

# Spring 2024 Newsletter



The countryside charity  
Staffordshire

## CPRE Staffordshire Spring Newsletter

SPRING NEWS FROM CPRE STAFFORDSHIRE

[WWW.CPRESTAFFORDSHIRE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.CPRESTAFFORDSHIRE.ORG.UK)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Hello and welcome to our summer newsletter. If you've received this newsletter in the post, that either means that we don't have an email address for you, or that because of the GDPR, we haven't had confirmation that you wish to continue receiving emails from CPRE. If this applies, please email Supporter Services ([supporterservices@cpre.org.uk](mailto:supporterservices@cpre.org.uk)) to confirm that you are happy to receive CPRE emails.

As well as reducing our printing costs, signing up for e-mail newsletters means you will get your news earlier. We will never pass your email address on to anyone else. Please also let us know if you do NOT wish to receive the newsletter or other communications from us.

**Please let us know if you would like a large-print copy of the newsletter.**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May: Stall at Wildlife at the Castle event (Stafford), 10am-4pm.**

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September: AGM and visit to Blithfield Hall.**

*Above photo credit: Tree and Crop, Ellenhall, Rob Cannell.*

## Chairman's address

Following the lovely snowdrops of January and February, it's now the turn of the daffodils to brighten up our gardens and roadside verges. At home, I have been kept very busy planting over 2,500 bulbs in my garden, but the 10 months of colour the resulting flowers will provide will be worth it!



Whilst I'm enjoying the lighter evenings, I'm pleased to report that we made good use of the dark winter nights by holding a repeat of our popular stargazing event in February. Nearly 60 children from Brownies and Guides enjoyed a free event at Beaudesert, led by professional astronomers from Keele University's Observatory. All the children had a chance to look at different stars and

constellations through a powerful telescope as well as learning about what can be seen with just the naked eye. We are very grateful to the Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership for funding the event.

Our Hedgerow Heroes project got off to a great start, with over 100 metres of hedgerow planted at Highgate Common, in partnership with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. By the end of March, we had exceeded our target of planting 2km of new hedgerow around the county.

Looking ahead to the spring and summer, we'll be returning to the popular Wildlife at the Castle event on 19th May. We will be inviting all Staffordshire schools to showcase their environmental and conservation work for our Green Schools Trophy competition. We're also pleased to once again sponsor the Sustainable and Green Initiatives Award in the Best Kept Village Community competition. We hope

that as many of you as possible will be able to join us for a tour of Blithfield Hall - not normally open to the public - on Saturday 7th September, followed by lunch and our AGM. Later in September, we will be running some more planning training sessions for parish councils.

Needless to say, we couldn't do all of this without our dedicated team of volunteers. The more people we have on board, the more we can do to help protect, promote and enhance Staffordshire's countryside. At the moment, we are particularly keen to recruit new trustees to help us plan the future work and strategic direction of our charity. If you have an hour or two to spare a week, please visit the volunteering page on our website to find out more. We would love to have you on board!

With best wishes,

Mohammed Khuram,  
Chairman.



## FUTURE EVENTS

### Online Planning Training for Parish Councils

Together with our colleagues at CPRE Cheshire, CPRE Derbyshire and CPRE Shropshire, we will be holding an interactive online training session from 6-8pm on Tuesday 24th September on the planning system in England, covering legislation, designations and statutory development plans. We'll examine the role of planning and how we can shape and inform our rural communities. We will also discuss how to make effective representations in planning, exploring what are material considerations and how to engage in the planning process. This session will also include a range of planning case studies.

The session will be delivered on Zoom by Hannah Barter, Director of [Urban Vision](#), who has

over 15 years' experience in planning and community development, working in the public, private and third sectors. Details of how to book will be sent to parish councils shortly.

### Countryside Day: Tour of Blithfield Hall, lunch and AGM



Saturday 7th September is Countryside Day, an initiative spearheaded by CPRE Sussex to raise awareness of the countryside and how it benefits us all. To mark the occasion, we invite you to join us for a tour of historic Blithfield Hall just north of Rugeley - not normally open to the public. We will have a tour of the Hall itself and the adjacent church, as well as viewing the Orangery, followed by lunch and our AGM in the Great Hall. Further details will be sent out and published on our website soon.

## LOCAL NEWS

### Hedgerow Heroes



We've planted and restored 2,692 metres of hedgerow around Staffordshire over the winter. That's over 15,000 trees!

