

# The Dorset Review

Autumn 2023 News Issue 121

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The countryside charity  
Dorset



## CPRE Local Plan Reforms consultation update

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) launched a consultation on major reforms to the Local Plan process in July. The consultation is wide ranging, involving 16 thematic areas, with an overarching aim of 'streamlining and simplifying' the current plan-making process. There's currently insufficient detail within the proposals on what evidence will be cut, and Plans will still need to be justified.

A full copy of our responses to recent consultations are available on the Dorset CPRE website. A big thank you to all our hard-working volunteers for contributing to these.

## CPRE manifesto for the next UK government launched

CPRE has launched a manifesto for the next UK government, outlining four key areas of priority for the countryside, climate, communities and wildlife. CPRE is a powerful collective voice for our communities, countryside and green spaces. Our aims are relevant to people in rural communities, market towns, and urban areas. CPRE wants a future when our countryside and all our communities are thriving, resilient and sustainable.

With all parties, it's clear that defending the countryside and standing up for well planned development is going to be a tough job in the run up to the next election.

## Biodiversity Net Gain

Developers in England will be required to deliver 10% "Biodiversity Net Gain" from January 2024 onwards when building new housing, industrial or commercial developments meaning by law they must deliver a net positive for the local environment, for example by creating new habitats and green spaces. Local Planning Authorities appear to be struggling with ways to manage this important concept.

## State of Nature

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September saw the publication of the fourth State of Nature (SON) report, the product of a collaboration of environmental NGOs, academic institutions and government

A warm welcome to Mike Madgwick and Peter Neil who were co-opted as Trustees at our 12<sup>th</sup> May Trustees Meeting bringing us up to the maximum of seven. We now have Trustees covering all our Group areas in Dorset. We welcome Heidi Poole to Dorset CPRE as our Planning Advisor working on a self-employed basis. Heidi is supporting our local District Groups by monitoring planning applications and coordinating our submissions on land-use planning issues including consultations on local plans and related strategies.

It has been a very busy few months for local and national consultations. In June we responded to **Dorset Council's (DC) consultation on planning for climate change guidance**. DC prepared three documents (Interim guidance and position statement, Sustainability checklist and Listed buildings) to provide guidance on considering climate change in planning applications. The documents are to support decision making until the new DC Local Plan is adopted.

## Dorset Council Housing Strategy Online Survey

Dorset Council (DC) is aiming to produce its housing strategy by the end of 2023, setting out their vision for future housing in the Dorset Council area. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October a letter was submitted, the response came jointly from the "Dorset Deserves Better" Campaign and Dorset CPRE. We have serious concerns over some of the information in the "Evidence Base" presented by Dorset Council. This is significant because some of the figures appear factually incorrect while others seem to be incomplete and misleading. If the "Evidence Base" is in question, then it follows that the housing strategy may be based on false assumptions. We hope DC will take our analysis into consideration.

## Consultation on Permitted Development Rights

This consultation is on proposed additional flexibilities to support housing delivery, the agricultural sector, businesses high streets, and open prisons; and a call for evidence on nature-based solutions, farm efficiency projects and diversification. Please see full article on page 6.

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**Front Cover image** – View south from Luccombe Farm, Milton Abbas, taken by Louisa Kayll.



Photo: Rupert Hardy

Comma Butterfly feeding on blackberries

agencies. Natural England says: “The report makes compelling reading. It lays bare the stark fact that nature is still seriously declining across the UK, a country that is already one of the most nature-depleted in the world. The data show that since 1970 UK species have declined by about 19% on average, and nearly 1 in 6 species (16.1%) are now threatened with extinction. This is a timely reminder, if we needed it, that the nature crisis isn’t restricted to far-off places like the Amazon or Great Barrier

Reef. It is right here, on our doorstep. We are losing familiar wildlife that we cherish including the hazel dormouse and skylark.” The report ‘State of Nature 2023 – report on the UK’s current biodiversity’ can be found on <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/29/state-of-nature/>.

### BCP Council and commenting on applications within 1 mile

Following my report in the Spring edition of this magazine, it turns out there was an error in a Bournemouth Echo report regarding changes to the Constitution agreed by BCP Council on 21<sup>st</sup> March. It does not prevent anyone from submitting a comment on a planning application to the BCP planning offices regardless of where they live. All comments will be logged on the BCP Council Planning register as normal.

### Hedgerow Heroes Phase 3

CPRE’s Hedgerow Heroes project is now in its third year. There are nine transformative hedgerow projects planned by local CPRE groups across England.

In August Dorset CPRE received £5,000 from the Hedgerow Heroes

Funder in recognition of the ambition and potential of the Great Big Dorset Hedge project. Please see John Calder’s latest update on the project on page 20.

### Water Pollution

Clean rivers and the matter of pollution in Poole Harbour are a concern. The green algae in the south west of the harbour is visually unattractive especially from the ferry road. Natalie Poulter, Dorset Catchment Partnerships Co-Ordinator, recently gave a very well-informed talk to a number of our Countryside Forum Members. Discussions are ongoing on what Dorset CPRE should be doing to help combat this problem of poor water quality.

We hope you enjoy this edition of The Dorset Review which contains news, group updates and information on issues and campaigns from around the county, as well as articles from a variety of contributors, for which we are very grateful. As always, please contact us with any local issues where you think we can help.

*Peter Bowyer*

Chair of Trustees

## 86<sup>th</sup> AGM

### Roger Mortlock, new Chief Executive Officer of CPRE, Guest Speaker

We are delighted that Roger will join us on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November for our 86<sup>th</sup> AGM at Cerne Abbas Village Hall, starting at 11am. **Please see enclosed A4 booking form.**

Roger joined CPRE in May 2023 after 15 years in leadership roles for environmental charities.

As Chief Executive of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, he led the organisation through a period of transformational change and launched Building with Nature, the UK’s first green infrastructure benchmark. At the Soil Association he was Deputy Director leading campaigns promoting sustainable food and farming, and Chair of the Food for Life Partnership.

Previously he worked in policy, communications and fundraising roles with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal College of Nursing and the national volunteer agency, Community Service Volunteers. He is also a Trustee of the Summerfield Trust and Hawkwood College.

He succeeds Crispin Truman, who was CEO from 2017 to 2022.

We hope as many members as possible will make the most of this opportunity to meet Roger who will share his priorities for CPRE nationally.



Roger Mortlock



Battery Storage at Minety, Wiltshire

## Chickerell 400 MW BESS

Statera Energy Ltd has submitted their long awaited application for the huge BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) near Chickerell. The Dorset Council planning application number is P/FUL/ 2023/04657. This is an “industrial” sized structure which, we feel, is dangerously close to an increasingly populated area. No one can say with confidence that any lithium battery system is safe and will not burst into flames emitting clouds of toxic fumes – one only has to “Google” lithium battery fires to see they are happening more often. Most fires are from cars or bikes and some are large battery systems – this system would be 600 containers worth! The group CAG (Chickerell Action Group) is extremely active with publicity (website, Facebook, placards outside houses, local magazine etc). There have been information presentation sessions at village halls where CAG has put up detailed information and answered any



questions. More meetings are planned. Last June we accepted Statera Energy’s invitation to visit another BESS in Wiltshire. This was much smaller and well away from housing – very different to this one and I personally would not object to that. But the continual stream of reports of lithium battery fires is alarming. We all appreciate the need for such storage systems as we become increasingly dependent on renewable energy (when the wind and sun are not blowing or shining) but this is misplaced.

The reason for choosing this site is that there is an existing National Grid substation conveniently (or inconveniently) already there.

In addition there would be huge disruption to the local population in Coldharbour during construction. Hauling 600

containers to the site along with transformers, concrete etc is no small task! The roads are country roads and not designed for this. There is a large younger population nearby too – with a playground close to the road. Also children walking and bicycling etc. This system may be needed – but not there! It is, by the way, also on greenfield (agricultural) land.

We fear that Statera may well be planning to bring back their plans for a nearby large solar park which they withdrew. Last time half of it was covering the AONB. Their next one might be smaller but it would be close to the AONB – and certainly in “the setting of...”

## Portland Waste Incinerator

Despite overwhelming community opposition, Powerfuel Portland are appealing against Dorset Council’s unanimous decision to refuse the waste Incinerator planning application at Portland Port. There were over three thousand objections including from Dorset CPRE. As before we support the Stop the Portland Waste Incinerator local Action Group run by the very capable Paula Klaentschi. If you are new to this issue please visit <https://stopportlandwasteincinerator.co.uk/> for more details.

## 7 new houses on Watery Lane, Upwey

Recently we put in an objection to the (recurrent) application for 7 new houses in a flooding area on Watery Lane (it has been withdrawn several times before). Not only does this area flood (badly), the sewer system is grossly inadequate – a 9 inch pipe. During flooding raw sewage is found in the road as the system overflows. I listed a number of potentially serious diseases from this. How the water and sewage mixes is unknown – including by Wessex Water who are yet to do anything about it. Clearly more houses here is inappropriate – for many reasons (they are also 3 and 4 bedroom houses).

## STAND

The Group Save The Area North of Dorchester continues to do amazing work fighting the vast estate proposed north of Dorchester.

*Dr Guy Dickinson*



# Commenting on Planning Applications

You may have heard about a development proposal happening in your area either on the grapevine or in the local press (lists of validated planning applications are regularly published in the Blackmore Vale Magazine, Dorset Echo, Bournemouth Echo & West Dorset Magazine), and are wondering if you can have an input into the decision-making process. The good news is that anyone can comment on a planning application.

## Where can I find out about a Planning Application?

Details of planning applications received by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) are available for all members of the public to examine on their website, or, in person at their offices. Our area covers two local planning authorities, Dorset & BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole). In addition to the information requested on the application form and plans, large scale applications will be accompanied by a host of supporting information including, a design and access statement, environmental impact assessments, archaeological assessment etc. It is well worth looking at these as they provide useful information about the proposed development which can help inform your opinion.

## How long do I have to comment on a Planning Application?

The date that comments must be received by is provided on the online registry entry for the application, this is normally within 21 days of the consultation commencing (14 days from a notice being published in the press). Comments may still be received after the deadline but is worth double checking with the case officer assigned to the application if you think you may not be able to make the deadline.

