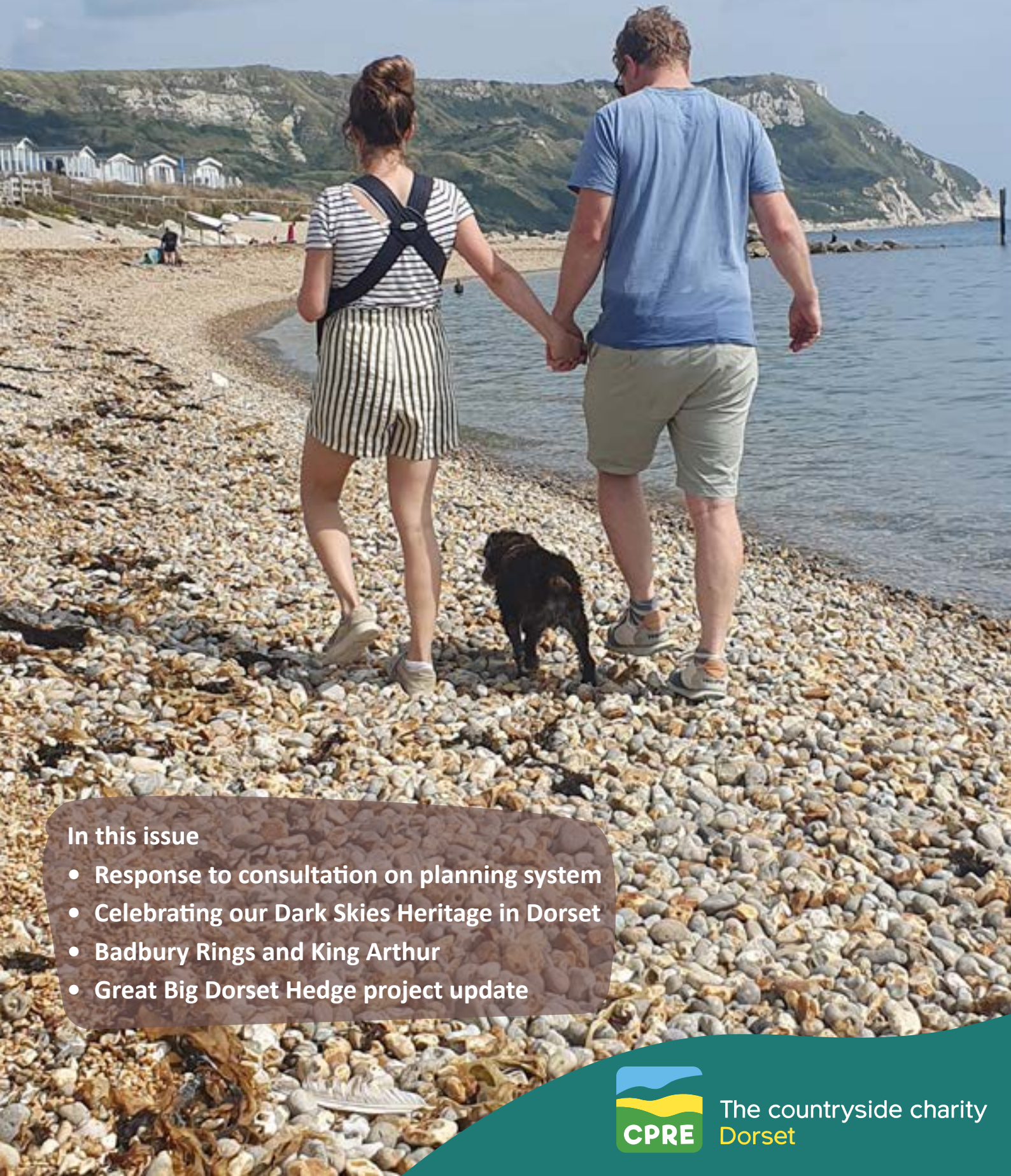


# The Dorset Review

Autumn 2024 News Issue 123



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The countryside charity  
Dorset





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The contents of this publication are intended as guidance and general interest. It does not constitute legal advice and can be no substitute for considered advice on specific problems. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information printed in this publication, Dorset CPRE cannot accept liability for errors and omissions. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of CPRE.



**Front Cover image** – Young family on Ringstead Bay, taken by Rupert Hardy.

Well, it is hard to believe that six months have passed since I was writing my first report. So much has taken place!

## Local Elections

In April we were preparing for the local elections in the Dorset Council area. Candidates of every colour were standing for election in towns and parishes as well as the unitary authority. Dorset Council, as the primary planning authority for Dorset outside of the conurbation, has such an important strategic role in deciding where new building will be located. And, of course, they are charged with developing the much-delayed Local Plan.

Preparing for an election such as this takes a lot of administrative effort. Candidates need to be contacted and presented with our manifesto (my letter to candidates was published in our Spring edition of this magazine). We do this so that where elected representatives change, Dorset CPRE continues to be known, recognised and hopefully consulted: our expertise in understanding the opportunities and constraints on future builds is second to none.

## General Election

It is one thing to prepare for a series of elections which are normally part of a four-year cycle. There are an entirely different set of challenges when reacting to a general election being called with only the six weeks' notice. Yet that is what we faced when the Prime Minister stood in the rain outside 10 Downing Street on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

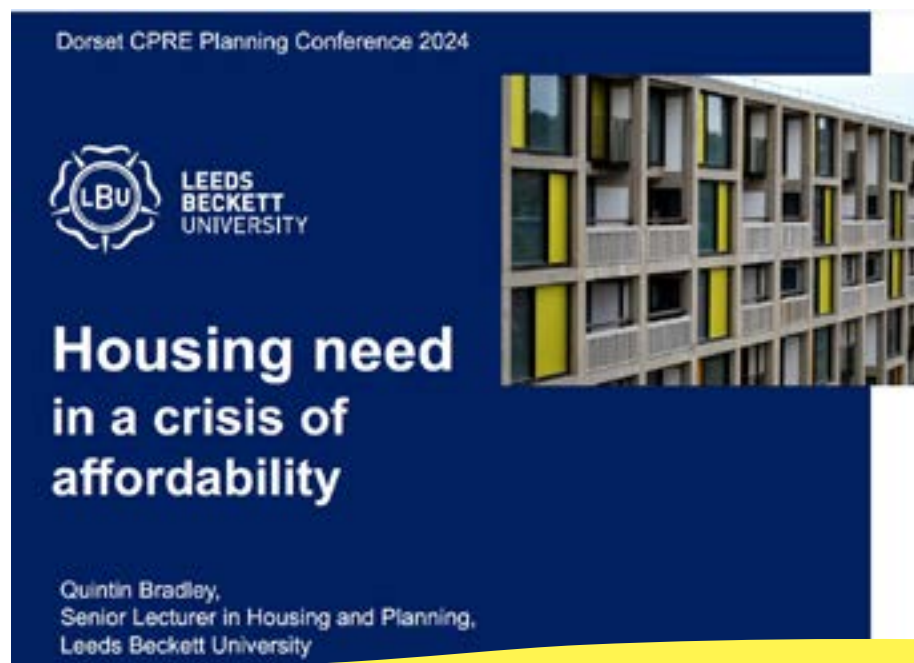
Thankfully, we did manage to write to all candidates in each of the eight Dorset Constituencies. And it is a good job we did. Three quarters of our constituencies changed colour at the election and, as we know, the Labour Party returned to power with a large majority.

Now the challenge is to establish working relationships with the Liberal Democrats run Dorset Council, the coalition-led BCP Council and our MPs drawn from three different political parties. Interesting times!

## Dorset's Affordable Housing Crisis? – our summer planning conference

In June, during the run-up to the general election, we grasped the nettle and held our conference critically examining the topic of Affordable Housing with a focus of what it means for Dorset. It was ably chaired by Lord Richard Best.

Among the many eminent contributors, Mike Allen (Dorset CPRE) used an evidence-based analysis to examine the type and numbers of houses required by Dorset, both now and in the future. With major contributions from Dr Quintin Bradley (Leeds Beckett University) and Alison Ward (Middlemarch Community Led Housing) the Conference was both inspiring and insightful.



There is a more detailed report of the conference on pages 6 of this magazine. The presentations from key speakers and other resources continue to be available on our website.

## National CPRE AGM

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July Jez Hughes, Vice-Chair, attended the National CPRE AGM at Bartholomew Close in London. This was a hybrid meeting which I attended online. However the value of attending in person was demonstrated as Jez was able to establish contact with many other useful delegates. Not least, he met the incoming national President Mary-Ann Ochota and invited her to visit Dorset to witness the work that we are undertaking. We have a provisional arrangement for her to visit sometime in 2025. Mary-Ann is a broadcaster, author and



Mary-Ann Ochota

anthropologist whose passionate expertise has engaged people worldwide with landscapes, heritage and the natural world. She has presented factual programmes for the BBC, Channel 4 and National Geographic, including Time Team, Mystic Britain and Ancient Impossible.

In addition, Jez met Margaret Paren, Chair of Hampshire CPRE. Building on this contact, I am going to meet Margaret at Sparsholt College during the autumn. There are many issues that Dorset and Hampshire share, not least our shared border, chalk streams and Cranborne Chase.

