

OUTLOOK



The countryside charity
Northamptonshire

November 2022

Photograph looking west from Aynho courtesy of Peter Hopkins

The newsletter of
CPRE Northamptonshire
www.cprenorthants.org.uk

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. *Burning the Brash at Daventry Country Park*
2. *The Quick Buck*
3. *AONB Progress*
4. *At last ... a non-Zoom Planning Roadshow: Planning Update for North Northamptonshire*
5. *Town and Country Awards: 50/50*
6. *Warehouse Hell - the current state of affairs: Branch Out With the Tree Council*

Burning the Brash at Daventry Country Park

- Robin Jones

Avoiding the word *crisis* these days is nigh on impossible – cost of living, mortgage interest, NHS, war in Ukraine and so it goes on. Spending a few hours at Daventry Country Park, as we did recently, was a welcome, if only temporary, escape from these, but even there the elephant in the room, the one that won't go away any time soon, the Climate Crisis, was impossible to avoid. The reservoir water levels are extremely low and causing concern to the Canal & River Trust which pipes water from the reservoir to the Grand Union Canal to

coppice willows. Park Ranger Alan was keen to clear an area of the bank to encourage the growth of ground cover in the resulting wetland. He hopes this will attract snipe, warblers and other species. Our partners were there on a quest for raw material vital to hedge laying. Provided they are long and flexible enough, the branches of coppiced willow make ideal bindings between the stakes supporting newly laid hedges. Our task was to coppice the willows, sort and trim the coppiced branches, and burn the brash, a new word to us. Brash covers



make sure it remains navigable. In its own small way, we hope our sponsorship of the planting and regeneration of hedgerows will help. We can but try.

We were in the Country Park to help two of our Hedgerow Heroes partners, the C&RT and Brackley Town Council, to

anything coppiced for which we had no use. It burned remarkably well considering how damp it was. It's too early to coppice hazels for their stakes right now but next month we hope to help with that.

By the end of October the C&RT hopes to

have completed the small nursery at Stoke Bruerne that we are sponsoring and expects to begin using it early in 2023. Training volunteers in the art of hedge laying begins in November. Hedgerow regeneration, a mixture of gapping-up and laying, will start in the same month at Stoke Bruerne, Crick and Winwick.

Brackley Town Council also plans to begin planting and regeneration in November. Operations Manager Mark Stopps thinks that hedge laying will be a little delayed because of the strange weather we have had over the last months but expects the sponsored work to be completed early next year. He was particularly pleased that Brackley had been selected to receive one of the trees making up Buckingham Palace's Tree of Trees, created to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

We hope very soon to be making the first payments from the sponsorship money received from National CPRE. It's currently earning an almost respectable rate of interest at our bank but that is very much not the object of the exercise!

[Does learning to lay hedges appeal? Email catherine.west@canalrivertrust.org.uk to find out more.](mailto:catherine.west@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

The Quick Buck

- Geoff Carverhill

The saying, “a week in politics is a long time” could, in the light of the recent events in government, be reworded “a day in politics ...” Within weeks of Boris Johnson being dethroned and Liz Truss taking office as the new prime minister, and then resigning just forty-four days later, CPRE was having to face up to new battles for rural communities and the countryside.

How short-termism and corporate greed are destroying the countryside, nature and rural life

Two days after Ms Truss had been confirmed as the new PM, she announced that she would end the moratorium on fracking, enabling developers to seek planning permission to drill for shale gas. CPRE, in conjunction with 38 Degrees, immediately started a campaign for the decision to be reversed, which was well on its way to 76,000 signatures by the time the next announcement came on 21 October that the planning deregulation proposals which had been shelved by the government under Boris Johnson were to be re-introduced. CPRE had been at the forefront of persuading the government that this was a wholly undemocratic proposal, which in essence would strip away the protection of the planning system from the countryside by creating ‘investment zones’. If any further planning deregulation does now get implemented, developers will be given free rein to industrialise our countryside, changing the face of rural England for generations to come.



