

# OUTLOOK

Autumn 2023

The newsletter of  
CPRE Northamptonshire



The countryside charity  
Northamptonshire

## Chairman's Update

- Geoff Carverhill

Since becoming chairman of CPRE Northamptonshire in June this year I have been made aware of the many aspects the job entails and of my responsibility, not only to our membership, but to our trustees, in trying to achieve good outcomes for the Northamptonshire countryside.

Before accepting the position, with those all too present challenges and responsibilities, I spent a good year or so as a trustee. This enabled me to get to know other trustees, planning technical secretaries and to meet other members. It didn't take long for me to realise that CPRE Northamptonshire has a lot to offer in terms of dedication, knowledge and expertise. More and more individual members and organisations such as parish councils are turning to CPRE to ask questions concerning the countryside and their rural environment, especially with regard to planning, and I feel confident that we have the knowledge and expertise to answer those questions. However, we are few in number and need more volunteers to take some of the pressure off trustees and current volunteers, so we have commenced a volunteer and trustee recruitment drive, which was started by Robin Jones, our treasurer and secretary, in the previous issue of Outlook.

When I came to live in Northampton 43 years ago, I was struck by the beautiful rolling countryside that hitherto had not been discovered by other 'outsiders'. As a keen cyclist I very quickly started to appreciate the quiet country lanes that ran alongside farmland, hedgerows and woodland that make up the rural parts of the county. To have this right on my doorstep was a luxury I had never experienced and one that I came to value very quickly.

But, forty years on, a lot has changed – not all of it for the better. Opportunities to appreciate the countryside are being eroded by continued inappropriate development, which has permanently changed the landscape of the county.

If we at CPRE Northamptonshire can help to enable sustainable and appropriate development that benefits the county and its inhabitants, as well as continuing to enhance the many other aspects that make up our unique countryside, I think we will start to earn our stripes as a positive advocate for Northamptonshire.

It's a hard ask, but I'm confident we're up to it.

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[www.cprenorthants.org.uk](http://www.cprenorthants.org.uk)

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Photograph  
courtesy of Andrew Carter

## Weekley Hall Wood Under Threat

- Alan Mayes

The proposal to develop the area known as Weekley Hall Wood to the north of Kettering has raised greater public awareness of the impact of development on the countryside in north Northamptonshire than any other threat for some years. Weekley Hall Wood has long been enjoyed by residents of Kettering as an area of recreation and it also supports significant wildlife habitats. The planning application submitted in 2020 to develop the area has resulted in a major campaign to stop the proposal which now, because of the local authority's non-determination of the application, is due to be the subject of a Public Inquiry starting in November. Then both the applicant's and the campaigners' views will be considered by a Planning Inspector.

To fully understand this situation it is necessary to step back ten years or so to the public consultation for the North

development as set out in Policy 36 of the Joint Core Strategy which states that the site should provide B1, B2 and small scale B8 employment uses. Sadly, the majority of the application is made up of B8 units (warehousing) with only a small part of the allocation being B2. Consequently, the proposals are dominated by large warehouses with proposed heights of between 12 and 17 metres. No actual leisure uses appear to be specified, although these are referred to in the policy make-up.

No significant mitigation is offered at the site as part of the proposals to replace the loss of habitats and access to the countryside. The consequence is very dominant buildings which will impact upon the adjacent countryside even with the retained woodland. Structures of this scale cannot easily be integrated into the adjacent countryside. A level of mitigation is

Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, at which Weekley Hall Wood was considered and approved as an employment site. As such there is a presumption in favour of some form of

proposed off-site by the creation of new woodland and new habitats, but this does not compensate for the destruction of established woodlands that could have been preserved by a different scale of development.

All of the above concerns have been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by CPRE Northamptonshire, in the hope that the application will be refused as



not fulfilling the criteria of the original policy in the Joint Core Strategy.

Since this application was submitted, CPRE Northamptonshire has become increasingly concerned at the number of applications for use class B8 (warehousing) across the whole of both North and West Northamptonshire. The justification for these levels of B8 concentration we consider to be highly questionable.

## Call of the Kingfisher - by Nick Penny, Bradt £9.99

This book is described as "an enchanting love letter to a stretch of river and all things that live there". It is a deeply personal insight into the wildlife along the Nene.

Nick Penny is a wildlife sound recordist, musician and composer and his attention to detail is apparent in his painstaking study of nightingales and their song on the Nene near

Oundle. This close association with wildlife on the Nene led Nick to want to learn more, so he set out to walk the river path and write about his observations.