## What issues can be raised?

All planning applications are assessed against national policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and those contained in a) Local Plan b) Neighbourhood Plan for the area in which the development is proposed. These documents are also available for members of the public to view on the local planning authority website (Links to a) Dorset Local Plan b) BCP Local Plan are provided at the end of this article.)

When formulating your response to a planning application it is useful to consider it against the LPA's policies, perhaps you think the proposal contravenes a certain policy?

If the proposed development is situated in an area with a special landscape designation i.e., Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the local authority has a statutory obligation to ensure that decisions made have regard for the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. Dorset has two AONBs, the Dorset AONB which covers just over 40% of the County, and the Cranborne Chase AONB. Each AONB has drawn up a management plan containing policies and objectives aiming to conserve and enhance these special landscape areas and are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications falling within an AONB.

Issues which can be considered when assessing planning applications are called material planning considerations. Whilst there is no definitive published list or definition of a material planning consideration, what constitutes a material planning

consideration is governed by the principle that planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, so that the protection of purely private rights or interests such as the impact of development on the value of a neighbouring property or loss of private rights to light cannot be material considerations.

Examples of the types of issue that you **can** raise as a material consideration are: –

- National/ local/ neighbourhood planning policies
- Government circulars, orders, and statutory instruments
- Previous planning history
- Nature conservation and biodiversity issues.
- Loss of trees
- Loss of farmland
- Risk of flooding
- Intrusion into open countryside/greenbelt
- Light pollution
- Impact on listed building, conservation area or area of archaeological interest
- Highway safety
- Road access
- Lack of parking
- Disabled access provisions
- Layout and density of buildings
- Design, appearance, and materials
- Landscaping
- Smells and fumes
- Incompatible/ unacceptable uses.
- Hazardous materials, contaminated land
- Impact on local infrastructure (public drainage/ water systems)
- Deficiencies in local community facilities (spaces in schools/ hospital beds)

If you can supply supporting evidence for any issues that you raise when commenting this will help give weight to your argument.

As mentioned earlier issues that relate to an impact on private rights or interests **cannot** be taken into consideration by the LPA. For example: –

- The perceived loss of property value
- Private disputes between neighbours
- The loss of a view
- The impact of construction work or competition between firms
- Restrictive covenants
- Ownership disputes
- Personal morals or views about the applicant
- Boundary disputes

## How do I submit a comment?

You can register your comment either in writing, or, by uploading it on the planning authority's website (this facility is available on the planning registry entry for the application). In either case you will need to provide details of your name, address etc. Unfortunately, anonymous comments will not be accepted/ taken into consideration.

**Continued overleaf**

## Useful Links

Dorset Council's Planning Portal <https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/>

BCP Council's Planning Portal <https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Search-and-comment-on-applications>

## Dorset Local Plan

This is in the process of being drafted and is anticipated to be in place by May 2026. Currently planning applications are being assessed against adopted Local Plans for West Dorset Weymouth and Portland, Purbeck, North Dorset, East Dorset and Christchurch, Swanage.

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/adopted-local-plans>

## Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Local Plan

This is in the process of being drafted and is anticipated to be in place by Winter 2024. Currently planning applications are being assessed against adopted Local Plans for the Bournemouth Area, Christchurch Area and Poole Area.

<https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Planning-policy/Current-Local-Plans/Current-Local-Plan.aspx>

*Heidi Poole*  
Planning Advisor to Dorset CPRE

# Consultation on Permitted Development Rights



Photo: Chris Odonovan from Magneto

Family walking through a farm past heavy machinery.

It has been a busy year for Government consultations, the most recent being on Permitted Development Rights (PDRs). This consultation is on proposed additional flexibilities to support housing delivery, the agricultural sector, businesses high streets, and open prisons; and a call for evidence on nature-based solutions, farm efficiency projects and diversification.

The consultation opened on 24<sup>th</sup> July and closed on 25<sup>th</sup> September. Dorset CPRE's response focused on the proposals contained within:

- 1) Agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses
- 2) Supporting the agricultural sector through additional flexibilities
- 3) Markets – temporary use of Land (Class B of Part 4)

## Summary

Dorset is a predominantly rural county, famous for its Jurassic Coast and Hardy country, a large proportion of which (approx. 50%) is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and was recommended in the 2019 Landscapes Review by Julian Glover as warranting National Park Status. As such the proposal to extend further permitted development rights already applicable to agricultural buildings under the General Permitted Development Order, Class Q and remove the exemption covering agricultural buildings in designated landscapes (Article 2(3) Land) is a subject close to our heart.

## Conversion of Agricultural Buildings

We are strongly opposed to the government's proposed amendments to the General Permitted Development Order to

extend permitted development rights relating to the conversion of agricultural buildings. The UK is widely acknowledged to be one of the most nature depleted nations in the whole world, extending permitted development rights to cover agricultural buildings, particularly those in Article 2(3) Land will lead to further urbanisation of our precious rural areas which are of great natural beauty. We should be seeking opportunities to restore natural beauty where it has been lost rather than perpetuating its demise.

Due to the impact that changing the use of these buildings we believe that any applications for change of use of agricultural buildings should be fully assessed by local planning authorities who are best placed to assess the suitability of the building for conversion, the impacts of any proposed use and whether it meets local needs.

## Support Farming and Food Production

Given that food security has never been more important we would like to see government policies that support farming and food production as an activity. Extending permitted development rights that actively encourage farmers to move out of farming related enterprises to non-related businesses such as sport and leisure activities not only has huge multifaceted impact on the rural environment but also devalues farming as an occupation and sends out the wrong message.

We do support the re-use of agricultural buildings to activities related to/required to support enterprises associated with the main farming/horticulture/forestry activity.

## Support for Mixed Farming

We are concerned that the combination of allowing farm buildings of increasing magnitude to be constructed without requiring planning consent coupled with permitted development rights for the conversion of smaller buildings is encouraging a movement away from family run, smaller mixed farm businesses towards larger specialised farm units. These diverse farms have played a critical role in shaping the countryside that we all enjoy and are central to maintaining biodiversity. We would like to see more government measures to support mixed farming.

The extension of Permitted Development Rights to Agricultural Buildings is resulting in a decrease in opportunities for new entrants to the farming industry. Where once it might have been possible to purchase a 'starter unit' of a few buildings and some land, these buildings are now being sold for development.

A full copy of our response to this consultation is available on the Dorset CPRE website.

# Campaigning on Housing

## In regard to housing, Dorset CPRE campaigns for:

- less new housing overall than the Government target
- for new housing to be sited on brownfield sites in preference to greenfield
- for Green Belt and AONB land to be protected from housing developments
- for a greater emphasis on building social housing for rent
- for the demand for second homes and short-term rentals to be balanced against the need for long-term rented housing
- for new homes to be zero carbon by 2030

## Less Housing Overall

The Government's housing target requires about 37% more homes to be planned and built in Dorset than household growth projections suggest are necessary. The reasoning is that an excess of homes would lower prices. In fact growth in the number of households in Dorset is based on people moving into the county from elsewhere, so extra housing will only be sold if extra people move here (based on the Council's own research on Housing Need by Icenj). Dorset CPRE sees no need to increase this inflow and points out that it ages the population artificially. Dorset CPRE campaigns for the Government's artificial uplift in Dorset's housing target to be abandoned.

## Brownfield not Greenfield

Dorset CPRE believe that new housing should be planned on Brownfield sites (re-using land that has already been developed before) in preference to Greenfield sites. Too often developers target the fields next to where people already live, depriving them of contact with cherished green spaces and devaluing their way of life. They do this because greenfield sites are cheaper to develop, and do it despite the resulting need for unsustainable car use. Meanwhile our towns are blighted by unused (often derelict) brownfield sites.

## Green Belt and AONB

Dorset CPRE opposes strongly the re-drawing of Green Belt and AONB boundaries to allow housing developments. Wisely these areas have been protected from development for the benefit of succeeding generations, yet pressure from Government targets and developers threatens that protection. Dorset Council have already granted permission for 13,000 homes to be built in Dorset that have yet to be constructed (amounting to about 10 years' of future growth), so Dorset CPRE campaigns for that land to be used first.

## Greater emphasis on social rented housing

Figures published recently by the Times (sourced from the Land Registry) showed that house prices overall in Dorset have fallen by 5% since 2007 after taking account of inflation. Dorset Council's research into Housing Need (cited above) finds the main requirement to be extra homes for those with low incomes – a need met primarily by the social rent sector. Dorset CPRE contends that



Bellway Estate Construction at Blandford 2023

the experiment requiring market housing developments to incorporate social rented homes has failed to keep up with demand in that sector, resulting in a current annual need for 577 such homes (*Dorset and BCP Local Housing Need Assessment, Icenj Projects, p. 109, Table 7.31*). Dorset CPRE campaigns for a fresh approach to meeting this specific need.

