



Spring 2021

Contents:

- Spring Update
- Calling for a Chilterns National Park
- Support your local Farm Shops!
- A Cleaner, Greener Future
- Benefits of walking in the countryside
- Planning Update – Volunteers needed!
- How to donate - for free!

Spring Update

Welcome to our spring newsletter. As we start 2021 we are again dealing with lockdown and huge pressures caused by COVID. This time we do have hope for the year ahead with the roll out of vaccines. The winter months are harder but I hope you are managing to get outside in either the garden or walking locally. Being out in the fresh air and countryside is what is keeping me going. Despite the wet weather longer days and the early signs of spring are slowly emerging with hope of better times ahead.

We are busy as usual having become totally accustomed to a new way of working digitally with virtual meetings and moving forward we will probably work with a mix of face to face and virtual as it does save time and travel costs. We have been focusing on volunteer recruitment to increase our capacity to respond to planning issues and to add to our Trustee capacity. We are still looking for further help with planning, communications and media so if you have some spare time please look at our website for more details. **[Paula Buck, Chair]**

Calling for a Chilterns National Park – by Dame Cheryl Gillan

Now, more than ever, we need our open spaces and the green ‘lungs’ around our cities, which provide tranquillity and revitalisation. They strengthen physical and mental resilience for countless people.

Even before Covid-19, it was evident there is increasing pressure on landscapes like the Chilterns. This is a globally significant environment for its chalk streams alone. There are only about 200 chalk streams in the world and 85 per cent of them are in Southern and Eastern England. The effects of climate change, of national infrastructure projects like HS2 and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, and other developments threaten the ecosystem.

Growing up in Derbyshire, I’d seen at first hand the extra layer of safeguarding coming from the establishment of a National Park. After meeting Julian Glover, I was gratified that his 2019 Landscape Review identified the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as a landscape which would benefit from becoming a National Park, with enhanced protections to ensure it can continue to flourish. With unprecedented pressures on our open spaces, now is the time to put this policy into action.



The first national parks came into being in 1951 with that aim. Sir Arthur Hobhouse, in his 1947 report, wrote: “It would be wrong to confine the selection of National Parks to the more rugged areas of mountain and moorland, and to exclude other districts which, though of less outstanding grandeur and wildness, have their own distinctive beauty and a high recreational value.” It took a long time for those aims to come to full fruition and it is now ten years since the South Downs National Park was established. We must create more National Parks, because the pace of environmental damage should be matched by equal speed in repairing it.

Why the Chilterns? Apart from it being the third largest AONB, as this country prepares for the postponed COP 26 to take place in November 2021, we ought to take action about our own globally significant landscapes.

[Extract of an article written by CPRE Bucks President Dame Cheryl Gillan for The House Magazine in Nov 2020]

Support your local Farm Shops!

Over the past year, for obvious reasons, farmers in our county have seen their income fall in the region of 30% compared with 2019. For any of us, that's a big drop. Though wholesale meat prices have been robust, the feed costs paid by farmers have increased dramatically - more than enough to cause financial difficulty for many. For dairy farmers, the fall in demand from the food service industry has been equally significant and put farmers' livelihoods under pressure.

For many farmers, farm shops are a welcome boost to income. Farm shops cut out those wholesale markets offering ever lower prices for farm output and allow sales direct to the local community. This is better for

the farmers, better for local jobs, better for the environment – and tastier for consumers!

CPRE Bucks supports local, rural businesses. Our farmers help protect the Bucks landscape and its unique character. A thriving rural economy, side by side with environmental stewardship, is central to CPRE's vision for the county.

You can support local farmers and rural enterprises by visiting your nearest farmers market - but why not also visit the shops at the farms themselves, and see for yourself the landscape and livelihoods that you can help support?

[Andrew Garth, Trustee]

A Cleaner, Greener Future

Last November CPRE Bucks participated on the discussion panel during The Chiltern Society Cleaner Greener Conference. The conference brought together interested parties including Bucks Council, Scientists Warning Europe, Chilterns Conservation Board and a keynote speaker Rosalind Redhead (an independent London Mayoral candidate) to consider what must be done to achieve a faster route to becoming carbon neutral. The general consensus was that to limit global warming to 1.5-2.0°C then we need to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030- 20 years ahead of the Paris Agreement. The key question then is what to do?

First some sobering facts: Figures vary and are difficult to pin down but the conference was told that at a global level, 72% of emissions are due to households. The global average for per person annual emissions is 5 tonnes of CO₂ (European averages are 9 tonnes per person). It is also quite clear that carbon capture and storage technology is unlikely to be available at scale to mitigate CO₂ levels in the time needed. Rosalind outlined the CO₂ generated by:

- a long-haul economy flight (5 tonnes),
- a mobile phone call (57g/minute) and
- first hour of gas heating (2.7kg).

It all adds up. This shows that we must act at both the personal and local level.

The good news is that living with, and in, the countryside, we can use this environment to help what the conference called this 'nature's gift'- green infrastructure that sequesters carbon. The role of

CPRE is therefore central in encouraging bio-diversity to help nature, lobbying for quality development using carbon friendly materials on brownfield sites, encouraging personal carbon savings and working with other organisations such as farmers, conservationists and politicians to create a greener future.

