

ALL CHANGE AT HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL?

The council elections in May this year completely changed the political composition of Herefordshire Council. The Conservatives lost a number of seats and, with this, control of our Unitary Authority. They were replaced by a new administration consisting of Herefordshire Independents, It's our County and the Green Party. These three have 28 councillors on the 53 seat Council. The Conservatives have 13, Liberal Democrats 7 and the True Independents 5.

It appears that there is now a majority of county councillors who are at best sceptical about the benefits of building major new roads around Hereford and there may even be a majority who would vote to stop all the proposed road building completely – CPRE Herefordshire is watching with interest.

Members will recall that there were two major road schemes proposed by the previous Council. These were the Southern Link Road and a Western Bypass.

The Link Road was designed to link the A49 south of the city at Rotherwas to the A465 Abergavenny Road close to historic Belmont Abbey. In the process it would cut through ancient woodland and the high bridge over the



Looking towards Hereford along the route of the proposed bypass. - © T Geeson

railway would impact on the local landscape. This road already had planning permission and compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) for the land and housing affected by the scheme had already been made. It is believed that these will be implemented if the road eventually goes ahead. The original planning approval was due to end this summer if the road was not started. However in order to retain the approval a small amount of work was authorised along the route to satisfy Herefordshire's planning department that a start had indeed been made. It should be remembered that when the previous Council sold off its farm small holdings it retained a number because of their development potential and increased value should any road building occur.

The proposed Western Bypass was less advanced at the time of the recent elections. This was due to run from Belmont across the River Wye at Breinton, north across the Kings Acre Road to the Roman Road near the cattle market. At a later date it would proceed east to join the A49 at Holmer. A route had been approved by Herefordshire Council but detailed studies were still underway. Neither planning permission nor CPOs were likely for a while. This road would impact the buildings and setting of listed Belmont Abbey and also on the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and SSSI. It would pass close to the proposed 1200 houses to be built on Church Commissioners' land at 3 Elms.

CPRE Herefordshire AGM

Saturday 19th October 2019 at 2pm

Bishopswold Village Hall, Kerne Bridge, HR9 5QT
(2 miles south of Ross-on-Wye on B4234)

Speaker: **Andy Johnson** will talk about Housing in Herefordshire - A Personal View.
Andy is a past Chair of Kemble Housing Association, now involved in establishing community land trusts in Herefordshire.

All welcome, but please let our Branch Administrator know of your intention to attend for catering purposes by 9th October.
Barbara Bromhead-Wragg,
admin@cpreherefordshire.org.uk
Tel: 01873 892965

twitter.com/CPREHfrdshire



facebook.com/CPREHerefordshire



The new Council has decided to pause all work on both road schemes to allow further time for them to be reviewed. The review will cover the roads as well as the associated walking and cycling proposals, an eastern bridge, removal of some traffic lights and potentially electric buses, improved school bus services and ultra-light rail. No timetable has yet been announced for the review but it may yet see the end of major road building locally. As our 2017 national report – ‘The Impact of Road Projects in England’ – demonstrates the benefits of road building are often exaggerated while the adverse effects can be seriously damaging. CPRE Herefordshire looks forward to playing a full part in this review and defending our very precious landscapes from inappropriate development.

Dr Tony Geeson

THE OCLE PYCHARD POLYTUNNELS JUDICIAL REVIEW

A member’s experience of running a local campaign

Almost 18 months ago, the community of Ocle Pychard came together in opposition to a planning application (P182191/F) to cover 91 acres (37 hectares) of our local landscape in polythene.

The initial responses were highly emotional, and a public meeting was held to gauge support. A group of ‘activists’ was formed, with regular newsletter-styled emails circulated to keep everyone updated. We realised fairly quickly that, in order to fight this application effectively, we needed professional help. A working fund was established from donations by members of the campaign group. The local CPRE Branch recommended Helen Hamilton of Marches Planning, who has worked with passion and tenacity on our behalf.

Submitting objections by email or letter is very easy, and individuals can write as many times as they wish, right up to decision day. We learned to focus on specific points of planning law in our letters of objection. The National Planning Policy Framework, Herefordshire Local Plan,

Herefordshire Polytunnel Guidance and the local NDP (Neighbourhood Development Plan) became bedtime reading, and we began to reference individual points in these documents in our letters to the Council. Ploughing through all the applicant’s reports and documentation, we identified inconsistencies, errors and gaps and drew the Planning Officer’s attention to these.

