

# DEVON **CP RE**

The Voice for Devon's Countryside

Devon Voice Newsletter - Spring 2021



## Welcome to our Spring Newsletter

The last year has surely been one of the most extraordinary many of us have ever known, and at times even access to our own countryside has been denied to us, perhaps making us appreciate it more than ever. Evidence shows that being outdoors surrounded by nature is good for both our physical and mental well-being, and we are seeing more people than ever visiting the countryside as foreign travel restrictions continue. While this does, unfortunately, sometimes give rise to problems, we can only hope that as more people become acquainted with the special beauty of our landscape, so too will more people come to value it and want to protect it.

As ever we continue to receive requests from our members for help opposing many applications for new housing. At the beginning of the year Devon CPRE analysed the government Housing Data and were able to show that in Devon we have already exceeded the projected target figures for new housing. We are happy to report that several local councils were able to use our briefing document on this to turn down unwanted excess development in their areas. We can offer free planning advice to any council that is a Devon CPRE member so do encourage your local parish or town council to join us if they have not already done so.

This last year has seen house prices in the region experience a rapid rise, due to a post-Covid flight from the cities attracting people seeking a new life

away from London and the South East. While good for home-owners, these rising house prices make it even harder for many local people to get onto the housing ladder. Many people believe that the power of the big development companies is limiting the ability of local councils to provide truly affordable new housing, and we look for a possible solution to this problem.

In spite of some success, we must not rest on our laurels, however, and this year we are facing an onslaught of applications for ever larger solar installations, which together would cover an area of many square miles of green Devon countryside. People are now used to seeing small installations around, and solar panels on rooftops but what is now being proposed are acres and acres of solidly packed PV panels, surrounded by tall protective fencing and security lights and cameras; basically we risk seeing the industrialisation of our countryside. More details of these applications are in this newsletter, if you would like to register objections to any of them that affect your area.

On a more positive note, one group of people who are raring to get out and about are the judges for our Best Churchyard Competition, now in its fourth year and still attracting more entries than ever. We look forward to visiting one of these special places near your home soon.

**Rebecca Bartleet, Chairman**

**News from Around the County - North Devon**  
**North Devon District Council Planning Committee**  
**Refuse Permission for more New Houses at Chivenor**

**The decision follows evidence, based on the government’s own figures, that North Devon has delivered a third more homes than were actually required over the last five years.**

North Devon’s Planning Committee recently responded to evidence from local objectors, including ourselves, with an emphatic refusal for 59 new homes at Chivenor Cross near Braunton. Councillors voted 9-3 against the application, which was not in the Local Plan and had been refused before, but it was resubmitted because the authority was deemed to lack a five-year Housing Land Supply.

We welcomed the planning refusal as a “significant statement that North Devon Council is not prepared to allow the area to become a developers’ free-for-all just because the planning system is broken”.

North Devon was the first planning authority to receive a detailed Briefing Paper from us, which has been circulated to all the Devon planning committees, prepared by our trustee Steve Crowther.

Steve says, “Supported by the detailed evidence that we and others submitted, the Committee took the strong stance that they should stand by their previous policy-based decision not to allow building on this site, despite the

temptation to tip another 59 houses into their leaking Land Supply bucket.”

“This is hugely encouraging. Our evidence highlighted that the Courts are increasingly weighing in to support authorities who are not prepared to be ‘bounced’ into making bad, contra-policy decisions just because of this trap called the Housing Land Supply.”

The Land Supply metric, part of the government’s National Planning Policy Framework, tilts the balance in favour of ‘sustainable development’ if the authority cannot demonstrate that it can meet its housing land supply targets over the next 5 years. According to CPRE, up to two-thirds of local authorities nationally could be in this situation.

This false measure, which rendered the North Devon & Torridge Local Plan out-of-date after 14 months, is seen as a developer’s charter. In essence, the longer they fail to build the permissions they have been granted, the more permissions they can demand. Now though, recent High Court and Appeal Court decisions have confirmed that Councillors are perfectly entitled to continue to refuse applications that are unsustainable or don’t comply with their broader planning policies.

Our special Briefing Paper is available to members on our website.

## National Parks, the AONBs and the People

### Robin Hogg, Vice President



Central Government has to be in charge of some things: COVID Vaccination programmes, Military operations, Strategic relations with other countries and diplomacy. To make the right decisions, “real-time intelligence” is crucial. In the wider world this is achieved through a broad variety of sources from Mr James Bond to Diplomats and Space-based satellites.

Insofar as decisions to do with our countryside are concerned, this all important intelligence best comes from those who live and work there, and have experience of the effects of central government decisions on the rural economy and the people who do their best to make it work.

COVID has necessarily forced the Government to take control, sometimes in areas from which they will be reluctant to give up; such as who and where we should meet, and in what circumstances, and when and how to travel abroad, and so on.

All round us we see Groups following suit. Look at the National Trust for

example; deciding to change the way the charity will try to simultaneously rid itself of historic colour-blindness and links to slavery, at the expense of its main charitable purposes set out in its original charitable aims. There has been a revolt from all those who voluntarily work to keep these historic houses open and from others who do not wish to see a great charity become yet another WOKE-driven, centrally-controlled organisation that is losing touch with reality on the ground.

Devon CPRE lives in and knows much about National Parks of which we have two: Dartmoor and Exmoor, shared with Somerset. We have five AONBs, three wholly within the county - North Devon, East Devon and South Devon. Together these “Protected Landscapes” cover 35% of the entire county, each one significantly different from each other.

Not only are these Protected landscapes very different from one another, but vary hugely in topography, agriculture and their local economies. To suggest that some central authority could have enough practical knowledge of such markedly different spaces as Dartmoor, the Norfolk Broads and the New Forest, to be able to control or in some way govern them is fanciful.

We in Devon CPRE face up to and try to deal with a wide variety of those who might wish to trash the landscape in pursuit of development, or for other reasons. We are affected by and sensitive to the way government housing policy is spreading concrete



around our towns and cities, yet failing to provide genuinely affordable housing for those who most need it, and who are part of our future rural economy. We try to get on well with our County and District Councils who are charged with difficult decisions. Devon CPRE supports renewable energy, but not at any price for those who live here, we are prepared to challenge planning applications for which we do not have evidence of any real necessity beyond profit for the developer, and we have invested in "Independent Studies" on housing so that we have the "Evidence" to challenge those who would try to ride roughshod over the wishes of local people.

In doing this we need everyone's support who cares about these things. Our membership continues to grow in these tough times. It would be good if you would encourage others to join us. You can be sure that, insofar as this proposal to take central control of our National Parks and AONBs is concerned, we shall most certainly oppose it.

## YOUR VOICE in DEVON VOICE

We hope you enjoy our Spring newsletter, which contains news, updates and information on issues and campaigns from around the county, as well as articles from a variety of contributors, for which we are very grateful.

We welcome articles, letters, comments and photos for our newsletters.

Please email Penny Mills:  
[info@cpredevon.org.uk](mailto:info@cpredevon.org.uk)



There are now six massive solar farm proposals in Devon. The three in the planning system to which we have objected are the 49.9MW Langford Solar Farm in Mid Devon, the 49.9MW Litchardon Cross Solar Farm in North Devon and the 42MW Derril Water Solar Farm in Torridge. On 31st March the Langford Solar Farm went before a special Zoom meeting of the Mid Devon Planning Committee. It was unanimously agreed that the decision would be deferred pending the receipt of more information and following a site visit. On 28th April the Litchardon Cross Solar Farm went before the North Devon Planning Committee. Despite our best efforts and after a long meeting the application was unanimously approved by the Planning Committee. We are deeply disappointed and are very concerned at the massive industrialisation of the North Devon countryside that will inevitably ensue. Planning applications have not yet been made for the other three proposals, which are the 32MW Gammaton Moor Solar Farm in Torridge, the 49.99MW Coldharbour Farm Solar Park in Torridge and the 49MW Paytherden Solar Farm in East Devon. In total, the six solar farms would cover nearly 1,000 acres of farmland.

