



Gloucestershire
Campaign to Protect Rural England

Newsletter

Rob Colley

www.cpreglos.org.uk

President The Rt Hon Lord Vestey

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The countryside under threat?

The National Planning Policy Framework

A BIG thank you to all our members who have written to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government raising concerns over the draft National Planning Policy Framework or who have contacted their MP about the document. As this newsletter went to print, in early October, public concern over the government's proposals showed no signs of abating with continuing extensive coverage of the issues in the media. CPRE and the National Trust have been prominent in radio and

Richard Lloyd

television interviews with Ministers. The Daily Telegraph was running a 'Hands Off Our Land' campaign, launched on 31st August with a leader article saying that the government's actions are "a shameful way to treat rural Britain" and that "the Coalition is trying to railroad its national planning policy framework without debate."

The government wants to simplify the planning system by getting rid of pages and pages of detailed national policies contained in a suite

of separate statements on different topics and replacing them by a single statement of national policy of not many more than 50 pages. In CPRE we support the principle of simplifying the planning system, which almost everyone agrees has grown to become too bureaucratic and cumbersome.

We are concerned, however, that in drafting the National Planning Policy Framework many of the existing policies appear to have been re-written to prioritise development over all other issues. Not surprisingly, the development industry fully supports the changes. But those concerned with proper long term planning of essential development and safeguarding the countryside are deeply alarmed, as what is proposed could be a recipe for urban sprawl and inappropriate sporadic development across the countryside.

The government says it is determined to press ahead with simplifying and speeding up the planning system in order to stimulate much needed economic growth. However, under sustained pressure from CPRE and others there are indications that the government may be prepared to agree changes to some of the detailed wording. We must keep up the pressure and that is why your letters are so important.

On 14th September CPRE



Is this countryside under threat?

Rob Colley

◀ National Office ran a seminar on the National Planning Policy Framework. The Rt Hon Greg Clark, the Minister for Decentralisation and Cities, attended the session which was chaired by our new County Chairman, Charlie Watson. Greg Clark emphasised the government's determination to proceed with the Framework but acknowledged that there were areas that needed to be improved and unintended loopholes removed. The same day, at Prime Minister's Question Time, David Cameron promised to meet with CPRE, and further assurances about refining the draft were given at the Conservative Party Conference.

By the time you read this article, the Branch will have submitted a detailed response to the consultation questionnaire.

Our key issues of concern will include ensuring:

- that priority is given to re-using previously developed land, wherever possible, as a first option;
- that national policy fully supports and where necessary reinvigorates town centres and high streets;
- that AONBs are fully safeguarded;
- that the wider countryside is properly protected and policy on the protection of high quality agricultural land is strengthened;
- that the need for affordable housing in villages is properly addressed; and
- that transitional arrangements are put in place to avoid a policy vacuum and a developer free-for-all before new local plans are ready.

We will also be making a number of detailed points and suggested wording changes to help in avoiding the final form of the Framework becoming a recipe for legal challenge and misinterpretation.

Securing the value of nature

Richard Lloyd

THIS IS the title of the natural environment White Paper published in June, the first White Paper on the natural environment in 20 years. The White Paper is linked to the National Ecosystem Assessment which demonstrates strong economic arguments for safeguarding and enhancing the natural environment, and it acts on the recommendations in the Lawton Report *Making Space for Nature*, reported in the last Newsletter.

A recognition of the need for recovery and restoration of the natural environment at a landscape scale has been welcomed by CPRE. Indeed, the Government says it wants this to be the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than it inherited. Consequently, the proposals are ambitious but they will require commitment across all government departments if the aspirations are to be achieved.

Headline points include:

Protecting and improving our natural environment

Past action has often taken place on too small a scale. The Government wants to promote an ambitious, integrated approach, creating a resilient ecological network across England. To this end it says it will:

- publish a new Biodiversity Strategy for England, responding to our international commitments and setting a new direction for policy;



- establish Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) to strengthen local action, raise awareness about the services and benefits of a healthy natural environment, contribute to the green economy and complement Local Enterprise Partnerships;

- create Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) to enhance and reconnect nature on a significant scale. 12 initial NIAs will be identified by competition, supported by £7.5 million of funding;

- promote a strategic approach to planning for nature within and across local authority areas, guiding development to the best locations, encouraging greener design, and enabling development to enhance natural networks;

- retain the protection and improvement of the natural environment as core objectives of the planning system;

- establish a new, voluntary approach to biodiversity

offsetting, testing the approach in pilot areas;

- work with the farming industry to reconcile how to improve the environment while at the same time increasing food production;

- work with local communities in a number of areas to support local engagement in landscape planning.

