

# Summer 2024 Newsletter



The countryside charity  
Staffordshire

## CPRE Staffordshire Summer Newsletter

SUMMER NEWS FROM CPRE STAFFORDSHIRE

[WWW.CPRESTAFFORDSHIRE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.CPRESTAFFORDSHIRE.ORG.UK)

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Hello and welcome to our summer newsletter.

In light of rising costs, we have made the difficult decision to discontinue the printing and posting of our newsletter after the current issue. In future, the newsletter will only be sent out by email.

This decision was not made lightly, as we understand the value of

staying connected with our members. However, printing and posting the newsletters is costing us £640 annually, which is hard to justify in the current economic climate and would be far better spent on our campaigning work. Please let us know your current email address so you can receive our latest news and updates.

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September:  
Countryside Day: Tour of  
Blithfield Hall, lunch and  
AGM.

24<sup>th</sup> September and 23<sup>rd</sup>  
January: Online planning  
training for parish  
councils.

*Above photo credit: Walton Play  
Park, Stone, Noel Bennett.*

## Chairman's address

With our AGM fast approaching, this is always the time of year when we take stock of our achievements over the past 12 months and look to the future. I look forward to seeing some of you at Blithfield Hall for our Countryside Day event on Saturday 7th September. I would also like to pay special mention to Anne Clendon, who is stepping down as a trustee and Vice-Chair after more than 20 years on the CPRE Staffordshire committee. A member of CPRE since 1998, Anne organised many social events and visits. We are extremely grateful to Anne for her dedication to CPRE.



Our standout achievement this year is the Hedgerow Heroes project. As part of our core aim of enhancing the countryside, I am delighted to report that we have planted over 2.6 kilometers of new

hedgerow across Staffordshire. These new hedgerows will not only enhance the beauty of our landscape but also play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity, providing habitat corridors for wildlife, and contributing to the fight against climate change. This project has brought together volunteers, local communities, and a range of different organisations and project partners, showcasing what we can achieve through collaboration and shared passion. We are most grateful to Claire Geoghegan, who did an excellent job as project manager.



I would also like to thank all the schools who entered our Green Schools Trophy awards scheme. It was great to see the range of work being done by schools around the county to inspire the next generation to help wildlife thrive. Congratulations to the winning school, St

John's C of E Primary Academy in Stafford.

We have continued to be actively involved in reviewing and responding to numerous planning applications. Gerald Kells, who is both a CPRE member and planning consultant, produced an in-depth report on housing numbers in the West Midlands, which underpinned our response to the South Staffordshire Plan.

We have also focused on empowering local communities through education and training. In September, Hannah Barter of Urban Vision will deliver the first of two planning training sessions for parish councils. These sessions will help equip councillors with the knowledge and tools they need to effectively engage in the planning process and advocate for their communities.

Have a lovely summer!

With best wishes,

Mohammed Khuram,  
Chairman.

## FUTURE EVENTS

**Online Planning  
Training for Parish**



## Councils

Together with our colleagues at CPRE Cheshire, CPRE Derbyshire and CPRE Shropshire, we will be holding an interactive online training session from 6-8pm on Tuesday 24th September and Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January on the planning system in England, covering legislation, designations and statutory development plans. We'll examine the role of planning and how we can shape and inform our rural communities. We will also discuss how to make effective representations in planning, exploring what are material considerations and how to engage in the planning process. This session will also include a range of planning case studies.

The session will be delivered on Zoom by Hannah Barter, Director of [Urban Vision](#), who has over 15 years' experience in planning and community development, working in the public,

private and third sectors.

Tickets can be booked on our website.

### **Countryside Day: Tour of Blithfield Hall, lunch and AGM**



Saturday 7th September is Countryside Day, an initiative spearheaded by CPRE Sussex to raise awareness of the countryside and how it benefits us all. To mark the occasion, we invite you to join us for a tour of historic Blithfield Hall just north of Rugeley - not normally open to the public. We will have a tour of the Hall itself and the adjacent church, as well as viewing the Orangery, followed by lunch and our AGM in the Great Hall. Visit our website to book your tickets. The agenda and nominations form will also be posted on our website.

## LOCAL NEWS

The winner of the 2024 Green Schools Trophy is St John's CofE Primary Academy in Stafford.

