



Annual Report 2022-2023



The countryside charity
Staffordshire

Campaign to Protect Rural England

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It's hard to believe that almost a year has gone by since I took over the reins at CPRE Staffordshire. I'd now like to take this occasion to reflect on what we have achieved over the past year and to let you know about some of our plans for the coming year.

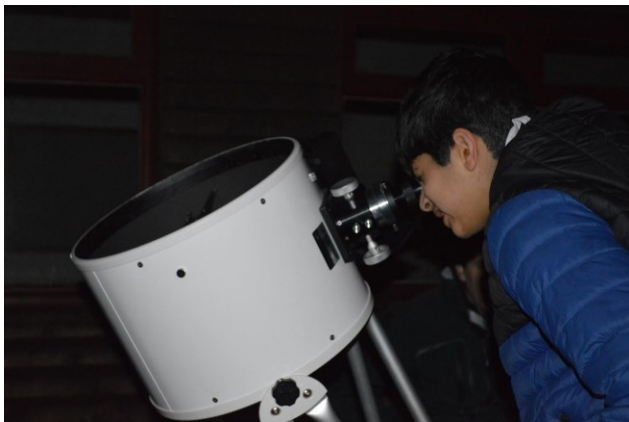


I'm very pleased to report that our bid for funding under Phase 3 of national CPRE's Hedgerow Heroes project has been successful. We will be organising several hedge-planting events over the autumn and winter months to meet our ambitious aim of planting just under 4km of new hedgerow around Staffordshire. We are pleased to welcome Claire Geoghegan to the CPRE office as our new Hedgerow Heroes Project Manager. As well as being passionate about hedgerows, the countryside and conservation, Claire has a wealth of experience in managing volunteers and community projects, and I'm sure she will be a great asset to the team.

If you might be interested in volunteering to plant trees and hedges, please register your interest via this [online form](#). Please also drop us a line you know of a community group that might like to get involved with planting. Speaking of funding, I'm pleased to report that our finances are

now on more of an even keel, which will help us better plan for the future.

For the keen photographers amongst you, our photography competition offered the chance to win Canalside Farm vouchers and have your photographs featured in a 2024 calendar showcasing the beautiful and varied landscapes of Staffordshire. We had a hard time shortlisting the calendar photos! We hope you will enjoy voting for your three favourite photos at today's AGM.



In February, more than 60 children from Beavers, Scouts and Brownies joined us at Beaudesert for our first-ever stargazing event, led by professional astronomers from Keele University. All the children had a chance to look at different

stars and constellations through powerful telescopes and to learn about what you can see with just the naked eye. We are very grateful to the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership for funding the event.

The stargazing event is just one of the ways in which we've collaborated with the AONB Partnership. CPRE volunteers also helped farmers and landowners in Bednall and Gentleshaw plant trees and hedges as part of their Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.

We're pleased to report that 13 schools entered our annual Green Schools Trophy competition. The trustees had a hard time picking the winner, but in the end awarded the trophy and £50 cash prize to Burton Fields School in Burton-upon-Trent in recognition of their fantastic work to create more habitats for wildlife. They have planted over 100 trees, installed bird and bug boxes, created a bog garden, and run a gardening club. It's a whole-school approach in which the pupils suggest, lead and implement changes and teachers support them to do this.

Planning will of course remain a core focus for CPRE Staffordshire, and we aim to substantially increase the number of applications we respond to. We will continue to respond to all Local Plan consultations. We also plan to offer further training sessions for parish councils along the lines of the Neighbourhood Planning training in September 2022.

We have continued to strengthen our links with local government through our county committee, which meets three times a year. Following suggestions from councillors, we will be looking at what we could do to promote bee-friendly towns and middle-distance cycling between towns. With an increasing number of applications for new solar farms coming throughout the county, we would like to work with the county council to map where the applications are located. We've also continued our involvement in the CPRE West Midlands regional group, which looks at issues affecting the conurbation. Other voluntary organisations and community groups we have collaborated with include the Prince's Trust and the Community Foundation of Staffordshire. We sponsor the

Sustainable and Green Initiatives Award in the annual Best Kept Village Community competition. This year's winners, Edingale, have fitted solar panels to half of the village hall roof, reduced mowing to promote the growth of wildflower verges, and is taking part in local initiatives to improve water quality in the River Mease.