The Biodiversity Strategy was published in August under the title *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*, and bids are being made to set up Local Nature Partnerships and for funding to create Nature Improvement Areas. There is likely to be an LNP for Gloucestershire and CPRE Gloucestershire will seek a seat on it.

Growing a green economy

The National Ecosystems Assessment (NEA) shows that protected natural areas can yield returns many times higher than the cost of their

protection, and that there are multi-million pound opportunities available from greener goods and services, and from markets that protect nature's services. Accordingly, the Government says that it will:

- put natural capital at the centre of economic thinking and at the heart of the way economic progress is measured by including natural capital within the UK Environmental Accounts;

- establish an independent Natural Capital Committee to advise the Government on the state of natural capital in England;

- publish an action plan to expand markets and schemes in which payments are made by the beneficiary of a natural service to the provider of that service;

- set up a business-led Ecosystem Markets Task Force to review the opportunities for UK business from expanding the trade in green goods and the market for sustainable natural services;

- issue new guidance for businesses on how to measure and report corporate environmental impacts.

Reconnecting people and nature

The NEA and the Marmot Review, *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, demonstrate the positive impact that nature has on mental and physical health. In recognition that high-quality natural environments foster healthy neighbourhoods, green spaces encourage social activity and reduce crime, and the natural environment can help children's learning, the Government says it will:

- make enhancing nature a central goal of social action across the country;

- help local authorities use their new duties and powers on public health, including through access to a good natural environment;

- remove barriers to learning outdoors and increase schools' abilities to teach outdoors;

- create a new Green Areas Designation to allow local people to protect the green areas that are important to them;

- establish a Green Infrastructure Partnership with civil society to support the development of green infrastructure in England;

- launch a new phase of the Muck In4Life campaign, offering volunteering opportunities to improve the quality of life in towns, cities and the countryside.

International and EU leadership

There is a commitment to show environmental leadership internationally and within the EU and to protect and enhance natural assets globally, promoting environmentally and socially sustainable growth. Specific commitments include:

- pressing for effective implementation of the 2010 Nagoya agreement by the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

- promoting the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012;

- providing £25 million for biodiversity and ecosystem projects through the Darwin Initiative;

- greening the Common Agricultural and Common Fisheries Policies to improve environmental benefits;

- implementing an ambitious new EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The full document, with its 92 separate commitments, can be accessed via the Defra website: www.defra.gov.uk

“The Government says it wants this to be the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than it inherited.”

Heathland restoration in the Wye Valley

Neighbourhood Planning in Practice

David Brooke

CPRE GLOUCESTERSHIRE has embarked on two programmes of work associated with the Government's localism agenda and the proposed introduction of Neighbourhood Plans.

Firstly, we are finalising a research project that provides the link between neighbourhood plan preparation and the lessons of past approaches. Village Design Statements and Parish Plans, for instance, have shown their ability to express firm community aspirations while other approaches, including Concept Statements, Local Landscape Character Assessment and Market Town Plans, have all helped parishes and neighbourhoods to determine their own futures.

Neighbourhood Plans themselves will add a further tool to the community planning tool-kit, bringing a valuable status as part of the statutory development plan, and the consequent need for planning authorities to have

'proper regard' to them. Other approaches do not have this formal status (although some have become Supplementary Planning Documents) but their strength lies in covering issues far beyond statutory land use limitations.

The research project has spawned a number of reports and briefing papers but its ultimate purpose will be to publish a guide – a route map – in the autumn. Over the years, a dozen or more methods have been developed to help communities plan their own future and the guide will help them navigate through this complex mix to find the most appropriate approach to planning for their specific circumstances.

Secondly, CPRE and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) have been commissioned by the government to provide training and advice for communities who are thinking of embarking on their own plans.

The programme of advice



Community planning in action

is still being developed but it is likely to include practical guidance and workshops. Gloucestershire CPRE will be working with the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) to push the

programme forward locally. These two pieces of work will go a long way towards drawing community interests together in a fully comprehensive statement of neighbourhood aspirations. Watch this space.

“The Branch is to publish a guide to help communities find the most appropriate approach to planning for their specific circumstances.”

TRANSPORT UPDATE

Alastair Goldie



Traffic congestion on Crickley Hill

THE LOCAL Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) for the years 2011 to 2026 is now being implemented. After much consultation, the Plan has had to be radically cut back because of the spending cuts. The main emphasis is on improving and maintaining existing roads and on implementing more sustainable transport options by improving bus services and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, the idea being to give drivers a choice.

Despite the sustainable slant, which is to be welcomed, the Quiet Lanes scheme has been dropped as it is too difficult a concept to get over to drivers without a plethora of signs and traffic calming devices. Some aspects of Quiet Lanes are

incorporated in other parts of the LTP.

