

OUTLOOK

March 2023

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



The countryside charity
Northamptonshire

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Photograph of Harpole countryside courtesy of Suzanne Bowen

Residents Demonstrate to Save the Trees along Wellingborough Walks

Words and Photos - Geoff Carverhill



Councillors Turner-Hawes and Anslow lead protest

One of the items high on CPRE's campaign agenda recently has been climate change: helping create policies that help cut climate change while enabling sustainable development and growth. It's a tall order, but CPRE has been able to provide considerable input since 2018 to the government's National Planning and Policy Framework document.

Emphasis on combatting climate change through tree and hedgerow planting and

preservation have proven to be a worthy initiative. A section on CPRE's response to the 'England Tree Strategy' in September 2020 gave examples of the importance of not only the role of ancient trees, but of urban and street trees as a "key part of our green infrastructure and of growing importance for climate change adaptation such as for urban cooling".

News of a battle to save some trees from the developer's axe was flagged up on

Twitter by Wellingborough Eco group and concerned residents, including two CPRE members. A week-long struggle by the residents had begun on Monday 20 February to save trees that have been a landmark on the Wellingborough Embankment for more than a century. But, despite their best efforts, the local protesters had a setback on the Wednesday when contractors felled fourteen of the trees. During the protest, four people were arrested trying to prevent contractors from destroying the trees.

A petition to save the trees was instigated by local councillor Marion Turner-Hawes, which contained some compelling statistics concerning the value of these urban trees:

"To replace the CO₂ emission sequestration 'powers' of just one of these trees would require planting upwards of 300 saplings and only after about four or five years of growth would their CO₂ 'sink' powers reach the same capacity of just one of these trees today."

Despite having tree-preservation orders, the lime trees were felled by contractors working for construction company Vistry, formerly Bovis, who have been contracted to build a new dual carriageway connecting road from Wellingborough Embankment to the Stanton Cross development area. The

< Page 1 contractors claim that the tree-felling represented “essential works” and that the work entails “statutory undertaking”.

Protesters met again on the following Sunday evening to rally support for renewing the battle with contractors, as a further twenty-three lime trees were due to be cut down on the following day. At the meeting local town councillor and spokesperson, Marion Turner-Hawes addressed the protesters and commented that North Northamptonshire Council claim to be “powerless to prevent the contractors from felling trees...” and that “the leader of the council, Jason Smithers has commented that the situation is ‘out of their hands’”. Councillor Valerie Anslow added her concerns and support for the

until Monday 27, she commented “We have made a difference and shown that we care about where we live and will hold people to account”.

The protesters returned to Wellingborough at 8 am on Monday 27 and were able to prevent further trees being cut down. However, in order to succeed, an 84-year-old man was arrested by police and a barrister, who had been taken on by the protesters, had climbed one of the mature lime trees. It was at this point that North Northamptonshire Council urged the contractors to stop the tree felling, until Friday 3 March. Councillor Turner-Hawes later commented that “campaigners welcomed the temporary pause in felling for high-level behind-closed-doors talks, due to take place on



Protesters in front of threatened limes

protesters, as did members of the local Wellingborough Eco group and local vicar, Ben Lewis, of St Mark’s Church.

The protesters are questioning the legality of the tree-felling, as all 189 lime trees in the Wellingborough Walks area have Tree Preservation Orders. Additionally, due to the possibility of bats nesting in some of the trees, to cut them down would be breaking the law.

Marion Turner-Hawes, addressing the assembled crowd, went on to say that “there is no evidence to support whether trees need to be felled for the expansion work on the roundabout”. About their action during the week, which delayed further tree felling

Friday”.

For the time being, the trees are safe. Questions are being asked of the developer, through North Northamptonshire Council, regarding the legal basis of their work and about attempts to go ‘under the radar’ with potential controversial development activities.

These protests have now gained nationwide support, and a temporary halt has been made on any further destruction pending the outcome of a proper consultation process.

CPRE Northamptonshire will continue to monitor and support the fight to save the Wellingborough Walks lime trees. In the meantime, people power has won the day in Wellingborough!

Introducing New Trustee Graham Ferrie



Graham Ferrie trained in economics and enjoyed a career as an accountant in industry. His career took him into the boardrooms of large and small companies around the world. He retired at 60 and became a health care assistant for mentally ill people. He continues his commitment to mental health through his voluntary work. Graham and his wife, Sue, enjoy walking and know the countryside of Northamptonshire well. Graham is also a keen piano player.

