



The countryside charity
Hampshire

CPRE Hampshire the countryside charity

Report of the Board of Trustees – year ended 31 December 2021

Registered charity number 1164410

1. Introduction

The Charitable objects of CPRE Hampshire are to promote and encourage for the benefit of the public the improvement, protection and preservation of the countryside of Hampshire and its towns and villages, and the better development of the rural environment. CPRE Hampshire works closely with National CPRE but is a separate charity.

The environment within which we work continues to be challenging. As the Countryside Charity for Hampshire, we are campaigning for the proposed changes in the planning system to better protect the countryside on our doorsteps and reduce urban sprawl, while building much needed affordable homes in the right places.

For the last two years the Covid Pandemic has meant that live events have had to be cancelled and most of our meetings have been held virtually. Nevertheless, we have succeeded in maintaining our core activities.

2. Campaigning and Influencing

Green Belt - We continue with our work to promote a Green Belt for South Hampshire. The Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) have announced that they support it, but it always seems to be pushed to the back-burner. The Green Belt was mentioned by CPRE at the Havant Local Plan Examination and also included in a Reg 18 version of the Fareham Local Plan, but it had sadly disappeared by the time of the Reg 19 submission version. Test Valley voted to support it at Full Council, so we wait to see it manifest in their next draft Local Plan. We also hope that Winchester agree with the response of their public consultation, which was wholeheartedly in support.

North Hampshire Downs - We are in the early stages of campaigning locally for the protection of the chalk landscapes of the North Hampshire Downs, possibly by the adoption of AONB status. We are seeking views and support from a series of local Parish Councils within the area.

Dark Skies – During 2021 CPRE Hampshire, along with Sussex and Kent CPREs, commissioned work to identify the changes that have occurred in dark skies across the south of the country over the past 5 years. The outcomes from this were used to help raise awareness as to why dark skies are important for both people and wildlife as part of the National CPRE Star Count campaign and will be available for our District Group planning leads to discuss with their local planning authorities in future meetings.

Valued Landscapes – We continue to raise the issue with local planning authorities of the importance of them identifying valued landscapes within their local plans, to highlight the importance of protecting these high-quality and “demonstrably special” landscapes. Good traction has been made with East Hampshire, Winchester, Fareham and the South Downs National Park.

Hedgerow Heroes – We were successful in bidding to National CPRE for funding to run a major hedgerow restoration project in the western part of the New Forest. This involved planting 1.7 km of new hedge and a further 1.3 km of gapping-up of existing hedges. We recruited a team of volunteers, working under the supervision of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, to carry out wildlife and soil surveys and



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hedge-laying activities. And we have engaged with students at local primary and secondary schools to plant hedges and learn the benefits of hedgerow restoration, not least in the context of climate change mitigation.

3. Work of the District Groups

Our six District Groups, run entirely by volunteers, continue to do sterling work in their local areas to respond to Local Plan reviews, inappropriate planning applications and large threats to the countryside including NSIPs. Highlights of 2021 included a decision by the Secretary of State to refuse permission for the proposed Aquind Interconnector to exchange electricity with France and a dogged campaign against the building of a massive commercial waste incinerator in the middle of the rural Wey Valley near Alton.

Unfortunately, Covid put paid to most of District Groups' fund-raising activity through events, with the notable exceptions of North Hampshire's wonderful autumn Supper and South Downs & Central's virtual raffle (following the unfortunate cancellation of two quiz nights). For more information on District Groups' work, please visit our website and sign up to the e-newsletter.

4. National Involvement

We continue to work closely with National CPRE on raising public awareness of the importance of the countryside and green spaces to people living in towns and cities. It is good to see the government backtracking on some of their proposals to reform the Planning System. Latest pronouncements suggest that they will continue to attach importance to local consultation, will pay attention to Neighbourhood Plans and will give priority to development on Brownfield sites. All of which are issues on which CPRE has been pressing hard.

5. Governance and Staffing

Two new members of staff joined us during the year: Mandy Roberts, who has taken on the role of Office Administrator and Vicky Marr, who has been appointed as Communications Manager. The four new trustees who joined in late 2020 have brought new energy and skills to the Board of Trustees.

Our Chair, Dee Haas, stood down in November, having completed the maximum term permitted by our constitution. Before retiring Dee received a "Connected and Inspirational Award" from National CPRE in recognition of the huge contribution she has made both in Hampshire and nationally over her time as a trustee and Chair. She will of course continue to support CPRE Hampshire, a cause in which she believes deeply. Peter Prag also stood down as a trustee and has retired from the role of Chair of the North Hampshire District Group.

6. Treasurer's Report

The charity continued to operate with a reduced staffing level, with all staff employed on freelance contracts. Funding from National CPRE for the Hedgerow Heroes project has paid for a proportion of our staff costs and covered part of our overheads. The annual appeal and Christmas card sale brought us a total of over £13,000. Unrestricted reserves increased by £7,352 to £88,927. The level of reserves is now comfortably above £70,000, the level set by the Board of Trustees to ensure sustainability.