Despite massive local opposition, Herefordshire Council’s Planning Committee granted the application on the casting vote of the Chair. 4 members voted to refuse, 4 supported and 4 abstained.

If there is a serious legal error either in the Council’s decision or in the way in which the decision was reached, a legal challenge can be brought before the High Court – known as a Judicial Review – in an attempt to quash the granting of the application. Helen identified several such errors, and secured the services of a QC who would work for us *pro bono*, and solicitors on a conditional fee arrangement.

Our legal Counsel was cautiously optimistic about the chance of mounting a legal challenge, and Herefordshire CPRE agreed to take on the case at this point. Through generous donations from a small group of local residents, we managed to build a fund that would, in the worst case scenario, cover our share of the costs if we managed to make it all the way to Judicial Review and lost.

The Council, as Defendant, was presented with four grounds identified by our QC to apply for a Judicial Review, and the Council conceded. The Applicant, however, decided to fight on alone as, to throw in the towel, would have meant that his application would return to the Planning Committee.

Our case was presented to Court and examined, and it was found that we do have an arguable case: we were granted permission to proceed to Judicial Review. On 4th December, a judge will hear the arguments of our legal team and those of the Applicant, and will either agree with us that errors of law were made and the application should thus be re-submitted to the Council, or will find in favour of the Applicant, in which case Ocle Pychard will become home to a sea of plastic and static caravans.

Kathie Barrs



Photo montage showing what the development may look like in winter. Ocle Pychard church in the foreground. © Kathie Barrs

Lime tree avenue on Kings Acre Road saved!

Great news! On 15 August 2019 the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on the magnificent avenue of lime trees along Kings Acre Road was legally confirmed! It was in November 2016 that Breinton Parish Council first formally made the proposal to Herefordshire Council but it was not until 14 June 2019 that Herefordshire Council finally issued a Formal Notice for public consultation, including this text:

“The trees within the order have significant landscape, heritage, biodiversity and public amenity value. The trees are under potential threat from development and, to add weight to their material consideration with the planning system, the Council considers it expedient to serve a new Tree Preservation Order”.

The age of these trees is not clear, but certainly trees along this avenue can be seen drawn on a 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey map in 1920. Therefore, they could be over 100 years old.

It is most likely that the lime trees were planted by the proprietors of Kings Acre Nurseries at that time. These nurseries were taken over by Harry Williamson by 1929 and became known as Wyevale Nurseries in 1932.

Dr Nichola Geeson



Attractive entry to Hereford from the west © N Geeson



Hedgerows are integral components of our rural landscape © B Bromhead Wragg

HCPRE HEDGEROWS AND VERGES MANIFESTO

We are preparing a Manifesto in booklet form, aiming to publish before the end of the year. Our intention is to highlight the great importance of conserving Herefordshire’s wealth of hedgerows and roadside verges. Both are of intrinsic importance but are also points of contact with the natural world for road users.

The removal of hedgerows with many of them dating back hundreds of years, that used to occur, is now illegal under the Hedgerow Regulations introduced in 1997. However, without suitable management schemes to protect and conserve them, hedgerows deteriorate. Fortunately hedgerows are still relatively widespread in Herefordshire and are integral components of our rural landscape; they are often of historical importance and provide valuable living reservoirs of biodiversity. Appropriate management schemes can ensure that such significant elements of our environment are sustained.

Verges can also be rich in biodiversity, full of plants, animals and insects, some of which provide food for birds and larger animals. Most roads are bordered with verges, many of them closely associated with adjacent hedgerows. With the increasing disappearance of farm grasslands and meadows, well cared-for verges have become important remnant substitutes. Our aim is to discourage the increasing practice of close cutting verges and to join with *Plant Life* (www.plantlife.org.uk) in advocating the planned management of verges that will ensure their continued existence as richly diverse natural habitats for a large variety of living organisms.

Virginia Morgan/Ros Bradbury



Wildflower verges © B Bromhead Wragg

INTENSIVELY FARMED POULTRY

CPRE groups in Herefordshire and Shropshire, together with our neighbours, the Brecon & Radnor group of CPRW in Powys, continue to monitor the annual increase in the numbers of intensive poultry units and, where necessary, object to them at the application stage. We have all been concerned that none of the three Planning Authorities produced records and maps showing the distribution of the units.

Recently County records were trawled and the data on the numbers of these units in the three counties were shared; a member in Shropshire produced the map (*see opposite page*) showing their locations.