Despite all our hard work and lots of evidence, a Planning Inspector allowed an appeal against the decision by Mid Devon District Council to refuse an application to build a mini-power station consisting of 24 gas-powered generators, each of 1MW capacity, at Willand. This is yet another example of a local democratic decision being overturned by a single government-



appointed Planning Inspector.

The impact of Anaerobic Digesters (ADs) continues. Speaking in February 2021 at a Scrutiny Committee meeting of Mid Devon District Council, Neil Parish, MP for Tiverton and Honiton and Chair of the House of Commons EFRA (Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) Committee, identified many problems with AD plants and the impacts on local communities. He said that he was trying to collate all the problems across the country to get the Government to take some action. Accordingly we wrote to Neil Parish presenting all the information we have concerning the major ADs in Devon, the way that they are operating in contravention of their planning conditions and the impact they are having on local communities. We are aware that many individuals and local communities have also written to Neil Parish about the impact of ADs near them.

Despite overwhelming local opposition, a proposal for a 1,300m<sup>3</sup> digestate storage bag near Witheridge was approved by North Devon Council. The proposal for a 7,000m<sup>3</sup> digestate storage lagoon near Upton Pyne in East Devon continues to encounter massive local objection.

*(See article on pages 10-11).*



Like so many of us, a year ago, we had no idea that our work would be so drastically different than normal! However, sometimes, good things come from challenging circumstances and that is how we feel about the changes taking place at Wembury Marine Centre.

At time of writing, a whole new suite of interpretation is being installed at the centre and we have upgraded the lighting, heating, and ICT to modernise the whole experience. We cannot wait to unveil the new look to our supporters and the public as we launch into another season.

At present, we are planning to follow the guidance and aim at June for a majority of our events on the beach, a full list will be available on the website <http://www.wemburymarinecentre.org/> so please come and join us if you can.

We are so grateful for the ongoing support that we receive from our generous funders, of which Devon CPRE are one. We believe that connecting people with the natural world is even more important following the last year and your partnership enables us to keep this vital work going!

Devon's  
**Best Churchyard**  
Competition  
**2021**

It was fantastic to welcome so many people to our webinar at the beginning of March, to find out more about this

year's competition. We are delighted to have received a lot of entries - far more than last year, and such a variety from all over the county. Thank you to all the entrants. The judges are greatly enjoying their visits and we look forward to announcing the results in September. Watch this space!

## A Few Home Truths about the Housing Industry

Rebecca Bartleet, Chairman



Every so often we read something that stops us short, a fact so astonishing that we have to pause in order to give it due consideration. A few weeks ago, I read the following:

*The awarding of planning permission dramatically increases agricultural land values – from an average of £22,000 per hectare to £6.2 million per hectare ... an increase of more than 275 times.*

This snippet comes from the book **Home Truths** by the economic journalist Liam Halligan.\*

The fact that land increases in value due to planning permission came as no surprise but the scale certainly did. The cost of the land now represents about 70% of the price of a new house – a higher proportion than ever before.

We are all too aware how much house

prices have spiralled over the last few decades, and many of us worry that our children and grandchildren may never be able to afford to buy their own homes.

However, we are also noticing how much new housebuilding is occurring in our towns and villages, often threatening to change the way of life in our rural towns and villages for the worse. Residents put forward their concerns at the lack of accompanying infrastructure for new housing developments but are invariably dismissed as NIMBYs, even though Devon County Council has recently admitted that if all the new homes planned for Tavistock are built, there will be insufficient school places for all the children whose families will come to live there.

Who benefits from this massive increase? The people who own the land, and these are predominantly the big development companies and land speculators. The big players in the housing industry do not actually need to build any houses to make profit, the value of their assets increases merely by obtaining permission to build on the land they hold. Is it really fair that all of this enormous windfall bonus goes to the landowners who are, very often, very rich and powerful publicly listed companies?

Mr Halligan suggests the reintroduction of a Land Value Capture (LVC) tax. This



would operate by sharing the value of the 'planning uplift' between the landowner, the local council where the development was situated, and central government. The local authority could spend the money on local infrastructure from which everybody in the host community would benefit and central government could put their share towards financing social housing and addressing the problem of unsafe cladding on many buildings. It would also make it easier for smaller construction companies to enter the market, local builders who are excluded by the over-inflated land prices.

This is but one element of the book, other chapters highlight other problematic areas in the housing industry, and although Devon CPRE take issue with a few of his arguments we agree with many issues he raises. Mr Halligan is highly critical of the government's Help to Buy scheme, and he examines some of the very dubious practices of the housing developers in the area of sales, the often poor building quality of many new builds as well as the deliberately slow build out rate of the big developers once planning permission has been granted.

I recommend this as an informative, if at times enraging insight into some of the problems which affect Britain's housing market.

*\*Home Truths by Liam Halligan, published by Biteback Publishing at £9.99 (paperback).*

## Talks

We have a number of talks to other groups and organisations in the diary, which we are looking forward to, including Torrington Rotary Club, The Tiverton Society and The Devonshire Association. If you know of a local group who might like to hear from Devon CPRE, please do put them in touch with us.

## 2021 Art Competition Devon's Best Young Landscape Artist

This year we have decided to rebrand our traditional painting competition and we will shortly be launching our **Devon's Best Young Landscape Artist Competition**.

The competition will be open to anyone aged 18 and under and will be widely publicised, with some great prizes on offer in different age categories and a deadline for entries of 1st September 2021. We're really looking forward to seeing what we're sure will be some fantastic paintings and drawings of our unique and precious landscapes produced by Devon's young people.



## Planning Applications and Appeals

We've continued to be incredibly busy responding to a great many and a large variety of planning applications around the county, many of which our members have brought to our attention - thank you. We continue to keep our excellent planning consultant, Jo Widdecombe, very busy. If you are

concerned about a planning issue near you which you think might be of interest to us, please get in touch - drop Penny an email on [info@cpredevon.org.uk](mailto:info@cpredevon.org.uk) - and remember to let us know the planning application reference number and please give us as much notice as possible!

Some of the recent applications we've submitted responses to include:

Solar farm, Pyworthy	Pending decision
Solar farm, Langford, nr Cullompton	Pending decision
Solar farm, Litchardon Cross, North Devon	Permitted
140 lodges, Clawton, nr Holsworthy	Permitted
303 dwellings, Exmouth	Permitted
shepherds hut development, nr Mary Tavy	Refused
Class Q conversion, Bovey Tracey	At appeal
Overton Quarry, Bishops Tawton	At appeal
26 dwellings, Exeter	At appeal
22 industrial units, Lake, Barnstaple	Pending decision
290 dwellings, Bideford	Pending decision
200 dwellings, Holsworthy	Pending decision
Agricultural building, Seaton	Pending decision
12 holiday lodges, Horns Cross, Bideford	Pending decision
Dwelling at Brayford, Barnstaple	Pending decision
120 dwellings, Dartington	Permitted
5 dwellings, Edginswell	Pending decision
Dwelling, Yelverton	Pending decision
250 dwellings, etc, Yelland	Pending decision
Class Q, Appledore	Pending decision
80 dwellings, Exwick, Exeter	Pending decision
Development at Colestocks, Honiton	Pending decision
61 dwellings, Pinhoe, Exeter	Pending decision
Dwellings, Newton Abbot	Pending decision
New school, Dartington	Pending decision
3 dwellings, Pyworthy	Pending decision
3 dwellings, Whimble	Pending decision
Woodland development, Hittisleigh	Pending decision
Equestrian development, Colyton	Pending decision
41 dwellings Halwill Junction	Pending decision
179 dwellings, Tidcombe, Tiverton	Pending decision
22 dwellings, allotment site, Tiverton	Pending decision
80 dwellings, Kingsbridge	Permitted

## **Wolborough Barton, Abbotskerswell, Newton Abbot**

Following the disappointment of the judgement at the High Court earlier this month regarding the decision to permit the building of 1,200 new homes, Abbotskerswell parish council has decided to seek permission to appeal this decision from the Court of Appeal.

