

# SOMERSET VOICE



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Standing up for your countryside

The newsletter of the **SOMERSET BRANCH** of  
the Campaign to Protect Rural England

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

Why are so many green spaces at risk?



The Government  
wants to build  
1 million homes



Suitable brownfield  
sites have space for  
1.1 million of them

# BROWNFIELDFIRST

## BROWNFIELD FIRST

CPRE Somerset Chair, Chris Lewis said:  
*"This report shows that there are pockets of brownfield land in our larger towns and even in our villages that are still being overlooked by developers. Even in a rural county like Somerset, there is huge potential to make more of our brownfield land. It is unacceptable that we continue to allow large scale housing development to tear up our green fields and dominate our village communities while brownfield sites lie unused, often in prime locations. Somerset needs new homes and we should make better use of our brownfield sites to deliver good quality housing and vibrant communities whilst protecting our beautiful countryside."*

According to the latest figures, Somerset has 260 hectares of brownfield land and the total is increasing. This could be enough for over 6300 homes.

CPRE's analysis of councils' Brownfield Land Registers, published in March, demonstrates the huge potential that building on derelict and vacant land has to help regenerate towns and cities and to provide new homes across England. Our "State of Brownfield 2019" report shows that there is space on suitable brownfield land to accommodate more than one million new homes. Two-thirds of these sites are 'shovel ready' and could make an immediate contribution to meeting housing need, as they have been confirmed as being deliverable within five years.

To understand more on housing issues in Somerset, watch our 2 minute video.



Just search for "CPRE Somerset" on YouTube or find it on our website



### SAVE THE DATE:

At this year's AGM - on Friday 18th October - we will be discussing examples of brownfield regeneration in Somerset. Speakers confirmed so far are Chard Regeneration Scheme and CPRE Chief Executive, Crispin Truman. The venue will be Chard Guildhall. Invitations will be sent to members nearer the time and more details will be posted on our website.

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[www.cpresomerset.org.uk](http://www.cpresomerset.org.uk)



# HISTORIC SIGNPOSTS

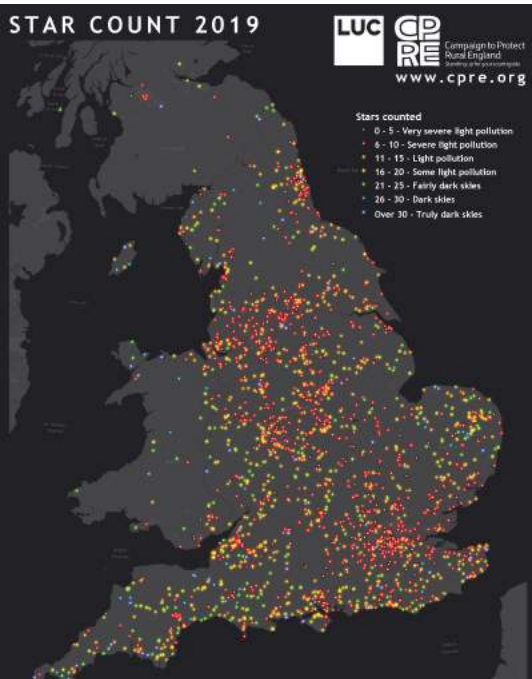


Parish Councils wishing to restore their historic fingerposts are now able to take part in safety training workshops run by Somerset County Council Highways. Those who have attended the workshops and are within 10 miles of Hinkley C, are eligible for our funding and we are encouraging them to apply.



Williton Parish Council are hoping to restore several damaged fingerposts, including this one (*left*) in the town centre which needs a new arm and will be repainted in the style seen on this old postcard (*right*)

## STAR COUNT 2019 RESULTS



Thank you to everyone who took part in Star Count 2019 in February. A record 2,300 people took part across the whole country. Here are the results at a glance: The redder the dots, the less stars were visible.

As you would expect, the results in Somerset were mixed - some areas had truly dark skies but others struggled to see more than 10 stars in the Orion constellation as a result of severe light pollution.

If you have concerns about light pollution in your area, we can help. Our website [www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk](http://www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk) contains lots of useful advice so we can all experience the wonder of dark skies

# PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Last year's photography competition was such a success that we have decided to make it an annual event. For 2019, our theme is "**Enjoying the Somerset Countryside**".