Graham said “I am particularly proud to have been elected as a trustee of CPRE Northamptonshire. The work done by CPRE, both nationally and at a county level, is a jewel in the voluntary sector. CPRE historically has stood up for the countryside of the UK, particularly farmers, and has quietly and successfully lobbied for changes in Government policy.

I think we are about to enter a very challenging period prior to the next general election. Our existing MPs in Northamptonshire should be held to account for the destruction of our county as a result of HS2 and Northampton Gateway - both Government initiatives. At a Unitary Authority level the plethora of poorly justified warehouses, riding on the back of sloppy local plans, must be scrutinised.

Above all I welcome the current Prime Minister’s stance on high standards in all levels of public administration. CPRE, with its technical expertise and huge practical experience, is a force to be reckoned with and I am pleased to join it as trustee.

From those to whom much is given, much is expected.

Forceleap Farm’s history stretches over almost 200 years from a smaller farmhouse built in 1829 to the farmhouse and outbuildings you see today. In the intervening period there have been many changes. In the mid-19th century the Cartwright family of Aynhoe Park, the then owners, decided to develop Forceleap into a *Model Farm*. The latter came in many forms but in essence they were designed to make the most efficient use of space, materials and labour. In the

There was little change for most of the next 150 years, reflecting the relatively unchanging nature of farming. In 2016, however, a momentous shift took place with the announcement, shortly after the

knew she sat firmly in the first camp as she believed actively challenging issues such as climate change and decreasing biodiversity provided part of a viable long-term strategy. The Old Farmyard project

Forceleap Farm’s Vision for the Future

– Robin Jones



case of Forceleap, this resulted in a central farmyard surrounded by a farmhouse and the outbuildings needed for mixed farming. The farmhouse still features a bell on the roof, once used to call farm labourers to work and to bring them in from the fields for mealtimes.

UK voted to leave the EU, that farm subsidies would disappear by 2027 - a serious challenge to all farms. Around this time Alice Townsend (pictured) inherited the ownership of Forceleap Farm. With the loss of subsidies on the horizon, the long-term sustainability and direction of the farm was now seriously in question. Alice commissioned an exploratory survey in an attempt to understand how the farm might diversify and better use its neglected assets.

A visit to The Real Oxford Farming Conference highlighted to Alice that two clear farming camps were developing: the first was passionate about topics such as rewilding, pasture-fed beef and regenerative agriculture, and was sympathetic to working with the needs of nature and local communities, while the second saw survival in maximising yields through intensive farming methods. Alice

was born. In December 2019, planning permission was granted to regenerate the old farmyard into a mix of offices, holiday accommodation, rental apartments and a range of indoor and outdoor events spaces.

Now, with Phase 1 of the plan complete, The Old Farmyard opened this year and has already begun to deliver on its vision - to help people reconnect with the local countryside by building a space that brings together local businesses, artists, educators and more, hosting local business meetings, team building and training days, yoga classes, foraging walks and mushroom growing workshops. The Old Farmyard is available for events from corporate to community and anything in between.

If you’d like to know more, email info@forceleapfarm.com.

National Planning Policy Framework Consultation - CPRE Response

–Alan Mayes

Our planning system is once again facing changes and CPRE Northamptonshire recently joined in the forming of National CPRE’s response to the Government’s consultation exercise for proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As with other major government consultations, CPRE has sought to present a single response reflecting the views of CPRE branches across the country.

CPRE has campaigned for a strong, effective and transparent planning system for nearly 100 years, based around accountable decision-making and the balancing of private development interests with the provision and protection of public goods - the protection of a sustainable countryside being paramount.

When first introduced over 10 years ago, the NPPF set out to streamline the English planning system and introduce a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. From CPRE’s perspective, a critical outcome remains - sustainable land use with minimal unnecessary loss of greenfield land to build development, whilst improving the provision of

genuinely affordable homes to create thriving rural communities.