## **Galmpton Residents Association**

We've been pleased to give advice to longstanding members, The Galmpton Residents Association, regarding ongoing planning issues with the expansion of holiday lodges.

## **Croyde Area Residents Association**

Congratulations to Croyde Area Residents Association and their significant achievement winning at the High Court and helping to protect the North Devon AONB from development.

## **Massive Lagoon and Expansion of Industrial Anaerobic Digesters has to Stop**



We believe the expansion of anaerobic digesters (ADs) has to be curtailed to protect rural communities and the countryside, as fourteen villages and hamlets join forces to protest against development plans for an industrial-scale lagoon near Upton Pyne. This facility will act as a massive storage and distribution centre west of Exeter for liquid digestate, a by-product of ADs.

The AD sector in the county seems to be out of control. The result is a rise in pollution incidents, damage to highways and historic hedgerows, as well as blatant breaches of planning conditions with HGVs and overloaded tractors, tankers or trailers carrying fodder crops and liquid digestate.

A controversial planning application has

been submitted for a so called lagoon to East Devon District Council (20/1517/FUL), to support the business expansion of the Gorst Energy AD plant at Enfield Farm, Clyst St Mary, despite operators Gorst Energy Ltd losing a major planning appeal in autumn 2020 to triple production. The lagoon will be located on a waterlogged green-field site off Rixenford Lane, which is owned by the Earl of Iddesleigh and served by a narrow, quiet country lane frequented by cyclists and walkers.

To date, 450 residents have signed an online petition objecting to the 1.5 million gallon lagoon to provide storage for liquid digestate from the Enfield Farm AD, over 12 miles from the lagoon. Over 2,000 heavy tractor and tanker journeys will be generated annually, driving through Exeter city centre and narrow village lanes to the lagoon, from which the liquid digestate would be distributed and spread onto multiple landholdings west of Exeter.

We think that the proposal is poorly conceived and the accompanying information is misleading and

inadequate. The lagoon is the very opposite of a sustainable green energy solution. The transport implications alone are unsustainable and would result in the consumption of huge quantities of diesel fuel with all the resulting pollution problems, and conflicting with national planning policy.

There would be an unacceptable impact on the local lane network in terms of damage and inconvenience of other road users and an unacceptable impact on the local community in terms of noise and smell. The location and use of the lagoon would lead to a huge risk of pollution to local watercourses. There have been many instances of pollution of watercourses in Devon caused by operators of AD plants, including Devon's worst-ever pollution incident in 2019, when over 10,000 fish were killed as the result of pollution of the River Mole by digestate from a nearby AD plant.

Residents have voiced strong disappointment at the failure of Devon County Council Highways and the Environment Agency to investigate AD breaches and to not fully interrogate the industrial lagoon proposal and its impacts - the harm to the local community, to narrow lanes and the environment.

Neil Parish, MP for Tiverton and Honiton and Chair of the House of Commons EFRA (Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) Committee, supports small on-farm AD plants but also fears that the large industrial-scale ADs in Devon are getting out of control.

Speaking in February 2021 at a Scrutiny Committee meeting of Mid Devon District Council, he is reported to have recognised the impacts on local

communities, in particular the transportation of feedstuffs going into the industrial-scale AD plants and the liquid digestate coming out as a by-product.

We understand he said, "ADs are getting bigger and bigger and getting out of all proportion. While they were a good thing in using them for waste to produce gas or electricity, what you have now is a huge amount of crop being used in them and they are becoming vast. In becoming so big they are moving stuff around all of the time. There are problems all over the place. I am trying to collate all the problems across the country to get the Government to take some action."

Quite clearly, transporting digestate from an AD in Clyst St Mary across Exeter to a storage lagoon in Upton Pyne would only add to Neil Parish's list of problems with ADs.

There is still time to voice an objection to this application. Opponents can write to East Devon District Council or register/login on the Council's website at 20/1517/FUL | Construction of digestate storage lagoon, with associated hardstanding and 2.4 metre high security fencing | Land South Of Rixenford Lane Upton Pyne and add a comment up until the date a decision is made.

## Facebook and eBulletins

We hope you are enjoying receiving our monthly ebulletins with all the latest news. We are sending these to all our members for whom we have an email address - if you are not receiving them and would like to, please drop Penny an email on [info@cpredevon.org.uk](mailto:info@cpredevon.org.uk).

## Plantlife's Road Verge Campaign: Saving Road Verge Wild Flowers - Kate Petty



Photograph © Matt Pitts

Over 700 species of wild flower grow on the UK's road verges – nearly 45% of our total flora. Since the 1930s, over 97% of the UK's wild flower meadows have been destroyed, so road verges really are the last remaining refuges for many wild flowers. And where wild flowers lead, wildlife follows... a multitude of bees, butterflies, birds and bugs all depend on these wonderful habitats.

However, our road verges are under considerable pressure. Priorities for safety and access, alongside budget constraints, a desire for 'neatness' and difficulties with the collection of litter and grass clippings all mean that enhancing their wildlife value is often low on the list. But these habitats have enormous potential to be wildlife havens, and the wild plant charity, Plantlife, has been raising awareness of the importance of road verges and campaigning for better road verge management since 2013 and its petition to councils has now been signed over 127,000 times.

Plantlife is working with local authorities, contractors and local communities across the country to transform road verge management and allow nature to flourish. Plantlife has produced two practical guides all about road verges, The Good Verge Guide and Managing grassland road verges:

a best practice guide. Working to adopt these guidelines will help to make grass cutting regimes more sustainable and efficient over time, as well as bringing back colour to our verges and enhancing our connection to nature and contributing to wellbeing.

Over 7 in 10 councils now say they're doing something to help wildflowers on road verges, and there's wonderful grassroots momentum as communities see more wild flowers on their local verges. In Devon, the county council is encouraging communities to manage verges for wildlife through the Life on the Verge project. There's lots more information about the scheme and case studies available on their website.

Plantlife Road Verge Campaign Manager, Kate Petty, says "We're very happy to provide guidance to and support councils, contractors, and community groups who want to manage road verges in a more wildlife-friendly way, or to showcase the projects you're working on. Do get in touch via [roadverge@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:roadverge@plantlife.org.uk)".

If you want to find out more about Plantlife's campaign, visit the website or watch their recent road verge webinar. You can add your voice to the call for wildlife-friendly verges by signing the petition, and let your councillors know you'd like to see road verges managed with wildlife in mind. You might also like to join in with Plantlife's **No Mow May** campaign – just a month without mowing to let the flowers on your lawns, greenspaces, and verges bloom to help bees, butterflies, wildlife, and all of us too!

## Small Modular Reactors: The Ultimate Low-Carbon Renewables

Phillip Bratby

Devon CPRE Member Julian Tippet has rightly identified Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) as a necessary part of the solution to our future electricity needs (see Letters to the Editor on page 26). If the government has its way, we will need much more electricity for heating and for charging all those millions of electric vehicles. To meet these needs, the electricity supply will need to be expanded and become much more reliable.