The only major schemes are Park and Ride with one proposed for Elmbridge near the Elmbridge Court roundabout. The County Council will seek funding for this. It seems extremely expensive (£23m) for such a scheme which will benefit only motorists visiting Gloucester from the east and north as other Park and Ride sites already exist. Without improving the existing transport infrastructure within Gloucester, I feel it will lengthen journeys between Gloucester and Cheltenham.

LTP3 includes provision for the dualling of the Kemble-Swindon rail link.

SITUATIONS VACANT!

THE BRANCH is looking for a volunteer Coordinator for our CPRE GLOUCESTERSHIRE AWARDS SCHEME.

ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEERS are also needed to help CPRE at either Branch or District level.

The Awards Scheme is now in its fourth year. In that time it has recognised some twenty buildings and other projects for their contribution to Gloucestershire's environment and rural communities. The five that received an Award in 2010 were described in the Spring 2011 newsletter.

We are seeking a volunteer who could manage the scheme for us – working with the four judges to identify potential candidates, arranging meetings of the Awards Group and designing the Awards Ceremony each autumn.

This is an exciting time for CPRE. On the one hand, there is a need to assess and respond to the fundamental changes to the planning system being introduced by the government – such as the new National Planning Policy Framework. On the other there are new initiatives being undertaken locally by CPRE concerning neighbourhood planning and branch development.

Meanwhile, the everyday need to monitor, investigate and respond to specific development proposals continues. Through the generosity of our supporters we are currently well funded



but we need new people who are willing to give up just a few hours a week to take forward our cause at this critical time. Are you able to help us?

David Brooke, the County Director would be very pleased to tell you more!
david.brooke@cpreglos.org.uk
or ☎ 01452 309 783.

A Jubilee message from HM The King

David Brooke

INTERESTING ITEMS often emerge from the archives in the Branch Office, and none more so than a message from HM King George VI to CPRE in its Silver Jubilee Year. The message – dated 28th May 1951, some sixty years ago – acknowledges the 'remarkable work' undertaken by its members since CPRE's founding in 1926.

Our archives also contain the national CPRE Annual Report for 1951, with a summary of recent achievements by the then President, the Duke of Norfolk KG. The President's address ranges widely, covering many matters that still concern us today. But perhaps of more interest are those that have moved on.

Mr Wentworth Day, for instance, spoke to the 1951 AGM in a 'spirited and forthright manner' on the destruction of historic houses, now mercifully a rarity compared with the 42 that were demolished in 1950. We

don't know what exactly the speaker said but he clearly stirred things up, prompting the President to reflect tersely that 'Mr Wentworth Day as a guest speaker enjoyed freedom of speech of which he had taken very full advantage'.

In contrast, the design and routing of electricity pylons were of considerable concern in 1951 and remain so today. The details of the debate sixty years ago are mannered and courteous but expose a clear division between the Revd Charles Schooling, who lamented the replacement of the pylons designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield RA with new 'gantry types', and Mrs E Edwards of the Electrical Association of Women, who saw the 'urgent necessity of speeding up the provision of electricity in rural areas'.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 was well established by the time of the

1951 AGM but CPRE noted with evident exasperation that 'it is too early to see much of the positive planning which was one of the chief objects of the Act'. Sir George Pepler (of the CPRE Executive Committee) had 'some hard things to say about the planning of the Board of Trade, which has a potent voice in town and country planning' – an echo of which still rings clear in 2011.

On the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, however, CPRE was more welcoming, taking the 'opportunity to congratulate the National Parks Commission in the progress so far made'. A CPRE idea of the time, so obvious now even for AONBs, that each National Park 'should be represented by a resident Officer' did not 'at present, commend itself to the Commission'.

Annual Reports like these include the voices of our predecessors who in their day

shared our passions and supported CPRE with the same energy as we do. Some of the battles are the same – minerals, electricity schemes, and the location of industry. Others are of their time: our current worries do not, perhaps, include the design of Police Wireless Stations. Nor do we have an annual England Ball in London or weekend discussion groups in country houses. But all are both our past and our future.

The King was right to hope that CPRE might 'continue to achieve in the future the notable results that it has achieved in the past'. I just wish that, sixty years on, we could tell him.



“The design and routing of electricity pylons were of considerable concern in 1951 and remain so today”

GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH

Annual General Meeting

Sir John Adye retires as Chairman

Sir John Adye displays the plaque for his tree



Sir John congratulates Charlie Watson as his successor as Branch Chairman

David Bayne

THE MODERN, environmentally-friendly surroundings of CPRE Award-winning Toddington Village Hall, where around 45 members and their guests met on 28th June 2011, could hardly contrast more with the ornate Italian Revival of Westonbirt which hosted us in 2010. Sadly, at the last minute our President, Lord Vestey, had to fly to Australia for family reasons, but the chair was most ably filled at short notice by the Earl of Weymss and March, a Branch Vice-President.

