

HEREFORDSHIRE HIGHLIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2016



The Annual Report of the Herefordshire branch of the
Campaign to Protect Rural England.



BREXIT What does it hold for the Herefordshire countryside?

You are all probably sick of the sound of Brexit whichever way you voted in the referendum, but the reverberations from this historic national decision will continue for decades and affect us in many ways not least the impact on farming and the countryside. As one of England's most rural counties with agriculture at the centre of its economy, any changes to agricultural policy and funding will have significant repercussions for Herefordshire.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Since the UK joined the EU in 1973 farming policy has been largely dictated by the CAP and, across the member states, accounts for 40% of its budget. This amounted to £58 billion in 2015, to which the UK contributed £6 billion and received £3 billion from the CAP, which represents 55% of UK total income from farming. It is to be noted that under the CAP we contribute twice as much as we receive. Payment to farmers comes in 2 major streams: the Basic Payment Scheme (direct payment based on acreage) £2.4 billion, and funding for the wider rural economy (wildlife, climate change, water conservation etc) £600 million. The CAP funding is inequitable, with

the largest 20% of farms receiving 80% of the payments. So Herefordshire, which tends towards smaller farms especially when compared with the eastern counties, fares badly.

Because the CAP is a compromise between the 28 member states it is often unwieldy, complex to administer and farmers struggle with the bureaucracy; the UK government faces financial penalties from Brussels for maladministration of the subsidy claims, which are levied retrospectively and will not be abrogated by our leaving the EU. However, without the subsidy many farms would not be viable. There have also been major environmental successes as a result of the CAP including improved water and air quality, clean beaches, more energy efficiency, countryside stewardship and protection of habitats and birds.

The UK has a once in a lifetime opportunity to radically review the place of farming in our society and how it is funded. This could result in a much more flexible system of public funding, sensitive to the needs of a diverse farming economy whilst maintaining all the environmental benefits achieved through the CAP. It also gives a great opportunity for stakeholders in the countryside, including CPRE, to try and influence policy development.

continued overleaf

Dates for your Diary >

**15th October 2016, 2pm - HCPRE AGM at
Weobley Village Hall, Weobley HR4 8SN**

BREXIT, continued from previous page.

The future? What public funding support will there be for farming?

When we leave the EU we will no longer contribute to nor will farmers receive funding from CAP. The Leave Campaign ruled out subsidy cuts until 2020 but any public financial support thereafter is undecided and impossible to predict. Currently, the National Farmers Union is undertaking a large survey of its members to inform its case for continued funding and for a new policy that would be simpler to administer.

Farmers fear that Andrea Leadsome, Secretary of State at DEFRA, may reduce basic funding or even scrap it altogether, making small farms and those on poor quality land, unviable. She said "It would make much more sense if those with big fields do the sheep and those with hill farms do the butterflies". Thus, if basic funding is reduced or stopped, it is likely that market forces will push agriculture towards economically efficient units at the expense of all the other very important functions that farmers fulfil as custodians of our countryside and significant members of rural communities. Even if funding for environmental improvements continues, the loss of small farms and a change to more industrial farming would have a dramatic and damaging effect on a county such as Herefordshire.

We are certainly not arguing that small is good and big is bad; there are very good examples of excellent land management in both large and small farms in Herefordshire. What the government needs to recognise is the huge importance of farming in terms all its functions, not just as a food factory. So future policy should ensure that funding is equitable and based on merit in every sense, rather than focusing entirely on the market forces and economics.

CPRE National Office has produced a very thoroughly researched discussion paper; it seizes the opportunity presented by Brexit to produce a plan and suggest policies to improve the whole agricultural sector for the benefit of farmers, food production, landscape, the environment and the rural economy. We would urge you to read it at: <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/farming/item/4347-new-model-farming>



We need to support a diverse farming economy

NOTE:

Our speaker at the HCPRE 2016 AGM at 2pm on Saturday 15th October at Weobley Village Hall HR4 8SN is Richard Priestley.

His talk "Post-Brexit – what future for Herefordshire's Countryside?" is preceded by a brief business meeting and followed by refreshments.

