MINUTES OF 88th ANNIVERSARY DORSET CPRE AGM, HELD AT THE CERNE ABBAS VILLAGE HALL, CERNE ABBAS, ON SATURDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2025

1. **Welcome**

Kate Adie, President, opened the Meeting at 11 am and warmly welcomed 51 members and guests.

We started the meeting with a presentation by John Calder, our guest speaker, who gave an inspiring talk on 'Enhanced and Extended Hedgerows All Across Dorset, A delivery mechanism for Nature Recovery'. 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 which is trying to restore and extend the hedgerows of Dorset.

The aims of the GBDH project, established in 2021, are being achieved by bringing volunteers and farmers together on an ambitious and unprecedented scale. Over 400 volunteers are registered, just over 200 are truly actively engaged. New farming enterprises are engaging each month - the current number is 120 but there is a need for more farmers in the East Dorset area. John spoke about the hedge surveys undertaken at the Symondsbury Estate, these surveys help to establish the condition of the hedges and where the opportunities for improvement lie. Having established a rapport with each farmer the GBDH team move on to enabling the hedge planting projects which they helped to identify - again working with the same volunteers.

From the beginning, over three years ago, the big issue has been the sheer magnitude of the scheduling operation plus the technicalities of documenting the project's progress. It has evolved from a purely volunteer activity to a hybrid combining huge numbers of active volunteers with eight specialist contractors (The Engine Room) to implement the ambition to see hedgerow enhanced and extended the length and breadth of Dorset.

John said the GBDH is grateful for funding from Dorset CPRE over the past 2 years, totalling £12k, and £5k from the National CPRE Hedgerows Heroes project in 2023, to keep the momentum going. The project also receives funding from Dorset National Landscape, Clipper Tea, farmers who receive survey reports and more recently from Wessex Water. In closing John said the GBDH project, a delivery mechanism for nature recovery, needs a stable funding structure to continue the current growth.

John mentioned that following the recent consultation, Dorset Council has listened and Hedgerows will feature in the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

2. **Apologies**

Mr Shaun Leavey, Mr Jeremy Selfe, Mr Colin Brixton, Mr John Worth, Mr Roy Phillips, Dr Frances Hogwood, Mr Peter Neal, Mr Sandra Hillier (Thornhackett Parish Clerk), Dr & Mrs J A Larkin, Ms Deirdre Flegg, Mr & Mrs C Maude, Dr Guy Dickinson, Mrs G Gibbons, Mrs Barbara Bird

3. **Minutes of the 2024 AGM**

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

4. **Matters arising from the Minutes**

Updates on our work, Local Plans and the 'Barbara Vance Countryside Prize' were covered in the Acting Chair of Trustees' Report and the Treasurer's report.

Regarding the two greenfield solar farm applications within open sight of the Grade II* Listed Horton Tower, both planning applications were approved in 2025. Rupert Hardy (Chair North Dorset CPRE) and local members spoke at the Solar Farm Hearing for North Farm. We were disappointed that the proposal was approved 6-1 and at the number of councillors who failed to attend the Solar Farm Hearing.

On support for farming, National CPRE included a response to the farming protest and inheritance tax relief changes in their Weekly Network News dated 27th November 2024. Trustees were pleased to see National CPRE take up the case and provide a response. We are delighted to have George Hosford, former Chair of NFU Dorset, as Dorset CPRE's new Agricultural Advisor. He wrote an article on 'The State of Farming in Dorset' for the latest issue of our magazine 'The Dorset Review'. We visited two farms during the year.

5. **Acting Chair of Trustees' Report**

Jez Hughes, thanked Kate for her work and for promoting CPRE. He gave an update on the following areas:

Members, Groups and Committees

Thank you to the 10 percent of our membership who come to the AGM. You encourage 90 percent of our membership to be active. There is a lot we could be doing to attract new members. We are aware that some people may prefer to support individual initiatives and not take up annual membership.

This has been another busy year in particular for our Planning Group who responded to local and national consultations. A lot of effort went into submitting a robust response to the Dorset Council Local Plan on Site Options. We highlighted that the plan must meet the genuine, evidenced housing needs of Dorset's communities - not arbitrary central targets not related to local need - while protecting the rural character, natural beauty, and biodiversity that define the county.

Jez went on to say that we are very conscious that we do not currently have an active local Group covering Bournemouth, Christchurch and East Dorset. During the year we made some new contacts at Bournemouth University and look forward to building on these in the year ahead.

Partnerships

We can achieve more working with others than on our own. For example, promoting the GBDH initiative, working with Dorset CAN on housing matters, meeting with Dorset Wildlife Trust. Our planning conferences help to bring together industry experts, policy makers, developers and academics - all helping us to achieve the common good.

We have also linked up and arranged a special meeting with local CPRE branches to discuss planning issues and the impact the Government's new housing targets have had. We also continue to organise farm visits, this year hearing about regenerative farming, and diversification on a Dorset Council Country Farm.

National CPRE continue to work on key campaigns with enthusiastic support for Hedgerow Heroes and the Rooftop Revolution campaign. Looking ahead, CPRE has started a discussion about some fundamental ways we could work more closely together and what the benefits of greater national/network alignment might be. We can all do more to get our voices heard.