Commercial nuclear power stations have been operating for nearly 70 years. They have provided huge amounts of reliable and affordable “clean” and almost infinitely renewable electricity. Nuclear energy has the best safety record of any energy technology. All environmental concerns, such as waste disposal, have been solved. So why hasn't nuclear power been widely accepted? One reason is that for many years environmental activists have persuaded much of the public, many politicians and the media that nuclear is unsafe. However, some activists have recently changed their minds,. For example James Lovelock, author of the Gaia Theory has said that “nuclear power is the only green solution”. Bryony (now Baroness) Worthington, a lead author of the Climate Change Act, who once said that she was “passionately opposed to nuclear power” has more recently said of nuclear power “I urge you on moral ethical, scientific and environmental grounds to rethink your opposition to it”.

One-time anti-nuclear campaigner, environmental activist and author Mark Lynas, who has said that he “grew up hating nuclear power” has now said that “continuing to oppose nuclear was a mistake ... it's extraordinarily safe... and we must learn to love nuclear power”. But given the facts, why do some environmental organisations still oppose it and prefer environmentally destructive wind and solar farms coupled with batteries? The reason they continue to object to nuclear power is not that it doesn't produce abundant low-carbon energy, but that it does, and that conflicts with their apparent overall aim to halt economic growth.

Because of the anti-nuclear propaganda and campaigning, regulators require multiple, excessive layers of safety in nuclear plant design that needlessly boost costs. The regulatory process is over-complex, is very slow and cumbersome and takes years to complete. Nuclear plants are thus unnecessarily complex and take a long time to construct after all the regulations have been met. The long lead time before operation adds to expense and political uncertainty is one reason why many recent proposals for nuclear power stations in the UK have been abandoned, leaving the twin power stations at Hinkley C in Somerset as the only ongoing project.

To overcome some of these problems, the focus for future nuclear power



Schematic of a R-R SMR

stations has switched to SMRs. SMRs have been in operation for over 60 years in submarines, aircraft carriers and ice-breakers, but only in the last few years has serious attention been paid to developing land-based SMRs for commercial electricity generation.

The advantages of SMRs have over current nuclear power stations are legion:

- They use relatively simple proven technology.
- They can be manufactured in factories and constructed on site very rapidly.
- They are even safer than current nuclear power stations.
- They occupy very little land and have little impact on the landscape. Some can be constructed underground.

Compared to renewable energy generators such as wind and solar power:

- They provide generation that can be controlled to provide baseload and load-follow capability. Their output is not weather-dependent.
- They are synchronous and the large rotating generators provide inertia which is a positive benefit to the reliability and stability of the grid.
- They use very high energy density fuel and thus require a lot less land.

A 440MW SMR would require about 25 acres of land and would produce about 3.5TWh of electricity per year (enough for about 1.2 million homes). To produce the same amount of electricity from solar farms would need about 13,000 acres (20 square miles) of land and from wind farms would need about 32,000 acres (50 square miles) of land.

There are about half a million homes in Devon and on average each consumes about 1.5MWh of electricity per year. Therefore Devon's domestic electricity

needs could easily be met by a single 440MW SMR occupying a small area of land. By contrast, a huge area of Devon's farmland would need to be covered in solar farms or wind turbines, to provide the same amount of electricity. Even then, alternative sources of electricity would be needed for when the wind doesn't blow or the sun doesn't shine.

Several competing designs are being developed around the world, ranging in size from 10s of MWs to 500MW and of many different design concepts.

In the UK, a consortium led by Rolls-Royce, which has built seven generations of SMRs for use in nuclear submarines, is the lead contender with its design for a 440MW SMR.

Another contender is NuScale, an American company. It has developed the NuScale Power Module™ and last year it gained regulatory approval in the USA. It is envisaged that each SMR plant would be constructed in an array of up to twelve 70MW individual Power Modules, giving a maximum total

capacity of up to 840MW. NuScale has an office in London, has been actively involved in the government's SMR studies and is working with UK partners to license, manufacture and build its SMRs in the UK and ultimately for export.

In the UK it is envisaged that SMRs would be constructed on the redundant sites of closed nuclear and coal-fired power stations, i.e. on brownfield land where grid connections are readily available.

The big question is, why are several billion pounds a year wasted on subsidising intermittent renewable energy generators such as wind and solar power? Surely it would be better for the government to invest a fraction of this money in developing SMRs for deployment in the UK. The electricity from SMRs would be considerably cheaper than that from intermittent offshore wind farms, which, for some inexplicable reason, seems to be the government's preferred option.



Schematic of a NuScale SMR

<https://sightline3o8.com/2020/01/nuscale-makes-first-canadian-smr-review-submission/>



## Don't let Lockdown Litter Deface Devon - Penny Mills

So much for the public's new appreciation of the countryside since the start of the pandemic, sadly Devon seems to be suffering from a litter and fly-tipping epidemic. If you've ventured along the A30 from Okehampton to Exeter since lockdown restrictions eased, for example, you may - like me - have been shocked by the amount of litter strewn alongside the highway. It's the worst I've ever seen it and it seems I'm not alone in that.

In recent weeks Devon CPRE has been inundated with messages from people concerned about the disgraceful state of our roads around the county from litter. The A30 is the gateway to Dartmoor and many parts of Devon and Cornwall. Roadside rubbish is an awful sight for visitors to be met with!

We can all play our part in keeping Devon litter-free, starting with the simple act of taking home our rubbish rather than leaving it for others to clear up. I know our cash-strapped local authorities are doing what they can to address the problem within their districts. Litter picking along main roads is clearly dangerous though and

requires putting traffic control systems in place or coordinating with scheduled road closures for highways improvements and maintenance. Evidently, these sporadic litter picks aren't enough to keep Devon's roads beautiful.

Could tougher sanctions help deter those who leave our countryside strewn with bottles, cans, rotting food, wrappers and plastic bags? Last year Clean Up Britain called for littering fines to be raised as councils across the UK spend millions on cleaning up litter. And litter is not just an eyesore and a nuisance: it can harm and kill wildlife and livestock.

As Plantlife have explained (see page 12) let's not forget that the grass verges beside our main roads and country lanes are important wildlife habitats. Whilst striving to keep them litter-free, shouldn't we also be doing more to improve them to encourage the growth of wildflowers for bees, butterflies and other insects? Blooms instead of bags and bottles, that's what I'd like to see proliferating when I drive along the A30 in future!

### STOP PRESS

28th April - North Devon District Council Planning Committee voted to defer the decision on plans to develop the former Yelland power station site on the Taw estuary.

We strongly opposed the scheme which includes 250 houses, none of which would be affordable. Over 800 objections to the application had been submitted and only 2 letters of support.

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## Cold Climate Changes - Ivan Buxton

As I write this the temperature has dipped well below freezing point for the sixth day in a row. Naturally comparisons are being made in the media with previous cold winters and the spectre of climate change is forefront in all matters relating to the weather.

My first memory of being cold is from 1947. It was disgusting, the snow was so deep I was not allowed to go out and play in it! The killjoys, AKA my parents wrapped me in newspaper, sat me on the stairs and played games to keep warm.

During the big freeze of 1963 I had the temerity to suggest to my Grandmother, it was the worst winter ever, she sighed deeply and began telling me about the blizzards of 1927 and 1933. She was born in 1900 when winters were winters.

My grandfather told me about his parents and the time in 1881 when they experienced the last Frost Fair held on the River Thames, which had frozen over. I am sure they would have laughed at the fuss we make now over a few days of polar winds and attendant snowfall.

My next real memory of heavy snow was the winter of 1952. Once again, I was disgusted, we didn't have a sled and I had to wade through knee deep fallen snow carrying two buckets of water to the caravan in which we lived. That was after the standpipes at the nearest farm had been manually thawed out using burning rags, no

mean feat I can tell you.

There was plenty of snow that year and it laid across Westminster Bridge as seen in the photo below:



My Mother often recalled the winter of 1940, the war was on, and she recanted the rumour from the opening months of the First World War that Russian soldiers had been spotted with snow on their boots. Complete nonsense of course, but it just goes to show that fake news is not the prerogative of the twenty first century. Imagine what social media trolls would have done with that little gem!

