



The countryside charity  
Lancashire, Liverpool City Region  
and Greater Manchester

# Lancashire Voice

Newsletter | Winter 2020



## An unusual visitor

Dear members,

A warm welcome to our Winter newsletter, sent out slightly later than usual to follow the Branch AGM.

You may have followed the story of Pip the pipistrelle on our website - a malnourished bat who crash-landed in the garden and had to be nursed back to health by the Bat Conservation Trust before being released back into the wild (slightly reluctantly - he'd developed a taste for the easy life in captivity during his recuperation!)

I work from the broom-cupboard sized "snug" at home, looking out on to fields and trees. The window pane frames the bird feeders too, so I can distract myself with the local bird populace which regards us as a soft touch! A flat log provides dining for wood pigeons, pheasants, and thrushes.

Voles also partake. Hanging feeders including suet balls, peanuts, mixed and niger seeds for the fussy goldfinches provide a smorgasbord for tits, finches, robins, nuthatches and woodpeckers. Wrens creep and flit around. Two water bowls to slake thirst complete the facilities.

Observing a scrap between warring coal and blue tits, a sudden movement caught my eye. With a fury of flapping, birds were fleeing at lightning speed in all directions. I had never seen such panic, even when a cat sneaks through. A bird perched on the fence, its dark grey back facing me. Too big for a kestrel or any other of our usual suspects, I wondered, what is it?

It turned and my eyes locked on to those of a magnificent sparrowhawk! He was stunning with grey and cream stripes and a rufous bib spreading down his throat

and breast. His yellow eyes intimidated me and there was no fear there. It was a male as the females, like most birds, are plainer although raptors are unusual as the males are usually smaller. I was thrilled to see him; I had only ever seen a sparrowhawk from a distance. Reflecting their name, they take birds and small furies, flying low and fast in pursuit, even through hedges.

Serenity is now restored in our garden. After a quiet spell of a couple of days the songbirds and tits returned. Just one or two to start, but now the usual crowd!!

It has been a very different autumn for CPRE, without our normal meetings in person. Thank you to those who joined us at our AGM or sent proxy votes - we were delighted that so many supported us in meeting the requirements of the Charity Commission.

We have had some notable successes in our planning campaign work recently - in particular, the rejection of a large, industrial-scale Mushroom farm in the Green Belt in Scarisbrick. We will continue to campaign for thriving countryside and urban green spaces in 2021.

On behalf of all at CPRE, I would like to send our very best wishes and thoughts for this Christmas and New Year to all of our members, volunteers and supporters. Many thanks to all of you - we could not do it without you. We hope that you are able to get out and enjoy your local countryside or green space over the holidays.

Please stay safe and well.

Debbie McConnell, Chair



Steve Ward via  
Creative Commons

# Planning update

## CPRE highlights issues with Planning White Paper

### Proposed Zoning system is not sufficiently nuanced

From CPRE's perspective, the planning system must ensure countryside for all, with fair access to quality green space near where everyone lives, wherever they are in the country; connected space and landscapes for nature, wellbeing and for addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies; and better, thriving places with more genuinely affordable new homes, buoyant town and village centres and walkable neighbourhoods, providing healthy, low-car environments that people want to live and work in.

Nationally and locally, we have worked to highlight the issues with the proposals, which could mean hugely inflated housing targets for rural areas, rather than an approach which looks at housing need to allocate land. We also want to see a genuine brownfield-first approach, to ensure that development on greenfield sites is a last resort.

Many thanks to all those who have contacted their MP and local councillors to highlight concerns with this matter. Our website will be kept up to date with latest information from this campaign.

### Liverpool Local Plan Examination

The Examination of the Liverpool Local Plan took place in mid-October. Jackie Copley, our Planning Manager, spoke on the Green Belt and Housing Need. Nick Ireland of GL Hearn, who authored the Liverpool Strategic Housing Need and Employment Land Market Area report (SHELMA), commented that if the report were done today, the background would be much more pessimistic. This means that in light of issues such as Covid-19, Brexit and the fact that the EU is our biggest trading partner, the upper end of

the SHELMA range is unrealistic. Links to the sessions can be found on our website.