In his final report as Chairman, Sir John Adye said that much had been achieved during his six-year tenure. He highlighted especially the success of the CPRE Gloucestershire Awards scheme – almost 20 Awards had now been made –, the formulation of the Branch Vision, which had provided an essential framework for the annual Action Plan, and, thirdly, the fact that the Branch had attracted substantial bequests, both expressing confidence in CPRE's values and activities and providing

financial security for the future. But he regretted that under his chairmanship the Branch had so far failed to raise its public profile within the county or to arrest the steady decline in membership. The Branch was about to embark on a development initiative to redress both these shortcomings.

After paying tribute and expressing his thanks to those many staff and volunteers, past and present, who had supported himself and the Branch, before formally resigning he enthusiastically commended Charlie Watson who was to be proposed as his successor. To show their appreciation of all he had done members then presented Sir John with a number of gifts, including a tree, with plaque, for his garden and a Cotswold stone planter.

Charlie Watson was duly



Saltway Hill during pipeline installation

elected unanimously as a Trustee and the new Chairman of CPRE Gloucestershire. He paid tribute to the work and values of Sir John and undertook to do his best to emulate his approach. The remaining Officers and Trustees were re-elected.

Following the AGM itself, a team from National Grid gave an illustrated presentation on the recent project to install a new gas pipeline between Wormington and Sapperton. This installation had had to overcome numerous physical challenges, crossing rights of way, walls, wildlife sites, conservation regions, watercourses, roads and rail crossings as well as private land. The project team had needed extensive liaison with the Cotswold Conservation

Board and with the numerous individual landowners and tenants. This had been critical in minimising disruption and restoring the route to its former natural state. Extensive communication and involvement with the community had been vital to the project's success.

The team illustrated their presentation with photographs of significant parts of the route before, during and after installation. These provided those present with a clear illustration of what an excellent and impressive job National Grid had done in restoring the landscape at least to its former, if not an improved, state.

The event ended with a delicious and convivial finger buffet supper.



Saltway Hill reinstated after pipeline installation

OUR NEW CHAIRMAN Charlie Watson

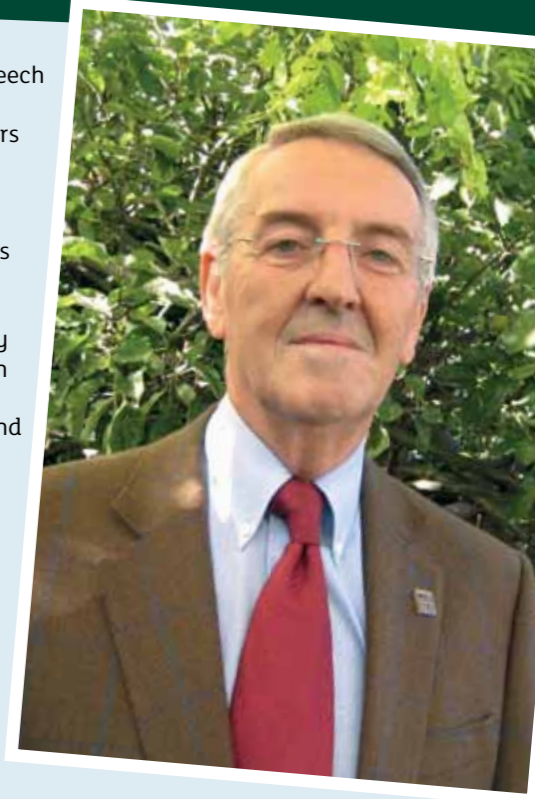
IN HIS leaving speech as he stepped down after 6 years as County Branch Chairman, Sir John Adye commended Charlie Watson as his proposed successor. Charlie was duly elected unanimously at the Branch AGM in June.

Charlie's background is in planning and local government. He is a past national President of the County Planning Officers' Society and was Gloucestershire's Chief Officer in the late 1980s and early 1990s before taking up the roles of Director of Environment and Chief Executive in Hertfordshire. At the same time he acted as an advisor to the Local Government Association and the government on planning issues.

Since retirement he was invited to join CPRE's national Policy Committee and has continued his interest in helping environmental charities.

Charlie is a keen supporter and advocate of CPRE's wide-ranging work. He emphasises that we are not an organisation of NIMBYs but rather of LAMBYs – people concerned with 'looking after my back yard'. That is why CPRE is taking such an interest in the Government's proposed changes to the planning system. These changes have the potential to alter the balance between the development industry and the control available to local authorities and communities.

