way along the road, rather than being directed by lines and signs.

Our Clutter Challenge is part of the national campaign to clean up the street furniture on our roads, lanes, villages and towns in the countryside and to halt the creeping urbanisation of rural England. Enclosed with this News Update is a printed copy of the on-line survey – it would help save costs if you can fill in the survey form on our website at www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk/clutter-campaign/index.html but I know that many of you either do not have the internet yet or prefer 'snail mail'. Please feel free to photocopy the form if you want to pass it on to a friend, and if you have more than example you want to tell us about, list them on the back of the form. And if you have a photo, send it too. Please support this campaign – doing so will help us in Herefordshire to persuade the Council to sign up to the National Clutter Challenge.

*Stella Woodman
Branch Development Officer*



Clutter horrors. Photograph courtesy of CPRE National Office. Not taken in Herefordshire.



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
HEREFORDSHIRE

Wickton Action Group

Wickton Action Group is a local action group formed by residents to fight polytunnel development around the village of Wickton, near Stoke Prior, south of Leominster. Jenny Ellerton, member of the group, outlines their campaign.

Why is the Council allowing the Herefordshire countryside to be blighted by polytunnels, with their disastrous visual impact, the environmental degradation and soil erosion, traffic generation, tourism reduction and other problems which they cause? At present the Council is allowing vast 100-200 acre concentrations of polytunnels without the need for planning permission, relying on a Voluntary Code which has little weight. Individual residents have fought for several years to persuade the Council and Councillors to reconsider their policy, but without success. In the case of the Brierley Court development, the developer S&A Davies has appealed against the injunction which has stopped the building, without planning permission, of residential amenities for initially 1000 temporary farm-workers and 300 caravan units.

A Public Inquiry is to be held to consider these matters.

At Wickton, the latest area to be affected in north Herefordshire, the only legal option available to local residents is to seek a Judicial Review of the Council's failure to require large scale polytunnel development to apply for planning permission. Legal advice indicates a high probability of success, though this cannot be guaranteed. If the Court were to find in the Council's favour, then the overall cost to the Wickton Action Group could be as much as £40,000. If you would like to join the Action Group, pledge financial support or would like more information please ring Jenny Ellerton 01568 797414 or Deborah Jones 01568 797354



Polytunnels changing the face of the countryside. Photograph courtesy of CPC.

Landscape Character Assessment: a CPRE view

In the 1990s CPRE Herefordshire supported the commencement of a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of Hereford and Worcester, and have not seen reason to challenge the resulting identification of twenty two 'Landscape Types' identified here. However, LCAs go on to decide how to use this characterisation and Herefordshire Council's *evaluation system* causes CPRE grave concern as this evaluation of landscapes uses a mathematical formula, which is then applied in what we think is an invalid way.

Between five and eight elements characterising each Landscape Type were scored individually from one to three on four different counts, despite three of these four being attempts to rate the formidable concepts of 'likelihood of change', 'functionality of element in today's world', and 'replaceability of element' (hedgerow replaceability? - quickly now, score it 1-3, and then do tree cover character...).

These four scores were multiplied together in two combinations to give two further scores, themselves multiplied together to yield a number, called 'Resilience', for each element of each landscape type. (Gearing introduced by serial multiplication means a difference of one in just one initial score can change that element's final score by 500%). Undeterred by this consideration, each element's 'Resilience' scores were then summed for each Landscape Type, sorted by magnitude, divided into one of only two categories and mapped as Landscape Type - Least Resilient to Change and Landscape Resilient to Change, and presented in the UDP as the tool to replace Local Designation in guiding development and other decisions throughout Herefordshire's countryside. We will be making representations about this LCA evaluation system at the UDP Public Inquiry which is currently taking place.

CPRE objects to this shaky evaluation process, and are dismayed by many other things, including lack of involvement of local people throughout, and the Council's ongoing unawareness that draft PPS7 was replaced by the final version last August.

Penny Farquhar-Oliver

Down Your Way: Monitoring Planning Applications

David Ward, from the Ledbury group of CPRE Herefordshire, describes a new initiative to monitor planning applications.

Building on the successful scheme run by Cyril & Paddy Stone covering Ledbury and surrounding Parishes, Virginia Morgan [Walford] and Andrew Meek [Foy] are setting up a similar monitor-and-respond service covering the south eastern area of the County.

Checking our local planning applications as they are published, they write in to express any CPRE concerns about any particular local bids, objecting on behalf of the Branch to those one or two which appear to contravene national, regional and County guidelines and are giving rise to local concern. Keeping in touch with the local Parish Council and seeking the views of any CPRE member who lives near the site, Virginia [01989 562426] and Andrew [01989 561030] will check out the location visually if necessary and, as well as putting in a letter, will talk regularly to the Area Planning/Development Officers whose, sometimes difficult job, it is to recommend rejection or acceptable [with constraints if necessary] of the application concerned.

So if you live in a south-east parish and are worried by a local application you now have a local CPRE contact – as well as your Parish Council – to listen to your concerns and help you make your case, as well as responding on behalf of the Branch. You could also ring Virginia or Andrew about any wider concerns you may have in your locality relating to planning or development. We will be writing soon to south-east members listing all the Parishes in that district/area, so you will know which territory is covered by the Ross team.

If you don't live in that part of the County – hang on! We are building these area teams one at a time and we'll get to you in a while: meantime ring/email the Branch with any immediate problem. Kington and north west is next. Members there can expect details in a few weeks time. Stand by for a local service for local members!

*David Ward,
CPRE Ledbury and District Group*

Night Blight Conference

Our first campaign symposium was a great success. At least half the delegates were non-CPRE members and several Parish Councils were represented. It was also good to have two County Councillors present, and the Leader of the Council, Roger Phillips, squeezed us in for a few hours mid-afternoon. The wide range of speakers gave some excellent presentations, and left everyone feeling their eyes had been opened to the ins and outs of light pollution. It was particularly interesting to hear from Devon CC, who have an 'enlightened' policy on Night Blight and have some fascinating pilot projects on going, but it was also interesting to learn that despite the Council policies, Devon still have problems with their planning department!

So what next? One of the things everybody can do is to lobby Parish/Town Councils about current light pollution and also to take an interest in and comment on local development plans or proposals, and planning applications – particularly for housing estates, industrial or semi-industrial sites in rural areas, to make every effort to ensure that they do not increase light pollution.

Don't forget our website
www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk

Stella Woodman ceases to be our Branch Development Officer on 28 February 2005.

Please contact the branch either by email:
cpre@herefordshire.kc3.co.uk

or contact

Secretary: Peter Louis
Tel. 01432 350178

Chairman: Eric Loe
Tel. 01981 500456
eric@theoldhouse24.freeserve.co.uk

Chair of Policy Group: Bob Widdowson,
Tel. 01544 230050
rw@gumpol.demon.co.uk

Please send any comments or letters to:
CPRE Herefordshire Newsletter,
Laundry Cottage,
Wormelow,
Hereford HR2 8EG.



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
HEREFORDSHIRE