Inevitably, when thinking about cold winters we ally our thoughts to the hottest weather experienced. Dredging my memory, I can remember 1949, the hottest for 30 years and the cause of one of the worst English droughts and you don't need me to tell you there have not been many of those! Londoners took to sleeping al fresco in Hyde Park and there were water

shortages across the country because of the previous dry winter.

In essence it does not take much for the British to start comparing weather notes, especially when talking to our children, our summers were always hotter and winters colder than they are today! We had it tough, to coin a phrase, and no doubt the kids of today will tell their children about the “Beast from the East” they endured in 2018 and roll their eyes when their offspring have the audacity to claim some future event as being the worst on record.

The problem with records, especially those involving weather, is that temperatures, rainfall, clouds, sunshine, ice, snow and all other aspects we call ‘climate’ vary from place to place. It can rain on one side of the street and be dry on the other. One orchard in a valley can be devastated by a late frost whereas another just a few feet higher up the hill can have a bumper year.

The new breed of scientists, those that somehow or another have acquired qualifications in predicting the future, are continually telling us that global temperatures are rising and we are not just heading for a worldwide climate emergency, but it has arrived.

Anyone who questions “the science” is branded as a climate change denier and denigrated for daring to raise queries over the belief that it is the greatest challenge mankind has ever faced.

During 1915, the children of London were dunking themselves in the Thames to keep cool, whilst their fathers, uncles and even grandfathers

were fighting a war of attrition in France. Maybe those men, if asked then about climate change, would have had an opinion too.

I have no quarrel with those with opinions about the changing climate, however I do question the way the information is portrayed. The manner in which it is presented unfortunately ramps up the rumour mill and reminds me of the fear campaigns surrounding the use of atomic power to provide the nation with electricity.

No doubt there is substance in the climate change arguments, but don’t frighten the children with portents of doom and gloom. Stop ramming the words ‘climate emergency’ down their throats, they have enough to worry about already. Use the pleasure of warm summers, snowy winters and green springs to good effect. Educate them with the fun of snowball fights, swimming in the sea and watching the miracle of young birds hatching.

Take a positive stance, give them something to love, memories to cherish and nurture them with belief that this is a world worth preserving by reducing pollution, waste, hunger and hardship through their own actions and not by continually pontificating about a global climate disaster.

Extoll the benefits of looking after their neighbourhood; the delights, enchantments and pleasures of the natural world, invite them to care for their homes, the streets they live in, the fields and woodlands that surround our towns and cities and above all educate them to be tolerant of those with opposing opinions.

## Revisiting Devon Place-Names - Ellen Chaplin

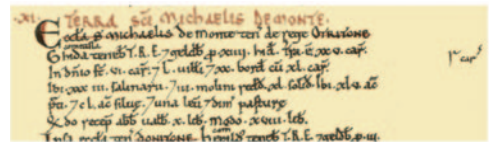
Names have always held a fascination for people. We have named places for as long as we have inhabited them, and in doing so we create a connection with the land around us. Place-names provide us with an invaluable glimpse into how people interacted with and referred to the landscape around them in the Early Medieval period, knowledge that has otherwise been lost.

For instance, there are 40 unique terms for hills recorded throughout English place-names each of which describe a specific shape of hill. Two such hill terms are found in Plymouth Hoe which is from Old English *hōh* meaning a hill with a concave slope like a heel and its contrast Old English *orā* meaning a hill with a convex slope which we find in Loxhore in North Devon. The specificity of place-name terms gives us an insight into the incredibly close connection that Early Medieval people had with the landscape.



Plymouth Hoe (above) and Loxhore with the slopes of their hills highlighted in red

In considering the origins of place-names it is important to remember that these names were not always coined by the land occupier, but by their neighbours. The settlement that you live in to you is just home, but to your neighbours it is the farm on the River Otter, so Otterton or the ford belonging to Dunn, so Dunsford. Each place-name tells a story about how the land was occupied and used, and in many cases this name evolves and changes as the land is used differently, or lost entirely if the name ceases to be relevant to the way the land is used. Because of this we must look at the earliest records of names in order to piece together the origin of the name.



Otterton is first listed in 1806 in the Domesday Book as Otritone

When it comes to place-name information, the most comprehensive resources are the county survey volumes published by the English Place-Name Society, which aims to catalogue and provide potential origins for every place-name in England. The first volume was published in 1924 and nearly 100 years later several counties are incomplete or entirely lacking. The two Devon volumes were published in 1931-1932, and provide comprehensive coverage of larger settlements, reasonable coverage of

## 5G: Rural Areas to be allowed Taller and Wider Masts



smaller settlements and poor coverage of minor place-names such as field names.

The place-names of Devon are due a revisit, and this is exactly what my project intends to accomplish. Using geographic mapping software it is possible to undertake a much more thorough catalogue of place-names than was possible in the 1930s including smaller settlements. Surveying the place-names of an entire county is by no means a small endeavour and so it is perhaps more accurate to say that this project will start the process of revisiting Devon place-names, and will seek to review their origins in light of the last 100 years of place-name research.

I have previously conducted smaller scale studies into the field-names of Bridestowe Parish and the place-names recorded in the 13th Century Dartmoor Perambulation which I will develop further to be included within this project. Ultimately, I hope to be able to provide a useful and accessible resource for people interested in Devon place-names and what they can tell us about how local areas have evolved over the years.

*This project is being undertaken at the Institute for Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham as a PGR research project.*

*For more information please contact [ellen.chaplin@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ellen.chaplin@nottingham.ac.uk)*

We are concerned at the government's reported plans to allow taller and wider mobile phone masts to be built across the countryside to speed up the rollout of the 5G network. We know that improved connectivity is important to people in rural areas to close the 'digital divide', but proposals to allow taller masts and to build bigger masts could have a big impact on our landscape.

There is also the question of whether, if allowed simply under permitted development rights, the government's apparent drive towards quick-fix solutions is effectively bypassing the planning system?

## Hang on to your Wallet: Here comes the Precautionary Principle

Phillip Bratby

In the burgeoning worldwide campaign to prevent climate change, a core tenet which is frequently cited by policy-makers from the UN downwards is the 'Precautionary Principle'. It now underlies almost all climate-change policy, and increasingly forms the basis of momentous national legislation. And it has recently become world-famous as the basis upon which many EU countries decided to stop vaccinating millions of potential COVID sufferers because a tiny number of people had died from a blood clot after being jabbed. But what is the Precautionary Principle?

There is no universally accepted definition of the Precautionary Principle, and this has, unsurprisingly, led to some confusion. Part of the confusion lies in the fact that it isn't actually a principle, it isn't just about precaution and there are now several different definitions of it, all claiming to be its true representation.

The Precautionary Principle generally defines actions on issues considered to be very uncertain. It maintains that, even if there is some scientific uncertainty surrounding an issue and the risks are unclear or unknown, if there is any realistic chance that catastrophe could occur, we ought to regulate it. Rather than encouraging the avoidance of risk, the Precautionary Principle seeks to advise on how to proceed when we have reason to suspect that a risk exists but we do not have enough information to quantify it or, perhaps, to confirm its existence.

Risk is at the heart of all human development; humans are risk takers. Without taking risks, the Age of Enlightenment would not have occurred and we would still be living in the Dark Ages.

The media tend to prioritise scary reports and emphasise risks, since they catch our attention. Politicians favour the Precautionary Principle because they can use it to justify decisions and make regulations in circumstances where they do not have the evidence to justify those decisions and regulations, and would otherwise be accused of not 'following the science'.