## Garden Party

In July we held our summer garden party. Our hosts on this occasion were Tom and Rosamond Sweet-Escott at Chettle House near Blandford. Tom spoke about the changes that they

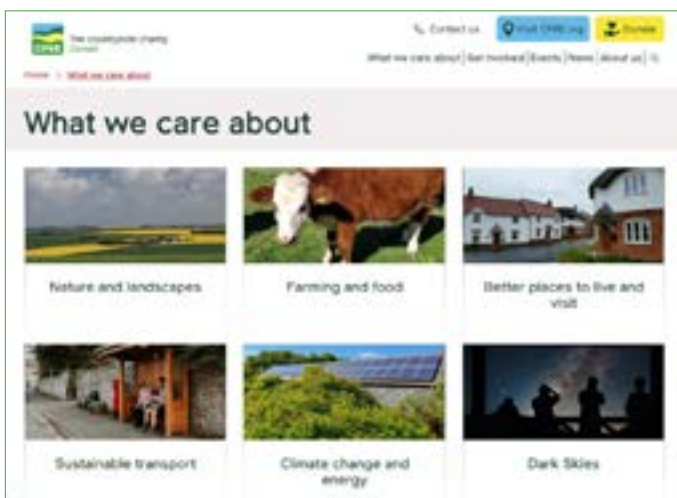
had made to the house, gardens and fields in order to create new habitats and help stem the decline in our biodiversity.

Attendees enjoyed a buffet lunch in a marquee on the lawn and afterwards explored the grounds which are being managed within a restorative farming environment. Blessed with kind weather, it provided a great opportunity for members to catch up and meet our President, Kate Adie, and our trustees.

Thanks to Tom and Rosamond for being such gracious hosts.

## Website

During this time, Linda has been working tirelessly updating our website ([dorset-cpre.org.uk](http://dorset-cpre.org.uk)). It now has a much more modern feel and more closely represents the work being done by our volunteers across Dorset.



Do visit the website and please encourage others to do so. We hope that the inspiring work carried out by our local groups and volunteers will encourage more to join us. Working together for a better Dorset is our aim and I would like to thank all of you for making Dorset CPRE so successful and influential.

*Neil Matthews*  
Chair of Trustees

## 87<sup>th</sup> AGM

### Roger Morgan-Grenville, Curlew Action Chair of Trustees, Guest Speaker



We are delighted that Roger will join us on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November for our 87<sup>th</sup> AGM at Cerne Abbas Village Hall, starting at 11am. **Please see enclosed A4 booking form.**

Mary Colwell, the founder of Curlew Action, has spearheaded the campaign for a GCSE in Natural History since 2011, which

was confirmed by the department of education in April 2022. This new qualification is set to be introduced in schools by September 2025. A GCSE in Natural History is a unique

opportunity for young people to engage with wildlife in a structured, guided way, to learn the skills of a naturalist at a time when we need them more than ever. Roger works on the Natural History GCSE campaign and will share with us their future plans.

Roger was a soldier in the Royal Green Jackets for nine years, during which time he served on five continents, and led the first expedition to successfully retrace Shackleton's extraordinary journey across the island of South Georgia. As well as managing a housewares company, Roger helped to found the charity Help for Heroes, and was its first head fundraiser. Roger is an author, writing on both natural history and sport, as well as an enthusiastic amateur beekeeper and lifelong lover of birds.

Do come, meet some of your fellow members, and see what we are up to.



# The Sherborne and District Society



## Taming the Wilderness

In recent years many Sherborne residents will have noticed a lady hard at work on creating a long flowerbed beside the passage between Fosters lane and the Wilderness housing. Prior to her efforts this was merely an area of weeds and scruffy shrubs. In its civic society role Sherborne and District Society CPRE has wished to recognise Sylvia Avgherinos's enormous amount of hard work and achievement, and the Chairman Sir Christopher Coville made a presentation to her with some garden centre vouchers.

## The Sherborne

It has been very gratifying to see the culmination of all the efforts to bring the restoration of Sherborne House to fruition. It is now a dominant feature of the town and a great resource for the local community.



It is of course also the legacy of the late Michael Cannon and his determination, despite failing health, to deal with all the challenges that this extensive work entailed. It is now a worthy memorial to his vision for the building and his dedication to the project.



## Farming: Cause for concern

In recent weeks two announcements about farming should be causing great concern to all those with an interest in the local countryside. The first was the NFU's statement that if the UK was reliant during 2024 on 100% domestically produced food it would have run out of that by mid-August. The second was an announcement by Natural England that to achieve all the environmental targets set by the government our domestic food production would be slashed by 25%. In a county where farming is such an important part of the rural economy and the dominant feature of our wonderful landscape this ought to be a wake-up call for our Dorset MPs, Councillors, and Dorset CPRE. Farming is changing (see photo of a field north of Sherborne) to optimise production as the country's population increases. But to ensure we maintain our "green and pleasant land" we must as CPRE members do all that we can to ensure local farming remains not just viable, but also profitable.

## Wyke Farm Solar Panels Proposal

The Sherborne and District Society CPRE committee have been giving considerable thought to the appropriate response to the proposal for a solar farm on land owned by the Ilchester estate near Sherborne. This is symptomatic of a widespread problem as landowners and farmers increasingly realise that post-Brexit their reduced support payments (coupled with the complexity of some of the replacement conservation schemes) are increasingly having an adverse impact on farm profitability. This prompts landowners and farmers to

turn land over to projects such as that proposed for Wyke Farm, but it also tends to increase the number of on-farm diversification enterprises. That militates against optimising domestic food production, and can in some cases impact adversely on the landscape. Whilst the promoters of the scheme argue that 95% of the land will be able to support sheep grazing the farm (which was previously owned by Winchester College) has a significant acreage of prime arable land.

A public statement by the Chairman on behalf of the local CPRE Group reads as follows:

*We support wholeheartedly the UK's target of net zero emissions by 2050.*

*We agree that appropriately scaled and sited renewables will need to be a vital part of the energy mix. However, we submit that land should be optimised to best effect, with a strong presumption that existing farmland should be retained in food production to narrow the national food deficit.*

*Accordingly, we believe that priority should be assigned to fitting rooftop solar arrays on all existing commercial and on all new housing developments, followed by unproductive land where there would be no adverse effects on the landscape or on heritage assets.*

*Only when this has been achieved should any consideration be given to using productive farmland for solar arrays.*

## Two Town Triumphs (and one work in progress)

Dorset Council is putting together a Local Heritage List of buildings that are not listed but are of architectural significance. We nominated a number of buildings and were recently informed that the following buildings will be included.



## 27 Cheap Street

Formerly Sporting Classics and now a dress shop, Aspiga, 27 Cheap Street is

an important survivor of Moderne shop design. Dating from 1930's the design of the shop front and the use of modern materials reflects that of the Art Deco Movement with its decorative terrazzo floor and bold leaded glazing and lantern. As well as its architectural importance, 27 Cheap Street plays its part in the evolution of retail along the street making a positive contribution to the town.



### Rawson Hall

In a rather sorrier state is Rawson Hall, Gravel Pits, built by the Rawson family for the Church Lads' Brigade Cadet Corp before WW1. These 'tin' buildings, made of galvanized iron, were delivered flat

pack and popular from 1860s particularly among flourishing non-conformist congregations. The importance of these humble vernacular buildings is finally being recognised, and Historic England is working with owners and communities to find new uses for these buildings. Let's hope Rawson Hall finds a new use soon. Other examples in town include, the Studio Theatre, Marston Road and Devon Haye, a private residence, bought flat-pack from Harrods in 1899.

### Sherborne Railway Station Buildings

The cluster of buildings, including the footbridge have been added to the heritage list. We wrote about these buildings in the spring magazine, but would like to add that interested parties are working together in the hope of finding a long term solution to the empty station master's house.

Thank you to our members and guests who attended our AGM on 27<sup>th</sup> September and for your continued support. We discussed the above topics which demonstrates not only how active



we are as a Group, but also the breadth of issues which we confront to retain the beauty of our countryside and the elegance of our Town and nearby villages.

*Sir Christopher Coville*  
Chairman

## Visit to The Orchard, Chalmington



Shaun Leavey arranged a visit to a farm very different from the two large farms we visited in 2022 (Lower Farm in Lillington) and 2023 (Hollis Mead Organic Dairy). On 18<sup>th</sup> May, twenty five members had a tour of The Orchard, located north of Cattistock village, learning about the variety of apples grown and cider making. It was an opportunity for members to learn about the reality of trying to run a small fruit farm producing a low value crop.

The Orchard is a small farm specializing in cider apple production where the viability of the holding has been dependent on various forms of diversification – shepherd's huts for holiday let within the orchard, a small farm shop (with limited opening times), and its own award winning Dorset Star cider to drink on site or buy. They sell orchard honey and other local produce.