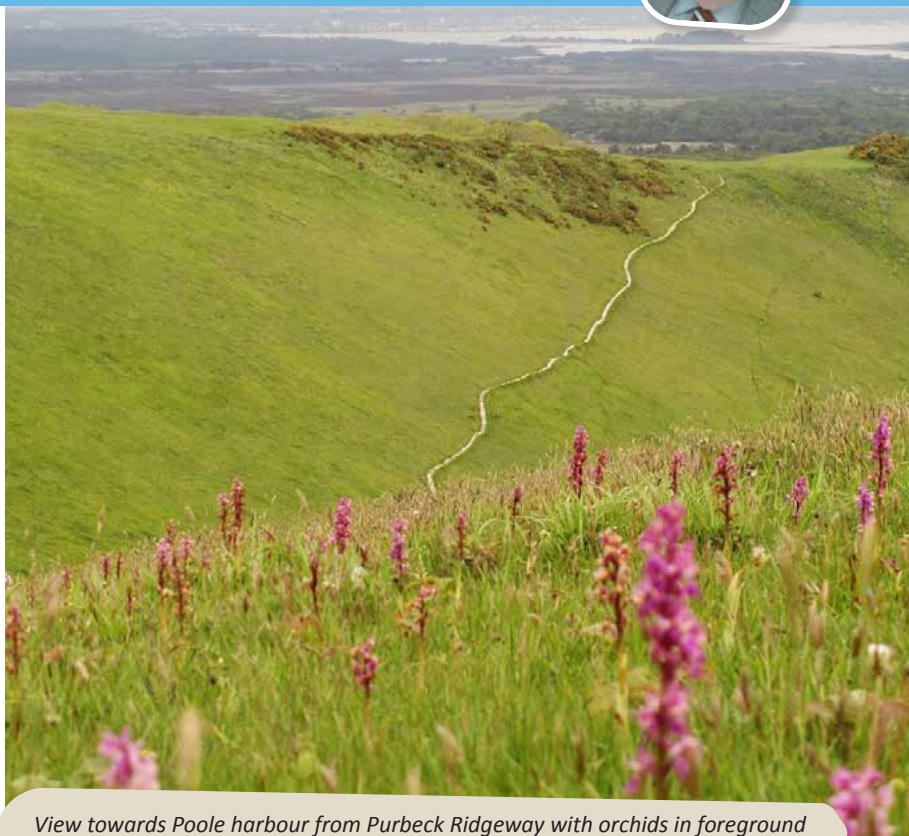
## Balancing second homes and Airbnb against long-term rental homes

In some towns and villages in Dorset too many local homes have been re-purposed as second homes or Airbnb-type holiday lets. As a result, long-term rental properties are scarce and communities are hollowed out as those with lower incomes have to move elsewhere. Dorset CPRE campaigns for a better balance.

## Zero Carbon by 2030

Dorset CPRE supports Dorset Council's declaration of a climate emergency and **the findings of the government Climate Change Committee**. Dorset CPRE also campaigns for all new homes **to be zero carbon by 2030** and insulated to high standards to minimise energy use, and for new homes to incorporate roof-top solar energy capture and the means to charge electric cars.

*Mike Allen*



View towards Poole harbour from Purbeck Ridgeway with orchids in foreground

## A Brief Review of Local Concerns / Actions

This article, written prior to our Open Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> October to refresh our local views and activities, outlines some of the concerns that we have tried to address over recent months. More may arise as a result of either the meeting or any thoughts you may wish to share with us. The primary concerns are as follows:-

- 1. Preparedness for new Local Plans affecting our area** and to be issued by both Unitary Councils in Dorset. In this connection we have contributed to various relevant consultations including a current government consultation on proposed 'plan-making' reforms: reforms that appear to remove significant controls from local government (rather than improve such controls), despite the fact that "one size does not fit all."
- 2. Pollution of the rivers draining into Poole Harbour** that needs to benefit from pollution reduction rather than the proposed pollution "neutrality." We are collaborating with all seeking to understand and promote ways to foster pollution reduction.

- 3. Air pollution** is of increasing concern as we hear about the absence of evidence concerning the incidence / concentrations of very fine particles that can adversely affect life and living. Such absence of evidence is not helpful when considering proposed moves to burn plastics (create dioxins) in an extra incinerator to be sited at Canford Resource Park – to supplement two others proposed elsewhere in Dorset.
- 4. Light pollution** could become an increasing problem since Dorset Council is understood to be unable to adjust its policies until the early 2030s, despite increasing awareness of risks and needs for extra controls. Questions have been asked and the matter is being pursued.
- 5. Power supplies** remain a local need which could be reduced if insulation and roof-mounted solar panels were adopted more widely (a CPRE policy). Failure to implement such a policy is no reason to lose the carbon-capturing potential of soil to acres of solar panels, to invest in avoidable transmission costs, or a reason to extract oil near Affpuddle – matters we have resisted.

- 6. Housing needs** remain a local challenge, particularly for younger people on locally earned median annual income, since housing market prices are so very high. It is essential that Local Plans respond positively to this issue, more support is given to Community Land Trusts and houses of the right type, quality and tenure are built in the right places – matters we are pursuing.
- 7. Infrastructure adequacy** is an additional concern since the planning 'system' is fragmented amongst so many organisations that are expected to collaborate (but are not required to agree!). This situation has involved us in expressing concerns for the provision of adequate emergency care in Purbeck plus concerns over the development or use of roads when extra commercial activities are proposed, especially when they impose onerous additional demands affecting communities and/or the environment.

Regarding our environment, it was with great sorrow we learnt of the vandalism inflicted on our existing 'green infrastructure' by severe damage to a 180-year-old oak tree in Wool (one of our vulnerable biodiversity hotspots). Someone somewhere should have known, as Sir David Attenborough has said **"Ancient trees are precious, there is little else on earth that plays host to such a rich community of life within a single living organism."** Oak trees, as most of us know, can live for many centuries.

In tackling the above, we seek to increase our membership, to collaborate with Parish and Town Councils, support Neighbourhood Forums and try to assist the Unitary Councils make "sound" and "sustainable" Local Plans, to serve relevant public interests, in accordance with The Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life.

Please do not hesitate to share your personal views with us. I am happy to receive them at any time.

*Gerald Rigler*

Group Chairman



# Litter Campaigns

We participate in the Litter Free Dorset Forum meetings, hosted by Litter Free Dorset – Land, Coast and Sea, and contribute to discussions on a number of topics and campaigns.

## Litter Free Dorset Forum Meetings Vape Campaign

LFD recently visited vape retailers in towns across Dorset to promote vape recycling facilities. Many of the business-owners were unaware that vape recycling is available and were happy to display LFD posters to help make their customers aware of how to best dispose of their vapes. Vapes can be recycled via large electrical retailers as part of their compliance with WEEE (Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment) meaning they can be recycled by retailers under the electrical takeback scheme.

### LFD's campaign aims to raise awareness on three key points:

1. Vapes cannot go into your home general waste or recycling bins.
2. You can recycle your disposable vapes at your local retailer via a retailer takeback scheme.
3. Reusable vapes help to cut single-use plastic and conserve valuable resources such as lithium.

LFD are also planning to hold pop-up sessions during Fresher's Week at Arts University Bournemouth and Bournemouth University, helping students to understand the effects of single-use vapes on our environment, and how they can best dispose of their vapes.

## Sustainable Business Network Event

We wrote about the project in the spring 2023 magazine. LFD's second Sustainable Business Network event was a huge

success. The event took place at the LUSH Green Hub in Poole on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and was LUSH's first public event since the opening of Hub. Eloise Flinter, the Green Hub Business Development Manager, spoke about LUSH's remarkable circular economy initiatives and provided a tour of their impressive development. Attendees were amazing to see and hear about the sustainable changes and aims of this Dorset based global retailer and manufacturer.

The event brought together many different businesses all wanting to make a positive impact on the environment.

Businesses who sign up to the network will be supported by LFD and together businesses can work to achieve a 'Sustainable Business Award' to proudly show the local community they are making a difference.

## Ban on single-use plastic plates

In January it was announced that a range of polluting single-use plastics will be banned in England from October 2023, allowing businesses time to prepare, following the Government's consultation. The ban includes single-use plastic plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, balloon sticks, and certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers. The ban will not apply to plates, trays, and bowls that are used as packaging in shelf-ready pre-packaged food items, as these will be included in our plans for an Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme – which will incentivise producers to use packaging that can be recycled and meet higher recycling targets. For example, this would include pre-packaged salad bowls and bowls filled with food at the counter of a takeaway.

Councils have been reminding businesses about the new restrictions amid concerns many are unaware of the changes.

The ban is part of the Government's latest round of policies to cut down on plastic packaging. It follows the introduction of a plastic packaging tax in April 2022 and the launch of single-use plastic carrier bag charges in 2015.

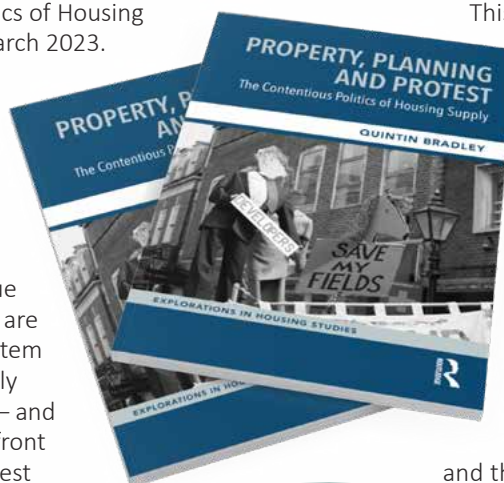
## Property, Planning and Protest: The Contentious Politics of Housing Supply

Dr Quintin Bradley, Senior Lecturer in Planning and Housing at Leeds Beckett University has written a book titled 'Property, Planning and Protest: The Contentious Politics of Housing Supply.' It was published by Routledge in March 2023. Quintin has been in touch with STAND (Save The Area North of Dorchester) action group, and provided the following quotation:

"Property, planning and protest is an investigation into public attitudes to house building and real estate development. I argue in this book that amenity groups like STAND are the champions of a democratic planning system that protects the environment and effectively regulates land use to meet real local needs – and not the greed of property speculators. The front cover picture of Property, Planning and Protest depicts the Skimmity Ride protest through the

streets of Dorchester, and it is time that we took seriously the opposition to more urban sprawl in the Dorset countryside.

This is not a selfish Nimby protest. It was protest movements like STAND that first created our planning system to prevent land speculation and to stop development that only benefits shareholders and foists all the costs onto the local community. Housing should not be a high-priced commodity built by speculators only to extract value from land and local communities. To oppose house building under these terms is not to object to the provision of new homes but to reject the commodification of a basic need and the treatment of land and the environment as a financial asset."



# North Dorset Group



## North Dorset Housing Land Supply

We were pleased to see that North Dorset, as of April 2023, had 5.74 years supply of deliverable housing sites against its housing requirement, compared to 4.27 years in 2022. This is the first time for many years that it is back over the five year threshold and is very significant. Under five years, a presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged (with few exceptions), but this will put all housing developers here on the back foot now.