Towcester Watermeadows is on the opposite side of the road and less than half a mile away from a proposed mega warehouse development at Tiffield, South Northamptonshire.

Tom Fyans, Interim CEO of CPRE, commented: “Investment zones are deregulation on steroids... and it will not end well for the countryside or our rural communities”.

CPRE Northamptonshire is fighting its own local battles and continues to try to show North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils that enough is enough in terms of inappropriate developments, such as the mega warehouse developments that are in planning officers’ in-trays at the moment. But until the toxic relationship that exists between government and corporate business is either severed or dramatically reduced, the fight for survival for rural communities and the countryside will remain. There are too many examples of shareholder profit and developer greed taking precedence over respect for nature, the countryside, green belt or the rural economy. In the City’s eyes, corporate profit comes first; everything else comes a long way behind.

How do they get away with it?

The biggest threat facing the sustainability of rural Northamptonshire currently comes from the inappropriate siting of warehouse logistics developments, such as those planned for Towcester and sites near Thrapston, in the east of the county, adjacent to the picturesque village of Titchmarsh.



The idyllic landscape and this view at the picturesque village of Titchmarsh will be ruined if warehouse developments get the go-ahead.

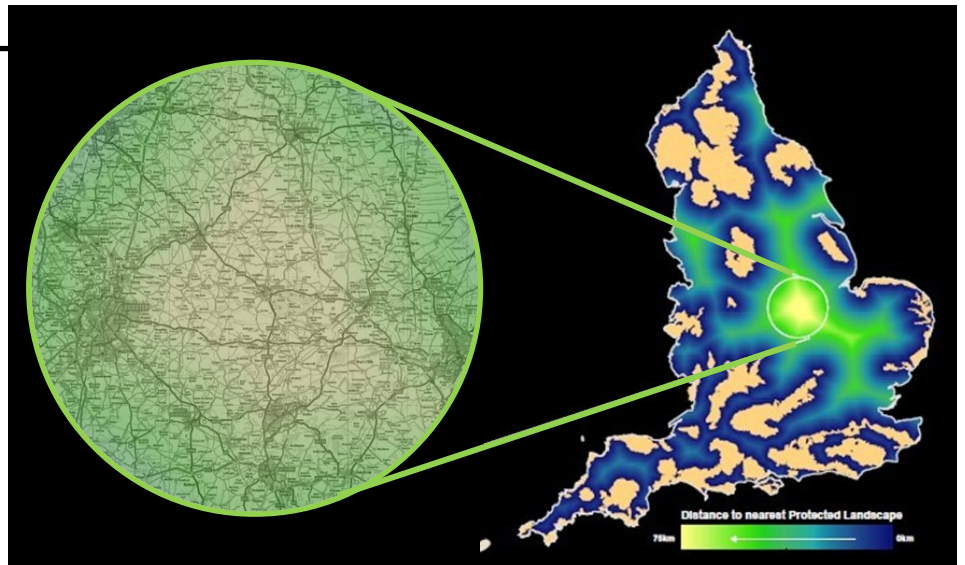
From a logistics industry perspective, Northamptonshire is in ‘the golden triangle’ in terms of access to major roads and a centrally located position for nationwide distribution. A call for sites to be made available for potential development will be made by government to local authority planning departments, which is backed by spurious figures from land agents, consultancies and the Office for National Statistics. Once the call by the local authority is put out, owners will offer up their land for sale for prospective development and the vested interests of landowners and developers. Fortunately for Northamptonshire, there are still plenty of farmers and landowners in the county who have a respect for the land they are custodians of and the heritage that goes with that responsibility. There are also landowners who will take the money without thinking and caring about the long-term

AONB Progress

- Brian Skittrall

Carew Treffgarne and Brian Skittrall, who are leading the AONB project, recently had a Zoom meeting with Emma Marrington of National CPRE. She gave them an overview of the AONB process and copies of campaign cases from two other CPRE branches. The meeting confirmed our expectation that it is likely to take around 5 years if we are successful. Closer examination of the two campaign cases led Brian to think that we could make a stronger case by ensuring that our application adhered more closely to the AONB criteria.

