

OUTLOOK

February 2021

The newsletter of CPRE
Northamptonshire



The countryside charity
Northamptonshire

www.cprenorthants.org.uk

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Accessing the Countryside 1:
Do You Have What it Takes? 2:
The Concept of Care Applied to the
Land 2: Branch Strategy 3:
Litter Heroes - an Update 3:
Brixworth Ancient and Modern 4:
Virtual Planning Roadshow 4

Accessing the Countryside

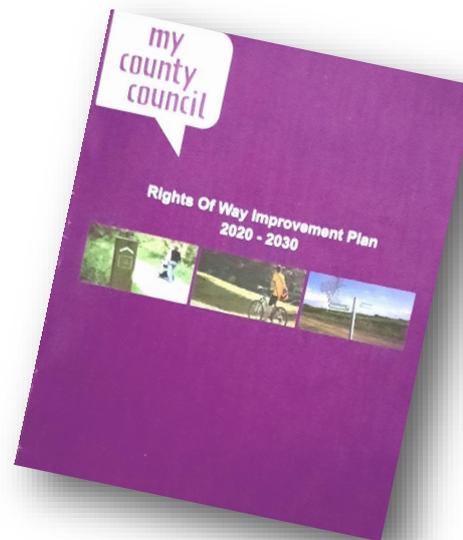
- Bill Heelan

We are fortunate indeed to live in a county as beautiful as Northamptonshire. Nobody is far from fields, woods or rivers. We have footpaths, bridleways and a rights of way network that crisscrosses the county, often through private land, which affords the general public easy and unfettered access to the majority of the open countryside.

Most CPRE members will be regular users of their local network, enjoying the therapeutic benefits of outdoor exercise. I anticipate that most were doing so long before lockdown and will continue to do so, long after it ends.

Not everyone is aware that a policy exists for the protection, development and management of the network. All approved rights of way must be shown on the Northamptonshire Definitive Map (and Statement). Parishes may appoint a Public Rights of Way (PROW) Warden to monitor and report problems as required. Additionally, where historic paths or routes exist in a parish that have been used for 20 years or more but are not currently on the Definitive Map, a process exists to register them. Conversely, in certain circumstances, landowners may apply to remove an existing PROW. For further information visit the NCC website and search for the

NCC Rights of Way
Improvement Plan 2020 –
2030.



The county has a population of circa 750,000 with approximately 70% occupying urban areas and 30% rural areas. Our current membership numbers equate to less than 1% of the total rural community, which is both surprising and disappointing.

Our challenge is to find ways to inspire and encourage greater use of our glorious countryside via the excellent access network. This is especially important for younger people and those in urban areas. We would like to see them fully engage with and enjoy the countryside, as not doing so must be to their detriment.

We don't have to travel far to find places to lift the spirit. This photograph was taken in Penvale Park, Northampton. It's a beautiful spot right in the middle of East Hunsbury.

By kind permission of
Maggie Burgess-Wood

continued on page 2

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

What do you think when you read in Outlook that

VOLUNTEERS ARE WANTED

to help CPRE with countryside matters?

Have you perhaps thought about it, but then moved on?

Because life is busy.

Because life is not getting any easier these days.

Then again, *unsuitable development* of valued green spaces *is still happening apace*. Country

lanes are *still litter strewn*. *Hedgerows* still tend to *disappear overnight*. Villages are still *losing their essential services*.

Even more than funding – and goodness knows we need that – *CPRE Northamptonshire needs volunteer help*. From *all ages, all backgrounds, all skill sets, with all levels of time available*.

Why don't you find out what you - or perhaps someone you know - can do to help with the issues that confront the countryside we love?

Email us at info@CPRENorthants.org.uk, or leave a voice message on **01604 780000**, to discover more.



Accessing the Countryside

continued from page 1

We should also seek to engender a greater appreciation and understanding of the countryside and its intrinsic role in our lives and wellbeing, whilst simultaneously nurturing a desire and commitment in everyone to value and protect it.

So how do we achieve the aim?

I have my own ideas, but *I would very much appreciate the thoughts and ideas of you, our members*. You will have local knowledge; places perhaps that inspire you personally that may not necessarily be generally known. I would also very much *like to hear from anyone willing to volunteer to assist in any way in this venture*.

I cannot possibly do this alone!

The Concept of Care Applied to the Land

Yvonne Dean

In writing about how we manage land, the statistics for how we prioritise care for land, as against that for people, are staggering.