All Staffordshire schools were invited to showcase their conservation and environmental projects for a chance to hold the CPRE Green Schools Trophy for a year.

St John's is working hard to engage all pupils with nature and the benefits of being outside. This year they have taken an old unloved part of the grounds and using the 'no dig' method we are trying to turn it into a wildlife haven. They have planted a mix of British wildflower seeds to encourage a range of wildlife to the area.

The school has also installed a pond onsite alongside wildlife planters, apple tree and bird feeders, runs weekly Forest School sessions, and has planted fruit trees on its grounds. The kitchen does not use single-use plastic cups and the school building has solar panels on the roof. Children can join the eco committee,

gardening club and the Junior Foresters' Club.



Ellen Spry, one of our volunteers, ran a willow-weaving workshop for the children in July. Ellen has also kindly provided all the schools who entered for the award with a kit to make a bird-feeder out of willow.

## Let's Talk Transport



How can Staffordshire's transport network best support everyone?

What walking routes would you like to see in your community?

As the council develops its new Local Transport Plan, help shape the future by getting involved.

We're pleased to have been appointed to the county council's External Sounding Board as it works on its new Local Transport Plan.

As rural communities in particular face many difficulties when it comes to accessing public transport, the council has asked us to canvas the views of our members as to what they would like to see included in the new Local Transport Plan to ensure that the transport network supports everyone.

Let the council know your views - whether it's on bus services or walking routes - and find out more about how you can get involved in shaping the future of local transport.

<https://letstalk.staffordshire.gov.uk/let-s-talk-transport>

## VOLUNTEERS' CORNER

## A thank you to Anne Clendon

Our longest-serving trustee and Vice-Chair, Anne Clendon, is stepping down this year after many years on the committee.



*Anne with her Special Contribution award from national CPRE in 2020*

We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to Anne for her long service and dedication to CPRE.

After joining CPRE in 1998, Anne was first elected to the CPRE Staffordshire committee in October 2000. She arranged many popular trips and visits for members to gardens and places of interest, including Bethesda Chapel in Hanley, the First



World War Hut on Cannock Chase, Heath House, near Tean, Castern Hall in Ilam, Tissington Hall, Merevale Hall, and Saint Mary the Virgin church in Colton.

Anne has done a considerable amount of voluntary work within her community, having served on Colwich Parish Council for many years and been a leading light in the Haywoods' successful Britain in Bloom activities.

### New trustee



We are pleased to welcome Andy Proctor to our Board of Trustees.

Andy has worked in the NHS for over 20 years, where he is now a senior executive. Andy is also a qualified drystone waller and can hedgelay as well. He is passionate about how these traditional skills provide opportunities to preserve cultural heritage, maintain our countryside, and provide opportunities to support

physical and mental well-being.

Please get in touch if you are a farmer or landowner looking to host a dry stone walling work party on your land - we would love to hear from you!

## CPRE NATIONAL NEWS

### CPRE ready to work with Labour Government

With Labour securing a landslide victory in the 2024 general election, CPRE has expressed its readiness to work with the incoming government to deliver its vision of a thriving and beautiful countryside for everyone.

In her first speech as chancellor, Rachel Reeves introduced proposed changes to the planning system, including a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and mandatory housebuilding targets. CPRE wants to see ambitious targets for genuinely affordable homes and has called for clarity on Labour's definition of 'grey belt'.

### Rural affordable housing

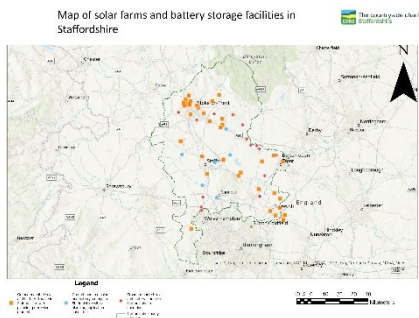
CPRE has launched a rural affordable housing campaign to build support and put pressure on the next government to deliver genuinely affordable rural homes. Its rural affordable housing report showed that a combination of factors, including stagnating wages, rising rents and a proliferation of second homes and short-term lets has intensified the rural affordable housing crisis.

### Which areas would benefit most from new hedgerows?

New CPRE research reveals which parts of England would benefit most from the creation of new hedgerows. Seven out of the eight areas with the highest hedgerow priority scores are in the northern half of the country. CPRE calling on the government to target these areas to help deliver its commitment to create or restore 30,000 miles of hedgerow by 2037.