## Planning Trials and Tribulations

Sadly the Pulham/Mappowder solar farm was approved in the summer despite the strong grounds for refusal. However we are more optimistic about the outcome for the two huge ones close to the iconic Horton Tower, near Wimborne, where the public consultation has formally closed. We are objecting primarily on grounds of harm to protected landscapes, heritage assets, amenity and the use of best and most versatile land, which is unforgiveable given national concern over food security and inflation. Knowlton Parish Council voted unanimously to

reject both and the Cranborne Chase AONB heavily criticized them, while there was an active action group organizing opposition, to whom Dorset CPRE has provided some financial support and considerable campaigning advice. There were over 60 individual objections to each application, in a thinly populated part of Cranborne Chase. We continue to promote solar rooftop in preference to greenfield to save our precious beautiful Dorset countryside where possible.

## Application for 500 homes north of Blandford

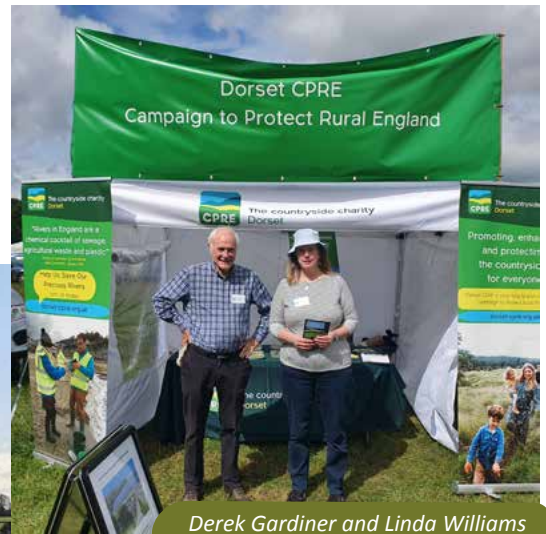
Our next major planning hearing is likely to be concerning the Wyatt Homes housing application for 500 homes north of Blandford. It is expected soon even though the September planning hearing on it was postponed due primarily to the release of the North Dorset housing land supply figures, we believe, which will force Wyatt Homes to rework their arguments. We, Pimperne Parish Council and the Cranborne Chase AONB, will hopefully all be speaking against the development which is seriously flawed. We have covered extensively before the reasons for objection.

## 120 houses and community centre proposed for Marnhull

On the proposal front, we are considering our likely response to a large mixed use development including 120 houses and a new community centre mooted for Marnhull. It has some merits with a large social housing component and some facilities the village lacks, but it is easy to criticize it too as it could lead to gridlock on the narrow lanes of the village, and there have been several large housing estates approved here already so there will be no shortage of new houses overall. Once the planning application comes in we will have a clearer idea.

There have been some other less major planning applications in North Dorset that we have objected to as well.

## Oak Fair: Successful Event



Derek Gardiner and Linda Williams at Stand at the Oak Fair 2023

Eleven Dorset CPRE volunteers, organised and masterminded by Derek Gardiner, manned our stand over two days at the Oak Fair over the August Bank Holiday weekend. It was a successful event, and a good opportunity to meet members and recruit new ones. We displayed a large banner with the words "Campaign to Protect Rural England" to ensure visitors understood better what CPRE does, which helped. Lots of discussions were held on solar rooftop, housing, hedgerows and water pollution.



View over site of Wyatt Homes proposed development on rolling downland in the parish of Pimperne

Photo: Rupert Hardy

Rupert Hardy  
Group Chairman

# Cost of Living Crisis Squeezes Dorset Village Shops

## Cost of Living Crisis Squeezes Dorset Village Shops, but Child Okeford Village Shop is thriving

COVID was kind to village shops, which had been under pressure for decades from the relentless onslaught from supermarkets. Government advice to stay home and fear of infection drove shoppers to avoid supermarkets, except for using their online delivery services if available. Village shops offered a friendly face to consumers, who otherwise might have felt isolated, while they benefited from the trend to support local businesses at a difficult time for all, and sustainability. Price was less of an issue.

Roll on 2023 and much has changed dramatically, with shoppers facing a vicious cost of living crisis. Village shops may still benefit from a long-term trend to sustainability, but they face much tighter purses. Price wars have been intensifying and we all know which supermarkets are winning: the discounters, Aldi and Lidl. There is still a clear long-term trend to online shopping that the supermarkets can take advantage of and village shops find they cannot. Other factors have been the decline in physical newspaper and tobacco sales, and these in the past were major drivers of customer flow for the shops. What can they do? The bigger ones are in a much stronger position as they can both offer a broader range of stock, and they can also diversify if space allows by opening cafes, which bring extra footfall and generate higher margins. They can sell more quality local sustainable produce which we applaud, as we support quality local food and drink producers, of which Dorset has many. More shops are joining symbol groups, such as Spar, to help their buying and provide marketing support.

One sad trend has been the demise of village shops opened by enterprising publicans during COVID. Some closed their doors a year ago or more, while the remainder have now succumbed too as villagers return to supermarkets. Local loyalties proved fickle, but it is also likely most were too small to offer the range of stock a successful village shop needs to compete. The Greyhound pub in Winterborne Kingston closed its shop doors after Christmas, as did the Rose & Crown at Longburton.

Please support your village shops. Use them or lose them!

## Child Okeford Village Shop

Yet there are exceptions and the Child Okeford Village Stores is doing all the right things to attract its many customers. Andrew Stevenson-Hamilton bought the shop in 2020 after a career in finance, having felt he would like a more community-spirited role. Before he bought it, the shop was not doing too badly thanks in part to a spacious shop floor, enabling a broad selection of stock, and a good site in the middle of a relatively affluent large village of twelve hundred, fifteen minutes drive from the lures of the nearest major supermarket. However he has made lots of positive changes.

Firstly he bought an Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system so staff no longer need to laboriously price up products, and secondly he brought in new staff who would be more welcoming to customers and adjust easily to innovation, and thirdly he joined the SPAR symbol group. They helped him with



Customers inside the store



Andrew Stevenson-Hamilton and his daughter Mimi outside the shop

stock selection, and to redesign the shop layout and to increase the size of the shopfloor so he can introduce new lines, such as more local products. Fortunately SPAR allow stores a lot of flexibility so you still feel this is a village shop with character.

He has a broad range of clients. First are the relatively affluent retirees who appreciate the broad range of stock, including items missing from local supermarket shelves, who are not keen to shop online, which he cannot offer. As he says "it is important to have variety and a perception of plenty." Then come the mums and children after school so the toys help here. Thirdly are the less privileged members of the community who appreciate that his pricing for basic items is quite affordable. Fourth are the workmen, helping on construction projects in the village, who buy coffee and high margined pastries first thing in the day, and use the tables and chairs outside as may the tourists visiting the village. Customers like the in-house bakery with its wonderful fresh smells. Andrew believes in a "sense of theatre."

## The Friendly Community Hub Meeting Everyone's Needs

He listens to what his customers want and has made the shop a buzzy, friendly community hub. Innovations include a section for Coeliacs, a Book Exchange, a Nespresso style coffee dispenser and expanding the range of Greeting Cards so the shop is now a destination store. He has brought in a loyalty card system, with the logo designed by the village school. He sponsors the school football team and a police awareness initiative to reduce online abuse of children. The Post Office section works well partly thanks to an old-style contract which pays a salary and bonus.

Andrew has not been afraid to reduce costs where necessary and cut his electricity bill in half by reducing the heating, making insulation covers for his freezers and taking out the Hot Tower. He has evaluated building a café to improve footfall even more, but is not sure it would make a good return. However he would like to host more village events, such as wine and cheese tasting. Keep it up, Andrew!

*Rupert Hardy*

Chair of North Dorset CPRE

# The Sherborne and District Society



Sherborne and District Society are focussed on four areas: Planning, Farming/Agriculture, Town Centre and Listed Buildings.

## Planning

On Planning, the delay in the Dorset Local Plan is not welcomed, as it leaves open the opportunity for developers to exploit existing loopholes to bypass appropriate democratic processes. However, it does provide more time for us to continue our work on the proposed western development, which some believe should have as many as 1500 new houses. The 2021 census, together with revised assessments of the real needs in the county, suggest that the current government targets are exaggerated, and need serious revision. Dorset is losing young people and gaining older ones, mainly owing to the lack of quality jobs in the area, together with the high cost of housing against the low average wage rate. Accordingly, we continue to press for the right sort of housing for the real market, environmentally sound with PV and

proper insulation, in-place infrastructure in the early stages of development, and adequate green spaces for all to enjoy. Alongside this, we shall work with the principal local landowner to establish the relationship between numbers of houses and accompanying infrastructure, especially medical and school facilities.

## Farming/Agriculture

Our farmers have had a rough deal since Brexit, with uncertainty, complexity and unwelcome initiatives encouraging sub-optimal use of land. We continue to argue for a holistic approach to internal food production as an essential ingredient of national resilience, whilst encouraging environmental projects where it makes sense to do so.

## Town Centre

We have continued to work closely with Sherborne Town Council and other stakeholders to ensure communication, coordination and reduced duplication of town initiatives, of which there are many, but often working in a vacuum. A coordination group has been set up,

both to inspire new ideas but also to record what individual groups are doing on behalf of the town community.

## Listed Buildings

We are increasingly concerned at the state of several listed buildings in Sherborne, and have taken measures to raise the profile of those especially listed. We find it disappointing that our most treasured architecture, identified as needing special care by a central government body, is then effectively abandoned by the county authorities. The crusade goes on!

## AGM on 10<sup>th</sup> November

We are holding our AGM at the Digby Memorial Hall, Digby Road, Sherborne, on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023 for 6:30pm start. Wine and soft drinks will be served from 6pm. It is a good opportunity to meet our Committee Members and review with us the four areas mentioned in this article.

*Sir Christopher Coville*  
Chairman

## Visit to Hollis Mead Organic Dairy

In recent years the Sherborne and District Society has made an annual visit to a local farm as a means of better understanding the commercial imperatives (and regulatory constraints) that influence the way an agricultural business operates. Visits have varied between the in-hand farm on a large estate and a relatively small Dorset Council holding.

### Organic milk and dairy products

This year the chance to visit was opened up to all Dorset CPRE members, and the farm that kindly hosted the visit was at Hooke, north east of Bridport. Hollis Mead has attracted a great deal of media attention because of the very unusual way in which it operates. It was established by Oliver Hemsley after a very successful career in finance. Its commercial viability is founded on his belief that there can be significant added value for organic milk and dairy products if they are from cows fed solely from the resources on the farm and only milked once each day.