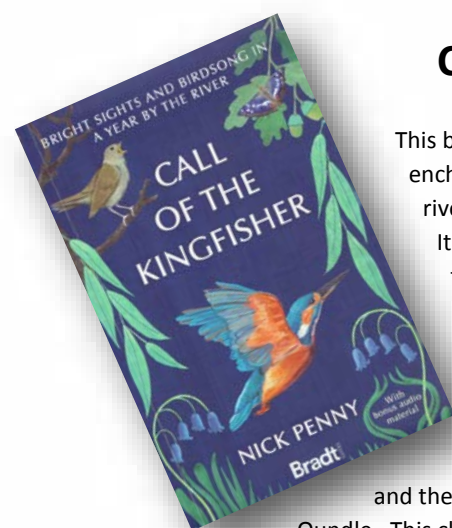
His book, set out in the form of a diary over a period of a year,

contains a personal insight, not just of the Nene wildlife, but of aspects of local history and the surrounding landscape. Nick also pays homage to naturalists who lived nearby, such as Denys Watkins-Pitchford – a.k.a. 'BB'.

Although there are no photographs or illustrations to accompany the nature narrative, the addition of audio soundbites made by Nick, accessed by the reader via a QR code, makes the book unique. Each page where a sound clip augments the words is indicated by a speaker icon, numbered individually for easy access.

This is Nick Penny's debut wildlife book, but his way of telling tales of his riverbank is an incentive to all of us to appreciate what we have, especially when it's on our doorstep.

- Geoff Carverhill





Back in March we let you know the winners of 2022's Community Awards and finally on Friday 27 October they were presented with their plaques at a very pleasant evening held at The Old School Hall, Yardley Hastings, home of Yardley Arts. Space was limited making it impossible to invite all our members.

Apart from the judges, barely anyone knew much about the winners. That they were organisations making valuable contributions to the life of their various communities was not in doubt, but this was our first opportunity to meet the people who helped start them up and keep them going.

First up were Adam Perrins-May and Charles Matts from the overall winner, Creaton Village Shop & Post Office. Adam, an impressive and enthusiastic young man, combines managing the shop with a one day a week course in business management at Northampton University. Chairman Charles Matts went on to tell us how a group of villagers raised £50,000 and with that and various grants established a shop on land generously leased at a peppercorn rent. It continues to thrive.

Next came Dave Askew from Northamptonshire Walks, founded by Dave himself, and providing a website for all those interested in walking. And it all began with Dave's wife persuading him to go to the doctor for a routine check-up. One frighteningly high blood pressure result was enough to convince him that a lifestyle change was unavoidable. Many people now enjoy healthy walks in town and country thanks to that lifestyle change.

The last presentation was to our hosts, Yardley Arts. Artist and Programme Manager, Polly Parrish, and fellow director, Richard Artus, told us the story of Yardley Arts from its beginnings in

## Presentation of Community Awards

- Robin Jones



2017 as a not-for-profit organisation, set up to promote and support the arts. We learned that not so many years ago The Old School Hall, had been pretty well derelict with a goodly portion of its roof missing. Thanks to the Compton Estate, Yardley Arts now occupy a comfortable space well-suited to their requirements.

The awards were presented by Deputy Lieutenant, Dominic Goble, who showed genuine interest in what the prize-winners had achieved and injected humour into what was a very enjoyable evening.

## Reflections – What Wildlife Needs and How to Provide It

- by Mark Avery, Pelagic Publishing £20

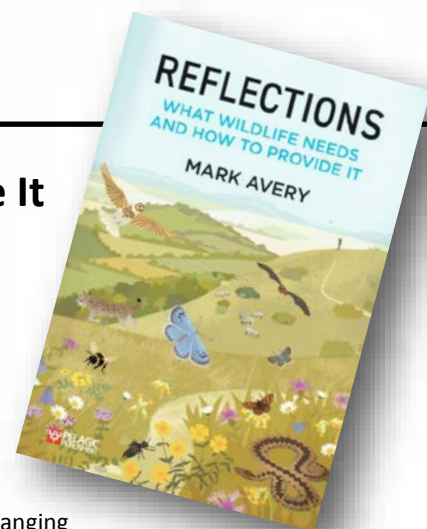
Mark Avery has spent nearly forty years in conservation - 25 as an executive with the RSPB and thereafter as a freelance nature and wildlife writer and conservationist. He is co-founder, along with broadcaster Chris Packham and Dr Ruth Tingay, of the campaigning organisation 'Wild Justice'. Chris Packham's enthusiasm for Avery's book is unquenchable: 'If I were king for a day, Avery would instantly be installed as the benign dictator of conservation in the UK. If you love wildlife, read this, think about this, and act upon this.'