Councils, Government and Planning
The planning framework is up for change. We are here to support Parish and Town Councils and have held meetings with BCP Council and Dorset Council Officers. We are trying to establish good connections with local MPs and seek to exert influence through them and put forward the positive opportunities.

Sustainable Countryside
A sustainable countryside is what we are about. We need a thriving countryside and to address the severe shortage of genuine affordable homes to rent and buy, sustainable housing, and good transport infrastructure.

Centenary
We are looking forward to a landmark year ahead with CPRE's National Centenary in 2026. Our centenary will mark 100 years of championing the English countryside, from National Parks and the Green Belt to dark skies and local planning. Hopefully it will provide an opportunity, not only to commemorate the last 100 years of protecting the countryside, but also to engage the public and create a stronger future for CPRE. We are organising our own centenary celebration event with details to be confirmed in spring 2026.

Working together for a better Dorset is our aim and Jez thank all present for making Dorset CPRE effective and influential.

6. **Treasurer's Report**
Bob Bowmer summarised the Accounts for year ended 31st August 2025. The accounts for our four local Groups are consolidated into the Dorset CPRE branch accounts. Key points:

- Subscriptions in line with 2024 with a slight increase as more members pay new fees
- Investment income is up by 2.3% to £24,708 and we closed the Teachers Building Society account due to low interest rate.
- Donations are up by £17,894 (Fundraiser for Wyke/Blackberry Solar Farm Campaign and £3,800 from Save our Silton Group)
- Creditors for North Dorset Group, £13,800 received, £3,800 treated as a donation. The donation was made on the understanding that, should Save our Silton Group

need to be re-formed to oppose a new application within the next five years, £10k of the funds would be returned to them.

- Creditors for Sherborne and District Society, £15,025 net accrued for a local project by 31st August and paid away in October 2025.
- For 2025-26 we shall review investments but always ensure safety and ongoing security as paramount.
- We continue to support grants of up to £200 for fingerpost and up to £250 'Barbara Vance Countryside Prize' for wildlife related projects at schools with evidence of outdoor learning and introducing children to the countryside/rural life.

Bob asked if there were any questions on the Accounts and there were none. The Accounts were accepted. Proposer Richard Norman, Seconder Alexander Rottenburg, all in favour, none against.

7. **Election of Examiners**

Our Examiners, Scott Vevers in Bridport, were proposed by Richard Norman seconded by Howard Thomas, all in favour, none against.

8. **Adoption of Updated Constitution**

Jez Hughes explained that the current 2014 Constitution was out of date. The number of Trustees is being increased from seven to eleven to help share the workload. The proposed updates reflect important clarifications and improvements to our governance, ensuring the Branch's continued effectiveness and compliance with National CPRE requirements.

A copy of the updates was circulated again with the agenda and printed copies of the updated constitution were available if needed. Jez, on behalf of the trustees, recommend the adoption of the updated Constitution.

Adoption of the updated Constitution was proposed by Linda Poulsen and seconded by Alexander Rottenburg, all in favour, none against.

9. **Election of Officers**

The Trustees present were introduced. Our newly approved Constitution allows for up to eleven Trustees, we currently have room for two Trustees who could be co-opted during the year. We would love to hear from potential Trustees in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and East Dorset area.

The following were duly proposed and elected en bloc, proposer John Holiday and seconder Howard Thomas, all in favour, none against, (see next page):

Position	Proposed	Proposer	Seconder
President	Kate Adie	Jez Hughes	Dr Frances Hogwood
Vice-Presidents	Peter Neal	Sir Christopher Coville	David Gidney
	Richard Norman	Peter Neal	Rupert Hardy
	Dr John Larkin	Gerald Rigler	Colin Brixton
Trustees	Jez Hughes	Bob Bowmer	Sandra Brown
	Bob Bowmer (Hon. Treasurer)	Sandra Brown	Jez Hughes
	Alexander Rottenburg	Rupert Hardy	Richard Norman
	Sandra Brown	Deirdre Flegg	Gerald Rigler
	Andrew Procter	Sandra Brown	Rupert Hardy
	Dr Guy Dickinson	Peter Neal	Dr Diane Stanley
	Gerald Rigler	Colin Brixton	Dr John Larkin
	Rupert Hardy	Sir Christopher Coville	Andrew Procter
	Sir Christopher Coville	Peter Neal	Rupert Hardy
Examiners	Scott Vevers		

The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected at the next Trustees Meeting on 28th November.

10. **CPRE Award presentation**

Captain Lionel (Dickie) Bird RN was nominated earlier this year by the Sherborne and District Society for a CPRE Special Contribution Award in recognition of his exceptional service to the Dorset Branch and the Society. More details will appear in our spring 2026 magazine. Sir Christopher Coville presented the award and medal to Dickie Bird.

11. **Resolution**

No resolution was tabled this year.

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

Kate Adie highlighted our local landscape is under threat. She made reference to a farm totalling 340 acres (138 hectare) of biodiverse land that has come up for sale surrounding the small plot of land with the Cerne Abbas Giant – this plot has been managed by the National Trust since 1920. Dorset CPRE has written to the Wessex NT Region to say we hope that the Trust will look carefully at acquiring the land.

Linda Williams was presented with a bouquet of flowers and thanked for being a linchpin of the organisation and her work with our volunteers and members.

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