

The Dorset Review

Autumn 2025 News Issue 125

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The countryside charity
Dorset

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Front Cover image – View northwest from Maiden Castle, Dorchester, taken by Rupert Hardy.

Welcome to our autumn magazine

I would like to thank Neil Matthews for his great contribution as Chair of Trustees, he has sadly had to step down for personal reasons.

Planning Conference on Net Zero Homes

We want to see responsible development that supports the local economy whilst also protecting the unique heritage of the Dorset countryside. That's the key message from Dorset CPRE that we've been promoting at every opportunity this year. What's particularly frustrating is when we get dismissed as 'NIMBY'. That's certainly not the case. In June our annual Planning Conference attracted ninety attendees.

The keynote speakers showed how we could have appropriate new housing that was genuinely affordable and environmentally sustainable. I particularly liked the presentation from Sam Goss, Founding Director of Barefoot Architects, about the community cohousing scheme at Bridport. See article on page 18 for more details.

Dorset Council Local Plan

Our panel debate at the Planning Conference included Councillor Nick Ireland, Leader of Dorset Council. Over the last couple of months we have been in close contact with the Council as we prepare our submission to the draft Dorset Plan. Driven by top-down housing targets set by the Government, the draft plan includes over 55,000 new homes across more than fifty towns and villages throughout the county over the next 17 years. There is scant regard for any of these new homes being genuinely affordable for local young people looking to buy their first home and stay local. The knock-on effect of such widespread new housing on our largely Saxon road system isn't addressed. As I write, we are hoping parish and town councils, local organisations and individuals, will join us in opposing the Plan and encouraging the Council to say to the Government their housing target cannot be met. See page 4 for a summary of Dorset CPRE's response to the consultation.

Meeting with Local CPRE South West Branches

In August, Dorset CPRE organised a Zoom meeting with local CPRE representatives from Hampshire, Devon, Wiltshire, Somerset, Avon and North East Somerset and Gloucestershire to discuss the planning issues, and the impact the Government's new housing targets have had. Councils in Somerset, Gloucestershire, Devon and Hampshire are all in the process of undergoing re-organisation and are at different stages. Somerset reported that planning in the county is in disarray with the county recently announcing a 12 week shutdown (commenced on the 25th of July 2025) where public queries will not be answered and planning enforcement will be put on hold. Devon and Hampshire both reported that New Towns are planned for their counties. All the Counties are suffering from the Government's new housing targets and where local plans are out of date, they are seeing applications for development being granted consent on appeal.

There was a consensus that the Government's housing policy poses a great threat to the countryside and National CPRE are being made aware of the strength of feeling that this needs to be campaigned against. Another meeting is being organised.

Support to local farmers

Our commitment to the local economy is not just about appropriate, rather than inappropriate, developments. It is also to give our support to local farmers. In September George Hosford, from Traveller's Rest Farm, addressed our Countryside Forum. We are delighted to have George as our new Agricultural Advisor. Our farmers need all the support they can get as they seek to stay in business, not least when the whole Government subsidy system is up in the air. It was also good to hear that Traveller's Rest has joined in the Great Dorset Hedge Project which Dorset CPRE is proud to sponsor. George's article on 'The State of Farming in Dorset' is on page 14.

Fingerpost Grants

I am pleased to report our Trustees agreed in September an additional £5k tranche of funding for our fingerpost grant scheme. Since the Dorset CPRE grant scheme was launched in 2017, the charity has approved over £24k of funding towards the restoration of 170 traditional fingerposts helping to keep these local treasures and

save them from extinction. We offer a small grant scheme, up to £200 per post, 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 or Town Council representative (or similar), with a summary of the fingerposts that need repairing, their location(s) and estimated costs. It is so important that we preserve these Dorset icons!



Fingerpost in Tarrant Monkton refurbished in September 2025 with grant from Dorset CPRE

Volunteers doing our bit

Thank you to all our members. We're all volunteers doing our bit. If not already a member, please do join us. Add your voice for appropriate, sustainable economic development for Dorset that protects our amazing countryside.

Seeking Trustees

We are looking to appoint new trustees at the AGM and would love to hear from you if interested in becoming a trustee or know of anyone with enthusiasm, skills and a passion for environmental and countryside issues. For more information, please phone or email info@dorset-cpre.org.uk for an informal chat.

Jez Hughes CBE

Acting Chair of Trustees



Visit to Eastbrook Farm on 30th June, from left, George Hosford and Julian Speers

88th AGM



From left, John Calder explaining how to record a hedge survey with Kate Adie and Neil Matthews

John Calder, Voluntary GBDH Project Manager, Guest Speaker

We are delighted that John will join us on Saturday 15th November for our 88th AGM at Cerne Abbas Village Hall, starting at 11am. **Please see enclosed A4 booking form.**

England's hedgerows offer a valuable habitat for wildlife, amongst many other benefits, and CPRE is working to protect them and create more.

Here in Dorset, John Calder has been driving the Great Big Dorset Hedge (GBDH) project **since 2022**, a Dorset CAN initiative, which is trying to restore and extend the hedgerows of Dorset. When you think of farmland it can be easy to forget the hedge. For the farmer, it is not a commodity. But for the wildlife of our countryside, it is a rich haven, a year-round food source and sanctuary for mammals, insects and birds. They are part of the farmed landscape but the part that is not farmed – hedges escape the intensification of farming.

Improving the network of hedgerows across Dorset will help support the biodiversity and protect against the effects of climate change. So far, over 100 farmers have signed up to the GBDH to survey all the hedges on their farms. John's talk is an opportunity to find out more about the project, how funds are used, the progress made to date and how you can help.

Annual General Meetings are generally about looking back, but as well as reviewing 2025, we will be looking forward to a landmark year ahead with our National Centenary in 2026.

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



Photo: Rupert Hardy

Handsome brick and flint houses at Manor Farm Close, Pimperne

Dorset Council Local Plan

In August 2025, Dorset Council launched a consultation on the Local Plan which will underpin future housing and development for 17 years from 2026 to 2043. Dorset Council and its Ward Councillors rightly called on residents, town and parish councils and local societies to “have your say” by responding to the consultation which now closes on the 31st October.

Dorset CPRE’s response to the Dorset Council Reg 18 Local Plan Options Consultation

Executive Summary

Dorset CPRE thanks Dorset Council for the opportunity to respond to this important consultation and looks forward to continuing to work constructively as a key stakeholder concerned with protecting and enhancing the Dorset countryside and helping our communities to thrive.

While Dorset Council’s Vision and Strategic Priorities must sit within the framework of national planning policy, Dorset CPRE believes it is essential that the Local Plan be realistic, deliverable and sound. Dorset needs a Local Plan that identifies appropriate locations for new housing and employment while reflecting the county’s unique environmental, landscape, and infrastructure constraints. Such a plan must meet the genuine, evidenced housing needs of Dorset’s communities—not arbitrary central targets—while protecting the rural character, natural beauty, and biodiversity that define the county.

In the Council’s 2021 Local Plan consultation, over 9,000 respondents expressed their desire for a realistic, sustainable and deliverable plan which supports communities and countryside alike. Those voices remain relevant today.

Unsustainable and undeliverable plan

Government housing targets derived from the “standard method” would lead to an unsustainable and undeliverable plan. Targets of around 3,300 homes per year (55,000 over the plan period) far exceed Dorset’s historic delivery rates—averaging just 1,300 homes per year over the past two decades—and would overwhelm local infrastructure. Developers build only what the market can absorb, and Dorset’s constrained geography and infrastructure make such levels of growth implausible. A plan attempting to meet these targets would fail the housing delivery test, triggering the Government’s “presumption in favour of sustainable development” and allowing speculative, developer-led expansion across rural Dorset.

Dorset Council has itself recognised that these national targets are unrealistic. Dorset CPRE strongly supports the Council in pursuing a locally justified housing figure based on Dorset’s environmental capacity, infrastructure limitations, and genuine housing need including for truly affordable homes for local people.

Assessment of Dorset’s housing need

In support of this, we welcome Dorset Council’s decision to commission, jointly with BCP, an up-to-date assessment of Dorset’s housing need. This work, together with new evidence such as the Green Belt Review and site assessments, should inform a revised Regulation 18 draft Local Plan that is realistic and environmentally responsible.

A recent Parliamentary Question to Planning Minister Matthew Pennycook MP, from Dorset MP Vikki Slade, elicited an important clarification of national policy. The Minister confirmed that Local Authorities “should make an assessment

of the number of new homes that can be provided in their area... justified by evidence on land availability, constraints on development such as National Landscapes and areas at risk of flooding, and other relevant matters. Local Plans should be deliverable, based on proportionate evidence, and consistent with national policy. Plans should also take the views of local people into account.”

A clear mandate to plan for what is achievable and sustainable

This guidance provides Dorset Council with a clear mandate to plan for what is achievable and sustainable, not what is theoretically required by a national formula.

