



We are pleased to be able to support the restoration of Somerset's historic signposts in areas close to Hinkley C

Celebrating Rural Somerset

Since the branch took the bold step of appointing a part-time Planner in April 2017, we have been able to devote a bit more time to developing positive projects as well as getting involved in planning matters

We successfully applied to the Hinkley Point C Community Fund and were awarded a grant of £5000 over two years to help nearby Parish Councils to restore their historic signposts. Somerset is one of only four English counties that retains these iconic and much loved features but many are in a sorry state as Somerset County Council no longer has funds to repair them.

A POSITIVE NEW DIRECTION

We are now proud sponsors of the new "Village Shop of the Year" award in partnership with the Mid-Somerset series of newspapers and Somerset Live. Village shops are often a real lifeline for rural communities and we want to reward the best and celebrate the amazing things that can be achieved.

We have also sponsored a "Somerset's Changing Landscape" photography competition together with the Somerset County Gazette.

Protecting Rural Somerset

As Liz, our Planner, can concentrate purely on planning issues there is now time to engage more thoroughly with Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan consultations and help to ensure that the value of the countryside is given sufficient weight in their policies. Where possible, we try to discuss our concerns about planning proposals directly with Local Authority officers. We are increasingly getting involved with pre-application consultations and working with local people and Parish Councils. Whilst still very definitely objecting to proposals which we feel are contrary to policy, this more proactive approach is proving effective and allows us to give practical support to local people who ask for our help.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

We are grateful to all members who contributed so generously to our Save Our Somerset Countryside appeal. Including Gift Aid donations, the appeal brought in £2790 - thank you.

The Hinkley C Community Grant includes a contribution towards staff costs and we continue to explore new ways of bringing in extra income to help us balance the books. You can help us to raise funds by choosing CPRE Somerset as your charity when you shop online using the easyfundraising tool.

Contact us for a full set of accounts.

A Voice for the Countryside

With funding from CPRE South-West, we have created two short videos explaining our work and the issues around housing in Somerset. Find them on our website or search CPRE Somerset on YouTube.

You can follow us on Twitter and find us on Facebook or contact us to sign up for our e-newsletter. We produce a printed newsletter for our members twice a year.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Did you know that, back in 1926, CPRE was formed by the joining together of lots of different campaigning groups who all shared the same desire to protect rural England. Now, over 90 years later, we still recognise that the best way to stand up for our countryside is to work together with others. Here are a few examples of the partnerships we have strengthened this year.

We work with local action groups campaigning against inappropriate development and for positive change. This year we have worked alongside the Save Cuckoo Hill group in Frome, the group campaigning against new road proposals for Glastonbury and local residents fighting inappropriately large housing developments in villages like Henstridge and Ashill.

- We play an active part in CPRE South-West meetings
- We are on the grant awards panel for the Mendip Hills Fund and are proud to be a member of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership
- We share a place on the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership with our colleagues at CPRE Devon.
- We sit on Exmoor National Park's Landscape Advisory Committee and also attend the Hinkley Community Forum.
- We were pleased to welcome Anna Mathieson, CPRE's Branch & Regional Development Manager, to a recent Trustee meeting and gained a lot through hearing the latest news from national office.

Consultations

- We have represented the branch and CPRE South West on the Purpose Project Network, made up of staff and volunteers from around the country, all helping to shape the future purpose of CPRE and how we can continue to have a strong voice and influence.
- We have added our views to the "one CPRE" responses to national consultations on the revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Agriculture Bill.
- We will contribute to CPRE's response to the Glover Review, examining the position, status and effectiveness of National Parks and AONBs.

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 a MediaTraining day for SW branches and led by Jim Hardcastle, Mendip Hills AONB Manager.
- Our Transport Volunteer, John Roberts, attended the Transport for New Homes event in London, organised by the Campaign for Better Transport.
- We attended the "Devon's Housing Numbers" event organised by CPRE Devon in October 2018.
- We participated in a Neighbourhood Plans workshop run by CPRE Gloucestershire.
- We completed training to ensure we are compliant with the new General Data Protection Regulations.

Reaching Out

This year, we have organised several events and we have been happy to widen the invitation beyond CPRE members, encouraging new audiences to find out about CPRE and what we do. Starting with the 2017 AGM "The End of The Road" - we encouraged groups with interests in sustainable transport to attend, along with our own members. What resulted was the best attendance at an AGM for many years and a great deal of lively and well-informed debate.

In March, we visited Porlock Bay Oysters to highlight how the efforts of the local community are bringing back local jobs and a fantastic gourmet product to this beautiful area.



In May, we had a fascinating and very enjoyable tour of Cheddar Ales Brewery. About half of those attending were non-CPRE members so it was a great opportunity to explain more about what we do and to make new friends over a pint or two and some delicious fish and chips!