We are inviting you to share your photos of your best times out with your family and friends - even four legged ones! You could be walking the dog, riding your bike, having a picnic, attending a festival, picking blackberries, milking the cows, using traditional skills like thatching or hedge-laying, quietly birdwatching or even playing pool sticks - the possibilities are endless! We would love to see people sending in their photos from across the whole county, to share just what our countryside means to us all.



*One of our favourite entries from last year by Ben Redward*

Amateur photographers can submit up to three images to this free competition. The best entries will be displayed on our website over the summer. Two judges, CPRE Chair Chris Lewis and professional photographer, Kit Houghton, will then choose their favourite. The winner will be announced at our AGM and they will receive a prize of £100.

**Entries should be emailed as an attachment to [admin@cpresomerset.org.uk](mailto:admin@cpresomerset.org.uk) by midnight on 16th August 2019** along with the following information:

- Photographer's name
- Address
- Email address
- Telephone number
- Location of photo
- Date photo taken
- Name of photograph or caption

Competition rules are on our website or get in touch for a copy. **Good luck and have fun!**



### Did you know?

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), there are potential significant changes that could affect **footpaths and bridleways in your area?**

Sections 53 to 56 of the Act prescribe a cut off date (1st Jan 2026) for the recording on definitive maps of footpaths and bridleways created before 1949. Certain paths which have not been claimed before the deadline may well be extinguished. We invited our Trustee, **Hugh Williams**, to tell us his story .....

.....**Haselbury Plucknett Parish Council** has a working group dedicated to the footpaths in and around our village and we have been very active over the last few years. Last year Somerset County Council advised the Parish of the status of the footpaths with a usage classification. This was reviewed as many of the footpaths were deemed low use, which we felt was not the case. All the footpath classifications have now been updated and there is a working project to maintain the footpaths. Some of the footpaths have been given a “permissive way”. This is often used to reroute the footpath around the edge of a field rather than across the middle. These are not legally binding, and the old route still needs to be recorded.



Many of the older wooden stiles have now been replaced with new gates to allow easier access. Working with Somerset County Council, Haselbury Plucknett Parish Council and local groups to date have replaced 21 stiles with pedestrian gates. While the modern gates may not be in keeping with the older historic wooden stiles, they are much safer and give greater access to all ages and dog walkers in our village. This program of work has also played a significant part in our entry for Village in Bloom.

# USE THEM OR LOSE THEM?



*Hugh Williams and the team have been working hard to make footpaths more usable all year round.*

Footpaths that were very wet and muddy have had revised drainage and a layer of hardcore put down to ensure the footpaths are accessible all year round. This has helped residents from Haselbury Plucknett and the adjoining villages to walk the footpaths with ease. This will allow more people to use our footpaths, improving health, mental wellbeing and social interaction as well as enabling them to enjoy the amazing flora & fauna that Somerset has to offer.

Haselbury Wildlife & Habitats Team has also made and installed 80 birdboxes around the village and have plans for bat boxes & insect homes. The Village in Bloom team are also planting insect friendly wildflowers and trees.

## *It's not too late for your village to start.....*

It has taken Haselbury Plucknett four years to get to this point, and there is still much work to be done to ensure our footpaths remain for many years to come. We plan to continue to replace the remaining stiles and broken gates, and to create a booklet of the walks around the village for our visitors.

if you feel inspired and would like to run a project in your village, a good starting point is **Don't Lose Your Way**, a campaign run by **The Ramblers** to encourage people to register lost footpaths. There is lots of advice on their website **www.ramblers.org.uk**

# PLANNING UPDATE

## Mendip

Any CPRE members living in Mendip are very welcome to join our friendly group which meets 2 or 3 times a year. Get in touch for details of the next meeting.

The group has scrutinised the Mendip Local Plan Part 2 as it has gone through various stages of consultation over the last two years or so. We are pleased to see that many of our concerns have been addressed. The revised plan will be examined in public in July.

We continue to work closely with the Mendip Hills AONB and are proud to be a member of the AONB Partnership and to sit on the board of the Mendip Hills Fund. We also enjoy a good relationship with the Mendip Society who do so much great work on the Hills.