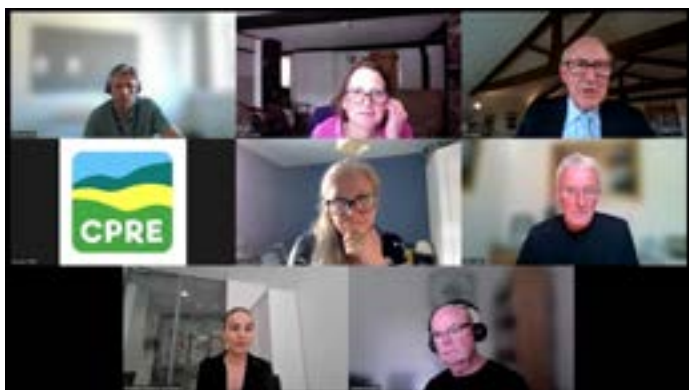


Dan Green, the owner, also has a small rare breed Berkshire pig enterprise producing free range pork. Very unusually the whole site, including the farmer's family eco-house, is off-grid. Solar panels and firewood are important sources of energy – Dorset CPRE has been actively promoting rooftop solar for some years.





# Planning Conference 2024



## Dorset's Affordable Housing Crisis?

With housing a major campaign issue for all political parties, not least the new Government, the Dorset CPRE online conference on the 20<sup>th</sup> June titled, 'Dorset's Affordable Housing Crisis?' was timely. The conference was instigated by Dorset CPRE's strong belief that housing delivered in Dorset should be focussed on meeting the county's true needs.

- **Lord Richard Best**, Crossbench Peer and Social Housing Leader, chaired the conference following an introduction by Dorset CPRE President, Kate Adie.
- The three questions 'How many new homes are needed in Dorset? What sort of homes? And who is paying?' were addressed by **Mike Allen** from Dorset CPRE's Planning Group.
- **Dr Quintin Bradley**, Senior Lecturer in Planning and Housing at Leeds Beckett University, reviewed the relationship between affordability and housing need and the mismatch between Government targets and the backlog of unmet need.
- **Elizabeth Bundred-Woodward** and **Brad Taylor** from National CPRE presented the findings of CPRE's November 2023 report, 'Unravelling a crisis: the state of rural affordable housing in England', with a focus on Dorset and the Southwest.
- **Paul Derrien**, Dorset Council Housing Enabling Team Leader, gave an insight into the challenges facing Dorset and the Council's plans for the future.
- Finally, **Alison Ward**, Director of Middlesbrough, provided an overview of Community Land Trusts, their benefits and local examples.

About ninety people attended the online conference, including many Parish, Town and Dorset Councillors, as well as a housebuilder, Civic Societies, Community Land Trusts, and members of Dorset CPRE.

The speakers highlighted the inability of the then Government Policy to deliver housing targeted at meeting the nation's need for truly affordable housing; instead policy is focussed on building large numbers of market homes of which only a small proportion are designated as 'affordable housing.'

Often these homes are not 'affordable' for the families that need them.

Dorset CPRE's message was that communities need homes that people can afford to live in, particularly social rented housing. The current housing target of 1788 homes per annum for Dorset Council is far higher than Dorset's shrinking local population needs, yet the affordable homes that are desperately needed are not being built. As permission has been granted for 11,000 unbuilt homes, Dorset CPRE believe that a lower target of 1300 homes per annum would suffice to meet Dorset's demand for housing, a significant proportion of which should be allocated for social rented homes: the number suggested by Dorset CPRE was 577 each year.

Social rent homes need extra subsidy initially, but that subsidy returns to communities a long-term economic benefit in providing local, healthy, and stable long-term homes for those unable to afford spiralling market rents. A recent report by CEBR showed that the total economic and social benefits of building 90,000 social homes nationally would generate £51.2bn net over 30 years.



Official opening of one Hastoe housing project in Powerstock, new homes at Forge Orchard

Photo: Samantha Cook Photography

The challenge faced by Dorset Council to meet the need for affordable housing was evident. Homeless figures have increased from under 3500 in 2021/22 to over 4000 in 2023/24. Currently there are 500 new applicants per month for housing, the greatest requirement being for 1 and 2 bedroom homes, with smaller numbers applying for family sized accommodation.

Communities can take a pro-active approach towards providing homes that meet their needs by forming Community Land Trusts. These homes tend to be in locations that work for the community, designed to meet the community's individual requirements and secured for future generations

Lord Best summed up the conference by saying, ***"We need more affordable housing, more homes for local people, more housing that is social rented that is genuinely affordable housing for the future. It may cost money, but you get the money back!"***

Jez Hughes, Vice-Chair of Trustees, highlighted the relevance of the Conference to the work of Dorset CPRE: ***"We will be calling on our newly elected Members of Parliament to be advocating a focus on more affordable housing in a way that genuinely supports local young people in rural communities and protects and enhances the environment they live in."***

Copies of the presentations and a link to the recordings can be found on [www.dorset-cpre.org.uk](http://www.dorset-cpre.org.uk).

# Response to consultation on planning system

In September, Dorset CPRE submitted a response to the open consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system. We also contributed to the National CPRE One CPRE response.

From renewables to housing, the new government is pushing for change, and the NPPF is at the heart of it. While we support more housing and clean energy to tackle the climate emergency, the detail is important.

## Our response addresses key issues, including:

- We want an assessment of local housing need which is realistically based on demographic data and on communities' aspirations and needs, for example for affordable homes.
- We want draft Local Plans which are based on such realistic assessments. We do not want the hugely excessive housing targets for Dorset Council and BCP areas proposed by the government and based on a flawed, misguided affordability-based Standard Method.
- The need for a mix of genuinely affordable housing tenures, including social rent housing.
- Strong protections to be maintained for the Green Belt for people and nature and to rethink the proposed reclassification of areas of Green Belt as 'grey belt'.
- The brownfield first approach to development needs to be strengthened to ensure that previously developed land is not passed over in favour of more easily developed greenfield sites.

## Dorset Housing Target is excessive, misguided

The Government is setting totally exaggerated and unrealistic Housing Targets for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) and Dorset Councils. A new formula announced on 30<sup>th</sup> July would require an additional 93,000 homes in BCP and Dorset over 15 years. The build rate in Dorset would need at least to double, as the Government seeks to shift house building from big cities. The proposed target won't achieve key goals. It would neither bring down house prices nor address the shortfall of truly affordable housing and lack of social or low-rent housing.

## Deliver the right houses in the right places

We wish to see planning and development which deliver the right houses in the right places, through Local Plans which are appropriate to their areas and communities. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) know their local areas and communities, and the value and significance of their local environment and heritage. LPAs are best placed, in consultation with local people, to devise plans which: support sustainable communities and meet housing needs including for genuinely affordable homes, promote the local economy, address the climate and nature emergencies, and protect and enhance the environment and heritage.

## Green Belt protections are maintained

It is essential that Green Belt protections are maintained and that our landscapes are protected as we transition to use of renewable sources of energy. Currently one in six species of animals, plants and fungi in the UK are at risk of extinction (State of Nature Report, 2023), it is essential that planning policies support nature restoration at every opportunity and that productive agricultural land is protected from development.

## Promoting healthy communities

There is mounting evidence of the vital contribution of access to nature and greenspace to physical and mental health and wellbeing. This has great economic as well as social and personal value, for the country nationally and for communities. The countryside has great value and potential to benefit people, nature, the economy and climate. With appropriate planning and management, in consultation and partnership with communities, the countryside can provide wide-ranging economic and public benefits: good quality food and food products; health and wellbeing for local communities and visitors; biodiversity and nature recovery; improved water management and reduced pollution; carbon capture and renewable energy; jobs, skills and sustainable growth. The countryside can play a key role in a sustainable, low carbon economy, helping both rural and urban communities to thrive.

## Brownfield first approach to development

The Government's stated goal of adopting a brownfield first approach to development is much welcomed, but in our opinion, it needs to be strengthened to ensure that previously developed land is not passed over in favour of more easily developed greenfield sites. The Port of Poole has a significant number of previously developed sites including the former Poole Power Station which has been undeveloped for over 30 years. This brownfield site, allocated in the Local Plan to provide housing and employment land, and subject to numerous planning applications for re-development, still sits vacant whilst precious land in the Green Belt has been released for development instead to meet Poole's housing need.



## Sustainable transport

Planning of new housing developments inevitably places new demands on the transport infrastructure both in the immediate area and the wider hinterland. The capacity of that infrastructure must therefore be a control on the scale of any new development. A 'transport vision' must be built on a need to protect the environment. It should prioritise opportunities to reduce car traffic particularly by solo drivers. Shared car schemes, taxis, public transport (bus and rail), cycling and walking should all be promoted. The need to subsidise public and community transport in rural areas must be recognised if these are to provide a real alternative to car journeys.

Our full response to the consultation is available on the Dorset CPRE website. A big thank you to Heidi Poole, our Planning Advisor, for collating the contributions and feedback from all our hard-working volunteers.

*The Planning Group*





I'm afraid this edition of The Review brings two bits of very bad news for West Dorset campaigners.