Care is a word we associate more with our health than the land around us. Currently there are 1.6 million people who work for the NHS and 1.4 million carers. So, 3 million people are committed to looking after us, our bodies or well-being. The number of people working in the farming or agricultural industry amount to just 476,000 (Wikipedia) and yet the growing of food and the quality of it affects our health directly. Just 24,000 are employed to manage our fish stocks (House of Commons research briefing - Nov 2019). Worse still the number of people working for the Environment Agency, as 'earth carers' if you like, amount to just 10,600. They are responsible for the health of all our land and rivers in the UK. This is a staggering shortfall. If greater effort was put into the healthy management of land and crops there would be a corresponding fall in the need for health care.

We need to switch emphasis in occupations similar to what happened in the late 80's. As nuclear power stations diminished in importance, scientists with that background suddenly found themselves giving advice in the field of low energy design. We seem to be at a tipping point when the pandemic and climate change will help us review our priorities.

an extract from 'SURFACE' a draft essay

Copyright Yvonne Dean 2021

The revised Branch strategy, which was emailed to all members in December last year, has now been finalised by the Executive Committee. The document builds on earlier iterations, such as the 2018 Forward Strategy, and is rightly evolutionary rather than revolutionary. It also takes into consideration, and aligns with, the National CPRE strategy, which was published in Spring 2020.

The vision of ‘a beautiful and thriving Northamptonshire countryside that enriches lives’ provides the rallying call for us all to mobilise and focus.

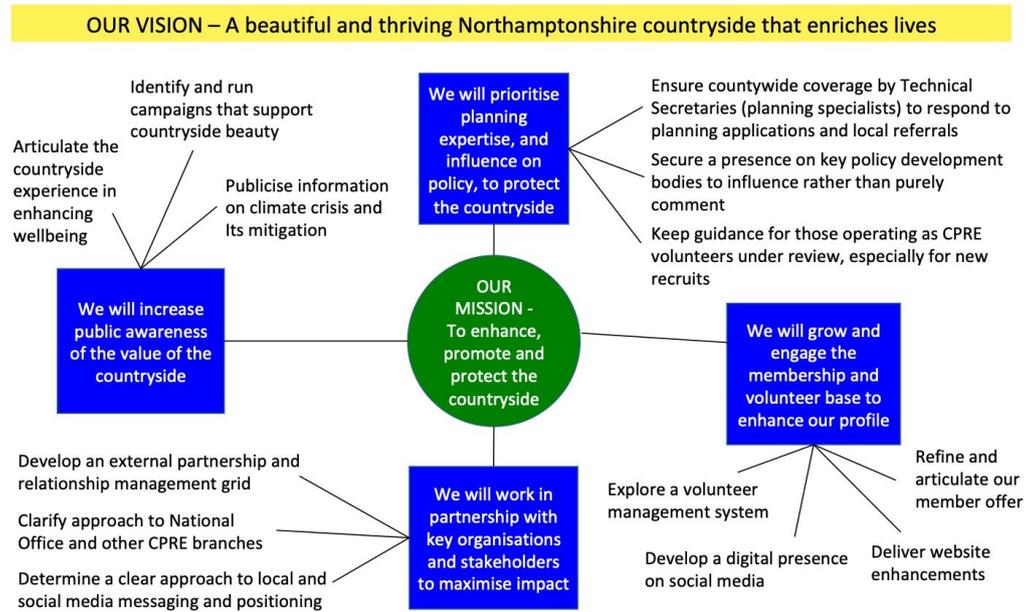
The 4-pronged strategy will allow us to continue to both protect the countryside through the excellent work of the technical secretaries (our planning specialists), and to promote the countryside and increase public awareness of its value. The last year has ensured that, as a nation, we now recognise more fully how important fresh air and green spaces can be for mental and physical wellbeing.

We will continue to work in partnership with other organisations where appropriate to help achieve our aims, but of course little of this can

be achieved unless we can maintain and grow our membership and volunteer numbers.

We were delighted to receive helpful feedback from you our members from the recent email introducing the revised strategy. Common

Branch Strategy - Andrew Powles



themes were around the importance of protecting the countryside but also the need to further develop a social media and digital presence. The message that successes do not have to be on a grand scale was also a helpful one.

The Executive Committee is

now developing a document to make the strategy come to life and allocate portfolios of responsibilities to Trustees.

If you would be interested in playing a part in implementing the strategy, please do contact us.

Litter Heroes - an Update

- Peter Hopkins

Winter lockdown means that more people are walking more muddy miles. Favourite footpaths are like the fields of Flanders in the First World War. And more people are finding more litter. Some are even taking bags along, to pick as they go. But the battle to change hearts and minds is clearly not yet won. So, the litter campaign rolls on.