Avery gently introduces us to his own wildlife experiences in his home town of Raunds, at present still rural Northamptonshire. Waiting at a local garage for a verdict on his car, he notices a peregrine on the church spire. Falcons and red kites are both considered conservation successes, but not so the spotted flycatcher whose loss Avery laments: 'I can see them in my

mind's eye very clearly, just no longer in reality'. He examines why flycatchers have gone and offers some answers to combat further decline. He analyses, pulling no punches, reasons why our wildlife landscape is changing and why we need to act now to avoid irreversible changes in the wildlife profile of Britain.

Avery leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to where the responsibility for a wildlife renaissance lies: 'Wildlife decline is a problem caused by our society and the achievement of a wildlife recovery will have to be a shared achievement'.

- Geoff Carverhill



Part of the planning process allows for direct public presentation to committees as they make their final decision as to whether to approve or reject a planning application. This is a significant part of

There is also a risk that your slot will be withdrawn at the very last minute.

At your agenda item the Case Officer will speak first. Their job is to talk the members (the elected councillors who make up the committee) through the main points of the application. A document will be attached to the agenda which the planning officials will have produced which pulls

I recommend that you look very carefully at the section of the Case Officer's report that deals with 'Balance of Planning'. Properly done this is key to the recommendation. However, WNC have a stated policy of working proactively with the developer. A weak Case Officer will simply give in to the developer's demands and bypass public opinion. This gives you the opportunity to use your direct area knowledge to 'reset' the balance.

Once you have your thoughts in order, write them down exactly as you want to say them. Do not try to say too much. As a guide, any more than 110 words per minute is difficult for any audience to follow and any more than three points gets confusing. Once in your seat make sure your microphone is working (push the button and a red light comes on) and move the microphone so it is in front of

## Speak Up!

- Graham Ferrie

open government and in this article, I explore what happens 'on the day' and how you should approach the event if you are the presenter.

Not all planning applications go to public committee. Most are dealt with by the planning departments themselves and follow strict guidelines. Others, usually the more significant or contentious, go to the Strategic Planning Committee and others get dealt with by sub-committees which work on a regional basis. Both WNC and NNC work like this, with some slight differences but the overall idea is that the meetings are open to the public and nowadays are live-streamed onto dedicated YouTube channels.

The part of the process that I want to discuss here is the availability of a presentation slot, where an individual can take part in the decision process as it happens. Strict rules apply to ensure the smooth running of the meeting and a clear understanding of what these rules mean can enable you to use this presentation slot to really get your voice heard. The following steps will help you make the most of this very valuable feature of local planning.

It has to be assumed that if you are even thinking about presenting at a public meeting you are already on top of the details of the planning application. You will have studied all of the key documents and no doubt put in many hours of work. If you have got this far you are to be congratulated.

You need to apply for a presentation slot. Usually an email to 'Democratic Services' does the trick but your slot is not guaranteed. They need two working days' notice before the meeting. The final decision as to who presents is the Chairman's and a balance is looked for.

together all of the evidence, the results of the public consultation and presents the reasons why it should be approved (or rejected in rare cases).

Once the Case Officer is finished, the members will then ask questions. These can be very revealing and will indicate where they think the problems lie.



The public presentations then take place in order. You will be asked to take a seat at a desk in front of the Committee and you will be given five (sometimes only three, so check) minutes to say your piece. At the end of that time, you will be stopped. Stay in place because this is the members' opportunity to ask you questions. At the end of the questions, you will be asked to return to your seat.

The committee will then discuss the application and at some stage take a vote.

### **Preparation for your presentation**

Use the case officer's report to develop what you want to say. There is little point in simply repeating things that are already in the report. You should also find out if a site visit has been made which will give the members a feel for the local conditions.

your mouth. Being clearly heard is of utmost importance.

At the end of your piece, leave the microphone on and sit still. If you are asked questions, you are not timed so you may want to use this opportunity to go into more detail. One recent presenter answered questions for 20 minutes without challenge!

As you go back to your seat, take satisfaction that you have played your role. For local democracy to work our voice needs to be heard.

CPRE will help its members with this process if required. We can't promise to speak for you as we may have our own presentation slot to attend to. CPRE can be contacted on [info@cprenorthants.org.uk](mailto:info@cprenorthants.org.uk).

Good Luck!

## Village Hopper



For current fares please visit our website

[www.cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk](http://www.cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk)

A community, not for-profit bus service serving  
Wollaston, Bozeat, Easton Maudit, Grendon, Whiston, Cogenhoe, Brafield, Little Houghton, Great Houghton & Northampton (Wellingborough on Saturdays only)

Service provided by:  
Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council

email: [clerk@cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk)  
Enquiries 07512 045418

There is no service on Sundays or Public Holidays

1st September 2023

When the former Northamptonshire County Council announced that from 2018 onwards it would no longer be subsidising the bus service on which Cogenhoe and nearby villages

depended, residents could have been forgiven if they had just accepted the situation and somehow made do and mended. To their credit the local parish council were not prepared to let this happen.

Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council quickly formed a consortium of the seven parishes that the loss of this service would affect and, led by the council with the highest user numbers (Cogenhoe & Whiston), set about learning what would be needed to set up their own service as a replacement. A local door-to-door service run in a neighbouring town gave much help and advice and, when the service ended on the 21 July 2018, the Village Hopper took over on the 23<sup>rd</sup> despite the endless bureaucracies encountered on the way. It was a steep learning curve: permits, insurance, timetables, pricing structures, leases and employing drivers all had to be sorted in a short space of time. All of the parishes contributed financially to the set-up costs and so the Village Hopper was born!

There still remained the question – would it really get off the ground? Planning a community bus service is one thing but ultimately it is all about bottoms on seats.

It turned out that success was never in doubt and the 50,000th passenger is now in sight. The service is comprehensive with five

## The Village Hopper

- Deborah Rush and Robin Jones

round trips from Wollaston to Northampton on weekdays and four round trips from Wellingborough to Northampton on Saturdays. Monthly take-up is running at around 1,000 passengers, a mixture of schoolchildren, workers and shoppers. You can pay your fare in cash or by card, a term season ticket is available for schoolchildren, bus passes are accepted and the service participates in the DfT's £2 fare cap scheme.

The Village Hopper is a not-for-profit service. Its most recent financial year ended in a deficit of £7,000 which was made good with grants from a variety of organisations. Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council chair, Jon Bailey, stressed that the service would not be viable without the 4/5 hours a week involvement of Parish Clerk, Deborah Rush.

What a great story!

## 3rd Quarter Draw

First Prize £50: Sue Baylis

Second Prize £40: Ann Craske

Third Prize £30: Max Nicholls



After thirteen successful years we have decided to discontinue the 50/50 Draw. It is a surprisingly time-consuming operation and sadly we no longer have the volunteer resource to manage it. Would those of you with standing orders in place please take note.

Thank you for your generous support.



This case relates to overdevelopment in the A6 town of Irthlingborough, a run-of-the-mill urban environment with a central conservation area. Sadly, the town centre was ravaged by redevelopment in the 1960s. The former Co-op, an undistinguished building in the High Street, earlier this year gained approval for flats at the first floor and significant visual improvements externally. Looking to gain permission for yet more flats, a second application was made for the addition of an ugly mansard roof. This ploy is used

## Small-Scale Planning Victory

- Alan Mayes

by many developers who, having gained one approval, submit a further application on the coat tails of the first. Acceptable schemes can easily be spoiled by such overdevelopment.

The second application did not fully take account of the significant detrimental impact on the conservation area, nor of the lack of parking which would result in residents using an already inadequate cul-de-sac at the rear of the building to park their cars. Despite these failings, the scheme was recommended for approval. However, due to the large number of objections, including the Town Council, the matter was dealt with by the NNC Planning Committee. This enabled local residents (including those living in the cul-de-sac) and the Town Council to lobby members of the Planning Committee and speak at the Planning Meeting itself. This local action resulted in members of the Planning Committee fully understanding the detrimental impact of the proposal on the conservation area and also the full impact of the lack of parking on the residents living at the rear of the building. As a consequence, the development was refused and the recommendation to grant approval overturned.

Though a small victory in planning terms, this is an excellent example of local democracy in action.

## Lobbying Brings Some Progress on NDMPs

- National CPRE

October's vote in the House of Lords marked as far as CPRE can go to improving National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill.

NDMPs are a new type of national planning policy that cover how land is used in England. Until now, these policies could have been implemented without minimum guarantees on prior scrutiny. Thanks to the hard work of CPRE supporters, alongside the incredible efforts of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Better Planning Coalition, we were able to shift the government's approach to ensure the public is consulted on any new NDMP – unless in exceptional circumstances.



*Green Belt in Surrey*

Sadly, our final efforts to ensure parliament was able to consult on new NDMPs was thwarted in the House of Lords, despite the great work of Baroness Thornhill and peers across the House. However, verbal assurances were given that NDMPs will undergo Environmental Assessment (EA) and that only in the rarest of circumstances would a case be made for no consultation.

These wins, while small, are critical. NDMPs will cover so many of the things we care about, from Green Belt to affordable housing, flood risk and transport. As drafted, the Bill states that when national policy and local policy conflict, local plans will be overridden, and priority will be given to NDMPs. So, ensuring as much scrutiny as possible of these new policies has been of the utmost importance. NDMPs will return when the government consults on their scope, and we will be monitoring this process with a readiness to challenge.