The principle of 'cost-benefit analysis' was devised 170 years ago to prevent policy-makers from wasting money on scares or risks about which little knowledge exists, and on projects without clear benefits. The cost-benefit test is particularly well suited to dealing with risk: its demand for the best available proof of harm, and analysis of scenarios with different levels of risk, can help determine a reasonable way forward.

However, carrying out cost-benefit analysis can be difficult, and is consequently disliked by bureaucrats and politicians. Using the Precautionary Principle instead, they can spend large amounts of tax-payers' money without having to justify the costs against a benefit; indeed without knowing for certain whether what they propose is achievable, or whether any measurable benefits exist. They can, and do, use it to regulate or ban certain

activities – examples being the banning of GM crops in the EU and the banning in the UK of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars after 2030.

Improvements to policymaking through the cost-benefit approach were cast aside after the widespread introduction of the Precautionary Principle in the 1990s.

Its best-known application in relation to the environment is Principle 15 of the 1992 Rio Declaration which stated: “In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation”. In other words, a perceived threat, without conclusive scientific evidence, is sufficient to take action, and the cost is not limited by an analysis of identified benefit.

The Climate Change Act 2008 was passed based on the Precautionary Principle, without any cost-benefit analysis – it has been described as the most expensive legislation (some say ‘suicide note’) in history. The same applies to Theresa May's unilateral commitment to a zero-carbon economy by 2050 through the 'Net Zero Emissions by 2050' law.

The risk from global warming is famously uncertain, and the cost to the UK of de-carbonisation is unknown (partly because much of the proposed technology does not yet exist), but has been estimated at £3 trillion. The benefit is equally unknown. But the UK only produces about 1% of the total

world emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>. Given a global target to reduce warming by 2°C, the UK's reduction in global warming will be less than 0.02°C and so will be immeasurably small.

It is unsurprising that the government doesn't emphasise that they plan to spend £3 trillion of taxpayers' money to reduce global warming by 0.02°C.

Perhaps it would be better to adapt to an increase in temperature of 0.02°C rather than spending £3trillion of taxpayers' money trying to prevent it? In the absence of cost-benefit analysis of the two options, we will never know.

Had a cost benefit analysis been carried out, the UK would perhaps have embarked on an arguably more sensible course of action – an action which would not be unilateral but would be agreed and acted on by all nations. Does it make sense for the UK to be spending £3 trillion on Net Zero when at the same time the Chinese are building hundreds of new coal-fired power stations? The Climate Change Act and the UK's unilateral target of 'Net Zero Emissions by 2050' are enshrined in law; if it proves impossible to achieve, will the government in 2050 send itself to jail for breaking the law?

With the Precautionary Principle in play, politicians have the freedom to take action regardless of the costs and without knowledge of any benefits of that action – or even any harms that may result from unintended consequences.

Had the Precautionary Principle been used in the past, scientists would not have been allowed to develop a variety of benefits to society that we now take for granted. Medical improvements

such as vaccines would almost certainly not have been developed because of the risk of side effects. Research into the atom and the development of nuclear medicine (use of x-rays, radiotherapy etc) would probably not have been allowed because of the risk of radiation and the development of nuclear weapons.

The Precautionary Principle, if enforced across the world, will see policy developed both positively and negatively on the basis of hunch and imagination, rather than rigorous

analysis; some believe it will inevitably lead back to a new 'Dark Age' with fear and superstition being preferred to science and rationality. All agree that the Net Zero policy will require massive changes in human behaviour (about which the Public Accounts Committee warns that the government has not yet properly engaged with the public), and a significant reduction in the lifestyle certainties and comforts we now take for granted.

One thing is for certain: it will cost taxpayers an absolute fortune.

## Clean Devon



Devon's residents and visitors are being urged to 'find a bin or take it home' in a new county-wide anti-littering campaign which has been launched on social media. And Devon CPRE are delighted to be part of the CleanDevon partnership.

As lockdown eases and the warmer months beckon, the multi-agency partnership Clean Devon wants to encourage everyone to take more responsibility for their rubbish whilst enjoying the beautiful moors, beaches, wildlife, countryside, towns and villages.

Littering is an increasing burden on society, both financially and environmentally and the partnership aims to improve the issue through preventing, detecting and deterring this type of behaviour in Devon.

For additional advice and facts please visit our website [www.cleandevon.org](http://www.cleandevon.org).

**Look after where you live**

A photograph showing several people in a park setting, actively picking up litter and putting it into green bags. One person in the foreground is kneeling and holding a bag, while others are visible in the background.

**Be a local litter hero**

The Clean Devon logo.

[cleandevon.org](http://cleandevon.org)

A small icon of a person standing next to a bin, representing the 'find a bin or take it home' message.

**Our wildlife is amazing, let's protect it**

A close-up photograph of a hedgehog's face, looking directly at the camera.

**Your rubbish, your responsibility.**  
**Find a bin or take it home.**

The Clean Devon logo.

[cleandevon.org](http://cleandevon.org)

A small icon of a person standing next to a bin, representing the 'find a bin or take it home' message.



## News from Around the County - Torbay

We are bitterly disappointed to learn that the new village known as Inglewood has been permitted at appeal by a planning inspector. We had strongly objected to the proposal and it was opposed by Torbay Council because of its impact on the landscape.

In a decision published this week, the inspector has given outline permission for up to 373 homes, a pub and primary school on land alongside Brixham Road near White Rock. The appeal was lodged after the council had failed to make a decision in time, but the council's planning committee later decided that it would have refused the scheme because of its effect on the landscape.

The site is on farmland outside the designated Future Growth Area and is not identified for housing in the Brixham Peninsula Neighbourhood Plan. It is also close to the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We believed that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the setting of the protected landscape and the open space between Paignton and Brixham. The inspector accepted the scheme would cause some harm to the landscape character and appearance of the area and would also go against local planning policies by filling part of the "settlement gap" of open countryside. But he said the limited harm to the landscape was not enough to justify rejecting the application and also that the council could not meet Government rules to show a five-year or three-year supply of housing sites. That meant the balance for decision-making must be tipped in favour of approving new homes. He said the benefits of the scheme, taking into account the 'tilted balance', outweighed the harm and it should be approved.

### WHERE THERE'S A WILL ...

When we write our wills we want to ensure that our assets are divided fairly and in a way that will do the most good, passing on personal treasures and memories as well as more valuable property.

When we add up all our assets is there, perhaps, something we have overlooked? What about our beautiful Devon countryside? Many of us were born and brought up here and spent idyllic childhood summer days at the beach or on the moors and in woodlands. Others will have come to live here later in their lives, seeking a calmer cleaner more peaceful environment to spend retirement. In either case, what we all want is that that countryside is still there for our children, grandchildren and all future generations to enjoy. While we may not own

acres of land that we can pass on, there is an opportunity to help organisations like Devon CPRE by leaving us a bequest.

We have been fortunate enough to have benefitted from two most generous legacies from the late Ms Wendy Lawrenson and Mr Andrew Mason and this money has provided essential funding for our busy campaigning activities and we have attracted many new members as a result.

Please help us to continue this work and protect and preserve our precious countryside for all those generations to come and remember us in your will, The Devon Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England CIO, our charity number is 1175228. Thank you.



