



The countryside charity Staffordshire

Minutes of the 86th Annual General Meeting 2022

6:30pm, Thursday 22nd September 2022
Haling Dene Centre
Cannock Road
Penkridge
Staffordshire
ST19 5DT

Present: John Baker (from 7:20pm), Ken Barlow, John Blount, Sarah Burgess, Cllr Len Bates, Mary Booth, Anne Clendon, Ronald Dixon (Voluntary Chase Wardens), Steve Hopkins, Cllr Victor Kelly (Penkridge Parish Council), Sue Kneill-Boxley, Corinna Rayner (Staffordshire Place Names volunteer), Alison Reid, Andy Reid, Judith Tolley (Chebsey History Society), Paul Windmill, Anna Woolliscroft.

- 1. Welcome and opening remarks.** Steve Hopkins was nominated to chair the meeting, as CPRE Staffordshire did not have a Chairman.
- 2. Apologies for absence** were received from Steve Anderson, Philip Atkins OBE, Jan Blount, David Bradbury, Dorothy Bradbury, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Mr Ian Dudson, Mohammed Khuram, Cllr Barry Panter, Stephanie Thompson, Cllr Victoria Wilson, and Cllr Mark Winnington.
- 3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2021.** These were accepted as a true record.
- 4. Presentation and adoption of the 2021-22 Annual Report.** Sarah Burgess provided a brief summary of the annual report and CPRE Staffordshire's work over the past year. The annual report was accepted.

Steve Hopkins noted that CPRE Staffordshire attempts to do as much as it can and to organise varied activities aimed at promoting and protecting the countryside. He invited any comments, suggestions or complaints to be given either in the meeting or via email at a later date.

It was queried whether the letters sent in conjunction with CPRE West Midlands regarding greenfield development and promoting the use of brownfield had been successful. Whilst at a national level the amount of Green Belt has actually increased slightly due to some new land being added to it, other local authorities have had major losses. Paul Windmill noted that in some cases, land is removed

from the Green Belt and therefore does not count when Green Belt development is measured.

5. Presentation and adoption of the 2021-22 Statement of Accounts. The audited accounts, summarized by Sue Kneill-Boxley, were approved. The past year has seen more engagement with and income from parish councils. Steve Hopkins noted that CPRE Staffordshire is running on a shoestring and at a deficit. However, other CPRE branches are in a similar position and also struggle to recruit members and trustees and to increase their income. Whilst we do have some volunteers, such as the people who ran the Staffordshire Way, these rarely translate into members. Some branches have taken other steps to address their financial situation, such as amalgamating with the national CPRE charity.

6. Acting Chairman's address. Steve Hopkins thanked Sue Kneill-Boxley, who has stepped down from the position of Office & Publicity Manager to take up a new position with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, for her work over the past seven years.

A statement from the Chairman designate, Mohammed Khuram, was read out. Mohammed will be happy to meet volunteers in person or online to get to know them.

Steve Hopkins noted that in his personal view there has been considerable debate about where members want to see CPRE going (Building the Movement). This has caused some controversy and there are differences of opinion nationally. However, this will not have much influence on the projects and initiatives carried out by CPRE Staffordshire.

7. Election of President and Vice President(s). The Trustees' recommendations that Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Mr Ian Dudson be invited to remain President and Philip Atkins OBE be invited to remain Vice-President, were accepted.

8. Election of Officers and Executive Committee. The Trustees' recommendation that Mohammed Khuram be elected Chairman and Sue Kneill-Boxley be elected as Honorary Treasurer were accepted. All Trustees agreed to remain in office.

9. Update on Local Plans around the county. Paul Windmill summarised the national planning policy context. The Government's target of building 300,000 new houses a year remains in place, despite the new Prime Minister's vow to abolish it. Biodiversity Net Gain legislation is also coming into force. However, this has led in some case to land being bought for afforestation to sell to developers who need to demonstrate biodiversity net gain. Nutrient neutrality is also an issue that has limited housebuilding in some areas – though this may be scrapped - and an inadequate electricity supply is hampering the construction of houses. Computer centres are also massive users of

electricity. Implementation of new building regulations in relation to energy efficiency may be deferred.

In terms of Local Plans, Lichfield is taking increasing numbers of houses from other authorities, which will entail green belt loss. We do not yet know when the examination in public will be.

South Staffordshire published their Preferred Options in December 2021, with a substantial over-allocation of housing due to the need to provide 4,000 dwellings for Birmingham and the Black Country. Most of this will be in the Green Belt. SSDC also has to provide housing for Wolverhampton due to the 35% uplift in targets for cities. Cllr Bates informed the meeting that a document will be going to full council on 9th November, which will be followed by a consultation.

Stafford Borough will be holding a consultation on its Preferred Options soon. Tamworth's Preferred Options consultation is expected in early 2023 and East Staffordshire do not intend to produce a new plan.

10. Closing remarks. Steve Hopkins thanked everyone for attending and introduced the guest speaker, Dr John Baker, Associate Professor in Name-Studies at the University of Nottingham, who gave a presentation on Staffordshire Place Names and the Rural Environment.

The meeting closed at 8:45pm.