

HAMPSHIRE VIEWS



Celebrating 100 years
of CPRE with
Hampshire artists

100
YEARS



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Hampshire

Stand up for countryside 'On the Edge'

The countryside on the edges of our towns and cities is some of the most pressured and overlooked in England.

Yet, nearly nine in ten people in Britain say protecting the countryside for future generations is important to them.

'On the Edge' is CPRE's call to action, with the ambition that every town and city should be surrounded by thriving and protected countryside.

Show your support by signing the nationwide petition and adding your countryside story to the interactive map.

CPRE Hampshire is working to protect our local urban edge countryside. Read about the Southwest Hampshire Green Belt (p6), our meadows on the edge project (p8) and planning success just outside Winchester (p11)

www.cpre.org.uk/on-the-edge

Leave a legacy to CPRE Hampshire

Leaving a Gift in your Will is a really special way to look after the people and places you care about.

[Download a free brochure on our website to find out how your gift could help nurture the countryside for years to come.](#)

CPRE Hampshire,
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Charity number: 1164410



Welcome to this edition of Hampshire Views

For 100 years the Campaign to Protect Rural England has stood up for the countryside. From campaigning for National Parks and Green Belt, winning protection for hedgerows, and championing planning legislation, local foods and sustainable development, we have played our part in safeguarding this precious resource.



Now the countryside is facing intensified and unprecedented challenges: from the climate and nature emergencies to needless loss from poorly planned and located development. That is why our centenary has to be more than a celebration, it must also be a call for action. It is an invitation to us all to demonstrate that to 'Love Your Countryside' means playing our part in protecting what matters, regenerating what has been lost and connecting to the places that sustain us all.

I hope you will enjoy reading about what we in CPRE Hampshire are doing from replanting hedges and restoring chalk grassland to fighting the developments in the wrong place and that you will join us in our forthcoming centenary celebrations.

Margaret Paren, CPRE Hampshire Chair
chair@cprehampshire.org.uk

Celebrating our centenary

AGM and Centenary Lunch

On Saturday 25th April, CPRE Hampshire members, supporters and partners gathered at Itchen Abbas Village Hall near Winchester to celebrate the achievements of the charity over the last 100 years and look forward to the future.

A packed AGM heard about changes the Board was proposing to the CPRE Hampshire constitution which had not been reviewed since 2015. Since then our membership has fallen, the use of hybrid meetings has grown exponentially, the new Charity Act 2020 has come fully in force, and a major re-organisation of local government is proposed that will impact how planning is carried out in the county.

Following the AGM, members and supporters enjoyed the premiere of CPRE Hampshire's inspirational new film 'The Hedge', by filmmaker Simon Dures. It follows the progress of the Hampshire Hedge project and captures some of the people and their stories which helped to



Alastair Clarke and Ellie Banks received presentations at the AGM

make the project such a success (read more on page 12).

Presentations were made to Alastair Clarke and Ellie Banks. Alastair is a long-standing Trustee with CPRE Hampshire and has supported the charity in many ways, helping forge good relations with Parish Councils across Hampshire. Ellie Banks, Hedgerow Project Officer, started as a volunteer with CPRE Hampshire four and a half years ago and went on to successfully manage the Hampshire Hedge project.





We did it!

Celebrating the successful completion of the Hampshire Hedge Project

Back in 2023, CPRE Hampshire was looking to develop a project to celebrate the high-quality landscape in Hampshire. The idea was formed to plant hedges to link the South Downs and New Forest National Parks together. This project would provide important landscape and wildlife features, as part of the nature recovery strategy for Hampshire.

It has been three years of hard graft, starting in November 2023, with only two volunteers turning up to the first planting session. It seemed a daunting task to plant 15 km of new hedgerow - between the New Forest and South Downs National Parks. But by the end of March 2026 our magnificent team of hedgerow heroes had done it and planted a whopping 16.2km of new hedgerow.

What a fantastic achievement! We are so proud of our hedgerow team; Ellie, Katy and all the brilliant volunteers, landowners, community groups and schools that they have worked with us over the last three years

Ellie Banks, CPRE Hampshire Hedgerow Project Officer, commented: 'It has been an amazing project to be involved with. I would like to thank all the landowners, farmers, partners and most of all the amazing volunteers, we couldn't have done this without them.'