The relative sizes of the blobs represent the different total numbers of birds on each farm. Powys has relatively more 'egg-layers', with Shropshire and Herefordshire having the higher concentration of broiler units. This map now enables us to keep track of numbers through time and is especially useful in highlighting areas where the numbers of units create cumulative impacts on the environment. While anyone living near an IPU of any size can be exposed to unpleasant smells, increased traffic and other problems, communities that become surrounded by multiple installations such as these endure high levels of objectionable consequences for many weeks each year.

A current planning application in Herefordshire (No: 182726) in Lyonshall Parish and close to the boundary with Almeley has caused concern. The applicant, who has large IPUs in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire and some units in Lyonshall, now wants to erect six broiler houses, nine biomass boilers, a manager's house and a number of associated buildings on a piece of land that he bought expressly for that use. He also wants to make a new access

road to the site through an ancient woodland. If allowed, about 2,880,000 birds will be raised a year, in seven week cycles. Large quantities of manure will result, all of which will be transported off the site since the applicant has no nearby land. Inevitably large quantities of vehicles, including tractors, HGVs and cars will be coming and going to the site, using the local roads. Boreholes or spring-fed wells on the adjacent hill supply water to ten households who fear that the high volumes of water needed for washing down the broiler sheds and to water the birds will deplete their water supplies.

As can be seen on the map opposite, Lyonshall (just east of Kington) is already surrounded by poultry farms and one of the issues raised by objectors to the application is the cumulative effect of having so many in a relatively small area. Until recently cumulative effects appear to have been ignored by decision makers but during the last year there are cases where Officers have clearly given them some consideration.

Until this year local Planning Authorities have not had any responsibility over what happens to poultry manure taken off the site. But in May of this year Shropshire CPRE took an IPU case to a Court of Appeal which ruled that all fields on which storage and/or spreading of poultry manure would take place have to be identified; the potential dust and odour impacts modelled and an assessment made of the likely significant effects on the environment and on nearby residents. This is an important ruling that will strengthen controls on the emissions from chicken manure. It is a case that we will quote in our comments on the Lyonshall application.

