Campaign to Protect Rural England Cheshire

Lancashire, Liverpool City Region & Greater Manchester Viewpoint

Newsletter | Autumn/Winter 2026



100th Birthday celebrations at Ainsdale Beach

View from the Chair

We held our 'Love Your Countryside' centenary celebrations with tea, cake and pirates at Ainsdale Discovery Centre on Saturday 19th September.

It was wonderful to see members, new faces and old friends. It was wonderful to have the Mayor of Sefton, Cllr Jennifer Corcoran, take part in unveiling our commemorative information board celebrating the efforts of local people in protecting our countryside.

We paid a special tribute to the late Dr Desmond Brennan, a retired Liverpool University chemistry lecturer who tirelessly fought to save our green spaces and provided vital scientific support to the anti-fracking campaign.

We thought we'd seen the back of fracking when thousands of you supported our campaign in 2022 and the government said it had reinstated the moratorium on it. But a moratorium isn't a ban, it's just a pause — which any future government could come in and overturn. There's also a current loophole which means that fracking is already being pursued at sites in North Yorkshire, East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire.

That's why we're backing Friends of the Earth's campaign to ban fracking for good. You can sign their petition here.

Successes to share...

We're delighted that CPRE's national 'On the Edge' campaign the 'Best Use of Data and Technology' award from Campaign Lab at The Campaign Fringe, a day of campaign-focused activity during the Labour Party Conference.

But this award doesn't just belong to us, it belongs to you too. We asked our supporters what the countryside means to them, and more than 2,300 people answered. Together we've built an important national picture of the places people love and care about. And over 17,000 people also signed our pledge to stand up for the countryside near them. You can still add your story to our interactive map.

And, as this is our last newsletter of 2026, may I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! 🎄

Lindsay Beaton, Chair, CPRE Lancashire

Team News



Retiring Chair and Trustee
Debbie McConnell

Our event at Ainsdale allowed us that very rare occasion to all meet 'in person' and we took the opportunity to thank our retiring chair and trustee Debbie McConnell with a CPRE commemorative book and metal garden sculpture.

Stories and News

A new team member has joined the branch - Sara Mak - our Freelance Social Media & Communications Manager. It's Sara's role to keep our members updated with all events and activities as well as sharing our news and stories across our social channels.

She comments: "I am looking for countryside stories from across our region. If you know of any interesting projects or want to tell us about your favourite hidden countryside gem then you can email me at media@cprelancashire.org.uk."

"Please continue to like and share our posts so that we can recruit new members and recognise the work and support from our existing members too."

Could you be a volunteer?

We are looking for new volunteers to help drive Lancashire CPRE forward.

We're especially keen to find planning volunteers who can support us as local 'eyes and ears' on the ground for proposed developments. It's vital that we have this input from communities and local volunteers.

Our Planning Manager Eddy Taylor is seeking to recruit a number of volunteers to assist with spotting proposed developments across our region. If you are passionate about protecting the countryside, we may have a role for you!

Visit our Volunteer Stories page to watch videos from some of our volunteers and find out more about getting involved with CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester as a volunteer.

LCR 200 Ringway: Update on new cycling and walkway

The LCR Ringway will form a looped route connecting all Liverpool City Region's six local authority areas – Liverpool, Knowsley, St Helens, Sefton, Wirral and Halton – and parts of west Cheshire, Warrington and west Lancashire, taking walkers and cyclists through some of the region's most distinctive landscapes and heritage sites.

Starting at Liverpool's Pier Head, beneath the iconic Liver Building, the route will head clockwise through the city region before finishing at Hamilton Square in Birkenhead. The route will be divided into 20 stages, with the start and finish of each stage linked to public transport making it possible for people to explore individual sections without needing to complete the whole route.

Work is due to start on the trail using green waymarking signs for walking and brown ones for cycling, and it will follow existing footpaths, cycle routes, parks and open-access land wherever possible. It is hoped that the work will be completed to coincide with Stage 2 of the 2027 Tour de France which arrives in the Liverpool City Region on Saturday 3 July.

Designed to connect almost two million residents with the natural and cultural heritage on their doorstep, the trail will showcase the unique variety of landscapes found across the Liverpool City Region and west Cheshire – from open countryside, woodland, parks and farmland to coastline, canals, and estuaries.

The project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with additional funding from the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society (PNFS).



Trustees Clive and Nick (and dog Ben) walking part of the proposed LCR Ringway at Formby

100th Birthday Celebrations at Aintree honouring local countryside champion



CPRE Charity Chief Planning Officer Jackie Copley at panel unveiling by the Mayor of Sefton

Cllr Jennifer Corcoran, joined long-term supporters and locals to celebrate with our 100th birthday with tea and cake on Saturday 19th September 2026 at Ainsdale Discovery Centre.