## Portland Waste Incinerator

Firstly, we heard on 16<sup>th</sup> September that the dreadful Incinerator that Powerfuel Portland want to build on the edge of Portland Harbour is in danger of going ahead. The Appeal last winter has now been allowed and planning permission granted by a junior minister, Rushanara Ali, on behalf of the Secretary of State, Angela Rayner, having read the Inspector's report. I was at the appeal in December and spoke. I could not detect *any* support for the incinerator at all- just very vociferous opposition. Admittedly Powerfuel can afford an expensive legal team but the Inspector's conclusions seem very strange. As you may know it was turned down originally in March 2023 by Dorset Council's Planning Committee, voicing concerns over its visual impact, pollution and lorries. The chimney stack, in use 24 hours/7 days a week, would stand at 262ft (80m) tall. This incinerator will be a massive eye-sore on the Jurassic coast which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It will belch toxic fumes, and, depending on the wind direction, will blow over the local Portland people or those in Weymouth. It is not required- Dorset's waste is already well managed, for 2022/23 Defra ranked Dorset as the best unitary council for recycling rates. There will be frequent journeys with large trucks past closely populated areas and schools etc.

The local action group, Stop Portland Waste Incinerator, have spoken with their legal team and decided there are enough grounds to challenge this decision and present a strong case in the High Court at a Judicial Review. They have reopened their Just Giving page to raise the funds needed to present the case in the High Court.



## Battery Energy Storage System

The second unexpected blow in July was the granting of planning permission for an equally monstrous and unpopular proposal (2000 local residents who were asked all said they were against it- none for it). This is the giant Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) very close to Chickerell and also Southill. As I described in the spring edition of our magazine, these lithium batteries are potentially extremely dangerous. This one is particularly massive- 400 million watts. OK we need some sort of energy storage system but not here- so close to housing. A fire cannot be excluded and that, to me, is enough to make it mandatory to build these batteries in safe locations. The fire brigade is unable to put the fires out with water. The gases produced are very toxic. There was another big fire in a BESS at Escondido, California, very recently.

At the Planning Committee Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> July at County Hall, Dorchester, Rupert Hardy read out my statement as I was recovering from recent spinal surgery



and said "If safety cannot be absolutely assured (and it patently cannot), this BESS must NOT be built in this location. To do so would be utterly irresponsible." There were some very good speeches including a very detailed account of the dangers by a physicist. But the councillors immediately voted it through as though nothing had been heard!

## Our Countryside is worth so much more

There are increasing numbers of proposals like these that severely damage the countryside and also appear against, at least, local democracy. They are driven through for maximum profit. That is the main concern. It encourages, for example, solar panels in green fields rather than on rooftops, car parks and so on. It is very worrying. Our countryside is worth so much more than a quick easy profit.

## Solar Farm near Maiden Newton

A second attempt is being made to build a solar farm on prime agricultural land within the Dorset National Landscape near Maiden Newton. We objected to the original application and it was refused by Dorset Council.

I hope there will be much better news next time!

*Dr Guy Dickinson*  
Group Chairman



# Barbara Vance Countryside Prize

In our spring magazine we mentioned that two of our Trustees, Frances Hogwood and Neil Matthews, visited schools to gauge their interest in working with Dorset CPRE. All schools were welcoming, most have an eco-school lead, with an opportunity to build relationships. Following the visit, Trustees agreed to set aside £2,500 for a 'Barbara Vance Countryside Prize', enough to fund a minimum of 10 schools, if they are all successful in receiving the maximum of £250, for wildlife related projects with evidence of outdoor learning and introducing children to the countryside/rural life. So far two projects have been completed.



## Damers First School – Nature Information Board

On 28<sup>th</sup> June, Frances and Neil attended the unveiling of a Nature Information Board in the meadow next to Damers First School in Dorchester. The Duchy of Cornwall had given permission for the children to re-wild the area turning it into "Damers' Meadow".

In 2023, Year 1 pupils from the school took part in a nature project organised by the Harmony Project, funded by the Aurora Trust, which asked schools to choose an activity that would encourage children outside to learn from nature. For the whole of the summer term they did a school project on Wildflowers. The enquiry question was "What is my favourite Wildflower?" Children named the wildflowers, insects, food



Dorchester Mayor, Robin Potter accompanied by the mayoress, Val Potter, with Year 1 teacher Edd Moore and three pupils from the school

and vegetables in the school grounds documenting them in their nature journal using pictures and writing. They collected wildflower seeds on their weekends sowing these too on the Damers' Meadow which bloomed over the summer holidays attracting many bees and butterflies.

Tours of the school grounds were given by the children to their families, other classes in the school, Dorset CPRE Trustees, Miles King from People Need Nature, and Dorset Gardens Trust Trustees. As part of the tour they named the wildflowers and shared facts. Everyone was amazed by how much the children knew.

The children wanted to create an information board for the Damers' Meadow to help educate the community and visitors on what wildflowers, insects and birds they might see around them. The children, with help from their teacher Edd Moore, raised the money with donations from organisations including Dorset CPRE and businesses.



Old school pond with hard standing

## Charmouth Primary School – Reinstated School Pond

Over the May half term, a project to reinstate the pond at Charmouth Primary School was completed with the help of parents. MKM Building Supplies donated most of the materials to complete this project and Groves Nursery Bridport donated the pond liner. The Barbara Vance Countryside prize was used to purchase plants and bug houses for the area. This area is now a much safer and enjoyable place to be in for both the children and staff.

The new space is being used as the perfect place for children to do quiet reading and also to do pond dipping, then analyse their findings and do general wildlife pond work/observations. The children have already enjoyed seeing the development of pond life, wildlife and the plants, all changing with the seasons.



New space for wildlife and pond dipping

## North Dorset Group



The major news was the new Secretary of State's (SoS) decision to cancel the Calling-In of the application to build 490 homes between Blandford and Pimperne. There has been little feedback from the SoS as to the actual reason other than it is a new government with a mandate to build more houses. Her letter merely says that the application "does not raise issues which warrant her intervention". The issues we raised to the SoS were of national significance, such as protection of protected landscapes and upholding of the principles of Neighbourhood Plans, so sad to see them swept under the carpet. It is also disheartening to see a senior Dorset Council (DC) Planning Officer get away with such an unbalanced Officer's Report without an Inspector's scrutiny. Overall, a sad day for local democracy.

### Success at Land North of Ward's Drove Development

To offset this we had good news with the speculative development of 130 homes North of Ward's Drove, Blandford St Mary, being refused. This was the third iteration of this development and was turned down by DC without a hearing. North Dorset CPRE ran this campaign so we can take some credit. We hope this will be an end to Hallam's attempts to develop this site as most DC officers were against it.

### Dorset Council's reasons for refusal are:

1. The proposals would result in less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets including the Church of St Mary, the Old Rectory, and Clerkenwell House which is not clearly and convincingly justified through overriding public benefits contrary to Policy 5 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan (2016), and the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 206.
2. The proposed development by reason of scale (in terms of quantum of dwellings) and details of access would be contrary to Policy B10 of the made Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan, Policies 4 and 24 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1, Page 2 of 4 and paragraph 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework as it would have an adverse impact on the

character area 'CA9. Countryside of Blandford St Mary' and associated landscape.

3. The legal agreement is not completed nor signed and there constitutes a reason for refusal by not securing affordable housing nor off-site contributions contrary to Policies 8, 13, 14, and 15 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan (January 2016).
4. The applicant has submitted insufficient information to overcome concerns relating to flood risk. As such it is considered that the proposed development would represent a serious risk to health and safety in terms of flood risk on and off the site. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy 3 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan (January 2016) and the aims and objectives of the NPPF.

### Dinah's Hollow

DC has not covered itself in glory here. The most recent stage in development was the application for Tree Works here with no consultation beforehand. DC recently voted to budget for £8m to cover the remedial works, but it is likely to be much higher. A need to compulsory purchase the banks rather than working with the landowners has not been investigated. The suitability of the proposed works has been questioned by many. Cranborne Chase National Landscape consider that cutting down 75% of the trees is unacceptable. The proposed works will do huge damage to the bio-diversity of the area, conflicting with DC's recently announced Nature

Emergency. Protected bats, dormice and great crested newts are all threatened while the proposed steel mesh will harm rare flora. There has been little evidence that the Hollow was about to collapse, and this damaging remedial work was necessary. The latest development was the failure of DC to notify consultees and protestors of the planning hearing which had to be rescheduled! A right cock-up.

### Other Planning Issues

There has been no shortage of planning applications elsewhere in North Dorset. It was sad to see Gladman win the appeal to build 160 more homes at Stalbridge, given the massive development there in recent years. We have also been giving advice to an action group who are trying to restrict the commercial expansion of the Compton Abbas airfield which is affecting local residents.

### Oak Fair

We took a stand again at the Stock Gaylard Estate over the August bank holiday weekend. Glad to see about fifteen CPRE volunteers there from all our Groups. It was a good opportunity to meet the public and CPRE members, and get feedback, as well as add 54 names to our monthly newsletter list. The location at the Fair was good, and the stand stood out well. The weather was somewhat damp on the Saturday, but much better on the Sunday. Thanks to Derek Gardiner and Linda Williams for organizing this.