We have lots of plans for the coming year! As well as our Hedgerow Heroes project, we plan to run our popular stargazing night again, enabling more children to enjoy the wonders of a dark, starry sky. We also hope to organise events with under-represented groups who may struggle to enjoy all that the countryside has to offer, such as armed forces veterans. Lastly, with a General Election approaching, we will be reaching out to all Staffordshire MPs to see where they stand on issues affecting the countryside, from climate change to rural affordable housing.

With best wishes,
Mohammed Khuram.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The 2022-23 accounts cover the 12-month period running from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. A statement of income and expenditure, showing the current balance, is below.

The closing balance of £18,825.41 at the end of March 2023 is down from £21,081.63 at the end of the previous March (2022). However, the deficit of £2,256.22 is much reduced from the previous year - this is due to an increase in income of £1,137.91 and reduction in expenditure of £4,664.61.

Our share of national subscriptions has increased a little - which is good news in the current climate - and, likewise, donations are up by £474.70 and include a generous £350 Shell Community Kindness grant, £100 donated by Canalside Farm and Shop; £148.13 from our Just Giving appeal and £50 generously given by the Haywood Society. CPRE Staffordshire would like to thank all individual and group donors who have given this year.

Early in 2023, we were awarded £500 from Staffordshire County Council's Climate Action Fund to plant new hedgerow in Kinver. We also received £556 for our popular stargazing initiative enabling more children to experience the wonder of a dark, starry sky.

Many of our costs reduced or remained about the same as for the previous financial year. Contracted hours reduced by almost £4k due to the resignation of a member of staff part way through the financial year. There are no other significant differences to report on other than publicity and promotion being kept to a minimum with a reduction in purchasing prizes and stall bookings. Office running and printing have been separated on the 2022-23 statement but amount to £227.11, which is a £135.23 reduction from the previous year. The cost of materials has been reduced substantially by £433.89 due to not needing to re-stock on books, greetings cards etc.

CPRE Staffordshire is in need of a volunteer auditor - please contact us if you would be interested. Thank you.

Sue Kneill-Boxley, Treasurer.

<u>CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND</u>				<u>STAFFORDSHIRE BRANCH</u>			
<u>Statement of Income and Expenditure ending 31st March 2023</u>							
<u>Income</u>	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>
Share of National Subscriptions	5,740.91	5,595.04	5,664.30	Travel	56.70	238.28	157.50
Parish Councils' Donations	0.00	160.00	50.00	Office Running Costs	314.54	362.34	48.92
Funding Awarded	962.06	100.00	1,056.00	Contracted Hours	11,792.79	11,794.24	8,049.43
Other Donations	4,545.32	561.50	1,036.20	Postage	163.97	112.57	140.04
Events	0.00			Publicity	1,181.83	490.15	5.00
B Society Interest	30.57			Events	0.00		426.00
AGM	0.00	3.00	64.22	Expenses	7.78		
Sale of Goods	94.34	340.35	205.14	Exec Meetings	0.00		70.68
Sale of Raffle Tickets	188.84	256.83	88.77	AGM	14.39	270.00	255.83
Other	0.00	10.00		Insurance	411.24	479.99	484.56
Travel Expenses Recuperated	0.00			Other	131.77	39.00	114.50
Calendar Sales & funding	1,425.54			Calendars	870.00		
Robert Cartwright Books	390.53			RC Books	304.99		
				Consultancy	625.00		
				SCF & CAF spend		790.00	415.20
				Printing			178.19
				Materials		508.89	75.00
Total Income	13,378.11	7,026.72	8,164.63	Total Expenditure	15,875.00	15,085.46	10,420.85
Excess of Expenditure over Income	-2,496.89	-8,058.74	-2,256.22				
				Reconciliation			
Opening Balance 01/04/2022			21,081.63				
Less excess of expenditure over income			-2,256.22	Cash Float			61.80
				Current Account - Nat West			19,135.60
				PayPal a/c			0.00
							19,197.40
				Less Accruals:			
				Contracted Hours			193.80
				Print & Photocopying			178.19
				Postage			
							371.99
Closing Balance			18,825.41				£18,825.41
..... Hon Auditor	 Date	 Hon Treasurer	 Date	
Statement Summary Calculations Correct							