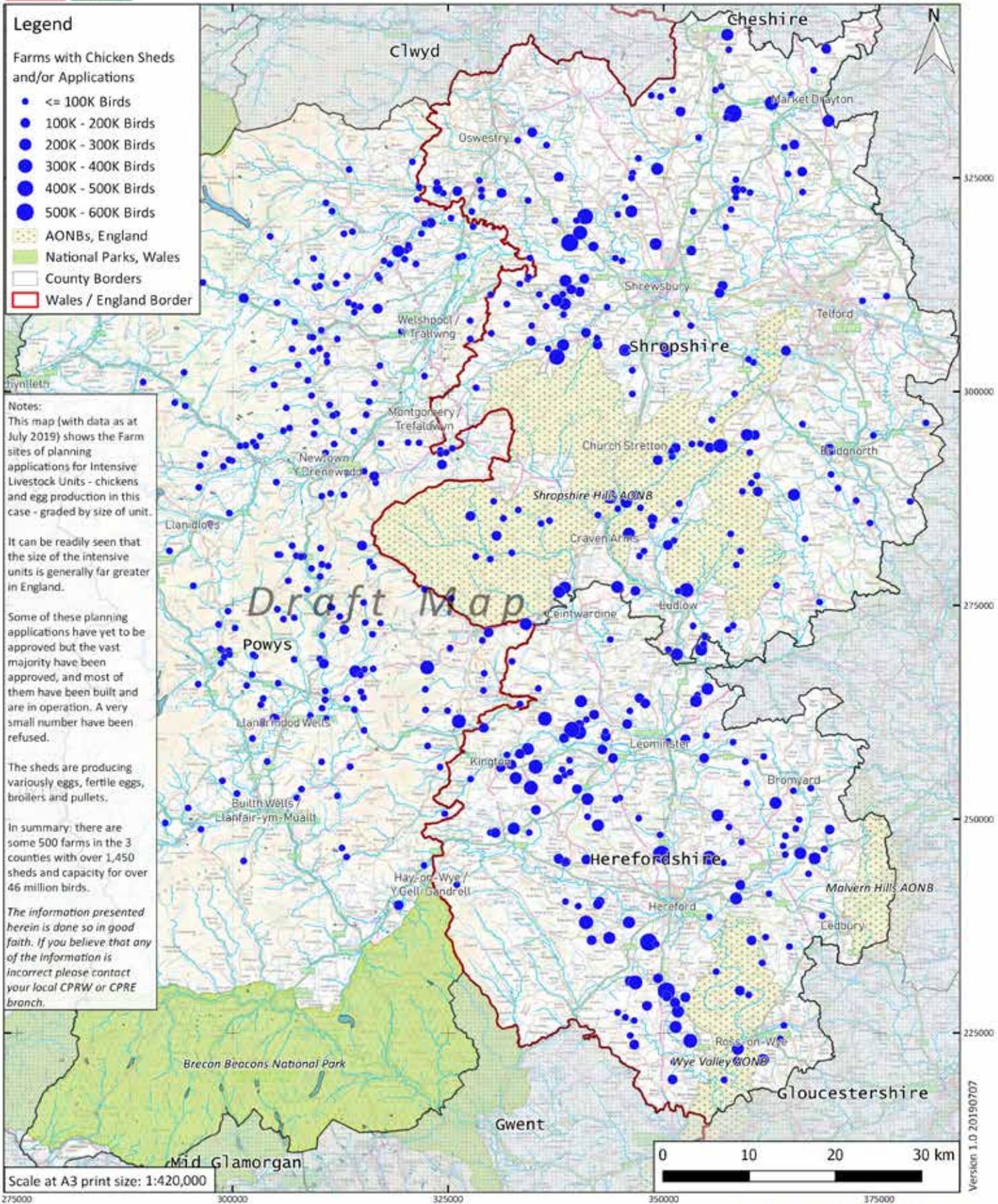
Ros Bradbury

Herefordshire CPRE needs you!

We can only continue the level of activity reflected in this newsletter if we have active volunteers. In 2019, we lost valuable volunteers due to ill health and the PLAN team is now so small that we are at crisis point. We have only three volunteers to comment on planning applications for the whole of Herefordshire. Whilst the team is dedicated, this is not sustainable. In the near future, HCPRE risks being unable to comment on planning matters, which as you know, is the cornerstone of our work.

HCPRE has been active in the county since 1933. If we are to remain effective in helping the Herefordshire countryside, we need new volunteers more urgently than ever. Training is available and you will not be alone

Please share this with your contacts as widely as you can and do please consider giving us a little of your time.



BRANCH ACTIVITY SINCE THE LAST AGM

In the continued absence of a Branch Chairman it falls to me to give a brief summary of the last 12 months.

CPRE Herefordshire is a small branch with around 230 household memberships (equivalent to about 400 individuals) plus six town or parish councils.

Finances are healthy but current expenditure continues to exceed income each year. The Trustees consider the deficit amount to be manageable – more detail can be found in the separate Treasurer's report.

We continue to 'punch above our weight' as a Branch. The main items of discussion at our bi-monthly meetings have been:

- Contesting the planning approval given by Herefordshire Council for a large polytunnel development at Ocle Pychard. A very active Residents Group has raised over half the money necessary to bring this case to Judicial Review – more details elsewhere in this report.
- The Government's review of designated landscapes – AONBs (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), National Parks etc. – led by Julian Glover, where one of our volunteers intervened in the proposed representations from National Offices to ensure that our case for a Marches AONB in the west of Herefordshire was not ignored.
- Phosphate levels in the Wye and Lugg catchment. Since 2016/17 the Environment Agency has cut the number of monitoring sites from 45 to 8. The level of pollution was of great concern during the Public Inquiry into the Herefordshire Core Strategy in 2015 and continued high levels are a potential block on new development. There is now less data than ever to ascertain whether Herefordshire Council's much criticised Nutrient Management Plan is on track to reduce these levels.
- Intensive livestock units where we have been co-operating with CPRW (Campaign to Protect Rural Wales) in a mapping exercise – again there is a more detailed item elsewhere in this report.
- The Government's consultation on bio-diversity offsetting where another volunteer has made a significant input into National Office's response to this thoroughly bad idea.
- More locally we have participated in consultations on the Hereford Transport Package and the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and contacted our local MP's about the potential impact of the National Road Investment Strategy on the local communities most directly affected by major road schemes in their areas.

- The position of **Branch President**. The Executive Committee are very pleased to be able to recommend that Professor John Whitelegg be approved in this role at the AGM.

Dr Tony Geeson

Vice Chair CPRE Herefordshire



In 2019 HCPRE made the case to the Government for a Marches AONB in west Herefordshire

Treasurer's report

In 2018 the Branch showed a slightly decreased deficit, of £3,091, and, given the exceptional expenditure outlined below, the Trustees consider this to be a manageable situation.