*Rupert Hardy*

Group Chair



Stand at Oak Fair 2024, from left Steve O'Connell, Linda Williams, Lavinia Phillips, Derek Gardiner, Roy Phillips and Mike Allen



# Dorset CPRE Grant Scheme for Fingerposts



Dorset CPRE offer a small grants scheme for people wanting to restore fingerposts using the correct materials as set out by the Dorset National Landscape. Match funding is not required and there is no application form, but we ask that requests come from a Parish Council representative (or similar), with a summary of the fingerposts that need repairing, their location(s) and bank accounts details for online payments. Dorset CPRE are covering all of Dorset, and are prepared to award up to £200

per fingerpost. As of August 2024, we have spent £21,737 on grants for 149 fingerposts with a further 4 that have been approved but not paid for. Locations include Melbury Abbas, Winterborne Stickland, East Stour, Holt, Mappowder, Broadwindsor and Evershot to name a few. Visit our website for more details. It is so important that we preserve these Dorset icons!



*Restored Cast Iron fingerpost in Evershot*

## Cartons and foil now accepted in kerbside recycling bins across Dorset

Great news, Dorset Council announced in September that food and drink cartons, as well as foil trays and sheet foil, can now be placed in your household recycling bin for collection.

Cartons have been difficult to recycle in the past as they are similar to cardboard when sorting mechanically but contain foil/plastic. The sorting facility is now able to separate these cartons for recycling, which Dorset Council hope residents will find more convenient than the banks that have been provided in recycle centres and car parks.

They now accept empty food cartons and drinks cartons (e.g. soup, milk, juice etc.) in your recycling bin or box, alongside the usual paper/plastic/cans etc. they already collect. They will also accept empty cardboard tube-shaped containers (e.g. curved crisps, hot chocolate, gravy granules) too.

Sheet foil or wrappers should be scrunched into a ball roughly the size of a tennis ball before placing in your recycling bin. If it does not scrunch, it's not the kind of foil that Dorset Council can recycle.

The Recycle for Dorset kerbside collection scheme has been an enormous success since its introduction over a



decade ago. Dorset Council is currently the number one unitary council in England for recycling, with 59.1% of the waste they collect being recycled.

The success of the Recycle for Dorset scheme is mainly due to the efforts of Dorset's keen recyclers. So, it is vital for the council to continue making things simple for people wanting to do the right thing, by recycling as many kinds of waste items as possible at the kerbside.

# Celebrating our Dark Skies Heritage in Dorset

One attraction of Dorset is that most of the county is rural in nature with large areas of downland that have remained relatively unspoilt and uninhabited over the years. Also, in common with a few other English counties such as Cornwall and Norfolk, we do not have a motorway or many brightly illuminated main roads running through the countryside. These characteristics of the county favour Dorset as an attractive venue for looking up to the heavens on dark, clear, moonless nights given that there still exist many places here that are not plagued by excessive light pollution.

Indeed, as well as established groups of amateur astronomers such as Wessex Astronomical Society and Weymouth Astronomy Group, there now exists a public group on Facebook who go by the name, the *Dorchester Area Stargazers*. Favourite activities of the latter involve organising local stargazing sessions particularly at venues such as the public area used for viewing the Cerne Abbas Giant hill figure, and at Maiden Castle. An example of the night sky looking from the viewing area in the direction of the Cerne Giant is shown in this long-exposure photograph.

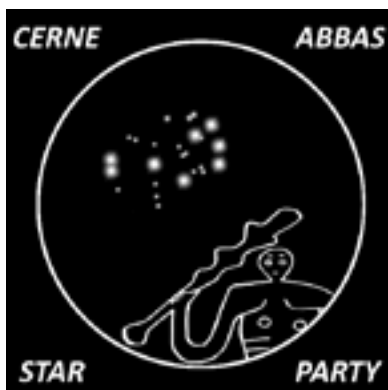


Smartphone image taken on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023 by Kevin Quinn showing Jupiter and the Pleiades star cluster

## The first Cerne Abbas Star Party

Earlier this year, like-minded local stargazers (including the writer) enthused by the splendid dark skies in the Cerne Abbas area came up with the idea of holding a 'star party' locally. Star parties usually involve gatherings of people from far and wide arriving in campervans, bringing tents or staying in local accommodation, and who bring their various telescopes and binoculars for everyone to view through. We realised that an even darker location than the Giant viewing area existed immediately to the south of the village where the local Cerne Abbas Brewery is

located, nestled in the valley surrounded in all directions by hills that better sheltered the site from light pollution arising from distant urban areas such as Bournemouth and Yeovil. To cut a long story short, the star party was organised for the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> September, three nights



in all, and was advertised via the Eventbrite website and through contacts with local societies and Facebook groups. Profits from the event were donated to the charity, *Parkinson's UK*.

Piddletrenthide and former Cerne resident, Kevin Quinn was the main organiser. He designed a logo based on the Giant, the design of which some believe was inspired by the constellation of Orion the Hunter and its association with the star cluster known as the Pleiades or 'Seven Sisters'. Contingency plans were laid in case of bad weather including arranging four talks and a quiz with generous prizes to be held in the taproom of the Brewery. Fortunately, the room has a TV/computer projector mounted on the underside of the roof beams along with a large screen, and a microphone and speaker were also set up for the occasion. The accompanying photograph shows Dr John Macdonald giving his talk about sundials on the Sunday afternoon.

Despite our best-laid plans, the weather gods had other ideas and the heavens poured forth with quite a deluge all day Thursday and through that night. Each of the three subsequent nights proved essentially cloudy or wet apart from a short spell around midnight on the Saturday night when celestial observations were briefly possible. Although the bad weather forecast discouraged many folk attending, we did have several visitors from further afield, namely from South Wales and the Shaftesbury/Wiltshire area, who all stayed Friday through Sunday. One advantage of the venue was that participants could not only sample the delights of the local beers and cider but food was also laid on at the Brewery and cooked breakfasts were available at one of the local pubs. Excellent feedback was received afterwards showing that it had been a great success despite the weather and so we are planning another star party for 2025.



## Dark sky reserves

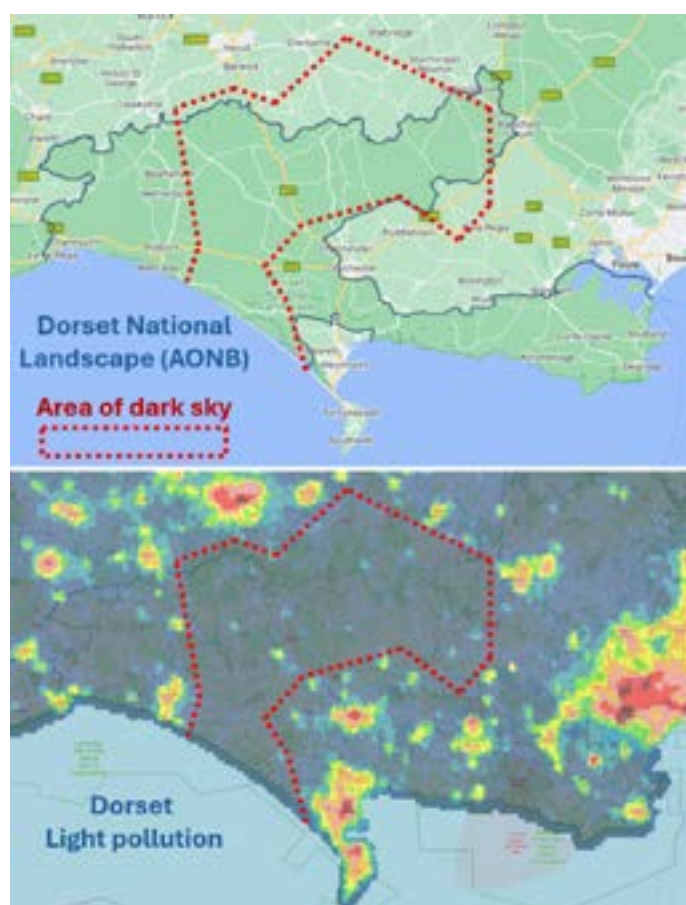
Every cloud is supposed to have a silver lining (or so the saying goes) and despite the rain having largely stopped play as far as observing celestial objects through telescopes, we did have much more time for wide-ranging discussions. One topic that came up several times was the gradual deterioration in the conditions for observing the stars perceived by some of the attendees. It was agreed that places such as 'deepest darkest Dorset' needed to conserve wild places and access to the night skies unfettered by light pollution. How best to do this? We were fortunate in that our speaker on the Saturday evening was Steve Tonkin, who is the Dark Sky Adviser for the



Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Since its designation in October 2019, Cranborne Chase has been officially recognised as an International Dark Sky Reserve and Steve assisted in the bid to win this status by serving as a volunteer, taking sky quality readings and supporting stargazing evenings through giving talks and showing people the night sky. The question was asked, “*Is there an area within Dorset that would meet the requirements of a dark sky reserve?*” And “*Would ‘reserve status’ help to conserve our dark skies?*”

## How to protect our dark skies?

Let’s look at the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which in 2023 was renamed the Dorset National Landscape. It has been a protected area of the county since it was established in 1959, just three years after the very first, the Gower Peninsular in South Wales. Our National Landscape covers an area of 436 square miles and is shown edged in blue on the accompanying map. Much of the sky in this protected area suffers from excessive illumination as shown by the accompanying light pollution map, especially the areas of Portland/Weymouth and Bournemouth/Poole. But there still remains a good proportion that is properly dark, as shown edged with a red dashed line, and part of which extends north into the Blackmore Vale.