To assist this process, Dorset CPRE commissioned Jo Witherden MRTPI to review some of the Council’s proposed development sites across the county. Her professional assessment demonstrates that many of the proposed allocations are neither sustainable nor suitable for development. Across locations such as Dorchester, Crossways, Broadmayne, West Knighton, Lytchett Matravers, Lytchett Minster and Sturminster Marshall severe environmental and infrastructure constraints make the proposed housing numbers undeliverable, unsustainable and inappropriate. The same constraints also apply in our view to sites at Bridport, Blandford, Colehill, Longham, Sherborne and West Parley.

Key concerns include:

- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Roads, junctions, drainage systems, and public transport networks are already overstretched. Many proposed sites are distant from employment centres, schools, and services, including already over-stretched health services, fostering car dependency and congestion.
- **Environmental and Landscape Harm:** The loss of high-quality farmland, damage to the Dorset National Landscape, and threats to Green Belt and conservation areas are significant and, in many cases, irreversible.
- **Flood and Pollution Risks:** Groundwater vulnerability, surface water flooding, and phosphate/nitrate pollution—especially in sensitive catchments such as Poole Harbour—pose major obstacles to sustainable development.
- **Unsound Settlement Expansion:** Strategic proposals such as the North Dorchester Garden Community and Woodsford new settlement would fundamentally alter the character of the countryside and are unsupported by credible infrastructure or transport evidence.

Dorset Council faces a profound challenge: how to produce a sound and deliverable Local Plan that genuinely reflects Dorset’s environmental capacity, infrastructure limitations, and statutory duty to protect its National Landscapes. The county’s geography—dominated by protected landscapes, flood plains, and constrained transport corridors—demands an evidence-based and proportionate strategy, not one driven by abstract and unrealistic housing numbers.

A realistic, locally justified Local Plan

Dorset CPRE’s position is therefore clear. We support a realistic, locally justified Local Plan that:

- Meets Dorset’s genuine housing and employment needs;
- Includes assured provision for truly affordable housing for local people in the form of social rent;



- Protects the countryside, Green Belt, and National Landscapes;
- Directs growth to only proven sustainable locations with robust existing infrastructure;
- Adopts a Brownfield First approach; and
- Embeds at its core and is wholly consistent with clear climate, nature recovery, and net zero policies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Dorset CPRE urges Dorset Council to develop a Local Plan that reflects what Dorset can sustainably deliver, not what national targets demand. The Local Plan must be sound, evidence-based, and faithful to Dorset’s landscape and community character. We remain ready to work constructively with the Council and its officers to help achieve that outcome.



Bellway Estate Construction at Blandford 2023

West Dorset Group



As I'm sure others have commented, everything at the moment is dwarfed by the Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation. It may be that other parts of Dorset are hit harder than West Dorset because of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (*now known as Dorset National Landscape – for reasons that I still don't understand!*). Dorset as a whole is an exceptionally beautiful county and, if covered by housing in the sort of numbers we are hearing, it will be irreparably damaged. That of course isn't counting all the proposed solar parks, wind turbines and so on. I personally am very pleased to see Dorset Council is now mentioning the words small "modular" nuclear reactor! But we will do all we can to stop this horrendous onslaught of excessive targets housing imposed by central government. We believe that these numbers are far, far too high to cope with what is actually needed. Not enough will be realistically affordable either. Please see article on page 4 for more details.

STAND

We already have the proposals for building North of Dorchester with around 4000 houses planned. The group STAND (Save The Area North of Dorchester) continues to fight the proposal. They organised another march through Dorchester on October 4th supported by the Thomas Hardy Society, the Dorchester Transport Action Group and Stinsford Parish Council. There are many problems still unresolved with this proposal such as hydrological issues (flooding, water, sewage and pollution) as well as transport and roads. Schools and medical cover have not been planned. In this country it seems that huge housing estates can be built with the NHS expected to sort out the medical cover later - and that is just medical. Shouldn't all these issues be established first?!

Dorset Council is being asked by this government to build 3246 a year, which is frankly insane. They have already said that the compulsory annual target of 3,246 houses a year for Dorset is unachievable. The target compares with long-standing delivery of around 1,300 houses a year, and the previous

government's target of 1,793 a year [which the former Dorset Council Leader said was at the upper end of what is realistic and deliverable].

Melplash Agricultural Show



Diane Stanley (who I am very pleased to say is now the new Vice Chair of the West Dorset Group) attended the Melplash Show with me on 21st August (we receive two entry tickets as sponsors of the annual Hedgelaying competition which took place on 28th September). A beautiful day. We made several contacts while there.



Parnham House

We are very concerned about the plans for Parnham House – a Grade 1 listed building which was destroyed by fire in April 2017. It was bought by James Perkins who co-founded Fantazia – a "rave" music organisation. The owner wants to restore the house as well as provide a venue for hospitality and a restaurant. But to fund this he wishes to build 85 houses in the parklands. The grounds are within the Dorset National Landscape and this is one of the reasons why we will campaign against the proposed houses.

Stop Portland Waste Incinerator Campaign

The extraordinarily effective and hard-working action group "Stop Portland Waste Incinerator" have raised enough money to take their case to the Court of Appeal at the Royal Courts of Justice on October 7th. Dorset CPRE was one of the donors. We wish them every success (this is written before the date).

Dorset National Landscape

I continue to attend the Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board meetings. They have held a public consultation on their National Landscape Management Plan for 2026–31. Their work is vital to Dorset.

Dr Guy Dickinson
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.

Electrical Reuse Project

Following on from the article in our spring magazine, the LFD Electrical Reuse Project is in full swing with over 1 ton of small electricals collected! From hair straighteners to hi-fis, Dorset residents have donated hundreds of unwanted electrical items for reuse or recycling through either a free home collection or drop off at one of our Give or Take events.

Volunteer repairers from repair cafes across Dorset have been working through the donated items at a workshop in Dorchester; once they've been repaired and PAT tested, these items are made available at LFD's Electrical Give or Take day, where anyone is welcome to come along and donate unwanted small electricals or take any items away.

LFD have hosted four **Give or Take Days** in Weymouth, Blandford, Dorchester and Sherborne, where over 360kg of electricals have been taken away to be reused.

The next Give or Take Days will be in Wimborne and Gillingham. Look out for updates for when you can book a home collection in your town and attend a Give or Take event! To find out more visit <https://www.litterfreedorset.co.uk/recycle-your-electricals/>



Nature Hubs

LFD have been breathing new life into the Old Spa area in Weymouth, with a planting scheme connecting people to nature and boosting biodiversity. The project was funded by Hubbub's Nature Hubs fund, a national initiative to create accessible greenspaces to promote wellbeing and nature.

Local businesses - London Lounge, The Famous Old Spar, Brewers, and Nice & Spicy - have adopted planting areas, with staff watering and maintaining the displays. Students from Wey Valley School also joined in, planting colourful geraniums, rudbeckia, trailing plants supplied by Island Garden Nursery in Upwey.

LFD have plans for further planting and invite any local residents and businesses to get involved.

Love Weymouth Harbour campaign

Through posters, leaflets, and stickers, LFD are encouraging boat users to care for the harbour and marine environment. Key actions include avoiding throwing anything overboard (even the milky dregs of a coffee!), using onshore toilet facilities, and installing holding tanks or chemical toilets on board. While a new pump-out station is set to be installed at Weymouth Harbour, LFD are currently signposting boaters to the free pump-out facility at Portland Marina.



To reach their target audiences, LFD attended a variety of summer events including the Surf Life Saving Nationals on Weymouth Beach, the Nothe Fort Family Fun Day, and hosted pop-up stands outside the Weymouth Harbour Master's Office and on the social pontoon at Weymouth Marina.

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 for more information on how to organise your own clean-up and contact details for groups near you.



The Sherborne and District Society



The Society are focussing on the following key issues:

The Dorset Local Plan

There are a few surprises in the latest draft out for consultation; we are especially concerned at the inclusion of the Town Community Health Centre, The Yeatman Hospital, which together with adjoining land belonging to Newell House is identified with development potential for up to fifty three dwellings. This runs counter to previous assurances from Dorset Health Trust, but worryingly is one of only three Community Hospitals identified in this draft for development. The Chair will be writing to Dorset Health for clarification.

The bigger issue is the focus on a total number of 2000 dwellings to the west of the Town. Whilst not opposed to the development, we intend to put down markers for in place infrastructure before houses are put on the market. These infrastructure elements would comprise as a minimum schools and healthcare provision, which at the moment is stretched, improvements to insulation and heating and design that is in harmony with the Town of Sherborne.

In addition, we are supporting strongly lobbying from external groups to ensure adequate affordable housing is included, with special attention to the significant shortfall in the rental market.

