



# The countryside charity Buckinghamshire

## The Buckinghamshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England ("CPRE Bucks")

### Annual Report of Trustees 2020 -2021

#### Foreword

The year 2020-2021 has presented us with a whole new range of challenges as we faced running the charity through the pandemic and the various lockdowns. Making the best use of technology enabled us to carry on functioning with virtual meetings and saved us a lot of time and money in travelling. In March 2021 we made the decision to withdraw from the offices we shared with Community Impact Bucks in Princes Risborough and which we had not used for twelve months.

We have made full use of our new website, newsletters and increased our presence on social media this year to reach more Bucks residents, To support our work in April we appointed Christa McDermott as our part time Office Support Manager.

We know the pandemic has raised the profile and appreciation of the countryside from a much wider group of people. Maintaining this interest is a key campaign for us moving forward. To further promote this interest we ran a rewilding project in Spring 2021 in which we sent all our members a packet of wild flower seeds to get them started.

Planning again has been our primary focus. Our work on contributing to the withdrawal of the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan was a major piece of work. We contributed to the overall CPRE response to the new government planning proposals, which are of great concern. We are pleased that these have just been paused and we hope for a fundamental rethink. We have continued to work on the Oxford and Cambridge proposals working with neighbouring CPREs

We were very sad to hear in the spring of the death of our former president Dame Cheryl Gillan MP, who was an avid supporter of the countryside and in particular, the Chilterns. We are delighted our vice president Sir David Lidington has agreed to take over the President's role.

We are also pleased to have recruited a new trustee Frances Nash. We have also said goodbye to John Meech and Hilary Mullen

I would like to thank all trustees and volunteers, past and present, for their considerable efforts to make CPRE Bucks an effective force to protect our beautiful county. This year has brought about new challenges but our appreciation of our green spaces and countryside has never been greater.

**Paula Buck**

**Chair**

## **1. Overview**

With 654 members, including 42 Parish Councils, CPRE Buckinghamshire is one of 42 county-based branches that make up the field organisation of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Our aim is to protect and promote the character of the Buckinghamshire countryside. We want to see a working countryside that enriches our quality of life, as well as providing us with crucial natural resources, including food.

We work with other campaigning organisations, local government, businesses and individuals. We seek partnerships with those who share our values and goals, and open dialogue with the uncommitted. We challenge those who threaten the countryside.

We operate in the area administered by the new Buckinghamshire Council and by Milton Keynes Council. Working with and as part of the national framework, each CPRE branch is an independent organisation. As such, we are a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

## **2. Governance and structure**

The Buckinghamshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England is an incorporated charity, number 1163356, set up to promote and encourage for the benefit of the public, the improvement and protection of the English countryside, particularly that of Buckinghamshire and its towns and villages, and the better development of the rural environment. The charity was incorporated on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014 as a private company, limited by guarantee number 09186100.

To provide the branch governance, the following were trustees and directors during the period up to the AGM

Paula Buck , Chairman Nov 2018 on going  
Steven Horner, Treasurer  
Neil Salisbury  
Hilary Mullen Resigned July 21  
Andrew Garth  
John Meech Resigned April 21  
Frances Nash – co-opted March 21 up for election at AGM  
Fiona Williamson

The trustees are supported by Christa McDermott our part time Office Support Manager and a small number of volunteers.

A Board of Trustees administers the company and the trustees are all directors of the company. New trustees are recruited by specialist advertising and informed of their role by attending trustee meetings as an observer before appointment, given detailed information on activities and governance and invited to attend training workshops held by the National Charity.

The executive group, which includes trustees, contract and employed staff and some volunteers, meets every two months to manage the business of the charity and provide

governance. We also welcome guests, including those from CPRE national and regions. Since February 2020 we have been holding most meetings via Google Meet.

In April 2021 we approached our members to formally agree to us changing our articles to allow online meetings going forward.

### **Charity Commission Governance Code**

Although this code is not a legal regulatory requirement, it is designed to encourage charities to review and improve their governance processes. Accordingly, the company has reviewed its procedures and made changes that are proportionate to its size and resources.

### **Risks**

The company maintains a risk register, which is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

## **3. Objectives and activities 2020 -21**

Our Charitable Objectives are, to promote and encourage for the benefit of the public, the improvement and protection of the English Countryside and in particular that of Buckinghamshire, its towns and villages and the better development of the rural environment.

