

Autumn 2013**Issue 12****Knickers in a Twist**

Apart from my interest in CPRE, I am a Trustee at my local hospice. I was Chairman until recently and like all voluntary organisations it is easier to agree to take on a responsible post than it is to stand down. It is the same with CPRE. We have a small group of active, if ageing, volunteers but we are always seeking more and particularly ones who will take on key roles. However this is not the time or place to follow this line of thinking. Perhaps I will return to the theme in some other issue of our Newsletter.

The reason I started down this path was following my reading of a magazine called Governance. I am Chairman of our hospice governance committee and this magazine is a first class publication edited by an organisation called Civil Society. In this issue one of the articles certainly rang a bell with me. It starts with that lovely song "Your toe bone is connected to your foot bone....your foot bone is connected to your ankle bone....etc, etc." And finishes "Now hear the word of the Lord"

The article is about Connections and describes what happens when these connections break down. As I read it I am minded of the total lack of connections within our Government over policies relating to that which we hold dear, the Green Belt.

CPRE National Office is conducting a second review of the Green Belt and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 18 months on which we have been asked to take part. It makes enlightening if not easy reading.

Twelve months ago in August 2012, some four months into the NPPF, there was uncertainty over the revocation of regional plans. Pressure from planning inspectors was leading to continued pressure on the Green Belt. At that time, CPRE estimated that proposed development on the Green Belt was the equivalent to a new town the size of Halifax with houses, roads and warehouses. Where are the connections with the philosophy of the need in NPPF to save the Green belt?

You would think 12 months on that these threats to planning on the greenbelt must have receded given the commitment of Government. Eric Pickles, Secretary of State, has abolished RSS policies. Brandon Lewis, a junior minister under Eric Pickles, issued a written statement to Parliament on 1 July making clear the commitment of the Secretary of State that any incursion into the Green Belt needed "very special circumstances". Eric Pickles himself made a speech to the Royal Town Planning Institute on 11 July. He stated: "You can plan for growth but not at any price. So we have been very clear that we must have secure safeguards to protect the green belt, that vital green lung which prevents urban sprawl."

You would think that with this pressure from the team responsible for planning that our green belt would be protected. Not on your Nellie.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has called for greater use of existing powers to “swap” Green Belt land so enabling development on some sites in exchange for some new land being categorised as Green Belt. Bradford’s plan some six years ago went down that line to the detriment of the green belt. CPRE nationally has the view that this defeats the key purpose of permanence and will breed urban sprawl. Many MP’s have voiced concern in letters to Ministers and in debates in Parliament. CPRE National Office is tracking all this and hopefully there will be many more when the extent of this serious incursion into the greenbelt becomes more and more evident. And yet

We know in West Yorkshire that the Planning Inspectors are already preventing progress with local plans for their forecasts for new houses. They want more! And yet these same Councils in West Yorkshire are already planning housing and warehousing development on Green Belt;

- In Calderdale upto 6,800 dwellings could be built on Green Belt.
- Leeds has plans for 19,400 in urban sprawl, much of which is likely to be on Green Belt.
- Kirklees plan 1500 houses on the Green Belt around Dewsbury and the Inspector wants more;
- In Wakefield plans for a stadium and warehousing on Green Belt have already been approved;

And this the tip of the iceberg.

So where do we go from here? How do we persuade our ministers to connect the various planning regulations and guidance to make our Green Belt the permanent feature it was meant to be to protect our countryside?

We keep at it. We protest. We badger Ministers, MP,s Planning Inspectors, and Local Planners. We write to newspapers. We seek time on local radio and TV. We make a nuisance of ourselves because we believe that if we don’t our countryside will not be the place we want to hand onto our grandchildren. We demonstrate to Government that it is not our knickers that are in a twist. It is theirs.

In the meantime the Government intends to publish any time now a new guidance promised following Lord Taylor’s review of planning guidance to support the NPPF. CPRE National Office is calling for it to address a number of issues including

- defining the” exceptional circumstances” for incursion into the Green Belt;
- linking in with the Localism Act so Councils as a group set the boundaries to prevent large urban areas;
- assistance available for local planning authorities who wish to regenerate particularly brownfield sites in urban areas.

For this article, I am indebted to CPRE National Office for their briefing paper GREEN BELT and the NPPF. As they say in their last paragraph they have produced a Charter for the Countryside. They are looking for widespread public support to reinforce our case for better planning and protection of the Green Belt. Please sign by going to www.cpre.org.uk or ring 020 7981 2800. I have.