Newell House

We are raising further the profile of Newell House, a listed building which has been abandoned and is now derelict and being vandalised. We are engaging with all stakeholders to establish what legal mechanisms are available, together with the owner's right to act as he wishes within the law in private property.

Wyke Farm/Blackberry Solar Farm

The situation has not changed and the action group, Wyke Against Solar on Arable Land (WASA), are awaiting the requested Environmental Impact Statement which must precede requests for planning. By way of reminder, RWE (a specialist solar farm developer) is proposing to construct ground mounted solar arrays, battery storage and associated infrastructure on an area of land amounting to about 250 acres on a total site of 400 acres. The site is within



Ryan Matthews pictured with Dr Alan Kerbey

the Parishes of mainly Castleton, but also Bradford Abbas, Nether Compton, Yeovil and Over Compton. Yeovil is included as the grid connection is intended to run down the A30 into Yeovil itself. Thornford Parish is also materially affected owing to residents' strong views against the proposed solar farm due to its detrimental effect on the landscape.

Future Sherborne

This initiative, which is being delivered in partnership with Sherborne Town Council and other stakeholders, is divided into four focus groups, all of which have relevance to the Local Plan. Sherborne CPRE at the request of the Council is assuming a coordinating and leadership role in view of our key expertise and history as a Town Centre Civic Society.

Planning

We were delighted to hear that a development proposed for Charlton Horethorne, for which we gave considerable assistance, had been refused. While Highways issues were clearly key factors in this decision, we are very pleased with Reason 2 of the refusal, which says that 'by reason of the introduction of built form and hardstanding into an area of open countryside beyond the existing village envelope that would be visible in close and far-reaching views of the site, together with the failure of the layout design and soft landscaping to mitigate

this impact, the development fails to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside resulting in an unacceptable harm to the character and visual amenity of the open countryside and edge of village location'.....contrary to LP Policies SS2, EQ2, EQ5 and NPPF 135,136 and 187(b).

Summer Party

The Summer Party at Monks Barn was a great success. A big thank you to our hosts Ann and David Gidney.

Geography Award 2025

In September Dr Alan Kerbey OBE represented the Sherborne and District Society at the Gryphon School Prize Giving.

He presented the Society's Award for the top Year 13 student in Geography. The winner was Ben Rutter, who unfortunately couldn't be present, and Ryan Matthews (pictured with Dr Kerbey) accepted the Award on his behalf. We wish Ben well in the future.

AGM

We are holding our AGM at the Digby Memorial Hall, Digby Road, Sherborne, DT9 3NL, on Friday 21st November 2025 at 6pm for 6:30pm. Refreshments will be served from 6pm. Committee members will provide an update and discuss relevant local CPRE issues. We look forward to welcoming you to the meeting.

Sir Christopher Coville
Chairman

2025 Hedgelaying Competition



Champion Hedgelayer Terry Coombe and winner of the Lady Elizabeth Perpetual Challenge Cup

Dorset CPRE is one of the sponsors of an annual Dorset Hedgelaying Competition held in September and organised by the Melplash Agricultural Society who are committed to keeping the traditional skill of hedge laying alive.

Rupert Hardy and I attended the event on Sunday 28th September, on a scenic site, located at Toller Fratrum, just outside Maiden Newton, by kind permission of JH Yeates & Son and Mr Colin Hawkins. It was a warm sunny day and we took advantage of a trailer ride around the fields. The event welcomes spectators and is free to attend. We appreciated the tea and homemade cakes provided by the Beaminster Young Farmers Club.

Starting at 9:30am, competitors were given six hours to lay 10 metres of hazel hedge in the Dorset Style. There are classes for individuals and pairs open to both novices and experienced

hedgelayers, and also a mechanical flail hedge cutting class.

The Hedgelaying was judged by Mr Roger Vickery – Thorncombe, Mr Kevin Goodfellow – Bridport, Mr Phil Hart – Uckfield, Mr Chris Stanton – Ashburton and Mr Peter Yeates – Bridport.

The results are available on <https://www.melplashshow.co.uk/>.

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 2½ 6½ – 3½ high.

A big thank you to the team of volunteers who made it such an enjoyable day for people of all ages.

Linda Williams



Catherine Carter, Intermediate Hedgelayer and winner of the Bill Hook Trophy for the best Lady competitor



Hedgelaying competition – Russell Woodham, Melplash Society's Hedgelaying Chairman



Jemma Barker, winner of Novice Hedgelayer and Russell Woodham Bill Hook Trophy for best hand tool competitor

North Dorset Group



There have not been that many new planning applications as currently Dorset Council has a sufficient housing land supply, but that will change in October, when we expect the floodgates to open as the new housing land supply targets take effect. There are lots of new sites shown for North Dorset in the Local Plan (LP) Consultation, as we have less protected landscape here than most of rural Dorset. The next few years are going to be very difficult with insufficient infrastructure a major issue and serious traffic congestion a consequence. I should add that most new housing is not now needed, with the exception of genuinely affordable ones, given the large number of new housing estates either approved or being built.

The residents of Motcombe, Hazlebury Bryan, Marnhull and Milborne St Andrew would have been unhappy reading this Consultation, given the numbers in their "opportunity sites" as DC describes them there. All the North Dorset towns and most large villages have to expect yet more developments on top of what is already happening there now. The least affected town is Sturminster Newton. The North Dorset CPRE Group gave lots of advice to both parish councils and residents.

Overall though the Blackmore Vale/ North Dorset communities will be drowning their sorrows less than in other parts of Dorset, as the numbers are lower than might have been expected, but this is no help to those affected. About 8,800 houses are in "opportunity sites" in the traditionally defined Blackmore Vale/ North Dorset region as opposed to the artificial division of Dorset shown in the LP Consultation.

New Planning Applications and Proposals

We have objected to another large new housing development in Okeford Fitzpaine. The village is also facing potential new sites in the LP Consultation, despite its sustainable status being under threat.

One worrying new proposal is heading our way in the form of a synthetic fuel generating plant covering 28 hectares at Rudge Hill Farm, only a mile or so south of Sturminster Newton, in open countryside, only accessible down tiny lanes. There has been a request for an EIA screening opinion, with DC now insisting on one. We are still getting to grips with the technology and its implications. It was clear however that the Screening submission was

materially deficient, and failed to provide sufficient information on a wide range of relevant environmental factors, including but not limited to: heritage impact on a Grade II listed farmhouse and nearby scheduled monuments; adverse landscape and visual effects; water demand and groundwater vulnerability; pollutant by-products and residue handling; technical feasibility and environmental implications of direct air capture; noise and vibration impacts; harm to priority habitats and protected species; surface water flood risk; traffic and access implications; and risk management of hazardous gases. In other words lots to worry about.

We have met with Graham York, a Technology Consultant, who lives nearby and has volunteered to lead an action group against this development. Carole Jones, the Dorset Councillor for Sturminster Newton, is also involved in the group. We have indicated that North Dorset CPRE will be supporting them too.

Appeals and Hearings

We were very disappointed regarding the appeal concerning the 130-home development on Land North of Ward's Drove at Blandford St Mary. Sadly we and the Council lost, with no one else speaking against. DC was heavily outgunned on the legal front, and it appeared that some of their team had not done their homework, although Robert Lennis had done his. Does DC have much chance of winning if they field no barristers? Funding issues no doubt. For those interested the main issues were the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area, with reference to landscape and the setting of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL), as well as the settings of the listed buildings in the Conservation Area.

Solar farm at North Farm near Horton Tower

Sadly we lost 6-1 at the hearing regarding the 30-hectare solar farm at North Farm near Horton Tower (we did not speak at the larger Woodlands hearing as we knew it was a lost cause). Not surprising as there were five abstentions on the Planning Committee, including Spencer Flower, Belinda Ridout and Toni Coombs (illness etc.), who usually object, leaving the floor to councillors mostly representing urban/

suburban wards, with the respected David Tooke, the only vote against. The rural vote is essential to stop any renewable developments, however harmful. I, Colin Davidson and another local resident did our best to make the Committee understand the importance of Very Special Circumstances in the Green Belt, real concerns regarding cumulative effect of so many solar farms in the area (nine) and the usual red lines of Best and Most Versatile Land, harm to the adjoining CCNL, impact on listed heritage assets (Horton Tower) and the amenity enjoyed by the local community (footpaths) etc. Clearly the voice of the local Dorset Councillor, the local PC and 74 objections on the portal had no bearing on Councillors who seemed only concerned with renewable energy targets. The quality of debate and the paucity of it was disappointing. A sad day for local democracy but we had been warned that DC were keen to approve these solar farms.

I did complain to the Monitoring Officer at DC about the paucity and quality of debate, the exceptionally high approval rate, and also substantial non-attendance by Councillors at the Strategy & Technical Committee planning hearings over the last year. Answers were given but not very satisfactory ones.