The analysis, conducted by the Organic Research Centre, considered historical hedgerow cover, the condition of existing hedgerow networks and levels of ongoing government support.

## Solar Mapping



It's clear we need more solar energy to meet our climate change targets, but where should new solar panels should go? At CPRE we believe the best answer to this question is on our roofs.

However, Staffordshire continues to face applications for large scale solar farms and battery energy storage facilities (BESS) on farmland, affecting our landscapes, our habitats and our ability to grow our own food.

Charlie Walthall, a student at Keele

University, undertook a placement with us to produce a map of all planned and approved solar and BESS applications in Staffordshire. A new interactive map will be available on our website shortly, along with Charlie's report into potential locations for rooftop solar.

## PLANNING ROUND-UP

### Cannock Chase District Council

Our response to the Regulation 19 consultation stated that the Plan appears to be over-allocating housing. We consider that the Regulation 19 document is potentially unsound, as it does not provide evidence of how completions and SHLAA sites have been taken into account in deciding on the scale of new allocations required. We requested that this be clarified before the Inspectorate is asked to consider the document.

### South Staffordshire Council



*Photo by Christopher Dean*

CPRE's response to the Publication Plan consultation stated that too much Green Belt land still risks being lost to development. Green Belt release has been cut by 73% compared to the previous version of the Plan, and some of the more controversial development sites are now longer included. However, CPRE has cautioned that windfall numbers have been under-estimated and there are no 'exceptional circumstances' to justify loss of Green Belt for overspill housing for the Black Country.



We also see no justification for the inclusion of Site 036C (South of Stafford - pictured above), a productive arable field bordering Stafford Borough, and request its deletion from the Plan. We have not found any evidence that the Duty to Cooperate with Stafford has been met. The site has previously been refused planning permission and does not serve the needs of South Staffordshire. Stafford's Local Plan states that the town will not be extended southwards, and the borough has already exceeded its housing targets.

**24/00427/OUTMEI:** Outline planning application for the demolition of an existing dwelling and delivery of up to 165 dwellings and a first school. Land North Of Penkrige Stafford Road Penkrige.

Objected as the application would not be in accordance with the current Local Plan, and the new Local Plan has not yet been examined

by the Planning Inspectorate.

### Stafford Borough Council

**22/36478/FUL:** Construction and operation of a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Farm of up to 49.9MW in generation capacity.

Objection on the grounds of impact on landscape character, loss of agricultural land, and the cumulative impact.

### Walsall Council

**24/0411:** Outline planning application for the demolition of existing dwelling and equestrian centre with erection of 4 detached 4-bedroom dwellings. Land Rear of 127 Longwood Lane, Walsall.

Objection on the grounds of transport access and impact on Green Belt and protected trees.

## **Leaving a Gift in Your Will**



Leaving a gift in your will to CPRE Staffordshire would help us campaign for a countryside is rich in nature, accessible for all and protected for the future. A future where hedgerows are restored and communities get a say on what gets built where they live. A future where brownfield sites are recycled, farmland is protected, and dark skies are enjoyed.

CPRE has partnered with Farewill to offer a free will-writing service. While there is no obligation to leave a gift in your will with this service, many supporters remember CPRE to help protect the countryside they know and love.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to talk about leaving a legacy to CPRE Staffordshire.

CPRE Staffordshire is a registered charity, number 219443. It promotes and encourages the protection and improvement of the countryside of Staffordshire: its towns, villages and rural environment. Anyone who values the Staffordshire countryside is invited to join us, either as a supporter of our work, or as an active participant.

<https://www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk>

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**Current CPRE Staffordshire Executive Committee Officers:**

Chairman: Mohammed Khuram

President: His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Mr Ian Dudson, CBE KStJ

Vice President: Philip Atkins OBE

Vice Chairs: Mrs Mary Booth and Mrs Anne Clendon BEM

Executive Committee Members: Dave Evans, Steve Hopkins and Andy Proctor

**Join Us!**

If you would like to join CPRE, please go to:

<https://www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-member/>

As a member you will receive discount to attractions nationwide, 15% off Cotswold Outdoor store and national and local news about events, your local countryside and future planning.

Please remember to state **Staffordshire** as the local group or branch you are joining through.