Emma also shared a graphic showing the distances to a nationally protected



landscape within England. Northamptonshire lies within the area with least accessibility which can only help our case.

Carew also hosted another meeting of interested parish councils within our target area. We were joined by Sharn Matthews from the Nene Rivers Trust and Nenescape. We learnt that there is

a lot of synergy between our organisations and she has good connections that can only be to our advantage. We hope that the relationship will develop into a partnership for the AONB project since both are centred on the Nene catchment. We will have to see how the relationship develops but at the very least they will be a powerful ally.

< Page 2

consequences of their action. They will be supported by consultancies such as Barton Willmore, which has, as one of its unique selling points, proven success in enabling strategic planning and promotion of land in the green belt and in winning green belt appeals. They are aided and abetted by the Land Promoters and Developers Federation and the United Kingdom Warehousing Association, which represent the logistics industry. The interests of these organisations are underpinned by central government, who has its own mandate for the logistics industry. In June 2022, the government issued its 'The Future of Freight' plan. Following the announcement, the logistics industry's own newsletter 'Logistics UK' stated,



Increasingly, signs like these have started cropping up all around Northamptonshire.

"The publication of the Future of Freight plan is a positive step forward for industry; it reaffirms government's vital support of one of the largest sectors of the UK economy and helps to provide clarity for logistics businesses moving forward.

"The inclusion of £7 million investment to boost the uptake of innovative new technologies and the development of a National Freight Network is particularly welcome. The government is also right to focus on planning rules to reduce barriers to building new logistics developments"

Apart from destroying rural infrastructure and removing decision making from rural communities, plans to allow massive road distribution networks fly in the face of any climate change policies the government has, which may as well be torn up and thrown away.

Planning policy is currently inadequate and planning case officers are struggling to defend it against unfair and inappropriate developments being imposed on rural communities. As well as regulating the commercial and industrial sector, local authorities need to be given the right to set stronger policies to regulate for more affordable housing and energy efficient houses and against house building speculators seeking to increase profits with greenfield building schemes.

As of 27 October, new PM Rishi Sunak has re-instated the moratorium on fracking, but planning deregulation is still high on his new agenda. If further planning deregulation is allowed, it may offer short-term gain for the corporate land-grabbers, but it will also most certainly end in the long-term destruction of rural England that will not be easy to fix.

At last ... a non-Zoom Planning Roadshow!

- Alan Mayes

The first live Planning Roadshow since lockdown took place on 13 October at Wadenhoe Village Hall with about 30 attendees representing parish councils from across North Northamptonshire. The speakers from North Northamptonshire Council were Cllr. David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration and Chair of the Planning Policy Committee, and Simon Richardson, a Strategic Planner. We were very fortunate to have both an elected member and a planning officer to talk about planning in the new unitary authority.

Our speakers pointed out that over 10 years ago a Joint Core Strategy was approved for North Northamptonshire under



the old county structure and that North Northamptonshire Council was continuing with the strategic policies contained in Part 1 of the JCS when setting growth figures and

allocating strategic sites. Strategic policies then feed down to the Part 2 Local Plan level. Parish councils were encouraged to engage with both the Part 1 Core Spatial Strategy consultations and the Part 2 Local Plan consultations as they occur because it is too late to object to a planning application if a policy that allows it was included in an adopted plan. Consultation for the new Core Spatial Strategy has already taken place this year.

The speakers highlighted future changes that could impact the planning system, including possible changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which all planning documents must conform to, the impact of the Environment Act and a desire by central government to simplify the planning process.

Our speakers also gave guidance on responding to planning applications, emphasising that these should always relate to material considerations and relate back to policies either in the NPPF, Core Strategy, Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, if one is in place. Other site-specific areas which were discussed by the speakers included the proposed Tresham Garden Village near Corby, Kettering Energy Park and the Ise Valley Strategic Plan.