Oak Fair Success

We took a stand again at the Oak Fair in August, with volunteers from all over Dorset CPRE helping. Thanks to Derek Gardiner for doing most of the organization. It was a great success with the recruitment of six new members, many signing up for our e-newsletter, and a new legacy, aided by concern over DC's Local Plan Consultation.



Stand at the Oak Fair 2025, from left Ray Hartley, Chris Coville, Alexander Rottenburg and Derek Gardiner

Rupert Hardy
Chair North Dorset CPRE

A Village Shop in Spirit

Hawtree & Sons Riverside Garage, the family business in West Stour that's busily defining rural retail.

After the brief COVID-era reprieve, when shoppers turned to their local stores and village shops rediscovered their value, long-term pressures on rural retail have returned with force. Discount chains like Aldi and Lidl have fuelled an ongoing price war. The shift to online grocery shopping favours the giants. This year, steep rises in the Minimum Wage and National Insurance contributions have squeezed margins across the board. And with energy, insurance and other costs rising faster than inflation, many independent retailers face increasingly tough decisions.

So what is it that makes a rural shop thrive, rather than simply survive?

Larger stores have natural advantages. More shelf space means a broader product range. Some have diversified with cafés, attracting footfall and offering higher-margin sales. Many now prioritise local and sustainable produce – something the CPRE has long championed. Dorset has many high quality local food and drink producers. Some independently-owned village stores can also be run more professionally, which was not the case some years back when too many amateurs bought village shops to run as collectives. Other stores have joined large symbol groups like SPAR, benefiting from the greater buying power and marketing support. A few – like Hawtree & Sons Riverside Garage in West Stour – have done all of the above, and then some.

From garage to flagship

The Hawtree family has run the SPAR forecourt store and garage at West Stour since 1988. Today, the second generation – brothers Seb, Paul and Tom – run the business, with Seb leading the team at Riverside and Tom managing their second SPAR store in Marnhull. The Riverside site sits on the A30, surrounded by ten villages without a single community shop.

It was the community response during COVID that changed everything: customers rallied behind the store and the Hawtrees responded by offering free deliveries to pensioners and disabled residents. That shift – from a transient, roadside clientele to a loyal, local customer base – proved transformative.

In 2023, the family unveiled the newly-expanded Riverside site, now the largest SPAR in the South West. It's a store that comfortably blends SPAR's national support with local autonomy – allowing the Hawtrees to fill their shelves with lots of quality local produce such as The Real Cure charcuterie and Wilton Wholefoods.

At the same time, SPAR's own basic range offers a price-point close to the supermarkets – essential in a cost-conscious community.

There are also plenty of reasons to linger: fresh bakery items, chiller and frozen food cabinets, a strong 'food to go' offer including takeaway coffee and ice cream machines, and even fresh flowers.



They don't do online shopping – but they are active on Facebook.

And rather than rivalling the nearby Udder Farm Shop, Hawtrees complements it – the two businesses attract different shoppers.

Behind the counter

Both Seb and Paul previously worked for Waitrose – a grounding that has clearly influenced their customer-first approach. They've introduced queue management to keep tills flowing, and Seb is adamant: 'We treat every customer as a guest.'

That ethos carries through in the shop's glowing online reviews, which consistently mention attentive, helpful staff. The family briefly ran a café, but now the focus is on broadening the garage offer, which includes a jet-wash, launderette, dog wash and courier lockers. EV charging and DIY car valeting are coming soon. Notably, the petrol prices are competitive.

This approach hasn't gone unnoticed. Hawtree Riverside has twice won the SPAR Convenience Retailer of the Year for the South West, and in 2024 was runner-up in the Countryside Alliance's Village Shop category. This year they are a finalist at the Forecourt Trader Awards, and they are finalists for the prestigious Retail Industry Awards 2025.

Holding the line

Of course, the business faces the same headwinds as other retailers. Staff costs are rising, shoplifting is a growing concern, and they've had to become more creative with sourcing to keep prices under control. Solar panels are already helping offset electricity bills. And while a café may return one day, it will depend on improved consumer confidence. The Hawtrees are also exploring the potential for a small business unit on-site – and they haven't ruled out acquiring another forecourt in the future.

It may look like a service station from the road – but inside, Hawtree Riverside is a true village shop in all but name. Rooted in its community, stocked with the best of Dorset produce, and managed with a professionalism that puts many high street names to shame, this is rural retail done right.

Hawtree & Sons Riverside Garage are open Monday to Saturday 6:30am to 10pm and on Sunday 7:30am to 10pm.



Seb Hawtree with colleague Lorraine

Rupert Hardy

Chair North Dorset CPRE

Purbeck and Poole Group



View over Knowle Hill in Purbeck June 2025

Our Group always welcomes local Members views about local circumstances and plans (my contact details are on the back page) and seeks to ensure matters are duly promoted consistently with the general thrust and interests of Dorset CPRE.

It is confirmed that our Group was founded because of concerns over :-

1. Effects of increasing pollution in the harbour that sits between Purbeck and Poole, and
2. the need to ensure rural and urban areas can be mutually supportive – symbiotic not parasitic – a significant issue in these days of increasing disparities!

As you know Dorset requires Local Plans and following the rescheduling of the timetable for the new plan affecting Poole (and adjoining towns in the BCP partnership area of Dorset), Dorset Council has started preparation of a Local Plan for the more rural areas of Dorset, presumably to replace / correct the adopted plan for Purbeck.

Local Plans

At the time of writing this article we have been promoting the need for responses to the information issued about possible (not necessarily probable) housing development sites. It is hoped that Dorset Council will obtain a very clear understanding of the limitations and

constraints affecting the potential use of the sites that they identified to us all. Naturally as the Local Plan is progressed further it is hoped that Members, and their friends and colleagues, will feel free to ensure that we are empowered to supplement your views to ensure that any proposed Local Plan is both legal and practical. “sound” in terms of the controlling legislation for actual delivery within the plan period concerned – not at some distant eventual future time!

For our part this report will continue to be used for describing our relevant efforts.

Since my last contribution to this magazine our Group has :-

- Objected to an appeal against a refusal of proposed 16 dwellings on land at Morden Mill.
- Stressed the need for better publicity of the consultation about bus services affecting ‘non-BCP area’ residents using Routes 4, X6 and 10.
- Objected to an isolated settlement (a care village) on land in the Green Belt that is for the most part presently permanently open.
- Objected to 29 dwellings in Lytchett Matravers.
- Objected to 15 dwellings in Langton Matravers.
- Objected to change of land use (for residential caravans) in Lytchett Minster.
- Continued a campaign to ensure suitable revisions to street lighting in Swanage.
- Recommended refusal to a change of land use for a SANG that might

facilitate 950 new houses in an unacceptable location.

- Contributed to Branch efforts to help ensure the required “soundness” of any eventual local plan being developed by each Unitary Council in Dorset.
- Supported the proposal to install solar panel canopies on a multi-storey car park.
- Continued contacts with Purbeck Parish and Town Councils (and Poole Neighbourhood Forums plus other activists in the conurbation) to try to support their needs as may be appropriate. And
- Continued contacts with local Members of Parliament to ensure they are aware of our current views about local town and country planning issues.

Thank you if you joined us in August for our local ‘get-togethers’ for a chat over a cup of tea.

As mentioned above, please let me know about any planning issues that we may be able to progress with you or for you. Obviously nobody can be aware of everything but together suitable actions become possible in promoting the wonderful attributes of our area.



Gerald Rigler

Group Chairman

Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (DLNRS) is still in draft. It provides a 10-year framework to enable everyone to work together to achieve a shared vision for nature recovery across Dorset. A public consultation was held from 7th May to 30th July 2025 and is now closed. Dorset Council is reviewing the responses and updating the strategy. The final strategy will be published in December 2025.

Nationally and locally biodiversity is in decline

In July, Dorset CPRE responded to the consultation and welcomed the opportunity to submit comments on the draft DLNRS and appreciate the hard work that has gone into its preparation. Dorset is a county noted for its biodiversity, landscape quality, and natural heritage including the UNESCO World Heritage Jurassic Coast; however as highlighted in the Dorset Local Nature Partnership's Natural Value Report



Parasol Mushrooms at Durdle Door

2022, nationally and locally biodiversity is in decline. In 2020 only 44% of Dorset's SSSIs were in a favourable condition and 45% of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest were in a good, maintained condition (Natural Value Report 2022, The State of Dorset's Environment). As mentioned in the introduction to the DLNRS, as a Nation we are committed to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030, as



Butterfly feeding on blackberries at Winterborne Tomson

agreed at COP 15 and set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The DLNRS has the potential to be instrumental in ensuring that Dorset not only meets but exceeds the ambitious targets agreed at COP 15 particularly if used in conjunction with a land use strategy as consulted on by the Government earlier this year.

