



The countryside charity
Gloucestershire

2021 Annual Review

www.cpreglos.org.uk



A new spring for our countryside ...

When the snowdrops start to emerge in late winter and the days begin to lengthen, we know that spring is just around the corner. In Gloucestershire, we are particularly lucky to have several outstanding snowdrop gardens to visit, including Painswick Rococo Gardens, Cerney House Gardens and Colesbourne Park. These little harbingers of spring cling to our thin Cotswold soil and delight us with their promise. This early reminder that nature is springing into life again is also a reminder of how much we value that annual resurgence of growth; the reassurance that the cycle of the seasons on which we depend will continue.

But it may not. While we can protect the snowdrops and the crocuses and the daffodils in our own gardens, we cannot be sure that our precious countryside with its rolling fields, woodland and rivers, will be there for future generations. Excessive and inappropriate housing development too often consumes the land needed to grow our food; insensitive agri-businesses has resulted in plummeting wildlife numbers in our countryside and pollution is poisoning many of our rivers. Where once life in villages and market towns was in harmony with the surrounding countryside, these cherished places are increasingly dormitories for car-based commuters who care little for the needs of the land that surrounds them.



Prof. Patricia Broadfoot CBE,
County Chair

But this can change. Gradually we are all becoming much more aware of the crisis of the countryside. As we learn more about the potential devastation that climate change will bring to our wildlife, our trees and our plants; as flooding becomes so much more devastating, not least in our own county of Gloucestershire; as mental health issues and levels of loneliness in our communities become increasingly apparent; so more and more people are willing to help protect the life of our rural areas.

I am delighted that this year's Annual Review is full of good news about what, together with our many volunteers, CPRE Gloucestershire has been able to do to support our glorious countryside. Even during a pandemic, CPRE members and volunteers across the County have been busy picking up litter, planting hedgerows and fighting inappropriate planning applications among many other activities. This gives me hope. Not just the hope that the snowdrops bring: but hope that more and more of you will want to do what you can to help our rural areas flourish once again.

If you have supported CPRE Gloucestershire this year, in whatever way, thank you so much. I hope you will continue to do so. And please, encourage your friends to join us too, so that together, we can do so much more to protect our priceless and irreplaceable countryside.

Our Campaigns

Despite the long history of campaigning for protected landscape status for the Forest of Dean which first featured as a Hobhouse Report candidate after the Second World War and was favourably considered in the Glover Review recommendations for new designations, we were disappointed that Natural England's announcement on a new programme of designations did not mention the Forest of Dean. However, also announced was an "All-England Assessment" to identify the future potential for new or expanded National Parks and AONBs and areas where alternative landscape approaches might be appropriate. We will be engaging in this exercise.

At the end of June, National Highways announced that their proposals for the A417 Missing Link had been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate for formal examination. The announcement was accompanied by a report on the outcome of the last public consultation in 2020 which had proposed a number of design improvements. The final submitted scheme reflects the conclusions of this consultation and includes further changes, including most of those advocated by CPRE. Separately, we contributed proposals to a bid for "dedicated funds" for investment in environmental improvements and community facilities in the wider corridor through which the new road will traverse. We proposed a grant scheme to help fund the repair and restoration of the characteristic network of drystone walls and address the loss of trees in the landscape from ash dieback, where ash is the most widespread tree species in the Cotswolds outside woodland.

We supported the CPRE National Hedgerow Heroes campaign in a partnership with the Farming and Wildlife

Advisory Group (FWAG) and the Friends of the Cotswolds which will see the planting of over 4km of new hedgerow on 22 farms across the county over the 2021/22 winter. Volunteers recruited by CPRE are doing much of the work and learning the skills of successful hedge planting.

A perennial campaign for CPRE is tackling the scourge of litter. Our Berkeley Vale and North Cotswold Districts were particularly active in promoting local clean-up campaigns.

Membership

CPRE National has changed the basis on which membership is counted, recording households rather than individuals. The total at the end of December 2021 was 729, including parish and town councils. Over the year we achieved a modest net gain of 26 members. Of the 43 local CPRE groups, CPRE Gloucestershire currently ranks 9th in terms of membership.