### Lancaster City Council Local Plan Climate Emergency review

CPRE is delighted that Lancaster City Council is reviewing its recently-adopted Local Plan in order to make an assessment of changes that can be made in order to facilitate the move towards net-Zero carbon emissions. The council are also calling for sites to be identified in order that they can be added to the Brownfield Register - another of CPRE's key aims which will if achieved reduce development pressure in the countryside.

The council has released a helpful video on the planning process - the link can be found on our website.

### Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

CPRE is considering the detail of the much improved GMSF Publication Plan 2020. Our campaigning combined with that of local community groups has led to:

- A more urban and brownfield regeneration focus;
- A more achievable housing requirement, with 27% affordable housing;
- A 60% reduction in Green Belt land release.

However, we are still considering whether so much industry and warehousing (53%) should be located in the Green Belt. The economic forecasts should be reality checked against the ongoing economic uncertainty and take account of the recently approved speculative developments in the Green Belt. Cumulative impacts must be understood.



## Photography Competition Winners

Congratulations to Tracy O'Connor and Stephen Carrigan, winners of our 2020 photography competition.

**People's Choice vote:** Stephen Carrigan's wonderful photo (above) of the lighthouse at New Brighton won the 'People's Choice' award, having received the most votes on social media.

**Trustee Choice:** Tracy O'Connor's picture of sheep beside a beautiful solitary tree won the vote from the Trustee Committee, with Richard Marchant's photo of two parallel

gates taken on a walk in the verdant countryside of East Lancashire on a spring day chosen as the runner-up.

Shortlisting and choosing winning entries from such a huge number of fantastic images, showing such a range of aspects of nature and landscape across our region, was very difficult. Many thanks to all those who entered the competition and shared their wonderful photos with us.

See more photos on our Instagram page - and please tag us (@cprelancs) if you're sharing your photos of beauty spots and green spaces in our region - we'd love to see them and share them with our followers!



### Success in Scarisbrick Mushroom Shed application

CPRE is delighted that our objection to an application to build very large sheds for mushroom culture on Grade 1 agricultural land in Scarisbrick has been successful. The proposal was for an extremely large factory building in open West Lancashire countryside, which is protected by Green Belt designation. Local residents were very concerned about the loss of the highest grade, grade 1, best and most versatile farmland.

The landscape and visual impact would have been significantly adverse, and permission would have set a terrible precedent. We recommended that the operations associated with the mushroom farm (industrial shed, growing rooms, laboratory, more akin to a employment shed) would be better suited to location on a vacant industrial site in Burscough as the jobs would still be delivered, but none of the harm to the sensitive rural area would result.

Thankfully the development management committee recognised the extent of harm to Green belt purpose and in agreeing with CPRE refused the application. Thanks in particular to CPRE West Lancs Chair, Karen Martindale, for her persuasive speeches to the committee.

### Melling Parish Council

Melling Parish Council commissioned some expertise to respond to local planning matters of concern. Planning issues included problems of match day parking on narrow rural lanes associated with a community football field, an unlawful traveller site and the harm to Green Belt, a development pursued under the auspices of a sheep isolation unit that appeared to be coming forward as a dwelling house. Letters were drafted for the attention of Sefton Council's planning enforcement team to highlight the local concerns and problems faced. CPRE are pleased that the Parish Council is a good 'eye and ear' for rural protection and enhancement purposes.

### Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

We are delighted that CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester has been nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Three of our trustees - Chair, Debra McConnell, Dr Des Brennan and Alasdair Forman, each had an interview with the assessor, Amanda Parker of Browsholme Hall, Clitheroe, who made some very nice comments. We will hear in January if we have got through to the next round.

### Public Affairs Awards

We were also delighted that CPRE's national campaign, 'Don't

fast-track Fracking' was selected as one of three finalists in the 2020 Public Affairs Awards. Our own Dr Des Brennan was very involved in this campaign.