Ellie added: 'The big problem in this country is that wildlife is fragmented on 'islands' and unable to get between those habitats, so hedgerows can provide that connectivity.'

The Hampshire Hedge project has received funding from National CPRE Hedgerow Heroes project,

Our achievements

Over 16.2km of new hedgerow

Over 75,000 whips planted

Over 13,000 volunteering hours

The Linbury Trust, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Tree Council and the South Downs National Park - Trees for the South Downs scheme, plus support from many others.

What's next for our hedgerow work

We are delighted that Katy is staying on with CPRE Hampshire as Ellie cycles off into the distance for pastures new. Katy will be working on the meadows project to support Rachel - you will see her out and about at some summer events.

We are busy writing up a final report on the Hampshire Hedge project, trying to capture the achievements as well as the lessons we have learnt along the way. We will share this with funders and our steering group - many are keen to continue to work with us on more hedgerow projects across Hampshire.

So for now we are watching the birds make their nests, enjoying the blossom of the hawthorn and recovering from a very wet and tough season. We plan to do more ...so watch this space!

www.cprehampshire.org.uk/hedgerows



Our inaugural hedge laying competition

On 20th Feb, over 30 hedge layers came together at the Broadlands estate, near Romsey, for CPRE Hampshire's inaugural friendly hedge laying competition - Hedgefest. The event, supported by the South of England Hedge Laying Society, was a chance to celebrate the fantastic work we have done over the last three years and introduce the traditional art of hedge laying to a new audience.

Thanks to the generous support of the National Heritage Lottery Fund, we have been able to run hedge laying traineeships and training courses, training 372 people in hedge laying skills and funding five-month hedge laying traineeships for 15 young people.

Trainee participation

All six of our 25/26 trainees took part, travelling from Essex, Somerset, Sussex and Hampshire.

They were joined by hedge layers from Holland, who also compete annually in the South of England Hedge Laying Society competition and are working hard to introduce hedges into the Dutch landscape.

Hedge laying - South of England style

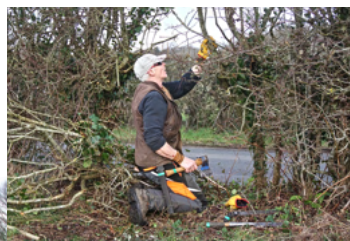
Competitors had five hours to lay a section of hedge. There were three categories; Novice, Intermediate and Professional. Each category had a different length of hedge to lay.

Three female judges from the South of England Hedge Laying Society gave individual feedback to all the hedgelayers taking part.

Sharing skills and knowledge

There were no winners or losers at our Hedgefest, it was all about learning and sharing.

We were delighted to see people who have been on our training courses having a go, along with a whole team from Test Valley Countryside Service who took on the challenge.



A CPRE Hampshire volunteer has created a Winter ID Guide to Hedgerow Plants. You can download it from our website.
Many thanks to Ian!

The Southwest Hampshire Greenbelt

The countryside on the edge of towns and cities supports nature, climate and our everyday lives. Yet without action, growing pressures on these places risk losing enormous future benefits.

Hampshire has one designated Green Belt, the 'Southwest Hampshire Green Belt' which was designated to prevent urban sprawl along the coast from Bournemouth and Christchurch. There are 5 key purposes of a Green Belt these are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

In December 2024, the UK government updated the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to define and prioritize "grey belt" land within the Green Belt for housing development. Grey belt refers to low-quality, brownfield, or underused land within the Green Belt. Local authorities are required to review Green Belt boundaries to identify this land when unable to meet local housing need.

Grey belt land includes previously developed (brownfield) land within the Green Belt, and other "low quality" land that makes a weak contribution to the primary purposes of the Green Belt (e.g., preventing urban sprawl, preventing towns from merging).

The government has established "golden rules" for development on Green Belt land, focusing on sustainability and infrastructure, to ensure that development on this land benefits the community.

Where Green Belt release is necessary to meet housing targets, authorities are instructed to prioritize:

1. Brownfield land,
2. Grey belt land, and
3. Other, higher-quality Green Belt locations.

The government is providing support for local authorities to undertake these necessary Green Belt reviews.