In this our 90th year, we will also be holding a 'draw' at the AGM. The prize is a copy of the recent CPRE book '22 Ideas that saved the countryside'.

INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK UNITS

A continuing threat to the countryside



ILUs may make such pastoral scenes a rarity

During the past year we have objected to planning applications for Intensive Livestock Units (ILUs), mostly for chickens (IPUs) and one for Intensive Pig Rearing. Although most IPU applications in Herefordshire are to rear broiler chickens for meat, some are for 'free range' egg layers. In Herefordshire and our neighbouring counties of Shropshire, Worcestershire and Powys the numbers of approved applications increase year on year. In 2015 we commissioned the production of a map to show the density of IPUs in Herefordshire. In some cases we, together with local people, have produced objections that have persuaded Council Planning Committees to refuse an application; we all wish it were more! Indeed, we are concerned that the cumulative impact of the increasing number of IPUs is not being monitored or considered by the County or national authorities.

Applications for two or more broilers that house more than 85,000 birds fall under Schedule One of the 2011 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and must submit assessments of the likely environmental impacts of the units when operational. As a consequence, to comment adequately demands a considerable amount of time, often requiring research of comparable applications and decisions. An objection needs to be related to current local and or national planning policies.

We are planning to hold a one-day meeting on the topic of Intensive Livestock Units probably in the Spring of 2017. Our aim is to provide an opportunity for people to hear in some detail about the respective roles and responsibilities of a Planning Authority and the Environment Agency in permitting and monitoring ILUs, offer a workshop run by a planning specialist who will provide advice on how to object effectively to planning for such units and to provide a forum in which people can share their experiences of such installations.

We will send details of this meeting to our members and other interested parties nearer the time. Keep an eye on our website if you are interested in attending,

SOUTHERN LINK ROAD

In June 2016, Herefordshire's Planning Committee approved the Council's own application to build a road south of Hereford connecting the A49 Ross Road and the A465 Abergavenny road. This new road that will run through open countryside is supposed to both improve access to the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone and reduce congestion in Hereford. The road will follow a route known as SC2 running from the existing roundabout where the Rotherwas link road already meets the A49 trunk road to the A465 near Belmont Abbey. A spur road onto the B4349 Clehonger road was added after the formal consultation period ended.

This route will require a highly visible bridge and embankments over the main Newport to Manchester railway line and require many thousands of lorry movements just to remove existing soil and to import suitable material for such large scale works. The road will damage the setting of the Grade 2* Haywood Lodge and the surrounding landscape. It will run through Grafton Wood, one of the last remnants of the medieval Haywood Forest, ignoring the fact that it is ancient woodland and a rare surviving example of wood pasture. The Council's consultants failed to recognise the large numbers of bluebells, helleborine orchids and adder's tongue ferns that grow there, citing the wood as poor quality. They are now faced with the prospect of "translocating" protected species. Where trees are removed for the road, new planting is promised. Unfortunately planting is planned for the exact location of the eastern construction site compound where the soils will have been ruined by compaction and pollution, and new trees will not flourish.

CPRE Herefordshire objected to the road proposals and explored the possibility of a judicial review of the decision. Other objectors included the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust. At the time of writing the up-to date costs of this road have not been published, funding is not guaranteed nor have any Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) been authorised. Any such orders might produce objections and lead to a Public Inquiry.

The Council's own policies say that sustainable transport measures should be implemented and assessed first, before new roads are built as a last resort, yet detailed proposals for the sustainable transport measures for South Wye are only just emerging. In building this road Herefordshire are increasing the potential development value of their agricultural smallholdings locally but are selling off others not close to the road. Local residents who are not on mains water are being consulted about their use of local ground water and are rightly concerned about pollution and the quality of their water supplies in future.

CPRE Herefordshire remain concerned that the economic benefits of such a road – apparently required to turn Hereford into an urban powerhouse – are illusory and are being bought at a huge environmental cost that is not yet fully understood.



