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## Spring Update

Normally at this time of the year we would be printing and sending out our spring newsletter. We are however in very strange and difficult times but we wanted to let you know that we are still campaigning for the Buckinghamshire Countryside.

Now more than ever the importance of our green and open spaces for both our physical and mental wellbeing is paramount. Whilst staying at home, whether it is gazing at it through the window, garden or on a short local walk the countryside is putting on its spring show and with the reduced background noise the bird song is especially noticeable.

We also encourage and support our local rural businesses who are going out of their way to support their local communities with home deliveries etc.

Although our activity is reduced we are still keeping abreast of some of the major issues facing our countryside.

We were pleased to hear in the budget statements that the plans for the Oxford Cambridge expressway have been paused for a rethink. The Government still seem committed to the Ox Cam Arc as a major development area but are now willing to look at alternative ways of improving the local infrastructure. Given the current situation we are in, the future of how we work and travel could be very different and hopefully this will filter into future plans. It is very disappointing that work is continuing on HS2 during the current period. The recent ruling on the Heathrow expansion is also perhaps an indication that different priorities may come to the fore.

[Paula Buck—Chair CPRE Bucks]

## Celebrating our local food producers

As we all commit to staying at home during the COVID-19 crisis, we have had to find alternative ways to feed our families to avoid endless trips to the local shops. This has proved a real challenge, particularly because getting an online delivery slot with the big chains is near impossible to achieve.

But there is no need to panic buy...while this is undoubtedly a difficult time, there have also been wonderful things to celebrate. One of these is how much local food producers, restaurants and pubs have stepped forward to help those in need. With so many businesses having to close down their day to day operations, many of them have launched takeaway and delivery services so people can continue to enjoy their favourite meals.

In some areas of the county this has brought the whole community together. For example, in Princes Risborough the local council has launched a new service – ‘Risborough Basket’. Complete with an efficient ordering system, this has included a consortium of businesses, such as the local butchers, baker and wine merchants. In addition, the council itself is compiling bespoke fruit and veg boxes for the local community, all delivered by an army of volunteers.

We hope this community spirit endures and we would love to hear your own local recommendations of food producers that are going above and beyond for their local communities. Please do get in touch!

[Katie Priddis]



## Planning Update

The new Buckinghamshire Council officially came into being on 1 April. The District Councils and County Council have formally been wound up. The plan was to hold elections for Councillors in the new Council in early May, but this has all changed with the advent of coronavirus/COVID-19. The elections have now been postponed to next year and the Shadow Authority will continue until then.

The District Local Plans, however, are being taken forward under the management of the new Council. The Local Plans for Wycombe, Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes are all well advanced and, in the cases of Wycombe and MK, already formally adopted.

But Chiltern and South Bucks Councils have been working together on their joint Local Plan for the last five years and it is still some way from adoption. This plan was out for public consultation last year and was supposed to be undergoing the Public Inspection now (April). Like all other public events at the moment, this has been indefinitely postponed.

We, and many other local groups, are appalled at the plan. It proposes sacrificing a number of parts of the London Metropolitan Green Belt to build yet more unaffordable homes, while ignoring the possibilities offered by brownfield sites within existing town boundaries, including proposals such as those put forward by Chesham Renaissance Community Interest Company (CRCIC). The Plan – if it were implemented – would also considerably increase carbon emissions and pollution, thereby contradicting the Councils' own declaration of a climate emergency. As a result, in January we wrote an open letter to the Councils, which was also signed by four other local groups, the MP for Beaconsfield (Joy Morrissey) and another two councillors. The letter called for the plan to be withdrawn and instead suggested the Councils proceed at full speed to create a new, Unitary-wide, Local Plan. Our Head of Planning followed this up with a meeting with the Chiltern DC Leader (Isobel Darby), the Council's CEO and their Head of Planning to press home the argument. We had some excellent coverage for this initiative in the local press. We will continue our campaign to get this awful Local Plan withdrawn, lobbying the Unitary Authority and we aim to participate in the Public Inspection, if and when it happens.

[Neil Salisbury, Head of Planning CPRE Bucks]

## Our Volunteers—A Day in the Life

One topic I'm fascinated by is biodiversity so I was thrilled to attend a workshop on this topic led by Milton Keynes Council in November. The workshop was set up in response to the Government's net gain biodiversity legislation brought in last year. Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features, it is hoped that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.

Every chair in the room was filled with various interested stakeholders covering all areas including public, private and charitable sectors who all collaborated to create an engaging and positive event. Some of those attending stated the workshop would form part of the Councils consultation which was aimed at helping to develop plan MK 2.

There were three different areas being reviewed including water, landscapes and trees. Each table had a guide and we were instructed to look at issues and solutions within each of these subject areas. Some of the discussions were as expected such as lack of resources both financially and staff time plus all parties working together or communicating effectively to resolve difficulties. However, it was also incredibly informative to hear some fantastic community work such as a Parish Council that had taken responsibility for trees in their area and aimed to work with the community to increase the number of trees for National Tree Week during 2020.

All of the feedback shared at the workshop will be used to help shape and develop the future of biodiversity net gain in Milton Keynes. My only hope is this informative and useful event is not a one off and that momentum continues to build. It's an important topic that needs ongoing discussion – let's hope it's onwards and upwards from now on.

[Vanessa Leroux, Volunteer in Milton Keynes]