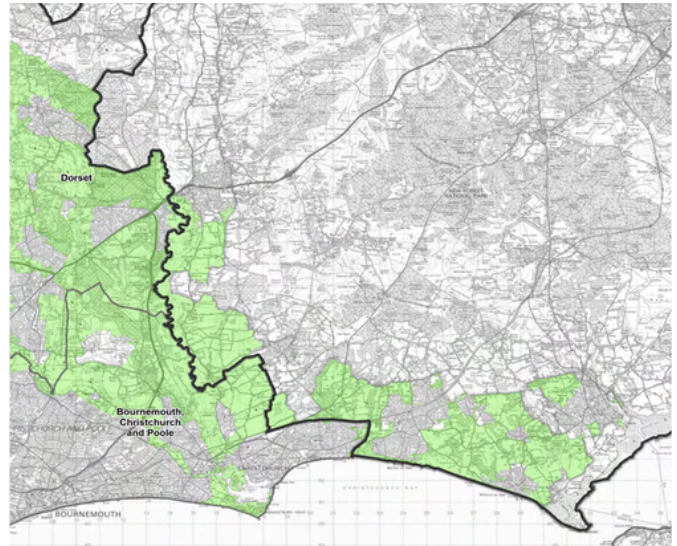
The policy is part of a broader aim to build 1.5 million new homes by encouraging development on low-quality land to reduce pressure on protected green spaces.

In line with this policy a new study into the South Hampshire Green Belt prepared by LUC for New Forest District Council in Jan 2026, identified 17 areas in the existing Green Belt which the study is recommending reclassifying as grey belt, leaving these areas vulnerable to development proposals and therefore much less protected.

These sites vary in size. In the West of the New Forest a site stretching from Sopley, along the River Avon to Avon Tyrell and North Ripley has been identified.

In the South of the New Forest an area stretching from Downton joining Everton and Milford has been included. If all these changes were implemented, it could result in urban sprawl from Lymington through to Poole.

CPRE Hampshire has responded to the recent planning consultation in the New Forest and is planning to work with local Parish Councils to highlight concerns to New Forest District Council.



CPRE is asking the government to

- Change its definition of 'grey belt' in national planning policy, and restore the pre-existing protections of designated Green Belt land;
- Change national planning policy so that once planning consent has been granted, it must be built within a reasonable timeframe or else sanctions should be applied;
- Implement a "brownfield first" policy with real teeth in it, so these redevelopment and regeneration opportunities are not continually deferred and left unbuilt; and
- Bring long term empty homes back into occupancy as soon as possible, so these dwellings can be utilised and are not just a waste of space.

We want to see all of these measures in place before eroding and diminishing the Green Belt, as is currently happening.

What you can do

- Add your name to the national petition standing up for the countryside. Visit www.cpre.org.uk/on-the-edge
- After signing, share your favourite countryside location on the interactive map

The Green Belt is one of England's outstanding achievements
Campaigners in the late 19th and early 20th centuries called for a "green belt" around large population centres to prevent the loss of countryside to urban sprawl. This was achieved in 1938 with the passage of the Metropolitan Green Belt Act, one of CPRE's early successes.



Involving young people in our work

In our centenary year, one aspiration is to reach new and younger audiences. Working with partners such as Sparsholt College and Youngwilders, we have had some successes engaging with young people.



Rhys Leighton at the CPRE Parliamentary Reception

Parliamentary reception at the House of Lords on 3rd Feb 2026

Rhys Leighton represented CPRE Hampshire at a special centenary reception. He describes his experience:

“It was a lovely evening (despite the weather) and I met a whole host of interesting people with whom I discussed the various intricacies of balancing nature recovery with agriculture, energy infrastructure, development, and so many other types of land use. I also eagerly spouted to a lot of people about the hedgerow heroes project and the ecological importance of hedgerows.”

Jack Durant, Co-director of Youngwilders, said:

‘There are few higher-leverage actions for restoring nature in the UK than planting hedgerows. Hedges are biodiversity banks; they provide crucial landscape connectivity, and they’re an agricultural asset. They’re also a deep part of our cultural heritage. We now see the impact of their removal; all that’s left is to bring them back!’