Clear roadmap

To be successful the DLNRS needs to provide a clear roadmap setting out how Nature Recovery on the scale required will actually be achieved. In our opinion the current strategy is largely a visioning document and lacks a description of how the 30by30 targets will be achieved. Key elements that we would like to see clearly communicated in the DLNRS include:

- A **clearly established baseline** of the current state of biodiversity in the county against which improvements can be measured. This could take the form of an updated version of the Dorset Local Nature Partnership's Natural Value Report 2022.
- **Clearly defined targets**, explaining the changes required for 30by30 to be achieved in Dorset.
- Real **plans, policies and funding and a timetable** outlining targets and monitoring progress.

The role of volunteers in nature restoration

The delivery of many of the activities targeted at nature restoration will be carried out by volunteers. The Great Big Dorset Hedge (GBDH) project which aims to restore and extend hedgerows across Dorset is reliant on an army of volunteers to carry out this work. Greater emphasis should be placed on the role volunteers can play in nature restoration together with information on how members of the public can volunteer. We recommend that the GBDH project is included in the DLNRS as a case study as it provides an excellent example of how collaboration between Dorset wide organisations and the general public can achieve nature restoration.

Conclusion

Finally, it will be important that the DLNRS, including in the opening sections, communicates clearly and honestly the challenge – the parlous and deteriorating state of nature in Dorset – and the opportunity – that, with the commitment and support of Dorset people, businesses, communities and other stakeholders, and visitors, the policies can be put in place and the actions can be delivered to help nature recover.

Dorset's biodiversity and natural environment, the county's diverse landscapes, its UNESCO World Heritage Jurassic Coast and marine environment, and the natural environment and habitats of its communities, towns and villages, are not only very special but also central to enabling nature, communities and our economy to thrive and succeed. Dorset people, Dorset Council, BCP Council and organisations like Dorset CPRE, want to keep Dorset special. We encourage all concerned to optimise the Dorset LNRS's contribution to keeping Dorset special and helping Dorset's nature and people to thrive.

Nature recovery is a 360-degree public good – good for our environment and climate, locally and globally, good for our economy and sustainable economic growth, good for communities and for health and wellbeing for all. Such clear, effective, consistent messaging will be vital to securing the public support, policies and resources necessary to delivery. A full copy of our response can be found on <https://dorset-cpre.org.uk/resources>

Dorset CPRE Planning Group

The State of Farming in Dorset

A report for Dorset CPRE September 2025



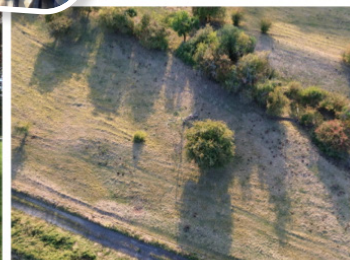
In a year which began towards the end of the wettest 18 month period we have seen in decades, followed within 4 months by a drought from April to early September, and in the year that Defra chose to close without warning the main strand of the Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMS), farmers might be forgiven for being a little brassed off!



August 2022



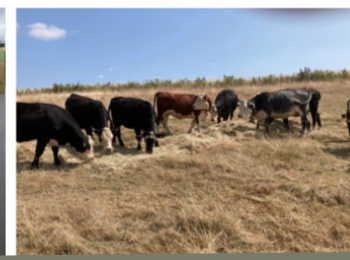
November 2023



August 2025



March 2024



Wildly fluctuating weather challenges farmers to produce a consistent supply of reliable quality food from animals and crops at the same time as protecting soil, water and environment.

On top of this I should add the early ending of the Basic Payment Scheme, the legacy scheme from the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP), as well as the proposed changes to inheritance tax.

Fortunately for the dairy and livestock sectors at least, positive markets and prices have eased the pain somewhat, whereas in the arable sector, low grain prices, driven downwards by good harvests in the major producing areas of the world, have piled woe upon woe, particularly for those farmers who have kept faith with the movement, (since the catastrophe that was Brexit) towards public money for public goods, and have committed to extensive environmental schemes. 5000 farmers this autumn will see the end of their 5 year Countryside Stewardship (CS) schemes, and there is nothing to replace them with.

What should they do, plough up all the valuable habitat that they have created over the last 20 years of schemes? They cover a multitude of options ranging from Wild bird winter food plots to Floristically enhanced field margins, from Water protection buffer strips to No insecticide use, from Overwinter cover crops to Downland reversion?

Sustainable Farming Incentive

We were promised that the features of the old Countryside stewardship mid-tier scheme, which covered all these options and many more, would continue to be available in the new Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), trumpeted by the last government as the main plank of ELMS, the scheme that would pay farmers to revitalise our soils, water and environment, and to lift the pedal from relentlessly driving towards ever more intensive production methods. Public money for public goods it was touted as. How bitter that sounds now.

The current government now claims that the previous government had paid no regard to budgets, and had promised all things to all men in their desperation to prove that leaving Europe and the Common Agricultural Policy was a good thing. In the process they gave the green light to far too many environmentally inferior applications, which have, surprise surprise, eaten up the budget. Defra have so far given no clue as to when the SFI might re-open, what it might contain, or to how much money

is already committed to it.

Farmers however have to make and implement their cropping decisions for the year ahead between harvest and autumn sowing time, i.e. now. Once the crops are planted it is too late to include many of the wildlife options. In addition, all faith in the system has been shredded by recent government decisions. Who would plan and apply for new schemes if there's a fear they will be withdrawn suddenly, without notice. In the way that SFI was withdrawn on March 11th 2025, and we have no idea what, if anything, will follow it.



What should farmers do with the habitat they have created if the funding stops? There is still rent and other overheads to cover, must it revert to cropping or grazing?

Farmer Survey

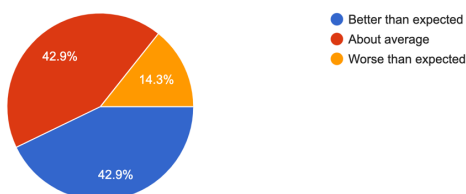
In pursuit of the word from the horse's mouth, I sent round a short survey a couple of weeks before the September Dorset CPRE Countryside Forum Meeting, to around 60 farmers across the county via a couple of chat groups, and was pleased to

receive some 30 responses. **To establish the true state of farming in Dorset, who better to ask?** So I asked a simple set of questions to farmers in each sector. The charts following show the responses:

Arable

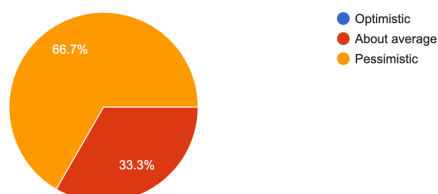
How do you feel about Harvest 2025's overall outcome, even if you still have a lot to sell ?

21 responses



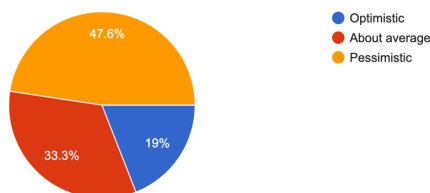
How do you feel about the prospects for selling the remaining product of Harvest 2025?

21 responses



How do you feel about the likelihood of a profitable arable enterprise for harvest 2026?

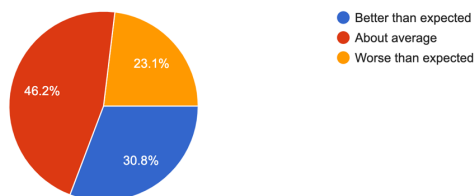
21 responses



Dairy

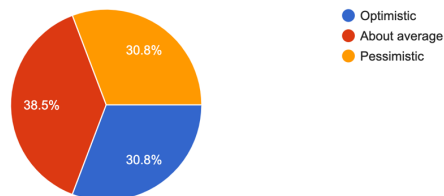
How do you feel about your dairy outcomes from the last 12 months ?

13 responses



How do you feel about the prospects for dairy for the next 12 months ?

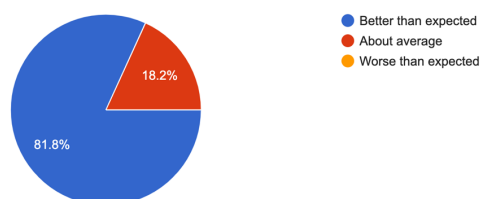
13 responses



Beef and Sheep

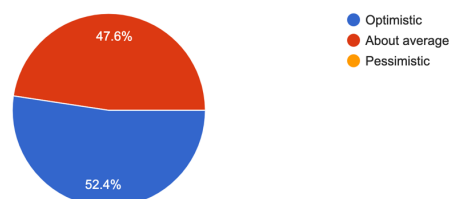
How do you feel about your livestock outcomes from the last 12 months ?

22 responses



How do you feel about the prospects for livestock for the next 12 months ?