Is the area shown enclosed by the red line worthy of being recognised as a dark sky reserve? Certainly, as with the Cranborne Chase, the typical night sky quality in these rural areas is sufficiently dark that it meets the reserve eligibility standard, which in technical terms is currently

defined as >21.0 magnitudes per square arcsecond of sky or thereabouts (Bortle scale 4 to 4.5). All National Landscapes were established with the aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the land, and with two secondary aims: meeting the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and having regard for the interests of those who live and work there. The guarantee of dark skies would attract more people to visit the locations to enjoy not only the landscape but also the associated ‘skyscape’ especially that witnessed on spectacularly clear nights. More visitors in search of dark skies would surely enhance the rural economy. Naturally much of the area is farmed and so any dark sky reserve should operate in such a way as to not unreasonably curtail established farming practices. Lighting is often used to ward off predators such as foxes and badgers or as a means of improving security, so having lights fitted with infrared sensors triggered by movement is one way that would both help minimise light pollution and conserve energy.



## Seeing the bigger picture

One could argue that stargazing is very much a niche interest but many people who are attuned to the natural world are increasingly aware of the other benefits that dark night skies bring. According to the charity *Buglife*, insect life is declining at alarming rates in part because of light pollution. Unlike forms of pollution in the natural environment such as plastics, pesticides, air pollution or climate change, which, despite turning off the source, will continue to cause harm, lighting can be reduced at the flick of a switch. Sadly, the move towards better energy efficiency by increased use of LED-type lighting, especially brilliant white or bluish-white sources, is particularly distracting for nocturnal creatures, as are the latest vehicle headlights that also dazzle other road users.

We are able to celebrate our dark skies heritage here in Dorset by holding star parties or encouraging visitors to stargaze but we should also strive to preserve this inheritance of ours for future generations. I suggest that applying for ‘dark sky reserve’ status for a nominated area within Dorset could be one way of helping to ensure this happens.

*Dr Richard Miles*

Dark Skies Adviser, Dorset CPRE



## Local Planning & Communication

We know that communication leads to community (*understanding / mutual respect*) and good planning depends upon good understandings of circumstances and adequate respect for practical constraints.

Our various Councils (Parish, Town and Unitary) deal with a vast range of matters that get influenced in many ways – not least by the government with its relatively short term perspective when compared with the viewpoints of those who would like to ensure natural assets (that they inherited) will be available to future generations (*not just their own great grandchildren!*). CPRE exists to promote a much longer perspective in the stewardship of our natural assets, for the benefit of all, by seeking to ensure relevant understandings by all decision-makers. Recently our Group has promoted our understanding of local opinions as follows:-

- submitted representations concerning the draft Local Plan published by BCP Council for the three towns partnership. The BCP Council Local Plan was submitted for examination at the end of June.
- thanked local candidates for standing to represent certain localities in Parliament whilst stressing the need for 'soundness' in the use of resources which affect the environment (and the life it supports) and offering future assistance in their roles as MPs.
- asked Dorset Council to refuse a planning application for environmentally damaging non-agricultural use of two buildings that could affect the Purbeck Heaths Super National Nature Reserve.
- reinforced our previous objection to a proposed building in protected countryside that would also exacerbate traffic problems on the A351.
- attended relevant Dorset Council meeting to suggest that the Purbeck Local Plan should remain under consideration for formal adoption, after advising local parish and



Arne, Poole Harbour

town councils of the intent. We are disappointed that Dorset Council decided to formally approve the Purbeck Local Plan at their meeting on 18th July. It will eventually be superseded by the Dorset Council Local Plan.

- contributed to clarifying Dorset CPRE necessary responses to a governmental consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework on revisions to planning law / guidance material.
- responded to the 'Big Conversation', promoted by Dorset Council, with particular attention to the effects on Purbeck after the formal adoption of the Purbeck Local Plan.
- congratulated The Purbeck Gazette on some articles relating to defects in the planning 'system' and to the approaches being adopted by two of our newly elected MPs.
- reminded Dorset Council that two planning applications adversely affecting Lytchett Matravers have been kept in limbo for a long time and should be refused since they do not offer any nett gain in biodiversity – rather the reverse. And
- reminded a BCP Planning Committee of our previous objection to an

incinerator in protected countryside on Canford Heath.

We certainly believe that in teamwork "silence" isn't golden: its deadly! Also, "strategy" is not a solo sport, even if you are the Chief Executive.

Strength does come from active teamwork. Therefore, it would be good to know if there are Readers in our CPRE area (*created to help protect Poole harbour*) who wish to help us improve communication / understandings about not only our local natural assets but also the planning for their future use / protection / promotion. We are currently considering revising our contact arrangements and would be very pleased to know how we could receive your possible assistance to ensure Purbeck and Poole are enhanced for the benefit of future generations.

Please do not hesitate to share your personal views with us. My contact details are on the back page and I look forward to hearing from you: many hands do make light work!

*Gerald Rigler*  
Group Chairman



# Litter Campaigns

We participate in the Litter Free Dorset (LFD) Forum meetings, hosted by Litter Free Dorset-Land, Coast and Sea, and contribute to discussions on a number of topics and campaigns. The meetings are held in-person and online.

## New from the September meeting held in Blandford

### The Dorset Cup!

LFD is excited to announce the launch of The Dorset Cup scheme in Southbourne, a new initiative to reduce single-use coffee cups. The scheme's simplicity is its strength: customers can borrow a cup from any of the participating cafés, enjoy their coffee, and then return the cup to any café within the Dorset Cup network. The aim is to make it easier and more convenient for coffee lovers to opt for a reusable cup, without the hassle of remembering to bring their own.

LFD has an online platform which allows people to log their cup, this will give them valuable data to track how many cups are being used and when and where people are using them. This data will help them to expand the scheme and get more cafés on board. You can find more details on [www.litterfreedorset.co.uk/dorset-cup/](http://www.litterfreedorset.co.uk/dorset-cup/).



The aim was to promote sustainability and reduce plastic waste. This first attempt was a huge success, with over 800 people recorded refilling their bottles and cups, effectively saving over 800 single use plastic bottles. LFD actively encouraged attendees to bring their own bottle or reuse the festival cups that drinks were served in.

For those who arrived without a drinking vessel, they could borrow cups ensuring everyone had access to free fresh water. The water station was particularly appreciated given the hot weather, allowing people to stay hydrated without needing to buy a plastic bottle of water.

### Sustainable Business Network

We wrote about the project in the spring 2023 magazine. The network now has 150 members from different sectors and a new award category has been created for nature recovery. LFD has created a step by step guide to joining the Sustainable Business Network and gaining a Sustainable Business Award – all completely free. Dorset businesses of any type or size can achieve a Sustainable Business Award by making small but impactful changes to the way they operate. Businesses can also attend networking events to meet and hear from like-minded business owners and local ambassadors who share their tips and experiences.

### Join a litter picking group near you!

A big thank you to our members who undertake local and community litter picks.

If you are interested in making a difference to your local environment, LFD support a range of community and volunteer groups across Dorset who organise regular litter picking and beach cleaning activities in their local areas. Please visit [www.litterfreedorset.co.uk](http://www.litterfreedorset.co.uk) for more information and contact details for groups near you.



### Hydrating the Reggae Weekender

This year LFD collaborated with Bournemouth Water to provide the first free tap water station at the Bournemouth Reggae Weekender event.



# 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 recently.

## Winfrith Site Stakeholder Group

The Group met on 14<sup>th</sup> May at Winfrith village hall. Paul Brennan, Harwell and Winfrith Site Director, said that rebranding to Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) continues and represents the joining together of Magnox and Dounreay to ensure best value for money but our focus on safely decommissioning our nuclear sites remains the same.

James Fisher Nuclear Ltd, the principal contractor for decommissioning the Winfrith Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor, went into administration in August 2023. NRS has progressed the project where possible and it is hoped that plans will be finalised by October of this year.

The Dragon reactor core decommissioning work has continued with removal of shielding from the coolant ducts.

1068 drums of Treated Radwaste radioactive sludge were transported to Nuclear Waste Services in Cumbria by rail rather than by road, thus protecting the environment and reducing the carbon footprint.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the End State of the Site will shortly be completed. That will be followed by further community and stakeholder engagement prior to submission of planning and permit applications.

## Alaska windfarm

Four wind turbines at Masters Pit and a huge array of solar panels have been installed across the fields at Stokeford



but I have yet to see the turbines rotating and I have been told that nothing has yet been connected to the National Grid at Wareham.