John Denham

Around the Districts

Southern District

Throughout this lovely summer we have all been busy doing our own things. Going on holiday, gardening, garden visits, etc. We did, however have a wonderful visit to Brecks Farm near Swillington, to see the wildflower meadow there. It was truly spectacular, a haze of all our favourite species interwoven with hundreds of orchids in various shades. We were treated to a fabulous strawberry cream tea back at the farmhouse to end a memorable afternoon

A close watch has been kept on planning applications which also seem to have been on holiday, except for the usual rash of turbine applications, to which we have objected. There have been two successes. The four huge turbines at Birdsedge were refused unanimously by the Heavy Woollen Planners, to much cheering by the residents of the village who have fought a long hard battle for about 5 years to preserve their village integrity. All praise to them. Also two similar sized turbines at Farnley Tyas were withdrawn.

We are supporting the Stirley Farm Project at their open day on Sunday 1st September, and are presenting a seat which will be built on the farm.

Sue Carter

Northern District

Site Allocations

The recent publication by Leeds City Council on housing, site allocations, has caused much discussion by your District Committee and in the local towns and villages. Potential sites are classified as Green, which have the greatest potential to be allocated for housing. Amber sites which have potential but there may be issues which need to be resolved. or may not be in such a favourable location as those highlighted green . Red sites which are not considered suitable, in the foreseeable future ,for housing. These whereabouts of these sites are available to look at, [Leeds.gov.uk/site allocations](https://leeds.gov.uk/site-allocations) or you can get a paper copy

David Cove has analysed by area the sites, 71% are Green sites, 90% are Amber sites. Only 14% of the Green and Amber sites involve Brown field land.

Leeds have a target of 66,000 houses and we have asked Leeds for details as to how this was arrived at. We believe that this figure is much above requirements

Scholes

David Cove gave a talk to over 100 people at a recent "save our Scholes" meeting on the threat to Green Belt.

Protected Areas of Search

These sites were previously considered under the previous Regional Spaceial Strategy as sites not likely to be built on, and given some protection. Now Leeds in order to find enough building land in the next five years to satisfy government requirements has released areas under 15 hectares for building .Not good news

HS 2 High Speed Railway

We have looked at where the line is likely to go, and some houses near Woodlesford will virtually have the lines at the bottom of their gardens. Waterton Park, Wakefield will be divided. It is hoped that the route of the line can be re routed. National office is looking into the routing of the line

Opencast

We objected to the proposed site near Bretton Park and this application has been refused.

Footpaths

If you have any complaints or suggestions get in touch with Leeds City Council who have 6 Rights of Way Officers.

Wild Flower Meadow

If you were not able to join us on the visit to the site near Rothwell you missed an interesting afternoon. We saw many orchids and other wild flowers.

David Cooke

Planning Officer Report

"CPRE fights for a better future for the English countryside. We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving countryside for everyone to value and enjoy." This statement, probably familiar to most of us, is used by CPRE to provide a succinct description of what we do and why we do it. I refer to it here because the national and local strands nicely sum up much of my work since the last newsletter, which has focussed on reinforcing links between countrywide initiatives and local issues and campaigning work, alongside developing new ways to promote our message across the county.

One example of reinforcing the links has been supporting a National Office initiative to increase the influence of local groups on policy making at a national level through effective lobbying of their MPs. The initiative involved National Office organising an event at Westminster where local groups actively campaigning against inappropriate housing and other developments would be able to debate the issue of *'How we can meet housing need while protecting our valued green spaces and countryside'* with MPs. At the branch level, I co-ordinated our update of local groups active in the county so that invitations could be sent to as many as possible. The event was held in July, and several campaign groups from West Yorkshire were able to send representatives. Following the debate, described by one attendee as *'a great motivation'*, at least one of the groups has been successful in arranging further meetings with their MP to discuss their concerns in more detail.

I've also carried out research on emerging Local Plans in the county, which has fed into the countrywide annual briefing paper *Green Belt: Under Renewed Threat?* While the nature and the scale of the threats to the West Yorkshire Green Belt is discussed elsewhere in the newsletter, it's worth highlighting that the press release accompanying the briefing paper was picked up by the local press and led to an article in the Halifax Courier, focussing on the Green Belt in Calderdale. While the article itself won't reduce the threat, the piece alerts people to the development

planned in their Green Belt, and promotes our work and values to a wider local audience, which I hope will encourage more people to stand up for their countryside and help persuade our authorities that their plans should do more to protect these important areas from inappropriate development.

