

Standing up for the countryside

The newsletter of the Devon branch of
the Campaign to Protect Rural England : Summer 2014
www.cpredevon.org.uk

EVENTS, EVENTS ! COME AND JOIN THE DEBATES



Harm to our heritage

Special fund-raising event

Thanks to our new President, Sir Simon Day, we have been able to arrange a fund-raising evening with **Lord Heseltine as the guest speaker. Friday 14 November, 6pm-8pm, at The Watermark, Ivybridge.** Tickets will be available nearer the time.

Lord Heseltine has been Environment Secretary, Defence Secretary, President of the Board of Trade, and Deputy Prime Minister. More recently he has been campaigning for devolving decision-making to local levels. It should be a fascinating evening.

Our successful programme of open meetings with local MPs continues throughout the year.

So far we have organised meetings in Totnes (Dr Sarah Wollaston MP), Newton Abbot (Anne Marie Morris MP), Holsworthy (Geoffrey Cox QC MP) and South Hams (Gary Streeter MP).

The great thing about these meetings is the opportunity for discussion about current planning and environmental issues, including the chance to hear an MP's perspective. And they're an enjoyable way of finding out what CPRE Devon are doing and, if you wish, getting more involved.

So put the next round of meetings in your diary.

They are:

Friday 19 September, Okehampton - Mel Stride MP
Friday 24 October, Tiverton - Neil Parish MP
Friday 28 November, Goodleigh, nr Barnstaple - Sir Nick Harvey MP

To book your place at any of the meetings contact Penny Mills - chairman@cpredevon.org.uk or phone 01392 966737. On past form, they will be very popular and so places must be reserved.

Wind turbines and solar farms on the run?

The long-running campaign against wind turbines and industrial-scale solar farms in the wrong locations has had some notable successes lately. See page 3.

Dates for your Diary >

19 September : **Mel Stride MP open meeting**
24 October : **Neil Parish MP open meeting**

14 November : **Lord Heseltine fund-raising event**
28 November: **Sir Nick Harvey MP open meeting**

CHILDREN AND THE COUNTRYSIDE



Will they ever get to know the countryside?

A very generous legacy

CPRE Devon now has the chance to make a real difference to children's understanding of the countryside.

Dr Wendy Lawrenson, who lived near Holsworthy and died in 2012, was a passionate defender of our countryside. She worked with CPRE Devon's Torridge group and served as a judge in our Best Kept Village competition. As a university lecturer, she believed that the future of the countryside was inextricably linked to ensuring that children understood its purposes and its value.

In her will, Dr Lawrenson left a substantial legacy to CPRE Devon to be used for "developing an interest and appreciation of the countryside in children". We feel honoured to receive the gift and to have been judged by her as a worthy steward of her aims.

The trustees of CPRE Devon are now considering how best we can use Dr Lawrenson's legacy. We are inclined to identify suitable partner organisations who can bring the management and delivery skills which are not available in sufficient quantities within CPRE Devon's volunteers.

If you have any constructive suggestions to add to our own pool of ideas, please send them to Peter Cleasby, one of our vice-chairmen, email projects@cpredevon.org.uk or phone 01392 271899.

Children a key theme at our AGM

The theme of engaging children in the countryside was explored by Michael Morpurgo, the well-known Devon author and teacher, at our 2014 AGM.

To an audience of 120 people, Mr Morpurgo spoke of his firm belief that children should be able to experience the countryside at first hand so that they might understand it. By "countryside" he meant the land, and those who work it and act as its stewards: in other words, farmers.

The charity Farms for City Children, which he and his wife set up, aims to do just that. Young urban-based children take part in the life of a working farm, getting up early, cleaning stables, helping manage livestock and so on. This is far removed from - as he put it - patting a sheep at a county show. Only with this degree of practical experience can we hope to start repairing the vast gulf between urban people who do not understand true country people.

This gulf was visible in this year's floods when - despite extensive media coverage of the devastation on the Somerset Levels - it was only when the Thames began to flood in the home counties that the politicians woke up. And convincing people of the importance of domestic food production is another reason for bridging the gulf.

In a lively question and answer session, Mr Morpurgo said he supported small-scale developments of affordable housing in rural settlements. As Princess Anne had recently commented, this scale of development was acceptable to the communities whereas large housing developments were not.

In recognition of the value of the work done by Farms for City Children, CPRE Devon donated £1,000 to the charity.

The Western Morning News was present at the AGM and subsequently printed an extensive interview with Michael Morpurgo in the 19 April edition, available on line at <http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/Morpurgo-spells-views-countryside/story-20983551-detail/story.html>

Renewable Energy

The long-running campaign against wind turbines and industrial-scale solar farms in the wrong locations has had some notable successes lately.