Grafton Wood - threatened by the SLR

Herefordshire CPRE and Herefordshire Wildlife Trust Joint Venture

Herefordshire CPRE has teamed up with the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust to promote Wildplay activities in the Kington District this autumn. The Branch's role has largely been to find the finance to support the project. We applied successfully to the National Lottery to obtain £10,000 and found another £2,500 from the branch's investments with the Herefordshire Community Foundation. Other contributions have enabled the budget target of some £15,000 to be met.

The Wildlife Trust programme of Wildplay offers children and young people the opportunity and inspiration to play outside in their local parks, green spaces and reserves. Each year it works with around 4500 children. Popular activities include natural messy play, bug hunting, river dipping, playing in waterways and woodlands, cooking on a campfire, whittling and playing team games. It also provides outdoor play training for adults through schools, children's centres and the local authority. Wildplay has been running for 12 years now, it's a unique product within Herefordshire and works well at engaging families and the community. The intention of WildPlay is to reconnect children and families with nature by offering outreach (undertaken in public environments), open access play sessions, as well as providing more formal environmental education to schools as required. There is no other service that offers this service in the county (there are very few left nationally). It is the only provider to offer outdoor play for groups who want private events for their clients and work regularly with various groups who want to provide this experience to the children they work with. It is flexible and creative enough to fit in with school curriculum plans and for groups with special needs, making it an attractive option.

The Kington project, to be launched in the autumn term, will involve the local primary school (children, parents and grandparents), local landowners and Kington Town Council, residents, community groups and housing associations.

Chairman's report 2016

Having had the honour to serve as branch chairman for 3 years, the time has come to stand down. Being chairman has extended the length of my membership of the committee, and I am soon to hit the ceiling specified in the Constitution. Time limits for committee membership are important, particularly in making space for 'new blood' to join the committee. More generally, the constitution of any organisation is an important tool of management. CPRE has a good record in this respect, at national and branch level. This year's 90th anniversary of CPRE as a national organisation is a record of effective administration as much as anything else.

Over 90 years, CPRE can also demonstrate that small really is beautiful. It is an organisation which is nimble on its feet and able to engage with a wide spectrum of other bodies, statutory and voluntary. Having a compact size means that communications amongst branches and with national CPRE are easy and effective. The recent visit by the national CPRE chairman, Su Sayer, was a good example of this.

The long established and central position of Herefordshire CPRE in landscape campaigns has generated useful alliances with other county bodies, some of which stand out in what has been a productive year. The holding of a second open meeting on Neighbourhood Development Plans achieved a good attendance and lively debate, indicating that this event met a need for information and learning from shared experiences. Another initiative has been the close collaboration with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust to set up and fund an environmental education project at Kington.

The Southern Link Road objections and River Wye pollution issues have involved productive links with other organisations, including the Welsh equivalent of CPRE, the CPRW. The branch is also represented on the Joint Advisory Committees for the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills AONBs, where it presents an independent view from the voluntary sector.

The ability to understand other points of view and to identify solutions which are workable, the hallmarks of CPRE, encourages optimum solutions for issues involving landscape protection and development. CPRE pursues a permanent campaign to ensure that this is achieved more often than not.

In the world of environmental charities, the long established presence of CPRE enables it to take the long view. An early battle in Herefordshire was the initiative to save Queenswood from development in the 1930s. Now one of the jewels in Herefordshire's crown, CPRE was pleased to be involved in the 80th anniversary celebratory event in May, which marked the transfer of Queenswood to the Wildlife Trust.

Finally, I must commend the energy and dedication of all the branch committee members and volunteers, whose achievements are considerable, and who have made my time as chairman an inspiring and memorable experience. Fortunate also to be well-resourced, the branch can look forward to the future with confidence. I hope to continue to play a small part in that future.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016

Legacies

CPRE Herefordshire has been very fortunate indeed. It has received two exceptionally generous legacies which will transform the financial security of the Branch for many years to come. In 2014 the estate of Mrs Barbara Maclese provided the sum of £18,232 and in 2016 from the estate of Barbara Edith Washbourne the sum of £77,893 was received. These legacies will provide a secure foundation for the Branch's future activities. For a long time the Branch has been constrained by a very tight budget based on an income mainly derived from membership subscriptions of around six to seven thousand pounds a year, limiting somewhat its campaigning work and its ability to service its membership. With wise investment to secure additional income and controlled use of some of the capital the Trustees will be able raise the profile of the Branch, its campaigning activities to protect the Herefordshire countryside and ensure a better commitment to its membership. A small working party of Trustees has been established to develop the strategy.



NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS (NDPs)



NDPs can be used to protect valued views such as this one from Wellington Heath

A high percentage of parish councils in Herefordshire have engaged with the complex but rewarding process of neighbourhood planning. In a climate where planning controls are being weakened and pressure is increasing for housing and economic development, neighbourhood plans provide communities with a means to guide local development. A well prepared plan will identify the community's needs (housing, business growth, infrastructure), and aspirations for the future as well as identifying landscape features and qualities that are locally valued such as views, tranquil areas and landmarks. This is particularly important for landscapes and environments that do not have protection due to statutory designation such as Conservation Areas, AONBs, SSSIs or Green Belt, which is true of 79% of the Herefordshire countryside.

The majority of Herefordshire's NDPs are still at an early (draft stage), a small number have completed the process and the plans have been adopted following a referendum of local people and about 45 parishes have not (yet) applied for designation as a neighbourhood plan area¹.

With so many local plans, a rather fragmented approach across the county can result. CPRE Herefordshire as a statutory consultee for Neighbourhood Plans at the 'regulation 14' stage, (the stage at which the plan has been drafted and is published for wider comment) is able to encourage communities to consider issues they may not have felt to be relevant to their locality. Communities often concentrate on the issues of rural housing, employment and economy but may be less aware of other threats to valued landscape features particularly from large scale farming (eg intensive livestock farming units and large-scale poly-tunnels) and renewable energy infrastructure (eg wind turbines and solar farms). Such development, if poorly located, can cause distress to neighbours, pollute the environment physically or visually and generally degrade the environment and landscape. Neighbourhood Plans enable communities to set out principles to guide the selection of appropriate locations and appropriate scale.

The CPRE team have been impressed by the neighbourhood plans we have been asked to comment on – they display a depth of local knowledge and expertise, sensitivity to the environment and landscape as well as deep commitment. In our comments we do not question local choices about the content or policy wordings, but we do suggest amendments or additions that reflect CPRE's national concern for the rural landscape as a whole. We think it is important that communities consider identifying and stipulating ways of protecting:

- unique characteristics for example: 'dark skies', tranquillity, a distinctive settlement pattern;
- the setting and broad sweep of the landscape, important views and development on horizons;
- significant trees, hedgerows and wildlife habitats;
- features of the man-made environment, particularly unlisted features such as boundary stones, signposts, decorative features on barns, ancient paths, ditches and banks.

It is very useful to map such assets so that future development can be located sensitively.

In addition plans should set out principles for future development with a view to protecting local character visually and physically, by requiring new development to, for example:

- incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (suds);
- use particular plant species when landscaping, for example using native species;
- mitigate and prevent pollution of all kinds including noise, light, odour and visual blight;
- incorporate high quality, sensitive design which enhances local landscape and settlement character
- protect surface and sub-surface archaeology.

CPRE has always been an enthusiastic proponent of neighbourhood planning because it aims to put local people in charge of development that happens in their area, rather than merely being consulted on planning proposals. Whilst our enthusiasm for neighbourhood planning has not dimmed, the results of a number of recent planning appeals have highlighted a weakness in the system. In Herefordshire we have seen planning decisions overturned (Ledbury) and appealed (Bartestree) because the Herefordshire Core Strategy has not identified a robust five year supply of land for housing development. This is symptomatic of a nationwide trend which is allowing speculative planning development contrary to neighbourhood plan policies. This May, the Government turned down a proposal to give councils with Neighbourhood Plans in place or near completion the right to appeal such planning decisions. CPRE nationally continues to campaign for greater weight to be given to neighbourhood plans.