In January, we objected to an application for 6 homes, 5 of which would be affordable homes, in Westcombe. This was a complex case for us as CPRE is a leading advocate of the need for rural affordable housing, but not in totally inappropriate locations such as this one. The development site was in open countryside at the end of a very long single track cul-de-sac, and to compound matters, it was within the setting of a listed building. The applicant relied on the "rural exception site" argument which allows for building affordable homes in areas outside development limits that would not normally be granted planning permission. However, no evidence was provided that the need could not be met in a more sustainable location. Moreover there was no "clear support" for the proposal in the community, contrary to the relevant policy requirement. The application was eventually withdrawn.

In March, we were contacted by residents in North Wootton who were concerned about loss of agricultural land, negative landscape impact, light pollution and potential disturbance and loss of tranquillity caused by plans for seven timber holiday lodges with hot tubs in the village setting. We were particularly concerned about the potential for increased light pollution as North Wootton currently has some of the darkest skies in Mendip.

We submitted CPRE's dark skies mapping as evidence in our objection. We felt that, even if lighting was to be strictly controlled, the quality of dark skies could be at risk due to this proposal as the use of outdoor hot tubs would inevitably encourage late night use of outdoor lighting in a previously unlit area. The application has now been refused.

## Sedgemoor



Sedgemoor's Local Plan Review was completed and the Plan was adopted by full Council in February.

We are happy to welcome the Friends of Quantock as CPRE members and we look forward to building a closer working relationship with them.

We continue to attend the Hinkley C Community Forum when we can and have raised concerns about light pollution coming from the construction site.

Our Chair, Chris Lewis, gave a talk about CPRE at the AGM of Cheddar Parish Council in April which was well attended and generated lots of lively debate. We have since been in contact with Cheddar PC about concerns they have regarding an application for more housing. Cheddar has had some very large housing developments in recent years and there is a fear that local infrastructure, particularly transport and roads, cannot cope with more.

After 5 years of hard work and a referendum, the Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in October 2018 and its policies have now become part of the Sedgemoor Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot limit development but it can steer where it goes and influence layout and design. We sincerely hope that the Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan, which represents the wishes of the local community, will be respected despite the ever increasing pressure from developers.

# PLANNING UPDATE

## South Somerset

On a point of principle, we objected to an application for two semi-detached houses in Low Ham, a tiny hamlet with no facilities. The applicant was arguing that it formed part of a 'cluster' of settlements including High Ham, Henley, Wearne and Pitney, and that they all shared services. We feared that, if this argument were to be accepted uncritically, it would drive a coach and horses through South Somerset Local Plan policies that are supposed to protect small villages and hamlets with minimal facilities. We were pleased to see that the planning officer, when refusing it, closely analysed the applicant's argument and pointed out its flaws. For example, local residents there would be more likely to find what they need in Langport or Huish Episcopi rather than in small neighbouring villages.

One of the reasons why the Officer recommended refusal in that case was because the proposed development formed part of a distinctive green space separating groups of buildings, and it would therefore harm the dispersed village character. This in-filling of the larger open spaces in rural villages to create a suburban effect is an issue of deep concern to us, and why we are currently working with local communities to fight housing estate applications in Charlton Adam and Lovington.

One of the reasons why South Somerset's villages are under so much pressure is perhaps because the large Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) planned for Yeovil have not yet been delivered. These are allocated in the Local Plan and we accept that they must be built, despite the loss of quality farmland. However, there have been revisions and amendments to these much delayed plans which have been a cause for concern. There was a suggestion that the proposed new primary school forming part of the Keyford SUE was to be relocated which would have damaged the site of a Roman Villa. In partnership with the affected Parish Councils (East Coker PC & Barwick & Stoford PC), and the local MP Marcus Fysh, we wrote to the Secretary of State asking for this application to be called in.

Happily, South Somerset District Council has confirmed that the location of the school will not be moved after all. Our concern was primarily landscape protection and trying to keep the built development to the north of Placket/Pavyotts Lane and for the moment we seem to have achieved this.

We wrote a comprehensive objection to an application for up to 35 dwellings in Haselbury Plucknett. In our opinion, the application was submitted without adequate community consultation and is, we believe, in an inappropriate location and has an unsuitable layout.

## Somerset West and Taunton

A new Local Authority, Somerset West & Taunton, was created on 1st April 2019, merging the old authorities of West Somerset and Taunton Deane.