### **Vision**

A beautiful and living Buckinghamshire countryside that is valued and enjoyed by everyone.

### **Aims:**

To promote and enhance the character of the Buckinghamshire countryside.  
To promote a more sustainable approach to land use

### **Strategic objectives:**

Respond to planning issues in Buckinghamshire, where they fit with our charitable concerns.

Campaign at a local level on selected priority issues.

Take an active involvement in national CPRE housing campaigns.

Raise the profile of CPRE to members and the general public.

Engage and collaborate with other CPRE branches, local groups and organisations.

Develop resources (volunteers, funds, members) and build capacity

Improve and maintain good governance and financial management

#### **4. Volunteers**

We are always looking for volunteers to help us meet our objectives. If you have any time or expertise that could help us protect and promote our countryside, please contact us at [office@cprebucks.org.uk](mailto:office@cprebucks.org.uk)

Our small number of volunteers supporting our planning process have already made a big difference in our ability to respond. Volunteer support has helped us increase our social media presence.

However other demands on their time does mean some of our volunteers need to step down or halt their volunteering periodically.

#### **5. Communications**

Communications are vital and we have continued to develop our newsletter this year. We also have a Twitter site @cprebucks, where we can share local information and link up with other branch groups and national stories. We have updated our website inline with the revised CPRE new branding.

We will continue to develop our digital presence. Communication is a large part of what we do and we need to do it in a cost effective way. Email is virtual cost free to us, post is not. I urge all our members to let us know if they are prepared to accept email communication. The form is on our website. – <https://www.cprebucks.org.uk/>

#### **6. Joint Working**

The trustees head up a variety of tasks to expand and further the work of CPRE Bucks, in collaboration with volunteers. The aim continues to be growing the influence and activity of CPRE Bucks in saving the countryside. This has meant considerably more activity in responding to planning issues, inputting to CPRE National charity in writing or via the County Branches Forum, Regional Board and Policy Committee. We have also collaborated with other like-minded institutions such as the Chiltern Society, Chiltern Conservation Board and Bucks Rural Affairs Group

We continue to review and respond to the current Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes local plans. A considerable input was given to the response to the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan. This involved a team of volunteers who responded to the various sections, and this was then pulled together as a major response, working with a number of partners. We were delighted the flawed Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan was withdrawn formally on 21 October.

We contributed to CPRE's response to a variety of topics including planning, particularly the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Arc. In reacting to the Oxford Cambridge proposal, CPRE Bucks is part of a joint CPRE working group, comprising the National Charity and other CPRE's along the route – Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, which is coordinating the response to the proposals. We also work with local pressure groups, which support our view.

We liaised with local MPs and Councillors to support our aims – particularly relating to inappropriate development in Areas of Natural Beauty and Green Belt. We are making

members aware of the damaging plans in their locality. Communicating with and informing members via newsletters and digital media is a key role together with receiving feedback on what our members require of us.

Although CPRE Bucks is an independent organisation, we work with a number of like-minded organisations. We participate in national working groups and attend regional groupings to share the issues we are involved with. We work with neighbouring CPRE Branches, such as Oxfordshire and London, as a number of issues are cross boundary. We are well supported by National Charity with staff and volunteers attending induction days and national conferences

## **7. Financial Review 2020-21**

The COVID pandemic has impacted on the company's activities throughout the year under review. Limitations on travelling, holding face-to-face meetings and attending events, resulted in reduced expenditure in the year. However, by making increased use of digital applications we have continued to be active in campaigning for the Buckinghamshire Countryside, and ensuring the Board met regularly. The result was a net income of £7,206 increasing the reserves at year-end to £66,598.

As part of ensuring the company is well placed to continue its activities, once the COVID lockdown restrictions were eased, the company appointed a part-time office support manager in April, 2021.

### **Reserves**

The policy on reserves is to hold a minimum to cover 3 months activity. Current reserves are substantially higher than this, giving the flexibility a small charity requires to be able to support appropriate campaigns, when the need arises.

### **Sources of funds**

The main source of income is the company's share of membership subscriptions to the national charity. We are signed up to various charity giving initiatives e.g. easy fundraising, Amazon Smile and local lotteries. Due to the nature of our income this has not been affected during the COVID pandemic.