Income from subscriptions showed a slight decrease (from £6,503 in 2017 to £6,376.03 in 2018), and there was a fall in donations (£1,868 in 2017 to £1,073.00 in 2018) taking interest from savings and investments into account there was a fall in total income of £972. However, the Branch successfully reduced expenditure from £13,407 in 2017 to £12,915 despite carrying out a number of tasks which incurred staff overtime payments: complying with the new GDPR legislation; work on the new website; and the recruitment of our Administrative Assistant Social and Media. There was also the reduced cost of the two Public Meetings held in 2018 as compared with the Public Meetings held in 2017. The deficit in 2018 was £3,091 as compared to £3,279 in 2017. It is expected that in the coming year staff costs will be more predictable.

Monies from the Designated Reserve of £20,000 (set up in 2017 for professional services, such as legal advice and specialist consultants and research) were used on legal advice on a possible challenge to an approved planning application (£2,000) and £240 on analysis of phosphate levels in the river Wye in the Welsh part of the catchment area. In 2019 the Branch continued to use the designated fund to provide professional services in our core areas of activity as outlined in the Chair's Report.

I wish to thank the Trustees and staff for their work in monitoring and controlling expenditure in 2018 and for ensuring that our healthy reserves enable us to continue to support local people and communities in their work to protect the county's landscapes.

Nicola Forde Branch Treasurer

The Committee asked me to represent the Herefordshire CPRE Branch at the National CPRE AGM and Conference. I was happy to accept, having attended before and finding the event interesting and worthwhile. This year it was a two day event in late June, at a venue right in the centre of Birmingham. Perhaps a strange venue for a countryside organisation, but convenient for West Midlands branches!

For me one of the great things about the national organisation of CPRE is that general meetings can accommodate all the county representatives in one large room. Ideal for networking, and learning from the experiences of other branches. Proceedings kicked off with the AGM, an opportunity to see who's who on the Board of Trustees, and to marvel at their impressive CVs. They are indeed the "great and the good," but their commitment and passion for CPRE and the countryside was clear. Some useful information about CPRE finances at national level was reported. CPRE is one of those national charities which receive legacies on a fairly regular basis, some of them very substantial, and recent. This knowledge is reassuring, but it did prompt concerns that CPRE had become over dependent on legacies. Someone even asked whether CPRE was about legacies or legitimacy!

Day two included a speech by the national President, Emma Bridgewater. Drawing on her experience in the world of ceramics, she spoke perceptively about the importance of brands. They should make people feel good, as does the countryside. She considered that the countryside had an important role in healing mental health problems. She was concerned that CPRE had a relatively low level of recognition among the public, even among other environmental organisations. She urged CPRE to be more passionate with the splendid sound bite "a passionate organisation must be clear about its passion." These themes, wellbeing, nature connectedness, being positive more than negative, were the main feature of the day. For branches campaigning at the sharp end some of this may sound, well, a bit up in the air, but it is important at national level to connect with current issues. I came away feeling that CPRE had achieved this in an articulate and inspirational manner.

The first day concluded with a reception, and the presentation of awards to various long serving volunteers in the branches. I was delighted to receive a lifetime achievement award in the form of a framed citation, and a CPRE medal! This was for my involvement with Herefordshire CPRE since 1972, and yes, I was very young at the time. I think I was objecting to the felling of oak trees in Holme Lacy Park. They were felled!

I should say that my service was not continuous, but it did include some years as branch secretary, and more recently as chairman. On receiving the awards I did have the opportunity to respond, and said that I had always valued the relatively small, compact size of CPRE. I suggested it had enabled the organisation to be nimble on its feet, often to very good effect. I expressed the hope that this feature of CPRE would be retained as it developed its purpose, and moved to grow its membership.

Ben Nash

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR BEN NASH



Ben Nash and Chair of CPRE Su Sayer

Small Grants Available

Back in 2011 the Branch's Trustees set up an Endowment Fund with the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF). £10,000 was matched by an equivalent amount of Government money. Since then the fund has grown and the balance now exceeds £25,000. The original capital cannot be touched but the return on this investment is intended to provide a source of grant aid for relevant projects.

Our fund is intended to benefit organisations and activities in Herefordshire that support the protection and tranquillity of the countryside particularly through campaigning. It is one of a number of similar funds administered by HCF. Each fund has its own aims so if what you want to do does not fit the CPRE fund criteria it could be worthwhile contacting HCF to learn if other grant funds might be available.