¹ Data from www.herefordshire.gov.uk

JUST GIVING and Herefordshire CPRE

Whilst the branch doesn't charge for its service in advising people on planning matters, we have over the years received enquiries on how donations could be made to Herefordshire CPRE.

Previously, we have received donations by cheque but we recognise that this can in fact be a barrier in today's fast-paced world. We have therefore made it quicker and easier for people to donate to the branch.

Having investigated various options, we decided to use probably the most well known method for online donations, *Just Giving*.

Just Giving offers us not only the option for donations to be made quickly and easily but also the ability to receive Gift Aid. As a well-known social media site, Just Giving also provide help, support and a wealth of experience when utilising Crowd Funding to raise money for a particular campaign.

The service is offered for a relatively small fee and the branch has agreed to explore this for an initial term of 5 years, although we are not bound by any minimum term.

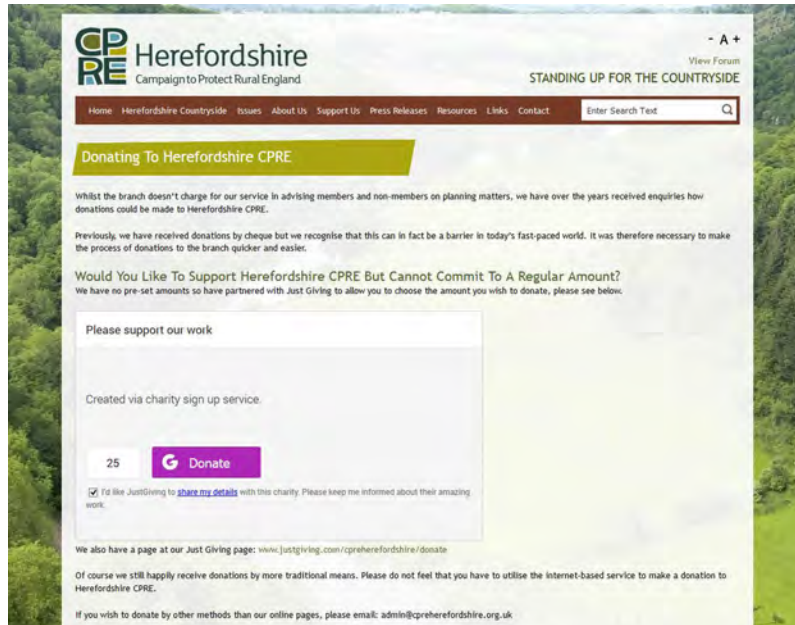
HCPRE's Just Giving donation page can be found on the branch website at <http://www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk/donation.aspx> and also at: <https://www.justgiving.com/cpre-herefordshire>

In Herefordshire we are likely to see many threats to our beautiful county from inappropriate development due to a number of changes in the planning system and following our exit from the EU. These are wide-ranging and include large housing developments (not concordant with the Local Plan), intensive livestock units and renewable energy schemes. In the coming years it will be more important than ever for county residents to know what to do if faced with a potentially damaging planning application.

We are often contacted by concerned residents towards the end of the time allotted for responding to applications. It remains a factor that people only learn of CPRE when there is a threat on their doorstep.

We hope that better exposure in today's social media led world will help to raise awareness of Herefordshire CPRE and the work that branch volunteers do – you can make a difference!

Of course we still happily receive donations by more traditional means. Please do not feel that you have to utilise the internet-based service to make a donation to Herefordshire CPRE.



HCPRE Branch website, new donation page
<http://www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk/support-us/donate.aspx>

Contributors

Barbara Bromhead Wragg
Ros Bradbury
Ben Nash
Peter Louis
Tony Geeson
Nicola Forde
Richard Williams

Photos by Richard Williams

Contact CPRE Herefordshire:

Email: admin@cpreherefordshire.org.uk
By post: c/o 19, Pine Grove, Sunningdale Estate,
Knightwick WR6 5PP

Monthly Branch Meetings

11.00am every second Tuesday at RVS, Vicarage
Road, Hereford HR1 2QN. ALL WELCOME.



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

CPRE Herefordshire
www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk

Chair: JB Nash, Secretary: D Phelps, Treasurer: P Louis

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