



The countryside charity
Hampshire

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Working locally and nationally for
a beautiful and living countryside.

CPRE Hampshire the countryside charity

Annual Report - year ended 31 December 2023

Registered charity number 1164410

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.

CPRE Hampshire Business Plan

In January 2023 the Trustees held a strategy day to work with the new Operations Manager, Alison Talbot, on the development of a Business Plan to guide and focus our work.

The key challenges facing CPRE Hampshire were a falling membership base (over 1,000 members pre pandemic to 915 by Dec 2023), limited financial resource base and a small staff team, largely on freelance contracts. We needed to focus on how to make the most of this limited resource to maximize our impact.

The two key priorities in our Business Plan are Planning and Projects, with some marketing and Comms activity to aid delivery of our key priorities.

Strategic Priority 1 - Planning

Our planning work is carried out by district groups and coordinated by our Planning Policy Group (PPG).

Planning work operates on 3 levels:

- Supporting National CPRE e.g. Levelling Up Bill
- Working with Local Planning Authorities on Hampshire Planning issues e.g. Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan consultations and Local Plan reviews
- Strategic Campaigns e.g. water and rooftop renewables campaign.

President
Earl of Malmesbury

Chair
Margaret Paren

Registered charity number 1164410

Key planning activities in 2023

National Level Planning. CPRE Hampshire has been a consultee on the Levelling Up Bill and National Planning Policy Framework. We have sought to ensure that national policy framework works to conserve and enhance the Countryside.

Locally we have sought to influence Local Plan Policies to conserve and enhance the Hampshire Countryside.

We have submitted substantial responses to:

The Hampshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan

Basingstoke & Deane Reg 18 Local Plan Review

East Hampshire Reg 18 Local Plan Review

Test Valley Reg 18 Local Plan Review.

In addition, our local district groups have kept a watching brief on local planning applications and submit regular responses to individual applications. We continue to promote the concept of Valued Landscapes to provide protection for high-quality countryside that is not nationally designated and to develop model policies for the use of our volunteers and others when commenting upon draft Local Plans. Our model policies have all been reviewed and updated in 2023.

Strategic Planning Campaigns

Our Water Focus team has been active in many forums over the year. They attended a 'River Summit' in Kimbridge, Test Valley and a Community Chat organised by Basingstoke MP on 'Protecting the environment and our local rivers' in October 2023. Following an abortive last-minute attempt by the Government to amend the LURB to abolish the regulations on nutrient neutrality, we continued to monitor the situation in case the proposal was re-introduced

The National Campaign to promote Rooftop Solar was launched in 2023 and in Hampshire we have carried this baton forward and developed a project working with CPRE Sussex and the University of Southampton's Energy and Climate Change Division to identify and map potential rooftop sites across Hampshire and Sussex.

Strategic Priority 2 – Projects

In 2023 our aim was to deliver 4 projects which:

- Make money for CPREH to support our core work.
- Raised the profile of CPREH and helped us reach new audiences.
- Fitted well with our expertise and experience.
- Meet our charitable objectives.
- Engage with partners that we want to work with.

We identified five project areas in our Business Plan. These were Hedgerows, Dark Night Skies, Litter, Rooftop Renewables and the Hampshire Countryside Awards.

The Hampshire Hedge Project

We have established a three-year project with an ambitious target to create a green corridor of hedgerows between the South Downs and New Forest National Parks. We have secured funding from CPRE Hedgerows Project (£50,000), Linbury Trust (£40,000), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (£40,000), the Big Give (£9,800) and Spurgin Trust (£2,000) for the first year of the project, as well as hedging plants, trees, guards and stakes from The Trees for the South Downs, Hampshire Forest Partnership and Tree Council. Total Funding support in Year 1 £141,800, note year 1 of project runs until 31.3.24.

We appointed a full-time project officer, Ellie Banks, who started in July 2023. In September she was joined by a student intern from Plymouth University, Alex Jackaman, who joined CPRE Hampshire for a 6-month student placement which ends in March 2024.

Year 1 is well on target to deliver against its targets. Key targets are 5,000 meters of new hedgerow planted across 8 sites. 0.5miles of hedgerow restored. 18 training events held to teach people traditional hedge laying skills. 3 x 5-month hedge laying traineeships funded and the Community Hedge Fund established to support local projects. Engagement with local colleges and school has resulted in 100s of young people being engaged with the project.