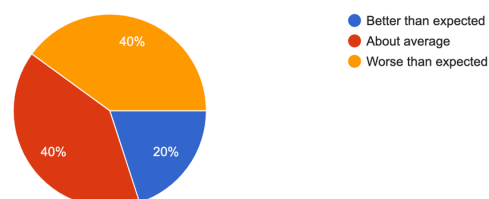
21 responses



Pigs

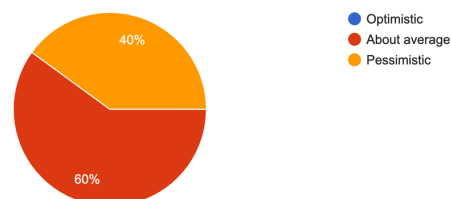
How do you feel about your pig outcomes from the last 12 months ?

5 responses



How do you feel about the prospects for pigs for the next 12 months ?

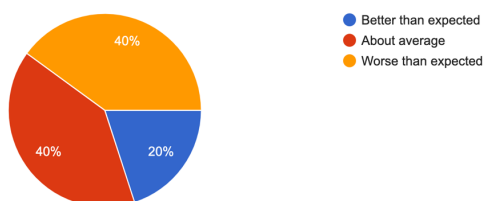
5 responses



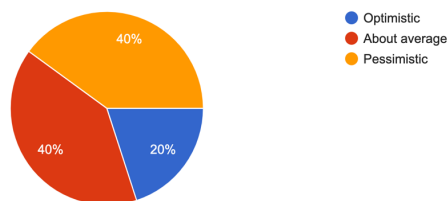
The State of Farming in Dorset continued

Horticulture

How do you feel about your Hort outcomes from the last 12 months ?
5 responses

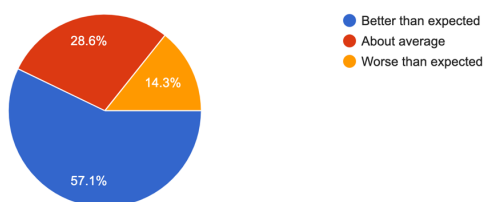


How do you feel about the prospects for Hort for the next 12 months ?
5 responses

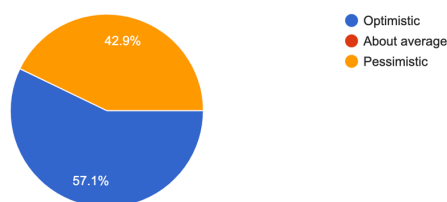


Poultry

How do you feel about your Poultry outcomes from the last 12 months ?
7 responses



How do you feel about the prospects for poultry for the next 12 months ?
7 responses



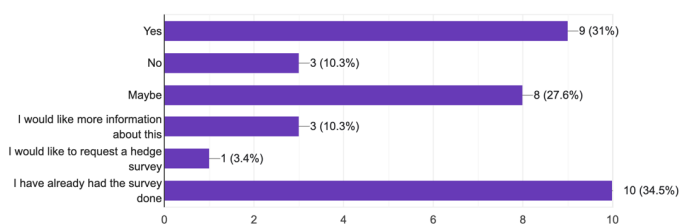
It seems that dairy, beef & sheep and poultry farmers are feeling happier than the arable, pig and horticulture sectors. There are numerous reasons for these differences, and beyond the simplistic effects of market conditions, it would take too long to cover within this three page article.

The future of government support.

For each sector an additional question was asked relating to how each respondent felt about the future of government support for agriculture. The answers can be seen summarised in the following chart:

How do you feel about the future of Government support for farming and landscape?					
Summary of responses					
	No of responses	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No expectations	Don't care
Arable	25	4	21		
Diary	15		14	1	
Beef and Sheep	21	1	15	5	
Poultry	8		5	2	1
Pigs	6		4	1	1
Horticulture	6		4	2	
	30 farmers responded				
Total responses	81	5	63	11	2
	100%	6%	78%	14%	2%

Would you be interested in GBDH surveying your hedges? Please tick all that apply.
29 responses



Current issues needing urgent attention from new Defra team:

- Admin failures: no budgetary control, statements delivered one year after payments etc.
- 5000 CS agreements expire this autumn, with nothing to apply for to take its place
- SFI needs to re-open
- 25-year TB eradication plan under threat from bureaucracy and weak testing
- Properly fund advisory bodies like Natural England
- Lack of staff with digital skills
- Weakening targets for water quality

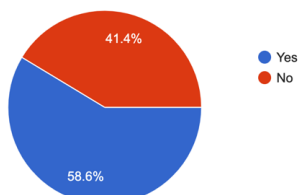
Positives to take away and work on:

- Maritime climate, more rain than many countries we import food from
- A growing population who need 3 meals per day
- A sophisticated marketing and logistics infrastructure
- A mature and experienced farming sector
- A nimble industry that adopts new ideas rapidly
- Strong independent advisory sector
- An engaged green lobby
- Opportunities to diversify from core farming

Hedges

The final question in the survey related to hedges, specifically how many farmers are aware of, or have already worked with, the Great Big Dorset Hedge project. Originally proposed as an easy win for farmers to help obtain funding for hedge work under SFI, the GBDH offers to survey farmers' hedges and classify them, to help work out a priority for hedge restoration on their farms.

Are you familiar with the Great Big Dorset Hedge project?
29 responses



George Hosford

Agricultural advisor to Dorset CPRE

Farm Visits 2025

This year we arranged not one but two farm visits, the first was to Coppet Hill/Purcombe Farm located in Whitchurch Canonorum, Bridport, and the second to Eastbrook Farm in Shillingstone, organised by Shaun Leavey.

Coppet Hill/ Purcombe Farm, Bridport on 21st May

Coppet Hill is located between the villages of Broadoak and Whitchurch Canonorum in West Dorset's Marshwood Vale. Surrounded by some of Dorset's most spectacular hills, amazing views of Lyme Bay and the Jurassic Coast, the 600-acre family farm is a paradise for walkers and nature-lovers, with over 8 miles of footpaths and trails to explore.



George Streatfeild's father established a dairy at Purcombe Farm in the 1950s and cows have long been part of the landscape in the Marshwood Vale, being ideal for growing grass. But in 2021, the family made the decision to move out of dairy farming and explore a new more environmental approach of managing the land.

On a day with much needed rain, seventeen members enjoy a talk from George Streatfeild and Ellen Kingston on the Coppet Hill journey, how they farm regeneratively now and the results they have seen from this. Followed by a Tractor and Trailer Farm Tour through fields with various crops, new woodland and new hedgerows.

Working with local organisations such as Dorset Wildlife Trust and being mindful of climate change, the environment and biodiversity, they are rethinking how they farm. They minimising the use of the plough in order to keep carbon in the ground, and managing their crop rotation and livestock grazing to improve the health of their soil. Wildlife is encouraged to thrive in their traditional hedgerows, and they are fully embracing the government's Countryside Stewardship schemes.



Coppet Hill Farm visit on 21st May 2025



Talk on Eastbrook Farm

Eastbrook Farm, Shillingstone on 30th June

On a very warm June evening twenty four members and their guests visited Eastbrook Farm, a Dorset Council Country Farm, in Shillingstone. The organic beef farm does a great deal of diversification alongside the commercial livestock enterprise.

Eastbrook Farm extends to 56 hectares (139 acres), with an additional 30 acres rented locally. Julian and Felicity Speers took on the farm in March 2012, being first generation farmers following a short career in the Army. The farm was converted from an Dairy farm to a suckler unit following the introduction of NVZ (Nitrate Vulnerable Zones) restrictions. The original farm house was sold in a derelict condition by the landlord at the start of the tenancy and Julian built the new Agricultural Occupancy Condition (AOC) farm house following a number of years living in the centre of the village.

The farm has diversified, for a number of years, with their 'Showground Field' hosting the Three Okefords Steam Rally, the Dorset Gravel Dash and three events a year from the Bournemouth and District Car Club. Eastbrook farm also hosts visits from The Somerville, a South London Community Centre, supporting children from an Afro Caribbean background.

From a farming perspective, it is a grass based Organic beef unit with approx. 40 sucklers cows, a combination of Angus, Ruby Red Devons, Limousin and Blues, calving in April / May and rearing the majority for slaughter. It carries two years of offspring, circa 120 head. The farm is a closed herd, breeding its own replacement heifers.

In addition to being Organic, Eastbrook farm is also in the mid Stour catchment area and subscribes to both the Countryside Stewardship scheme and the Sustainable Farming Incentive. The farm has invested in a variety of complimenting environmental schemes which have seen a growth in wildlife diversity in the last decade.



Julian Speers feeding pigs during farm visit

Feedback from member, Gillian Lewis

My thanks to all who arranged that excellent visit to Shillingstone on Monday evening. Of course, my special appreciation to Julian Speers and family for welcoming us and sharing so much information. Please thank him very much indeed. The explanations made one understand better how things are for smaller farmers these days, manoeuvring under ever increasing regulations, climate differences, public ignorance, animal welfare, land issues, and environment.