Several different people asked for our help in objecting to a plan for 5 houses on Beacon Road in Minehead, in a conservation area and close to the Exmoor National Park boundary.

A proposal for a leisure facility at Bittescombe Hill Farm, Upton, has caused much local concern. One of our volunteers attended the Parish Council meeting and we subsequently objected regarding the potential impact on dark skies and tranquillity as well as concerns over access and the impact on wildlife.



Scheduled trains will link Taunton to the West Somerset Railway on peak days this summer. The Exmoor Gateway Project will see a Great Western Railways shuttle service running from Taunton to Bishops Lydeard. A bus link is already provided but it is hoped that the appeal of a rail link will make it easier for people to access the heritage railway and the stunning landscapes of Exmoor National Park without the need for a car. CPRE's recent research shows that more than one third of people can't easily access our finest landscapes such as AONBs and National Parks, so we applaud projects like this.

# EVENTS



## A DAY AT THE DUMP

**"Everybody should see this!"** is a quote often heard from visitors as they stand at the tipping face of the landfill site at Dimmer. Only when you see the sheer enormity of it with your own eyes can you fully comprehend the importance of being sustainable.

**Come and see it for yourself.....**

That is why we have arranged a "Day At The Dump" guided by the experts at the Carymoor Environmental Trust. For over 20 years, the Trust has been carrying out pioneering land restoration and habitat creation on 100 acres of capped landfill just outside Castle Cary. The nature reserve is close to the active landfill site at Dimmer and our visit will give a clear demonstration of how we must all try to reduce our impact on the environment - and the positive steps we can all take.

Our group visit for CPRE members and their guests will be at **2.00pm on Wednesday 4th September**.

The **two hour** visit will allow us to see the landfill site in operation on a working day as well as some of the restored habitats. The cost will be **£7.50 for CPRE members and £10.00 for non-members**, including a cup of tea in the visitor centre.

NB: the visit will involve a 1-2 mile walk with some uneven ground.

**Numbers are limited, so please book your place via [admin@cpresomerset.org.uk](mailto:admin@cpresomerset.org.uk) or 0845 269 4206**

## WYKE FARMS

In March, members and their guests enjoyed a fascinating visit to Wyke Farms 100% Green Energy Centre at Wyke Champflower, near Bruton.

We were greeted by Lucy Francis, Brand Manager, and welcomed into the warmth of the purpose built visitor centre for tea and biscuits. Lucy explained the history of Wyke Farms and how the Clothier family have been making cheese for some 800 years. Grandmother Ivy Clothier's ancient recipe for cheddar cheese is still used today and the original recipe is kept in a safe on the family farm. The farm is 1500 acres and has 1000 milking cows. Milk is also brought in from 110 farms within a 65 mile radius to produce 18,000 tonnes of cheese each year. Cows at Wyke Farms graze outside from March to October and those farms supplying milk which farm sustainably are paid a premium rate. Cheese is exported to 160 countries worldwide.

Soon it was time to don our hi-viz vests to meet James Barwick, Sustainable Energy Manager, for a tour around the green energy plant. The giant anaerobic digesters are fed with cow slurry, waste products from the dairy, straw, apple pomace from local cider makers and bread waste from a factory in Bristol. They only use food waste and do not take in bio-energy crops.



James explained that the science of AD plants is similar to cheese making in that you use specific bio-cultures and have to have the right conditions to optimise their growth. Enough energy is produced to run the dairy and a surplus is sold to the grid. The energy produced is enough to power 6000 homes Wyke Farms even use solar power to cool the milk before it enters the cheese making process. James answered lots of questions from our knowledgeable CPRE members and then it was time for a cheese tasting! Many thanks to Wyke Farms for a great visit.

# BRANCH NEWS

Sadly, Liz Payne has had to give up her planning role with us for personal reasons. Liz made a tremendous difference to our work during her time with us and we wish her all the best and continue to stay in touch. We are happy to announce that we have now recruited Judith Chubb-Whittle to take on our planning work. Judith started in May and will be working part-time for us. She has been using her planning skills as a volunteer with the Mendip Hills AONB for several years and she has first hand experience of neighbourhood plans and dealing with contentious planning applications. Welcome Judith and we look forward to working with you!