The farm website [www.hollismead.com](http://www.hollismead.com) states: "At Hollis Mead we're different. We hold high standards of animal welfare, nature and biodiversity at the core of everything



Oliver Hemsley and Shaun Leavey.

*we do. Part of this is being 100% pasture fed. Our cows just eat grass and wild flowers grown on the farm. As a result, this means we produce less milk per cow than the average industrial dairy farm, but the taste, quality and positive impact on our cow's health is non-negotiable."*

## Visit to Hollis Mead Organic Dairy (Continued)



### Group Tours on 6<sup>th</sup> September

The CPRE party of over 30 was divided into two groups. One looked round the very high quality livestock buildings (the cows were out in the fields on a strip grazed system) and the calf rearing unit. The others were given the chance – within hygiene constraints – to see the milk processing plant, and to have the various techniques such as cheese-making explained to them.



### Sampling the products

Everyone seemed greatly impressed, not just by the facilities on the farm, but also by the very high quality of the staff and their ability to communicate their enthusiasm and expertise. The two groups then swapped over before gathering together again for the chance to sample some of the Hollis Mead products and make purchases.

On a very hot morning it was probably as well that the CPRE visitors were not taken out across the fields, but it was apparent that they are managed in a way that greatly benefits wildlife with their well grown hedges as field boundaries, providing a great habitat for fauna and flora.



At the end of the visit Sir Christopher Coville, Dorset CPRE Countryside Forum Chair, expressed thanks to the Hollis Mead staff team on behalf of all the CPRE visitors for a fascinating and informative morning. Oliver Hemsley, a very hands-on member of the team as well as being the person who had made it all happen, was able to meet several of the visitors as the party left the farm.

As an organisation concerned with the countryside and its landscape CPRE cannot have the credibility it needs unless it fully understands the commercial factors that affect decision-making on farms of many different types. Dorset CPRE is right to be making a real effort to achieve that aim.

*Shawn Leavey* OBE FRAGS

# Reynolds Stone: Dorset's Legendary Engraver



Reynolds Stone at work cutting letters

Our local church in Winterborne Tomson boasts a plaque engraved by Reynolds Stone in memory of A.R Powys, the architect who was responsible for saving it from ruin in the 1920s. The distinctive style impressed me, but I only paid more attention when my wife visited the house and garden at Litton Cheney where he lived for well over twenty years until his death, and spoke of its magical and ethereal qualities, that so inspired him in addition to the beautiful unspoilt countryside of the Bride Valley surrounding his house.

Named after the painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, an ancestor, he spent his childhood in Bridport, but was educated at Eton, where his father taught. He then went onto Magdalene College, Cambridge, where like me, he read History. With no clear idea about a career he drifted into a two-year apprenticeship at the Cambridge University Press, where he was taught to appreciate letter design. An accidental meeting with Eric Gill led him onto wood engraving, and after a spell at another printing firm he became a freelance wood engraver without formal training. He married Janet Woods, a photographer, in 1938 and in WW2 worked as an aerial photographic interpreter for the RAF. In 1953 they moved to the Old Rectory at Litton Cheney in Dorset, while his work as an engraver and his expertise in lettering brought him many commissions and considerable success with a broad range of clients.

## His Designs Were Everywhere in Post-war Britain

As many observed you may not know his name, but it is unlikely that you haven't come across his designs. If you travelled with a UK passport you would have seen his royal coat of arms on it, while if you read The Times you would be familiar with his masthead clock face design, and you might have paid for it with a £5 note in the 1960s that was designed by him too. The distinctive Dolcis shop sign was created by him, and he carved many memorials in stone too, such as that to Winston Churchill, TS Eliot and the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain in Westminster Abbey. His forte was white line lettering. Interestingly the war did not change his approach to design, unlike many of his contemporaries.

He engraved dozens of bookplates, mostly with flowing Italianate swirls and flourishes that were distinctively his style, for Benjamin Britten and Hugh Trevor-Roper among others. Engraving wood blocks is not easy, but Stone dismissed the difficulty, observing "It's rather like rowing. You have to put the oar in at the right angle." His engravings depict the countryside with its woods, glades, churchyards and ruins. His daughter Emma said: "The landscape seemed to suit him and his vision. The soft rounded hills and secret valleys, the lush greens, and perhaps above all the trees which feature so prominently in his engravings". He was partly inspired by Samuel Palmer, and was certainly no modernist. Among his best regarded was his set of engravings, The Old Rectory, published in 1976. He illustrated many books, such as

Herman Melville's Omoo. Sylvia Townshend Warner, a Dorset neighbour, wrote poems to complement a fantastic collection of his wood engravings called Boxwood, while in his later years he illustrated A Year of Birds, which was poetry written by Iris Murdoch, a friend. Reynolds designed typefaces, such as Minerva, and one named after his wife Janet as well. His skills were much in demand, and as Hans Schmoller said later "he might almost be described as the Engraver Royal."

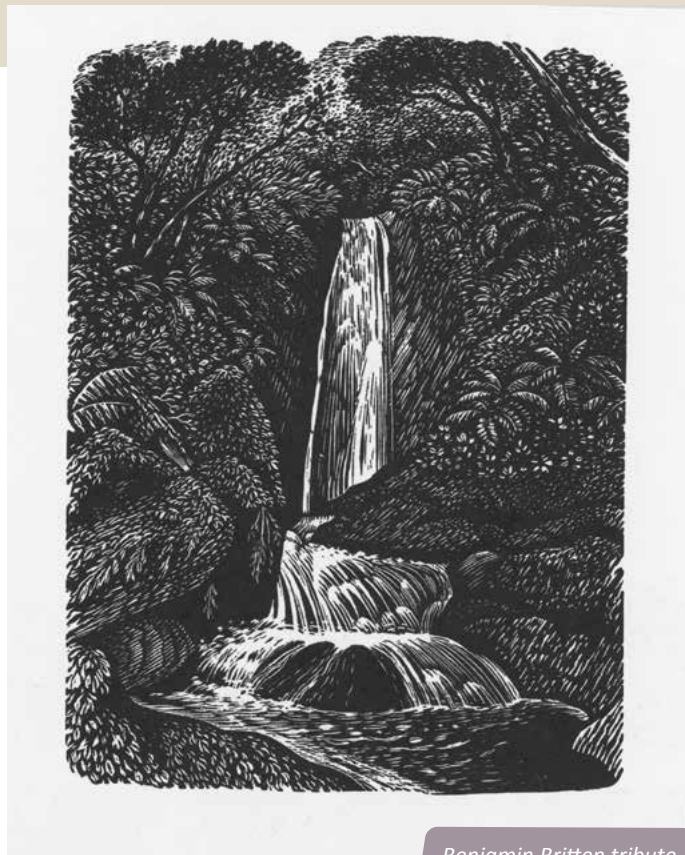


The Times masthead clock face design

A less known part of his prodigious output was his own writing. He wrote regularly pieces for the BBC's The Listener and the Times Literary Supplement. He was an accomplished watercolourist too.

## His Dorset Garden was a Particular Inspiration

His home in Dorset attracted many distinguished literary and artistic figures. Kenneth Clark, John and Myfanwy Piper and John Bayley were special friends but Benjamin Britten, Frey Stark and John Betjeman were regular visitors too. A photograph of the First Sea Lord Charles Lambe playing a duet with the painter John Nash there reflects well on the eclectic company the Stones kept. However, as his son Humphrey said in his memoir published a few years ago, "its magical garden became his whole world. Here he could find the necessary solitude to pursue perfection in all he did." He had a protective passion for woods and wild things, never picking a wild flower or avoiding daisies when he mowed the lawn.



*Benjamin Britten tribute*

Iris Murdoch, in her memorial address said this of him: "good art shows us reality, which we too rarely see because it is veiled by our selfish cares, anxiety, vanity, pretension. Reynolds as artist, and as man, was a totally unpretentious being. His work, seemingly simple, gives us that shock of beauty which shows how close, how in a sense ordinary, are the marvels of the world." He was awarded the CBE in 1953 and died in 1979, but his work survives in the designs with timeless appeal that he created.

All images by kind permission of The Reynolds and Janet Stone Estate.

*Rupert Hardy*

Chair North Dorset CPRE



*Reynolds Stone at gate*

## Visit to Mapperton Estates



*Suzanne Keene and Richard Norman*



*Tamworth sow being friendly*

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June members had an opportunity to visit Mapperton House and Gardens and had a guided tour of either the Manor House or Rewilding Project. We then explored the distinctive Grade II\* Gardens, formal topiary gardens, orangery and arboretum.

# Minerals and Waste in Dorset



This is a summary of our recent work on minerals and waste in Dorset together with a few other items of interest.

I continue to monitor the Minerals Sites Plan 2019, Imerys Ball Clay Operations Dorset, Wytch Farm Oil Field, the Waste Plan 2019, the Winfrith Site, and other developments throughout the County of Dorset. This time I will present news of a few things which have been happening here recently.

## Winfrith Site Stakeholder Group

I attended an Open Day Exhibition at Winfrith Village Hall on 25<sup>th</sup> May where there were posters explaining the details of how the Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor, the Dragon Reactor and the pipeline leading out to the Channel would be decommissioned over the next few years and the Site returned to heathland which will be open to the public. Several senior members of staff helpfully answered our questions. All this will now take rather longer than expected and the site end state will not now be established until at least 2030.

## Arne Moors Intertidal Nature Reserve

I attended a Zoom meeting of the Arne Moors Stakeholder Liaison Group on 13<sup>th</sup> July. This advisory and information sharing Group will meet three times a year during the construction phase which is expected to take three years. Terms of Reference will be published shortly. The next meeting of the Group will be in October at the end of the first construction season.

A carefully designated route for Heavy Goods Vehicles with a speed limit of 20 mph has been generously signposted with passing places and a cabin for the supervisor. I have driven along this route several times when I needed to be in the area and there are now quite a few HGVs about but they seem to be driven carefully and the system is working well.

A substantial Compound Area has been established beside the Arne Road at the southwestern corner of the Intertidal Nature Reserve. There are already many vehicles and a large portable building with a site office where members of the public can get information about what is going on and talk about any concerns they may have about the Project. I dropped in there a few days ago and had useful conversations about present and future progress with senior staff of the Environment Agency and Keir, the engineering site contractor.

