

**MINUTES OF 87th ANNIVERSARY DORSET CPRE AGM, HELD AT THE
CERNE ABBAS VILLAGE HALL, CERNE ABBAS, ON
SATURDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 2024**

1. Welcome

Kate Adie, President, opened the Meeting at 11 am and warmly welcomed 63 members and guests.

We started the meeting with a presentation by Roger Morgan-Grenville, Curlew Action Chair. He was due to give a talk on the charity's successful Natural History GCSE Campaign and future plans. Because of the reviewing of so many initiatives with the new government, the Natural History GCSE has been put on the back burner for the time being, which he said is agonising and annoying. The GCSE was agreed in April 2022 in the Natural History Museum as part of the then government's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy. Roger gave an excellent talk on nature education, including sobering stats about how much young people know about nature. He spoke about the work of Curlew Action and his feelings about the state of nature and nature literacy in Britain following four years when he has walked a total of 10,000 miles around all corners of the country researching and writing about local activism.

Roger read a 1968 quote from Senegalese environmentalist, Baba Dioum, "In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." We put ourselves above nature, if we continue nature will be depleted. He went on to say that "Nature needs a place to hide." Protecting and enhancing nature does not cost too much money and is good value. We need to reconnect with nature, protect what we have now and find a middle ground.

2. Apologies

Mrs Sandra Brown, Mr Richard Brown, Mr Jez Hughes, Dr & Mrs J A Larkin, Mr Rupert Hardy, Dr Colin Davidson, Mr Steve O' Connell, Ms Deirdre Flegg, Mr & Mrs H Thomas, Mr Alexander Rottenburg, Mr Michael Allen, Mrs Jane Westbrook, Mrs A Mcintosh, Mrs Jennifer Warren-Peachey, Miss Mary Stanford, Mrs Jenny Harding-Rolls, Mr & Mrs N Forrest, Mr & Mrs C Maude, Dr Guy Dickinson, Mrs G Gibbons

3. Minutes of the 2023 AGM

The Chair asked if there were any amendments to these Minutes. There were none. Proposer Richard Norman, seconder Peter Neal, all in favour, none against.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

Updates on our work on major planning applications, consultations and the 'Barbara Vance Countryside Prize' are covered in the Chair of Trustees' Report.

With reference to the two greenfield solar farm applications, within open sight of the Grade II* Listed Horton Tower, Rupert Hardy spoke to the planning officer who confirmed the planning hearing is delayed until March 2025.

5. **Chair of Trustees' Report**

Neil Matthews, Chair, thanked Roger for his most interesting and informative presentation. He took the opportunity to publicly thank Kate Adie for all that she has given to the Branch over this past year.

We started the year in a very positive way. In January, Neil, Kate and Linda met with John Calder, Project Manager of the Great Big Dorset Hedge, to undertake a short hedge survey around Chilfrome and learn about the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme that can give farmers access to capital grants to improve their hedges. The Trustees were pleased to give the project £6k in funding.

A key appointment this year was that of Andrew Proctor who chairs our monthly online Planning Group Meetings. Along with Heidi Poole, our Planning Advisor, this has strengthened this strategically vital Group which is in the front-line in responding to local and national consultations, local plans and scrutinising planning applications for large developments across Dorset.

The Planning Group organised our Summer Conference on Affordable Housing. Chaired by Lord Richard Best, the Conference had inputs from a leading academic in the field, notably Dr Quintin Bradly, as well as inputs from Middlemarch Community Led Housing, Housing Enabling Team Leader at Dorset Council and CPRE planning experts including our own Michael Allen. The event was not only hugely informative, Neil believes it could have a direct impact on decision making within the local Unitary authorities. Thank you to all who helped organise this and also took part.

Neil spoke about the revisions to the planning system, the incoming government was elected on a manifesto with a strong emphasis of economic growth based on construction of houses and infrastructure. The draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), announced on 30th July, include a mix of proposals that either accept or reverse changes made to the December 2023 version of the framework and then introduce new policies. In September, we submitted a response to the open consultation and also contributed to the National CPRE's "One CPRE" response. From renewables to housing, the new government is pushing for change, and the NPPF is at the heart of it. Whilst we support more housing and clean energy to tackle the climate emergency, the detail is important.

In terms of land use, with the climate emergency now fully underway, inevitably we will see more pressure on the countryside to be used as a place of energy capture either from the sun or wind. It seems that it is also a place increasingly considered suitable for waste incineration. Somehow there has to be a compromise and some battles will be lost but others must be won. One thing is for sure, the countryside cannot ever be static. It is dynamic and changes all the time. However, we must remind all of our elected representatives both locally and nationally: once it's gone, it's gone, and gone for good.