“

*Dear Editor,*

*I always look forward to the days when the Devon CPRE Newsletter lands on my doormat. Always full of interest and reports of the superb work being done to keep Devon RURAL – it's in the name.*

*Of particular interest to me are the most informative contributions from Phillip Bratby regarding energy. I quite agree with your stance in objecting to these monstrous and inappropriate schemes which ruin our Devon countryside. In fact, Devon CPRE and, in particular, Phil Bratby were of great assistance to my neighbours and me in preventing the construction of a huge wind turbine which would have destroyed the outlook from here (a listed property) to Dartmoor National Park by cutting the vista precisely in half and breaking well into the skyline.*

*You can be sure of my full and continued support.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Roland Smith*

”

“

*Dear Editor,*

*You are very much the Voice of Devon and one of the loudest. Without your organisation the industrialisation of rural Devon might go un-noticed until it is too late.*

*For instance, the proposed 183 acre solar “park” at Pyworthy is a monstrous plan and one that benefits only the landowners and the offshore company of the developers.*

*The energy generated in the winter is minimal, whereas in the summer at its midday peak it is in danger of blowing the grid - unless the energy is wasted by certain companies engaged to do just that.*

*Is that really an investment for Torridge DC or citizens who have to pay ever-increasing electricity charges for power that one cannot rely on?*

*Well done Devon CPRE on your excellent objection to the proposed development.*

*Let us hope we can keep these industrial units at bay – we have after all just had 6 months of rain!*

*Name and address withheld*

”

“

Dear Devon CPRE,

*I was greatly struck by the eye-opening arguments posed by Phillip Bratby in his piece 'Electricity Supply Problems' (Devon Voice Autumn 2020). His article examined the multiple factors in play affecting the national electricity transmission grid, which could result in a real risk in the future of serious grid instability and even of blackouts. In a nutshell, the prime cause is the overloading of the grid with ever more renewable sources, wind and solar, which by their nature are uncontrollable. Dr Bratby argues that, without the balancing effect of sufficient controllable sources, e.g. gas or nuclear, the grid itself could become uncontrolled.*

*A picture is painted of the grid being developed primarily by political forces keen to burnish their 'green' credentials, without the balancing input from knowledgeable electricity transmission engineers. The whole national grid planning structure seems not to be up to the job, an issue that*

*must surely be addressed as a matter of urgency.*

*I expect much more should be said on the points Dr Bratby raises, but I would like to make a suggestion. In the search for more controllable energy sources that are zero-carbon, why does the nation not invest in a fleet of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)? In essence, each of these consists of a nuclear reactor (similar to those in nuclear submarines) generating steam which drives a turbine with coupled generator. Rolls-Royce have designs ready, the technology is proven, and RR have the skills and resources to implement such a programme. Each SMR would be factory-built ready for erection on site. Besides making a major contribution to the stability of the national grid, such an initiative could form the basis of a completely new home-grown manufacturing industry, with great potential for employment and for exports.*

*Julian Tippett, Ilfracombe*

”

## Trees and Hedgerows ...

We've been receiving a number of calls from around the county from people concerned at numbers of trees being felled and hedgerows being removed or damaged, perhaps but not always relating to a new development.

This appears to be an increasing

problem - obviously once a hedgerow or tree is removed or destroyed it's too late! So we are going to be monitoring developer's obligations regarding trees and hedgerows and will try to get a better understanding of the role, remit and enforcement powers of our Local Planning Authorities.

## Paignton Heritage Society - Covid Busting Walks!



Tony Hill and Karen Chapman  
of Paignton Heritage Society

When the Covid lock-down began back in March 2020, like so many other clubs and societies, Paignton Heritage Society had to cancel all its plans for meetings and events. Plans for the annual Heritage Day and annual Paignton Harbour Day, open days and tours of the medieval properties of Paignton, walks for U3A groups, etc etc - all had to be put into cold storage.

However, some members decided to use the time for new projects. Karen Chapman, the Society's Vice Chair, and fellow member, Tony Hill, saw how the people of Paignton were desperate to get into the fresh air for their daily exercise and walk. They put their heads together (socially distanced of course) and came up with some Covid Busting Walks!

Firstly, they produced an easy one mile stroll around Paignton Green (the town's Seafront), pointing out the Victorian development of the area, the military activity during the two World Wars and the changing face of a seaside resort over the years.

Next came an update of an existing leaflet on the medieval heart of

Paignton - they divided this up into two walks around the old town centre taking in the Norman Church, the medieval 'Clink' (an overnight lock-up for anyone the Constable caught having had too much cider) and the thousand year old Tower that is such a landmark of Paignton.

Becoming now inspired by the feedback and success of these walks from Paigntonians who had walked the paths for years and never realised the buildings and history that was around them, they then wrote a third (and probably most popular to date) trail - an easy 2.5 mile circular walk from Paignton Harbour, over the headland to the next beach of Goodrington and back. With history of the development of seaside entertainment, glorious views across the Bay to Brixham and Torquay, and plenty of places to refresh on a take-away coffee, this walk has proved extremely popular.

Another member decided to use his lock-down by putting the Society's collection of postcards of Paignton (over 2,500) on the website - (the Society made the decision to share our love of Paignton with the world by making this wonderful collection a free resource for everyone to enjoy) - and he's not finished the task yet!

If anyone would like to buy any of the Society's leaflets, or view the collection of postcards, please visit the website for details:

<http://www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk>

## News from the North Devon Coast AONB

### Jenny Carey-Wood, AONB Manager



How much are Covid-19 and people's responses to lockdown and the pandemic affecting our protected landscapes? Three consequences have become increasingly clear in the North Devon Coast AONB area. Firstly the challenge of managing visitor pressure after each lockdown ends in terms of traffic congestion, sheer weight of numbers of people using paths and access points, anti-social behaviour such as littering or poor parking and the need for additional capacity in services such as bins, cleaning, vehicle management and information services. Secondly a new look at the green spaces and infrastructure near more urban areas to optimise its use and reviewing the opportunities for different groups in our communities to access the more remote and popular, wide open, green and blue spaces on our coasts and uplands. Thirdly some new trends reflected through the development and planning process that may be a response to this extra-ordinary time but whose impact could remain with us for many years to come.

In North Devon and Torridge, the two districts spanned by the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, there has been a significant increase in the number of planning applications in the AONB over the last 18 months. The trends beginning to emerge include: - an increase in applications to convert tourist accommodation and agricultural buildings to permanent residential dwellings in both Districts; requests from operators wanting to extend the

camping and/or caravan season, with some wishing for 12-month occupancy; development of large, modern buildings within Croyde, especially new apartments replacing the typical seaside bungalows with surrounding garden; and finally proposals to create small housing schemes within the AONB, many outside the current development boundary and local plan housing allocations. A key argument being used is the lack of a 5-year housing supply within the Local Plan area, which should not apply within the designated AONB according to national legislation (NPPF).

All of these trends have an impact on the look and feel of the protected landscape, changing the character of settlements whether in the larger villages or the remote hamlets and farmsteads. The AONB Partnership and team are working together to respond to these pressures through increasing planning response capacity, requesting a Design Guide for the whole of North Devon district, responding to pre-application enquiries through the local planning authorities and supporting local communities with neighbourhood plans.

Whether the pressures from Covid-19 may end up having a permanent impact on the area or just a temporary one, at the moment we have to hope that the benefits to communities both local and visiting will not be undermined by destroying the beauty of the area, that underpins much of the local economy and our quality of life.

## Latest Government Figures Reveal that Devon is Building a Third more Houses than 'Required'

Devon's Local Planning Authorities - with the exception of Torbay - have over-delivered on housing for the last five years, according to the Government's own figures.

Devon CPRE's analysis of the Housing Delivery Test: 2020 measurement shows the county as a whole has delivered 30% more new homes than it was required to over a five-year period, in effect building 6,332 more houses than it had to. The Government data substantiates what we've been saying for years - that Devon is building far more homes than required and the countryside is being ravaged as a result.

An analysis of the 2020 measurement reveals:

- **Exeter** over-delivered by 45%, 25% and 90% over the past three years (average 53%); by 50% overall over the past five years (1,501 excess houses).
- **Plymouth, West Devon and the South Hams** over-delivered by 108%, 5% and 28% over the past three years (average 44%); by 44% overall over the past five years (2,401 excess houses).
- **North Devon & Torridge** over-delivered by 57%, 22% and 48% over the past three years (average 41%); and by 32% overall over the past five years (1,076 excess houses).
- **Mid Devon** has over-delivered by 76%, 19% and 28% over the past three years (average 39%); by 30% overall over the past five years (473 excess houses).