CPRE Gloucestershire District	Households	Parish and Town Councils and other organisations	Total
Berkeley Vale	74	12	86
Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury	204	18	222
Forest of Dean	64	5	69
North Cotswolds	89	6	95
Stroud	104	6	110
South Cotswolds and Tetbury	127	11	138
Other	9	-	9
Total	671	58	729



Raising our profile

During the year we further raised our presence on social media which is proving an increasingly important avenue for getting our work noticed and getting our messages across. In February, our Chair, Patricia Broadfoot delivered the Croome Lecture *Challenges for our countryside towards a better vision*, which was hosted by the Cirencester Civic Society and Cirencester Archaeological and Historic Society.

In March, we hosted the Gloucestershire Lecture in partnership with the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire. On the theme *The Future for Rural Gloucestershire*, the lecture was given by Adam Henson. Monthly, throughout the year, Mark Hurrell, formerly an editor with BBC Radio Gloucestershire, interviewed local people with knowledge about a subject of interest in the county. Called 'Topical Talks' they were very well received. These talks, and the lectures, can be viewed on our YouTube channel.

We had good local publicity for the annual star count celebrating the beauty of the night sky and the issue of light pollution, and continuing media interest in the Gloucestershire Stone Stiles Project.

For our members, supporters and friends we extended the scope of our e-newsletters to provide regular updates for members, volunteers and for those who are helping us in other ways.

With Covid restrictions easing, we were able to run two events for members and guests. In July we held a summer reception at Stanway House which was covered by Cotswold Life in their August edition. In December, in a new departure, we held a carol concert at the Holy Innocents Church in Highnam. We were also pleased to be back at the Frampton Country Fair.

Local Plans

A continuing concern is the lack of progress with the review of the Joint Core Strategy for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury (the JCS) and the associated work to develop proposals for a new Garden Town based on Ashchurch, which would help provide much of the additional housing land in the JCS area that is likely to be needed in the longer term.

Meanwhile, we input to the examination stages of the local plans for Tewkesbury Borough and Gloucester. With the Cheltenham Plan adopted in July 2020, it is hoped that all three of the JCS area authorities will have up to date local plans in place shortly, although neither Cheltenham nor Tewkesbury Boroughs could demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, prompting further speculative planning applications.

In summer 2021 our CPRE Stroud District and Berkeley Vale District Groups put in a joint response to the final formal stages of preparation of a new Stroud District Local Plan, focusing particularly on concerns over car-dependent locations for a number of the strategic housing development areas and impacts on the Cotswolds AONB at Minchinhampton. At the end of October, the plan was submitted for examination to the Planning Inspectorate.

The Local Plan review process in the Forest of Dean currently being developed had suggested a major new settlement in the District. A 'near Churcham' proposal had prompted concerns within CPRE and a public outcry locally. Forest of Dean District councillors subsequently established two consultation groups, one for communities and one for developers. We are partaking in both to see if the new settlement option or additions to existing settlements would be the better approach.

At the year end, an announcement on the commencement of a review of the Cotswolds Local Plan was anticipated.





Planning casework

With their local knowledge, our District Committees scrutinise planning applications and make representations where development would be detrimental, particularly in terms of sustainability and impact on the landscape.

Below is summary of a selection of planning cases considered during the year.

- At Gotherington in the immediate setting of the Cotswolds AONB, we objected to a 50 homes scheme on the grounds of landscape impact, social cohesion, the narrowing of a crucial gap with the neighbouring settlement and conflict with the neighbourhood development plan. The planning application was refused but an appeal was allowed as a 5-year housing supply in Tewkesbury Borough could not be demonstrated.
- We opposed a further development at Gotherington and two adjacent developments on the edge of Winchcombe in all three cases because of landscape impacts on the Cotswolds AONB and conflicts with Local Plan policies. Gotherington was refused; the two at Winchcombe have yet to be decided, but one has been allocated for housing in the draft Tewkesbury Borough Plan.
- We opposed a proposal for 250 houses at Oakley Farm on the edge of Cheltenham but within the Cotswolds AONB as the development site was not allocated in the new Cheltenham Local Plan. An appeal by the developer against non-determination was nearing its conclusion at the end of the year.
- We saw a significant growth in planning applications for solar arrays in the Severn Vale in Stroud District and Tewkesbury Borough. Two of the proposals were for 49.9MW arrays with associated 49.9MW of battery storage, just under the scale of project which would need to be

determined as a national infrastructure project. Much was made in these applications about biodiversity net-gain. The solar array at Longney was allowed after minor alterations to the layout. Three more applications for solar arrays in the Stroud District were yet to be determined at the end of the year.