We are also happy to welcome David Julian as our newest trustee. David has recently retired as Economic Development Manager at South Somerset District Council and is already proving to be a valuable member of our team. David, who lives in Ashill, has previously worked for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and has a sound understanding of the pressures on our countryside.

## Giving Just Got Easier

Donate with  
**JustGiving**



We can now accept donations online via JustGiving, the charity fundraising service. Donating this way allows you to easily add a Gift Aid donation, meaning we can claim an extra 25% from the taxman. You can link to our JustGiving page from the Home page of our website [www.cpresomerset.org.uk](http://www.cpresomerset.org.uk)

Don't forget to nominate us as your chosen charity on Easyfundraising when you shop online. It costs you nothing but all those pennies from the retailers really add up. If you need any help setting this up, just get in touch with Becky Collier.



*Our new Planner, Judith Chubb-Whittle has a deep love of Somerset's landscapes - as shown by her wonderful oil paintings.*

## Who We Are

**Chairman: Chris Lewis** [cglewis42@gmail.com](mailto:cglewis42@gmail.com)  
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### Branch Executive Committee & Trustees

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## [www.cpresomerset.org.uk](http://www.cpresomerset.org.uk)

*This newsletter is published twice a year by CPRE Somerset and is sent free to all members of CPRE Somerset Branch. To submit an article or letter for possible inclusion in the next issue, please send it to Becky Collier, Branch Manager. Contributors are responsible for their own views*

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# SUPPORT OUR WORK



Campaign to Protect Rural England  
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## JOIN US

IN STANDING UP FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

### YOUR DETAILS

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Surname: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

### Staying in touch

Your support is important to us so we would like to keep in touch. CPRE and your local CPRE branch will write to you about your membership and other things we think would be of interest to you. This may include sending you information about our work, campaigns, fundraising, events and other ways you can keep the fight for our countryside going.

Please let us know below if you would also be happy to hear from us by:

Email  Yes My email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone  Yes My phone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
SMS  Yes My mobile No. \_\_\_\_\_  
(if different to above)

**Don't forget you can choose to change how we communicate with you or ask to stop hearing from us at any time. Simply email us at [supporterservices@cpre.org.uk](mailto:supporterservices@cpre.org.uk) or call 0800 163680.**

### YOUR MEMBERSHIP

CPRE is a national charity with a regional network – we have a CPRE branch in every county of England. When you join CPRE you also become a member of your local CPRE county branch. If you would prefer to belong to a different branch from where you live, please write your preferred county here: \_\_\_\_\_

Upon returning this membership form, your data will be passed to your CPRE branch for membership and so they can stay in touch. All CPRE county branches are separate registered charities, with the exception of Durham and Northumberland.

**Please be assured we do not share, sell or swap your information with other organisations outside of CPRE and our county branch network.**

**CPRE membership starts at £3 per month but giving at a higher level will help us do more to protect the countryside.**

### I wish to pay a Direct Debit of:

- £3\* per month  
 £5 per month  
 £10 per month

I'd rather pay £ \_\_\_\_\_ per month/year (delete as appropriate)

\*Recommended minimum. In order to receive copies of our magazine *Countryside Voice* you will need to donate a minimum of £3 a month.

### Please complete the Direct Debit form below

Are you renewing your membership?  Yes  No

How did you hear about us? (e.g. radio, TV, social media, local branch, other): \_\_\_\_\_

**Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate. Simply tick the box and complete the declaration below. Thank you!**

*giftaid it*

Please treat as Gift Aid all donations and subscriptions I make from the date of this declaration, until I notify you otherwise.

I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

If your circumstances change, or you want to cancel your declaration, please contact us on 0800 163680.

Full name of taxpayer \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Privacy:** CPRE holds and manages your details in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). To find out more about how we manage your personal information please see our Privacy Policy at [www.cpre.org.uk/privacypolicy](http://www.cpre.org.uk/privacypolicy)



Campaign to Protect Rural England  
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### Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit



#### Name and full postal address of your Bank/Building Society

To: The Manager Bank/Building Society  
Address  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

\_\_\_\_\_

Branch Sort Code

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Bank/Building Society account number

\_\_\_\_\_

Service User Number

7 2 4 2 4 5

Reference (for office use only)

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

#### Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay CPRE Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction will remain with CPRE and, if so, my details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

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Make a one off donation with JustGiving

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Please complete this form and return to:

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