For more details and data the conference was recorded. The link is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE4PUKAYups>

[John Meech, Trustee]



[Misbourne River at Amersham]

Benefits of walking in the countryside

After being shut up all winter, it is time to get out and enjoy the signs of new life in the countryside.

There is a lot of pent-up energy to do something to get moving. While there is an array of fitness apps and free workouts streaming online, getting outside for a walk in the countryside is of real benefit.

Walking is simple, free and one of the easiest ways to get more active, lose weight and become healthier. Sometimes overlooked as a form of exercise, walking briskly can help build stamina, burn excess calories and make the heart healthier.

The lengthening days tell us that spring is on the way. The birds are becoming more vocal and the first buds are appearing on the trees. Now is the perfect time to get outdoors as the countryside bursts into life as Spring arrives. There is plenty to see from primroses to bluebells, as well as songbirds and wildflowers to enjoy. Woodland walks offer swathes of snowdrops, before bluebells bloom around April. Spring can be a wonderful time to get out and explore the countryside.

Spending time in nature directly and positively affects our cognitive function. Scientists increasingly recognise the beneficial effects of nature exposure on immune functioning, mood and feelings of well-being. Experiencing nature has been shown to reduce stress levels, help people feel less overwhelmed and more in control of the situation.

According to a survey by mental health charity Mind, 94% of respondents reported that spending time in green spaces for exercise or relaxation had a positive impact on their mental health. Mind research found that after a single walk in the countryside, 90 per cent of participants had increased levels of self-esteem,

with nearly three quarters reporting decreased levels of depression.



Walking improves blood flow and circulation, it releases chemicals in your brain to improve your mood, and it allows you to get outside of your normal environment and think outside the box through the process of movement. Walking releases dopamine and endorphins in the brain, which produce feelings of euphoria.

To maximise the benefits of nature, simply be present. Instead of connecting with people, connect with nature. Instead of thinking about your worries, think about what is growing and thriving around you. Turn off your phone and try to see, hear, smell and feel the unfolding of the beautiful English Spring, traditionally seen as a time of hope and new beginnings.

[Hilary Mullen, Trustee]

Planning Update – Volunteers Needed!

Most threats to the countryside come via the planning system, or from national projects that fall outside of that normal system (HS2 being just one obvious example). The latter are consulted on separately and in general are usually responded to by our National Charity (although they always ask for our input). Up until now we have been very severely constrained in our ability to respond to planning applications, and to input to national consultations, because of a lack of volunteers. We frequently have to disappoint both

members and non-members when we do not have the resource to respond to planning applications that threaten our lovely countryside

So we have launched an ambitious recruitment drive, which is now starting to get some results. We have been recruiting for planning support volunteers, whose role is to monitor new applications and apply a filter to try to identify and prioritise planning applications that are threatening the countryside the most.

So far I am pleased to say we now have support volunteers for Chiltern, South Bucks, Wycombe and Milton Keynes areas. We still need to find a volunteer to help us with the Aylesbury Vale area (which is now two areas within the new Buckinghamshire Council).

We have also advertised for a planning volunteer with more knowledge of the planning system to help me with responding to applications that we feel are the most serious for the countryside. So if you, or anyone you know, may be interested in giving us some of their spare time, do please have a look at our website (www.cprebucks.org.uk), where you will find more details under "Get Involved".

Returning to the subject in hand, in recent months we have objected to a number of planning applications and consultations, including:

- A consultation about a new large prison near to Grendon Underwood and Edgecton.
- Two proposals for motorway service stations on the M25 close to the M40 junction. There is a third being proposed in Hertfordshire near Rickmansworth, so we have written to the Council suggesting they look at this more strategically!
- We have objected to a proposal to build a "theme park" at Pinewood Studios on green belt land adjacent to the existing studios.
- We've supported a Forestry Commission project to establish a new woodland near Marsh Gibbon.

Hopefully, if we get the volunteers we will be able to do more in the future

[Neil Salisbury Trustee]

How to donate to CPRE - for free!

In these difficult pandemic times, when shopping in the High Street is almost a forgotten memory, more people than ever have turned to Amazon. But did you know that, by shopping at Amazon, you can help your favourite charity at no cost to you?

Amazon has created a simple, automatic method of donating while you shop; and it doesn't cost you any more at all! AmazonSmile was launched in 2017 and so far, UK charities have received more than £4.6 million in donations. It works by registering with AmazonSmile and nominating your favourite charity. Then, whenever you buy anything on Amazon, the charity will get 0.5% of the net purchase price donated by Amazon. You pay exactly the same as before, the donation comes from Amazon itself.



So please do sign up and register with CPRE Buckinghamshire as your favourite charity! Please go to smile.amazon.co.uk where you will find full instructions on how to do this. It is very simple and, once setup, just remember to go to smile.amazon.co.uk instead of the normal Amazon site (save it as a favourite!). Thank you!



[Snowdrops at Eythrope]