The speakers encouraged questions during their presentation and a lively and constructive debate took place during the evening. That the Roadshow lasted almost two and a half hours speaks volumes for the level of interest it generated.

Our grateful thanks to our speakers for a fact filled and enjoyable evening. Their openness and honesty were refreshing and it was pleasing to hear Simon noting the similarity between the aims of CPRE and those of the Council.

If you would like slides of the presentation, please email your request to info@cprenorthants.org.uk.

There are several planning applications in the pipeline that are of concern to CPRE Northamptonshire because of their potential detrimental effects on the landscape.

STAUNCH (Save Titchmarsh, Thrapston and the Upper Nene Valley Countryside & Habitats). CPRE Northamptonshire has submitted objections to both proposals and is leading a group of local parish councils who would like the Upper Nene Valley to be designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

of the year.

Sadly, the application for B8 warehousing at Weekley Hall Woods to the north of Kettering was granted permission despite much public concern. The site was allocated for employment use over 10 years ago when the Joint Core Strategy was approved and represents a case where greater public pressure should have been exerted at the time the JCS was being developed.

Planning Update for North Northamptonshire - Alan Mayes

The two planning applications for B8 warehouse development at Titchmarsh - Castle Manor Farm (175 acres) and the Glebe Land site (114 acres) - are due to be considered by North Northamptonshire Council in November. A former Chief Planning Officer, Paul Bland, is helping the Council review all the supporting documentation. A lively campaign against both developments is underway from

The countryside surrounding the Titchmarsh conservation area is also threatened by Elgin Energy's proposal for a solar farm on land owned by the Merchant Venturers at Titchmarsh Lodge. This 154 acre site would be the fifth largest solar farm in the UK.

The outcome of the application for a chicken farm in open countryside to the south of Rushden is still awaited. A determination is expected before the end

Finally, an application for Listed Building Consent has been submitted for Lilford Hall. This is designed to address urgent roof repairs and internal restoration work to assist the process of making the Hall into a family residence, which will hopefully remove its listing from English Heritage's At Risk register for Northamptonshire.

On 27 October, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery saw more than 60 distinguished guests, members and friends of CPRE Northamptonshire gather for the presentation of 2021's Town & Country Awards. The setting was superb, amply demonstrating why the Museum was one

perspective to the evening as he explained how they employed young people with learning difficulties with the aim of enabling them to move on to paid jobs – five already this year!

And the winners were.....

for many years. The site was an awkward one and could easily have remained wasteland. Instead, the developer, Cunnington Ltd, has built an attractive group of houses at the edge of the village, even managing to incorporate a local business at the far end of the site.

Northampton Museum and Art Gallery:

After an extensive expansion and redevelopment programme lasting several years, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery is once again open to the public. It has more than doubled in size and is now linked to the adjacent former gaol building by a nine-metre-high glazed atrium. The atrium includes a café and spacious outside terrace. Innovative design and imaginative reuse of redundant floorspace are particularly impressive. The new Shoe Gallery reminds us of the town's shoemaking heritage.

Coles Close, Little Harrowden:

A former agricultural site and grain store, Coles Close is a small residential development at the edge of the village, a mixture of housing types with the houses at the interface with open countryside designed to display the vernacular characteristics of farm buildings. CPRE is keen to encourage small, sustainable rural developments like this one by Seagrave Developments that reuse redundant sites and integrate well with their surroundings.

Chester House Estate, Irchester:

Northamptonshire County Council acquired this complex of 17th and 18th century farm buildings in 2004 and, despite a serious fire in 2010, has made an excellent job of developing the heritage potential of the house, farm buildings and adjacent archaeological site. The buildings now provide visitor facilities including a café and shops; sympathetic new additions include an events venue and museum. Chester House Estate is now owned by North Northamptonshire Council.