A steering group with partners from the two National Parks, Sparsholt College, Tree Council, Winchester City Council and Test Valley Council meets regularly to support the project.

In April work will begin on planning for Year 2 of the project, with funding being finalised and our Big Give campaign launched.

Dark Night Skies

In February 2023 over 200 people across Hampshire took part in CPRE's Annual Star Count, which was a record (up from 92 people the previous year), over 46.3% recorded less than 10 stars indicating severe light pollution, whilst only 7.5% recorded over 30 stars, truly dark skies.

We have put forward a costed project proposal to New Forest National Parks Authority to co-ordinate a 3-year project to secure a Dark Night skies designation for the New Forest area. Work is ongoing to progress this project.

Litter

In December 2023 we officially thanked the work of the Winchester litter picking group, who held regular litter picking events in and around Winchester. The group is no longer operating but achieved considerable success in its lifetime.

Rooftop Renewables

We have worked with our PPG group and the University of Southampton to develop an online map which shows the operational and pending solar farms across Hampshire. This is accessible via our rooftop renewable web page.

With funding support from The New Things Fund from the Centre for the South, we have been working with researchers from the Energy & Climate Change team at the University to demonstrate the potential of rooftop solar across Hampshire & Sussex. The results will be showcased at a conference in Southampton in June 2024.

Hampshire Countryside Awards 2023

With funding support from Hampshire County Council, Hastoe Housing and the Newbury Building Society we ran a successful Countryside Awards in 2023. Launched in May at the AGM the awards attracted 24 entries over 4 categories. The winners of each category had a special promotional video made for their project. These were shown at our Awards ceremony in December, attended by Deputy Lord Lieutenant. The Hampshire Choice Award went to the PUPS project at Ballard Water Meadows, New Milton.

Strategic Priority 3 - Marketing , Communication & Events

Events

The North Hampshire group held a successful couple of fundraising events in 2023, a Bluebell Walk in April and music concert in the Summer raising over £2,500 for CPREH funds.

CPREH had a stall at the 3-day New Forest and Hampshire Show in July, making good contacts that lead to hedge planting at Show Ground in the Autumn.

In September we trailed a couple of successful and popular foraging events, working with a local chef and forager to explore hedgerow edibles!

In November we hosted a national hedgerow hero event to co-incide with the launch of our Hampshire Hedge project. A team from Defra and National CPRE attended, alongside 50 invited guests and students from Sparsholt college.

We rounded off the year with our Countryside Awards ceremony at Kings Somborne Village Hall in December. Invited guests enjoyed a 'film show' of all the category winners and the Hampshire Choice award winner was announced.

Marketing and Communications

Our Bi -Annual Hampshire Views magazine continues to be a key means of communicating with our membership. We have now got the capability to produce it in house and have introduced a new look to the magazine.

In addition, we produce e newsletter updates on our work to members, in 2023 we have produced a dark night sky special, a Parish Council special , three hedgerow specials and a countryside awards edition.

We also regularly post on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram account.

PR success has been focussed on the Hampshire Hedge project , with coverage on BBC South Today , and the Countryside Awards , with a piece in Hampshire Life.

Governance and Staffing

At the start of the year, we were joined by a new Operations Manager, Alison Talbot.

Two new younger Trustees also joined the Board, Nat Wood and Simon Beetham.

Following the ill health and subsequent sad death of our Treasurer, Martin Gillie, we reorganised the roles around our finance work. Mandy Roberts left the admin role, and we replaced this post with a Finance Officer role which was filled by Jo Wyatt, who started work for CPREH in June 2023.

The Comms role saw some change, a move to change from a freelance arrangement to contract, did not work out past a probation period. We reverted to a freelance arrangement with Vicky Marr leading on Hampshire Views and the e- newsletters and Rebecca Simpson helping with the development of our website.

Our Hedgerow Project Officer, Ellie Banks, joined us in July on a full-time contract and we have had a 6-month student intern role attached to the Hampshire Hedge project between September and March.

We have had numerous students come and volunteer on part time, time limited projects, bringing new ideas, energy and enthusiasm to the team.

We have a regular 'office day' on Tuesdays in our office on the Sparsholt college campus.