A permanent CPRE information panel was unveiled by the Mayor of Sefton to commemorate all the achievements across the region to protect the countryside and local green spaces.

The panel was dedicated to the late Dr Desmond Brennan, a retired Liverpool University chemistry lecturer from Formby who tirelessly fought to save our green spaces and provided vital scientific support to the anti-fracking campaign.

After the Government withdrew support for fracking in November 2019, Des was awarded CPRE's Countryside Medal; he sadly passed away in 2024, and the CPRE panel has been erected in his memory.

Jackie Copley – Director of Planning for the CPRE and a former local planning officer in the region paid tribute to Des's passion for doing the right thing and making sure the 'facts' were presented properly so that positive decisions could be made to protect the local countryside.

Merseyside Development Corporation – consultation.



Proposed MDC new waterfront neighbourhood

We recently responded to the consultation on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's proposed Mayoral Development Corporation, or MDC, for the Liverpool North Docks. The MDC would **"**bring together the powers, partnerships and investment needed to help deliver long-term regeneration.**"**

The MDC is set to to unlock investment and support a high-quality waterfront neighbourhood with new homes, jobs, green spaces and facilities for local communities. This could include:

- Up to 17,000 new homes
- New commercial and employment space
- High-quality parks and green spaces; and
- Modern community and cultural facilities

Our Planning Manager Eddy Taylor explains our response:

"We generally support the MDC as an opportunity to enable use of brownfield to meet housing need in the City Region instead of greenfield sites. However, this will require coordination between Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) and Local Plans especially around Green Belt, housing numbers and promoting higher densities.

Members, planners and other officers at the Combined Authority and the councils must be on the same page.**"**

Other Planning News

In recent planning activity we have:

- held a North West Regional Planning Group meeting to discuss main planning issues including Spatial Development Strategies which could be an opportunity to effectively swap housing need between authorities so that more housing could be met on brownfield land
- discussed the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which includes some significant changes. CPRE contributed to the consultation, arguing for more emphasis on the use of brownfield land in urban regeneration in order to reduce the pressure for development in the green belt.



100th Birthday member celebrations at Samlesbury Hall

Planning for the future...

We held our 'Love Your Countryside' centenary celebrations with tea, cake and conversation at Samlesbury Hall on Sunday 19th October. Our centenary celebrations were more than just an opportunity for tea and cake. The sessions enabled us to really focus on the members' concerns and observations across our region. In short, you said - we listened; and now we're taking action...

Enforcement- more than just 'broken promises'.
Thanks to Dave and Yvonne - members from Formby for their input on this. We will focus on the need for enforcement on buildings 'not constructed as per plan' and where Section 106 obligations are not fulfilled.

Education - giving the land a voice.
This year, we have invested in boosting our social media presence with additional freelance support. We are now reaching a wider audience online and getting better engagement. We are also planning webinars and 'watch parties' so that members and supporters can access our experts for advice and CPRE guidance. Topics we will cover include Spatial Development Strategies (SDS), Local Plans and the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). We will also review more traditional methods of promoting our campaigns with the support of local volunteers.

Data centres - using intelligence wisely.
The rapid growth in AI, including generative AI, is driving unprecedented demand for compute power - making data centres essential for modern life. At a national level CPRE is pressing for a moratorium and calling for the development of a national strategy.

Data centre operators are exploring nuclear power, including small modular reactors, as well as renewables, as sources of clean, reliable power. Across our branch we are seeking out 'good examples' of where data centres are supporting the local economy as well as protecting the land. We hope to share these best practice examples with you soon.

Mega solar vs 'renewables done well'.
With an average annual rainfall of between 1m and 3m across the North West region you could be forgiven for thinking that there is no call for mega solar here. However, as every cloud can have a silver lining, small-scale community solar can be beneficial. The aim is to transition from a reliance on expensive fossil fuels to the use of locally generated, zero-carbon electricity produced from low-cost and stable wind and solar energy.

Democratic deficit - is this the end?
Two schemes in our area were cited at our recent event as having been turned down by councilors despite being recommended by planning officers *(giant warehouses on green belt at Finnington Lane in Chorley, and Formby Retail Park)*. By forcing local authorities to delegate planning applications to officers rather than to democratic planning committees, it could set up conflict between officers and committee chairs.

We understand that Councils are busy rewriting their constitutions to deal with the change. We will take a twofold approach. 1. clarify the criteria for officer decision under new rules and; 2 work with CPRE HQ to lobby on a national level to ensure the views of communities and their elected representatives are given full weight.

Help secure our future...

In recent years legacies of all sizes have helped our branch deliver its vital work across our region. Please consider leaving us a gift in your will so we can protect the countryside on our doorstep for future generations.

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@CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region & Greater Manchester c/o Rushtons Accountants, Shorrock House, 1 Faraday Court, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 9NB
Tel: 01772 378831 | Email: info@cprelancashire.org.uk
Registered charity number: 1107376

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