## Arne Moors Intertidal Nature Reserve

I attended an Open Day at the Arne Moors construction site office at Arne Road on 21<sup>st</sup> May. We were driven across the site on well engineered embanked roads above the generally very wet ground and flooded areas to a place not far from the River Frome where the archaeologists were actually in the process of excavating what appears to be a large Roman temple building some twenty metres long. We were able to walk round the site and see some of the walls still almost buried in the mud.

There was also an exhibition at the site office of peat excavation, pollen studies and well preserved wooden artefacts which had lain in water for many years. A video showed a Bronze Age wooden spade and a variety of pottery fragments.

## Ospreys in Poole Harbour

The ospreys have had another highly successful season. Four male chicks hatched and fledged and have been flying all round the Harbour for some while. One of them has just left to spend the winter in southern Africa. We do hope that most of the four will return here to their breeding ground in two years time.

The first wild-fledged osprey chick, ringed Blue 5 H1, from the Poole Harbour osprey nest arrived back from Africa on 16<sup>th</sup> May. She has been seen sitting on a nest with translocated male osprey 022 but is too young to breed this year. We hope that she will soon find a

mate and nest in the area herself.

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 throughout the breeding season.

## Beavers in Little Sea at Studland

The newly arrived beavers are settling in at Little Sea. Please do NOT disturb them and just keep right away from this area at all times.

Groups of wild beavers have recently established territories at many places across the Country including Kent, Devon and several parts of Scotland. Some of the beavers are in fenced enclosures carefully monitored by the Wildlife Trusts and others. Some of them have been started by well meaning individuals who have translocated spare beavers from elsewhere. Some beaver kits have not really had room to flourish in the streams where they were born. They have had to travel overland and seek out new territories elsewhere.

Beavers build dams and generally slow down the passage of water to the benefit of reptiles and other wildlife and also reduce the likelihood of flooding downstream. They live in and near their river and rarely venture much more than ten metres from the river and so do very little damage to adjacent crops or to the environment.

*Dr John Larkin*

Minerals and Waste Adviser  
to Dorset CPRE



## CPRE Recent Publications

National CPRE publishes a number of reports based on detailed research. The reports are free to download and can be found on the CPRE Resources webpage [www.cpre.org.uk/resources](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources):

### Insights for the decarbonised electricity system: journeys through planning (July 2024)



In July 2024 CPRE published a joint report with the Aldersgate Group and the industry body Renewable UK. The interim findings of this collaborative project outline what is currently working well, alongside the challenges currently hindering progress on delivering new critical power infrastructure. Key challenges identified include a lack of strategic planning, a need for joined-up policy, and improved public engagement. These challenges are compounded by a lack of resources across the system and difficulties around access to data, as well as systemic inefficiencies, uncertainty and a need to better manage trade-offs for developers, environmental groups and communities.

The final phase of the project, reporting later this year, will outline a clear set of recommendations to address these challenges and deliver a planning system that is fit for a low-carbon future.

Roger Mortlock, CEO of CPRE, said: 'We share the new government's desire for an expansion of renewables and a move away from fossil fuels. The new partnership between CPRE, Aldersgate and RenewableUK is an opportunity to chart a course to net zero that has the support of local people and takes the impact on our countryside and landscapes into account. Together, we're looking forward to working with the government on a just transition that benefits the climate, nature and rural communities.'

### Lighting the way: international policies for making rooftop solar a reality (April 2024)

In May 2023, CPRE published research 'Shout from the rooftops: delivering a common sense solar revolution' by members of the UCL Energy Institute, which found that there is potential for up to 117 gigawatts (GW) of low carbon electricity to be generated from rooftops and other developed spaces across England. This is substantially more than the government's target for 70 GW of solar energy by 2035.

To explore how this enormous opportunity can be realised at speed, CPRE commissioned WPI Economics to analyse approaches being taken internationally to deliver rapid growth in rooftop solar capacity. The findings of this research show that other major economies are pursuing a range of innovative policies to accelerate the deployment of rooftop solar and a bold and ambitious government here could turbocharge our installation rates by adapting these policies to a UK context.



### Aiming high for hedgerows: research report by the Organic Research Centre (March 2024)

A research report by the Organic Research Centre, commissioned by CPRE, which explores where we should target hedgerow action in England.

These are the questions addressed in this report. Our research objectives were to:

1. Build understanding of the challenges and opportunities of delivering the government's target to plant and restore 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037 and 45,000 miles by 2050.
2. Make a strong evidence-based case for where, in terms of landscape character areas, new hedgerows can most cost-effectively be planted and restored, enhancing landscape character and providing local environmental services, and the resources needed to do this.



resources needed to do this.

# Badbury Rings and King Arthur's Greatest Victory?



Badbury Rings, the multivalliate Iron Age hill fort close to Wimborne, is one of the greatest ancient monuments in Dorset and a favourite for family walks around its ramparts. However, not everyone is familiar with its fascinating history.

There is evidence of both neolithic and bronze age settlements nearby, with bronze weapons found in close proximity. An intriguing find was the Badbury Stone, a large block of sandstone capping a barrow, excavated by C19 antiquarians. Part of this sandstone was cut off as it had some strange markings believed to be carvings of Bronze Age axes. The stone became known as the 'Badbury Stone' and was moved to the British Museum. The only other example of these carvings within the UK is at Stonehenge.

However, the hill fort was built by the Iron Age Durotriges tribe, who inhabited most of Dorset around 600–500BC. The Roman conquest of Britain began in 43 AD and Badbury Rings was likely occupied by a legion under the command of the future emperor Vespasian, although there is little evidence of a battle there then. A few ballista bolts were found at the site of the temple the Romans built there, but that is all. Probably the Durotriges did not see the merit of fighting a well-disciplined legion! A mile away the Romans built the town of Vinocladia, just outside Shapwick, which became the second largest in the county after Dorchester. It was a major communications hub and the site covered 25 hectares. It was only discovered during the dry summer of 1976 when the outline of the Roman fort became apparent during the extended heatwave. Vinocladia was excavated in 2013, but has

been returned to farmland. Badbury is reported to be haunted – in the 1970s archaeological students fled their camp there as they were disturbed by 'the clash of metal, foreign voices and the sound of marching men'. The Rings were abandoned under the Romans but reoccupied in the post-Roman period, as security declined with the departure of the last legions in 407 AD.

## Battle of Mount Badon

The battle of Mount Badon was believed to have occurred around 500 AD between Celtic Britons and Anglo-Saxons, and it was first mentioned in a book by the 6th Century monk, Gildas. He chronicled the agonies of the Britons after the Romans left. One should add it is very difficult to confirm anything during the Dark Ages when so little was recorded. It was credited as a major and rare victory for the Britons, stopping the encroachment of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms for at least a generation, possibly two. Later, King Arthur became a legendary



*Arthur leading the Charge at Mount Badon by George Wooliscroft Rhead and Louis Rhead. From Tennyson's Idylls of the King: Vivien, Elaine, Enid, Guinevere, 1898*





figure during the Middle Ages, aided by Sir Thomas Malory and his book *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and then again in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The identification of Badbury Rings with the Battle of Mount Badon was more recently reported in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the eminent Dorset historian John Hutchins. Another historian, Roy Carr, suggested that the Saxons were held off from crossing Bokerley Dyke, further east, by the threat of an army in the west, perhaps stationed at Badbury Rings. Badbury is, however, one of three sites regularly advanced as the location of this battle, with sites near Bath, and another Badbury in Wiltshire, also recognised as contenders.

## Who Was Arthur?

The earliest text linking the Arthurian legend with Badon comes from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, which identifies Arthur as the British leader. Who was this Arthur in real life? Was he a Roman soldier- it is a Roman name- who stayed on to fight the Saxons after the Legions left? Gildas does not mention Arthur, but he concludes that Ambrosius Aurelianus, a late Roman leader who was the second son of the Emperor Constantine, was the key figure. Some historians suggest Arthur may have been Aurelianus' son.

## The Legend

One legend suggests that the Saxons had been defeated further north and pledged to return home. Instead they broke their promise and landed at Torbay. They terrorised their way eastwards until they arrived and built a fortified position at Mount Badon. Arthur hurried south to give battle. Nennius says that Arthur killed

940 Saxons "by his hand alone" - some exaggeration surely. Malory was responsible for the fictional *Le Morte D'Arthur*, but this was only a reworking of existing tales about the legendary King Arthur, Guinevere and the Knights of the Round Table. It is highly probable there is a strong link between the historical and fictional figures. There is a legend that Arthur lives on as a raven in the woods covering the ancient citadel, and that a golden coffin is buried somewhere in the area. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Tennyson wrote about King Arthur and Badon in his famous epic poem *Lancelot and Elaine*, where Lancelot recounts how he fought with Arthur in the twelve battles:

*On the mount  
Of Badon I myself beheld the King  
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,  
And all his legions crying Christ and him,  
And break them.*

## Did The Battle Occur here?

Frankly none of the three main contenders have exceptional claims although it was clearly somewhere in south west England. In 2013 an archaeological dig was organised at Badbury Rings and at least they found late Roman artefacts dating from AD 480-520 so it was occupied then and so has a plausible claim. If you are proud to hail from Dorset then take heart in the legend, and let your imagination take hold as you stroll across the ramparts!