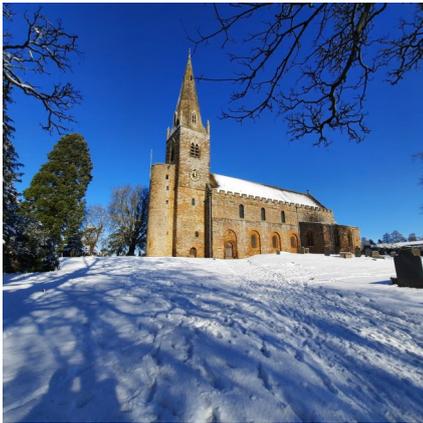
This time last year we started with our traditional Litter Heroes format - teams of pickers from villages and other communities across Northamptonshire competing for cash prizes for their groups. A few teams got going early and so beat Lockdown 1, but most who had been planning events later in the spring had to cancel.

We quickly switched the format to distribute most of the prize fund as community grants for future litter picking activity, with £500 of last year's funds rolled over to this year. We have funding to supplement this up to last year's total of £2,000.

At the time of writing, we are hopeful that group picking will happen at some time this year, but probably not during the spring. Such activities are still as yet uncertain. We are on hold until the government eases the current lockdown sufficiently.

If in past years you have been an organiser for litter related activities in your community, or litter-strewn footpaths make you want to start something this year, be sure that we have your email address – email us on info@CPRENorthants.org.uk and we will keep you up to date with our plans.

Winter weather and Northamptonshire clay tend to keep us closer to home when it comes to exercise at this time of year – a stroll round the village is frequently our limit. We often start our walks with a wander round the churchyard of All Saints, dominated as it is by an impressive Saxon church. In *The Buildings of England – Northamptonshire*, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner



recounts approvingly that it has been described as “perhaps the most imposing architectural memorial of the 7th century north of the Alps”. What a commendation! Its door and nave and clerestory window arches remind us that the Saxons themselves were once newcomers – the arches incorporate two

rings of Roman brick purloined from a nearby villa, just in case you thought recycling was a recent thing.

Though not unattractive, it is not a beautiful building – too many later additions for me - but it is England’s largest surviving Saxon church right here in the heart of our county.

Leaving the 7th century behind us, we walk a mere 600 yards or so east and find ourselves slap bang in the 21st – the factory of Mercedes AMG High Performance Powertrains. Here they develop and produce the Formula One engines that power not just the cars of the winning Silver Arrows team but those of several of its competitors too. The factory employs over 700 people, many of whom are engineers at the very top of their profession. Amazingly, given the noise of an F1 engine at full throttle, we have never heard a sound from the factory. A recent extension means the buildings are more obtrusive than before, but, given Mercedes’ past record, they will no doubt become less so as the landscaping matures.

Brixworth Ancient and Modern

- Robin Jones

CPRE supports a thriving countryside. I am therefore pretty sure that, had it been around at the time, CPRE would not have objected to the building of the church, even if it meant turning a blind eye to the dismantling of a potentially listed villa.



But what if another development like Mercedes comes along? What will our attitude be? In a post Covid-19 era, when economic prosperity and the jobs it brings will be absolutely vital, a kneejerk *no* will not cut the mustard. Interesting times lie ahead!



Our second virtual Roadshow focused on how reorganisation into unitary authorities will impact on local government and planning in the county. It proved an interesting and informative event for the 40+ attendees.

Virtual Planning Roadshow

- Robin Jones

Debra McConnell, chair of CPRE Lancashire, began the evening with a short description of her county. It has it all – huge built-up areas, green belt, AONBs and of course no shortage of unitary authorities. Debra’s presentation and that of her co-guest, Jackie Copley, initially made Lancashire sound like a foreign country when compared with rural Northamptonshire. However, as Jackie explored the problems faced by CPRE Lancashire, it became clear just how much we actually have in common. Whatever shape the local planning authority takes, the fundamentals remain the same – right now the need to ensure that the Planning White Paper currently under

consideration is drastically reformed before it reaches the statute book.

We were lucky to have two such informed speakers to give us a wider perspective, but ultimately the Roadshow was about our county’s reorganisation into two unitary authorities, North and West Northamptonshire. Brian Skittrall, CPRE trustee and Wellingborough councillor, took us through the transformation process in which he and many others have been involved. He and colleagues certainly appeared to have put in an enormous amount of work to ensure its success.

Dealing with questions from the audience, Brian stressed the importance of responding promptly to consultations for higher level planning documents such as Core Strategies and Local Plans. This is because once adopted any developments outlined within them are almost impossible to roll back. He also highlighted that Neighbourhood Plans can give communities a greater say in the developments that happen within their parish.

A recording of the Roadshow and the slides used are available at www.cprenorthants.org.uk.