So glad his herd is organic. Enjoyed the railway huts, lemonade, swallows, straw barn, tractors, distant suckler herd in the shade. For a moment we touched real life, in a time of headlong (fairly disastrous) change.

Planning Conference 2025



‘Net Zero Homes. Can Dorset do it?’ Dorset CPRE Conference held on 4th June 2025

The goal of achieving Net Zero homes is vital. Buildings account for a huge 39 per cent of energy-related carbon emissions, which come from their construction, operation and maintenance – they are a major driver of global warming and climate change.

In 2023, the UK government made a commitment to reach Net Zero by 2050, meaning that any greenhouse gas emissions produced must be balanced by those removed from the atmosphere. It is essential that all new buildings are designed and constructed to meet this goal.

Net Zero requires that homes must be compliant in both operational energy – the energy used for heating, lighting and daily living – and their embodied carbon, which covers the emissions generated during construction. Homes built to these standards aren’t just better for the planet, they also benefit their occupants by being constructed to higher standards and having significantly lower running costs.

Can Dorset join the revolution?

The Dorset CPRE planning conference looked at how Dorset can rise to the challenge of ensuring that all new homes meet the Net Zero target. The event brought together industry experts, policy makers, developers and academics to discuss the latest innovations and challenges in zero carbon sustainable housing. It showcased pioneering examples of Net Zero development and tried to answer some of these questions:

- What measures are needed to ensure that Dorset’s new homes meet Net Zero targets?
- What policy changes and incentives are needed to support innovation in the industry?
- How must construction methods change to reduce carbon emissions?
- Can affordable homes be delivered that meet Net Zero targets?

Getting left behind

The conference was opened by Dorset CPRE president, former BBC Chief News Correspondent, Kate Adie, and was chaired by Dorset CPRE Planning Group chairman Andrew Procter whose talk, *Making the Case for Zero Carbon in Dorset*, set the scene by explaining why Dorset and BCP Councils must take a proactive approach to ensuring new homes meet Net Zero targets.

He explored the opportunities for the area to become a leader in delivering Zero Carbon housing and highlighted other authorities, such as Cornwall, that have pioneered mandatory low-carbon policies for new developments. He also questioned why so many countries across Europe are so much further ahead.

Andrew proposed that Dorset should set up a Net Zero Innovation Centre – an idea that drew enthusiastic support from many in the audience.

It happens in Bath

The second speaker was Dr Will Hawkins, Lecturer in Structural Engineering Design at the Centre for Sustainable Energy Systems, University of Bath. His talk, *Pioneering Net Zero Carbon Construction Planning Policy in Bath and North East Somerset Councils* (B&NES), examined Bath and North East Somerset Council’s groundbreaking policies, introduced in 2023. These policies require all new developments to achieve Net Zero operational energy and major developments to meet embodied carbon targets, making B&NES the first council in the country to adopt such measures.

Pioneering Bridport

Sam Goss, Founding Director of Barefoot Architects, followed with *Bridport Cohousing: A Place to Grow*. He shared the story of Bridport Cohousing, now named Hazelmead – a pioneering low-carbon development of 53 Net Zero affordable homes built on land crowdfunded by members. Developed to address the severe shortage of affordable, sustainable and community-oriented housing in Bridport, the project was designed to foster sociability and reduce loneliness.



Bridport Cohousing 'Hazelmead' project, aerial view
image provided by Barefoot Architects Ltd

Ironically, it was initially opposed by Dorset Council, but has since become a flagship example of innovation. The Community Land Trust development includes shared facilities, a large wild space and a community orchard. Most of the site is pedestrianised, with cars and tarmac moved to the edges.

It's getting better

The final talk came from Ian Pritchett, Co-Founder and Innovation Director at Greencore Homes. A pioneer in using lime mortars in the building sector, Ian presented *Better than Zero Carbon Homes Now!*, and demonstrated how high-performance, low-carbon homes can be delivered today, and discussed how buildings can go even further. However, he noted that achieving this requires widespread upskilling across the industry. Greencore Homes is currently working on 500 such homes.



Greencore Homes, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire

Rooftop solar and no heat pumps

Following the presentations, there was a round table debate on the issues raised.

The speakers were joined by:

- Councillor Nick Ireland, Leader of Dorset Council (DC) and Cabinet Member for Performance, Climate and Safeguarding
- Councillor Kieron Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services at BCP Council
- Tim Crabtree, Director, Wessex Community Assets
- Mark Chivers, Co-founder of Zero Carbon Dorset

All the speakers gave engaging and inspirational contributions, but there was particular interest in the Hazelmead development in Bridport. Notably, Hazelmead and Greencore Homes both use direct electric heating rather than heat pumps – an approach that contrasts with current government policy. All the developments also make extensive use of rooftop solar panels, a strategy CPRE has been advocating for years as a preferable alternative to harmful greenfield solar schemes.

The round table gave leaders from Dorset Council and BCP Council a chance to reflect on the challenges and opportunities.

There was broad agreement that Dorset should follow the example set by pioneering councils such as Bath and North East Somerset by introducing standards far more ambitious than the current government building regulations. These national standards are often held back by the reluctance of large house builders to adopt them. Participants agreed that government legislation should be more supportive and proactive about decarbonising construction.

Signs of hope

CLlr Nick Ireland acknowledged that Dorset Council still has a long way to go to move on from the outdated policies in previous Local Plans. However, he expressed hope that the new – though still embryonic – Local Plan will show real progress. He also noted that Dorset Council is not currently considering using powers of compulsory purchase, describing them as “too cumbersome and too complex.”

Instead, he hopes the Council can use its own land to help meet local housing needs.

All present agreed on one thing: the urgency of the challenge, echoing Sir David Attenborough's words: “What we do in the next ten years will profoundly affect the next few thousand.”

Copies of the presentations and a link to the recordings can be found on www.dorset-cpre.org.uk.

Rupert Hardy

Obituaries

Peter Nicholas Bowyer 1946–2025

On 30th June, we said goodbye to Peter Bowyer, our former Chair of Trustees, who passed away on 9th June. He had not been in the best of health. Peter was a Trustee for six years up until 2024, and a councillor for Studland who worked on local campaigns. Members appreciated his quiet energy and considerable knowledge of the planning system.

Peter was born in Studland and spent his teen years working every summer on the beach as a lifeguard and deckchair attendant, making traps, camping out and generally embracing the fantastic country and seaside life of Studland in the 1950s and 60s.

He went to Sheffield University to read Economics and on gaining his degree became a lecturer at a Sheffield College. In addition to lecturing Peter was head of Survival and Outward-Bound courses taking his pupils on trips to the wilderness where he delighted in sleeping in man-made shelters even in the roughest weather.

During this period, he married and became the immensely proud father of Hannah.

He may have liked Sheffield, but he loved Dorset and particularly Studland and he was determined to find a way of returning South. So, Peter took a role with Pearson's, the educational publishers and owners of the Financial Times, as international invigilator of their overseas courses. He moved back to Studland and then proceeded to travel to almost every part of the globe visiting and assessing colleges from China to Africa, Russia and South America. He also set up his own Learning Centre assessing British Colleges and upon retirement threw himself into local matters as Chair of the Purbeck Society and Dorset CPRE as well as a long serving Parish Councillor.

Gerald Rigler (Purbeck and Poole CPRE Chair) and Sandra Brown (Trustee) represented Dorset CPRE at Peter's well-attended funeral in Studland's beautiful Saxon church. It was a privilege and pleasure to work alongside Peter in his tireless defence of our Dorset and Purbeck countryside and communities. He will be greatly missed.



Rear Admiral Richard George Heaslip 1932–2025

We were very sorry to hear of Rear Admiral Richard Heaslip, Dick to his friends, passing in April. Dick was a former local group chair for our East Dorset, Bournemouth and Christchurch CPRE group, served as a Trustee, was Chair of Trustees in 2013/2014 and made Life-Vice President in 2017. He was instrumental in updating our Constitution and overseeing our branch re-structure in 2014. Dick's wisdom and man management was needed at a crucial time.

He was a great supporter of Dorset CPRE, a highly respected and greatly liked Chairman and Trustee. In his local parish, Dick was a founder member of the West Parley Residents' Association (WPRA) which was set up to defend the village's greenspace, enhance the parish for residents and honour West Parley's heritage. In 2011, the Parish Council unusually experienced an election seeing all elected members of the Parish Council coming from the WPRA members as they wanted to be able to make even more of



Summer 1986

a difference in the village. Dick was chairman of the Parish Council for a number of years and whilst he was never shy to speak out on important matters, councillors past and present remember him fondly.