Hedgentines Day - Youngwilders event

On Saturday 21st February, over 60 young people - including 25 in Hampshire - gathered to plant hedges in Cheshire, Hampshire and Kent.

Named ‘Hedgentines Day’, the event aimed to educate and empower young people to love and create hedgerows.

Across the three counties, over 600 metres of new hedgerow was created at various sites.

This event was designed to empower young people through workshops and practical training to create and care for hedges.

Youngwilders seeks to remove as many barriers as possible stopping young people from attending events in the countryside. Attendees carpool from train stations and can get the cost of their train or bus ticket reimbursed. Youngwilders make sure learning, socialising and having fun are key elements to their volunteering days.

For more information visit <https://www.youngwilders.org/>



Youngwilders Event 21st Feb 2026 at Sandy Lane, Romsey, Hampshire

Meadows on the edge



With funding from the National Lottery Community Fund we are delighted to be continuing our work to restore and enhance Hampshire's chalk meadow grasslands and connecting communities to these important green spaces on their doorsteps.

This year we will be expanding our work and working with new partners, Natural Basingstoke and Andover Trees, on sites in Basingstoke and Andover while continuing our work in Winchester.



Meadow site plans 2026

As we enter our third year of the Magnificent Meadows project, we are learning and adapting our management interventions as we discover more about the sites we are working on.

There are still challenges working with contractors who cut and don't collect, creating more fertile areas for invasive plants to take hold.

Chalk meadow plants need low fertility soils to do well so we are working with land managers to really get this message across.



Rachel Remnant and meadow volunteers scything at Cowslip Field



Volunteer team growing

We now have a team of over 70 meadow volunteers who join us for traditional meadow management activities. It is a very weather dependent activity, so we really do need to make hay when the sun shines!

We learnt from last years' hot weather that an early hay cut can work well for some sites, so we have scheduled hay making weeks in June and July.

Read about our meadows project:
cprehampshire.org.uk/meadows

Find out more about volunteering:
cprehampshire.org.uk/volunteering/

‘On the Edge’ garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show

This year, CPRE will be represented at RHS Chelsea Flower Show with a centenary garden, ‘On the Edge’. Designed by Sarah Eberle, it highlights the often overlooked countryside at the edge of our towns that is under threat.

Don't miss the Chelsea special

In April, Roger Mortlock, CEO of National CPRE, and Sarah Eberle visited Cowslip Field with a BBC film crew to film a piece for RHS Chelsea Flower Show.



Roger Mortlock, Chief Executive, CPRE and ‘On the Edge’ garden designer Sarah Eberle

As well as talking Chelsea, it was a chance to view progress at the meadow site, which is now in its third year of restoration by CPRE Hampshire.

“I can barely believe it,” commented Roger Mortlock, “The ability of nature to bounce back on sites like this gives you masses of hope.”



Sarah Eberle’s Hampshire connection

Sarah Eberle is one of the UK’s most celebrated garden designers and holds the record for the most medals at RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

She also has a long-standing connection with the Hampshire countryside - including Cowslip Field near Winchester - which she shared with us:

“I trained in landscape architecture in London. My boyfriend at the time had parents in Southampton. We used to come through here on his motorbike, before the motorway was built and they moved the road.”

“I’ve since lived and worked in Hampshire. My children grew up around here, it’s all very familiar. Being here in this meadow today, it’s amazing to see how nature recovers. It shows that people and places can co-exist healthily, which is really fabulous.”

“How we manage nature and how we engage with nature it’s just amazing and feels like a big embrace.”



DON'T MISS

BBC coverage of RHS Chelsea Flower Show, featuring Sarah Eberle, Roger Mortlock and Cowslip Field, Winchester.

Available on BBC iPlayer - RHS Chelsea Flower Show 26 Ep.2

Successful centenary art exhibition celebrates Hampshire

A successful new art exhibition organised by CPRE Hampshire has helped raise vital funds to support countryside protection projects across the county.

Held at the Amanda Aldous Fine Art Gallery near Basingstoke from 15 to 18 May, the exhibition brought together Hampshire-based artists to celebrate the beauty and heritage of the local countryside. The collection featured a colourful mix of artistic styles and media, reflecting the deep connection between people and place.