One aspect of the proposed changes, relating to housing supply, which is generally welcomed by CPRE, is that local authorities should not have to demonstrate a deliverable five-year housing supply. This requirement has allowed developers, on too many occasions, to gain planning permission at Appeal for housing developments on greenfield land, which not infrequently is then added to land banks, further distorting housing deliverability. In its response CPRE has also called for better processes for identifying and prioritising suitable brownfield sites for development. Alongside meeting local housing needs, CPRE has emphasised the need to empower local authorities to provide more genuinely

Former Chairman's Mercy Mission to Ukraine

- Geoff Carverhill

Since resigning as chairman of CPRE Northamptonshire in December 2022, trustee Paul Parsons has found ways of continuing to contribute his efforts towards charitable causes by organising a fundraising initiative for humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

Paul teamed up with friend, Blakesley neighbour and West Northamptonshire councillor, Charles Manners, and Steve Challen, whose wife is Rector of the Tove Benefice, to co-ordinate fundraising to enable two 4x4 pick-up trucks to be driven to Lviv, Ukraine, loaded with over £13,000 of urgent medical and humanitarian aid.

The two trucks set off on the 1,300-mile trip on the morning of 10 February. One truck was driven by Paul Parsons and Charles Manners and the other by Oleh Naida, a Ukrainian guest staying in Towcester with his wife Uliana and children, and Alex Donaldson, who last year completed an aid drive to the

Skycamp refugee centre in Northern Poland on behalf of the Tove Benefice.

The initial fundraising target set by Paul of £10,000 was soon exceeded, with funds now totalling over £30,000. The two vehicles were purchased personally by Oleh and Paul and were filled with over 2,000 very specific items of quality medical and humanitarian aid, including two generators and various forms of power pack; 93 lifesaving tourniquets; hundreds of major trauma field bandages including specialist trauma clotting bandages; 48 emergency stretchers; boxes of hospital equipment; hundreds of ration pack meals; over 300 humanitarian infant items; and many thermal/warm items.

During the night of Sunday, 12 February, the two trucks entered Lviv, just missing a Saturday of air raids and explosions close to Lviv. The aid and one vehicle were passed to Oleh's Ukraine volunteer contact for a 700-mile drive the following day to the frontline near Bakhmut.

While the vehicles were being packed, Dame Andrea Leadsom MP and Towcester Mayor Martin Johns (pictured)



met with the drivers to see the aid items which had been purchased using the significant and generous donations that had been received, and to wish the crews good luck on their long journey.

CPRE Northamptonshire congratulates all those involved in this amazing mission.

< Page 3 affordable housing including social housing for rent. We also emphasised that in Northamptonshire, housing should meet local needs rather than developer-led four bed detached houses.

In terms of protecting the food production value of farmland, national policy on the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land has weakened since the introduction of the NPPF in 2012, with no governmental monitoring of agricultural losses since 2010. CPRE has therefore recommended the incorporation of the following guidelines in the new NPPF to ensure the loss of valuable farmland is minimised - a brownfield first policy, a greater steer towards medium- and high-density new housing and a firm presumption against development on BMV land.

In terms of onshore wind development, CPRE has stated that it is critical that developers of schemes respect landscape constraints where they exist and use less visually harmful turbines. Brian Skittrall, CPRE Northamptonshire wind farm expert, has challenged the use of ambiguous wording in this section which would be open to a wide variety of interpretations.

Greater clarification and qualification of the use of the term Green Infrastructure was suggested by CPRE Northamptonshire, given that significant developments have been granted permissions in Green Infrastructure Corridors in our area. The need for suitably qualified staff within local authority planning departments was also highlighted to deal with the emphasis on good design as proposed in the NPPF Consultation.

Finally, the proposed introduction of National Development Management Policies (NDMPs), as part of the proposed changes to the NPPF, received a firm "No" because it represented a loss to central government in any area that fell under the aegis of the proposed NDMPs of the precedence currently given to locally set and democratically agreed policies. As a county that currently has few statutory levels of landscape protection, Northamptonshire would most likely be a target for such policies being imposed from above.

All in all, it was considered that the consultation did not go far enough. Fundamental changes to national planning policy need to happen to ensure a democratic and just planning system in England, as well as providing more genuinely affordable homes, greater use of brownfield sites and less greenfield, and a fairer transition to tackling climate change.

Nature Brings Hedgerow Heroes Project to a Close

- Robin Jones

In days gone by we are told that hedge laying went on all the year round but not anymore. Nowadays rising sap and the beginning of the nesting season mark the end of hedge laying although gapping up – the filling of the gaps in newly laid and existing hedges – and the planting of new hedgerows continue till the end of March.