He stresses that we are not against development – new



homes, particularly affordable ones, and new jobs are needed. However, they must be in the best place and of the right type in order to protect both the countryside and natural resources for the future. That is what CPRE has advocated since its creation in the 1920s and what a balanced planning system should seek to achieve. Nothing changes in our aim but now the balance is in danger of tipping in favour of development at all costs.

In his new role as Chairman, Charlie is therefore determined to raise the profile of CPRE locally, to encourage existing members to volunteer some time to help our work and to assist in recruiting new members. It is the volunteers who make everything possible and whose voice needs to be heard

“Charlie is determined to raise the profile of CPRE locally”

Branch Policy Statements

IT IS some five years since the Branch, through its Policy Sub-Committee, set out a number of Policy Statements covering the main issues affecting our part of rural England. Hence these are now all being reviewed and updated. So far those on housing, on farming and land management and on minerals have been completed and a new policy, on the Gloucester – Cheltenham Green Belt, generated. Revision of the remainder is work in progress.

These Branch Policy Statements have two purposes:

- to advertise our stand on these key issues to the wider public, and
- to enable all our officers at Branch and District level to act consistently when responding to planning proposals of all kinds.

They can be found on the CPRE Gloucestershire website (www.cpre.org.uk) or are obtainable from the Branch office at Community House.

Berkeley Vale

Prue Vernon, Chairman

WE HAD a well-attended AGM at Elmore Court, by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Anselm Guise, with a talk on the proposed development of a new nuclear power station near Oldbury by Horizon Nuclear Power. There was a lively question and answer session after the talk. The scale will be massive but the design now incorporates power-assisted cooling blocks rather than the originally-suggested cooling towers which would have been three times the size of those at Didcot. The site enables the existing grid

to be used to distribute the power. We cannot pretend that it will blend into the Severn Estuary landscape – but if we want to keep the lights on we must accept it.

Mrs Anita Teesdale retired from our committee at the AGM. She has been a keen and active supporter of CPRE Berkeley Vale, being one of the founder committee members. Living by the river, she took a deep interest in everything to do with the river, the canal system and things watery in general. She has organised the catering for many, many District AGMs and has been a generous provider of chairs,

“These huge turbines would be visible from the Forest of Dean, the Cotswold Way, Berkeley, and a large area of the Severn Vale”

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DISTRICTS

plates etc to equip these events. We shall miss her and are most grateful for all she has done.

Power again – Ecotricity have appealed against Stroud District Council’s decision to refuse their application for four x 120 metre wind turbines along the railway line behind the Prince of Wales Hotel at Berkeley Road. This is under a kilometre from the boundary of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These are huge turbines which would be nearly as high as the escarpment at Stinchcombe Golf Course and would be visible from the Forest of Dean, the Cotswold Way, Berkeley, and a large area of the Severn Vale. It is the first application for a wind farm on the edge of the AONB escarpment and CPRE with the Cotswold Conservation Board and Save

Berkeley Vale are going to be represented at the Inquiry to resist the appeal along with Stroud District Council. Save Berkeley Vale are employing professional support which will be expensive and I am sure they would welcome any contributions towards the cost. I am happy to forward any donations to them (cheques payable to Save Berkeley Vale).

The next thing to watch is the proposed waste incinerator at Javelin Park, Haresfield. We attended displays by the two companies selected by Gloucestershire County Council to quote for it and continue to monitor and comment on developments. This would be another massive structure with a shelf life – if approved, we shall have to ensure that removal of the structure at the end of its life is part of the contract.

Cheltenham and Tewkesbury

Tom Hancock, Chairman

THIRTY TWO members went on an all day coach trip to Berrington Hall, near Leominster in Herefordshire in August. It was an excellent, enjoyable and interesting visit – in fact there was insufficient time to see everything on show. Berrington Hall has been created as “the perfect house in the perfect setting” with gardens that are one of Capability Brown’s final landscapes. There were many secrets for visitors to uncover, including how the servants moved around the house unseen by the family and their guests. The tour guides made

it all very real, which was so helpful in understanding what we saw.

On 19th May, the District AGM took place at Glenfall House, Charlton Kings, the Diocese of Gloucester’s Retreat House and Conference Centre, where before the meeting members were able to explore the handsome gardens and admire the fine view across the Severn Vale. After the AGM, and after a brief outline was given of the history of Glenfall House, Dr Andrew Spurr, Managing Director of Existing Nuclear, EDF Energy, gave a most relevant and thought-provoking presentation

on the challenges of meeting the UK’s future demand for energy. Glenfall House then laid on a delicious finger buffet in the fine Arts and Crafts library.