- **East Devon** has over-delivered by 37%, 5% and 28% over the past three years (average 22%); by 33% overall over the past five years (1,155 excess houses).

- **Teignbridge** has over-delivered by 32%, 5% and -35% (under-delivery) over the past three years (average -2%), and over-delivered by 11% overall over the past five years (342 excess houses).

Devon CPRE Director Penny Mills says, "The government's own figures vindicate what we have been saying for years. In 2018, we commissioned an independent report from specialists at Opinion Research Services (ORS) to establish the true number of homes needed across the county. It showed that delivering 4,300 homes each year would meet all local needs, allowing for a continuation of past migration trends and a fall in average household sizes. In July 2020, a second report produced for us by ORS concluded that a total of 2.3 million homes are needed nationally over the decade 2020-30 to meet household growth and provide for past under-supply, an average of 230,000 each year, NOT the 300,000 which the government claim."

Let's hope our local planning authorities, their officers and elected councillors will now start to put our countryside and green spaces first, before permitting any more unnecessary new housing developments.

## East Devon's Pebblebed Heaths

Chris Woodruff, Manager, East Devon AONB



Situated on rising ground to the eastern flank of the East Devon AONB, the Pebblebed Heaths is the single largest block of lowland heath west of the New Forest and a hugely significant area within the AONB. The heaths exist largely on account of the nature of their underlying geology - the Bunter Pebblebeds, which spread across this part of the area and give rise to one of the richest and most important wildlife and cultural habitats in the AONB. A plethora of designations span the site, Special Conservation Area (habitat), Special Protection Area (birds), Site of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Ancient Monument and now of course, National Nature Reserve.

National Nature Reserve (NNR) status for the Pebblebed Heaths will be formally recognised on 13th May this year with a virtual launch event which will include Lord Clinton, Kevin Cox (RSPB), Tony Juniper and Marion Spain of Natural England.

NNR status is a major accolade for all

partners involved in managing the whole site and offers huge opportunities for the future management of the area at a time of great change. It recognises the national importance of the site for nature but importantly also, for people.

It is an exciting time for this most recent of NNRs and a true honour to be elected Chair of the new Advisory Board for the NNR in my capacity as Manager for East Devon AONB. There is a great team on the new Board that brings with it a wealth of experience and knowledge from a variety of backgrounds and we look forward to playing our part in furthering the aims of the Pebblebed Heaths NNR with the management bodies in support of its wildlife and local communities.

Right now, more than ever, our environment is critical to our physical and mental health and well-being; it's our natural health service, but it needs our care in return.

## A Tribute to Mike Hulme



It was with great sadness that we learned of the untimely death of long-time Devon CPRE member Mike Hulme.

Mike was a “green” enthusiast long before it was fashionable. With a few others back in the early 70s he started a community in Spreyton, living the good life frugally, simply, and with a very low carbon footprint long before that phrase was ever invented. Even his enterprise (maintaining and repairing Volvo cars) was eco-friendly. He used as many recycled parts from his “saved” vehicles as possible. Keeping old Volvos going may not be everyone’s idea of “eco-friendly” but if you think about it, a 25-year-old Volvo 850 in regular use has prevented up to 8 new cars being manufactured - with that cost to the environment - and his

cars could be zero emissions if well maintained, which they certainly were. A meticulous mechanic and completely moral in his approach.

Mike came to fame with his starring role in the BBC2 documentary ‘The Wind Farm Wars’, which depicted his long battle against the proposed Den Brook Wind Farm near his home. He became a self-taught expert in wind turbine noise and was a founder member of the Independent Noise Working Group and the Den Brook Judicial Review Group. He assisted many local campaign groups in Devon and the rest of the country in opposing inappropriately sited wind turbines and wind farms.

He faced the end with dignity and pragmatism, never complaining, and he will be greatly missed.



## Devon CPRE - Who We Are



Penny Mills, Director



Rebecca Bartleet, Chairman



Mike Best, Treasurer and Trustee



Steve Crowther, Trustee



Phillip Bratby, Trustee



Ivan Buxton, Trustee



Dale Hall, Trustee



Nick Whitsun-Jones, Trustee

# Devon CPRE Membership

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP ONLY

£3 per month - £36 per annum

## FAMILY / ORGANISATION TOWN / PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

£5 per month - £60 per annum

Stuck for a gift idea? Membership of Devon CPRE makes an ideal gift.

Membership of the Devon branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England helps to protect the county and countryside we all love.

Devon CPRE is the only local, independent charity working to protect our precious countryside, green spaces and unique landscapes across Devon - for the benefit of all.

Once farmland and green spaces are built on, they're lost forever.

We know that new homes and other developments are needed in Devon to maintain a vibrant economy, but should

this be at the expense of our tranquil and beautiful environment?

Are we building the type and quantity of new homes Devon really needs? Are developers and planners being held properly to account?

Devon CPRE membership makes a crucial contribution to our work saving the countryside.

As an independent charity, Devon CPRE relies solely on memberships, donations and legacies. Please consider a membership gift and help us to protect Devon's precious countryside and green spaces.

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## Membership for Town and Parish Councils

Devon CPRE has proven expertise in planning matters. Did you know that we currently have over 60 town and parish councils and other organisations across the county who are already members and regularly benefit from our advice to respond to local planning applications? If yours isn't a member, please encourage them to join. For just £5 a month we could help your town/parish council too.





## Devon CPRE in The News

We've been getting a fantastic amount of press coverage recently, thanks to our brilliant PR consultant, Sharon Goble. We certainly keep her very busy, and she also ran a media training workshop for us recently.

We hope you've spotted us in our new regular column in the Moorlander, as well as all the features in other local media such as the Western Morning News, local newspapers, magazines, online, radio and TV.

# Councils are 'ravaging the countryside' with houses

## THE GROWING IMPACT OF ANAEROBIC DIGESTERS

Devon CPRE takes an active role in all matters relating to the environment and the countryside in East Devon. Anaerobic Digesters (ADs) have been known a number of years ago to...

meet household supply and provide for past under-supply, an average of 230,000 each year, NOT the 300,000 which the government claims."

The CPRE wants local planning authorities, their officials and elected councillors to put countryside and green spaces first, before permitting any more unnecessary housing developments.

## Rural campaign lauds planners' no to houses

## Councils exceed targets for new homes in Devon

LATEST government figures show Devon is building a third more houses than 'required', according to campaign group Devon CPRE.

All of the country's Local Planning Authorities - with the exception of Torbay - have over-delivered on housing for the last five years, according to the government's own figures, the landscape pressure group says.

WMM REPORTER

www.westmorlandreporter.com

Househunters, including young people priced out of the market for local property, argue that new developments help to bring down the average cost of a home by increasing the available stock. House builders are also often required to include proportions of affordable homes at homes for rent in their new developments.

WMM REPORTER

www.westmorlandreporter.com

briefing document, which is being circulated to all the Devon planning committees, prepared by Devon CPRE trustee Steve Crowther.

Steve said, "supported by the detailed evidence that we and others

think of local authorities nationally could be in this situation.

"This false message, which served the North Devon & Torridge Local Plan out-of-date after 14 months, is seen as a developer's failure to build the houses they

## Villagers fight plans for giant fertiliser lagoon

THIRTEEN villages and hamlets...

to be built. The lagoon is the size of a football pitch. It would be built on a site...



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Twitter & Facebook: @cpredevon

Devon CPRE  
is a member of the  
CPRE network



The  
countryside  
charity

The Devon Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England CIO. A charitable incorporated organisation with registered charity number 1175228.