The work this year will be mainly on water level management, temporary haul road construction, and restructuring of the Furze Brook. Ecology management and mitigation includes botany and invertebrates surveys, and studies of water voles and ground nesting birds. A patch of Viper's grass has been identified and fenced off.

Extensive archaeological surveys are also being made and a group of Iron Age buildings was recently discovered.



Two big saline lagoons will be built here



This shows the portable site offices

## Extraction of Sand and Gravel

Gerald Rigler has helpfully written a letter of objection on behalf of Dorset CPRE about the proposed extraction of sand and gravel at Hurst Farm, Moreton.

## Incinerator

Gerald Rigler has also written a letter of objection about another (!) proposed incinerator for domestic and other rubbish at the Canford Resource Park near Wimborne.

## Ospreys in Poole Harbour

The breeding pair CJ7 and O22 produced three chicks this year (ringed 5H3, 5H4 and 5H5), two males and one female, and we have all been watching them on the webcam. They were soon fully grown and have been finding their way around and exploring all parts of the Harbour. They have been feeding up and then set off in early September for the long journey to Senegal or somewhere else in that part of Africa where they can spend the winter in a warmer climate. All the other ospreys left for Africa by mid September. Nobody, not even the experts, knows exactly how these birds manage to navigate their way there. We hope that the two juvenile males will safely return to the Harbour after about two years but the female may choose to go elsewhere. All being well these and other birds will eventually restore a self sustaining population of ospreys in southern England for the first time in over 200 years.

Many ospreys have been staying temporarily in Poole Harbour during the summer especially in Lytchett Bay, Holes Bay and Wareham Channel.

Given the ongoing bird flu situation nationally and the outbreak in the Harbour it was decided not to translocate any more ospreys chicks this year but, hopefully, it will be possible for this work to be started again next year.

Do, please, go to [www.birdsofpooleharbour.co.uk](http://www.birdsofpooleharbour.co.uk) to find out more about this exciting Project and to watch the birds on camera again in due course.

*Dr John Larkin*  
Minerals and Waste Adviser  
to Dorset CPRE



# My Friend Earth

The book tells the story of Man's relationship with Earth and the resulting problems in a way that children find fun and can understand. It is particularly suitable for children aged between six and eleven.

It is written by David Birley who lives in Sherborne and is a CPRE member. David said "I had the idea for this story quite a few years ago. When I was lucky enough to be the mayor in 2016, I made a point of getting to know our community particularly the primary schools. It was reading the story to classes and getting such lovely reviews from the children and their teachers that inspired me to take the story further. I have also been lucky to find Helena, the illustrator. The children love her pictures."

What he had not realised at the time is that issues such as conservation, waste management, pollution and climate change are now part of the curriculum.

Sadly a drive on any major road or a walk in any city will show how bad the problems are and how much needs to be done.



David has read the story at various schools and received the following comments from teachers:

*I have never known the children to sit and listen so intently with such enthusiasm and their work afterwards was amazing – wow it is fantastic, I really like it. What a clever idea – It is ideal for schools to use and parents to educate children.*

## Comments from children include:

*It was really good. I loved it and would read it every night – I thought the story was amazing and I like the idea of saving the planet. – I think the story was inspiring because it teaches us to look after our earth, — It was really good. The best book ever.*

It has also been reviewed for CPRE by eleven-year-old Isla. Isla wrote "I really enjoyed reading My Friend Earth because it gave important messages about



the impact we are having on our planet. The message was delivered in a fun way that I was able to understand and relate to. I particularly liked the end where it talked about bringing children together to help make earth better. It inspired me to make a difference working alongside my friends to help save our planet. The

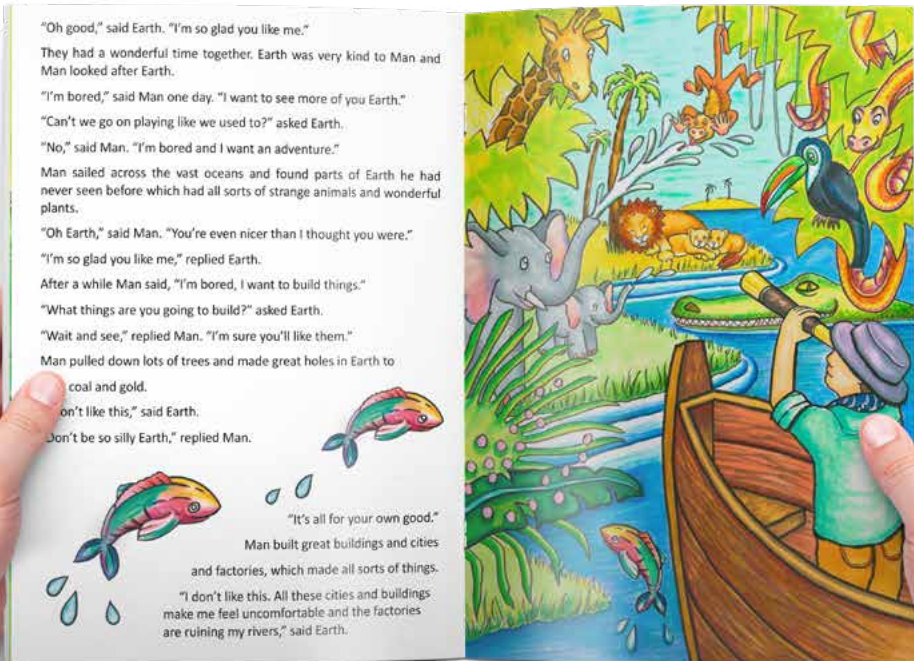
beautiful colour pictures helped reinforce the very important message."

David would encourage children and young adults to read this and for schools to use it when doing eco related work.

It is the author's intention to use the proceeds to help fund eco related projects at schools.

The book is available at a special discount price of £5 which includes postage.

**To order either email [davidpfbirley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:davidpfbirley@hotmail.co.uk) or write to him: David Birley, 4 The Old Green, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 3JY**



# The usefulness and relevance of Green Belt Policy



Photo: Io Jeremiah

*Upton heath between Corfe Mullen and Broadstone*

Tommy Jeremiah, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Planning and Property Development student at Oxford Brookes University, contacted Dorset CPRE in March 2023 and interviewed Mike Allen for his dissertation on 'The usefulness and relevance of Green Belt Policy'. Tommy has written an article on his research. Mike notes that Tommy's findings do not necessarily align with Dorset CPRE's strong support for Green Belt land protection around BCP.

## Introduction

For my Dissertation I completed an investigatory study into the effectiveness of Green Belt Policy and the potential for change or improvement. The United Kingdom's Green Belt Policy has acted as a buffer against uncontrolled development since its introduction in 1955. Intended to create balance between the demands of urbanisation and the necessity of environmental preservation, the Green Belt has been an ever increasing topic of discussion, its relevance and usefulness questioned in the face of a growing housing crisis.

## Historical Context

The Green Belt Policy is a policy which was introduced in 1955 and later updated in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with the 5 main purposes:

- (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Since 1955, the policy has shaped the development landscape of the UK, producing a vibrant belt that acts as the safe guard and

opportunity for the public to access green open space in towns and cities.

## The Green Debate

The Green Belt was designed as a balancing act between preservation and progress. However, the increasing pressure for housing and urban development has brought the effectiveness into question. The use of the Green Belt Policy now needs to be analysed through a modern lens, where the need for sustainable development and affordable housing takes an equal importance to the protection of the local environment.

## Case Study: Dorset

Dorset presents a microcosm of the larger debate surrounding the Green Belt. The county has been tussling over pressures of housing needs and the preservation of its picturesque landscapes. The local council, developers, and preservation campaigners like CPRE's Dorset branch have engaged in a tug-of-war, seeking a middle ground between development and conservation.

Dorset Council has produced a structured review system with a 'strategic Green Belt assessment' (Dorset Council local plan, 2018, P.1.1.1.) evaluating areas of green belt and non green belt land for development in Dorset. It included a harm rating for the land if it was to be released for development based on its contribution to the Green Belt objectives and its sustainability. From the review it designated specific Green Belt areas for development under exceptional circumstances while prioritising brownfield sites. This approach should be viewed as a potential model for other regions, offering a blueprint for reconciling the demands of development with the principles of preservation.

## Voices from the Ground

A series of interviews with local planners, developers, and residents in Dorset unearthed varied perspectives on the Green Belt. While there is still strong support for its preservation, many voiced concerns about the policy not fully meeting its objectives. The prevalence of "Nimbyism" – the Not In My Backyard sentiment – further complicates the situation, with opposition to development often arising from personal concerns rather than a true understanding of the potential impact.

## Brownfield Sites and Sustainability

Brownfield sites, previously developed land that is not currently in use. Whilst it is more desirable to build on brownfield sites it is increasing the density of developments by so much it is being argued that it is increasingly difficult to supply good quality urban design at an affordable price due to land value increasing constantly as available land decreases. Since the introduction of Green Belt land 'the real price of land for houses has risen more than 15 fold' (Paul Cheshire and Boyana Buyuklieva, 2019: page 2) however it is not the only factor causing the increase of land value in the UK. The debate around brownfield sites underscores the complexity of finding solutions that are both economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

## Relevance in a Changing Landscape

The Green Belt Policy remains relevant as it continues to play a vital role in preserving the natural landscape, preventing urban sprawl, and encouraging sustainable development. However, the evolving needs of society and the shifting dynamics of urbanisation necessitate a reassessment of its application and regulations.