Frances Hogwood and Neil visited a number of schools and 'Barbara Vance Countyside Prize' grants have been provided to three schools to enhance their environmental education and the pupil's appreciation of the countryside.

Neil thanked our active Groups across Dorset, they are in the frontline of all our planning issues. Examples of major planning applications our local groups have worked on include the huge Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) containing 600 shipping containers close to housing in Chickerell, we were disappointed when it was approved by the Planning Committee in July. The North Dorset Group were disappointed when the Secretary of State made a decision to cancel the Calling-in of the application to build 490 homes between Blandford and Pimperne. The government recently approved the Portland Waste Incinerator, Dr Guy Dickinson, Chair of West Dorset CPRE, spoke against the application at the Public Inquiry in December. Many of you may be aware that the local action group, Stop Portland Waste Incinerator, has raised enough funds to challenge the Government's unjust decision after deciding there are enough grounds to present a strong case in the High Court at a Statutory Review. The Sherborne and District Society are increasingly concerned at the state of several listed buildings in Sherborne and have taken measures to raise the profile of these. More details in our autumn magazine.

He encouraged members attending today that should they want to play an active role in safeguarding Dorset's unique landscape, do make themselves known to their local Committee. He also thanked Jez Hughes our Vice-Chair, Linda Williams our Secretary, and the three Trustees not seeking re-election - Peter Bowyer is retiring after serving his six year term as a Trustee.

On behalf of the Trustees, Neil concluded his report by extending our heartfelt thanks to members who have supported us through their volunteering efforts during this year, we are very grateful. We hope that the inspiring work carried out by our local groups and volunteers will encourage more to join us.

6. Treasurer's Report

Bob Bowmer summarised the Accounts for year ended 31st August 2024. There is a reduction in donations and legacies. The investment income is nearly £9k higher than last year, however, interest rates may go down and the Trustees will keep this under review as part of an action to explore ideas for increasing income. The Purbeck and Poole Group and West Dorset Group recently closed their bank accounts. The funds were transferred to the Dorset CPRE bank account and are ringfenced for the local group to access when needed. A copy of the independent examined accounts will be made available to view and download from the Charity Commission website.

Bob asked if there were any questions on the Accounts and there were none. The Accounts were accepted. Proposer Linda Poulsen, Seconder Peter Neal, all in favour, none against.

7. Election of Examiners

Our Examiners, Scott Vevers in Bridport, were proposed by Richard Norman seconded by Dr Frances Hogwood, all in favour, none against.

8. Election of Officers

The following were duly proposed and elected en bloc, proposer Sir Christopher Coville and seconder Colin Brixton, all in favour, none against:

Position	Proposed	Proposer	Seconder
President	Kate Adie	Neil Matthews	Dr Frances Hogwood
Vice-Presidents	Peter Neal	Sir Christopher Coville	David Gidney
	Richard Norman	Rupert Hardy	Dr Guy Dickinson
	Dr John Larkin	Gerald Rigler	Colin Brixton
	Dr Guy Dickinson	Peter Neal	Richard Norman
Life Vice-President	Richard Nicholls	Peter Neal	Dr Guy Dickinson
Trustees	Neil Matthews	Jez Hughes	Mike Madgwick
	Jez Hughes	Peter Neil	Mike Madgwick
	Bob Bowmer (Hon. Treasurer)	Jez Hughes	Mike Madgwick
	Dr Frances Hogwood	Linda Poulsen	Giles Watts
	Alexander Rottenburg	Rupert Hardy	Shaun Leavey
	Sandra Brown	Peter Neal	Dr John Larkin
	David Holmes	Rupert Hardy	Dr Colin Davidson

Richard Nicholls was nominated as Life Vice-President at our 8th December 2023 Trustees Meeting, having previously served as a Vice-President, Chair of Trustees and West Dorset Group Chair. In 2018, Richard received a Life Time Achievement medal and award in recognition of his great and continuing contribution to Dorset CPRE.

The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected at the next Trustees Meeting on 6th December.

9. **Resolution**

No resolution was tabled this year.

10. **Any Other Business and Questions from members**

Sir Christopher Coville, Sherborne and District Society CPRE Chairman, said we need to step up action for farmers. Our farmers have endured several years of misfortune and uncertainty: unpredictable weather, resulting in low crop yields; high costs of foodstuff and fertiliser; fluctuating grain prices owing to the war in Ukraine and Climate Change; and financial pressures following Brexit. The Government has now hit the farming communities with a cap on Inheritance Tax Relief which could lead to the loss of family working farms in the years ahead. We in Dorset strongly support our farming communities. Chris will send a copy of the draft text to the Chair, which Trustees might consider sending to National CPRE in support of our farming communities.

Kate Adie closed the meeting with a rally cry to spread news of our work and to recruit new members.