

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Achievements since last AGM (held in October 2016)



Planning training session for our volunteers - Sept 2017

Delivering Quality Planning Support

CPRE Somerset took a real step forward in April when Liz Payne, our new Planner, began working part time for the branch. It is already proving to be really valuable having a qualified person "in house" with an overview of all the different Local Plans, strategies and policies that steer future development but also aim to protect our countryside in Somerset. This is no simple task here in Somerset - with our five different district councils, one County Council, a National Park and four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, all with their own constraints and priorities.

A POSITIVE STEP FORWARD

Planning Casework

In the last year, our small band of volunteers, and now Liz, have looked at almost 70 planning applications and submitted detailed comments on many of them. We have examined and commented on Highways England's proposals for two major new roads - the A303 and the A358 east of Taunton. We spoke at the appeal hearing against large scale housing in the Shudrick Valley, Ilminster and also appeared at the public inquiry into designating a new village green for Norton St Philip. In September, we held a round table meeting to look at the many development pressures on Taunton and how this can possibly fit in with the model of being a Garden Town.

We recently ran a training session for our Planning Volunteers, running through the golden rules of how to respond to planning applications and understanding Local Plans and policies.



CPRE Planning booklets

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

This year, Trustees made the bold decision to appoint a part-time Planner. It was agreed that we could fund this arrangement in the short term, using our financial reserves. We must seek external funding sources to allow us to continue this arrangement and Trustees are now looking at fundraising options. Our new Treasurer, John Roberts, has set up internet banking and we are encouraging our members to raise funds while they shop online using the Easyfundraising website and app.

For a full copy of the accounts, contact the Branch Manager.

- We currently have 747 members and around 15 active volunteers. We always need more, so please do help if you can.

- We have over 650 followers on twitter

Facts & Figures

- CPRE Somerset's annual income is less than £20, 000 -Our income is largely from our membership subscriptions and we receive occasional charitable donations and legacies.

SHARING OUR MESSAGE



Looking Forward

Another positive change this year is that the branch has now adopted a Forward Plan. This is an action plan that sets out our priorities for the years ahead and is already helping to steer our work and campaigns. Each time Trustees meet, we update the Forwad Plan to ensure that we are staying on track. If you would like to see a copy, please contact the Branch Manager, Becky Collier.

We are striving more than ever to raise our profile and share our campaign messages to a wider audience. Chris Lewis, our Chair, gave a talk to Taunton Probus Group and he will shortly be doing the same with two similar groups in Frome. We have extended our twice yearly printed newsletter from four to six pages so that our members can have a better idea of the work we are doing. We are regularly featured in the local press, and Chris Lewis has appeared several times on local radio and TV this year, talking about issues such as Taunton Garden Town and new road proposals. We continue to share updates on social media, especially Twitter and Facebook.

We attended the Green Scythe Fair and the Yeovil Show again this year, promoting our Waste of Space campaign and inviting the public to tell us about brownfield sites that could be better used for housing or employment. We gathered many new examples all over the county, which are now plotted on our interactive map.



Membership Matters

CPRE Somerset would be nothing without its members you are at the heart of everything we do and we love hearing from you. Across England, CPRE has thousands of loyal members but all branches face a tough challenge recruiting new members. Somerset is no different and our membership numbers have been slowly falling but we are happy to say that in the last year, that downward trend has slowed significantly. We hope that our continued efforts to keep in touch with existing members and to attract new ones are starting to bear fruit.

As a bonus for their CPRE membership, we recently sent a copy of CPRE's new booklet "What's Special To You: Landscape Issues In Your Neighbourhood Plan" to all our Parish and Town Council members.

Co-operation

Working With Our Partners

- We work with local action groups campaigning against inappropriate development. This year we have worked alongside the Garden Town Not Bypass Town group, Save the Sparkford Vale, Save Shudrick Valley Group, Save The Charltons and many others.

- We play an active part in CPRE South-West meetings, alongside 6 other CPRE branches.

- We are on the panel for the Mendip Hills Fund and are proud to be a member of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership

- Our West Somerset Trustee sits on Exmoor National Park's Landscape Advisory Committee.

- One of our Trustees attends the Hinkley Community Forum. Consultations

- We commented on the review of the Sedgemoor Local Plan, expressing our concern at the degree of new development allocated for Cheddar., which lacks the necessary infrastructure to support such development.

- We commented on the Nexus 25 Strategic Employment Site consultation, expressing our concerns at a lack of a holistic plan for Taunton.

Learning From Others

We are members of the CPRE Staff Network and the CPRE Planning Network - both vital channels for us to share ideas with and learn from other branches and colleagues.
Our Branch Manager participated in an Integrated Campaign Training day organised by CPRE national office
One of our volunteers attended the 2016 annual Planing Law Conference in London, organised by Cornerstone Barristers
We sought advice from the Environmental Law Foundation on the planning definitions relating to slurry lagoons and earth banks associated with a retrospective planning application in Sedgemoor.

- Our Planner attended a seminar on capturing land value at CPRE national office.



CPRE Somerset

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