



The countryside charity
Lancashire, Liverpool City Region
and Greater Manchester

Lancashire Voice

Newsletter | Spring/Summer 2020



Local green spaces vital under lockdown

We hope that all our members are safe and well in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am writing today from my kitchen table. I see a lovely, very big silver birch which is a favourite pit stop for tree creepers and from which we hang coconut shells filled with suet. Green fields browsed by rabbits and our raised veggie bed complete the view. A huge array of birds, from songbirds to pheasants, commute daily to our table and feeders. A male bullfinch in all his peachy red glory visited yesterday. Field mice scurry in too to take the fallen seeds. Grey squirrels – superb raiders – join the throng when we are not around to chase them away! Covid 19 means nothing to the wildlife except a more peaceful and natural existence.

My family and I are so lucky to have our own green space. It gives joy, peace, a home for wildlife – and a space to spend time in nature is something we all need, young and old, singletons and families. It should not just be for the privileged. A garden, a stride across fields or a stroll through woodland feeds the soul and repairs the tensions of our busy or chaotic lives. It is a respite and a place “to be”. More people have now discovered the benefits of walking in green spaces. I am hopeful that the countryside will now be valued even more.

I can walk and cycle through Pendle Forest and the Forest of Bowland AONBs from my home without having to get into a car. I, and lots of others in my community and in the surrounding villages, see sheep and their lambs and hear skylark, woodpeckers, lapwings and curlews. It is an incredible joy and so uplifting. I so much want others to share this too. Have you noticed the birdsong and the calls of nestlings too?

Many people in urban and suburban areas, in flats and terraces, have no green space. Pots in the yard and flowers on a balcony – if one is lucky enough to have one – mean a great deal. But self-isolation has still wreaked a terrible toll. Even before the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of children had never ever visited a national park. Children whose homes are in the Midlands, most distant from a national park, are particularly disadvantaged.

CPRE is soon launching a campaign for schools to be able to take every child to a national park at least once. Every year, with the opportunity to go in different seasons over the lifetime of schooling, would be even more wonderful. Our aspiration is that children will not forget the experience; it will be meaningful, something they want to do with their friends and one day their own children. We want the next generation to value the countryside so they too wish to promote and protect it.

What can you see from your home or in your park or green space? Do write to us or post on our social media and tell us of your visitors and sightings. Photos would be great too. We would love to hear from you!

Debbie McConnell, Chair

The implications of the Heathrow ruling

Climate emergency campaigners celebrated in February when the Court of Appeal ruled that the Government's decision to build a third runway at Heathrow was unlawful because it did not take into account the UK's statutory commitment to reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This judgment, which will not be appealed by the UK government, establishes an important principle applicable to any Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

CPRE has long campaigned against Highways England's proposal to improve access to the greatly expanded Port of Liverpool by means of a dual carriageway (virtually a motorway) through the entire length of Rimrose Valley Country Park which is a broad strip of Green Belt land in one of the most deprived areas of our region. The park, which includes playing fields and two nature reserves amongst its amenities, is used by tens of thousands of local residents for recreation, traffic-free walking and cycling and spending time in nature, and acts as a green lung for the Thornton, Ford, Litherland, Waterloo and Crosby areas. However, in its 2017 public consultation, Highways England made no reference to the scheme's climate impact; the proposal will be determined under the NSIP regime.

Research carried out in 2017 by CPRE and Transport for Quality of Life confirmed previous studies demonstrating that building new roads generally has the effect of increasing the number of cars on the road and increasing distance travelled. The report, "The end of the road? Challenging the road-building consensus" shows that not only does the construction of new roads lead to more traffic, it also demonstrates that the economic evidence

used to justify the scheme is weak or non-existent in more than three quarters of cases. New roads also encourage a car-based economy, with employment, housing and retail development away from town centres leading to further journeys by car which would have previously been possible on foot, by bike or using local public transport. Schemes such as the A585 Windy Harbour to Skippool by-pass represent a missed opportunity to improve local transport links within Wyre to connect rural areas in an environmentally friendly way.



CPRE Rimrose Valley walk - Martin Pickup Photography

The proposed road through Rimrose Valley Country Park is yet another example of a major road scheme conceived in the absence of any strategic planning. Improving access to the Port of Liverpool will impinge on transport in the North, coast to coast, and should be multi modal whilst maximising the role of rail and minimising the role of road.

The application to explore for shale gas at Great Altcar is contrary to our net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 target, and would also have the effect of increasing HGV movements in a rural area. We have outlined on our website our many reasons for opposing this development.

Dr. Des Brennan awarded Countryside Medal

Crispin Truman OBE, the Chief Executive of CPRE, has awarded Dr Des Brennan the countryside medal, CPRE's prestigious Volunteer Award.

At the presentation of the medal by Peter Raynes, Chair of CPRE North West Regional Steering Group, he was thanked for his services to CPRE and for his sterling and exemplary campaigning work.

Dr Brennan, trustee and a former Senior Lecturer in physical chemistry at the University of Liverpool, is an acknowledged national expert on shale gas extraction.

Debbie McConnell, Chair of CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester, commented "Notwithstanding his venerable age, Des is a very active member of the team, making an enormous and invaluable contribution to our work.