Planting the whips



Mulching the newly planted hedge

Work at St James Lake in Brackley has followed this pattern. The laying of 160 metres of hedge in February was closely followed by 50 metres of gapping up and 240 metres of new hedge in March. It was great to see the hazel stakes and willow/hazel bindings the Brackley Town Council team and the Canal & River Trust harvested in the autumn at Daventry Country Park being put to such good use. Bringing together these two organisations has been a real plus of the Hedgerow Heroes Project – the CRT has the trees that need coppicing, BTC has the manpower and tools to expedite the work and they both share the spoils. A win-win situation if ever there was one and hopefully one that will be repeated year after year.

We've seen hedges being laid the traditional way using handsaws and axes and we've seen the BTC approach using chainsaws. While traditional methods might appeal to the romantic in us, there's no denying the speed and efficiency chainsaws bring to the party. The CRT has been playing catch-up all season because of a lack of trained chainsaw volunteers.

The whips used have included a classic English hedge mix of field maple, dog rose, spindle, crab apple, wild privet, guelder rose, hawthorn and blackthorn. The laid hedges were planted with trees – oak, walnut, hazel, rowan, crab apple and ash. In spring the BTC team will be planting a hedge friendly wildflower mix along the new sections, further improving biodiversity and giving some colour.

St James Lake is a wonderful amenity – a beautiful lakeside setting easily accessible from the town centre but still with the feel of open countryside about it. Its popularity with townfolk has meant that many people have witnessed at first hand the work on hedgerows their council has

carried out. Better than that, young people have been actively involved in hedge planting – Brownies, Cubs and Scouts have all volunteered to help. Their involvement inevitably slows work down and results in more expensive weekend working, but what's that compared to the nurturing of the volunteering habit and a healthy care for the environment the process brings with it?

Well done Mark and his BTC team.

Steady as She Goes

- Robin Jones

For the second year running, CPRE Northamptonshire has chalked up a surplus - £7,826 following on from £6,608 in 2021. We've moved from struggling to make ends meet to the comparative luxury of having money to spend on the things we hold dear. Not a fortune but better than just about managing. As an example of the freedom this financial headroom gives us, we recently felt able to employ an independent consultant to advise us on the proposed Towcester warehouse developments. As it turned out, he broadly endorsed our approach, but there will be more of this kind of investment. Our planning people do a great job, but they would be the first to admit they don't have all the answers.

CPRE Northamptonshire Community Awards were first launched in 2018. They aim to celebrate a volunteer-led community project that enhances the quality of life and environment for those living in Northamptonshire's villages, towns and countryside.

Judging the Community Awards is never easy – we'd love to give all our worthy entrants an award but that's not possible. We are therefore pleased to announce that Creaton Community Shop (pictured) is the outright winner of the 2022 Community Awards with "Highly Commended" being awarded to Northamptonshire Walks and The Yardley Arts Centre.



Nine entries were received which included a village newsletter, two community gardens, a community shop, a country park, two litter picking groups, an arts centre and a

2022 Community Awards Winners

- Alan Mayes

walks website. The rich diversity of the entries is an encouraging indicator of the number of volunteer initiatives that are thriving post Covid across Northamptonshire.

The Judges were Paul Parsons, then Chair of CPRE Northamptonshire, Elaine O'Leary, Chief Executive of Northamptonshire ACRE and Danny Moody, Chief Executive of Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils - NCALC. The judges were particularly impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm shown by the volunteers, all of whose projects add significantly to the quality of life of those living in or visiting Northamptonshire.

The judges were most impressed by the background to the establishment of the Creaton Community Shop after the original village store closed. The village came together to raise funds to provide a new shop which is now open 7 days a week providing a wide range of local produce, a post office, home deliveries and an excellent website. The shop has proved its sustainability and has a good business plan.

Northamptonshire Walks, which received a "Highly Commended" award, impressed the judges for its wide county usage with a 30,000 facebook group and 4,000 people on group walks in 2022. The facility particularly came into its own during the Covid periods providing local walks for everyone.

The second Highly Commended entry award went to The Yardley Arts Centre. This is a not-for-profit arts focused centre reusing an old school building and reaching out to Northamptonshire communities with a wide range of activities for all ages and all talents.

The Award winners will be presented with their prizes at a future CPRE event.

At time of writing, we have sold 85 £12 stakes in our thirteenth 50/50 Draw, raising in the process £510 for the Charity. If you fancy a bit of a flutter while at the same time donating to CPRE Northamptonshire, you still have time! To find out what to do email robinjones33@hotmail.com and our treasurer will tell you how. Our first quarter draw is on 5 April.



4th Quarter Draw

First Prize £50:

Susan Banner

Second Prize £30:

Rick and Pat Dunsby