

Minutes of the 83rd Annual General Meeting 2019

Haling Dene Centre, Cannock Road, Penkridge, ST19 5DT on Wednesday 11 September 2019.

Present: Present: Maggie Bailey (Brewood Civic Society), Cllr Len Bates, John Blount, Mary Booth (Chairman), Sarah Burgess, Anne Clendon, Hilary Hampton, Rob Hawkins (Stafford Litter Heroes), Steve Hopkins, Gerald Kells, Sue Kneill-Boxley, Cllr Barry Panter, Jacqueline Smith, Frank Walmsley, Paul W.

Welcome and Introductions. Mary Booth welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Apologies were received from David and Dorothy Bradbury, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Mr Ian Dudson, CBE KStJ, Cllr Gill Heath, Cllr Brian Heathcote, John Russell, Amyas Stafford Northcote, and Cllr Mark Winnington.

Minutes of the 2018 meeting. These were accepted as a true record.

Presentation of the annual report. Cllr Barry Panter proposed that the annual report be adopted, seconded by John Blount.

Sue Kneill-Boxley introduced the photography competition, 'Staffordshire's Countryside on Camera'. The winning photographs will be used to produce a 2021 calendar to mark CPRE Staffordshire's 85th anniversary. The closing date is 31 January 2020.

The chairman informed the meeting that CPRE Staffordshire had moved offices in August and expressed our gratitude to Staffordshire County Council for providing accommodation. The Green Clean is taking place on Sunday 15 September at Marquis Drive in conjunction with AONB officers and Litter Heroes, and is linked to the county council's Doing Our Bit campaign.

All members voted in favour of the adoption of the annual report.

Presentation and adoption of the 2018-19 accounts. The accounting period has changed from January – December to April – March. The branch needs to seriously think about fundraising as there is a deficit each year. Donations have increased by a small amount.

The accounts were accepted as a true record, proposed by John Blount and seconded by Anne Clendon. Mike Cross was thanked for auditing the accounts and SKB for preparing them.

Chairman's address. The chairman spoke about her first year in the chair. She noted that everyone present was there because they care about the countryside, which the new national vision for CPRE (a new logo, strapline 'the countryside charity' and strategic plan) puts centre stage. Many people do not know what CPRE stands for, and it is hoped that the Strategic Plan will bring increased recognition as well as new ways of working. Page 9 of

the Strategic Plan summarises the four aims that have been adopted. CPRE Staffordshire is now to be referred to as a local group rather than a branch; it is part of 'OneCPRE'. There will be some events in the autumn where we will see how these aims fit in with local priorities. We also need to work on growing our capacity in Staffordshire. The chairman thanked the two new trustees, Steve Hopkins and John Blount, and Anne Clendon for supporting her as vice-chair. Amyas Stafford Northcote is still involved in Best Kept Village.

The chairman urged people to consider becoming committee members or to ask anyone else who might be interested. She also spoke about the book *England and the Octopus* by Clough Williams Ellis, which was republished with a foreword by Jonathan Dimbleby to mark CPRE's 70th anniversary in 1996. The octopus represented urban sprawl. In some ways the new strategic plan is going back to the original vision of the CPRE.

The support of the two volunteers who have helped out in the office and at events, Grace O'Connell and Rob Turner, in addition to that of Birmingham University student Onoja Simeon, who helped develop fundraising ideas, was noted. MB thanked everyone who bought raffle tickets and/or sent donations.

SH commented on the strategic plan, noting that empowering communities influences CPRE's ability to promote rural life. Branches have the ability to influence CPRE's strategic aims, and to challenge anything at a national level that they might not be happy with. In terms of what the Strategic Plan means locally, he and SKB will be attending a meeting in Birmingham in November to see what can be done at branch level to contribute towards achieving CPRE's wider aims. Cross-referencing with the annual report shows that Staffordshire already has a programme of activities that correspond with the Strategic Plan, and is not without ambition. It is necessary to get the vocabulary right. We must not only make sense of what is happening, but also link it to what is going on locally, for example the Glover Review of AONBs and national parks. It is necessary to consider how best to keep up-to-date with everything going on nationally. This is quite a big ask, hence the need to increase membership of the committee.

GK noted that it is very important to consider what local groups can bring to national priorities. Currently, a large garden village/settlement/community at Cold Meece near Stone may be constructed subject to HS2 going ahead; Stafford Borough Council have the money to do a feasibility study.

Election of Presidents and Vice-Presidents. MB nominated Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Mr Ian Dudson CBE KStJ to remain as President, and Amyas Stafford Northcote as Vice President.

Election of Officers and Executive Committee. Mary Booth and Anne Clendon confirmed that they are willing to stand again as chairman and vice-chairman respectively; this was agreed unanimously. Steve Hopkins will continue to serve as a committee member. John Blount is standing down from the committee due to personal circumstances, but has agreed to help as a volunteer on ongoing projects and will remain a trustee until a replacement can be found, for which he was thanked by the chairman. There were no other volunteers to stand for election to the committee.

Speaker: Hilary Hampton – Veolia: Resourcing the World. Hilary Hampton, Communications Manager at Veolia, gave a talk on waste management. Veolia is a French company that has operated in the UK since the 1980s and offers a range of waste, water and energy management services. The 5p charge on plastic bags has led to a dramatic

drop in their use, but now coffee cups are a major problem. Veolia has been working with Costa Coffee to turn them into food packaging in a pilot project in the south of England, which will hopefully be rolled out to the rest of the UK. Veolia has also worked with TresSemmé as their black plastic bottles are difficult to recycle, and M&S have reduced the amount of black plastic they use in their products. Hilary stressed the need to reduce, reuse and recycle to decrease the amount of waste produced in the first place (the average household produces one tonne of rubbish each year).

Veolia was the preferred bidder for the Staffordshire Energy Recovery Facility at Four Ashes, which opened in 2014. Veolia now has a 25-year contract to divert waste from landfill from Staffordshire. Only about 500 tonnes of waste in the county went to landfill last year, which reportedly saves taxpayers £250 million.

GK expressed some concern about locking waste contracts into recovery. There was some discussion of food waste collections, the infrastructure for which is currently mostly lacking in the UK; it also relies on people sorting out their waste correctly. It was agreed to organise a CPRE visit to the Four Ashes facility. Veolia also offers a small EnviroGrant which could be a source of funding.

Jacqueline Smith, West Midlands volunteering development officer.

JS's work involves empowering communities and the network to engage more people to protect their local environment, and to organise activities that will raise awareness of what CPRE is all about. It also helps people to gain the confidence to engage with decision-makers. JS urged people to engage and talk to the volunteering and partnerships team and to take advantage of national events such as the induction days. All information is in the Network News email, and there is a new cloud-based platform called Assemble. Asked whether local groups will be responsible for volunteer recruitment, JS said a lot of this is intended to be done locally, as we know partners such as the Stafford Litter Heroes and can make connections with other local charities. GK noted that there are regional as well as local volunteer needs, and that there are questions about how we deal with the West Midlands combined authority.

Discussion of fundraising and closing remarks. SKB noted that people generally join through national CPRE. However, as some people might just want to be supporters of their local group, it was queried whether there could be an option to be a local supporter with a small monthly direct debit (they would not receive the *Countryside Voice* magazine). JS said this could be explored by the income and engagement team. In terms of legacies, anyone making a will needs to specify if they want their legacy to go to their local branch of CPRE rather than the national charity.

The chairman thanked everyone for attending, HH and JS for their presentations, and Beadesert Park Farm for providing lunch.

The meeting closed at around 4pm.