The District’s major planning concerns have been the proposals to build a further 1,000 houses on the northern side of Bishops Cleeve – a further 450 at Homelands Farm and, to the west of the A46, 550 at Dean’s Farm (‘Clevelands’). Appeals in respect of both proposals are the subject of a combined Public Inquiry that started in mid September and is scheduled for several weeks. The District is represented at the Inquiry, arguing that either development would be outside the provisions of the Local Plan, would prejudice the forthcoming Joint Core Strategy, in which we are arguing for an extension of the Green Belt north of Prestbury, and would seriously damage the setting

“A further 1,000 houses on the northern side of Bishops Cleeve would seriously damage the setting of the AONB”

Happily, yet another attempt to build on the Hunting Butts land in the existing Green Belt between Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve has been refused.

There is still no tangible progress to report on the Gloucester City – Cheltenham – Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy. The councils’ JCS team has continued to collect evidence and now promises a draft Strategy for consultation in October-November. But the JCS is not now expected to be adopted until early 2014. The draft National Planning Policy Framework says that in the absence of an approved strategy or plan, any and all new development should be approved. So, if the NPPF is unchanged, expect an unstoppable tide of speculative new development proposals.



Berrington Hall

Forest of Dean

Anne Prufer, Chairman

THE FUTURE of the Forest of Dean’s Public Forest Estate woodland remains very uncertain. Volunteers from CPRE Forest of Dean District met the Independent Panel on Forestry (IPF) members when they visited the Dean in late Spring. Throughout the reporting period they have been heavily involved in work for National Office, County Officers, and the Hands Off Our Forest and Friends of the Forest Groups in the preparation of submissions to the Panel. It is understood that the Panel have informed Ministers that they will not be in a position to advise government on the future direction of forestry and woodland policy in England until next Spring. Even then, uncertainty will remain since neither the Minister nor Parliament is duty bound to accept their advice. Let us hope therefore that, in the light of the views expressed, common sense prevails. Meanwhile, we shall do

everything we can to ensure our ancient Forest of Dean gains national designation protection in planning law terms (be it Statutory Forest, Contiguous Woodland or Forest Waste), is still owned as part of the Public Forest Estate, remains under the management of the Forestry Commission, and is accessible for everyone to enjoy for the foreseeable future.

Progress by Forest of Dean District Council on its Local Development Framework (ie local plan) for the 20 year period to 2026 has reached the stage where the Secretary of State has called an Examination in Public, commencing in mid-October, to examine the soundness of its Core Strategy and Cinderford Area Action Plan. CPRE Forest of Dean District has previously expressed concerns regarding the Council’s intentions on a range of topics, particularly its contention that the District needs 6200 new dwellings

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DISTRICTS

“The future of the Forest of Dean’s Public Forest Estate woodland remains very uncertain.”

over the period, most of them on greenfield rather than brownfield sites. We have also expressed the view that planning permission for new house building should only be permitted either where there is genuine demand caused by a shortfall in existing housing stock versus employment availability within the District or where there is a genuine existing community need, eg for affordable and social housing. A further

submission along similar lines is in preparation to the EiP Planning Inspector, and we have reserved our right to appear and speak.

We continue to watch activities at the Livox Quarry. Although situated over the border in Wales, its operations have had a significant visual and noise impact within the Dean and it lies within the Wye Valley AONB. The quarry has a new owner whose intentions, at present, remain uncertain.

City of Gloucester

AT THE District AGM in June, Alastair Goldie stood down as Chairman after many years. As no successor has been found, Alastair has been re-elected Chairman but only in a caretaker capacity so that the District can continue formally to exist while its future is reviewed at Branch level. Meanwhile arrangements are in place to make sure that relevant planning applications in the District territory receive attention

North Cotswolds

Peter Loveday, Chairman

OUR AGM was held at Wormington Grange where John Evetts gave a most enthusiastic talk on this most interesting largely 18th century house, and on The Landmark Trust. Afterwards he conducted us around the gardens; this visit attracted some 32 members and friends on a beautiful evening and was much enjoyed by all.

Later in June we visited

two marvellous gardens – the first set in an ideal landscape at Temple Guiting House developed by the Revd George Talbot and his son George in the late 18th & early 19th centuries, and now beautifully preserved as once described by the nearby rector Francis Witts in 1827. For contrast we moved on to Stone House, Lower Swell where the gardener, Paul, showed us many of his secrets in

“The increase of Natural Energy projects may bring industrialisation of the landscape”

maintaining this beautiful highly-cultivated formal garden with large borders, lawns and vegetable gardens, with greenhouses filled with house plants.