Planning inspectors have recently dismissed appeals against local authority refusals to grant planning permission for wind turbines near Witherdon Wood, Ashwater (Torrige), Iddesleigh (West Devon) and Bratton Fleming (North Devon). Solar farm appeals have been dismissed at Chalhanger Farm, Shebbear (Torrige) and Keen's Farm, Morebath (Mid Devon). In all cases, the inspectors have recognised the importance of renewable energy generation but concluded that this is outweighed by the damage to the landscape.

However, applications continue to come forward, so we need to remain vigilant and ready to act to protect the countryside. CPRE Devon has great expertise in marshalling cases against such developments in unsuitable locations, and we continue to work with local groups to protect the landscape. At the time of writing, there are over 3,300 acres of farmland at some stage in the planning process for solar farms or already permitted, and 325 wind turbines.

There is a useful national CPRE Policy Guidance Note on Onshore Wind Turbines, put together by a group of members from around the country, which gives advice on points to look for. It can be found on our website at Topics/Energy. A companion note on solar farms is expected shortly.

Transport

CPRE Devon continues to participate in the Local Enterprise Partnership's transport advisory group, which brings us into direct contact with some of the key decision makers, including the bus and rail operators. We submitted comments, as part of a CPRE South West response, on the draft franchising document which will be used when the current First Great Western franchise is retendered.

We have not taken up a position on the options for alternative rail routes between Plymouth and Exeter.

Housing

Unsuitable types of development continue to be proposed, and usually involve building on green field land. CPRE nationally has launched a campaign to identify brownfield sites - usually in towns - suitable for housing or other development. Details are at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/how-you-can-help/take-action/waste-of-space>. Get your cameras out!

CAMPAIGNS NEWS

Get involved!

There are many ways you can help our campaigning.

There's no let-up in the number or volume of issues that we need to handle: promoting our campaign on land use and food security, responding to major planning applications, assembling evidence, influencing decision-makers, and more.

Traditionally, we've worked through district groups and we'd like to strengthen these. But there are other ways of helping, for example in offering or developing expertise on a specific topic to be deployed county-wide, for example: transport, waste, housing, farming and land management, landscape issues such as hedgerows. People with common interests can form email groups, so no need to travel to meetings!

If you're interested, contact Penny Mills by email chairman@cpredevon.org.uk or phone 01409 231596. We'd be very pleased to hear from you.



The "ordinary" countryside is worth protection too

Another National Park?

There is a campaign for a new Dorset and East Devon National Park.

A Dorset-based group is promoting a new National Park running 100 miles west to east, based on the East Devon and Dorset AONBs and the Heritage Coast. CPRE Devon does not support the proposal on the grounds that it offers no evident benefits and increases development pressures on the areas outside the proposed NP.

DEVON ROUND-UP

CPRE Devon Countryside Forum

We're changing our old "Advisory Committee" into a more broadly-based forum bringing together countryside interests across Devon.

The BBC in Plymouth once said to a former chairman of CPRE Devon that we are the organisation they look to for comment on overall countryside issues. We thought it sensible to build on this pivotal role by using it to facilitate discussion among the wide range of groups in Devon who have interests in the countryside.

So on 28 May, at West Hill near Ottery St Mary, we invited a range of people to join us for presentations and discussions. The participants were as diverse as councillors and officers from Devon County Council, members and officers of the our National Parks and AONBs, local amenity groups, and specialist bodies such as the British Horse Society, Ramblers, NFU and CLA. We had presentations from Natural England and from the Dartmoor National Park Authority, which both stimulated discussion. We also heard from the proponents of a Dorset & East Devon national park (see page 3).

We will be holding the next meeting at the end of September.

Sign CPRE's Countryside Charter

With a general election approaching, it's important to try and make all the political parties commit to effective countryside protection.

CPRE's Countryside Charter seeks reuse of brownfield sites, a fair say for communities rather than developers, and more homes in the right places.

Please sign the charter now at
www.saveourcountryside.org.uk



Crediton Farmers Market

COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS

We want to spend as much as possible of our limited funds on campaigning. But keeping in touch with our members is important.

With postage now costing 53p a letter, we have to try and reduce our mailing costs. So we are sending this newsletter electronically to every member for whom we have an email address. This reduces our costs and is environmentally friendly. And you receive it sooner! We are of course sending it by post to members for whom we don't have an email contact.

We recognise that not everyone likes receiving items like this by email. So if you would rather have a hard copy please let us know - the contact details are at the foot of this page - and we'll send you one.

Our website - www.cpredevon.org.uk - is the place to go for news and updates, and those who use Twitter can join our hundreds of followers - @cpredevon.

We have a new central telephone number and central address for correspondence - see the foot of this page.



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

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