The exhibition attracted visitors from across Hampshire, including a sell-out private viewing evening on opening night. All featured works were available to purchase, with proceeds helping to support CPRE Hampshire's work protecting rural landscapes and green spaces for future generations. More than £10,000 worth of art works sold, with several artists selling all their exhibited works.



Featured artist Sarah Capes said: "I am thrilled that three of my selected paintings sold. The exhibition, hanging and organising were all great – thank you to CPRE Hampshire for inviting me to participate."

The exhibition was more than a celebration – it was also a call to action, in the year that CPRE marks its 100th anniversary. We have just launched a new national 'On the Edge' campaign, calling for greater protection for the vital countryside on the edges of towns and cities. In Hampshire, our Magnificent Meadows project is an important part of this support, aided by fundraising events such as this art exhibition.

Dee Haas, Vice President, CPRE Hampshire said: "We had a very successful and busy few days. As well as supporting our charity work, the exhibition also helped encourage brilliant emerging artists whose love of rural Hampshire shone through in their work. I'd like to thank Amanda Aldous for the use of their inspirational gallery."



Many thanks to Dee Haas and the organising committee for curating this special art exhibition to celebrate our 100 year anniversary.

Planning success for Valued Landscape in Winchester

Lanham Lane is on the western edge of Winchester, extending into the countryside leading towards Sparsholt. The application was for 188 houses on a site not allocated in the current or emerging Local Plan, and appealed following Winchester City Council's failure to determine the application within the prescribed time period - a clear attempt by the developer to bypass the local planning system. If allowed it would start an urban expansion into open countryside of Winchester over a ridge which has defined the urban limit to the west to date

While the landscape in which the site sits was acknowledged as being sensitive in its role in the setting of Winchester, in the absence of any specific designation or indication of quality, the issue of whether it amounted to a Valued Landscape or not was much debated. From that discussion and her own experiences on site visits, the Inspector concluded that "the site forms part of an area that should be considered valued as possessing a combination of qualities that elevate it beyond the ordinary. These include the deeply rural and tranquil character of the locality, its scenic quality and contrasting far reaching views with enclosed lanes offering more filtered views, and the degree to which the sites and area are representative of key characteristics in the LCA.....". NPPF Para 187(a) was held to apply. The fact that the site is well contained by hedgerows and trees and not that remarkable on its own did not prevent it being found part of a wider area of Valued Landscape. (Paras 24-47 of the Appeal Decision.)



Views over open countryside from Lanham Lane , Winchester

This an important and up to date decision in relation to our Local Plan work:

- notably in relation to containing the urban expansion of Winchester in a westerly direction
- assessing proposed site allocations for Valued Landscape
- assessing proposed site allocations which would breach natural barriers preventing urban expansion
- confirming that a site adjoining an urban area may form part of a wider area which is a Valued Landscape, even if the site itself it is not remarkable
- confirming that Valued Landscape is relevant through the NPPF, even if not identified as such in the Local Plan and despite absence of a specific policy to protect Valued Landscapes.

This case demonstrates that CPRE needs to fight to retain protection of the value of landscape in the new NPPF, as it was only the issues of landscape and visual impact which won the day in this case.

The result might have been different if Winchester City Council could not have shown a 5 year land supply on the tilted balance, but the Inspector attached significant weight to the very advanced emerging Local Plan which has finished Examination and is expected to be adopted in early 2026 which, with new allocations not including this site, will provide a 5 year supply.

Watch ‘The Hedge’

A beautiful tribute to our Hampshire Hedge project and people

Filmmaker Simon Dures has been following our Hampshire Hedge project for the last two years. He has joined us at numerous events and interviewed people involved with the project in different ways.

We are delighted to be able to share his film ‘The Hedge’ with you. It is a real celebration of hedgerows and the community of people who are working to raise awareness of the importance of hedgerows in our landscape.




“It’s really exciting to see more and more people be interested in hedges.”

Ellie Banks, Hedgerow Project Officer, CPRE Hampshire

Please do make a cuppa, relax and enjoy our beautiful film all about the Hampshire Hedge project.

<https://youtu.be/RmeVKVmvYlo>



A FILM BY  Simon Dures