The lessons learned from regions like Dorset show the path forward, highlighting the need for new strategies, structured reviews, and community engagement. These insights are

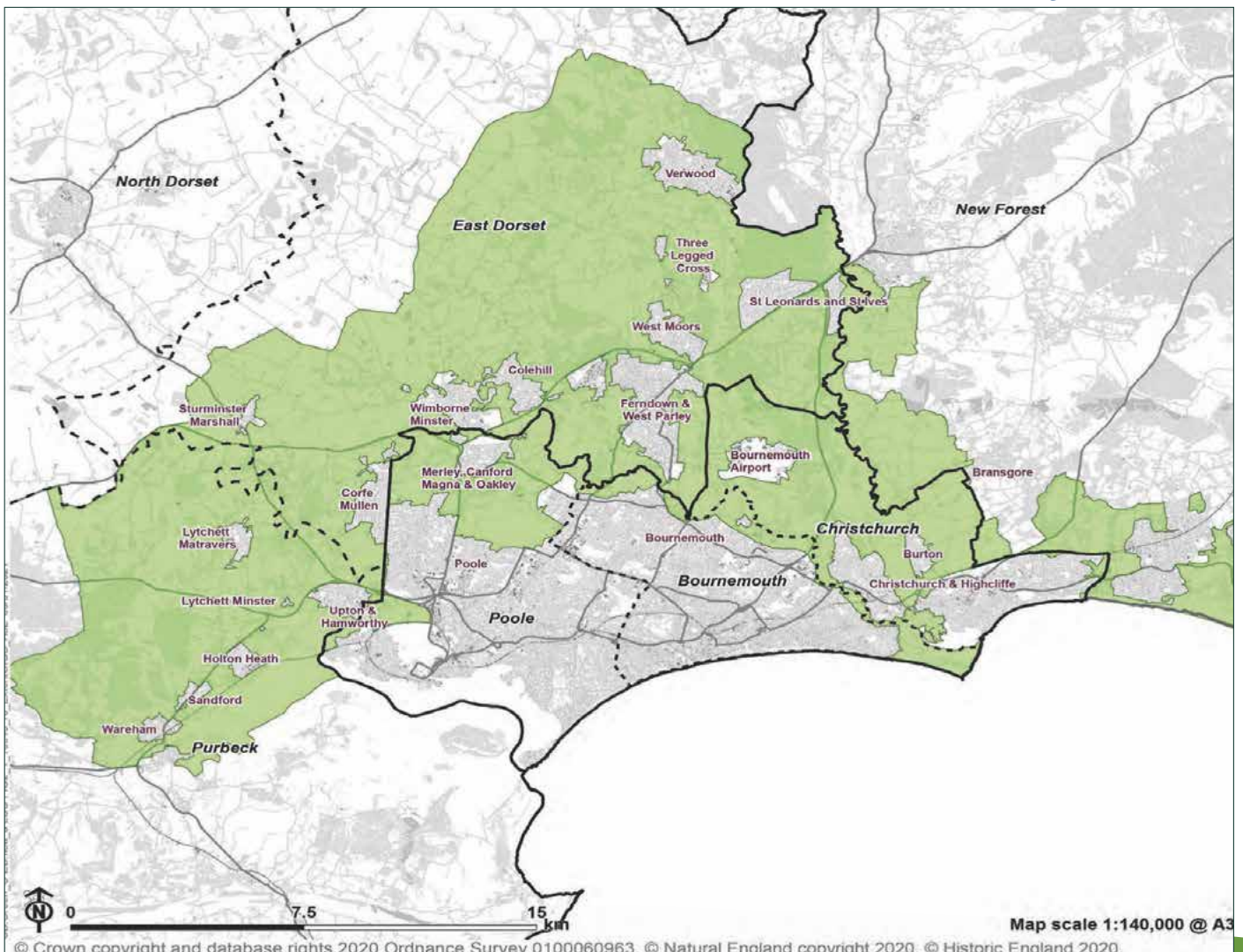
crucial as the UK seeks to navigate the challenging terrain between the preservation of green spaces and addressing the pressing housing needs.

## Conclusion: Green Belt for the Future

As we begin a new era of development, the Green Belt Policy's relevance and usefulness are more critical than ever. The policy, while rooted in the principles of preservation and sustainability, must evolve to meet the current needs of society. The ongoing debates, research, and case studies serve as a guide towards a coexistence of green horizons and urban landscapes.

In conclusion Green Belt Policy is still meeting its objectives of protecting the wall of green around towns and cities but now due to the increased pressure on housing needs in the UK there is need for a change. The introduction of standard structured review of each local authorities' Green Belt designation is needed to assess the value held in relation to the NPPF objectives. Importantly it should be done to identify areas of Green Belt which could be released for future housing development whilst redesigning areas of land more suitable for Green Belt designation. It would not be a loss of Green Belt land but merely a re-designation to allow for better quality sustainable developments. The review must sustain an equitable balance of use that is at the core of Green Belt policies.

*Tommy Jeremiah*



This shows the Green Belt in South East Dorset

# After a full year of Great Big Dorset Hedge surveys, what do we know?

In the first few months, our emphasis was on the major trails that traverse the county because surveys can be undertaken there without the need to seek permissions. Much can quickly be learned about which parishes have great hedgerows and which do not, just from the vantage point of those trails but little will change by doing surveys that just tell us current status. We were soon approaching farmers and seeking permission to assess their hedges on private tracts of land. Progress was initially slow, but this changed once the Dorset Wildlife Trust started inviting us to present to their various farm clusters. In the past six months, sixteen farms have welcomed us to do extensive surveys, and, in most cases, it is their intention to adopt the hedgerow actions in the Sustainable Farming Incentive now that the government has opened the application window. That should lead to a steady and strong improvement in hedgerow condition.

After a full year of surveys, around 1200 volunteer hours have generated 140 km of on-trail hedge surveys plus nearly 100 km of across-farm hedge surveys. We should admit immediately that 90% of these surveyed hedgerows are in West Dorset. Perhaps that explains why the condition of the hedgerows surveyed, thus far, is much more positive than you would expect reading in the press about our neglected hedgerows. We should not be too surprised, because West Dorset is renowned for its small fields of permanent pastures, and big banked hedgerows that also are the tradition in neighbouring Devon. Wherever permanent pastures exist, they are grazed by sheep or cattle and so hedgerows would still be valued as the fundamental barrier that keeps the animals safely contained. Perhaps, as our mission unfolds in all the other parts of our county, we will see a different picture emerging.

## The Sustainable Farming Incentive and hedgerows

The hedgerow is in the middle of a subsidy revolution but the general mood in the farming community is that it is all too complicated and may not fit well into a working farm, but for hedgerows some significant funding is available if the prescriptions can be accepted. Farmers can soon earn up to £360 per kilometre of **eligible** hedgerows to support appropriate ongoing maintenance and will have easier access to the capital grants for improving their hedges. We will not dwell on any weaknesses in the scheme here (though there are some) because it is what it is. It is released and fixed for now. We in the Great Big Dorset Hedge (GBDH) project are helping to overcome the barriers to its adoption for hedges because therein lies a path to successfully managed hedgerows. Some aspects of the application process leave much to be desired, but I do know at least one farmer who has secured an SFI agreement with hedgerows central to it.



Hawthorn Berries on Luccas Farm



Photo from left John Calder, David Cotterell (Farm Manager at Kingston Maurward College) and Gemma Harvey (NFU Country Advisor)

## How Farmers Learn to Make the Changes that now need to be made in Hedgerows

Farmers who want to learn 'best practice' have increasingly done so through formalised farm clusters. Organisations like the Game & Wildlife Trust (GWT), the county Wildlife Trusts (DWT in Dorset), and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) have offered facilitation services to establish and run such clusters. Hedgerows would occasionally be a focus of attention. Other organisations have sought to become very influential in enabling new thinking in farmers. I am thinking of the Soil Association (who are behind every certified organic farmer), the Nature Friendly Farming Network (whose focus is sustainable farming) and LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) who bring communities and farmers together. Then there is the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Country Landowners Association (CLA) who also have support resources for farmers. None major on the vital importance of the hedgerow in the landscape the farmer manages.

The two organisations whose passion for hedgerows stands out among the rest through their very effective hedgerow programmes are the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). Both have committed focused resources on hedgerows, and both have been enormously supportive in the early days of our GBDH project.

Despite all this support, it must be bewildering for a farmer to know which way to turn for help. We offer to undertake hedgerow surveys and then present the results in a format that fits the requirements of the hedgerow actions in the Sustainable Farming Incentive. The GBDH project brings the local community as volunteers together with the willing, participating farmer and makes it more likely that the intentions of the Sustainable Farming Incentive are to be achieved generating an enhanced network of hedgerows. We are enablers. We appear to be having a real impact.

## Those vital GBDH Volunteers

When I think about the volunteers who have been undertaking those GBDH hedgerow surveys it fills me with well-founded hope. How exciting it is to meet with such enthusiasm and to share time in such a worthy challenge. No names need to be mentioned but there really is a core team whose dedication and commitment is enormous. When I tell my colleagues we only have 180 volunteers and we need 400 to get the job done,



Dorset CPRE joined hedgerow survey at Kingston Maurward on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023

they ask where will they all come from? In all honesty, we have yet to master how we replicate the successes we already achieved in West Dorset to the rest of the county, but we know which obstacles need to be overcome. It is not hard to find those who would enjoy the walk, would enjoy acquiring the new knowledge, and might relish being slowed down. **What we find more difficult to find is the volunteer who is prepared to sit at their computer after the survey and loads the results,**

**or the other volunteer who is adept at computer skills to the extent that survey maps can be easily generated prior to each survey.** If, among your friends and peers you know of candidates for those roles they would be embraced in our project team very eagerly.

To the question of whether our Dorset-focused project might have applicability beyond Dorset, I would suggest we need to show successful deployment across our own county before claiming we have solved anything. However, as County authorities all over England embed the landscape recovery objectives into their organisations, as they are now obliged to do, they would be missing a trick if they did not learn from what is being achieved here. To quote ex-Minister George Eustice “in hedgerows we have the most important ecological building block in the farmed landscape and how we manage them matters. “

One farm at a time, we believe we are making a hedgerow revolution possible. If you would like to join other GBDH volunteers on future surveys, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/VolunteerGBDH>

*John Calder*

GBDH Project Manager for Dorset CAN

## CPRE Recent Publications

National CPRE publishes a number of reports based on detailed research. Here is a summary of the most recent reports that can be found on CPRE Resources webpage [www.cpre.org.uk/resources](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources):



### Rooftop solar revolution

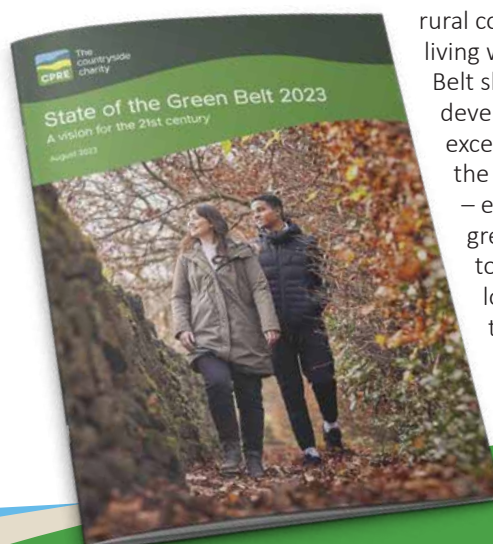
On 23<sup>rd</sup> May National CPRE published new research ‘**Shout from the rooftops: delivering a common sense solar revolution – CPRE**’ showing that 60% of the solar panels our country needs can be sited on rooftops. Research by the University College London (UCL) Energy Institute, commissioned by CPRE, shows the true potential of rooftop solar in helping to meet net zero targets, protect the countryside and tackle the climate emergency.