PLANNING ROUND-UP

Planning Applications

Over the past 12 months, we have responded to 10 planning applications. Six were for housing developments, two for solar farms and the others for a dog-walking field and the retention of a marquee in the Green Belt. Two of the responses were in support of the development (the conversion of the former Abbots Bromley School into housing), whilst the other responses were in opposition to development.



Left: 22/36536/OUT: We are pleased to report that this application for 40 dwellings in Stafford was refused. The site is greenfield land outside the settlement boundary that has not been allocated for development in the Local Plan.

Local Plan consultations

Newcastle-under Lyme Borough Council

Our response in August 2023 to the consultation on the First Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18 consultation) reiterates our opposition to the large amount of proposed greenfield and Green Belt development sites, which appear to form over 70% of the number of houses included in the

proposed allocations. We also objected to the proposed alteration of the Green Belt boundary in Policy PSD5.



Site CT1: Bells Hollow looking towards Mow Cop - Ian and Mandy McMillan

We are concerned at the encouragement of (undefined) ‘balanced growth’, how affordability will be improved and how choice will be provided. This could be seen to encourage the development of new housing in and around all villages. We regret that no account whatever is taken of potential windfall provision in Table 8 of the consultation document. An allowance for windfalls would be wholly appropriate and in accordance with the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Stafford Borough Council Preferred Options

Our response to the **Local Plan Preferred Options** consultation in December 2022 stated that we did not see the case for the uplift in housing numbers from the New Standard Method. We also stated our opposition to the provision of over 80 hectares of new employment land, the greenfield development of Meecebrook and other greenfield housing allocations.

South Staffordshire Council

Both CPRE Staffordshire and CPRE West Midlands responded to the Publication Plan in December 2022- the final stage of a new Local Plan before it goes to the Planning Inspectorate (see our website for the full responses). CPRE West Midlands provided detailed evidence to show that there is easily enough land already allocated to meet the needs for housing in South Staffordshire. CPRE wants South Staffordshire to drop plans to build on Green Belt for houses which are needed in the Black Country.

CPRE Staffordshire expressed concern that South Staffordshire is unnecessarily and inappropriately proposing development in the Green Belt and greenfield sites well in excess of the need of its own residents and migration assessed using the New Standard Method.

South Staffordshire Council subsequently announced that it will not be submitting its scheme to the Planning Inspectorate until it receives clarity on the Government's latest proposals over housing numbers.

The way forward

All our planning responses are written by either our dedicated planning volunteer, Paul Windmill, or Sarah Burgess, the office manager. This lack of resources, both human and financial, limits how many applications we can respond to. The chairman and one of the trustees, Dave Evans, are therefore submitting proposals for external funding to potential corporate donors such as JCB.



Campaign to Protect Rural England: Staffordshire Branch. Registered charity 219443.

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Executive committee members and trustees

President	Mr Ian Dudson, CBE KStJ, HM Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire
Vice-president	Mr Philip Atkins OBE
Chairman	Mohammed Khuram
Vice-chair (trustee)	Mrs Anne Clendon, BEM
Trustees and executive committee members	Mr Steve Anderson, Mrs Mary Booth, Mr Dave Evans, Mr Steve Hopkins and Ms Anna Woolliscroft
Treasurer	Mrs Susan Kneill-Boxley



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