Unauthorised roadside advertising, often on large lorry trailers, is a problem that blights many areas of countryside close to major roads across West Yorkshire. It's also an issue that CPRE nationally have campaigned against over many years. To provide a new impetus for this work National Office are working to prepare an up to date countrywide map highlighting areas where the problem is particularly severe. With the help of a local member, I've been able to send specific details for the area between junctions 28 and 32 of the M62. If you are aware of other problem hotspots, **please send details of the location and advertisers to Michael Church** and I will send them back along the chain.

In addition to these tasks, a great deal of my recent work has been aimed at promoting our message across the county by developing a website for the branch. A large number of CPRE branches already have websites, and it is hoped that by joining the club West Yorkshire CPRE will be able to communicate more quickly and effectively with members and others who share our views. As well as promoting protection for the West Yorkshire countryside and explaining what we do, the website will provide an easy way for people to contact the branch, as well as identifying ways they can get involved in protecting their countryside. In addition the site will promote branch social events and sign post a host of useful resources. Although we are hoping to 'go live' in September, work on the site will be on-going as we strive to provide more information and keep things up to date. You can help with this task if you have any really good quality digital photos of the West Yorkshire countryside. **Please email any you have to Michael Church** and although we can't promise to use them all, your efforts will be much appreciated.

Please have a look at the site and give us your feedback. Because we are still unsure what the address will be (possibly: www.cprewestyorkshire.org.uk), the best way to find us will be through a search engine, such as Google, or a link from the CPRE national website on the local and regional groups page.

Joe Varga
Planning Officer

Working to protect Communities, Greenspace & the Environment

West Yorkshire branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Kirklees Community Action Network (KCAN), and Wharfedale & Airedale Review Development (WARD) are pleased to announce the formation of a new “Planning & Development” campaign group, called the

Yorkshire Greenspace Alliance (YGA)

We’ve taken this important step because we strongly believe that by working together; sharing knowledge, expertise and resources; we will collectively have a much stronger influence on Planning & Development issues at Local, Regional and National level. We hope that other Groups, who share our aims, will also be inspired to join us.

Some work has already been undertaken behind the scenes and we are now ready to go public, to build the Alliance in to something that can have a real impact on Planning and Development issues across Yorkshire.

We can therefore now cordially invite you to attend the Inaugural meeting of

Yorkshire Greenspace Alliance

- ***10.30 to 12.30am***
- ***Saturday 28th September 2013***
- ***Upstairs function room of the Emmott Arms, Town Street, Rawdon, Leeds, LS19 6PU.***

The intention is to bring everyone up-to-speed about the plans so far, but also to have an open discussion about (for example):

- How we can reach out to areas and local groups who are not already involved.
- The sort of projects we can and will collectively undertake
- How everyone can get involved and contribute to a successful organisation

KCAN

CPRE

WARD

News from the Executive Committee

Executive Meetings

- 10th October 2013 7:00pm – Three Nuns Pub, Mirfield
- 21st November 1:00pm – Three Nuns Pub, Mirfield, meet 12:15 for Lunch

Situations Vacant

We still have two vacancies in the branch one old and the other new which we hope some of you will be tempted to come forward to fill.

Minutes Secretary to the Executive Committee

Until recently Rosemary Hollins has been our Minute Secretary. She did the job for several years and due to personal reasons has stood down. We would like to thank Rosemary for the work she did on the Executive Committee and the excellent timely minutes that she took.

We now urgently need a replacement for Rosemary. This is an opportunity to get more involved with the branch. Duties are to prepare the Agenda, take the minutes of the executive meetings and the Annual General Meeting, agree them with the Chairman and send them out to members of the committee.

The Executive Committee meets six times a year for the winter months the meetings are at the Three Nuns Pub in Mirfield from 1:00pm to around 3:00pm. In the summer we vary the venue and meet in the evenings starting at 7:00pm and ending around 9:00pm.

We need somebody that has PC experience and internet access.

If you are interested please contact:

Michael Church on email church_mj@yahoo.com telephone 01924 462811 or Mobile 0777 607 7289

or

Charles Tunbridge email charlestunbridge@btinternet.com

Webmaster

The Executive Committee has decided to move into the 21st century and as our first move we are looking to set up our own website. We have received a template from national office with full instructions.

Having the tools we now need somebody with some IT experience and internet access to take the project forward.

If you are interested please contact Michael Church on email church_mj@yahoo.com telephone 01924 462811 or Mobile 0777 607 7289