### State of the Green Belt 2023: A vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The Green Belt is being overlooked as a pivotal solution to climate change, the decline of nature and food security vulnerabilities. The report argues that the Green Belt, which protects 12.5% of England’s land area from development, should become greener, wetter and more biodiverse.

An acute need for more affordable and social housing means

rural communities living within the Green Belt should be able to develop small rural exception sites on the edge of villages – even when it is on greenfield land – to accommodate local needs, the report recommends



# Leaving a Legacy



**A GIFT IN YOUR WILL  
CAN HELP PROTECT OUR  
GLORIOUS COUNTRYSIDE  
FOR GENERATIONS TO COME**

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If you share our beliefs about protecting our precious heritage of a beautiful countryside, please consider leaving a gift to Dorset CPRE in your will.

Your legacy, no matter what the amount, will help us ensure that developments are sensitive to the countryside, and that housing sprawl is kept in check. With your help, there will be a green, tranquil and beautiful England for tomorrow's children to enjoy.

"The English countryside is an exceptional creation – immensely old, full of surprises and nearly always pleasing to look at. For me, the countryside represents so much of what makes life worth living but how much of it will be left for future generations to enjoy?" Bill Bryson

## 3 Simple steps to leaving a legacy to CPRE

1. Find a solicitor or other qualified advisor
2. Decide what type of gift you'd like to leave CPRE – a share of your estate or a fixed sum.
3. Take our details with you – your solicitor or advisor will need our full name (Dorset CPRE), address and registered charity number 211974.

## Plan-making Reforms

### Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: Consultation on Implementation of Plan-making Reforms

In July Michael Gove announced proposals to reform the current Local Plan making system. The stated objectives of these reforms are to:-

- Make Local Plans simpler to understand and use, and positively shaped by the views of the community about how their area should evolve.
- Clearly show what is planned in the local area, so that communities and other users of the plan can engage with them more easily.
- Speed up preparation time and frequency of updates.
- Make best use of new technologies to improve accessibility.

At our monthly Planning Group Meetings members raised the following comments on the Plan-making reforms:

### Supplementary Plans

We are concerned that these will be used to fast track 'speculative development' and the allocation of sites for new development without public consultation. However, on the plus side they could potentially be used to correct mistakes made in the Local Plan making process.

### Local Development Management Policies (LDMP)

We are concerned that there is a potential for a clash between LDMP and National Development Management Policies. The

latter will take the place of local policies and override them, for example in the areas of housing and conservation.

### Local Plan Making Process and Community Engagement

We would like to see an opportunity for community input at the inception of the plan making process (Stage 1). For example, BCP Council undertook a consultation on key Issues and a call for possible development sites in early 2019 to understand the issues that the community wanted the Local Plan to address prior to commencing work on the first draft; it then undertook an Issues and Options Consultation in 2022. We strongly feel that the removal of such an opportunity for community input at the start of the process will result in Local Plan policies that do not truly reflect the needs of the local community. There should be proper consultations at all stages.

We would also like to see a second Community Consultation on the draft local plan prior to it being finalised for presentation for public examination by inspectors.

### Community Land Auction

Whilst we welcome the opportunity for local authorities to benefit from the uplift in value resulting from the grant of planning permission for large scale developments, we have concerns about the practicality of the mechanism proposed.

National CPRE is preparing a full OneCPRE response to the consultation, given the considerable impact the reforms are likely to have on local plan-making and decisions. This consultation closes on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

# Dorset CPRE Membership

Thank you for being one of our valued members. Your membership makes a real difference to what we can achieve, and with your generous support we will continue our work towards our vision of a thriving, beautiful countryside for everyone.

## Gift of Membership

Have you considered the gift of Dorset CPRE membership?

Joining CPRE is the single most effective way to stand up for the countryside. Once farmland and green spaces are built on, they are lost forever. The more you can give, the more we can do to keep our countryside safe. You can join online via our website [www.dorset-cpre.org.uk](http://www.dorset-cpre.org.uk) or contact our office on 0333 577 0360 to receive a copy of our membership form. Individual £5 per month and £7 for Household membership. We also provide membership for Organisations, Town and Parish Councils.

As a member you'll receive our regular Countryside Voice magazine, and enjoy discounted entry to houses, gardens and other attractions around England.



- Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens
- Athelhampton House & Gardens
- Edmondsham House & Garden
- Mapperton Gardens
- Wolfeton House

Visitors are asked to check for individual opening times before setting out as many are seasonal.

Please visit our website for details on how to join or contact our office for a joining form. CPRE Membership also makes an ideal present.

Don't forget to take your membership card with you. All houses and gardens' opening dates and times are subject to coronavirus restrictions and may be updated throughout the year so please call, email, or check entries' websites.

Dorset CPRE Members also receive –

- The Dorset Review magazine in the spring & autumn
- Membership of your local county branch
- Access to our Planning Hotline for advice from CPRE Staff
- They can also join our Planning Group meetings



*Mapperton House & Gardens*

## Diary Dates

Please visit the Dorset CPRE website [www.dorset-cpre.org.uk](http://www.dorset-cpre.org.uk) for 2023/24 meeting dates for the Countryside Forum, Planning Group, District Groups and events.

**18<sup>th</sup> November** – 86<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AGM, 11 am, Cerne Abbas Village Hall. Guest Speaker Roger Mortlock, new CEO at CPRE.

# Campaign to Protect Rural England

## DORSET BRANCH


Registered Charity No. 211974

Dorset CPRE, PO Box 9018, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 9GY.

Tel: 0333 577 0360

email: [info@dorset-cpre.org.uk](mailto:info@dorset-cpre.org.uk)

website: [www.dorset-cpre.org.uk](http://www.dorset-cpre.org.uk)

  @DorsetCPRE

### BRANCH CONTACT

**Mrs Linda Williams**

### Executive Committee & Trustees 2023

#### PRESIDENT

**Mr Edward Fox OBE**

#### VICE-PRESIDENTS

**Mr Richard H Nicholls** **01308 427684**

159 Victoria Grove, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3AG

**Mr Peter Neal** **01935 814801**

5 Abbeymead Court, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 3AU

**Mr Richard H Norman** **01258 472887**

Mngani, 15 Hillcrest Close, Glue Hill, Sturminster Newton DT10 2DL

**Dr John A Larkin** **01929 555366**

Lorien, Grange Road, Wareham BH20 5AL

#### LIFE VICE-PRESIDENTS

**Capt Dickie Bird, LVO, RN** **01935 850576**

Manor Farm House, Trent, Sherborne DT9 4SW

**Rear Admiral Richard Heaslip, CB** **01202 594982**

2 Longfield Drive, West Parley, Ferndown BH22 8TY

**Mr Stephen G Howard** **01747 853029**

12 Savoy Court, Bimport, Shaftesbury SP7 8BN

#### CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

**Mr Peter Bowyer** **01929 450219**

The Thatched Cottage, 24 The Green, Heathgreen Road, Studland, Swanage, Dorset BH19 3BT

#### HONORARY TREASURER

**Mr Bob Bowmer** **07500 184141**

Fairfield House, 2 King's Road, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4HU

#### ELECTED MEMBERS

**Dr Guy Dickinson** **07747 776580**

1 Beech Road, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 5NP

**Mr Peter Bowyer** **01929 450219**

The Thatched Cottage, 24 The Green, Heathgreen Road, Studland BH19 3BT

**Dr Frances Hogwood** **01305 259576**

8 Hintock Street, Poundbury, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 3FB

**Mr Neil Matthews** **01305 264974**

3 Athelstan Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1NR

**Mr Michael Madgwick** **07966 322 475**

52 Bimport, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8BA

**Mr Peter Neil** **07880 721 138**

### Group Chairmen

#### West Dorset:

**Dr Guy Dickinson** **07747 776580**

1 Beech Road, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 5NP

#### North Dorset:

**Mr Rupert Hardy** **0780 390 7711**

The Manor, Winterborne Tomson, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 9HA

#### The Sherborne and District Society:

**Sir Christopher Coville** **07753 925 434**

#### Purbeck & Poole:

**Mr Gerald Rigler** **01202 601109**

9 Sundew Road, Broadstone, Dorset BH18 9NX

#### East Dorset, Bournemouth and Christchurch:

**Contact Dorset CPRE Branch**

### Countryside Forum Chair

**Sir Christopher Coville** **07753 925 434**

### Advisers to the Forum

#### Trees for Dorset

**Mrs Rachel M Palmer** **01929 462423**

Clouds, 14 Cologne Road, Bovington, Wareham BH20 6NP

#### Environment Agency

**Guy Parker** **01258 483460**

Flood Resilience Advisor (Wessex)

Rivers House, Sunrise Business Park,

Higher Shaftesbury Road, Blandford Forum DT11 8ST

Email: [guy.parker@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:guy.parker@environment-agency.gov.uk)

#### Dorset CAN (Climate Action Network)

**Giles Watts** **07840 061 712**

Email: [dorsetcan@gmail.com](mailto:dorsetcan@gmail.com)

#### CPRE SOUTH WEST

#### Regional Chair:

c/o CPRE South West, Rowdens Road, Wells, Somerset BA5 1TU

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EDITOR/DESIGNER: Linda Williams/Shawn Hodge

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