Dr. Des Brennan, with Lancashire Branch Chair Debbie McConnell and Regional Chair Peter

He is adept at planning policy and climate change science and Councils, regulators and developers alike have learned to respect (not to say fear) his submissions, which are always factually well founded and clearly argued. The medal is more than well deserved"

Coronavirus

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our daily lives in a way that would previously have been unimaginable. The negative aspects of the pandemic cannot be underestimated and we extend our sympathies to all those whose families and friends have been affected.

However, the radical change that we have experienced and the fact that society will need to operate differently until a vaccine or effective treatment is available means that we have an opportunity to do things differently.

The roads and skies have been much quieter than usual, leading to an improved sense of tranquillity. The directive to exercise only within walking distance of your home has led to a huge rise in families exercising together. Recent CPRE research carried out in conjunction with the WI has shown that a majority of people feel more connected with their community since the crisis began, and there is also majority public support for better protection for local green spaces.

With airports like Manchester increasingly looking to expand, despite the Heathrow ruling, it is more important than ever that we act. CPRE's aviation noise survey aims to collect opinions and perceptions on aircraft noise; if you would like to have your say, visit <https://tinyurl.com/aviation-survey>

CPRE supports the Committee on Climate Change's six principles for recovery from coronavirus which aim to focus on adaptations to climate change as a central part of the recovery package. Read more on the website:

<https://tinyurl.com/green-recovery>.

Photography Competition

If you've got a great photo of 'the best view in Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester', why not enter our photography competition? We're looking for photos taken before 20th March and we would love to hear what makes the place special to you. The winner will receive £50 and a CPRE book. Visit our website for more information: <https://tinyurl.com/Best-view>

Planning news

Local plans: Wirral, Manchester, Sefton and Burnley

Jackie Copley, our Planning Manager, provided some expertise for Wirral Green Space Alliance when responding to the Issues and Options Consultation. She helped to make the case that environmental and planning designations that protect valued local assets should endure in the future for the benefit of all, and highlighted the overriding issue relating to the need to correct the scale of development quantum for both housing and jobs downwards. Currently housing is wrongly specified at three to four times what it should be (using the standard method and out-of-date ONS 2014 derived data).

We responded to the Manchester City Council Issues and Options Local Plan Consultation. We recognise that an up to date adopted plan is the best way of preventing harmful development of our countryside and greenspace. Our two key areas of criticism concerned the excessive housing requirement, and the lack of reference to Green Belt protection. However, the overall strategic aim of achieving the target of a zero-carbon city by 2038 is laudable.

We also responded to consultations by Council planning teams in Burnley and Sefton on their Supplementary Planning Documents. These documents do not alter local plan policy, but they do help inform developers and decision takers to translate the policy wording for best planning outcomes in the pursuit of sustainable development. Ensuring adequate developer contributions, achieving quality housing design and ensuring for climate change and air quality were topics of focus.

Rail Needs Assessment Consultation

CPRE NW Regional Group has commissioned Professor Paul Salvesson to prepare a response to the National Infrastructure Commission's 'call for evidence' for the Rail Needs Assessment for the North.

Planning White Paper

We will respond to the Government's Planning White Paper when published. We know housing is seen as a means to kick start the economy and we are supportive of enough new houses, but we want the right type in the right places. An urban brownfield first approach should be the priority.



Enter our photography competition to help us to highlight Lancashire's landscapes

Events Round-up

We've really enjoyed meeting both established CPRE members and others interested in our campaigns at our recent walks.

Wigan Waterways walk

Wigan has the highest proportion of green space of any metropolitan borough in the country - and about half of our walk explored the wonderful Green Belt around the town. Many thanks to Dr. Andrew Read for leading our November walk in Wigan, and to our volunteers Graham Allanson and Alasdair Forman for organising the day. We were also delighted to see so many Ramblers members from the Manchester Weekend Walkers group joining supporters of the CPRE on the walk.

Stargazing at Beacon Fell

Truly dark skies are sadly a rare sight nowadays, but Lancashire is fortunate to have the Forest of Bowland AONB at its heart, an official Dark Sky Discovery Site. Astronomer Robert Ince gave a fascinating talk on the night skies and the effect of light pollution in the visitor centre at Beacon Fell before we all went out to experience the wonders of the night sky. All those who attended thoroughly enjoyed the evening and we hope to make it an annual event, to coincide with the lead up to CPRE's national Star Count week.



Rimrose Valley and Sefton Coast walk

We were delighted that CPRE's Chief Executive, Crispin Truman, was able to join us at our walk held with Rimrose Valley Friends to explore the country park and the Sefton Coast. Despite the forecast storm and rainy morning, when the walk commenced, the sun came out - albeit combined with a bracing wind! Thanks to photographer Martin Pickup for taking some great pictures, and to all those who took part.

AGM to be rescheduled

We were looking forward to seeing members at our AGM, for which planning was well underway. However, many of us are confined to our homes in light of a national emergency, and it's not yet clear when we will be able to get together again.

We now plan to hold our AGM later in the year, but are also investigating other options in case meeting in person is still not possible. We will share our audited accounts and Chairman's Report once the AGM details have been finalised.



Join in:
cprelancashire.org.uk

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