- Quarrying proposals in the North Cotswolds raised a range of significant issues, including the cumulative adverse effects of quarry ‘clusters’ and ‘purpose drift’ whereby building stone quarries switch emphasis to ancillary production of aggregates or agricultural lime. Planning decisions on two key quarry proposals (Guiting and Oathill) were not resolved and the parish councils affected formed an action group to pursue their concerns with elected councillors and to press for full environmental impact assessments.
- A major issue for our South Cotswolds and Tetbury District is a proposal for an HGV Truck Stop just off the A417 north of Cirencester in a relatively isolated location. We opposed the development as it would have a significant adverse impact on landscape character, and ‘exceptional circumstances’ have not been demonstrated.
- In the Forest of Dean we objected to a “Permission in Principle” planning application for the erection of between five and eight residential dwellings and associated highway access for land west of Upper Soudley. Our concerns were landscape impact, the land being in the Forest of Dean Statutory Forest, that it would be development in open countryside, and it would amount to unsustainable development. The application was refused. The proposed extension of Stowe Hill quarry remains unresolved and is subject to long term hydro-geological monitoring regarding potential adverse effects on a nearby SSSI. Monitoring equipment has been vandalised on more than one occasion.

Working with others

Activity has included:

- We maintained our strong links with both CPRE national and with the CPRE Southwest (SW) Regional Group.
- At CPRE national, Simon Murray, Chair of our Forest of Dean District group continued in his role as Chair of the national trustees. Patricia Broadfoot, Gloucestershire Chair is also a national trustee.
- Throughout the year we input into the process of producing ‘OneCPRE’ responses to Government consultations helping to ensure a consensus across the CPRE network.
- We contributed to the work of the SW Regional Group, sharing best practice and helping to develop a regional view on key issues across the southwest.
- In Gloucestershire, we continued to contribute to the activities of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) where Richard Lloyd is a Board member of the LNP.
- Our tree planting grant scheme, jointly with the Cotswolds Conservation Board to address the impact of ash dieback, continued for a further year.
- We were pleased to develop a new partnership with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group to plant hedges (more detail is included under campaigns).
- Two successful planning seminars were run during the year for Parish and Town Councils. Their purpose was to provide councillors and clerks with an up-to-date guide to the planning system and how it operates. Each ran over two days, and they were well received.

Branch Organisation

At the 2020 AGM it was unanimously agreed that CPRE Gloucestershire should move from an unincorporated body to that of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The work to effect the change was completed during 2021 and the CIO is now in place.

The Board of Trustees met five times during the year. The Board was supported by a Policy Sub-Committee. A separate group, with independent judges, manages the CPRE Gloucestershire Awards.

With Covid restrictions still in place, the office remained closed for most of the year, but our part-time staff – Louise Williams (Director), Lesley Painter (Marketing & Communications Officer) and Indianna Knight (Administrator) successfully maintained our operations working from home. At the end of the year, we were sad to say farewell both to our Director and our Marketing and Communications Officer. These vacancies have given us the opportunity to review our staffing structure.

During the year we were pleased to welcome Gill Raikes as our fundraising consultant. Gill, former Director of Fundraising for the National Trust and recently retired as Chief Executive of the Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals Charity, has been busy organising successful fundraising events for us, despite the limitations of Covid, and helping us to raise funds from charities and foundations to support our vital work.

Our six District groups continue to focus on the important work of local campaigning and particularly planning casework. Our thanks go to our District Chairs and their committees – Prue Vernon, Berkeley Vale; David Bayne, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury; Simon Murray, Forest of Dean; Stephen Smith, North Cotswolds; Max Thorneycroft, South Cotswolds and Tetbury; and Elisabeth Skinner, Stroud.





Our Awards

In 2021, the fourteenth year of our annual awards, five projects were recognised for the outstanding benefits they have brought to Gloucestershire's environment, people and local communities. The Awards were presented by our President, Charles Martell, at a ceremony in November at the Gambier Parry Hall in Highnam. The five projects were:



Leaf & Ground

A former garden centre has been transformed into an outstanding visitor destination incorporating a new garden centre, shop, delicatessen and café, extensive trails over 20 acres, a children's play area and 32 allotments for the local community



Llanthony Secunda Priory Re-formation

The remains of this former Augustinian Priory with its listed buildings have been sensitively restored and the surrounding grounds landscaped including a re-imagining of a medieval physic garden.