The increase of Natural Energy projects may bring industrialisation of the landscape and thereby conflict with that which we want to preserve. We would ask all our members to log

onto the CDC website as it is now much easier to express an immediate opinion on any development application because simple boxes are provided. Farmcote is now facing the possibility of a 25 metre high wind turbine on the escarpment above; your committee is intending to object vigorously to application 11/03756/FUL.



North Cotswold escarpment showing Farmcote, with Cromwell’s Clump on the left of the skyline and Hayles Fruit Farm below.

South Cotswolds

Nick Dummett, Chairman

Planning With our colleagues from North Cotswold and Tetbury district, we await the publication of the Cotswold District Council's (CDC) Core Strategy. Unfortunately this will not be until 2012. In the meantime we can expect further applications for houses in areas which would not normally be acceptable on the grounds that CDC has not allocated a five year supply of land. It was against this background that CDC approved a development of 100 houses at South Cerney. In our view the development was undesirable but was a least bad option for meeting the five year land supply – at least the outline proposal had a reasonable proportion of

adjacent to Cirencester Golf Club. We sympathise with the idea that the club needs a new club-house – and what was proposed would be a marked improvement on the existing one. But the harm to the landscape of the large number of retirement houses stretching up the side of the Churn valley outweighs the benefit. We have encouraged the applicant to submit a more modest scheme. Finally we were gratified to see that an application for a wind turbine outside Northleach has been withdrawn. The turbine would have been three-quarters the height of an electricity pylon and clearly visible for miles around – a terrible precedent if approved.

“We can expect further applications for houses in areas which would not normally be acceptable, on the grounds that CDC has not allocated a five year supply of land.”

affordable housing. CDC have however refused permission to build 60 houses on the edge of Cirencester impinging on the Siddington green belt on the grounds that the damage caused to the open countryside outweighed the need for housing. We have also objected to the proposal to locate a care village

AGM at Colesbourne Park. In June, the District was privileged to hold its AGM at Colesbourne Park thanks to the generosity of Sir Henry Elwes. Following the formal proceedings, Sir Henry gave a fascinating account of the history of the estate and described the achievements of his forbear, Henry John,



Sir Henry Elwes in Colesbourne Arboretum

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DISTRICTS



Generator with biogas storage pod behind

who collected plants and butterflies from around the world and then developed his interest in trees, resulting in the planting of 900 acres of new woods. Members were able to examine one of the books in a seven volume series with walnut covers, produced by Henry John, that marked the first significant effort to catalogue trees in Britain.

The talk also gave members an insight into the challenges faced by a benevolent estate owner who has helped to create employment in the village for 35 people in ten businesses and who is working to establish affordable housing. Sir Henry then escorted members on a short tour of the arboretum and church and they were able to see for themselves some of the eight “Champion Trees” that contribute to the distinction of Colesbourne.

Visit to Kemble Farms Anaerobic Digestion Project Continuing the previous year's focus on renewable energy and its links with the countryside, the District visited a successful anaerobic digestion (“biogas”) system built alongside the large dairy at Kemble Farms. Members were first introduced to the 750 cattle that were happily feeding in the covered area. Colin Rank, director of Kemble Farms, described the balanced diet on which the cattle are fed (and in passing explained the problems with TB in badgers on the farm, and the effectiveness of selenium in the diet of one of the badger families in eliminating the disease). After seeing the machinery which scratched the cattle, the visit moved into the dairy where the cattle are milked three times daily. We then passed on to the tanks and pipes outside through which slurry is collected and fed into the fermentation tank.

Colin Rank explained how the heat and electricity generated by the system is used in both the dairy and in farm cottages with the excess electricity being fed into the National Grid. Members enjoyed – rather surprisingly – handling and sniffing the ‘digestate’ produced as a by-product from the processes, and learnt how this is better than raw slurry for spreading on the land as fertiliser and soil conditioner.

The system cost approximately £1.2million and is expected to payback in 5 to 7 years. Since there are currently relatively few such systems in the UK, we were fortunate to be given such an illuminating tour of the operation.

Stroud

Geof Murray, Chairman

FOR OUR AGM, we were fortunate to have a lovely, if a little fresh, afternoon in May for our visit to the secret gardens at Cerney House in North Cerney. The timing enabled us to enjoy the tulips and other spring flowers, a wide range of vegetables and herbs and many more plants and trees. At the AGM members were sad to hear of the death of Dick Jarrett at the age of 100. Dick had been a member of CPRE for nearly 30 years and a committee member for 20 years, including periods as Vice Chairman and Chairman. He will be sorely missed. Ruth Fraser said her farewells to the meeting after serving on the Committee for some 10 years; she was presented with some flower pots in appreciation for her most valuable contribution to the work of the Stroud District on planning issues, organising events and supporting our work at the annual Stroud Show.