Pullman Close, Rushton:

Previously a railway siding, Pullman Close is an excellent example of the brownfield development CPRE has been championing

Town and Country Awards

- Robin Jones

of 2021's winners. Speeches from David Laing, President of CPRE Northamptonshire, and Lord- Lieutenant, James Saunders Watson, extolled the many virtues of our often unsung county. James Saunders Watson presented engraved brass plaques to the winners.

The evening went well with ample opportunity for people to mingle while enjoying a glass (or two) of champagne and canapes. In a large side room images of the entrants beamed onto a wall illustrated in more detail what prompted the judges to select the winners.

Jack Pishorn of Chester House Estate closed the event with their story, one bedevilled with problems, happily surmounted, ranging from a serious fire to the bankruptcy of a contractor. He lent



2nd Quarter Draw

- First Prize £60: Jean Howell, East Haddon
- Second Prize £50: Peter Kerruish, Apethorpe
- Third Prize £40: Susan Stevens, Thrapston



3rd Quarter Draw

- First Prize £60: Carew Treffgarne, Pilton
- Second Prize £40: Peter Jordan, Crick
- Third Prize £40: Andrew Powles, Orlingbury

Warehouse Hell

- the current state of affairs

- Geoff Carverhill

The major rail freight interchange logistics site on the M1 at junction 15 has grown out of all reasonable proportion since it was given planning permission in 2019. The development, in which nearly 13 million square feet of forestry and agricultural land have been lost, was given national strategic status by the government, thereby circumventing the usual scrutiny by local planning officers, because the scheme had a rail freight interchange facility.

Conditions applied to the development, upon permission being granted, included provision for a rail access to be finished prior to any road access continuing. The applicant has now requested that road access for goods vehicles be considered before the rail freight interchange is completed!

Some of the main objections to the development came from the villages of Blisworth and Milton Malsor, Collingtree and Roade, due to their close proximity, and now Blisworth and Milton Malsor are facing another fight. An application has been put forward by developers Kalvec for planning permission to redevelop a site on land to the north of Blisworth on Northampton Road in between the two villages. Part of the site is brownfield, that's the good news, but there is a greenfield proportion to the site. The proposal is for commercial logistics units of up to 182,000 square feet of floorspace, comprising B2 and B8 warehousing rising to 18 metres in height. The site is not an allocated site, so is not within the scope of the Local Plan or Core Strategy, but the principal objection is the perennial problem of traffic access. The proposal estimates 1,350 vehicle movements a day, an increase of over 40 percent on the highest historic levels.

Whilst CPRE is supportive of any redevelopment of brownfield sites, these over ambitious plans by Kalvec are not supported

by CPRE and will impact negatively on both Blisworth and Milton Malsor.

Meanwhile, the Save Towcester Now campaign support group awaits the outcome of the West Northamptonshire Council's Supplementary Planning Document, which was debated by the Planning Policy Committee on 25 October. The SPD was issued to provide planning guidance for the future allocation and specification of 'Employment Allocation' sites in South Northamptonshire, specifically Towcester. Details of the submission by CPRE Northamptonshire together with a report on the Planning Policy Committee can be found on our website www.cprenorthants.org.uk



The plan of the proposed development at Northampton Road, Blisworth by developer Kalvec

The Tree Council is currently offering grants from its Branching Out Fund of between £200 and £2,000 to support tree, hedgerow and orchard planting projects run by schools, community groups, parish and town councils and Tree Warden Networks.

To qualify, projects must have a strong community involvement – projects engaging children and young people up to the age of 21 are especially welcome. They should also enhance local wildlife and biodiversity.

If you would like to learn more about this initiative or obtain an application form, go to the Tree Council's website at www.treecouncil.org.uk.

Please pass on this good news to any organisation you think might qualify. To contact the Tree Council, call 020 7407 9992 or email info@treecouncil.org.uk. The closing date for applications is Sunday 4 December, the end of National Tree Week.

Good luck!

**Branch
Out With
the Tree
Council**