### Parkside Inquiry

CPRE's Planning Manager has been commissioned, by Parkside Action Group (<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/pagparksidepublicinquiry>) to provide expert witness support. PAG represents residents groups of Newton-le-Willows, Golborne, Lane Head South, Lowton East, and Croft & Culcheth Parish Council.

The St Helens local plan kept the land at the former Parkside Colliery for a strategic rail freight interchange, due to its high accessibility of the site on two rail lines (north to south, and east to west) and to the M6 and M62 motorways. The inclusion of high grade farm land to the west of the M6 motorway is a matter of local dispute. Additional rail freight capacity would help counter road congestion, excessive air pollution and carbon emissions. The area is already an Air Quality Management Area. The case being made is the road freight proposals fall short of very special circumstances to release the land from the Green Belt.

The proposed Parkside Phase 1 complex comprises nearly 1 million sqm of space in 3 to 4 big box warehouses. The sheds would be 23m high and prominent over the top of the large spoil heap, now naturalised, and a local landmark of industrial heritage, landscape significance. The link road will sever farm land with impact to local farms. Other planning harms identified include that to traffic, local heritage assets, including Winwick Battlefield, and ecology linked to Highfield Moss SSSI. There are also cumulative impacts of two further developments for a Phase 2 and 3 in total amounting to 225 hectares. While the developer purports the economic benefits of all the phases, they have only submitted environmental impact assessment information of the first phase, which is still a large area of 49 hectares, and the road covers 38 hectares. They ignore the opportunity cost of the jobs that would otherwise come forward.

The inquiry also includes other warehousing developments in the North West including at Bolton and Wigan. Haydock Point, which was refused by the Council in December. CPRE hopes to speak out against the shedscape being allowed on a highly speculative basis. What is needed is a joined up multi-modal approach based on sustainable development principles to best protect our rural landscapes and farmland. Parkside Inquiry is due to commence on 5th January for two weeks. A final report and decision are then expected later in 2021.





# Countryside for all

Sadly, our events programme has been unable to resume because of the continuation of Covid restrictions. However, with the positive news about a potential vaccine, we are thinking about how we can all get together again next year.

Members who follow our social media channels may have seen some photos of Victoria Inyang-Talbot (front, centre, picture below) exploring Rivington Pike with friends. Victoria has set up a number of grassroots groups to encourage people to improve their fitness and wellbeing through walking and exercise.

At CPRE, we want everyone to understand the value of our countryside - but at present, many groups are under-represented in our green spaces. How will we persuade people to protect the countryside if they don't feel a connection? We know that time spent in nature can also have a huge, positive effect on mental wellbeing - something which many of us are struggling with at present!

## Outdoor gear collection

We've been discussing issues stopping people from getting into the countryside, and one problem raised by Victoria was that outdoor gear can be expensive for people on limited incomes. If you have any old walking boots or waterproofs that you no longer use, or are thinking of buying new, we would be very grateful if you would hold onto the old items if you have the space. We are working on a way to collect these items to pass on to those who could make good use of them,

but with constraints of Covid-19 we're not able to collect at present. However, if you do have any outdoor wear that you would be willing to pass on, please let us know by phoning or emailing the Branch Office. Thank you!

## Annual General Meeting

Thank you to all those who supported our 2020 Virtual AGM, by sending in a proxy vote or by attending on the day. Carrying out our AGM is an essential part of meeting the requirements of the Charity Commission so that we can continue our campaigning work. We missed the cake and chat, and hope that we will be able to gather in person in 2021.

## Online lectures

Members are invited to attend our soil talk, which was due to take place in February 2020, and will now be broadcast as an online talk with Q&A in January 2021. To book your place or find out more, please contact the Branch Office. We also plan to hold talks on Farming and Brexit and Astronomy in February and March.

## Walks

We hope that in spring 2021 we will be able to resume our walks programme, meeting in person (socially distanced if necessary!) to explore our wonderful county. In the meantime, please do get in touch if you would like to share a walk route or rural spot to visit in Lancashire, Liverpool City Region or Greater Manchester. We would love to hear from you.



Join in.

[www.cprelancashire.org.uk](http://www.cprelancashire.org.uk)

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