During the past few months considerable efforts have been made to defend the Slad Valley from the proposed development of 48 houses on the Wades Farm site outside the urban settlement boundary at Uplands and within the Cotswolds AONB. The ‘Slad and Uplands against Development’ campaign group raised considerable awareness of the scheme which resulted in some 800 objections to the application. This was refused by the planning committee in July and an appeal is expected from the developer, Barratt Homes. However, the draft National Planning Policy Framework has caused considerable concern for greenfield sites. Despite all the fine words about localism and protection of designated landscapes like AONBs, overriding provisions for saying ‘Yes’ to development

“Considerable efforts have been made to defend the Slad Valley from the proposed development of 48 houses on the Wades Farm site”

will lead to greenfield sites being permitted on appeal as the default answer to building schemes.

A key future development in the area is the restoration of Brimscombe Port for which a mixed use development has been agreed in principle by the Council. Selection of the developer for this scheme is in process after which it is likely that a planning application will be submitted later this year. The indications are that there may be a range of housing up to 5-storey high, retail and community facilities and some limited employment opportunities.

Permission has been given to accommodate a further 10 vehicles at the Aston Down industrial estate at Minchinhampton. But a proposal to extend vehicular access from 6 am to 4 am, to which we objected on tranquillity grounds, has quite rightly been refused. It will have been noticed by everyone using the A419 up Cowcombe Hill that a new

roundabout is being built at the junction with Cirencester Road. This is part of the obligation under the planning permission granted in 2009 to the owners of the Aston Down site and is therefore not coming out of the County Highways Authority's budget.

A decision on the appeal concerning the two dwellings at the equestrian centre near Minchinhampton, to which we made a submission, resulted in the refusal of permission for the conversion of the barn for residential purposes, requiring the removal of the residential facilities. The Inspector was not convinced that the conversion had been carried out more than 4 years before it came to light.

Another application to redevelop the Railway Hotel site in Nailsworth, to which we objected, has been refused; it is set to go to appeal in October. We also objected on landscape grounds to applications to build holiday accommodation on a greenfield site within the AONB in Painswick and

an additional house in the garden of a house in South Woodchester; both were refused planning permission.

The Council has been taking enforcement action against the developer of the Fox's Field housing development (granted permission on appeal in January 2010), which is well advanced. A management and maintenance plan for the drainage scheme was not in place before the development work began, which was a planning condition. The first enforcement notice has been upheld on appeal subject, in effect, to the developer being given 12 months to achieve the plan with a public body or statutory undertaker or restore the site to its original greenfield condition. Further legal action may follow.

We are pleased that the District Council is to introduce a scheme for limited oral representations to be made to the planning committee on behalf of those for and against proposals, as well as by the Ward Councillor

A view of Wades Farm from across the Slad Valley



Tetbury

Geraldine Shepherd,
Chairman

“An application for 54 dwellings on a greenfield site on the main approach to Tetbury from the south provoked strong opposition”

THE MAIN issues for the District are two applications for large scale housing developments.

An application for 54 dwellings on a greenfield site outside the existing town boundary and on the main approach to Tetbury from the south provoked strong opposition. The thrust of development has always been to the north of Tetbury town centre where both schools, the only large supermarket and the few industrial businesses are located. After a vigorous campaign and 57 letters of objection, the application was refused. It remains to be seen whether, in view of the government's

plans to liberalise planning, the developers will go to appeal.

The second application, for 250 units at Highfield Farm submitted last May, is still pending. Many of our members are opposed to the scheme but it is within the Potential Strategic Sites identified in the Second Issues and Options Paper of the LDF Core Strategy of last December. However the same paper identified the problems in Tetbury as lack of employment opportunities, inadequate healthcare provision, inadequate transport and parking, and a shortage of leisure provision.

There is already capacity

to provide small scale building within the area to meet local housing needs. Cotswold District Council has land allocated for over 90 dwellings within the town development area which have not yet been implemented and as we have seen in other areas of the Cotswolds, despite hopes to the contrary, new employment does not follow new housing. A more modest development (The Hamptons) is still not finished and only 50% of the houses are sold.

Dwindling District membership continues to be a problem but we were delighted that nearly half our members were

able to attend our AGM and Summer Supper held in late July at Doughton Manor, just outside Tetbury. Doughton Manor is one of the most impressive and important manor houses in the South Cotswolds, though very little known. Dick Carter, the owner, has restored the original chimneys in a most exemplary manner and it was disappointing that his talk on the outside of the house was cut short due to bad weather. However, that did give us more time to explore the inside of this fascinating house and learn of its history from its enthusiastic and knowledgeable owner.

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