The following is a submariners group tribute to explain his illustrious Royal Navy career:

Rear Admiral Heaslip joined the Royal Navy in 1950 and served until 1987. He served in HMS BERMUDA, HMS SENTINEL (4th Hand), HMS TABARD, HMS SPRINGER, HMS AMBUSH, COQC No, 44 Teacher Commander B Hutching, HMS SEA DEVIL (CO), HMS DREADNOUGHT, HMS DOLPHIN, HMS COURAGEOUS, HMS CONQUEROR (CO), Director of Naval Operational Requirements, HMS DRAKE (SM2), Director of Naval Warfare, NATO Appointment, HMS SAKER, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff Commitments, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Flag Officer Submarines & SUBELANT.

He was a Member of the Friends of the Submarine Museum, a previous member of the Submarine Association, and, Winner of the Graham Naval History Prize for 1948.

LEAVING A LEGACY

If you share our beliefs about protecting our precious heritage of a beautiful countryside, please consider leaving a gift to Dorset CPRE in your will. Our work, both in Dorset and nationally, has been sustained in large part over many years through the generosity of members and supporters who have left us money in their wills to carry on protecting the countryside they love.

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

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

3 Simple steps to leaving a legacy to CPRE

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

Captain Michael Fulford-Dobson 1931–2025

Michael is a former President of Dorset CPRE, first elected in November 1995 and retired from the role in Spring 2008. A long-standing member of CPRE, he hosted Dorset CPRE's 75th Anniversary Party at his home, Cerne Abbey, in Cerne Abbas, and also a tour of the Abbey and Church for our Sherborne and District Society members.

Born in London, he studied at Pangbourne Nautical College and the Royal Naval Colleges in Dartmouth and Greenwich. Michael had a distinguished Naval career, he served in the Royal Navy for more than 30 years and held three sea commands - HMS Dark Avenger, HMS Hardy and HMS Jaguar. Is a former Lord Lieutenant of Dorset.

His life had been full of adventure and service, from traveling the world, sailing, and exploring history and nature, to his passion for animals, including dogs and cats.

He cared about the environment, and in addition to Dorset CPRE, he was a champion of many charities and organisations including West Dorset NHS Trust, Natural History and Archaeological Society, Cancer Care Dorset, Poole Maritime Trust, and Dorset and Somerset Sea Cadet Association.

His interests also included the restoration of historic buildings, not least his home, Cerne Abbey, a Grade I listed building. Remembered as a true gentleman and devoted family man, he is survived by his beloved wife, Barbara, and their three daughters.



Captain Michael Fulford-Dobson - A Summer portrait taken by his daughter Jessica in the grounds of his beloved Cerne Abbey which he and his wife devoted themselves to caring for and looking after for nearly half a century

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:

State of Brownfield 2025 (September 2025)

An updated analysis on the potential of brownfield land for housing

CPRE's latest State of Brownfield 2025 report released on 24th September reveals that more than half of these sites already have planning permission (either outline permission or better), meaning they could be built on rapidly.

With enough land to build 1.4 million homes in England, brownfield should be the first choice.

These sites are close to transport, schools, and healthcare, making them ideal for development, and helps us protect our countryside from urban sprawl. Prioritising brownfield means quicker delivery, lower environmental impact, and progress towards the UK's target of 1.5 million new homes by 2030.

CPRE is calling for the government to take action in the following areas:

Brownfield first

Introduce a comprehensive 'brownfield first' planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to enforce Ministerial commitments. This should allow for the true prioritisation and harnessing of the full potential of brownfield land development before any undeveloped greenfield land is considered. Local authorities should also have increased control of the order in which development land is built so that suitable brownfield sites are developed first and speculative greenfield proposals are rejected in all but exceptional cases.

Brownfield targeted housing funds

Incentivise brownfield first through focusing the New Towns Programme and Homes England support on developments that deliver on brownfield land and provide affordable homes. This will enable brownfield land to support regeneration and serve the needs of communities.

Diversity of housing tenures

Amend the NPPF so that national planning policy requires all new developments to have diversity of housing tenures and types as outlined by the 2018 Independent Review of Build Out led by Sir Oliver Letwin. This policy should be backed up by Homes England funding where necessary.

Regularly update brownfield land registers

The future planning performance regime for local authorities should include annual updating of brownfield registers as a key element. *The Dorset Council and BCP Council brownfield land registers were last updated in 2020, an update is well overdue.*

Centralised system of brownfield data collection

There should be a centralised, standardised system of brownfield data collection sitting within the government's emerging planning data hub to enable more accurate, efficient, and transparent analysis.

Delivering better integrated land use decision-making: evidence review (August 2025)

Grounded Insight / CPRE: Integrating Land Use Review, August 2025

Land is under increasing pressure to deliver multiple objectives – from energy, housing and transport infrastructure to timber, food, nature recovery, flood and drought management – all whilst reducing emissions. Achieving government objectives at different levels and across sectors is only possible with an integrated approach to managing land use change and its impacts. The effectiveness of Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs' (Defra) Land Use Framework (LUF), due to be published later in 2025, will rest on the systems, processes and structures by which it is put into practice both locally and regionally.

Getting solar off the ground (July 2025)

Climate change threatens the countryside, but the way we decarbonise matters.

CPRE calls for 60% of the UK's solar to be generated on rooftops and ban on solar farms on the highest two grades of farmland. England's most productive farmland is being lost to mega solar farms, CPRE research 'Getting solar off the ground – The problem of mega solar in the countryside' reveals. CPRE urges the Government to shift solar development away from prime farmland and toward smarter, less damaging alternatives.



Principles for new towns done well (July 2025)

The government has committed to delivering a new wave of up to 12 New Towns across the country, each containing at least 10,000 new homes. CPRE wants to see these in the right places delivering ambitious climate, nature and wellbeing friendly towns built to high design standards providing genuinely affordable homes.



Our principles

- 1 Brownfield first, sustainable locations
- 2 Meaningful community engagement
- 3 Integrate and protect green space and nature
- 4 Housing diversity for inclusive communities
- 5 Encourage market disruption Integrated transport planning
- 6 What goes where to create a sense of place
- 7 Carbon neutral development
- 8 Transparent accountability
- 9 Secure long-term success

Dorset CPRE Membership

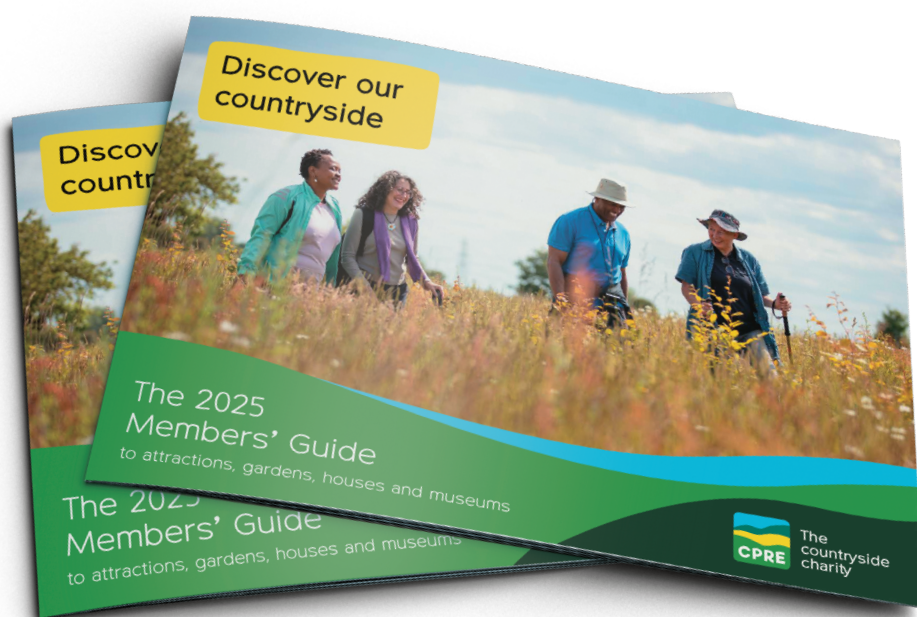
Thank you for being one of our valued members. Your membership makes a real difference to what we can achieve, and with your generous support we will continue our work towards our vision of a thriving, beautiful countryside for everyone.

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 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.



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
- Access to our Planning Hotline for advice from CPRE Staff
- Membership of your local county branch
- They can also join our Planning Group meetings

Diary Dates

Please visit the Dorset CPRE website www.dorset-cpre.org.uk for 2025 meeting dates for the Countryside Forum, Planning Group, District Groups and events.

15th November – 88th Anniversary AGM, 11 am, Cerne Abbas Village Hall. Guest Speaker John Calder will give an update on the Great Big Dorset Hedge Project, a Dorset CAN initiative. Please return enclosed booking form.

21st November – Sherborne and District Society AGM, 6pm, at the Digby Memorial Hall, Digby Road, Sherborne, DT9 3NL

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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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PRINTED BY: Remous Ltd, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4FW