Here are a few 'numbers' from the project:

- Number of planting locations: 6 (the above picture shows volunteers at Highgate Common).
- Number of planting sites: 23 (12 hedgerows newly created and 11+ lengths of hedgerows restored)
- Number of native species planted: 18
- Number of planting days / events: 26
- Number of people per work day: between 3 and 55 people
- Number of volunteers: 109 total, including 27 partners /

leaders, 19 young people, 2 people with significant additional needs requiring 1:1 support, and 1 child.



Above: Roger Mortlock, CPRE's CEO, joined us for a planting day at Bradford Estates near Weston Park.

- Accreditation: 18 young people have participated in the project as part of gaining accredited qualifications, including one Harper Adams University BSc student (who will write his thesis on the economics of planting projects), one Rodbaston college student and 16 participants from the Prince's Trust in Stafford and Cannock.
- Number of new project partners: 25 organisations (including Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Farming in Protected Landscapes groups, the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, golf clubs, community groups).
- Publicity: multiple articles have been written in collaboration with our

partner organisations, with one newsletter reaching over 16,000 new people in one week. Social media posts have also been shared widely, particularly after our involvement in the Stafford Green Arts Festival, with one post reaching over 900 people in one week.

- Outreach: Our exhibition and 'build a hedgerow' event was visited by nearly 1,000 people over the course of the Stafford Green Arts Festival, and we received an award from the Mayor of Stafford for our full-day hedgerow craft workshop at the same festival.

*Claire Geoghegan, Hedgerow Heroes Project Manager*

## Children Reach for the Stars

Children and teenagers from Brownies and Guides learned all about the wonders of the night sky at a free stargazing event in February.

Thanks to generous funding from the Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership, the children had the chance to look through a high-powered telescope at Beaudesert Outdoor Activity Centre on Cannock Chase. As well as providing great views of the night sky,

professional astronomers from Keele University's Observatory explained why it's important to reduce light pollution.



Cannock Chase is a nationally and internationally important landscape, and its relative wildness and tranquility lies at the heart of its natural beauty. Darkness at night is an integral part of a landscape. As a very small National Landscape, sitting between the towns of Stafford, Rugeley, Cannock and Burntwood, its relatively dark skies are significantly affected by light spilling in from the surrounding towns.

A new Good Lighting Guide demonstrates how simple changes by the way we light our homes, businesses and neighbourhoods can have big impacts. It provides information and advice to individuals, businesses and decision makers interested in

reducing and avoiding light pollution so that we keep Cannock Chase special.

### **A New Hedge for Kinver Edge**

Thanks to a grant of £500 from the county council's Climate Action Fund, in a bid supported by Cllr Victoria Wilson, we were able to provide one-third of the total funding for the National Trust to plant 240 metres of new hedgerow (1,100 trees) along the meadow at Kinver Edge.



Once mature, the plants will provide a rich source of nectar for insects throughout the year. Dogrose and blackthorn will produce rosehips and sloes to feed birds and small mammals from late August into the autumn.

## **CPRE NATIONAL NEWS**

### **NPPF: More focus needed on brownfield and affordable homes**

The government has published revisions to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Whilst there are some positive aspects, such as the changes to policy on five-year land supply, CPRE does not feel it goes far enough to provide rural affordable homes, promote brownfield development, or address the climate and nature crises.

### **Short-term let planning rules 'good news' for rural communities**

CPRE has welcomed the news that the government has announced measures to regulate short-term lets. Planning permission will be required for future short-term lets and a new mandatory national register will provide valuable information and help ensure accommodation is safe.

### **Government consultation offers hope of rooftop solar on new buildings**

A recent Government consultation has proposed changes to building regulations, including proposals for mandatory rooftop solar on most new buildings.

The consultation is part of the 'Future Homes and Buildings Standard 2025', which sets out the rules around the construction of new buildings. Within the consultation is an option for rooftop solar be installed as standard on new homes and buildings such as warehouses.

### **CPRE's manifesto for the next government**

CPRE's manifesto for the next UK government outlines four key areas of priority for the countryside, climate, communities and wildlife: a planning system for people, planet and nature; fixing the broken housing system for rural communities; enhancing the countryside next door, and rooftop renewables.



## LOCAL PLANNING ROUND-UP

### Cannock Chase District Council

Regulation 19 consultation.

### South Staffordshire Council

We will be responding to the Regulation 19 consultation (Publication Plan).

#### **23/00851/FULMEI:**

Erection of 135 dwellings. Land East Of A449 Land North Of Penkridge.