However Herefordshire CPRE would really like to see more applications to our grant fund and use it to engage more people with our wonderful countryside rather than have money sitting 'idly in the bank'. So if there is something that you or your organisation want to do which needs a small amount of seed-corn funding please consider applying to the HCF. If appropriate, your proposal would then be forwarded to the Trustees for a decision.

HCF can be reached at the Fred Bulmer Centre, Wall Street, Hereford HR4 9HP, by telephoning 01432 272550 or via their website www.herefordshirecf.org

IN BRIEF

Three Local Projects

The Herefordshire Yazor Brooks Restoration Project

The Yazor Brook winds its way through Hereford city, becoming the Widemarsh brook just above Plough Lane, and the Eign Brook just below Commercial Road. It provides an important refuge for wildlife and creates valuable natural spaces for us all to enjoy. Local people are now working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, 'Bugs and Beasties', the Wye and Usk Foundation, and the Environment Agency to help protect and improve the environment of the Yazor Brook, making it a watercourse that flows naturally, causes fewer problems when it floods, and supports more wildlife. Volunteers are regularly monitoring the "riverflies" in the brook at 13 sites, to provide information on the general health of the brook. This helps to identify where there may be pollution, or where the habitat will benefit from clearing excess vegetation. Regular litter picks are also carried out.

See: <https://www.herefordshirewt.org/loveyourriver>

More Trees for Hereford

Herefordshire Tree Forum https://h-trees.net/contact_us.html includes contributors from organisations, businesses and Herefordshire Council, working in partnership towards the common aim of increasing and protecting the tree cover and green infrastructure within and around the city, towns and villages of Herefordshire. Volunteers are currently working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust to map green spaces in Hereford city that could potentially support the planting of more trees. The aim is to increase tree canopy cover from the current 15%, to 25%. The urban tree canopy is very important because it can absorb pollution and noise, offer shade to keep streets cooler in summer, provide windbreaks and enhance the attractiveness of the built environment with greenery.

Conserving Herefordshire's Ice Age Ponds

To the west and north of Hereford, there are some unusual ponds, (particularly rich in aquatic wildlife), that originated at the end of the last Ice Age, when large blocks of ice melted and left depressions in the surrounding sediments. Volunteers were trained, and helped to complete at least twenty-five surveys of these vulnerable pond habitats. The team, that includes Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Herefordshire Amphibian and Reptile Team and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust are busy completing an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the delivery of appropriate site management plans. Look out for talks, guided walks and

more ways to get involved. More details available from: d.hutton@herefordshirewt.co.uk or e.andrews@worc.ac.uk

See: <https://www.herefordshirewt.org/iceageponds>

Dr Nichola Geeson

Book Review

Guy Shrubsole *'Who Owns England? How we Lost Our Green & Pleasant Land & How to Take it Back'* Collins pub. 2019 £20.00

The first 9 chapters of this excellent book are dismal reading, well known to CPRE members. A familiar tale of highly concentrated ownership, many of the owners hiding their assets in offshore or family trusts. There is one big surprise – a redistribution of badly managed assets or plain theft of public goods according to your viewpoint. It took 300 years from 1600 for common lands to be enclosed, but a mere 30 for the same amount of land (about 5 million acres) to be transferred, via Thatcher's privatisations / Blair's Private Finance Initiative (PFI), from public to private ownership.

I suggest that what CPRE members will find most helpful is Chapter 10, 'An Agenda for English Land Reform' because nearly all its 10 proposals have been implemented in England within living memory or are currently in place elsewhere. Here I will focus on three.

'End the secrecy around land ownership...' (pps. 273-275). Despite a good start in 1086, a registry of England's land will not be complete until 2030. In France they certainly do order things better – '... you can go into your local Town Hall and ask to see... the set of maps showing who owns land in your neighbourhood.' (p273).

'Fix the housing crisis...' (pps. 275-277). The writer does not fully support a land value tax, but something similar has been in place in the recent past: the 1967-71 Betterment Levy imposed a tax of 40% on land sold for development.

'Give people a stake in the country and let communities take back control of local land.' (pps. 286-288). The amount of land set aside for allotments and Council farms has been drastically reduced in the last fifty years. I liked this proposal particularly, because it puts forward a good slogan 'Take Back Control' – I wonder if it has been trademarked?

Patrick Goode



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

CPRE Herefordshire
www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk

Vice Chairman: Mr B Widdowson, Vice Chairman: Dr T Geeson,

Secretary: Mr D Phelps, Treasurer: N Forde

Registered Charity No. 213951