*Rupert Hardy*

Chair North Dorset CPRE

# The Great Big Dorset Hedge Project Update



Wildflower margin growing next to a hedge layed the previous year, photo taken August 2024

In our spring magazine we wrote that Dorset CPRE provided £6k of funding to the charity, Dorset Climate Action Network (DCAN), for some very specific outsourced activities that are required to enable their successful Great Big Dorset Hedge (GBDH) project to grow. John Calder updates us on their recent hedgerow surveys and achievements.

## Energised Volunteers

We have almost reached the point where 100 volunteers have done three or more surveys, and over half of the ones that have done three have done ten or more! There is so much enthusiasm and commitment out there, it is so very encouraging. Among our volunteers, we also have 15 superbly reliable data entry specialists who can upload the survey data and/or the maps and several of them are happy to upload surveys for others which is just excellent and should enable us to continue our growth trajectory.

## Energised Farmers

More participating farms are emerging all the time. We have 76 farmers participating in the project currently (including three from Devon!). Many are relatively small. We planted 500 hedge plants in the space of a morning a few months ago for farmer Simon Pengelly at Gorwell Farm. That was a gap-filling exercise in a hedge that had been laid last winter following the surveys we had undertaken in the previous year. The improvement in that hedgerow is assured. Simon Pengelly said: "We've got a couple of new hedges to plant this winter- any help with planting them would be much appreciated. Keep up the excellent work."

I want to restate just how certain I am that we have found the most effective way to improve the condition and to increase the extent of hedgerows all over Dorset. I have four

examples of quite large farms who are at different stages of their GBDH journey to help convey the message. The green patches on the map show the 76 farms involved currently but the red patches are my four big farm examples.

## Post Green Farm

First, and deepest into her GBDH journey is Clare Lees of Post Green Farm, Lytchett Minster. Clare was introduced to me by George Hosford (former NFU Chairman for Dorset) nearly a year ago when I asked him to find me a progressive farmer in the Southeast of the county. A mammoth effort from the local volunteers subsequently surveyed over **40 km** of hedgerows at Post Green Farm and now Clare has confirmed that 1.1 km of new hedgerows will be planted in the coming season PLUS 0.7 km of gap filling on top of that. All of it is being driven by our survey and all of it is funded by the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme. Clare Lees said: "You are bridging the gap between the urban and rural communities". Clare is now looking forward to the prospect of many of our volunteers coming back onto the farm during the planting season to get those hedge plants in the ground.

## Bussey Stool Farm

Another introduction via George Hosford was Jim Farquharson of Bussey Stool Farm, Tarrant Gunville. We met at a free-tree-collection event organised by the Woodland Trust in March this year at George's farm in Durweston. Without hesitation, Jim invited us to get started and we covered 5 km in the first morning deploying three survey crews concurrently on 1<sup>st</sup> May. We found that Jim has 30 km of hedgerows and surveying was concluded in August. Jim said: "Hopefully we will see a steady improvement in our hedges" and George Hosford wrote: "I am bowled over by the success of the GBDH project".

## Rampisham Farm

Attending a Dorset Council farmer engagement event, we were able to network with the farmers and secure the involvement of several of them. Among them was estate manager, Gareth Beynon of Rampisham Farm. Gareth has **50 km** of hedges, and we also completed his farm in August.



Spindle growing in the hedge





## Lower Farm

Finally, Jane Elwood-Mayo of Lower Farm, Langton Herring, had hosted a farm cluster event, organised by Dorset Wildlife Trust in April 2023, where I was able to present GBDH alongside the one and only Nigel Adams (we identify Hedge Structures using his Adams Code) and in due course Jane invited us to survey her hedges. We have surveyed the whole farm, **20 km** of hedgerows in total.

All four of these farmers are contributing financially to the GBDH project to see their hedgerows surveyed and to sustain an ongoing relationship with us. All of them aspire to see their

hedgerows improved. These examples are just the beginning of something positive arising from the efforts of so many GBDH volunteers all over the county and even beyond Dorset.

To hear about the project, volunteering and surveying watch our short video:

[https://youtu.be/P-qGoGxL\\_Qs?feature=shared](https://youtu.be/P-qGoGxL_Qs?feature=shared)

If you feel inspired to join the project in any capacity, please do sign up here: <https://tinyurl.com/VolunteerGBDH>

*John Calder*

GBDH Project Manager

## 2024 Hedgelaying Competition

Dorset CPRE is now one of the sponsors of the annual Dorset Hedgelaying Competition held in September and organised by the Melpash Agricultural Society who are committed to keeping the traditional skill of hedge laying alive. This replaces our annual sponsorship of the Best Village Shop competition. The Best Dorset Village Competition was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID and sadly is in abeyance currently as it needs a new major sponsor and volunteers to organise it.



The annual hedgelaying competition took place on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September at Wyke Farm, Chedington, Beaminster. The event welcomes spectators and is free to attend. Competitors are given six hours to lay 10 metres of hedge in Dorset Style.

### Dorset Style Hedge

The hedge is laid on top of a bank. It is kept low to the bank, tightly woven with itself and bonds (thin sticks) are used to secure it internally and externally. The finished hedge is a half barrel shape about 2' 6" – 3' high. There are classes for individuals and pairs open to both novices and experienced hedgelayers, and also a mechanical flail hedge cutting class.

Photos: Tim Russ



# Dorset Health Walks



The aim of the Health Walks is to help residents enjoy a more active lifestyle with a social 10 to 90 minute walk followed by a chat over refreshments at a local café afterwards (if available).

Specially trained volunteers lead the walks and are on hand to provide support and encouragement. The walks are free to join, offering a great opportunity to get out in the countryside, meet new people and you could even make new friends whilst doing it. There are so many beautiful parks, green spaces, footpaths, towns and villages waiting to be explored in Dorset, these community walks give you the opportunity to discover new places.

Some of the groups allow dogs on a discretionary basis.

## Health and wellbeing

Walking is the perfect activity to improve your health and wellbeing. You can start slowly and build your fitness gently, at a pace that is comfortable for you. If you are looking to get more active and would like to walk in the company of others, then a health walk could be for you! Organised walks can have a positive impact on your health, boost your social life and give you a break from the stresses and pressures of everyday life.

## Health walk locations

Currently there are health walk locations in Beaminster, Blandford, Bridport, Cattistock, Corfe Mullen, Dorchester, Ferndown, Gillingham, Maiden Newton, Moors Valley, Portland, Purbeck, Ringwood, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton, Swanage, Verwood, West Moors, Weymouth and Wimborne. Dorset Health Walks are an accredited scheme run in partnership with The Ramblers Wellbeing Walks.

Please visit [www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-health-walks](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-health-walks) to find out more about the locations, meeting times and contact details.

## Dorset Home Library Service

Dorset Council's Home Library Service brings books and talking books to people who cannot get to a library, long or short term.

### Bringing the library to you

Do you, or someone you know, love reading but find it difficult to get books from the library due to your caring responsibilities, health or mobility issues?

The Home Library Service could help: books and talking books are chosen individually for each person and delivered every three weeks from your local library by Royal Voluntary Service volunteers. It offers a wide range of fiction as well as information books on country life, nature, cookery, travel, biography and other popular subjects. The volunteers share their love of reading with the people they visit, a friendly face and regular visitor for people who may live in remote countryside areas and whose mobility and social interaction are limited. This community service is free. All the volunteers are DBS checked and carry ID badges.

Maria Jacobson, Dorset and BCP Home Library Service Manager for the Royal Voluntary Service, says: "For people who enjoy reading or listening to an audio recording but find getting out of the house challenging, this service offers a vital link to the local library. It enables them to carry on doing something they've always enjoyed and helps alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness."

The Home Library Service volunteers often talk about the joy and sense of satisfaction they experience when delivering the books, visiting and talking to their readers.

If you would like to find out more, please contact Royal Voluntary Service in Dorset by phoning their local office

on 01305 236666 or email: [dorsethomelibraryservice@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk](mailto:dorsethomelibraryservice@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk)

Alternatively, you can speak to staff at your local library.



Royal Voluntary Service volunteers, from left, Jenny Gurden from Bournemouth and Janice Jackson from Shaftesbury.

Photo: Royal Voluntary Service.



# 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.



- Athelhampton House & Gardens
- Dorset Museum & Art Gallery
- Edmondsham House & Garden
- 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



Dorset Museum

(c) Dorset Museum

## Diary Dates

Please visit the Dorset CPRE website [www.dorset-cpre.org.uk](http://www.dorset-cpre.org.uk) for 2024/25 meeting dates for the Countryside Forum, Planning Group, District Groups and events.

**16<sup>th</sup> November – 87<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AGM**, 11 am, Cerne Abbas Village Hall. Guest Speaker Roger Morgan-Grenville, Curlew Action Chair, discussing their Natural History GCSE campaign. Please return enclosed booking form.

# Campaign to Protect Rural England

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Please sign up to our e-newsletter on the Dorset CPRE website to receive regular news updates.

#### DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in some of the articles do not, necessarily, represent the views of Dorset CPRE. Many of the articles have been written from a personal viewpoint.

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