Objection on the grounds that it be seen as pre-emptive and potentially prejudicial to the council's consideration of the new Local Plan.

**23/00869/OUTM:** Outline application for the proposed development of up to 50no detached dwellings (100% affordable), new medical centre, public open space, and associated infrastructure. Rear Of College Farm Close

Westbeech Road  
Pattingham.

Reasons for objection:  
Located in the Green Belt, no indication of 'very special circumstances' to justify building in the Green Belt, no involvement of registered social housing provider, loss of trees and impact on biodiversity.

**23/01031/OUTM:** Outline application for a 100 MW Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure, New Road Featherstone.

Objection on the grounds of inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

### Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Our response to the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation reiterated 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 in the proposed allocations. We objected to the proposed alteration of the Green

Belt boundary in Policy PSD5.

### Stafford Borough Council

#### **22/36478/FUL:**

Construction and operation of a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Farm of up to 49.9MW in generation capacity. Land Adjacent To Haberdashers Arms Flashbrook Road Knighton.

Objection on the grounds of impact on the landscape and loss of farmland.

**23/37587/OUT:** Outline Planning Application for the erection of 36 dwellings. Land Off Old Croft Road Walton On The Hill Stafford Staffordshire.

Reasons for objection: inappropriate greenfield site at the edge of Stafford, close to Cannock Chase National Landscape. A previous very similar application was previously refused.

### Staffordshire Moorlands

#### **SMD/2023/0523:**

Installation of a solar farm comprising ground

mounted solar PV panels with a generating capacity of up to 49.99MW.

Objection on the grounds of inappropriate development in the Green Belt, impact on the landscape and the cumulative impact of several similar local applications.

### Walsall Council

**23/1368:** Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion for residential development, which in total includes up to 130 dwellings and associated infrastructure and landscaping. Land west of Longwood Lane, Walsall, WS9 0TA.

Objection focused on housing justification, impact on Green Belt, landscape and amenity, biodiversity and flooding, and transport.

### **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)**

We are encountering an increasing number of applications for battery energy storage systems (BESS). These are usually in the form of large

numbers of industrial-scale batteries packed together. They take in and store electricity when there is more available than the National Grid needs, and release it when the Grid needs more than is available from usual day-to-day sources.



For CPRE, these industrial processes are presenting new problems. They use large steel-framed structures and converted shipping containers to house the equipment they require. They are usually enclosed by a steel palisade security fence, which in turn is encircled by hedging and trees to 'mitigate' the visual and landscape impacts they create. CPRE would prefer the industrial equipment these processes require to be sited in industrial settings, or on brownfield land, with greenfield

land only used in exceptional circumstances.

### **Leaving a Gift in Your Will**

Leaving a gift in your will to CPRE Staffordshire would help us campaign for a countryside is rich in nature, accessible for all and protected for the future. A future where hedgerows are restored and local communities get a say on what gets built where they live. A future where brownfield sites are recycled, valuable farmland is protected, and deep, dark skies are enjoyed.

CPRE has partnered with Farewill to offer a free will-writing service. While there is no obligation to leave a gift in your will with this service, many supporters remember CPRE with a lasting legacy to help protect the countryside they know and love.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to talk about leaving a legacy to CPRE Staffordshire.

CPRE Staffordshire is a registered charity, number 219443. It promotes and encourages the protection and improvement of the countryside of Staffordshire: its towns, villages and rural environment. Anyone who values the Staffordshire countryside is invited to join us, either as a supporter of our work, or as an active participant.

<https://www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk>

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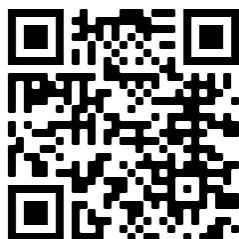
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**Current CPRE Staffordshire Executive Committee Officers:**

Chairman: Mohammed Khuram

President: His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Mr Ian Dudson, CBE KStJ

Vice President: Philip Atkins OBE

Vice Chairs: Mrs Mary Booth and Mrs Anne Clendon BEM

Executive Committee Members: Dave Evans and Steve Hopkins

**Join Us!**

If you would like to join CPRE, please go to:

<https://www.cprestaffordshire.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-member/>

As a member you will receive discount to attractions nationwide, 15% off Cotswold Outdoor store and national and local news about events, your local countryside and future planning.

Please remember to state **Staffordshire** as the local group or branch you are joining through.