Ozleworth Park Estate Environmental Land Management

Demonstrating that farming and conservation can go hand in hand, drystone walls have been restored, new hedgerows, areas of woodland and ponds created, limestone grassland enhanced and measures introduced to support pollinators and farmland birds.



Reintroduction of the Large Blue Butterfly to Rodborough Common

Dedicated research into its habitat requirements and partnership working between the National Trust, commoners and statutory and voluntary organisations has enabled the largest single re-introduction in England so far of this iconic butterfly.



Robinswood Hill Welcome and Visitor Centre

With sustainability at its heart, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's HQ has been transformed, creating better offices and a multiuse community space and café, enabling more visitors to enjoy the hill, and an expanded events and education programme benefitting young people and school groups.

CPRE Gloucestershire Summarised Statement of Financial Activities for the Year ended 31st December 2021

	2021	2020	
Income			
Share of National Subscriptions	22,424	22,159	
Investment Income & Interest	4,197	4,101	
Donations & Miscellaneous	10,314	7,486	
	<u>36,935</u>	<u>33,746</u>	
Expenditure			
Director & Staff Costs	38,119	34,468	
Recruitment & Training	595	2,400	
Postage & Telephone	1,366	576	
Office & I.T Costs	2,824	5,689	
Office Rent	4,045	3,467	
Publicity & Fund-Raising	3,917	1,257	
Publishing	2,101	3,465	
Reporting Accountant	690	672	
Professional Charges	1,794	2,994	
Insurance	541	864	
Travel & Meetings	774	1,040	
Awards Scheme	1,291	1,940	
Merchandise	1,170	0	
Subscriptions	191	91	
Bank Charges & Interest	232	96	
Planning Consultancy	100	1,225	
Partnerships & Projects	3,926	2,500	62,744
Deficit for the Year		(26,741)	(28,998)
Gain/(Loss) on Investments		23,164	(23,394)
General Fund brought forward		31,210	83,602
General Fund carried forward		<u>27,633</u>	<u>31,210</u>
Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2021			
Assets			
Investments	276,913	283,749	
Bank Accounts	22,000	350	
Debtors	4,998	5,131	
	<u>303,911</u>	<u>289,230</u>	
<i>less</i> Current Liabilities	(36,278)	(18,020)	
	<u>303,911</u>	<u>271,210</u>	
Financed by			
General Fund	27,633	31,210	
Fighting Fund	100,000	100,000	
Partnership Fund	50,000	50,000	
Development Fund	50,000	50,000	
Districts Fund	30,000	30,000	
Training Fund	10,000	10,000	
	<u>267,633</u>	<u>271,210</u>	

Hon Treasurer's Report

Our results for 2021 were very similar to those for the previous year, with the Deficit down just £2,000. Expenditure was marginally higher, but this was offset by greater success with fund-raising.

Of greater significance is that the fall in the value of our investments in 2020 due to the effects of the pandemic was almost entirely recovered. The overall outcome was a decrease in the General Fund of only £3,577, and that after having realised £30,000 from investments to support our ongoing activities.

Julian Oxley
Hon Treasurer

Our Trustees

The following trustees were elected at the AGM in November 2021.

Professor Patricia Broadfoot CBE (Chair)
David Brooke (Vice Chair)
Bob Brown
Miranda Chalk
David Crofts
Colin Evers
Julian Oxley (Treasurer)
Ashley Smith
Stephen Smith
Richard Lloyd MBE
was elected as a Vice Chair but is not a trustee.

In furthering the work of the charity the trustees are guided by the advice of the Charity Commission.

Our President and Vice-Presidents

Also, at the AGM
Charles Martell was re-elected as President.
The Earl of Harrowby,
Professor Adrian Phillips CBE,
the Earl of Wemyss and March, and
Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE
were re-elected as Vice-Presidents.
Sir John Adye KCMG had not sought re-election.
Thanks were expressed for his long and distinguished contribution to CPRE.



Our objects

The Objects of CPRE Gloucestershire are the promotion and encouragement, for the benefit of the public, of the protection and enhancement of rural Gloucestershire and its towns and villages

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